

Shroud Congress in Ohio, August 2008

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The Shroud Science Internet group, composed of about 100 scholars and researchers from around the world, will sponsor The Shroud of Turin: Perspectives on a Multifaceted Enigma on August 14-17, 2008 at The Blackwell Hotel on the grounds of The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

2008 marks the 30th and 20th anniversaries of two of the most important events in Shroud history. In 1978, the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP) had an unprecedented five-day access to the Shroud, which put forth many indications that it was an authentic 1st century burial cloth. In 1988, three laboratories performed a Carbon-14 (C14) dating test on the Shroud with the results placing the putative origin of the cloth between 1260 and 1390 AD. In many people's eyes, that ended the debate of the Shroud's authenticity. The cloth, however, has been fraught with controversy from its first documented appearance in Lirey, France around 1357.

Although a Catholic bishop in the 1380's had claimed that an artist had painted the Shroud, other church officials, including various Popes over the years, have spoken out in favor of its authenticity. The 1978 STURP team, in fact, in the course of its intensive investigations, found no paint (except for trace amounts left by artists who had touched their painted copies to the Shroud for sanctification purposes). One can see how the Shroud is such a contentious object. Although one principal figure involved in the 1988 dating compared anyone who still believed the Shroud to be authentic to "flat-earthers," the sheer number of Shroud conferences after 1988 testify to the complexity of the Shroud, technically known as "sindonology." The major conferences were: Paris 1989; Cagliari, Italy 1990; New York and St. Louis 1991; Rome 1993; Nice, France 1997; Turin 1998; Dallas 1998; Richmond, Virginia 1999; Orvieto, Italy 2000; Dallas 2001; Paris 2002 and Dallas 2005.

The conference will highlight the contributions of the 1978 STURP team, with a special PowerPoint presentation by STURP documenting photographer Barrie Schwartz. 2008 Also marks the 3rd anniversary of the death of STURP and Shroud Science member Ray Rogers. Rogers, who had dropped out of sindonology for about 20 years before reentering the scene after the release of a controversial Shroud book in 2000, was in a unique position regarding the evaluation of the 1988 C-14 results. He had custody of some samples from the 1978 study and then was given access to leftover samples used in the 1988 dating.

Shortly before his death, Rogers authored a significant paper in the prestigious peer-reviewed scientific journal *Thermochimica Acta*, in which he asserted that "Pyrolysis mass spectrometry results from the sample area coupled with microscopic and microchemical observations prove that the radiocarbon sample was not part of the original cloth of the Shroud of Turin. The radiocarbon date was thus not valid for determining the true age of the Shroud." Skeptics, and even those otherwise convinced

of the Shroud's authenticity, have contested Rogers' findings, but to date, no one has published anything in a peer-review journal.

Since the release of Rogers' paper, other researchers have found additional compelling evidence supportive of his findings. Abstracts for several papers pertaining to this new research are being submitted to the conference for possible presentations. Scientists, historians and theologians continue to weigh in on the Shroud. All are invited to contribute their various "perspectives of a multi-faceted enigma." It is hoped that the conference will be another significant chapter in the saga of the Shroud.

For more information, including guidelines for submitting abstracts and registration, see: <http://shroud.wikispaces.com/ohioshroudconference+2008>.