

Editorial



Salvator Mundi

What value the portrait on the left? The market initially had decided around £45. However, after a few decades and countless hours spent examining the paint and other aspects of its various layers and finally deciding that Leonardo da Vinci's name could be attached to it the market valued its 45cm x 66cm at over \$450,000,000.

What value the portrait on the right? Countless hours were spent looking for its layers of paint but none could be found! Indeed, there was not a "layer" of anything. Quite the opposite. Only a darkening of the linen which, taken as a whole, revealed not just a portrait but an entire body - ventral and dorsal, of a crucified man? The image is graduated in density so as to reflect the apparent distance each part of the body was from the cloth when the image was formed. This graduation is remarkably consistent along its 4 metre length. It is a very big picture. 16 times the size of the newly attributed Leonardo. Verdict from the most eminent scientists to examine it? *"Someone just got a bit of linen, faked it up and flogged it."* How? No one has any idea. Interest among scientists and scholars, except a few diehards, has been doused almost to extinction by the dead hand of disdain the above italicised phrase quite ignorantly heaped upon it. (More on this theme inside.)

So, what value does the Shroud have? Millions of pilgrims come to see it every few years when it is publicly displayed. These are mostly the Italian faithful undeterred by the verdict of the single C14 test, and then, in diminishing quantities: other Catholics, the open-minded and curious from all faiths and some of none. Obviously the Shroud has a monetary value to the city of Turin and has done for centuries. What other value might it have?

It is never likely to come onto the market so that will not be able to take a view. That is frustrating in a way because one of the myths available to try and explain the Shroud is that, it, too, is a secret work of Leonardo da Vinci as only he had the genius to conceive it. Should that myth have been validated, on a square centimetre basis, pro rata, the Shroud would be valued at over \$7 Billion. However, the da Vinci connection was scotched a long time ago.

But what value might be put on the Shroud if it could be returned to its rightful status as one of the world's great mysteries? And what if it turned out that one of its properties was to enable the World's faiths to unify in peace under its banner and put aside the differences that have had so many millions of fatal consequences down the centuries and continue to do so to this day?

The options for an explanation for the Shroud and its image that so far have been put forward are: a divine miracle being the product of a bodily resurrection; natural processes of putrefaction reacting with the linen; a combination of the former with ointments used to either embalm or preserve alive the body; an as yet unexplainable but natural quantum phenomenon; an ingenious forgery; a unique byproduct of seismic activity coinciding with laying out in the tomb; a fluke byproduct of a large scale medieval devotional object or, lastly, a byproduct of a grisly execution in mockery of the historical crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

As well as using my editorship of this Newsletter to bring you news of the best of what emerges throughout the year on our subject I will also be seeking to investigate whether, whatever the Shroud and its image may be, it might come to have some value as the unique, unifying force for good I describe above. There are straws in the wind that blow in that direction.



I dedicate my editorship to the late Father Peter Rinaldi S.D.B. He was my mentor as well as executive producer on *The Silent Witness* - my 1978 BAFTA-winning film which, together with Ian Wilson's Book, *The Turin Shroud*, of the same year, ushered in a decade of intense interest in our subject around the world.

David Rolfe, December 2017.