

NEXT BSTS LECTURE

DR. ALLAN MILLS OF LEICESTER UNIVERSITY

'THE RUSSELL EFFECT: A POSSIBLE CLUE TO THE MECHANISM OF THE FORMATION OF THE SHROUD IMAGE', WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER

This will be a part-repeat, part development of the highly intriguing paper presented by Dr. Allan Mills to the recent New York Symposium (see p.3). The lecture will be given on Wednesday 23 October at the Society's usual venue, the New Cavendish Club, 44 Great Cumberland Place, London W1 [nearest Underground, Marble Arch] 7pm.

Sheila Landi at the very end of her recent lecture to the BSTS showed an interesting example of an old engraving that had seemingly reproduced a 'negative' image of itself on its cover sheet (see next page). Images such as these are an intriguing and all too little-explored phenomenon, and still need careful study, in which regard members may be interested in a further suggested explanation for the mechanism of the Shroud's image, as sent to the Editor by Mr. D.H. Armitage, The Old Coach House, Greyhound Lane, Wilmslow, Buckingham MK18 3EB:

ANOTHER THEORY OF HOW THE SHROUD IMAGE WAS FORMED?

by D.H. Armitage

The fourteenth century date given to the Shroud by the carbon dating tests has prompted strong views from many who, being convinced the Shroud is not a forgery, feel that the scientists, through incompetence, ignorance, misunderstanding or even deceit, have somehow got the facts wrong. The present writer is also convinced the Shroud is not a forgery but feels it likely that the dating will prove to be correct. Consequently a hypothesis is proposed which attempts to explain how a fourteenth century cloth could have an authentic image of Christ's body imprinted on it. The hypothesis appears also to provide explanations for many of the mysteries which remain associated with the Shroud.

The hypothesis proposes that an image of Christ's body was formed on the original burial cloth from a combination of blood and sweat stains aided in some way by the spices packed with the body at the time of burial. These stains, it is suggested, extended through the thin burial cloth to form images on both sides of the cloth, front and back, the images differing due to variations in stain penetration. The bloodstains, for instance, would have had limited penetration due to most of them being formed from dried blood softened in some way by body fluids or the spices.

It is suggested that around the time of the first historical appearance of the Shroud in the fourteenth century a backing cloth was attached to the burial cloth for obvious protective reasons, the cloth being fixed to the side of the burial cloth which had been in direct contact with the body. This backing cloth would still have been in place at the time of the 1532 fire. The hypothesis proposes that in the intense heat of the fire, the image on the back of the burial cloth was transferred by some form of scorching mechanism to the backing cloth, but that as the duration or intensity of the heat increased, the original relatively fragile stain images on the burial cloth were severely damaged or destroyed.

After the fire, faced on the one hand with the damaged or destroyed original image, and on the other with the undoubtedly authentic 'scorched' image, the authorities took, it is proposed, the difficult decision to keep the facts of the case secret. So when, in 1534; the 'Shroud' was given to the Poor Clare nuns for repair following the fire, they were given, not the original burial cloth, but what had been its backing cloth now having on it the newly transferred image, albeit differing in some degree from the image which had been known prior to the fire. Thus what is known today as the Shroud is, it is suggested, a fourteenth century backing cloth of the original burial cloth of Christ.

In support of the hypothesis the following points are put forward; (i) The strong persistent rumours at the time of the 1532 fire that the Shroud had been destroyed and replaced by a copy; (ii) The Lierre copy of the Shroud painted only a few years before the fire differs significantly from the Shroud as we see it today and from subsequent copies painted after the fire; (3) The visual and technical nature of the present-day Shroud image strongly suggests a form of scorch; (iv) The transfer of the image could help explain the 'negative' nature of the Shroud image; (v) The narrow strip of material sewn along one edge of the Shroud could well have been put there so that the width of the backing cloth matched that of the original burial cloth; (vi) The presence of cotton in cloth samples taken from the Shroud suggests the possible existence of a previously unrecorded cloth in the Shroud's history; (vii) The apparent absence of blood on the Shroud; (viii) The carbon dating result itself.

The hypothesis has, in the writer's view, two main problems. Firstly it argues against something the Shroud community has always insisted upon, namely that the Shroud cloth itself is two thousand years old. Secondly, there is currently no positive evidence that there was a backing cloth in place at the time of the 1532 fire. Time will tell whether both problems can be overcome.