LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mandylion Copy on Guernsey?

From John McCormack, author of Channel Island Churches, the authoritative book on the history and architecture of the churches of Jersey and Guernsey

There is a very strange stone now at the top of a flight of steps into the churchyard of the Vale Church in Guernsey. It measures just over two feet long, about eight inches across, and about nine inches deep, and is of one of our hardest local granites. The design has been fairly lightly incised into it, and this seems to have been done sometime after the stone had already become worn, quite possibly from it having been the threshold stone for some previous church on the site. The present church is a multiphase structure dating from the 12th century onwards, but the considerable quantities of Roman bricks and other materials built into it show that it must have been an important Christian centre from much earlier, probably from the time around the late 5th century AD when the Channel islands were evangelised by monks from the abbey of St. Martin of Tours at Marmoutier [close to Tours in northern France -ed.].

As an indication of my interest in this stone, I have reproduced the photograph of it in my book Channel Island Churches (Philimore, 1987). Ever since my youth I have visited innumerable churches in England and Wales, but have yet to find anything like it. In particular, the diagonal patterning seems so similar to representations of the Mandylion [see below] that I am wondering if it has been drawn to your attention before? My suggestion is that it really was intended as a representation of the Mandylion, but with a cross in lieu of the head of Jesus, which might have been due to the extreme difficulty of producing a reasonable likeness on such a hard stone. Since Guernsey lay on the seaways between northern Europe and the Mediterranean, and pilgrimages to the Holy Land must often have brought travelers to its shores, it may not be so peculiar a thing to find here as one might at first think.

But if it is not the Mandylion, what is it? I should be most pleased to receive any comments from the Society's members, and will try to answer any questions that might arise.

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The Shroud is No 'Solarograph'!

From BSTS member Remi van Haelst, of Antwerp, Belgium.

(Members may recall that Remi and his wife narrowly escaped with their lives in a hotel fire eighteen months ago. As a result of this Remi had a Shroud-associated near- death experience to be featured in a later issue of this Newsletter):

In the publication De Arte no.51 Professor Nicholas Allen claims to have replicated the image on the Shroud [see BSTS Newsletter 42, p.27ff], using a camera obscura technology that would have been available in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The photographs published in De Arte are indeed very good. The Greek Aristotle (4th c.BC), the Arabian Ibn al Haitim (11th c) and England's Roger Bacon (circa 1250), certainly knew the principle. The mediaeval era saw the making, in Venice, of the first pair of spectacles, also the first glass mirrors. The Italian Alberti, flourishing in 1437, used a real camera obscura to look, from within in a real darkroom, at paintings outside that room. Leonardo da Vinci, circa 1500, wrote an unmistakable description of the camera obscura, while two more Italians Barbero (1568) and della Porta (1588) worked on the development of the first true lens. There is also no doubt that silver salts, e.g. nitrate and sulphate, were known, and we may even wonder why Professor Allen did not use the more suitable silver bromide or silver chloride for his purpose. So the technology to produce a Shroud-like image was indeed at hand.

But we must also wonder why it took Professor Allen several days to obtain a reaction between silver salt and light? And here is where Professor Allen clearly started to use modern knowledge. He used a bi-convex lens to pass ultraviolet radiation from the model to the linen. For a camera obscura, with a focal length of four metres, one may estimate a workable lens diameter of about 36 centimetres. And here the quartz lens does not behave like an optical lens, but like a burning glass, from which point of view Professor Allen states quite correctly 'In this sense the Shroud is not so much a 'photograph' as a 'solarograph' and is in effect quite similar to a suntan.' The direction of the sun is quite different at each different hour of the day, which means that all the shadows of all body protuberances, especially the nose and the feet, must be deformed on the image.

In fact the ultraviolet radiation singed the linen, meaning that the image was created by heat. And in this regard Professor Allen, who has studied STURP's findings from their examination of the Shroud in 1978, really ought to know that the Shroud image is not made by any heat or radiation-type process. To check this, one would only need to examine his singed linen under ultraviolet light and compare it with the results obtained by STURP team members Marion and Roger Gilbert, also Vernon Miller. While burn marks fluoresce reddish to yellow-green in ultraviolet light, the Shroud's body image, along with its bloodstains, do not fluoresce at all. It should also be recalled that Drs. Jackson and Jumper, in measuring the Shroud image's relative densities with a microdensitometer, came to the conclusion that there had to have been a direct contact between some protuberances of the body and the Shroud, also that its relative density is a function of the original body-to-cloth distance.

So it is clear that the Shroud cannot be a solarograph!

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