

The Shroud and Truth

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Of 109 occurrences in the New Testament of *Aletheia*, the Greek for Truth, over a third, 44, are found in St. John's writings, showing how important the idea is for him in portraying Jesus and the Christian Life. In the encounter with Pilate, Jesus tells the Roman Governor, "I have come into the World to bear witness to the Truth." Pilate contemptuously replies, "What is Truth?" [John 18, vs, 37 and 38]. This shows how much Pilate is like some political leaders in the twentieth first century, who do not value Truth, but tell blatant lies to those whom they are meant to serve.

When exploring Truth, a key text is John 14 vs. 6, in which Our Lord refers to himself as the "Way, the Truth and Life" and adds that "no-one comes to the Father but by me." The way is of sacrificial love towards God and our fellow human beings: the life is God's gift of Eternal Life, to which the Resurrection of Our Lord as shown on the Shroud is both witness and sign: the truth is harder to define [hence some validity in Pilate's question], but at the heart of it is the presentation of facts as they are, without gloss; and an understanding of their true divine significance through the work of the Holy Spirit, whom John calls the *Parakletos*, a term embracing all the Spirit's functions; Guide, Counsellor, Inspirer, Encourager, Comforter, indeed another Jesus. Evaluation of the Shroud has been very much a spiritual matter in which the spirit of confusion has also played a part, alongside the Spirit sent by Our Lord.

In a recent email, Joe Marino, writes of a British TV programme on the Shroud of 1982: It was on *The Shroud of Jesus, Fact or Fake?* and was part of a series called, QED. Among those interviewed were scientists involved in STURP four years before and also Teddy Hall as a sceptic. Joe notes that over five years before the carbon dating, this film's narrator says that Hall would be among those responsible for the ultimate test. Already it seems, the result may have been predetermined. Such scepticism concerning the Shroud is difficult to uproot. All too often those in authority in the Church[es] and Academia choose to side-step any possibility of the Shroud's being genuine. Thus the British Museum continues to say nothing in response to David Rolfe's recent challenge.

In John 8, vs. 38, Our Lord says, "The truth will make you free" and I thus I feel the need to correct where I side-stepped: it was in the sermon I preached in Abergavenny, in which I spoke [ignoring what I had said in my book] of the Shroud image as the result of infra-red radiation. This, it could not have been, since such radiation would have destroyed the Shroud. I had been misled by the reddish nature of the Shroud's positive photograph, less reproduced nowadays than its negative image. The actual cause of the reddishness still awaits full research and proper clarification.

Central to any investigation of the Shroud must be the search for Truth and Meaning.