

Against the Shroud. But with mixed cards

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Historian Andrea Nicolotti expects to make a clean sweep of all the «legends» that came out around the Sacred Linen of Turin: a thorough lie that is to be unmasked once and for all using the weapons of historic research. It is a pity that among those weapons there should not be some things that, on the contrary, Nicolotti uses very much: sarcasm and contempt towards who does not think in the same way he does (the reviled «Shroud scholars»), ignored sources and opposite sign research, rash incursions in distant fields, as the science ones. In short, the classical «thesis book», obviously flattered by the major newspapers, that a well-known Shroud scholar read for «Storia in Rete»

by **Emanuela Marinelli**

«*Sutor, ne ultra crepidam!*» It is told that this sentence (shoemaker, do not make more than sandals!) was pronounced by Greek painter Apelles of Coö (4th century B.C.). The artist exposed his works at the entrance of his workshop, to keep account of the possible suggestions of the people passing by; so then a shoemaker found that the sandals of a character were depicted in the wrong way, and Apelles hurried up to fix them. The following day the shoemaker, become proud by the acceptance of his previous affirmation, launched into a critic of other details of the picture and at that point Apelles addressed him with the sentence that later became a proverb. This episode should be reminded to Andrea Nicolotti, who in his recent book «*Sindone. Storia e leggende di una reliquia controversa*» (Einaudi 2015) turns from historian into expert of ancient textiles (p. 35, note 10), of photography (p. 215), of radiocarbon (p. 318) and of pollens (p. 340, notes 22, 23 e 24). And yet he was the one who spoke ironically (p. 338) of the fact that in the congress held at the ENEA of Frascati (Rome) in 2010 there was also «a woman who graduated in Natural Science to speak about iconography»!

I do not know how many people will have the courage to read Nicolotti's heavy book (370 pages), that is undoubtedly the result of an enormous research like his previous works («*I Templari e la Sindone – Storia di un falso*», Salerno Editrice, 2011 and «*Dal Mandyllion di Edessa alla Sindone di Torino – Metamorfosi di una leggenda*», Edizioni dell'Orso, 2011 (English updated version: «*From the Mandyllion of Edessa to the Shroud of Turin – The Metamorphosis and Manipulation of a Legend*», Brill, Leiden 2014), of which you can find my reviews following these links: www.sindone.info/SN-74ITA.PDF and www.sindone.info/SN-75ITA.PDF). And yet it is a very useful reading to appreciate the enormous effort performed by the author trying to deny at any cost the possible authenticity of the Shroud as Christ's funeral sheet. The book presents itself as a highly learned work, with an impressive amount of notes: there is no page without at least one or two notes, often four or five. The only exceptions are a few pages, where Nicolotti gives more room to his own thoughts: for example, where he affirms that «there are some reasons good enough to suspect a substitution» (p. 127), insinuating the doubt that the Shroud preserved today in Turin is not the one that was in Lirey around the half of the 14th century, whereas this fact is normally accepted also by all the people who deny the authenticity (except for who dreams that it is a

masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci). It can be understood in this way why, speaking of the burns present on the Shroud, he writes that «they are considered the result of the damages suffered by the cloth after a fire that took place in Chambéry in 1532» (p. 56). So for him it is not certain that they have been caused by the Chambéry fire, they are just «considered». At this rate, I would not be surprised if Nicolotti in his next book puts in doubt that the Shroud that today is preserved in Turin is the same that was photographed by Secondo Pia in 1898 or examined by a group of scientists in 1978...

In another page without notes (p. 215) the author denies that the Shroud image behaves like a photographic negative. In the following page he launches to write that on the Shroud there is only «the effect of the imprint, that was already well-known centuries before the invention of photography» (p. 216) and observing that the Shroud image is straw-colored, he can affirm that «if the Shroud image were a photographic negative we should deduce that the man who is portrayed had both his skin and his hair of the same color, that is violet» (p. 217). These are some of Nicolotti's lines of reasoning, and he, at the end of the book, in pages without notes, bursts out with personal attacks against who dares to affirm that the Shroud is authentic and he rushes against the scholars who examined the Shroud in 1978 (p. 265 and p. 276), culpable of having brought numerous elements in favor of the authenticity. Since he cannot eliminate the value of the scientific works that came out from those analysis, he must denigrate the authors of these publications, claiming that they were «people who already dealt with the Shroud thinking that it was authentic». I cannot help but smile thinking to many non-Catholic members of the *Shroud of Turin Research Project*, the group made of 33 American scientists who in 1978 performed measurements and analysis on the relic, publishing then the results on prestigious peer review journals. Among them, there were Protestants, Jews and atheists who left for Turin curious but skeptical towards the authenticity of the famous sheet. One for all: Barrie Schwartz, Jewish scientific photographer, who in his welcome page of his website www.shroud.com/message.htm – the biggest website that exists on the Shroud – narrates of his hesitation before accepting to participate to a research project on a Christianity relic and of his following conviction of the authenticity of the find, acquired because of his direct participation in the research and for the scientific data collected.

The absence of notes continues (p. 266) where Nicolotti goes on with his personal statements: according to him, «normal» science is not interested into the Shroud and almost all the study material produced about it is «made by people who have a high personal interest in its regards». «The level of much historic and scientific literature produced about the Shroud is very low» and there is «an impressive quantity of scientific studies on the Shroud, and the most part of it is unrepresentable». What to say about similar statements? The reader of «Storia in rete» can verify the valor accessing the page www.shroud.it/ARTICLES.HTM, where I have enlisted about three hundred articles on the Shroud after having read them, getting the opposite impression. «Sindonology in the past century has organized as a discipline that gathers all those who are interested into the Shroud, assuming the typical characteristics of pseudoscience», Nicolotti continues (p. 266 and p. 327). This statement makes no sense, because sindonology does not «gather all those who are interested into the Shroud» but all the disciplines that have performed studies on the relic and these studies have been carried out in the various science fields, at least thirty of them: anatomy, anthropology, archaeology, biology, chemistry, Roman laws, eidomatics

(*informatics of the images, Ed.*), Bible exegesis, physics, photography, genetics, Judaism, iconography, informatics, mathematics, forensic medicine, microbiology, microscopy, mineralogy, numismatics, palynology, paleography, pathology, radiology, textile science, history, history of art, thanatology, theology, traumatology. To say that sindonology is pseudoscience is like saying that the Natural Science degree, formed by many disciplines, is a pseudo-degree...

There are no notes even in the pages where sindonology is definitely declassified to «an apologetic drive or an inclination for a paranormal interpretation of reality» (p. 267). Free words. And he goes like this in another page of his own, where Nicolotti gets rid of the possibility that the Shroud has been preserved for a period by the Templar Knights, advanced by British historian Ian Wilson: «Wilson's hypothesis is founded on numerous misunderstandings, forcings, mistakes, unlikely conjectures» (p. 298). There is nothing to be said, Nicolotti clearly does not stand out for the respect towards who does not think in the same way he does. And obviously (pp. 298-299) he denies the importance of the discovery of a Templar Baphomet in Templecombe (GB), completely similar to the Shroud face. To him is not a Templar Baphomet at all!

In another group, this time bigger, of pages without notes (pp. 307-311) Nicolotti tells all the things that happened in view of the radiocarbon analysis of 1988, whose result in favor of a medieval dating of the Shroud cloth [*only of the cloth, the C14 test does not take account of the fundamental issue of the nature and the formation of the image, Ed.*] has been publicized in the whole world. As he did not put any note, we have to deduce that he was a direct witness to all the events. Considering that in 1988 he was 14 years old and he is able to describe even the previous years, we have to admit that he has really been an *enfant prodige*. He only does not know, without being made suspicious by it, how Anglican reverend David Sox [*who admitted being hostile to the hypothesis of the authenticity of the Shroud, Ed.*] had known in advance the results of the radiocarbon test: it was «somehow not clarified», according to Nicolotti (p. 312). Actually David Sox himself explains it in his book «*The Shroud Unmasked*» (The Lamp Press 1988, p. 142): he was there, on May 8, 1988 in the Zurich laboratory with the BBC *troupe* who had to film the performance of the test for the program *Timewatch*. So much for confidentiality!

What has been described until this point would already be enough to understand the big limitation of this book: the factiousness of the author. It is a pity indeed, because as a bookworm, Nicolotti can trace the most hidden sources: he even went to find (p. 121) the receipt for the cloths bought on the occasion of the restoration of the Shroud after the 1532 fire. And there are very few oversights, that could not be avoided, like the one (p. 53, note 169) where he says that the history of the rediscovery of the Sudarium of Oviedo until 2008 is narrated in a book that came out four years before, in 2004; or when he affirms (p. 78) that Aymon de Genève, stepfather of Geoffroy II [*custodian of the Shroud in Lirey at the end of the 14th century, Ed.*], is the uncle of the Avignon Pope Clement VII and right after that he writes that Geoffroy II is a grand-nephew of Clement VII; or when he calls cardinal Ballestrero [*the bishop of Turin who authorized the C14 test in 1988, Ed.*] Atanasio instead of Anastasio (p. 270). Worse are the mirror-like photos (right after p. 176), both of the Shroud and of the Sudarium of Oviedo.

Nicolotti's problem is that he wants to interpret the sources that he mentions so that they seem to deny the authenticity of the Shroud, and he says nothing about the sources that he does not mention. His purpose is clear since the preamble (pp. IX-X), where he makes some heavy statements: the one

of the Shroud «is a history made of episodes that Savoy and ecclesiastic historiography tried to tame». The comparison with the already existing literature «has been difficult, sometimes annoying, because the quality of the interventions in most cases is scarce and oriented towards the only objective to prove the authenticity of the relic». And he states: «We could not be silent about the cases when sindonology has polluted the field in which it worked, building actual propaganda and historical-scientific forging operations, able to influence heavily common thought».

The principal argument against the authenticity of the Shroud in the first chapter is the silence during the first centuries. Bible scholar Mons. Giuseppe Ghiberti gave him a good answer on *Il Sole 24 Ore* (May 24, 2015), making a comparison with the *Riace bronzes*: if an object appears without any documents on its previous history, it is not certainly false because of that. However, when some ancient text mentions Christ's funeral sheet, according to Nicolotti it is certain that it cannot be the one in Turin. Everything is labelled as unlikely or legendary, accompanying these statements with lists of ridiculous relics. Another insurmountable problem, in his opinion, is that there were various cloths attributed to Jesus' burial, and all of them were clearly not authentic. As if the existence of fake Rolex wristwatches were a proof that real Rolex wristwatches cannot exist. An enviable logic. Naturally a text that particularly annoys him is the one written by crusader Robert de Clari, who in his work *La conquête de Constantinople* wrote of the wonders that could be seen before the fall of the city (April 12, 1204) in the hands of the Latin Crusaders: among these there was a church called «St. Mary of Blachernae, and there was the Shroud in which Our Lord was wrapped, that every Friday was exposed all straight, so that it was possible to see well the image of Our Lord. No one, nor Greek nor French, knew what happened to this Shroud when the city was conquered». Nicolotti dedicates no less than five pages (pp. 28-33) to the attempt to demolish in every way this testimony, labelling it as a «deformed miracle account» (p. 32). Nine pages (pp. 33-41), moreover, are engaged with the destruction of the Sudarium of Oviedo, a cloth that has many coincidences with the Shroud, for the kind of weaving, for the AB blood group, and for the pollens found on them. Even here Nicolotti appeals to the lack of ancient documents and the radiocarbon test that makes it date back to the 6th-9th century A.D.

The second chapter, after a brief description of the relic, narrates the vicissitudes that followed from the middle of the 14th century until the arrival to Turin in 1578. While presenting the Shroud, Nicolotti affirms (p. 57) that a loom that could produce a cloth like that did not exist before the 12th-13th century. He says (p. 135, note 10) he had «dedicated some months to the recognition of all the scientific literature on the subject, consulted different experts of weaving history and checked one by one all the specimens of ancient cloths which are thought to be similar to the Shroud». It is a pity that in such an enormous work he missed what wrote John Tyrer, textile expert of the AMTAC Laboratories of Altrincham (GB): «It is known that looms with four healds had been developed in China that were capable of producing complex twill weaves before 120 BC». And he added: «Taking into account the high technology in the surrounding Ancient World, it would be reasonable to conclude that linen textiles with 'Z' twist yarns and woven 3/1 reversing twill similar to the Turin Shroud could have been produced in first-century Syria or Palestine» (*Looking at the Turin Shroud as a textile, Textile Horizons*, Dicembre 1981, pp. 20-23, <http://www.sindone.info/TYRER1.PDF>).

It is also a pity that Nicolotti attributes to Gabriel Vial, textile expert of the *Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens* of Lyons, the firm belief that the Shroud is medieval (p. 326). Vial

never wrote it in his works, that Nicolotti knows: or better, the French scholar concluded that the Shroud of Turin is «incomparable». I felt so astonished reading the note (p. 135, note 8) where Nicolotti mentions Vial's articles and praises them saying that they are «particularly reliable». I wondered how was it possible that he appreciated – unique case – the works of someone who had not sided for the falsity of the Shroud. I have personally met Vial (like Tyrer as well) and I know well what he thought. Then finally (p. 326) I have understood: Nicolotti had misunderstood everything! If someday he discovers that actually Vial never said that the Shroud is medieval, he will throw him into the hell of the charlatan Shroud scholars...

In the second chapter of his book, Nicolotti dedicates many pages to the appearance of the Shroud in Lirey, and this too, according to him, sadly lacks certitudes: «Unfortunately there is no document that clarifies in a definitive way when, how and thanks to whom the relic was put in Lirey» (p. 63). Naturally the role of the lion is played by the Memorial of Pierre d'Arcis, the bishop of Troyes who in 1389 describes the Shroud as a cloth that was «artfully depicted». Nicolotti publishes it entirely because it is «rich of precious indications» (p. 69). But which precious indications can a 1389 text give, compared to the research carried out six centuries after, directly on the relic, proving without any doubt that it had wrapped a corpse? But this consideration does not touch on Nicolotti, who denies any data which supports the authenticity of the Shroud. He is even annoyed by the depiction of the herringbone cloth that appears on the medallion found in Paris in the Seine in 1855 and on the stone matrix found near Machy, not far from Lirey, in 2009: «This is possible, but this does not exclude that it is a simple decoration pattern that maybe wants to recall generically the structure of a cloth. On the Shroud, in fact, the herringbone pattern can be recognized only by those who observe the cloth from a very short distance, and already from a two meters distance it cannot be seen anymore (every herringbone is made by two streaks, each about 11 millimeters wide). The usefulness of reproducing on the medallion the precise kind of texture much enlarged than it was in reality, as a sign of identification, is then not much comprehensible» (p. 84). But then, how to interpret the unproportioned dimensions of the bishops who hold the Shroud? Nicolotti strangely does not mention it. And who knows what would he say of the herringbone that is evident on the *epitáphios* [orthodox icon of the Deposition, Ed.] of the monastery of Stavronikita on Mount Athos (14th-15th century) and on the *epitáphios* of Thessalonica (14th century), preserved in the Museum of the Byzantine Civilization of Salonica. Certainly to him it does not recall the original Shroud linen. Speaking of the inspiration to the Shroud of the *epitáphios*, Nicolotti avoids to mention the interesting studies carried out by Enrico Morini, professor of History of Christianity and of the Churches at the university of Bologna (*Le «sindoni» ricamate. Simbologia e iconologia dei veli liturgici nel rito bizantino*, in Zaccone G.M., Ghiberti G. (Edd.), *Guardare la Sindone. Cinquecento anni di liturgia sindonica*, Effatà Editrice, Cantalupa (TO) 2007, pp. 229-257).

In his biography on the Internet, Nicolotti boasts of having climbed dozens of bell towers (<http://www.christianismus.it/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=74>), but he should clutch at straws to deny that the Byzantine liturgical cloths are inspired to the Shroud. It is better to stay silent... but what am I saying, no, he would find the solution immediately: who made the Shroud, copied an *epitáphios*!

Let us go on: an entire chapter, the third one, is dedicated to the years of the Shroud in Piedmont until the 19th century and to the description of the vicissitudes of a copy of the Shroud preserved in Besançon. With the year 1898 begins the fourth chapter, where Nicolotti gets rid of the discovery of the photographic negative stating that «it is an argument founded on nothing» (p. 201), and then passing to praise canon Ulysse Chevalier, who denies the authenticity of the Shroud dusting off again the letter of Pierre d'Arcis. Nicolotti defines Chevalier a «giant» (p. 209) and he adds that he «was absolutely one of the most brilliant and qualified people who committed to the historic study of the Shroud» (p. 214). Who knows if his judgement would have been the same if Chevalier had affirmed that the Shroud was authentic... I'm afraid not, because while reporting the opposite conclusions of an agnostic scientist who lived in the same period of Chevalier, Yves Delage, who supported the identification of the Man of the Shroud with Jesus Christ, Nicolotti says (pp. 226-227) that the Academy of Sciences of Paris was right, during the first years of the 20th century, not to publish them because the vaporographic theory that he and Paul Vignon supported was wrong... I seem to understand that Nicolotti does not like scientific debate. Besides, to slate definitely Delage, he affirms: «The scientist, just like the historian, is not just one who witnesses the events and the results of his own experiments without influencing them, but sometimes he is the author of them, he is the one who should correctly carry them out and interpret them. He can be wrong, and sometimes he gets tricked» (p. 227). This, obviously, is true for Delage but not for the scientists who carried out the radiocarbon test on the Shroud with a medieval result...

Nicolotti goes on (p. 228) destroying the dependence of the icons from the Shroud face: «The theory is highly conjectural and is suitable to be declined as everyone likes it the most, because everyone can see something on the Shroud and imagine to find it also on a painting in a completely transfigured way». He does not give any value, therefore, to the computer study of the points of congruence that various scholars have carried out. And anyway, although there was a resemblance, it would not prove anything to him: «The argument is obviously circular and anyone could affirm the exact contrary, that the Shroud has been made on the model of Christ's iconography». Successively (p. 231) he speaks of the cardinal Maurilio Fossati, archbishop of Turin from 1930 to 1965, and since he loved the Shroud very much, Nicolotti rushes to report the opinion one of his canons had on him: «A man without strong theological studies and of scarce general knowledge». He got rid of him. Good that Nicolotti does not afford to call an ignorant Pope Pius XI too, who had three degrees – but Nicolotti does not say it – and he was convinced, as a scholar, of the authenticity of the Shroud. But he is happy to report (p. 245) that, according to Father Agostino Gemelli, professor Giovanni Judica Cordiglia, former director of the Center of Sindonology of Turin, «is not a scientist» despite the fact that he was professor of Forensic Medicine at the University of Milan (Nicolotti does not say this, he just writes that he was «forensic doctor»).

Nicolotti's every praise goes to cardinal Michele Pellegrino (pp. 246-247), who followed Fossati at the lead of the diocese of Turin, «a man who made culture his reason of living». Three degrees, university professor. Nicolotti's deduction: «It is natural that the attitude towards the Shroud was not the same of his predecessor». It is natural? Who said that supports the authenticity of the Shroud must be ignorant while who is learned must automatically think that the Shroud is a fake? But did not Pius XI have three degrees as well? Oh, yes, but Nicolotti did not mention that... And so Nicolotti praises the results of the Pellegrino Commission, contrary to the authenticity of the Shroud

(pp. 252-253) and he also denigrates the contents of the little volume of observations on the reports published by the International Center of Sindonology (p. 254). «Evidently the Center was not able to gather around itself valuable scholars», he concludes hurriedly.

The last chapter, the fifth, is the anti-sindonology apotheosis. I have already reported the attacks against the American scientists who brought proofs in favor of the authenticity of the Shroud. A paragraph of his own is deserved by Max Frei, the scientist who discovered on the Shroud pollens of plants that do not grow in Europe, but in the Middle East: «statements that do not make sense», according to Nicolotti (p. 269). I am not going into deeper details in my comments. Who is interested in this subject can read this work that I have presented to the Valencia congress in 2012: <http://www.sindone.info/VALENC-4.PDF>. Then (p. 277) there is the praise of Walter McCrone, the microscopist who thinks that the Shroud has been made with ocher and vermilion. Naturally excluding that there is blood. His statements were completely proved wrong by two American non-Catholic scientists, John H. Heller and Alan D. Adler (*A chemical investigation of the Shroud of Turin*, Canadian Society of Forensic Sciences Journal, vol. 14, n. 3, 1981, pp. 81-103), but strangely Nicolotti does not mention their important article. Nor does he prove to know the one (*Blood on the Shroud of Turin*, Applied Optics, Vol. 19, No. 16, August 15, 1980, pp. 2742-2744) where Heller and Adler announce that actually there is blood on the Shroud [*this fact was affirmed also by professor Pier Luigi Baima Bollone, professor of Forensic Medicine at the University of Turin, Ed.*]. Nicolotti just reports generically: «The Shroud scholars have carried out other studies oriented to neutralize McCrone's conclusions, but this is not the place to discuss of chemistry and microscopy». Ah, now «this is not the place»? Comfy, isn't it? Also because right chemistry and microscopy analysis reveal the details that make the Shroud image unique, and they still today cannot be reproduced. To resume the conclusions of the American scientists (p. 280), Nicolotti writes among other things that according to them «the body had left the traces of blood and its own image thanks to a procedure for which no one could provide a suitable explanation». Even for the traces of blood, there would not be a suitable explanation? I wonder, once again, why does an historian not restrict himself to his field of research and claims to be omniscient. And allows himself to argue (p. 281) about the «inconsistence of many axioms of the sindonological vulgate». This in the field of the praises to Vittorio Pesce Delfino and Joe Nickell, the ones who made the reproductions with the bas-relief, the former with the heated one, and the latter with the rubbed one. According to Nicolotti, Nickell «proved the possibility to replicate an image with characteristics that resemble the ones of the Shroud» and adds that «this system, that successively will be furtherly improved by some Italians, is at the moment the one who allowed us to get closer to the Shroud image». If he is happy with this... The Italians are guided by Luigi Garlaschelli, a chemist to whom Nicolotti dedicates two pages (pp. 333-334). Obviously he mentions a scientific article by Garlaschelli (p. 350, note 187), but he is careful not to mention the critic received on the same paper from other scientists (Fanti, G. – Heimburger, T., Letter to the Editor – Comments on “Life-size reproduction of the Shroud of Turin and its image” by L. Garlaschelli, *Journal of Imaging Science and Technology*, Vol. 55, No. 2, March/April 2011, pp. 020102-(3)). After all, as it has been confirmed also by research carried out by the laboratories of the ENEA of Frascati (a theme that Nicolotti treats in a very quick way...) no method known today – except for the laser!! – allows us to reproduce the characteristics of the image of the Shroud.

For the historian from Piedmont, there are no ancient historical documents about the Shroud; the ones that speak of a Shroud before the middle of the 14th centuries are either fake or speak of other cloths, all of them fake; the scientific works that state that it is authentic have no value; the only authentic historical documents are the ones which say that it is fake; the only reliable scientific works are the ones which prove that it is not authentic. With such a distressing and depressing picture, I cannot understand why does Nicolotti go on writing books on this subject. Naturally Nicolotti absolutely denies that the *Mandyllion* of Edessa, the image of Jesus on a cloth, which is mentioned in numerous ancient sources, can be traced back to the Shroud or that it can even have been the Shroud folded in four parts. It is not a case that the *Mandyllion* of Edessa was defined *tetrádiplon*, that is «folded in four». The identity between the two relics is a precious intuition of historian Ian Wilson [*which is going to be supported by new discoveries announced by an article that will be published on «Storia in Rete», Ed.*] which Nicolotti gets rid of, saying that Wilson «imagines» and that «all the sources that speak of or depict the *Mandyllion* exclude any relation with Jesus' funeral cloth» (p. 295). The icons of the *Mandyllion*, though, have an impressive resemblance with the Shroud face... Almost five pages (pp. 302-306) are then dedicated to the destruction of any Shroud inspiration of the Pray Codex. Seeing the miniature, contained in an ancient manuscript of the end of the 12th century and preserved in Budapest, everyone can judge with their own eyes if and how much the image of the Deposition of Christ on a sheet recalls the Shroud in various details.

Then there is the problem of the radiocarbon test of 1988 which collocated the origin of the Shroud between 1260 and 1390 A.D. Speaking of this, Nicolotti does not admit critics: «The reactions were untidy and amateurish, recurring to the most unlikely excuses» (p. 315). He gets rid of the bioplastic coating found on the same area of the sampling by microbiologist Leoncio Garza Valdés as «an invention», careful not to report that this kind of pollution had been taken into consideration by physicist Harry Gove, the father of the modern radiocarbon dating, who published a scientific article about this, written with Garza Valdés himself (www.sindone.info/GOVE.PDF). The discovery of the traces of a mending, made by chemist Ray Rogers, is defined by Nicolotti «a more curious variant of the pollution theory» (p. 323) and obviously he mocks any possibility that an effect caused by Resurrection could have altered the quantity of radiocarbon and at the same time have originated the image (p. 325). Nicolotti's statement is strange: «The piece that was cut for the dating was not on an edge» (p. 347, note 143). The photos of the sampling prove the opposite thing! For further comments on the radiocarbon dating of the Shroud, you can read this work I have presented during the Valencia congress in 2012: www.sindone.info/VALENC-1.PDF

In the conclusion of the book there is the final firework: of the congress held in 2014 at the Polytechnic of Bari, Nicolotti reports only one speech, the one of a Belorussian physicist who said he had noticed the major growth of little plants put near a copy of the Shroud. Undoubtedly, this was a work that should not have been admitted by the scientific committee, but you cannot throw mud on an entire congress mentioning only that speech. But Nicolotti goes far beyond this: he uses this argument to denigrate all the Shroud scholars. In fact the book ends (p. 338) right after that, in this way: «It is the 21st century sindonology». Alas, Nicolotti has the 21st century sindonophobia.

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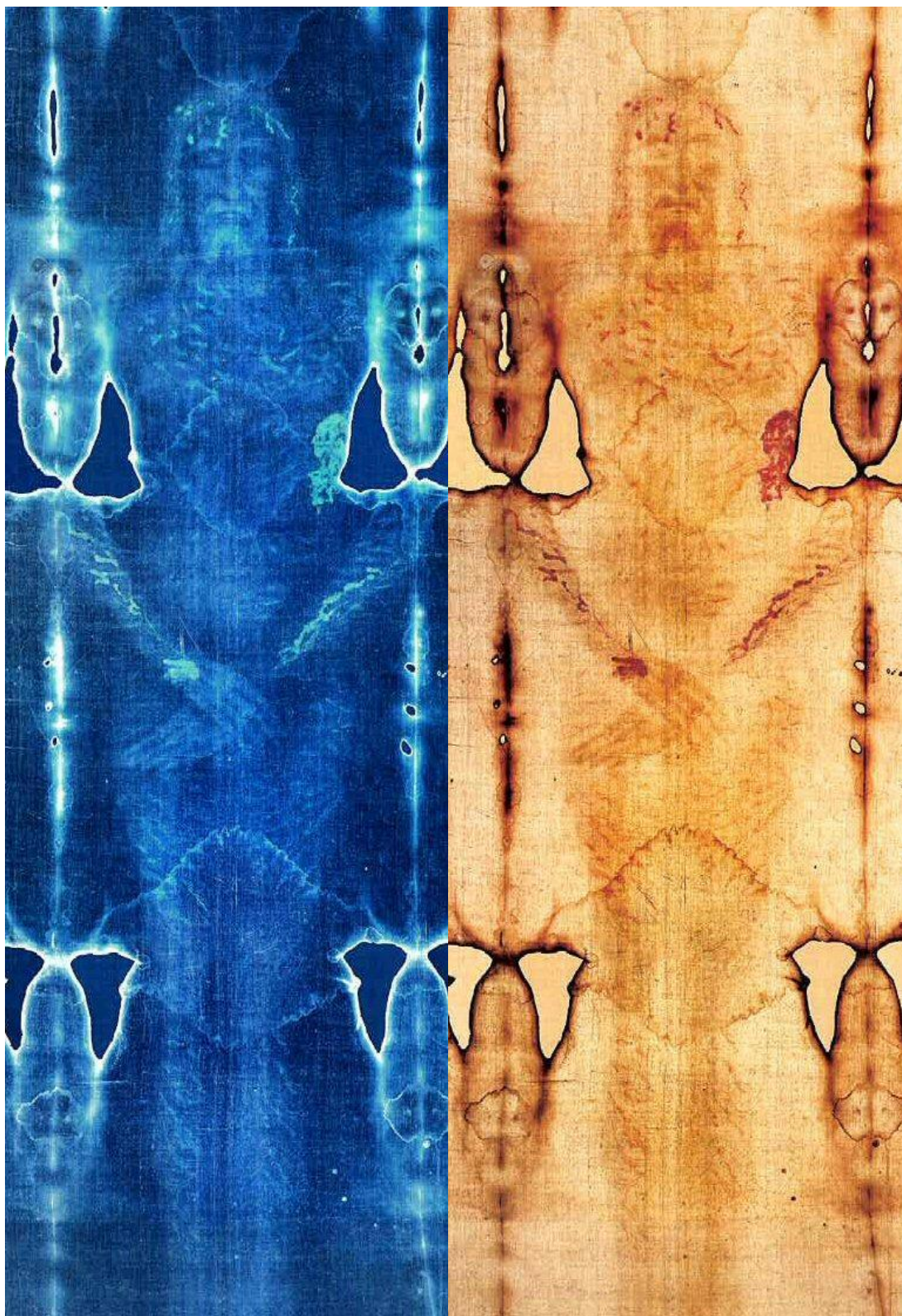
The Shroud inspires theorems to whom wants it to be fake at any cost. And who says the contrary is laughed at or ignored...

I wish the reader to get to these lines not before but after having read professor Marinelli's article. When you get at the bottom of her article you will have a clearer idea of the good and bad sides of Andrea Nicolotti's book, as ambitious as bankruptcy in its attempt to untangle the doubts of a complicated subject and, even today, that cannot be solved easily as the Shroud of Turin. Nicolotti's foolish ambitions are all in his attempt to face this subject with the only weapons of the historian when it is clarified by now – although many people pretend to forget it, and in this field Nicolotti is in good company – that the hard core of the puzzle of the Shroud is in the possibilities that only Science has to clarify the characteristics of the image: microscopical chemical and physical characteristics that today cannot be reproduced. Moving the research field to the only cloth (and not on the image) we arrived in 1988 to the debated test of the Carbon 14 that dated the linen back to Middle Ages. This test was accepted by all the «skeptical», completely deaf (it is the case, for example, of Corrado Augias) to the innumerable methodological, ethical and statistical «faults» – not to say anything else – that have been noticed by scholars and scientists and that have not found objections neither in Nicolotti's book nor anywhere else, nor even in the enthusiastic reviews that the book had on some of the principal national press. The first one who stood out was Paolo Mieli who dedicated to Nicolotti one of his usual huge articles on the «Corriere della Sera» of the past March, 17: for Mieli, Nicolotti's book is simply «extraordinary», the history of the Shroud is «the story of an incredible legend» and the attempts to fill the apparent lacks of historical news during the thousand years that separate the Passion of Christ from the appearing of the relic in France at half of the 14th century are «nothing but the result of an acrobatic use of history». On positions that are completely different from Nicolotti's (unluckily for him, still at the beginning of his academic career) we can find, besides scientists and researchers, also numerous university professors, both Italian and foreign, of various tendencies, specialists in numerous disciplines, and this does not make Mieli worried; he, as a journalist, follows Nicolotti along the way of the «let us not speak of them, but look, and pass...». But a minimum of «academic» attention/consideration towards their own colleagues lacks also in the opinion of two regular university professors, both historians, and voluntarily far from any kind of formalism and courtesy to promote the merits of Nicolotti's book. On May 20, on «Repubblica», Adriano Prosperi, famous historian of the 16th century and the Inquisition, used tones that suited the courts that he had studied for such a long time comparing the almost two million people who even this year wanted to queue to venerate the Shroud during the Exhibition to «a crowd of fetishists». Fetishists who if they had read Nicolotti's book would have been brought back on the right way: «A great book, a bigger proof of the value of historic research. Who knows if the visitors of the Exhibition would find it among the books on sale or if Pope Francis would have the chance to flip through its pages before speaking of the Shroud in June.

It will be an important occasion to choose between the invitation made by Pope Wojtyla not to be afraid of the historical and scientific truth and the usual opportunistic yielding to the turbid streams of the mass devotional tourism». Obviously not even in Prosperi, too busy giving room to his own sense of superiority, there is the echo of the many authoritative voices that support an opinion contrary to Nicolotti's. The same thing happened in the speech of May 10, of professor Sergio Luzzatto on the «Sole-24 ore» whose tenor could be easily deduced from the title: «The Shroud has no mysteries». The usual eulogy for Nicolotti – who, with friends and fans of this level, should already be at the Accademia dei Lincei at least instead of still being «research fellow»... – and for a «definitive» study: «The only thing that could be regretted is that the subtitle sounds «History and legends of a controversial relic», while the convincing demonstration of the author would have justified a different adjective: «History and legends of a fake relic». Since Nicolotti's book has the good value of certify, just so, the historical-anthropological richness of a fake». And then, just to make everyone understand that it would be time to stop with the delicacies and the shades and those annoying things that someone still calls «doubts» and «issues that are still to be clarified»: «After Nicolotti's book, no one would ever read again circumstance sentences like the ones that still appeared the past April 19, on the pages of the «Corriere della Sera», from the pen of a learned and sharp journalist like Aldo Cazzullo: «The truth on the Shroud does not exist. Because a doubt and consequently a mystery will always remain». Stop. The truth on the Shroud exists, there are no more doubts nor any mystery. The Shroud is a medieval manufacture, it is a fake shroud of the 1st century A.D. made by some forger in a date between half of the 13th century and the half of the 14th».

Getting closer to the conclusion, the famous expert of dozens and dozens of different disciplines Sergio Luzzatto dictates the text of the necessary gravestone on a debate that according to him has lasted for a very long time: «The definitive proof occurred, as it is known, in 1988: when a Shroud linen sample was subjected, by different international laboratories, to the radiocarbon test (C14 isotope), and the unanimous report established that it was a cloth that could be dated back to the 1260-1390 age. But the radiocarbon dating did not discourage the followers of the pseudoscience that since a few decades is defined «sindonology». On the contrary. While the Catholic Church barred the accredited scientific community every new access to the Shroud cloth, an international company made of generous enlightened and of improvised scientists, of pleasing freelance journalists and of fanciful swindlers, built around pollens, electric fields, lasers and neutrons, matter and antimatter, an actual mythopoetic factory: a breeding ground of «authenticist» absurdities, no one knows whether they are more exhilarating or more disturbing». These are just a few of the ways (haughtiness, prejudices, arbitrary classification of the sources, absolute judgements on research fields of which one does not have any authority, etc. etc.), of the tones and the names of who committed themselves in a one-way battle that more than cultural seems to be more and more ideological and that goes beyond the non-negligible issue, whether the Shroud is «authentic» (whatever meaning is to be given to this expression) or not.

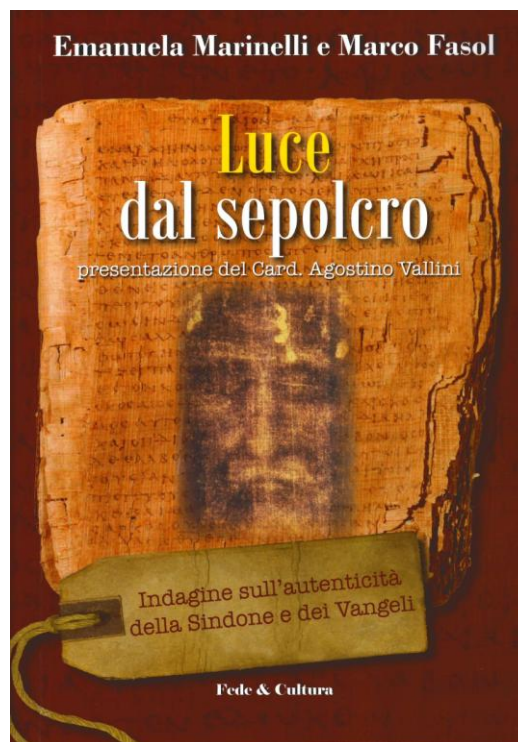
Would it be a case if we found the same tones and often the same manners also about other historiographically debated subjects? [F. An.]



The Shroud of Turin, the sheet in which according to Catholic tradition Christ was wrapped.



Templar Baphomet of Templecombe, England, 13th-15th century. From 1185 until the beginning of the 14th century Templecombe was the site of a Templar Preceptory. On the wooden panel appears a bearded face, with shaded borders, unequivocally similar to the Shroud face: with the technique of the superimposition in a polarized light 125 points of congruence have been found between the two images. Some hypothesize that the panel could have been the cover of a casket in which the Shroud was preserved.



The author of this article together with Marco Fasol wrote «Luce dal sepolcro. Indagine sull'autenticità della Sindone e dei Vangeli» (Light From The Sepulcher. Inquiry About The Authenticity Of The Shroud And The Gospels), Fede&Cultura, 2015, pp. 224, € 15,50.



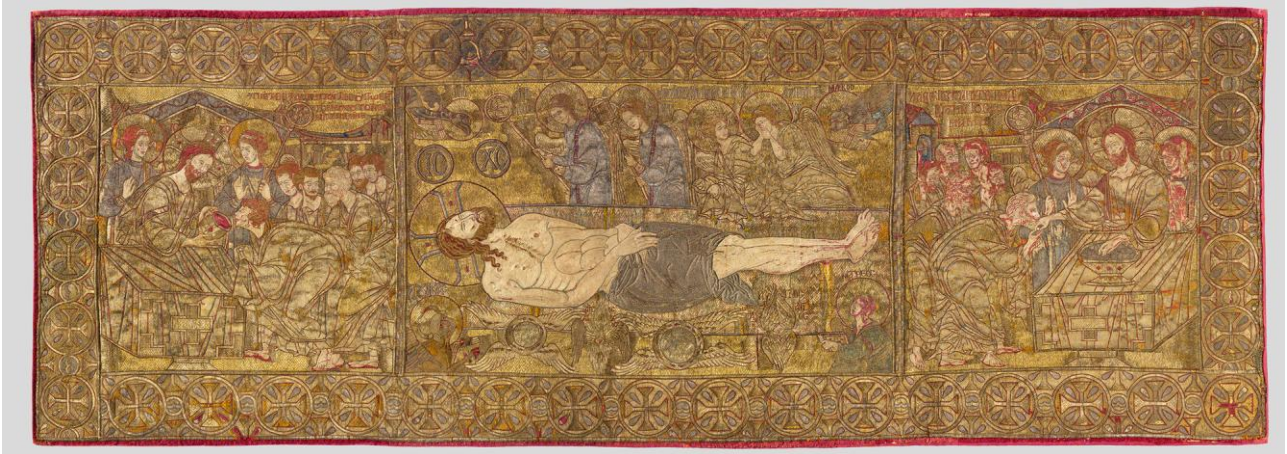
Jean Gaspard Balduino, *Sepoltura del corpo di Gesù avvolto nella Sindone* (17th century), Chapel of the Holy Shroud in Nice.



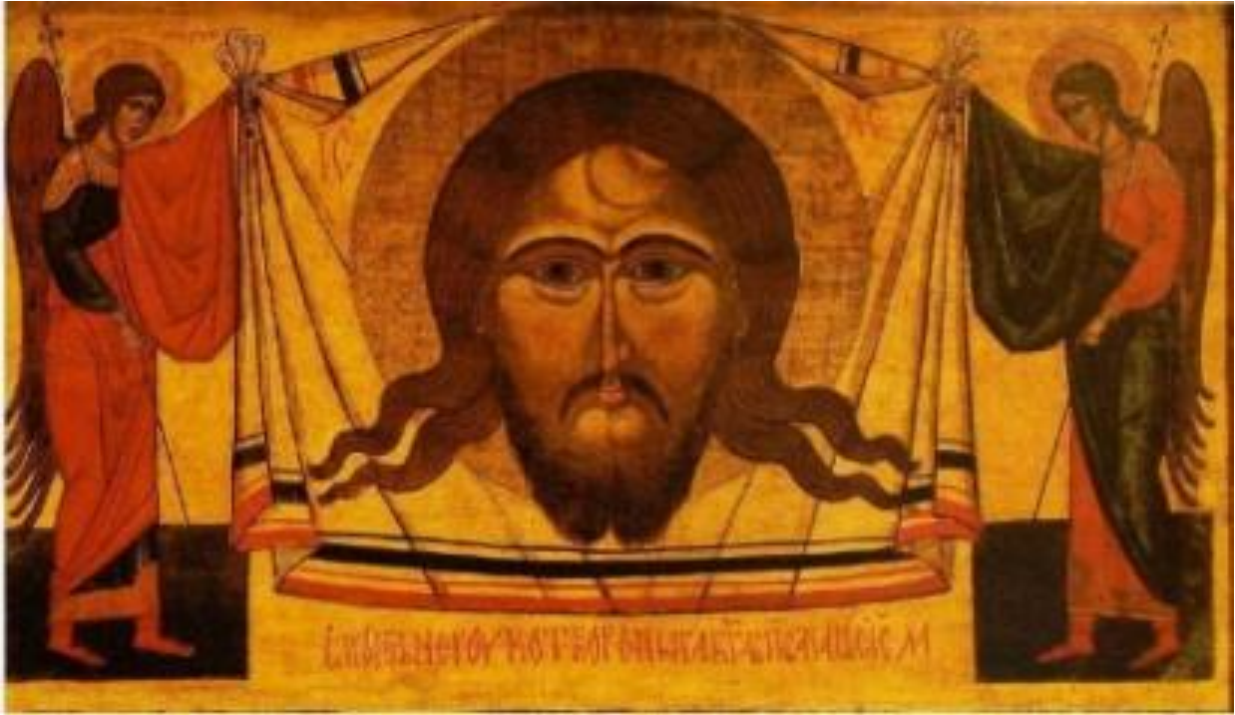
Leaden medallion, 14th century, museum of Cluny, Paris. It is a pilgrimage souvenir found in 1855 in the Seine, in Paris, at the height of *Pont au Change*. On it, there is the whole Shroud depicted, with the herringbone cloth that can be seen very well. By the presence of the coats of arms of the de Charny and of the de Vergy, united only by the marriage of Geoffroy I de Charny with Jeanne de Vergy, we can deduce that it dates back to a pilgrimage to Lirey when the Shroud was exhibited, around the half of the 14th century.



Epitaphios of the monastery of Stavronikita on Mount Athos (14th-15th century). We can notice that the Shroud is portrayed with a herringbone cloth.



Epitáphios of Thessalonica (14th century - Museum of Byzantine Civilization of Salonica). The Shroud is portrayed with a herringbone cloth.



Holy *Mandylion*, 15th century, Krempana, Poland. It is evident the resemblance with the Shroud face.



Pray Codex, fol. 27v., (circa 1192-95) preserved in the Széchenyi National Library, Budapest, Hungary. The miniature shows Christ's burial inspired to the Shroud and the angel who indicates to the Three Marys the empty sheet.

Translated by Michela Marinelli