

LETTERS

From Dr. Alan Whanger, 1712 Woodburn Road, Durham, NC 27705, U.S.A.

May I respond to your article on my recent work in the *Newsletter* of April 1986. A number of ancient art historians comment on the abrupt appearance of the artistic style called "frontality", first in depicting various gods and then rulers. I commend to you the article by the late Michael Avi-Yonah, a well-known archaeologist and geographic historian, entitled "Oriental Art in Roman Palestine". He is the one that originally traced the onset of the artistic phenomenon of frontality to the sculpture of Zeus Kyrios [see cover photo] in 31 AD at Dura-Europos. He and others traced the nearly explosive spread of this phenomenon through the Middle and Far East. He was perplexed as to why such a phenomenon should occur and why it would start at such an unlikely place as Dura-Europos. We feel that the likely answer can be found in the official history of the Mandylion, written either by or for Emperor Constantine VII on the occasion of the arrival of the image of Edessa at Constantinople (see Appendix C of Ian Wilson's *The Turin Shroud*, Gollancz 1978). This indicates that the image, which was apparently transported by Thaddaeus/Addai from Jerusalem to Edessa in 30 AD was responsible for the remarkable healing of Abgar V, the ruler of Edessa. The document states that Abgar V then devoted himself to Christ and honoured and revered the holy image. He smashed the statue of the Greek god standing outside his city gate, and set in its place the likeness of Christ as it was on the image sent to him. He required that everyone entering the city of Edessa, one of the important stations on the trade routes from the Far East to the Mediterranean, would need to "pay fitting reverence and due worship and honour to the very wondrous miracle-working image of Christ." Such an action would quite understandably have considerable impact, especially on the two closely allied towns of Dura-Europos and Palmyra. Copying the successful features of another person, product or programme is scarcely of recent onset.

You indicate that I have apparently overlooked the notion that the source for the Dura-Europos Zeus Kyrios was the Phidias Zeus statue. In respect of the so-called Vignon markings (Wilson p.85), we evaluated the findings on the face of the Phidias Zeus and on Zeus Kyrios found at Dura-Europos. We find that the Phidias Zeus has no clear-cut similarities and three merely possible similarities, while the Zeus Kyrios statue has ten and a half similar features and three questionable ones out of fifteen. The half comes from the strands of hair. There is only one apparent strand of hair, which is a nice replication of the forehead bloodstain on the Shroud. Thus it would be difficult, following the criteria outlined by Wilson, to indicate that there is any relationship at all between the Phidias Zeus and the Shroud.

Use of the polarized image overlay technique with the Zeus Kyrios image shows approximately 65 points of congruence in addition to the ones listed. I would feel quite confident in presenting this material to a jury in any British or American court.