

## ORIGINAL ARTICLES (3)

## THE FACE OF THE MAN ON THE SHROUD OF TURIN

Dr John Scotson



In front of me as I sit at my desk in my study at home I have a photograph (negative) of the face of the man of the Shroud whom I take to be Christ after He had endured the indescribable sufferings of the Passion. The facial features have been analysed, with profit, in great detail particularly in reference to early artistic impressions of Christ. Here are some thoughts and impressions from a non expert which I have gained from contemplating the Holy Face in its entirety, which I believe is a true icon of Christ the Redeemer after He was taken down from the cross. This image of the face of Christ, in my opinion, surpasses in beauty all the artistic impressions which have been made great though they many of them are.



Hagia Sophia



Piero della Francesca



Albrecht Dürer

After undergoing such indescribable suffering, speaking in human terms, one would expect to see these sufferings to be reflected in the facial features of the man. However there is no sign of any anger, as one might possibly expect. The face does show evidence of one which has been badly beaten with marks of multiple swellings and bleeding. Despite all this what is apparent on looking at this icon of Christ's face is one of nobility, tranquillity and majesty. The onlooker has nothing to fear from such a noble countenance.

A further thought occurs in connection with the Mother of the victim. Christ inherited His appearance from his Mother and many of his contemporaries would have been aware of the close likeness which existed between the Son and his Mother. Christ and Mary His mother were a reflection of one another. Hence when I see the face of Christ on the Shroud I realise to a great extent that I am also looking at a portrait of the Virgin Mary. This brings to mind the beautiful lines written by Gerard Manley Hopkins:(1)

So God was god of old:  
A mother came to mould  
Those limbs like ours which are  
What must make our daystar  
Much dearer to mankind;  
Whose glory bare would blind  
Or less would win man's mind.  
Through her we may see him  
Made sweeter, not made dim  
And her hand leaves his light  
Sifted to suit our sight

In a lesser but real way we see ourselves in this portrait in so far as the suffering Christ took on our human condition and wanted to be one as we strive to be like him.

(1) From "The Blessed Virgin compared to the air we breathe"