

The desire for total darkness

by Emanuela Marinelli

“God has put enough light into the world for those who want to believe, but he has also left enough shadows for those who don’t want to believe”. Blaise Pascal

In the darkness of the ancient centuries, some lights come on here and there to illuminate Turin Shroud’s troubled path. The historian’s task is to look for these torches and to reconstruct, through them, a likely path. This would be expected from Andrea Nicolotti, full professor of the Department of Historical Studies of the University of Turin, who has published a substantial volume (502 pages) entitled *The Shroud of Turin - The History and Legends of the World’s Most Famous Relic* (Baylor University Press 2019). The work is the English version, expanded and updated, of *Shroud - History and legends of a controversial relic* (Einaudi 2015, pp. 370).

The volume presents itself with a remarkable apparatus: a promising title; a captivating cover showing Saint Charles Borromeo praying in front of the Shroud; 23 illustrations (unfortunately in black and white); thanks to 76 people¹, of which 66 for the Italian version and 10 for the English version; 475 pages of text; 26 index pages of the 1817 names of personages mentioned, 1214 total notes in the five chapters; six short sentences of praise by authoritative personalities on the back cover, of which three are from priests, reported as longer sentences at the beginning of the book. Everything suggests a wide-ranging, complete, documented and objective work.

Anyone who has already read other books by Nicolotti knows, however, his destructive attitude: his interpretation of the sources is always contrary to the authenticity of the Shroud and the denial of any possibility that the relic is the funeral sheet of Christ is continually repeated². He is anxious to turn off any light, so that the darkness could be total. Nicolotti operates a systematic exaltation of the scholars who believe the Shroud to be false, people he presents as reliable, and an equally systematic denigration of those who consider it authentic, branded as sindonologists who make pseudoscience. In reality, his criticism of exaggerated claims is right, but he constantly rejects all statements in favor of the authenticity of the Shroud and this is not acceptable.

There are enough shadows for those who do not want to admit that the Shroud comes from the tomb of Jesus, it is true, but there is enough light to claim that it wrapped his body. History alone does not allow light to prevail, but we are not discussing an object that no longer exists: the cloth is still there and the scientific investigations conducted on it tend to its authenticity. Only the famous radiocarbon analysis of 1988 seemed to go in the opposite direction, but the validity of that test - as is now known - has been widely denied³.

The amount of sources cited by Nicolotti is enormous, among which there are documents found by him, but there is a strange silence on some sources and on some articles favorable to the authenticity of the Shroud, which he cannot ignore. We will see only a few examples, because the short space of a review does not allow a complete examination of all his statements. The index of

¹ I have not found, either in this book or in other books by Nicolotti, a thank to the historian Ian Wilson for the use of two photos he granted him. See: Ian Wilson, *The Shroud, the Knights Templar and Barbara Frale*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 73, June 2011, part 5, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/n73part5.pdf>

² In this regard, you can read the already published reviews: E. Marinelli, *Wiping the slate clean*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 74, December 2011, part 8, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/n74part8.pdf>; E. Marinelli, *A small cloth to be destroyed*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 75, June 2012, part 8, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/n75part8.pdf>; E. Marinelli, *Against the Shroud. But with mixed cards*, in *Storia in Rete*, n. 117-118, July-August 2015, pp. 28-38, <http://www.sindone.info/SINDFOB2.PDF>, all of them not mentioned by Nicolotti.

³ See the articles mentioned in the notes 110-114.

names is vast and very useful. On the other hand, there is no general list of bibliographic sources, which appear only in the notes. This means that when in a footnote reference is made to a source already cited, it is not specified where it was mentioned and it is not easy to find it. An example: note 137 on p. 309 simply quotes “The exposition of the Holy Shroud” without indicating where it is possible to read the complete quote. That text had appeared in note 257 on p. 160 (the notes of each chapter are numbered starting from number one), but obviously the reader cannot remember it. Unfortunately there are no color photos. It is a pity, because obviously the color photos would have enriched the volume, as had happened in the Italian version. The choice of black and white photos may have been dictated by the need to contain the price, which in any case is \$ 59.99⁴.

The preface was written by Nicolotti himself. Here he states that there has been the veneration of various shrouds and that compared to the Shroud of Turin there are older burial cloths. So he has already decided that the Turin Shroud cannot be authentic. Another strong statement comes after a few lines: in the history of the Shroud there are episodes that the House of Savoy and the Church have tried to hide (p. XIII). He goes on to say that the Shroud of Turin was more fortunate than the others - initially more famous - because it has an image and “because of the powerful propaganda that was first advanced by the House of Savoy and later by the ecclesiastical authorities”. In our own age, “a group of authenticist scholars known as sindonologists have also made the case for authenticity”. Nicolotti then warns the reader: “I must devote a good deal of space to dismantling historiographical hypotheses that do not hold up under criticism. One cannot pass silently over the cases in which the sindonology has muddled the evidence; it has produced propaganda and historical-scientific fabrications, successfully influencing the *opinio communis*. The historian is called to address the issue directly, without hiding behind an artificial moderation that would only lead to reticence” (pp. XIV-XV). We are still in the preliminary pages and Nicolotti has already begun to express himself with aggressive tones. He then goes on to thank 66 people (p. XVII-XVIII), in particular Gian Marco Rinaldi⁵, according to Nicolotti “the finest scholar of the Shroud” (p. XVIII). He also thanks 10 people for the English version, which is expanded and updated. He reports that the Italian edition has had many positive reviews and two awards (p. XIX).

The first chapter is titled: “The Birth and Development of a Cult” (p. 1). Immediately some statements by Nicolotti that leave us perplexed begin. Jesus carried the cross “for the most part by himself” (p. 1, without a note). In reality, in the Gospels we read: “As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon...” (Matthew 27:32); “As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian...” (Mark 15:21 and Luke 23:26). Nicolotti writes: “Nails were driven through his hands and, in all likelihood, also his feet” (p. 1, without a note). Why for his feet he says “in all likelihood”? Jesus says to the apostles: “Look at my hands and my feet” (Luke 24:39). Nicolotti continues: “We do not know if his body was washed first or if the funereal unctions took place” (p. 2, without a note). Anyway he should have said that the aromas were used: “They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom” (John 19:40).

According to Nicolotti, the Gospels provide “scant and sometimes even somewhat contradictory information. Thus, it is not possible to consider the reports entirely objective” (p. 3). “In the Gospel accounts it does not seem that the first disciples paid particular attention to the sepulchral cloths of Jesus. It is not even proven that they spoke about the matter amongst themselves, neither did they understand that those fabrics had some role in witnessing and demonstrating the resurrection of their teacher” (p. 4). For Nicolotti, therefore, all what John says in 20:5-9 does not mean anything.

⁴ See: <https://www.baylorpress.com/9781481311472/the-shroud-of-turin/>

⁵ Gian Marco Rinaldi is a physicist, consultant of CICAP (Italian Committee for the Control of Claims on Pseudosciences). Most of the articles he has written are devoted to criticizing the claims of the sindonologists.

“The ancients knew practically nothing about how many shrouds there were and what forms they took. (...) The strongest temptation may be to go in search of texts that speak of any shroud in antiquity with such insistence that texts are ‘discovered’ even where and when they do not exist” (pp. 5-6). Thus Nicolotti prepares to make any reference to a burial cloth of Christ in ancient texts useless. Anyway, he enunciates a “vital methodological principle”: “A reference to the survival of sepulchral cloths of Jesus in ancient Christian literature does not allow certain identification of these cloths with any relic that might turn up in later centuries”. To further devalue the Turin Shroud, he adds: “There are in fact ‘other’ shrouds, relics that in the medieval period were in fact in competition with the Shroud of Turin to be the sepulchral cloths of Jesus” (p. 6). Despite the double reinforcing “in fact”, this medieval competition has no interest, given the profound difference we know today between the Shroud of Turin and all the others. But Nicolotti does not say this.

Nicolotti examines the Gospel of Hebrews (pp. 6-11) and is sure that “James the Just, known as *brother of the Lord*” is not one of the two apostles of the same name and adds that “according to the canonical Gospels he did not take part in the Last Supper” (p. 7). In reality, in the canonical Gospels there is no list of participants in the Last Supper... But the important thing for Nicolotti is to reach his predictable conclusion: “There is no evidence that the story of this Gospel is credible, nor does this account alone demonstrate that any sepulchral relic of Jesus is preserved anywhere” (p. 11).

In general, to remove any interest in possible sources, he proceeds by stating: “Like the canonical texts, apocryphal texts also show little attention to the sepulchral linen of Christ” (p. 11); if they have any attention, they have “an interest in miracles”, “an apologetic slant”, are “late and extremely fabulous”, “fanciful” (p. 12), “legendary and contradictory” (p. 14), “stories attributed to fantastic authors, invented according to the most banal formulas of literature of the imagination” (p. 15). Usual conclusion: “It should be noted, too, that the fate of the sepulchral linens is never the same in the texts cited above. Thus, none of them is useful to ascertain any historically accurate fact about the survival of these fabrics. Rather, all bear witness to the birth of a later, often romantic, and fanciful interest in these and other physical objects related to the life of Jesus” (p. 15).

It should be noted that starting from p. 13 the translator rendered with “shroud” not only the word “sindone” but often also the word “sudario” (p. 13, 18, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35), thus creating confusion in the reader; also because then on p. 32 we read “shroud (or sudarium)” in relation to the “*Sainte Coiffe*” of Cahors. Another strange thing is that on p. 13 Baima Bollone⁶ is mentioned without his first name and we have to wait until p. 446, after he was mentioned other times, to discover that he is “a well-known forensic pathologist”. Pietro Savio⁷, mentioned on p. 11, has no better luck. Nothing is said about him in the whole book.

Nicolotti writes that the first reports on relics in the Holy Land (4th century) do not speak of the burial cloths of Christ (p. 16). On several occasions (pp. 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26) he reports lists of strange and improbable relics to create in the reader a skepticism about the possibility that authentic relics exist. And anyway, according to him, the authors who speak of Jesus’ burial cloths are unreliable. An anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza who “would seem to lack sufficient acumen” (p. 17) speaks of a sudarium in the 6th century. In the seventh century Adomnan, abbot of the Island of Iona, wrote of the sudarium based on the story of the Frankish bishop Arculf, but also of “*linteamina* that wrapped the other parts of the body in the tomb” (pp. 18-19). “None of these sources speaks of a shroud that enveloped the body” (but... what about Adomnan’s *linteamina*?) Anyway, “the account

⁶ Pierluigi Baima Bollone was full professor of Forensic Medicine at the University of Turin. He is the author of numerous scientific publications and of a Manual of Forensic Medicine adopted in numerous universities. An internationally known essayist, he has written widely circulated works related to criminology and forensic medicine. He is honorary president of the International Center for Studies on the Shroud. There are many publications by him dedicated to the life of Jesus and above all to the Shroud. See: https://www.treccani.it/magazine/webtv/esperti/baima_bollone_pierluigi

⁷ Monsignor Pietro Savio was a historian of the Vatican Secret Archive.

of Adomnan, in addition to being quite imaginative, is also a bit inconsistent”. Adomnan is eliminated. What about Arculf, his source? “Scholars wonder whether a pilgrim ever in fact existed behind the figure of Arculf, or if he is merely a literary fiction” (p. 20). Also Arculf is eliminated.

In the eighth century John of Damascus speaks of “linen cloths (*sindónas*)” in Palestine, but his list of relics “offers no precise information about the actual preservation or permanent residence of these objects in Jerusalem” (p. 21). For Nicolotti there is always something that is not right with the texts that affirm the existence of Christ’s burial cloths. Anyway he concedes that “the existence in Jerusalem of relics believed to be Jesus’ funerary garb was, at least by the ninth century, taken for granted, albeit with some uncertainties concerning their form and place of conservation” (p. 23).

11th century: “Some, to prove the authenticity of certain relics, composed fantastical narratives about their origin” (p. 24). 12th century: “Now the fantasy has become utterly unbridled” (p. 25). In order to increase in the reader the feeling of confusion, and therefore of the unusability of the sources, with regard to the terms *sudarium* and *sindon* Nicolotti introduces the possibility that “the two terms were interchangeable” and warns the reader: “This should not astonish us, since in the centuries to come things would become even more confused” (p. 27). And so he goes on up to p. 36 in the description of some shrouds or sudariums preserved in France and found to be false, because now the field is restricted to false relics made of cloth, in order to approach the Shroud of Turin. In these pages he notes that in the fourteenth century “the shrouds / sudariums began to multiply in an uncontrollable manner” (p. 28). He continues noting “how untrustworthy legends about the origins of the relics could be” (p. 31) and “as is often the case, the lengthy silence of historical sources is justified (...) for it is said to have long remained hidden within a wall (this is the same subterfuge, we shall see later, that occurs in the case of the Shroud of Turin)” (p. 32).

On the relics in Constantinople after the end of the iconoclastic crisis (ninth century), Nicolotti admits that “some witnesses affirm the presence in Byzantium of the sepulchral cloths of Jesus” (p. 36) but to cool any enthusiasm he hastens to add that “during the Byzantine age, the prevailing notion was that Jesus was in the tomb wrapped in bands twisted around his body” (p. 37). The relics of the passion and death of Christ were within the Chapel of the Pharos (p. 37). Given that some sources include the *sindon* among these relics (p. 38), he points out that “the sources often speak of *sindon*, *sudarium*, *linens*, and sepulchral bands interchangeably, as if they were synonymous” (p. 39). Two pages later, he again states that the two terms *sudarium* and *shroud* “are used virtually as synonyms” (p. 41).

On the testimony of two people with the same first name, Nicolaus of Otranto and Nicolaus Mesarites, Nicolotti is a bit confusing. According to him, both attest that after the devastation of 1204 the relics are still in Constantinople (pp. 40-41). In reality Nicolaus of Otranto says the crusaders entered as thieves and does not say they left the relics there, which would be strange, since he called them thieves; when he talks about bands, Nicolaus of Otranto just adds “that we later also saw with our own eyes”. But he does not say where he saw them. Instead Nicolaus Mesarites “confirmed that ‘the *othonia* and the *sudariums*’ of Christ still remained in Constantinople”. In note 113 on p. 41 Nicolotti cites Mesarites and adds: “There is no reason to claim that Nicolaus had seen the Shroud at Athens (so Siliato, *Sindone*, 239)”. But Maria Grazia Siliato⁸, author of that book⁹, writes that Nicolaus of Otranto, not Nicolaus Mesarites, saw the Shroud in Athens. She is not the only scholar to assert it. The historian Daniel Scavone of the University of Southern Indiana (USA) writes that in 1206 Nicolaus of Otranto had traveled to Athens; “it may, therefore, be in Athens that Nicholas saw

⁸ Maria Grazia Siliato was a scholar of the Shroud, https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Grazia_Siliato

⁹ M. G. Siliato, *Sindone - Mistero dell'impronta di duemila anni fa*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1997.

the burial linens - so emphatically 'with our own eyes' - which is such a peculiar part of the passage just cited"¹⁰.

To warn once more the reader against believing in the existence of a real shroud, Nicolotti points out that "the ancient world was full of shrouds, bands, and sudariums kept in different places and in competition among themselves" (p. 43). Some pages (43-50) are then dedicated to the testimony of Robert de Clari, more difficult to devalue because it is very objective. The crusader describes in Constantinople, during the Fourth Crusade, "another church which was called My Lady Saint Mary of Blachernae, where there was the *sydoines* where our Lord had been wrapped, which every Friday raised itself upright, so that one could see the form of our Lord there". But Nicolotti contrives every possible reason to demolish this testimony. The Blachernae chapel "exclusively housed relics of the Madonna". The report of Robert is "isolated and in conflict with other sources". "He may not have actually observed the relic directly" (p. 45). "He was an uncultured man who had a tendency to accept unquestioningly the possibility of the strangest relics". "He was not a historian by profession". "The interval of time that passed between the events and the writing of the report certainly offers a basis for many errors".

Nicolotti also suspects "a defect in his memory" (p. 46) and thinks that he may have seen an *aér*, a liturgical veil. One of Nicolotti's most surprising statements on Robert de Clari's testimony is undoubtedly the following: "This is a precise description, so precise that it reveals the particular misunderstanding into which the knight must have fallen" (p. 47). I can't understand why a "precise description" must be a "misunderstanding", but let's proceed with Nicolotti's other statements. "Robert and his source confused the fabric of Mary with that of Jesus" (p. 47) or with "the silk veil that covered the icon of the Virgin" (p. 48). The crusader "does not say anywhere that the image of Jesus was above the veil". Could it be "the image of Christ on his mother's lap?" Luckily, at least he puts a question mark on the latter hypothesis... On the Blachernae he adds: "It would be very strange if in that church every Friday there was a special exposition of a relic of Christ" (p. 49). Nicolotti speaks of the procession from the Blachernae to Chalcoprateia (p. 49), but does not speak of the procession from the Pharos to the Blacherne¹¹ mentioned by the philologist Carlo Mazzucchi¹².

On the term *sydoines*, Nicolotti continues: "It does not need definitely to refer to a funerary garment" (p. 49); it can also "designate the veil hanging in front of the Blachernitissa icon", then "this detail, too, may have confused Robert in composing his account" (p. 50). In short, despite Robert de Clari wrote "the *sydoines* where our Lord had been wrapped" and "one could see the form of our Lord there", Nicolotti concludes: "Ultimately, I think we can exclude the notion that at Blachernae there was a burial cloth of Jesus with the image of his body" (p. 50).

The approach to the Shroud proceeds with the demolition of the Sudarium of Oviedo¹³. "The first document that speaks of our Sudarium is dated March 14, 1075" (p. 51). "This document is problematic because it is preserved not in its original manuscript form but only in two copies of the thirteenth century. Several elements have cast doubt on its complete authenticity" (p. 52). The ark in which the Sudarium was kept contains other unlikely relics - such as a piece of bread from the Last

¹⁰ D. Scavone, *Besançon and other hypotheses for the missing years: the Shroud from 1200 to 1400*, in *The Shroud of Turin - Perspectives on a Multifaceted Enigma, Proceedings of the 2008 Columbus International Conference*, Ohio State University, USA, 14-17 August 2008, Edizioni Libreria Progetto, Padova 2009, pp. 408-433, on p. 411, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/ohioscavone.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹¹ C. M. Mazzucchi, *La testimonianza più antica dell'esistenza di una sindone a Costantinopoli*, in *Aevum*, vol. 57, n. 2, 1983, pp. 227-231, on p. 230, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹² See: <https://docenti.unicatt.it/ppd2/it/docenti/01710/carlo-mazzucchi/profilo>

¹³ For a brief information on the Sudarium of Oviedo, see: K. Schiffer, *The Sudarium of Oviedo: the "other Shroud" of Jesus*, in *National Catholic Register*, 18 April 2019, <https://www.ncregister.com/blog/the-sudarium-of-oviedo-the-other-shroud-of-jesus>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

Supper and the milk of the Madonna - which are listed twice (pp. 52 and 56) in order to create the idea in the reader that they are all fake. “This story is interspersed with and enriched by miraculous episodes and devotionals”. The legend of Oviedo’s ark is “rather confusing and contradictory” (p. 58). “The Sudarium was only one of many relics in the ark and was considered less important than others” (p. 59). For the bloodstains, Nicolotti believes that the method used for explaining their origin is “pseudoscientific”. “It takes its initial assumptions as true instead of demonstrating them” (p. 62). In any case, “the alleged bloodstains did not reveal the presence of either blood or DNA”. The radiocarbon dating places the origin “between the sixth and ninth centuries” (p. 64). And so, the Oviedo Sudarium also ends up in the trash.

These following statements by Nicolotti are interesting. “When one knows the result at which one wants to arrive, it is a simple matter to find a method to produce it” (p. 63). “When a legendary report coincides with the thesis that one wants to demonstrate, one accepts it; when a report opposes the thesis, it is discarded, accused of being mere fantasy” (p. 65). Exactly what he does all the time.

With the second chapter, “The Shroud of Lirey-Chambéry-Turin” (p. 67), we definitively enter the subject of the Shroud with all the possible arguments to prove that it is false. It is immediately said that “it is not the first chronologically” (p. 67). Nicolotti states that “beginning in the seventh century the corporal was likened to Jesus’ shroud”, “a presence of the Shroud is attested in the liturgy”, there is “the *oratio super sindonem* typical of the Ambrosian and Gallican liturgies” but “this argument cannot be used to demonstrate the existence of a ‘shroud’ relic in the time when these liturgical objects or these prayers came into use” (p. 68). Nicolotti speaks of “symbolic level”, but he has never wondered why the altar cloth is a strip of fabric that is narrow and long on the sides. We should start from the fourth century: “A further passage worth mentioning is taken from *Liber Pontificalis*, known and mentioned in the Middle Ages for its *auctoritas*, whereby Pope Sylvester established that the altar cloth should exclusively be made of linen and not of other fabric, since the body of Christ, for the burial, was wrapped in a linen sheet”¹⁴.

About the burn marks present on the Shroud, Nicolotti writes that “the damage is believed to have occurred in a fire that broke out in Chambéry in 1532” (p. 69). “It is believed”? Is not Nicolotti sure either of the Chambéry fire? As for the possible loom on which the Shroud was made, Nicolotti - convinced that the Shroud was made in Europe - is interested in the arrival in our continent of an appropriate loom and writes: “Knowledge of treadle looms came, perhaps from China, in the eleventh century AD or a little before” (p. 71). But the appropriate loom in China had long existed: “It is known that looms with four healds had been developed in China that were capable of producing complex twill weaves before 120 BC”¹⁵. And the Shroud may have been made not in Europe.

Nicolotti dedicates three lines in a footnote (p. 71 note 13) to the possible origin of the Shroud from India, branding it simply as “sorry attempt”. No mention of the reasons for this hypothesis: the biblical scholar Maria Luisa Rigato¹⁶ believes that the Shroud may be a precious linen, available at the Temple of Jerusalem, used for the “royal” burial of Jesus; the paleographer Ada Grossi¹⁷ points

¹⁴ M. Filippi, *Sindon, sudarium, linteamina in the medieval allegorical interpretation of liturgy*, in *ATSI 2014, Workshop on advances in the Turin Shroud investigation*, Bari 4-5 September 2014, pp. 119-124, on p. 120, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹⁵ J. Tyrer, *Looking at the Turin Shroud as a textile*, in *Textile Horizons*, December 1981, pp. 20-23, on p. 21, <http://www.sindone.info/TYRER1.PDF>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹⁶ M. L. Rigato, *Il Titolo della Croce di Gesù. Confronto tra i Vangeli e la Tavola-reliquia della Basilica Eleniana a Roma*, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma 2005, pp. 222-223, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹⁷ A. Grossi, *Jewish Shrouds and Funerary Customs: a Comparison with the Shroud of Turin*, in *I International Congress on the Holy Shroud in Spain, Valencia, 28-30 April 2012*, pp. 1-33, on p. 28, www.academia.edu/2427474/Jewish_Shrouds_and_Funerary_Customs_a_Comparison_with_the_Shroud_of_Turin_in_1st_International_Congress_on_the_Holy_Shroud_in_Spain_-_Valencia_April_28-30_2012_ed._Centro_Espanol_de_Sindonologia_CES, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

out that these precious fabrics also came from India; the geneticist Gianni Barcaccia¹⁸, together with his collaborators, found DNA of Indian origin on the Shroud.

Commenting on radiocarbon dating, Nicolotti even goes as far as to doubt that the Shroud of Turin is the same as that which existed in Lirey. In fact, he begins a sentence with a very significant “if”: “If the current Shroud is physically the same as that of which the medieval sources speak, the dating narrows to 1260-circa 1355” (p. 72). From here on, Nicolotti describes the known history of the Shroud. On p. 75 he refers to an “image 4” which in reality does not appear in the book. From p. 81 he begins to speak of bishop Pierre d’Arcis, who considers the Shroud a painting, and publishes his entire *memorandum* (pp. 90-96). In the discussion of the document, Nicolotti notes its shortcomings: the original has not been found, the sender and the recipient are missing, the manuscript is undated (p. 97). But “all of this is insufficient to cause the extant text to be considered unrepresentable” (p. 98). A question arises spontaneously: would he have had the same attitude if the bishop had declared the Shroud authentic? For Nicolotti, in the case of the *memorandum*, what is stated by the biblist Josef Blinzler is valid: “One can say that if we eliminated any historical testimony not presented according to standard protocol, our ancient history books would be full of empty pages” (p. 97, note 74). But for Nicolotti what is true for Pierre d’Arcis is not true for Robert de Clari.

Later Nicolotti introduces a different hypothesis from the classic one of the forgery made to deceive, taking it from the canon Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier. There was “a liturgical ceremony of a theatrical nature at Easter time”, the “Mystery”, in which “a cloth imprinted with the figure of the buried Jesus Christ was shown to the people. These cloths or shrouds, kept in treasures of the churches since they always served the same purpose, were later taken to be the linens that were used for the burial of our Savior” (pp. 127-128). Therefore a trivial attribution error ...

It is similar the dramatization of the *Quem queritis*, “a dialogue in which characters - clerics in costume - staged the discovery of the empty tomb and showed symbolically to the people gathered in the church the shroud left behind by the risen Christ”. Nicolotti adds: “We have significant evidence that the use of a simple liturgical cloth in the *Quem quaeritis* could have fostered its transformation into a relic” (p. 129). But he concedes a small admission: “That argument’s sole deficiency would be a contemporary example that corresponds perfectly to the situation in Lirey. For now, it seems that the Shroud of the French collegiate church is an unprecedented relic” (p. 130). In fact, the great artist could have become very rich and famous by making other similar masterpieces for sacred representations. Who knows why he only made one! Among other things, according to Nicolotti, Geoffroy de Charny himself could have made the Shroud (p. 149). This artistic streak of the brave knight was unknown to me.

On the transfer of the Shroud to the Savoy family, Nicolotti is sure that “that transfer, undeniably, did not happen free of charge, though it is not explicitly mentioned in the documents” (p. 142), but wonders: “Who was the owner of the Shroud?” Marguerite de Charny or the Canons of Lirey? According to him, “the answer is not self-evident, since the existing documents that speak of the Shroud are relatively late and sometimes contradictory” (p. 148). “Without knowing with absolute certainty when the Shroud was placed in the collegiate church, or by whom, the question of the object’s ownership is not easy to resolve”, but he ultimately decides that the Canons are right in the controversy, “therefore, the subsequent transfer of the Shroud to the Savoys was certainly illegal” (p. 151) and “subsequent historians of the House of Savoy sought to blot out this indecorous account” (p. 152).

Nicolotti leaves room for the doubt that the Shroud was completely burned during the Chambéry fire and was replaced by a copy (pp. 169-171, 175-183). But he concludes: “There are some good reasons to lead one to at least suspect a substitution, and these are worth putting forth, but currently suspicions of substitution remain unproven. Therefore, in the absence of cogent proofs, from here on

¹⁸ G. Barcaccia - G. Galla - A. Achilli - A. Torroni, *Uncovering the sources of DNA found on the Turin Shroud*, in *Nature Scientific Reports* 5, 14484, 5 October 2015, www.nature.com/articles/srep14484.pdf, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

I will assume that the Shroud of Turin is the same as that which existed before the fire of 1532” (p. 183). All sindonologists must be grateful to him for this concession.

Speaking of the rescue of the Shroud in Vercelli, Nicolotti states that the canon Claudio Costa had a grandson, Giovanni Antonio Costa (p. 186). No wonder that a priest was a grandfather? In reality the translator wrote “grandson” where he should have written “nephew”... Regarding an exorcism of 1578, Nicolotti writes that the Shroud “was placed upon the head of a woman who, as a result of her Calvinist baptism, was possessed by a legion of demons” (p. 190); in reality in the source quoted by Nicolotti¹⁹ it is written that she becomes possessed a few days after her baptism, but it is not said that it is due to her baptism.

The third chapter is “The Shroud in Piedmont” (p. 195). Here we note some of Nicolotti’s statements. The Savoy family considered themselves a sovereign family superior to others because they owned the Shroud (p. 195 and 198). As for the Shroud history, the vicissitudes of previous centuries are erased. There is no mention of the Lirey period (p. 209). Pingone, court historian, gives credit to falsifications and legends, inventing them himself (p. 211). He does not speak, out of ignorance or deliberate omission, of the facts of Lirey but of a devotional story (p. 214). The eucharistic miracle of Turin of 1453, given that there is no evidence that it has historically occurred, is an invented legend (p. 215).

Then Nicolotti goes on to talk about the Shroud of Besançon, that, according to him, is interesting because it shows us how at the time it was relatively simple to create a new relic and spread the cult by convincing the faithful of its authenticity (pp. 223-224). The story of the Besançon Shroud did not exist in the Middle Ages, it was invented in modern times (p. 224). In Besançon since the 11th century there had been the sacred representation of the mystery of the Resurrection; a small cloth (p. 224), that was white (p. 227), was shown. The sacred representation fell into disuse in 1500, but was resumed in 1523 (p. 226). Then the Besançon Shroud was created to replace the white veil and becomes an object exposed to veneration; but “no contemporary document helps us understand precisely how it was possible for a cloth used for a theatrical representation to be transformed so quickly into a cloth that would be exhibited for veneration” (p. 227). However, Nicolotti had not posed any similar problem for the Shroud of Turin.

Nicolotti’s subsequent statements are as follows. The Shroud of Besançon was probably a copy of that of Lirey or it may be a copy of a hypothetical common model of both (p. 227). The Shroud of Besançon, like that of Lirey, had no history and it was therefore necessary to invent one (p. 227). The Jesuit Pierre-Joseph Dunod invented a theory by falsifying documents and deliberately distorting sources (p. 229). In 1350 there was a fire that damaged “both cathedrals” of Besançon. It is said that it destroyed the documents. “Fires are always a panacea for historians of relics who have a dearth of documents!” (p. 229). Jean-Jacques Chifflet says that the Besançon Shroud was miraculously saved (p. 229). Unlike Turin, Besançon did not have a dynasty that could support an ideological and propagandistic apparatus (p. 230). The story of the Besançon Shroud is useful for understanding how easy it is to invent a relic and attribute a story to it (p. 231).

Going back to the Turin Shroud, Nicolotti writes that the popes recognized its authenticity (p. 241). Since 1697, the annual exhibition of May 4 had fallen into disuse (p. 242). Until the end of the monarchy, public exhibitions were mainly for weddings of the House of Savoy (p. 243). Since 1865 Turin was no longer the capital of the kingdom, the king was no longer in Turin, the archbishop increased his role in managing the Shroud (p. 246). The Shroud remained the relic par excellence of the royal house; denying its authenticity would have been interpreted as a direct attack on the reigning family. More than on history, orators and writers focused on the devotional, dynastic, social and civil values of the relic (p. 247). The Savoy family never tolerated attempts to downsize the importance of

¹⁹ A. Grossi, *Un carteggio inedito di san Carlo Borromeo (1578-79): La Sindone e l'esorcismo di una calvinista*, in *Aevum* vol. 89, n. 3, 2015, pp. 687-720, on p. 699,
https://www.academia.edu/21113257/Un_carteggio_inedito_di_san_Carlo_Borromeo_1578_79_la_Sindone_e_lesorcismo_di_una_calvinista_in_Aevum_LXXXIX_2015_n_3_pp_687_720

the Shroud cult (p. 248). On Father Lazzaro Giuseppe Piano, an early nineteenth-century member of the Order of the Minims who taught philosophy at the University of Turin, Nicolotti writes that “he could convincingly refute some of the historiographical reconstructions that were then in fashion” (p. 249) but “having cleaned up of the previous historiographical reconstructions, Piano finds himself facing the usual lack of documentation for thirteen centuries. He is convinced of the authenticity of the Shroud, which belief ultimately leads him to repeat the error of his predecessors: he starts to invent” (p. 250).

We have thus arrived at the fourth chapter: “The Shroud and Modernity” (p. 253). Regarding the surprise of the photographer Secondo Pia in discovering the image of the Shroud in the photographic negative, Nicolotti asks himself: “Perhaps he wanted to convey a feeling of amazement to validate a sort of ‘proof of authenticity’ established ‘on purely emotional bases’?” Anyway, he concludes with a certainty about him: “In any case, it is no longer possible to believe in the story of the wholly unexpected amazement he felt in the darkroom on May 28” (p. 258).

In this regard, there is an interesting testimony of the opposite sign. The architect Carlo Capriata, grandson of one of Pia’s assistants, recalled what his grandfather, who was his namesake, had told him about that night: “Pia was on the threshold of the darkroom. With his hands he held the large plate still dripping the fixative. Looking at him, my grandfather was struck by the strange expression on his face. He looked down to the plate and saw... Standing and facing each other, the two could not take their eyes off that wonderful image, which according to their photographic experience must have been in negative, instead... It was Pia who first broke the silence: ‘Look, Carlino, if this is not a miracle!’”²⁰.

In any case, the important point for Nicolotti is another: “In truth one cannot say that the Shroud is a ‘true photographic plate’ or that the human hand is incapable of imprinting an image of this sort on a sheet”. According to him, there is a “misunderstanding over the negative”, which is an “issue based on nothing” (p. 259). Immediately after, Nicolotti explains to the reader who should be listened to, saying that at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Catholic world there were on the one hand priests who did not believe in the authenticity of the Shroud and were “the most renowned proponents of a tendency toward innovation”, “an intellectual elite”. These priests “were often entrenched in the academic world, and their word garnered respect even in spheres far from Catholicism” (p. 261). On the other hand there were the priests defending the Shroud: “generally - but not always - they were less learned and capable” (p. 262). Then, among the reliable priests who do not believe in the authenticity of the Shroud stands out the canon Ulysse Chevalier, “one of the most renowned historians of the medieval period”. “The learned canon wanted to react against whoever wanted to do without historians and sacrifice them on the altar of a supposed incontrovertible ‘scientific’ reality, one worthy of modern times, exemplified by the amazing photography of the relic” (p. 263).

Among the unreliable priests are those like Emanuele Colomiatti, general pro-vicar of the diocese of Turin. “In the area of historiography he was already distinguished, negatively, for his attempt to describe as miraculous a non-supernatural event that had happened in Turin in 1640” (p. 264). There was also the Jesuit Giammaria Sanna Solaro, professor of natural sciences, who “invented his own history” (p. 267), “his own personal theory” (p. 268). “He goes on to fantasize” (p. 269) and is accused of “gullibility and incompetence” (p. 270). Nicolotti reports the thought of a priest, Paul Maria Baumgarten, historian and diplomat, regarding Sanna Solaro: “It is a shame that a scholar of natural science did not remain in his field but sought to interfere in a historical matter” (p. 270 note 50). A question is logical: but with reversed roles, can a historian interfere in a scientific matter? Anyway, Nicolotti concludes that a “giant like Chevalier” is answered only by two priests “not very qualified on the subject” (p. 271). According to him, the canon Giuseppe Piovano, professor of ecclesiastical history in the Department of Theology could have answered; “but he did not write anything, because

²⁰ C. Capriata, *Miracolo*, in *Collegamento pro Sindone*, March-April 1991, pp. 38-47, on p. 40, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

he sided with Chevalier". Those who believe the Shroud to be false are always more competent... Nicolotti notes that "lack of competence, work on second-hand sources, misuse of the historical method, and recourse to convenient conjectures still today comprise the majority of written work dedicated to the Shroud" (p. 271). Of course he refers to the texts favorable to the authenticity of the Shroud, not to those contrary.

One of the objections raised to the documents considered by Chevalier was that Clement VII of Avignon was an "antipope", but Chevalier pointed out that "there was no true pope and one or more antipopes: each of the opposing pontifices was deemed the authentic pope among those who obeyed him". Nicolotti adds that "sometimes not even his contemporaries were able to clarify the legitimacy of each pontifex" (p. 273). Therefore, for Chevalier and Nicolotti one pope is as good as another. Nicolotti then complains that "this is a recurring objection among Catholic sindonologists", but the curious thing is that, according to him, this objection is "still repeated today" (p. 273 note 60) and he cites a 1907 publication as an example. As a historian, he has a strange concept of "today".

Going ahead, Nicolotti writes that Chevalier is denounced at the tribunal of the Holy Office. A committee of experts is named; they affirm that Chevalier is right but "neither the king nor the archbishop of Turin, and probably not even the pope, could accept that the verdict of the committee had become official and operative". An order forced Chevalier "to stop publishing on the Shroud of Turin" (p. 275). According to Abbot Luigi Nicolis of Robilant, "those members who during the committee's deliberations relied only on the historical argument would later change their minds, because they were impressed by the value of a 'chemical argument'" (p. 276). Nicolotti hastens to comment: "If this was truly so, it was not a good idea: the chemical argument, proposed in those years by Paul Vignon²¹, would be revealed to be mistaken" (p. 277).

There is an "almost offensive" definition used in his texts by the canon Giuseppe Giacomo Re, professor of Hebrew in the Department of Theology of Turin's seminary, to define the opponents of the Shroud: "sudariophobes". Baumgarten does not like Re's writings. He "described the canon Re's work as 'a fanatical writing'". Nicolotti notes that Chevalier "was no longer able to respond" and "his exit from the stage and the antimodernist repression slowly extinguished the fiery debate" (p. 277). As a great admirer of Chevalier, Nicolotti describes him thus: "He was absolutely one of the most competent and brilliant people dedicated to the historical study of the Shroud" (p. 278).

At this point Nicolotti ventures into the field of science, trying to demonstrate "the fragility of the hard sciences". He starts again with the contestation of the Shroud as a photographic negative: "This observation is obsessively repeated but is incorrect" (p. 278). The image of the Shroud is "the effect of the impression, which was well known for centuries before the invention of the photograph" (p. 280) and continues: "Even before the invention of the photograph, everyone could calmly understand the effect of a mold; in fact it has long been thought that the Shroud's image was actually produced in that way - that is, through contact between the cloth and the body of Christ covered in sweat, blood, and spices used for the burial. To cite only three proponents of that idea: Cardinal Louis de Gorrevod in 1534, Philibert Pingon in 1581, and Lazzaro Piano in 1883" (p. 281). Nicolotti had just written that "the chemical argument, proposed in those years by Paul Vignon, would be revealed to be mistaken" (p. 277), but now he likes it to deny value to the photographic discovery. For a definitive slating of the value of photography, Nicolotti specifies: "It would not even be correct to say only that the image on the Shroud has the characteristics of a photographic negative. A characteristic of the image of the Shroud is its monochrome nature, consisting of a certain shade of yellow: there is no difference between the color of the skin and the hair, for example. But in a true photographic negative of a human body, the difference between the colors is discernible". For Nicolotti, evidently there are only color photographs. In fact he concludes: "If the image on the Shroud were a photographic negative in color, we would have to deduce from it that the man depicted had, in reality, skin and hair of the same

²¹ Nicolotti does not immediately explain who Vignon was. We must wait for p. 292 to read that he "can be considered the father of modern sindonology. Having completed his degree in natural science, he became *préparateur* of zoology at the Sorbonne; afterward he became a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the Catholic Institute of Paris".

color, namely a shade between violet and blue” (p. 282). But what if the image was like a black and white negative? Nicolotti didn’t think about it.

Going on in his arguments, Nicolotti writes: “It is, however, impossible to think that the image of the man was formed merely through contact with a body soaked in a coloring agent” (p. 282). Chifflet and Piano “concluded that the image of the Shroud, which could not possibly be of natural formation, was the result of a miracle” (p. 282). For Nicolotti, of course, the conclusion is different: “Everything points away from the possibility that the image of the Shroud was formed naturally and entirely through contact with a corpse spread out over a flat surface in the tomb. The difficulties can be resolved if one considers some devices used by the creator who fashioned the Shroud”. And immediately afterwards he ridicules some sindonologists for “explanations that generally flow into the supernatural”, including the architect Nicola Mosso²² (p. 284).

Even the bloodstains for Nicolotti are problematic: there is not enough blood on the Shroud (p. 284). “If the spots were due to contact, it would be quite strange that they moved on the fabric without leaving any smudge, as if the alleged bloodied body had been put in contact with the fabric without making any movement or any adjustment” (pp. 284-285). Nicolotti does not observe the blood outside the body, such as on the feet or the elbows. He continues: “The position of the blood spots is artistic but not credible. The flow of blood that runs along the arms is completely unnatural, and so is the stain on the forehead in the form of the Greek letter ε” (p. 285). In support of this, he cites the article²³ by the forensic anthropologist Matteo Borrini and the chemist Luigi Garlaschelli but not the discussion²⁴ that followed, with the criticisms of that article also moved by physicians.

For the flagellation, Nicolotti states that the marks are in the form of the scourges existing in the Middle Ages (p. 285). He does not consider what was stated by the archaeologist Flavia Manservigi: “The body of historical, literary, iconographical and archaeological witnesses allows deducing that in the Roman world several instruments were used to scourge people, and their shape and destructivity depended on the gravity of the crime and on the social status of the sentenced. Some of those objects can be related to the one that was used on the Man of the Shroud, because their shape (as we know it from historians’ descriptions and from iconography) is compatible with the scourging marks visible on the cloth”²⁵.

Other problems with blood are seen by Nicolotti: “It is equally absurd that on the Shroud the spots occur not only on the skin of the face but also outside it - that is, on the hair where it falls away from the face” (pp. 285-286). He does not know the explanation given by the physician Gilbert Lavoie, specialist of internal and occupational medicine, who demonstrated that “the blood marks seem to be in the hair whereas they actually originate from blood clots on the face”²⁶. Nicolotti adds: “Not even

²² For a short biography of Nicola Mosso, see: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicola_Mosso

²³ M. Borrini - L. Garlaschelli, *A BPA Approach to the Shroud of Turin*, in *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 64, n.1, January 2019, pp. 137-43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.13867>

²⁴ A. Sanchez Hermosilla – G. Di Minno – W. Memmolo – L. F. Rodella, *Commentary on...*, in *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 64, n.1, January 2019, pp. 325-326, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1556-4029.13939>; M. Borrini - L. Garlaschelli, *Authors’ response*, in *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 64, n.1, January 2019, pp. 327-328, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.13940>; M. Bevilacqua – G. Concheri – S. Concheri – G. Fanti, *Commentary on...*, in *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 64, n.1, January 2019, pp. 329-332, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.13943>; M. Borrini - L. Garlaschelli, *Authors’ response*, in *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 64, n.1, January 2019, pp. 333-335, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.13941>; A. Sanchez Hermosilla – R. A. Rucker, *Commentary on...*, in *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 64, n.2, March 2019, pp. 654-655, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.13997>; M. Borrini - L. Garlaschelli, *Authors’ response*, in *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 64, n. 2, March 2019, pp. 656-657, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.13998>, all of them not mentioned by Nicolotti.

²⁵ F. Manservigi – E. Morini, *The hypotheses about the Roman flagrum: some clarifications*, in *The Controversial Intersection of Faith and Science, St. Louis Shroud Conference*, St. Louis, 9-12 October 2014, https://www.academia.edu/10173083/Shroud_of_Turin_The_Controversial_Intersection_of_Faith_and_Science_The_hypotheses_about_the_Roman_flagrum_Some_clarifications, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

²⁶ G. R. Lavoie – B. B. Lavoie – V. J. Donovan – J. S. Ballas, *Blood on the Shroud of Turin: part 1*, in *Shroud Spectrum International*, n. 7, June 1983, pp. 15-20, www.shroud.com/pdfs/ssi07part5.pdf; G. R. Lavoie – B. B. Lavoie – V. J. Donovan – J. S. Ballas, *Blood on the Shroud of Turin: part 2*, in *Shroud Spectrum International*, n. 8, September 1983,

the bloodstains can be explained through natural contact of the cloth with a cadaver. They must have been put there deliberately in an artificial way, probably with a brush, without the artist being able to or desiring to pay attention to the ‘scientific’ verisimilitude of their form or position” (p. 286).

No mention, by Nicolotti, of the presence of serum, so important for the biophysicist John H. Heller²⁷ and the biochemist Alan D. Adler²⁸: “Blood constituents other than hemeproteins are present in the blood areas. Similar albumin positive tests were also found in areas adjacent to the blood, e.g., the lance wound area. Elsewhere, expressed ‘serum’, apparently due to clot retraction, is noted as might be expected if the wounds truly represent clotted images”²⁹. The presence of serum was observed in ultraviolet fluorescent photographic images, where “the border of every blood mark shows the typical yellowish fluorescence of the serum ring exudate about scabs as expected for clot retraction transfer marks”³⁰. Adler also notes that in the ultraviolet fluorescent photographic images “all the scourge marks now show a pattern of scratches on the narrow ends, not seen in reflectance” and concludes: “Therefore an artist painting the blood marks would not only require a 20th century knowledge of the physiology of clot retraction, but would have to produce images of serum rings and scratches that are obviously evident under ultraviolet excitation”³¹. It is truly scandalous that nowhere in the book does Nicolotti mention Adler’s name and his articles on the Shroud³².

Other statements by Nicolotti follow. The position of the nail in the hands (but he does not believe that there was a nail) “is not precisely identifiable”. Sindonologists argue two things: “The nail passed through the wrist” and “the nails had to support the entire weight of the crucified man” (p. 286). According to Nicolotti, “both claims, however, are false” and adds: “Experiments were performed on different occasions with twenty or so fresh cadavers, demonstrating that the palm of a hand pierced by a nail is fully able to support a body without being torn” (p. 287). But he does not say who did these experiments.

The artist could not have been very great, since “the bloodstains were drawn in an approximate position”; but the holy man was animated by laudable intentions, given that “one cannot exclude the possibility that the Shroud’s artist wanted to represent the visions of Saint Bridget, according to whom Jesus’ hand had been pierced not in the palm, as one sees in stigmata, but rather ‘where the bone was hardest’” (p. 287). And then he accuses the Sindonologists of working in fantasy... At this point Nicolotti returns to praise Chevalier, who in regard to the “provocative elation induced by what seemed to be incontestable scientific proof - that is, the negativity of the photographic image” reacted “reaffirming the primacy of the historical sciences” (p. 287). I did not know that there was a competition between the sciences to determine which is the most important. What prize is there for the best science?

Later Nicolotti, in the debate on Pia’s alleged falsification of the photos (pp. 287-292), cites the report of the Poor Clares of Chambéry, but strangely he does not provide a source in which to read

pp. 2-10, www.shroud.com/pdfs/ssi08part3.pdf; G. R. Lavoie – B. B. Lavoie – A. D. Adler, *Blood on the Shroud of Turin: part 3*, in *Shroud Spectrum International*, n. 20, September 1986, pp. 3-6, www.shroud.com/pdfs/ssi20part4.pdf, all of them not mentioned by Nicolotti.

²⁷ *Obituaries*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 42, January 1996, part 3, www.shroud.com/pdfs/n42part3.pdf, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

²⁸ *Obituaries*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 51, June 2000, part 6, www.shroud.com/pdfs/n51part6.pdf, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

²⁹ J. H. Heller - A.D. Adler, *A chemical investigation of the Shroud of Turin*, in *Canadian Society of Forensic Sciences Journal*, vol. 14, n. 3, 1981, pp. 81-103, on p. 90, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/Chemical%20Investigation%20%20Heller%20Adler%201981%20OCR.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

³⁰ A. D. Adler, *Chemical and physical characteristics of the blood stains*, in S. Scannerini - P. Savarino (Edd.), *The Turin Shroud, past, present and future, International Scientific Symposium*, Turin 2-5 March 2000, Effatà Editrice, Cantalupa 2000, pp. 219-233, on p. 223, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/ssi43part12.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

³¹ *Ibid.*, on p. 224.

³² To consult a list of Adler’s articles on the Shroud, see: <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/ssi43part13.pdf>

that text³³ (p. 290). Then he goes back to talk about Vignon's vapography (or vaporography) to point out that it is a wrong theory (pp. 292-294). Given that Vignon admits that in the end it is possible "to enter the realm of the supernatural", Nicolotti immediately hastens to speak of the "true pseudoscientific attitude of Vignon" (p. 295). He continues with the description of the episode by zoologist Yves Delage, with whom Vignon was working. Delage, agnostic, presented Vignon's vapography theory and experiments at the Académie des Sciences in Paris. "As an addendum to his speech he proposed to identify the man depicted on the Shroud as the Jesus of the Gospels. The argument was as follows: the possibility that all the circumstances of the passion could be brought about in the same way for a man condemned to death other than Jesus seemed to him to be one in ten billion". The secretary of the Académie, Marcellin Berthelot, atheist and anticlerical, "refused to publish the whole text given to him by Delage. Only the technical-descriptive part detailing Vignon's experiments was printed, under an utterly neutral title and without any reference to the Shroud" (pp. 296-297).

Here his the comment by Nicolotti: "It seems to me that the behavior of Berthelot and the other scientists was unexceptionable". Vignon and Delage "claimed to describe the means by which the image of the Shroud of Turin was formed, on the basis of conjectures that, as already noted, were insufficient to prove it. The two zoologists speculated about photographs and were unable to examine the Shroud in person" (p. 298). This last consideration by Nicolotti is truly surprising. He also did not examine the Shroud in person, but despite this, he wrote a book of 502 pages, in which, among other things, he also rejects what scientists, who has examined the Shroud in person, say about it. But Nicolotti proceeds confidently: "Berthelot was right, while Vignon and Delage were wrong" (p. 298).

"It seemed to many that 'scientific' arguments put historical arguments to flight", Nicolotti adds (p. 298). "The scientist is not merely an irrelevant spectator of the events and results of his experiments but is sometimes their author, the one who must correctly perform and interpret them. He can be wrong, and he sometimes makes mistakes" (p. 299). However, Nicolotti would not apply these words to the scientists who in 1988 dated the Shroud to the Middle Ages.

Vignon argued that the face of Christ in iconography has details derived from the Shroud. "The theory is highly conjectural and lends itself to being applied as one pleases", Nicolotti states immediately (p. 300). "The argument is obviously circular, and the exact opposite could be affirmed, namely, that the Shroud was made on the model of the iconography of Christ" (p. 302). Anyway, the theory is dismissed as "fundamentally weak" (p. 303). At this point Nicolotti goes back to talking about canon Giuseppe Piovano, who was on Chevalier's side (he had written it on p. 271). Nicolotti found an unpublished letter of 1930 written by Piovano to the archbishop of Turin, Maurilio Fossati (pp. 304-305), who would become a cardinal in 1933. Given that Fossati, unlike Piovano, believes the Shroud to be authentic, Nicolotti hastens to write: "Fossati's merits, which were many, did not include a propensity for study: 'a man fasting from strong theological studies and of scant culture in general' - as one of his canons describes him" (p. 306).

Pope Pius XI also believed the Shroud to be true (p. 308), but Nicolotti in this case does not go so far as to affirm that he had little culture, given that he had three degrees. Shortly afterwards, the textile expert Virginio Timossi is defined "less than competent" (p. 312), without saying that he wrote a book on the textile aspect of the Shroud. I suspect that the fact that Timossi concludes his book by defining the Shroud "the most sublime document and the most solemn apology of Christianity"³⁴ weighed in Nicolotti's judgment. Predictable news can be found on p. 315, where Nicolotti talks about "Tito Signorelli, pastor of the Italian Methodist Church and freemason of the Scottish Rite, who wrote a booklet against the authenticity of the Shroud". Regarding the 1939 congress, Nicolotti believes that "the overall scientific value of this first experience was doubtlessly superior to that of

³³ L. Bouchage, *Le Saint Suaire de Cambéry a Saint-Claire-en-Ville*, Drivet, Chambéry 1891, not mentioned by Nicolotti. See also: *Report of Poor Clares of Chambéry*, in *Sindon* n. 2, January 2021, pp. 14-17, https://sindone.it/museo/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SINDON_02.pdf

³⁴ V. Timossi, *La Santa Sindone nella sua costituzione tessile*, L.I.C.E. - R. Berruti & C., Turin 1942, on p. 87, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

many other similar undertakings held subsequently”, but “two significant obstacles weighed down the entire project: the impossibility of directly examining the object and the authenticist leanings of all the organizers” (p. 318).

For the 1950 congress, Nicolotti reports a letter from Gaetano de Sanctis to Cardinal Fossati, in which the historian affirms that he does not believe the Shroud to be authentic (pp. 324-325). At this point Nicolotti makes a clarification: “Giving this quotation from De Sanctis’ letter, as well as the previous quotation from canon Piovano, seems necessary to me not because I wish to elevate those who do not accept the authenticity of the Shroud but rather simply to reestablish equilibrium”. According to Nicolotti, in the sphere of Catholic non-authenticists “it was preferable to remain silent rather than provoke ‘scandal’. It is a situation that, above all among the clergy, endures still today and deserves to be brought to light” (p. 324). Nicolotti, however, does not cite examples of priests who currently believe the Shroud to be false and prefer to remain silent rather than provoke scandal. On the contrary, in other parts of the volume he quotes Msgr. Victor Saxer (p. 446), Rev. Pier Angelo Gramaglia (pp. 355, 453 and 460), Father Jean-Michel Maldamè (pp. 443 and 453), Rev. Francesco Pieri (p. 453), all officially and explicitly denying the authenticity of the Shroud. Anyway, according to Nicolotti “the quality of the conference was inferior to that of its predecessor” (p. 325).

At this point Nicolotti speaks of Kurt Berna, “a mentally unstable individual who believed that he had received a vision of the passion of Christ; he claimed that Jesus, while he was in the tomb, was not dead” and he goes on to affirm that “this episode can be considered the first sign of a process that would become unrestrainable: sindonology, by that time having proclaimed itself an autonomous and independent science dedicated to the study of a potentially miraculous object, began to attract eccentric individuals, who were inclined to the use of unchecked fantasy” (pp. 325-326).

In the denigration of the sindonologists, Nicolotti continues with the negative judgment of Father Agostino Gemelli on some of them, including Don Pietro Scotti and the physician Giovanni Judica Cordiglia: “Prof. Scotti, a Salesian, is not a scientist, but a popularizer; Prof. Judica Cordiglia is an excellent Christian, but he, too, is not a scientist” (p. 328). In reality, Judica Cordiglia was a professor of Forensic Medicine at the University of Milan³⁵; Scotti was a physician, ethnologist, geographer and taught at the Universities of Genoa and Brescia³⁶. We must be cautious about Father Gemelli’s judgments, since he said of Saint Father Pious: “A morbid state, either a psychopathic condition or the result of simulation”³⁷. And we come to 1965 and the new archbishop of Turin, Michele Pellegrino. Since Nicolotti counts him among the skeptics, the praises of him immediately begin: he “was a man who had made culture his reason for living; he had three degrees and, at the time of his appointment to the episcopal see, was professor of ancient Christian literature at the University of Turin; for some years he was also professor of the history of Christianity, just where I have the same role today”, adds Nicolotti like a peacock (p. 330). A statement by Franco Bolgiani follows, “a student of Pellegrino and in turn professor of the history of Christianity at the same university”. Bolgiani recalls that Pellegrino “was personally very suspicious of a phalanx of exalted sindonologists and supposed scientists” (p. 331).

In 1969 Pellegrino chose a commission of experts to carry out a check of the cloth. Nicolotti writes: “The members chosen by Cardinal Pellegrino - as was explained at the closing press conference - were scholars ‘who did not hold, not even in their subconscious, positions for or against the Shroud’. This excluded the sindonologists, contact with whom was in any case guaranteed by Giovanni Judica Cordiglia, director of the Center of Sindonology” (p. 331). From what Nicolotti writes, it seems that there was, on the part of the cardinal, a desire to exclude the sindonologists due to a lack of esteem for them. However, if we read the next sentence of the text of the press conference, we have a different impression: “It was necessary, however, that someone was also present who could have knowledge of the problem of the Shroud and could give some indications about it”. And the sentence preceding

³⁵ See: https://www.sindone.org/santa_sindone/la_sindone/00024091_teorìa_del_contatto.html

³⁶ See: https://documen.site/download/illustre-podenzanese-scrittore-erudito-scientziato-severo-fervente_pdf

³⁷ See: <https://catholicmagazine.news/st-pio-of-pietrelcina-cross-persecution-and-glory/>

the one reported by Nicolotti also clarifies the context. Speaking of Judica Cordiglia, it is said: “You do not find in the volume any particular research of his, because the professor collaborated with everyone. In fact, he was placed in the Commission almost as a guide to the other Experts who had never been specifically interested in the Shroud”³⁸. The role of Judica Cordiglia was therefore not only of contact with the sindonologists nor did the cardinal who appointed the Commission show contempt for them.

On the occasion of the 1973 television exhibition, “Cardinal Pellegrino chose to limit himself to the terms ‘image’ and ‘keepsake’ and opened the way to a devotion of the Shroud that was more detached from the assessment of authenticity” (p. 337). But Nicolotti does not report a sentence from the message of Card. Pellegrino, in which referring to Christ crucified he adds: “This is why it helps us to contemplate the image of him in the sheet in which Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the most holy body of the Savior”³⁹. Nicolotti reports that Vittorio Messori intervenes, but here he does not say who he is (p. 337), nor on p. 362; finally on p. 424 he writes: “the famous Catholic journalist”⁴⁰. Nicolotti’s choice of not immediately explaining who the people he names are is strange.

In the following pages of his book, Nicolotti comments on the results of the Pellegrino Commission, published in 1976. About the forensic pathologists’ investigations, he writes: “Those tests were negative for blood; however, they left open the possibility that the typical characteristics of blood could not be further identified on so ancient an artefact” (p. 339). It would also have been useful to report another consideration by the analysts: “In carrying out the investigation it must be remembered that we had only a very small piece of material at our disposal”⁴¹.

On the possibility of dating the Shroud with the C14 method, Nicolotti only partially reports the opinion of an illustrious scientist, Cesare Codegone⁴², director of the Institute of Technical Physics and Nuclear Plants of the Polytechnic of Turin, on the problem of the part of the fabric to be sacrificed, too great at the time (p. 339). It would have been appropriate to refer also to this consideration by Codegone: “It remains to consider the fact that in its long and troubled history, the sacred linen has undergone vicissitudes which may have altered its composition, such as: exposure to fire and water; periods of time near rows of lighted candles in places occupied by crowds of the faithful, hence in air rich with carbon dioxide; contact with the sick to obtain cures, etc., all of which are circumstances which leave us perplexed about the outcome of tests undertaken to evaluate with certainty its date of origin and by tests which, at least up to now, give rise to grave uncertainties”⁴³.

A few more lines and with greater fidelity to the original texts would have been appropriate in referring the thought of the art historian Noemi Gabrielli (p. 339) and of the egyptologist Silvio Curto (p. 340). Nicolotti writes that Gabrielli “declared the Shroud a fake” (p. 340). In reality the word “fake” does not appear in Gabrielli’s report, who considers the Shroud a printing from a painting on cloth; but she does not mention the idea that it was made as a deception, a typical feature of the fake.

³⁸ *Introduzione alla conferenza stampa di Mons. José Cottino, vice-presidente della Commissione degli Esperti, in Osservazioni alle perizie ufficiali sulla Santa Sindone, 1969-1976, Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia, Turin 1977, pp. 11-18, on p. 12.*

³⁹ P. G. Accornero, *L'autenticità della Sindone*, in *La Voce del Popolo*, 28 March 1976, p. 1.

⁴⁰ In fact, Vittorio Messori is the best known and most widely read living Catholic writer. See: <http://www.vittoriomessori.it/>

⁴¹ G. Frache - E. Mari Rizzati - E. Mari, *Relazione conclusiva sulle indagini d'ordine ematologico praticate su materiale prelevato dalla Sindone*, in *La S. Sindone - Ricerche e studi della Commissione di Esperti nominata dall'Arcivescovo di Torino, Card. Michele Pellegrino, nel 1969*, Supplemento Rivista diocesana torinese, January 1976, pp. 49-54, on p. 52; English translation: *A definitive report on the haematological investigations carried out on material taken from the Shroud*, in *Report of Turin Commission on the Holy Shroud*, pro manuscripto, Copyright Turin Commission on the Holy Shroud 1976, pp. 49-56, on p. 52.

⁴² A short biography of Cesare Codegone can be found at this link:

<https://areeweb.polito.it/strutture/cemed/museovirtuale/storia/2-02/2-2-03/2-2-0316b.htm>

⁴³ C. Codegone, *Sulla datazione di antichi tessuti mediante isotopi radioattivi*, in *La S. Sindone - Ricerche e studi della Commissione di Esperti nominata dall'Arcivescovo di Torino, Card. Michele Pellegrino, nel 1969*, op. cit., pp. 31-38, on p. 37; English translation: *Concerning the dating of ancient fabrics by means of radioactive isotopes*, in *Report of Turin Commission on the Holy Shroud*, op. cit., pp. 31-39, on p. 38.

Gabrielli states: “Its author, with his thorough knowledge of anatomy, would appear to have transfused into this canvas his geniality and the emotional turmoil of his soul, interpreting the spiritual meaning of the moral figure of the Savior”⁴⁴. At the beginning of her work, she also writes: “If we do not accept the possibility of a miraculous intervention or an unknown photographic process, there are only two suppositions”⁴⁵. She then discards the hypothesis of the printing process using a model engraved on a wooden block, to prefer the other hypothesis, that of printing from a wet cloth stretched on a frame. But she realizes that there is also the possibility of the miraculous event and of the unknown photographic process.

About Curto, Nicolotti writes that to Gabrielli’s theory, the egyptologist adds that of “an unspecified photographic process” and that he “was inclined toward the hypothesis of artistic fabrication” (p. 340). In reality, in his article Curto writes other things that Nicolotti omits and that must be considered instead; first of all that “the fabric of the Shroud *can* date back to the time of Christ”⁴⁶. He personally leans towards artful execution, but remains open to other possibilities, including that of authenticity. In the case of dating to the time of Christ “then the image will also have to be considered of the same period and authentic”⁴⁷.

Nicolotti writes that “the commission was not called to approach the Shroud in the style of the sindonologists - that is, as if its authenticity were already a determined or probable fact” (p. 341). He therefore accuses the sindonologists of starting from the assumption that the Shroud is authentic, while it is he who is starting from an assumption: that the Shroud is false. Nicolotti criticizes the observations to the expert reports published by the International Center of Sindonology in 1977: “The sindonological publication did not escape the usual temptation to amass discussions and theories heterogenous in character and value, connected only by the thread of faith in the authenticity of the object” (p. 341). To ridicule the sindonologists, among the reports he cites that of the architect Mosso (already cited with the same purpose on p. 284) who speaks of the image as an effect of the resurrection. Nicolotti’s conclusion is: “Evidently the Center was not able to draw meritorious scholars, and it cannot be ruled out that this was one of the reasons why the cardinal decided not to make use of it” (p. 341).

We have now come to the fifth and final chapter: “The Creation of a Myth” (p. 343). The title already makes us understand the content. In some points of this chapter Nicolotti ventures again, and more decisively, in a field that does not belong to him, the scientific one; this aroused critical comments⁴⁸ from Paolo Di Lazzaro, physicist at ENEA (Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development) in Frascati (Italy) and deputy director of the International Center for Studies on the Shroud of Turin. Although the results of the exams published in 1976 were not “encouraging”, Nicolotti notes that “the fields of history, exegesis, and philology, none of which could provide decisive support for authentication, were relegated to the background”. We are in a “second stage” of sindonology that “aims increasingly at demonstrating the miracle of the resurrection scientifically” (p. 343).

Here are some other questionable considerations by Nicolotti, who is unleashed against the sindonologists. The 1978 scholarly commission “was assembled and led by those who had previously investigated the Shroud with the inclination to authenticate it”. “Almost all the material that has been produced is the work of those who are predisposed toward a particular outcome and are thus readily satisfied with conjecture about an object that they have never examined”. “The level of much of the

⁴⁴ N. Gabrielli, *La Sindone nella storia dell'arte*, in *La S. Sindone - Ricerche e studi della Commissione di Esperti*, op. cit., pp. 87- 92, on p. 89; English translation: *The Shroud in the History of Art*, in *Report of Turin Commission*, op. cit., pp. 88-94, on p. 90.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, on p. 87; English translation on p. 88.

⁴⁶ S. Curto, *La Sindone di Torino: osservazioni archeologiche circa il tessuto e l'immagine*, in *La S. Sindone - Ricerche e studi della Commissione di Esperti*, op. cit., 59-73, on p. 64; English translation: *The Turin Shroud: archaeological observations concerning the material and the image*, in *Report of Turin Commission*, op. cit., pp. 61-79, on p. 67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, on p. 70; English translation on p.76.

⁴⁸ P. Di Lazzaro, «*Let no-one who is not a mathematician read my principles*», in *Sindon* n. 2, January 2021, pp. 65-75, https://sindone.it/museo/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SINDON_02.pdf

literature on the Shroud, whether historical or scientific, is very low, and those who are sufficiently skilled to deal with it generally refrain from doing so in order to avoid making an argument that is controversial and unmanageable, scientifically speaking”. “The vacuum created by the absence of qualified research projects has created an avenue for intentional dilettantism” (p. 344).

The criticisms continue. “The result is an impressive amount of scientific studies on the Shroud, the majority of which, however, are less than credible. Sindonology in the last century has been organized as a discipline that has drawn a great number of Shroud fans and unfortunately has adopted the characteristics typical of pseudosciences”. “Sindonologists are united in the shared belief that the Shroud cannot have been made by an artificial method⁴⁹, but only in a way incomprehensible, extraordinary, or miraculous, and incapable of being replicated by human hands. This fundamental assumption is an indispensable one for them, without which the field of sindonology cannot stand”. “Sindonology does not have one of the most important checks common in science to prevent sincere scientists from presenting wishful thinking as data”. “The scientific community generally does not consider the Shroud an object of scientific study”. Sindonology is “organized in associations that ‘publish’ mainly through postings on the Internet, books, and self-referential and self-managed conferences” (p. 345).

The outburst still continues. “Human curiosity about mysterious subjects, the superficiality of the press, and the strength of sindonological organizations have created the false impression among the general public that the Shroud is an object widely studied by science and is now definitively recognized as incapable of being deciphered”. “The ecclesiastical authorities have accepted unquestioningly what sindonologists advance as science”. “The ‘scientific’ response thus provides support apparently founded on what often remains substantially an apologetic impulse or an inclination toward interpreting reality in paranormal terms” (p. 346). After those complaints, Nicolotti warns the reader: “What follows is what I have been able to conclude after having read hundreds of sindonological studies and, when necessary, having turned my attention back to competent persons in each specific field (with great difficulty, as scientists generally shun any association with pseudosciences and prefer simply to ignore them). A sufficiently detailed discussion of all topics related to this theme, accompanied by an appropriate commentary, would occupy hundreds of pages. Therefore, it will be sufficient here to summarize briefly the events of recent years, reducing to a minimum the essential references in the notes and privileging the historical narrative aspect over the scientific-analytical. I will defer for now a more thorough explanation of some aspects” (p. 346). Thanks to this synthetic effort by Nicolotti, we can now face the remaining pages of the book, which are 128 more.

The next personage criticized by Nicolotti is Max Frei⁵⁰, founder and director of the laboratory of the Zurich scientific police (p. 347). Nicolotti does not say that Frei, graduate in Natural Science, was also professor at the University of Zurich, at the Swiss Police Institute in Neuchatel and at the German Police Institute in Hilstrup; he was scientific editor for the German review *Kriminalistik* and was a UN expert investigating the death of the general secretary Dag Hammarskjöld⁵¹. To guide the reader not to trust Max Frei, Nicolotti talks about one of his reports, that was “flawed”, insinuating that “his mistake could not have been accidental”. He also suspects that the 1973 sampling was not authorized (p. 347). The samples would have been taken at night with the permission of a palatine chaplain without informing the commission (p. 347-348). In reality, Frei took the samples in the presence of

⁴⁹ I think Nicolotti refers only to the origin of the image on the Shroud, not to the whole Shroud.

⁵⁰ A short biography of Max Frei can be found at this link: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/frei-sulzer-max>

⁵¹ M. Frei, *Note a seguito dei primi studi sui prelievi di polvere aderente al lenzuolo della S. Sindone*, in *Sindon* n. 23, April 1976, pp. 5-9, on p. 6. Nicolotti does not cite this article either the article that follows in the journal, in which the scientific method used by Frei is illustrated by Giovanni Charrier, professor of Geology, member of the Italian Paleontological Society, of the Italian Botanical Society, of the International Society for the study of Quaternary, of the Italian Geological Society, of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy and of the International Organization of Paleobotany: G. Charrier, *Attualità dei metodi palinologici*, in *Sindon* n. 23, April 1976, pp. 10-14.

Msgr. José Cottino, vice-president of the commission and Msgr. Piero Coero Borga, then secretary of the International Center of Sindonology and chaplain of the Confraternity of the SS. Sudario, with the help of Prof. Aurelio Ghio, expert of the Turin law court, and with the consent of the competent authority⁵².

In a press release, Frei would have affirmed that he found fossil pollen from plants that only existed in Palestine 2,000 years ago. Furthermore, the Shroud would have stayed in Palestine and Turkey before arriving in Europe. Nicolotti excludes the assertion that a plant comes exclusively from Palestine or Turkey (p. 348). The botanist Avinoam Danin⁵³ of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel), known for having developed the database “Flora and vegetation of Israel”⁵⁴, has a different opinion. Danin, who is not mentioned in Nicolotti’s book, wrote: “As far as establishing the Shroud’s provenance, *Zygophyllum dumosum* is the most significant plant on the list. Max Frei identified pollen grains of this species on the adhesive tapes he examined. The northernmost extent of the distribution of this plant in the world coincides with the line between Jericho and the sea level marker on the road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho. As *Zygophyllum dumosum* grows only in Israel, Jordan and Sinai, its appearance helps to definitively limit the Shroud’s place of origin”⁵⁵.

On the possibility that Frei spoke of grains of fossilized pollen of plants existing only in Palestine twenty centuries before, given that this statement does not exist in Frei’s publications but only in newspaper articles, Nicolotti writes that it is not clear whether Frei has circulated two versions of the press release or was misunderstood by reporters, but also implies that Frei may have retracted his earlier claims (p. 348). Nicolotti does not even mention one of the articles⁵⁶ written by Frei, where he would have found clarifications for his doubts. Frei states that “to date, unfortunately, it has not been possible to verify the age of this sheet with scientific methods. Pollen analyses are not suitable for this purpose”⁵⁷. He also explains: “Because the geographic side of the Shroud’s past speaks in favor of authenticity, it would be very important the possibility of expressing ourselves on the age of the traces I found. But the current state of our knowledge does not allow an exact dating, as the plants, represented by their pollen, grow also today in the mentioned areas and we know from the ‘Flora of the Bible’ that in the last two millennia the vegetation in Israel - apart from a forest decrease and an increase in cultivated area - has not undergone fundamental changes. (...) A more precise dating could be in the future if we encounter the pollen of a plant extinct in the last two millennia. Contrary to some sensational but baseless print news, until now I have not been so lucky in my research. Further analysis of Shroud dust possibly will allow to study statistically the frequency of species and to synchronize it with the frequency spectrum of the pollen in the various horizons of sedimentation of the Dead Sea”⁵⁸. Nicolotti says that the news that Frei dated the Shroud to the first century thanks to the discovery of extinct plants is still widespread today, but does not give examples (p. 349).

⁵² M. Frei, *Note a seguito dei primi studi sui prelievi di polvere aderente al lenzuolo della S. Sindone*, op. cit., p. 7.

⁵³ A short biography of Avinoam Danin can be found at this link: <https://www.baslibrary.org/biblical-archaeology-review/42/3/16>

⁵⁴ See: <https://www.bio.huji.ac.il/en/content/prof-avinoam-danin-developed-database-%E2%80%9Cflora-and-vegetation-israel%E2%80%9D>

⁵⁵ A. Danin, *Pressed flowers*, in *Eretz Magazine* 55, 1997, pp. 35-37 and 69, on p. 69, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁵⁶ M. Frei, *Note a seguito dei primi studi sui prelievi di polvere aderente al lenzuolo della S. Sindone*, op. cit.; M. Frei, *Il passato della Sindone alla luce della palinologia*, in *La Sindone e la Scienza, Atti del II Congresso Internazionale di Sindonologia*, Turin, October 7-8, 1978, Ed. Paoline, Turin 1979, pp. 191-200 and 370-378; M. Frei, *Nine years of palynological studies on the Shroud*, in *Shroud Spectrum International* n. 3, 1982, pp. 2-7; M. Frei, *Identificazione e classificazione dei nuovi pollini della Sindone*, in *La Sindone, Scienza e Fede, Atti del II Convegno Nazionale di Sindonologia*, Bologna, November 27-29, 1981, CLUEB, Bologna 1983, pp. 277-284; M. Frei-Sulzer, *Wissenschaftliche Probleme um das Grabtuch von Turin*, in *Naturwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, 32 Jahrg, Heft 4, 1979, pp. 133-135, all of them not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁵⁷ M. Frei-Sulzer, *Wissenschaftliche Probleme um das Grabtuch von Turin*, op. cit, on p. 135.

⁵⁸ M. Frei, *Il passato della Sindone alla luce della palinologia*, op. cit., p. 199.

Nicolotti now prepares the ground to argue that the members of the STURP (Shroud of Turin Research Project⁵⁹) were already oriented towards the authenticity of the Shroud. Physicist John Jackson had wished to work with the Shroud “since childhood” (p. 349). Kenneth Stevenson, editor of the proceedings of the conference in Albuquerque (USA) 1977 says that “the hand of God had effectively operated among scholars” (p. 350). Nicolotti claims that the Shroud begins to have great fame because the news is invented that Elvis Presley was reading a book about the Shroud at the time of his death, but he does not mention any sources (p. 351). On the contrary, the news seems to be accredited by the London Times⁶⁰. The three-dimensionality of the image discovered in 1976 by John Jackson and Eric Jumper for Nicolotti is a “fallacious” argument, and explains: “If a painting or a photograph is subjected to analysis by the computer, one does not obtain a three-dimensional result, but if instead one uses an imprint (as in the case of the Shroud) one is able to recreate the ‘three-dimensional’ effect” (p. 351). To demonstrate it, he reports that the engineer Giovanni Garibotto obtains three-dimensional images from a cloth that was “heated or colored after being placed on a bas-relief”. Nicolotti has an explanation for everything: “One of the reasons that explains the great difficulties encountered by whoever has tried to reproduce it artificially is certainly the issue of the process of natural aging, prolonged over time, which made the picture on the cloth rather smooth and of quite low image contrast” (p. 353).

Meanwhile, the Waldensians react negatively to the 1978 exhibition with two critical books (p. 355). No expert from the Pilgrim Commission participates in the 1978 congress. “Generally speaking, the conference papers were oriented toward the argument for authenticity”. Some contributions, according to Nicolotti, are interesting, but he does not name even one. Instead, he dwells on those who make strange proposals (p. 357) in order to affirm that sindonology has an “inexorable pseudoscientific drift” (p. 358). There are interventions from the public “frighteningly off-topic” (p. 358). In the subsequent sindonological conferences “voices such as these often came not only from the audience but also from the pulpit” (p. 359). The researches of 1978 are mainly conducted by the Americans of the Sturp “who for some years had been associated with the Holy Shroud Guild”. Baima Bollone “unlike the Americans, had the opportunity to undertake some sampling of the fabric” (p. 359). Max Frei takes new samples, “this time surely with official permission”. Nicolotti lists Sturp’s tests, writes that Frei finds new pollen and Baima Bollone identifies AB blood and aloe and myrrh (p. 360). Moreover he reports Sturp’s conclusions in the press release of 8 October 1981 (pp. 360-362).

A Sturp delegation was in St. Peter’s Square on May 13, 1981 when the attack on the pope took place. Nicolotti does not report the name of the two scientists present. Their name can be read on the website of photographer Barrie Schwartz, another Sturp member never mentioned by Nicolotti: “May 13, 1981: (Wednesday). Sturp team members Dr. John Jackson and Larry Schwalbe, along with Fr. Adam Otterbein and Fr. Peter Rinaldi, are in St. Peter’s Square awaiting an audience with Pope John Paul II to report to him on the 1978 testing when the Pope is shot by Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca. The audience never takes place”⁶¹. The scientist whose words are reported, taking them from a book by the writer Vittorio Messori, speaks of “forces of evil” which prevented them from giving the Pope the fruit of their work⁶². Nicolotti (p. 362) makes fun of Messori’s words, “a positive scientist, far from any mystic temptation”, but Messori had said it while introducing the

⁵⁹ See: <https://www.shroud.com/78exam.htm>

⁶⁰ *News from around the world*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 52, November 2000, part 2, www.shroud.com/pdfs/n52part2.pdf, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁶¹ www.shroud.com/history.htm

⁶² V. Messori, *Ipotesi su Maria*, Ares, Milan 2005, p. 200.

scientist, not commenting on his words. At this point it is clear that Nicolotti wants to ridicule in every way those who believe the Shroud to be authentic.

Nicolotti states: “With the exception of the 1988 radiocarbon dating, the examinations of 1978 are on the whole still the most sophisticated tests that have been performed on the Shroud”. However he adds: “Not everyone welcomed the conclusions that Sturp came to” because there were and still are scholars “who acknowledge the value of many measurements and analyses performed by the Sturp technicians (moreover, there are no other such studies in existence for comparison), but they interpret them differently and would like to repeat those studies to subject them to strict verification” (p. 362).

To further devalue the research of the Sturp scientists, Nicolotti notes that they “did not constitute a group of scientists selected on the basis of their competence” but “offered themselves spontaneously”. Therefore “in this case the effect was that, essentially, the proposals for analyses came almost exclusively from sindonological organizations”, “engaged with the Shroud” and “generally convinced of its authenticity”. The Sturp “operated under the aegis of a sindonological organization led by two priests” (p. 363).

Jackson and Jumper, military men, “had recruited several others from the armed forces to their sindonological gatherings”. It is not clear why this is a problem, given that the military were also scientists anyway. “That group did not, however, have any experience with paintings, blood, images, or the coloring of cloth” (p. 363). As for the experience in the necessary areas, the members of Sturp⁶³ had a lot of it instead. Just think of the biophysicist John H. Heller, of whom Nicolotti mentions only one book, and of the biochemist Alan D. Adler, whom he completely ignored. Same silence on pathologist Robert Bucklin⁶⁴ and many others. Meanwhile Nicolotti notes that “it is clear that Jackson has in mind the resurrection of Christ” (p. 363) and thinks that the Shroud is “the tablecloth used at the Last Supper” (p. 364). This is to conclude that “given such premises, some of the members of Sturp may not provide the best guarantees of objectivity”.

According to Nicolotti, “the group could not reach a convincing answer on the origin of the Shroud image also because it took as its starting point a series of assumptions that are not necessarily true. For example, that the cloth wrapped the body of a real corpse was never put into doubt: the supposition that this was the case, however, conflicts with the fact that the image and the bloodstains of the Shroud are not compatible with normal contact between a piece of cloth and a wounded human body” (p. 364). But in reality Sturp did not take the presence of a corpse as a starting point: in fact, one⁶⁵ of the articles⁶⁶ published by Sturp reports the experiments that were attempted to reproduce an image like the Shroud one. Regarding the Sturp compatibility of the bloodstains present on the Shroud with a corpse, it was demonstrated by Gilbert R. Lavoie⁶⁷. Here is another statement by Nicolotti: “Science looks at Sturp’s studies with great suspicion or even with an inclination toward rejection” (p. 364). This affirmation is completely unfounded, given that Sturp’s works have been published in peer review journals. Nicolotti continues: “Though they act in good faith, sometimes

⁶³ The complete list of Sturp members can be found at this link: <https://www.shroud.com/78team.htm>

⁶⁴ *Obituaries*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 54, November 2001, part 12, www.shroud.com/pdfs/n54part12.pdf, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁶⁵ J. P. Jackson - E. J. Jumper - W. R. Ercoline, *Correlation of image intensity on the Turin Shroud with the 3-D structure of a human body shape*, *Applied Optics*, vol. 23, n. 14, 15 July 1984, pp. 2244-227, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/Correlation%20of%20Image%20Intensity%20Jackson%20Jumper%20Ercoline%201984%20OCRsm.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁶⁶ The complete list of articles published by Sturp and the possibility to download them can be found at this link: <https://www.shroud.com/78papers.htm>

⁶⁷ G. R. Lavoie – B. B. Lavoie – V. J. Donovan – J. S. Ballas, *Blood on the Shroud of Turin: part 1*, op. cit.; G. R. Lavoie – B. B. Lavoie – V. J. Donovan – J. S. Ballas, *Blood on the Shroud of Turin: part 2*, op. cit.; G. R. Lavoie – B. B. Lavoie – A. D. Adler, *Blood on the Shroud of Turin: part 3*, op. cit., all of them not mentioned by Nicolotti.

scientists are able to find what they look for because they eagerly want to find it". Obviously, according to him this statement is valid only for those who believe the Shroud to be authentic.

Nicolotti notes that "on some points agreement was lacking between the same scholars. For example, Sturp excluded the presence of aloe and myrrh, which Baima Bollone claims to have identified on the threads excised from the fabric" (p. 364). But Nicolotti knows, because he said it on page 359, that the Americans did not have samples of the fabric.

In reporting Walter McCrone's results, Nicolotti writes that the chemist "concluded that the figure of the man of the Shroud was painted by applying red ocher in a very diluted animal-collagen tempera" and "the so-called bloodstains would instead have been created with vermilion, in addition to red ocher and tempera" (p. 365). But on p. 351 he had admitted that three-dimensionality is not obtained from a painting. At this point Nicolotti writes that "the sindonologists have produced other studies aimed at neutralizing McCrone's conclusions or to furnish alternative explanations", but he does not mention them, stating that "this is not the place to discuss chemistry and microscopy" (p. 366). So why has he been discussing chemistry and microscopy so far? In reality, the studies produced to discuss McCrone's results were written by scientists from Sturp who cannot be defined as sindonologists: the main article⁶⁸ was published by John H. Heller and Alan D. Adler.

A member of Sturp, Joseph Accetta, "came to believe that the Shroud was printed from a medieval bas-relief" (p. 366). But weren't they all authenticistic sindonologists in the Sturp? Then Nicolotti goes back to talking about Frei and writes that his travels were financed by the "television producer" David Rolfe and by the International Center of Sindonology (p. 367). He criticizes that in Rolfe's documentary, Frei is in the "Turkish desert" to make believe that he is in Palestine and the laboratory is a "bogus" reconstruction in a room (p. 367 note 37). Apart from the fact that in Turkey it would be more correct to speak of steppe, not desert, Nicolotti's criticisms make it clear that he has evidently never participated in the making of a documentary...

Nicolotti writes, without citing a source, that the members of Sturp "were unable to secure a positive identification of the pollen; they were right, but it was said that this failure was due to their incompetence in the matter". He reiterates that Frei's claims are false (p. 367). He repeats that Frei's research does not prove the origin of the Shroud and says that a friar (he does not mention the name or the source) accuses Frei of having published photos of reference pollen, not of those found on the Shroud. This has given rise to suspicion of fraud (p. 368). In reality in the plates attached to his articles, Frei did not indicate whether the photographs were related to pollen grains found on the Shroud or to pollen grains of reference, but Ghio, who aided Frei in the 1973 samplings, in republishing two of those images specified that they were reference pollen grains⁶⁹.

Against Frei, Nicolotti writes that he ends his career with the scandal of Hitler's false diaries (p. 368) and reports that the presence of Shroud material in his samples is doubtful. Nicolotti reports only the criticisms (p. 369) of Marta Mariotti Lippi, professor of Archaeobotany and Paleobotany in the Department of Plant Biology of the University of Florence, but he does not mention the part of the article where the scholar states that, based on the list published by Frei, "the Shroud, in an unspecified period of time, stayed in the Middle East"⁷⁰. Nicolotti repeats that Frei was accused of having manipulated the results (p. 369) and his pollens are useless to establish the age and movements of the Shroud (p. 370). In note 42 he mentions a publication by Silvano Scannerini, director of the Plant Biology Department of the University of Turin, saying only that it is "somewhat skeptical". He does not say that Scannerini stated: "Frei's results therefore document that the Shroud in reality stayed in Palestine, Anatolia and, as documented without a shadow of a doubt, in recent times and today, in

⁶⁸ J. H. Heller - A. D. Adler, *A chemical investigation of the Shroud of Turin*, op. cit., not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁶⁹ A. Ghio, *I pollini della Sindone in relazione alle ricerche palinologiche del prof. Max Frei in Sicilia*, in *La Sindone, indagini scientifiche, Atti del IV Congresso Nazionale di Studi sulla Sindone*, Siracusa, 17-18 October 1987, Ed. Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1988, pp. 127-131, on p. 130, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁷⁰ M. Mariotti Lippi, *Riflessione sulle analisi palinologiche condotte sulla Sindone di Torino*, in *Collegamento pro Sindone Internet*, September 2011, <http://www.sindone.info/MARIOTTI.PDF>, pp. 1-6, on p. 5.

Savoy and Piedmont”⁷¹. The question of the pollen found on the Shroud cannot be limited only to Nicolotti’s criticisms, who in addition to the psychiatrist Gaetano Ciccone (a psychiatrist can judge the studies on pollen, according to Nicolotti) does not name other scholars who have intervened on the subject⁷².

About the possibility that the Shroud image was obtained using a heated bas-relief, hypothesis supported by Vittorio Pesce Delfino, an anthropologist from the University of Bari, Nicolotti admits that it is “very complex, almost impractical”. But the Pesce Delfino’s book is important “for it demonstrates the inconsistency of many axioms of ‘sindonological common knowledge’ that tend to insist on the impossibility of replicating the Shroud” (p. 371). How does Pesce Delfino demonstrate it, if he hasn’t succeeded in the achieving the feat?

Again Nicolotti returns to talk about Sturp, this time admitting that “the publication of the results of Sturp observed the usual peer-reviewed scientific criteria”, but, because of the conclusions, for the CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal) they could be considered “a case of pseudoscience” (pp. 371-372). A logic to be envied.

A member of Csicop, the investigator of the paranormal Joe Nickell, “revealed the possibility of replicating an image with similar characteristics to those of the Shroud” with a cloth adhered to a bas-relief, “system which would later be further refined by certain Italians”. Nicolotti refers to Luigi Garlaschelli’s experiment, which he will talk about later. According to Nicolotti, a bas-relief such as that of Wighton (15th century) may have been used for the face (p. 372). He does not think that, on the contrary, that bas-relief is inspired by the Shroud. According to him, the characteristics of the Man of the Shroud are reminiscent of those of medieval tomb figures. He then returns to put Rolfe in a bad light, saying that he wrote the script for his film *The Silent Witness* with Ian Wilson and Henry Lincoln, “writer of esotericism and supporter of the theory of the marriage of Jesus with Mary Magdalene” (p. 373).

The attack on sindonologists continues. According to Nicolotti they “strive to fill the void with conjectures based upon yet other conjectures, a practice in violation of the rules of historical criticism”. “The audience for these conjectures is not in fact the community of specialists, which generally ignores them, but the general public”. The problems for him generally remain the same of the time of Chevalier: “The relationship between faith, critical thinking, and scientific method; public use of history; the distorted use of ‘scientific’ evidence; and the dignity and independence of the historical sciences”. “Each advocate for authenticity has offered separate theories and legends about the Shroud’s ancient origins to describe stages of the Shroud’s journey that never occurred” (p. 376). How can he be sure that it never occurred? “When, however, the conjectures do not agree with the overall reconstruction taken for granted by sindonologists”, Nicolotti laments, “they are criticized or removed” (p. 377). However, he too criticizes and removes what is not in accordance with his assumption that the Shroud is false.

Nicolotti goes on by stating that “sindonologists have a tendency to construct a history for the Shroud by blending unrelated accounts: they look for ancient sources that speak of fabrics, whether they are shrouds or otherwise, and identify them with that of Turin” (p. 378). According to him, it is “the mythological construction of the sindonology of the twentieth century”. In the following pages, Nicolotti cuts off any testimony that might make somebody think of the Shroud (pp. 378-384) and all the hypotheses of the arrival of the Shroud in France (pp. 384-388). Othon de la Roche is also

⁷¹ S. Scannerini, *Mirra, aloe, pollini e altre tracce. Ricerca botanica sulla Sindone*, Editrice Elle Di Ci, Leumann 1997, p. 50.

⁷² An extensive examination can be found in E. Marinelli, *The question of pollen grains on the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo*, in *I International Congress on the Holy Shroud in Spain*, op. cit., <http://www.sindone.info/VALENC-6.PDF>, pp. 1-13, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

discarded (pp. 388-391); however Nicolotti does not speak of the relationship between Jeanne de Vergy, second wife of Geoffroy de Charny, and Othon de la Roche⁷³.

The identification, by the historian Ian Wilson, of the Shroud with the Mandylion, is “a labyrinthine history” (p. 391). Nicolotti argues that Wilson “has recognized, explaining his methodological assumptions that, unfortunately, instead of starting from premises, begin with conclusions”. To make us believe this (p. 392), he puts together two sentences taken from two different points of a 19-page article⁷⁴ which, however, do not make us understand what Nicolotti claims: “A significant part of the mystery of the Shroud is the fact, that, like an iceberg, most of it’s [sic] history lies beneath the surface and unknown Now if from all the independent scientific evidence we believe the Shroud to be genuine, we are bound to back the ‘murky past’ theory, and this is where the going gets very rough”. That “sic” to underline a typo of Wilson’s is really silly: does Nicolotti mean that Wilson does not know the spelling? So in reporting what Nicolotti writes in note 280 on p. 475 there should be written: “A synthesis of the new claims can be found in in [sic] M. Boi, ...”.

Returning to Wilson’s thought, it seems clear that he speaks of “independent scientific evidence” as the basis for believing the Shroud to be authentic and therefore the search for its history is the consequence of the fact that the Shroud itself has the characteristics of its genuineness. It seems to me a correct path. What about Nicolotti’s method, which begins from the belief that the Shroud is necessarily false? It is he who starts from his conclusions, which become his forced premise. For Nicolotti, Wilson’s explanations are “largely conjectural, fallacious, and even rash”. Scholars must make “an extra effort to separate sindonological from scientific literature”. He concludes that Wilson’s explanations “are the result of his imagination” (p. 392) and the study “has failed to confirm Wilson’s claims; after forty years, surely the time finally has come to stop prevaricating” (p. 393).

For Nicolotti “it is clear that there is no relationship between the Shroud and the Mandylion” (p. 394). “All the sources that mention or depict the Mandylion exclude any relationship with the sepulchral cloth of Jesus; but over the years dozens of conjectures have been developed that trend toward this desired outcome, not infrequently forcing a certain interpretation upon the texts and employing an indiscriminate use of fantasy”. It starts from “a predetermined explanation” (p. 395). The theory is founded “upon a series of contradictions” (p. 397).

At this point Nicolotti mentions, in addition to the Mandylion, the Veil of Veronica to affirm: “For the creator of the Shroud of Turin, the idea of the imprint of the face of Christ was not a novelty, and that is why he decided to make his imprinted image as he did” (p. 398). The possibility that the Shroud is identifiable with the Image of Edessa (Mandylion) is instead well documented in the doctoral thesis⁷⁵ in History of Art by the President of the Centro Español de Sindonología⁷⁶, Jorge Manuel Rodríguez Almenar, and in many other papers⁷⁷. Nicolotti also mentions the Doctrine of

⁷³ D. Scavone, *Besançon and other hypotheses for the missing years: the Shroud from 1200 to 1400*, op. cit., p. 412, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁷⁴ I. Wilson, *The Shroud's history before the 14th century*, in K. Stevenson (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 1977 United States conference of research on the Shroud of Turin, March 23-24, 1977, Albuquerque, USA*, Holy Shroud Guild, New York 1977, pp. 31-49.

⁷⁵ J. M. Rodríguez Almenar, *La Sábana Santa y sus implicaciones histórico-artísticas*, University of Valencia, May 2017, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/tesis?codigo=170976>, a 470 page text not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁷⁶ The website of the Centro Español de Sindonología can be visited at this link: <http://www.linteum.com/>

⁷⁷ See, for example: A. Caccese - E. Marinelli - L. Provera - D. Repice, *The Mandylion in Constantinople. Literary and iconographic sources*, in *ICST 2017, International Conference on the Shroud of Turin*, Pasco, USA, 19-22 July 2017, https://www.academia.edu/34142677/The_Mandylion_in_Constantinople_Literary_and_iconographic_sources, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

Addai (pp. 393-394) but does not explain that Addai could be Judas Thaddeus⁷⁸, one of the apostles, who was a relative of Jesus.

As for the Templars, Nicolotti writes that the idea of the transport of the Shroud by the Templars is by Vivien Godfrey-White, but he does not say who she is and does not enter a note. He could at least tell us that she was a Templar scholar⁷⁹. Nicolotti states that Wilson “tried to substantiate it through a series of conjectures” (p. 399) and insists: “As in the case of the history of the Mandylion, Wilson’s proposal is founded on numerous misunderstandings, forced assumptions, errors, and imaginative conjectures” (p. 401). Furthermore, according to Nicolotti, there is no evidence that the Templecombe panel is Templar (p. 401).

According to Nicolotti, Wilson is “no longer so convinced of his Templar theory”, and thinks of Édouard de Beaujeu, but “the Templars have nothing to do with Édouard de Beaujeu” (p. 403). In reality, in one of the articles cited in a note by Nicolotti, Wilson clarifies: “I do not totally reject the possibility of some Templar involvement in the Shroud’s history between 1204 and the early fourteenth century”⁸⁰ and also underlines: “Yet with regard to any connection to the Knights Templar, for instance, Edward’s link to the fallen Order is actually far stronger than Geoffroy’s. He was of the same family as Guillaume de Beaujeu, the renowned Templar Grand Master who died, true to his oath never to flee in battle, when the Crusaders’ last Holy Land stronghold of Acre fell to overwhelming numbers of Turks back in 1290”⁸¹. In a recent article⁸², Wilson reiterates that it is entirely likely and logical that the Templar Geoffroi de Charny should have belonged to the same family of the Geoffroi de Charny, first known owner of the Shroud. Wilson thinks that the de Charny family maintained silence on the Shroud’s origins because they guarded the relic in succession to the Knights Templar.

Nicolotti is certain that the letter from Theodore (Angelus) Komnenos Doukas to Pope Innocent III is false and therefore nothing of its content interests him (pp. 403-406); he does not consider that anyway even a forgery can contain historically interesting elements, inserted to give credibility to the document. In the images of the Pray Codex according to Nicolotti there is no reference to the Shroud (pp. 406-415). A different perspective is that of the French researcher Tristan Casabianca, who states: “The comparison between the Pray Codex and the Shroud of Turin, reinforced by a credible historical context and combined with a reliable methodological approach, makes the position that the Turin Shroud has absolutely no direct or indirect link with the Pray Codex untenable”⁸³. Among other things, Nicolotti writes that the epsilon-shaped stream of blood “is at the center of the forehead” (p. 409) while in reality it is more towards the left eyebrow. In the translation of Dionysius

⁷⁸ A. Di Genua - E. Marinelli - I. Polverari - D. Repice, *Judas, Thaddeus, Addai: possible connections with the vicissitudes of the Edessan and Constantinopolitan Mandylion and any research perspectives*, in *ATSI 2014*, op. cit., pp. 12-17, https://www.academia.edu/45620444/Judas_Thaddeus_Addai_possible_connections_with_the_vicissitudes_of_the_Edissan_and_Constantinopolitan_Mandylion_and_any_research_perspectives, non menzionato da Nicolotti.

⁷⁹ *Obituaries*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 49, June 1999, part 5, <https://www.shroud.com/n49part5.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁸⁰ I. Wilson, *Discovering more of the Shroud's early history*, in *I International Congress on the Holy Shroud in Spain*, op. cit., <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/wilsonvtxt.pdf>, pp. 1-14, on p. 13 note 4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, on p. 8.

⁸² I. Wilson, *The Madrid Manuscript of Geoffroi de Charny's "Livre Charny" Poem and "Demandes"*, (*Madrid Ms. 9270*), *Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, 1352*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 93, Summer 2021, pp. 3-13.

⁸³ T. Casabianca, *The ongoing historical debate about the Shroud of Turin: the case of the Pray Codex*, in *The Heythrop Journal*, vol. 62, n. 5, September 2021, pp. 789-802, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/heyj.13929>

A preliminary version of the same article can be found at this link:

https://www.academia.edu/45290040/The_Ongoing_Historical_Debate_About_the_Shroud_of_Turin_The_Case_of_the_Pray_Codex

da Furnà once again there is confusion in the translation, because “sudarium” is translated as “shroud” (p. 411).

In the 80s “on the wave of emotion caused by the results of Sturp”, here is that “everything seemed to presage an increase in the number of scientists or those presumed to be scientists who claimed to have found, by various means, further evidence of authenticity”. Nicolotti warns the reader: “There is not space in this book to consider all of the wild Shroud theories” (p. 416). Then in reality he goes on citing all the most improbable theories as if they were the only hypotheses supported by the sindonologists.

The situation is this: if a sindonologist only puts forward an unlikely theory, Nicolotti is very happy to quote it. If a sindonologist puts forward a probable and an unlikely theory, he cites only the unlikely one. If a sindonologist only puts forward a plausible theory, he does not quote it. Among the unlikely discoveries he cites the identification of aragonite, “a substance found in the tombs of Jerusalem (though not in them exclusively)” (p. 416). Nicolotti does not say that the aragonite found on the Shroud and that of the Jerusalem tombs are similar, as both have small amounts of strontium and iron⁸⁴.

We have thus come to the period of radiocarbon dating. Nicolotti again has a warning for the reader: “I limit myself to setting forth the main facts, leaving aside the examination of every detail. Insistence on the details risks losing sight of the essential point - that is, the result of the radiocarbon testing” (p. 418). Instead, I think that the details are very important and form the subject of useful reflections. There is an observation by Nicolotti: “It was clear that certain managers of the radiocarbon laboratories and Gove⁸⁵ himself had little regard for Sturp or other scientific sindonological associations. The scientists’ desire was to date the Shroud and nothing more, and they did not want the sindonologists to take part in the procedure” (p. 418). No negative comments on this situation on the part of Nicolotti, who evidently finds the exclusion of the scientists from Sturp and the Turin International Center for Sindonology to be reasonable. In fact shortly after (p. 419) he reports, without a source and without a contrary comment, the thought of the biophysicist Carlos Chagas who speaks of “their poor scientific value and their biased authenticist perspective”.

It was decided the sampling in a single point “to minimize the mutilation of the cloth” (p. 420). But the archaeologist William Meacham of the University of Hong Kong, as well as every other archaeologist and geologist, considered contamination “a very serious problem in interpreting the results of radiocarbon measurement”⁸⁶ and had proposed to take a thread from the middle of the cloth, between the dorsal and ventral image, a small piece from the edge next to the site of the 1973 sampling, a piece of the charred cloth, a piece of the side strip and a piece of the backing cloth sewn on in 1534. All samples would be carefully examined (microchemical tests, mass spectrometry, micro-Raman) and appropriately pretreated for impurities and intrusive substances⁸⁷.

⁸⁴ J. A. Kohlbeck - E. L. Nitowski, *New evidence may explain image on Shroud of Turin*, in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, vol. 12, n. 4, July-August 1986, pp. 18-29, www.baslibrary.org/biblical-archaeology-review/12/4/1/; R. Levi Setti - G. Crow - Y.L. Wang, *Progress in high resolution scanning ion microscopy and secondary ion mass spectrometry imaging microanalysis*, in *Scanning Electron Microscopy*, n. 2, part II, article 6, 1985, pp. 535-551, <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1179&context=electron>, all of them not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁸⁵ *Obituary*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 69, June 2009, part 7, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/n69part7.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁸⁶ W. Meacham, *On carbon dating the Turin Shroud*, in *Shroud Spectrum International*, n. 19 part 4, June 1986, pp. 15-25, on p. 15, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/ssi19part4.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁸⁷ W. Meacham, *Radiocarbon measurement and the age of the Turin Shroud: possibilities and uncertainties*, in *Turin Shroud – Image of Christ?, Proceedings of a Symposium held in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, March 3-9, 1986, Cosmos Printing Press Ltd., Hong Kong 1987, pp. 41-56, on pp. 52-53, <https://www.shroud.com/meacham.htm>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

Nicolotti dedicates a few lines to indiscretions and leaks of news. He does not know how Reverend David Sox⁸⁸ knows the results: he just writes that “Reverend Sox somehow also came to know of the first results” (p. 422). In reality, it is known that in Zurich, the filming of all operations by a crew from BBC *Timewatch* program was allowed⁸⁹. It is reported by Sox himself, who was also there⁹⁰. And the indiscretions were numerous⁹¹.

Gonella’s subsequent interviews “revealed his palpable anger with the laboratories” (p. 423). But Nicolotti does not report anything of what Gonella said. Here are some examples. “The gentlemen in Oxford and London misbehaved; in their attitude there is an attack to other scientists without even reading their articles. I had great respect for the University of Oxford that I no longer have. (...) xThe scientists came out of this test very discredited”⁹². “The vast majority of my colleagues are not satisfied, either by the adopted procedures, or by the conclusions. These gentlemen, moreover, shout from the rooftops that now the last word was pronounced on the question. Theirs, of course”⁹³. “Misconducts there were tons. The colleagues of the C14 behaved in a disgusting manner. Those scientists have hatched a true plot to discredit the Shroud”⁹⁴.

Nicolotti (p. 426) reports the words of Card. Ballestrero in the press conference of 13 October 1988, with which it seemed that the cardinal had accepted the medieval result of the dating. However, he should also have quoted these subsequent words of the cardinal. “I am quite convinced that the necessary diligence was not observed in the procedure that was agreed. (...) But perhaps these scholars have proceeded on the subject purposely with a little imprudence, due to excessive confidence in their techniques. And this, in the opinion of not few people, would make the results of the analyses unreliable. (...) I think so, instinctively, that it is authentic and therefore I understand well how science tries to realize how. (...) There is no doubt that the fabric as a weaving and spinning technique dates back to the time of Christ. (...) The fact of the negative is indisputable. Explain it though! Those scientists are right who say: whoever denies the authenticity of the Shroud must explain to us through which procedures this hypothetical forger was able to obtain a negative, in times when nothing was known about the negative. And even less about the three-dimensionality! But then the impressive correspondence between the Gospel description of the Passion, the torture, the crown of thorns, the crucifixion, the piercing and the Shroud data: it is a great miracle! (...) Nobody made me say that I accept these results. I have not said it and I am not saying it because it is not up to me, I am not the judge of science”⁹⁵.

To diminish the value of these words of Card. Ballestrero, in another of his texts, where instead he mentions the interview with the cardinal, Nicolotti writes: “That Ballestrero does not have full knowledge of the matter can be deduced from the integral reading of the interview in question, in which there are various technical inaccuracies and some errors of memory: however, it is not from a retired archbishop, lacking the appropriate studies, that too much precision can be expected. Similar

⁸⁸ Obituary, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 86, December 2017, part 6, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/n86part6.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁸⁹ *Two recent B.B.C. Television programmes*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 20, October 1988, part. 5, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/n20part5.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁹⁰ D. Sox, *The Shroud unmasked - Uncovering the greatest forgery of all time*, The Lamp Press, Basingstoke 1988, pp. 135-142, book mentioned by Nicolotti in note 32 of p. 363.

⁹¹ I. Wilson, *On the Recent “Leaks”*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, Special Issue, 23 September 1988, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/bstsleaks.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁹² R. Cascioli, *Sindone, chi ha barato*, in *Avvenire*, 12 May 1989, p. 5, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁹³ M. Travaglio, “*Non basta il carbonio 14*”. *Altre polemiche sulla Sindone*, in *Il Giornale*, 12 May, 1989, p. 7, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ G. Caviglia, *La Santa Sindone. Un enigma appassionante*, in *Il Messaggero del S. Bambino Gesù di Praga* n. 7, August-September 1997, pp. 18-23, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

inaccuracies regarding the problem of the Shroud were not found during the period of his episcopate, especially because at the time Ballestrero was supported by a competent consultant, professor Luigi Gonella, who always advised him on what to do and generally viewed the texts in advance of his public statements”⁹⁶.

According to Nicolotti, the sindonologists “decided to reject the result of the medieval dating as, according to them, it conflicted with what they already knew about the Shroud”. And again: “The Catholic press chose to react by giving voice to the opinion of the sindonologists, who parroted the usual argument according to which the Shroud is an inexplicable object, full of mysteries, which had already passed too many tests to be forced to capitulate to a single piece of incompatible evidence (in reality there was no proof in favor)” (p. 426).

Reactions to the dating were “unhinged and amateurish”, according to Nicolotti. “Up to this point none of these observations had ever convinced C14 experts” (p. 427). There are interesting statements instead, such as these: “For a relic like the Shroud, sample decontamination is key, according to Dr Liam Kieser, director of the radiocarbon lab at the University of Ottawa, Canada. ‘It has been handled by many people over the ages’, he said. ‘One would be concerned about the effect of finger oil’. He pointed out that the Shroud has survived several fires, ‘and while one can clean off smoke damage ... the organic vapors associated with fires can also be absorbed and become more permanently embedded’. (...) Dr Peter Steier, a radiocarbon expert at the University of Vienna, said he had heard credible reports of how repairs to the Shroud might have affected the 1988 results”⁹⁷.

On the lack of a record of the sampling operations and on the contradictory reports of the technician who carried out the sampling, Giovanni Riggi, and of the textile expert Franco Testore regarding the subdivision of the sample (pp. 427-428), Nicolotti minimizes: “Such problems have had no bearing upon the result of the radiocarbon test. The footage, photographs, and notes that Riggi, Gonella, and Testore took are sufficient to reconstruct correctly the sequence of events” (p. 428). But Riggi commented: “Who fantasized and was not soft in criticism and accusations, perhaps was not entirely wrong; because without documents to rely on, every fantasy was possible, every doubt was permissible and every conclusion, incorrect or unjust, when not authoritatively contradicted, could be reasonable”⁹⁸.

Nicolotti continues to minimize instead: “But above all, the way in which a piece of cloth was cut out in multiple places is information that is negligible in and of itself, and that could also be completed without being detailed verbally (especially since the operation was filmed)”. And again: “The laboratories simply dated what they received, and it is a separate issue whether in Turin no precise report of the samples was produced or if there was confusion about the numbers” (p. 428).

On the failure to grant raw data, Nicolotti speaks of “false rumors” and writes: “To substantiate the accusations, other false rumors were added, such as, for example, that the radiocarbon laboratories had refused to deliver the ‘raw data’ of the measurements; but the truth is that they sent the data to the relevant authorities, not to whomever asked for it” (p. 429). In reality the laboratories did not send the data to the “Colonnetti” Institute in Turin for the statistical analysis. At this point the “Colonnetti” asked not to be involved anymore and at the Institute only the engineer Anthos Bray agreed to be still committed, as a personal favor to Cardinal Ballestrero⁹⁹. Gonella had to insist on

⁹⁶ A. Nicolotti, *La Sindone, banco di prova per esegesi, storia, scienza e teologia. Considerazioni a margine di alcune recenti pubblicazioni*, in *Annali di storia dell'esegesi*, vol. 33, n. 2, 2016, pp. 459-510, on p. 492, note 88.

⁹⁷ J. Stannus, *Is it time for new tests on the Turin Shroud?*, in *Catholic Herald*, 2 May 2019, <https://catholicherald.co.uk/new-research-reopens-the-turin-shroud-debate/>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁹⁸ G. Riggi di Numana, *Il giorno più lungo della S. Sindone di Torino*, in *Sindone, il mistero continua*, Fondazione 3M Ed., Milan 2005, pp. 88-171, on p. 96, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

⁹⁹ L. Gonella, *Storia degli avvenimenti connessi alla datazione della S. Sindone*, in *Sindone, il mistero continua*, op. cit., pp. 28-87, on p. 78-79, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

having the data sent. Again Nicolotti repeats: “Sindonology had by now assumed the character of pseudoscience” (p. 430). On the erroneous datings listed by the sindonologists, Nicolotti writes: “But a careful evaluation of these so-called errors (which, however, are always cited in a generic and approximate manner) demonstrates that they do not exist, or that they go back to an earlier epoch in which the dating system had not yet been refined, or that they concern materials that do not lend themselves to radiocarbon dating but whose concentration of carbon 14 is measured for purposes other than those concerned with their age” (p. 430).

Archaeologist William Meacham has a different opinion, according to whom misleading dates are not rare at all. He reminds his experience as an archeologist in dating more than one hundred samples: 78 dates were considered credible, 26 were rejected as unreliable, and 11 were deemed problematic¹⁰⁰. Radiocarbon scientists themselves admit it: “The existence of significant undetermined errors cannot be excluded from any age determination. No method is immune to processing grossly incorrect dates when unknown problems may exist with the sample at the collection site. Our results illustrate that this situation can occur frequently”¹⁰¹.

Nicolotti states that textiles “are a type of material that responds very well to radiocarbon analysis” (p. 431) On the contrary, the chemist Piero Savarino, emeritus professor of Industrial Organic Chemistry at Turin University, writes: “Among the finds at risk are the textile fibers. In fact, the surface area per unit of weight exposed to the interaction with the outside is much higher than other systems (wood, leather) because of the small diameter of the fibers (of the order of tens of microns). If during the preparation of the samples the whole foreign material is not removed, we can easily incur in significant errors in dating”¹⁰².

Also the chemist Alberto Brandone of the University of Pavia stressed the influence of fungi, bacteria and spores on the linen fibers of the Shroud, with the development and deposit of products of metabolism and degradation¹⁰³. On the other hand, an important laboratory for radiocarbon dating, Beta Analytic, warns on its website about the possibility of incorrect dating: “Samples taken from textile applied with additives or preservatives will have a false radiocarbon age”¹⁰⁴.

The hypothesis of contamination for Nicolotti is “untenable”, and he adds: “For a radiocarbon scientist the Shroud is a very clean object” (p. 432). In the following pages he demolishes the experiments of the biochemist Dmitri Kouznetsov (pp. 433-435), downplays physicist Harry Gove’s interest in the bioplastic patina¹⁰⁵ (p. 436), disputes John Jackson’s carbon monoxide hypothesis and reports the complaints of physicist Christopher Bronk Ramsey for an article published in *La Stampa* (pp. 437-439).

On the possibility of an invisible mending, which Nicolotti defines as “a more curious variant of the pollution theory”, he ridicules Joe Marino and Sue Benford (p. 439) and then goes on to affirm that invisible mending does not exist. Nicolotti writes: “If they were truly ‘invisible’, then we ought to deduce that while making the repair, the one doing the mending saw his work disappear before his

¹⁰⁰ W. Meacham, *Thoughts on the Shroud ¹⁴C debate*, in *The Turin Shroud, past, present and future, International Scientific Symposium*, op. cit., pp. 441-454, on p. 443-444, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹⁰¹ R.A. Johnson - J.J. Stipp - M. A. Tamers - G. Bonani - M. Suter - W. Wölfli, *Archaeologic sherd dating: comparison of thermoluminescence dates with radiocarbon dates by beta counting and accelerator techniques*, in *Radiocarbon* 28, 2A (1986), pp. 719-725, on p. 725, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹⁰² P. Savarino, *La radiodattazione della Sindone*, in B. Barberis - P. Savarino, *Sindone, radiodattazione e calcolo delle probabilità*, Elle Di Ci, Leumann 1997, pp. 3-26, on p. 11, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹⁰³ A. Brandone, *Dattazione di reperti archeologici: problematiche connesse*, in *Sindon - Nuova Serie* 1 (1989), pp. 31-33, on p. 33, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹⁰⁴ See: <https://www.radiocarbon.com/ams-dating-textiles.htm>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹⁰⁵ H.E. Gove - S.J. Mattingly - A.R. David - L.A. Garza-Valdès, *A problematic source of organic contamination of linen*, in *Nuclear Instruments and Methods in Physics Research*, B 123, 1997, pp. 504-507, <http://www.sindone.info/GOVE.PDF>

eyes!” (p. 440). Nicolotti does not realize what an invisible mending is. At the end of the work, after cutting the hanging threads, really it is not possible to distinguish the new part of the cloth¹⁰⁶.

To argue that the sample did not contain any mending, Nicolotti also cites (p. 442) an article¹⁰⁷ which, however, was strongly criticized by Gian Marco Rinaldi¹⁰⁸. It is really strange that Nicolotti does not quote an article by Rinaldi, given the esteem he has of him; but no one can escape Nicolotti’s censorship if he or she dares to write something that is not advantageous for the negationist thought.

As for the statistical analysis of the radiocarbon dating results, Nicolotti considers it “inconclusive” (p. 442). The raw data that were processed for publication in *Archaeometry*¹⁰⁹ according to Nicolotti “have been in circulation for some time now” (p. 442) while on p. 429 he had written that the data had not been sent “to whomever asked for it”. The authors of the article in *Archaeometry* specified: “Since the publication of the article in *Nature*, many researchers have requested, in vain, the publication of the raw data. In fact, the three laboratories (Oxford, Tucson, Zurich) and the British Museum, the institution in charge of statistical analysis, have always evaded this request. In 2017, for the first time, one of the researchers of our team, the French Tristan Casabianca, legally requested (through the *Freedom of Information Act*) the British Museum for such data, managing to obtain the reports sent by the three laboratories to the institution”¹¹⁰.

Nicolotti then continues to speak of the twelve data published in *Nature*¹¹¹ as if only those and not the raw data had been studied. In reality, the twelve data of *Nature* had been previously studied, with this conclusion: “The 12 datings that were produced by the 3 laboratories cannot be considered as coming from a single unknown quantity and it is therefore probable the presence of an environmental contamination in the piece of cloth analyzed that acted in a non-uniform way, but in a linear way, adding a systematic effect that is not negligible”¹¹². Nicolotti concludes that “this issue is completely irrelevant” (p. 443). The doubt arises that he has not understood what raw data are. We hope that he will find useful three interesting articles published after the release of his book¹¹³.

Meanwhile Nicolotti finds the words of the Dominican father Jean-Michel Maldamé interesting: “The disputes over the carbon 14 dating do not come from individuals who are competent in the

¹⁰⁶ See: <https://www.parisiangentleman.com/blog/invisible-mending-an-amazing-craft-under-threat>

¹⁰⁷ R. A. Freer-Waters - A. J. T. Jull, *Investigating a dated piece of the Shroud of Turin*, in *Radiocarbon*, vol. 52, n. 4, 2010, pp. 1521–1527.

¹⁰⁸ G. M. Rinaldi, *Autogol a Tucson*, January 2011, <http://sindone.weebly.com/autogoltucson.html>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹⁰⁹ T. Casabianca - E. Marinelli - G. Pernagallo - B. Torrisi, *Radiocarbon dating of the Turin Shroud: new evidence from raw data*, in *Archaeometry*, vol. 61, n. 5, October 2019, pp. 1223-1231, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/arc.12467>

¹¹⁰ T. Casabianca - E. Marinelli - G. Pernagallo - B. Torrisi, *Sindone medievale? Inaffidabile*, in *La Nuova Bussola Quotidiana*, 28 March 2019, <https://lanuovabq.it/it/esclusivo-sindone-medievale-inaffidabile>

¹¹¹ P.E. Damon et al., *Radiocarbon dating of the Shroud of Turin*, in *Nature*, vol. 337, 16 february 1989, pp. 611-615, <https://doi.org/10.1038/337611a0>

¹¹² M. Riani - G. Fanti - F. Crosilla - A.C. Atkinson, *Statistica robusta e radiodazione della Sindone*, in *Sis-Magazine*, 31 March 2010, <https://old.sis-statistica.org/magazine/spip.php?article177>, not mentioned by Nicolotti; see also: M. Riani - A.C. Atkinson - G. Fanti - F. Crosilla, *Regression analysis with partially labeled regressors: carbon dating of the Shroud of Turin*, in *Statistics and Computing*, vol. 23, 2013, pp. 551–561, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11222-012-9329-5>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹¹³ B.J. Walsh - L. Schwalbe, *An instructive inter-laboratory comparison: the 1988 radiocarbon dating of the Shroud of Turin*, in *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*, vol. 29, 2020, 102015 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2019.102015>; P. Di Lazzaro - A.C. Atkinson - P. Iacomussi - M. Riani - M. Ricci - P. Wadhams, *Statistical and proactive analysis of an inter-laboratory comparison: the radiocarbon dating of the Shroud of Turin*, in *Entropy*, vol. 22(9), 2020, 926, <https://doi.org/10.3390/e22090926>; P. Di Lazzaro - P. Iacomussi - M. Riani - M. Ricci - A. Atkinson - P. Wadhams, *Revisione propositiva dei risultati di radio-datazione della Sindone di Torino*, Rapporto Tecnico RT/2020/2/ENEA, 2020, <https://iris.enea.it/retrieve/handle/20.500.12079/52941/5084/RT-2020-02-ENEA.pdf>

subject of dating” (p. 443). Where does Nicolotti think he will fit? Among individuals who are competent in the subject of dating?

Nicolotti mocks those who think that dating may have been influenced by a phenomenon connected with the resurrection (pp. 444-445) and concludes: “Thus the sindonologist would seem always to have the advantage over the serious scientist, who would never resort to supernatural explanations” (p. 445). However, on the same page, in note 191, he had named Thomas J. Phillips¹¹⁴ of the High Energy Physics Laboratory, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, among the supporters of the neutron radiation due to the resurrection. According to Nicolotti, is a Harvard physicist a serious scientist or not?

Nicolotti criticizes the book¹¹⁵ I wrote with the Vatican expert Orazio Petrosillo¹¹⁶: “That book could be considered the summative repository of groundless accusations addressing the results of the radiocarbon dating” (p. 447). The book is out of print, but to assess whether those accusations were “groundless” or not, you can read the paper¹¹⁷ I presented at the Valencia congress in 2012, an updated summary of the part of the book dedicated to radiocarbon dating. I have the honor of being considered by Nicolotti “one of the most famous sindonologists in the world”, even if he does not appreciate my production: he considers my books “propagandistic” and “not very reliable” (p. 447).

On the pareidolia phenomena of those who see “writings and coins” on the Shroud (p. 448) it would have been useful to mention an important article published in 2013¹¹⁸. Speaking of Gonella (p. 448), Nicolotti reports a 1996 statement of the Turin engineer who says that only the sindonologists have doubts about dating, he does not. If we examine Gonella’s previous statements it did not seem like that...

According to Nicolotti, the expert in ancient fabrics Gabriel Vial, based on textile considerations, would have said that the Shroud dates back to the Middle Ages (p. 449). Nicolotti does not put a note with a source, but in one of the articles¹¹⁹ by Vial that Nicolotti cites on p. 70, note 8, the French textile expert does not write that the Shroud is medieval, but simply that it is “unparalleled”¹²⁰ because he has not found an identical fabric. Nicolotti then states that the experts from the C14 laboratories “declined all invitations to sindonological conferences” (p. 449); but he does not say that the physicist Michael Tite of the British Museum, coordinator of all the research, attended the 1989 Paris congress and agreed to be interviewed by me and Petrosillo for *Il Messaggero*¹²¹ and by Chantal Dupont for the Parisian radio station *Radio Courtoisie*¹²².

Nicolotti insists on pseudoscience: “Therefore, the impression is that all sindonology falls entirely into the category of pseudoscience, influenced as it is by a predetermined agenda, and that those

¹¹⁴ T. J. Phillips, *Shroud irradiated with neutrons?*, in *Nature*, Vol. 337, 16 February 1989, p. 594.

¹¹⁵ O. Petrosillo - E. Marinelli, *La Sindone, un enigma alla prova della scienza*, Rizzoli, Milan 1990; English translation: *The enigma of the Shroud, a challenge to science*, Publishers Enterprises Group, San Gwann 1996. Nicolotti writes (p. 447, note 196) that the book in Italian came out in 1998, confusing it with another book: O. Petrosillo - E. Marinelli, *La Sindone, storia di un enigma*, Rizzoli, Milan 1998, updated version of the previous one.

¹¹⁶ For a short biography of Orazio Petrosillo, see: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orazio_Petrosillo

¹¹⁷ E. Marinelli, *The setting for the radiocarbon dating of the Shroud*, in *I International Congress on the Holy Shroud in Spain*, op. cit., pp. 1-30, <http://www.sindone.info/VALENC-3.PDF>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹¹⁸ P. Di Lazzaro – D. Murra – B. Schwartz, *Pattern recognition after image processing of low-contrast images, the case of the Shroud of Turin*, in *Pattern recognition*, vol. 46, n. 7, July 2013, pp. 1964-1970, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹¹⁹ G. Vial, *Le Linceul de Turin, étude technique*, in *Bulletin du CIETA*, n. 67, 1989, pp. 11-24; G. Vial, *À propos du linceul de Turin*, in *Bulletin du CIETA*, n. 69, 1991, pp. 34- 35; G. Vial, *À propos du Linceul*, in *Montre-Nous Ton Visage*, n. 10, 1993, pp. 27- 30.

¹²⁰ G. Vial, *Le Linceul de Turin, étude technique*, op. cit., on p. 21.

¹²¹ O. Petrosillo – E. Marinelli, *Interview with Dr. Michael Tite*, in *Shroud News*, n. 59, June 1990, pp. 3-9, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/sn059Jun90.pdf>; *Intervista al Prof. Tite del British Museum*, in *Collegamento pro Sindone*, January-February 1990, pp. 38-44, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹²² *An interview with dr. Michael Tite*, in *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, n. 25, April-May 1990, part 1, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/n25part1.pdf>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

involved make no effort to disassociate themselves from the pseudoscience” (p. 450). He mentions three priests against authenticity who are university professors (p. 453). No mention of university professors priests in favor of the authenticity of the Shroud such as Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti¹²³ or Rafael Pascual¹²⁴.

In John Paul II’s speech of May 24, 1998 it is said that the Church “entrusts to scientists the task of continuing to investigate, so that satisfactory answers may be found to the questions connected with this Sheet”¹²⁵. According to Nicolotti, in the congress held in Turin in 1998 “there would be no hope of finding such scholars” (p. 454). And he proceeds by citing only the speakers who have proposed the theories that he considers most improbable. In 2000 there were two congresses. According to Nicolotti, in that of Turin “the quality of the scholarly presentations was, on average, superior” of that of Orvieto. The intent is clearly to disqualify the congress of Orvieto¹²⁶ in comparison with that of Turin, where radiocarbon experts who accepted the medieval dating of the Shroud participated (p. 456).

In note 223 of p. 459 Nicolotti states that Baima Bollone in one of his books describes William Meacham as “paranoid”. It’s not true. Baima Bollone in that book¹²⁷ rejects the criticisms made by various scholars about the intervention conducted on the Shroud in 2002 and speaks in general when he writes: “The overlapping of criticisms calls for psychological subjectivities”. In particular, when he talks about Meacham, he does not approve the way he expressed the criticisms, but he defines him as a “brilliant archaeologist from the University of Hong Kong”.

Nicolotti acknowledges that “studying the Shroud and hundreds of sindonological publications is tiring and takes a great deal of time” (p. 461). But why does he do it? He then goes on to talk about the copy of the Shroud made by Garlaschelli¹²⁸, which he considers valid (pp. 461-463). However, he does not mention a critical letter¹²⁹ published in the same magazine where Garlaschelli published his article. Then he speaks of Rolfe saying that he was “already a controversial figure in 1978 for the production of a film on the Shroud”, but he does not explain why (p. 464).

Regarding “the theme of the Masonic conspiracy”, Nicolotti writes: “On this topic, various sindonological books quote some phrases attributed to Cardinal Ballestrero, from which it would seem that, once retired, he attributed to freemasonry some influence on the medieval result of the radiocarbon dating; but it is a matter of the erroneous interpretation of an interview in which he was speaking not of the laboratories and scientists but rather of some authenticist sindonologists who

¹²³ See: <http://www.tanzella-nitti.it/profilo-biografico>; G. Tanzella-Nitti, *Aspetti teologici legati alla tradizione del lenzuolo funebre di Gesù e le informazioni documentali consegnate dalla “Sindone di Torino”*, in G. Tanzella-Nitti, *Teologia della credibilità in contesto scientifico. II. La credibilità del Cristianesimo*, Città Nuova, Rome 2015, pp. 364-93, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹²⁴ See: <https://uprait.academia.edu/RafaelPascual/CurriculumVitae>; Father Pascual is the Coordinator of the Postgraduate Certificate in Shroud Studies <https://www.upra.org/offerta-formativa/istituti/isf/postgraduate-certificate-in-shroud-studies-edition-2021-2022/> that is held at the Science and Faith Institute of the Pontifical Athenaeum *Regina Apostolorum* in Rome, in collaboration with *Othonia* <https://www.upra.org/strip-checkout-result/othonia-web-www-othonia-org/>, the *International Center of Studies on the Shroud* in Turin <https://sindone.it/museo/en/ics/ics-overview/> and the *Giulio Ricci Diocesan Center of Sindonology* of Rome.

¹²⁵ *Address of His Holiness Pope John Paul II*, Sunday 24 May 1998, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/travels/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_24051998_sindone.html

¹²⁶ *Worldwide Congress “Sindone 2000”*, Orvieto (Italy), 27-29 August 2000, <http://web.tiscali.it/sindone2000/index2.htm>

¹²⁷ P. Baima Bollone, *Il mistero della Sindone*, Mondolibri, Milan 2006, on pp. 156-59.

¹²⁸ L. Garlaschelli, *Life-size reproduction of the Shroud of Turin and its image*, in *Journal of Imaging Science and Technology*, vol. 54, n. 4, July 2010, pp. 1- 14, <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/ist/jist/2010/00000054/00000004/art00002>

¹²⁹ G. Fanti – T. Heimburger, *Letter to the Editor - Comments on “Life-size reproduction of the Shroud of Turin and its image” by L. Garlaschelli*, in *Journal of Imaging Science and Technology*, vol. 55, n. 2, March-April 2011, pp. 1-3, <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/ist/jist/2011/00000055/00000002/art00002#>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

were freemasons” (p. 464). He adds in note 247 that he has demonstrated this in an article written by him and “Giuseppe Caviglia, personal secretary to the cardinal, has confirmed it for me orally”.

It is not possible to check with Father Caviglia the veracity of this and another confidence that Nicolotti speaks of in note 146 on page 425, because Father Caviglia died in 2017¹³⁰. But you can read an interview in which Father Caviglia asks Ballestrero: “Could Freemasonry have had a hand in this whole affair? And the external pressures?” The cardinal replies: “I think it is indisputable!” Later, in the same interview, Ballestrero says: “A serious slander was also being purposely mounted against the Church, an enemy of science because it was afraid of the truth, worried not to lose the relics that make money”¹³¹.

In another version of the interview we read: “Do you think that in the exploitation of the Shroud affair made by the mass media, there is a hand of Freemasonry and other pressures in bad faith?” The cardinal replies: “I think it is indisputable. It cannot be a coincidence that everything has been interpreted in a polemical and anti-religious key”¹³². Gonella, for his part, said: “In my opinion there is an anti-Catholic conspiracy of specific milieus¹³³”. So, Ballestrero and Gonella would have been referring to authenticistic sindonologists that would have been Freemasons, anti-religious and anti-Catholic at the same time? I have been interested in the Shroud since 1977 and so far I have never met a sindonologist who is at the same time an authenticist, a Freemason, an anti-religious and an anti-Catholic.

Later Nicolotti writes: “It is not possible to offer a very brief account of the progress of sindonology in recent years” (p. 466). He then decides to dedicate the last ten pages of the book to criticize the strangest and most improbable theories in order to ridicule all the sindonologists as much as possible. As we have already seen, he names only those with strange ideas or only the strange ideas of those who also have right ideas. He also says that “beginning in 2001, the Turin Center of Sindonology has organized conferences held by sindonologists in schools to indoctrinate students” (p. 466).

Nicolotti then speaks of an article¹³⁴ that was withdrawn after its publication (p. 470), but does not report what the authors subsequently wrote¹³⁵. Regarding the earthquakes mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew, he states: “Ignorance of the exegetical literature on the subject leads to an imprudent, literal reading of the Gospels. According to the majority of biblical scholars, the ‘quakes’ of which only the evangelist Matthew speaks in correspondence with the death and resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 27:51 and 28: 2) are not real earthquakes but symbolic, apocalyptic signs referring to Old Testament motifs (especially Ezekiel), indications of a theophany, of a direct intervention of God in human affairs” (p. 471, note 268). Obviously, for Nicolotti the only interpretation is the symbolic one.

¹³⁰ G. Zoppi, *Il ricordo di padre Giuseppe Caviglia*, in *La Voce e il Tempo*, 17 January 2017, <https://www.lavocedeltampo.com/Chiesa/Il-ricordo-di-padre-Giuseppe-Caviglia>

¹³¹ G. Caviglia, *La Santa Sindone. Un enigma appassionante*, op. cit., not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹³² G. Caviglia, *Guardare alla Sindone con fiducia e con serenità, intervista a S. E. Card. Anastasio Ballestrero*, in Various authors, *Il grande libro della Sindone*, San Paolo 2000, pp. 231-234, on p. 234, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹³³ R. Patruno, *Un complotto anticattolico contro la sacra Sindone*, in *La Repubblica*, 29 September 1988, p. 18, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹³⁴ E. Carlino – L. De Caro – C. Giannini – G. Fanti, *Atomic resolution studies detect new biologic evidences on the Turin Shroud*, in *Plos One*, vol. 12, n. 6, 2017, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0180487>

¹³⁵ *Giulio Fanti contro la ritrattazione di Plos One*, <https://www.scienzainrete.it/articolo/giulio-fanti-contro-ritrattazione-di-plosone/2018-10-23>; *Giulio Fanti all'editore di Plos One: non ritrattare*, <https://www.scienzainrete.it/node/18394>; *Carlino letter*, <https://retractionwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Carlino-letter.pdf>, all of them not mentioned by Nicolotti.

Speaking of the conference¹³⁶ held at Enea in 2010, Nicolotti complains, among other things, of the presence of “a biologist to talk about history, a physicist and a natural science graduate to talk about iconography” (p. 474). He evidently thinks he is the only one who can talk about everything, as he did in this volume. He does not miss a dig at the physicist Paolo Di Lazzaro, who organized the congress at Enea: “Since then, Paolo Di Lazzaro has been rewarded with the position of vice director of the Turin International Center of Sindonology” (p. 474).

Since Nicolotti considers himself an expert in everything, he also attacks the palynologist Marzia Boi, researcher at the Laboratory of Botany, Department of Biology, University of the Balearic Islands: “Boi described Frei’s research as imprecise, erroneous, inconclusive, and unscientific (as was already known); soon after, however, she herself undertook the identification of other pollens, falling into the same errors of those she had criticized” (p. 474) and concludes that “Frei’s and Boi’s results are in full contradiction and cancel each other out” (p. 475).

Nicolotti does not mention an important article by Boi and its interesting conclusions: “We have set forth new data about the Shroud of Turin. The pollen evidence shows that the relic could contain botanical substances used in anointing and embalming during funeral and burial rites in ancient times. The exact identification of the sindonic most abundant pollen of the Asteraceae (*Helichrysum*), along with the presence of the Cistaceae (*Cistus*), the Apiaceae (*Ferula*) and *Pistacia*, reveals the use of ointments. These plants were typically employed in expensive and valuable products cited in the scientific writings of Pliny the Elder and Dioscorides. Our conclusions show that the relic could be a real burial cloth, yielding pollen evidence of *Helichrysum* oil, as well as of ladanum (*Cistus* spp.), galbanum (*Ferula* spp.), mastic oil and gum (*Pistacia lentiscus*) and terebinth (*Pistacia terebinthus*), all of which are the bases of ancient ointments used in the first century AD. The precise identification of *Helichrysum* pollen, which had formerly been wrongly recognized as *Gundelia tournefortii*, confirms and authenticates the theory that the corpse kept in the Shroud received a funeral and burial with all the honor and respect that would have been customary in the Hebrew tradition. The largest amount of *Helichrysum* pollen originates from the form used to produce its oil, utilizing exclusively fresh flowers. The smaller quantities of the other pollen types can be explained by the use of products derived from other botanical components. These botanical products have contributed to an exceptional preservation of the fabric right up to the present time; they have protected the linen by acting as powerful insect and fungal repellents. At the same time, they have caused the yellowish tinge of the Shroud, because these are substances that oxidize on coming into contact with the air”¹³⁷.

At this point it is evident that Nicolotti does not mention the articles he does not like, because they do not help his anti-authenticist cause. In conclusion, it can be said that the volume is undoubtedly useful for what it says, but it must be read knowing that Nicolotti does not say everything that should be said and what he says it is always interpreted in a totally negationist sense, contrary to the authenticity of the Shroud. The book ends by ridiculing the congress¹³⁸ held at the University of Bari in 2014: “References to earthquakes, to corona discharges, to lasers, and to sacred fires of the Holy Sepulcher did not obscure the news of the discovery of a new type of special energy” (p. 475). He continues by citing the intervention of a Belarusian physicist who spoke of seedlings that grow more if they are close to a copy of the Shroud. According to Nicolotti, not only that speech - which in any case was interrupted by the moderator of the session - represents the whole congress in Bari, but even all the sindonology: “Such, it would seem, is the triumph of sindonology in the twentyfirst century”. With these words the volume of Nicolotti concludes, providing the measure of his hatred against the scholars who are interested in the Shroud considering it authentic. Paraphrasing his final statement, it can be said that his book is the triumph of the sindonophobia in the twentyfirst century.

¹³⁶ *International Workshop on the Scientific Approach to the Acheiropoietos Images*, ENEA Research Center of Frascati, Italy, 4-6 May 2010, <http://www.acheiropoietos.info/>

¹³⁷ M. Boi, *Pollen on the Shroud of Turin: the probable trace left by anointing and embalming*, in *Archaeometry*, vol. 59 n. 2, April 2017, pp. 316-330, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/arcm.12269>, not mentioned by Nicolotti.

¹³⁸ See: <https://www.uniba.it/eventi-alluniversita/anno-2014/la-sacra-sindone-e-le-nuove-ricerche-scientifiche>