



116. Feb. 13/26, 1973. St. Simeon the Myrrh-gusher of Serbia

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Date : September 2, 2016

Dear Brother in Christ, Alexey,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ. Just a brief note — since you mentioned that you might be printing Sarah’s article on the Shroud of Turin separately. I read it yesterday at last, rather quickly but enough to see that it shouldn’t be printed as it is, for several reasons:

- (1) The most compelling reason: it was obviously written for Roman Catholics and contains a number of purely Latin phenomena and expressions: The “Stations of the Cross,” “merits” of the Cross, etc. In such a form it would evoke a furor among many Orthodox and perhaps dose their minds completely to any possibility that the Shroud might after all be Orthodox!
- (2) Secondly, I would question the very large emphasis given to the Shroud in the article as a scientific proof, such phrases as “the most important verification of Christianity outside of Holy Scripture,” and “It can establish that Jesus Christ is true God and true man.” How can science establish such a non-scientific truth?! As secondary evidence it might corroborate the fact of Christ’s Resurrection, true — but not unless we have other then scientific grounds to accept the Shroud. “Scientific” knowledge by its nature is the least reliable form of human knowledge, very subject to revision and deception; not to mention the very real possibility of demonic counterfeits. Also, Sarah seems to be much more certain about such points as the dating of the Shroud than I recall the Walsh book as being (which only said, as I recall, that such cloth was used in the Near East around the time of Christ but not in Medieval Europe).
- (3) Almost no attention is given in the article to what from the Orthodox point of view is crucial: actually identifying the Shroud as an Orthodox holy object. Page 6 of the article from this point of view is crucial: each one of these references should be carefully researched and documented, and more found. Where, for example, does the reference from St. Nina come from? Its known that she was involved with the Lord’s Tunic, but not (as far as I know) the Shroud. It’s extremely important that the Orthodox history of the Shroud be made quite certain; then the scientific corroboration becomes stunning. But to build almost the whole argument on the scientific evidence is extremely risky.

All this is said not to throw any cold water! — but just to emphasize that to make the Shroud convincing to many Orthodox people much more than the scientific evidence is needed — the whole Orthodox context must be established. There must be found, for example, a sufficient answer for those who argue that it couldn’t be genuine because there is no Orthodox feast day or service to it. All this requires thought and research, and a premature presentation of the issue will only harm the



cause of its acceptance.

Pray for us — we are still in last year with the OW and the Post Office has given us until July 1 to get caught up!

With love in Christ our Saviour,
Seraphim, monk