

accepts the authenticity of the Shroud.

There is no doubt that many people (mostly Christian believers already?) are being persuaded by the "evidence". I have reservations on two counts. The first is that the chain of evidence has too many missing links which have to be strung together by hypothesis. Wilson's arguments rely a great deal on the identification of the Mandylion of the Eastern Orthodox Church with the Shroud of Turin, so much so that one has to remind oneself that there is no hard evidence for this identification (a fact that Wilson does not consciously seek to deny). Again, the scientific evidence only proves that at one stage of its history the Shroud material was in Palestine.

But further, there is a grave danger in all the debate of sliding into an identification of two orders of reality. When the Shroud "proves" that the body it once encased had received a spear wound in the side, "methinks it doth prove too much". This (late) detail in the Fourth Gospel is clearly on the borderline between "history" and that interpretation of history which belongs to the realm of faith and tradition.

The bare historical facts of the Christian Faith by themselves do nothing to men. Plenty lived through them and "saw" nothing. It is the significance and meaning of these events, history as interpreted in the tradition, that bred a Church and nourished a faith. And here we are in a world of faith and value-judgements, not a laboratory with its Carbon 14 tests, its microscopic analysis of pollen-seeds and X-ray investigation of the warp and woof of cloth.

There is no instant, convenient connecting door between these two rooms. You still have to go out of one, down the corridor and into the other.

REX MASON.

### NEWCOMEN SYMPOSIUM

The 250th anniversary of the death of Thomas Newcomen, the inventor of the steam engine, was marked by a commemorative symposium at Imperial College London on 23rd June 1979. The symposium, organized by the Newcomen Society for the Study of the History of Engineering, was concerned mainly with Newcomen's technical work, but his life as a Baptist pastor at Dartmouth and the importance of his Baptist contacts around the country were also mentioned.

The earliest Newcomen engine of which much is known was built near Dudley in 1712, and it is probable that the church contacts Newcomen already had with Bromsgrove led him to work in that area. Newcomen died in London at the house of his friend Edward Wallin, who was both the minister of Maze Pond Chapel and a business colleague of the inventor. One of the few surviving letters written by Newcomen was written from Wallin's house. It bears testimony to his faith and was published in the *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. 15.

BRIAN BOWERS.