

Editorial

Here reproduced, on the opposite page, is a painting by John Flaxman (1755-1826) representing Jesus Christ with three children – John, on the left, died at the age of three years, and the twins Christina and William, on the right, died at the age of 19 months – that an early death had taken away from their parents, Francis Redfearn and Julia Stewart of Langton Lodge, Yorkshire.

This painting could be taken as a memento of the high risk of reproductive failure that characterizes given families and multiple pregnancies in general. It must have been noticed with interest by the members of the Fourth International Congress on Twin Studies as they visited Flaxman Gallery during their London meetings at the end of June of 1983.

This congress has been the fourth of a series that started ten years ago, when the First Congress convened in Rome, giving me the opportunity to meet personally many researchers whom I had previously only admired through their writings or had corresponded with. One result of that congress was the establishment of the International Society for Twin Studies, of which I am proud and honored to be the Founding President.

Our organization is made up of researchers, as well as lay people and groups, all directly or indirectly concerned with twins as individuals, with their “special” nature, and with the fundamental contribution they can give to research progress in a wide range of disciplines. But our organization is also made up of friends, who have great regard for one another and cordially gather to exchange their experience in sometimes widely differing areas, who easily engage in collaborative studies, who share the goal of helping twins, as well as of keeping twin research in the foreground, as it should be.

We had verified this in Rome, in Washington, in Jerusalem, and could reconfirm these scientific and human ties in London, under the guidance of Professor MacGillivray, and thanks to the efforts of Dr. David Fulker and the members of the Organizing Committee, all of whom I should like to thank, both personally and on behalf of our Society. And a word of thanks I should also like to express to Paolo Parisi, Secretary General of our Society, Executive Editor of this journal, and my associate at the Mendel Institute for now a quarter of a century.

The choice of London as the site of our Congress was particularly significant, since it commemorates the founding father of twin research, Francis Galton, whose life and work are outlined, in the following pages, by Dr. Gerald Corney, of the Galton Laboratory, whose important contribution to the organization of the Congress I should also like to gratefully acknowledge. And, in a somewhat different, contemporary perspective, the choice of London may prove particularly meaningful to the twins and their families, reminding them of the presence, in Her Majesty’s government, of a lady, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, who can count, among her many victories, that of being the mother of dizygotic twins.

Rather than published separately, as it was done for the previous two congresses (with the three volumes of *Twin Research* and the three volumes of *Twin Research 3*, respectively published by Liss in 1978 and 1981), the proceedings of the London congress are being published as part of the journal, similarly to what was done with the first congress (*Acta Genet Med Gemellol* 25, 1976). The subdivision into three main parts will be kept, however, each part corresponding to one journal issue: Part A, *Twin Biology and Obstetrics*, issue 33-1; Part B, *Twin Psychology and Behavior Genetics*, issue 33-2; and Part

C, Clinical Studies, issue 33-3. Although published within volume 33 of the journal, these issues will also bear the special title, "Twin Research 4", clarifying that these are the proceedings of the Fourth Congress. All of the issues of 1984, and particularly the last one, issue 33-4, which will include regular papers, are in addition meant to commemorate the Centennial of Gregor Mendel's death: the founder of genetics in fact died in Brunn on 6 January 1884.

The papers contained in this first issue therefore refer to topics such as multiple pregnancy and prenatal and perinatal mortality, antenatal diagnosis and management, congenital malformations, variability of twinning and maternal factors. Some of these are very sensitive areas, and certain procedures reported in the antenatal diagnosis and management section are liable to be objected upon from an ethical viewpoint. These considerations, however, have not affected our editorial procedures, that have been solely based on scientific and technical aspects, in an effort to have these proceedings as much as possible faithfully reflect the works of our London congress.

Starting with these proceedings issues of 1984, our journal will again be published directly by The Mendel Institute in Rome. We should like to express our gratitude and appreciation to the New York Publisher, Alan R. Liss, who has so effectively handled our publication for the past five years. His assistance and support in what has been a somewhat transitional period have been of great value to us. However, we trust that by concentrating now in Rome all of the publication processes, along with much of the activity of our Society, the efficiency and economy of the various operations should be considerably improved. And it will be our endeavor that the result of this be a better service to authors and readers alike.

Luigi Gedda

*From The Mendel Institute
on the Centennial of Gregor Mendel's death
6 January 1984*