

Apse from Sant Climent in Taüll

THE EYES OF TAÜLL

11 December 2008



One morning, a long, long time ago, in a tiny village in the Pyrenees, after a terrible storm in the night, when the people came out into the street they realised, in surprise, that a new painting had appeared in the church: it was a hand.

Who could have painted it? Whose hand could it be? This is the story of ...

THE EYES OF TAÜLL

The lamb with seven eyes said: "No matter how hard I look, with so many eyes I can't see it properly."

"Grrrrrrr!" - Mark's lion roared. "Don't ask me about hands for I only understand claws."

"All right," a man said to him, "but please answer this question before you go: "Do you think that your friend, Luke's ox, might know something about it?"

And Luke's ox replied: "I had my back turned and didn't see anything."

"Not even with this eye you have in the back of your head?", the man insisted.

"I'm short-sighted in this eye and I've needed glasses for a while. But perhaps the Little Angel, who even has eyes in his hands, saw something."

"Yes I might have seen it," said the Little Angel, "but the problem is that with my eyes I can only see letters. By the way, have you noticed these Greek letters that have appeared: alpha, which means the beginning, and omega, meaning the end?"

This made things even more mysterious. Why the beginning and the end? What did that have to do with the hand? But the most important question remained unanswered. Who had painted it? Whose hand could it be?

"I've got an idea," said Seraph, who was very curious, "let's ask the five wise men about it."

The wise musician, after thinking about it for a while, said, "it's a man who plays the piano; these thin fingers give him away."

Mary the philosopher added, "I think it's a man who dresses in fine clothes; look at the crease in his sleeve!"

Bartholomew the astrologer gave his opinion. "I'm sure the person who has drawn it has studied geometry, as he's framed the hand in a perfect circle."

"John the mathematician added, "And artistic drawing too, as the proportion is just right."

James the geologist concluded, "It's a man who doesn't work on the land, that's for sure, as his fingernails are clean."

Just then Lazarus appeared, a beggar who was always at the gates of the village, and he said, "Last night, when I was begging for alms at the rich man's house, I suddenly saw a flying hand. Please don't think I'm mad. Yes, a flying hand that came to rest on the

ceiling of the church. Because of the fright I've come out in a rash! Isn't that right, Bobby?"

All of a sudden, when nobody was expecting it, a voice that silenced everyone was heard. It was Theo, the village ophthalmologist, who said: "I am the all-seeing eye and I'll tell you what has happened. Last night I couldn't sleep. I got up quietly and started drawing. First I drew an alpha and an omega at the entrance to the village so that you can learn a bit of Greek, and think from the beginning to the end. And then, as I was still awake, I started to draw my hand. Can't you see that it's mine? Haven't you noticed that I always draw it the same way? You have to admit that besides being a good eye doctor I'm an extraordinary painter."

"It's true! It's in the same position! Yes, yes, they're identical!"

And Theo continued. "How is it that you haven't recognised it? Can it be that in a village with so many eyes, you can't see properly... Maybe you all need glasses. I'll give you a test. What does it say here? Anyone who can't read the letters properly will obviously have to pay a visit to the optician's and start wearing glasses!"

Today, if you look at this painting, you can see that some of the figures are wearing glasses. But if you can't see this then maybe the one who needs glasses is you... the glasses of the imagination.