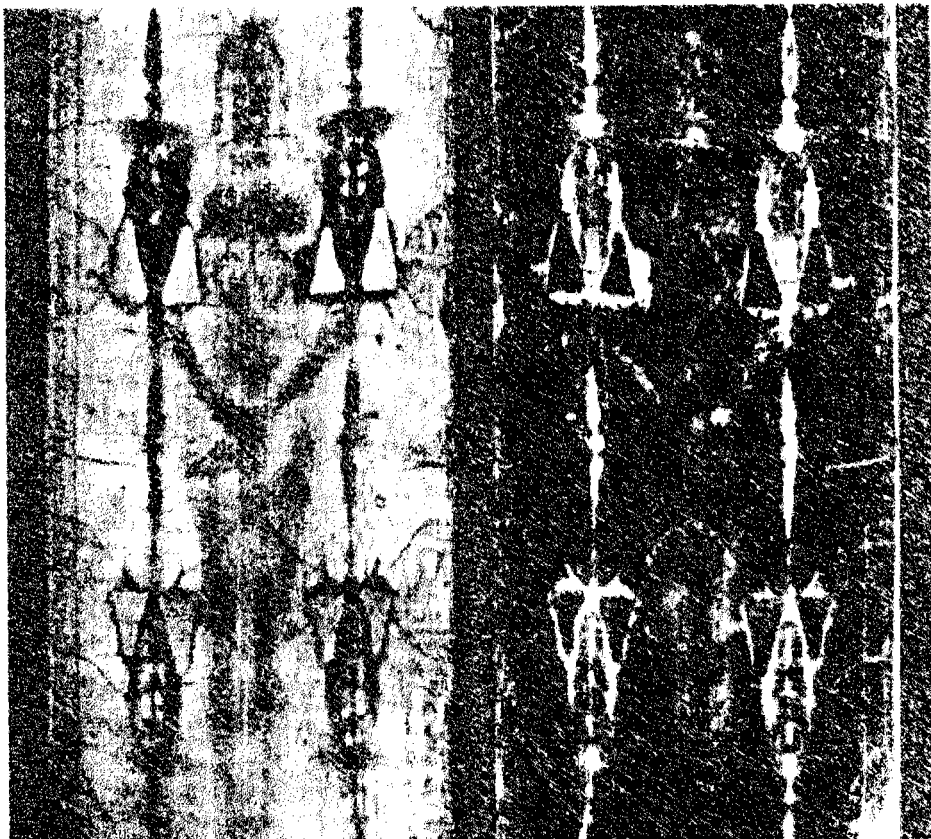


The Shroud of Turin—
“Is it, or Isn’t it” (the burial cloth of Christ?)
by Arnold E. Lemke

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(Positive and negative photos of shroud)



(Depiction of burial)

Introduction

The Shroud of Turin - a truly ancient piece of linen that has been in the public eye and the center of controversy for ages. Upon it - the apparent image of a man bearing the marks of crucifixion. Many see in this image parallels to the biblical account of what occurred with Jesus Christ as recorded in the gospels. But what was the source of the image? The hoax of a clever forger, or the true impression of a crucified victim? What meaning (if any) does it have for us who see in it parallels to the gospels, and perhaps a possible source for a better understanding of the scriptural account of Jesus' death and burial?

Christians have long been skeptical about such presumed relics from the past and rightly so. Lutherans in particular have reacted negatively to the commercialism so often attendant to these relics; to the accounts of "supernatural healings;" to the all-too-frequent revelation of obvious hoaxes and outright fraud. More importantly, we know and believe that the truth of Scripture and of the Christian faith does not rest upon any such items from the past interesting as they may be, whether actual historical and archeological discoveries or not. It rests upon the clear word of our God himself and his inspired, inerrant account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection set forth as the age-old plan of atonement for mankind. Scripture is endowed with the quality of "ἀ ἀπίστία"—*self-validation*—and so requires no certification from any other source. Comparatively recent discoveries of ancient cities long ago recorded in the Bible, and inscriptions holding such previously unsupported names as "Pontius Pilate" and "House of David" are interesting to Christians and can be helpful in some ways to Biblical scholarship, but are not by any means determinative. New and better studies can change the significance and meaning of such discoveries, or even discredit them altogether. God's word does not change, and it's meaning for us is not dependent upon any such artifacts. "God's word is our great heritage, and shall be ours for ever" we rightly sing from our Lutheran hymnals. That word has never needed historical or archeological certification to be true and efficacious for our lives or our souls. It is, and is to be, believed and lived.

And yet...and yet...we humans still have minds that sometimes wonder. We also don't mind having Bible teaching and our beliefs seemingly validated by something more concrete than just statements of faith if or when such "evidence" becomes available. So, it doesn't hurt to be able to demonstrate from the tested laws of science and common experience that new life does not spring up spontaneously as once believed from the warming mud of a river bank, but comes only from pre-existing and previously created life as Gen. 1 clearly tells us. Or to be shown from experimentation that there are defined limits to how far changes can go in a life form (or "kind") in any natural setting. Or to find that any number of the people, places and events of Bible times can be pinpointed by ancient inscriptions or archeological relics. Our minds willingly accept such apparent facts which parallel the biblical account if and when they become available, helping to satisfy both our sense of logic and completeness, as well as our hearts. We could do without them, of course, since the writer to the Hebrews speaks truly when he says, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not

see.”¹ But for any number of people, such information can and does play a helpful role in providing some measure of reassurance as to its historic reliability, possibly removing roadblocks which at times may cause one to struggle—or simply to doubt.

That, perhaps, is where the interest in the Shroud of Turin lies for many. It is well known that through the centuries, especially in the superstitious Middle Ages, this shroud was viewed by people as an unusual icon among the rest, one that seemed to have a certain unique legitimacy about it due to the faint still unexplainable figure depicted on it. For some individuals, it was a mystery that needed to be solved (or debunked); for others, it has been simply an intellectual curiosity. But for any number of Christians versed in the gospel accounts of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, the questions raised often are, “Just what is going on here?” Or perhaps, “What, if anything, might be learned from it?” Or just, “Who cares?!”

Your essayist had similar questions himself with such matters years ago. Coming out of a public school background, he appreciated the creationist writings he later encountered not available there which helped to sort out his thinking on the creation/evolution debate and better align it with his Scripture-directed beliefs. As to the Shroud of Turin, the first real awareness of this relic came when in Israel with a group of members on a LCMS-run tour in the early 1980’s which had recruited Dr. Paul Maier as one of several guest lecturers. While speaking to the probability of the correct locations of certain traditional sites in the Holy Land, and faced with a question regarding that shroud which was under intensive study, Dr. Maier then stated that in his judgment it was about “95% probably authentic.” Not all people will approach the study of this relic from the past in the same way. Some truly accept its authenticity as the burial covering of Jesus almost as a matter of faith. Others have fallen into the trap of superstition, venerating it in the vain hope of perhaps receiving some special help or healing. Still others may simply dismiss it out of hand for strong personal or perhaps simply uninformed reasons. Many will fall somewhere in between, or care not at all. This may be in the spirit of Martin Luther who wrote in the Large Catechism in this context: “All that (relics) is a dead thing which can sanctify no one. God’s Word is the treasure which sanctifies everything.”²

Our goal with this study will be to attempt an objective look at this famed relic from the past now known as the Shroud of Turin, first from a scriptural, then an historical and scientific perspective, closing with a final evaluation. No matters of faith are involved. As a result of this study, however, we may be able to satisfy any curiosity we might have personally (if there), or at least be better positioned to advise our people on questions which they might set before us regarding this well-known object. We may also gain through it a better understanding of certain Jewish practices of 2000 years ago, and thereby perhaps a clearer understanding of the Bible’s own account of our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection.

I. Scripture Study

Passages which may be related to the shroud and its “markings” are:

John 18:22: “When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face...”

John 19:1: “Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.”

John 19:2: “The soldiers twisted together a crown (στέφανος—garland, wreath, chaplet) of thorns and put it on his head.”

Mt 27:30: “The soldiers...took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.”

John 19:18: “Here they crucified him, and with him two others...”

John 20:25: “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands...and put my hand into his side...”

John 19:34: “One of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear...”

Mt 27:59: “Joseph took the body, wrapped (ἐντυλίσσω—wrap) it in a clean linen cloth (σινδών)...”

Mark 15:45-46: “(Pilate) gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth (σινδών) took down the body, wrapped (ἐνειλέω—wrap up) it in the linen (σινδών) and placed it in a tomb...”

¹ Hebrews 11:1

² Luther’s Large Catechism, Section 91, page 607, Triglota

Luke 23:53: “(Joseph) wrapped (ἐντυλίσσω) it in linen cloth (σινδών) and placed it in a tomb...”

John 19:39-40: “Joseph was accompanied by Nicodemus...Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds. Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them *tied* it (δέω—tie, bind; wrap??) by strips of linen (ὀθόνιους—dat. of means) in company with the spices. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.”

Luke 24:1: “On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.”

Luke 24:12: “Bending over, Peter saw the strips of linen (ὀθόνια) lying by themselves...”

John 20:6-7: “Simon Peter... saw the strips of linen (ὀθόνια) lying there, as well as the burial cloth (σουδάριον) that had been around (ἐπί) Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen strips (ὀθόνια).” (Literally: “...not lying with the linen strips but apart, folded up (ἐντυλίσσω), in a place by itself.”

A short summary of these events from the partial narratives each gospel provides would be:

1. Jesus was subjected to Jewish and Roman abuse and torture by:

- being repeatedly struck in the face with a fist
- being hit on the head with a staff, flogged
- having a “crown” of thorns forced on his head
- crucified with nails through “hands” and feet
- a Roman spear thrust into his side

2. Jesus’ burial was initiated by Joseph’s request to Pilate, followed by:

- being wrapped with a linen cloth by Joseph, placed into a tomb; or perhaps first:
- being bound at hand and foot with strips of linen, with myrrh and aloes added
- the various burial wrappings noted by the disciples after the resurrection including the linen strips where the body was, and another “linen cloth” (σουδάριον/σινδών?) folded up but set apart from these linen strips
- women planning to bring additional spices later to also anoint the body (no new wrappings)

The key words here (Vine, Souter, others) are:

“σινδών” - larger linen cloth as used for garment (Mk. 14:51), burial shroud, sheet, curtain

“σουδάριον” - “sweat cloth”, various kinds of linen cloth, towel, handkerchief

“ὀθόνιον” - diminutive of “ὀθόνη” - sheet,” strips of cloth especially linen

There are several challenging interpretative questions encountered in these accounts which are otherwise mainly straight forward narratives of the death and burial of our Lord. Different details are to be found, of course, and different terminology used by the various gospel writers as one would expect with the testimony of several eye witnesses or if the writers intended to speak to different audiences. One notes first that “στέφανος” has several possible meanings in addition to the common “crown” (of thorns) especially “chaplet,” the significance of which may be evident later; “διάδημα,” the true “royal crown,” is not used here. Also, “χείρ” or “hand” can well include the wrist area immediately attached to the hand as distinct from the arm bones above, since the Greek has no common word to distinguish the wrist from the hand itself.

The most difficult questions have to do with the apparent conflict between the accounts of the burial and wrappings provided by the first three gospels on the one hand, and the single account translators usually provide from the Gospel of John on the other. Matthew, Mark and Luke state clearly that the body of Jesus was wrapped in a “σινδών”—a large linen sheet or garment—and then placed into the grave. The major translations of John’s account (KJV, NIV, GWN, NASB) seem to indicate a somewhat different picture of how the body was wrapped. These speak of it being done with strips of cloth along with spices, perhaps not that different from the “mummy wrap” concept of Egyptian burials; and with the addition of a “face cloth” as also in the Lazarus story also by John. How do we reconcile these two accounts of Jesus’ burial? Is it possible that the body of the Lord

was double wrapped as some commentators have suggested?³ Or that the large linen cloth was torn into strips (an assumption) and these then used to wrap him? Or might there be some other explanation for the very different approaches that these gospel writers appear to provide? And finally, how does this ail harmonize with John’s concluding statement that the burial of Jesus took place “according to the custom of the Jews?”⁴

Let’s begin with the accounts of the three synoptic gospels where the terminology is simple and clear: Jesus body was “wrapped” (ἐνειλέω, ἐντυλίσσω) in a “large linen cloth” (σινδών) and then placed into the grave. The Greek is quite straightforward here and provides a clear picture of what occurred. The problem comes with the parallel account from John.⁴ If John is here describing just the same actions and materials as the synoptics (which seems to be the presumption of most translators) then there would be an apparent conflict—a tying or wrapping up in “ὀθόνια” (strips of linen). But, looking more closely, we note that John actually uses quite different terminology from the others. He uses “δέω” instead of one of the three Greek words used specifically for wrapping; the basic meaning of “δέω” is to “tie, bind.” He uses “ὀθόνια” and “κειρία”—“small linen strips,” “cords”—to describe the material used for such a tying here and in the similar account of Lazarus.⁵ It is quite a stretch to try make these come out the same as “σινδών”—“large linen cloth”—as in the first three gospels.

Perhaps the answer or solution to this apparent problem is that John, an eyewitness of these events, was not in fact speaking to exactly the same part of the burial activity as the other three writers who received their information second hand, but to a quite different aspect of the process of which he personally was aware and which is not that well known today. Taken literally, John appears to be saying that the body of Jesus was “tied with linen strips” (ὀθόνια) in connection with his burial. If we then use his account of the burial of Lazarus some chapters earlier to help with the interpretation of just what is meant (“the feet and hands bound with cords”)⁵ we would have to say this tying of Jesus also probably was applied to the hands and feet, not to the whole body. The Lazarus account goes on to say, “λύσατε—loose/untie him” (KJV); (not: “take off the grave clothes” - NIV) and let him depart.” Then the picture becomes clear and the items mentioned later in the gospels that were found by the first visitors to the grave, the linen strips and the folded cloth, can be put into better perspective. The gospels are not in conflict—no Scripture is. Rather, it is much more likely that our understanding of Jewish burial practices simply has not been that clear now after a span of almost 2000 years. And it may have been a preconception or simple misconception on the part of both early and later translators that attempted to force from John’s words a parallel meaning to the first three gospels in regard to the wrapping of Jesus, when in fact he was speaking to something quite different—a tying of the limbs to hold them in position at the time of burial due to rigor mortis rather than a separate wrapping or covering of the entire body with strips. That is the conclusion your essayist has been brought to by this study. It may not be the last word on the subject by any means, but an interpretation to be considered in any exegesis of these passages, if not also with the illustrations used of the burial of Jesus (and Lazarus) in Christian educational materials.

Another difficult question is the meaning in this context of the “σουδάριον” which John states had been tied or wrapped around (περιδέω) the head of Jesus. The determination to be made is whether this is a reference to just a relatively small face/head binding or covering of some sort used at death, or whether it is in fact a more generic term chosen for the same “σινδών” which the other gospel writers speak of and which also would have been “wrapped around” the head (while covering the rest of body as well). “Σουδάριον” is the word also used earlier by John in connection with Lazarus when he struggled out of the tomb and needed help to be released from his grave cloths and ties. One finds in its other New Testament usage⁶ that they speak of a “σουδάριον” or “piece of cloth” in a different context, this for wrapping up and hiding money, or to aid in a healing, indicating a somewhat broader meaning for this word than just a grave connection. In this particular context, and since we have searched in vain for reference to face cloths or napkins in common Jewish burial practice in any period, we may be best advised to stay with the simplest and most obvious interpretation. Some indeed believe that John

³ “The People’s Bible -John” p. 255 (see end note)

⁴ John 19:39-40

⁵ John 11:44

⁶ Luke 19:20; Acts 19:12

may be referring here to a simple binding cloth sometimes used to hold the jaws in a closed position at death, a practice Jewish historians say was often employed. But the statement that this σουδάριον was “folded and set aside” would indicate a more likely possibility - that he is here pointing to a larger cloth, namely the same basic burial cloth (“σινδών”) that the other evangelists speak of, perhaps as a play on the word “sweat cloth” (this for the whole body, not just the face). That would be our preferred interpretation.

It is also possible, of course, that there was in fact a true face cloth (“*schweisz Tuch*” - Luther) used for a brief time perhaps to help cover the head or face of our Lord while being taken on a carrier to the grave and then left there, with the main linen wrapping cloth later having been taken away from the grave by the time Peter arrived on Easter morning—but this is speculative. In this connection, it is also of interest that the three accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke all state that shortly after Joseph wrapped the body of Jesus in the larger linen cloth (“σινδών”), the body was placed into the tomb. The account from John of the binding of Jesus with linen strips does not connect that action with the placing in the tomb so clearly or closely, perhaps an indication that this could have taken place separately prior to the wrapping. It simply states several verses later that the tomb was where the body was placed.

What should be helpful to us is the statement that all done here was “in accordance with Jewish burial customs.”⁷ Just what exactly 1st century Jewish burial customs were and how consistently carried out, quite frankly, has not been that easy to establish. One source⁸ has noted that “an account by Maimonides, a 12th century Jewish scholar at Cordova, parallels what can be constructed from the 4th century Talmud, 2nd century Mishna, and biblical accounts: ‘After the eyes and the mouth are closed, the body is washed; it is then anointed with perfumes and rolled up in a sheet of white linen in which aromatic spices are placed’” Another states that Gamaliel II (110 AD) at a time of frequent extravagance sought to set the standard for future burials by “introducing the custom of burying the dead in simple linen dress” with the result that even today the use of a simple shroud is also listed as the recommended procedure for the Orthodox.⁹ Following our practice of allowing clearer Scripture to help interpret other that may be less clear, we should pay note again to John’s reference to Lazarus coming forth which states that only the hands and the feet were “δέω” - “bound” with “κερία” - “cords, bands”. No where either in Scripture or Jewish tradition does the practice of wrapping the whole body with strips of cloth and spices appear to be recorded as a common or traditional practice of the Jews. The simple sheet, the tying of limbs and perhaps the jaw,¹⁰ with spices placed “μετά” - “in company with” - the body, would appear to be the “traditional” practice John is referring to based on what information we have from Jewish sources and the gospels.

Beyond this there do not appear to be noteworthy exegetical problems, conflicts, or major variations in text which one looking into this subject has to struggle with. How to explain the linen cloth that was “set apart, folded up by itself”¹⁰ when by rights it still should have been laid out as if covering a body? One could speculate that Jesus had done this with the shroud after the resurrection, or the angels when they came in later. But why not another set of likely candidates—the group of women who came to the tomb and “when they entered it they did not find the body of Jesus”?¹¹ It would not be unreasonable to infer that these women may have taken up the burial shroud lying there to inspect it, found it empty except for the linen strips or cords, and folded it back neatly rather than just dropping it in a pile. (The plans of these women to come back to the tomb in order to bring additional spices, though perhaps not part of the “traditional practice,” can be understood as a special act of reverence inspired by love and respect for someone as special as Jesus was to his group of followers.) This would explain John’s comments on what he and Peter found and why.

A somewhat obscure but still relevant aspect of this burial is the fact that the Scriptures do not tell of the body of Jesus being washed first before burial as customarily done in the case of natural deaths in many societies including Jewish. One might expect that had this in fact taken place it would have been recorded.

⁷ John 19:40

⁸ Current Anthropology, Vol. 24, p. 9 (see end note)

⁹ Ency. of Jewish Concepts, p. 531

¹⁰ John 20:7

¹¹ Luke 24:3

Several explanations are possible, the most obvious being that the press of time simply did not allow for the traditional washing so near the onset of the Sabbath (“as evening approached”).¹² As a consequence, the Lord’s body would have been covered quickly with the shroud by Joseph assisted by Nicodemus without a washing, and the limbs tied in place with the strips or cords of linen when they arrived, with the spices also quickly placed around. There is no indication of any additional washing or final wrapping being planned after the Sabbath when it is stated that the women were preparing to return, something in any event that was proscribed by Jewish laws against moving or lifting a buried corpse. The more probable answer for such a lack of washing may be found in the fact that Levitical law then and to this day (“Code of Jewish Law”) decrees that when a Jew dies as a result of execution or other shedding of the blood (“life blood” in contrast to incidental injuries), this blood was not to be washed off or disposed of but the victim simply wrapped and buried with it, an ancient but still practiced application of Lev. 17:10-12, which would then have precluded any such washing.¹³

It is possible, of course, that even under these extreme circumstances the body of Jesus was initially covered with a traditional shroud at the grave site and then given a quick partial washing by Joseph, Nicodemus or others present somewhere during the process of burial. This fact may simply not have been detailed in the gospels, as there is silence with other burial possibilities of that day which have been referenced or inferred such as the closing of the eyes with coins,¹⁴ flowers with the body, etc. No final conclusion can be reached from such arguments of silence, of course. One ancient parchment from Egypt believed by some scholars to have come from a lost “Gospel According to Peter” and referenced by theologians as far back as 190 (bishop of Antioch) and 253 (Origen) does refer to a washing but obviously with lesser authority since not part of the canon. This “gospel” states: “And (Joseph) took the Lord and washed him, and wrapped him in a linen cloth, and brought him to his own tomb, which was called the Garden of Joseph.”¹⁵ For our purposes there is no real significance in either case except to the extent one might wish to draw a connection with the markings that are “evidence” imprinted on the Shroud of Turin as many have sought to do. In this case, an unwashed body might prove helpful in providing a possible explanation.

In summary, one may be inclined toward the evaluation of LCMS seminary professor Dr. David Scaer in the Jan. 1979 CTQ: “The image on the shroud fits perfectly the accounts of the suffering and death of Jesus portrayed in the Gospels...There is therefore no valid theological objection to identification of the Shroud of Turin as the shroud in which Jesus was buried.”¹⁶

II. Shroud history

The clearest confirmed record of what is now commonly known as the Shroud of Turin begins in Europe in the mid-1300’s with its coming somehow into the possession of a certain Geoffrey de Charney, a well known and heroic French knight. Unique to this relic in contrast to most others of that time was the extraordinary impact it had on those who possessed it, as well as on others who also sought its ownership or made copies for sacred use elsewhere. This took place in an era when the last of those religio-political military expeditions known as Crusades were being undertaken purportedly to free the Holy Land from the Moslems (but often with other strategic or commercial motives) and whose conduct at times brought much discredit upon their participants. The Hundred Years’ War was then raging between France and England. There was much competition among the various political and religious entities of the day for “true relics of the cross” which might attract pilgrims hoping for a religious or healing experience, often motivated by possible financial benefits for those communities that could claim them. During the years that followed de Charney’s sudden and unexplained acquisition of the shroud, literally dozens of references were made to this unique relic which are still to be found in a variety of European church and court records detailing its movement before it found a more

¹² Mt 27:57

¹³ Unlocking Secrets of Shroud, p. 74

¹⁴ Current Anthropology, p.9 (end note)

¹⁵ Man Of The Shroud Washed, Zugibe (www.shroud.com)

¹⁶ CTQ, Jan. 1979, p. 47 (see end note for more of quote)

or less permanent home under the protection of the House of Savoy in Turin, Italy, around 1578. Following are just a sampling of these:¹⁷

- 1349 Geoffrey de Charney reports to Pope Clement VI his intention to build St. Mary's church of Lirey, probably to hold the shroud in his possession
- 1357 Expositions of the shroud begin, large crowds of pilgrims attracted, souvenir medallions struck; Bishop Henri states doubt and orders the expositions halted; pope overrules
- 1389 King Charles VI of France orders the shroud to be seized; cloth is described as bearing the double image of a crucified man
- 1418 Due to danger from marauding bands, shroud moved to Montbard for safety
- 1449 Shroud exhibited in various places including Liege, Belgium, by Margaret de Charney
- 1457 Margaret threatened with excommunication if shroud not returned to Lirey
- 1465 Duke Louis I dies at Lyon; acquisition of shroud stated as his greatest achievement
- 1473 Shroud transferred to Turin, Italy
- 1483 Inventory describes shroud as "enveloped in a red silk drape, kept in a case decorated with silver-gilt nails, and locked with a golden key"
- 1502 Shroud deposited in Chambrey in a special cavity behind the high altar, secured by an iron grate with four locks, each opened by separate keys
- 1509 A new silver casket created for the shroud
- 1532 Fire in the church melts parts of the casket severely scorching the shroud before rescue
- 1534 Nuns repair the shroud sewing on a backing cloth and patches over some damaged areas
- 1578 Shroud returns to Turin
- 1606 Public showing of shroud attracts 40,000 pilgrims
- 1737 Showing of shroud to mark or "bless" a royal wedding

And so it went, this just a sampling of the many records of the Shroud of Turin's known history and travels about Europe as researched and recorded by various scholars and interested individuals in recent years. Chief among these has been Ian Wilson, a well known English author and newspaperman, and without a doubt the most balanced and respected of the many shroud students and chroniclers, whose *The Shroud of Turin* and *The Blood and the Shroud*, still stand as the most comprehensive resources on shroud matters available. While there were many similar relics during its early days including numerous partial or whole copies of the shroud image on cloth created by artists and displayed in dozens if not hundreds of churches on festive occasions, none apparently had the innate credibility or received the continued special attention which the Shroud of Turin did upon which these copies in many cases were based. The earliest examinations had already brought most who studied this large linen cloth to the conclusion that the faint but definite image on it was not obviously faked (although this bit of apparent misinformation continues to be promoted).¹⁸ Only in the past fifty years or so has it been subjected to the kind of rigorous scientific analysis that was thought might help to determine the actual origin of the cloth, its markings, as well as to evaluate its other aspects such as age, prior location over the centuries, etc., to the extent possible.

What about the centuries before the shroud's confirmed and recorded history in Europe where it was first known to be in the possession of Geoffrey de Charney and later others? Is there credible evidence of a possible prior existence going back to its supposed origin in the Holy Land which might be gleaned from the historical records of that time, eye witness accounts, or other evidence from outside of Italy and France? Or was the Shroud of Turin indeed only the cunning counterfeit of the 14th century some claimed it to be then (and now), designed mainly to attract tourist and pilgrim dollars as with so many "relics" of that time? Is it to be just an object whose mystery and true origins are forever lost in the mists of time and left at that? Many would ap-

¹⁷ The Mysterious Shroud, p. 17-29

¹⁸ BAR, March/April, letters to editor (see end note)

parently like to leave it there in the realm of mysticism and faith so as to avoid having to make any kind of informed judgment on this ancient cloth.

It is important to note in this connection that there was one similar, and yet in some ways apparently different, relic in existence prior to the shroud which also had a special credibility among the ancients as well as an oral and written tradition connecting it to the early church. It was indeed quite different in that it did not exhibit anything like the full double figure back-and-front image which the Shroud of Turin holds, but only a much smaller portrait or face image. A significant number of references to this object, the famous Mandylion or “face cloth,” have been located in the Mediterranean world, especially in connection with the ancient cities of Edessa and Constantinople in Turkey, each of which is known to have had possession of it for a period of time. The type of the documentation here is mostly second or third hand references, however, not original manuscripts, and so does not meet European standards of 1000 years later where many original records are still available. But there is a record to be found which should be acknowledged and evaluated at least on the same basis as one would other historical events and/or artifacts from those ancient days while taking into account both the passage of time and the different cultures involved.

The story of this Mandylion which had similarities to the shroud while still quite different in certain ways really comes to the fore with its capture by an army sent from Constantinople in 943 AD to Edessa in SE Turkey. It was to take possession of this famous relic for its own collection of religious artifacts, the largest in the world. Various speculations have been advanced as to the Mandylion’s location in its earliest days including one that it had been taken by Peter to Antioch, a headquarters of Christian activity in the early years of the church.¹⁹ Perhaps the most persuasive and best documented account is a history of the Mandylion that was researched and prepared in Constantinople contemporaneous with its capture from Edessa.²⁰ Although it contains apparently reconstructed accounts of statements purportedly from Jesus and others, one can draw from it, as well as from additional manuscripts found much later in 1840 in a monastery in Lower Egypt and elsewhere, an account of its possible historical movement which goes briefly as follows:

- 30ff. Sometime after the resurrection a disciple named Thaddaeus (“one of the 12 / 70”)²⁰ brought the cloth with a face image on it with him when responding to the request for a visit by Algar V, ruler of Edessa, who is subsequently converted
- 57 After Algar V’s death the Mandylion is sealed in a niche above the west entrance gate of Edessa due to hostility on the part of his successor; knowledge of its location is lost
- 525 During reconstruction of the city’s walls after a particularly destructive flood, the Mandylion is rediscovered and a new cathedral built to house and protect it
- 600’s *Acts of Thaddaeus* cites existence of a strange Christ image on a sindon (burial cloth)
- 639 Moslems gain control of Edessa; Christian population and properties still tolerated including the Mandylion in a prominent role
- 943 Byzantine army from Constantinople besieges Edessa to obtain the Mandylion; city is later sacked by the Moslems
- 944 Mandylion arrives in Constantinople (Aug. 15), given its own site of special honor
- 945 History of Mandylion researched from then extant Syrian documents, published as the “Narration on the Image of Edessa”; also in “Sermon of Gregory Referendarius”²¹
- 1204 Crusaders sack Constantinople on Fourth Crusade; Mandylion disappears

Since we are not dealing with inspired Scripture here, it falls upon the historian to make his own judgment as to the trustworthiness of accounts such as these in the context of that other information developed from those ancient times. But what to make of the basic fact that one important relic, the Mandylion, described by contemporaries as having a faint sepia colored depiction of only the face of a man (“not made by human

¹⁹ Antioch and the Shroud, Markwardt, p. 3 (www.shroud.com.)

²⁰ The Anti-Nicene Fathers, p. 558 (ms. differ on of the 12 or 70)

²¹ The Mysterious Shroud, p. 108

hands” as the ancients put it) disappears, then another much larger one, also of a similar faint sepia (reddish-brown) depiction but now including the entire back and front of a male figure as well as the face, suddenly appears a little later in the same general time period? Could there be somehow a connection between the two in spite of the clear, evident differences in size and depiction?

There are several significant pieces of evidence that throw light on this apparent coincidence which have been noted by a number of scholars as well as students of the Shroud of Turin. There is the fact that the earliest depictions of Jesus in works of art from the Greek (not Jewish) world varied greatly according to the preference of the artist (St. Augustine in the fifth century complained that the portraits of Jesus then were “innumerable in concept and design... since we do not know of his external appearance nor that of his mother”).²² Then around 550 AD, the time of the Mandylion’s rediscovery, a dramatic change suddenly took place in that virtually all Byzantine mosaics, paintings, icons, coins etc. begin to depict the face image of Jesus almost uniformly as a bearded Jew remarkably along the lines of that found later on the shroud, with other areas soon following this practice. Still another significant development is that from around 1150 a number of paintings and manuscript illustrations of Jesus’ death which have been located and dated include not just a face but a body length cloth as part of the burial scene.²² As far as written records are concerned, a shroud with body image is recorded as being one of the royal treasures of Constantinople in a 1201 listing;²³ and the French crusader Robert de Clari reported in his diary having seen there the “body image on the cloth” being displayed in the Church of St. Mary of Blachernae in 1203.²⁴

Could the two have been one and the same, and thereby a continuous history from the early appearance in Edessa to the present times established? Surprisingly, the answer appears to be a qualified if not absolutely verifiable “yes.” The key may be found in the 6th century “Acta Thaedaei” where the Mandylion image is spoken of as an imprint on a linen that was “*tetradiplon*” or “doubled in four.”²⁵ A close check of the shroud today reveals among other markings a set of creases that would correspond closely to such a folding to eight thicknesses which would result in just the face being revealed. As Ian Wilson puts it in his study on the subject, “It appears that someone at the very earliest stages of the Shroud’s existence mounted and folded the Shroud in such a way that it no longer looked like a shroud. Furthermore, this was done in such a clever way that either accidentally or deliberately, it deceived many generations.”²⁶ An explanation for this folding other than the evident convenience of handling and storage might be the concern for the Jewish traditional abhorrence of things that had to do with the dead. At some later date in Constantinople prior to 1150, if the two were indeed one and the same, the Mandylion would have been taken out of its frame with gold mounting and its true nature subsequently become known. Thereafter copies that were made no longer focused just on the face but the whole body image, often including the back side and at times even the earlier damage marks visible on the cloth. In addition, those public displays that are recorded no longer were of the folded version but of the whole body image.²⁷

If one accepts this admittedly circumstantial case (which appears to become stronger with every new discovery), there is still that time period of about 150 years from the Crusaders’ sack of Constantinople until the shroud’s sudden (re-)appearance in the hands of Geoffrey de Charney which has not been truly accounted for. While a number of sometimes imaginative explanations for this gap in time have been offered, probably the best case made to this point has been for its possession by the Knights Templar,²⁸ a powerful secret Christian organization of the day long involved in the protection of pilgrims to the Holy Land and various crusader efforts. There is the additional fact that one of the last leaders of the Templars when the organization was decimated in 1307 by the King of France for political reasons also bore the name of “Geoffrey de Charney,”²⁹

²² The Mysterious Shroud, p. 110

²³ Die Palasrevolution des Johannes Komnenos, p. 30

²⁴ BAR, Mar./April, 1999 (see end note)

²⁵ Acts of Thaddaeus (Traps. of Writings of Fathers, p. 558)

²⁶ The Shroud of Turin, p. 102

²⁷ The Mysterious Shroud, p. 114

²⁸ The Mysterious Shroud p. 117-118

²⁹ Ibid, p. 118

and is known to have been an uncle of a later namesake, Geoffrey I, whose estate some fifty years afterward “suddenly” made public the family’s possession of the shroud.

So, although the evidence is somewhat circumstantial as developed by historical detective work barring the future uncovering of new documents, one can find at least a reasonable case to be made for the Mandylion of ancient history and legend, and the Shroud of Turin from medieval times to the present, being quite possibly if not certainly one and the same object, just differently mounted and displayed. One will not make this an article of faith, of course, but this justifiably will continue to be an object of historical inquiry.

III. Scientific studies attempted

Much could be presented in this area since an enormous and varied amount of material from both objective and well-intentioned scientific sources, as well as from clearly non-objective individuals with a cause to promote, has been published (a good part of which is also accessible by internet). To go too deeply into this aspect of the shroud would be beyond the intended scope of this paper and in the end would probably not be fruitful for drawing any real conclusions. We will therefore just summarize briefly some of the more significant studies and arguments made which play into this topic together with references for those who wish to do further reading or research on the subject themselves. A number of end notes will also provide additional details.

A unique aspect of shroud study which sets it apart from that of most other ancient objects such as inscriptions, sculptures, pottery shards, etc., is the wide range of data from many disciplines that bear on it. Students of history, exegesis, archeology, anatomy and other fields of study have found reason to direct their attention and professional skills toward this controversial relic. While there are certain Scriptural and spiritual implications which may relate to the shroud, its authenticity is not strictly speaking a matter of faith but more a matter of satisfying one’s own mind and judgment. An important aspect of making an informed and proper judgment on this question is insuring that an orderly process is used. One ought to expect the same objective professionalism and peer review in shroud studies as would be applied to other items of lesser significance which may (or may not) have come down from the distant past and which also have historical if not Scriptural implications.

It was a little over 100 years ago in connection with a rare exhibition of the shroud in 1898 that a totally unexpected event occurred as a result of “modern” technology. This also began to spark the interest of many people and open the door to various studies on the part of scientists. A series of black and white photographs taken of the shroud resulted in not just prints but also negatives with images that were far more detailed and revealing than the actual photos themselves. The clear and striking depictions of a bruised and beaten man, powerfully built, about 5 feet, 11 inches in height, bearded, with a serene expression, lying peacefully with his hands folded across his body in death, became a media sensation and focused growing attention on this shroud of which the general public was mostly unaware even though it was long held in special regard by certain religious folk. This mystery of a “negative” portrait on a piece of cloth was new to science and caught the attention of any number of individuals who sought an explanation.

One of the earlier attempts to evaluate the significance of these mysterious pictures was that of Dr. Pierre Barbet, a French surgeon, as recorded in his book *A Doctor at Calvary*. From later photographs which he had access to and a personal examination of the linen cloth at the time of the Turin exposition of 1933, Dr. Barbet came up with the following early observations based on his professional experience, findings which for the most part have been supported by subsequent studies:

- the blood marks were made by clotted blood rather than fresh flowing
- not a trace of painting can be seen even in magnified enlargements
- there is a noticeable swelling at the left cheek as if the person had been struck hard
- there are scourge marks all over the back side of the body, dumbbell shaped; the imprints slant upward on the shoulders, horizontal on the buttocks, down on the legs

- the blood flows from the head and side wounds are downward as if the one depicted was in a vertical position when they were caused
- the feet are slightly crossed
- the “hand” wounds are in the bony and ligamentous structures of the wrist area
- no thumbs are observed, as if having been forced in sharply as happens when the median nerve of the wrist is activated by an object forced through it

In addition, later more detailed studies of the image by the Shroud of Turin Research Project of 1978 as well as other studies by scientists revealed apparent injuries to the shoulder area from abrasions caused by the rubbing of some heavy object (crossbeam?) tied to the subject’s outstretched arms; also damage to the left knee of the kind that would have occurred if a person fell with such a burden. Spillage of excess blood (group AB)³⁰ on the cloth from both the chest wound and the feet were noted of the kind that might have taken place if the body was laid in a prone position and covered. The marks on the scalp indicate a rough “cap” rather than the more traditional “crown” of thorns usually depicted in Middle Age and later paintings. The side wound matches exactly those of the Roman lance found in various excavations. A totally unexpected anomaly was the discovery of “three-dimensionality” in the image on the cloth when viewed through a VP8 analyzer of a sort never seen before on such material and which provided additional depth and detail.³¹

Another finding significant to shroud students was that by a Dr. Max Frei, professor of criminology at the University of Zurich. A biologist specializing in microscopic techniques, he was able to identify numerous tiny pollen grains on the shroud of the kind which criminologists use to determine the previous geographical location of objects under investigation. In 1973 he with two other experts identified these usually microscopic pollen grains obtained from adhesive strips applied to the shroud as having originated from at least 58 plants located in the general Mediterranean region, the greater number growing primarily or solely around the Dead Sea and Jerusalem. Others were also found from the areas of Constantinople and Greece, as well as France and Italy. This indicated that even though the clearest and most definitively recorded history of the shroud is confined to France and Italy, at one time it almost certainly had spent some years in or around the Holy Land. Later Studies by Dr. Alan Whangaer detected faint images of flowers on the shroud mainly around the head, these of a variety of species all of which are found in Israel.³² Still others using modern computer enhancement techniques have identified coins covering the eyes of the man in the shroud, one of which appears to be a tiny lepton or mite from the time of Pontius Pilate of which four letters are visible and inscribed as follows (underlined here): TIBEROU CAISAROUS.³³

As one reads the results of these studies as well as the debate and back-and-forth interpretations of the various scientists involved, one realizes again the truth of the old statement that scientists or “experts” in their fields can find reason to debate any apparent “facts” or conclusions based on their own past experience, expertise, or simple personal bias, often coming up with conflicting conclusions from the same data. While some consensus has developed around the findings above as a result of repeated tests and evaluations by a variety of individuals, one large area of controversy where there is still much confusion and debate relates to the attempted Carbon-14 tests of 1988 on a piece cut from one edge of the shroud. For years permission had been sought from its guardians for a small piece of the linen to be subjected to this basic test in which so many had come to place their trust (in spite of the many problems and inconsistencies with similar tests in prior years). When this permission finally was granted and the results came in, to the shock of some and the delight of others a date of between 1260 and 1390³⁴ was reported, apparently ruling it out as an object that could have come down from the time of the early church or Jesus himself.

³⁰ New York Times, 8/3/99

³¹ The Mysterious Shroud, p. 47-49

³² “Pressed Flowers,” Danin (www.shroud.com/papers)

³³ Current Anthropology, p. 7

³⁴ Ibid, p. 134-135; also: www.shroud.com/htm

The initial shock on the part of those who had long been studying this object and had attempted to date it by using other legitimate approaches was palpable. Media attention, great until then, virtually disappeared. But then “peer review” of this C-14 test, its methodology and limitations began. While much could be said on this subject (books have been written), significant concerns were expressed over such matters as the location of the sample taken (an edge piece with seam rather than from the body of the cloth); that just three laboratories were used rather than the proposed seven; that one dating technique was employed rather than several; and over the lack of careful collating and tabulation of results before releasing to the public.³⁵ Severe contamination of this sample also was suspected from hundreds of years of handling and display often while illuminated by smoking candles or torches. Subsequent studies have revealed significant amounts of bacteria and fungi growing inside the linen fibers of the shroud themselves, as well as a biogenic varnish on the threads, much of which cannot be removed by traditional cleaning techniques. These have been demonstrated to have a significant impact on the C-14 results of other objects similarly contaminated.³⁶ Since there is doubt that any kind of process presently available can remove this type of contamination, even new attempts to redo the C-14 approach would not appear to offer prospect of a more conclusive result. It illustrates the problem that true science—the search for “knowledge” of this world God has placed us in—has to deal with. Scripture is God’s perfect revelation of truth. “Science” as we know it is dependent on man’s imperfect observations and judgment, and thus subject to change. So it has been in the past, and so it will always be.

IV. Evaluation/Conclusion

There are few unprejudiced observers of the Shroud of Turin and the controversy it has generated over the centuries whether in theological, scientific, historical, or other circles. As John Walsh in *The Shroud* puts it, “The Shroud of Turin is either the most awesome and instructive relic of Jesus Christ in existence...or it is one of the most ingenious, most unbelievably clever, products of the human mind and hand on record. It is one or the other; there is no middle ground.”³⁷ No doubt tens of thousands and more of religious folk, pilgrims and other observers over the centuries have approached it with the same wonder and/or doubt: the shroud—is it, or isn’t it—the true burial cloth of Jesus?

Since Scripture does not help with the answer beyond telling of the last recorded observers of the shroud in the newly opened grave, we are left with only circumstantial evidence to deal with. Perhaps it is good in this regard that there have been so many who have attempted to falsify or disprove the possibility that this ancient piece of linen could have been the actual burial cloth of Jesus by such means as historical research, anthropological studies, or scientific testing. In contrast to most expectations, the results of these efforts in the end have left the door still quite open to the possibility of its being in fact a 1st century relic with a true body image, instead of locking it tight as intended (the C-14 experiment notwithstanding). What is the particular circumstantial evidence that those with an interest or concern will encounter when they look into this subject of the Shroud of Turin? It would include such items as:

- An account of how the shroud may have moved from Jerusalem to Edessa (based on 6th century manuscripts as well as others available when the 9th century history was written)
- various references to a Mandylion/shroud from the 6th to 9th century including its capture by forces from Constantinople and early reports of an image on it
- the quick acceptance among religious leaders and artisans of a standard version of Jesus’ features after 560 AD which was virtually identical to that now found on the shroud
- the pollen studies, coin and flower images etc., brought into the picture by recent high-tech enhancement testing

³⁵ BAR, March/April 1999, letters to editor

³⁶ The Mysterious Shroud, p. 134-135

³⁷ The Shroud, p. 8

- the close correlation between Scripture and the wounds clearly depicted on the shroud image (bruises, “crown” of thorns, scourge marks, hand, feet and side wounds)
- the extraordinary one-of-a-kind image on the linen cloth revealed by photography

How was this image formed—whatever its source—thus making the Shroud of Turin unique among the relics of old? That is still the question which has mystified people through the ages to this day, from those who have sincerely believed it to be the image of Christ, to those who have had only an intellectual interest in finding an explanation. There are still the “professional doubters,”³⁸ of course, who have their theories of an artist or some unknown human hand having used something, perhaps an acidic solution of some sort applied to the linen cloth to make the faint image seen there (paint pigments have not been located). Invariably they find themselves still having to deal with the “negative image” problem of photography which apparently cannot be duplicated.

Unless one wants to move into the supernatural in order to find an explanation (there was a supernatural event which did take place in the tomb on the third day!), one may need to turn to the single parallel from the natural world where a comparable sort of image can be found. Sometimes called Volckringer patterns³⁹ after a French pharmacist who brought attention to the unique characteristics of a process used in botany departments all over the world, they are found in collections of pressed plants and leaves whose images are imprinted on the paper sheets used to store them for periods of time. These very unique images are also sepia in color; occur on both sides of the specimen; offer considerable detail of the plant involved; and show inverse relief characteristics which become fainter with increasing distance from direct contact with the paper. Interestingly, they also offer the same kind of photographic detail when viewed as a negative, as well as the three-dimensionality found on the Shroud of Turin. What might these plants and a possible human body have in common which would produce such an image? Lactic acid naturally present in plants as well as in body sweat appears to be the answer, although the presence of other resins and oils too may play a role.⁴⁰ This is a possible natural solution for the shroud image, a mystery which has caused some to reach for various highly imaginative ideas such as bursts of radiant energy from within the body at death, a purposeful image left by Jesus, etc. Again, while only circumstantial in nature, this has been considered to be one more “piece of the puzzle” which could tie that famous shroud now in the hands of the church in Turin, Italy, to the 1st century burial cloth of Christ. The conundrum is, if the shroud image was not in truth formed by a wrapping around the bruised and battered body of a man, how else might it have been accomplished? It is a question still searching for an answer.

Some may also wonder in what ways this shroud might be “instructive” as John Walsh put it before, if one were to grant its legitimacy as the original burial cloth of Jesus Christ? Well, it would among other things tell us something about the physical size, the noble appearance, even the very features of the Lord. It would confirm the severity of his treatment at the hands of the Jews and Romans in the beatings and scourging received, as well as the wounds in his feet and his side. It would give correction to how artists through the ages have long depicted the “crown” of thorns (more like the eastern mitre or cap than the European medieval crown), as well as the proper location of the nail wounds in the “hands,” both of which speak against it being the work of a 14th century forger. It may point us to a better understanding of Jewish and probably also early Christian burial practices of the 1st century, an area where some confusion still prevails.

In the end, of course, the matter of the shroud is primarily an intellectual, and perhaps emotional, one for those who may be personally intrigued by the questions it sets forth. But not one soul will be gained for the Kingdom of God by evidence which may or may not be forthcoming from this ancient piece of linen. Not one will be lost if a satisfactory case cannot be made for its authenticity. It is the individual’s response to the gospel, to the cross and the message of atonement and salvation coming from it, that will continue to make all the difference there. As one member of the 1978 team which gained permission to study the shroud put it, “People

³⁸ Current Anthropology, p. 7 (see end note)

³⁹ The Mysterious Shroud, p. 99

⁴⁰ The Mysterious Shroud, p. 100

who have faith don't need a relic or an icon or an image. People who don't have faith aren't going to buy it even if we could prove that it was Christ, which no one will ever be able to do."⁴¹

So it will be for us in the WELS and also our people. We may want to be prepared to provide the information and resources that are out there for those who are sincerely interested in looking into the shroud for their own personal reasons. There is nothing to fear from that any more than from the study of other relics; from one wanting to take a trip to view the Holy Land or other historical or archeological sites; or from similar activities relating to Christian faith and history. This, I believe, is or should be the true "Lutheran" approach to these matters rather than the almost automatic rejection of such items from the past we sometimes encounter.⁴² After all, the entire Biblical narrative is set firmly into history as we commonly understand it. Our God came into history as its creator, then as a man in the person of his own Son. But, in the end, we will point our people back to Scripture and God's own complete and inspired account of history (or "His-story" as one of our old professors used to put it) and the plan of salvation as he carried it out through his own Son. The acceptance of this precious gospel teaching by God's grace and the Holy Spirit's working, or its rejection due to one's own will and mindset, is what will make the real difference for each individual soul. It will not be the consequence of the on-going debate, or new discoveries, if any, relating to what today is known as the Shroud of Turin.

Finally, to the question why this single burial cloth from ancient times, if one were to grant it to be that which once covered the body of our Lord, was preserved and all others which covered the bodies of the dead in Jewish tombs from those early days were not, we may go back again to Scripture to find the answer. It was given indirectly to the church by Peter on Pentecost,⁴³ then also later repeated by Paul to the people of Antioch,⁴⁴ statements which reference an even more ancient prophetic source privileged by the Spirit to foresee this circumstance though without a full understanding. There, David the Psalmist wrote, "You will not allow your Holy One to see decay/corruption."⁴⁵ All other burial shrouds "corrupted" along with the bodies they covered until the remains finally were moved to that special carved box or ossuary found in most tombs and the bones thus "gathered to their ancestors." The shroud of Jesus did not suffer this fate, but remained for the women and the disciples to view after the tomb had been opened. If this is indeed that shroud referenced in the gospels, it bears witness not just to the truths of Scripture as to the manner of Christ's death, but also by its very existence to the account of his resurrection and life after the grave. Perhaps that is why many have sought so desperately to discredit it over the years - not for the shroud's own sake, but for the Easter message which even the possibility of its continued existence proclaims to all.

But for us, after we have each come to terms in our own minds with the question of the Shroud of Turin's authenticity, let it then be put aside; or, at most, the information used to assist others who are searching. It is an interesting relic with an interesting tale to tell. For many, no doubt, Christians and non-Christians alike, it may be the most intriguing, and perhaps instructive, relic of all to have come down through the centuries. But Scripture and God's record therein of this world's history, and his plan for that world which is to come, a plan centered on the cross of Calvary, is of greater interest and of far greater significance to us. It is that which will be most on our minds and hearts when we see the Lord coming dressed in glory on the Final Day. It will not be the ancient piece of linen, special as it may have been, left behind in a borrowed tomb which bore the name of another, now almost 2000 years ago.

⁴¹ Minneapolis Tribune, 12-23-81, p. 7-A

⁴² Shroud a Hoax, Christian News, 4/12/82

⁴³ Acts 2:27

⁴⁴ Acts 13:35

⁴⁵ Psalm 16:10

End notes

3. Gary Baumler, "The People's Bible - John," p. 255 (E-mail update below:)

"Although the Greek word 'deo' can be translated 'wrapped' (almost any synonym of 'bind' is possible depending on the context), it seems that the root meaning 'bind' would do nicely. When harmonizing with the other Gospel accounts, I think you have a plausible solution. Keep in mind that it was common for John to omit details that the other Gospels already reported. It seems he expected his readers to be familiar with the others. Also, he sometimes included details that they didn't report. It's certainly feasible that the burial included some kind of binding of the hands and feet (or the body). The text says they bound the 'body,' but that could mean in the traditional way, i.e., the hands and the feet, and then they wrapped the body in a shroud - which would be consistent with all the Gospels. You've aroused my curiosity. If I get the opportunity, I may try to research this a little farther yet." (Gary Baumler: e-mail 2/14/00)

8. Wilson, "The Shroud of Turin," p. 39

"We can also detect that, as in Jewish custom, the man of the Shroud seems to have been bound at head, hands, and feet. On the Shroud there is a distinct gap between the frontal and dorsal images of the head, almost certainly indicating the presence of a chin band tied around the face. A binding cloth or cord at this point would almost certainly indicate the presence of a chin band tied around the face. At the region of the wrists we may perceive that there is an apparent break in the blood flow immediately to the left of the covering hand. A binding cloth or cord at this point would almost certainly have been functionally necessary to counteract the effects of rigor mortis, which according to some medical opinion would have tended to return the arms to the original crucifixion position. In the area of the feet, the possible presence of a similar cord or binding cloth is less obvious, but there is a blank in the image at precisely the most likely position."

9. "Jewish Cemeteries," (Jewish Cemeteries web site)

"Jewish law prohibits embalming or cometicizing the body, which should be wrapped in a simple white shroud and buried, ideally within 24 hours after death."

Also: "The Jewish Book of Why," p. 49-53; "Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period," p. 103-105

14. Meacham, "Current Anthropology," Vol. 24, p. 9

"The placing of coins or shards over the eyes of the corpse was known among medieval Jews and believed to be an ancient tradition...Recent excavations at Jewish tombs of the 1st century AD near Jericho have yielded the first evidence of this practice; two coins (AD. 41-44) were found inside a skull, undoubtedly having fallen through the eye sockets."

Wilson, "The Mysterious Shroud," p. 129

"In the course of their study of the VP8 three dimensional images (on the shroud), Drs. Jackson and Jumper thought they could discern small button-like objects, possibly coins, laid over the man of the Shroud's eyelids... High magnification photography... revealed what seemed to be four letters, UCAI, arranged in a coin-like curve surrounding a shape resembling a shepherd's crook. As it happens, among the known coins of Jesus' time is a tiny lepton or mite of Pontius Pilate bearing an astrologer's staff accompanied by the inscription TIBERIOU KAISAROUS...(of which) the UCAI might be the central letters with a C substituted for the Greek K..."

16. Dr. David Scaer, "Concordia Theological Quarterly," Jan. 1979, p. 47-49

"The Christian Century has pontificated upon the shroud in the following manner: 'There's one chance in a billion times a billion times a billion that the image on the cloth could be Christ.' This weighty pronouncement is certainly an overstatement. The image on the shroud fits perfectly the accounts of the suffering and death of Jesus portrayed in the Gospels...The chances that another Jewish victim of the Roman soldiers would so perfectly fit the Gospel description of Jesus are statistically insignificant. The idea that a(nother) man was deliberately crucified in such a way as to match the account in the Gospels cannot be considered seriously. Such a theory makes a good horror story, but not good history. In spite of the increasing attention being given to the shroud, the Protestant world has been remarkably reticent about its possible authenticity. One basic reason for the lack of any widespread Protestant enthusiasm for the shroud may be a general negativism towards relics that is part of the heritage of the Reformation. Luther's doctrine of free grace flew right in the face of the medieval idea that one could obtain forgiveness of sins through the veneration of relics...one's judgment as to the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin should not be influenced by the use or abuse of relics in the R. C. church...Evidence of the shroud's authenticity cannot simply be dismissed on the grounds that most relics are frauds or that they have

been abused. By this kind of reasoning Palestine itself would come into question. The question of the shroud's authenticity must be judged on its own merits...One suspects that the noticeable lack of Protestant enthusiasm for the shroud stems not only from the natural aversion to relics, but also from an ideological bias engendered by the thought of Barth and Bultmann. Karl Barth based his theology upon a concept of 'God's Word' which had no need of real history... Modern biblical scholarship has narrowed itself down to a bare bones historical minimalism. Scarcely the shadow of Jesus is left...Many Christians of the first decades saw almost daily the palace of Pilate, the temple, Golgotha, and the tomb where Jesus was laid. These things were constant historical reminders that the Jesus who was now reigning in glory at the Father's right had indeed lived and died among these people. For them these sacred places were authentic ties to the life of Jesus. The Shroud of Turin may very well be an authentic link with a past which was not only sacred but real."

18. Ronald L. Byrnes, "Letters to the Editor, Biblical Archeological Review," March /April, 1999

"Those of us who have kept abreast of the Turin Shroud research over the last 30 years can only shake our heads in pity as Walter McCrone trots out his tired old iron-oxide-and-gelatin-paint horse once again, ignoring the basic scientific fact that the fibrils that make up the image area on the cloth show no trace of any pigment material whatsoever. All of the other chemists and physicists who have examined these fibrils under powerful microscopes, plus infrared and ultraviolet rays, agree that the image fibrils are darkened due to severe oxidative dehydration, i.e., they were shriveled by heat, just as a quick, light scorching (or acid burning) of the linen would have produced. The explanations of McCrone (and well-intentioned but ill-informed commentators like Gary Vikan) are even less believable than the possible authenticity of the shroud. Come on, Walter, put that old horse out to pasture!"

24. Peter Demboroski, "Letters to the Editor, Biblical Archeology Review," Mar. / April, 1999

"(At the church) which they called My Lady St. Mary of Blachernae, was kept the syndoine in which Our Lord was wrapped, which was stood up straight every Friday so that the figure/body image of Our Lord could be plainly seen there. No one, either Greek or French, ever knew what became of this syndoine after the city was taken."

38. Meacham, "Current Anthropology," Vol. 24, p. 7ff.

"Much publicity has been generated by the assertions of McCrone, a former STURP consultant, that the image is a painting, judging from the microscopic identification of traces of iron oxide and a protein (i.e., possible pigment and binder) in image areas. The STURP analysis of the Shroud's surface yielded much particulate matter of possible artists' pigments such as alizarin, charcoal, and ultramarine, as well as iron, calcium, strontium (possibly from the soaking process for early linen), tiny bits of wire, insect remains, wax droplets, a thread of lady's panty hose, etc. However, this matter was distributed randomly or inconsistently over the cloth and had no relationship to the image, which was found to be substanceless, according to the combined results of photomicroscopy, X-radiography, electron microscopy, chemical analyses, and mass spectrometry. McCrone's claims have been convincingly refuted in several STURP technical reports (Pellicori and Evans 1980:42; Pellicori 1980:1918; Heller and Adler 1981:91-94; Schwalbe and Rogers 1982:11-24). The results of previous work by the Italian commission also run totally counter to those claims (Filogamo and Zina 1976:35-37; Brandone and Borroni 1978:205-14; Frei 1982:5). Undaunted, McCrone (personal communication, 1982) continues to stake his reputation on the interpretation of the Shroud image as 'an easel painting...as a very dilute water color in a tempera medium.'"

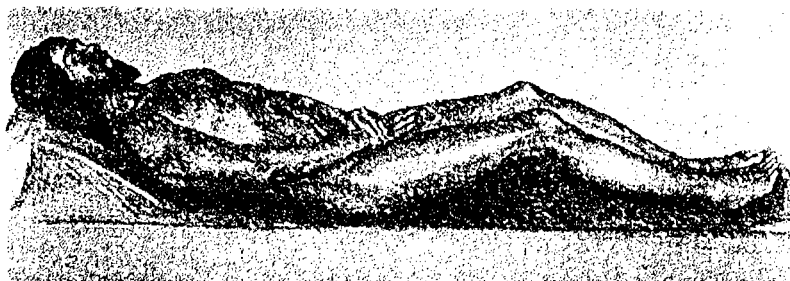
"I would reject the claim that there are dated objects 'more exposed' than the Shroud. In any event, what archaeologist worth his salt would give any credence to a date on an excavated sample which had been handled by hundreds of workers, kept in CO2-rich and high-humidity atmospheres, remained missing for along while, been boiled in oil (mentioned in a 16th-century text), washed, burnt and repaired, and touched to the sick and to fresh paintings, had wax dribbled onto it, etc.? Unless, of course, the result was to his liking after all! Backward contamination is so rare that it may be dismissed, and the eventual dating of the Shroud will at least provide a minimum age."

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Web sites (for additional background information)

- <http://shroud.com/index.htm> (Main Shroud of Turin web site)
- <http://shroud.com/library.htm> (Variety of technical studies on the shroud)
- <http://shroud.com/bstsmain.htm> (British Society for shroud studies; recent newsletters)
- <http://dmi-www.mc.duke.edu/shroud/default.htm> (Council for study of shroud; articles & images)
- <http://www.shroud.com/infolink.htm> (Links to a variety of shroud related sites)
- <http://www.abe.com> (Very good source for out of print books)
- jeffgavin@avenew.com (Rev. Jeff Gavin, LCMS specialist on shroud)



(Artistic reconstruction of shroud image)