

**The Shroud  
Of Turin:**

**A Mystery  
Across The Ages**

## THE SHROUD OF TURIN

### A Mystery Across The Ages

Science, although not incompatible with faith when properly understood, has more often served to reduce the wonders of nature to mere molecular conglomerates than to awaken man to the infinite wisdom and power of Almighty God as reflected in his creation. Because it acts to unlock the mysteries of nature, science has long been cast in the role of protagonist by those seeking to destroy the stronghold of faith. Historian Lewis Spitz writes: "The scientific revolution, which made its first giant strides in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, has won such a total victory through its apparent domination of nature that the Western mind has virtually capitulated to its advanced alleged truth."

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen Hebrews 11: 11.

If scientists are gradually losing their position as high priests of society, generations educated in a system governed by the scientific method still carry the burden of doubting Thomas. Although faith does not rest on scientific evidence, nonbelievers continue to clamor, "Show me," "Prove it." Ultimately the case rests on the question of Christ's Resurrection. While there is not, and can never be a scientific test for the Resurrection of Christ, skeptics have used the lack of material evidence in their favor. Is it not providential that today, in this age of science's hegemony, they are being challenged by a mysterious piece of cloth, the Shroud of Turin, believed by many to be the burial shroud of Jesus Christ?

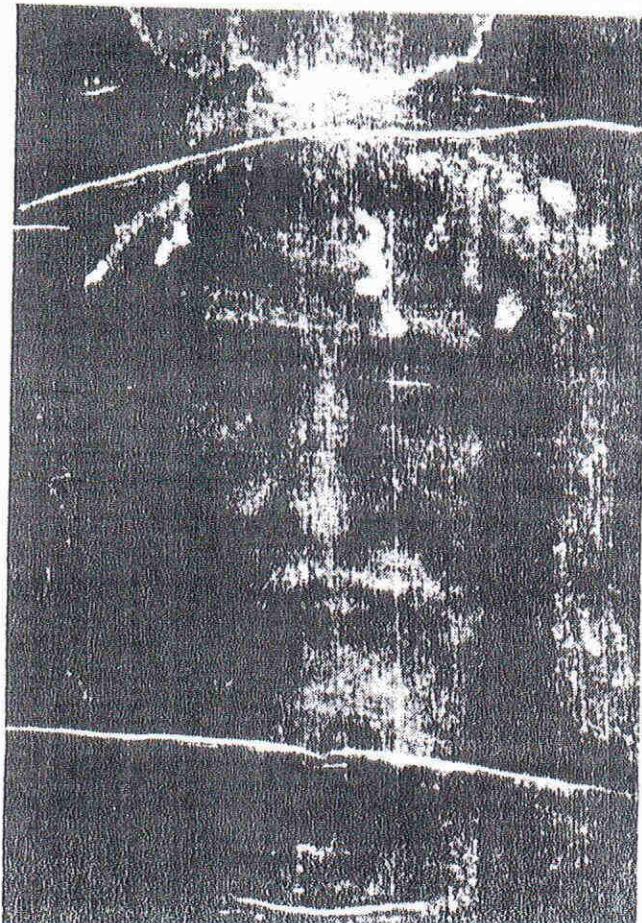
To say that the Shroud is a challenge to hardline materialists is not to say that the debate over its authenticity is neatly divided between believers and non-believers. Not at all. In fact, until quite recently, most people - even Christians - have readily dismissed it as a fake. But over the past several decades, the debate has been sharpened as proponents of the Shroud's authenticity have been joined by a number of prominent scientists. This has brought considerable publicity to the subject. And understandably so,



for science has not generally been kind to religion and most scientists have a reputation for regarding relics of this nature as so much "flummery from the Dark Ages."

### A Wonder of our Scientific Age

Today's advanced scientific techniques have made possible an in - depth study and analysis of the Shroud which is unique among religious artifacts in having captured the attention, even the imagination, not only of scientists, but also of scholars from many different fields. The results of their multidisciplinary work comprises a sizeable body of research which has opened a special field of study devoted to the Turin Shroud, called Sindonology, from the Greek word, *sindon*, meaning burial cloth.





Articles on the Shroud have appeared in professional scientific journals and in the popular press, where virtually every aspect of the Shroud has been hotly disputed at one time or another. The research reflects the work of both proponents and opponents, critics as well as those convinced of the relic's authenticity. It includes those who have come to the subject with totally objectivity and those who have had a predisposed opinion; those who have converted to Christianity as a result and those whose agnostic views remain entrenched and unchanged.

In view of the Shroud's possible significance, it is rather surprising that there has been very little substance offered from an Orthodox point of view. In the '60's, a Russian emigre scholar, N. Boutakoav, undertook a thorough investigation of the Shroud. Unfortunately, his manuscript which was to have been published by Holy Trinity Monastery Press in Jordanville, NY, was misplaced when its author died, and has never been found. The results of his research appeared in a condensed form, but this gives only fleeting revelations from an Orthodox perspective. The second edition (1973) of *The Law of God in Russian* by Archpriest Seraphim Slobodskoy contains a brief chapter titled, "The Holy Shroud of Christ," based on an article by Bishop V. Grigorenko, which looks very positively at the Turin relic. In more recent years, a short series called "The New Testament and the Shroud of Turin" by Bishop John of Atlanta appeared in *The Orthodox Observer* and an article by Bishop Chrysostomos of Orei, Greece and Priestmonk Auxentius, "The Holy Shroud: the Controversy in Perspective" in *Diakonia*, whose purpose is not so much to evaluate the Shroud as to caution against hastily dismissing it as a fraud - as some Orthodox have done - on the basis of certain objections which will be discussed. This sparse treatment is regrettable since Orthodoxy has a rather unique vantage point from which to understand the Turin Shroud and all of its pro and con arguments.

Of course, it must be stated quite clearly here that the Orthodox Church has no official opinion or view of this relic and any article written by an Orthodox, however well intentioned, simply carries the opinion of its individual personal insight which may or may not be shared with other Orthodox who have given thought to the subject. Some years ago, Archbishop Antony of San Francisco said, in response to a



question about the Shroud, that many Orthodox Christians, including those prominent bishops and clergy accept the authenticity of the Shroud, "but", he added, "Since the Turin relic does not touch upon the dogmatic teaching of the Church, no official view is possible." Even the Roman Church which is the guardian of the relic remains reserved in this matter.

A penetrating examination of this subject was launched before his death by Priestmonk Seraphim, then editor of *The Orthodox Word*, and respected author and translator of various Orthodox texts. He prepared a detailed outline of Orthodox arguments for and against the Shroud. We have tried in this article to reflect his work on this subject, while further taking into consideration the proliferation of studies and important new research which has been conducted in the years since his death.

Although we do not pretend to provide a scholarly article, we have consulted a wide variety of sources, both pro and con, in an effort to be as subjective as possible. Those wanting to satisfy the task of learning about the Shroud, but interested in an honest overall look at the arguments, are referred especially to Ian Wilson's book, *The Mysterious Shroud*, and Dr. Heller's eminently readable *Report on the Shroud of Turin*. It is hoped the present work will stimulate a more serious and widespread interest in the Shroud, and will bring to light some new perspectives - particularly scholarly research - from Orthodox sources in other languages, on a subject which even the blatantly secular *New York Times* has observed and concluded is indeed "a wonder of our scientific age."

### The Evidence

A brief summary of the history documented of the Shroud of Turin begins with a letter written by a French bishop in 1389. Its owner at the time was a French knight, Geoffrey de Charny. His childless daughter, Margaret kept it after her father's death until 1453, when she gave it to her close friend, Ann de Lusignan, wife of Duke Louis of Savoy whose family built a special chapel to house it in Chambéry, France. In 1532, a fire in the chapel caused damage to the silver reliquary containing the folded linen, as well as some water and heat damage to the relic itself. In 1578, the Shroud was

brought to Turin, the capital of the House of Savoy. There, in the cathedral of St. John the Baptist, it has remained to this day, periodically exhibited to the faithful for veneration.

while many people venerated the Turin relic as the genuine burial cloth of the Lord, a majority were unimpressed by the faint image on the flaxen cloth and were inclined to dismiss it summarily as simply another clever mediaeval forgery. This consensus was unsettled when in 1898 the Italian photographer, Secondo Pia was given permission to take photographs of the Shroud. "To his astonishment, Pia discovered that the image on the Shroud is actually a negative. Its dim and blurred features spring to life when 'printed' on the film in Pia's camera." (1). The significance of the discovery intrigued scientists and prompted a series of scientific investigations, culminating in the 1978 Shroud of Turin Research Project, henceforth referred to by its acronym, STURP.

It has not been the purpose of recent scientific studies to determine whether or not the Turin cloth is in fact the burial shroud of Jesus Christ as this is virtually impossible for scientists to prove. The two questions which the STURP Team sought to answer were 1) What were the "blood stains" and holy images made of? and 2) How were they formed?

For five days, in a royal suite adjacent to the Turin cathedral, 24 American scientific and technical personnel, as well as a number of Italians and a Swiss criminologist, using tons of sophisticated scientific equipment, subjected the Shroud to the most intense scientific and photographic scrutiny possible short of damaging the cloth. Data and samples, collected for later examination and analysis in the laboratories, provided materials for study which is still incomplete. No one who reads about the STURP study can fail to be impressed by the high level of scientific professionalism among the team members. Whatever their religious affiliations or lack thereof, it is apparent that they approached their task from an objectively scientific point of view and their results should satisfy the most severe critics.

To the naked eye, even at the optimum viewing distance of about 15 feet, the Shroud imprint is seen as a rather mysterious straw colored image dominated by several distinct



water stains. A scientific reading, however, presents an astonishing, detailed picture of the naked and unwashed body of a bearded, long - haired male who appears to have suffered terrible torture by scourging and other sources of trauma, bloody wounds on the wrists and feet, as well as the angle of blood flow along the arms, suggest crucifixion, which is supported by the fact that the man died from asphyxiation, as established by forensic specialists; peculiar wounds to head and side indicate strong parallels to a crown of thorns and piercing with a Roman lance; the nose appears to be broken, the left cheek is swollen, and the shoulders are bruised. So complete is the information "coded" on the Shroud that scientists have even been able to reconstruct the scourge or whip used to inflict the particular wounds in the back and chest. Significantly, this reconstruction was found to be congruent with the first century Roman scourges discovered by modern archaeologists and unknown before the last century.

In short, Dr. Robert Bucklin, STURP member and forensic pathologist of Los Angeles County, has stated, "The pathology and physiology are unquestionable and represent medical knowledge unknown 150 years ago." (2). And Ian Wilson writes, "If the Shroud is the work of an artist, his archeology was faultless." (3).

In spite of the vastly increased knowledge concerning the man on the shroud, the ,actual image formation process remains an enigma, while none of the STURP findings served to disauthenticate the Shroud, the question remains : Is it or is it not the burial shroud of Jesus Christ?

### The Objections

The very fact that science is unable to definitively prove the Shroud's authenticity leaves room for skepticism. The objections raised by some Orthodox Christians and other critics are weighty and deserve discussion. The most salient may be listed as follows:

Iconic depictions show that Christ was not buried in the manner indicated by the Turin Shroud. Furthermore, the gospels specifically refer to burial cloths, in the plural. Therefore the Shroud of Turin cannot be the actual burial sheet of the Lord.

There is no significant Orthodox history for the Shroud prior to its first known appearance in the West. If it is authentic, surely it would have been known in the Orthodox East at some point in its history prior to the Crusades, a period of time afterwards that it finally appeared in the West. We are aware one of the purposes of the Crusades was to obtain relics of the early Church preserved in Constantinople and the Holy Land and to retrieve them for the West so it could claim a connection with the Apostolic Church. Churches in the imperial capital city and the eternal city of Jerusalem were filled with such treasures.

The presence of artist's pigments on the cloth unquestionably point to its being a forgery and it should be considered in the same category as certain other manufactured relics of medieval times.

### Is It a Fake?

The question of authenticity must be considered first, for if the Shroud of Turin is a forgery, all other objections are secondary and of minor importance. And indeed, STURP member, Kenneth Stevenson writes: "The Shroud image seems so incredible that one might say the burden of proof rests on those who think it is forgery." (4).

The charge of fraud stems from four main sources:

First, the famous memorandum of Bishop Pierre d' Arcis in 1389. In this letter, addressed to Pope Clement VII at Avignon, he mentions that in 1357, his predecessor as Bishop of Troyes, Henri of Poitiers, had prohibited the exhibition of the Shroud, and that according to this same Bishop Henri an artist had confessed to having painted the cloth: "to wit that it was a work of human skill and not miraculously wrought or bestowed." (5). On this basis d' Arcis asked that the Pope put a stop to the exhibitions, which were drawing hundreds of pilgrims to Lirey, and ban them once and for all.

For centuries, many routinely accepted this memo as conclusive. But even the most severe critics of the Shroud have had to admit that D'Arcis gives no evidence whatever of either an investigation or the alleged confession given to his predecessor a whole generation before; He does not even give



the name of the supposed artist. Nor does any mention of the proceedings appear in any of the history annals of that period. This is most unusual, considering the medieval preoccupation with documentation and detail.

And when one considers that D'Arcis' successor in the See of Troyes, Bishop Louis Ragon, believed the Shroud to be genuine and permitted its open veneration, one wonders if D'Arcis was even describing the same object. In fact, there is reason to suspect that the memo may have referred to a mere copy of the real relic.

However, there is a more obvious possibility: it is true that D'Arcis claimed the image had been "cunningly painted." But it is also true that he was locked in moral confrontation with the owners of the Shroud, - the Charny family - who were at that very moment successfully challenging D'Arcis' authority in the diocese. Motives come in play here which should not be dismissed.

"Taken on its own merits, the memorial of Pierre D'Arcis is untrustworthy, because it was written in anger and betrays a strong bias against deCharny and the Dean of Lirey, (Clement VII,) himself, in his rescript to deCharny and in his final decree, declares that Pierre D'Arcis was angry with his opponents for obtaining an indult to exhibit the Shroud without his permission. He was still more angry with them when they ignored his command to withdraw the Shroud from public veneration, and invoked the intervention of the king to prevent him from taking action against them. And he was hurt and humiliated when (Clement VII) upheld his opponents and put him under silence in the rescript to the layman deCharny, leaving the outraged bishop to learn of this censure from common report. Pierre D'Arcis' memorial is a violent outburst over his grievances and a piece of special pleading in his own defense. He is so intemperate in language, so bitter in his animus against those whom he accuses and castigates, so reckless in imputing to them the basest motives, that we cannot rely on his unsupported statement that they were guilty of the meanest kind of fraud." (6).

Clearly, the D'Arcis memorandum - by itself - gives insufficient grounds for proof of forgery on the one hand someone might well object that it is hardly scientific to

discredit the memorial on the basis of his emotional tone. Opponents of the Shroud's authenticity claim that science supports the D'Arcis accusation. But does it?

### Is It Blood?

Before entering a discussion of the scientific arguments, we should make note of the criteria established by the STURP committee, which were to be followed in determining forgery: "(i) Are there signs of pigments, dyes, stains, powders, acids, or other artificial or natural colorants on the cloth?... (ii) Finally, can a duplicate be made of the image that demonstrates ALL the known characteristics of the image and still falls within the technological ability of a forger who lives between the first and 14th centuries" (7).

The scientific evidence, cited by those who believe the Shroud to be the work of an artist, is based primarily on the testimony of Dr. Walter McCrone, STURP member and eminent microanalyst, who achieved renown in 1974 when he unmasked the Yale Vinland map, - thought to be a 14th century work - as fake and a fraud. After examining a number of sticky tape slides containing samples of fibril's from the Shroud, McCrone declared that he had found a high incidence of iron oxide, and that this iron oxide was hematite, an earth pigment used since prehistoric times in making paint. On this basis, he concluded that, indeed, the Shroud was the work of a clever artist using a thin watercolor - which explained the lack of detectable brush strokes. McCrone did not hesitate to publish his conclusions in his company scientific journal and the press readily grabbed on to his discovery which made appropriately sensational headlines. With due respect to Dr. McCrone's professional reputation, were his conclusions in fact, correct? Were they even scientific?

When McCrone presented his findings to the rest of the STURP team, the other members were frankly dismayed. No one disputed the presence of iron oxide on the cloth, but every one except McCrone questioned its "precise nature in any one sample and...its relevance as a contributor to specific forms of the various images seen on various parts of the cloth." (8).



McCrone had arrived at his conclusion independently, without comparing his findings against any other STURP scientists who had been conducting extensive testing from other angles and perspectives. And in fact, *none* of the other tests bore out McCrone's conclusion that it was an artist's forgery. But in order to properly refute McCrone's theory, they would have to account for the presence of so much iron oxide and the few particles of pigments which had been found.

This puzzle was finally resolved by the scientific sleuth work of Dr. John Heller and colleague, Professor Alan Adler. The first clue came when a comparison of samples from the image and non - image areas showed virtually no difference in the concentration of iron oxide particles, which was significantly higher only in the "blood" image areas. Closer inspection also showed that the iron oxide was found *inside* the fibril walls, and not on the surface. This evidence led them to the discovery that the iron oxide was but the result of a chemical change that takes place in the manufacture of linen, coupled with the effect of heat from the fire of 1532. These experts were able to successfully duplicate this process in the laboratory.

McCrone claimed emphatically that the "blood" was quite obviously paint: it was too red to be genuine blood and furthermore, in his test for birefringence, the particles were shown to be of a crystalline structure which is characteristic of iron oxide but not of blood. This puzzled Heller and Adler whose tests with microspectrophotometry had given definite proof of hemoglobin. The discrepancy in the chemists' findings was finally explained by the fact that McCrone had carried out his test for birefringence through the optically active Mylar sticky tape holding the sample on to the glass slides. When the particles were separated from the tape, the test for birefringence proved negative. Later, a renowned Italian pathologist determined more specifically that it was truly "human blood, of the A B blood group." (9).

Still another test revealed the presence of a great amount of bilirubin in the blood, "far more than would be expected in a normal healthy human being. The only possible interpretation was that at the time of his death the man of the shroud must have been severely, horribly jaundiced, with huge quantities of bile pigments present in his blood stream.

But why?...Outside actual illness, the conditions in which such severe jaundicing can occur are severe concussive injuries, such as occur in road accidents, but which would also be consistent with the sort of severe beating and scourging which the man of the Shroud appears to have undergone...." (10).

As these findings gradually came to light, McCrone began to retract his conclusion, admitting that he had "neglected" to compare results from different areas on the Shroud" (11) and adding that his information was not "as precise as one would like" because some guess work on his part was involved, and therefore his data "should not be interpreted as anything like exact." (12). In a letter to Wilson he went so far as to say "I do not think anyone of us would doubt authenticity if the date of the carbon test came out to be first century." (13).

But if McCrone had changed his position, the damage had already been done. The contradictory findings received little, if any, publicity and today some sincere critics still point to McCrone's theory as conclusive because it is the only one given publicity and attention, that the Shroud is an ancient cloth, later touched up by an artist. In spite of it being better known this theory collapses in view of the later scientific findings.

What about the particles of paint pigment actually detected? STURP proved that they were "strays, or adventitious materials, with no justification for being considered contributory to the Shroud's actual images." (14). Where did these "stays" come from? Research has shown that over the centuries many artists had made copies of the Shroud, and these were "for practical purposes...placed in actual one - to - one contact" with the original. In just the same way, scientists have also found occasional particles of thread from vestments that had brushed against the Shroud during its rare expositions through the centuries.

But are there perhaps some other ways in which the images on the Shroud could have been forged, other than by painting? There have been a number of experimental attempts in recent years to duplicate the image by artificial means just to see if it could be done.



One of the most publicized attempts to do this was by Joe Nickell, an experimenter at the University of Kentucky and former magician who made a name for himself when he wrote about his experiment in the magazine "Popular Photography." He theorized that the Turin image was the result of a dry powder of myrrh and aloes brushed onto the cloth stretch over a bas-relief figure. He was able to show that, indeed, a kind of image can be produced on cloth by his method. Simulating some characteristics of the Turin Shroud. But there are several striking dissimilarities between his results and the actual Shroud image.

First, Nickell's techniques require a significant build-up of the particles in the image area - something which microscopic inspection does not show on the Shroud of Turin. Additionally, the fire and water that came into contact with the Shroud during the fire of 1537 "would have affected an image formed with organic substances." (15) This did not happen with the Turin cloth, although it otherwise shows clear evidence of heat scorching and water marks.

Secondly, there are serious aesthetic objections to the image produced by Nickell. His image, limited to the face, shows "nothing of clarity and resolution of the image on the Turin Shroud" (16) but is crude and blurred. Nor does Nickell's creation conform to the 3D computer image of the Shroud, which provides one of the most striking arguments against it being a fraud. Furthermore, Nickell claims the rubbing technique he tried to duplicate was common in the art of the Middle Ages and yet research in art history has yet to produce a single specimen bearing any appreciable degree of similarity to the characteristics of the Shroud.

P. Scotti, Chairman of the 1939 Sindonolgy Congress reported, "NO one who thinks scientifically will deny the authenticity of the Shroud."

Although Nickell's theory, like McCrone's is often used as prime evidence against the Shroud's authenticity, it is significant that neither of these theories have been supported by any respected scientific journal. And while the casual reader may be convinced by Nickell's arguments, those abreast of sindonological research are appalled by the unscientific approach of Nickell, who misquotes or quotes out of context

from various scientific and scholarly investigations, simply to advance his own point. He makes his testing conclusions fit his predetermined consequences.

Another theory is that the image was produced by heating a metal statue and then applying a cloth, which would then be slightly scorched in the appropriate places. STURP thoroughly investigated this idea but found that "scorches fluoresce under ultraviolet light, and while the Shroud's scorches from the 1532 fire indeed do so, the body image does not." (17) This test also invalidates a somewhat similar attempt by the well - known Geoffrey Ashe a few years ago in England.

Thus far no experiment has been able to produce an image which successfully meets STURP's criteria as outlined earlier in our discussion.

wilson well summarizes the situation:

"The Shroud, then presents an extraordinary enigma. Ostensibly it ought to be a forgery. After all, it seems far - fetched idea that a piece of linen of such a size would have survived nearly two thousand years, even though there are surviving Egyptian burial linens twice as old. It seems equally far - fetched that in the case of none other than Jesus Christ's photographic image should have been left on the cloth. If it is a natural phenomenon, why are there no other surviving examples?" (18)

On the other hand, if one maintains that the Shroud is fake, then one must explain "whoever fabricated it before 1357, by whatever unknown methods, had command of knowledge and abilities quite incredible for his time. He must have known the precise methods of crucifixion in the first century; possessed the medical knowledge of a modern expert surgeon; utilized an art process unknown to any great master, never duplicated before or since; been able to foresee and approximate principles of photographic negativity not otherwise discovered for centuries; imported a piece of old cloth of Middle Eastern manufacture, using a coloring agent which could be unaffected by intense heat; been able to incorporate in his work details that have only recently been discovered, that the human eye cannot see and that are visible only with the most advanced computer - scanning devices; been



able to reproduce flawlessly, on a merely flat line surface, in a single color, undistorted 3 D characteristics of a human body in a "negative format" on the tops of the threads, while conversely showing the "blood" as positive and soaking all the way through. All of this had to have been prior to 1357, for since that date the Shroud has a clearly documented and uninterrupted history. And even now, with all the scientific and technical skills at our command, our scientists and artists cannot duplicate the Shroud." (19)

In view of these overwhelming odds against the Shroud being the work of an artist, it is hard to believe that there are still those who insist that it must be a clever forgery on the part of the medieval Roman Church simply because that Church once had a dark period in which some relics were fabricated and still in use today, a fact freely admitted by Roman authorities today. But what everyone forgets and almost dismisses is the prior history of the Shroud. There is no doubt it was stolen from the capital city of Constantinople by Crusaders whose actual and main objective was to invade the East to retrieve relics of the apostolic church kept by the Byzantine Emperors in various capital city churches and shrines. The Library of the magnificent cathedral basilica of St. Mark in Venice is filled with such items saved by the Crusaders from the onslaught of the Muslim invaders and their original Orthodox guardians. So we are blessed this valuable and spiritually inspiring relic was saved because with the obvious limitations and incompetence of Orthodox patriarchs in the capital city, many items have perished.

Contrary to popular opinion, the Turin Shroud has not been the property of the Church of Rome until quite recently when, following the death of ex - King Umberto of the House of Savoy in 1983, it finally passed into the hands of the Church. Prior to that, the Shroud was owned and possessed by two important families - one of which, the House of Savoy had been vehemently anti - papal in its time; in fact the wife of the late Umberto was herself not sure of the Shroud's authenticity.

The general mental climate of the Roman Church in the last generation has gone stridently in the direction of de-mythologicalization. Roman scholars have raced headlong to

strip their Church of anything that cannot be absolutely authenticated through objective documentation and evidence which means from a purely secular and worldly perspective. In this extreme anti - traditionalist stand one sees saints being "de - canonized" relics discarded and, in general, any notion of the supernatural de - emphasized. Were it not for the extensive scientific research on the Shroud in the last twenty years, it is entirely possible that this long strip of linen might now be confined to the same oblivion where now rest various embarrassments of the medieval Roman Church.

Also, the cooperation of the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, the guardian but not the owner of the Shroud, in allowing a scientific investigation, shows the readiness of that Church to accept the possibility of forgery. Some skeptics are suspicious of the fact that no carbon 14 test has been permitted which would conclusively date the linen to within 300 years of its origin. Here it should be pointed out that apart from any such test, textile authorities on the basis of extensive research and laboratory tests, agree that the linen with its distinctive herringbone weave can be reliably dated from the first to third centuries and comes from the Middle East. Their findings are supported by those of Swiss criminologist and pollen expert Max Frei, who has discovered on the Shroud spores of plants native to the Holy Land. Those who feel this evidence is still not strong enough, will be interested to know that as this is being written, Pope John Paul has given permission for the long - desired carbon 14 test, now that enhanced techniques enable the test to be performed using the tiniest portion of fabric. Obviously, Church authorities are prepared to accept the fact that in the unlikely event that the test contradicts those already performed, and the linen is dated after 300 AD, it will be completely discredited as the Burial Shroud of the Lord. If, as is expected by scientists, the carbon 14 test simply confirms the assertion of the textile experts, skeptics will have to find another argument.

### Science Concludes

A precise refutation of forgery charges is provided by a statement released to the press by the American experts at their final meeting:



"The scientific consensus is that the image was produced by something which resulted in oxidation, dehydration and conjugation of the polysaccharide structure of the microfibrils of the linen itself. Such change can be duplicated in the laboratory by certain chemical and physical processes....However, there is no chemical or physical methods which can account for the totality of the image, nor can any combination of physical, chemical, biological and medical circumstances explain the image adequately...;

"We can conclude for now that the Shroud image is that of a real human form of a scourged, crucified man. It is not the product of an artist. The bloodstains are composed of hemoglobin and also give positive test for serum albumen.

"The image is an ongoing mystery, and until further chemical studies, perhaps by some scientists in the future, the problem remains unsolved..." (20)

It would seem, then, that serious Orthodox objections to the Turin relic must now be based on a foundation other than simple forgery.

How did the Jews bury their dead?

Some Orthodox Christians base their criticism of the Shroud on the testimony of iconography and also on certain passages in Scripture. These objections concern the important question of burial customs at the time of Christ, for if indeed the Shroud is to be considered authentic, then it must not only show no signs of forgery, it must also conform to the known methods by which the Jews buried their dead in the first century. And whatever else it may be, it is not the burial Shroud of the Lord.

As illustrated by numerous icons, both of the Lamentation or Burial of Christ and of the raising of Lazarus, some suggest that the custom at the time of Christ was to wrap a corpse in narrow strips of linen soaked in certain spices and oils which, as they hardened, or "set," formed a mummy - like cocoon in a manner suggestive of the burial practices of the ancient Egyptians. The Shroud of Turin, being a long single strip of linen, is certainly incompatible with this method.

The answer to this question is complicated by the fact that while there is a proliferation of ancient Egyptian funeral cloths, "in Palestine itself, no cloth is known to have been preserved because of the extremely humid climate. Burial cloths would have normally been destroyed quickly by the decomposition of the bodies they covered and enveloped." (21) The fact that Egyptians embalmed their dead -in the belief that this would insure existence in the after life helped to preserve the mummy wrappings. The Jews, on the other hand, had a considerable and understandable abhorrence of Egyptian culture, and scholars make it clear than any imitation of Egyptian burial practices would be contrary to Israelite beliefs, as partaking of heathen, idolatrous customs and practices.

The Israelite customs surrounding burial of the dead were sacred and vested in laws and taboos not at all compatible with Egyptian mortuary sciences. There is no evidence that the Jews did anything to retard the natural dissolution of the flesh. Finklestein, in his massive two volume work on ancient Jewish religious customs, says that "no elaborate provision" should be made for a corpse (22), which itself argues against any complicated mummy - like wrapping. Archaeology abundantly confirms this although no mummies have been found in Jewish sepulchers or tombs. Essene burial shows skeletons in the same position as the image on the Shroud, "laid out flat, facing upward, elbows bent slightly and hands crossed on the pelvis" (23); "the protruding elbows rule out an Egyptian type of mummified burial" (24) in which the arms are slightly bound at the sides.

Furthermore, "It was standard Jewish practice that when the deceased flesh had fully rotted from his bones, they would be gathered up into an ossuary." (25) Jewish ossuaries from the time of Christ are abundant. Here again, it doesn't make sense that the corpse would be elaborately wrapped in bandage - like strips of linen soaked in sticky ointments, which would later be cut in order to remove the bones. Interestingly, orthodox Christians in countries like Greece still exhume their dead after a few years and reverently transfer the bones to an ossuary.

What about the spices used in a Jewish burial? What then, was their purpose? "The Jewish custom was intended simply to



make a pleasant smell and thereby render the death somewhat less alien and unpalatable, and was in no way comparable with the Egyptian practice of embalming, which preserved the body from decay." (26) While it is true that St. John Chrysostom speaks of the spices and ointments as "cementing" themselves to the body in order to retard the natural effects of death, he was probably reflecting a common bit of misinformation from his own time, as we see below.

Concerning Jewish burial practices, another interesting testimony in support of the Shroud's authenticity comes from the *Code of Jewish Law* "which instructs that a person executed by the government was to be buried in a single sheet." (27).

Quite apart from this information, there is yet another possibility readily apparent in a careful reading of the Gospel accounts. Since the evangelists speak only of taking the body down from the Cross and wrapping it in spices, but not of washing the Body which was a required ritual act, although other sources say it was not to be done for a criminal or anyone who had died an accidental death and had his own blood on him, it could be that the Turin Shroud was merely a preliminary burial cloth, to be replaced when full ablutions and anointings could be completed, or even used as part of the ablutions themselves, to soak up blood and perspiration before it could dry and coagulate and thus become very difficult to wash off. This is strongly suggested by John 19: 40: "Then they took the body of Jesus, and wrapped it in linen cloth with spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury." The translation here is open to interpretation. "A word for word translation of the Greek text gives us: 'as is the custom of the Jews in laying out a body.' *Entphiazō*, the Greek verb used, can only mean 'lay out'; if 'bury' had been intended, then the proper verb would have been *thapato*. Thus, John does not say that definitive burial took place" (27a)

The likelihood of this possibility increases when one considers the haste with which all this had to be accomplished before the approaching sundown marking the beginning of the Sabbath when it was strictly forbidden to do any such work. The Synoptic Gospels all say that Jesus 'gave up the ghost' shortly after the ninth hour, that is 3PM our time, and that time was come when St. Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and "begged the body of Jesus." Therefore, there could not have



been more than an hour or two in which to take the Body from the Cross and lay it in the sepulcher.

"And when the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him" Mark 16: 1; Luke 23:54 - 24: 1.

This conjecture is further supported by the fact that the Myrrhbearing Women, having seen the precious Body of the Lord laid in the tomb on Friday, then went and bought still more spices in addition to what had already been provided by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. The implication is certainly that the necessary burial rites had not been completed. Indeed, the late Archbishop Andrew of Novo - Diveyevo says that the reason the Holy Women returned on the third day was out of obedience to the law of Moses, which required the completion of certain burial customs. (28) Had the law been fulfilled there would have been no need to risk the danger of returning to "anoint him."

### Iconographic Contradictions?

What, then, can be said of the numerous icons which clearly show Christ and Lazarus wrapped in strips of cloth like mummies? In answering this question we must begin with a brief look at the meaning and purpose of icons.

As a general statement, we can say that in the Orthodox faith iconography forms one part of the inspired treasury of Sacred Tradition or Revelation. This treasury is not lightly to be tempered with, and includes everything that has been revealed: Holy Scripture, Church Councils, Orthodox writings of the Holy Fathers, lives of the saints, liturgics, including hymnography, church architecture and, of course, icons.

According to the understanding of the Church, icons are theology in color. They teach and reveal certain truths about the saving faith, inspiring the viewer feelings of compunction and awe, in much the same way as do the writings of the Holy Fathers. Iconography is the artistic and creative expression of theology, just as hymnography is the poetic expression of what the Church teaches. It is understood, for example, that



the beautiful dialogue between Archangel Gabriel and the Birthgiver of God, sung during the Annunciation canon, is poetically inspired and theologically sound, but there is no need to believe it is historically accurate. In the same way, the purpose of icons is to convey the theological content of the subject rather than any accuracy of historic detail. Neither are icons strictly representational; they are not intended to be photographic, realistic, although many do portray actual historic events such as the Lord's Baptism or the Mystical Supper. But even when showing actual events, certain unreal but acceptable conventions are used: for example, in icons of the Myrrhbearing women we seldom see a typical Jewish tomb such as would have been used by St. Joseph of Arimathea; instead, we see a self-like structure or sarcophagus. It is not physical actual reality icons wish to advance, but the spiritual qualities of the individual or event portrayed. The message of icons is essentially spiritual.

On the other hand, iconography is an art that has certain conventions which guide the iconographer in his composition, colors, etc. For this reason, in Orthodox icons one does not encounter the diversity of treatment, given any one subject, which characterizes Western religious art whose authors had greater liberty in the use of their imagination with the unfortunate result that Western religious art very soon sacrificed its theological purpose to worldly aesthetic standards. An Orthodox iconographer, unless he is working on a subject never before depicted iconographically, will base his work on some traditional representation or iconographic mode called in Russian, *podlinnik*. This explains the basic similarities of icons over the centuries and even those from different locales.

Turning more specifically to the question at hand, what are we to make of icons that depict the shroud of Christ as a mummy-like cocoon, or those icons that show St. Lazarus unmistakably wrapped like a mummy?

A very early example dated third or fourth century of the latter appears on a fresco in the catacombs which was illustrated on page 220 of *The Crucible of Christianity*, edited by Arnold Toynbee. On the theory that antiquity proves authenticity, one might be inclined to assume that this



correctly illustrates Jewish burial practices. In fact, however the same fresco also depicts the Lord beardless, with short hair, and dressed like a Roman of the time, a likeness not uncommon before the 6<sup>th</sup> century; the possible implications of this are discussed below. Whatever the iconographer's reasons, he seems to have drawn on things in his own society rather than from first century Jerusalem. And when we look more closely at Roman society at that time, we find, beginning with Julius Caesar and continuing to the collapse of Rome, an official fascination with Egyptian religion, which had become quite fashionable in certain classes, and which influenced funerary practice in many parts of the empire.

Later in time, because of profound influence of the West in Russia, icons have been created of the Blessed Trinity depicting the Eternal Father as a kindly old man. Since He is a pure spirit, He cannot be depicted in any way beyond symbolism which has traditionally been the case. In addition, during the iconoclastic controversy, by imperial order, huge quantities of icons were destroyed and therefore cannot witness to the tradition of the early Church in depicting the burial of Christ appropriately.

A brief survey of icons that survived will show that not all depict mummy - like wrappings. One can find distinct variations even within the same school. Some icons of the Raising of Lazarus, for example, depict Lazarus entirely bound with narrow strips; his arms at his side, while in other icons he is clearly wrapped in a single sheet which is secured with a few narrow bands. Likewise, some icons of the Lamentation or Entombment show Christ also wrapped in many narrow strips, although ;one can usually distinguish a single length of cloth underneath the wrappings, while others depict the dead Christ lying on a large sheet which SS. Joseph and Nikodemos are about to fold over the Body (confer plate 153, *Byzantine Art in the Collection of the USSR*, Moscow, 1966).

If we were to generalize, it might be said that icons in the Greek Tradition tend more towards the mummy - like depictions, familiar to many Orthodox Americans in the series of festal icons produced by Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston. In this series, the icon of the Myrrhbearing Women at the Lord's empty tomb clearly shows a cocoon - like mummy. Although it is a nicely stylized image of burial clothes, can



this type of example be used against the authenticity of the Shroud?

Because, as we have said, icons are not always representationally accurate, we must go in this case to the higher authority of Scripture. On this point St. John is most detailed (20: 6 - 8). "He observed the wrappings lying on the ground and saw the piece of cloth which had covered the head not lying with wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself." This detail receives greater detail in the Slavonic translation which reads "...specially wrapped" - "*Otsob svit'*." This is not so illustrated in the icon in question. Nor is it accurately depicted in a majority of Russian icons of the same subject, although these show a single piece of cloth and a smaller cloth lying separately, the latter is not "wrapped."

Commenting on this passage, St. John Chrysostom says that one of the cloths was placed carefully and deliberately aside as a specific "sign" of what had happened in the tomb - the removal of the Lord's glorified Body by Resurrection rather than by stealing - and that this was a purposeful and conscious act, not something accidental or hurried; that it was itself a "sign" to those who came to the empty tomb. And indeed, St. John the Evangelist, speaking of himself, said that when "He saw and believed" John 20: 8. Had there been an intact cocoon neither Mary Magdalene nor the Apostles would have been so certain that the Lord's Body had disappeared.

Critics of the Shroud have also pointed out that icons of the crucifixion universally show the nails piercing the hands, whereas the man of the Shroud was crucified through the wrists. Since crucifixion was abolished in the early fourth century, and "the earliest artistic representations of the crucifixion date only from the fifth century," (29) the tradition of nails through the palms was most probably an incorrect assumption. When the French surgeon, Pierre Barbet made some experiments on cadavers in the 1930's, He discovered that neither the muscles nor the bones in the palms are strong enough to support the weight of a crucified victim. "But when Barbet drove a nail through the point he judged to be indicated on the Shroud, the highly compacted metacarpal bones of the wrists, he found that any normal body weight was held firm and secure." (30) This point is a non anatomical tunnel,

called the Mesocarpal space of Destot, which allowed the nail to be driven through wrist without breaking the bones.

We must also consider that in describing the hands, as the place of the nails, it is not simply the palm of the hand and its fingers which is considered in reality the hand. Hand extends from tip of fingers to the elbow. So by the fifth century, without any precedent in depiction, in time, this understanding may have been lost.

Another interesting detail which icons do not reflect is the missing thumbs on the man in the shroud. Again Barbet's experiments demonstrated that in penetrating the wrist, the nail invariably injured the median nerve which caused a contraction of the muscle controlling the thumb, drawing it sharply into the palm. Dr. Barbet's observations have been confirmed by modern forensic specialists.

The very fact that the Shroud image does not conform in these details to traditional depictions favors its authenticity; a forger would certainly have tried to follow a conventional portrayal of the Crucified One as closely as possible. As Heller writes: (31) "The stigmata on the body do not follow art or legend. They were of life."

Returning to the intact cocoon of linen bandages, some apologists say that a mummy reinforces the theological principle that, "Just as our Lord, in his Nativity, passed through his Mother's birth canal, without disturbing her virginity, and just as He passed through the seal of the sepulcher without disturbing the sealed entrance, and just as He passed through door of the Upper Room to greet the Apostles, He passed through or out of the grave clothes and left their structure and form intact as well" (32) This is an extremely appealing idea, of course, similar to the exquisite parallelism the Holy Fathers loved to use in comparing the Old and New Testament symbols and their fulfillments. The problem is that it simply does not work in this situation for many of the reasons just stated. It is contradicted not only by Jewish burial customs, but also by Scripture, to which we now turn in our discussion.



## The words of Scripture

Criticism of the shroud's authenticity also rests on variant readings of certain Scripture passages in which some are again inclined to deduce support for the mummy - style wrappings. The four terms we are concerned with here are: *edesan*, *sindon*, *othonia*, and *sudarion*.

We begin with John 19: 40: "Then they took the Body of Jesus, and wrapped it in linen cloth with spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury." (KJV) The phrase "wrapped it in linen cloth" might suggest a tight binding of the corpse, but the accepted verb here is *edesan*, which means "wrap" or "fold" and is quite compatible with the synoptic verbs.

The Synoptic Gospels use the singular Greek word *sindon* for the grave clothes of the Lord. This word "means precisely a sheet of linen. *sindon* can also be used generally to designate a single strip; of linen used for any purpose: a sheet, a garment, a sail, and so forth....In its only other occurrence in the New Testament, (Mark 14: 51), it describes a garment, a sheet draped around the body like a robe." (33) Only St. John uses *othonia*, a plural word sometimes translated as "linen cloths" or, more suggestively, as far as a mummy is concerned, "strips of linen." However, most scholars agree that *othonia* actually refers to all the grave clothes associated with the burial of Jesus - the large *sindon* or the shroud, as well as the smaller strips of linen that bound the jaw" - and/or tied the shroud to the body, clearly seen in a number of icons of the raising of Lazarus (Confer Ouspensky and Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, p. 174.) Such strips would be a necessary part even of a provisional burial "This interpretation of *othonia* is supported by Luke's use of the word. He says (23: 53) that Jesus was wrapped in a *sidon* but that Peter (24:12) saw the *othonia* lying in the tomb after the Resurrection. Luke, then uses *othonia* as a plural for all of the grave clothes, including the *sindon* or shroud." (34)

Among th grave clothes mentioned by St. John is "the handkerchief which had been about his head," an item mentioned above in connection with our discussions of icons. The Greek word translated here as "handkerchief" is *sudarion*, and can also be translated as "napkin" or "sweat cloth." Its ambiguous meaning has given rise to several explanations of just what



this *sudarion* represented. Critics who interpret this as "facecloth" say that if the *sudarion* had been placed over the Lord's face there could be no facial image on the Shroud. But since both the *Mishnah* and the Code of Jewish Law command the binding of the jaw, it has been suggested that the *sudarion* was not a face cloth at all, but rather the strip of linen used to tie up the sagging chin of a corpse. The image on the Shroud of Turin also indicates that the jaw was bound.

A second interesting theory rests on still another interpretation of the word, *sudarion*. Boutakov's brief reference on this subject serves to sharpen regret over his lost manuscript

"In our work we show in detail, that the word, "*sudar*", "*sudars*" in Aramaic, the language of the Saviour and his disciples, signifies none other than the bodily covering or Shroud. This word came unchanged into the Slavonic gospel: "And the *sudar* which was over his head..." Thus Christ himself folded and carefully laid aside his Holy Shroud, apart from the other grave clothes, as if to mark the importance - for the future - of what was imprinted on it. The rest of the cloths, according to Rabbinic testimony concerning Jewish burial customs were comprised of bandages - one around the ankles, another around the arms and a third around the jaw. No other linens were used in this kind of burial." (35)

Boutakov supports his interpretation with the testimony of a fourth century Holy Father, St. Ephraim the Syrian, who refers to an ancient tradition in Jerusalem which held that the *sudar* which covered Christ's head was in fact his Shroud. "The same Holy Father said in a Paschal homily: 'When dawn approached He was wrapped in the shroud. Just as the darkness scattered and the light appeared, so He himself took off and folded up the *sudar* in which He had been bound.'" (36)

Wilson concurs with this as a possible explanation; "Although this may have been a mere chin band, it implies a more substantial piece of linen, and an alternative interpretation is that it could have been the Shroud we know today. The root meaning of *audarion* is sweat cloth, and the Shroud may have been intended as a temporary wrapping to soak up the sweat and blood from the body prior to a more



definitive burial, which would have taken place after the Passover Sabbath." (37)

while one could reasonably support any number of interpretations concerning the precise nature of the grave cloths used in the burial of our Lord, scholars are in agreement that there is no evidence for mummiform burials among the Jews at the time of Christ, and considering the questionable historical accuracy of icons that show this type of burial, we must suggest that the arguments from iconography and scriptural terminology really cannot be used to discredit the Shroud of Turin

This leaves us with one final, but by no means unimportant objection to the authenticity of the Shroud

Is there an Orthodox history of the Shroud?

We have already said that the first documented appearance of the Shroud in the West was in 1389, more than a millennium after the Resurrection. If the Shroud of Turin is to be considered genuine, where was it all this time? Critics say that this apparent lack of "geneology" is another indication that the Turin relic is not the Lord's Shroud. From an Orthodox standpoint, this is a serious objection.

This objection rests on the quite reasonable supposition that if the Shroud existed before the fourteenth century such a precious relic would have been widely known; furthermore, in the Orthodox East, it would have had a feast day and services in its honor, as is the case with other relics of the Lord or his Mother, such as the feast of the True Cross, the Sash of the Birthgiver of God.

In addressing this position we must first point out that contrary to what some have assumed, the historical "slate" is not after all, void of any mention of a shroud prior to 1389. There are fleeting references to it sprinkled through those first centuries. For example, St. Jerome, the translator of the Scriptures into Latin, quotes from a lost Gospel of the Hebrews which says that the burial sheet of the Lord was given to someone by the Lord himself. The life of the fourth century enlightener of Georgia, St. Nina, says that the Lord's Shroud

came into the possession first of St. Luke and then St. Peter, but during her time she did not know where it was.

So whether or not the Turin relic is the same burial linen described above, the burial cloth of Christ, obviously did survive the initial period of time after the Resurrection, and was evidently known in the Apostolic era. And this only makes sense; would not the first Christians have treasured any object that had been in contact with the Saviour, especially something associated with his salutary Passion and glorious Resurrection? A seventh century Western bishop says that although he did not know where the Lord's shroud was, 'yet I do not think that the Apostles neglected to preserve these and such - like relics for future times.' (38) And in fact, St. John Damascene (+750), in his third Apology Against the Iconoclasts, lists the "winding sheet" among those "created things...by which God has accomplished our salvation," and which are thereby accorded veneration. (38a)

In relation to the Shroud of Turin, one of the most interesting of early references to the Lord's grave clothes is found in the ancient Mozarabic liturgy, used by Christians of Moslem Spain and preserved to this day in the diocese of Toledo. In the service for Great and Holy Saturday it speaks of Peter and John seeing the fresh traces (*vestigia*) on the linens of "the One Dead and Risen." (39)

Beginning in the year 570 we find more references to the linen associated with the Lord's sepulcher. Various pilgrims at different times and places attest to having been shown either the *sindon* or the *sudarion*. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Byzantine Emperor Alexis Comnenus, in a letter to Robert of Flanders, mentions that among the most precious relics in his possession were the burial linens found in the tomb after the Resurrection. (40) This receives curious confirmation in a catalogue of Constantinople's relics, compiled in 1157 by the superior of an Icelandic monastery, Nicholas Soemundarsen, which lists the "bloodied shroud of Christ." (41) And in 1171 William of Tyre wrote that the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus showed the Frankish King Amalrich I of Jerusalem "the most precious evidence of the Passion of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that is, the Cross, nails, lance, sponge, reed, crown of thorns, *sindon* and sandals..." (42) A more detailed description is provided by the Greek, Nicholas Mesaries,



who was guardian of the relics for the emperor and who saved the shroud from fire during an uprising of the guards in 1201:

"In this chapel Christ rises again, and the *sindon* with the burial linens is the clear proof....The burial *sindon* of Christ; this is of linen, of cheap; and easily obtainable material, still smelling fragrant of myrrh, defying decay, because it wrapped the mysterious, naked body after the Passion." (43) Elsewhere this has been translated "...covered and clothed the naked Body of the Eternal One in death." (44)

Thus, "something" associated with the burial of the Lord was certainly believed to have survived, was known in the Orthodox world before the Great Schism, and was seen by those who lived long before today's controversy surrounding the Shroud of Turin. Whether the Turin cloth is one or all of these mentioned in the old chronicles, we do not know; there is, thus far, no independent historical verification.

There is also an intriguing statement from the Crusader, Robert de Clari. In 1203 he saw, in the church of the Blachernae in Constantinople, the *syndone* in which our Lord had been wrapped, which stood straight every Friday so that the figure of the Lord could be plainly seen there." (45) Scholars say that the medieval French word for "figure" could be interpreted as either "face" or "full figure," in itself an intriguing suggestion, as we shall see below. But de Clari added that "no one, either Greek or French, ever knew what became of this *syndoine* after the city was taken over by the Crusaders." (46) What actually happened to it?

In trying to answer this question, Boutakov follows the lead of Geoffrey de Villehardoin, and reliable historian and a leader of the Fourth Crusade. He relates that a general of the 6<sup>th</sup> Burgundian division, the knight Othon de la Roche, saved the Shroud from being divided in the course of plunder, and took it to his native Burgundy in 1206. With his father, Ponce de la Roche, an aristocrat of the neighboring Franche - Comte, he presented the Holy Shroud to Archbishop Amadeus who placed it in the Besancon Cathedral.

According to Cathedral records (manuscript #826) the shroud was brought out annually at Passover for veneration until 1349 in which year it was stolen. Soon thereafter the

Shroud came into the possession of King Philippe de Valois, who in turn gave it to his standard bearer, knight and count of Lirey, Geoffrey de Charny, in gratitude for his services. de Charny was given the relic with the understanding that it would be treasured in the church he intended to build in Lirey. And in fact, "a decree issued by Pope Clement VII in 1390 mentions thaa the Shroud was 'reverently placed' at Lirey by de Charny" (47) who likewise founded a special mission to protect the relic and to bring it out for veneration by the people. (48)

Although Boutakov's information is carefully referenced with good footnotes to many original sources, more recent scholars find this geneology speculative. Wilson, for example, favors a theory proposed by an Oxford scholar, Hungarian Dr. Csocsan de Verallja, who suggests that the Shroud was taken from Constantinople by Mary, the widow of Emperor Isaac II Angelus. The Hungarian - born Empress had married the man who led the sack of Constantinople, Boniface de Montferrat, taking the name Margaret in Roman baptism. Since "to the victor belong the spoils," and since we know that many relics were stolen by the Latins at this time, it is more than probable that Mary - Margaret and her husband participated in the dreadful looting of Holy Byzantium. In any case, we know that they moved to Thessalonika, where they built the church of the "Acheiropoietos" (the icon of the Holy Face not made with hands.) In itself very suggestive.

By her third husband, Mary - Margaret had a son who eventually became a Knight Templar. If Mary - Margaret stole the *sydoine*, building a church to house it, it is very possible that her son later transmitted the prized relic to the Templars, one of whose Masters was Geoffrey de Charny, just one generation before the Geoffrey de Charny who displayed the same Shroud that Bishop d'Arcis called a forgery! what makes this even more interesting is the fact that among the accusations brought against the Templars in the early 14<sup>TH</sup> century was the charge that they worshipped a "Sacred Head" or "Face," and that in England, on the site of the old Templar preceptory, a wooden panel was discovered on which is painted a face, presumed to be of Christ, bearing a striking resemblance to the man on the Shroud.



Is this but a coincidence? Perhaps some day evidence will be uncovered that fully substantiates this possible "geneology" or something similar to it. For now, it can only be learned speculation.

### The Icon of the Holy Face

We do know, however, that there were "holy cloths" in the reliquaries of Constantinople. We know that they disappeared along with numerous other relics during the sack of the city in 1204. And we know that a short time later many of the relics began showing up in the West. But if certain burial cloths existed in the Orthodox East, why was no feast day or service instituted for veneration of a "Holy Shroud," as was the case with another very holy cloth, the *Mandyllion* or Icon of the Holy Face - "Not Made with Human Hands" very well known to Orthodox Christians today, and not to be confused with the popular Veronica's Veil known to Romans? Just what was this cloth whose epithet has today been applied to the Shroud of Turin?

According to Orthodox Tradition, in this case recorded by Eusebius of Caesarea around 325 and regarded by secular scholars as quite reliable, the king of Edessa, Abgar VI, received one of the seventy disciples mentioned in Scripture. He had brought with him the *Mandyllion*, which healed the king of his disease, thus inspiring Abgar to convert to Christianity. This disciple then also converted the people of Edessa. A subsequent persecution caused the image of the Lord "Not Made by Hands" to be hidden and then eventually forgotten or lost. In any case, pilgrims who visited the city - and even St. Ephraim the Syrian, who lived in Edessa in the fourth century - did not mention it. Perhaps here is a lesson for those who are so quick to dismiss the Shroud on the basis of missing documentation.

In the sixth century the *Mandyllion* was rediscovered; it had been hidden - bricked up - in an arch over one of the city's gates. Copies were made, many of which were touched to the original before being sent to churches elsewhere, much as was done with the Shroud of Turin in the Middle Ages. After four centuries of veneration in Edessa, it was moved to the Church of Blacharne in Constantinople, and it was assigned

August 16 for its feast. It was as moved about to different churches and chapels from time to time in solemn procession.

Although there is no eyewitness accounts of the *Mandyllion* being removed from its secure reliquary chest, at some point during its tenure in Byzantium someone must have taken it out and made an astonishing discovery, for beginning in the early twelfth century there are new and startling descriptions of this cloth. These descriptions say that the *Mandyllion* had imprinted on it "the glorious image of the Lord's face and the length of his whole body." (49) Were the *Mandyllion* and the Shroud one and the same piece of cloth? Is it mere coincidence that both were to be found in the Church of the Blachernae in Constantinople, from which they both disappeared at the same time?

A sixth century text refers to the *Mandyllion* as a *tetradiplon*, "doubled in four." "A most curious choice of word, according to Cambridge University's Professor Lampe, editor of the *Lexicon of Patristic Greek*; in all literature it occurs only in association with the image of Edessa, being scarcely, therefore, an idle turn of phrase." (50) As Wilson convincingly suggests, if the Shroud of Turin were folded in this manner, i.e., doubled four times, the viewer would see nothing but the head. And if this folded cloth were attached to a board, as the *Mandyllion* is said to have been, those who venerated the holy image could well have been ignorant of the fact that they were looking at but a portion of what was actually a full-length image, particularly if this image had been sealed up for so many years.

This theory is strengthened by the distinct crease marks photographically discerned on the Shroud in the very locations suggested by the "doubled in four." And although the evidence of pollen is by no means conclusive, because it can be blown hundreds of miles, Dr. Frei identified on the Shroud pollen not only from the Constantinople and Jerusalem areas, but also from the Anatolian steppes where Edessa is located.

*O bloodthirsty people, jealous and vengeful! May the very graveclothes and the napkin put you to shame at Christ's Resurrection!* Matins versicle, Holy and great Saturday.



Is it still another coincidence that the use of iconographic winding sheets, or shrouds, in Greek, *epitaphioi*; in Slavonic, *plascanici*, begin to appear on Great and Holy Friday services around this very same time, that is the eleventh century? As all Orthodox Christians know, these beautiful icons, some as quite large, are usually painted on stiff canvas or mounted on thin wood, and carried in solemn procession on that day. They depict the Body of Christ laid out after death on the Cross in similar manner to the image on the Turin Shroud. Here we might also note that the church founded by Mary - Margaret and dedicated to the Image of Edessa is known today as the *Eski Cuma Cami*, or Ancient Friday Church. (51)

Boutakov examined the earliest extant record of these iconographic shrouds and found, particularly among Russian examples, that they bore a marked likeness to the Byzantine copies from the time of the Paleologues, which were made to replace the original shroud after its disappearance.

Here we should also mention that following the rediscovery of the Edessan image in the sixth century, icons of Christ show a dramatic change; no longer is Christ depicted as a beardless Roman, but rather He is shown with features traditionally found in the best examples of Orthodox icons of Christ since that time. And comparison studies reveal a distinct likeness between these traditional icons and the visage on the Shroud. (52)

But none of this, as fascinating as it is, has been conclusively proven. We can only say that the historical evidence thus far uncovered, and the scientific evidence of the shroud of Turin itself, does indeed suggest this explanation. But the point is that if the Shroud is also the *Mandyllion* not only does it have an Orthodox history, but it also explains why it seems to have no separate feast or service. We say "seems" because there is still another area as yet unexplored; even if it were eventually proven that the *Mandyllion* and Shroud were not one and the same, how can we overlook the content of the Great and Holy Friday services themselves?



*The Holy Face; Novgorod School, 12th c.*

In the text of the services we find so many references to the Lord's Shroud that it is difficult not to see the services for this day as being in some way the divine service in honor of the Shroud. After all, it would hardly seem appropriate to honor the Shroud apart from the commemoration of our Lord's death and Resurrection. And when we consider how most of the Great and Holy Friday Services take place before a symbolic Tomb, with the large icon of the Shroud depicting the dead Christ upon it and how this same Shroud is anointed by the priestly celebrant, adorned with sweet flowers and herbs, and the faithful make prostrations and venerate it, one is struck by how these devotional services seem to be in honor, not just of the Lord sleeping in the flesh, but of his Holy Shroud as well.

### Conclusion

As Orthodox Christians do we need the relic of the Lord's Shroud? As far as fullness of faith is concerned, "given once and for all to the saints" is concerned, we do not. The image of the Shroud adds nothing doctrinally to what has already



been revealed; neither does it take anything away. Had it not survived Apostolic times, as some think, our faith in Christ and his Church, the Ark of Salvation, would continue to be the same. Nor do we seek after signs and wonders to confirm our faith in Christ. On the other hand, the Shroud provides a visual document of something that the evangelists describe in only a few terse words: "They crucified him."

In the image of the Shroud there unfolds before our very eyes "the story, the process, of indescribable suffering, those physiological processes which took place in the human Body of Christ. This is all precisely documented on the Shroud, attesting to our Lord's humanity and at the same time revealing his divine power, for He arose as God, rising in such a way as to leave all the evidence imprinted upon the Shroud and miraculously undisturbed...containing a providential meaning which is not being revealed."

The late Archimandrite Constantine Zaitsev, an eminent Church writer who wrote these words, was so impressed by the powerful testimony of the Turin Shroud that he urged widespread dissemination of this "discovery," which he said "lies with the conscience of each faithful Christian soul who becomes acquainted with it." (53) What precisely is the value of the testimony offered by the Shroud?

Dr. John Heller, biophysicist states "All in all, it is a startling medical documentary of what was described so briefly in the Gospels." The Russian bishop - saint, Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724 - 1783) as so many other spiritual directors, was alarmed at the very cold - hearted insensibility of people, at the callousness, indifference and worldliness of the average soul, joined to complete love of self. In our own way, most pastors would add to this list the soul - killing sin of self - righteous and zeal not according to knowledge, which stems from the Luciferian sin of pride.

As a spiritual remedy, the Saint urged people to "keep in our houses an icon of the passion of Christ, look at it often with reverence...the whole deepest content of the gospel is portrayed in the passion of Christ and incites us to imitation." (54) To imitation of what?

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St. Tikhon observed that "God descends to the humble as water flows down from the hills to the valleys." And it was this awesome humility of the Lord on the Cross that St. Tikhon wished his spiritual children to imitate. But how to find humility? In union with all Orthodox Fathers, St. Tikhon taught that each individual must seek to know himself as he really is, without self - deception. Seeing thus his own wickedness, he must then consider "the suffering of Christ, the magnitude of whose love and suffering surpasses our understanding." (55) Christ's example of humble obedience "even to death" inspired this saint in instructing his spiritual children to "remember often, especially during the night, the suffering of Christ. It will kindle in you love for the sufferer; this love will preserve you from sin. Meditate on his Passion....The suffering Christ is like a saving book from which we learn...repentance, faith, devotion to God, love of our neighbor, humility, meekness, patience, detachment from worldly vanities..."(56)

"what is it then, to follow Christ? To do good and to suffer for the sake of the will of God...to endure all, looking upon Christ who suffered" St. Tikhon of Zadonsk.

St. Tikhon was not here introducing some novelty into Orthodox piety or spiritual theology. It must be made perfectly clear that he was not suggesting the use of imagination - a common element in Western spirituality - in order to create dangerous emotions that lead to "prelest" or spiritual deception. St. Tikhon understood that the Son of God suffered not just a death such as might come to any man, but a terrifying emptying of his divinity joined to an unimaginable physical, mental, and spiritual agony that we cannot comprehend. But we can, even with sinful eyes, gaze upon it as those who put the Lord to death stood by and watched and some, like the blessed centurion, even confessed the divinity of Christ. The image on the shroud vividly tells us, in ways that words often cannot, what unutterable suffering was endured for our sake, and the high price with which our souls were ransomed from eternal death.

My Lord and My God!

Together with this universal significance which applies to all Christians at all times, the shroud may also be said to



be uniquely relevant to our 21st century, in which science has had such a powerful voice. Some believe that this image as encoded on the fibers of the cloth like a time capsule intended specifically for our materialistic age, when only the tools of modern science could begin to decode or unlock its secrets, when belief in God would be so weak or non-existent that even faith in science would testify to the things of God.

There used to be a poster, plastered on walls in the Soviet Union which showed a smiling astronaut flying through space, the caption read, "There is no God." For individuals reared under the forced domination of "scientific atheism," the inability of scientists to disprove the Shroud does not go unnoticed. And there is a reason to believe that the scientific evidence in favor of the Shroud's authenticity has been instrumental in opening doors to faith behind the Iron Curtain. A report on the Shroud written by a scientist in the Soviet Union was said to be circulating there in *Samizdat* when there was similar interest aroused in the West.

We, too, in the free world, have been greatly influenced by scientific - materialist outlook. And it seems that now, at a time which many believe to be the eleventh hour, the suffering yet serene face looking at us from the Shroud confronts us with the REALITY of Jesus Christ. Can it be that in this age of diminishing faith, when even believers are crying out, "Lord, help my unbelief." The Lord in his sublime mercy has condescended to reveal himself to man in a special way, that seeing they might believe and exclaim with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

Father Alexy Young, Sister Michaila, Mary Mansour

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#### Footnotes

1. Stevenson Habermas, p. 31
2. Quoted in Heller p. 2
3. Wilson, *Mysterious Shroud* p. 31
4. Stevenson Habermas. p. 100
5. Humber, p 110
- 6.

6. Fr. Wuenschel, *Ecclesiastical Review*, 1935, quoted in *Ibid*
7. Stevenson Habermas p 105
8. Wilson op cit p. 88
9. *Ibid* p. 96
10. *Ibid* p. 94
11. Tribbe, p. 133
12. Quoted in Wilson *Mysterious Shroud*, p. 88
13. Quoted in Rinaldi p. 685
14. Wilson, op. cit p. 100
15. Stevenson Habermas p. 108
16. *Ibid*
17. Wilson, op. cit p. 82
18. *Ibid*
19. Tribbe, p. 142
20. Quoted in Rinaldi, p. 685
21. Humber, p 35
22. Finkelstein, p. 1790
23. Wilson, loc. cit.
24. Stevenson Habermas, p. 46
25. Wilson, loc. cit
26. Wilkinson, p.156
27. Rabbi Revkir translation quoted in Boutakov p. 46
- 27a Humber p. 66
28. *One Thing Needful*, p. 56
29. Humber, p. 80
30. Wilson, op cit, p. 22
31. Heller, p. 217
32. Private communication from George Gabriel, Editor of *The Ark*
33. Humber, pp. 64 - 65
34. Stevenson Habermas, p. 48
35. Boutakov, pp. 9 - 10
36. *Ibid*
37. Wilson, op. cit. p. 45
38. Quoted in Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 74
- 38a *On the Holy Images*, St. Vladimir Press, 1980, p. 85
39. Quoted in Boutakov, p. 10
40. *Ibid*
41. Boutakov, p. 11
42. Quoted in Wilson, op. cit. p. 142
43. *Ibid*, p. 144
44. Boutakov, loc. cit.



45. Quoted in Wilson, op.cit., p. 76
46. Ibid, p 77
47. Humber, p. 96
48. Boutakov, pp. 13, 14
49. See pp. 135 - 146 of Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin* for complete quotations from three 12<sup>th</sup> century accounts.
50. Wilson, *Mysterious Shroud*
51. Ibid, p 117
52. cf. Dr. Whanger's study in Wilson, op. cit., p. 108
53. *Pravoslavna Put'* 1967, p 5
54. Quoted in Gorodetsky, p. 192
55. Ibid, p. 194
56. Ibid, p. 195

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# What Is This?



## The Holy Shroud

A dramatic part of the Great and Holy Friday liturgical services is the procession at the very conclusion of Vesper services with what is called *The Holy Shroud*. It is reminiscent to believers of the wrappings and coverings with which Jewish bodies were respectfully laid to rest. In the case of our Lord, at the moment of the miraculous Resurrection, apparently, there was such an astounding physical development that in his restoration to life the image of his sacred body was literally printed on the burial clothes, not to be discovered until centuries later when stolen from the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople by western Crusaders and subsequently brought to the West, modern photos showed the image plainly present on the burial fabric.

From the earliest days of the inner liturgical life of the Church, reverence has been shown the Holy Shroud as it is carried in procession by the priestly celebrant in each parish reminding the faithful of the procession led by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea from the cross atop Mount Golgotha to the burial cave several hundred feet away.

Imprinted in iconographic style generally is the dead Christ, lying in the tomb, amid burial raiment. Embroidered around the edges of the icon depiction is the troparion for Great and Holy Friday, "The noble Joseph took down your most pure body from the cross, wrapped it in a clean shroud and anointed it with fragrant spices and laid it in burial in a new tomb." This hymn is repeatedly chanted as the procession winds its way outside the and around the parish church, to return once again to the church and be entombed in the prepared florally decorated tomb before the Iconscreen. The faithful are then invited to come forward, many times on their knees, with profound bowing and prostrations to venerate the Lord depicted on the Shroud.

Before the beginning of Great and Holy Friday Vespers, the Shroud is placed on the holy altar table before the tabernacle where it awaits the time of procession and subsequent veneration. Pious faithful visit parish churches late on Great and Holy Friday as well as during the day on Great and Holy Saturday venerating the shroud in various parishes besides their own, as a part of spiritual pilgrimage in memory and honor of this remarkable event in salvation history.

The Shroud remains in the tomb all day Holy and Great Saturday and until the services of Resurrection Matins is celebrated Saturday evening. Then it is taken by the priestly celebrant, and after profuse incensing is laid upon the altar table as Resurrection hymnology is introduced.

Made of velvet fabric, elaborately embroidered and decorated with fringe and tassels upon which is prominently shown the icon of artist's canvas, the Holy Shroud is a inspiring vehicle of the richly endowed liturgical services of Great and Holy Friday.