

## VERSUS THE SHROUD OF TURIN

The Turin Shroud is hailed by Christian fanatics as the burial cloth of Jesus Christ showing what he was like when he was lying dead in his tomb. Whether you believe or not that it is inexplicable comes down to what "experts" you wish to listen to. But, when you consider the rule that you must accept a supernatural explanation only when all the natural ones are impossible, it is evident you have to side with the sceptics until absolute proof comes. If you make your own concoction of herbs and chemicals and stuff out of the fridge and get it tested you will be told that there is a mystery about what some of the ingredients are. Put the bottle away for a hundred years and it will be even more mysterious. Something is innocent of being a miracle until proven guilty! Inexplicable does not amount to miraculous! In reality, it is impossible to be ever reasonably certain that an event is a miracle. Unknown natural laws may do strange things.

Believers claim that the image cannot be rationally explained at this time - they fail to remind us that even if that is true, the image is inauthentic because of the major errors made on it. It is certainly not a miracle then. Believers do not tell us the whole story.

Believers like to say the shroud is excellent anatomically. Maybe but that does not mean it is anatomically excellent as an imprint. No far from it!

The image contains errors - the face in particular should show wraparound distortion but it doesn't. A cloth pressed into a paint stained or bloodstained face will have a distorted image. There is no wraparound distortion on the cloth at all which is interesting.

The man bled around the head from a crown of thorns. But the "blood" looks as if it was put on artificially. The blood is very clearly defined like drops. Real blood would not be sitting on top of the hair but would have matted especially when Jesus would have sweated a lot. There is too much blood everywhere for a supposedly dead man.

The Shroud man has a lot of blood all over him. The Bible says that Jesus was buried according to the Jewish custom. This to many means he would have been washed. However others say the custom was for criminals to be buried with their blood. Obviously the Bible is referring to the general custom so he had been scrubbed down. The burial of criminals would not be the general custom. Jesus was not thought by the Jews to be a real criminal. Also, when the Bible says the women went to the tomb on the third day to anoint the body, the body was not treated as a criminal corpse. And they are said to have been sure that if there were soldiers at the tomb then they would be allowed in. Another hint. However, that visit was an eccentric departure from tradition for the body was considered to be decomposing by then and it shows (if the account can be trusted) how much Jesus was thought not to be a criminal when they were prepared to do such an over the top thing. Surely a body that is washed would last a little better than one that was not? They act as if they did not expect too much decomposition.

The Bible would tell us what it meant by the general custom had it meant Jesus being buried with his blood like a criminal for it tries to emphasise how demeaning for Jesus his death was. Plus the general custom has to refer to the washing for you don't speak of a custom for some criminals as the general custom.

If Jesus' corpse was washed then why is there so much bleeding after? If he bled like that then clearly he wasn't dead when he was put in the tomb. Even tiny cuts emitted blood indicating life. Dead men don't bleed. Big wounds may give out some blood but with this is not like bleeding and there won't be much blood. Was the Shroud created to indicate that Jesus was not dead at all to support the rumour that Jesus survived the crucifixion and that was how he "rose"?

Jesus and his followers did make a point of debunking Jewish traditions that were not scriptural but he would have had no problem with the washing – that was only decency.

The believers say Jesus was not washed but the Bible must be taken as indicating that he in fact was. The Shroud was forged by somebody who did not know that Jesus was washed.

The blood has a painted appearance - I am only saying it looks that way and it shouldn't and especially so if there are indeed no brush marks on the image. You see no evidence that the blood was disturbed when the cloth when the body would have rolled and moved inside it during burial. The Shroud should have been rubbing over the body and distorting the stains as the body was put in the tomb. No smudges, smears or distortion are evident. The image has clear bloodstains

which show an unmistakable intention to make it suitable for display - a major reason to deny authenticity. Jesus would have had messy blood marks for spices were used at the burial according to the custom and rubbed into his body. We should have a body that was all red with the blood rubbed all over in the spices and ointments but the Shroud shows the opposite.

All old blood shows the same blood type, AB, yet Christians pretend that the Shroud and another cloth the Sudarium might have come from the same person for the blood type, AB, matches. And we are not told that the alleged blood on the Shroud is not really blood.

There are errors such as the man's hair hanging down as if he was standing up and the face image should be distorted if the cloth was draped over the face.

Also, if a body had lain in the cloth on its back, the back image should be pressed deeper into the cloth and a lot of smudging should have taken place. But what we see is that the front and back images are light - they show no difference in density (The Jesus Relics, page 184).

The hands which should have fallen back to his side when they were not tied conveniently cover the private parts. All this shows forgery.

The perfect muscular physique of the Shroud man does not fit Jesus who lived rough and who should have been malnourished. Do you really imagine that Jesus would have been working out? Would a man who despised luxury and became a travelling preacher and who expected to die on a cross be imagined as being that into fitness?

Middle eastern pollen was reportedly found on the cloth. But interestingly, pollen from the huge preponderance of olive trees in Palestine was absent (The Jesus Relics, page 177).

The image was made so long ago that chemical alteration and ageing and fading have added to the mystery.

The believers like to claim that radiation miraculously made the image. But if that is so why did the rays not penetrate the cloth? All you have is some surface fibres scorched. And where are the reproductions made to prove the theory? If it was not possible centuries ago it should be possible now.

Independent and open minded and non-religious researchers are kept away from the Shroud (page 224, The Jesus Relics). Scientific access to the Shroud is limited - chiefly to a few who are prepared to deny that its a fraud or declare that fraudulence is inconclusive.

Many deny that the image is miraculous and say they can explain it.

According to The Jesus Relics, STURP, the body that exists to research the Shroud manipulates the investigations and tests in order to keep true to its notion that the shroud is genuine. They have used dodgy people like Frei to give the impression that pollen tests show that the shroud came from Palestine where Jesus died. They have used the mad Whangers to declare that images of Palestine's flowers can be seen on the cloth. They have not let sceptics study the cloth itself. Whanger used image analysis techniques to show that the Shroud and the Sudarium of Oviedo covered the same body but Whanger is not even a scientist. His work has been laughed at by forensic anthropologists (page 204, The Jesus Relics). Plus Whanger is not the respected scientist that he is called in Catholic literature but an eccentric ageing ex-psychiatrist. STURP used John Heller and Alan Adler to refute the discovery of Walter McCrone that the Shroud was made using a painting technique even though they did not have the experience and prestige of McCrone. They used improper techniques to give the impression that the blood on the cloth was not paint but real blood (page 219, The Jesus Relics).

The believers claim that the Sudarium of Oviedo supports the authenticity of the Shroud and that this cloth covered the head of the shroud man.

The shroud man has a bloodstain on the forehead like a mirror image 3. This is not on the Sudarium (page 205, The Jesus Relics). The forehead part of the Sudarium is largely free from blood marks while this is not the case for the Shroud.

Carbon-dating for the Sudarium has been performed - accurately we hope! But it points to a date from about 695 AD (page 209, The Jesus Relics).

If religion exists such desperation in the search for evidence for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to find his image, is that not a warning that it is bad for the mind? The supporters of the shroud carry on like addicts.

The prestigious French magazine, Science and Life, reported in 2005 that it proved the shroud a forgery by making the

same shroud from materials available in the middle ages.

The Bible, as you will see from my entry on MARTYRDOM, states that we must check first that the Old Testament God predicted the resurrection of Jesus before we have the right to believe the apostles' testimony that he rose. No such predictions exist so we can be sure that nothing supernatural happened meaning that if the Shroud is a miracle then it has nothing to do with Jesus Christ.

We don't need to be able to explain the Shroud to know that it isn't a miracle! It is not the only item in the world that is surrounded in mystery.

The Shroud is hailed by some as a miraculous photographic negative. But the positive image shows a man with white hair and a white beard (page 182, The Jesus Relics). This is not what you would expect of Jesus Christ who would have been dark and who was allegedly only in his early thirties when he was put to death. The Shroud does not have the properties of an actual photograph (page 188, The Jesus Relics).

Carbon dating has pointed to a medieval origin for the cloth but believers, including "scientists" sneered at the dating from the very start though there is no evidence that the Shroud existed in the first thousand years after Christ.

With all the reasons the Turin Shroud can't be that of Jesus Christ, it is clear why the image was made so subtle to keep the Church wondering what it was to give it a chance of becoming popular enough so that the Church would have to come to terms with the existence of the cloth. Otherwise the Church would have come down too hard too soon and the Shroud would have ended up on a pyre. And if for no other reason than that it depicts a man who was not dead for he was bleeding too much.

Even if the cloth is strange and inexplicable and even if there is real blood on it, it still does not give us any reason to think these effects came from a body. The image does not carry the huge distortions that would be seen if a body had lain in it and imprinted the images. The image has nothing to do with proving the existence or resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is very good for proving that many religious people have some kind of mental disorder. And it is worrying that sane people enable them to tell their lies.

Do you really want to believe in a miracle cloth that glorifies martyrdom purely for religious grounds? Christians believe that Jesus did not die to save the poor from genocide or for human rights but purely for religious doctrine.

