

In the Shroud Linen Sea, the Nazarene. Is a Fisher of Men

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Abstract

In this article, we look at the Shroud of Turin through the eyes of those who have great faith and believe in the word of Jesus Christ, which is Verbum Dei. We are not interested in data obtained, characteristics, discussions, processes of the Body Image formation, age of the Shroud linen cloth, or comparisons of hypotheses. We want to investigate the Transcendent aspect, often obscured by the Immanent one, of the above Image and understanding its impact on people. Our thoughts will be fixed on the unspeakable sufferings of the scourged and crucified Jesus Christ who appears with a serene face on a body severely wounded by the torture he suffered. In these conditions, which we had already experienced, the mind transcends earthly events, is elevated, and is spiritually enriched.

Keywords: Shroud of Turin; Body Image; Faith; Jesus Christ; Transcendent, Immanent

Introduction

In recent decades, scientists, researchers, and scholars from various backgrounds have significantly increased their scientific, religious, and theological output on a particular archaeological find: the Shroud of Turin. A simple glance at the available literature reveals the multitude of people trying to solve the mystery of the Shroud Body Image formation which has persisted since the 19th century. Exactly since May 1898, when the first photographs of the Shroud were taken by Secondo Pia, an amateur photographer. This was the first step in research on the Turin Shroud, understood in the modern sense. Among these scientists, those of the Catholic Christian faith feel a significant push to understand the process of formation of the Image of the One whom Pope John Paul II called "The Silent Witness." A wonderful description, born from the mind of a man who dedicated his entire life to Jesus Christ, the Nazarene.

In this journal (Ann Rev Resear), we recently published an article with the aim of supporting our hypothesis on the formation of the Body Image on the Shroud [1]. At the same time, many other scholars have published their articles in other journals supporting their ideas on the formation mechanism mentioned above. In all these articles, each one, in addition to supporting their own

formation model, tries to show the flaws present in other models. This statement shows that personal relationships between scientists of opposing opinions are far from idyllic. In fact, to understand these actions, it is necessary to take into account that similar behaviors are typical in the study of a relic. This is a battle being fought between various groups (made up of scientists and ordinary people, who think the same way). Word against word, fact against fact, article against article, with an obsession almost entirely tied to the scientific-material aspect of the Immanent, neglecting the spiritual aspect of the Transcendent. In any case, the confusion all we have produced is already great and, if it continues to grow, in the near future we will all find ourselves in a Tower of Babel [2]: "Everyone will speak to everyone without being understood." So much so that Barrie Schwartz, (former President and Publisher of STERA (Shroud of Turin Education and Research Association) Inc. and a member of STURP (Shroud of Turin Research Project) Team, wrote to me: "The standard of scientific excellence has been dramatically lowered, and that is why we see so many so-called experts writing books or articles far from their areas of expertise" [3]. Barrie was an extraordinary person, endowed with great humanity and a profound knowledge of the world of the Shroud of Turin. He was a dear friend of mine.

So, right now, after so many verbal battles, we want to look at all these problems, far from comparisons, discussions and interpretations, through the eyes of those who have great faith in Jesus Christ. For this reason, we consider two articles that particularly struck us [4,5]. The first of these articles [4] describes a microscopic investigation, conducted by members of STURP team. The deductions are really interesting. In fact, we now know that the regions where the Image is absent is composed of fibrils whose color is generally considered “background color” (naturally degraded linen). This color is the result of the natural interaction between the linen and electromagnetic radiation. Differently, in the area where the Image is present, fibrils with the background color are present mixed with more yellowed fibrils. The latter all have the same optical density value (linen which is not naturally degraded). Furthermore, their density, in the region where the image is, is not constant.

The second paper [5] provided an important characteristic of the Body Image present on the Shroud of Turin: the penetration depth (or thickness) of the Image which is about 200 nm. This is a very superficial image, so much so that by eliminating about (250-300) nm of tissue, we would see the entire linen with only the background color. By doing so, in fact, we eliminate the effects of the interaction between the corpse and the burial linen. The conclusions of the two papers cited above together with those coming from other writings produced by the STURP Team [6-13] certify that the nature of the above Image is constituted by yellowed linen fibrils while the process of its formation is unknown. It is fascinating to see how so many yellowed linen fibrils, to such a small depth, as 200 billionths of a meter, are capable of forming the Body Image that we see with such high resolution that it allows us to appreciate so many details of the scourged and crucified man [14]. Looking at it, it is clear why many people think the Body Image that appears on the Shroud, relating to the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, is the Fifth Gospel. There are also non-believers who, after seeing the aforementioned linen cloth, have embraced the Christian faith. The converting power of this Image is great. In fact, it describes the crucifixion of Jesus in great detail. We can also write that the Nazarene is “The Eyewitness” of all the sufferings endured.

Now, observing the Shroud linen cloth (0.345 mm thick), one gets the impression that the Body Image is floating. This occurs because the ratio between the thickness of the linen cloth (albeit small) and that of the Image on the Shroud is about 1725. Furthermore, it is important to remember that several of Jesus Christ’s disciples were fishermen from Capernaum and operated in the Sea of Galilee. The apostle Luke recalls the miraculous catch of fish. Luke (5, 4-6): After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon. “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch”. Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets”.

When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. It is therefore evident that the Nazarene knew the waters; he got into the boat and fished with his disciples; he walked on the water [14].

The man depicted on the Shroud of Turin is undoubtedly the Nazarene. A man with a serene face who shows his body with all its wounds. Two of these are not part of a classic Roman crucifixion with the use of nails: one on the forehead and the nape of the neck, and one on the side. However, these two wounds are described in the Sacred Texts as they appear on the Shroud of Turin. We can therefore see that even today, through his image, he continues to be the “Word of God”. We like to think that today Jesus swims in a sea of linen with the same intentions as some 20 centuries ago. He transmitted these intentions to his disciples, as it is written in Matthew (4, 19-20): He said to them: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”. And immediately they left their nets and followed him [14,15]. Today, many people, after having visual contact with Linen of Turin, approach the Shroud Body Image, convinced that it represents Jesus Christ, the Nazarene. Others, after learning of the existence of this burial cloth, embrace the Christian faith. Thus, what at the beginning of this writing was merely an archaeological find, now becomes the object of a profound spirituality that evokes feelings of Christian love.

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In this article, I like to remember my friend and brother in faith, Giovanni Sturniolo Villa (1943-2020). On the themes of the Immanent and the Transcendent, our thoughts overlap.

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