The True Holy Grail

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For indeed, Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness. But to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

~ I Corinthians 1:22-24

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Abstract

The Holy Grail was said to be the chalice used by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper and also supposedly employed by Joseph of Arimathea to catch the blood of Christ during his crucifixion. However, the concept of the Holy Grail as we know it is entirely a literary invention by a number of medieval authors starting in the 12th century. As it was combined with the tales of King Arthur, the stories became extremely popular with their popularity lasting down to the present. What took place at the time to inspire this outpouring of literary works? This paper proposes that the object that inspired the medieval Grail authors was actually the Shroud of Turin, the alleged burial shroud of Christ which was stained with blood. The literary history of the Holy Grail is reviewed and its role in inspiring the Grail literature, as well as the history and the evidence for the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin.

Introduction

The Holy Grail is generally thought of as the chalice that Jesus Christ used at the Last Supper, and which was also said to be used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch Christ's blood when his side was pierced on the cross (Lupack, 1995). But despite the many stories surrounding it, there is little evidence of the actual chalice that inspired the stories, as most of them focused on its symbolism rather than speaking of it as a literal object. Like the bread used in Christian communion services, the cup is a symbol of Jesus' body or essence, and the wine in the cup represents the blood of Christ, which was poured out at his death as the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of humanity. As Jesus said in Luke 22:20 "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

The Eucharist, the celebration of bread and wine in remembrance of Christ, is thus the richest and most complex of all religious symbols[1], and the Holy Grail is typically presented as a gateway to immortality, and a means of securing eternal life for those who "drink" of it.[2]

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[1] The Catholic church teaches the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, the belief that the wafer and wine administered to the communicant are a literal means of God's grace and "become the body and blood of Christ" to that person.

[2] The symbolism doesn't end there. The Old Testament often refers to the need for a sacrifice as an atonement for evil – that the blood of an innocent unblemished animal had to be shed to atone for sin. This concept goes back to the beginning of humanity and the Biblical story of Cain and Able (Genesis 4). The Jews had an elaborate sacrificial system which prefigured and was ultimately replaced by the sacrifice of Christ who was sinless and therefore "unblemished." His crucifixion took place on Passover – the Jewish celebration of their liberation from Egypt in which the blood of a lamb was smeared over the doorpost of their houses so that the angel of death would "pass over" them. The lamb then was roasted and eaten – Christ was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" and at the Last Supper he said, "This is my body which is broken for you, and this cup is the new agreement in my blood which is shed for you. Do this in remembrance of Me."

The symbolism continues: Easter Sunday when Christ rose from the dead was also the Jewish festival of First Fruits, and the Apostle Paul uses that analogy: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God." 1 Corinthians 15:20-24

Furthermore, in the Old Testament the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the innermost part of the Temple, in a room known as the Holy of Holies. The central portion on the lid of the Ark between the golden figures of the cherubim was known as the "Mercy Seat" – the place where God would provide propitiation and mercy for the sins of the people. The exact design for the Temple was given by God to Moses and was a representation on earth of what is in heaven. The High Priest of Israel was the only person who could enter the Holy of Holies and he did so only once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, in order to sprinkle blood from a sacrificial animal on the Mercy Seat. When Jesus died, the veil covering the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, showing that the way was open for all to come into the presence of God through the blood of Christ.

The term "Christ" is a title meaning "Messiah", "Chosen One", and "Ruler." In addition to Jesus being the Passover lamb, one of his many other titles is "High Priest." In that role he symbolically entered the Holy of Holies for us, gave his own blood that was figuratively sprinkled on the Mercy Seat as the sacrifice for everyone, and opened the way for all to enter. Before returning to heaven Jesus indicated that he would send the Spirit of God to live in us, so the Eucharist therefore symbolizes us partaking of Christ through the Spirit, which now lives within us. Furthermore, Jesus is both priest and king and therefore he has both ecclesiastical and political power. After his return he will rule as king, and his throne will be the Mercy Seat.

Since the time of Christ, his followers have celebrated his death and resurrection in this manner, but the Last Supper cup itself did not become a focus of attention until a thousand years later. The Middle Ages was the era when the Holy Grail was invented as a literary concept. Grail legends and lore have captivated people since then, and the Holy Grail has become one of the most enduring of all symbols. Fascination with the Grail continued down through the centuries to the present and includes works such as the *DaVinci Code* and the 1989 movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade,* with the ancient Templar Knight who utters the famous lines, “He chose poorly,” and, “You have chosen wisely!”

The Literary History of the Holy Grail

The grail stories tie together the great themes of passion, devotion, romantic love, chivalry, questing, birth, suffering, and death. A grail is always a "serving device" but the concept evolved and was expressed in different ways. The word "grail" comes from the Latin *gradale* meaning "gradually, in stages," and can mean cup, chalice, dish, tureen, bowl, or platter, but was also conceptualized as a stone, or something ethereal or spiritual that defies explanation, culminating in the Holy Grail – the Cup of Christ containing wine representing his blood.[3] Thus the origin of the word encapsulates the evolution and the transitions in its meaning, as well as the complexity of the underlying ideas.

The narrative begins with the Biblical Gospels which inspired an outpouring of literary and artistic works culminating a millennium later in the grail stories and romances of the 12th century. The latter were the most popular and compelling stories of their time – many were associated with King Arthur, and virtually all of them were chivalric tales involving knights on some type of quest. Following are the most significant grail-related writings as well as predecessor works from the time of Christ through the Middle Ages:

- *The Biblical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)*. These are, of course, the stories of Jesus – his life, ministry, death, and resurrection. All of them mention the actions of Joseph of Arimathea who provided the burial cloth and the tomb in which Jesus was buried.

- The *Doctrine of Addai* from the early 4th century (Howard, 1981) and the *Acts of Thaddeus* from the 6th century (Lipsius & Bonnet, 1891). These are both historical and hagiographic and tell the story of King Abgar the ruler of the city of Edessa in what is now Turkey, from 4 BC to AD 50. Abgar was suffering from gout and leprosy and had apparently heard of the healings and miracles of Jesus, so he sent an emissary requesting medical help. Jesus washed his face, wiped it on a cloth on which the image of his face appeared, and then then sent one of his disciples to Edessa along with the cloth, which was described both as a towel and as a burial shroud. Abgar was healed of his disease, converted to Christianity, and Edessa became a Christian city.

- *The Acts of Pilate*, from the 6th century (Roberts & Donaldson, 1951). In this story, Joseph of Arimathea was imprisoned by the Jewish authorities on Saturday and then released by Jesus after the Sunday resurrection. Jesus proved his identity by showing Joseph the burial shroud that the latter had provided, and which was still in the tomb. Other writings from this period mentioning Joseph include *The Gospel of Gamaliel*.

[3] Blood is, of course, a vital fluid, so as mentioned above, the "blood of Christ" represents his life essence that was poured out as a sacrifice for humanity. Wine as a drink is also necessary for sustaining life, and its role as well as its appearance connects it with blood.

- *An Apocryphon of Joseph of Arimathea, in the Georgian Language* (Harnack, 1901; Kluge, 1904). This 8th century manuscript from Russian Georgia is the first known reference to Joseph of Arimathea catching the blood of Christ: "I, Joseph climbed Holy Golgotha, where the Lord's Cross stood, and I collected in... the large shroud the precious blood that flowed from His side." This text also alleges that Joseph and Philip, the disciple of Christ, built a church at Lydda near Jerusalem.

- *The Mabinogion (The Red Book of Herges* and *The White Book of Rhydderch)*. The Mabinogion is a collection of Welsh tales that date anywhere from the 5th century BC through the 13th century AD. Part of this collection is the tale of Peredur, another name for Perceval, the grail knight, involving the search for the grail. In this story the grail is a platter which holds the severed head of a man who had been killed by a sorceress, probably an allusion to the death of John the Baptist (Satyal, 2022).

- *Historia Regnum Britannie*, by Geoffrey of Monmouth in England, written around AD 1136. This is supposedly a history of the kings of Britain, beginning with the Trojans of Homer's *Iliad* and ending with the Anglo-Saxon kings of the 7th century. Geoffrey used sources that are now lost to us, as well as perhaps adding his own content and spin. This work was very popular in its time and forms the basis of much English lore written later. Some of the kings mentioned are Brutus, who supposedly founded Britain and named it after himself; Lear, later used by Shakespeare; Old King Cole of the nursery rhyme fame; King Lud after whom London was supposedly named; the emperor Constantine, who was crowned emperor of Rome in the English city of York; and most notably, King Arthur. Geoffrey also wrote several books about Merlin, and associated him with King Arthur and Stonehenge, and these works are the source of the later King Arthur tales (Monmouth, c. 1136). However, Geoffrey did not make any mention of the grail. There were several other authors in this period or earlier that wrote about or alluded to King Arthur and added various elements to the story, such as the round table and courtly love (i.e., knights enduring hardship and going on quests in order to win the favor of a lady). These include Nennius in *Historia Britonum*, William of Malmesbury in *Historia Regum Anglorum*, Wace in *Roman de Brut*, and Layamon in *Brut* (Arthuriana, 1990).

- *Le Conte du Graal*, by Chrétien de Troyes and others in France, written during the period 1170 through 1240 (Staines, 1990). The name "Chrétien" means "Christian" and may have been a pen name for author, about whom little is known. *Le Conte du Graal* is a collection of poems concerning the ideals of chivalry and knighthood and were in turn based on the earlier *Chansons de Geste*, "songs of deeds," which were anonymous songs and poems sung by troubadours about the days of Charlemagne. This was the era when chivalry, the Lord and the Lady, courtly love, and *Noblesse Oblige* were at their height, and the grail romances had a large impact on the societies of that day. These works captivated Europe with their concepts of nobility, virtue, honor, loyalty, devotion, and strong notions of the meaning of masculinity and femininity. The city of

Troyes where Chrétien lived was also the European headquarters for the Knights Templar. European support for the Knights began there in 1128 by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and the Templars played a significant role in those times.[4]

The writings of Chrétien were a conscious attempt to reduce the level of conflict that was occurring at the time, and redirect energies into building up society rather than ravaging it. Thus they were a follow-up to the "Peace of God" and the "Truce of God," the first mass peace movements in history, which were promulgated by the Catholic Church beginning in 987 and 1027 respectively. Some of these literary works were actually commissioned by Henry II, King of France and England, or more likely Elanor of Aquitaine, his queen, or Marie of France, Countess of Champagne.[5] These were done for a different and much more prosaic purpose,[6] nevertheless, one of the main motives of these writings was to elevate the conduct of men-at-arms so that these men would help build up society rather than tear it down.

Chrétien's stories are set in ancient Britain, where the legendary King Arthur rules from his castle at Camelot with his queen Guinevere – albeit they speak French and dressed in the European fashions of the Middle Ages rather than 6th century Britain. Chrétien stories are full of romance and magic, but they place Arthur in a supporting/observing role, with others taking the major parts, such as *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* (the Knight of the Cart) about Gawain, Lancelot, and Guinevere. Chrétien introduces the grail in an associated tale, possibly the last one he wrote. It is the story of the knight Perceval, who visits the Fisher King in his grail castle. Perceval sees a dish (the grail) being carried by a beautiful girl, accompanied by a bleeding lance and a silver plate. But he fails to ask the all-important question related to the grail's secret and leaves the castle before discovering the grail's true meaning and significance. Chrétien died before the story could be completed, and therefore his ultimate vision of the grail was never revealed. Other writers completed the story after Chrétien's death, but other than Robert de Boron, their identities are

[4] The Templars were a military monastic order that was originally devoted to protecting pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. It can be hard for us as moderns to understand the motivations of the Templars and the pilgrims they protected, as many of them had a deep devotion to what they felt was their calling.

[5] Both Eleanor and Marie were proponents of courtly love in which marriage bonds were to be formed on the basis of love and desire rather than political or social expediency, and men were expected to "win" their ladies and treat them with dignity and honor.

[6] The Angevin empire is little known today, but in its time it was one of the most significant regions in Europe. Henry II, who was the cleverest and most powerful of all of the Angevin rulers, had his own purpose for commissioning these literary works. They were funded not simply to improve public morality, but also as a subtle form of propaganda, meant to associate himself and his Norman (French) lineage with an ancient and mythic past, and so legitimize his reign in the minds and hearts of his Celtic and Anglo-Saxon subjects in England. The latter were resentful of Norman rule which was often overbearing and high-handed (Sir Walter Scott's novel *Ivanhoe* provides insight into the tenor of those times). England was essentially the milk cow that supplied the Angevin rulers with money to carry out their plans of conquest on the continent. Henry II was the Count of Anjou in France before becoming King of England, and the Angevin dynasty, which included Richard the Lionhearted as well as Prince John of Robin Hood fame, was based in Angers, France. The Angevins were more French than they were English, and the many conflicts in this royal house were for the most part responsible for the long and destructive wars, as well as the hatred that developed between France and England.

unknown because they ascribed the writing to Chrétien. It is significant that the actual word used by Chrétien was "graal" (a serving dish), rather than "grail" (a chalice). The latter description would be applied a few years later by Robert de Boron.

- *Parzival*, by Wolfram von Eschenbach written in Germany, in the period 1205 through 1216. As previously mentioned, there were a number of authors who were inspired both by Chrétien and by Robert de Boron. *Parzival* is a narrative poem of chivalry and spirituality which tells the story of the last surviving grail knight, Percival, and his quest for the grail. Like Chrétien, Wolfram was also concerned with chivalry and improving the conduct of men-at-arms, but he took a much higher and more spiritual tone and focus. In this poem the grail is defined in mystical, spiritual terms, and is spoken of as being either a dish or a mysterious stone (von Eschenbach, c. 1215). Wagner's last opera was based on von Eschenbach's work.[7]

- *Le Roman du Graal (Joseph d'Arimathe, Merlin, and Perceval)*, by Robert de Boron in France, from circa 1200 to 1210 (O'Gorman, 1970; Rogers, 1990). He was a poet and cleric employed by Gautier de Montbeliard, the Lord of Montfaucon, who joined the fourth crusade and then returned to France. Previous writing such as *The Acts of Pilate* and the *Apocryphon of Joseph of Arimathea, in the Georgian Language* had supplied various characters and plot elements. Robert de Boron built on and connected these, but most significantly created the Holy Grail as a literary concept. He was the first to designate the grail as holy and to indicate that it was the cup used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch the blood of Christ. This transformed Chrétien's symbol of a common serving dish ("a graal") into a holy chalice ("the Grail") (Ford, 2001).

  As mentioned above, Chrétien's version of the Perceval story and his encounter with the Fisher-king was never finished. But de Boron's re-wrote the story, and in his version, Perceval uses the Grail to heal the Fisher-king. In a play on words, the French word for "fish" is "peche" but it also means "sin," so Perceval uses the Grail (i.e., the blood of Christ) to heal the sins of the king (i.e., the "Sinful-king" rather than the "Fisher-king"), who then is able to leave the world and enter heaven. In *Joseph d'Arimathe*, de Boron replays *The Acts of Pilate*: Joseph is thrown into prison by the emperor Vespasian and is visited by Jesus in his cell. But in this version of the story Jesus gives him the Last Supper cup which sustains him through long years in prison. At the end of the story Joseph is released after Vespasian is healed of leprosy, not by the cup, but by a cloth containing the image and blood of Christ, in the same way that King Abgar of Edessa was healed of the same disease. De Boron thus fused a number of preceding works and connected the grail with the Shroud in compelling stories with hidden spiritual meanings.

[7] Wagner was essentially neo-pagan and attracted to the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. The latter was an atheist, enamored with Eastern religion, and believed that the world was inherently irrational. But Wagner's final opera *Parsifal* was a recreation of von Eschenbach's *Parzival* as a sacred consecration play which included a celebration of the Eucharist. According to Nietzsche, Wagner knelt before the crucifix, and may have sought for the God of the Bible. Like the rest of Wagner's work and the state of his soul, it is a mystery.

The genius of Robert was essentially to unite the secular world with the divine in the same way that earlier writers such as Augustine connected Aristotle and Plato, the material and the spiritual, with the connection being the blood of Christ, the God-man. This fired the imaginations of others, and a large collection of chivalric and grail-related tales were written. They include the *First Continuation* a story written around 1200. In this tale, Nicodemus[8] attempts to carve a statue of Christ as he had appeared on the cross. But Nicodemus could not complete it because the carving "could not be made by human hands." According to the story, God Himself had to shape this work of art, which is a possible reference to the Shroud.

Joseph of Arimathea catching Christ's blood from the cross.
From: Arthurian Art,
http://www.zendonaldson.com/twilight/camelot/art/stassen/stassen6.htm

Another grail romance was *Perlesvaus*, written sometime between 1191 and 1225. This story alludes to an Easter ritual from the city of Edessa involving the Shroud (described in more detail below). King Arthur had a vision during mass in which he sees a lady offer her child to the priest. Then it appeared that the priest was holding a man, crowned with thorns, who was also bleeding from his side, hands, and feet. Finally, the man's body changed back into the child. Later in the story the grail knight Gawain saw the secret of the grail: the chalice changed into a child, and then into the Crucified Christ, with the grail again serving as the vessel used by Joseph to collect Jesus' blood.

Yet another grail romance was *Queste del Saint Graal*, ca. 1225. In this story the grail knight

[8] Nicodemus was a Jewish religious leader who visited Jesus at night (he was afraid of denunciation by the Jewish leadership) as recorded in John 3. He is the individual to whom Jesus indicated "You must be born again" (John 3:5), as well as the famous verse of John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Nicodemus became a believer in Christ and assisted Joseph of Arimathea in Christ's burial (John 19:39).

Galahad sees a similar vision alluding to the same Easter ritual: the host from the Eucharist takes on the semblance of a child whose face blazed as bright as fire, who then entered into the bread. A bleeding Christ then emerges and administers the sacrament associating the grail with the Last Supper. All of these later became part of a larger work known as the *Vulgate* or the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, circa 1245, which was an attempt to collect all of the tales, add to them, and set them in a meaningful sequence. Beginning with de Boron, these stories associated the blood of Christ with both the Shroud and the Holy Grail.

Christ and Joseph of Arimathea
From: St. Joseph of Arimathea, https://catholicsaintmedals.com/saints/st-joseph-of-arimathea/

- *Le Morte D'Arthur*, by Sir Thomas Malory, written in England around 1469. The stories about King Arthur and the Holy Grail from the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* were extremely popular in the Middle Ages but being written by various authors, the narratives were different in style, tone, and content. Malory took all the of plot themes and wrote them into a consistent tale, from the birth of Arthur until his death. Furthermore, he gave the story the tragic and poignant character that we currently associate with King Arthur (Malory, c. 1469).

From: Tapestry Art Designs, www.tapestry-art.com

Malory referred to the Holy Grail as the "Sangreal." This could mean one of two things depending on how the word is split: "San Greal" meaning "Holy Grail," or "Sang Real" meaning "Royal Blood." Malory may have intended this as a play on words, because if these two meanings

are merged, we have a holy chalice that contained the royal blood of Christ.

The literary King Arthur came from a line of supposedly British Christian kings said to be descended from Joseph of Arimathea. The "Arimathea" portion designates the town where he came from, which is also known as "Ramah" (or "Ramallah" as it is known today). The prophet Samuel in the Old Testament was also born and lived in Ramah, and this was the town referred to in the Gospel of Matthew as "A voice was heard in Ramah - Rachael weeping for her children" in response to King Herod's massacre of the innocents after the birth of Christ.[9]

It is said that Joseph of Arimathea was the great-uncle of Jesus (the Talmud indicates that Joseph was the younger brother of the father of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and thus Joseph was her uncle and Jesus' great-uncle) (Capt, 1983, p. 19). Jesus' father, also named Joseph, apparently died when the boy was still young, and under both Hebrew and Roman law the next male of kin would become the legal guardian of the family. Joseph of Arimathea would then have assumed that role, which would also explain the fact that Joseph "went boldly unto Pilate… and Pilate gave the body [of Jesus] to Joseph." (Mark 15:43-45). According to law, unless the body of an executed criminal was claimed by the next of kin it was thrown into a common grave and all records would be wiped out (Capt, 1983, p. 20).

The Garden tomb near the Garden of Gethsemane outside Jerusalem

From: https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/israel/2018/march/he-is-risen-watch-garden-tomb-easter-sunrise-service-live-from-jerusalem

[9] Matthew 2:18 is a quote from Jeremiah 31:15 – "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children. She refused to be comforted because they were no more." Rachael was the wife of Jacob in the Old Testament and was on the way from Ramah to Bethlehem (they are 11 miles apart) when she died in childbirth. Matthew therefore views Rachael's last journey as pointing to the future birth of Christ and his escape from the clutches of Herod.

Tradition indicates that Joseph was a tin merchant. Tin is a necessary ingredient in the making of bronze, a popular metal of antiquity. There are tin mines in Cornwall in southern England which were one of the main sources of tin, and in operation long before the Christian era.[10] So it is possible that Joseph had been there in the course of his trading activities, and it is speculated that he brought Jesus to England when the latter was a boy (the Bible is silent on where Jesus was and what he did from the age of 12 through 30) (Capt, 1983, p. 28). William Blake's poem of 1908 which became known as "Jerusalem" and is now the British national anthem was inspired by this story:

> And did those feet in ancient time walk upon England's mountains green?
> And was the Holy Lamb of God on England's pleasant pastures seen?
> And did the Countenance Divine shine forth upon our clouded hills?
> And was Jerusalem builded here amongst these dark satanic mills?

Furthermore, several ancient manuscripts assert that Joseph was commissioned by St. Philip, the disciple of Christ, to take the Gospel to Britain. The date given was AD 63, and it states that Joseph remained in Britain for the rest of his life (Albanicus, c. 1300). There is also a story that on the way, or possibly on another voyage, that he brought Mary Magdalene and Lazarus first to Cyprus and then to Marseilles in Gaul, as described in more detail below (Capt, 1983, p. 37).

The stories of Joseph tell us that he came to Glastonbury in Cornwall, the location of the Isle of Avalon in the King Arthur tales. The original name of Glastonbury Tor, the hill of Glastonbury, was "Ynys yr Afalon," meaning The Isle of Avalon (Christian, 2021). In ancient times the area was flooded, so the Tor was an island in the "Lake of Avalon," which is the location of the Arthurian "Lady of the Lake." It is claimed that the Isle of Avalon is where the graves of King Arthur and his Queen Guinevere are located (Capt, 1983, p. 96). In 1190, the monks at Glastonbury Abbey were digging a grave and, in the process, supposedly discovered a coffin holding the remains of a man with severe head wounds. Beside him was the grave woman with a plait of golden hair. Also found was a lead cross bearing the inscription, "Here lies buried the famous King Arthur with Guinevere his second wife, in the Isle of Avalon" (Ford, 2001). The cross and the plait of hair seem to be rather too convenient and may have been a hoax by the monastery in order to raise money for repairs. Also troubling is that the lead cross disappeared in the 18th century, but a drawing of the cross made by William Camden for the 1607/08 editions of his book, "Britannia" survives, as shown below. However, there are problems with the relic hoax hypothesis that are described in the above-mentioned article.

[10] For example, Herodotus writing in the 5th century BC, refers to the metal trade with the "Islands of the West" and the Roman historian Diordorus Siculus from the 1st century BC describes how Phoenician ships "voyaged beyond the Pillars of Hercules into the sea that men call the ocean." However, Joseph may have instead journeyed up the river systems of France to reach Britain.

A drawing of the lead cross that was said to be found under the graves of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere in Glastonbury.
From: https://earlybritishkingdoms.com/arthur/glast_cross.html

If this story about Joseph was true, he was therefore Britain's first evangelist and founder of the first church in England[11] at Glastonbury (a mud and wattle structure that later became the "Lady Chapel," the ruins of which can still be seen) (Capt, 1983, p. 45). The land for the church (reportedly "twelve hides") was said to be given to him by a King Arviragus. Joseph supposedly thrust his staff into the ground on Wearyall Hill, and the staff budded and became the "Glastonbury Thorn," which has been tended by the monks there for centuries. It was also said that he died and was buried in the Glastonbury area – near his grave is "the Well of Joseph" (Capt, 1983, pp. 93-94).

De Boron wrote that Joseph brought the Grail cup with him to England, and other stories indicate that the cup was dropped into what became known as the "Chalice Well." The water from this well flows out into the "Blood Spring" and has a high iron content, so the red deposits from the well-water are said to symbolize the iron nails used at the Crucifixion (Capt, 1983, pp. 85-89). De Boron also wrote that the table of King Arthur was the successor to the Last Supper table and was a symbol of the banquet that God will prepare after the end of the world. Similar to the Jewish Passover custom of leaving an empty seat at the table for the return of Elijah, one seat at the table was left open for the *Siege Perilous*, the Perilous Seat of the knight who would one day be successful in the quest for the Holy Grail.

The Talmud indicates that Joseph had a daughter named Anna, who would have been cousin to Mary, the mother of Jesus (Harlein Manuscripts, 23-59 f, 193 b). It is also said that Anna married into what became a line of Welch kings which ultimately led to the Pendragons and to King

[11] Hugh Paulinius Cressy (1605 – 1674) who wrote the *Church History of England*, stated, "Now the most eminent of the primitive disciples, and who contributed most to this heavenly building, was St. Joseph of Arimathea… These toward the latter end of Nero's reign and before St. Peter and St. Paul were consummated by a glorious martyrdom, are by the testimony of ancient records, said to have entered this island." Therefore Britain, "received the beams of the Sun of Righteousness before many other countries."

Arthur, tying the heritage of the Christian kings of England back to Joseph of Arimathea.

But, despite the elaborate nature of these stories, the early Christianization of Britain is hagiographic and largely based on a scholarly mistake. The error was made by the Venerable Bede, a well-known English author who wrote the *Ecclesiastical History of Britain*. He relied on an associate who reported that while studying the papal files in Rome, he discovered the record of a letter received by Pope Eleutherus of the 2nd century from a King Lucio Britannio. This was interpreted as a British King Lucius asking for assistance in converting his lands to the Faith. No one had previously heard of a King Lucius of Britain (the country was still a Roman province at that time), but Bede took this as evidence that Britain had been evangelized and become Christian in that era. This reference was actually to King Abgar VIII from Edessa in Turkey (considered in more detail below in the history of the Shroud), but as Bede was widely read and quoted, this story was repeated (Scavone, 2010). It grew in the telling and in 1342 John of Glastonbury updated William of Malmesbury's well-known book, the *Church in Glastonbury* and inserted an unknown king Arviragus who had been fictitiously invented by Geoffrey of Monmouth into this history, as the ruler who provided the Glastonbury land for Joseph of Arimathea's church. Did Joseph of Arimathea actually come to Britain as its first evangelist and as the ancestor of royalty? Maybe or maybe not – it is now impossible to separate fact from legend. As with other stories from antiquity there may be elements of truth underlying the myth.

The Round Table of King Arthur

King Arthur was said to have lived in the 6th century Britain and supposedly was the descendant of Joseph of Arimathea. Therefore, a higher standard of morality and behavior was expected from Arthur, and in these tales, he is meant to epitomize the ideals of honor, courtly love, servant leadership, and *Noblesse Oblige*. In a total reversal from past notions of rulership, the king was expected to rule for the benefit of his people rather than merely for himself and his cronies, as unfortunately was and still is typical of many leaders. The Round Table symbolized the equality

of all of the knights that sat around it (the table had no "head"), and that everyone was worthy of being heard. It did not eliminate royal power but placed limitations on it and directed it to serve others rather than being merely self-serving.

This model for the noble and proper use of power became the essence of chivalry and the core around which these poems and stories were woven. For example, here is the knight's pledge from *Le Morte d'Arthur*:

"Then the king established all his knights, and to them that were of lands not rich, he gave them lands, and charged them never to do outrageousity nor murder; and always to flee treason; also by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asketh for mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always do to ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour; upon pain of death. Also, that no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no law, nor for no world's goods. Unto this were all of the knights sworn of the Round Table, both old and young. And every year they were sworn at the high feast of Pentecost."

Despite these high ideals, Mallory's story of King Arthur exposes the baseness and sinfulness of humanity – it begins in treachery and ends in betrayal and tragedy. It starts with Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon, who lusts after Igraine, the wife of the Gorlis, Duke of Cornwall. Uther asks Merlin, the master Druid, for assistance in seducing Igraine, and with Merlin's help Uther succeeds in entering Tintagel Castle on the coast of Cornwall where she lived, and then impregnating her. Her husband Gorlis was away from the castle engaged in a battle and was killed on the same night. Uther subsequently marries Igraine who then gives birth to Arthur. In some versions of the story, the baby Arthur is taken and raised by Merlin, who had forced Uther to agree to give him Igraine's first-born child as payment for his help, thus poisoning the Uther/Igraine relationship and ensuring that Uther's crimes would create strife and turmoil for him, rather than peace and satisfaction. Uther Pendragon himself dies in battle soon afterward, and as his dying act, he thrusts his sword into a stone. After his death the country is left without a king because no one was able to draw Uther's sword from the stone, until Arthur grows up and is able to retrieve it. This sword, the Excalibur of legend, thus proves Arthur's lineage and his right to rule.

The betrayal and tragedy at the end of the story involves the adultery of the knight Lancelot with Guinevere, Arthur's wife and queen. Arthur is forced to condemn Guinevere, but Lancelot rescues her, and in the process kills several knights of the Round Table, thus betraying his oath. Finally, the climax of the story is the fight to the death between Arthur and Mordred, Arthur's illegitimate son by his half-sister Morgan le Fey with whom he had had an adulterous fling.

The quest for the Holy Grail is thus a metaphor for Arthur's search for redemption and peace. He had established the Round Table and performed many good works as king, but these were not

enough. Arthur is grieved by his own failures and seeks for something beyond this world, something both higher and deeper. The search for the Holy Grail was thus an attempt to go beyond nature and the natural world, to climb higher than the trees, to fly above the eagles, and go beyond the atmosphere. It was an attempt to pierce the magic and the limited power of the Druids as represented by Merlin and the natural world, and to seek for God and heaven.

It is very interesting that Merlin perishes from his own magic used against him by a woman. In some tales he is trapped under a stone, and in others, in an oak tree, and dies. Both of these natural elements, especially the oak tree, were symbols of Druidical power. Merlin, the ultimate Druid, is therefore slain by his own gods and destroyed by the symbols of his own religion. Druidism itself is thus seen as mortal and transient – a false hope – whereas the Holy Grail is immortal and eternal.

Arthur includes others in the search for heaven and beyond, sending his knights on the quest because, like ripples in a pond, the problems in his family affect others, and ultimately the entire kingdom – a metaphor for how the sins of leaders metastasize into the evils of society. But except for Percival and Galahad all of the other knights fail in the Grail quest, including Arthur himself, who does not find redemption until his death. In the concluding fight with Mordred, a symbol of the evil that had arisen within his own family, Arthur kills his son, but is himself fatally wounded. He returns his sword Excalibur to the lady of the lake in Avalon, surrendering his power and authority, and then dies.

King Arthur may have been a mythical invention of Geoffrey of Monmouth (it was said that Geoffrey needed to fill in the blank spaces in history of the 6th century). But there is some evidence that the character of Arthur was at least partially based on Artur MacAidan who was not a king, but rather a warlord of the Celts prior to the Saxon invasions that finally ended Celtic power in Britain. The Saxons gradually forced the Celts south and west,[12] and eventually wiped them out. There are hints that the last Celtic leader committed or was involved with a transgression against the people, a betrayal and/or some type of adultery, that led to a spiritual crisis in his life and to conflict in the kingdom (the real Artur MacAidan was said to have had a sister named Morgan). However, the crisis was never resolved – the Celts and Scots went into battle with the Saxons and were badly defeated. Artur was slain and Celtic power in Britain was eventually crushed, never to rise again. Thus the legendary line of Joseph of Arimathea, the Pendragons, and the Christian kings of Britain came to an end in treachery, sorrow, and tragedy.

This is the significance of the tales of King Arthur and the Holy Grail. But the story goes on: the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes who defeated the Celts in the 5th and 6th centuries were themselves

[12] The setting for the seduction of Igraine by Uther Pendragon was in Tintagel Castle on the western coast of Cornwall, in the far south and west of England.

defeated by William the Conqueror and the Normans in 1066. Furthermore, legend says that one day King Arthur will rise again to fight for Britain. Other countries have similar stories. For example, in Denmark there is a legend of Holger, a Danish warrior who traveled to many countries but finally came back home and fell into a long sleep. It is said that in a time of national crisis, he will awake and return to fight for Denmark. In World War II the Danish resistance movement called themselves "Holger Dansk," and there is a statue of him in the dungeon of Kronborg Castle ("Hamlet's Castle") in Helsingor, asleep with a sword in his hands, waiting for the day of crisis at the end of the world.

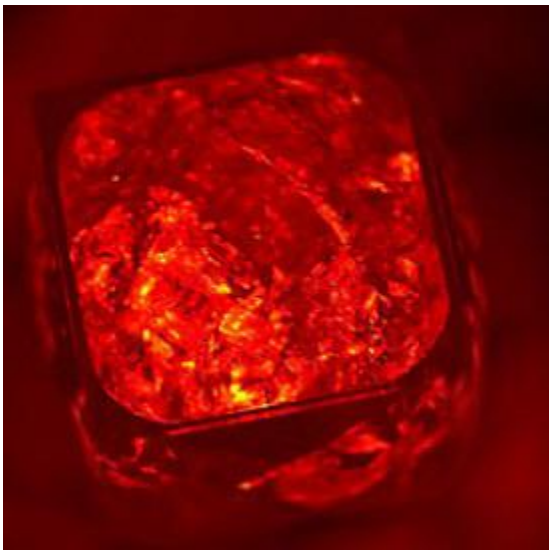
Sir Thomas Malory, the presumed author of *Le Morte D'Arthur*, lived during the tumultuous period in England known as the "War of the Roses," and he wrote the story while in prison. He was charged with theft, kidnapping, and rape, but it is unclear whether he was actually guilty or whether the charges were politically motivated. In those times it was disastrous for anyone of nobility to be on wrong political side, which Malory unfortunately was. In his story he saluted the traditions of chivalry – its highness, nobility, and devotion to protect the weak, but also decried its excesses – continual fighting, cruelty, and struggles for power. So he infused his version of the tale with both the possibilities and the sadness of the human condition.

King Arthur is therefore not merely a symbol of human nobility, failure, and the subsequent quest for God. With the inclusion of the Holy Grail, the story also becomes a paradigm for divine redemption – a symbol of Christ who died a sacrificial death so that those who seek him like the knights Percival and Galahad would find the mercy of God and live.

Contemporary Conceptions of the Holy Grail

In addition to considering the Holy Grail as the Last Supper Cup, it has also been viewed in other ways:

- **The Holy Grail as the Philosophers' Stone**. The concept of the Philosophers' Stone is variously defined and has its roots in the mythic past, and in alchemy, magic, and sorcery. Some allege that a version of the stone was brought to Atlantis when humanity was supposedly spawned by ancient aliens (it was said to be a square of red crystal with supercomputer properties) (Remington, 2021) but most consider it to be associated with alchemy. Alchemy is hard to define because at times it has had both physical, magical, and philosophical aspects. Various alchemical practitioners throughout history have involved themselves in only one or sometimes all of these and have defined what they did in a variety of ways. But alchemy is essentially the search for both health, wealth, and immortality, and as such it is ancient, with its roots stretching back to Babylon, Egypt, China, India, and the Islamic world.



A representation of the Philosopher's Stone.
From: Mystic Investigations,
https://mysticinvestigations.com/paranormal/philosophers-stone/

Some practitioners of alchemy focused on promoting health, and alchemy was sometimes comingled with drugs and medical practices (until the 17th century medicine was often viewed as magic). For example, the Chinese employed colloidal gold as a drug of longevity and the word "alchemy" came from the Chinese words: kim (gold) and yeh (juice). When adopted in the Islamic world, the Arabs took the word "kimyeh" (gold juice) and added their definitive article "al", creating the word "al-kimiya," which then evolved into "alchemy" (Mahdihassan, 1985). Indian-Hindu medicine has long claimed antioxidant and rejuvenating properties for preparations containing gold (Sravani, 2017). In the 16th century Paracelsus used gold solutions to treat epilepsy (Ternkin, 1971). Later, a gold-based "cordial" was advised to manage ailments related to "decreases in the vital spirits," such as fainting, fevers, melancholia, and epilepsy (Fricker, 1996). In the 19th century, gold was used to treat syphilis, and it was noted that gold had much milder

side-effects as compared to mercury, the usual medicine used against syphilis at that time (Richards, 2002). More recently medications containing gold have been used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, cancer, asthma, pemphigus, and systemic lupus, but there are also a number of potential side-effects (Fricker, 1996). In the 16th century the alchemist Paracelsus wrote "Of all Elixirs, gold is supreme and the most important for us... gold can keep the body indestructible... drinkable gold will cure all illnesses, it renews and restores" (Paracelsus, c. 1530).

Other practitioners of alchemy focused on gaining wealth and tried to develop methods of turning base metals into gold. This aspect of alchemy was known as "chrysopoeia" meaning "the making of gold." We now know that gold is an element and as such cannot be produced by a chemical reaction process (gold can be refined from ore but transforming other substances into gold would require a nuclear reaction). But alchemists throughout history have tried to do so, and sometimes claimed success, although any wealth they received was from patrons and from marketing their ideas. Nevertheless, alchemists sought to make the Philosophers' Stone from the following three materials: gold (the prime ingredient), purified antimony, and flux/menstruum which is a secret liquid, said to be the universal solvent, and that supposedly is able to dissolve gold but also retain the capacity to create a crystalline substance. A successful alchemical process supposedly created a type of red-colored, colloidal, gold-antimony crystal (Medina, 2020). Movies such as *Harry Potter and the Philosophers' Stone* play on this theme.

The ouroboros and the squared circle. The ouroboros is an ancient symbol where infinity is represented by a serpent or dragon swallowing its own tail – the image is often used in alchemical texts from the Middle-Ages. Contained within the ouroboros is the squared circle, an alchemical symbol delineating the synergy of the four elements of matter resulting in the creation of the Philosophers' Stone (Medina, 2020).

Yet other alchemical practitioners focused on the magical aspects of alchemy, which viewed the health and wealth aspects of gold as a paradigm in the search for immortality and the "elixir of life." This aspect involves portions of the many strains of magic and sorcery, such as hermeticism, divination, theosophy, kabbalism, astral projection, necromancy, spiritism, witchcraft, etc. It is an attempt to gain spiritual and personal power through a variety of methods – seances, casting circles, invoking spirits, and so on.

Another way of viewing the Philosophers' Stone is in purely philosophical and metaphysical terms. According to this view stones and grails don't actually exist, rather they are simply an extended metaphor for a search for meaning (Ball, 2020). In contemporary Western culture this

search is especially poignant because God is said to not exist, or if He does exist then He is irrelevant, so heaven and the afterlife, and perhaps even alchemy and magic don't really exist either. Science has become God and the scientific pursuit to understand more about the nature of matter and energy has become the grail quest for some. Darwinian evolution has thus become very important as a supposedly scientific replacement for God (Sorensen, 2020). It is certainly important to find new cures for diseases[13] and to develop better technology, and some would quote the phrase, "It's better to travel hopefully than to arrive." But how can we travel hopefully if we're just on a road with no ultimate or meaningful destination? Is that all there is to life? Others would view Buddhism and Eastern Mysticism as the "grail quest." For Buddhists God is pantheistic and impersonal, and life is viewed as "samsara" – the wheel of suffering. In order to escape we must follow the eight-fold path and somehow live a perfect life so that we can eventually enter nirvana which means that we will be absorbed into the cosmic all (Sorensen, 2021).

The difference between viewing the Holy Grail as the Philosopher's Stone vs. the Last Supper Cup is thus very significant. The Philosophers' Stone is either a humanist or a Buddhistic escape from the world and from the meaninglessness of existence without God, or it is a means to personal power, success, and achievement – to seize and gain health, wealth, and even immortality through one's own efforts. Thus it appeals to the desire to be the "sole captain of our fate" and accountable to no one, dismissing God as irrelevant and unnecessary. We cannot prove or disprove the existence of God, so whatever we believe about the spiritual realm is a matter of faith. In contrast, the Last Supper Cup is an admission of spiritual poverty and the need for the grace of Christ – that health and wealth in this life are a matter of personal effort and discipline, but that we cannot control the spirits and that immortality is only from above. In effect the alchemist/magician says, "I did it!" while those drawn to the Last Supper Cup say, "God did it!"

[13] However, some have alleged that the large increase in depression and other psychiatric disorders is largely caused by increased use of both illegal and legal drugs, especially psychotropic drugs such as xanax and valium. See, for example, https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/public-health-now/news/depression-rise-us-especially-among-young-teens

- **The Holy Grail as Mary Magdalene**. This concept sees the Biblical character of Mary Magdalene as the Holy Grail. The idea was first proposed in the 1982 book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln and popularized by Dan Brown's 2009 novel and the resulting movie, *The DaVinci Code*. The Bible indicates that Mary Magdalene became one of the followers of Jesus after he cast seven demons out of her. She may also have been the Mary of Bethany who poured perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair prior to his arrest and trial, as described in John 12 (there is a scholarly debate as to whether "Mary Magdalene" and "Mary of Bethany" were the same person) (Sorensen, 2011a). She then came to the tomb after his burial in order to anoint his body with spices, as was the custom of the day. However, he had already risen from death and appeared to her – she was the first person to see him after his resurrection.

Jesus meeting Mary Magdalene after his resurrection.

From: Jesus revealing himself to Mary Magdalene, https://paintingandframe.com/prints/william_brassey_hole_jesus_revealing_himself_to_mary_magdalene-5220.html

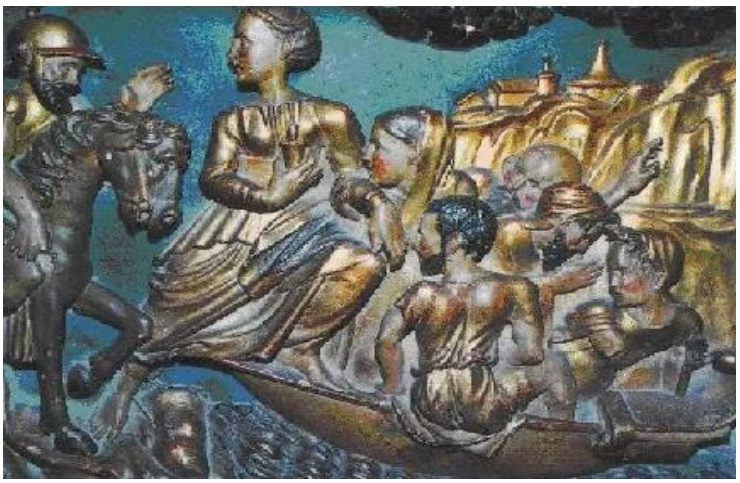
Holy Blood, Holy Grail goes much further and indicates that Mary was in love with Jesus as evidenced by the anointing scene, and that she supposedly became his wife or concubine. The book also alleges that she had one or more children with Jesus and thus her womb was a "chalice," a vessel of Christ in bearing his children. However, there is no support for this whatsoever in the Bible, or in any of the writings of Jesus' disciples, followers, or church leaders. Jesus met and talked with many women, which was unusual for a man, and especially for a rabbi of that time. But he did this to honor and ascribe value to women and did not have any romantic motives or relationships. Given his identity of universal savior, and his role as the suffering servant, Messiah, King, and the third person of the Trinity, this would not have been possible for him.

The only possible documentary support for Mary Magdalene's alleged intimate relationship with

Jesus is a confusing statement from one of the Gnostic "gospels" – the Gospel of Philip – written several hundred years later, and which stated, "The companion of the Savior is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by this and expressed disapproval. They said to him, 'Why do you love her more than all of us?'" Most assume that the above account, being from a Gnostic writing, is religious fiction, as the Gnostics had their own theological axe to grind. But some have taken it literally and alleged from the above quote that Mary Magdalene was Jesus' spouse or consort. However, if that were the case, then why would the disciples, who were married men with their own wives, object to him kissing her? Even the Gnostic writings never claim that Jesus and Mary were married, nor do they claim that there was any sexual relationship or that any children were born to them. The Gnostic writings therefore do not provide any "new light" on the Biblical gospels. Gnosticism was simply one more set of theological speculations, at odds with the Bible.

Holy Blood, Holy Grail further alleges that Mary Magdalene traveled to Marseilles in France (called Massilia in Gaul at the time) by boat. As previously indicated, she and Lazarus were said to have sailed with Joseph of Arimathea, and possibly they first stopped on the island of Cyprus.[14] Eventually Mary Magdalene was said to have settled near what is now the town of St. Maximin, thirty-five miles north of Marseille in the Baume mountains. It was also said that she then helped evangelize Provence (i.e., southern France). This idea seems to be supported by the many churches and shrines in Provence and the Languedoc dedicated to her, and at first glance, it appears to be quite convincing. She became the patron saint of Marseille, and her supposed remains are kept at the Basilica of St. Maximim. Her coffin is in the crypt of the church, as well as her skull, which is displayed in a reliquary. The skull has been carbon dated to her general time period, and brochures in the Basilica tell the story of Mary Magdalene's voyage to Gaul as historical fact. Every year on July 22, her feast day, there is a procession in her honor, in which the reliquary is paraded through the town. In the mountains near St. Maximin is a site that is claimed to be Mary Magdalene's grotto, where she is said to have gone to pray. There are a few later accounts of the presence of Mary Magdalene and Lazarus in Marseilles. For example, Roger of Howden, who was more-or-less the official chronicler of the Third Crusade, wrote of his visit to Marseilles in 1190, and stated the following: "Marseille is a city situated twenty miles from the mouth of the Rhône, and is subject to the King of Aragon. Here can be found the relics of St. Lazarus, the brother of St. Mary Magdalene and of Martha. After Jesus raised him from the dead, Lazarus became Bishop of Marseilles" (Stubbs, 1868).

[14] There is a tradition that Lazarus became of the bishop of Cyprus. The Church of St. Lazarus in Larnaca is dedicated to him and his supposed tomb is in the crypt of the church. However, it is not clear how Lazarus could have been an evangelist and a church leader in both Cyprus and Marseilles.



An artistic conception of the arrival of Mary Magdalene in Marseilles (actually at St. Maries de la Mer) from a carving in the Basilica of St. Maximum's (picture by the author).

The Grotto of Mary Magdalene in the Baume Mountains above Marseilles
From: St. Mary Magdalene Cave, http://decouvertes.fr/content/saint-mary-magdalene-cave

As with the story of Joseph of Arimathea in Britain, ascribing the start of Christianity in France to the actions of Lazarus and/or Mary Magdalene has a powerful romantic and historic cachet that many have found irresistible, but the connection is very tenuous. According to the hagiography, a monk named Baudillon from Gaul traveled to the Holy Land on pilgrimage in the late 10th or early 11th century and brought back with him what were said to be the bones of Mary Magdalene which were then kept in Vézelay, France (Derheim, 2011). In 1058 the Pope confirmed the genuineness of the bones as relics and the Cluniac abbey of Vézelay was granted papal recognition, leading to a large influx of pilgrims. Vézelay grew into one of the greatest pilgrimage centers in Europe, thanks to the prestige of its patron saint, the support of the French monarchy, and its ideal location on a main route used by pilgrims from Germany to Santiago de Compostella in Spain where the relics of St. James were kept. The original location of Mary's activities, however, was Provence at the Baume grotto where she supposedly lived a monastic existence for thirty years, as well as the town of St. Maximin (the ground in that town on which St. Madeleine's Basilica was later built, was specifically mentioned in some versions of the legend as her original burial place). The status of the Provençal shrines improved considerably after 1279, when the monks of St. Maximin and the Angevin prince Charles of Salerno miraculously discovered that her skeleton was still there

after all, hidden inside an ancient sarcophagus in the crypt of the church. Thus Charles and his allies attempted and were ultimately successfully in reclaiming the saint's patronage and protection for the county of Provence and the house of Anjou (however, one of Mary Magdalene's fingers is still kept in Vézelay). The cult of Mary Magdalene in England came from the same general period, especially following the Norman (French) Conquest of 1066. There were only a few churches dedicated to her through the 10th century, but by the 15th century there were around 200, as well as an Oxford college named for her (Reames, 2003). C.S. Lewis, the famous atheist-turned-Christian author, taught at this school, which is known as Magdalene College.

So regardless of the speculations, asserting that Mary Magdalene and/or Lazarus lived and ministered in Gaul is very tenuous. There are no early tales of the activities of either Lazarus or Mary in Gaul as there were for other evangelists, such as St. Patrick in Ireland (AD 460 – 500). If individuals as significant to the history of Christianity as Lazarus and Mary Magdalene had actually lived in Gaul for many years and were instrumental in the evangelization of the Celts and the Franks, there certainly would have been many stories about them from that time. The complete lack of early evidence does not definitively disprove the tale but places it in the realm of hagiography rather than fact. Victor Saxer, one of the main researchers on Mary Magdalene, has debunked this, as well as the notion that Mary Magdalene's daughter married into a Salic Frank family that eventually became the Merovingian dynasty, a key assertion of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (Saxer, 1959).

Since the feminist movement of the 1960's and 70's Mary Magdalene has become a feminist totem, such as in Margaret Starbird's book, *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail*. Mary Magdalene was the first person to see the resurrected Christ and thus was said to be the "Apostle to the Apostles." She was also alleged to have been a significant preacher and evangelist in Marseilles, being the first female in that role, so she is "exhibit A" for those who believe that the church has misogynistically suppressed women. As the feminist goal is for women to be made equal to or exceed men in power and authority, there have been concerted attempts to ground these desires in history and archaeology – to demonstrate how women have been methodically suppressed throughout history and show that there were ancient matriarchal and socialistic societies that worshipped a goddess. Feminist works such as *The First Sex* by Elizabeth Davis, *When God was a Woman* by Merlin Stone, and *The Chalice and the Blade* by Riane Eisler, allege that Christianity kept women down which ultimately resulted in the myth of the "nine million burned witches" who were said to be "goddess worshipers and keepers of an ancient flame" (Sorensen, 2010). However, efforts to establish feminism on an historical basis have been completely unsuccessful. As indicated by Philip G. Davis in his monumental work, *Goddess Unmasked: The Rise of Neopagan Feminist Spirituality*,

> "Not a single [ancient society] provides clear evidence of a supreme female deity; not a single one exhibits the signs of matriarchal rule, or even of serious power-sharing between the sexes; not a single one displays

> social egalitarianism, non-violent interpersonal and interstate relations, and ecological sensitivity which we have been led to anticipate. In each of these cases, the story of the Goddess is a fabrication in defiance of the facts" (Davis, 1998, pp. 83-84).

One would think that goddess worshipers would be distressed that their religious concepts are based purely on concocted fallacies. However, in accordance with their roots in 19th century Romanticism, these individuals "feel" rather than "think," because thinking is largely logical, left-brained, and therefore male. They subordinate thinking beneath feeling when there is a conflict between the two. As Davis further indicates:

> "Virtually none of the Goddess books deals directly with factual challenges to their story. Instead, we are most likely to encounter one or both defenses to the Goddess: the irrelevance of men and their opinions, or the irrelevance of truth itself" (Davis, 1998, p. 85).

Thought and logic (i.e., evidence and arguments that demonstrate the fallacies and deceptions of feminism) is thus a-priori misogynistic and anti-female and can safely be vilified and ignored (the word "misogyny" has been redefined to mean "anyone who opposes feminism"). As the legal scholar Ann Scales stated, "Feminist analysis begins with the principle that objective reality is a myth" (Scales, 1990).

Regardless of how one feels about Mary Magdalene, there is no evidence whatsoever that she was the bride of Christ, that she challenged men for leadership, or that she was ever a leader in her own right in the vein of male leaders (Sorensen, 2011a). Her essence was submission and obedience rather than power and control. Jesus ennobled women, gave them value equal to men, and involved them in his ministry, all of which were revolutionary for his day. But at the same time he supported male leadership (all of the Apostles were men) and traditional sex roles (e.g., John 4:3-30).

Viewing the Holy Grail as either the Philosophers' Stone or as Mary Magdalene thus are both largely inventions of the 20th and the 21st centuries, despite their supposedly ancient roots. Therefore, they are "born yesterday" and do not have the historical and theological connections to the Holy Grail as does the Last Supper Cup.

The Actual History of the Last Supper Cup

The grail history begins with the Last Supper, followed by the crucifixion of Christ, and the actions of a religious leader named Joseph of Arimathea. The Bible tells us that Joseph was a wealthy man and a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling Jewish religious council in Jerusalem. Joseph asked Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor before whom Jesus was tried, for the dead body of Christ after the crucifixion. Along with the Pharisee Nicodemus, the man to whom Jesus said, "you must be born again," Joseph took the body of Christ, wrapped it in linen burial cloths, and placed it in a new tomb that he owned. There is nothing more in the Bible about Joseph of Arimathea, and no hint whatsoever that he obtained the cup used at the Last Supper (he was not a participant), or that he was even at the crucifixion, although he may have been there.

It is possible that the actual Last Supper cup could have survived from antiquity. According to one account, in 1910 a silver chalice comprised of an unfinished inner cup and a finished outer holder was dug up supposedly at the traditional site of the ancient cathedral in Antioch, the city to which many Christian Jews fled during the persecutions that followed the resurrection of Christ (Eisen, 1923). The plain silver interior bowl was then claimed to be the Holy Grail, and the elaborate shell enclosing it was thought to have been made in the 1st century to honor the Grail. But the authenticity of Antioch Chalice has been challenged, and it is now considered to be a 6th century cup or more likely a standing lamp in commemoration of Christ's words "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). In any case, there is no record of it being proclaimed as the Last Supper cup before the 20th century when that was done to increase its sale value (Wood, 2008).

According to another account the Last Supper cup is now located in Spain (Sevilla & Ortega del Rio, 2015). This cup was supposedly seen by pilgrims in Jerusalem in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher beginning in the 400's after that church was constructed under the sponsorship of St. Helena of Constantinople. According to parchments recently discovered at a university in Cairo, after the Muslim takeover of Jerusalem in the 7th century, the cup was given to the emir of Dénia in Spain by the Fatimid Dynasty, and then to Ferdinand I, King of León, who gave it to his daughter Doña Urraca of Zamora. It is now known as the Cup of Urraca.

One of the problems here is that we have no idea if the cup seen by pilgrims in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was indeed the Last Supper Cup, or whether it was a replica made later. According to Torres and Ortega del Rio, the first known account that specifically mentions the cup was from AD 570 (Sevilla & Ortega del Rio, 2015, p. 60). The account also mentions the presence of the sponge and the reed (employed during the crucifixion to give Christ a drink of sour wine), as well as pieces of the cross. But considering the death threats and immense pressure that Christ and the disciples were under at the Last Supper, is it reasonable to think that they would be concerned about the cup used during the seder dinner, which was probably one of several and the property of whoever owned the premises? The same thing is true of the sponge, the reed, and pieces of the cross. On the afternoon of

the crucifixion the sky was black, there was a violent storm, and then an earthquake. Also, Roman soldiers controlled the crucifixion, and Jesus was considered to be a common criminal – given the fact that the cross was probably re-used by the Romans for other crucifixions, how reasonable is it that the reed, sponge, and pieces of the cross would have been saved by anyone? Thus, it is much more likely that those items were made during or after the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and when it was opened to pilgrims. Throughout history people have desired to have both spiritual and physical elements of religion – to be able to handle and touch actual objects of their faith. So the original intent was probably not to deceive – like pieces of artwork they were meant to be tangible things that could be a focus of devotion, and an aid to visualizing the sufferings of Christ. It was only over time that they acquired the cachet of being genuine which led to the later mania for relics such as "pieces of the true cross," and then to the cynicism with which relics are treated in modern times.

But a more serious problem with the Cup of Urraca as the source of the Holy Grail literature is that the Kings of León never mentioned this relic and it has remained essentially unknown. This is in contrast to the Sudarium of Oviedo, which is the cloth or "napkin" said to cover the head of Christ (the bloodstains on the Sudarium correspond to the Shroud image), and which was brought to Spain in the 6th century. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that this cup could have inspired the Grail stories, regardless of its authenticity. The Cup of Urraca may indeed be ancient, but if so, it is probably the relic made for display in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as indicated above.

There is also no historical indication that the Last Supper cup was used to catch Christ's blood during or after the crucifixion. That was purely a literary concept first stated by Robert de Boron as described above. But there was an object which did contain the blood of Christ, namely the linen cloths or shroud that was used to wrap his body in the tomb. The shroud is also a relic, and like the Cup of Urraca we should be suspicious and exercise caution about its authenticity. But unlike the relics mentioned above, the shroud contains an unusual image of the entire body of a man who was crucified in the same manner as Jesus. The image is so complex that to this day no one has been able to explain it. Furthermore, there is much historical evidence that the shroud was preserved and still exists – it is known as the Shroud of Turin. It is the author's contention that the Shroud of Turin is the actual object behind the literary tradition and myths of the Holy Grail.

From: www.shroud.com - ©1931 Giuseppe Enrie

The History of the Shroud of Christ, later known as the Shroud of Turin

As discussed above, The Holy Grail as the Last Supper cup is a literary invention, and its use as the literal grail object is either fictional or is based on another object. There are others who have also proposed that the inspiration for the Holy Grail was actually the Shroud of Turin, such as Ian Wilson (Wilson, 1978)[15] and Daniel Scavone (Scavone, 2010).[16] But the ideas presented here were independently developed through research for my *Unholy Grail* novel series (Sorensen, 2007b, 2011b) in the period of 1997 through 2011 and are the most comprehensive treatment.

After the body of Jesus was placed in the tomb, a large stone was rolled in front, the tomb was sealed by the order of Pontius Pilate, and soldiers guarded it. When various people came to the tomb the following day, the soldiers were gone, the stone was rolled away, and the tomb was open and empty, except for the linen cloths or burial shroud which had been left behind. The Bible mentions that the

[15] Wilson stated that the central point of the grail stories was "a very special secret vision of Christ."

[16] Scavone wrote, "Specific documents and rituals surrounding the Mandylion resonate closely with and provide precise sources for the chief attributes of the Holy Grail. Like the legendary Holy Grail, this cloth was linked to Joseph of Arimathea, resided in a place known as Britium [another name for Abgar's residence in Edessa], was thought to have contained Jesus's body, captured Jesus's dripping blood on Golgotha, and was displayed only rarely and in a gradual series of manifestations from Christ-child to crucified Jesus."

Apostle John saw these cloths in the tomb after Christ's resurrection (John 20:3-8). There is no known historical record of exactly what became of the burial cloths, but there are traditions that an image had appeared on the shroud, a picture of Jesus' body presumably burned into it by the power of the resurrection. Following is a table of significant events in the history of the Shroud, which is turn is followed by a large section providing extensive details on its history.

c. 33	Jesus is crucified, buried by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea in burial cloths and a tomb provided by the latter, and then rises from the dead. The burial clothes are mentioned as being seen in the tomb.
c. 33-38	The burial cloths (i.e., the shroud) is brought to Edessa by Thomas or Thaddeus, and King Abgar V is miraculously healed. Edessa becomes a Christian city. A mosaic tile was made of face on the Shroud (known as the Keramion) and placed over the city gate. In addition to the Shroud, this tile may have been the model used for future pictures of Christ.
57	Ma'nu VI becomes king of Edessa and reverts the city to paganism. The Shroud and the Keramion are hidden in the city walls to protect them from destruction, and the location was forgotten.
177 – 212	Abgar VIII ("The Great") becomes king of Edessa. He was a Christian and sought to find the roots of Christianity in the city, but the Shroud was still hidden. He is probably the literary source of the story of King Abgar V.
525	The Shroud and the Keramion are rediscovered during the rebuilding of Edessa after a flood.
544	Edessa is besieged by a Persian army and the Shroud and/or the Keramion purportedly save the city. Following this, the Hagia Sophia church (named after its analog in Constantinople) is constructed to house the Shroud/Keramion and venerate them. The Shroud is shown to the public every Easter, but in an air of secrecy and mystery.
544 – 944	The appearance of Christ as depicted in Christian art suddenly changes from smooth Greco-Roman to a Semitic man, with the characteristics of the face from the Shroud and/or the Keramion. Syriac artists become the main source of Christian art.
944	One hundred years after the end of the iconoclastic controversy the Byzantine emperor, Romanus Lacapenus has his army sent to Edessa to bring the Shroud and later the Keramion to Constantinople (a copy of the latter was probably brought). The Shroud was received with great ceremony and paraded through the city.
944 – 1204	The Shroud and Keramion are kept in the imperial relic treasury and periodically presented to private audiences.
1204	The knights of the 4th Crusade come to Constantinople, supposedly on their way to Jerusalem, but due to a complex and unfortunate series of political events, they sack the city instead. Both the Shroud and the Keramion disappear.
1204 – 1355	This period is known as the "missing years" of the Shroud, and there are a number of theories as to its whereabouts during that time. The two most popular are, 1) The Shroud was taken by one or more members of the Knights Templar (it may have remained in Constantinople for some period); 2) The Shroud was given to the knight Othon de la Roche, a knight from the Burgundy region of France who

	became the Lord of Athens in Greece. The Shroud may have been in Greece but was eventually brought to Besançon, the capital of Burgundy. In any case the Shroud eventually became the property of Geoffrey de Charny and his family.
1355	Geoffrey de Charny, a high counselor to King John II the Good of France and the Lord of Lirey and Savoisy, had built a chapel in Lirey to commemorate his rescue from the English. He and/or his wife Jeanne displayed the Shroud to the public and had pilgrim medallions minted to commemorate the display.
1389	Pierre D'Arcis, the Bishop of Troyes, wrote the *D'Arcis Memorandum* in which he complained to Pope Clement VII that the Shroud being shown in Lirey was a painting and a fake. However, this memorandum has been debunked.
1400 – 1454	Margaret de Charny, the granddaughter of Geoffrey, allowed the cloth to be publicly viewed on a number of occasions during the period of 1400-1453. In 1454 she sold the Shroud to the Duke Louis I of Savoy and received from him the castle of Varambon and revenues of the estate of Miribel as payment.
1464	The sale of the Shroud by the de Charny family to the Savoys is detailed in a document in the Paris archives. Some years later a history of the Savoy family recorded that Louis' acquisition of the Shroud was his greatest achievement.
1464 – 1578	Later generations of the Savoys periodically displayed the Shroud, built churches to house it, and often took the Shroud with them when they traveled. It was shown in public many times in various places, and was finally moved to Turin, Italy in 1578.
1694	The Shroud was placed in the Guarini Chapel in Turin where it remains to this day.
1898	The first photograph of Shroud was taken by Secundo Pia, and it was then noticed that the Shroud was a negative image.
1902	The first medical examination of the Shroud image was done at the Sorbonne by Yves Delage and associates.
1978	The STURP research team did an extensive series of tests on the Shroud which demonstrated that is not an artwork (i.e., not a painting, photograph, block print, rubbing, or any other known artistic technique).
1983	Umberto II, the ex-king of Italy and legal owner of the Shroud, died. In his will he bequeathed it to the Pope and his successors, with the stipulation that it must remain in Turin.
1988	Samples from the Shroud were carbon-dated to the Middle Ages (from the period of 1269 – 1390). However, the results were challenged, and the dating process has been discredited.
2002	The Keramion was discovered in the archives of a museum in Edessa.
2022	Threads of the Shroud were dated with x-ray technology to the time of Christ.

Historical Evidence of the Shroud in the New Testament

Woven articles such as shrouds were expensive in ancient times, and the burial cloths used to wrap the body of Christ had been provided by Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man who had also supplied the tomb (graves carved out of rock were also expensive). As indicated above, Joseph may have been related to Jesus, and if so, he would have had a right to claim and bury the body. He was both a follower of Jesus as well as a member of the Jewish religious hierarchy, and therefore was thought of as a traitor by the latter, especially because of the mysterious circumstances surrounding the disappearance of Christ's body for which Joseph had made the burial arrangements. The Bible doesn't tell us what happened to him, but he would certainly have been a marked man. Assuming that the cloth was in his possession, he may well have given it to someone else for safe keeping.

The question has been posed of how the ancient Jews buried their dead. Authorities generally believe that the deceased were dressed in their own clothes (Long, 2013).[17] Shroud researcher Dr. Gilbert Lavoie noted that in the Code of Jewish Law from the 16th century, that an individual who died a violent death with blood flowing "should not be cleansed, but they should inter him in his garments and boots, but above his garments they should wrap a sheet which is called sovev [a shroud]." This is a tradition that some Jewish scholars believe goes back to the New Testament era (Wilson & Miller, 1986, pp. 45-46). Therefore, if a man died naked as did Jesus he would then be wrapped only in a shroud. Aside from a few fragments, no other known ancient burial cloths from Israel have survived, so we do not have any comparative samples.

Larry Stalley's article referenced below indicates that there are a number of possible references to the shroud in the New Testament (Stalley, 2020), but there are several reasons why there are no direct references to what happened to the burial cloths:

1. Among the Jews, articles associated with the dead were unclean – even stepping on a tomb without realizing it required ritual purification. Burial shrouds would therefore not generally be handled or displayed.

2. The Jewish authorities very much wanted to conceal the fact that Jesus' body had disappeared, and they paid the guards of the tomb to lie about what had happened (Matthew 28:11-15). The Roman authorities would also not want any evidence that Jesus had escaped from the crucifixion that they had performed. So if the existence of such an object became known, it would probably have been seized and destroyed by either the Jews or the Romans.

3. Extreme suffering in those times was considered to be the judgement of God, whereas wealth, military might, and power were typically viewed as marks of God's approval. A good example is the book of Job, possibly the oldest in the Bible, in which Job suffers a series of calamities and

[17] Many of the following historical references are drawn from John Long's extensive summary of the Shroud's history.

winds up sitting in ashes and scaping his boils. His friends could not understand how a wealthy and upright man as he had been could ever experience such disaster – when bad things happened to you it had to mean that God was against you. Therefore, people could easily have wondered how attractive Christianity could be when its founder, the son of God, was displayed as dying in such a humiliating and gruesome manner. A different mindset was required for the Christian message to be understood and appreciated.

4. Related to the previous item is the issue of oriental sensitivity. Christ as depicted on the Shroud is brutally beaten, wounded, and dead. He is also naked, and all of these characteristics were not just disagreeable to the society of that era, they were abhorrent, especially to spiritual and ascetic minds of that time. Even after understanding the message that Christ had suffered and died for the sins of humanity, it was another matter to reveal the grisly details. As a man from Syrian Edessa expressed it:

   "When he was stripped, the sun and the moon blushed with modesty. As soon as Christ was stripped, all creatures were covered with darkness … all creatures wept and cried out with anguish … Since He who clothes all creation was made naked, the stars hid their light" (Savio, 1982).

   Rev. Edward Wuenschel, one of the first American Shroud researchers, noted that early Christian artists were very reticent to depict Christ and the crucifixion realistically until after the 13th century, and then only in the West:

   "Now on the Shroud the effects of Christ's crucifixion are visible in all their stark reality, more vivid and more appalling than in any artistic work… It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that the Shroud was kept more or less hidden for centuries and a prudent silence observed about its imprint… Those who imagine that the guardians of the Shroud should have gone about waving it like a banner show little understanding of the Christian Orient (Humber, 1978, p. 91).

   So in conservative regions such as Judea and Syria there was little chance of the Shroud being fully displayed in public, and this was also true of the somewhat more liberal Constantinople when the Shroud was eventually brought there.

Historical Evidence of the Shroud from circa 33 – 525

A large number of the disciples and other church members left Jerusalem in the persecutions that took place during the period AD 33 – 67, and the destruction of the city by the Romans in 67 – 70. The destination for many was either Antioch, a large city in Turkey on the south-eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, or Edessa (), another city in Turkey around 150 miles to the east.[18] Edessa (now known as Şanliurfa or simply Urfa) is called "The Blessed City" and "The City of Prophets." According to Muslim tradition, the Biblical figures of Jethro, Job, Elisha, and Abraham lived there or in the surrounding region. Nearby is the ancient town of Harran, reputed to be the birthplace of Abraham and the town from which he set out on his journey to Canaan as described in Genesis 12:1-9 (Dayvault, 2016, p. 108). The population of the area included Syriac, Greek, Armenian, and Arabic speaking peoples as well as a strong Jewish representation.

There are two significant documents providing information about the possibility of the shroud being taken to in Edessa soon after the resurrection of Christ: the *Acts of Thaddeus* written in Greek, and the *Doctrine of Addai* ("Addai" is the Syriac version of "Thaddeus" or "Thomas") from the early 4th century written in Syriac.[19] As mentioned above, they tell the story of King Abgar V Ouchama who ruled the Osrhoene providence of Edessa during the time of Christ, from 4 BC to AD 7, and then again from AD 13 to 50 (Osrhoene was a buffer state between the Roman and Parthian empires until AD 216 when it became a Roman colony). The story is clearly hagiographic, as it has elements of legend, but also has an historical basis.

Abgar was said to be suffering from gout and leprosy and had apparently heard of the healings and miracles that Jesus was performing in Israel, so he sent an emissary requesting medical help. Jesus was said to have washed his face and wiped it on a cloth on which the image of his face appeared. He then sent one of his disciples to Edessa along with the cloth, which was referred to as a *mandylion* (handkerchief). But in the *Acts of Thaddeus* the Mandylion was described, not as a handkerchief, but rather as a cloth which was a *sindon tetrádiplon*, or "burial shroud folded in eight parts" where only the face of Christ would be visible. It also indicated that the facial image on the cloth was extremely faint, like a "moist secretion without pigments or the painter's art" and this describes what the shroud actually looks like (Scavone, 1996). Scholars have questioned if King Abgar knew that it was a full-length burial cloth or if it was simply a towel or handkerchief. A 10th century codex containing an 8th century account indicated that an imprint of Christ's body was left on a canvas kept in a church in

[18] There is an Assyrian tradition that the wise men who visited the infant Jesus either came from or traveled through Edessa in fulfillment of a prophecy made by Zoroaster in the 7th century BC. On their return they supposedly told of the wonderful things they had seen and heard, preparing the Edessians for the reception of Christianity.

[19] There are a number of documents that tell various aspects of the King Abgar story, such as *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13 written by Eusebius of Caesarea, the 4th century church historian.

Edessa, and that "King Abgar received a cloth on which one can see not only a face but the whole body" (Savio, 1957).

Abgar was then gradually healed (Guscin, 2009, p. 29). In that time cities would typically have a statue of its patron god or goddess placed by the city gate and all travelers entering the city were required to stop there and worship the deity before proceeding into the city (A. Whanger & M. Whanger, 1998). After Abgar was healed, it was said that he had the statue of Edessa destroyed; he then replaced it with a mosaic tile bearing the face of Christ which was mounted over the city gate (Wilson, 1978). This tile was known as the "Keramion" a word derived from "ceramic" which in turn came from the Greek *keramikos* or *keramos* (Dayvault, 2016, p. 146). Abgar converted to Christianity as did the rest of the city, which along with Antioch then became one of the first Christian communities outside Jerusalem.

After Abgar's death in AD 50 his son Ma'nu V became king. However, the latter died soon afterward and his brother or son Ma'nu VI came to the throne in 57. He reverted to paganism, persecuted Christians, and sought to destroy all of the associated relics. Therefore, Edessa became hostile to Christianity until the rule of King Lucius Abgar VIII 120 years later. The Shroud and the Keramion were hidden within the city walls by church officials and forgotten for over 460 years (Dayvault, 2016, p. 66).

The *Doctrine of Addai* indicates that the King Abgar story was found in the archives of Edessa, and apparently placed there by King Lucius Abgar VIII (177 – 212) known as "The Great." This later King Abgar was a Christian and may have inserted the story of the earlier King Abgar into the Edessan archives as a way of demonstrating an earlier Christian connection to Edessa. He had no doubt heard of the shroud, but it had disappeared and was not rediscovered until three centuries after his time. Therefore, he had never seen it, hence the story of the Mandylion as an attempt to explain the healing and conversion of the Abgar V in the 1st century by an image of Christ. Lucius Abgar appointed and consecrated Palut as Edessa's first bishop in 200, and he sought to promote Christianity but without forced conversions. Bardaisan, a contemporary of the king, wrote of the efforts of the latter replace paganism in his *Dialogus de Fato*. There is also a church in Edessa that dated from 201, which was built after the Daisan River flood mentioned below (Segal, 1970, p. 24). But this was an era of confusing heretical variations of Christianity, and disputes concerning the humanity and divinity of Christ were not settled until the Council of Nicea, which took place a century later in 325. Lucius Abgar therefore sent a letter to the church in Rome, asking for missionaries to come and preach the faith in his city.

This was also a time before the papacy in Rome actually existed. There were churches in Rome established during the 40's AD and these churches had leaders, but it was not until after the Edict of Milan in 313 that the papacy truly began (the first true pope was Sylvester I, 314 – 335). Nevertheless, Abgar's letter came to Eleutherus (175 – 189) the leader of the Roman church at that

time, and the correspondence was later recorded in Rome's 6th century *Liber Pontificalis* – the deeds of the popes (Duchesne, 1886, pp. CII-CIX; Harnack, 1904; Loomis, 1916, pp. 16-17). King Abgar VIII was also a friend of Rome (he added "Lucius" to his royal name in honor of the Roman emperor Lucius Septimius Severus). The Roman historian Dio Cassius (150 – 235) further wrote that this King Abgar paid a state visit to Rome in the time of Eleutherus (Cassius, 1927).

This reference in the *Liber Pontificalis* was the source of the error made by the Venerable Bede, the English author mentioned above, which led to a fictional British King Lucius and to Bede's account of the early Christianization of Britain. A similar confusion came from the misinterpretation of another early document: Clement of Alexandria, one of the Fathers of the early Church who lived during the same time as Lucius Abgar VIII, wrote that "Thaddaeus and Thomas were buried in Britium Edessenorum" by which he meant "in the Birtha of the Edessenes." The Daisan River flows around the city of Edessa, and at times it became a raging torrent. In 201 it spilled over the walls and devastated the king's palace. Many people died in the flood and the king rebuilt his palace on high ground, hence the Syriac word "Birtha" being used to describe it. That word was transliterated into Latin as "Britium" and misinterpreted as meaning "Britain."

The *Doctrine of Addai* further states that this earlier Abgar sent agents on a mission to the Roman governor at Eleutheropolis in Israel. However, this can only have come from Lucius Abgar's time, since it was only about AD 200 that the Roman emperor Lucius Septimius Severus renamed the town of Beth Gubrin as Eleutheropolis, to celebrate his granting of municipal status to its people.

Thus the stories of the 1st century King Abgar V in the *Acts of Thaddeus*, the *Doctrine of Addai*, and other writings are clearly hagiographic and are often characterized as legend. J.B. Segal, perhaps the most prominent historian of Edessa, referred to them as, "One of the most successful pious frauds of antiquity" but also added "Nor, indeed, should we reject as wholly apocryphal the account of the conversion of King Abgar to Christianity; the legend may well have a substratum of fact" (Segal, 1970). So a more reasonable version of the story is that either Thomas (the doubting disciple of Jesus in John 20:24-29) or Thaddeus (one of the seventy disciples of Christ), brought the shroud bearing Christ's image to Edessa sometime after the resurrection and during the period of Christian persecution, perhaps around AD 38. Joseph of Arimathea was reputed to have connections in Edessa and may therefore have given the cloth to Thomas or Thaddeus who then performed a miraculous healing of Abgar in the same vein of the healings done by Christ. Abgar then sought to Christianize Edessa and had the Keramion made and placed over the city gate. There is little doubt about the early presence of Christianity in Edesssa as well as a cloth showing the face of Christ, which at that time was referred to as the Mandylion (Barnard, 1968; Philip, 1998).

Aside from the documents mentioned above, there are other early references to the Shroud. The 2nd century apocryphal *Gospel According to the Hebrews*, somewhat respected by early Christian writers, indicated that Jesus gave his shroud to "the servant of the priest," or as some scholars suggest, "to Peter." Other apocryphal books from the same time period such as *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, the

Gospel According to Peter, and *Mysteries of the Acts of the Savior* all mention the Shroud and its whereabouts (Long, 2013).

However, some believe that the Shroud was instead brought first to the city Antioch (Markwardt, 1999). This ancient city is now a pile of ruins near Antakya in Turkey, but at the time of Christ, Antioch was the third-most important city of the Roman Empire, and it was the location mentioned in the Bible as the primary destination of Christian Jews fleeing from the persecution in Jerusalem (e.g., Acts 11:19-30 – Edessa is not mentioned in the Bible). For example, Nicolas of Antioch was one of the first deacons appointed by the Jerusalem church; after Stephen was stoned to death around AD 37 (Acts 6:8 – 8:3) and the intense persecution of Christians by the Jewish establishment in Jerusalem began, Nicolas and others moved to Antioch. By the middle of the 1st century, there were two distinct Christian churches there – one primarily for Jews and the other for gentiles. The city also sponsored the great missionary efforts of Paul and Barnabas. The Apostle Peter also lived in Antioch for a while before traveling to Rome, and he may have been the city's first Bishop. St. Nino, the woman who visited Jerusalem from Antioch in the 4th century, wrote that the burial cloth of Jesus was preserved by Pilate's wife, given to St. Luke, and then given to the Apostle Peter (Markwardt, 1999). However, that cloth may have been the "napkin" that covered the head of Christ, and which later became known as the Sudarium of Oviedo as mentioned above. Unlike Edessa which became hostile to Christians after 57, Antioch long continued as a center for Christianity and therefore would be the most logical place for the relics of Christ to be kept. Christians also suffered there later during the long periods of Roman persecution, so relics such as the Shroud would have been hidden, as in the Edessan story. But given the fact that Christians were welcomed in Edessa for some period of time, as well as the stories of Abgar V and the later rediscovery of the Shroud as described below, makes the Antioch hypothesis much less likely (Scavone, 2010).

Historical Evidence of the Shroud from 525 – 944

In 525 the city of Edessa was again flooded by the waters of the Daisan River and many people were killed (an account gives the number of 30,000) (Hamdy & Reinach, 1892, pp. 96, 124). This was the same period when fires and an earthquake destroyed most of the city of Antioch When the walls of Edessa were eventually torn down and rebuilt, the Shroud and the Keramion were re-discovered (Wilson, 1979, pp. 138-139), and to the people of Edessa it was the "lost cloth of legend" (Long, 2013). Then in 544, around twenty years after the flood, a Persian army attacked, perhaps because the city's defenses had not yet been fully restored. Evagrius, the author of *Greek Ecclesiastical History*, written about 595, tells the desperate attempts to stave off the ensuing siege. When the Persian army built a large wooden siege ramp, the Edessans mined under it in an attempt to burn it down but were not successful. According to Evagrius, "So, when they came to complete despair, they brought the divinely created image, which human hands had not made, the one that Christ the God sent to Abgar… Then, when they brought the all-holy image into the channel they had created and sprinkled it with water, they applied some to the pyre and the timbers. And at once… the timbers caught fire." The siege ramp was destroyed, and city saved. According to Evagrius, Edessa was protected by a "divinely wrought portrait" (acheiropoietis) sent by Jesus to Abgar. The cloth was said to be a "holy palladium" with protective properties (Markwardt, 2000). After the Persian invasion had been thwarted, the king of Persia requested that the cloth be used to heal his sick daughter (Drews, 1984, p. 58).

Edessa' main cathedral had also been destroyed in the flood of 525, and a church was built after the attempted Persian invasion to house the Shroud and the Keramion. It was named the "Hagia Sophia" after the famous church that had also been recently built in Constantinople. Like its analog in Constantinople, the Edessan cathedral was said to have been beautiful beyond description, with gold plating, glass, and marble (Segal, 1970, p. 189).

The *Liturgical Tractate*, a 10th century Greek text describes the Edessan rituals and indicates that no images were permitted in the Hagia Sophia cathedral except the Icon (i.e., the Shroud and/or the Keramion). The Shroud was highly revered but kept in great secrecy – folded in eight, stored in a chest in its own sanctuary, and guarded by an abbot (Wilson, 1979, p. 145). However, every Easter it was shown to the public, but in a secretive way. The Tractate states, "Then, on the Sunday before the beginning of Lent, there was held a special procession in which the Image, still enclosed in its chest, was carried through the cathedral accompanied by twelve incense-bearers, twelve torch-bearers, and twelve bearers of flabella or liturgical fans" (Wilson, 2000, p. 222). The chest in which the Shroud was kept was allowed to be opened and the Image seen only by the archbishop. It was equipped with shutters which were opened on rare occasions "then all the assembled throng gazed upon it; and every person besought with prayers its incomprehensible power" (Drews, 1984, p. 38). But this was done at a distance through a grille at the entrance of the sanctuary, making it difficult to see the face very well (Dobschütz, 1899, p. 182). The Tractate further states, "No one was allowed to draw near or touch the

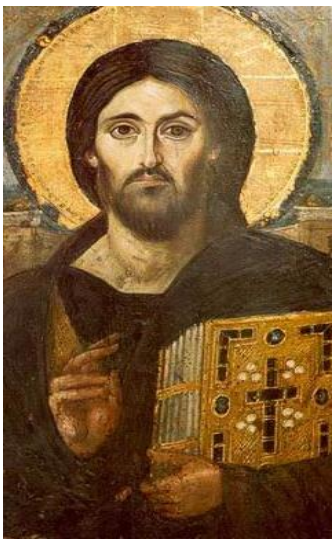
holy likeness with his lips or eyes. The result of this was that divine fear increased their faith, and made the reverence paid to the revered object palpably more fearful and awe-inspiring" (Wilson, 1979, p. 146). During the 1st hour of the ceremony (6 am) Jesus' image was displayed as an infant, at the 3rd hour (9 am) as a child, at the 6th hour (noon) as a youth, and at the ninth hour (3 pm) as the crucified Christ (at that point the shroud image was shown) (Scavone, 2010). Exactly how this display was done is not known, but it prefigures a similar ritual done later in Constantinople, as described below.

In reading the *Tractate*, Historian Robert Drews concluded that details make it apparent that "we are dealing with an object of some size, and not with a small, unframed cloth that the wind could lift and carry" (Drews, 1984, p. 37). Other documentary references include the 1994 translation of Georgian texts found at St. Catherine's Monastery in Egypt which confirmed old Georgian traditions that Assyrian monks evangelized Georgia in the 6th century. Theodosius, one of the monks, was from Edessa where he was "a deacon and monk [in charge] of the Image of Christ," a reference either to the Shroud and/or the Keramion (Wilson, 2010, pp. 135–136). Theodosius and a companion were tasked to paint religious art and are rare examples of known individuals engaging in "icon evangelism" during this era. Additionally, the 6th century *Syriac Acts of Mar Mari the Apostle* (believed to be an early evangelist to the Assyrian region) briefly records the miraculous origins of the Icon (Harrak, 2005). Jesus is said to have made his image on a "sdwn'" (linen cloth) (Drijvers, 1998, pp. 21-26).

Syriac documents and traditions continue to shed light on the Image for the next three centuries. An unpublished mid-7th century letter addressed to Nestorian Christians in Edessa was recently disclosed by Archbishop Gewargis Silwa, head of the Church of the East in Iraq, which called Edessa "a sanctified throne for the Image of his adorable face and his glorified incarnation" (Wilson, 2000, pp. 34-35). The Jacobite Patriarch Dionysius of Tell-Machre (a town near Edessa) in the 8th or 9th century records that he remembered the Image of Edessa being in the hands of the orthodox Christian community going back to the late 6th century. His recollections are similar to those of the *Acts of Mari* and tell of Jesus making his "swrt'" on a "shwshaepha" (piece of cloth or towel) (Drijvers, 1998, pp. 21-26). These accounts are almost identical to the image creation account in the *Acts of Thaddeus*. Dionysius recalled a story told to him by his grandfather of how a clever artist, in the employ of the Edessan Athanasius bar Gumoye, had made a copy "as exactly as possible [of the original] because the painter had dulled the paints of the portrait so they would appear old" (Segal, 1970, pp. 213-214). His testimony of having to "dull the paints" suggests the faint negative image of the Shroud face. Other early 8th century texts make it clear that the Edessan Image was a continuing and important religious object. The Church where it was kept was referred to as "The House of the Icon of the Lord" in manuscript BL Oriental 8606 dated to 723 (Drijvers, 1998, p. 28). Another was an unpublished 8th text known to scholar Hans Drijvers recording a dispute between a Christian monk and an Arab wherein the latter admits he has heard of the image made by Christ and sent to King Abgar (Drijvers, 1998, p. 27). In 730, St. John Damascene, in his anti-iconoclastic movement thesis, *On Holy Images*, describes the Shroud as a *himation*, which is translated as an oblong cloth or grave cloth (perhaps the

first documentary reference to it being a burial shroud) (Dreisbach, 1995). Pope Stephen II (752 – 757) who probably knew of the King Abgar story, described the Shroud as follows: "Christ spread out his entire body on a linen cloth that was white as snow. On this cloth, marvelous as it is to see… the glorious image of the Lord's face, and the length of his entire and most noble body, has been divinely transferred" (Dreisbach, 1995). Thus, there is a wealth of documentary references to the Shroud being in Edessa in the 6th century and following.

It is well known that in the first few centuries Christian art depicted Jesus in a variety of ways, but most frequently as beardless, in the style of a Greek or Roman man. However, this changed in the 6th century to a more Semitic appearance (beard, moustache, shoulder length hair parted in the middle, and usually front facing) that was then passed down through the centuries to us today. The model for these are probably the facial image from the Keramion which was in turn based on the Shroud. Some of the earliest of this new type are mosaics in Ravenna, Italy (Wilson, 1979, p. 102) made by Byzantine artists, and date to the 540's. Ian Wilson noted that conventional academia had no accepted explanation for this change other than "the Byzantine tendency at this period to create rigid artistic formulae that then became the pattern for future generations," (Wilson, 1979, p. 103) but where did this "rigid artistic formulae" come from? In the 1930's the French researcher Paul Vignon observed twenty or so facial peculiarities, subsequently called "Vignon markings," in many representations of Christ from the 6th century and following. In his opinion, the earliest was found on copies of a mysterious eastern icon, the "Image of Edessa" (Walsh, 1963, pp. 157-158). These appeared to have little or no artistic function, but nevertheless corresponded to markings on the Keramion and the Shroud, suggesting that it may have been a model for this new version of Jesus' face. Wilson subsequently recast the markings of Vignon into fifteen characteristics including an open top square on the forehead, one or two "V" shaped markings near the bridge of the nose, a raised eyebrow, accentuated cheeks, an enlarged nostril, hairless area between lips and beard, and large eyes. No picture included all these characteristics, but some contained many of them. Wilson also noticed that a few of them, especially from the forehead, were to be seen on pictures of other saints, probably placed there as a sign of holiness (Wilson, 1979, pp. 104-105). Other significant artworks noted by Wilson include the mosaic in St. John Lateran and a painted panel in the Sancta Sanctorum Chapel of the Lateran Place, which were called *acheiropoietos,* indicating that the model was an image "not made by hands" (Wilson, 1979, pp. 142-143). Some researchers have expressed reservations, noting that non-Christian pictures sometimes have similar markings, but they are so frequently used for the face of Jesus that a Shroud-related model is likely to have been employed.



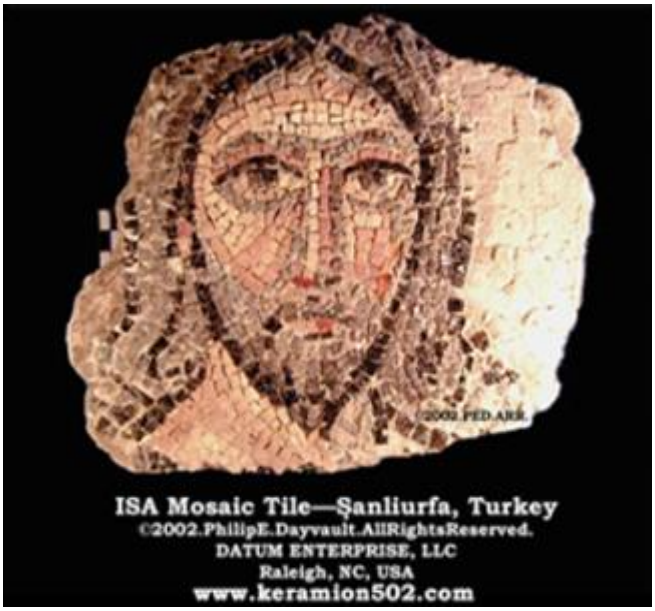
Icon of Christ Pantocrator from St. Catherine's Monastery
From: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_Pantocrator_(Sinai)

A good example of the "true likeness" of Jesus is the 6th century Christ Pantocrator from St. Catherine's Monastery shown above. The Pantocrator or "Christ Enthroned" and sitting in majesty as ruler of the world, was a significant artistic type and a preferred means of depicting him in that era. Dr. Alan Whanger and his wife Mary developed a technique for overlaying and comparing pictures, and then counting the points of congruence (Whanger, 1985). When applying an overlay of the face from the Shroud onto the St. Catherine's Pantocrator the Whangers counted 170 points of congruence (they note that 45 to 60 points are sufficient to prove common identity in a court of law) (M. Whanger & A. Whanger, 1998, pp. 19-20). This is also true of many other pictures, icons, and images on coins dated from the 6th century onwards (Wilson & Miller, 1986, pp. 26-27). They noted that Christ's face on one 7th century coin from Constantinople (the Justinian II tremissis) is particularly significant as it was not "naturalized" as other coin images to show what a living Jesus would actually look like. A comparison with the Shroud face strongly suggests that the designer was more concerned with reproducing the image from the Shroud (the Whangers counted 188 points of congruence between the two) (M. Whanger & A. Whanger, 1998, pp. 33-34). In 1979 the sindonologist Gilbert Lavoie visited retiring Harvard University Dr. Ernst Kitzinger, one of the giants in Byzantine art history, who made this surprising admission: "The Shroud of Turin is unique in art. It doesn't fall into any artistic category. For us, a very small group of experts around the world, we believe the Shroud of Turin is the Shroud of Constantinople. You know that the crusaders took many treasures back to Europe during the 13th century, we believe that the shroud was one of them" (Lavoie, 2000, pp. 73-74).

In contrast to contemporary artists to whom individual expression is all-important, ancient iconographers typically sought to empty themselves of all individualism so that they could create an accurate copy of the model they were using. After prayer and fasting, they would attempt to capture the essence of subject of their work without adding any personal interpretation, as the original was considered to be holy. Thus all of the details of the model would be replicated as accurately as

possible, which is why the face on the Shroud and the Keramion were duplicated in such exactitude (Dayvault, 2016, p. 143).

In 2002 Philip Dayvault traveled to Şanliurfa in Turkey, the city formerly known as Edessa, to research ancient oil lamps. He was able to gain approval to do research in the basement archives of the main archaeological museum in Şanliurfa, and there he found what is believed to the actual Keramion – the mosaic tile created between AD 30 and 50 and placed over a city gate in Edessa (Dayvault, 2016, pp. 124-134). The mosaic is the face of Christ so it is known as the "ISA Tile" (Jesus is "Isa" in Arabic) with a limestone backing as if it had been mounted on a rock facing and then hacked off (Dayvault, 2016, p. 161). The tile was made in the style of an "emblema" which is a picture done in mosaic and was frequently used in ancient times for decorating walls or pavements. It was created with small colored tesserae aligned in curving patterns resembling worms, therefore this type of mosaic is known as *opus vermiculatum*. After such mosaics are finished and dried, they are applied to a stone backing with an adhesive.



The mosaic tile from Edessa believed to be the Keramion. Dayvault thinks that it originally had "nimbus" elements over the head of Christ representing his divinity which were broken off by Muslims (they are not allowed to keep representations of Christ, so images of Jesus are often identified as being the Biblical Nimrod) (Dayvault, 2016, p. 179). It was sold to the museum in 1972 by an unknown party, and therefore had probably been kept in the Edessa area throughout its history (Dayvault, 2016, pp. 138-139).

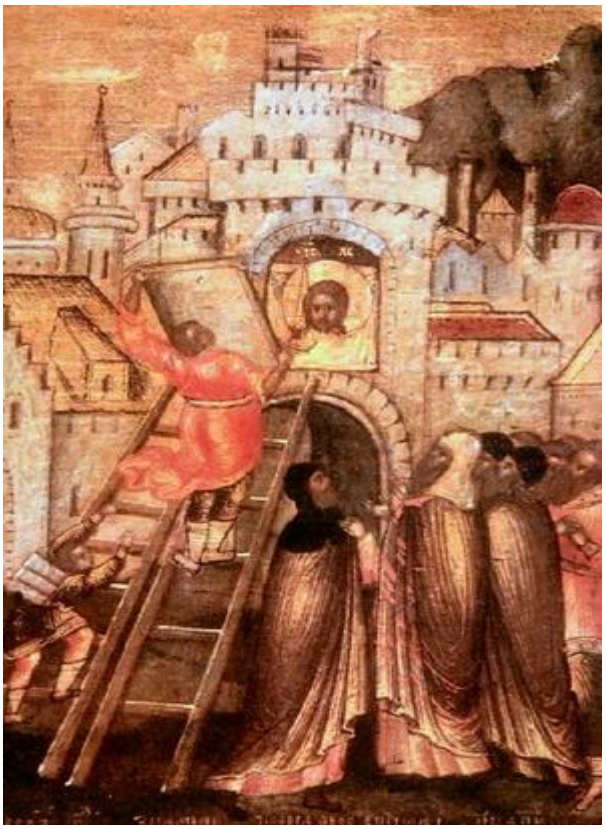
Still standing outside Şanliurfa are sections of the walls and the western gate of ancient Edessa – the gate through which Thaddeus was reputed to have entered the city and over which the Keramion had been placed by King Abgar V. Dayvault found a cave near the top of the wall where the Shroud and the Keramion were said to have been hidden from AD 57 to 525. Within the cave were places where these objects could have been placed (Dayvault, 2016, pp. 220-241). Over the gate was an area of missing stone from which the Keramion could have been removed (Dayvault, 2016, pp. 281-292), but the cave has since been closed off to visitors by Moslem authorities (Dayvault, 2016, p. 269). Dayvault also did extensive comparisons of the ISA tile face to the Shroud as well as to ancient icons and art works described above (Dayvault, 2016, pp. 164-219) and indicated, "Subsequent research determined forensically that the ISA Tile had served as the model for numerous ancient, classical

depictions of Jesus Christ" (Dayvault, 2016, p. 136). Thus the Keramion was probably the model used by artists in both Edessa and Constantinople in the production of sacred art.

A 10th century a painting showing Thaddeus presenting the Shroud which displays the face of Christ, and King Abgar V holding it (Huntsidway, 2014).

The face of Christ from the Keramion and therefore from the Shroud thus became the de facto model for Christian art after 544. Ian Wilson theorized that some unknown artist studied the face on the Shroud (or more likely the Keramion), made model drawings including the peculiarities noted by Vignon, and then sent copies to others who were engaged in creating religious art (Wilson, 1979, p. 105). The art historian O.M. Dalton noted, "It was the Aramaeans [Syrians] who counted for most in the development of Christian art" including "the cities of Edessa and Nisibis, where monastic theology flourished" (Dalton, 1925). He also stated, "The East had always one advantage over its rival [Hellenistic West]... it was the home of monasticism, the great missionary force in Christendom... Monks trained in the Aramaean theological schools of Edessa and Nisibis flocked to the religious houses so soon founded in numbers in Palestine. From the 5th century it was they who determined Christian iconography" (Dalton, 1925, p. 9).

Thus the cloth known then as the Holy Image of Edessa is a documented certainty no later than the 6th century. But it was almost always kept folded with only the face visible as well as being hidden, and the secrecy and mystery involved in handling the Shroud is of great importance in understanding its history – why its identification as the Shroud of Turin has been difficult, and also why this object later fired the imagination of many.



"Discovery of the Manylion" A painting done in 1678 by Fedor Zubov and now in the Moscow Kremlin Museum. It depicts the discovery of the Shroud and the Keramion in Edessa.

From: Akathist to our Sweetest Lord Jesus Christ,
https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/Akathist%20to%20the%20Holy%20Mandylion.pdf

In 2009 the board of the Central Bank of Armenia adopted a new design for their AMD 100,000 Dram bank note. The obverse depicts King Abgar V pointing to a flag bearing a portrait of Christ, and the reverse shows the disciple Thaddeus presenting the Shroud to King Abgar and his family. The latter was taken from a 1580's painting by the Dutch painter Matthijs Bril (Dayvault, 2016, pp. 249-251).
From:
https://www.banknoteworld.com/armenia-100-000-dram-banknote-2009-p-54-unc.html

Historical Evidence of the Shroud from 944 – 1204

The emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman empire from Rome to the city of Istanbul in AD 330, renaming it Constantinople after himself. The Roman empire collapsed in the latter part of the 5th century, but Constantinople retained its greatness. In the Middle Ages it was surrounded with high walls, located on the "Golden Horn," and was like a remote and impregnable fairy-tale palace. As a center of art, culture, and commerce it was unrivaled, having preserved the knowledge and experience of the old Roman Empire. Trade poured into it from all quarters, and its palaces, churches, and shrines were the envy of the world. Vikings from Scandinavia who eventually became known as the "Rus" and the founders of Russia called the city "Mikligard" (the great city), and they grew rich from their trading voyages from Novgorad, down the Dnieper River, to the Black Sea, and then on to Constantinople. What is considered to be the first Russian state was established in Kiev on the Dnieper near the end of the 10th century, which is now the capital city of Ukraine.

Constantinople retained its prominence as one of the major cities of the world for many years. It was also the capital of Byzantium and the seat of the Greek Orthodox Church until it was conquered by the Muslims centuries later in 1453. Moslem forces did take Edessa in 639 and then advanced on Constantinople. But their attack failed, and the city was eventually able to recover. Then the iconoclastic ("image breaking") controversy of the 8th and 9th centuries took place by those who took the 2nd commandment very literally, and much of the empire's religious art was destroyed.[20] Finally, supporters of iconography, led by the imperial family, triumphed in 843 and pictures of Christ and the saints reappeared. So in 943 in order to celebrate 100 years of the "Triumph of Orthodoxy" the then Byzantine emperor, Romanus Lacapenus, sent an army to Edessa to recover the famous Image from the Moslem infidels. The Muslims in Edessa were ill-prepared for an attack, but the general of the Byzantine army offered the city's Muslim Emir the promise of immunity from further attack, a sum of money, and the freeing of 200 Moslem captives and for just one thing – the "Mandylion cloth" which was provided. Even so, the Christian population of the city resisted, and a crowd followed the withdrawing Byzantines in protest (Wilson, 1979, pp. 147-150). When Moslem Turkish forces destroyed the Christian civilization in Edessa 200 years later in 1146, they apparently searched for the Shroud and the Keramion. "For a whole year they [the Turkish looters] went about the town digging, searching secret places, foundations, and roofs" (Wilson, 1979, p. 151).

The Shroud was brought Constantinople on 15 August 944 for the purpose of "obtaining a new and powerful force of divine protection" (Markwardt, 1999). The Shroud was first brought to the Church of St. Mary Blachernae in the city's northwest corner. After celebrating the Mass for the Assumption of the Virgin, a small group of clergy and nobility saw the Shroud, and this event was recorded by a painted miniature, the first of many done over the next 200 years. The 10th century writer Symenon Magister reported that the emperor's two ruffian sons, who were in attendance, "could see nothing but

[20] "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them." (Exodus 20:4-5)

a [faint] face" but their brother-in-law and future emperor Constantine VII (an artist himself), could discern various facial features (Scavone, 1989, p. 86). The following day it was officially welcomed, in the words of a contemporary history, "high psalmody, hymns... and boundless light from torches" among "a procession of the whole people… It is impossible to describe in words all the weeping for joy and the intercession, prayers, and thanksgivings to God from the whole city as the divine image... passed through the midst of the city" (Wilson, 1979, p. 152). The Shroud's arrival was thus celebrated with processions, and it was placed in the Pharos Chapel, the imperial treasury for relics located in the palace of the emperor. There is a surviving eyewitness account of that day – the *Narratio de Imagine Edessena*. Gregory Referendarius, archdeacon of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, was a member of the clerical committee that arranged for the reception of the Shroud, and in a sermon dated 16 August 944, he mentioned that it was a full-length image of Christ and carried his bloodstains. He even noted the piercing of Christ's side (Guscin, 2004).

The date of the Shroud's procession into Constantinople (August 16th) became a feast day and was added to the Orthodox calendar. For the first anniversary a detailed history of the Shroud was written, possibly by the new emperor, Constantine VII. This history was called the "Story of the Image of Edessa" and is the first lengthy description of its survival for 900+ years, as well as being an eyewitness account of its reception the previous year (Wilson, 1979, pp. 272 –290). Also known as the "Festival Sermon" it claimed to be based upon "painstaking inquiry into the true facts" from historians and Syrian traditions (Wilson, 1979, p. 273). The Story indicates that King Abgar V suffered from arthritis and leprosy and had heard of Jesus and his miracles. So he sent a messenger to invite Christ to live in Edessa and heal him. Jesus declined but promised to send a disciple after he had returned to his Father; he also "washed his face in water, wiped off the moisture that was left on the towel that was given to him, and in some divine and inexpressible manner had his own likeness impressed on it." But the author of the Story also discusses another version – that when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, "sweat dropped from him like drops of blood" (Wilson, 1979, p. 278). Thaddaeus was the disciple sent by Christ and brought the Image to Edessa. Abgar could see "that it did not consist of earthly colors," to which Thaddaeus replied, "the likeness was due to sweat, not pigments." The Story goes on to describe that King Abgar put the cloth on a board decorated with gold, and the city was evangelized by Thaddeus while Abgar lived. But under the kingship of his grandson, Christians were persecuted, and the Image had to be hidden within a gate of the city and was then forgotten. Then in 544 during the siege of the Persian army, a bishop had a vision in which the location was revealed, and the Icon aided in the victory described by Evagrius. Another version of the Festival story indicates that "Bishop Eulalius found the icon, and the tile [i.e., the Keramion] on which the cloth had miraculously copied itself… and Eulalius frustrated the efforts of Chosroes and the Persians, and Edessa was saved" (Drews, 1984, p. 56). Historians generally dismiss the Story's account of the Shroud's history, but it appears to have been a serious attempt by its Byzantine author to understand its unusual nature and describe its mysterious past.

The Keramion had a somewhat different history. It was allegedly ordered to be brought from Hierapolis, a city near Edessa, to Constantinople in 966 or 968 by Emperor Nikephoras II Phokas, in other words, after the Shroud had already been brought there (Dayvault, 2016, p. 159). But a copy of the Keramion may have been brought instead, as the original found by Dayvault as described above, was from the Edessa area. Dr. Alexei Lidov, a professor of art history explains how the Shroud and the Keramion were eventually placed, and the impact this had on Eastern Orthodox church's "cross-in-square" design, "The two images of Christ – the Mandylion and the Keramion… were placed at the apex of the east and west domed arches, exactly opposite each other… The Mandylion-Keramion paradigm is an almost obligatory feature in order to create a sacred space within the church… This unique placement has been replicated in Orthodox churches since at least the 11th or 12th centuries… Nowhere, however, is there to be found an adequate explanation for this unusual juxtaposition of the two most ancient miraculous images of Christ" (Lidov, 2006, pp. 17-18, 24). In regard to placement of the Shroud and Keramion facing each other, Lidov further indicates, "Edessa could serve as such a highly esteemed prototype because it was the only earthly city which formerly received the protection and blessing of Christ himself, expressed to King Abgar. From this point of view, the status of Edessa could be compared to that of Jerusalem" (Lidov, 2006, p. 26).

As described above, the Shroud was kept in a case and folded so that only the face was visible. In addition to the factors mentioned above concerning oriental sensitivity, the authorities in Constantinople had another potential issue: the Abgar story indicated that the cloth contained only an image of Jesus' face. This was apparently solved by either by imprinting a facial image on another small piece of cloth (a Mandylion or handkerchief is also recorded as an independent object in the relic repository) (Wilson, 1978, p. 166), or by using the Keramion (the Edessan mosaic made in the time of King Abgar V) as a shroud representation, i.e., as an icon. Dr. John Jackson, one of the members of the 1978 Shroud of Turin Research Project team (STURP), noted that are a series of fold marks occurring at one-eighth length intervals on the Shroud of Turin, "which argue strongly for the identification of the Shroud as the Mandylion" (Jackson, 1995). The frequent reference to the "Icon of Christ" may therefore refer to the Keramion, which was a mosaic image of the face of Christ based on the Shroud. Painted picture of the Shroud became standard in most eastern churches, and most of the early depictions show Jesus' face in a circular opening of what appears to be an ornate, trellis pattern slipcover or reliquary, similar to how the Shroud was stored (Wilson, 1991, pp. 25 a-d). It first appeared in the lists of relics held at Constantinople in 1093 as "the linens found in the tomb after the resurrection" (Wilson, 2000, p. 272) Louis VII, King of France, visited Constantinople in 1147 and reportedly venerated the Shroud, and other visitors and pilgrims during the 11th and 12th centuries left several reports of the "linen cloth with the Lord's face on it," but noted that the object was kept hidden and available only to the emperor (Wilson, 2000, p. 181). In 1201 it was spoken of by Nicholas Mesarites, the overseer of Constantinople's treasury of relics, who wrote, "in this place the naked Lord rises again, and the burial sindons can prove it" (Wilson, 2000, p. 272) Mesarites'

description is particular compelling because of his indication of the nudity of the Shroud figure, which was never done in artistic renderings of Christ.

The Hungarian Codex, dated around 1143, contains a picture of the Shroud displaying the herringbone weave of the cloth as well as burn marks that can currently be seen on the Shroud (it has survived three known fires). The artist employed in 1143 must therefore have been viewing the same cloth that exists today. 1143 is around two hundred years before the date indicated by the carbon dating process of 1988 (Klotz, 2016).

There were several written testimonies of crusaders who saw the Shroud when they came to Constantinople during the 4th crusade, including the knight Robert de Clari, who noted the following:

> There was a Church which was called My Lady Saint Mary of Blachernae, where there was the shroud [syndoines] in which Our Lord had been wrapped, which every Friday, raised itself upright so that one could see the form of Our Lord on it, and no one either Greek or French, ever knew what became of this shroud [syndoines] when the city was taken (Peter, 2014).

The Shroud was apparently used in a ceremony for private viewing as indicated by de Clari, where it was gradually raised and revealed throughout the day – first the face and finally the entire body (Long, 2013). It thus gained an audience, but it was still considered a sacred object, held in great reverence, and not viewable by the public. Despite its extensive impact, the essence of the Shroud remained elusive. This is reflected in the many terms used to describe it, such as *acheiropoietos* (not made with hands), *mandylion* (handkerchief), *mantile* (towel or tablecloth), *santa toella* (holy towel), *icon* (picture), *imago* (image), *linteum* (linen cloth), *manutergium* (hand towel), *ektypoma* (figure in relief), *tetrádiplon* (four-doubled or folded in eight), *soudarion* (face cloth), *spargana* (swaddling cloth), *panni* (cloth or garment), *fasciae* (bandage or girdle), *othonai* (linen cloth), *sindon* (fine linen cloth), and *syndoines* (burial shroud) (Long, 2013). This confusion was due to several factors:

1. The first story of the Shroud was about King Abgar V and the circumstances of how Christianity was brought to Edessa. The disciple Thaddeus was said to have come there after

the resurrection of Christ and healed Abgar with a cloth that had the facial imprint of Jesus. In this story the Shroud was described as a *mandylion* (handkerchief), but the story was probably written by King Lucius Abgar VIII over 120 years later. This was at a time when the Shroud and the Keramion were still hidden, so the latter Abgar only had the traditions that had been passed down to him.

2. The Shroud was typically folded in eight parts (*sindon tetrádiplon*) with only the face visible, so it would have appeared to people as a towel or handkerchief if they had seen it.

3. In a day long before graphics and photography, paintings and mosaics were the primary artistic mediums of oriental societies. As previously noted, after the rediscovery of the Shroud and the Keramion, artistic representations of Christ immediately changed to the more Semitic Shroud face, but more likely they were based on the Keramion (the Shroud is a faint negative image, and therefore much harder to use as a general model than the Keramion). The latter was therefore probably the model used for the production of religious art in both Edessa and Constantinople. The sacred image of Christ was sometimes described as an "icon" and sometimes as a "burial cloth." This confusion can be resolved by understanding that the two objects were kept together in both the Hagia Sophia of Edessa as well as in the churches and chapels of Constantinople. So references to the Image of Christ as an "Icon" may refer to the Keramion.

Historical Evidence of the Shroud from 1204 – 1355

Jerusalem had been taken from Moslem hands in 1099 by the knights of the 1st Crusade but was retaken by the forces of Saladin in 1187. A 2nd Crusade (1147-49) and then a 3rd (1189-92) had been attempted to recapture Jerusalem but were unsuccessful, so in 1202 a 4th Crusade was organized. But due to a series of unfortunate political events, most of the crusaders never reached the Levant. Transport for the voyage was provided by the Venetians, but they demanded much more than the crusaders could pay. So to compensate Venice the crusaders attacked a Christian town that was a Venetian rival and sacked it. In response, the Pope excommunicated the crusaders, but that information was concealed from the army. As the crusade continued, it was in great need of funding, so the leadership entered into an agreement with the Byzantine prince Alexios Angelos to temporarily divert the army to Constantinople and restore his deposed father Isaac II Angelos to the throne. The intent of the crusaders was then to continue to Jerusalem with the aid promised to them by the Byzantines. On 23 June 1203, the main crusader army reached Constantinople, and several months later Alexios was crowned co-emperor, but in January 1204 he was deposed by a popular uprising and murdered the next month. The Byzantines had long been regarded in the West as duplicitous, so with their patron dead and then being treated as potential enemies, in disgust the crusaders attacked Constantinople and by April 1204, they captured and plundered the city's enormous wealth. Only a handful of the crusaders continued to the Holy Land. According to historian Sir Steven Runciman, "There was never a greater crime against humanity than the Fourth Crusade" (Runciman, 1954, p. 130).

Relics would sometimes be paraded through the city during times of danger or stress. When in 1037 a severe drought threatened the city "Emperor Michael IV personally carried the Image of Edessa in procession to the Church of the Virgin at Blachernae to plead for rain," (Wilson, 2010, pp. 178-179) and the Blachernae Church was apparently a rallying point for the city. In 1204 the Shroud may then again have been brought forth to reassure the frightened population, and thus was captured by the crusaders.

During the sack of Constantinople both the Shroud and the Keramion vanished as indicated in the quote of de Clari above. There is no indication of what happened to the Keramion and it disappeared from history (i.e., the version kept in Constantinople), but regarding the Shroud, Theodore Ducas Anglelos, a crusader legate, wrote a letter to Pope Innocent III in 1205 in which he stated:

> The Venetians partitioned the treasure of gold, silver and ivory, while the French did the same with the relics of saints and the most sacred of all, the linen in which our Lord Jesus Christ was wrapped after His death and before the resurrection (Dreisbach, 1995).

With the Shroud disappearing from Constantinople, tantalizing rumors circulated in Europe of a holy object that contained the blood of Christ, especially because most of the crusaders returned home

rather than continuing the Crusade. Around the year 1211, the English lawyer and chronicler Gervase of Tilbury wrote his monumental *Otia Imperialia*, remarking in one passage:

> The story is passed down from archives of ancient authority that the Lord prostrated himself with his entire body on whitest linen, and so by divine power there was impressed on the linen a most beautiful imprint of not only the face, but the entire body of the Lord.

As indicated above the grail romances were written in France during this general period and became enormously popular, and the mystery surrounding the Shroud made it even more interesting and compelling. The Shroud then disappeared from view for a period of 150 years following the sack of Constantinople which are referred to as the "missing years." There are a number of contradictory theories that have been advanced to explain the Shroud's whereabouts during this period – none of them are conclusive because of the lack of definitive documentary evidence (many church records were later destroyed during the French Revolution of 1789 which was very hostile to religion), but the most compelling theories are as follows:

1. The Knights Templar, one of the most esoteric organizations in history, was associated with the Shroud during this time. The Knights were founded at some point during the period 1113–18 as a group of initially nine men who dedicated themselves to protect pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem in the aftermath of the first crusade. In 1128 they were proclaimed a religious order free from secular authority and answerable only to the Pope. Their rules of life as a monastic military group were written by St. Bernard of Clairvaux[21] and patterned on the same rules used for the Cistercian order of monks. Because of the public's intense interest and devotion to the crusades, many donated land and resources to the Templars and sent their sons for training, with the result that the order became very wealthy and influential. The fact that the Muslims had conquered North Africa, Palestine, Spain, the Balkans, Sicily, Southern Italy, invaded France, and had persecuted Christians on pilgrimage to the Holy Land created a large outpouring of support for the Crusades as a means of avenging those defeats. In 1095 Pope Urban II preached to large crowds in support of the 1st Crusade, and when in 1146 Bernard of Clairvaux preached the 2nd crusade in Vézelay, France an audience of over ten thousand people came to hear him including King Louis VII of France. The anti-Muslim fervor for crusading lasted for 200 years (1095 – 1291), with a total of eight official crusades as well as minor ones The *Reconquista* in Spain to expel the Moslem Moors continued until 1492.

[21] Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153) was the European champion and cheerleader of the Templars. He was one of the most influential men of his time, and his Cistercian order of monks was one of the largest and best funded. However, he operated as a power behind the throne. For example, he was a "pope-maker," heavily involved in promoting the election of Innocent II in 1130, and then selecting the following pope, Eugenius III. The latter was Bernard's ex-disciple and was said to be a mild man of simple character and a lackey of Bernard who made the decisions was the actual pope. Bernard was the main proponent and cheerleader for the 2nd Crusade, and when in 1150 it failed in disaster both men were blamed. Bernard tried to disassociate himself by claiming that the fiasco was caused by the sins of the crusaders, but both Bernard and the pope died shortly afterward in the same year.

A warrior of the Knights Templar.
From: www.eternalma.com

It has been alleged that the Knights Templar were, at some point in their history, the keepers of the Shroud and/or the Holy Grail, and given the above evidence, that may very well have been the case. Ian Wilson, the most prolific of all Shroud researchers, believed that no text is authoritative of those that profess to document the Shroud during the missing years (Wilson, 2010, p. 198). He concluded that due to the length of time, a group rather than an individual must have been responsible, and that they must have been wealthy with no need to sell or reveal the relic.

By the time of the crusader conquest of Constantinople the Templars had grown large and wealthy (as well as secretive and arrogant) by providing very dependable banking services and investing in numerous other profitable enterprises. The only form of currency at the time was gold and silver, either in bar or coin form, and travel in those times was hazardous with brigands and highway robbers a common problem. Smaller groups were thus hesitant to take sums of money with them. The Templars had preceptories (fortified storehouses) in various locations in Europe and the Levant and were the first group in history to provide long-distance banking services, which became a model for later organizations such as the Hanseatic League. For someone who wished to travel, for example, between Paris and Rome, the individual would give gold to the Templars in Paris and receive an elaborate signed receipt. Upon reaching Rome they would surrender the receipt and get back their gold, less a fee. The Templars were thus unwittingly the inventors of paper money, as the receipts eventually became a convenient form of currency. They also had a reputation for scrupulous financial honesty, and harshly treated any member for theft or embezzlement.[22] Wilson observes "the Order was able to act as guardians, traders and pawnbrokers for the flourishing trade in relics, genuine and false alike, that ensued after the Fourth Crusade." he also noted that some Templars conducted secret, late night mystery rituals

[22] In a case where several Templars murdered Christian merchants, they were sentenced to be brutally whipped through various regions of the middle east before being incarcerated in a castle where they later died. See, for example, Bevan, R. (2020). Holy Money: How the Knights Templar got so rich. https://www.history.co.uk/shows/knightfall/articles/holy-money-how-the-knights-templars-got-so-rich

venerating "a certain bearded head, which they adored, kissed and called their Saviour" which may have been the Shroud, even though the rank and file may not have been fully aware (the Templars were spread over a wide geographical area) (Wilson, 2010, p. 198). Among the accusations brought against various Knights during their later trial was that they worshiped the head or face of a man, which was called "baphomet." One of these paintings on a wooden panel still exists in Templecombe, a Templar preceptory in Somerset England, and bears a striking resemblance to the face on the Shroud, although the picture may not have originated from the Templars (Ritchie, 2000).

The Templar's growing wealth, their arrogance, and their penchant for secrecy eventually created powerful enemies, as they operated outside the bounds of the existing political entities of their day. By the 1300s Templars operated many businesses and owned huge estates in France, all of which were free from royal taxation. The French King Philip IV le Bel who despite his "le Bel" moniker (meaning "the fair or beautiful") was a cruel and avaricious man. The French crown had borrowed heavily from the Templars to finance various military conflicts and Philip wanted to avoid repayment. Also at the beginning of the 14th century, Pope Clement V, fearing attack, moved the papal court from Rome to Avignon in France, beginning the period known as the "Babylonian Captivity" of the Papacy. Clement V was essentially a pawn of the French king, so in 1307 Philip forced him to revoke the papal charter of the Knights Templar and officially disband them. The king then repudiated his debt to them, confiscated all of the Templar assets he could lay his hands on, and had all of the Knights in France arrested and put on trial.[23] Seven years later in 1314, the king had Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master of the order, and Geoffrey de Charny, the Preceptor of Normandy, burned at the stake.[24] There is a story that de Molay cursed both the king and the pope from the flames; both of them died later the same year. Meanwhile, the Templars scattered and some of them fled to Scotland where they reputedly assisted Robert the Bruce in his struggle against the English. Other Templars crossed the Alps into what is now the country of Switzerland, and it is said that they founded the Swiss banking industry with its penchant for financial secrecy, as well as providing military expertise (Butler & Dafoe, 1998). But the story of the Templars coming to either Scotland or America in boats laden with treasure is a myth. As is the case with contemporary banks, most of their resources were illiquid in the form of real estate, loans, and businesses, so stories about their hidden wealth such as the 2004 movie *National Treasure* are interesting but also mythical.

[23] The pope still wanted to hear Molay's side of the story and when questioned by papal legates, Molay retracted his earlier confessions made under torture. A power struggle ensued between the king and the pope, which was settled in August 1308 when they agreed to split the convictions. In 2001, a document was discovered in the Vatican Secret Archives which confirms that in 1308 Pope Clement V absolved Jacques de Molay and Geoffrey de Charney. Nevertheless, the king had them executed.

[24] This took place on the Ile des Javiaux, an island in the Seine River. The island can now be reached from a stairway descending to it from the Pont-Neuf bridge (it is a launch point for boat tours of the Seine). There is plaque on one of the bridge abutments marking the site of Jacques de Molay's execution.

In 1355, a second Geoffrey de Charny, the nephew[25] of the de Charny who was burned at the stake with Jacque de Molay in 1314, was revealed as the first documented owner of the Shroud. De Charny and both his wives, as discussed below, were descendants of the crusader forces which looted Constantinople and/or participated in its later administration. There are no known documents describing how de Charny received the Shroud, but he built a chapel in Lirey, France to house it and made it available for public viewing. Like his uncle, he was probably a member of the Knights Templar, and therefore the Shroud may have been a family heirloom taken from Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade by an ancestor of his family and kept throughout this period at one of the Templar preceptories.

After the events of 1307–14 when the order in France was destroyed, the remaining Templars continued in far greater secrecy. The Shroud could have been in the possession of the de Charny family or close relatives during the entire period. The latter Geoffrey de Charny was a man of honor and great influence in France – a counselor to King Philip VI and his son, King John II. De Charny was captured by the English after the Battle of Calais in 1349 and ransomed by King John II in 1351. However unlikely, some have suggested that he had the Shroud with him while he was a prisoner and that he hid it in the Templecombe preceptory mentioned above during the period of his captivity. It was also suggested that the wooden panel on which the painting was made was originally the cover of a box in which the Shroud was transported.

In 1350 during the period of the Black Death which killed a large percentage of the population of France, John II, "the Good" became king. He attempted to establish a new Templar-like organization called the "Order of the Star" devoted to the same chivalric ideals. Geoffrey was among 500 knights from across France called to join, and apparently was one of its main leaders. It has been speculated that Geoffrey may have sought to revive the Templars with plans to use the Shroud to rally influential knights (Wilson, 1979, p. 198). Several years later, de Charny was back in combat for his king, and he was given the highest honor of carrying the Oriflamme, the banner of the king, into battle. He was killed at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356, shielding King John II from the attack of the English, and when he fell, the Oriflamme was still in his hands (Viardi, 1899; Vidier, 1910). Many other French knights died with Geoffrey, spelling the doom of the Order of the Star as well as the end of 1300 years of quasi-secret Shroud possession. The cloth's owners then decided to share it with the wider Christian public.

2. According to Greek documents (Crispino, 1982), the Shroud could have been kept in Constantinople for some period of time and later passed on to French King Louis IX ("Saint Louis"). After de Charny's chapel was rebuilt in the 16th century, a manuscript was composed testifying that: "The members of the [Lirey] chapter assert that Geoffroy I, after his liberation

[25] The records of the Templars disappeared after the downfall of their order, but it is almost certain that the earlier Geoffrey de Charny was an uncle or great uncle of the later one. Wilson, I. (2010). *The Shroud*. London: Bantam Press, p. 209

from the English, received the Shroud at Amiens from Philip VI." A tablet placed in the church added, "Geoffroy, knight, Count of Charny and lord of this place Lirey... received from King Philip as recompense for his valor, the Holy Shroud of Our Lord... to be placed in the church which he hoped to build" (Scavone, 1993, pp. 208-209). Scholars have challenged these assertions, but it is known that after the events of 1204, Baudouin II de Courtenay, the third emperor of Constantinople, was desperate for cash to pay his army (a perennial problem for medieval rulers). In the years between 1237 and 1247 he obtained loans from the Venetians and his cousin, King Louis IX of France, and in return, gave up many relics which were delivered to Louis' new Sainte-Chapelle church in Paris. These reportedly included a *sanctam toellam tabule insertam*, a "holy towel inserted in a frame" (Crispino, 1985). In giving the Shroud to de Charny, King Phillip may have provided what he thought was only an odd, faint painting of Jesus' face. If so, then the Shroud was a de Charney family secret which could explain their documentary silence. Perhaps after they discovered that they had Christendom's greatest relic, they would rather the king not learn the astonishing truth and demand its return. For the next one hundred years they and Geoffrey's granddaughter, Maguerite, kept the details secret (Crispino, 1988).

3. The Shroud could have been taken by family members of Jeanne de Toucy, the first wife of Geoffrey de Charny. She was the niece of a churchman in the Cathedral of Reims, and some of her family were said to be friendly with the emperor in Constantinople. She died around 1350, and in 1352-53 Geoffrey de Charny married Jeanne de Vergy.

4. The group who took possession of the Shroud may have been the Cathars, or possibly Cathar members of the Knights Templar, who were a Gnostic sect from the French Languedoc. The Cathars had given large tracts of land to the Knights Templar, and a number of Knights had taken up the Cathar religion or became sympathetic to them, which perhaps contributed to the Templar downfall in 1307 (the Cathars were the main target of the Albigensian Crusade of 1209 – 1229). There were also Gnostic religious groups related to the Cathars in Constantinople at the time of the 4th Crusade in addition to any Templars with Cathar leanings. The Cathars did not believe in the literal person of Christ, and therefore were opposed to relics and would not have displayed an artifact depicting Christ's humanity and death. Nevertheless, like the Edessans and the Byzantines before them, the Cathars could have taken the Shroud from Constantinople as a palladium – a means of protection. Protection was necessary because in 1198, Innocent III became pope. He was a fanatical opponent of all groups considered to be heretical and did not hesitate to use military means to enforce his will (he was also the pope who initiated the 4th Crusade). After unsuccessful attempts to convert the Cathars, he launched the Albigensian Crusade against them in 1209 in order to eradicate them. Part of the rationale for the destruction of Constantinople had been to "rescue the relics of Christ from the Greeks," and if the Shroud, the most important relic of all, was thought to be in Cathar hands, it would have been one more reason to assail them.

   There is an account of Amaury de Montfort, the Catholic leader of Albigensian Crusade, declining

a Cathar invitation to come and see the body of Christ "which had become flesh and blood in the hands of the priest." Over the next several decades the Cathars were repeatedly attacked and driven back, and in 1243–44 the Cathar leadership made a last stand at their mountaintop fortress of Montsegur in the Pyrenees. Throughout the Albigensian Crusade, the fortress of Montsegur was rumored to contain a mystical Cathar treasure that exceeded all material wealth, and which gave the fortress supernatural protection. On 16 March 1244, just preceding the final storming of the fortress by Catholic forces, it was rumored that several Cathar men escaped during the night by descending the steep and sheer western face of Montsegur by rope. According to tradition, they took with them unspecified Cathar treasures which may have included the Shroud. In the story of *Parzival*, which was written in the period 1205–16, Wolfram von Eschenbach indicates that the Holy Grail was kept in a mountain fortress in the Pyrenees, and in another poem he named the Lord of the Grail Castle as "Perilla." At that time, Raymond de Perella was the Lord of Montsegur. The Cathar escapees from Montsegur supposedly carried their treasure to a valley in the Sabarthes region of the Pyrenees south of Montsegur. If this story is true, the Shroud was kept there for the next 100 years by persecuted Cathars who were systematically hunted down and either killed or forced to recant by the Inquisition. Then in 1347 the Black Death swept across Europe. In some communities of southern France, over ninety percent of the people perished, and the Languedoc, already suffering from famine and war, was devastated. Aside from isolated individuals and those who had fled to Spain, the Cathars were essentially wiped out. The Shroud was perhaps discovered among the confiscated and forfeited personal goods of a Languedoc heretical family, and Geoffrey de Charny, who had some degree of authority in that area of France, may have acquired legal title to the relic by right of royal grant.

Among the Cathars, title to the Shroud could not have legally passed from one generation to another, because according to the law of that time, heretics, their sympathizers, and their descendants were prohibited from making a will or receiving a legacy. In addition, all personal property of heretics and their descendants was subject to confiscation and forfeiture to the crown. There are records in Paris that in the spring of 1349, de Charny's royal annuity was modified to include forfeitures that might occur in the Languedoc regions of Toulouse, Beaucaire, and Carcassonne, which were all cities in the Languedoc with Cathar leanings. The Cathar hypothesis would also help to explain de Charny's silence on how the Shroud had come into his possession.

Regardless of his method of obtaining the Shroud – either by inheritance or by forfeiture from a Cathar family – he would have had to obtain papal permission to display it as the Shroud of Christ. There is a letter from de Charny to pope Clement VI in which de Charny reports his intentions to build a church at Lirey to honor the Holy Trinity, who answered his prayers for a miraculous escape in 1352 while he was a prisoner of the English, but there is no record of de Charny obtaining papal permission to display the Shroud at the church. If the Shroud had been in Cathar hands, however, the possible reasons for papal silence are compelling: once it was understood that the Shroud may have come from a Languedoc forfeiture, it would have been clear

that the Cathars and their descendants had been the Shroud's keepers since the sack of Constantinople. Disclosure of this information would embarrass the Catholic Church, raise questions about the motives for the Albigensian Crusade, create sympathy for the Cathars for preserving Christianity's most precious relic, interfere with the Church's ongoing prosecution of heresy, and possibly expose the Shroud to attack as a forgery or idol of heretics. In addition, had it become known that the cloth was only recently discovered among the personal effects of Black Plague victims, it may have aroused fear of contamination and a call for its destruction.

Finally, disclosing the Shroud's history could have generated a demand from the Byzantine Emperor or the Eastern Orthodox Church that it be returned to Constantinople. The pope may therefore have required the perpetual silence of the de Charny family in return for allowing the Shroud to be publicly displayed, as he did later in the case of Bishop D'Arcis, as discussed below (Markwardt, 1997, 2000).

It should also be noted that the "Cathar explanation," although completely lacking in any historical documentation, provides the basis for much of the current fame of the Cathars. In the 20th century interest in the Cathar religion was revived by Otto Rahn, the German homosexual mystic and Obersturmführer in the Nazi SS, who wrote two Grail novels that were best sellers in Germany (*Kreuzzug gegen den Gral* – "Crusade Against the Grail" in 1933 and *Luzifers Hofgesinf* – "Lucifer's Court" in 1937). Rahn spent many years researching the Cathars and was convinced that von Eschenbach's *Parzival* was based on the Holy Grail and was an object that had been kept at Montsegur. Rahn was responsible for developing and popularizing the story of the three Cathar men who supposedly escaped from Montsegur prior to its fall in 1244 and carrying with them the unspecified treasures of the Cathars. Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS and Rahn's boss, was fascinated by the occult, and became very interested in Rahn's work. He apparently informed Hitler, who also became interested in the Grail as a divine source of power. Hitler created Nazi Ahnenerbe SS as a research institute to investigate Montsegur and the Grail. Rahn at first was a darling of Himmler, but apparently had a falling out with the German command – he resigned from the SS in 1939. Later in the same year, under mysterious circumstances, Rahn's body was found frozen to death in the Tyrolian Alps, and his death was officially ruled a suicide. His life and work was supposedly one of the inspirations of the highly popular 1981 movie *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

5. Despite the intriguing nature of the above possibilities, there is very little documentary evidence for them. As stated by professor and Shroud researcher Daniel Scavone, "Historiography proceeds by documents." He notes that documents suggesting a shroud remained among the Constantinople relics after 1204 are better understood that none was found, no shroud was documented as leaving the city for Louis IX's Sainte-Chapelle, no inventory ever placed it there, the Knights Templars made no claim to having the shroud of Christ, and none claimed that their idol was a shroud or even on cloth (Scavone, 2008). Therefore, the possibility with the most documentary evidence,

but which is also contested, was that the Shroud was given to Othon de la Roche, a knight from the Burgundy region of France. Othon commanded the district of Blachernae in Constantinople where the Shroud was kept, and after the sack of the city, he was said to have been given the Shroud, as well as the duchy of Athens in Greece for his leading role in the crusade (De Cremiers, 1991). Othon then became the Duke of Athens and Sparta and supposedly took the cloth with him to Greece. The above quoted letter from Theodore Angelos to Pope Innocent III indicated that Athens was where the Shroud had been taken. The cloth was seen there according to two eyewitness accounts, by a letter of Theodore of Epirus dated 1 August 1205, and in 1206 by Nicholas of Otranto, abbot of the monastery of Casole (we "saw with our own eyes" Christ's burial linens) (Scavone, 2008).

In 1219 an agent of the Byzantine emperor and ally of Othon went on a mission to Burgundy with a safe conduct pass and an armed guard, and it is possible that he carried the Shroud with him and gave it to Ponce de la Roche, Othon's father. Alternatively, it could have been brought to France by Othon himself when he returned to Burgundy in 1224. His contemporary descendants still live in his castle at Ray-Sur-Saone near Besançon, and among heirlooms of the family is an ornate box that according to family tradition, transported the Shroud from Athens to Besançon as shown below (Piana, 2007).

A box kept by the family of Othon de la Roche at the family residence of Ray-Sur-Saone. It was said to be constructed from pieces of an original box which was used to transport the Shroud to Besançon.
From: https://biblearchaeology.org/the-shroud-of-turin-list/2332-the-shroud-of-turins-earlier-history-part-four-to-little-lirey

It was customary for relics to be donated to local churches, and a manuscript known as "MS 826" which was placed in the Besançon archives about 1750, claims that Othon's family passed the Shroud to Bishop Amadeus de Tramelay, the Archbishop of Besançon, to be kept at St Stephen's Cathedral (also known as the Cathedral of St. Etienne) in Besançon (Scavone, 1989, p. 98). Amadeus was possibly an ex-member of the Knights Templar, as he was related to Bernard de Tramelay, the fourth Grand Master of the Templars. The Shroud was used at the cathedral in Easter and Ascension rituals from the 1200s through the mid-1300s (Scavone, 1993, pp. 194-195), but in 1349 a fire burned down the cathedral and destroyed the church records. However, before

the cathedral went up in flames, the Shroud was removed.

Othon's granddaughter, Elizabeth de la Raye, had married into the powerful de Vergy family, and her great-granddaughter, Jeanne de Vergy, married Geoffrey de Charny sometime in 1350-53. Besançon, the leading city of Burgundy, was on the border between what at the time was France and Germany and was therefore a hotbed of politics. Located in the "Franche-Comté" region it was still nominally part of the Holy Roman Empire (i.e., Germany), but a large portion of the population, including the de Vergys, desired a union with France. Some have suggested that Jeanne, using the cathedral fire as cover, may have executed a family ploy to keep the Shroud in French hands (Scavone, 1993, p. 207). After Jeanne's marriage to de Charny, she brought the cloth with her into his family.

Despite the additional documentary evidence for this possibility, the evidence is relatively thin and controversial. Much of this is due to fires but even more so to the destruction of church records by forces of the French Revolution of 1789. For example, there are documents referring to a manuscript in a Spanish library indicating that Jerome Turrita, an Aragon nobleman, was present when the Shroud was given to Othon de la Roche (Scavone, 1993, pp. 192-193). Such a manuscript would be of great importance, but the original is not extant, prompting caution on the part of contemporary researchers. But in any case, the Shroud came into the possession of Geoffrey de Charny, the Lord of Savoisy and Lirey, and high counselor to the King of France.

Historical Evidence of the Shroud from 1355 – 1400

Depending on which of the above versions of the story is chosen, Geoffrey de Charny probably acquired the Shroud at some point between April 1349 and January 1354. Either he or his wife arranged for it to be shown for the first time in Europe, beginning around 1355. He had built a church in his hometown of Lirey, a small town near Troyes in France, and named the church "The Annunciation of St. Mary" in praise to God for his 1351 rescue from the English. This was the site where the Shroud was first shown to the European public, and the first undisputed historical representation of the Shroud was created at that time – a small pilgrim medallion picturing the Shroud and the coats of arms of both the de Charny and the de Vergy families.

The lead medallion made to commemorate the first Shroud display in 1355. It was found in the Seine River when the river was being dredged in 1855 and is now kept in the Cluny Museum in Paris. Hundreds of assorted medallions from the 1300's were found in the mud next to the Pont au Change bridge, on the north side of the Ile de la Cite where the Cathedral of Notre Dame is situated (Foster, 2012).
From: https://biblearchaeology.org/the-shroud-of-turin-list/2332-the-shroud-of-turins-earlier-history-part-four-to-little-lirey

De Charny died in battle the following year, and Jeanne de Vergy, his widow, either began or continued the Shroud displays at Lirey. As in the case of other relics, a fee was charged to view the Shroud, possibly because Jeanne de Vergy was in financial straits after the death of her husband. Many pilgrims came to see it, and in June of 1357 twelve bishops granted indulgences to pilgrims visiting the church (Fossati, 1983). But the Vatican had for some time attempted to curb abuses related to relics (in 1215 the 12th Ecumenical Council, Fourth Lateran, placed restrictions on the use of relics including the statement that "new ones could not be venerated without church authorization" (Piana, 2007)), and the displays in Lirey were eventually stopped.

By 1389 Jeanne de Vergy was remarried to Aymon of Geneva, the uncle of the Avignon Pope Clement VII. The family then decided to re-exhibit the Shroud, but this required ecclesiastic approval. Due to Aymon's influence with the Pope, they appealed directly to the papal legate, Cardinal Pierre de Thury, circumventing Pierre d'Arcis, the local Bishop in Troyes. It is at this point that the undisputed documented history of the Shroud begins, ironically with a complaint about its authenticity.

Bishop D'Arcis strenuously objected to this exhibition, and after writing to King Charles II and getting nowhere, he wrote the now-famous *D'Arcis Memorandum* to Pope Clement VII. In his memorandum Bishop D'Arcis referred to the Archbishop Henri de Poitiers, who had supposedly concluded that the Shroud was a forgery some "thirty-four years or thereabouts" previously (i.e., around 1355) and had supposedly conducted an inquest into the Shroud at that time. Here is the text of the relevant portions of the memorandum:

> The case, Holy Father, stands thus. Some time since in this diocese of Troyes the Dean of a certain collegiate church, to wit, that of Lirey, falsely and deceitfully, being consumed with the passion of avarice, and not from any motive of devotion but only of gain, procured for his church a certain cloth cunningly painted, upon which by a clever sleight of hand was depicted the twofold image of one man, that is to say, the back and the front, he falsely declaring and pretending that this was the actual shroud in which our Savior Jesus Christ was enfolded in the tomb, and upon which the whole likeness of the Savior had remained thus impressed with the wounds which he bore…
>
> The Lord Henry of Poitiers, of pious memory, then Bishop of Troyes, becoming aware of this, and urged by many prudent persons to take action, as indeed was his duty in the exercise of his ordinary jurisdiction, set himself earnestly to work to fathom the truth of this matter. For many theologians and other wise persons declared that this could not be the real shroud of our Lord having the Savior's likeness thus imprinted upon it, since the holy Gospel made no mention of any such imprint, while, if it had been true, it was quite unlikely that the holy Evangelists would have omitted to record it, or that the fact should have remained hidden until the present time…
>
> Eventually, after diligent inquiry and examination, he discovered the fraud and how the said cloth had been cunningly painted, the truth being attested by the artist who had painted it, to wit, that it was a work of human skill and not miraculously wrought or bestowed. Accordingly, after taking mature counsel with wise theologians and men of the law, seeing that he neither ought nor could allow the matter to pass, he began to institute formal proceedings against the said Dean and his accomplices in order to root out this false persuasion… They, seeing their wickedness discovered, hid away the said cloth so that the Ordinary could not find it, and they kept it hidden afterwards for thirty-four years or thereabouts down to the present year. [But it was said by them that the shroud] had previously been much venerated and resorted to in that church, but on account of the war and other causes, by the command of the Ordinary, had been placed for a long time in safer keeping… Accordingly, most Holy Father, perceiving this great scandal renewed amongst the people and the delusion growing to the peril of souls, observing also that the Dean of the said church did not keep within the terms of the Cardinal's letters, obtained though they were by the suppression of the truth and the suggestion of what is false, as already explained, desiring to meet the danger as well as I could and to root out this false persuasion from the flock committed to me, after consultation with many prudent advisers, I prohibited the said Dean under pain of excommunication, by the very act

> sufficiently published, from exhibiting this cloth to the people until otherwise might be determined… The scandal is upheld and defended, and its supporters cause it to be spread abroad among the people that I am acting through jealousy and cupidity and to obtain possession of the cloth for myself, just as similar reports were circulated before against my predecessor.

This memorandum was later used to "prove" that the Shroud was a fake because it states that an artist had confessed to painting it. Clement VII, who was Pope at the time, never ordered an investigation of the Shroud (the d'Arcis memorandum as such may never have been sent to the Pope, as it came only from the archives in Troyes). Furthermore, the artist mentioned by d'Arcis was never identified and no claim of authorship was ever made.

D'Arcis also indicated in his memorandum that the Shroud was perhaps involved in some scandal and that the church would somehow be gravely damaged ("the delusion growing to the peril of souls") if the exhibition were allowed to proceed. It is unclear how souls could be in peril through simply viewing the Shroud, and therefore the scandal may possibly have been related to the Knights Templar, who had been put on trial eighty years previously. One of the charges in their trials was that Templar members had worshiped the devil as well as an idol named "baphomet," and d'Arcis may thus have been associating the Shroud with the Templar trials and hinting that it was the source of the baphomet image.

However, d'Arcis' testimony is suspect from several perspectives. First, he was apparently resentful because Jeanne or Geoffrey II her son had gone over his head in seeking approval from the papal legate, and the priests of the Lirey church had apparently not gotten his approval before putting the Shroud on display. Second, d'Arcis may well have wanted the revenue coming to his cathedral in Troyes instead (Lirey is a small town located approximately 20 miles from Troyes). It is also known that the nave of the Troyes Cathedral collapsed in late 1389 at the same time that the memorandum was written. This accident damaged and/or destroyed many of the relics kept there, which was one of the main sources of church fundraising. D'Arcis may therefore have been seeking to recoup and raise funds for reconstruction by forcing the de Charnys to bring the Shroud to his cathedral, or by paying him a portion of the proceeds to keep him quiet. People at the time apparently believed the same thing, as in his memorandum d'Arcis himself alludes to those whose were questioning his motives ("it is spread abroad… that I am acting… to obtain possession of the cloth for myself."). Furthermore, there are royal records that the bailiff of Troyes was sent to Lirey to seize the Shroud and bring it to Troyes several months before d'Arcis wrote his letter to the pope, indicating that the bishop may have previously tried to use secular authority to take the Shroud for his own purposes.

Even more significant is the only known correspondence from Archbishop Henri de Poitiers, the churchman who supposedly held an inquest on the Shroud in 1355, to Geoffrey de Charny, the text of which is below. This letter makes no mention of the Shroud or any concerns about its being displayed (however, the reference to a "divine cult" is a probable indication that Henri was aware that the

Shroud was being shown), and instead it is a letter of congratulations and appreciation to de Charny. D'Arcis' reference to a Shroud inquest by Henri de Poitiers is therefore cast into doubt.

> Henri, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See, confirmed bishop elect of Troyes, to all those who will see this letter, eternal salvation in the Lord. You will learn what we ourselves learned on seeing and hearing the letters of the noble knight Geoffrey de Charny, Lord of Savoisy and of Lirey, to which and for which our present letters are enclosed, after scrupulous examination of these letters and more especially of the said knight's sentiments of devotion, which he has hitherto manifested for the divine cult and which he manifests ever more daily. And ourselves wishing to develop as much as possible a cult of this nature, we praise, ratify and approve the said letters in all their parts—a cult which is declared and reported to have been canonically and ritually prescribed, as we have been informed by legitimate documents. To all these, we give our assent, our authority and our decision, by faith of which we esteem it our duty to affix our seal to this present letter in perpetual memory. Given in our palace of Aix of our diocese in the year of Our Lord 1356, Saturday, the 28th of the month of May.

Alternatively, d'Arcis may have honestly believed the Shroud to be a painting and therefore a fake, as others erroneously believe even today, although it is unclear whether he had personally examined it. There have been many painted copies of the Shroud made throughout history, and d'Arcis may have mistakenly thought the relic at Lirey was one of them. For example, a copy of the Shroud was painted for the Besançon cathedral and displayed in place of the original after the fire of 1349, and it may be to this or to another painted Shroud copy to which d'Arcis' memo actually refers. The artist of the "Besançon Shroud" is unknown but he may have been known to Bishop d'Arcis and been the artist to whom d'Arcis referred. This painted version of the Shroud may have been a replacement for the actual one taken by Jeanne de Vergy (Scavone, 1993).

The Shroud of Besançon. It was a painted copy of the Shroud from Besançon's rebuilt St. Stephens Cathedral, displayed ca. 1377, and became famous throughout France until it was destroyed during the French Revolution. This may have been the painted shroud to which d'Arcis actually referred (Marino, 2022).
From: https://www.academia.edu/s/6eb16ace4f

In any case, a series of correspondences eventually ensued between Clement VII, d'Arcis, and the de Charnys. The final result was a papal order to d'Arcis requiring him to be silent and refrain from any further attacks under pain of excommunication, and another to the de Charnys and the Lirey church allowing them to display the Shroud but with the stipulation that it could not be claimed as the true Shroud of Christ. The next year Clement reversed himself and issued a papal order granting new indulgences to those who visited the Lirey church and its relics, thereby signaling that he considered the Shroud to be genuine. Far from debunking the Shroud, the *D'Arcis Memorandum* has thus become additional evidence to establish its authenticity.

Historical Evidence of the Shroud from 1400 – 1464

After the death of Jeanne de Vergy and her son Geoffrey II, the Shroud came into the possession of her grand-daughter, Margaret (or Maguerite) de Charny. Margaret kept secret the history of the Shroud perhaps because of all of the previous controversy, admitting only that it was "conquis par feu messier" (acquired by the late sire) Geoffroy de Charny (Crispino, 1988, p. 31). But she allowed the cloth to be publicly viewed on a number of occasions during the period of 1400-1453. In 1453-54 she sold the Shroud to Duke Louis I of Savoy and received from him the castle of Varambon and revenues of the estate of Miribel near Lyon for "valuable services" to him.

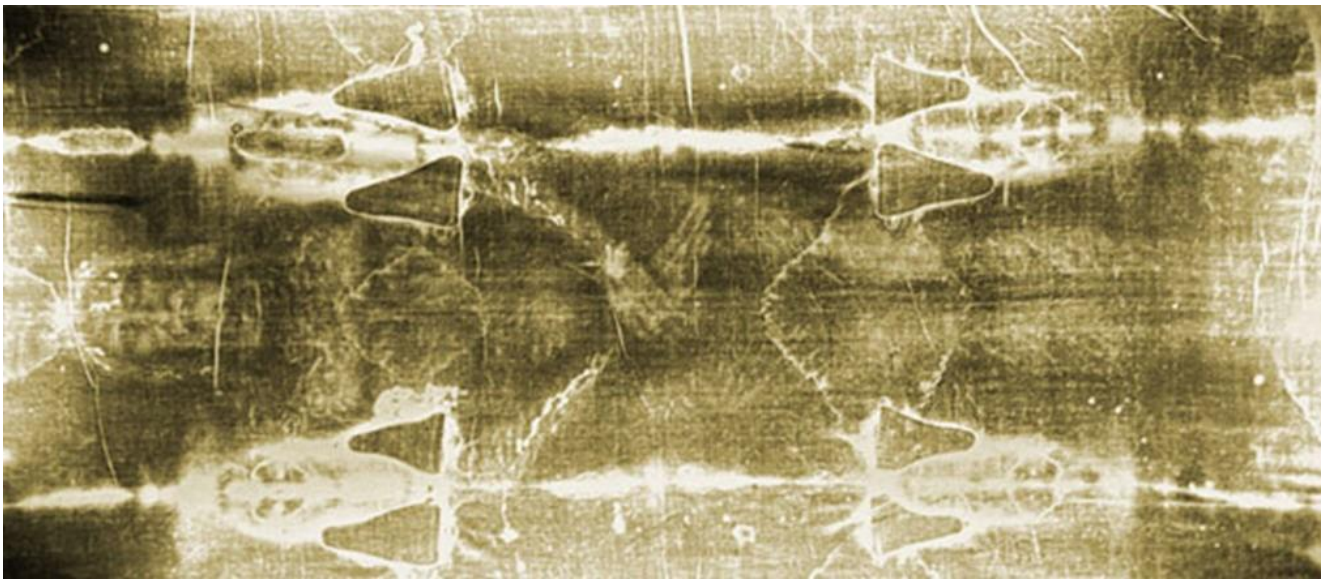
Historical Evidence of the Shroud from 1464 – Present

Meanwhile the Lirey churchmen, missing the revenue that had been generated by the Shroud, were attempting to get it returned to them. So in 1464 Duke Louis I of Savoy agreed to pay them an annual rent, to be drawn from the revenues of the castle of Gaillard, near Geneva, as compensation for their loss of Shroud revenues. This agreement was drawn up in Paris and is the first known document indicating that the Shroud had become the property of the Savoys. The agreement specifically notes that the Shroud had been placed in the church of Lirey by Geoffrey de Charny, Lord of Savoisy and Lirey, and that it had then been transferred to Duke Louis I by Margaret de Charny. Twenty years later a history of the Savoy family recorded that Louis' acquisition of the Shroud was his greatest achievement. Later generations of the Savoys periodically displayed the Shroud, built churches to house it, and often took the Shroud with them when they traveled. It was shown in public many times in various places, and was finally moved to Turin, Italy in 1578. In 1694 the Shroud was placed in the Guarini Chapel in Turin where it remains to this day (Markwardt, 1999).

In 1983 Umberto II, the ex-king of Italy and legal owner of the Shroud, died. In his will he bequeathed it to the Pope and his successors, with the stipulation that the relic must remain in Turin.

The Catholic Church provided for public viewing of the Shroud at twenty-five-year intervals although the policy later changed. In 2010 the author viewed the Shroud of Turin, and the current policy is that it will be publicly viewable at ten-year intervals.

The Shroud of Turin



From: www.shroud.com - ©1931 Giuseppe Enrie

The Shroud of Turin is a piece of ancient linen, approximately fourteen feet long and four feet wide, imprinted with an image of a naked, tortured, and crucified man (Bucklin, 1997). It contains both dorsal and ventral images; in other words, the man was placed on one end of the cloth, and it was folded over the top, and therefore there are images of both his front and back sides. There are blood stains on his scalp, feet, wrists, and right side, and lacerations over the entire body, particularly on his back (Schwortz, 2000b). The previous reference is the main website on the internet dedicated to the Shroud of Turin and is maintained by Barrie Schwortz.

> Scientific scrutiny of the Shroud image began in 1900 at the Sorbonne. Under the direction of Yves Delage, professor of comparative anatomy, a study was undertaken of the physiology and pathology of the apparent body imprint and of the possible manner of its formation. The image was found to be anatomically flawless down to minor details: the characteristic features of rigor mortis, wounds, and blood flows provided conclusive evidence to the anatomists that the image was formed by direct or indirect contact with a corpse… On this point all medical opinion since the time of Delage has been unanimous.
>
> Of greatest interest and importance are the wounds. As with the general anatomy of the image, the wounds, blood flows, and the stains themselves appear to forensic pathologists flawless and unfakeable. Each of the different wounds acted in a characteristic fashion. Each bled in a manner which corresponded to the nature of the injury. The blood followed gravity in every instance (Bucklin 1961:5). The bloodstains are perfect, bordered pictures of blood clots, with a concentration of red corpuscles around the edge of the clot and a tiny area of serum inside. Also discernible are a number of facial

> wounds, listed by Willis (cited in Wilson 1978:23) as swelling of both eyebrows, torn right eyelid, large swelling below right eye, swollen nose, bruise on right cheek, swelling in left cheek and left side of chin.
>
> The body is peppered with marks of a severe flogging estimated at between 60 and 120 lashes of a whip with two or three studs at the thong end. Each contusion is about 3.7 cm long, and these are found on both sides of the body from the shoulders to the calves, with only the arms spared. Superimposed on the marks of flogging on the right shoulder and left scapular region are two broad excoriated areas, generally considered to have resulted from friction or pressure from a flat surface, as from carrying the crossbar or writhing on the cross. There are also contusions on both knees and cuts on the left kneecap, as from repeated falls.
>
> The wounds of the crucifixion itself are seen in the blood flows from the wrists and feet. One of the most interesting features of the Shroud is that the nail wounds are in the wrists, not in the palm as traditionally depicted in art. Experimenting with cadavers and amputated arms, Barbet (1953:102-20) demonstrated that nailing at the point indicated on the Shroud image, the so-called space of Destot between the bones of the wrist, allowed the body weight to be supported, whereas the palm would tear away from the nail under a fraction of the body weight. Sava (1957:440) holds that the wrist bones and tendons would be severely damaged by nailing and that the Shroud figure was nailed through the wrist end of the forearm, but most medical opinion concurs in siting the nailing at the wrist. Barbet also observed that the median nerve was invariably injured by the nail, causing the thumb to retract into the palm. Neither thumb is visible on the Shroud, their position in the palm presumably being retained by rigor mortis.
>
> Between the fifth and sixth ribs on the right side is an oval puncture about 4.4 X 1.1 cm. Blood has flowed down from this wound and also onto the lower back, indicating a second outflow when the body was moved to a horizontal position. All authorities agree that this wound was inflicted after death, judging from the small quantity of blood issued, the separation of clot and serum, the lack of swelling, and the deeper color and more viscous consistency of the blood. Stains of a body fluid are intermingled with the blood, and numerous theories have been offered as to its origin: pericardial fluid (Judica, Barbet), fluid from the pleural sac (Moedder), or serous fluid from settled blood in the pleural cavity (Saval, Bucklin).
>
> So convincing was the realism of these wounds and their association with the biblical accounts that Delage, an agnostic, declared them “a bundle of imposing probabilities” and concluded that the Shroud figure was indeed Christ. His assistant, Vignon (1937), declared the Shroud’s identification to be “as sure as a photograph or set of fingerprints” (Meacham, 1983).

As indicated above, there is another very old piece of bloodstained cloth which is alleged to have been the cloth used to cover the face of Christ after his crucifixion. It is known as the “Sudarium of

Oviedo," was brought to Spain in the 7th century, and has been kept in the Spanish town of Oviedo since the 8th century. The Sudarium was studied in 1999, and the team studying it concluded that the Sudarium and the Shroud both covered the same injured head (Guscin, 1997). The Sudarium may have been the "napkin" or the cloth covering Christ's head/face that was mentioned in the Gospel of John account, in John 20:3-7.

Problems with the Authenticity of the Shroud of Turin

The Shroud of Turin is purported to be the literal burial shroud of Jesus Christ. Its authenticity has thus aroused intense debate and sometimes hostile rhetoric between those who believe that the Shroud is authentic – or at least believe that it is the actual burial shroud of a crucified man who may or may not have been Jesus – and those who do not. Many attempts have been made by skeptics to challenge its authenticity on various grounds, as well as to develop alternative theories to explain how the images on the Shroud could have been faked or generated by a variety of mechanisms. For example, some have alleged that the Shroud is a painting by Leonardo DaVinci or another artist (Piczek, 1996). But despite periodic claims, no theory capable of explaining all of the characteristics of the Shroud image has yet been developed that can satisfactorily explain how the image could have been a forgery. The Shroud of Turin is therefore the most highly studied relic in the history of the world.

Considering the shady history of religious artifacts and the many fraudulent attempts to make money at the expense of credulous and naïve worshipers, it is therefore very appropriate that the Shroud of Turin be approached with an attitude of skepticism. François de Mely claimed in 1902 that there were forty-two medieval shrouds of Christ, and he even named the towns whose inventories mentioned them. But these were either simply pieces of cloth or artistic copies of the Shroud of Turin, and a number of these copies still exist (Scavone, 1999). Many if not all of those images were not created with an intent to deceive, but rather as a piece of art intended to inspire worshippers. Nevertheless, the evidence for the authenticity of the Shroud is so comprehensive and compelling that if it were an object with no religious overtones, there would be little serious doubt as to its authenticity. But being the purported burial cloth of Jesus Christ and a possible witness to his resurrection, hence to Christ's deity and the truth of Christianity, the Shroud raises powerful passions in both those who believe and those who disbelieve. Accepting and especially rejecting the authenticity of the Shroud is therefore often an issue of faith and religious, or anti-religious, conviction. However, those who seriously seek to study the Shroud must approach it with an open mind and lay aside their religious persuasions as they examine the evidence. There are still questions for which no answer has yet been provided, as follows:

1. There is a lack of documentary evidence for the Shroud's existence in Biblical times. The first record of the Shroud's existence was in Edessa possibly around AD 38 as described above, but the evidence is not definitive.

2. The Shroud is one long piece of cloth, which is at variance with the burial cloths typically used by 1st century Jews, and possibly in disagreement with some of the details in the Biblical accounts of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. However, this could also be viewed as evidence for the Shroud's authenticity, as a forger would presumably have tried to make his work fit with the Biblical accounts and with known burial customs. Also, the burial was hurried as it was near sundown on Passover; the body was transported to the tomb and the

burial performed by only two individuals – Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. The cloth was also supplied in haste by Joseph of Arimathea, and he may have had only one long piece of linen available to wrap the body.

3. The Bible indicates that Jesus' body was buried with myrrh and aloes, but neither of these substances could be detected on the Shroud, although at least one eyewitness historical account from around AD 1000 indicated that the cloth "smelled of myrrh." However, as indicated above, the burial of Christ was hurried, so the use of burial spices may have been minimized. It has also been alleged that the Shroud has at various times been washed and/or dipped in oil or other substances, which could have removed any myrrh or aloe residues.

4. Objections have been raised regarding the height of the man—between 5'11" and 6'1"—as most men of the time were shorter.

5. Concern has been expressed about formation of the image in regard to the way that the body was wrapped in the cloth, for example, the lack of creases in various parts of the Shroud image (however, the lack of creases may also be due to the haste in which the burial was performed). Also, there is no image on the sides of the cloth where it was presumably wrapped around the shoulders, arms, and legs of the dead body. This would seem to negate the possibility of the image being formed by some type of radiation from the corpse that possibly occurred during Christ's resurrection. Assuming that radiation was responsible for producing the image, it would presumably have been emitted in all directions, unless the radiation for some reason was only emitted only in a vertical direction (see below).

6. Some have discovered what they allege to be writing on the Shroud, as well as images of coins that were supposedly placed over the eyes. They are discussed in articles such as one by Mark Guscin (Guscin, 1999). But these are typically discounted as visual artifacts and as evidence of "believer bias" by others. So this potential support for the Shroud is not very valid (Jones, 2013; Jordan, 2013).

7. Muslims deny that Jesus was the Son of God and therefore deny the validity of the Shroud on the basis of their belief (Shah, 2011).

8. Many have wondered how a piece of linen could have survived intact through so many centuries, and still bearing a visible image. However, these are arguments from silence and are not substantive enough to cause serious doubts about the Shroud's veracity. As one Shroud researcher indicated,

"It has been my contention that, while the lack of historical documentation is a difficulty, the evidence from the medical studies must be treated as empirical data of a higher order. The dead body always

represents a cold, hard fact, regardless of a lack of witnesses or a freely offered confession of murder. With anatomists and forensic pathologists of the highest caliber in Europe and America (many of whom are also well versed in the history of art) of one mind for 80 years about the image as a body imprint, one is on firm ground in characterizing the Shroud as the real shroud of a real corpse. The direct testing of the last 20 years goes farther in demonstrating that the relic is a genuine grave cloth from antiquity rather than the result of a medieval forger's attempt to imprint the cloth with a smeared corpse. Fleming (the medieval textile expert who examined the Shroud) concurs, with the conclusion that 'it is the medical evidence that we are certainly looking at a gruesome document of crucifixion which satisfies me that the Shroud is not medieval in origin'" (Meacham, 1983).

9. One of the long-standing beliefs of skeptics was that the Shroud was a painting done by a medieval artist. The strongest contemporary proponent of this hypothesis was Dr. Walter McCrone, now deceased, who was a consultant to the original Shroud investigatory team (known as STURP – "Shroud of Turin Research Project") in 1978. However, his painting hypothesis was not based on examination of the Shroud itself, as he never saw it, but only on his analysis of sticky tapes, which were used to take samples of surface materials from the cloth and then sent to him for analysis. McCrone had previously been instrumental in debunking the "Vinland Map" which was supposedly the earliest depiction of the New World, showing a section of North America's coastline southwest of Greenland (Cummings, 2021). Archeological discoveries at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland during the 1960s have since confirmed that the Vikings had built settlements in the Americas long before Columbus sailed, but the Vinland Map was a forgery proved by the analysis from McCrone's laboratory. After that success he apparently wanted to enhance his reputation by debunking the greatest relic of all time, so he broke an agreement that the team had made to delay publishing individual results until a team report had been produced. McCrone published first in order to discredit the Shroud, alleging that it was a painting done by a medieval artist. But it is his conclusions that have been discredited by a wealth of subsequent investigation.

"Much publicity has been generated by the assertions of McCrone (1980), a former STURP consultant, that the image is a painting, judging from the microscopic identification of traces of iron oxide and a protein (i.e., possible pigment and binder) in image areas. The STURP analysis of the Shroud's surface yielded much particulate matter of possible artists' pigments such as alizarin, charcoal, and ultramarine, as well as iron, calcium, strontium (possibly from the soaking process for early linen), tiny bits of wire, insect remains, wax droplets, a thread of lady's panty hose, etc. (Wilson 1981). However, this matter was distributed randomly or inconsistently over the cloth and had no relationship to the image, which was found to be substanceless, according to the combined results of photomicroscopy, X-radiography, electron microscopy, chemical analyses, and mass spectrometry. McCrone's claims have been convincingly refuted in several STURP technical reports (Pellicori and Evans 1980:42; Pellicori 1980:1918; Heller and Adler 1981:91-94; Schwalbe and Rogers 1982:11-24). The results of previous work by the Italian commission also run totally counter to those claims (Filogamo and Zina 1976:35-37; Brandone and Borroni 1978:205-14; Frei 1982:5). Undaunted, McCrone… continues to stake his reputation on the interpretation of the Shroud image as a painting" (Meacham, 1983).

> "McCrone's conclusions are largely based on his examination of material obtained from the Shroud on Mylar sticky tapes by the STURP group in 1978. There are, indeed, linen fibers with paint pigments on them on these tapes, but it has apparently eluded McCrone that these are fibers which translocated to the Shroud from the some fifty-five medieval painted "true copies" which were laid by the artist directly on top of the Shroud as a "brandum." These pigmented fibers have nothing to do with the images on the Shroud other than their proximity to some of the body images, which one would expect considering their origin" (Whanger, 1998).

Walter McCrone continued to defend his painting hypothesis (McCrone, 1999) despite the overwhelming evidence against it because admitting the fact that he had been wrong would have destroyed his reputation and possibly put his lab out of business.

10. Carbon dating tests were done on the Shroud in 1988, and the results indicated a date in the Middle Ages, from 1269 to 1390, which is the main reason why many think that the Shroud is not genuine. When the dating results were published, secularists breathed a sigh of relief, and concluded that the Shroud was a fake and could be safely ignored. But if anyone doubts that there is dishonesty and politics in science, the C^{14} dating of the Shroud should disabuse them. The procedures were questioned even before the results were announced, and from beginning to end the process was filled with deception, political maneuvering, arrogance, inflated egos, and mistakes. Joseph Marino, a prolific Shroud researcher, compiled a thorough assessment in his book, *The 1988 C-14 Dating of the Shroud of Turin: A Stunning Expose*, in which he documents what took place (Marino, 2020).

    - Willard F. Libby who invented the carbon dating process in 1947, indicated that he felt the Shroud was not a good candidate for C^{14} testing because of its long history of being handled and damaged by fire (Marino, 2020, p. 2). Radioactive dating is presumed by the public to return hard and accurate dates but has been repeatedly shown to be wildly inaccurate at times. For example, the Greek archeologist Spyros Iakovidis stated: "I sent a certain amount of the same grain sample to two different laboratories in two different parts of the world… The readings differed by 2,000 years… I feel that this method is not to be trusted" (Marino, 2020, p. 698).

    - In 1973, five years prior to the STURP investigation, a sample was taken from a corner of the Shroud (known as the "Raes" sample) and several people including Walter McCrone wanted to have C^{14} dating done on that sample despite research which that already concluded the edges of the Shroud had been rewoven in that area. Dr. Harry Gove, a leader in the latest dating technology and who desperately sought to have his lab involved, was quoted as saying "I sometimes think that McCrone dreamed of becoming history's greatest iconoclast" (Marino, 2020, p. 5). He also wrote, "I was determined to prevent their [the STURP team's] involvement in carbon dating the shroud, if that were ever to

come about." The man remained hostile to the team who had done the most intensive scientific investigation of the cloth in history (Marino, 2020, p. 8).

- In 1985-86 a group of around twenty experts in various aspects of carbon dating held a series of meetings for the sole purpose of setting up a protocol for carbon dating the Shroud, knowing that this would be the most complicated and controversial carbon dating ever done. Among the group's recommendations were the taking of seven samples from seven different places, the use of seven laboratories and two techniques, the careful analysis of the samples to determine their characteristics and contents before the carbon dating itself, the use of careful controls, and the collating and tabulation of the test results before releasing the information to the public to eliminate as many potential doubts as possible. All of their recommendations were ignored.

  "For reasons that remain very unclear but are suspicious to many of us, shortly before the taking of the sample in 1988, the protocol was completely discarded by the then scientific adviser to the then Cardinal, the Archbishop of Turin, who is custodian of the Shroud. The adviser allowed only one sample to be taken, he (instead of the recommended textile expert) determined where the sample would be removed, he used only three of the laboratories and only one of the test methods. Many objected to this violation of the protocol but were told basically to get lost if they didn't like it" (Whanger, 1998).

  "When we heard where the single specimen was taken from, we were appalled, as he chose the worst possible site on the Shroud, even though he had been advised to stay away from such areas. The specimen was taken from the lower edge of the Shroud on the side that has the seam running its full length (the anterior aspect), next to the missing corner. This is visibly the dirtiest area on the Shroud (having been handled by this corner on numerous occasions over the centuries), and it is also at the edge of burn marks and a water stain from 1532. The sample taken included the seam which was added at an unknown date probably to help reinforce the Shroud fabric. The seam and some extraneous fibers were trimmed from the specimen. Contrary to the common idea that three different specimens were tested, three pieces were cut from the one specimen, one piece being given to each of the three laboratories so that the single specimen was tested three times, and only by a single technique (AMS)" (Whanger, 1998).

- Through a complicated series of political wranglings and machinations between Vatican officials, Gove, and other parties, all members of the 1978 STURP research team were eliminated from involvement, including Dr. Robert Dinegar who had been originally selected to lead the effort (Marino, 2020, p. xvi). Marino elaborates, "Given that an enormous amount of publicity, grants, other financial considerations (e.g., Oxford eventually was given a one-million-pound donation to establish a chair) and a perceived battle between science and religion were involved, the Shroud dating was a prime candidate for passion ruling an experiment" (Marino, 2020, pp. 408-409).

Gove complained that the STURP team were all "religious zealots" although it also seems that a number of "anti-religious zealots" were also involved including Gove himself. Another example was David Sox a cheerleader for Gove and a passionate Shroud denier, despite or perhaps because of the fact that he was an Episcopal priest. He wrote his Shroud book *The Shroud Unmasked – Uncovering the Greatest Forgery of All Time* even before the dating results were released (Marino, 2020, p. 454). There were a number of irregularities in the handling of the samples and in the people involved, even in regard to the modified protocol (Marino, 2020, p. 498). William Meacham, an archaeologist on the team, subsequently wrote a book, *The Rape of the Turin Shroud: How Christianity's Most Precious Relic was Wrongly Condemned and Violated* (Marino, 2020, pp. 33-36).

- After the testing was done in October 1988, an article alleging that the Shroud was a medieval fake was published in *Nature* even before the data was available (Marino, 2020, p. 478). The raw data from the labs was not released until 2018, thirty years after the testing, and required a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain it from the British museum (Marino, 2020, p. 708). After the British Museum was forced to release the raw data it became obvious why the Museum had stonewalled prior requests – all of the anomalies of the results were then revealed. One of the labs involved belatedly admitted (thirty years after performing the testing) that the original conclusions should have been disqualified: "A statistical analysis of the *Nature* article and the raw data strongly suggests that homogeneity is lacking in the data, and that the procedure should be reconsidered" (Casabianca et al., 2019). Thomas de Wesselow, an expert on medieval art, provided the following summary: "The carbon dating of the Shroud will probably go down in history as one of the greatest fiascoes in the history of science. It would make an excellent case study for any sociologist interested in exploring the ways in which science is affected by professional bias, prejudices, and ambitions, not to mention religious and irreligious beliefs" (De Wesselow, 2012, pp. 160-172). The process did become the subject of a doctoral thesis: *The Socio-Politic of a Relic: Carbon Dating of the Turin Shroud* (Laverdiere, 1989).

- A definitive answer to the dating controversy and its coup-de-grace came from a study released on 20 January 2005, in which Raymond Rogers, a scientist from the Los Alamos National Laboratory and one of the original members of STURP, conclusively demonstrated that the sample used for the carbon dating tests were taken from a rewoven area of the Shroud, and therefore did not represent the original fabric (Rogers, 2005).

The 1988 Shroud carbon dating tests and results have thus been discredited.

Evidence for the Authenticity of the Shroud of Turin

Even admitting any questions of carbon dating, the amazing image on the Shroud must still be explained. In the words of the Shroud researcher John Walsh, "The Shroud of Turin is either the most awesome and instructive relic of Jesus Christ in existence… or it is one of the most ingenious, most unbelievably clever products of the human mind and hand on record. It is one or the other; there is no middle ground" (Meacham, 1983). Following are characteristics of the Shroud, which argue for its authenticity:

1. The first recorded showing of the Shroud was in 1353-1357, and it was publicly displayed many times after that, so if it were a forgery, it must have been done prior to that period with the technology available in that era. Leonardo DaVinci, who has sometimes alleged to have been the artist, was born in 1452 (Piczek, 1996). The carbon dating procedures performed on the Shroud which dated it to the period 1269 – 1390 have been discredited as described above.

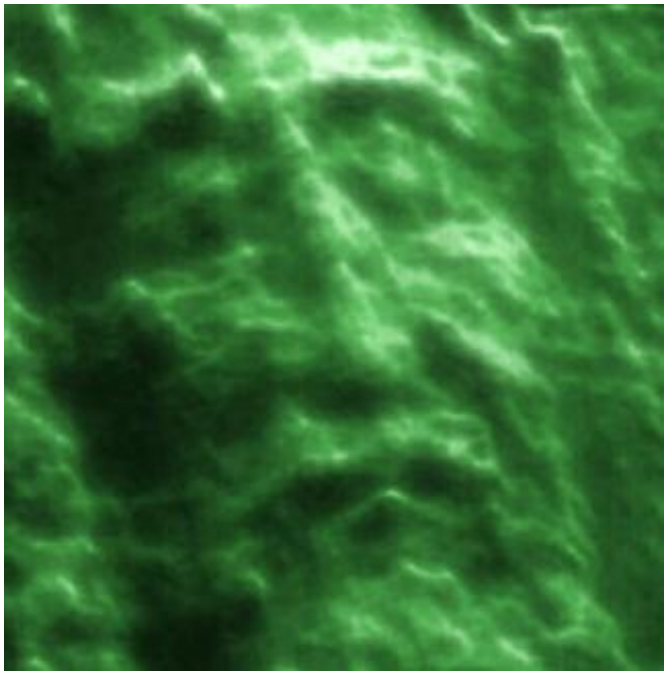
2. The picture on the Shroud is actually a negative image and must be photographically inverted to see the positive image. Concepts of negative images were certainly known in the past; for example, the mold that is used to cast a statue is a "negative image." But no true negative images were seen until the invention of photography around 1826. In fact, this aspect of the Shroud was only noticed when the Shroud was first photographed in 1898 (Piczek, 1997). Therefore, how could a medieval artist have even conceived of a negative image or have been able to render it?

3. The Shroud is linen, and raw unprepared linen repels water and is difficult to paint. Furthermore, there is no artistic "style" to the image, no pigments and no brushstrokes. It is "photographic" in nature rather than "artistic" (Piczek, 1997). Furthermore, the image lacks the sharp outline and color of a painting, as it is a fairly uniform sepia-yellow in color. The "lines" making up the image are approximately 1/100 the width of a human hair, making it impossible for the image to be painted by an artist. As indicated above, only one contemporary researcher has claimed that the image was produced by paint (Dr. Walter McCrone), but others have demonstrated conclusively that the actual Shroud image is not created from pigment (Piczek, 1995). The Shroud was apparently used as a template for medieval painters, and thus there are traces of pigment and iron oxide on the surface, as described in the quote above. Microscopic examination found no evidence of capillarity action (i.e., soaking up of a liquid) in the fibers. This indicates that the image was not caused by the application of a liquid such as an acid, or by an organic or inorganic chemical in liquid form. This would include paint, dye, or stain.

4. The Shroud figure is naked, which would have been repugnant and unacceptable for a medieval artist in depicting Christ.

5. The plethora of artistic depictions of Jesus from the 1st through the 16th centuries showed him as being nailed to the cross through the hands, whereas in the Shroud image he is nailed through the wrists. As indicated above, nailing through the hands would not have supported a man's weight, and the purported artist would have had to have known this fact and gone against all artistic precedent.

6. Unlike paintings the Shroud image has three-dimensional holographic-type qualities encoded within it, as the strength of the image is proportional to the distance from the associated body part. For example, the nose area is shown very strongly, but the eyes less so (Schumacher, 1999). Therefore, a three-dimensional "map" can be created showing the face and other parts of the body in bas-relief, as shown below.



A 3D rendering of the face of the man on the Shroud.
From: Joy of the Lord, www.pinterest.com

7. The man's head and knees are slightly bent, and therefore the image has foreshortening in it. The concept of foreshortening was first discovered and used by the Renaissance painters sometime after the Shroud was first shown (Piczek, 1995).

8. The three-dimensional aspect of the image also explains why it cannot be a block print. Complex carved wood block printing had been done for some time, but only on a flat sheet of paper or canvas. A three-dimensional block print would distort the image as well as producing smears (Piczek, 1995).

9. The Shroud images can be seen in front lighting but cannot be seen if lit from behind. This indicates they were not generated by the application of any substance to the front surface of the cloth, meaning that the image could not be a rubbing, a dusting, or a print.

10. The image coloration makes it appear to be a scorch (i.e., due to contact of a hot object with cloth). However, this type of scorch will fluoresce under ultraviolet light, but the Shroud image does not fluoresce, indicating that it was not produced by scorching. A scorching process would also have discolored the linen fibers of the Shroud all the way through, rather than only on the fiber surface, as the image is only on the interior surfaces of the cloth.

11. The "light source" seems to come from within or behind the image rather than from an external point, as would be the case with photographs, which are created by light reflected from the surface of an object. The edges of the image seem to "melt away" and are not sharp as they would be in the case of an actual photograph. In addition, there are no shadows in the image as would occur in a photograph, nor have any silver or silver-related (i.e., light-sensitive) compounds been detected on the Shroud (Schwortz, 2000a).

12. The medical opinion on the Shroud since it was first seriously examined in 1900 has been unanimous – that the image was produced from a real man who had been tortured and died in the same manner as did Jesus in the Gospel accounts. Given the contusions, whip marks, blood flow, etc. the general medical conclusion is that the image is unfakeable.

13. A number of researchers have demonstrated the presence of blood on the Shroud and some have done testing on the DNA in the blood. The blood was shown to be from a human male who had experienced extreme trauma (Ford, 2000). Dr. McCrone claimed that there is no blood on the Shroud, but he never examined it, and was the same individual who fallaciously claimed that the image was painted. There have been a few attempts to discredit the blood stains, but they have been dismissed (Borrini, 2019).

14. The Shroud contains pollen and plant images from plants that grow into the Jerusalem area (Danin, 1998).

15. A recently advanced hypothesis is that the Shroud is a medieval photograph done by Leonardo DaVinci and taken with a *camera obscura* using actual cadavers (Allen, 1996). According to this hypothesis, the Lirey Shroud of the 1350s was a painted and counterfeit relic; after the Savoy family acquired it in 1464 they supposedly discovered that they had purchased a fake and then commissioned Leonardo DaVinci to create what would presumably be a more realistic fake by using the photographic method stated above. This effort, which has no historical support whatsoever, supposedly produced the Shroud we have today. However, the optical characteristics of the Shroud as stated in the paragraph above on photography, as well as other

physical and historic factors, makes this hypothesis untenable (Sorensen, 2005).

16. Another image-formation method proposed was the exposure in sunlight of a piece of cloth soaked in bleach placed under a large piece of glass, over which a painted version of the Shroud is laid. This method supposedly produces an image similar to the Shroud, but has at least two fatal flaws: 1) it requires a large flat piece of glass, at least 6' x 3', which did not exist in the Middle Ages; and 2) the chemistry of the Shroud image is completely different than one that would be produced by such a method, because it has been demonstrated that in the real Shroud the image is deposited only on the surface of the fibers (Rogers & Arnoldi, 2003). The depth of the image is therefore very thin (Adler, 1999).

17. Some years ago the Shroud was cleaned, and the backing material was removed. Another faint facial image was then discovered on the back side of the cloth matching the main facial image, making it virtually impossible for the Shroud to be a fake. This was not previous detected because of the backing material that had been sewn on the Shroud at some point during the Middle Ages.

18. Scientists have recently developed a new method of dating ancient textiles using a technology known as WAXS (Wide-Angle X-ray Scattering) which operates by detecting the degree of structural degradation of threads from a cloth. In contrast to carbon dating, this method is non-destructive and can be done on very small samples (0.5 mm). A number of cloth samples have been dated with this technology, and when one of the threads from the "Raes" sample of the Shroud was analyzed, the date returned was similar to that of a linen fragment from the Siege of Masada, which took place in 55–74 AD. This analysis thus places the Shroud in the era of Christ's death and resurrection, ca. 30 AD (De Caro et al., 2022).

19. Despite many attempts, no theory of image formation has as yet been advanced that successfully explains how the Shroud could have been a forgery (Sorensen, 2007a). It is highly questionable that even with current technology a body imprint could be generated with all of the characteristics of the Shroud of Turin.

There are many shroud-related internet resources, but a good starting place for anyone looking for detailed historical and scientific information is the Shroud of Turin website (Schwortz, 2000b) maintained by Barrie Schwortz who was the videographer for the 1978 STURP team.

The question remains, how was the image generated? Ray Rogers, one of the STURP team members believed that it was created by a chemical reaction between the cloth and the body fluids, and/or vapors from the corpse (Rogers & Arnoldi, 2003). However, there is no evidence that any human body has ever encoded high resolution images of itself onto the surface of any clothing in all of human history (aside from the Shroud), and our current understanding of the laws of science does not

include any mechanism for this to happen. Therefore Roger's answer is unacceptable for the generation of the Shroud image.

Robert Rucker in his article *The Role of Radiation in Image Formation on the Shroud of Turin* (Rucker, 2020), notes that the images on the Shroud are a unique phenomenon, and there has been a complete failure to propose any naturalistic method by which the images could have been created. Scientists may therefore be barking up the wrong tree, and instead need to think outside their naturalistic boxes. Rucker makes the following points:

- The image is a uniform sepia color, and a mechanism was necessary to discolor only the top portion of the linen fibers, as the thickness of the image is only 0.4 microns deep, less than a wavelength of light. In other words, only the outer surface of the fiber was discolored – the inside was unaltered as indicated above. Furthermore, the discoloration was not due to pigment but rather to a change from single to double electron bonds of some of the carbon atoms on the surface molecules. The Shroud has survived several fires, but the high temperatures did not cause any change in the image as would be the case if the image was chemically generated.

- The mechanism for this was probably a static discharge (a "lightening rod" effect) due to radiation emitted by the body within the Shroud which probably occurred during the resurrection event. Researchers have indicated that the image shows bones close to the surface (teeth, vertebrae, and hand and skull bones). Therefore, radiation from within the body would be the only way that such an image could be created.

- It is known that bursts of protons and high energy infrared and ultraviolet light can create discolorations in cloth. However, such radiation is typically emitted in all directions, which should seemingly have caused images on the sides of the cloth as well. The Shroud images are only vertical, as there is no image from the sides of the corpse. The body of Christ was said to disappear or "collapse" during the resurrection which was likely the cause of the radiation penetrating the Shroud. If the radiation occurred at the end of the collapsing process, the cloth would also have collapsed, resulting in only vertical images that seem to "melt away" at the edges.

- Radiation from the body within the Shroud traveled only a short distance and affected only the top molecular layers of the cloth. Body parts that were not in contact with the cloth, such as the eyes, show little detail, so air gaps served as a blocking mechanism. Also, no image exists under the places where blood appears on the Shroud, so the presence of blood absorbed the radiation that otherwise could have produced an image.

- Rucker suggested that if a burst of neutrons occurred, that this could also have potentially increased the C^{14} content of the Shroud (i.e., by creating more radioactive carbon atoms) resulting in a later date being returned by the dating process (Rucker, 2020).

- Quantum physicists currently espouse "string theory" as the best method of explaining sub-atomic phenomena. In this theory, everything including all matter and energy (protons, neutrons, photons, quarks, etc.) are composed of much smaller components known as "strings." All of the characteristics of both matter and energy (mass, charge, chemical and nuclear reactions capabilities, etc.) are caused by the nature and the possibilities of these combinations of strings, which in turn make up our physical reality. For example, the elements iron and copper are metals whereas oxygen and nitrogen are gases. In other words, everything in our physical cosmos is caused by the large variety of string combinations, which operate under a series of strict rules in generating subatomic entities such as protons and photons (i.e., it is not clear whether they are fundamentally "particles" or "waves" as they seem to have properties of both). String theory also posits that there are ten dimensions which are beyond our known dimensions of length, width, height, and time. The additional dimensions are said to be "wrapped" within a "Planck-length" distance of the known dimensions (a Planck-length, named after the quantum physicist Max Planck, is the shortest possible length of anything and is approximately 0.000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,001 meters). If someone were to travel or transition into one of these dimensions, perhaps like the teleporting capability shown in the *Star Trek* series, the process could have caused a release of energy which produced the Shroud images.

- The possibility that the Shroud image was generated by radiation emitted during the resurrection process should not be objected to as either unscientific or even startling. An essential axiom of science is that researchers must be open to new phenomena and new information even if it conflicts with current understanding so that our conceptions of how things work can be modified and expanded to cover everything that we observe. Therefore, it is important for us to understand how the Shroud images could possibly be formed so that we have a correct view of reality.

Western society is said to be "post-Christian" and we may have lost the numinous awe that the Shroud helped to inspire in past centuries. But it is still an object of mystery that defies our best attempts to explain it in purely naturalistic terms. As more testing on it is done and as additional ancient documents are discovered and translated, our knowledge of the Grail-Shroud connections will increase. In the meantime science has been stumped.

Conclusion

The Holy Grail was purely a literary concept, but the Shroud of Turin seems to have been the source of this literature and the object upon which the grail stories were based. A summary of the reasons include:

1. The many faceted concepts associated with the Grail: human sinfulness and suffering, divine forgiveness, the sacrifice necessary to pay for that forgiveness, the quest for personal meaning and redemption, the longing for something beyond this world, and the desire for God, heaven, and eternal life. As mentioned above, the word "grail" comes from the Latin *gradale* meaning "gradually, in stages," so the origin of the word encapsulates the transitions in meaning and the complexity of the underlying ideas, culminating in the Holy Grail – the Cup of Christ containing wine representing his blood. All of these ideas are personified in the Shroud.

2. The grail stories were written after the Shroud was brought to Constantinople and kept there for a period of 260 years. Constantinople had been the capital of Roman Empire, was the seat of the Greek Orthodox Church, and for centuries was the largest and most influential city in the world. Religion in Constantinople was extremely important, and one writer characterized religious discussion there as "the sport of the people – the football and baseball of that era" (Duffy, 1997). Thus the Shroud had a huge impact on Byzantine thought and society, made all the more significant because of the significance of Constantinople as a major metropolis.

3. Robert de Boron wrote that Joseph of Arimathea used the Last Supper cup to catch the blood of Christ on the cross, thus creating the literary heritage of the Holy Grail. But in his story *Joseph d'Arimathe*, the Emperor Vespasian is healed, not by a chalice, but by a cloth containing the image and blood of Christ. This was a clear literary allusion to the Shroud and was based on the miraculous healing of Abgar V who may have been the historical Fisher-king that the story was originally based on, who was healed by the power of the blood of Christ from the Shroud. De Boron thus made the leap from the "graal" of Chrétien and transliterated it into the Holy Grail by infusing his stories with Christian communion concepts, overlaid with Shroud imagery. His stories in turn influenced the development of the King Arthur tales and the quest for the Holy Grail which are still popular almost a millennium later.

4. During the time following the Shroud's appearance there was a new flowering of Eucharistic symbolism that the image on the Shroud could then be combined with a realism of Christ's passion, thus creating a "new language of Christian art" (Scavone, 1996). The Shroud was in large part responsible for the development of Byzantine art and iconography, which was widely viewed, and had a significant artistic impact on society that carried over into literary works.

5. The esoteric order of the Knights Templar who in the medieval mind epitomized Grail knights and were reputed to be keepers of both the Shroud and the Holy Grail.

6. The fact that that Shroud, like the Holy Grail contained the blood of Christ, and therefore carried the same ethereal and immortal significance. Early church leaders had often used the Last Supper cup as an analogy for Jesus' death – the actual chalice representing the body of Christ and the wine representing his blood, giving an ethereal significance to the cup. Byzantine iconography would often picture the wounded Christ along with a chalice representing the "cup of sorrows" that Jesus "drank" on the cross. The Catholic church teaches the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, the belief that the wafer and wine administered to the communicant are a literal means of God's grace and "become the body and blood of Christ" to that person. The "container" of Christ's blood would therefore be the chalice used in the Eucharistic rites. With these powerful religious metaphors of a literal chalice becoming a source of divine grace, it is easy to understand how a communion chalice was transformed into the Holy Grail of legend, and how the grail came to be viewed as a cup, despite the fact that the origin of the grail stories was probably the Shroud.

Given the above history and evidence, it is therefore my reasoned conclusion that the object knowingly or unknowingly alluded to as the Holy Grail throughout literary history – the object behind the myth – was actually the Shroud of Turin, the burial cloth of Christ. As is true of any historical artifact, the Shroud of Turin cannot be proven to be authentic, but unlike other religious relics, the evidence for its veracity is very strong. If it is truly authentic, the Shroud of Turin is thus the "San Greal" (the Holy chalice) and contains the "Sang Real" (the royal blood) of Christ.

Christ at the Last Supper
From: https://enterthenarrowgate.org/first-eucharist

Whether or not the Shroud of Turin was the actual burial shroud of Jesus Christ, nevertheless it is the true Holy Grail.

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