The Shroud of Turin: Jesus’ Death Robe or Clever Fake?

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Intro:

The Shroud of Turin remains a powerful religious symbol, both for skeptics and believers in the shroud’s authenticity. If in fact the shroud is real, is still debatable to this day, and due to contamination throughout the years; testing of the shroud continues to give inconclusive evidence. What our group will debate is exactly the topic of the Shroud of Turin’s authenticity and specifically the two questions at odds, over the years:

(Pro) *It is in fact the shroud which covered Jesus Christ?*  

(Con) *It is a medieval fake, fabricated to attract patronage or possibly another man and not Jesus Christ?*

Brief History:

The Shroud of Turin’s history begins around the 1350’s. It was first located in the city of Lirey, France where a French knight named Geoffrey de Charny was in possession of the shroud; it is believed he acquired the shroud from Constantinople. Some historic evidence shows that the Shroud of Turin was previously in the East, initially in the city of Edessa and later in Constantinople, before it was brought to Europe during the Crusades (Figure 1). Later in 1453 the Shroud of Turin was handed over to Duke Louis Savoy, and followed the ruling capital Savoy and was later transferred to Piedmont whose capital is Turin. Shortly after that in 1694 the Shroud of Turin was relocated once again and this time it has been kept in the chapel that Guarino Guarini built between the Cathedral and the Royal Palace. Today the Shroud of Turin is kept in the round chapel of the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Turin, Italy (Image 1). Since 1983 the Shroud of Turin was left by Umberto II, the last Italian monarch, to the Pope in his will and ever since has become the property of the Catholic Church.
Burial Customs, Blood Stains on Cloth, Image of Shroud

Con:

Con group will be arguing that the Shroud of Turin is not the linen cloth that Jesus was wrapped in after the time of his crucifixion. As part of our arguments we will be discussing the results of the radiocarbon dating conducted on a piece of the linen during 1988. We will also point out that the results show that in fact the linen could be a fake created during the Middle Ages since during that time it was common.

We will also discuss the blood stains on the Shroud of Turin and how they could have possibly have been made. Based on what the way the blood stains are on the Shroud, and what the bible states about the way Jesus was crucified and brought down we can see that they are not similar. We come to this conclusion also based on burial customs of the time of Jesus’s death.

To help support these point we will also be talking about how the textile used for the Shroud is resembled to the time it was radiocarbon dated. Finally we will be discussing the standing point of the Catholic Church when it comes to the authenticity of the shroud.

We believed the Shroud of Turin is a hoax due to the blood stains in the cloth. There are no Smudges, instead there is a clear outlining, and it went against Jewish burial customs (Hiller). The following excerpt outlines, other feature in the Shroud

“apparent bloodstains : bloodstains flow from the base of the man's left hand—his right wrist, covered by the left hand, is not visible—and from both of his feet. Furthermore, at his rib cage on the right side there is also a wound with a large blood stain around it (Image 2)...Visible around the man's head are smaller lesions from which blood has trickled downward, a detail corresponding to Jesus's crowning with thorn…Also visible are numerous small wounds covering the entire body, front and back, from the shoulders downward, and these accord with the account of Jesus' scourging by Roman soldiers preparatory to his crucifixion” (Image 3, Wild)

Image 2 Puncture wound and blood stain.
“These stains, clear in outline and unsmudged, show a downward trend in their flow. Such would have been the direction taken by blood flowing from Jesus' various wounds while he hung vertically on the cross but not while his body lay prone in the tomb, if such flows could still have occurred at that point” (Image 3)…those bodily areas closer to or touching the cloth should be delineated very clearly while those further away should be less distinct. In fact, however, Jesus' hands and face, including even the recessed areas around his eyes, are quite distinct (as one would expect in portrait art) while other areas of his body such as his buttocks and his navel are faintly outlined or even invisible” (Image 3, Wild)

Image 3 The blood stains are circled on the Shroud of Turin, at the top can be seen wounds and consequent blood stains.
Pro:

Arguments against the shroud’s authenticity mention the blood present, as going against Jewish tradition in regard to burials (Hillers). Therefore, if the shroud is real it would not belong to a Jewish man. However, the shroud does show head wounds that could have been caused by the crown of thorns which was put on him.

In addition actual puncture wounds Jesus Christ would have had, if crucified are present in the wrists, the forehead as mentioned and the forearms. On the forearms section of the Shroud, there can be seen the blood stains of deep claw like scratch wounds caused by a flagellum (Image 4 and 5), scourging was a common practice to inflict on a person before their crucifixion. The shroud shows signs, of scourging through the blood stains present in the forearms. The wrists show where Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross. The wrists are the physical and historical account of where people were driven the nail, when crucified.

Excerpts on crucifixion:

“On this dorsal imprint we can see the back of the head which is covered with blood stains from puncture wounds. If these puncture wounds were caused by a crown of thorns, then the crown was not in the shape of a ringlet as widely believed but in the shape of a bushy cap which covered the entire head, since the puncture wounds appear throughout the head right up to the vertex or top.” (Image 4, Desalvo)

“Also, we can see numerous marks across the back. These marks appear in the shape of tiny knots or dumbbells and there are over 100 of these marks occurring in groups of two's and three's covering the entire body. These marks are likely the result of some type of scourging. From studying the size and shape of these marks and historical records we can identify the scourging instrument as the Roman Flagrum. This instrument has been found in archeological digs…” (Image 5, Desalvo)

Excerpt from Richard B. Sorenson, “Summary of Challenges to the Authenticity of the Shroud of Turin”:

“First Recorded Showing:

The first recorded showing of the Shroud was in the period 1355-57, and it was publicly displayed many times after that, so if it were a painting or other type of forgery, it must...
have been done prior to or during that period, and with the technology available in that era. Leonardo DaVinci, who some have alleged to be the artist, was born in 1452.

• Body Characteristics.

The Shroud image is highly realistic and detailed, and depicts many bodily wounds that are completely consistent with Biblical accounts of the crucifixion, such as whipping, lacerations, contusions, scalp punctures, wound in the side, etc. Detailed examinations of the image by medical investigators have uniformly confirmed its accuracy.

• Lack of Clothing.

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

• Nails through the Wrists rather than the Hands.

The plethora of artistic depictions of Jesus from the first through the sixteenth centuries all show him as being nailed to the cross through the hands, whereas in the Shroud image he is nailed through the wrists (the Shroud only shows the exit wounds and does not depict at what point the nails entered). As indicated below, nailing through the hands would not have supported a man’s weight, and the purported artist would have had to have both precedent.

• Image Characteristics.

The Shroud is linen, and raw unprepared linen repels water and is a difficult medium to work on. Furthermore, there are no pigments or brushstrokes. The image is without substance, and is made up of “lines” of darker coloration imprinted into the surface fibers of the cloth. These lines are approximately 1/100 the width of a human hair, making it impossible for the image to have been painted or manually created by an artist. Also, the depth of the actual Shroud image is very thin.

• Foreshortening.

Because the man’s head and knees are slightly bent, 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.

• Blood.

A number of researchers have demonstrated the presence of blood on the Shroud in various places, and some have done DNA testing, but the blood has proved to be too old and degraded to obtain
any useful DNA test results. It has also been shown that there is no image in the areas where the blood exists; the blood was apparently deposited on the Shroud first, and acted to inhibit the image formation mechanism...” (Sorenson)
Bibliography


