

TWO STUDIES OF JOHN 20:6-7

Biblical scholars have long recognized the difficulties in St. John's description of what he saw in the Empty Tomb that made him believe. Believe in what? And why? The uncertainties and varieties of translations into modern languages, and even in the Vulgate, are evidence enough that there is a problem. The Johannine passage is of paramount importance, not only to sindonologists. Whether, as some say, the Shroud illumines the Gospels or, according to others, the Gospels illumine the Shroud, is an idle distinction. They illumine each other in the same light.

The Rev. Father André Feuillet translated John 20:6-7 in a new and revealing way. During the 1978 Exposition of the Shroud, his translation was printed large on a placard and hung on the wall of the museum of the Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia for all to ponder:

[Pierre] voit les linges affaissés, et le suaire qui avait été sur la tête de Jésus, non pas affaissé avec les linges, mais enroulé distinctement exactement à sa place. (André Feuillet: "L'Identification et la disposition des linges funéraires de la sepulture de Jésus d'après les données du quatrième évangile". Acts of 1978, p. 239)

(He sees the cloths sunk down and the napkin that had been on Jesus' head not sunk down with the cloths, but distinctly rolled, exactly in its place.)

Speaking to the members of the 1978 Congress, Fr. Feuillet emphatically states: One must absolutely not violate the texts of our Gospels to make them agree with the Shroud of Turin." The amazing thing is that scholars — like Jacob — have grappled with an angelic passage that modern language translations render insipid, inconsequential. Why these "bandelettes" lying carelessly on the floor, why the "face veil" neatly folded and laid aside all by itself? Where is the Shroud bought by Joseph of Arimathea? Would such a confused, contradictory scene shock the two apostles into belief in the Resurrection? Instead, in a correct translation, St. John's choked description becomes luminously clear, and the awesome significance visually illustrated before our eyes in the Holy Shroud.

LE LINCEUL DE JESUS DANS LES EVANGILES
ROBERT BABINET

Robert Babinet introduces his study by stating that the best source for understanding the enigma of the Shroud is in the Gospels; and for a precise study of the funeral linens one must refer only to the original Greek texts. The way St. John wrote of the discovery in the Empty Tomb has been criticized for not being a "paragon of clarity". Babinet instead finds John's description is of "astonishing realism".

Examination of the Septuagint manuscripts A and B indicate that *sendon* and *othonia* are synonymous, so there is in fact no contradiction between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel, authored by St. John, who had been "nourished on the Septuagint". *Soudarion*, instead, refers to a chinband, a small cloth circled under the chin to a knot at the top of the head, used to keep closed the jaw of the deceased.

After pondering the exegesis of Lavergne and Feuillet, Babinet gives his own translation of John 20:6-7:

Il observe les linges gisants, et la mentonnière, qui était sur la tête de Jésus, non pas gisante parmi les linges mais distinctement enroulée a la même place.

(He observes the cloths lying, and the chinband, which was on Jesus' head, not lying like the cloths but distinctly rolled up at the same place.)

The key phrase is *eis hena topon*. This does not mean "on the floor, not with the linens but apart, not with linens but separate, rolled up in a place by itself", . . . as one reads in the translations. It means: "in the same place". The chinband, therefore, remained in the same place it was while it was around Jesus' head, that is, between the top and bottom layers of the Shroud. The Shroud was lying flat but the chinband retained its circular and somewhat bulky form. This accords well with John Jackson's theory of collapse of the cloth through the Resurrecting Body.

It was seeing the Shroud lying undisturbed and the form of the chinband still where Jesus' head had been, that John "saw and believed".

Babinet quotes also the version by Sister Jeanne d'Arc, renowned Greek scholar:

Il remarque les linges là, à plat. Et le tissu qui était sur sa tête n'est pas à plat avec les linges, mais enroule,, lui, en place.

(He notices the cloths there, lying flat. And the cloth that was on his head is not flat like the cloths, but it is rolled up, in its own place.)

In conclusion, Babinet notes that the blank areas on the Shroud under the chin and between the frontal and dorsal heads confirm the presence of a chinband and that the semantic studies authorize one to identify the Shroud of Turin as the Shroud of the Gospels.

Readers of *Esprit et Vie* will remember Robert Babinet's article, "Le Sindon et la découverte du tombeau vide en Jean 20:3-10", that appeared in June of 1988 in that prestigious hundred-and-three-year-old journal.

ETUDE DE JEAN 20:3-8
BERNARD RIBAY

The Dominican Father Ceslas Lavergne came to Turin at the time of the II International Congress of Sindonology in 1978, but he was unable, for reasons of health, to participate. His paper, "La Protohistoire du Linceul du Seigneur", was delivered by "a young and vibrant"* scholar, Bernard Ribay. Ribay's involvement in the Johannine question is therefore not only of long standing, but also based on personal communication with theologians whose patient scholarship coupled with deep reflection in the Gospel events have structured a clear conception of what St. John meant to convey. To begin, Ribay asks the *vexata quaestio*: What did the Evangelist see that made him, on the spot, *believe*? He quotes the translation that Feuillet published in 1977 in *Esprit et Vie*:

Pierre considère les linges affaissés, et le soudarion qui était à sa tête, non pas affaissé autant que les linges, mais distinctement enveloppé-et-enroulé au même endroit.

(Peter regards the sunken cloths, and the napkin that was at his head, not sunk down as much as the cloths, but distinctly enveloped-and-rolled-up at the same place.)

The interpretation is not new to us: the "top" half of the Shroud is collapsed upon itself; it is empty; the corpse is no longer there. The *soudarion* is a napkin, a chinband, that had encircled Jesus' face to prevent the jaw from falling. The form of the chinband is discerned still in its place, where Jesus' head had been; it is still inside the fold of the Shroud. Farther on, Ribay calls attention to the theological and apologetical aspects of this passage, as a reminder of the distinction between human reason and faith, two separate domains: "He saw" being a human faculty; "he believed" appertains to faith.

"This correct translation and its interpretation," Ribay states,

*Jose Luis Carretio Exteandia: *Al Cerrarse la Lima de la Sabana de Christo*, Madrid 1980.

"are obtained not by the assertions of vague intuitions, but by demonstrations conducted with rigor, objectivity and impartiality."

In a trenchant *explication de texte*, he then takes each word of the original Greek passage and holds it up for inspection. Reading this section, I had the uncanny sensation of viewing a display of botanical specimens; as if some intrepid explorer, venturing on perilous expeditions into exotic and ancient territories, had assembled a vast collection of each species; each specimen carefully mounted, identified, its primitive environment described and its microscopic dissections pitilessly analyzed.

Except here the specimens were semantic, plucked from the rich fields of ancient literature, sacred and profane, in languages Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Syriac, Aramaic, Arabic.... Even the troublesome *othonia* seems subjugated in this scrutiny. As each specimen is examined in its original context, all its apparatus is systematically noted and recorded, and finally entered as scientific data.

Père A.-M. Dubarle, O.P., suggested to Ribay that he investigate the Greek word *opsis*. St. John uses it (11:44) in relation to the chin-band around the face of the revived Lazarus. *Opsis* meaning "face" (not "aspect", as in classical Greek) is found in the Septuagint texts of Exodus, Numbers, Ezekiel, Song of Songs, Genesis, and Samuel and in St. John's Apocalypse. The commentaries of scores of scholars are referenced in the footnotes.

In this paper, Bernard Ribay, penetrating even beyond the exegeses of his renowned predecessors, confirms, reiterates, if you will, their conclusions.

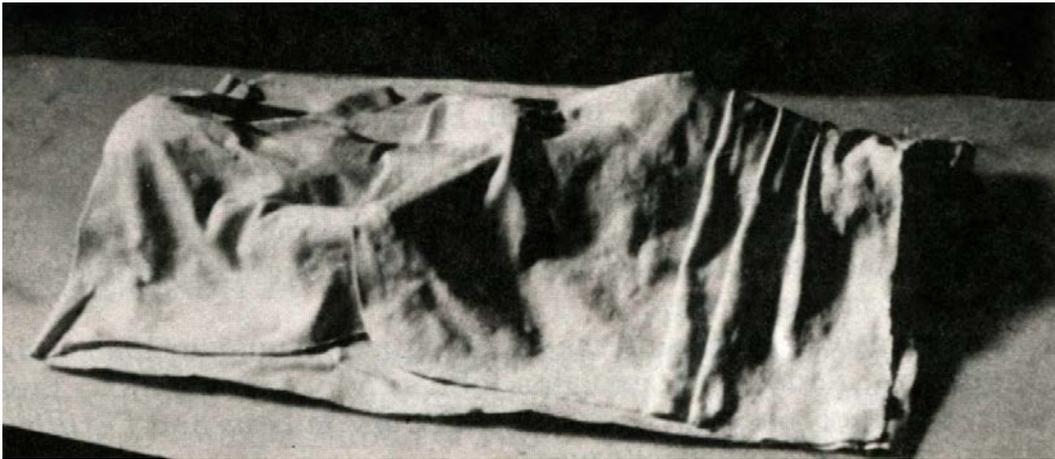
There is no other correct translation of John 20:6-7; there is no other interpretation but that the burial cloths lay undisturbed in the Empty Tomb. It is an interpretation that just happens to coincide perfectly with the scientific evidence of the Holy Shroud.

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It was not the purpose of Robert Babinet or Bernard Ribay to furnish a background history of studies on the Johannine text. But it is not without interest to recall the names of some Biblical scholars who, even before Lavergne and Feuillet, felt that the modern language translations did not ring true to the Greek original.

As early as 1813, a glimmer appeared in the Scottish gloom to the Rev. John Fleetwood, Doctor of Divinity. He wrote: "... Peter ... stooped down, and seeing the linen cloths lying in the same manner as before, he viewed their position, the form in which they were laid, and returned, wondering greatly in himself at what had happened" (Lk 24:12).

In *Das Leben Jesu im Lande and Folke Israel*, Dr. F. M. William imagined that the corpse of Jesus had become "aerial", leaving the linens "settled down". The idea would not leave him; in 1949 he



An articulated manikin in the position of the Dead Christ between the folds of fine linen.



The linen, "sunk down", retaining the form of the figure it had covered.



And the chinband, still in a circle, still "in the same place" beneath the upper fold.

wrote that the transfigured Body had "traversed the enveloping cloths. And these sank down in place...."

In 1939, the American Jesuit, Fr. McClellan, concluded that the linens were "sunk down"; in 1950, Fr. Antonio Coiazzi: "... the Shroud ... sunk down, like a glove that retains the form of the hand it had covered..." C. K. Barrett, in 1956: "... the Body ... traversed the linens, leaving them lying as they were." In 1967, the Jesuit P. Gaechter proposes the same in *Die Engelserscheinungen in der Auferstehungsberichten*.

An extensive exegesis by the Rev. Miguel Balague, in 1966, in *La prueba de la Resurrección*, explains John's "Vio y creyò". José Luis Carreño devotes several pages in *Al Cerrarse la Urna and El Ultimo Reportero* to his compatriot's work.

It was, however, Père Lavergne in "Le Sudarium et la Position des Linges après la Résurrection", (*Sindon* #6, 1961), who brought to light the startling significance, to John and Peter, of the sudarium. In fact, this small cloth "remained imprisoned, enveloped inside" the Shroud; but its presence there was clearly discernible for it was not sunk down "as much" as the sheet.

Let us go once more to Turin, 1978. At the close of the Congress, 142 persons signed a petition to remove the erroneous translation posted in the Introductory Exhibit (*la Pre-Lettura*) near the Cathedral. It was to no avail. There was an emotional moment during a question and answer period, when a voice was heard begging that from henceforth the Church would concede that at the Mass of the Holy Shroud this passage, John 20:6-7, would be read in Greek. Who would make such a plea, if not the "young and vibrant" scholar, Bernard Ribay! But his impassioned entreaty did not echo beyond the applause of his auditors.

Let there be a groundswell of loyalty to the correct translation; and may the sound of it be heard again in Rome.