

## THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO TURIN

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I have taken for the title of this paper an adaptation of the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). The disciples were despondent because they had expectations about Jesus that weren't met. But once they understood that their expectations were misguided and they were set straight about what they should have expected, they were able to see even a catastrophic event like the crucifixion in a different light.

Perhaps in October 1988, sindonologists were like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, thrown into disarray and confusion over the results of the 1988 C-14 testing. It is now almost 8 years since the announcements of those results, and it seems clear that our perspectives are different now that they were then, just as the perspectives of the Emmaus disciples changed. I can remember being with a group of sindonologists in 1988 at a gathering when a somewhat worried Fr. Peter Rinaldi called the place where we were gathered, concerned, about the effect of the announcement on Christians who had believed the Shroud to be authentic. I'm sure Fr. Rinaldi, who died in 1993, has had a hand in the positive turn of events that have happened since those dark days of 1988.

I am indebted to Dr. John Jackson for some of the ideas contained in this paper. Some years ago I started taking down notes for a paper like this and discovered that he had thought about similar thoughts. So I tapped him for his ideas and have interwoven them with mine.

Speaking of Dr. Jackson, I know we're here to honor Fr. Otterbein, but I feel that Dr. Jackson deserves special mention for his work on the Shroud over the years. He led the STURP team in 1978, and I figure he has personally spent about 45,000 hours in his life studying the Shroud. I have had the privilege to spend time with him the last 5 summers, and it's incredible what he and his wife Rebecca have done at the *Turin Shroud Center of Colorado*, which the two of them run. There are plans for a symposium in Colorado Springs on August 8-9 1997, so perhaps you can visit the center when you come out there for the symposium. Even if you don't make it out for the symposium, you can visit the center at another time. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for all they've done for the Shroud. Please keep them and their work in your prayers.

First, I would like to state several general insights before I get into some specifics. I think it's important to remember that Jesus himself in

## THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO TURIN - MARINO (cont'd)

the flesh was unable to convince everyone that He was who He said He was, so I don't think we can expect a cloth 2000 years later to convince everyone. God always leaves room for faith. As nice as it would have been for the results in 1988 to have come out 1st century, I've come to realize that the Lord would never make it that obvious. That would have been the equivalent of Jesus coming down off the cross when his tormentors taunted him to do so (Mk 15:32). He obviously could have done that, but as Isaiah told us, God's ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts (55:8). When the tomb was found empty, people had the choice of believing that his body was stolen or that Jesus rose from the dead. People can believe that the C-14 test was accurate and shows that the cloth is definitely not the original cloth of Jesus or that the Shroud is authentic and that something is wrong with the C-14 date because it was a shoddy testing fraught with discrepancies and inconsistencies and doesn't match with 100 years of other, hard scientific evidence. Each side has something significant to which to point. Whatever side one comes down on, it really ends up being somewhat of a faith issue. And I believe, that's exactly as the Lord wants it.

If the Shroud is the actual burial cloth of Jesus, one might expect to find similarities not only between the Passion, Death, and Resurrection narratives and the Shroud but between the Shroud and the life of Jesus at every stage of his life and in the subsequent history of Christianity. I will attempt to set before you some of these similarities.

**ORIGINS:** In John 7:25-36, the Jews are discussing the origin of the Messiah. Because he grew up in Nazareth, they assumed he did not come from Bethlehem: "Does not scripture say that the Christ must be descended from David and come from the town of Bethlehem? So the people could not agree about him (7:42)." When Geoffroy II de Charny wanted to exhibit the Shroud in 1389, Bishop d'Arcis objected that the scriptures did not mention an image, which he believed the evangelists would not have failed to mention. Just as the Jews presumed wrongly that Jesus was not from Bethlehem because he was brought up in Nazareth and concluded that Scripture militated against Jesus being the Messiah, d'Arcis made an unwarranted presumption that the authenticity of the Shroud depended on a direct scriptural reference to the image. Many scholars have shown that the Shroud, including its image, in fact, corresponds very well with what is in Scripture about the burial linen.

**FAMILIARITY:** When Jesus claimed to be the bread that came down from heaven, the Jews complained that they knew his father and mother (Jn 6:41-42). The reasoning is that something so familiar couldn't be

## THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO TURIN - MARINO (cont'd)

divine. Some people refuse to believe that there could be anything divine about a linen cloth, which is a common, familiar object. According to this logic, the image, though unexplainable, has to be natural.

**SELF-TESTIMONY:** The Pharisees did not accept Jesus' testimony about Himself because He testified on His own behalf (Jn 8:13). Jesus nonetheless claimed that His testimony was valid and that His Father was his witness, too (Jn 8:14-18). Many people do not accept all of the self-contained indications on the Shroud suggesting authenticity and prefer to accept the external testimony of the dubious C-14 test. The Shroud, with its unexplained image and all of its powerful evidence, internally proclaims its own authenticity. The Church, by allowing exhibitions of the Shroud in 1998 and 2000, is an added witness to its authenticity.

**POPULAR ACCLAIM:** Although some people had doubts about him, some proclaimed "Surely he must be the prophet (Jn 7:40)." Although there were doubts about the Shroud, it was generally accepted as being authentic between the mid-14th century and 1988.

**MIRACLES AS SIGNS:** Jesus asked people to believe in Him for the works he did, if they didn't believe his words about Himself (Jn 14:11). Some people believed in him just on his words but others believed because of the some of the signs he worked as Jn 2:23 tells us. Believing in Jesus because of the Shroud is really no different than someone in his day that came to believe in him because of a sign he worked. The Shroud was for me personally, a catalyst for faith. Some people consider the Shroud in the same vein as the Pharisees asking for a sign from Jesus (Mt 12:38; Mk 8:12; Lk 11:16), but it is one thing to ask for a sign in bad faith; it is quite another to accept a sign that God graciously gives. No sign would have been enough for the Pharisees because they had made up their minds about Jesus and were not open to his claims. Similarly, some people have made up their minds about the Shroud and are not open to its claims. I remember one woman being interviewed on a Shroud documentary and being asked if she thought the Shroud was authentic. She said, "I don't believe it. I don't see how any cloth could last that long, even under the influence of the Lord Himself."!!! What can you say about a person who comes up with a statement like that? Just as Jesus wanted people to look beyond the sign itself to its significance, we must look beyond the Shroud itself for its significance. In both cases, the significance is the person of Jesus and his claims.

**DIVISIVENESS:** Some said about Jesus, He is a good man," others, "No, he is leading the people astray (Jn 7:12)." Some people feel the Shroud brings them closer to God; others that the Shroud brings a danger

## THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO TURIN - MARINO (cont'd)

of idolatry. Some tried to discredit Jesus by attributing his exorcisms to the Beelzebub (Mt 12:24; Mk 3:22; Lk 11:15). When the 1st pictures came out in 1898 showing the majestic life-like image on the photographic negative, some tried to discredit it by charging that trickery was involved. The photographer, Secondo Pia, was vindicated when new photo: where taken in 1931 and yielded the same results.

**PLOTS:** The Pharisees and Herodians, although enemies, joined forces to try to overthrow Jesus (Mk 3:6). Certain people who would normally be at odds with one another have combined forces at times to try to discredit the Shroud. One well-known detractor of the Shroud who normally writes for religious-bashing publications wrote a "the Shroud fake" article for a Christian evangelical magazine. The Pharisees and Herodians eventually wanted to kill Jesus. In 1972, two attempts were made to set the Shroud on fire to destroy it.

**BETRAYAL:** Jesus was betrayed by one of his own disciples Mt 26:47-56; Mk 14:43-49; Lk 22:47-52; Jn 18:3-4). STURP planned the C-14 testing and then was drummed out of the picture by one who had supposedly been connected with the group.

**JUDGMENT;** Jesus was judged by the Sanhedrin and found guilty of being an imposter, despite all the evidence that pointed to Jesus being the Messiah (Mt. 26:57-68; Mk 14:53-65; Lk 22:54; Jn 18:12-24). The Shroud was judged by the C-14 labs and pronounced to be a forgery, despite all the evidence that pointed to the Shroud being authentic.

**CASTING LOTS:** When Jesus was crucified, lots were cast for his tunic (Jn 19:23-24). During the C-14 testing, a scientist made a bet for a pair of boots on the outcome of the C-14 test. (Ian Wilson mentioned that in his *Holy Faces, Secret Places* book. I believe that it was this citation that prompted me to start looking for other similarities.) Jesus' clothing was torn into 4 pieces (Jn 19:23). The Shroud was cut into 4 pieces, 3 pieces for the labs and 1 extra piece.

**CRUCIFIXION:** There were apparently 3 nails used on Jesus (2 in the wrists and 1 in the feet). 3 labs were used for the dating. When Jesus was crucified, he was mocked. After the C-14 dating, the British Museum mocked the Shroud in a exhibition about forgeries. After the crucifixion,

most people believed Jesus could not be the Messiah. After the C-14 dating, most people believed that the Shroud could not be the burial cloth of Jesus. After the crucifixion, the enemies of Jesus thought they would hear no more of him. After the C-14 results, the labs thought they would hear no more of the Shroud.

**FAITHFUL DISCIPLES:** At the time crucifixion, most disciples fled

**THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO TURIN - MARINO (cont'd)**

while John and some of the women stayed near Jesus (Jn 19:25-27). After the C-14 results, some sindonologists abandoned the cause while others refused to flee.

**SEALS:** A seal was put on the tomb (Mt 27:66). Seals were put on the canisters containing the Shroud samples being packaged for the C-14 test.

**ENERGY:** Jesus knew that power had gone out of him when the woman with the hemorrhage touched him (Mt 9:20-22; Mk 5:25-34; Lk 8:43-48). His face became radiant during the Transfiguration (Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2-3; Lk 9:29). He appeared as a light to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3; Acts 22:6). A radiant energy was evidently given off to produce the image on the Shroud.

**RESURRECTION:** The disciple whom Jesus loved saw in the lay of the cloth evidence that Jesus rose from the dead (Jn 20:8-9). Scientists see in the lay of the image, evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. Just as Jesus seemingly passed through locked doors (Jn 20:19), it appears that the cloth "passed through" the body as the body dematerialized. Just as death could not conquer Jesus, the C-14 results could not conquer the Shroud.

**PAYOFFS:** Just as Judas was payed 30 pieces of silver for betraying Jesus (Mt 25:14-16), the Oxford lab was given 1 million pounds by 45 rich businessmen to establish an archaeological chair for supposedly debunking the Shroud. Do you know when that payment was made? It was made on Good Friday, 1989.

**DEBUNKING THEORIES:** In the 19th and 20th centuries, a lot of theories were put forth trying to rationally explain the Resurrection: it was a mass hallucination; it was a plot concocted by the disciples; the disciples couldn't find the body because they went to the wrong tomb. All of these theories couldn't be right and they actually had the effect of strengthening the solidity of the belief that Jesus resurrected. Any number of theories have been put forward to explain how the Shroud image was done: it's a painting; it was done with a dauber and a bas-relief; it's a heated statue; it's a carbon dusting technique; it was done by Leonardo da Vinci; it was done using a camera obscura before the time of da Vinci. All of these theories can't be right and they similarly strengthen the solidity of the belief that the image is authentic. And isn't interesting that the 19th and 20th centuries also gave us the scientific expertise needed to unlock many of the mysteries of the Shroud?

**RICHNESS OF GOSPELS/SHROUD:** Just as the gospels continue to be studied and new theological and historical insights emerge and reveal a

## THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO TURIN - MARINO (cont'd)

new richness, so does the Shroud continue to be studied and reveal a new richness as new theological and historical insights shed more light on its mystery.

**MISCELLANEOUS:** The age of the Shroud given by the labs was 663 +/-25 years, which includes 666.

-- For those of you familiar with the events in Fatima, Portugal in 1917, STURP finished its testing in 1978 on October 13, the anniversary of the last of the apparitions, the day of the Miracle of the Sun.

-- STURP was to brief the Pope on its findings on May 13, 1981, the anniversary of the 1st apparition.

-- 10 years to the day after STURP finished its 1978 testing, the C-14 results were announced

**CONCLUSION:** THE PHILOSOPHER BLAISE PASCAL WROTE THAT GOD GIVES ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO SATISFY THOSE OF GOOD WILL BUT NEVER ENOUGH FOR THOSE OF ILL WILL. AS I MENTIONED, WHEN JESUS' TOMB WAS FOUND EMPTY, PEOPLE COULD BELIEVE THAT SOMEONE HAD STOLEN HIS BODY OR THAT HIS DISCIPLES SAW HIM AFTER HIS DEATH AND THAT HE HAD RISEN. WITH THE SHROUD, YOU CAN BELIEVE THAT THE C-14 RESULT IS ACCURATE AND THAT THE SHROUD CANNOT BE THE BURIAL CLOTH OF JESUS OR YOU ARE FREE TO BELIEVE THAT IT IS EVIDENCE FOR HIS RESURRECTION AND THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH THAT C-14 RESULT. THERE IS ANOTHER POSSIBILITY THAT SOME HOLD TO: THAT THE C-14 IS ACCURATE BUT THAT THE IMAGE WAS MIRACULOUSLY MADE IN THE MIDDLE AGES. IN ANY EVENT, OUR REACTION TO THE SHROUD MAY END UP TELLING US AS MUCH ABOUT OURSELVES AS IT TELLS US ABOUT OUR GOD. I JUST KNOW THAT MANY PEOPLE, MYSELF INCLUDED, SEE THE IMAGE ON THE SHROUD, AND, LIKE THE APOSTLE THOMAS, WHEN HE SAW THE RISEN LORD, ARE MOVED TO SAY, "MY LORD AND MY GOD."

