

Shroud feature

The Holy Shroud of Turin

2) Identity - Whose image?

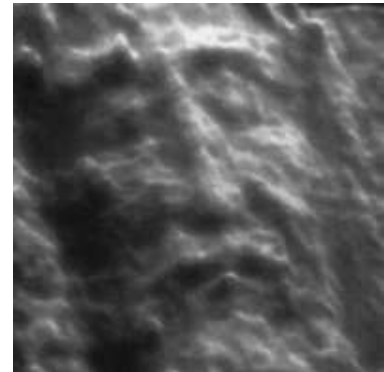
By David Belz

Introduction & reprise

In a previous introductory article, I provided an overview of the Shroud of Turin, and I gave a summary of key scientific work that has attempted to authenticate it as the burial cloth of Jesus Christ.

This linen cloth 4.34m x 1.09m depicts two faint brownish images showing the frontal and dorsal views of a man who has been tortured and crucified. Ever since 1898 when the first photographs taken showed that the image was a virtual negative, science has attempted to learn more about this enigmatic artefact.

The wounds shown were anatomically flawless, and the blood flows provided convincing evidence of crucifixion; Pollen samples showed plants exclusive to Palestine, Turkey and the Mediterranean; Dirt particles are said to correspond to Jerusalem limestone; Red stains on the cloth are blood of type Group AB; Minor cotton contamination of the linen shows that the weave is of Middle East and not European origin; The absence of vanillin in the cloth suggests that it is of ancient manufacture and not medieval. The image itself encodes 3-dimensional information. There is no known method of producing a similar image with all its properties. Geometry of the facial image closely matches that of the Sudarium of Oviedo.



*Shroud face in 3D
by VP8 Image Analyser*

Present Outline - The Medical Researchers

In this present article I want to establish the identity of the victim and present the arguments as to why it is Jesus Christ. In searching for an answer we are deprived of any such direct evidence as clothing, jewellery, pottery or the other more usual archaeological clues. We have only the image of the naked body and the signs of punishment inflicted.

In the previous article, I described the first anatomical studies carried out by Paul Vignon and Yves Delage at the Paris Sorbonne following the earliest photographs of 1898. Since then further extensive studies have occurred, most notably by Dr David Willis of Surrey England during the 1960s. In the United States, Dr Anthony Sava of Brooklyn, New York made a thorough study of the bloodstains, particularly the wound in the side. Subsequent work was carried out by pathologist Dr Robert Bucklin in Michigan and California.

The work by Dr Willis during the early 1960s concentrated on the wounds inflicted on the Shroud man. As a general practitioner in Surrey he came from a veritable dynasty of physicians named Willis back to the time of King Charles II. As one of the few British research experts on the Shroud he accompanied Ian Wilson and Fr Maurus Green to a special exposition at Turin in 1973. His detailed descriptions of the wounds show a close match with the

Shroud feature *cont.*

(Continued from page 29)

gospel accounts of the punishment inflicted on Jesus.

Brutal prevalence of crucifixion

It is a brutal fact of history that countless thousands were sent to their death, executed by the barbaric punishment of crucifixion. It was practiced by Persians, Seleucids, Carthaginians and Romans from about the sixth century BC, until the fourth century AD, when the first Christian emperor Constantine the Great abolished it out of veneration for Jesus Christ, its most famous victim. It was most frequently used to punish political or religious agitators, pirates, slaves or those who had no civil rights.



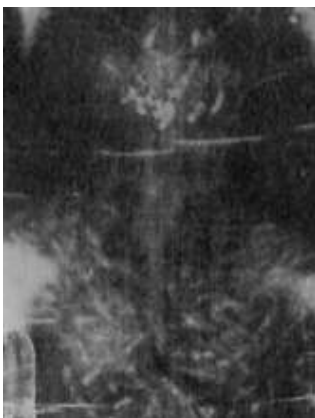
Bas-relief of Darius I, in Persepolis; Darius crucified 3000 political opponents in Babylon

In 519 BC, Darius I, king of Persia crucified 3,000 political opponents in Babylon; In 71 BC, following the uprising of Spartacus, the Roman consul Marcus Licinius Crassus crucified 6,000 slaves on crosses set up on the Appian Way between Capua and Rome; In 88 BC, Alexander Janneus the Judean king and high priest crucified 800 Pharisaic opponents. Following the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC, riots broke out in Jerusalem while his

heir Archelaus was in Rome obtaining imperial ratification of Herod's will. The Syrian governor suppressed the uprising, crucifying some 3,000 Jews. Perhaps the collective memory of this last event may have provided the basis of Matthew's gospel story of the slaughter of the Innocents at this time.

So there is no shortage of crucifixion victims to choose from, and asking "*Whose image is on the Shroud?*" or "*Who is it meant to be?*" are fair questions.

First clues - hair and beard



Back of head showing pigtail, blood flows on scalp, and scourge marks on back

The first clue is in the long hair and beard. With few exceptions, Romans tended to be clean-shaven, while Jews traced their long hair and beards back to the time of Moses, his brother Aaron being specifically stated as having a beard. Jews only shaved their beards as a sign of deepest mourning.

Visible on the dorsal image is a long streak of hair, in the form of a pigtail, from the back of the head reaching down to the base of the shoulder blades. A German scholar H Gressman has shown that this was a common fashion for Jewish men in antiquity. Usually this was worn plaited and rolled up under the headgear, except on public holidays. There are superficial indications therefore that the man of the Shroud was a Jew.

Scourging - the Roman flagrum

Further important clues on the era of this crucifixion are provided in the shapes of the extensive scourge marks on the body. Each wound is of dumbbell shape as from twin balls or metal pellets. They occur in groups of three as from a three-thonged whip. The weapon is readily identifiable as the Roman *flagrum*, frequently mentioned in accounts of Christian martyrdoms, and occasionally illustrated on Roman coins. An actual specimen was discovered during excavations at Herculaneum, sister city of Pompeii, and displayed in the local museum. A *flagrum* in this form is not typical of any other culture, and so the scourge marks are identifiably Roman.



Roman coin (Herculaneum ~100BC) with gladiator using a flagrum against an opponent;



Reconstruction of a Roman flagrum (after P Vignon)

Each of the scourge marks is about 35 mm long, and as some are indistinct their number is estimated to be between 90 and 120. They have all been delivered from behind, the wounds in front being caused by aiming the weapon to whip around onto the upper chest and thighs. They were delivered by two men, the taller one on the right, and the shorter man on the left who had a tendency to whip his victim's legs as well as the back.

Piercing - Roman lancea

Another important clue is the apparent lance wound in the right side. The area from which the "blood" is seen to issue is described as a perfect ellipse 14mm x 15mm. There were three main stabbing and hurling weapons used by Roman soldiers: the *hasta*, a long heavy spear; the lighter *hasta velitaris*, a 1m long javelin with a thin point; the *pilum*, also with a thin point but twice as long as the *hasta*. None of these could have caused the lance wound.

The weapon described in St John's gospel used to check that Jesus was dead is the Roman *lancea*, in John's Greek - *lonche*. This was a spear of various lengths, with a long leaf-like tip, thickening and round off at the shaft. Whereas other weapons might be thrown and break on impact so they could not be reused by the enemy, the *lancea* was designed to be held continuously, and was the type of weapon we might expect to be standard issue at the Roman garrison in Jerusalem. From excavated examples the shape of the *lancea's* blade corresponds exactly to the elliptical wound visible on the Shroud.



Identical wound on Dying Gaul Statue, Rome;

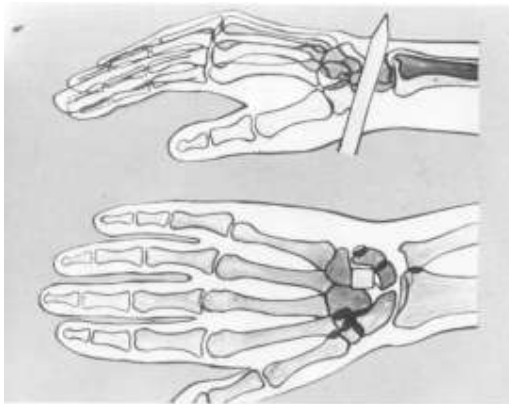


Remains of lancea, Zurich museum

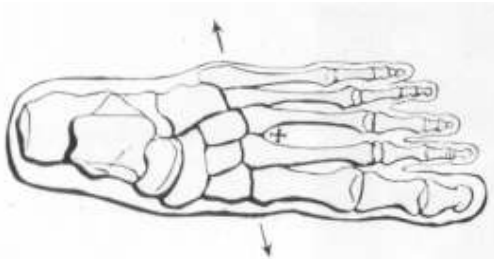
Shroud feature *cont.*

Crucifixion - wrist nailing

When we come to the crucifixion evidence itself, we are on less certain ground as there was considerable variation in the methods used, depending on the resources immediately available and sometimes this was merely at the whim of the soldiery. Two main methods appear to have been used: either binding the arms to the cross-beam or else nailing at the wrists. Until 1968 no known victim of crucifixion had been discovered. The main reason for this is that crucifixion nails were highly valued as medical talismans being credited with curing epilepsy, fever, swellings and stings, and so rarely remained with the body.



Position of nail in the wrist (top) and in the foot (+ below) as deduced by medical experts. The nail contact with the median nerve reflexes the thumb into the palm of the hand (not shown)



In 1968 a Jewish burial ground was discovered near Jerusalem while excavating for a new apartment block. It dated from shortly before the Jewish revolt of 70 AD, and most there appeared to have died violent deaths. It included a young man *Jehohanan* who had been crucified, as a nail had bent and jammed in his heel. Closer examination revealed that he had indeed been nailed through the wrists.

The only gospel record that tells us that Jesus was nailed to the cross, rather than being bound to the cross-beam is found in John 20:25-28, the story of doubting Thomas who refused to believe in the risen Christ until he had seen the holes the nails made: *"Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe."*

The Greek word used here for 'hands' is *'kefir's* and it includes the hand, the wrist and the lower forearm. The same word *'kefir's* is used in Acts 12:7 describing Peter's escape from prison "... *and the chains fell from his hands*". Three of the modern reputable translations now have the chains falling "*from his wrists*".

However St Jerome when translating John 20:25 from the original Greek into Latin, used the word "*manus*" (hand) instead of "*carpus*" (wrist). Consequently countless generations of Christian artists show the crucifixion of Jesus with the nails through the palms of his hands rather than through his wrists.

The man on the Shroud image had been nailed through the wrists, and as we have shown this is consistent with the gospel account of John 20:25, and from the evidence of *Jehohanan*, this was evidently a Roman practice.

Facial and other wounds

Dr Willis has described the superficial facial wounds, listing them as follows: swelling of both eyebrows; torn right eyelid; large swelling below right eye; swollen nose; triangular-shaped wound on right cheek; swelling to left cheek; swelling on left side of chin. These injuries are consistent with the gospel accounts of Christ being struck repeatedly on the face, both by the High Priest's men and Pilate's soldiers, prior to his crucifixion.

There are also other marks on the body image, signs of abrasion on the shoulders from the carrying of a heavy cross, and severely damaged knees as if from repeated falls. However the legs are not broken, as is consistent with the scriptural accounts.

The decisive evidence - Crown of thorns

However the most telling evidence of all identifying the Shroud man as Jesus Christ are the wounds on the scalp and the back of the head. Ian Wilson has provided a detailed description of these wounds in David Willis's precise medical terminology.

As Willis found, it is impossible to talk sensibly about these wounds except in the context of a crown or a cap of thorns as described in the mockery of Christ as the King of the Jews. Paul Vignon too had been fascinated by these thorn wounds particularly one shaped like a numeral three which he found entirely faithful to physiology. He remarked, "*No painter, in his most elaborate work has ever risen to such detail.*"

When we look at most of the clues, we can say that these are all consistent with the gospel account of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, but that most of them might have happened to any Jewish victim crucified by the Romans. However the crowning of thorns is signatory, as no other victim ever suffered this punishment.

Crowning or capping with thorns was never a normal part of Roman punishment procedure, nor in any other culture throughout human history. In the gospel accounts, it seems to have arisen from some unknown Roman soldier's whim, perhaps after sighting some thorn branches gathered for firewood. "They dressed him up in purple, twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on him; and they began saluting him '*Hail, king of the Jews!*' They struck his head with a reed and spat on him; and they went down on their knees *to do him homage.*" *Mark 15:16-19.* The crowning of thorns then is clearly seen as being solely part of the mockery as king of the Jews, and uniquely identifies the Shroud man as Jesus Christ.

One of the earliest modern Shroud sceptics was Jesuit historian Herbert Thurston, but he felt obliged to admit in 1903:

"As to the identity of the body whose image is seen on the Shroud, no question is possible. The five wounds, the cruel flagellation, the punctures encircling the head, can still be clearly distinguished. ... If this is not the impression of the Christ, it was designed as the counterfeit of that impression. In no other person since the world began could these details be verified."



Facial negative showing blood flows from scalp including the distinctive "3" mark on forehead. Facial bruising also

Shroud feature *concl.*



One of many recent three dimensional renderings of the Shroud negative image published on a new French web-site: <http://thierrycastex.blogspot.fr/> The image has been enhanced by Fourier Transform filtering, and RGB equalisation of colour components. Normal photographs do not have 3D capability. The legs are shown clearly bent at the hips and knees, as in rigor mortis. The four irregular shapes are the cloth patches sewn after the 1532 fire damage. The wound in the left wrist is clearly visible, and the dorsal image is seen to commence at the crown of the head. Several other fascinating images can be found on this web-site. A reading knowledge of French is helpful to obtain complete information.

Looking ahead

In a subsequent article, I hope to outline the evidence for some of the theories concerning the early history of the Shroud prior to its first emergence in France in about 1350.

References

- My main reference source for this article is "*The Turin Shroud*" by Ian Wilson, Victor Gollancz, 1978; Other copies of images are from his 2010 work "*The Shroud*" Bantam Press.
- I am grateful to Fr Paul O'Connor and another correspondent for some exegetical research on John 20:25-28, and Acts 12:7.

Parish Pastoral Council:

There have been recent changes to the membership of the Parish Pastoral Council with some members retiring while other new members have consented to being appointed. Following retirement of Brian Geary, the Council is soon to appoint a new chairperson.

Present PPC members are:

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Fr John van der Kaa (parish priest) | Gerard Chaplin | Peter Gordon |
| Galu Hunkin | Jane Langham | Ray Lindsay |
| Andrew Oliver | Ian Pettigrew | Jane Norman |

Others continue to assist PPC in their roles as required:

Brian Geary (immediate past chairman); Tony Barkley (parish webmaster); Sue Devereux (archdiocesan representative assisting Tawa).