

This reflection paper concerns data on the Shroud, some of the prophecies in the Old Testament and my reaction to it. It is a personal reflection based on my own experiences in life, faith and how the Shroud has impacted my life & what I do because of that impact. I have always believed and lived out that my actions must correspond to my beliefs. This road in life is not necessarily easy, but it is worth living. I spent four years away from my Catholic home studying Scripture, both New & Old Testaments, reflecting on the passages that I am bringing to bear in this paper. At that time I knew nothing of a Shroud, was unaware that there were things in this world that may give us some indication of what Jesus looked like or what he was like with the exception of Scripture and history. From the fruit of that reflection & study, I offer this poem I wrote in light of that to start this reflection.

The Quest of a Stranger

His heavy breathing could hardly be heard above the tumultuous crowd. The upward climb was a difficult one; harder than any had yet endured. Was there a purpose to all this madness? A goal to be reached? Truth would be known, sooner or later.

In the midst of the path the stranger traveled, in spite of the noise all around, there was quiet. Even though hatred surrounded him as a fog, love was present as oxygen which gives life. Riots were all around, yet there was peace. Is it true that a trail of innocent blood was left behind? Does evil finally triumph over good?

But what is this? The stranger has fallen. His knees are bruised and his blood is flowing again. Is there no one here to help an innocent stranger? Whips!! The punishment for falling is severe. Thank goodness I'm not in his place.

Up again, he moves slowly along. Pushed and kicked, spat upon and whipped, he struggles silently upward as the crowd mocks and screams. How is it cruelty seems to add insult to injury? Is it possible for a beard to be a souvenir? Still the man refuses to curse any. Has the world gone mad?

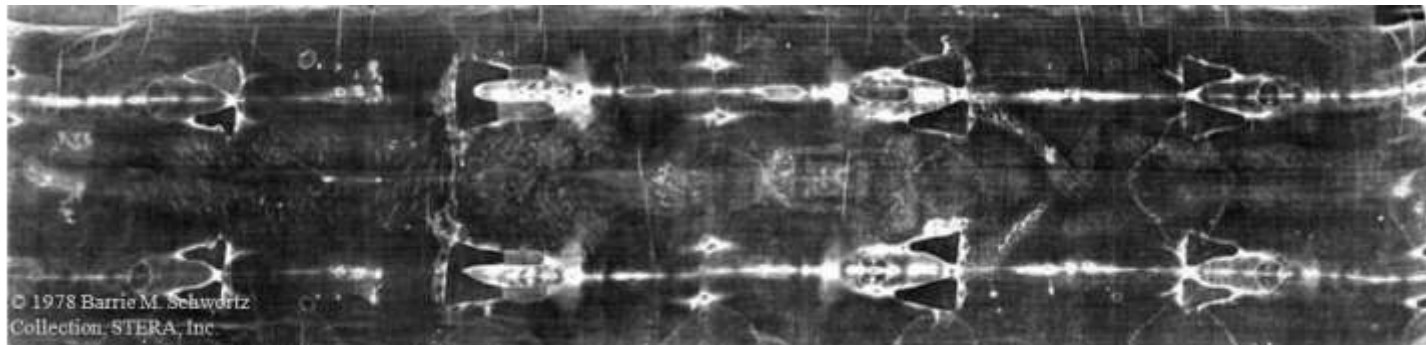
The hill traveled by the stranger seemed never ending, yet the end is in sight. The Legionnaires awaiting his arrival appeared anxious and angry at the delay. Surely his quest will be fulfilled at the top of this tortuous hill.

As he arrived at the apex, the Legionnaires ripped the robe off his torn back. They lean over him as they drive the spikes through his body, making him one with the wood. Why do they treat him with such contempt? Not even one word of protest did he speak.

As he stood suspended over all, darkness covered the land. Yet a voice could be heard, words coming from the mouth of the stranger, "...Forgive them...".

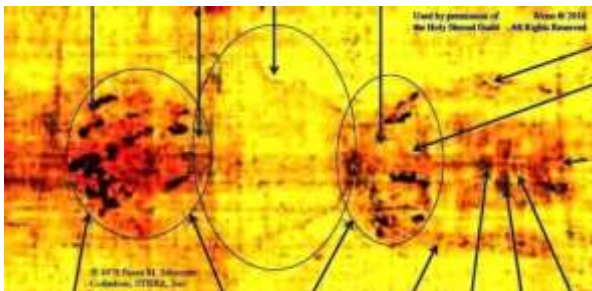
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I come to study of the Shroud in a most unexpected way. I know several Shroud researchers who would make the same claim, some of whom are my good friends, such as Deacon Pete Schumacher & Barrie Schwartz. These seem to be accidents or chance, but is there really anything as chance? Perhaps so or perhaps not – it sure does take faith to believe such a proposition. But when I look upon the image of the Shroud, I see it in a unique way...with my own two eyes. No one has ever seen the Shroud in the same way.

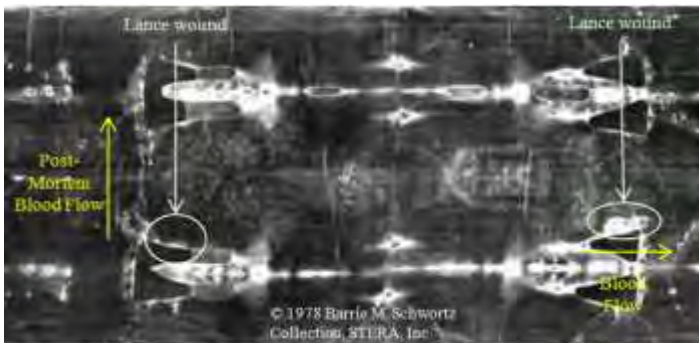


Zechariah 12:10¹ *I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of mercy and supplication, so that when they look on him whom they have thrust through they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and they will grieve for him as one grieves over a firstborn.*

In piercing him with my sins, I mourn and grieve. I mourn and grieve because he did this willingly and I took no thought of it in my sinfulness and my selfishness. I mourn and grieve the more I realize how selfless was the Son of God and how selfish was I, his creation. I look on him whom I have pierced through when I am mean back to someone who is not so nice to me, when I am thoughtless and unappreciative for anyone who does anything for me. At this point, please note I do not go around trying to hurt people and be unappreciative. Yet I find in myself a law that seems to push me on to think of myself rather than others and that push is going in the wrong direction, toward myself and away from the other. Perhaps you have a similar experience in life? The bottom line is life is not all about me. Perhaps you can honestly say the same for yourself. Yet I am not here to talk about you, about others, I am talking about myself. I don't deserve the sacrifice the image above indicates. Let me explain.

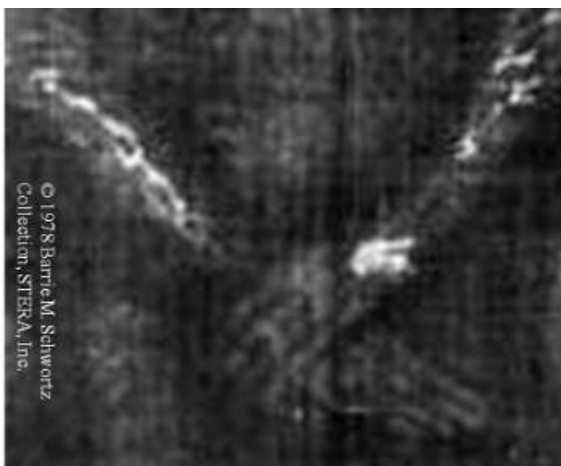


To the left we have a small image of the ventral (front) and dorsal image of this man's head. There are arrows pointing out several points. You can see in the circles of the dorsal and ventral images the top of his head. These marks were made by a crown of thorns. Please note that there is only one person in recorded history who was whipped and crucified by the Romans who had to endure the crown of thorns – Jesus. When Petrus Soons came to Alamogordo to do some work and gave several enthralling talks several years ago, I had the chance to speak with him one-on-one. He told me when they had produced the full hologram front and back of the entire image on the Shroud, he climbed a ladder and looked at the top of his head and found that what looks deceptively flat in the image to the left was actually filled with puncture wounds. He was truly pierced in the head. Ever get hit in the head? I have. Man that hurts! This man endured puncture wounds from thorns that were one to two inches in length! He wore a helmet of thorns, as Petrus, a retired medical doctor, was to relate to me from his groundbreaking work with holographic imagery studies of the Shroud. According to doctors including Soons, the cartilage was displaced from the bone of his nose. I realize what this Man has done and I mourn and grieve.

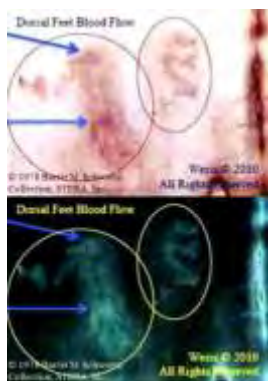


The wound in the side to the left was made by a Roman lance after the man was dead. How can I know that? Jesus was the only crucified one who had a crown of thorns and in the eyewitness accounts of the Gospels, we are told that he was thrust with the lance through after he was dead and blood and water flowed out separately. Medical doctors who have studied the Shroud have made this claim from their many years of experience. Even after death he still continued to give all he had and I mourn and grieve.

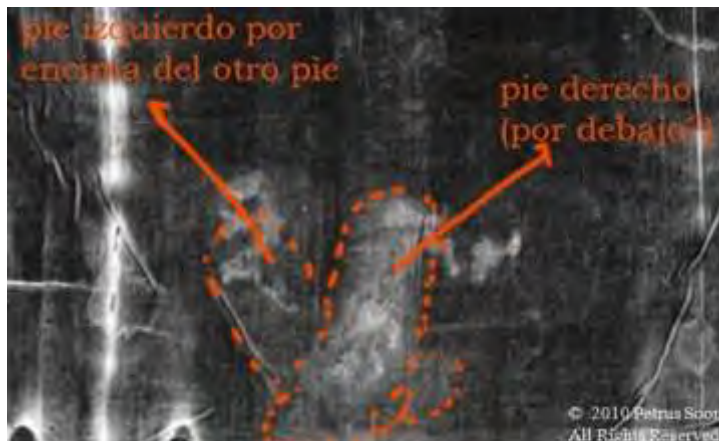
¹ All Scripture references from New American Bible, Revised Edition, 2011. Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.



Next we examine the hands/wrists. This wound started in the base of the palm, the nail travelling through [Destot's space](#) and coming out the wrist as you see to the left. Obviously both wrists were punctured in the same way because similar blood trails go down both his forearms. Nailing a person to the wood of a cross in crucifixion has shown to be able to hold more than the weight of a body. While you cannot see this in the negative image to the left, when one examines the color photo of Barrie Schwartz, documenting photographer on the 1978 STURP team, one can see what appears to be the thumbs behind the hands where they lay, either due to the median nerve being severed or just thumbs at rest with the nailing of to the wood of the cross. It is interesting that the picture of this inexplicable image would have x-ray qualities, but it does. I have seen it with my own two eyes and I grieve and mourn.



The feet are interesting and made easier to picture when one takes account what is highlighted by Dr. Petrus Soons to the right. It shows the right foot was put against the stipes (vertical beam) with the left laid on top of it in an X pattern. This was revealed through his holographic work. The image to the left is from a color image, not a negative one which explains why the feet are reversed from the negative image on the right. His feet were nailed to a tree and I mourn and grieve.



I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of mercy and supplication. Why all the mourning and grieving? Do you mean aside from the fact that the Romans were obviously expert in the art of torture, humiliation and death? It is because God will give us a spirit of mercy and supplication. My mourning and grieving show my sorrow and contrition, not just for what Jesus, the Son of Man had to go through to gain forgiveness for me (& you), but that very mourning and sorrow are a gift from God. When I mourn over that which is right to mourn over, I do what is right and just. And then I ask forgiveness and it is granted. All I have done is to cooperate with what God was doing in the first place. I am thankful it was His idea and so I see in it my redemption and salvation.

When I look at the Shroud I see my own reflection. It reflects my own sinfulness. All sin is disordered. I see chaos in the Shroud in one sense, and when I am living contrary to the will of God for me, I have chaos in my life. From this, the second reflection of myself I see in this image is what I deserve. As a sinner I do not deserve life, yet He gives it to me anyway. So I mourn and I grieve which brings me mercy and supplication, hence I find salvation when I trust in God my savior.

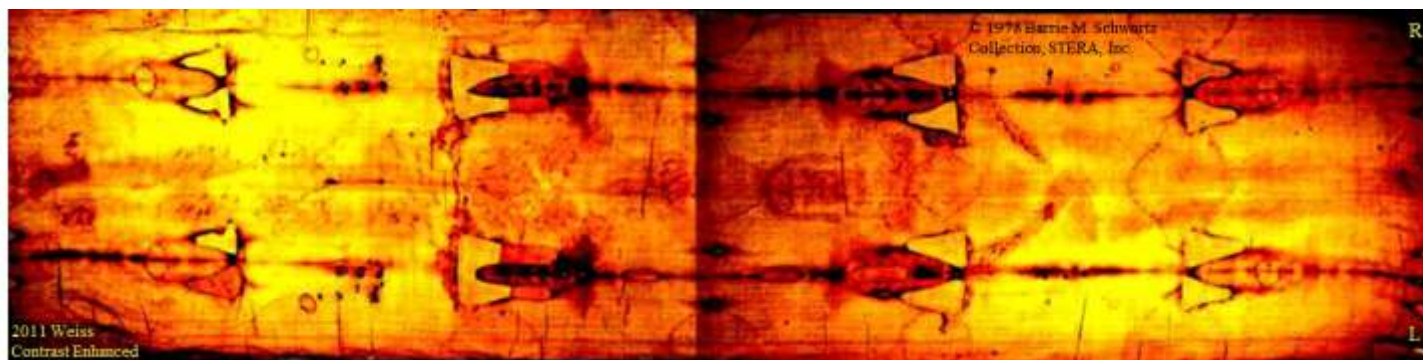


Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 *See, my servant shall prosper, he shall be raised high and greatly exalted. Even as many were amazed at him—so marred were his features, beyond that of mortals his appearance, beyond that of human beings—So shall he startle many nations,*

kings shall stand speechless; **for those who have not been told shall see**, those who have not heard shall ponder it. Who would believe what we have heard? To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up like a sapling before him, like a shoot from the parched earth; He had no majestic bearing to catch our eye, no beauty to draw us to him. He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain, like one from whom you turn your face, spurned, and we held him in no esteem. **Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God and afflicted, but he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed.** We had all gone astray like sheep, all following our own way; but the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all. Though harshly treated, he submitted and did not open his mouth; like a lamb led to slaughter or a sheep silent before shearers, he did not open his mouth. Seized and condemned, he was taken away. Who would have thought any more of his destiny? For he was cut off from the land of the living, struck for the sins of his people. He was given a grave among the wicked, a burial place with evildoers, though he had done no wrong, nor was deceit found in his mouth. **But it was the LORD's will to crush him with pain. By making his life as a reparation offering, he shall see his offspring, shall lengthen his days, and the LORD's will shall be accomplished through him.** Because of his anguish he shall see the light; because of his knowledge he shall be content; my servant, the just one, shall justify the many, their iniquity he shall bear. Therefore I will give him his portion among the many, and he shall divide the spoils with the mighty, because he surrendered himself to death, was counted among the transgressors, bore the sins of many, and interceded for the transgressors.

To put it bluntly, Jesus was beaten to a bloody pulp and I am startled. They did this to him while missing all the vital organs on purpose so as not to kill him. Then they stripped him naked to shame him some more. Yet I am saying they. Yes in history specific people did this. Yet my sins caused all this. If I were the only sinner on earth, Jesus would have come and died this horrific death for just me. Yet that is not the case, looking around at the state of the world, I think. But I am talking about me and my relation to this man. I am to see this and understand, reads the passage.

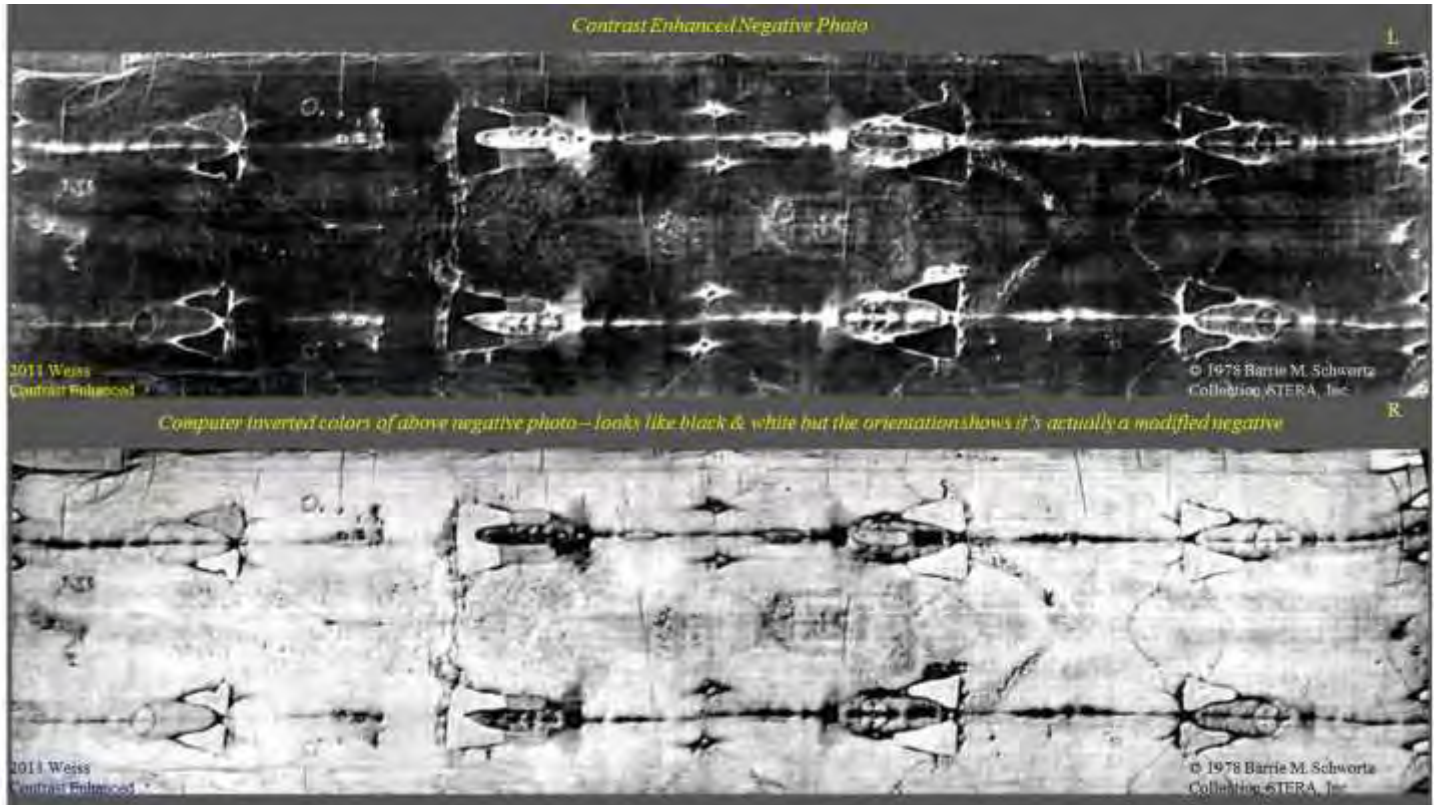
One can look at the image and see the flagrum whip marks all over his body, though easiest to view on his back, buttocks and legs down to his ankles. Higher resolution photographs reveal these marks even as high as his shoulders. In the following Psalm we can see how he felt in undergoing his torments. We can visually see on the image the piercing and we can see clearly that none of his bones are broken.



Psalm 22 *My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why so far from my call for help, from my cries of anguish? My God, I call by day, but you do not answer; by night, but I have no relief. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the glory of Israel. In you our fathers trusted; they trusted and you rescued them. To you they cried out and they escaped; in you they trusted and were not disappointed. But I am a worm, not a man, scorned by men, despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they curl their lips and jeer; they shake their heads at me: "He relied on the LORD—let him deliver him; if he loves him, let him rescue him." For you drew me forth from the womb, made me safe at my mother's breasts. Upon you I was thrust from the womb; since my mother bore me you are my God. Do not stay far from me, for trouble is near, and there is no one to help. Fierce bulls of Bashan encircle me. They open their mouths against me, lions that rend and roar. **Like water my life drains away; all my bones are disjointed. My heart has become like wax, it melts away within me. As dry as a potsherd is my throat; my tongue cleaves to my palate; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me; a pack of evildoers closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and my feet I can count all my bones. They stare at me and gloat; they divide my garments among them; for my clothing they cast lots.** But you, LORD, do not stay far off; my strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the grip of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth, my poor life from the horns of wild bulls. Then I will proclaim your name to my brethren; in the assembly I will praise you "You who fear the LORD, give praise! All descendants of Jacob, give honor; show reverence, all descendants of Israel! For he has not spurned or disdained the misery of this poor wretch, did not turn away from me, but heard me when I cried out. I will offer praise in the great assembly; my vows I will fulfill before those who fear him. The poor will eat their fill; those who seek the LORD will offer praise. May your hearts enjoy life forever!" All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD; all the families of nations will bow low before him. For kingship belongs to the LORD, the ruler over the nations. All who sleep in the earth will bow low before God; all who*

have gone down into the dust will kneel in homage. And I will live for the LORD; my descendants will serve you. The generation to come will be told of the Lord, that they may proclaim to a people yet unborn the deliverance you have brought.

And so I mourn and grieve – I am looking through the eyes of the prophet Zechariah. And yet that is not the end of the story. I do not *only* mourn and grieve. I come to the Lord with repentance and humility, knowing that I do not deserve his forgiveness and mercy, but asking nonetheless because of my need. And in my need he answers me. In my humility, he accepts me. What is humility but to know who I am in relation to the uncreated God?



And so I see in this image ultimately not just mourning and grieving, but my salvation. The Lord is saving me from myself and my sins by his great sacrifice. So ultimately I look on this image as one of self-donating love and mercy. May all who read this reflection come to their own realization that God loved them so much he did what we see in these images for them, personally, as well as for all mankind corporately.

Respectfully and with Love,

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