

The Shroud And The Iconography Of Christ

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Abstract:

The similarity between the Shroud face and most of the depictions of Christ known in art, both Eastern and Western, is clear and cannot be attributed to pure chance; it must be the result of a dependency, mediated or immediate, of an image from the other and of all from a common source. We can identify several elements on the Shroud that are not regular, hardly attributable to the imagination of the artists, that make us understand how the ancient representations of Christ's face depend on the venerated relic. It is reasonable to think that in the early days of the Church, the Shroud has been kept hidden for various reasons. During this period, for the representation of Christ they only used symbols or they applied to the figure of Christ appearances derived from other religions. After the victory of Christianity, sanctioned by Constantine in 313 with the Edict of Milan, a new image of the face of Jesus began to spread, which is characterized by not too long beard, mustache, narrow, tall and stately face, with long hair, falling on his shoulders, and sometimes with a middle line that divides them. Numerous testimonials, both written and iconographic, confirm that in Edessa (Sanliurfa today, in south-eastern Turkey) there was an impression left by Jesus on a cloth with his sweat and his blood. This sacred cloth, hidden for centuries and rediscovered in the sixth century, became the inspirational model for the iconography of Christ. All the legends, the traditions, the references to the existence of such an image are important for reconstructing an itinerary of the Shroud in the dark ages prior to its appearance in Europe and to understand why there are so many references to the existence of an image of Christ on a cloth.