

Holy Shroud of Turin: The Last Mystery Revealed

By Jean Sévillia

Interview - Historian **Jean-Christian Petitfils** has been passionate for more than forty years regarding the mystery of the Turin Shroud. He publishes in a few days a book-investigation in order to lift the veil on the enigma that this relic poses.

LE FIGARO -. You are a historian of the Old Regime, but after your "Jesus" published in 2011 and your "love dictionary of Jesus" published in 2015, You go out for the third time from your specialty.

Jean-Christian Petitfils-. Without a doubt. However, you will note that in two works cited I devoted several pages already to this significant relic of the Christianity that continues to question history and science. The question is to know if this large sepulchral linen 4.40 m long by 1.10 m wide, which presents, in a color varying from beige to sepia, the ventral and dorsal faces of a crucified dead, flogged, tortured, with all the signs of passion, served well the burial of Jesus on the evening of April 3 of the year 33, after the descent of the Cross. I have been interested for forty-four years in this amazing mystery, studying French and foreign studies, specialized journals, reports of conferences, expert reports, noting the advances in research, difficulties interpretation as extraordinary finds for which multiple disciplines have been summoned: history, archaeology, legal medicine, hematology, palynology (pollens science), exegesis, law, numismatics, spectrography, optics, polarized imaging, etc. To see too - Religion: How does Emmanuel Macron believe? This is the whole of this dossier, up to date with the latest discoveries, that I wanted make available to readers whose knowledge often remains fragmentary, even distorted. Let's say it bluntly, the holy shroud or shroud of Turin has all the characteristics of authenticity. Doubt today, does not exist anymore. It is science that says it, because history, unfortunately, does not allow us to go back to the origins.

LE FIGARO -. While some affirm that the existence of the shroud is only attested from of the 14th century, in Champagne, on which elements do you support you to reconstitute its origin?

Jean-Christian Petitfils-. At the beginning of the 5th century, this *acheiropoieta* image, that is to say "not done hand of men", was already venerated in the city of Edessa (Urfa, Turkey), where to go to Private the blessed Daniel de Galash. She had to get there at the end of the 4th century, perhaps in 387-388, coming from the big Christian city near Antioch in the grip.

Then to violent troubles. In any case, from this time, we see a fundamental change in the iconographic representations of Christ in Orient then in the West. Instead of the first faces of Jesus with short hair, like Greco-Roman gods, we see appear on imperial currencies, icons and tables, a model Standard derived from the image of Edessa, transferred in August 944 to Constantinople: a elongated face, pronounced brow arches, protruding cheekbones, a slightly aquiline nose, a two-pointed beard, long hair separated by a line in the middle, a small wick on the top of the front ... in total about fifteen characterized signs which, as noted in 1939 the biologist Paul Vignon, found perfectly on the Turin shroud. Note that the artists took for a lock of hair the blood flow along the sinuosities of the forehead. See also - Civilization: Is Christianity definitively dead? Preserved preciously in the imperial chapel, the shroud escaped in 1204 in the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders. It was transferred to France in 1241 with the second batch of relics that followed the sale of the holy crown to Saint Louis by the last Latin emperor Baudouin II of Courtenay and was kept in the Treasury of the Holy Chappelle. It was Philippe VI de Valois who, as I established, ceded the relic to his standard bearer Geoffroy de Charny, in September 1347, without going account of the immense value of the gift he was making. The knight of Charny began to present it to pilgrims in its little collegiate church in Lirey towards 1355. His granddaughter, Marguerite, ceded to the house of Savoy in 1453. First Preserved in Geneva, then in Chambéry, it has been in Turin since 1578.

LE FIGARO -. Your work exposes scientific controversy around the shroud. In 1988, Carbon 14 analyzes dated the Middle Ages. How this result can be challenged?

Jean-Christian Petitfils-. In 1988, indeed, the analysis of the relic to the C14 by three specialized laboratories gave a range of dates (1290-1360) which seemed to question the first achievements of science, in particular very serious American works of the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STuRP) of 1978 which had given rise to microchemical tests, spectrography, studies of infrared radiometry, optical microscopy, ultraviolet fluorescence proving that the shroud could not be a fake from the Middle Ages.

LE FIGARO -. Does history make sense?

Jean-Christian Petitfils-. After a moment of amazement, we realized that the C14 analysis had been carried out under conditions that are not respectful of the defined protocol and posed serious statistical consistency problems. The publication in 2017 of the raw data of Laboratories, obtained from the British Museum thanks to the approaches of the French researcher Tristan Casabianca, showed that the dispersion of the results between the

samples was infinitely larger than that announced. As early as 2005, moreover, at a remarkable Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory at New Mexico, chemist Raymond N. Rogers had proven that the area where the samples had been taken was a re woven area.

However, even the adversaries of the authenticity of the shroud come up against an enigma: this one cannot be the work of a counterfeiter, because to "make" such an image would have required unknown scientific knowledge in Middle Ages... The image is not a painting. No trace of brush strokes, no outline has even been observed under an electron microscope. We must also exclude the hypothesis of a smear, an application of a bas-relief of wood or marble, a metal statue previously heated. The image corresponds to a light degraded browning affecting only the top of the flax fibrils on a thickness from 20 to 40 microns. Giving a three - dimensional image, it seems to be produced by emanation at a distance from the body and orthogonal projection, so that its appearance lateral is absent. A total mystery! "The mystery of the resurrection cannot be understood or live only in faith."

LE FIGARO -. For the Catholic Church, now owner of the Holy Shroud, what is the status of the Shroud?

Jean-Christian Petitfils-. Even if over the centuries several Popes, from Sixtus IV to Julius II - having instituted in its honor a particular office celebrated on May 4 - in Saint John Paul II, held him for authentic, it is obvious that today, due to the scientific controversies, the Church will not sacralize [*authenticate?*] this relic, even if, as this is finally the case, it presents the required level of requirement.

LE FIGARO -. You addressed the shroud as a historian. But in the last part of your book, which is a story of the passion of Christ through the shroud, do you not let your Christian faith come to the surface?

Jean-Christian Petitfils-. In truth, it is this absolutely unique archaeological piece that questions us and obliges us to ask ourselves the question of the resurrection of Christ! It is not obviously not "proof", because the mystery of the resurrection cannot be understood nor live in faith, but it does not allow us to understand why the cadaver of this crucified presents no trace of decomposition, nor how the body was able to get out of its sepulchral clothing without leaving the slightest trace of tearing on the many blood clots.

Christian Petitfils: Le Saint Arouire de Turin, Tallandier, 463 p., 26 €. In bookstores August 25. SDP

