

## **CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF SUPPORTING TEXTS**

From Prof. Dan Scavone's article on the Image of Edessa and the Holy Grail

from BSTS Newsletter #56

The Holy Grail as a Christian object was never clearly defined. The best etymology of "grail" is from the Latin gradalis, "in stages." Both Grail and Edessa shroud Icon have a secret: in their rituals, both change--in stages--from Christ-child to crucified Jesus. Whether a dish or cup, the Grail is always related to the body or blood of Jesus, both which fit the Edessa Jesus-icon. Both Grail and icon are associated with the "Real Presence." In the 13th c. Grail romances Joseph captured Jesus' blood in the cup-Grail. In an 8th c. MS, Joseph captured Jesus' blood in the N.T. shroud. Edessa's shroud icon of the full-sized body of Jesus was first thought to be a bloody face icon. It, too, was not clearly defined. Texts placing Joseph and the Grail in Britain, actually have reference to Edessa, also known as Britium, where Joseph's N.T. shroud resided. British King Lucius was actually King Lucius Abgar VIII of Britium. My thesis has little to do with any claimed actual grails (cups of the Last Supper). Instead it is a "paper chase" that has found texts and rituals from Edessa and Constantinople that the Grail stories copy sometimes almost verbatim.

### **DATE OF TEXT OR EVENT**

**A = JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA/GRAIL LANE; B = EDESSA**

### **DOCUMENTS/GRAIL LANE**

**A 60-120** New Testament: in a "cameo role," Joseph of Arimathea buys shroud for Jesus's body. Acts of the Apostles place Philip as missionary in the East--Turkey and Palestine.

**A 2nd c.** Apocryphal Gospel of Peter makes Joseph Pilate's friend.

**B 2nd-3rd c.** Apocryphal Acts of John: Jesus appears simultaneously polymorphic--as a boy and as the Lord. Gnostic "Polymorphic" tradition in the East.

**A 2nd-6th c.?** Apocryphal Acts of Pilate: Joseph is imprisoned and miraculously released by Jesus, who identifies himself in terms of the burial wrappings (NT shroud, no Grail).

**B177-212** Christianity came to Edessa. King Lucius Abgarus VIII, first Christian king of Edessa, in 205 built the BIRTHA (Latin *Britium*) or citadel of Edessa. Joseph of Arimathea is not named in Edessan contexts.

**B 200** Palut, Edessa's first bishop, was consecrated.

**B 201** The 6th c. Chronicle of Edessa mentions the destruction of "the sanctuary of the Christian church, and

**B 205** the building of the BIRTHA (Latin:*Britium*) by Lucius Abgar VIII. See **AB ca. 210**.

**AB 210** Clement of Alexandria, Hypotyposes, asserts that the tomb of St. Jude-Thaddeus was known in *Britio Edessenorum*, the citadel of Abgar. Clear reference to Britium as Edessa. See B 205.

**B 330** Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, establishes epistolary contacts between Rome and Edessa under Abgar VIII. Dio Cassius attests Abgar's visit to Rome.

**B 375-425** Syriac Doctrine of Addai in Edessa: Hannan, legate of King Abgar V (13-50), paints Jesus in his ministry with "choice paints." Text says, erroneously, that Abgar V, healed by the icon, became Edessa's first Christian king. This legend places Christianity too early in Edessa. See **B 177-212**, and **B 201**.

**A 5th c.** KEY TEXT. Eighth c. Manuscript from Russian Georgia (thought to originate in 5th c.): links Joseph and Philip in erection of a church to Mary in Lydda, near Jerusalem. Joseph captures Jesus's blood on Golgotha in the burial wrappings. Here Joseph's N.T. shroud is prototype for Robert's "Grail," as container of Jesus's blood. See **A 60-120**, **A 8th c.**, & **A 1189-1202**.

**B 6th c** *Acts of Thaddaeus* revises *Doctrine of Addai*: Abgar's legate fails to paint Jesus, who wipes his face on a *tetradiplon*, leaving his portrait on the "not made by hands" *sinдон* (shroud), and sends it to heal Abgar. From here on a gradual growth of awareness that the Edessa icon was a larger imaged burial cloth. See **B 375-425**.

**AB 530** KEY TEXT. Anonymous copyist of the Book of the Popes inserted under Pope Eleutherus (ca. 180) that Briton King Lucius asked this pope for missionaries. Philip and Joseph not named. No one knows the source of this statement. My thesis: "Britain" here is really Edessa. Lucius is really Lucius Abgar VIII. See **AB 210, B 205, & B 330**.

**B ca. 550** Gildas, British historian, does not know a British King Lucius.

**A 7th-8th c.** *Vindicta Salvatoris*: Connects Joseph accounts to the Veronica. See **A 2nd-6th c.** Voragine's version: Joseph remained in prison 40 years, nourished only by the "food of heaven."

**A 8th c.** Actual date of MS from Russian Georgia. See **A 5th c.**

**B 750** John of Damascus refers to the Edessa cloth icon as a Greek *himation*, i.e., very large. See **B 6th c.**

**B 769** Pope Stephen's iconodule sermon first mentions the Edessan image of Jesus in the West. The Edessan legends are known in the West.

**AB 8th c.** Bede, British church historian, repeats the 530 insertion in the Book of the Popes. Gildas should be preferred. See **AB 530** and **B ca. 550**.

**A 850** Freculphus Introduces an ambiguity permitting Joseph to be placed with Philip in Gaul (France) rather than in Galatia, Turkey. See **A 60-120, A 5th c.** and **A 8th c.**

**B 944 Aug. 15**: Narration of the Edessa Image: The cloth icon is taken to Constantinople, where it is described by eyewitnesses as a faint but bloodstained face transferred to the cloth during Jesus's garden agony ("not done in paints, rather a moist

secretion"). Retells Abgar story: Abgar is blinded by its brightness but, forgetting the paralysis in his legs, rises and is healed. Blood first seen on the icon.

**B 944 Aug. 16:** Sermon of Gregory archdeacon of Hagia Sophia: Eyewitness suggests the cloth icon held a full body image of Jesus with bloodstains of the crucifixion. Its arrival in Constantinople is celebrated by a major procession and ceremony. The Edessa icon's secret was that it was really a bloodied image of the entire body of Jesus.

**B 10th c.** MS of the "Oldest Latin Abgar Legend" refers to Edessa ritual in which the image changes from child to crucified Jesus.

**B 944 on:** The Edessa icon is copied as seen in an oblong frame or case with Jesus's face in a circular central opening. But it was not shown publicly.

**B 958** Documents begin to describe Jesus' burial cloth as distinct from the facial icon in Constantinople. Since no arrival celebration was ever remarked for Jesus' precious burial wrap, it may be assumed that the facial icon was now recognized as large burial shroud. A relationship with Joseph's N.T. burial cloth begins.

**B 960** Liturgical Tractate: (Constantinople) Refers to secret Edessan rituals of the (full-body) cloth icon.

**A 1125** William of Malmesbury: In his treatise on Glastonbury, using Bede and Freculphus, he said missionaries sent to Britain by the pope at the request of British King Lucius in 166 were probably chosen by Philip, preaching in Gaul "as Freculphus wrote." But this may only be pious opinion." See A 850, AB 8th c, and A1247.

**B 1130-1211** Two Latin Western accounts (Gervase of Tilbury, Ordericus Vitalis) refer to a full-body image on the Edessa cloth and its secret rituals in which it seemed to change from Christ-child to crucified Jesus. See B 2nd-3rd c., B 769, B 10th c.

**A 1191** Chrétien de Troyes introduces the Grail into Western literature as a dish holding not a fish but a communion wafer (body of Jesus). Neither the Passion nor Joseph is mentioned. See Introduction.

**A 1189-1202** Robert de Boron first associates the Grail with the Passion. Says Pilate gave Joseph Jesus' body and the cup of the Last Supper, in which Joseph collected Jesus' blood on Golgotha. See A 5th c. and A 8th c.

**B ca.1192** Melismos Byzantine liturgy (division of the Host in Communion): the bread is covered by a cloth image of the Christ child and divided by cutting through the cloth to render the transubstantiation. The child changes into the sacrificial body of Christ. See A 2nd-3rd c. and A ca. 1200.

**A ca.1200** In the *Perlesvaus* the Grail was the vessel used to collect Jesus' blood; in it Gawain saw its great secret: a child changing to the crucified Jesus. Arthur had a similar mysterious vision. Thus the Grail signifies the Real Presence and also the *gradalis* idea. See A 1191-1202, AB 1201, and AB 1203 below.

**A ca.1201** First Continuator of Chrétien says Nicodemus carved a head of Christ, but God shaped it for it could not be made by human hands. See B 375-425 and B 6th c.

**AB 1201** Nicholas Mesarites, keeper of the imperial relic collection in Constantinople, describes Jesus "rising again, as proved by the burial wrappings." Suggests a gradual revelation of the crucified Jesus by raising the cloth from its case. See AB 1203.

**AB 1203** Robert of Clari, eyewitness, describes full image on shroud of Jesus displayed in Constantinople. He says it "stood up straight," recalling the secret rituals and gradual revelations of the texts of B 10th c, B 1130-1211, and AB 1201, and it disappeared after the 4th Crusade. Grail quest romances begin about now.

**A c.1225** In the *Queste del Saint Graal*, during the mass, the wafer becomes a child with blinding light. Then crucified Christ issues from the Grail--as if from the full-body image on the burial shroud--and administers the sacrament to the twelve. "Polymorphic Jesus" again and Grail contains Jesus' body. See B 1130-1192; B ca. 1192, and A ca. 1200.

**A 1247&1342** Later Glastonbury scribes embellished William of Malmesbury's information, adding that Philip was definitely in Gaul and sent Joseph as missionary to Britain, where he built a church to the Virgin. (See A 5th c., A 8th c., and A 1125. These recensions, not based on solid sources, first brought Joseph to Britain.