

Ruminations on the Likenesses of Christ inspired by the Shroud...and a love story.



This has become one of my favourite likenesses - not for any aesthetic reason – but for the reminder of the value of *detail* in any research endeavour. Readers of our Winter 2018/19 Edition will remember the article by historian and numismatist, Justin Robinson, who brought to light a series of coins unquestionably inspired by the Mandylion, also known as the Image of Edessa and what we would come to know as the Shroud of Turin. Though these coins date from as early as the C7th I have chosen this one minted around 1028 because of the replication on the forehead of the epsilon shaped blood trickle so uniquely distinctive of the Shroud. Any fair-minded person would say that this simple observation alone should be enough to refute a C14th date for the “forgery” of the Shroud. However, such fairmindedness tends to evaporate under the pressure exerted by the (discredited!) carbon dating in our secular world.

1 View C14 videos on the bstsnewsletter.com website.



One can readily see that certain facial marks identified by Paul Vignon as being indicative of the influence of the Shroud on artistic representations of Jesus can be useful. However, I am reminded regularly of the dangers of over-reliance on this when watching the BBC

news when that most prominent open square of Hugh Edwards hits me right between the eyes where it sits on his face and on many others, too. But that epsilon-shaped blood trickle? You do not see that anywhere else.



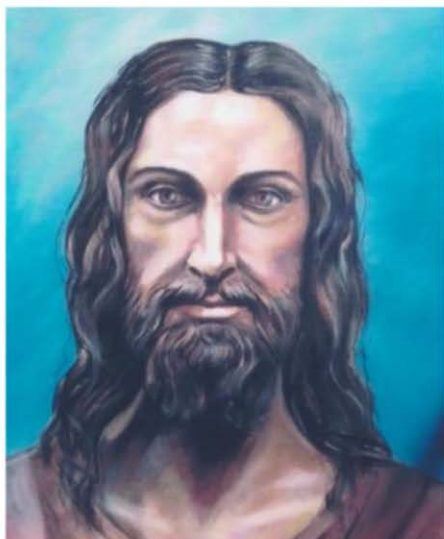
This is the first known coin depicting Christ to be minted. It was struck during the reign of Emperor Justinian II (692-695). Christ was the “Head” and he was the “Tail”. The engravers would have travelled down to Edessa to make the copy. The coin featuring the epsilon was struck when the Mandyllion had

been transferred to Byzantium where the engravers would have had more time to include such detail as the epsilon. We are lucky, of course, that any images of Christ have come down from the era after the ravages of Iconoclasm that swept the region. Presumably, the iconoclasts drew the line at destroying ready money.



Fortunately, some images did survive. My wife and I had the chance of viewing this one at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai on an excursion (under armed guard) from Sharm el Sheikh. If it looks somewhat pristine for something 1400 years old, it was meticulously cleaned in 1962. It was almost certainly created in Constantinople/Istanbul where, in 1976, I was able to film the other most notable images in this style in the great 6th Byzantine church, Hagia Sophia. Under Ottoman rule from 1453 it had become a mosque but from 1934, under the liberal and secularist reformer, Kemal Attaturk, it had become a museum so access to film was relatively easy. Turkey’s president, Tayyip Erdogan, has just reclaimed it as a mosque. Plus ça change...

If the Shroud and the Image of Edessa, as seems ever more likely, are one and the same we can be certain that the consensual image of Jesus as depicted virtually everywhere - Google "Jesus Christ" in Images to see what I mean - then we can be reasonably certain that in looking at the Shroud we are, indeed, looking at the inspiration for the depiction of Jesus for the last 1400 years or so.



There have been modern attempts to paint or model the face of Jesus directly from the Shroud. The spur for this article was prompted when BSTS stalwart and former treasurer, Reggie Norton, sent me this one created by the artist Jo Witney. Reggie is so moved by its realism that he will send a free copy to any subscriber who would like one. (Email BSTS to request one.)

Working from Barrie Schwartz's 1978 negatives, 3d and cgi expert, Ray Downing set out to create a likeness as closely as possible from the contrast data on the Shroud. The result is impressive as also is the fact that the Shroud image - uniquely - possesses such 3D data. How? we might ask ourselves. Or, even more significantly, "why?". *How* is easy to explain though unfathomable to understand.



The *only* viable explanation for both ventral and dorsal 3d characteristics is one that posits that the source of the scorched discoloration of the Shroud's surface fibres came from some form of radiation emanating from within the body that the Shroud enveloped and that, as physics would predict, this radiation decayed over distance to reflect the distance that any one fibre of the cloth was from the body in the instant that the image

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formed. For "instant" read fractions of a nano second. Anything longer would have scorched the cloth beyond recognition.

In 2009, I was given permission to film the Shroud in HD for the first time. When I and the crew entered the room adjacent to the cathedral in which it had been placed, free of any glass protection, I was shocked to see just how faint the image is and how fine and pale the cloth itself is.



I would characterise the colour as ivory in tone and the image extremely “delicate”. Once our eyes adjusted it was easier to see clearly but as new visitors came into the room, they, too, had to have specific features pointed before they could get their bearings. Should it be a surprise that something so ethereal could be so informative and rich in meaningful data? Some might say it is miraculous that it does.



Now for the love story. Sometime after the C14 test my film *The Silent Witness* was doing the rounds on cable channels in the States. A tired US soldier called Rebecca was crashing out in barracks watching a random documentary. Suddenly, her interest was aroused. There was something familiar about the image (left) but she couldn't put her finger on it. The film turned out to be about something she had never heard of before. The film cut to a sequence shot in Colorado Springs, not too far away. John Jackson and Eric Jumper were revealing their discovery of the Shroud's 3D characteristics. The combination of the two images suddenly reminded her of someone. Rebecca was Jewish and grew up in Brooklyn, New York. She had never heard of the Shroud but there was no doubt in Rebecca's mind. Whoever the guy on the cloth was he was definitely Jewish. He looked just like her grandfather! Rebecca made contact and eventually found and met a somewhat disconsolate John Jackson, co-leader of the 1978 Shroud scientific examination of the cloth, still trying to come to terms with the recently announced C14 test. She arrived full of enthusiasm to find out more and to encourage John to direct some attention at whatever Jewish rather than purely Christian studies might reveal. It turned out to be a match made in heaven.



30 years later John and Rebecca Jackson still jointly run the Turin Shroud Centre of Colorado.



Now that the Shroud has yielded up its hidden facial and bodily details, I feel that the need for any artifice is entirely redundant. What more does one need? Here is a man who has clearly suffered the most extreme form of execution the Romans could devise. And yet, there is something in His expression that transcends - triumphs, even. What is more it lives best in monochrome - black *and* white. In a world that has needed to be reminded of past injustices and that black lives matter, the time has now come for the Shroud to be re-evaluated after the scandal that was the 1988 dating.

David Rolfe, Editor.