

The Medieval Hypothesis of the Shroud of Turin

By Jack Markwardt

A hypothesis is a supposition based on limited evidence¹ and the Medieval Hypothesis of the Shroud of Turin² supposes that the Shroud was artistically created in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. Its genesis is traceable to 1898 when photographic negatives of the Shroud's image were proclaimed proof of its authenticity, triggering a fierce debate between progressive clerics, who held relics to be spurious,³ and conservative clerics, who deemed them worthy of veneration. When agnostic professors of the Sorbonne unexpectedly entered the fray on the authenticity side, progressive clerics "lost their heads and grew unduly violent"⁴. One of their number, Canon Ulysse Chevalier, a noted French historian and bibliographer, was familiar with the Shroud's hazy provenance and believed that archival documents would evidence its medieval origin.

The Archival Evidence Found By Chevalier

In the archives of the French National Library, Chevalier found two draft memoranda,⁵ datable to 1389, in which Pierre d'Arcis, the Bishop of Troyes, made several disparaging allegations about the Shroud in an effort to persuade Clement VII, the reigning French anti-Pope, that ongoing exhibitions of the Shroud at the church of Lirey should be immediately terminated.⁶ The bishop's most significant allegation was that, some thirty-four years previous, Henry de Poitiers, the then-Bishop of Troyes, conducted an investigation and an unnamed artist admitted to having painted the Shroud's image; however, and as Chevalier well knew, a draft writing was deemed historically-unreliable, and, in this case, both memoranda were clearly drafts, as they lacked dates, the names of the sender and the recipient, and signatures,⁷ all customary marks of an authentic record and official document.⁸ Indeed, the rougher of the two drafts⁹ even contained "parts which were crossed out, underlinings, and some too-violent expressions canceled"¹⁰. Although Chevalier attempted to locate an original of this memorandum in the Vatican archives,¹¹ where it should have been maintained had it actually been sent to, and received by, Pope Clement, it was not there and, to this day, it has never been found.¹² Thus, it appeared that an original of the memorandum "never saw the light of day"¹³ likely because d'Arcis

¹ See Oxford Languages.

² This term is employed in Farey, Hugh, *Where and When*, The Medieval Shroud Blog (October 2, 2022).

³ See Chevalier, Ulysse, *Etude critique sur l'origine du Saint Suaire de Lirey-Chambery-Turin*, pp. 5-8, Picard (Paris 1900).

⁴ Thurston, Herbert, *The Holy Shroud as a Scientific Problem*, The Month, Vol. CI, p. 162 (1903).

⁵ Folios 138 and 137, volume 154 of the Champagne Collection. See Chevalier, *supra*, subscript to Document G.

⁶ The transcribed memorandum appears in Chevalier, *supra*, as Document G (hereinafter, references to this memorandum pertain to Document G).

⁷ See Nicolotti, Andrea, (trans. Hunt, J. M. and Smith R. A.), *The Shroud of Turin: The History and Legends of the World's Most Famous Relic*, p. 97, Baylor University Press (Waco, Texas 2019).

⁸ See Bonnet-Eymard, Bruno, *Superabundant Historical Testimony*, Catholic Counter-Reformation in the XXth Century, Eng. Version, No. 237, pp. 15-16 (March 1991).

⁹ Folio 138, volume 154 of the Champagne Collection.

¹⁰ Crispino, Dorothy, *Literary Legerdemain*, Shroud Spectrum International, *Spicilegium* Issue, p. 64 (April, 1996).

¹¹ Chevalier transcribed a letter from Pope Clement from Bishop d'Arcis which he found in the Vatican archives. Chevalier, *supra*, Document N.

¹² See Nicolotti, *supra*, p. 99; Bonnet-Eymard, *supra*, p. 15.

¹³ Bonnet-Eymard, *supra*, pp. 15-16.

had been sentenced by Clement to perpetual silence regarding the Shroud and, facing a loss of his office and excommunication from the Church if he again spoke about it, he ultimately decided against sending such an incendiary critique of the relic to a Pope who had, only recently, issued a bull permitting its public exhibition.

The only other archival records suggestive of the Shroud's inauthenticity were three documents in which it had been referenced as a "figure or representation" of Jesus' actual burial cloth; however, and as will be shown, this terminology merely mirrored that which had been coined by a person having no knowledge of the cloth's nature or provenance. Given the obvious dearth of relevant archival evidence, most experienced historians would ordinarily have abandoned the idea of proposing a Medieval Hypothesis, but Chevalier, desirous of attaining greater fame and humiliating his conservative and scientific adversaries, was not to be dissuaded.

Chevalier's Presentation of False and Illusory Evidence

In 1900, Chevalier published a study in which he declared that the Shroud "was not the true shroud of Jesus Christ, but only an image or representation and that it was painted by human hands".¹⁴ In this study, he also published transcriptions of thirty-three archived documents, all but four of which were entirely irrelevant to the issue of the Shroud's alleged medieval origin,¹⁵ and he proceeded to conceal the evidential deficiencies of these four documents by performing various masterly acts of "literary legerdemain".¹⁶

To create the illusion that d'Arcis' allegation had been made in an original archival document, Chevalier first published "a very neat and careful transcription" of the text of the rough draft, making no note of any of its mark-ups.¹⁷ He then described this marked-up draft it as an "original note on paper".¹⁸ Finally, he gave this marked-up draft a date, thereby upgrading it to "the status of an authentic archival record"¹⁹ and keeping it from standing out as a draft among his other transcribed documents, all of which bore dates.

To create the illusion that this draft memorandum had ultimately been completed, formalized, and sent to Pope Clement, Chevalier first falsely represented that it "must have reached Clement VII towards the end of the year 1389".²⁰ He then claimed to have found this writing in the archives of the National Library among "letters sent to our lord the pope by the bishop of Troyes regarding the Sudarium of Lirey",²¹ but cited a document which he had actually found in the archives of Aube.²² Next, he created a document which "did not really exist"²³ by affixing, to the text of the rough draft, the heading of the more polished draft which recited that d'Arcis intended to send this writing to Pope

¹⁴ Chevalier, *supra*, p. 26.

¹⁵ *Id.*, Documents A-F; R-BB.

¹⁶ See Crispino, *supra*, p. 64.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Chevalier, *supra*, subscript to Document G.

¹⁹ Bonnet-Eymard, *supra*, p. 15.

²⁰ Chevalier, *supra*, p. 26.

²¹ *Id.*, subscript to Document G.

²² *Id.*, Document J.

²³ Crispino, *supra*, p. 64.

Clement.²⁴ Finally, he dated this non-existent document to the end of 1389,²⁵ thereby making it appear that Pope Clement had received it shortly thereafter and that Clement had, after reviewing it, issued a bull on January 6, 1390 which imposed new restrictions on the Lirey exhibitions.²⁶

To create the illusion that Pope Clement, in alluding to the Shroud as a “figure or representation” of Jesus’ actual burial cloth, was evincing his personal knowledge of the relic’s inauthenticity, Chevalier failed to point out that both Bishop d’Arcis, in his draft memorandum, and Clement, in his letter of July 28, 1389 to Geoffrey II de Charny,²⁷ had recited that Geoffrey II, a man who knew nothing about the Shroud’s nature or provenance,²⁸ had originally coined this terminology in petitioning for renewed exhibitions of the cloth. Then, by misdating this letter to January 6, 1390, Chevalier made it appear that Clement had used such terminology in this letter because he had reviewed d’Arcis’ memorandum, which Chevalier had falsely dated to the end of 1389, and thereby determined that the Shroud was inauthentic.²⁹ In the context of the foregoing circumstances, it is perfectly clear that when Clement, in his bull of January 6, 1390,³⁰ alluded to the Shroud as a “figure or representation” of Jesus’ actual burial cloth, he was merely again employing Geoffrey’s terminology, and when the Lirey canons and the husband of Marguerite de Charny did the same in an agreement dated July 6, 1418,³¹ they were merely employing Clement’s terminology, and were not, as Chevalier claimed, describing the Shroud “as it was” and as they “believed it to be”—to wit, a “copy and not the original”.³²

²⁴ Notably, Chevalier did not transcribe the text of the more polished draft which alluded to a “Master Guillaume Fulconis”, a procurator to the papal court to whom a draft document would have been submitted “for corrections and to be put in formal ecclesiastical style” before being submitted to the Pope. See Crispino, *supra*, p. 66. This notation refutes Chevalier’s representation that the memorandum had been sent to Pope Clement, and a historian who advocates for the Shroud’s medieval origin has conceded that “there is nothing to indicate that this copy was ever sent to Master Fulconis”. See Nicolotti, *supra*, pp. 98-99.

²⁵ In his draft memorandum, Bishop d’Arcis referenced key events which had transpired prior to August 5, 1389, but he did not reference key events which occurred on and after August 15, 1389. See Markwardt, Jack, *The Hidden History of the Shroud of Turin*, p. 226 (2021).

²⁶ Chevalier, *supra*, Document K. Clement did not mention d’Arcis’ memorandum in this bull and he specifically recited that these new restrictions were meant to advance an unspecified matter “beneficially profitable in the Lord”, most likely his ongoing attempt to end a centuries-old schism between the Western and Eastern Churches through John V Palaeologus, the Roman Catholic emperor of Byzantium. Notably, after Emperor John was deposed on April 14, 1390, Clement issued a new bull restoring some of these solemnities and relieving the Lirey clergy of making any announcement about the Shroud whenever a sermon was not preached. See Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 242-243.

²⁷ Chevalier, *supra*, Document O (this letter was misdated by Chevalier to January 6, 1390).

²⁸ The Act of Foundation of the church of Lirey, dated June 20, 1353, made no reference to Geoffrey II’s mother, Jeanne de Vergy, suggesting that her marriage to Geoffrey I “took place later, most probably late 1354 or early 1355”, and thereby making Geoffrey II an infant or toddler when his father died in September of 1356. See Wilson, Ian, *Some Paradoxical Documents underpinning the Shroud’s ‘Middle’ History*, BSTS Newsletter, Issue No. 91, p. 5, n. 4 (Summer 2020). It is unlikely that Geoffrey I ever spoke to his bride about the Shroud, as he had likely been sentenced to perpetual silence by Pope Innocent VI who must have approved the Shroud’s exhibition at Lirey. See Markwardt, *supra*, p. 206.

²⁹ When Chevalier republished this same letter in 1903, he dated it correctly, but failed to acknowledge or explain its previous misdating. Chevalier, *Ulysse, Autour des Origines du Suaire de Lirey*, Picard (Paris, 1903), Document H.

³⁰ Chevalier (1900), *supra*, Document K.

³¹ *Id.*, Document Q.

³² *Id.*, p. 31.

Unpresented Evidence

Chevalier's study did not include two critically-important documents maintained in the archives of Aube, from which he had extracted numerous other writings.³³ The first was a letter, dated May 28, 1356 (which would go undiscovered until 1991) in which Bishop Henry praised Geoffrey de Charny and the "divine cult" of Lirey³⁴—thereby evidencing that, less than four months before Geoffrey's death, Henry had not investigated the Shroud and an artist had not claimed to have painted its image. The second was a bull, issued on June 5, 1357, in which a pontifical court had granted even more favorable indulgences to the church of Lirey³⁵—thereby evidencing that, less than nine months after Geoffrey's death, the Avignon papacy had no knowledge of either any wrongdoing committed by the Lirey dean, who still held that office under Bishop Henry and would continue to do so until his death in 1358,³⁶ or any claim made by an artist that he had painted the Shroud's image. Indeed, no disciplinary action of any kind was ever taken against the Lirey Dean and canons, whom d'Arcis would later accuse of having presented a false relic for veneration, and having staged bogus miracles, and having concealed the Shroud from Bishop Henry. Curiously, this pontifical court bull was found in the archives of Aube very shortly after Chevalier published his study,³⁷ and Chevalier, having been provided with a copy of it by Father Noiré,³⁸ falsely claimed that it was "favorable to the thesis of the non-authenticity of the Shroud" when he transcribed and published it in his study of 1903.³⁹ While it cannot be proved that Chevalier did, in fact, discover either or both of these documents, which refuted his Medieval Hypothesis, his other acts of dishonesty in publishing this study make that a likely probability.

Additionally, Chevalier failed to point out several circumstances, critical to assessing the validity of d'Arcis' allegations, which he had surely discovered in reviewing the Troyes diocesan archives and in transcribing d'Arcis' draft memorandum; to wit, all of d'Arcis' claims were unsworn, unattributed, and uncorroborated, none had been referenced in any diocesan document, and, in the months preceding his drafting of the memorandum, d'Arcis had mentioned none of these claims to either Pope Clement, during two ecclesiastical appeals, or to the Royal Curia, during the prosecution of his own civil suit.⁴⁰ Moreover, and in a very best light, all of these allegations were blatant hearsay, for d'Arcis did not become affiliated with the Troyes diocese until 1373, and, in a very worst light, all of these allegations were pure fabrications, for d'Arcis had been accused of seeking to end the Lirey showings out of "jealously and cupidity", the people of Champagne and its surrounding regions had been "flowing" to the Lirey exhibitions,⁴¹

³³ *Id.*, Documents D, I, J, L, M, Q, R, S, T, V, W, X, Y, Z, AA, BB.

³⁴ See Bonnet-Eymard, *supra*, p. 18.

³⁵ Chevalier (1903), *supra*, Document E; see also Nicolotti, *supra*, pp. 82-83.

³⁶ See Nicolotti, *supra*, p. 84.

³⁷ See Vignon, Paul, *The Shroud of Christ*, p. 54, Archibald Constable & Co Limited (Westminster 1902).

³⁸ See Chevalier (1903), *supra*, subscript to Document E.

³⁹ *Id.*, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Bishop d'Arcis elected not to participate in either of these two ecclesiastical proceedings, and he informed the Royal Curia only that the Shroud was of a "superstitious origin" and that the faithful were being "led to believe erroneously that it is the true shroud of Christ". Chevalier, *supra*, Document G; see also Nicolotti (2109), p. 86.

⁴¹ See Nicolotti, p. 86.

and the diocese, needful of making long-neglected repairs to its damaged cathedral,⁴² would have surely benefited by a redirection to Troyes of a portion of the local donations which had been pouring into the church of Lirey.

The Implausibility of Chevalier’s Medieval Hypothesis

Setting aside all of Chevalier’s misrepresentations, manufactured illusions, and masterly acts of literary legerdemain, his Medieval Hypothesis was based entirely upon a single uncorroborated hearsay allegation which appeared in an evidentially-incompetent draft writing, and three allusions to the Shroud as a “figure or representation” of Jesus’ burial cloth which merely repeated terminology coined by a person having no knowledge of the Shroud’s nature or provenance. Thus, Chevalier’s hypothesis was based on minimal, incompetent, untrustworthy, and non-probative historical evidence. It also failed to provide either satisfactory answers to the questions of when, where, why, how, and by whom the Shroud was created⁴³ or a satisfactory account of the Shroud’s history between its alleged medieval manufacture and its initial public exhibition in Lirey. Considered strictly on its merits, Chevalier’s Medieval Hypothesis was highly-implausible, a fact which would have been quickly discovered soon after its publication had it been properly investigated and critiqued by Shroud Authenticists and/or objective academic scholars.

Chevalier’s Fraudulently-Procured “Verdict of History”

When Chevalier’s Medieval Hypothesis was published in 1900, it appeared to be facially plausible, for many venerated relics were undoubtedly spurious, with suspicion falling most heavily upon those, like the Shroud, which first appeared in medieval times. Moreover, d’Arcis’ claim that the Shroud’s image had been painted was not, at that time, scientifically falsifiable, and, as was being stressed by the progressive cleric Herbert Thurston, the Shroud’s pre-Lirey history was unarguably an “absolute blank”⁴⁴ and “no intelligible account, beyond wild conjecture” of its previous whereabouts seemed possible.⁴⁵

Thus, it is not surprising that Chevalier, through his keen cunning and shameless dishonesty, was able to persuade Shroud Authenticists that he had faithfully transcribed an original document which had, in fact, been sent to and received by Pope Clement VII. Indeed, in a book published in 1902, Paul Vignon, a leading Authenticist, stipulated that Chevalier had “sought for and discovered the original letter”,⁴⁶ duly quoted Chevalier’s claim that this document had been “forwarded to Clement VII about the close of the year 1389”,⁴⁷ and virtually conceded the historical debate to the canon:

We confess that documentary history is distinctly unfavourable to the authenticity of the Holy Shroud, and it is on this lack of historical testimony that the opposition, dating from the fourteenth century onwards, has been based...If we cannot discover what became of the Shroud before 1200, and

⁴² *Id.*, p. 84.

⁴³ A standard of plausibility suggested in Farey, *Where and When*, *supra*.

⁴⁴ Thurston, Herbert, *The Holy Shroud and the Verdict of History*, p. 26, *The Month*, Vol. CI (1903).

⁴⁵ Thurston, Herbert, *The Holy Shroud (of Turin)*, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13, Robert Appleton Company (New York 1912).

⁴⁶ Vignon, *supra*, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁷ *Id.*, pp. 57-58.

above all between 1205 and 1353, we shall be obliged to relinquish all hope of supporting our case by historical evidence; and the claim of the Holy Shroud will rest entirely on scientific probability.⁴⁸

Rather incredibly, no Authenticist, not even Vignon who worked in Paris at the Sorbonne, inspected the archives of the National Library to confirm that Chevalier did, in fact, transcribe an original of d'Arcis' memorandum, as he had claimed. Clearly, Authenticists never suspected that an ordained Catholic cleric of unblemished reputation would misrepresent material facts concerning the authenticity of a putative Passion relic, and they were obviously cowered by Chevalier's historical credentials, as evidenced by Vignon's admission of having borrowed most of his book's historical material from the Shroud's "chief opponent, M. le Chanoine Chevalier".⁴⁹ Moreover, "the president of the Academie des Inscriptions, at a solemn sitting held on November 15, 1901, whilst awarding a gold medal of 1,000 francs to M. le Chanoine Chevalier, did not hesitate to severely censure any future attempt to impose upon the credulity of the faithful with what could henceforth be described only as a fraudulent misrepresentation",⁵⁰ thereby warning the Shroud's scientific defenders against challenging Chevalier directly.⁵¹

In 1903, a lone and diligent Authenticist reported that he had searched the Vatican archives in vain for d'Arcis' memorandum, prompting Chevalier to respond that "the double copy on parchment, preserved in volume 154 of the Champagne Collection constitutes the original note",⁵² thereby continuing to conceal the fact that both writings were drafts. Chevalier also boasted that all of his conclusions were supported by "authentic documents" and claimed that this assertion could be false only had there been a "conspiracy against the truth" when the Shroud first appeared,⁵³ his statement dripping with the irony that it was he himself who had conspired against the truth.⁵⁴ Chevalier also falsely claimed that, "from its origin, by prescription of the bishops and popes, (the Shroud) was shown to the faithful as a simple painting",⁵⁵ knowing full well that Bishop d'Arcis had alleged that the Shroud had initially been presented to the faithful as Jesus' true burial cloth.⁵⁶

In that same year, Thurston published an English translation of Chevalier's transcription of d'Arcis' memorandum and, after falsely stating that this writing had been "forthwith dispatched to the Pope",⁵⁷ he purposefully excised those portions of the transcription

⁴⁸ *Id.*, p. 53.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.*, pp. 11-12.

⁵¹ Instead, Vignon attempted to discredit d'Arcis' allegations by proving that "the impressions on the Shroud cannot have been painted, but are of the nature of a photographic negative" and by hypothesizing that the Shroud image was a so-called "vaporograph". *Id.*, pp. 58; 154-170.

⁵² Chevalier (1903) *supra*, p. 9.

⁵³ *Id.*, pp. 8; 58.

⁵⁴ See also Markwardt, Jack, *The Conspiracy Against the Shroud*, British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter, No. 55 (June 2002).

⁵⁵ Chevalier (1903), p. 8.

⁵⁶ "(The Lirey dean put out a story) not only in the kingdom of France, but so to speak, throughout the world (that) this was the actual shroud in which our Savior Jesus Christ was enfolded in the tomb, and upon which the whole likeness of the Savior had remained thus impressed together with the wounds which he bore...so that from all parts people came together to view it." Chevalier (1900), *supra*, Document G.

⁵⁷ Thurston (1903), *The Holy Shroud and the Verdict of History*, *supra*, p. 21.

which evidenced that it had been falsely dated by Chevalier to the end of 1389.⁵⁸ Bragging that Chevalier's Medieval Hypothesis had been accepted by "Catholic scholars of unimpeachable orthodoxy", Thurston pronounced it a "verdict of history".⁵⁹ Nine years later, he truthfully declared that "an immense preponderance of opinion among learned Catholics" now held the Shroud to be medieval,⁶⁰ and, over the next sixty-six years, Chevalier's hypothesis was accepted as established historical fact.

The Death of Chevalier's Medieval Hypothesis and the Birth of the Radiocarbon-Dating Medieval Hypothesis

In 1978, Chevalier's Medieval Hypothesis was entirely refuted when a scientific examination of the Shroud established that its image had not been painted, as Bishop d'Arcis had alleged.⁶¹ Ten years later, in 1988, three university laboratories radiocarbon-dated samples taken from a corner of the Shroud and announced that its fabric had been manufactured between 1260 and 1390,⁶² thereby giving birth to a new, and scientifically-based, Medieval Hypothesis; however, this hypothesis has proved to be quite problematic, as the testing data both reflects an unexplained "chronological gradient" of radiocarbon dates which extends across the samples⁶³ and also precludes the Shroud's manufacture after 1320,⁶⁴ establishing that the 1260-1390 radiocarbon-dating range was overstated by about fifty-four per cent.

Understandably, many Authenticists have challenged, or attempted to explain, these radiocarbon dating results on scientific grounds; however, and as Shroud Medievalists⁶⁵ seem to better perceive, the issue of the Shroud's age essentially remains a matter of history, and a plethora of historical evidence denotes the relic's existence centuries before 1260,⁶⁶ including an authentic ecclesiastical text, known as the *Latin Sermon*, which is reliably datable to 988 and alludes to a "not-made-by-human-hands" image of Jesus' entire body impressed upon a linen cloth.⁶⁷ Thus, an Oxford professor who participated in the 1988 radiocarbon-dating testing has candidly conceded that there is "a lot of other evidence that suggests to many that the Shroud is older than the radiocarbon dates allow and so further research is certainly needed".⁶⁸

⁵⁸ *Id.* Thurston, who knew that the Lirey exhibitions had commenced in about the Spring of 1389, removed both the transcribed document's heading, in which d'Arcis had recited that the cloth had "just been so exposed again", and its initial paragraph, in which d'Arcis had recited that the exhibitions had "just come to pass in the diocese of Troyes".

⁵⁹ *Id.*, p. 29.

⁶⁰ Thurston (1912), *supra*.

⁶¹ See Rogers, Raymond N., *Image on Shroud of Turin not Painted; Spectrometry-Fluorescence*, <https://shroud-story.wordpress.com/2012/02/26/1-image-on-shroud-of-turin-not-painted-spectrometry-flouescence/>

⁶² See Damon, P. E., *et al.* (21 authors), *Radiocarbon Dating of the Shroud of Turin*, *Nature*, Vol. 337, No. 6028 (Feb. 16, 1989).

⁶³ See Farey, Hugh, *The Chronological Gradient*, *The Medieval Shroud Blog* (August 29, 2020).

⁶⁴ See Farey, Hugh, *Radiocarbon: Raw Data to Calendar Dates. Calibration explained*, *academia.edu*, *The Medieval Shroud* 3, p. 98 (December 2019).

⁶⁵ This term appears in Farey, Hugh, *The Day I Changed My Mind*, *The Medieval Shroud Blog* (January 6, 2021).

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Markwardt (2021), *supra*, pp. 22-155.

⁶⁷ See Markwardt, Jack, *The Provenance of the Latin Sermon*, *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter*, No. 97, pp. 15-28 (Summer 2023).

⁶⁸ Ramsay, Christopher, *The Shroud of Turin* (March 2008). <https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/shroud.html>.

Over the course of the past ten years, Medievalists, mindful that the Radiocarbon-Dating Medieval Hypothesis is completely bereft of any historical foundation, have attempted to resurrect the discredited d’Arcis draft memorandum by repudiating its original Medievalist translation,⁶⁹ asserting that it is “rich in valuable evidence”,⁷⁰ and defending its author’s debatable integrity;⁷¹ however, in lieu of proffering even a single piece of historical evidence corroborative of d’Arcis’ allegations or probative of the Shroud’s alleged medieval origin, they have engaged in speculation regarding why, when, where, by whom, and how the Shroud may have been created in medieval times.⁷²

Medievalists On Why The Shroud Was Created In Medieval Times

Medievalists have never contended that the Shroud was created for veneration as an authentic Passion relic, as they have astutely recognized that the profitable business of manufacturing false relics, so prevalent in early-thirteenth-century Europe, effectively came to an end shortly after 1215 when the Fourth Lateran Council, in promulgating Canon 62, banned the installation of any new relic in a church unless its veneration had first been approved by the Pope himself.⁷³ Medievalists also know better than to claim that the pious and honorable Geoffrey de Charny would have commissioned the creation of a false Passion relic or permitted the exhibition of a papally-unsanctioned relic at the church of Lirey, and they understand that Bishop d’Arcis alleged only that an avaricious dean of the Lirey church had “procured” the Shroud, not that he had commissioned its manufacture and imaging.⁷⁴

While Chevalier’s study did not deal with the question of why the Shroud was created, Thurston suggested in 1912 that the cloth “was probably painted without fraudulent intent to aid the dramatic setting of the Easter sequence”,⁷⁵ seemingly referencing a medieval Easter liturgy wherein clerical actors “showed to the people the linen in which the body (of Jesus) had been wrapped”.⁷⁶ Recently, Medievalists have attempted to expand upon Thurston’s Easter sequence speculation. Noting that, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, many European churches presented, on Easter Day and on the Feast of Corpus Christi, a liturgical drama, known as the *Quem Quaeritis* and in which stage-prop shrouds were employed,⁷⁷ they have raised a question as to “whether the

⁶⁹ Medievalists now contend that the Latin verb *depingere*, used by d’Arcis and translated by Thurston, “ought to be understood as not necessarily ‘to paint’”. See Nicolotti, *supra*, p. 99. However, they have provided no compelling reason to disregard this verb’s primary meaning of “to paint”.

⁷⁰ Nicolotti, *supra*, p. 90.

⁷¹ “...the case for d’Arcis being dishonest, and inventing the investigation of his predecessor Henri de Poitiers, looks far-fetched and somewhat mean-spirited”. Farey, Hugh, *Pierre d’Arcis, the Bishop of Troyes*, The Medieval Shroud Blog (July 13, 2023).

⁷² See Farey, *Where and When, supra*.

⁷³ See Markwardt (2021), *supra*, pp. 194-197.

⁷⁴ “(The dean of the Lirey church) being consumed with the passion of avarice, and not from any motive of devotion but only of gain, procured for his church a certain cloth cunningly painted, upon which by a clever sleight of hand was depicted the twofold image of one man, that is to say, the back and front.” Chevalier (1900), Document G, *supra*.

⁷⁵ Thurston (1912), *supra*.

⁷⁶ See Holweck, Frederick, *Easter*, The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 5, Robert Appleton Company (New York 1909).

⁷⁷ See Freeman, Charles, *The Origins of the Shroud of Turin*, History Today (November 2014); Farey, *The Medieval Shroud 3, supra*, p. 100; Real Seekers podcast, *supra*.

Shrouds of Besancon and Turin were examples” of these.⁷⁸ To explain how the very large Shroud of Turin could have been so employed, they have speculated that it was displayed in an unnamed large church, large monastery, or cathedral. To explain why the Shroud’s use as a stage prop remains completely unknown to history, they have speculated that its creation was commissioned by, and that it was displayed in, an enclosed monastery. To explain how the Shroud came to Lirey, they have speculated that it was eventually gifted to either Geoffrey de Charny or the Lirey dean.⁷⁹

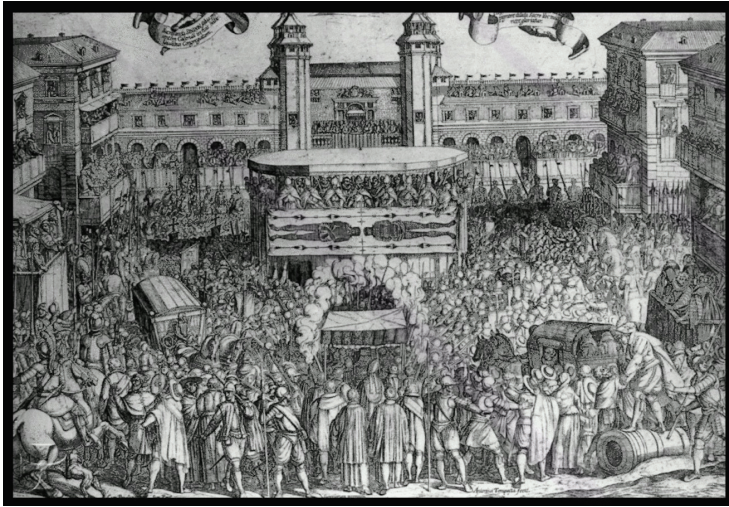
Yet, this claim lacks a historical basis, as documents and tradition do not reference the employment of a sizeable and/or imaged shroud stage prop in any *Quem Quaeritis* drama or provide even a hint of any church, monastery, or cathedral having commissioned, owned, or gifted such a cloth. Within the extensive scholarly studies of the *Quem Quaeritis* liturgy that were authored by Walther Lipphardt, Carl Lange, and Karl Young, there are detailed accounts of the scripting and staging of many hundreds of performed *Quem Quaeritis* dramas, but not a mention of any sizable and/or imaged stage prop shroud.⁸⁰ Indeed, the scripting and staging of the *Quem Quaeritis* drama would have rendered the use of the Shroud as a stage prop very impractical, if not impossible. In the tenth century, the liturgy’s format was established at Winchester, England in the *Regularis Concordia*, and, initially, it was staged on the altar. The action commences with two or three clerics, playing the roles of the “Marys”, approaching Jesus’ tomb to anoint his body, and being asked by another cleric, playing the role of a white-robed angel, “Whom do you seek? (*“Quem quaeritis?”*”). Replying “Jesus of Nazareth”, the Marys are then told by the angel that “he is not here, he has risen as he foretold”, and are invited to “come and see the place” where they are shown Jesus’ empty burial shroud. They then lift and fully extend the stage prop shroud, thereby showing the congregation that Jesus has risen. Over the course of the following centuries, many churches moved the liturgy’s staging from the altar, often to a recess created in a wall of the north transept, and, in the eleventh or twelfth century, some churches added a scene, the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, wherein the apostles John and Peter later visit the tomb, bring forth Jesus’ shroud, and lift and fully extend it, thereby showing the congregation that Jesus has risen. As illustrated by Antonio Tempesta’s famous engraving of 1613 (*see illustration below*), seven to nine men were required to lift and fully extend, possibly with the support of a railing, the fourteen-foot-long Shroud for its display to the public, and it simply beggars belief that, in the thirteenth and/or fourteenth centuries, and with no support denoted in the stage directions, one or two clerics fully extended the Shroud for the viewing of a congregation.

It is also rather telling that Medievalists have not attempted to explain why a church, monastery, or cathedral would have commissioned the manufacture of a cloth so poorly-suited for use as a stage prop in a *Quem Quaeritis* drama, or why they would have paid the exorbitant costs incidental to manufacturing and imaging a cloth which would be employed only briefly as a stage prop but once or twice a year, or why there is no record

⁷⁸ Freeman, *supra*;

⁷⁹ View Real Seekers podcast, *Panel Review (Part 2b), Debating the Medieval Documents* (March 8, 2023).

⁸⁰ See Lipphardt, Walther, *Lateinische Osterfeiern und Osterspielen*, multiple-volumes (Berlin, 1975-1980); Lange, Carl, *Die Lateinische Osterfeiern* (1887); Young, Karl, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, Volume 1, University Press (Oxford, 1933).



1613 Exhibition of the Shroud of Turin (Antonio Tempesta)

of any similar cloth having been commissioned for such use, or how a former stage-prop shroud, even one that had been displayed in an enclosed monastery, could possibly have been later successfully passed off as Jesus' authentic burial linen, or why the Shroud's former clerical owner would have remained silent as it was being presented to Christians as an authentic relic and credited with effectuating miraculous cures. Medievalists have also failed to provide satisfactory explanations as to why the Shroud's use as a stage prop was discontinued⁸¹ and why in the world a former stage prop would have been given to Geoffrey de Charny or the Lirey dean.⁸² Indeed, so vague and problematic is the entire concept of the Shroud having once served as a *Quem Quaeritis* stage prop that the Medievalists have acknowledged that "no one has found any significant evidence of the Shroud's existence before 1355, when it appeared in a chapel at Lirey"⁸³ and have candidly characterized these imaginative ideations as mere speculation and supposition.⁸⁴

Medievalists On When The Shroud Was Created In Medieval Times

Medievalists are at odds with one another in their speculations regarding when the Shroud was created. As a matter of art history, one Medievalist has attributed the creation of the Shroud's bloody and flagellated image of Jesus to the fourteenth century.⁸⁵ Another has asserted that the cloth's manufacture was "recent" to its arrival in Lirey in the 1350s,⁸⁶

⁸¹ Hugh Farey has speculated that the Shroud may have become stained or that its image may have practically disappeared from washing; however, had the cloth or image deteriorated to a point that the Shroud could no longer be usefully employed for a few rare and brief displays in *Quem Quaeritis* dramas, just how could it have possibly been thereafter employed for years of frequent and extended exhibitions at the church of Lirey?

⁸² Hugh Farey has speculated that the Shroud may have been gifted to the Dean and Canons of Lirey when they attended the investiture of a new abbot at an enclosed monastery; however, he has provided no documentation of the occurrence of such an event.

⁸³ Freeman, *supra*.

⁸⁴ View Real Seekers podcast, *supra*.

⁸⁵ See Freeman, *supra*.

⁸⁶ See Nicolotti, *supra*, p. 81.

a view refuted by radiocarbon testing data which precludes the cloth's fabrication after 1320.⁸⁷ A third has pointed out that the radiocarbon testing data denotes the Shroud's manufacture in the 1290s,⁸⁸ a scenario rendered rather problematic by Bishop d'Arcis' allegation that, in about 1355, an unnamed artist claimed to have painted the Shroud's image, for, were the Shroud fabricated and promptly imaged in the 1290s by a skilled and experienced artist of about forty years of age, this artist would have been approximately one hundred years old in 1355, when d'Arcis has him confessing to the deed, and even had this artist been a rather precocious twenty-year-old in the 1290s, he would still have been about eighty years old in 1355. These speculated scenarios constitute near factual impossibilities in the famine, war, and plague-ridden fourteenth century when average life expectancy was a mere forty-five years.⁸⁹ In any event, the historical record is totally silent regarding any manufacture and imaging of a fourteen-foot cloth with a three-to-one herringbone weave during the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

Medievalists On Where The Shroud Was Created In Medieval Times

Medievalists are also at odds, both with one another and with themselves, in their speculations regarding where the Shroud was created. One, noting that a small quantity of cotton threads was found in the 1988 radiocarbon dating samples, has speculated that the Shroud may have been manufactured in the south of Germany, perhaps in Ulm or Augsburg where "fustians, cloths in which linen and cotton threads were woven together, were produced each year".⁹⁰ Another, having observed that there were centers of linen manufacture all over Europe,⁹¹ has acknowledged that d'Arcis' allegation of an artist having confessed to painting the Shroud's image evidences that the cloth was "relatively local" to Lirey, but has also pointed out that, were this the case, it is unlikely that Lirey clergy's presentation of the Shroud as an authentic Passion relic could have gained any "traction among the community".⁹² The actual fact is most likely that asserted by a third Medievalist; i.e., it is simply impossible to know whether the Shroud was produced near to, or at some distance from, Lirey.⁹³ In any event, the historical record is totally silent regarding any factory capable of manufacturing a fourteen-foot cloth with a three-to-one herringbone weave during the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

Medievalists On How And By Whom The Shroud Was Created In Medieval Times

Regarding the Shroud's manufacture, two Medievalists have speculated that it was woven on a horizontal treadle loom with four shafts and have claimed that knowledge of horizontal treadle looms came to Europe in the eleventh century and that a four-shaft horizontal treadle loom "was probably introduced by the Flemish in the thirteenth

⁸⁷ See Farey, *The Medieval Shroud 3*, *supra*, p. 98; View Real Seekers podcast, *Panel Review (Part 6), Historical and Anatomical Authenticity* (April 29, 2023).

⁸⁸ *Id.*

⁸⁹ See *Do We Really Live Longer Than Our Ancestors?* BBC (2018). While, in medieval times, life expectancy was between 62 and 70 years, in the fourteenth century, it was shortened considerably by the Great Famine (1315-1317), the Hundred Years War (1337-1355+), and the notorious Black Death (1348-1351) which killed thirty to sixty per cent of the entire population of France.

⁹⁰ See Freeman, *supra*.

⁹¹ Farey, Hugh, *personal correspondence*, June 14, 2023.

⁹² See Farey, *Where and When*, *supra*.

⁹³ See Nicolotti, *supra*, p. 81.

century”;⁹⁴ however, they blame the uncertainties surrounding this issue on “ignorance of the characteristics of the artefact rather than lack of possible methods”.⁹⁵

Regarding the Shroud’s imaging, one Medievalist has speculated that it was produced by an artist via free-hand painting,⁹⁶ a method precluded by the 1978 scientific examination of the Shroud.⁹⁷ Another has speculated that it was produced by *craftsmen* (plural) “whose names, will probably never be known”,⁹⁸ via their covering a bas-relief carving of Jesus with a printing medium.⁹⁹ In any event, the historical record is totally silent regarding any method, artist, or craftsman capable of producing the Shroud’s image during the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

Clearly, the varying, and oft-conflicting, speculations of Medievalists neither constitute historical evidence upon which a hypothesis can be sufficiently based, nor do they satisfactorily answer why, when, where, by whom, and how the Shroud was manufactured and imaged between 1260 and 1320, nor do they provide the Shroud with a viable history between its medieval manufacture its public exhibition. In this regard, it should be noted that, in a recently-published book, an accomplished Medievalist-historian was unable to relate a pre-Lirey history for the Shroud or even describe the circumstances which attended its arrival in Lirey.¹⁰⁰

The Plausibility of the Radiocarbon-Dating Medieval Hypothesis

Were the Medievalist Rev. Herbert Thurston alive today, he would likely describe the Medievalist history of the Shroud as an “absolute blank” and conclude that “no intelligible account, beyond wild conjecture” can be given of the relic’s medieval history. Were the Authenticist Paul Vignon alive today, he would surely declare that “documentary history is distinctly unfavourable” to the Medievalist history of the Shroud and conclude that, as the Radiocarbon-Dating Medieval Hypothesis presently rests “entirely on the scientific probability” of the dubious 1988 radiocarbon-dating test, its plausibility must be regarded as highly-questionable.

⁹⁴ See Nicolotti, *supra*, p. 71; Farey, Hugh, *The Medieval Craftsman and the 3D Effect*, The Medieval Shroud Blog (August 27, 2019).

⁹⁵ Farey, *The Medieval Craftsman and the 3D Effect*, *supra*.

⁹⁶ See Freeman, *supra*.

⁹⁷ See, Rogers, *supra*.

⁹⁸ Farey, Hugh, personal correspondence, June 14, 2023 (emphasis supplied).

⁹⁹ See Farey, *The Medieval Craftsman and the 3D Effect*, *supra*.

¹⁰⁰ See Nicolotti, *supra*, p. 81.

