

sees them as prophetic at the time they were written and fulfilled in the Shroud. The explanation is densely worked and supported by biblical extracts and dictionary definitions taken in quite dense extracts from various sources, themselves containing conventions, abbreviations, and changes in typeface, orthography and emphasis, few of which are further explained, making it tough going, but he certainly makes his point.

A further chapter is a more ambitious attempt to derive prophesy from a pictographic interpretation of individual Hebrew letters. Thus we learn that Y-H-W-H, the standard abbreviation for Yahweh, is composed of the letters Yud - Hey - Vav - Hey, which have the pictographic meaning of Hand - Behold - Nail - Behold, and that Nazah, which is the word used in Isaiah for 'sprinkle', converts to "Behold the heir to the throne, pierced." There is quite a lot more of this, but for me, it requires a good deal more careful philological elucidation to be convincing.

The book ends with a review of some of the evidence adduced to support the authenticity of the Shroud, which I will pass over, and a long, slightly apocalyptic sermon and prayer, which I assume is preached from the point of view of Stevenson's own Everlasting Covenant church.

Few of the original STuRP team are still with us, but even when they were alive, most of them kept their own views about the Shroud to themselves, so it is interesting to read the journey one of them has made in the last forty years, both academically and personally.

Nazah is available from Amazon by search or via this [link](#).

Editor's Notes

Until recently BSTS membership has been in decline. However, I am pleased to say that there are signs of a reversal of fortunes. The digital option has made joining much easier and since its inception our base has almost doubled. Of course, there are many who still prefer to have the printed version as well, as do I, and, thanks to Brenda and Stuart Benton, the distribution is running better than ever. Our overseas membership is

also growing. There may shortly come a time when we need to consider a name change from the British Society to the International Society for the Turin Shroud.

BSTS Committee

Hon. President: Ian Wilson	Pam Moon	Mark Guscini,
Editor: David Rolfe	Hugh Duncan	Hugh Farey
Circulation: Brenda and Stuart Benton	Yvonne Windsor	Arif Khan
Treasurer: Benedict Lawrence	Anthony Luby	Luigi Antoniazzi
	Hugh Duncan	

I am also pleased to say that we have a newly constituted committee of volunteers willing to help guide us onwards and upwards. We are somewhat spread around the country and, indeed, the world so physical meetings will always be something of a problem. However, modern technology is making the possibility of Cloud-based meetings that enable remote presentations and discussion ever more achievable. Watch this space. I hope to include profiles of our committee members over the next few issues. See Tony Luby's below.

Thanks to the Jalsa Salana (August 2nd – 4th) we do have an opportunity to meet up at Alton for anyone taking up Arif's invitation to attend. I will be there on Sunday August 4th. Many of the Committee will be there, too. Email committee member Arif Khan (me@arifkhan.co.uk) as soon as you can to get documentation.

Benedict Lawrence is now spending more of his time overseas and is retiring as Treasurer. He has done a great job and, as an accountant, has agreed to audit and submit accounts as they fall due. Perhaps, from among our existing committee or readers, or someone you may know, we will find a replacement to take over from him. Given our aspirations, I would also hope that the person filling the new role will add to it the task of Head of Fund-Raising and possibly steering us towards charitable status. Our subject deserves more than the shoe-string arrangements we currently depend on.

What is the Shroud For?

A good proportion of subscribers to this Newsletter will, like me, have come to the conclusion that there is – on balance of all the evidence – at least the possibility that the Shroud is authentic and by that I mean an, as yet, unexplainable image of the crucified body of the Jesus of the New

Testament. Some may have more certainty than others but, for most, at least this *possibility* is entertained. If it *is* authentic then are we not obliged to ask the question: *Could it have an intended purpose?*

Each of us may have speculations on this and they will be affected by many factors. Having been exposed to the phenomenon for almost half a century I have come to a view. Please indulge me if I share it with you and feel free to challenge any aspect of the logic and assumptions that have brought me to it.

Christianity's great detractor, Richard Dawkins, in typical mendacious style, cited Prof. George Wells of London University as a senior academic prepared to make the case that Jesus never existed. Dawkins failed to mention that this academic was neither a historian nor a New Testament scholar. He was, in fact, a professor of German - the language of the iconoclastic New Testament scholars typified by Rudolf Bultmann and Albert Schweitzer. However, they *never* went so far as to suggest that Jesus of Nazareth did not exist. They did, however, argue that some of the biblical stories about Him were unreliable as historical accounts and were likely to have been embellished by the well-meaning early evangelists anxious to convey the impact that Jesus had made on them.

Once the very idea of *embellishments* being present in the biblical accounts took hold the next logical scholastic step was to ask what there was that we could be certain about and, depending on the rigour applied, this could amount to very little. Fundamentalists, by definition, sidestepped the problem and, to a large extent, so did mainstream Protestant theologians by keeping these views cloistered away within academia while their Catholic equivalents accepted Papal strictures not to venture too far down that path. Papal infallibility trumped controversial scholarship as Hans Küng discovered.

For me, one of the most remarkable aspects of the Shroud is its *total lack* of "embellishment". Indeed, its total lack of anything "tangible" except the linen itself (entirely consistent with a 2000-year provenance) and its traces of blood and other body fluids. The image "layer" is measured in microns and to emphasize the "minimalism" the body is naked. There is

nothing, except the apparent Jewishness of appearance, that would allow any one sect or denomination to claim “ownership”. And yet, “miraculously”, for the open-minded with eyes to see, everything one might need to know about the Jesus of the New Testament is present.

I have met several people – and include myself - who find something calming and even “healing” and transcendent, in simply meditating on the negative image of the face on the Shroud in its “apparent” state of repose. This image was not available in the detail it now is until relatively recent times. If you have not yet done so, please try it yourself. This is highly *subjective* evidence as opposed to *objective* but, if it is authentic and with a purpose then the possibility that the image could have this quality should not be surprising. Compare it with the crudeness of the medieval copies of the Shroud.

Then there is the sheer meticulous forensic detail of a Roman crucifixion. Avowed opponents of the Shroud’s authenticity have targeted this for obvious reasons and succeeded in getting published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. “*Blood Pattern Analysis*” is an established forensic tool in reconstructing causes of injury. I commend to you a reading of Mark Walker’s thorough repudiation of the most recent attempt to explain away the Shroud’s intrinsic evidence of a death by crucifixion²².

Then there is the unique image itself and its inherent “*mystery*”. “Mystery” is, indeed, the only word for it. No one has been able to explain it or reproduce one like it. As someone who began professional life as a photographer I can tell you just how difficult it is to reproduce an evenly rendered image over any given surface area.

The unattenuated 3D analysis of the Shroud reveals just how consistent the density of light and shade of the Shroud’s image is over its large length and breadth. This would be a considerable technical achievement today let alone for a medieval forger. It rules out any known contact mechanism that involves gravity as weight distribution would be a factor as would the consistency of the mass and viscosity and all other attributes

²² Available at www.bstsnewsletter.com

of the medium that transferred the image. The Shroud's image remains unique just like the personage it appears to represent.

So, to return to my question: *What might the Shroud be for?* If it is authentic then, logically, we might expect it to have some greater purpose than to provide fodder for curious minds skeptical or otherwise to argue over. We are not that far off the 2000th anniversary of the event that would have produced the image on the Shroud. Our modern "Age" will probably come to be known as "The Digital Age". I contend that the Shroud and its image can be viewed as a giant "digital" image with billions of pixels. Pixels that *reveal* - pixels that add up to something that in and of itself is nothing less than a "revelation", of sorts. A revelation of Christ crucified and, by extension, as the only current viable explanation for the image, Christ "Risen". If that is the case, then any of the Evangelists' "embellishments" would have been either true or otherwise justified.

What might that mean for us? And by "us" I mean anyone reading this who regards themselves as being sympathetic to the idea of the Shroud's authenticity. I believe it means that you must spread the "Word" about it just as the Evangelists did. Over the coming years we must overcome the iniquities of the C14 fiasco²³.

How can this be done? After a long and steady decline, I am pleased to say that the circulation of this Newsletter is now growing. That is only achieved by the word-of-mouth of its current readership. We have no advertising budget (yet). Please aim to recruit *at least* one new subscriber before the next edition. Subscriptions are our only source of income though there are opportunities to donate online. Perhaps you can organise a local talk or even give one yourself. In the beginning of this new "Digital Age" will be the "Image" to complement the "Word."

David Rolfe, June 2019.

²³ See: *C14 - A Personal and Inside View*" in this issue.