

The Provenance of the Latin Sermon, a Tenth-Century Reference to the Shroud of Turin

By Jack Markwardt

The *Latin Sermon*, a text which is indisputably datable to the tenth century,¹ references an *acheiropoietos* (not made by human hands) image of Jesus' entire body on a white linen cloth², thereby providing potent historical evidence of the existence of the Shroud of Turin before the close of the first millennium. This text has merited relatively infrequent mention,³ primarily because the identity of its author, the source of its information, and the occasion of its composition all remain unknown, thereby denying it a provenance directly relatable to the relic⁴. An effective remediation of these deficiencies will conclusively establish the tenth-century existence of the Shroud of Turin, provide additional proof of its authenticity, and repudiate its 1988 radiocarbon dating.⁵

¹ The oldest manuscript of the *Latin Sermon*, *Codex Vossianus Latinus*, Q69, maintained at the library of the *Rijksuniversiteit* in Leiden, is composed in a Carolingian-style handwriting and, therefore, it "cannot date much later than the end of the tenth century". See Wilson, Ian, *The Shroud, the 2000-Year-Old Mystery Solved*, p. 177, Bantam Press (London 2010). Unfortunately, it is missing a folio which "mutilates the ending of the text." See Zaninotto, Gino, *L'immagine Edessena: impronta dell'intera persona di Cristo. Nuove conferme dal codex Vossianus Latinus Q 69 del sec. X*, in *L'identification scientifique de l'Homme du Linceul: Jésus de Nazareth*, p. 57, note 3, Actes du Symposium Scientifique International, Rome 10-12 Juin 1993, OEIL-F-X. de Guibert (Paris 1995). This manuscript has been dated to the tenth or eleventh century. See, e.g., Zaninotto, *supra*, p. 57, note 3; Nicolotti, Andrea, *From the Mandylion of Edessa to the Shroud of Turin, The Metamorphosis and Manipulation of a Legend*, p. 112, Brill, English Edition (Leiden 2014). The second-oldest manuscript of the *Latin Sermon*, *Codex 5696*, fol. 35, datable to the twelfth century, is maintained at the Vatican library in Rome. See Savio, Pietro, *Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone*, p. 340, note 31 (Turin 1957); Wilson, Ian, *The Shroud of Turin, The Burial Cloth of Jesus Christ?*, p. 136, Doubleday (Garden City, New York 1978). The third-oldest manuscript of the *Latin Sermon*, *Codex Par. B.N. lat6041A*, datable to the fourteenth century, is maintained at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris. See Dobschütz, Ernst von, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, pp. 130*-135**, 138**, Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung (Leipzig 1899).

² The *Latin Sermon*, paragraphs 4 and 6. See English translations in notes 48 and 49, *infra*. For the Latin text, see Dobschütz, *supra*, pp. 133*-134**; Zaninotto, *supra*, pp. 59-60. Derivations of the *Latin Sermon*'s narrative would later be published by Ordericus Vitalis (ca. 1140) and Gervasius of Tilbury (ca. 1211). See Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 133**.

³ See, e.g., Green, Maurus, *Enshrouded in Silence*, *Ampleforth Journal*, Vol. LXXIV, p. 333 (1969); Wilson (1978), *supra*, pp. 135-136; Drews, Robert, *In Search of the Shroud of Turin*, p. 48, Rowman & Allanheld (Totowa 1984); Wilson, Ian, *The Blood and the Shroud*, p. 270, The Free Press (New York 1998); Wilson, Ian (2010), *supra*, p. 177; Nicolotti (2014), *supra*, pp. 112-119; Markwardt, Jack, *The Hidden History of the Shroud of Turin*, pp. 132-134 (2021).

⁴ See Zaninotto, *supra*, p. 57. Zaninotto opined that the probative value of the *Latin Sermon* had also been diminished by the generally-poor condition of, and the appearance of transcription gaps in, certain of its manuscripts.

⁵ In 1988, the Shroud of Turin was radiocarbon dated to 1260-1390. See Damon, P. E., et al., *Radiocarbon Dating of the Shroud of Turin*, *Nature*, Vol. 337, No. 6028 (Feb. 16, 1989).

Ascertaining the Provenance of the Latin Sermon via an Identification of its Proper Place in the Evolution of the Abgar Legend

The *Latin Sermon*, sometimes called the “older Latin Abgar legend”,⁶ is one of several installments of the Abgar legend, and a determination of its proper place in the legend’s centuries-long evolution will not only permit its more precise dating but also disclose the likely sources of its information.

The Abgar legend is a series of stories which tell of a first-century king, Abgar V of Edessa, converting to Christianity after having received an image of Jesus. Although the literal historicity of this narrative has “long been rejected by the academic world”,⁷ many scholars view it as an allegorical account of the historical late-second-century conversion of the Edessan king Abgar the Great.⁸ As this is a Christian legend, it is important to appreciate that, from the first to the fifth centuries, the Church enforced a secrecy custom, now known as the Discipline of the Secret, which required that pearls of the faith—which would surely have included the concealed imaged burial shroud of Jesus—could be referenced only by the use of linguistic or optical devices, such as metaphors, allegories, inferences, or symbols,⁹ and other texts of this same era, also composed pursuant to the strictures of the Discipline of the Secret, establish that the allegorical image mentioned in the Abgar legend was, in actuality, the Shroud of Turin.¹⁰

⁶ See Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 130**.

⁷ Thomas, Michael, *The Conversions of Adiabene and Edessa in Syriac Christianity and Judaism: The Relations of Jews and Christians in Northern Mesopotamia in Antiquity*, Concordia Theological Journal, Vol 7:1, p. 15 (Winter 2020). J. B. Segal, the preeminent historian of Edessa, has branded the Abgar legend “one of the most successful pious frauds of antiquity”. Segal, J. B., *Edessa, The Blessed City*, p. 64, Oxford University Press (London 1970).

⁸ See, e.g., Burkitt, F. C., *Early Eastern Christianity*, John Murray (London 1904); Fortescue, Adrian, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, Catholic Truth Society (London 1913); Tixeront, L. J., *A Handbook of Patrology*, B. Herder Book Co. (St. Louis 1923); Thomas, *supra*, pp. 16-17; Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 39-44.

⁹ See, e.g., Barnes, A., *The Discipline of the Secret*, The Catholic Encyclopedia, Robert Appleton Company (New York 1909); Schwartz, Daniel L., *Paideia and Cult: Christian Initiation in Theodore of Mopsuestia (The Disciplina Arcani)*, Studies Series 57, Center for Hellenic Studies (Washington, D.C. 2013); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 7-10.

¹⁰ *The Inscription of Abercius*, a monumental epitaph composed in ca. 192 by Bishop Avircius of Phrygian Hieropolis, esoterically recites that he brought a fish (Jesus) “of great size, and perfect” on his journey to Mesopotamia, the location of Edessa, in the late second century. See Leclercq, Henri, *Inscription of Abercius*, The Catholic Encyclopedia, Robert Appleton Company (New York 1907); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 45-50. *The Hymn of the Pearl*, reputedly composed in ca. 220 by Bardaisan of Edessa, a close friend of the recently-converted King Abgar the Great, esoterically recites that its protagonist-prince, an allegorical representative of Jesus, sees on his robe, an allegorical representative of Jesus’ burial shroud, a mirrored image of the “whole self” of the King of kings—a title given to Jesus in the late first century. See, e.g., Bevan, Anthony Ashley, *The Hymn of the Soul Contained in the Syriac Acts of St. Thomas* (ed. Robinson, J. Armitage), pp. 25-27, Wipf & Stock (Eugene, Oregon 2004); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 51-54; Revelation 17:14; 19:16.

This original legendary narrative was deposited into Edessa's royal archives where it would later be discovered by both Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea¹¹ and an anonymous Syrian author.¹² In ca. 325, Eusebius related, in his *History of the Church*, that, just before his conversion, Abgar saw a "great vision" appear on the face of the disciple Thaddeus.¹³ In ca. 400, this anonymous Syrian author related, in the *Doctrine of Addai*, that, just before his conversion, Abgar received a portrait of Jesus' face which had been painted in "choice pigments" by a royal functionary.¹⁴ At the time when these initial installments of the Abgar legend were composed, the Shroud of Turin lay concealed in the city of Antioch,¹⁵ and even if either author possessed knowledge of its existence, the Discipline of the Secret would have prohibited any reference to its true appearance or location.

In 540, and immediately before the Persian army destroyed Antioch, that city's Patriarch brought the Shroud of Turin to Constantinople,¹⁶ and for six years, beginning in 554, the Byzantine emperor Justinian I had the cloth exhibited throughout Anatolia, and the viewers of its image would describe it as "not made by human hands".¹⁷ By 574, the Shroud of Turin had been installed in the imperial relic collection of Constantinople and became known as the "Image of God Incarnate".¹⁸ Copies of its Pantocrator-Type facial image of Jesus were placed upon standards of the Byzantine army, propagated throughout the empire,¹⁹ and established as the archetype image of Jesus.²⁰ As an image of this nature had not been mentioned in the *Doctrine of Addai*, a third installment of the Abgar legend was necessitated, and, in ca. 630,²¹ an anonymous author related, in the *Acts of Thaddeus*,

¹¹ See Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 1.13.1-20.

¹² See *Teaching of Addai* (trans. Howard, George), pp. 105-107, Scholars Press (Ann Arbor, Michigan 1981).

¹³ See Eusebius, *supra*.

¹⁴ See *Teaching of Addai, supra*, pp. 9-15.

¹⁵ While the Shroud of Turin was being maintained by the Church of Antioch (ca. 70-362), it was, during a brief period of Roman religious tolerance (ca. 180-192), taken to Edessa to assist in the conversion of King Abgar the Great, and, later, in 362, it was hidden in a wall of that city where it lay lost and forgotten until ca. 538. See Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 31-71.

¹⁶ See Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 77-79.

¹⁷ See *Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor*, (ed. Greatrex, Geoffrey), Book Twelve, a, pp. 425-427, Liverpool Press (Liverpool 2011); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 86-89.

¹⁸ See, e.g., George Cedrenus, *Hist. Comp.*, Bonn ed., p. 685; *History of Theophylact Simocatta* (eds., Whitby, Michael and Whitby, Mary), Book Two, 3.4-6; Book Three, 1.11-12, pp. 46; 73, Clarendon Press (Oxford 1986); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 90-96.

¹⁹ See, e.g., *History of Theophylact Simocatta, supra*, Book Two, 3.4-6; Book Three, 1.11-12, pp. 46; 73; Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 97-99.

²⁰ See, e.g., Belting, Hans, *In Search of Christ's Body. Image or Imprint?*, in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (eds. Kessler, Herbert L. and Wolf, Gerhard), Villa Spelman Colloquia, Volume 6, p. 10, Nuova Alfa Editoriale (Bologna 1998); Gibbon, Edward, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Volume II, Chapter 49, Penguin Books (London 1994); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 100-102.

²¹ See Palmer, Andrew, *Les Actes de Thaddée*, Apocrypha 13, pp. 63-84 (2002), ref. in Nicolotti (2014), *supra*, p. 29, note 2.

that, just before his conversion, Abgar received an *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' face created when Jesus had dried his face with a *tetradiplon*—a cloth “doubled-in-four”.²²

In 726, the Byzantine emperor Leo III established imperial iconoclasm throughout the entire empire and, in 741, his son, the iconoclastic emperor Constantine V, desirous of ending continuous earthquakes which had been striking Constantinople for almost a year, sealed the Image of God Incarnate—the Shroud of Turin—within its gold case and promised God, on behalf of himself and his imperial successors, that, henceforth, this cloth would remain inaccessible to anyone other than the Byzantine emperor himself.²³

In 944, the Image of Edessa, a reputed *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus's face on a linen cloth, was brought from Edessa to Constantinople by the Byzantine army. As this icon apparently exhibited some sign of blood, and as blood had not been mentioned in the *Acts of Thaddeus*, a fourth installment of the Abgar legend was necessitated. In 945, an anonymous author, acting under the direction of the emperor Constantine VII, related, in the *Narratio de imagine Edessena*, that, although it was possible the *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' face received by Abgar had been created when Jesus used the cloth to dry his face,²⁴ it was more likely created when Jesus used the cloth to wipe blood-like sweat from his face in Gethsemane.²⁵

In 958, the emperor Constantine VII extracted the Image of God Incarnate—the Shroud of Turin—from its gold case to employ it for the sanctification of water which he wanted to send to the Byzantine army for divine protection. At that time, he must have discovered the cloth's *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' crucified body, for, in deference to the synoptic Gospels,²⁶ he referred to it as “the *sindon* which God wore”²⁷ or “the theophoric (derived-from-a-god) *sindon*”.²⁸ Although this *sindon* surely bore a full-body image of Jesus (for such an image was observable on this same cloth when it would later be publicly exhibited at a Constantinople church),²⁹ the emperor made no mention of same, and, for the next two hundred and forty-five years, this image would continue to go unacknowledged by the emperors of Byzantium.

²² See Nicolotti, Andrea, *The Shroud of Turin: The History and Legends of the World's Most Famous Relic* (trans. Hunt, J. M. and Smith R. A.), p. 30, Baylor University Press (Waco, Texas 2019).

²³ These events are recited in the *Tarragona* manuscript, a text composed in Constantinople and datable to ca. 1190. See, e.g., Ciggaar, Krijnie N., *Une Description de Constantinople dans le Tarrogonensis 55*, pp. 120-121, *Revue des etudes byzantines* 53 (1995); Flusin, Bernard, *Didascalie de Constantin Stilbes sur le Mandylion et la Sainte Tuile*, pp. 63-64, *Revue de Etudes Byzantines* 55 (1997); Guscini, Mark, *The Image of Edessa*, p. 181, Brill, (Leiden-Boston 2009); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 117-131.

²⁴ See Guscini, *supra*, p. 21.

²⁵ *Id.*, pp. 25-27.

²⁶ See Matthew 27:59-60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53.

²⁷ See Scavone, Daniel C., *Acheiropoietos Jesus Images in Constantinople: The Documentary Evidence* Document IV (1996-2006). <https://shroudstory.wordpress.com/about/acheiropoietos-jesus-images-in-constantinople-the-documentary-evidence/>

²⁸ See Nicolotti (2019), *supra*, p. 36.

²⁹ See Robert de Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople* (trans. McNeal, Edgar Holmes), p. 112, Columbia University Press (New York 1936); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 153-154.

The reason for such imperial silence is rather obvious. Scripture implied that Jesus had been crucified naked and specifically recited that Jesus' crucified body had been wrapped in his burial cloth. Thus, any image of Jesus' body impressed upon his burial *sindon* would surely have depicted him naked, and the conservative, modest, and pious Byzantines would have regarded such an image as repulsive and sacrilegious. Indeed, from the time that the Image of God Incarnate—the Shroud of Turin—had arrived in Constantinople in the sixth century, Byzantine emperors never publicly disclosed either that this cloth was a *sindon* or that it bore a naked full-body image of Jesus. “Christian art for a long time objected to stripping Christ of his garments”,³⁰ and, accordingly, Byzantine emperors mandated that the crucified Jesus be depicted clothed, as exemplified by a Syrian Gospel Book illustration datable to *ca.* 586.³¹



In 958, when the emperor Constantine VII discovered the *sindon* relic, the Byzantines were still portraying Jesus as crucified in a robe or a *perizoma* (loincloth) covered by a *colobium* (a long, flowing, sleeveless tunic that extended to the knees).³² As Professor Robert Drews has noted,

*It is not difficult to imagine that the custodians of the cloth might have been perplexed and embarrassed about that full image. In fact, we may be quite certain that if they had exhibited the entire cloth, and had no explanation for it other than that it was Jesus' gift to Abgar, the proprietors of the cloth would not only have encountered utter disbelief, but would have so outraged the public that the cloth would have been destroyed... Not until he was threatened with the destruction of his city (by the leaders of the Fourth Crusade in 1203-1204) did the emperor disregard the traditional injunction and reveal the Shroud for public veneration.*³³

This imperial concealment of an image accounts for late-twelfth century pilgrims and chroniclers having made no mention of same in reporting the ongoing presence of a *sindon* in the imperial collection.³⁴

³⁰ See Marucchi, Orazio, *Archaeology of the Cross and Crucifix*, The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume IV, Robert Appleton Company (New York 1908).

³¹ The *Codex Syriacus*, 56 is preserved in the Laurentian Library at Florence. See Schacher, A. A., *Crucifixion (In Art)*, p. 487, McGraw Hill (New York 1987); Marucci, *supra*.

³² See Marucci, *supra*.

³³ Drews, *supra*, pp. 48; 50.

³⁴ See, e.g., Wilson (1978), *supra*, pp. 142-143; Scavone, *supra*, Document X; Wilson (1998), *supra*, p. 271; Nicolotti (2019), *supra*, p. 38; Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 146-149.

As an image of Jesus' entire body on a white linen cloth had gone unmentioned in both the *Acts of Thaddeus* and the *Narratio de imagine Edessena*, a fifth installment of the Abgar legend was necessitated and, before long, that bill would be filled by the *Latin Sermon*. Thus, the *Latin Sermon's* proper place in the Abgar legend's evolution is subsequent to the emperor Constantine VII's discovery, in 958, of an *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' entire body on the *sinidon* of the imperial relic collection—the Shroud of Turin—and, obviously, the only persons then in a position to have disclosed the existence of this image to the author of the *Latin Sermon* were the Byzantine emperor and his closest family members.

Ascertaining the Provenance of the Latin Sermon via an Identification of its Author

Although the author of the *Latin Sermon* has been described as anonymous,³⁵ the narrative of this text is preceded by an *Inscriptio* which names its author as “Master Smira, archiater”.³⁶ In the tenth and eleventh centuries, an “archiater” was a chief physician to an imperial ruler, and, more than twelve decades ago, Ernst von Dobschütz, the world's preeminent expert on Jesus images, posited that this archiater's last name may have been “Smera”, rather than “Smira”.³⁷ Fortunately, this information is sufficient to identify the author of the *Latin Sermon* as a tenth-century physician who is rather well-known in the history of medicine: “The first Slavic scientifically trained physician to be known by name was the Pole Jan Smera, who in the second half of the tenth century studied medicine in Constantinople and Alexandria, and later on became an archiater at the court of Vladimir in Kiev”,³⁸ where he practiced Greek and Syrian medicine.³⁹

The *Inscriptio* also recites that the archiater Smera translated, into Latin, a text “from a book of the Syrians”,⁴⁰ so he clearly possessed proficiency in the Syriac and Latin languages, and what is known of Doctor Jan Smera reveals him to have been a polyglot with an aptitude in Polish, Greek, Syriac, Russian, and, as a medical doctor, Latin.⁴¹ As it is extremely unlikely that there could have been another tenth or eleventh-century doctor named Smera who served as a chief physician to an imperial ruler and was capable of translating a Syriac text to Latin, Doctor Jan Smera can be identified, with a high degree of confidence, as the author of the *Latin Sermon*, and his known service as archiater to

³⁵ See, e.g., Nicolotti (2014), *supra*, p. 113.

³⁶ “The treatise begins from a book of the Syrians, translated into Latin by Don Smira, architrater, about a certain divinely-transformed cloth, which is very suitable for this solemnity.” *The Latin Sermon, Inscriptio*. For the Latin text, see Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 131**; Zaninotto, *supra*, p. 59.

³⁷ See Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 140**; Zaninotto, *supra*, p. 57.

³⁸ Grmek, Mirko Drazen, *Ancient Slavic Medicine*, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 38 (January 1959).

³⁹ Rowell, Margery, *Russian Medical Botany before the Time of Peter the Great*, *Sudhoffs Archiv*, Bd. 62, H. 4, p. 342 (4. Quartal 1978).

⁴⁰ “The treatise begins from a book of the Syrians, translated into Latin by Don Smira, architrater, about a certain divinely-transformed cloth, which is very suitable for this solemnity.” *The Latin Sermon, Inscriptio*. For the Latin text, see Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 131**; Zaninotto, *supra*, p. 59.

⁴¹ See Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 136**; Nicolotti (2014), *supra*, p. 113.

Czar Vladimir I dates this text more precisely to 980-1015—the period of Vladimir’s rule of the Kievan Rus’.

Ascertaining the Provenance of the Latin Sermon via an Identification of the Occasion of its Composition

The *Inscriptio* also recites that the Syriac text was translated to Latin so that its Abgar legend narrative could be delivered, as a sermon, at a “solemnity” for which this narrative was “very suitable”.⁴² In light of Doctor Jan Smera’s connections to both Constantinople and Kiev, this solemnity is readily identifiable as what was likely the most important solemnity of Czar Vladimir’s life.

In 988, Vladimir, who was then about thirty years old and suffering from a serious loss of eyesight, ordered his army to attack the Byzantine-held city of Cherson, located in the Crimea, and, after the city had been taken, he offered to return it to the Byzantine emperor, Basil II, if he would be permitted to marry the emperor’s famously beautiful, and extremely pious, sister, Princess Anna Porphyrogenita.⁴³

Both Basil and Anna appreciated that the Christianization of the pagan Kievan Rus’ would greatly advance “the prudent and pious policy of their predecessors, who had ever sought to bring their fierce (Russian) neighbors under the humanizing influence of the Faith”.⁴⁴ Indeed, the emperor Leo VI had, at the beginning of the tenth century, employed “the splendor of the churches, the holy relics, the precious *icons*, and the ‘Instruments of the Passion of our Lord’” to negotiate a favorable peace treaty with the Russian prince Oleg, thereby leading his imperial successors to conclude that Russian rulers could be bent to their will in affairs of state “if by any means they might catch from them the spirit of the faith”.⁴⁵ Thus, Basil and Anna agreed to Vladimir’s proposal, conditioned upon his acceptance of the faith, and proceeded to contemplate how they might employ a venerable Byzantine religious object to induce him to import Christianity into his realm.

In accordance with this agreement, Vladimir was baptized and he immediately recovered his full eyesight.⁴⁶ Soon thereafter, the princess Anna, accompanied by a “venerable body of clergy” and a large Byzantine retinue,⁴⁷ which surely included Vladimir’s future archiater, Doctor Jan Smera, travelled to Cherson for the wedding ceremony. Someone, perhaps the pious Anna herself, recalled that the Abgar legend told the story of how a pagan ruler, suffering from a serious physical malady, invited Jesus to take up residence

⁴² See note 40, *supra*.

⁴³ See Mouravieff, A. N., (trans. Blackmore, R. W.), *A History of the Church of Russia*, p. 13, Oxford: John Henry Parker (London 1842).

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*, p. 9.

⁴⁶ *Id.*, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁷ *Id.*, p. 13; John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 811-1057 (Wortley, John, trans.), p. 319 and note 100, Cambridge University Press (New York 2010); Shipman, Andrew, *St. Vladimir the Great*, The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 15, Robert Appleton Company (New York 1912).

with him in Edessa so he might instruct him in, and help him convert his subjects to, Christianity, and of how this ruler, upon receiving a cloth bearing an image of Jesus' face and declaring his faith in him, had been immediately cured of his malady. In the here and now, Czar Vladimir, a pagan ruler who had recently been cured of a serious physical malady upon declaring his faith in Jesus, had invited a Christian princess to take up residence with him in Kiev so she might instruct him in, and help him convert his subjects to, Christianity. Not only was the *Latin Sermon* "very suitable" for this "solemnity", but, indeed, it is difficult to imagine another sermon which would have been more appropriate for this particular wedding ceremony.

Basil and Anna concluded that Vladimir, once he had heard a sermon referencing an *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' entire body on a white linen cloth and had been advised that the Byzantine emperor possessed such a cloth, would, as they believed that all Russian leaders were inclined to do, catch "the spirit of the faith" and fulfill their personal ambition of bringing Christianity to the pagan Kievan Rus'. In furtherance of this scheme, they directed Doctor Smera to modify the traditional Abgar legend, as related in the Syriac text, by reciting, in its translation, that Jesus promised to send Abgar a linen cloth bearing a "divinely-transferred" image of his entire body⁴⁸ and then created this image by spreading his body upon a snow-white linen cloth.⁴⁹

Because Byzantines would have deemed an image of a naked Jesus repulsive and sacrilegious, the translated sermon could not recite that Jesus had completely undressed before creating the image sent to Abgar, and the language employed by Doctor Smera in his translation is sufficiently ambivalent on this point; however, and seemingly forgetting that, in 944, the Image of Edessa had been taken from that city for its transfer to Constantinople, Doctor Smera retained the Syriac text's recitations that the cloth was still being kept in Edessa's great cathedral⁵⁰ and that, on Easter day, its image would

⁴⁸ "...But if you desire to see my face physically, I will send you a linen, on which you will be able to see not only the form of my face, but more readily the divinely-transformed state of my body, which, when you have seen it, you will be able to cool the ardor of your soul...". The *Latin Sermon*, paragraph 4. For the Latin text, see Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 133**.; Zaninotto, *supra*, p. 59.

⁴⁹ "For this mediator of God and men, that he might satisfy the king himself in all things and through all things, spread himself with his whole body upon a kind of cloth like snow, in which, it is wonderful to say or hear, so divinely was the form of that domineering face suddenly transformed glorious, and the noblest state of the whole body, that for those who had not at all seen the coming of the Lord in bodily form standing, it was sufficient to see the transfiguration in the linen ". The *Latin Sermon*, paragraph 6. For the Latin text, see Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 134**.; Zaninotto, *supra*, p. 60.

⁵⁰ "This linen cloth, still uncorrupted by the age of time, is kept in Mesopotamia, Syria, in the city of Edessa, in its great church, and in the chief festivals celebrated in honor of the Lord and Savior throughout the year, a circle of hymns and psalms and special songs is produced from the golden chest, and it is adored by all the people with great reverence." The *Latin Sermon*, paragraph 7. For the Latin text, see Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 134**.; Zaninotto, *supra*, p. 60.

miraculously transform to sequentially depict Jesus as an infant, a child, an adolescent,⁵¹ and an adult. This oversight was typical of previous modifications to the Abgar legend, for “each time something new was discovered about the Image of Edessa, it was incorporated into the legend **with no attempt to iron out any resulting contradictions**”.⁵²

Obviously, for the sermon to be understood by wedding guests from the West, including marriage relatives of the Byzantine royal family⁵³ and members of the Latin clergy,⁵⁴ the Syriac text would have to be translated to Latin, and for it to be understood by the couple’s family, friends, and royal attendants, it would also have to be translated to Greek and Russian. Doctor Smera, proficient in all these languages, performed the necessary translations, including uniform modifications of the Syriac text, and, as the entire sermon was very brief and recitable in several minutes, it could be read, sequentially, in all three languages.

The Byzantine plan worked like a charm, for once Czar Vladimir, accompanied by his bride, arrived back in Kiev, he immediately initiated the Christianization of his realm by causing all twelve of his sons to be baptized.⁵⁵

With the provenance of the *Latin Sermon*, including its author, its sources of information, and the occasion of its composition, now established, the text’s reference to an image of Jesus’ entire body on a white linen cloth is connectable to the Byzantine *sindon* relic of the imperial relic collection which was discovered by Emperor Constantine VII in 958 and which would be shown to possess a full-body image of Jesus when it was publicly exhibited at a Constantinople church in 1203-1204,⁵⁶ and that cloth has been identified by several prominent art experts as the Shroud of Turin.⁵⁷

⁵¹ “...on the holy day of Passover, the species of his age used to change to different kinds, that is to say, the first hour of the day is infancy, the third is childhood, the sixth adolescence, but the ninth shows itself to have fullness, in which the Son of God, coming to his passion, endured the cruel punishment of the cross for the weight of our crimes.” The *Latin Sermon*, paragraph 8. For the Latin text, see Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 134*; Zaninotto, *supra*, p. 60.

⁵² Guscini, Mark, *The Sermon of Gregory Referendarius*, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/guscini3.pdf> (emphasis in original).

⁵³ In 944, the then Byzantine co-emperor, and a future sole emperor (*r.* 958–963), Romanos II, married Bertha-Eudocia, the daughter of a king of Italy. In 972, Theophanu, the niece or granddaughter of the Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes (*r.* 969–976), married Otto II, then heir to the Holy Roman Empire, in Rome. Her husband became Holy Roman Emperor in 973 and, upon his death in 983, she became Empress Regent for her three-year-old son, Otto III, and she was serving in that capacity in 988 when Princess Anna Porphyrogenita married Czar Vladimir I.

⁵⁴ In 988, the Orthodox and Roman churches were still united, as the Great Schism between the two churches would not transpire for another sixty-six years (in 1054).

⁵⁵ See Mouravieff, *supra*, p. 14.

⁵⁶ See Robert de Clari, *supra* p. 112; Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 153-154.

⁵⁷ Ernst Kitzinger noted that “for us, a very small group of experts around the world, we believe the Shroud of Turin is the Shroud of Constantinople.” See Lavoie, Gilbert, *Resurrected—Tangible Evidence that Jesus Rose from the Dead*, pp. 73-74, Thomas Moore (Allen, Texas 2000). Hans Belting concluded that “the authentic relic of the Holy Shroud (was) preserved in the chapel of the (Bucoleon) Palace before it ended up in Turin”. See Belting, Hans, *An Image and Its Function in the Liturgy: The Man of Sorrows in Byzantium*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 34/35, p. 6 (1980/1981).

Brief mention may be made of Dobschütz' belief that the author of the *Latin Sermon* merely copied its reference to an *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' entire body on a white linen cloth from the Syriac text and that this reference had been interpolated in the Syriac text sometime between 769 and the composition of the *Latin Sermon*.⁵⁸ While others share this belief,⁵⁹ no one has explained how, during this period, a putative interpolator could have obtained knowledge of an extant *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' entire body on a linen cloth, particularly given that, from 769 to 958, the Image of God Incarnate—the Shroud of Turin—remained sealed within its gold case.⁶⁰ As far as it is presently known, the very first time, subsequent to 769, that anyone learned of an extant *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' entire body on a white linen cloth was Emperor Constantine VII's discovery of the *sinдон* relic of the imperial collection in 958, and it seems clear that the Syriac text was not modified after 958, for, in 988, it still recited that the imaged cloth was being kept in Edessa, when, in fact, it had, in 944, been taken from that city for transfer to Constantinople. Thus, the *Latin Sermon's* reference to an *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' entire body on a white linen cloth appears to have been its author's invention rather than his transcription of the Syriac text.

The Latin Sermon's Reference to a White Linen Cloth Bearing an Image of Jesus' Entire Body is a Reference to the Shroud of Turin

There is substantial historical corroboration that the *Latin Sermon* references the Shroud of Turin, as, prior to its composition, various texts had alluded to an image of Jesus' entire body on cloth. For example, in *ca.* 220, the *Hymn of the Pearl*, attributed to Bardaisan of Edessa, a lifelong friend of the recently-converted King Abgar the Great, alluded to a mirrored image of the “whole self” of the King of kings (Jesus) on a clean robe.⁶¹ In *ca.* 600, the *Mozarabic Liturgy*, recently revised with the assistance of Bishop Leandro who had served as the Spanish ambassador to Constantinople, recited that Peter and John discovered the “recent imprints” of Jesus' body on his burial cloth.⁶² In *ca.* 730, John of Damascus related that Jesus had impressed an image of himself upon a *himation*—a cloth almost two yards wide and three yards long.⁶³ Additionally, and shortly after

⁵⁸ See Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 139**. His conclusion derived from his view that this same Syriac text had been the source of a sermon, delivered by Pope Stephen III to a Vatican synod in 769, which alluded only to an *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' face on a linen cloth. See Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 138**; Nicolotti, *supra*, p. 114. The Latin text of that sermon reads “...*quod si faciem meam corporaliter cernere cupis, en tibi vultus mei speciem transformatam in linteo dirigo ...*”. See Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 191*; Nicolotti (2014), *supra*, pp. 114, 115 (note 74). Some have mistakenly asserted that this interpolation was made in the papal sermon of 769. See, e.g., Wilson (1978), *supra*, p. 135; Wilson (1998), *supra*, p. 270; several works listed in Nicolotti (2014), *supra*, p. 115, note 75.

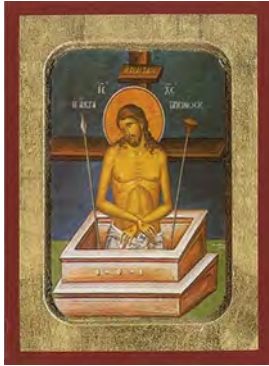
⁵⁹ See, e.g., Green, *supra*, p. 333; Wilson (1978), *supra*, pp. 135; Nicolotti (2014), *supra*, p. 112.

⁶⁰ Except for whenever, if ever, it was privately viewed by the Byzantine emperor himself. See Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 121-135.

⁶¹ *The Hymn of the Pearl* (*ca.* 220). See, e.g., Bevan, *supra*, pp. 25-27.

⁶² *The Mozarabic Liturgy* (*ca.* 600). See, e.g., Guscini, Mark, *The Oviedo Cloth*, p. 17, Lutterworth Press (Cambridge 1998).

⁶³ See Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 189*; Drews, *supra*, p. 39.



the composition of the *Latin Sermon*, Byzantine artists began to create icons and other artworks which portrayed a dead or resurrected Shroud-like Jesus with his arms crossed at the wrists, right over left, and his hands laying over the pelvic area.

In the second half of the twelfth century, when texts “often speak of *sindon*, *sudarium*, linens, and sepulchral bands interchangeably, as if they were synonymous”,⁶⁴ pilgrims and chroniclers reported that the imperial relic collection held Jesus’ *sindon*,⁶⁵ and Jesus’ *linteum*,⁶⁶ and the “*sudarium* which was over (Jesus’) head”.⁶⁷ In ca. 1192-1195, King Béla III of Hungary, a former Byzantine emperor-designate who had access to the imperial *sindon*, published a codex containing one illustration of a dead Shroud-like Jesus with arms crossed at the wrists, right over left, hands laid over his pelvic area, thumbs out of sight, and forehead bearing a bloodstain, and another of a Shroud-like burial cloth with a herringbone weave and an inverted L-shaped pattern of holes.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ See Nicolotti (2019), *supra*, pp. 38-39; 41.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Wilson (1978), *supra*, p. 142; Wilson (1998), *supra*, p. 271; Nicolotti (2019), *supra*, p. 38.

⁶⁶ See Scavone, *supra*, Document X.

⁶⁷ See Wilson (1978), *supra*, p. 143.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Macartney, C. A., *The Medieval Hungarian Historians: A Critical and Analytical Guide*, Cambridge University Press (New York 1953); Berkovits, Ilona, *Illuminated Manuscripts in Hungary, XI-XVI Centuries* (trans. Horn, Z.), Praeger (New York 1969); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 149-150.



Finally, and as previously noted, in 1203-1204, the imperial *sindon*, a cloth identified by several prominent art experts as the Shroud of Turin,⁶⁹ displayed an image of Jesus' entire body when it was exhibited, every Friday, at a Constantinople church.⁷⁰

The Shroud of Turin is the only white linen cloth bearing an image of Jesus' entire body which perfectly fits every piece of the aforementioned textual and artistic evidence, and no other such image is known to have existed prior to the Shroud of Turin's public exhibition at a Lirey church in *ca.* 1355-1357.⁷¹ Thus, the Shroud of Turin, and only the Shroud of Turin, could have been the imaged cloth which was referenced in 988 by the *Latin Sermon*.

Q.E.D.

Res ipsa loquitur!

A skeptic of the relic's authenticity has claimed that this text alludes to the body of a living Jesus, and, although it is clearly incumbent upon anyone making such a claim to identify a then-extant tenth-century white linen cloth bearing an image of the body of a living Jesus, he has not done so.⁷² His assertion is based entirely on an inference drawn from the passage of the *Latin Sermon* which relates that the image was created when a living Jesus spread his body on a cloth; however, and as previously noted, Doctor Smera merely modified the corresponding passage of the Syriac text which had recited that Jesus created an image of his face by pressing it to a cloth, and that passage is as patently-legendary as the following passage which recites that the image would transform on Easter day, a passage which this same skeptic has acknowledged to be a "fantastic description"⁷³ While this skeptic has also noted that the text of the *Latin Sermon* does not mention blood or wounds,⁷⁴ there is no reason to believe that Dr. Smera

⁶⁹ See note 57, *supra*.

⁷⁰ See Robert de Clari, *supra*, p. 112; Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 153-154.

⁷¹ The patently-bogus imaged Shroud of Besançon did not make a certain historical appearance until *ca.* 1523. See Zaccane, Gian Marie, *Le manuscrit 826 de la Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon*, Acts of the Third International Scientific Symposium of CIELT-Nice 1997, pp. 211-217, Editions du CIELT (Paris 1998).

⁷² See Nicolotti (2014), *supra*, p. 115.

⁷³ *Id.* This tale could not have originated in Edessa. See Dobschütz, *supra*, p. 182.

⁷⁴ See Nicolotti (2014), *supra*, p. 115.

ever personally viewed the referenced cloth or was otherwise able to affirm, or disaffirm, whether it displayed any blood or wounds. In all likelihood, he had been told only that there existed a linen cloth bearing an *acheiropoietos* image of Jesus' entire body.

Arriving at a Coherent History of the Shroud of Turin

In 1988—somewhat ironically, for it was precisely one thousand years after the composition of the *Latin Sermon*—the Shroud of Turin was radiocarbon dated to 1260-1390.⁷⁵ Twenty years later, Professor Christopher Ramsey of Oxford University, a participant in that testing, candidly and astutely observed:

*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. It is important that we continue to test the accuracy of the original radiocarbon tests as we are already doing. It is equally important that experts assess and reinterpret some of the other evidence. Only by doing this will people be able to arrive at a coherent history of the Shroud which takes into account and explains all of the available scientific and historical information.*⁷⁶

In a recently-published book, I presented a plethora of historical evidence which suggests that the Shroud of Turin is much older than the 1988 radiocarbon dating allows.⁷⁷ For example, a first-century scriptural text alludes to a “clear portrayal of Jesus crucified” that was displayed to the Galatians,⁷⁸ a fourth-century ecclesiastical text references a full-length “holy image of our Lord and Savior” that was once possessed by the apostolic Church of Jerusalem,⁷⁹ and numerous first-millennium images depict a Shroud-like face of Jesus, including the famous sixth-century Christ Pantocrator icon of St. Catherine’s monastery⁸⁰ and the equally-renown sixth-century mosaics of Ravenna’s church of Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo.⁸¹

⁷⁵ See Damon, P. E., *supra*.

⁷⁶ Ramsay, Christopher, *The Shroud of Turin* (March 2008). <https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/shroud.html>

⁷⁷ See Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 22-168.

⁷⁸ Galatians 3:1 (ca. 56); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 22-27.

⁷⁹ The *Sermon of Athanasius* (ca. 360). See Dobschütz, p. 282**, n. 3, ref. Mansi, XIII, 584a = Athan. opp. II 353c; Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 28-30.

⁸⁰ This painted icon is datable to ca. 540-565. See, e.g., Galey, John, Forsyth, George, and Weitzmann, Kurt, *Sinai and the Monastery of St. Catherine*, Massada, p. 92 (Givatayim, Israel 1980); Manaphēs, Kōnstantinos A., *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, pp. 92-93, Ekdotike Athenon (Athens 1990); Weitzmann, Kurt, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, the Icons*, p. 13, Princeton University Press (Princeton 1976); Markwardt, *supra*, p. 80.

⁸¹ These mosaic images are datable to ca. 547. See, e.g., Caccese, Alfonso, Marinelli, Emanuela, Provera, Laura, and Repice, Domenico, *The Mandylion in Constantinople: Literary and Iconographic Sources*, p. 3, International Conference on the Shroud of Turin, Pasco, Washington (2017); Pfeiffer, Heinrich, *The Shroud of Turin and the Face of Christ in Paleochristian, Byzantine and Western Medieval Art*, pp. 18-19, Shroud Spectrum International, No. 9 (1983); Markwardt, *supra*, pp. 80-82.



As the tenth-century existence of the Shroud of Turin, now firmly established by the *Latin Sermon*, is totally irreconcilable with its origination after 1259, and as all other available historical information is perfectly consistent with its existence prior to 1260, the formulation of any coherent history of the Shroud of Turin will clearly require a rejection of the 1988 radiocarbon dating data.



Jack Markwardt's book *The Hidden History of the Shroud of Turin* is available on Amazon, as a hardback, as a paperback, and also as an Amazon kindle.

Here is the link on amazon.co.uk:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Hidden-History-Shroud-Turin/dp/B09LY6QF3Q>