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*Like the Shroud, the Veil of Veronica is an acheiropoieta (an image made without hands), that was created when a woman, Veronica, used her cloth to wipe Jesus' face on the Road to Calvary. My interest in this legend stems from its literary and visual representations, especially in the Stations of the Cross—the popular devotion that charts Jesus' journey from trial to crucifixion. On one level, the legend contains truths about courage, fidelity and kindness. But, my research indicates that on deeper reflection, this seemingly straight forward story proposes a theology of the Incarnation.*

### **ABSTRACT**

#### **The Veil of Veronica: From Concealment to Revelation**

The cult of the saints, at the height of its popularity in the 15th century, was an integral component of western Christianity. And a popular story concerned St. Veronica, keeper of a miraculous cloth known as the Veil of Veronica ("the Veronica"). According to tradition, the cloth was miraculously imprinted with Christ's image after the woman, Veronica, gave it to him to wipe his face on the road to Calvary. Like the Shroud of Turin, the Veronica is considered to be a miraculous image made without human intervention. But unlike the Shroud, which has a full-body image, the Veronica bears Christ's face only. Although the Veronica story is not in the New Testament, it was written down beginning in the 4th c. and later recorded in artistic representations, including the Sixth Station of the Cross. Art historian Neil MacGregor notes that images of the Veronica eventually outnumbered written texts so much so that "by the end of the fifteenth century there was an agreed likeness of Christ" that most Europeans could recognize. But what was the motivation to set down this "legend," thereby ensuring its popularity and longevity? Perhaps it was because the Veronica contained truths about humanity's being created in God's image and the revelation of the invisible God in Christ. But the most fundamental argument, however, was the Incarnation. Because images of Christ in his human form showed the historicity of God made man, it was therefore appropriate to make images of him as a man. And as humanity's image reflects God's, images of the incarnate Christ show his divinity and humanity and therefore teach the doctrine of the Incarnation. The presentation surveys biblical and Patristic writings, as well as the Veronica in art and literature to explore its status as a symbol of the Incarnation that reveals God's human face in Christ.