

Early Christians Identified Jesus' Shroud With His Royal & Priestly Robe!

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ABSTRACT

Based on an abundance of scientific and historical evidence that has surfaced in recent years, the author believes the Shroud of Turin is the genuine burial cloth that Joseph of Arimathea purchased and used to wrap the body of Jesus. Peter and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” found the tomb empty of a corpse on Resurrection Day. However, when they found the funeral linens, something about their appearance caused the disciple to “believe” (John 20.8). The cloth was stained with blood and had been defiled by its contact with a corpse. Why then wasn't the Shroud viewed as “unclean,” discarded and buried? Why did the early Church treasure this piece of linen and seek to safeguard it from opponents and enemies of the Faith? How did they come to perceive this cloth? What beliefs became attached to it? In a former paper² the author attempted to show that the early Christians likely perceived the Shroud as being the miraculous “sign of Jonah” that Jesus had promised.³ In this paper he will seek to demonstrate that the early Christians also identified Jesus' Shroud, typologically, as his royal-priestly robe, sanctified by His sacrificial blood! The earthly Shroud was a “type and shadow” of the heavenly robe! With its miraculous image, the Shroud was viewed as being a link between the earthly and heavenly realities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Being Jewish and living in Rome during the 1st century had its difficulties! You felt the contempt native Romans held concerning your race! From their unwelcomed glares you could sense their unspoken but heartfelt animosity:

Another Jew! I despise you! You despise the customs of our ancestors! You have no idols like all other religions. You despise our gods and show them no respect. Because of

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² See Larry Stalley, “The Image on the Turin Shroud Is ‘The Sign of Jonah’ for Our Generation!” at www.shroud.com.

³ Matt 12.38-42; 16.1-4; Luke 11.29-32

*you, the gods will bring calamity upon our city! Your strict dietary laws are absurd, as you see no difference between eating pork or human flesh. You show how barbaric you are as a race by circumcising your baby boys. You “superstitious barbarians”! You are lazy, wasting and sitting around doing nothing on the day of Saturn. Rumor has it that you were kicked out of Egypt due to leprosy and for being misfits. You refuse to join the army. You will not participate in our civic celebrations or attend the banquets at our temples. Rome would be a much better place without your race!*⁴

Yes, Rome was a hotbed for anti-Semitism in the 1st century CE.

And it was likely even more uncomfortable residing in Rome during the last half of the first century being a Jewish follower of Jesus. The emperor Nero blamed the Great Fire of Rome in 64 A.D. on Christians and inflicted “*great punishment*” on them. The Roman writer, Tacitus, stated they were a “*class hated for their abominations*” and were “*punished with the utmost refinement of cruelty.*”⁵

On the Day of Pentecost, 30 AD, some “visiting Jews from Rome” were present in Jerusalem and became followers of Jesus.⁶ They may have been responsible for introducing Christianity to Rome.⁷ By 49 AD the tension within the Jewish quarter of the city became so intense that riots broke out. The emperor Claudius responded with an imperial edict expelling Jews from the capital.⁸ Suetonius tells us the Jews were expelled because of tumults over a certain man named “Chrestus,”⁹ which likely was a Latin error for “Christus.” Apparently, opposition to preaching Jesus as the Christ within the Jewish community became so inflamed that riots broke out and Claudius responded by throwing the Jews out of Rome. This would have included Jewish Christians.

Claudius died approximately five years later and his successor, Nero, rescinded the edit. Jews then began to reenter the capital city. This scenario probably provides the backdrop setting for understanding Paul’s letter to the *Romans*.¹⁰ Over the previous five years the Christian community in Rome had dominantly—if not exclusively—become a Gentile faith community.

⁴ I have attempted to summarize in my own words what can be found among Roman writers of that period or shortly thereafter. See Tacitus, *Histories* 5.4 and Juvenal, *Satire* 14.97. Cicero, Seneca, and Pliny the Elder also display racial remarks against the Jews in their writings.

⁵ Tacitus, *Annales*, xv. 44, Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963) 2.

⁶ Acts 2.10

⁷ Perhaps “Andronicus and Julia” (Rom 16.7) were among those Jews who brought the Christian faith originally to Rome.

⁸ Cf. Acts 18.2

⁹ Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.

¹⁰ G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London, 1951) 145-47.

That faith community was now hesitant in welcoming Jewish believers back into their fellowship.¹¹

But the ostracism felt by Jewish Christians living in Rome also helps us to appreciate the likely cultural setting behind the New Testament letter to the *Hebrews*.

2. HEBREWS

We do not know who penned Hebrews. Origen in the 3rd century said, “only God knows.”¹² However, whoever the author was, he was brilliant! He really knew his Old Testament and displays a broad grasp of the Jewish Scriptures. He also was a dynamic preacher, showing advanced training in rhetoric. The opening sentence of the letter is the best rhetorical Greek in the entire New Testament. He incorporates alliteration by beginning five words in verse one with the Greek letter for *p* (π). He also claims to have received his knowledge of Christ from those who had known the Lord personally.¹³

If we had to give our “best guess” regarding authorship, we probably could do no better than to identify him with Apollos whom Luke described as being “a Jew from Alexandria,” “a learned (or eloquent) man” who was “mighty in the Scriptures” and who was speaking “boldly in the synagogue” about Jesus.¹⁴

The genre of Hebrews takes the feel and form of a well-crafted, first-century sermon rather than the form of a letter. We may be on target if we think of Hebrews as having been a homily written outside of Italy to predominantly Greek-speaking, Jewish-Christian house churches in Rome.¹⁵

What was the primary message behind this sermon? The writer seeks to encourage them to stay the course in their commitment to Christ!¹⁶ Repeatedly he warns about the danger of “drifting away” from the salvation found in Christ.¹⁷

His readers have suffered persecution for Christ but not to the point of becoming martyrs.¹⁸ They have been made “a public spectacle,” “endured a great conflict of sufferings,” experienced “reproaches and tribulations,” and have had their property confiscated.¹⁹

¹¹ See Rom 3:1-2; 11:13-24; 14.1; 15.6-12; 16:3-17.

¹² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1955) VI.XXV: 247

¹³ Heb 2.3

¹⁴ Acts 18.24-26

¹⁵ Heb 13.24

¹⁶ Heb 12.1-3

¹⁷ Heb 2.1-3

¹⁸ Heb 12.4

¹⁹ Heb 10.32-34

Due to the hardship of following Christ some have stopped attending the Christian gatherings for worship.²⁰ The temptation is real for his readers to forsake Christ and return to the Jewish synagogue and to the Jewish community at large from which they have been ostracized. To persuade his readers to remain steadfast and to endure in the Faith, his written sermon strives to instruct and to remind them how much better their salvation is in Christ. The word “better” becomes a key word. Christ is ...

- Superior to the Jewish prophets of old (1.1)
- Superior to angels (1.5-14)
- Superior to Moses (ch. 3)
- Superior as a High Priest to Aaron and the Levitical priesthood (chs. 4-7)
- Superior in ministry by mediating a superior covenant (ch. 8)
- Superior regarding the sacrifice He offered for sins (8:3-10:18)

Led by the Holy Spirit, the writer masterfully weaves these themes together with exhortations to endurance and warnings about falling away from the salvation found in Christ alone.

What is particularly of interest for our current study is the typology the writer incorporates when discussing the heavenly offering Jesus made for the sins of humanity. In chapter eight he states that the priests on earth “*offer the gifts according to the Law and serve (as) a **copy/type** (τύπος) and shadow (σκιά) of the heavenly things.*”²¹ In chapter nine he contrasts the “*divine worship of the earthly sanctuary (tabernacle)*” with the better worship/offering that Christ made when, “*with (or by means of) the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands,*” and “*with his own blood, He entered the Holy of Holies once for all, obtaining eternal redemption.*”²²

Several verses earlier he began to describe the furnishings in the “earthly tent” and to set the table for his typology for the “more perfect tabernacle not made with hands.” But he stops short and writes: “*...but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*”²³ What exactly does he refrain from telling us? Is he hinting to us that there is something more he would like to say but can’t? Is he hinting that there is one or more additional, spiritual truths lying under the surface, something the reader should seek to discern but is not explicitly told?

²⁰ Heb 10.25

²¹ Heb 8.5

²² Heb 9.11-12

²³ Heb 9.5b

Earlier the author chided his readers for their elementary understanding and lack of desire to move forward to deeper truths. He exhorted them to “press on to maturity.”²⁴

*Concerning him (Melchizedek)²⁵ we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. **6** Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity....²⁶*

So, is the author now, in chapter nine, providing us with a deeper truth if we have eyes of discernment? Yes, I think he is! But we will come back to his important sermon later.

3. THE SHROUD OF TURIN

A primary reason why Christian leaders have generally rejected the Shroud of Turin as being authentic is due to the lack of any references to it in the New Testament.^{27, 28} However, if we keep in mind the backdrop of persecution occurring during the period when the New Testament documents were being written, it should not surprise us that the writers would not want to make clear references to the miraculous image lest it be hunted down, confiscated, and destroyed by either religious opponents or by hostile, political authorities. As Jesus himself

²⁴ Heb 6.1

²⁵ I have supplied Melchizedek as the interpretation for “him.” The form of the relative pronoun here in the Greek can be either masculine or neuter. (The form is the same for both genders concerning this pronoun in the genitive case.) The NIV chooses the neuter and translates the relative pronoun as “which.” However, as a general rule, it should agree in gender with its antecedent, who would be Melchizedek of the preceding verse.

²⁶ Heb 5.11-6.1 (NASV)

²⁷ In the 16th century John Calvin wrote: “How is it possible that those sacred historians, who carefully related all the miracles that took place at Christ’s death, should have omitted to mention one so remarkable as the likeness of the body of our Lord remaining on its wrapping sheet? This fact undoubtedly deserved to be recorded.” John Calvin, *Treatise on Relics* (1543) 238, accessed May 8, 2019, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/treatise_relics.v.html.

²⁸ Unfortunately, most Bible scholars have not kept up with the scientific research related to the Shroud and have dismissed it as either unimportant or as unauthentic. However, the Turin Shroud has the potential to greatly impact the theologian’s search for the historical Jesus! Since the Enlightenment there has been a tendency to demythologize the New Testament and to view the resurrection as something that existed only in the minds of Jesus’ followers. Consequently, the Christ of history is blurred and the Christian’s assurance of hope beyond the grave is attacked. In both of those matters, the Shroud of Turin is a game changer!

both warned and commanded: “Do not give that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”²⁹

A plausible inference can be made that, due to the threat of persecution and confiscation, any reference to the Shroud in the New Testament itself would be veiled.³⁰ Such secrecy would be in keeping with what would become known as “*The Discipline of the Secret*.”³¹

I suggest we may have such a “veiled reference” in the text of *Hebrews*, something which the writer hints at but does not feel he can explicitly reveal or discuss “in detail.”

Over the past forty years a plethora of evidence has surfaced—from a vast, multidisciplinary effort—demonstrating that the Shroud of Turin is very likely the genuine burial cloth of Jesus!³² The incredible, faint, full-body image of a crucified man on the cloth was *not* the work of an artist. Furthermore, no one has been able to explain how the image could have been formed by natural causes, nor has anyone been able to fully replicate it! The shadowy image has properties associated with being a three-dimensional, high-definition, photographic negative! It also shows evidence of x-ray³³ and holographic properties! Either the image is “the riddle of the ages”³⁴ or it is the Father’s witness to the Gospel story and His gracious gift to every doubting Thomas.³⁵

Although, personally, I was a firm sceptic regarding the Shroud of Turin, I have kept an open mind and allowed myself to form my conclusions based on the solid evidence. Concluding the cloth is authentic allows me to make a logical inference: The Shroud was both treasured and

²⁹ Matthew 7.6

³⁰ In four other papers the author has written about possible texts within the New Testament that might be “veiled references” to what we know today as the Shroud of Turin. The strongest candidate is Galatians 3.1. See “*The Crucified Christ Seen by the Galatians: A Literal Context for ΠΡΟΕΓΡΑΦΗ (Galatians 3.1)*.” Another paper is, “*He Saw and Believed! Is the Shroud of Turin in the Background of John’s Resurrection Narrative?*” A third paper makes the case that the image on the Shroud should be equated with the “Sign of Jonah” Jesus promised: “*The Sign of Jonah*,” op cit. Last, there is a summary paper that provides brief analyses of possible tests: “*Are There Veiled References to the Shroud of Turin in the New Testament? (An Exegetical Summary of Select Texts)*.” All four papers can be found at www.shroud.com.

³¹ See Jack Markwardt, “Ancient Edessa and the Shroud: History Concealed by the Discipline of the Secret,” *Proceedings of Columbus International Shroud Conference* (Columbus, Ohio, 2008) 16.

³² For an overview of the scientific evidence see Robert J. Spitzer, “Science and the Shroud of Turin,” *Magis Center of Reason and Faith* (May 2015) 1–33, accessed April 5, 2019, https://2i7i0l43ftgic4pas6ndtk6b-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Science_and_the_Shroud_of_Turin.pdf; and Marc Borkan, “Ecce Homo? Science and the Authenticity of the Turin Shroud,” *Vertices: The Duke University Magazine of Science, Technology, and Medicine* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1995) 18-51.

³³ This is apparent from the bones being seen in the fingers.

³⁴ David Van Biema, “The Shroud of Turin,” *Time Magazine*, April 20, 1998.

³⁵ See the author’s paper, “*Sign of Jonah*,” op cit.

safe-guarded by the early Church! In fact, the apostle John informs us that it was by seeing the funeral linens in the empty tomb that he, personally, came to faith in the Resurrection!³⁶

At this point, it would be helpful attempting to put ourselves back into their culture and striving to discern the cloth from their perspective. How did *they* view this special gift left behind in the empty tomb? From a Jewish perspective, since the cloth had touched a corpse and had blood on it, it should have been regarded as “unclean” and buried. Why was it retained rather than discarded? How did the early Church view the Shroud of Jesus?³⁷ My thesis in this paper is: *The early Christians identified Jesus’ Shroud typologically with His Royal and Priestly Robe!* The earthly Shroud was a “type and shadow” of the heavenly!

4. A ROYAL ROBE

Quoting the Psalmist, the apostle Paul wrote:

Therefore it says,

“When He ascended on high,

He led captive a host of captives,

And He gave gifts to men.”

(Now this expression, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)”³⁸

Although Paul doesn’t mention the matter, surely in carrying out such a ministry the Christ must have been wearing a Royal robe!

In his heavenly vision Daniel saw one like a “Son of Man,” a term Jesus was fond of using for Himself. Daniel describes the exaltation and enthronement of the “Son of Man” as He is presented before the “Ancient of Days.”³⁹ He fails, though, to mention His robe. Yet, without any doubt, such a scenario will require this “Son of Man” to be in possession of a Royal Robe!

The Revelation of John supports this understanding:

³⁶ John 20.8. This assumes that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was John, which might be incorrect.

³⁷ For other ways the early Christians likely perceived Jesus’ Shroud, see Stalley, “*Sign of Jonah*,” op cit.

³⁸ Eph 4.9-10, quoting Ps 68.18

³⁹ Dan 7.13-14

- “I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, **CLOTHED IN A ROBE REACHING TO THE FEET...**”⁴⁰

While other parts of John’s description for the Son of Man are found in Daniel, this description of His robe is not!⁴¹ Yet, the man depicted on the Shroud has the cloth reaching down entirely to his feet!

- “And on His **ROBE** and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘**KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**’”⁴²

Where did the early Christians find support for this “robe reaching to the feet”? It is the one part of the description that is entirely new, nowhere to be found in the Old Testament prophets! Yes, it came by means of the vision John had. But, at the same time, I would suggest we should not divorce this truth from insights John and other early Christians held regarding Jesus’ Shroud and the spiritual truths it represented! With its miraculous image, the Shroud was viewed as being a link between the earthly and heavenly realities.

4-1. The Hymn of the Pearl

Nowhere is this link more profoundly developed than in an early, non-canonical text found in the *Acts of Thomas* known as the *Hymn of the Pearl* (or *Hymn of the Soul*).

The *Hymn* is a beautiful poetic song found among the Gnostic literature of the early Church. The *Hymn* is dated no later than 224 AD and is believed to be older than the *Acts of Thomas* where it became embedded.⁴³ In the *Acts of Thomas*⁴⁴ the apostle by that name travels to India to evangelize. Thomas in Aramaic means “twin.” He is cast as the identical twin of Jesus in this early, apocryphal allegory.

In the *Hymn*, Thomas is a young prince who has been given a special mission by his father, the king of kings. He is sent from the East to Egypt (the land of darkness) for the purpose of fetching a priceless pearl from the grasp of the sea serpent. Thomas leaves behind a glorious robe (the garment of light) at his father’s house but is promised to regain the garment and to become joint heir with his brother (Jesus) in the kingdom once his mission is completed. For a while Thomas forgets who he is and why he is in that pagan land. Eventually, however, he

⁴⁰ Rev 1.12-13 (emphasis added)

⁴¹ Dan 10.5 does have “dressed in linen,” but that is all.

⁴² Rev 19.16; cf. Deut 10.17 & Ps 136.3

⁴³ The origin of the Hymn remains a mystery. “It may go back to the first century.” J. B. Segal, *Edessa, The Blessed City* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). Another student of the Hymn states: “a date within the first two centuries CE is thought to be probable.” Dylan M. Burns, “The Garment Poured Its Entire Self Over Me”: Christian Baptismal Traditions And the Origins of the Hymn of the Pearl,” in *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honor of John D. Turner* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=BfiZAAAQBAJ&pg=PA261>) 261.

⁴⁴ The *Acts of Thomas* is one of the non-canonical writings that make up the New Testament Apocryphal.

overcomes his peril and casts a spell upon the serpent. While the serpent sleeps, he manages to take possession of the pearl. On his way back to the light of his homeland he regains his marvelous robe and it becomes the focal point of the *Hymn*.

As you read the selected lines of the poem below, keep in mind that Thomas is the identical twin of Jesus. So, when he sees himself, he is, in actuality, seeing Jesus. This Thomas is the same apostle who became known as “Doubting Thomas,” a disciple who came to faith in the Resurrection by visibly seeing the wounds of crucifixion on the body of the risen Christ. The wounds he is invited to touch and see are the very same wounds witnessed on the Turin Shroud! His story in the Fourth Gospel follows soon after we learn that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” came to faith when visibly seeing the funeral linens in the empty tomb.

The focal point of the Hymn, surprisingly, is *not* the pearl but, rather, the marvelous “garment of light.” A more fitting name, therefore, for this song would be “The Hymn of the Prince’s Robe.” Reproduced below is the focal point of the robe’s description:

76 But suddenly, when I saw it over against me,
The splendid robe became like me, as **my reflection in a mirror**;
77 I saw it **wholly** in me,
And in it I saw myself quite apart from myself,
78 So that **we were two in distinction**
And again **one in a single form**.
79 And the treasurers too
Who had brought it to me, I saw in like manner,
80 That they were **two of a single form**,
For **one sign of the king was impressed upon them (both) ...**

82 My splendid robe adorned
Gleaming in glorious colors....

86 And **the image⁴⁵ of the king of kings⁴⁶**
Was completely embroidered all over it....

96 With the beauty of its colors I adorned myself....

98 I clothed myself with it and mounted up
To the gate of greeting and homage.
99 I bowed my head and worshipped

⁴⁵ “Image” is found in the translation by G. R. S. Mead, “The Hymn of the Robe of Glory,” in *The Mead Collection: Echoes from the Gnosis* (The Gnostic Society Library, 1908), www.gnosis.org/library/grs-mead/grsm_robeofglory.htm. Wilson chooses the word “likeness” in Edgar Hennecke, “Acts of Thomas,” *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964) 2:502.

⁴⁶ Cf. Rev. 17.14 that states, concerning the Lamb who overcomes His enemies: “He is Lord of lords and King of kings.” And 19.16: “...on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’”

100 The splendor of the father who had sent it (the robe) to me,
 Whose commands I had accomplished,
 As he also had done what he promised.
 101 And at the gate of his satraps
 I mingled among his great ones.
 102 For he rejoiced over me and received me,
 And I was with him in his kingdom....⁴⁷

Several religious and cultural traditions likely influenced the thinking of the author behind the *Acts of Thomas*. It is multi-layered in that regard. There are old religious strands originating from Syria and elsewhere.⁴⁸ In the *Hymn* one can detect biblical stories, like Joseph in Egypt, Leviathan (the serpentine Satan), the Prodigal Son, the Pearl of Great Price, the childhood of Jesus in Egypt, and Daniel's "Son of Man" being presented in the heavenly court before the Ancient of Days. One line (93) in the *Hymn* may be a metaphor for Christian baptism: "*It poured itself entirely over me.*"⁴⁹ As an allegory, the story certainly hints at the divine mission of Jesus, our Redeemer, coming to earth to rescue humanity from sin and the devil. With the pearl rescued from the grasp of Satan and secured, the Prince receives back His robe and makes His journey back home to His waiting Father.

Note that it is only **after** the prince has completed his mission that he sees his robe *now* has an image of himself! Prior to that point in the story his robe was imageless. Similarly, the biblical narrative notes that Joseph of Arimathea purchased a "clean" burial cloth to use for the burial of Jesus.⁵⁰



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There is one-point Thomas apparently wants to emphasize because he states the matter twice (lines 78 & 80): a **single** image exists in **two** parts. "*We were two in distinction, and again one in*

⁴⁷ This English translation is almost entirely by R. McL. Wilson, found in Hennecke, "Acts of Thomas," 2:502-503. Other translations consulted were J. K. Elliott, ed., "The Acts of Thomas," in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 488-91; Montague Rhodes James, "Acts of Thomas," *The Apocryphal New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924) 411-15; William Wright, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (London, 1871) 238-45; and Mead, "The Hymn," op. cit.

The words in bold font have been added by me for emphasis.

⁴⁸ Since the *Hymn* was written earlier and independent from the *Acts*, the non-Christian, Gnostic overtones found in the *Acts* should not be quickly superimposed onto the *Hymn*.

⁴⁹ Burns, "The Garment," 261-73. Cf. Gal 3.27

⁵⁰ Matt 27.59

⁵¹ © 1978 Barrie M. Schwartz Collection, STERA, Inc.

a single form.” That is, an image of his *whole* body (lines 77 & 86) exists on the robe, but it has two distinct parts. Of course, that is exactly what we find on the Shroud of Turin: both the frontal and dorsal parts of a full-body image!⁵²



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Also, he states that *“the image of the king of kings was completely embroidered all over it (i.e., the robe)”* (line 86). Compare that statement in the *Hymn* with what John wrote in his Biblical Revelation:

*“And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*⁵⁴

There is no consensus as to how either the *Acts* or the *Hymn* should be interpreted. But it is generally agreed that the *Hymn* was written earlier and was inserted into the *Acts* sometime prior to 224 A.D.⁵⁵

Originally written in Old Syriac, the *Hymn* is commonly thought to have been authored by Bardaisan (154-222),⁵⁶ a Christian philosopher and poet who was born in Edessa and reportedly

⁵² Rev. Dreisbach appears to have been the first to appreciate a sindonic significance to this portion of the *Hymn*. [Albert R. Dreisbach, “Thomas & the Hymn of the Pearl,” *Proceedings of the Sindone 2000 Shroud Conference, Orvieto, Italy*, <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/dreisbc2.pdf>.] Jack Markwardt began to expound upon the *Hymn*’s allegorical content and meaning. [“Ancient Edessa,” 29-32.] The current author is endeavoring to carry the poem’s explanation forward by raising additional matters not found elsewhere. Specifically, (1) I am seeking to make a stronger Sindonic (cf. fn. 57 below) case for the *Hymn* than has previously been done; (2) I am suggesting the *Hymn* shows strong evidence (in conjunction with Heb 5-10; Rev 1.13; 19.14; and Dan 7, 10) for the early Church identifying the Shroud with Jesus’ “Royal Robe;” and (3) I am suggesting line 80 of the *Hymn* might indicate the early Church identified the miraculous image on the Shroud with the promised *Sign of Jonah* (Matt 12.38-42).

⁵³ This Medieval depiction of the Shroud at a public showing in Turin illustrates the “two parts” of the “full-body image” that was discernable with the naked eye. © 1978 Barrie M. Schwartz Collection, STERA, Inc.

⁵⁴ Rev 19.16; cf. 1.13

⁵⁵ See fn. 41 above. There are questions concerning the *Hymn* that we cannot answer with any certainty. Personally, I would like to know if the “sea serpent” has any relationship (typology) to the sea monster that swallowed the prophet Jonah. In addition, I wonder if the statement, “one sign of the king was impressed upon them (both),” has any connection to the one signature miracle from heaven that Jesus associated with Himself as the “Son of Man” and labeled, “the sign of Jonah.”

⁵⁶ Mead, “The Hymn,” 10:4.

attended school with the future king, Abgar the Great. An excellent case has been made that this is the very king behind the *Legend of King Abgar*, who was miraculously healed and converted to Christianity after viewing the face of Jesus on a linen cloth.⁵⁷ This cloth became a precious treasure for the city and became known as “*The Image (Icon) of Edessa.*” As a life-long friend of the king, and frequent visitor to the Royal Court, Bardaisan likely would have been privileged to have seen the image on the cloth!

The reader will need to judge for him or herself the weight of the circumstantial evidence presented here! To this author, however, looking at the image on Shroud of Turin and comparing it to the description of the prince’s royal robe in the *Hymn*, I cannot accept any other conclusion than that the writer of this early Christian, poetic hymn is describing that same image, yet in a “veiled” manner. The description is too representative of the Turin Shroud to simply be coincidental!



Consequently, the *Hymn* makes two important contributions to Sindonology.⁵⁹ First, it provides strong evidence that the image on the Shroud existed before 224 A.D. Second, **the *Hymn* reveals how the Shroud was identified, typologically, with Jesus’ kingly robe!**

Here is an important question to contemplate: what was the source of inspiration for the theology behind the *Hymn of the Pearl*? Was the source Daniel’s heavenly vision of the enthronement of the “Son of Man”?⁶⁰ Was the source John’s Apocalypse?⁶¹ Was the letter to the *Hebrews* an important source? The *Hymn* strongly suggests that, from a very early date, spiritual truths were associated with Jesus’ Shroud!

4-2. “The Precious Merchandize of the Revealed Light”

The Church historian, Eusebius, was personally familiar with the sacred literature kept in the archives of Edessa. As a historian, and as one who had access to the archives, Eusebius surely knew of the city’s influential philosopher and poet, Bardaisan, who had lived a full century before his time and who was likely the author of the *Hymn of the Pearl*. In addition, Eusebius was very familiar with *the Legend of Abgar*. The *Legend* told the story of how king Abgar had been converted to Christianity. A certain image had played an important role in the king’s conversion. Eusebius informs us that it was none other than “Thomas, one of the twelve

⁵⁷ F. Burkitt, “Chronicle of Edessa,” in *Early Eastern Christianity* (London 1904) 19; Markwardt, “Ancient Edessa,” 26-28.

⁵⁸ ©2003 Rev. Albert R. Dreisbach Jr. Collection, STERA, Inc.

⁵⁹ Σινδων (sindōn) is the Greek word found in the Synoptic Gospels for the burial cloth of Jesus. On that basis, the study of the Shroud of Turin has become known as Sindonology.

⁶⁰ Dan 7.13-14

⁶¹ Rev 1.9-16; 19.16

apostles” who, after the Resurrection, sent Thaddeus (one of the seventy disciples) to Edessa as an evangelist. In Eusebius’ account there is no mention of a cloth. However, later accounts of the Legend speak of an image of Jesus’ face on a linen cloth. In time, this image on a cloth becomes the famous “Image (Icon) of Edessa.”

With that information serving as background material, we should take note of a very interesting statement Eusebius penned in the late 3rd or early 4th century. In discussing the apostle Peter making his way to Rome, Eusebius wrote:

“He (Peter) ... bore *the precious merchandize of the revealed light* from the east to those in the west, announcing the light itself...”⁶²

What exactly did Eusebius mean by “*the precious merchandize of the revealed light*”?

Jesus claimed to be “the light of the world,” the light that brings enlightenment and enables men not to remain in darkness.⁶³ “The precious merchandize of the revealed light” sounds very much like it is an object, like a garment, that belonged to Jesus.

Should we associate it in some way with the “garment of light” that was the focal point of the *Hymn of the Pearl* which had originated in Edessa a century earlier than Eusebius? Could it refer to the burial cloth Joseph of Arimathea purchased for Jesus from a merchant? Might Eusebius’ statement be a concealed reference to what we know today as the Shroud of Turin? In this author’s opinion, yes! “The precious merchandize of the revealed light” sounds very much like a “veiled reference” to what we know as the Shroud of Turin in existence during the period of the early Church!

Is it possible that Jesus’ apostles in the early Church made use of the Shroud as an aid in telling and providing evidence for the Gospel story? Was it used as an aid in evangelism?^{64, 65} Was the Shroud used, as Eusebius states, “announcing the light itself”?

⁶² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1955) II.XIV: 64.

⁶³ John 1.4; 8.12; 9.5; 12.35-36, 46

⁶⁴ It has been argued that Peter used Antioch of Syria as the base for his missionary activities between 47 and 54 A.D. Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961) 281-82. During those years, when Paul and Barnabas were called out by the Holy Spirit and sent out by the church at Antioch on their first missionary journey (that would take them into the province of Galatia), were those two missionaries given the Shroud to be used as an evangelistic aid in their travels (Acts 13-14; cf. Gal 3.1)? An additional piece of evidence in support of the thesis that the Shroud was used as an aid in evangelism is the cryptic message found on the late 2nd century “Inscription of Abercius.” Concerning that *Inscription*, see John Jackson, *The Shroud of Turin: A Critical Summary of Observations, Data, and Hypotheses* (The Turin Shroud Center of Colorado, 2017) 12, www.shroudofturin.com.

⁶⁵ In one of my papers I develop the thesis that, what we know today as the Shroud of Turin, lies behind Paul’s statement in Galatians 3.1. See “The Crucified Christ.” Such evidence lends credibility to another thesis, namely that the early Christians perceived the image on the burial cloth as being the promised *Sign of Jonah*. I write about this in my paper, “The Sign of Jonah.” Both papers, op. cit., can be found at www.shroud.com.

Peter is the best candidate to have been the first custodian of the Shroud.⁶⁶ Some believe he made his way to the capital city of Rome as early as 42 A.D.,⁶⁷ after James was martyred and Peter escaped from prison. It's likely that Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians living in Rome. Therefore, if there is any truth to the above scenario, they certainly would have known about the Lord's gracious gift and powerful, silent witness: The Shroud with its miraculous image.

5. A PRIESTLY ROBE

5-1. MELCHIZEDEK

The writer of Hebrews makes use of typology in discerning spiritual truths. He also asserts that the earthly is sometimes merely a "copy (or type) and shadow" of the unseen reality of the heavenly.⁶⁸ In chapter seven he asserts that Jesus is a better High Priest than Aaron because he was appointed to be a **king-priest**, "according to the order of Melchizedek," who was both "king of Salem" and "priest of the Most High God."⁶⁹ Every king has a royal robe! Every High Priest has a priestly robe!

An important question that was likely *not* overlooked by either the writer of Hebrews or by early Jewish Christians was this: ***How could Jesus be the superior High Priest and perform his priestly duties without a priestly robe?***

The Hebrew writer also asserts that Christ entered "*heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*"⁷⁰ and "*has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle (sacred tent), which the Lord pitched, not man.*"⁷¹ As "a minister in the (heavenly) sanctuary," certainly Jesus would be clothed in a priestly robe! Likewise, he must surely have entered heaven and took His royal seat, clothed in a majestic robe! The vision sounds very much like Daniel's "Son of Man" who

⁶⁶ Peter was ordained as the chief of the Apostles (Matt 16.18-19), was the first to enter the empty tomb where the Shroud was discovered (John 20.1-10), reportedly traveled extensively preaching the Gospel (Acts 12.17; Gal 2.11; 1 Cor 1.12; 1 Pet 1.1; 5.12-13), and is commonly thought to have been "the servant of the Priest" who was given the Shroud after the Resurrection, as related by Jerome in the lost "Gospel according to the Hebrews." Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 2. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1992) 1:111. Peter is likely, therefore, the best candidate to have been the first custodian of the Shroud.

⁶⁷ John Wehnam, "Did Peter Go to Rome in 42?" *Tyndale Bulletin* (1972) 23:94-102, https://legacy.tyndalehouse.com/tynbul/Library/TynBull_1972_23_04_Wenham_PeterInRome.pdf.

⁶⁸ Heb 8.2, 5; 9.23-24

⁶⁹ Heb 5.6, 10; 7.1

⁷⁰ Heb 9.24

⁷¹ Heb 8.1-2

was dressed in “linen” when he was presented before the Ancient of Days in the heavenly court!⁷²

Something important to note is that the robe for the Jewish High Priest was specifically (1) to be made of “fine linen,” (2) to be consecrated (i.e., made holy) by being sprinkled with “sacrificial blood,” and (3) have a special “checker work” weave!⁷³ What is certainly fascinating, in that regard, is that those happen to be three literal features also associated with the Shroud of Turin! Did Jesus instruct His disciples to view His “fine linen” shroud—with its “sacrificial blood” and special “herringbone weave”—as a type of the priestly tunic worn by the High Priest?⁷⁴

I propose the reason why the early Church did not discard the Shroud as an “unclean” object—contaminated as it was by both a corpse and by blood—is because it had been “sanctified” (i.e., made holy) by His sacrificial blood! It had become a holy garment, even a priestly garment. Typologically, the Shroud was a bridge linking the transition from Jesus earthly entombment to, as High Priest, presenting His perfect sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary.

Additional support for this thesis is likely provided by the statement in the very early apocrypha work, *The Gospel According to the Hebrews*, which states, after the Resurrection: “...**Now the Lord, when he had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, went to James and appeared to him.**”⁷⁵ It is commonly believed that Peter would have been “the servant of the priest.”⁷⁶ If Peter was the “servant” then Jesus must have been “the priest.” That would provide us, in a very early reference,⁷⁷ with Jesus’ burial cloth being mentioned in the same sentence with the Lord being a priest! This linkage aligns very nicely with an intriguing statement found in *Hebrews*: “*Now when Christ came as a High Priest, with (or by means of) the*

⁷² See Dan 7.9-14; 10.5

⁷³ Exod 28.4-5, 39; 29.21

⁷⁴ Luke 24.27, 44-45

⁷⁵ *The Gospel According to the Hebrews* is now a “lost gospel.” Jerome gives us this interesting quote in the late 4th century (392-3). [Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 2.] Originally it was written in the Aramaic language but in Hebrew characters. It was, therefore, in use by Palestinian Christians who spoke Hebrew (Aramaic), which explains its name. “At Jerome’s time, most people regarded this apocryphal gospel as the Hebrew original of the canonical Gospel of Matthew which Papias mentioned (Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3, 39, 16; 6, 25, 4; Irenaeus 1, 1).” Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Christian Classics: Westminster, Maryland, 1992) 1:111-12 (emphasis added).

⁷⁶ See footnote 64 above and consider the sacrificial-priestly-servant themes behind 1 Pet 1.2, 15-16, 18-19, 22; 2.4-10; 3.15, 18; 4.10-11. It is important to remember the need the writer felt to be cryptic about the identity of the Shroud’s custodian in order to safeguard the cloth from potential enemies. Some choose to identify the apostle John with “the servant of the priest.” However, there is no certainty that John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Ben Witherington, for example, has concluded Lazarus was likely that beloved disciple. Furthermore, the evidence for John being “the servant” relies on the Johannine narrative of the Passion story. However, this lost gospel aligns itself closely with Matthew’s narrative.

⁷⁷ It must have been written before the last quarter of the second century as Clement of Alexandria used it in his *Stromata* (2.9.45).

*greater and more perfect sacred tent not made with human hands ... and ... with His own blood ... He entered into the heavenly Sanctuary...*⁷⁸

6. THE SHROUD AS A TYPE IN HEBREWS?

Now let's return our attention to *Hebrews*, chapter nine, for a brief exegesis of our primary text. The whole passage is highly typological, as it contrasts between "tabernacles," "blood," "priests," "entering into and through," "covenants," "worship," a "copy" versus the "genuine," "earthly" versus the "heavenly;" and, by implication, "not of this creation" versus "made by human hands."

In verse five he informs us that there is more he would like to say "but," for whatever reason, *"...of these things we cannot now speak in detail."*⁷⁹ Is that our clue that there is something deeper just ahead for those readers with a discerning quest who are not satisfied with milk?⁸⁰ If he could speak in greater detail, what would he tell us?

Leading up to verse eleven the writer of *Hebrews* focuses on two serious limitations inherent in the provisions under the Old Covenant inaugurated at Sinai: (1) the severe restriction on having access to God (vv. 7–8) and (2) the deficiency of the sacrifices offered under that covenant to deal decisively with the removal of sin and the cleansing of conscience (vv. 9–11). He will go on to write about the inadequacy of the sacrificial blood of animals under the former covenant (vv. 12–13), in contrast with the unblemished blood of the Messiah (v. 14), and the necessity of death regarding the mediator of the Covenant (vv. 15–17).

As we reach the core of the writer's argument (vv. 11-14) he draws two great conclusions: (1) Christ entered the real, heavenly sanctuary into the presence of God (vv. 11-12) and (2) there He offered himself to God as the perfect sacrifice for sin (v. 14). It is the first of those two conclusions that we want to especially take a closer look at.

"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He *entered* through (διὰ) the greater and more perfect tabernacle (σκηνηϊς), not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through (διὰ) the blood of goats and calves, but through (διὰ) His own blood, He entered the Holy Place (τὰ ἅγια) once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."⁸¹

⁷⁸ Heb 9.11-12

⁷⁹ Heb 9.5b

⁸⁰ Cf. Heb 5.11-6.3

⁸¹ Heb 9.11-12. This English translation is taken from the *New American Standard New Testament* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1960) 361. The author of this paper has added words from the Greek text.

At the outset it should be emphasized that the writer is speaking of spiritual, even heavenly truths. Sometimes what you see with your eyes is only a “shadow,”⁸² or a “copy,”⁸³ or a “symbol”⁸⁴ of what is real. There is an “earthly sanctuary” (τὸ ἅγιον κοσμικόν),⁸⁵ but the real sanctuary (archetype) (the τὰ ἅγια of v. 12) is in heaven.⁸⁶ The writer very much believes in “types.”⁸⁷ A “type” means there exists an additional meaning which might not at first be apparent. For example, in chapter eleven the writer tells us that Abraham believed that “God is able to raise men even from the dead.” So, when he “received him” (i.e., Isaac, his ‘only begotten son’) “back” (from the altar of death), it was, figuratively speaking, a “type” or “shadow” of a great spiritual truth.⁸⁸ Typology, therefore, at its very essence, is about their being a secondary way to understand a subject or truth. And the secondary way might be the greater truth to discern.

As you read this paper, it is best to think of the Shroud in light of the perspective found in *Hebrews*: there are times when the objects linked to worship “serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.”⁸⁹ *“Now we see as in a mirror dimly, but then face to face!”*⁹⁰

So, this passage, consisting of two verses, presents the reader with a typological riddle:

When Christ came⁹¹ and ministered as the superior High Priest, what could be (1) described as a “sacred tent” (σκηνῆς) that is “*not of this creation*,” that was (2) associated with both the actual *blood* of Jesus and the heavenly *Sanctuary*, but (at the same time) was (3) distinct from both?

⁸² Σκιά (shadow, shade, foreshadowing) in 8.5. Does Peter’s “shadow” in Acts 5.15 serve as a type to Paul’s later miracle in 19.12? Yes! In turn, does Paul’s miracle involving “handkerchiefs” (σουδάριον) have a tantalizing connection to the Shroud or *Sudarium of Oviedo* in some way? Did Paul make use of one of these on his missionary journeys, as an aid in evangelism (see Gal 3.1)? Were miracles worked by placing a handkerchief on the Shroud’s facial image and it, in turn, being taken to the sick? Does such a practice have anything to do with the legend that developed concerning “King Abgar”? Or am I simply guilty of apophenia?

⁸³ Τύπος (type, copy) in 8.5

⁸⁴ Παραβολή (parable, symbol, type) in 9.9; 11.19

⁸⁵ Heb 9.1

⁸⁶ Cf. Heb 8.2, 5; cf. Acts 7.44; Rev 15.5

⁸⁷ Τύπος (type, copy) in 8.5

⁸⁸ Heb 11.17-19. The Greek word παραβολή (parable) is used.

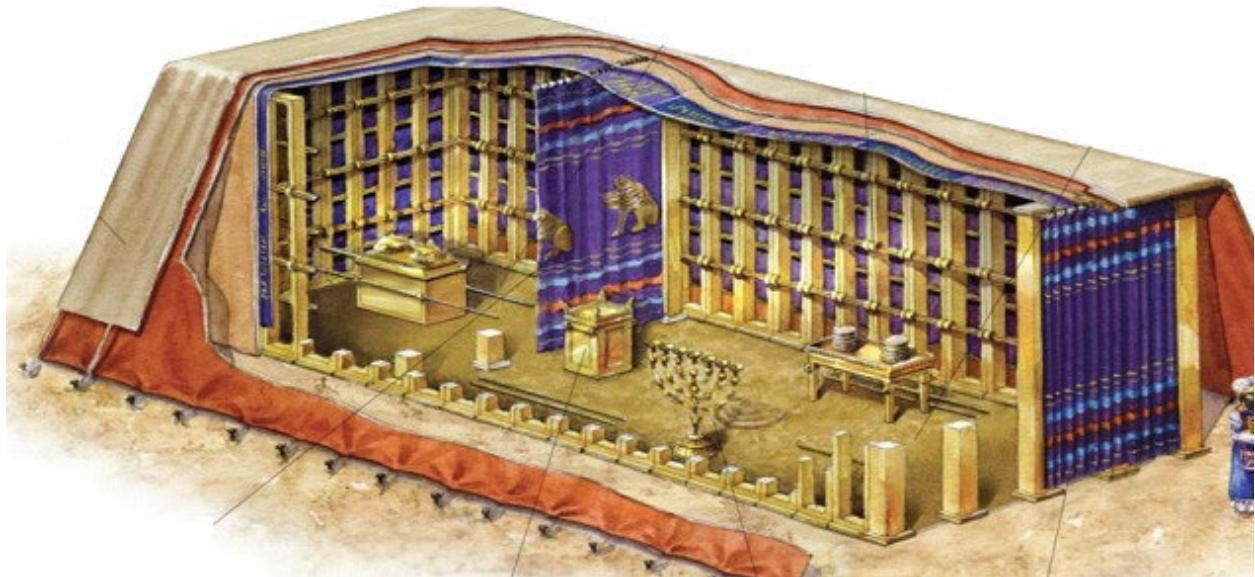
⁸⁹ Heb 8.5

⁹⁰ 1 Cor 13.12

⁹¹ The verb (παραγενόμενος) (9.11) is a past tense, aorist participle from παραγίνομαι, “to come” or “to appear.” Some manuscripts have a variant reading for the next verb: “the good things which are to come” (μελλόντων; cf. 10.1). However, the past tense, “the good things that have now come” (γενομένων), “*appears to have superior attestation on the score of age and diversity of text type.*” Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) 668.

6-1. THE SHROUD AS A TYPE OF “THE SACRED TENT NOT MADE BY HUMAN HANDS”

The Greek noun σκηνή⁹² (“sacred tent”) has been used in the immediate context by the writer for the (two) “compartment(s)” of the Sanctuary the Israelites erected in the wilderness subsequent to Mt Sinai. This word can be translated as “tabernacle” or “sacred tent” or “compartment.” It can be used of the entire structure⁹³ (the Tabernacle) or of the individual two compartments that made up the larger tent. The writer has particularly made use of the word in the latter way, distinguishing between “the Holy Place” of the “first (or outer) compartment”⁹⁴ and “the Holy of Holies—a second (inner) compartment (tent) that was “behind the (second) inner curtain.”⁹⁵ It was into this inner, sacred tent that only the High Priest could enter into and only once each year (i.e., the Day of Atonement).



It is not difficult to perceive how early, Jewish Christians could have perceived the Shroud as being associated, in some way, with this “sacred tent”: (1) both were made from linen cloth;⁹⁶

⁹² Σκηνή is used in Genesis for nomads who *dwell in tents* (Gen 4.20; 12.8), and the writer of Hebrews uses the word that way for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (11.9). It is used of a soldier’s *tent* in the N.T. apocryphal, *Gospel of Peter* (8.33). Σκηνή is used for the sacred *Tabernacle* or *Tent of Testimony* in the Pentateuch (Ex 27.21; 29.4; Lev 1.1; Num 1.1). In the marginal notes of the NASV, σκηνή is often given “sacred tent” as an optional, English translation. The word can be used for the whole structure (Heb 8.5) or for either of the two separate compartments that made up the superstructure (Heb 9.2, 3, 6, 8). In verse 11 the writer is likely using σκηνῆς for the “first” (outer or front) (cf. vv. 2, 6, 8) compartment. Therefore, “compartment” would also be an acceptable rendering for σκηνή in this verse.

⁹³ Heb 8.2, 5; 9.21; Acts 7.44

⁹⁴ Heb 9.2, 8

⁹⁵ Heb 9.3

⁹⁶ The Tabernacle structure was covered with a cloth made of fine twisted line, blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim embroidered by skilled craftsmen. That linen cloth was then covered with a layer of cloth made from goat hair, which in turn was covered with ram skins (dyed red), which was covered with a top layer of hides from

and (2) because Jesus' burial cloth had been sanctified by his sacrificial blood, it could typologically be identified as being a sacred covering⁹⁷: either as (a) "the Holy Place" or (b) as His "priestly robe"! It is interesting that John, when speaking of the sacred presence of Christ as he dwelt on earth, uses the verb form (σκηνώω) of this word, "sacred tent" (σκηνή): "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory..."⁹⁸ Similarly, we are told in Revelation that the heavenly time will come when "the sacred tent (ἡ σκηνή) of God is among men, and He shall dwell (σκηνώσει) among them."⁹⁹

6-2. THE SHROUD AS A TYPE OF THE HOLY PLACE

The reader must comprehend two important facts before the typology with the Shroud in *Hebrews* can be appreciated. First, the "sacred tent" (σκηνή) of verse 11 is different and distinct from "the Holy of Holies" (τὰ ἅγια) of verse 12. As Lane correctly notes: "The syntax of vv. 11-12 demands that a distinction be made between the σκηνή, 'front compartment,' through which Christ passed and τὰ ἅγια, 'the sanctuary,' into which he entered."¹⁰⁰

A second important fact the reader must understand is this: before the high priest can enter into the sanctuary [the Holy of Holies (τὰ ἅγια)—also called the inner or "second compartment" (μετὰ δὲ τὸ δεύτερον καταπέτασμα σκηνή ἢ λεγομένη Ἁγία Ἁγίων¹⁰¹)] he must already be within the Holy Place—also called the outer or the "first compartment" (τὴν πρώτην σκηνήν¹⁰²). In the next chapter (ten), the writer presents Jesus as leaving the first compartment (tent) and entering the second, the heavenly Holy of Holies (τῶν ἁγίων¹⁰³). So, here is an important question we must ask: when was Jesus inside the "first compartment"?

The antecedent of the "sacred tent" (σκηνή) of verse 11 is the "first (outer) compartment" found in both verses 6 and 8. Therefore, if the "sacred tent" of verse 11 is to be associated with a place, then likely it should be understood as Christ being in the first compartment of the Tabernacle, i.e. "the Holy Place."

sea cows, providing a waterproof covering and camouflaging the rich interior from enemies and bandits. *Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Time Lines*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015) 93.

⁹⁷ Two basic aspects associated with "tent" are "covering" and the tent commonly being a place of abode or "dwelling." Michaelis, "σκηνή," ed. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1971) vii:368. "In secular Gk. skene originally denoted a tent-covering ..." M. J. Harris, "Tent, Tabernacle," ed. Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1978) 3:811.

⁹⁸ John 1.14; cf. Rev 7.15; 21.3.

⁹⁹ Rev 21.3

¹⁰⁰ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13, Word biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 47b:238

¹⁰¹ Heb 9.3

¹⁰² See Heb 9.2, 6, 8

¹⁰³ Heb 10.19

That results in a very interesting type for the Shroud. When the corpse of Jesus was placed in the tomb and His body wrapped in the Shroud, that “sacred tent” became (typologically) the Holy Place (first compartment) of the heavenly tabernacle!

It is interesting that the oldest Gospels use *διά* for the three days Jesus spent in the tomb!¹⁰⁴ In those two parallel texts *διά* is understood as a period “through time,” or “the period of time within which something takes place ... within three days.”¹⁰⁵

The writer of *Hebrews* is telling us that, once Jesus’ body became enveloped with the linen cloth, His shroud-covering served (typologically) as being the Holy Place of the real Tabernacle during His relatively short time in the tomb. His body lay inside the “sacred tent” of the Shroud for “three days and three nights,” waiting to become the means by which He would enter the Holy of Holies!¹⁰⁶

So, in the minds of the early Christians, it appears that Jesus’ sanctified burial shroud served, typologically, as the “sacred tent,” even the Holy Place (“first compartment”) of the heavenly Tabernacle! Furthermore, it was during those three days and three nights when His corpse was enclosed in the Shroud that Jesus made His “*descent into the lower parts of the earth*” and took “*captive a host of captives*”?¹⁰⁷ As Peter wrote: “*Christ ... having been put to death in the flesh ... went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah...*”¹⁰⁸ If this understanding is correct, then during those three days Christ was not only performing a priestly ministry but a kingly mission as well.

6-3. THE THREE ΔΙΑ PREPOSITIONS

The typology behind this passage (9.11-12) is influenced by how one interprets the Greek preposition *διά*. This preposition occurs three times in these two verses. The preposition can either have an “instrumental” or a “locative” meaning, depending on the author’s intent.¹⁰⁹ Is the author speaking of the tent as a place or as a means (i.e., an instrument) to something else?

¹⁰⁴ Matt 26.61; Mark 14.58

¹⁰⁵ Nigel Turner, “SYNTAX,” vol. 3, James Hope Moulton, ed., *A grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) 3:267.

¹⁰⁶ The way I have attempted to this express this type exhibits how both a locative and an instrumental understanding can lie behind the first of three *διά* prepositions in the passage. There are times when the “instrumental approaches ... that of the locative.” H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927) 89. In 10.20 the writer of *Hebrews* uses the single occurrence of the *διά* preposition first as a locative and then instrumentally. See Lane, *Hebrews*, 275, 284.

¹⁰⁷ Eph 4.8-10; cf. Col 2.15; 1 Pet 3.18-20

¹⁰⁸ 1 Pet 3.18-20

¹⁰⁹ Both options share the same Greek form for the noun *σκηνη*; so, a solution cannot be resolved by the Greek word itself. One’s decision must be based on syntax and context. What does the author want us to understand?

There are times, however, when the “instrumental approaches ... that of the locative.”¹¹⁰

This author has concluded that the Shroud was viewed by the writer of Hebrews as a type of the Holy Place. This is true whether one treats the first *διά* as locative or instrumental.¹¹¹

However, there is yet another type present when that preposition is treated as an “Instrumental of Association.”¹¹²

So why do translators not favor the instrumental translation for the first occurrence of *διά*? Because it presents a problem of comprehension! Here is how one commentator interestingly describes the dilemma:

*If *διά* is understood in an instrumental sense (i.e., Christ obtained access to God “by means of the greater and more perfect σκηνῆς”), it becomes necessary to give to σκηνῆς a symbolic value, so that **it signifies Christ’s body in some way**.... It is not customary for the writer to use **language so cryptically**.*¹¹³

In other words, because translators can’t perceive how *σκηνῆς* might, “in some way,” be a “type” to Jesus’ body, they have chosen to interpret *διά* in a locative sense! This dilemma is easily rectified by Shroud typology, but commentators haven’t considered that possibility!

There are three good reasons why an instrumental function might be favored for all three occurrences of the *διά* preposition in 9.11-12.

1. Generally, the syntax would demand that, in this string of subordinate clauses, the first instance of the *διά* preposition function in the same way as the subsequent two occurrences of the same preposition.¹¹⁴
2. Understanding the first *διά* preposition in an instrumental manner doesn’t require supplying a verb to the Greek clause, as it does for a locative understanding.

What was his intent? Is “sacred tent” to be understood as a place or functioning as an instrument (means), in some way?

¹¹⁰ Dana and Mantey, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 89.

¹¹¹ This would be regarded as an “Instrumental of Means or Manner,” being “expressive of the method by means of which an act is performed or an end achieved.” Ibid, 89-90. Cf. Heb 3.16. The idea in English is often expressed as “by means of.”

¹¹² Ibid, 88-91.

¹¹³ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 236-37. Emphasis of the bold font has been added by the current author. See also Westcott, *Hebrews*, 256-60.

¹¹⁴ B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1903) 256; H. Montefiore, “A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Harper’s New Testament Commentaries* (New York: Harper, 1964) 151-52.

This first subordinate clause lacks a verb, but a locative sense of the preposition is best served by supplying a verb. Yet, supplying the verb is subjective and can be a bit cumbersome.

- Lane chooses “*passing through*” ...
- NASV: “*entered through*” ...
- GNB: “*went through*” ...

In each of the three translations cited above a verb has been supplied that is not found in the Greek text. This has been done to clarify the meaning of the clause. Like the RSV, one can go forward in this long sentence to the following verse (twelve) and use εἰσῆλθεν (“he entered”).¹¹⁵ But that confuses the two compartments and tends to imply that they are one and the same, which they are not!

Personally, if I was treating the first occurrence of διὰ as a locative, I would prefer Lane’s choice of “passing through the compartment.” Yet, one could just as easily choose: “walking through the sacred tent.” The idea of “entering” confuses this compartment with being the same as the second compartment where the verb “entered” is used at the end of this long, complex Greek sentence. Supplying “entered” for the first tent confuses the two tents as being the same space.

3. Precedents for the instrumental understanding can be traced back to the Greek and Latin patristic tradition!¹¹⁶

6-4. THE SHROUD AS A TYPE OF JESUS’ PRIESTLY ROBE

With an “instrumental of association” understanding of διὰ the first preposition would be rendered in English as “*with*.” “With” also fits nicely for the subsequent two usages of διὰ. This gives consistency to the rendering of all three occurrences of the preposition in the passage.¹¹⁷

“But when Christ appeared as High Priest ... with (διὰ) the greater and more perfect sacred tent-covering¹¹⁸ (σκηνηῆς) ... not with (διὰ) the blood of goats ... but with (διὰ) His own blood ... He entered once for all into the real sanctuary.”

¹¹⁵ Cf. Heb 9.24

¹¹⁶ Westcott, *Hebrews*, 257

¹¹⁷ See footnote 114 above.

¹¹⁸ See fn. 97 above.

This legitimate translation nicely allows for an association between Christ and the sacred tent.¹¹⁹ Just as Jesus appeared “with His own blood,” likewise, as High Priest, he appeared



“with (His) priestly robe” (i.e., the “sacred tent-covering”)—the very place on which His sacrificial blood had been sprinkled. His burial cloth became associated with His High-Priestly robe! No doubt the visual impact of the miraculous image of Jesus crucified on His burial cloth was a primary reason behind the robe typology.

As we have noted, the Shroud had the three necessary characteristics to serve as a High-Priestly garment: (1) it was made of “fine linen,” (2) it had been consecrated (i.e., made holy) by being sprinkled with “sacrificial blood,” and (3) it had a special “checker work” weave!¹²⁰ Surely Jesus must have had a proper priestly robe when He served in the Holy Place,

ministering as the superior High Priest!

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So, it appears quite possible the writer of Hebrews perceived the Shroud as being the greater “sacred tent” that became an instrument enabling the Lord’s entrance into the Holy of Holies:

¹¹⁹ This would be termed “The Instrumental of Association” use of the preposition. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927) 88-91.

¹²⁰ Exod 28.4-5, 39; 29.21; cf. Heb 9.21

¹²¹ “The Descent from the Cross with the Holy Shroud” (c. 1625) generally attributed to G.B. Delarovere. © 1978 Barrie M. Schwartz Collection, STERA, Inc.

“With (His) greater priestly robe ... and with his own sacrificial blood ... Christ entered the real sanctuary.”

When the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement it was necessary that he take along “with” him a blood-sacrifice to present for the sins of the people. Where was Jesus to obtain the necessary blood for His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary if it was not the blood on His Shroud?

The writer of Hebrews explains this “sacred tent-covering” with two adjectives followed by two subordinate clauses. It is the “*greater and more perfect*” sacred tent (tabernacle).¹²² Why? For one reason, it was “*not made by human hands.*”¹²³ And then he explains that clause by saying, “*that is, not of this creation.*” What else could the writer be referring to except **the image** on the Shroud?

The Greek word, **ἀχειροποίητα** (acheiropoieta), began to be used for an image of Jesus on linen cloth no later than 554 AD.¹²⁴ At that time, this word was used for the “*Image of God Incarnate*” when a group of orthodox priests publicly paraded an image of Jesus on linen throughout the regions of Cilicia and Cappadocia.^{125, 126} This Greek word literally means

¹²² Cf. 8.2a

¹²³ Cf. 82b

¹²⁴ Jack Markwardt, “Modern Scholarship and the History of the Turin Shroud,” *St. Louis International Shroud Conference* (Oct 2014) 21–23. <https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/stlmarkwardtpaper.pdf>. Jackson provides an excellent historical summary of the whole subject concerning ἀχειροποίητα. Jackson, *The Shroud of Turin*, 14–20.

¹²⁵ Approximately twenty years earlier (528–538) an “awesome” image of Christ—“an object of particular veneration”—had been discovered hidden away within a niche, above a gate, of the city wall for Antioch during a reconstruction project. It has been hypothesized that the linen object found had been hidden there in 362 when Theodorus, an Arian presbyter, hid the church’s treasures from the visiting Emperor Julian and suffered execution rather than reveal the location where he had hidden the treasure. One and a half centuries later, in the year 540, just prior to Antioch being destroyed by the Persians, the patriarch of Antioch, Ephraemius, left the city in haste and went into Cilicia. He died in 545. Nine years later (554) an image of Christ, described as “**not made by human hands**,” was publicly paraded throughout Cilicia. [See Eisen A. Gustavus, *The Great Chalice of Antioch* (New York, NY: Kouchakji Freres, 1923); Markwardt, “Modern Scholarship,” 20–23; and Jackson, *The Shroud of Turin*, 14–17.]

¹²⁶ At almost the same time ἀχειροποίητα also began to be used to describe the “*Image of Edessa.*” [Ernst Kitzinger, *The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm* (Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 1954) 8:114–15; Jackson, *Shroud of Turin*, op. cit.] That term has an earlier presence in the historical record than the “*Image of God Incarnate.*” The earlier term was used for a renowned image of Jesus’ face on a cloth that, according to the old “Legend of King Abgar,” played an important role in Christianity coming to the city of Edessa in the 1st century. [See Ian Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1998) 144–75.] However, the current author favors a late 2nd century date for the introduction of Christianity in Edessa with the conversion of their king, Abgar VIII (the Great). [See Jack Markwardt, “Ancient Edessa and the Shroud: History Concealed by the Discipline of the Secret,” *Proceedings of Columbus International Shroud Conference* (Columbus, Ohio, 2008) 1–49, <http://www.ohioshroudconference.com/papers/p02.pdf>.] Inhabitants of Edessa came to believe that the icon protected their city from foreign invaders. [Ian Wilson, *The Blood* 175–79.] The Greek word pronounced *icon* means *image* and, thus, one will often read in Sindonological research of “The Icon of Edessa.” The original icon of the Christian Church was an image of Jesus on a linen cloth.

“not made by (human) hands.”^{127, 128} It would be another way of saying *the image* was “from heaven” and “not a product of human creation.” Therefore, the cloth was not associated with being a “graven image” and, thus, violating the Second Commandment. This word, ἀχειροποίητα, is strikingly like the wording we find our writer using in his first-century, written sermon (*Hebrews*): οὐ χειροποιήτου (ou cheiropoietou), meaning “not made by (human) hand.” The difference between how Christians were describing their image of Jesus on linen cloth in the sixth century and how the writer of *Hebrews* describes the greater “sacred tent” could be likened to the difference between “atheist” and “not a theist.” The former makes use of an “alpha- privative” to negate the word, while the latter phrase uses the negative “not.” In addition, the Hebrew writer uses the singular “hand” (like by “the hand of God”), whereas the sixth-century word is plural: “hands.”¹²⁹

Twenty years after the appearance of the “Image of God Incarnate” in Cilicia the image-bearing linen cloth was taken by the Byzantine Emperor to the capital city of Constantinople.¹³⁰

As a historical anecdote, crucifixes and crucifixion portrayals were invented just after the arrival of this cloth image in Constantinople.¹³¹ At this time it would have been considered inappropriate to illustrate Jesus stripped of all his garments.¹³² Even so, it is interesting to see the two thieves girded only around their loins and, in contrast, to see Jesus clothed in a full-length robe.



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Before we draw some conclusions, one more question should be addressed. Should we equate the σκηνη̅ς of v. 11 (the “*sacred tent not made by human hands, and not of this creation*”) with Jesus’ body being a spiritual temple: “*We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’*”¹³⁴ The problem with that

¹²⁷ W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 127.

¹²⁸ This word is used in Mark’s Gospel (14.58) for the spiritual temple when false testimony was presented against Jesus: “*We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’*”

¹²⁹ But this fact is insignificant because the writer of *Hebrews* uses the plural noun later in verse 24.

¹³⁰ Jackson, *Shroud of Turin*, 19.

¹³¹ A. A. Schacher, “Crucifixion (in Art),” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2003) 4:391-93.

¹³² Marucchi, “Cross and Crucifix,” *Archaeology of the Cross* (New York, NY: The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1908) 4:529.

¹³³ This is an illustration of the crucifixion from the *Rabula Gospels* dating from the late 6th century (586). Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=155321>.

¹³⁴ Mark 14.58

interpretation is that it undermines the humanity of his flesh! This *σκηνη* is “not of this creation,” yet it does have a relationship to both his “blood”¹³⁵ and “flesh.”¹³⁶

So, which of the two typological understandings associated with the Shroud is correct: Is the writer (1) likening the Shroud to Jesus’ priestly robe? Or, (2) is he likening the Shroud to the Holy Place of the Tabernacle—during His time of captivity in the tomb? Syntax favors the instrumental usage pointing to the robe; the overall context favors the Shroud being a type of the Holy Place. Both appear to be valid types of the “sacred tent.”

So, I will answer my question with another question: is it necessary to choose between two types? If more than one type is valid, why is it necessary to choose between “either” this one “or” that one. Why can’t both be true?^{137, 138}

It appears the writer had a rich and *fluid* typology: In chapter eight, the heavenly “*tent pitched by the Lord*” is equated with being a type, copy, or shadow of the second (inner) compartment of the earthly sanctuary, the Holy of Holies.^{139, 140} In chapter nine, the writer equates “*the greater and more perfect tent*” with the first (outer) compartment of the Tabernacle. In chapter ten, we will soon see that the inner “curtain” becomes the type—the curtain that separated the two compartments!

The writer has reminded us that Moses was instructed to make “*all things*” concerning the Tabernacle according to the pattern (model) of the heavenly one which he had been “shown on the mountain” (Sinai).¹⁴¹ Consequently, an exegetical principle arose in the early Church where, “*accordingly, all the features of the cult become clues to the heavenly liturgy*”

¹³⁵ Heb 9.12; 10.19

¹³⁶ Heb 10.20

¹³⁷ See footnotes 140 and 154 below. First-century Judaism produced some strange hermeneutics from a modern, Western mind-set. In my thinking, the writer stretches it a bit with his typology of Isaac in 11.19. We must be careful not to impose our analytical construct upon the writer’s hermeneutic.

¹³⁸ I believe this paper is the first to propose either of these two types for linking the “sacred tent” of Hebrews with “the Shroud of Turin.” The marvelous type links the Shroud with the Holy Place whether one translates the first of three *διὰ* prepositions in 9.11-12 either in the Greek locative case or in the instrumental case. Also, the marvelous type of the Shroud as Jesus’ high-priestly robe comes into view when that preposition is understood as an “instrumental of association.”

¹³⁹ Heb 8.1-5.

¹⁴⁰ In 8.2 the expression “the true tabernacle” (*τῆς σκηνης τῆς ἀληθινῆς*) should be understood as an explanation of “the real sanctuary” (*τῶν ἁγίων*). The NEB correctly renders the two accordingly: “*the real sanctuary, the tent pitched by the Lord.*” Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that we should disassociate this “sacred tent” (*σκηνη*) “*which the Lord pitched, not man*” (8.2) with “the greater and more perfect sacred tent, *not made by human hands, that is, not of this creation*” (9.11). Even so, the “sacred tent” (*σκηνη*) of 9.11 is distinct from the real sanctuary (*τὰ ἅγια*) of that same sentence. Therefore, this proves the writer has a rich, dynamic, and fluid typology concerning the “sacred tent” (*σκηνη*) in chapters 8-10. He does not restrain himself to only one type or to only one concept behind this “tent which the Lord pitched.” Cf. Lane, Hebrews 47a:200-201, fn. e and 47b:238.

¹⁴¹ Heb 8.5; cf. Ex 25.40

accomplished by Christ.”¹⁴² Jesus instructed His disciples that “*all things which are written about Me in the Law ... must be fulfilled.*”¹⁴³ Therefore, it is this author’s viewpoint that the Shroud can and is serving the writer of Hebrews with more than one type of the heavenly liturgy.¹⁴⁴ It is up to the reader to decide on the validity of which types are valid.

6-5. THE SHROUD AS A TYPE OF THE CURTAIN TO THE HOLY SANCTUARY!

The author of *Hebrews* has something more for his readers to comprehend when he reaches the conclusion of his sacrificial-tabernacle-typology and gives a word of exhortation:

*Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the Holy Place **by the blood of Jesus** (by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us **through the curtain**, that is, **by means of His flesh**), and since we have a great priest over the house of God ... let us draw near (to God) ...*¹⁴⁵

Most English versions prefer to understand “*His flesh*” in this text as a metaphor for “*the curtain*” (i.e., the inner curtain (or, veil) which separated the two compartments of the Tabernacle and required the High Priest to go through in order to enter into the Holy of Holies).¹⁴⁶ The two clauses (“*through the curtain*” and “*that is, His flesh*”) are seen in apposition by most commentators, being similar to one another and the second explaining the first. For example, the *New American Standard Bible* renders the text: “... a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh...”¹⁴⁷

However, two excellent reasons can be given why “the curtain” should **not** be understood as a metaphor for Christ’s flesh. First, formerly the writer clearly wrote of how, as High Priest, “*Jesus entered (the heavenly sanctuary) through the curtain.*”¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, he also clearly spoke of the inner (or second) compartment (i.e., the Holy of Holies) as being “*behind the curtain.*”^{149, 150} Treating the curtain as a metaphor for Christ’s flesh fails to take into account these two earlier passages and becomes unnecessarily inconsistent with them.

¹⁴² Lane, *Hebrews*, 47a:207 who references, M. R. D’Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 205-22.

¹⁴³ Luke 24.44; cf. 24.27

¹⁴⁴ See footnotes 140 above and 154 below.

¹⁴⁵ Heb 10.19-22

¹⁴⁶ RSV, JB, TEV, NASB, NIV; et al.

¹⁴⁷ NASV, Heb 10.20

¹⁴⁸ Heb 6.19-20

¹⁴⁹ Heb 9.3

¹⁵⁰ The inner curtain or veil of the Old Testament tabernacle was made of “fine linen interwoven with blue, purple, and scarlet wool; on it were the figures of two cherubs. It symbolized the separation between God and humankind.” Verlyn D. Verbrugge, editor, “καταπέτασμα,” *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) 661.

Second, the structure of v. 20 is patterned after v. 19.¹⁵¹ The subject of v. 19 is believers; the subject of v. 20 is Christ. We enter the most sacred compartment of the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, by the blood of Jesus; He entered by His flesh. He opened “a new and living way”¹⁵² for us to have access to the presence of God Almighty! He took believers along with Him into the heavenly presence of His Father.¹⁵³

The “by” (έν) preposition used in verse 19 (“by His blood”) should govern the understanding of the “through” (διά) preposition in verse 20 (“through the curtain”) as also applying to “His flesh” in an instrumental sense (i.e., “by means of”).

So, what should we make of the phrase, **“He entered ... the Holy Place ... through the curtain by means of His flesh”**? At this point in his sermon, does the writer of *Hebrews* view the Shroud as a “type” of the “inner curtain,” separating the Holy of Holies from the people’s access to God?¹⁵⁴ Look at that statement again: **“Jesus entered the Holy Place ... through the curtain ... by means of His flesh.”** He is explicitly saying that Jesus’ flesh (body) went through the curtain!¹⁵⁵ That is astounding because it fits so beautifully with what apparently happened in the tomb! This statement **makes the Shroud to be a type of the inner curtain** of the holy sanctuary!

There are two fascinating matters that should now be brought to the reader’s attention.

First, there was something about the “funeral linens” found in the empty tomb that brought the apostle John to faith in the Resurrection. In particular, something about how the linens were “lying” produced faith—and lying apart from the face cloth, which at some earlier point had been separated and rolled up apart from the Shroud and apart from the bands of cloth used to

¹⁵¹ This analogous structure in the original Greek is graphically depicted by Lane, *Hebrews*, 47b:275.

¹⁵² Jesus’ sacrificial death opened the “way” into the heavenly sanctuary of for all believers! It is a “new” (πρόσφατος) way in the sense of being recent; it had not previously existed. It is also “new” with respect to quality as it is characterized by the freshness of the New Covenant. It is “living,” and therefore exists in the present, and is also the “way” that leads to life!

¹⁵³ One early Christian beautifully described our priesthood this way: “Jesus, the crucified high priest, by grace stripped us (i.e., Christians) of our filthy garments, polluted by sins, and will invest us with prepared garments and will provide an eternal kingdom because “we are the true high-priestly people of God.” [Justin Martyr, “Dialogue with Trypho, A Jew,” *The Apostolic Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004) 1:257.] Now if we will be given priestly vestments, it only stands to reason that we are correct in making the inference that, it was understood by the early Christians, Jesus had been invested with the holy garment (or, robe) of the High Priest! (See Rev 7.9-17)

¹⁵⁴ The writer, in chapter nine, clearly differentiated between the “inner curtain” (v. 3) and both of the two compartments, or “sacred tents,” that made up the Tabernacle (vv. 2-3). It is awkward now if he is equating the “sacred tent” with the “inner curtain.” Furthermore, the “sacred tent” in 9.11 is distinct from the Sanctuary (διά τῆς ... σκηνῆς ... εἰσῆλθεν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια). The high priest must be in the outer (first) compartment before he can enter the second (inner). It appears the writer develops a dynamic typology with a *fluid* understanding of the Shroud. In 9.11 the Shroud is identified with the “outer (first) compartment” of the tabernacle, whereas in 10.20 it becomes a type for the “inner curtain” that separated the two compartments.

¹⁵⁵ An interesting fact: the curtain was made of linen. See footnote 150 above.

secure the body inside the Shroud. The strange phenomenon caused John to “*see and believe.*”¹⁵⁶ The Greek is ambiguous, and it’s difficult to understand precisely what John is describing. Personally, I think the best scenario that fits both the Biblical text and current scientific research is to conclude that the glorified body of Christ had dematerialized through the cloth leaving the grave clothes intact but no longer containing his corpse.^{157, 158}

Yet, there is a second fascinating matter that we should mention in connection with Jesus “*passing through the curtain.*” Currently, from the extensive scientific research regarding the Shroud, the only explanation that begins to answer how the image on the cloth was formed (with all of its peculiar characteristics) is the unconventional hypothesis put forth by physicist John Jackson, who has been studying the Shroud for over forty years.

*“I propose that, as **the Shroud collapsed through the underlying body**, radiation emitted from all points within that body and discolored the cloth so as to produce the observed image.”*¹⁵⁹

The only way Dr. Jackson and his associates can make sense of how the image was formed is to postulate a theory that cannot entirely be tested by the scientific method:¹⁶⁰ a short, intense

¹⁵⁶ John 20.8

¹⁵⁷ I provide an exegesis of this passage in John’s Gospel in my paper, “*He Saw and Believed!*,” at www.srhoud.com.

¹⁵⁸ Support for this understanding is seen in the fact that in the following three stories Jesus (1) suddenly, out of nowhere, appears to Mary (20.14); then, (2) when the “*doors were shut ... for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst*” (20.19); and (3) “*again ... the doors were shut and Jesus stood in their midst, and said, ‘Peace be with you’*” (20.26). A reasonable inference follows that this understanding concerning the funeral linens in the tomb was understood and well known among the early Christians.

¹⁵⁹ John P. Jackson, “An Unconventional Hypothesis to Explain all Image Characteristics Found on the Shroud Image” in *History, Science, Theology and the Shroud* ed. by A. Berard (St. Louis: Symposium Proceedings) 1991, accessed July 10, 2019, <http://theshroudofturin.blogspot.com/2012/01/john-p-jackson-unconventional.html>. See also John Jackson, “Is the image on the Shroud due to a process heretofore unknown to modern science?” *Shroud Spectrum International*, No. 34 (March 1990) 3-29.

¹⁶⁰ In 2010 a team of six physicists from three research centers were able to partially confirm the Jackson hypothesis. Using an extremely brief burst of ultraviolet radiation from a powerful excimer laser they were able to successfully achieve a coloration of the outermost part of the fibers of a linen material similar in appearance to the Shroud’s image. [Paolo Di Lazzaro, D. Murra, A. Santoni, G. Fanti, E. Nichelatti, and G. Baldacchini. “Deep Ultraviolet Radiation Simulates the Turin Shroud Image,” *Journal of Imaging Science and Technology* (July-August, 2010) 1-6.] The scientific team concluded that the exact shade, texture, and extremely shallow depth of the imprints on the Shroud could only be produced with the aid of ultraviolet lasers. Yet, a single laser alone could not explain the 3-D image over the full length of the body. The director of the team estimated, to do that, it would take 34 trillion watts of energy coming from 14,000 such lasers emitting “pulses having durations shorter than one forty-billionth of a second.” Sergio Prostack, “Scientists Suggest Turin Shroud Authentic,” *Sci-News.com* (December 21, 2011), accessed July 15, 2019, <http://www.sci-news.com/physics/scientists-suggest-turin-shroud-authentic.html>.] He added: [The ultraviolet light necessary to form the image] “exceeds the maximum power released by all ultraviolet light sources available today.” [Viviano, “Why Shroud of Turin’s Secrets Continue to Elude Science,” *National Geographic* (April 17, 2015) 3, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/150417-shroud-turin-relics-jesus-catholic-church-religion-science.html>.] Dead bodies do not naturally emit a flash of light able to color a piece of linen, let alone one with the

burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation might be the source behind the image. The needed radiation would be in the form of “light” (protons), rather than in the form of “heat.”¹⁶¹ The radiation would be emitted evenly throughout a mechanically transparent body as the cloth collapsed through it.

To say that “the Shroud collapsed through the underlying (mechanically transparent) body” is simply another way of saying: the (glorified) body (of Jesus) **“entered ... the Holy Place ... through the curtain by means of His flesh.”**¹⁶² So Jackson’s “scientific” theory is very supportive of the words written in *Hebrews*.

7. CONCLUSION

How did the early Church view the burial cloth of Jesus that was discovered in the empty tomb? Why wasn’t it viewed as an unclean object—desecrated by blood and the corpse—and disposed of? This paper has attempted to show—from both canonical and non-canonical sources—that His Shroud was viewed as having been consecrated by His sacrificial blood. This resulted in two consequences.

First, the early Christians treasured Jesus’ Shroud and, due to persecution, attempted to safeguard it from enemies of the Church. On that basis, it is a reasonable inference that any reference to the Shroud during the period of the early Church would be done in a “veiled” or cryptic manner.

Second, because the Shroud had been both consecrated and possessed a shadowy, miraculous image—one “not made by human hands” and “not of this creation”—a set of beliefs developed around it. What message was it supposed to convey? How might the Shroud be used in evangelism to teach the Gospel to potential converts and to new disciples?

energy of 34 trillion watts! Has God graciously provided our current generation with extraordinary evidence of Jesus’ Resurrection on His ancient burial cloth? Is the mysterious image on the Shroud evidence of His natural, dead body transforming into what the Apostle Paul called His “glorious,” (Phil 3.20-21) “spiritual body” (1 Cor 15.35, 41-44)? It is something that science is unable to prove as it lies beyond the scientific method and falls into the realm of the miraculous. Even so, a believer arriving at such a conclusion is not required to take a leap of faith in the dark, believing in something that is baseless and irrational. As a side note, I think it is both confirming and very interesting that researchers from Northwestern University, in Chicago, have captured on film a “bright flash of light” at the very moment human life begins when a sperm meets an egg. *“An explosion of tiny sparks erupts from the egg at the exact moment of conception.”* [Sarah Knapton, “Bright flash of light marks incredible moment life begins when sperm meets egg,” *The Telegraph* (April 26, 2016), accessed April 3, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/04/26/bright-flash-of-light-marks-incredible-moment-life-begins-when-s/>.] Fascinating indeed!

¹⁶¹ The STURP investigation concluded the image was not the product of scorched or heated linen because the image did not fluoresce. See comment by STURP member Barry Schwartz, in “The Image on the Shroud of Turin is Not a Scorch” in *The Shroud of Turin Blog*—shroudstory.com, 2012, accessed October 7, 2019, <http://shroudstory.com/2012/02/10/the-image-on-the-shroud-of-turin-is-not-a-scorch/>.

¹⁶² Heb 10.20

Consequently, a rich typological understanding developed around the Shroud. The early Christians identified it, typologically, with His priestly-kingly robe! The earthly being a *shadow*, or a type, of the heavenly! Furthermore, evidence suggests the Shroud appears to have been identified as a type, in one or more ways, with the heavenly tabernacle (“*the greater and more perfect sacred tent*”¹⁶³) that “*the Lord pitched, not man.*”¹⁶⁴

- The Shroud as a type of Jesus’ heavenly, priestly-kingly robe (7.1; 8.5; 9.11; Rev. 1.13, 7.9-17, 19.16; *The Hymn of the Pearl*; *The Gospel According to the Hebrews*)!
- The Shroud as a type of the heavenly Holy of Holies (8.1-2)!
- The Shroud as a type of the first (outer) compartment of the Tabernacle (9.11)!
- The Shroud as a type of the heavenly (inner) curtain that Jesus’ flesh went through and, thereby, made a “new and living way” for believers to have access to the presence of God Almighty (10.20)!

It appears the writer had a fluid, dynamic typological understanding of the Shroud!¹⁶⁵ The typology unfolds in theological stages. It first became His earthly priestly robe, intact with His sacrificial blood. Next, while He was in the tomb, the Shroud was identified with the first compartment of the heavenly sanctuary, the Holy Place. And, due to the layout of the Tabernacle, it was *necessary* for the High Priest to be in the first compartment before He could enter the second! Then, at His Resurrection, Christ went through the curtain (Shroud) and, (with His Ascension) entered the Holy Sanctuary (“the Holy of Holies”) into the glorious presence of His Heavenly Father and received the everlasting kingdom (His Coronation¹⁶⁶)!

In its simplest form, *Hebrews* presents the reader with this riddle:

**When Christ came and ministered as the superior High Priest,
what could be described as a “sacred tent” that is “*not of this creation,*”
that was associated with both the actual *blood* of Jesus and the heavenly *Sanctuary*,
but (at the same time) was distinct¹⁶⁷ from both?**

¹⁶³ Heb 9.11

¹⁶⁴ Hebrews 8.2

¹⁶⁵ Cf. fn. 140, 154 above.

¹⁶⁶ Dan 7.13-14; Rev 1.5-6. This is the author’s understanding of the Ascension and Coronation derived from Scripture outside of Hebrews.

¹⁶⁷ By “distinct” I mean not identical to, not one and the same (9.11). The use of the preposition with “sacred tent” requires it to be understood as different from the “sanctuary.” “*The syntax of vv. 11-12 demands that a distinction be made between the σκηνή, ‘front compartment,’ through which Christ passed and τὰ ἅγια, ‘the sanctuary,’ into which he entered.*” Lane, *Hebrews*, 47b:238.

This author knows of only one answer: Jesus' consecrated burial Shroud, stained with His sacrificial blood and bearing the miraculous image of His crucified body! The earthly Shroud was a "type and shadow" of the heavenly, priestly robe!

Blessings in Christ our Lord!