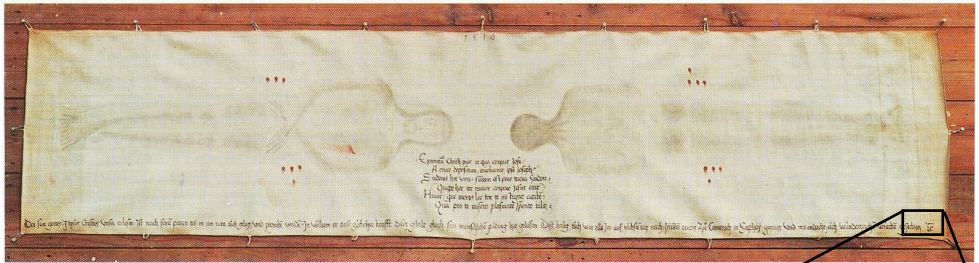


RESEARCH ARTICLES (3)
THE LIER SHROUD AND LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER
Pam Moon



Synopsis

This paper argues that the artist who created the Shroud of Turin copy known as the Lieer (or Lierre) Shroud may be Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553). It examines the signature on the Shroud and compares it with the different ways Cranach signed his name. It looks at Cranach's relationship with Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor (1459-1519) who was thought to have commissioned copies of the Shroud. It examines the similarity of the Lieer copy to the Shroud of Turin. And finally it examines other examples of Cranach's work particularly his *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* dated 1515.

Background

The Lieer Shroud (above)⁽¹⁾ is housed in the Treasury of St Gummarus in Lier, Belgium (Lierre is the French spelling). It is a copy of the Shroud of Turin which was commissioned when the Shroud was at Chambéry, France. It dates to 1516. The artist has not been formally identified although there has been speculation that Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) was the creator.⁽²⁾ Cranach was born Lucas Müller, but changed his name to Cranach after his birthplace (modern day Kronach). The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes him as the 'leading painter of Saxony, and one of the most important and influential artists in 16th-century German art. Among his vast output of paintings and woodcuts, the most important are altarpieces, court portraits and portraits of the



Protestant Reformers.’⁽³⁾ He is perhaps most famous for his paintings of Martin Luther.

The Signature

At the end of the Lier Shroud is ‘what seems to be a monogram.’ It is ‘yet to be identified. It could be a monogram, not of the artist, but of the person who inscribed the text; or even the person to whom the copy belonged. Canon A Thiéry surmised that it was a symbol for et cetera.’⁽⁴⁾ See *The Lier Shroud: A problem in attribution* Remi Van Haelst; the image Fig 1 is taken from that paper. The date of the Shroud and the artist’s signature are reproduced below (Fig. 2) with a comparison to Dürer’s signature (Fig. 3): he is not the artist as the signature confirms. However, perhaps the association with Dürer is important. Dürer was a contemporary and collaborator of Lucas Cranach the Elder and they are among the most influential of the Renaissance German painters.



Fig. 1

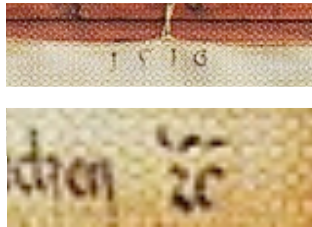


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

The difficulty is finding a high enough resolution image of the signature (if it is an artist’s signature). It appears to say ZC with a monogram. Fig. 2 is taken from theshroudofturin.blogspot.com.⁽⁵⁾ However if the same image is blown up using Word (Microsoft) technology the image appears to be LC (Fig. 4) . The Lier Shroud is not publicly available so investigation depends on relatively poor quality reproductions.

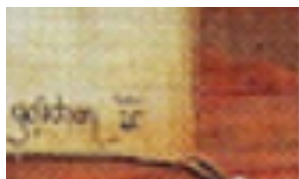


Fig. 4

The signature of Lucas Cranach

Where Cranach signed his name it tended to be by his initials: L C. Three examples of this are given below. One is from 1506⁽⁶⁾ and the others from 1509.⁽⁷⁾ Notice in the 1506 signature the C, which seems incomplete at the bottom, is similar to the Lier Shroud. The 1509 image shows the winged serpent symbol which Cranach adopted after 1508. Is the squiggle above the signature a form of the serpent?



Background to the Artist

The following is taken from the Lucas Cranach Digital archive: 'In the year 1505 Cranach was appointed court painter to Friedrich III the Wise, Elector of Saxony, a position he occupied almost uninterrupted until his death. He moved to Wittenberg where his duties not only included the production of paintings and woodcuts but also entailed everything from the design and execution of decorative schemes to the supervision of craftsmen as well as the embellishment of weddings, tournaments and other court celebrations. In short Cranach was responsible for almost the entire aesthetic ambience of the court. To meet these extensive demands he established a workshop initially in the Wittenberg castle and later in the town. In 1508 he was awarded the heraldic letter bearing the symbol of a winged serpent by the elector. At an early stage Cranach began to identify his artistic production with the court and employed this insignia as a seal of approval on paintings produced by himself and his expanding workshop. That same year he journeyed in diplomatic service of the elector to the Netherlands where he visited the court of Margaret of

Austria in Mechelen. Here he met the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I at the oath ceremony of his successor the eight year old Archduke Charles, later Charles V. Some years later Maximilian I commissioned Cranach along with the artist Albrecht Dürer to illustrate his prayer book.⁽⁸⁾

Maximilian I and the Lier Shroud

Remi Van Haelst writes: 'In his book, *Historia Serafica* (1709), Fernando da Soledad tells this legend: "by order of the Emperor Maximilian, two famous painters were to make copies of the Shroud ... but afraid that they were incompetent to reproduce the beauty of the image of the Redeemer, they did not know how to begin, so they went away leaving their canvases untouched. When they returned they found their paintings already done and it was impossible to distinguish the two miraculous copies from the real Shroud.

'According to this legend, and considering the similarity of the Lier Shroud to the Xabregas Shroud it is possible that the Emperor did order two copies of the Original; the full size copy being sent to his cousin, Eleonora ... and the second, as has been suggested to his daughter, Marguerite of Austria. The difficulty here is that the date for the arrival of the copy at the Monastery was believed to be 1507, though there are no documents to that effect. If this were so, then nine years passed before the Lier copy was dated. However, a chronicle of 1639 in the Monastery archives and quoted in part by Don Domenico Leone (*El Santo Sudario en España*, 1959) follows the tradition that the copy was a gift from Maximilian, who had commissioned two painters to copy the Turin Shroud.'⁽⁹⁾

As noted above Cranach met Maximilian in 1508 and was later commissioned to work for him on his Book of Hours, together with Albrecht Dürer. The image on the right is a detail taken from the *Torgauer Altar* (1509).⁽¹⁰⁾ It shows Maximilian (circled) painted by Cranach in a scene with the Holy Family.



Marguerite of Austria and the Lier Shroud.

In 1508 Cranach 'journeyed in diplomatic service of the elector to the Netherlands where he visited the court of Margaret of Austria in Mechelen.'⁽¹¹⁾ Remi Van Haelst notes 'the name of Marguerite of Austria (1480-1530) recurs often in the story of the Lier copy. The daughter of

Maximilian of Hapsburg and Mary of Burgundy, in 1497 she was married to Don Juan of Aragon, who died six months later. In 1501, the young widow became the bride of Philibert the Handsome, Duke of Savoy.⁽¹²⁾ The Dukes of Savoy were the custodians of the Shroud of Turin. In 1502 Margaret was involved in moving the Shroud to Chambéry.

In 1503 the Shroud of Turin was displayed for a state visit of Margaret's brother Philip the Handsome, (1478 – 1506) where it was witnessed by Antoine de Lalaing, Lord of Montigny.

Philip did not become Holy Roman Emperor as he pre-deceased his father Maximilian but his son Charles V succeeded. Margaret was widowed again in 1504 and in 1507 she was made ruler of the Low Countries by her father Maximilian and granted custody of Charles V.

Left: Cranach's painting of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor (1533).⁽¹³⁾

Right: Cranach's painting of Margaret (1520s).⁽¹⁴⁾

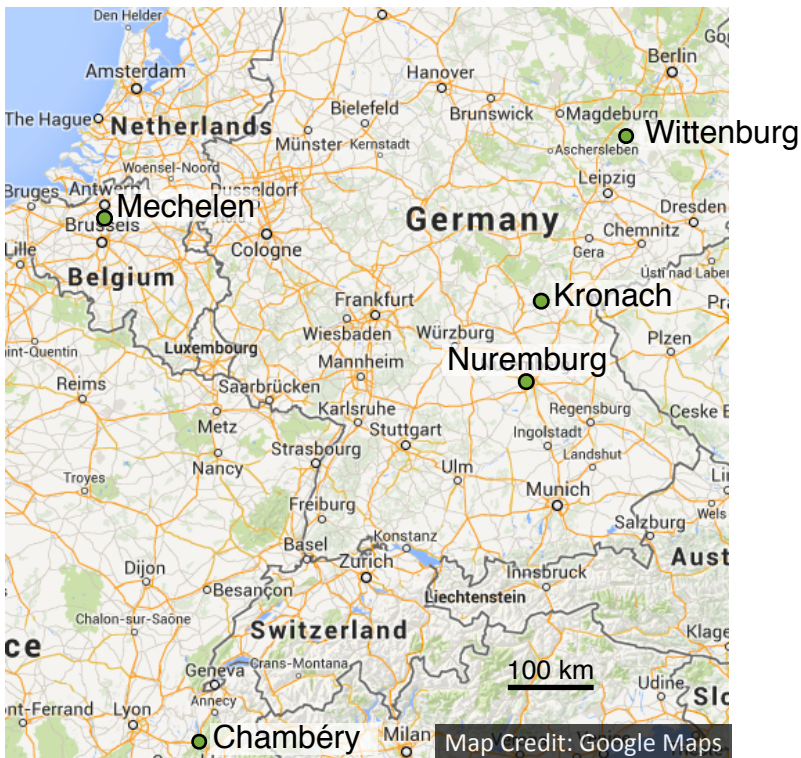


Writing on the Lier Shroud.

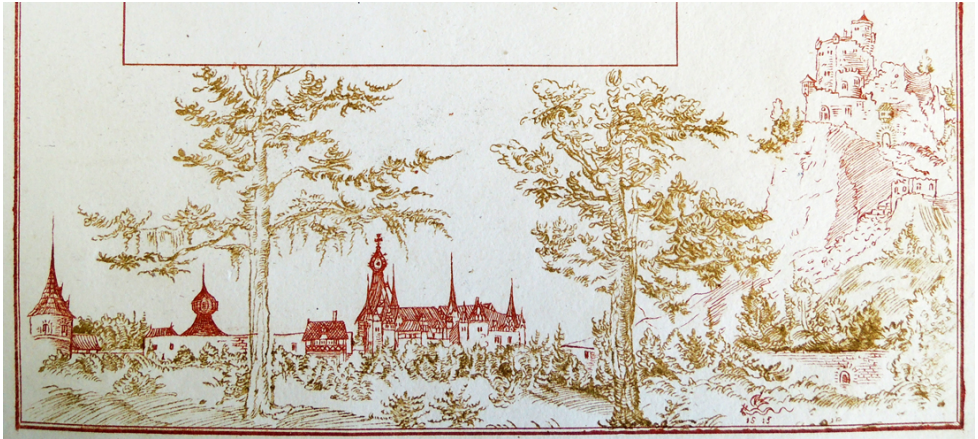
There are two inscriptions on the Lier Shroud, one written in Latin and the other in Nuremberg dialect. It is this unusual script which has prompted association with Albrecht Dürer: 'Our research has not discovered any documents or any author previously to Thiéry to attribute the painting to Dürer. The principle argument in his favour rests upon the inscription in the old Nuremberger dialect.'⁽¹⁵⁾

Cranach, was born in Kronach (Cranach in the sixteenth century) a town in Franconia. Nuremberg is one of the largest cities in Franconia. The distance between the two places is 73 miles; 117 km). Cranach would have known the old Nuremberger dialect.

In 1504 Cranach relocated to Wittenberg in the north to work for the court of the Elector of Saxony. He travelled to Mechelen in 1508.

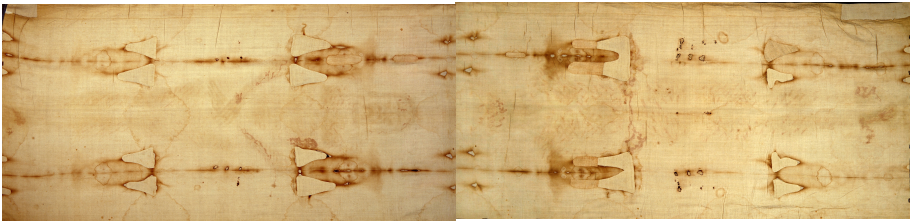
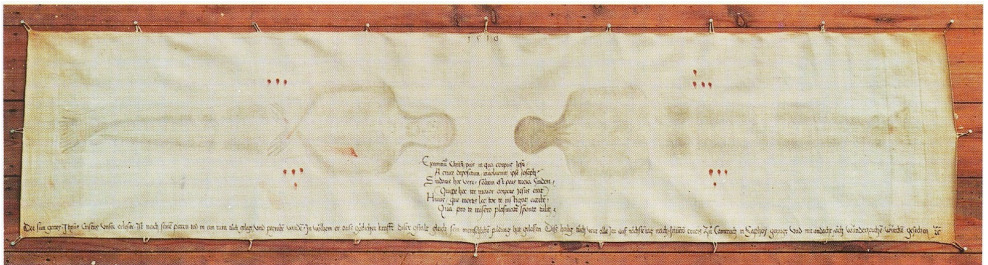


Did he ever go to Chambéry? Like Dürer, Cranach was known for writing on his paintings. He was also an accomplished printer and illustrator. Here are examples of his work taken from a reproduction of his borders for Maximilian's *Book of Hours* (printed 1513).⁽¹⁶⁾ On the title page, Albrecht Dürer's name is listed below Lucas Cranach the Elder.



A comparison between the images of the Shrouds of Turin and Lier.

At first sight the Lier Shroud does not look like the work of a particularly accomplished artist. It is not until it is compared with the Shroud of Turin that the exceptional ability of the artist becomes clear. 1516 pre-dates the fire at Chambéry, so the image is drawn without the triangular damage of the burn marks. The angles and shapes of the L shaped markings sometimes known as the 'poker holes' are accurately drawn. In particular there are only three holes on the right side of the front of the Man on the Shroud. The artist must have had access to the Shroud. The red colouration of the holes may be due to a red backing cloth. The missing corners were apparently intact in 1516. Notice also that there is more material beyond the feet of the Man than is currently visible. This extra material (unless it is artistic licence) may have been harvested as a relic or damaged by the fire.



A comparison of the Ventral images:

- The size of the Body is accurate.
- The areas where there is no image are carefully observed, for example there is no image under the forearms or of the inner thighs or calves.
- There is no image on the upper chest/ neck area.

- The line of the lower legs to the feet is depicted accurately, particularly the lower right leg as you look at the image which overlaps the left.

- It is clear that there was once an area without image between the chest and the upper arms. This has now been occluded by the fire damage.

- The thumbs are missing.

There are some differences

- Both wrists are visible.
- The artist has not foreshortened the arms and perhaps did not fully understand the burial position. The face is very simply painted with very little detail.

A comparison of the Dorsal images:

- The size of the Body is accurate.
- The areas where there is no image are carefully observed, for example there is no image on the inner thighs/calves.
- It is clear that there was once an area without image between the chest and the upper arms. This has now been occluded by the fire damage.
- The arrangement of the hair is unlikely in the Lier Shroud until you compare it with the light and shade at the back of the neck and upper back of the Shroud of Turin.

There is the possibility that the artist identified the dislocation of the right shoulder. In a paper entitled *Do we really need new medical information about the Turin Shroud?*, Matteo Beviliacqua et al. argue convincingly that the right shoulder of the Man on the Shroud was dislocated: an 'under glenoidal dislocation of the humerus.'⁽¹⁷⁾ The shoulders on the Lier Shroud are not identical. However, the image is not as anatomically accurate as the Shroud so it is difficult to say conclusively if the dislocated shoulder is there.

The Man of Sorrows by Lucas Cranach the Elder 1515

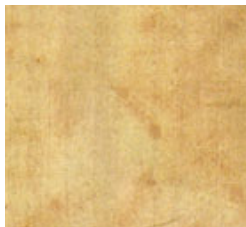


This painting is by Lucas Cranach the Elder. It is entitled '*Christ as the Man of Sorrows*'⁽¹⁸⁾ and was painted in 1515 a year before the Lier Shroud.

There is possible evidence on the painting that the artist had access to the Shroud of Turin image. The face has the long nose, divided beard and the line of the mouth that is standard in icons of Christ but there are details that are surprising and accurate to the Shroud.

1) The marks of the whip are very accurately depicted. The images below are taken from the left

Shoulder of the *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* image and from the back of the

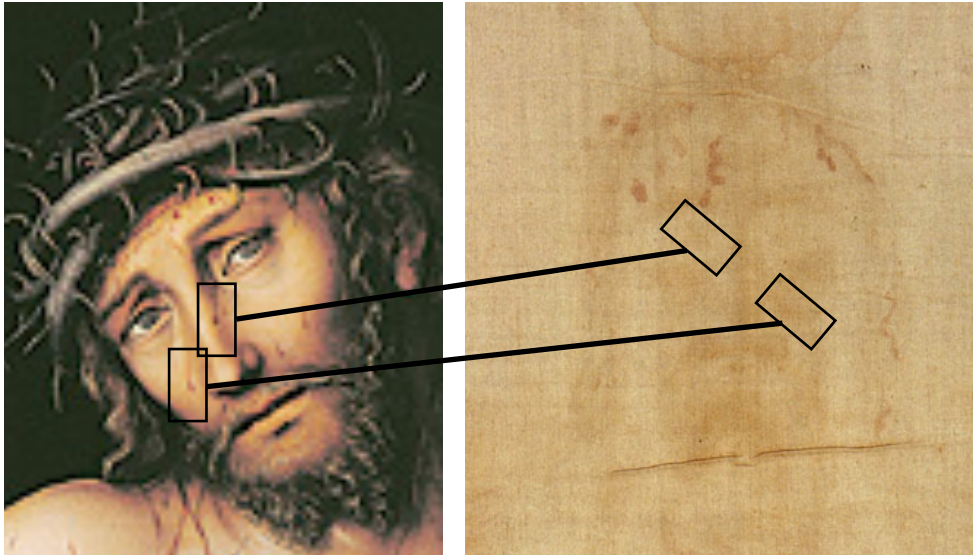


Shroud of Turin. There is the same dumbbell shape with a circular end. The number of whip marks far exceeds normal artist depictions and is consistent with the hundreds of whip marks on the Shroud of Turin.

If Lucas Cranach is the artist who painted the Lier Shroud then this *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* painting was executed by someone who saw the Shroud before it was damaged by fire. This may be the most accurate record we have of the nature of the whip marks to the arms before the fire

left them impossible to view. It gives detail of the muscle mass of the shoulders and arms and the shape of the elbow.

The whip marks on the left of the nose (A) and the cheek (B) are particularly interesting because they are evident on the Shroud. The blood flow and line of damage is seen within the boxed images in the detail.



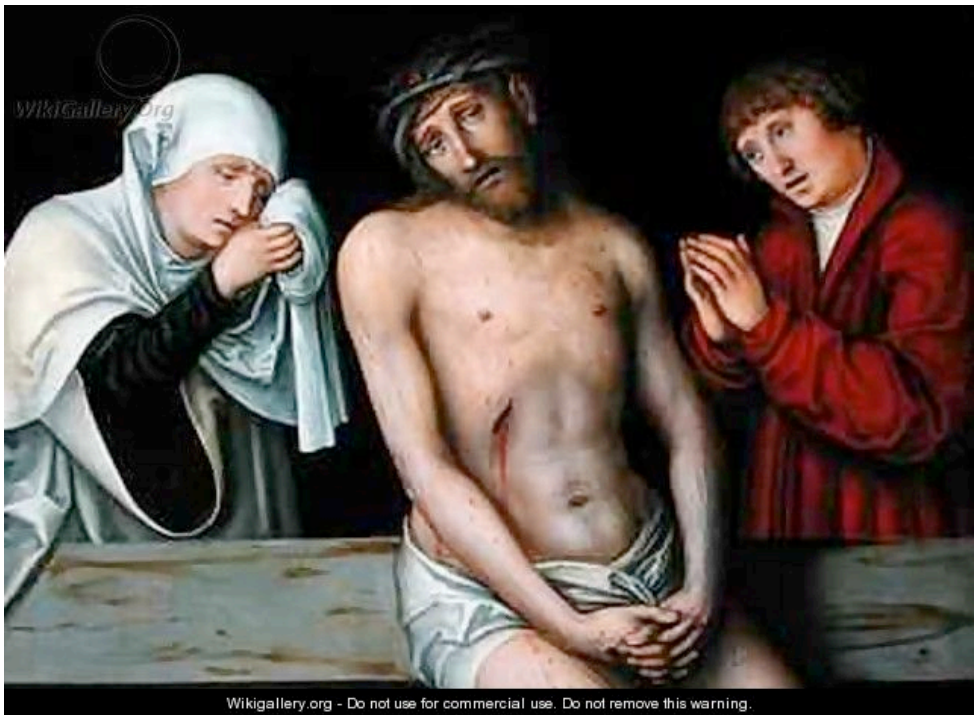
Cranach realised that the Shroud image is reversed, so his blood flow from the spear wound is on right of the body of the Christ as the Man of Sorrows although it is on the left as you look at the Shroud of Turin. The whip marks on the face are also reversed.

Cranach also painted the marks of the whip across the whole body of Christ: see right: *Altar panel: Christ as the Man of Sorrows*.⁽¹⁹⁾

2. The crown of thorns is not a simple ringlet - it has a depth to it which is consistent with the Shroud (see the back of the head, right). Cranach used this depth of crown repeatedly in his images, e.g. *Christ Crowned with Thorns* 1510.⁽²⁰⁾



3. There is evidence in Cranach's work of a dislocated right shoulder which is seen on the Shroud: see the paper '*Do we really need new medical information about the Turin Shroud?*'⁽²¹⁾ The shoulder dislocation is difficult to detect on the Shroud because of the damage caused to the cloth by the 1532 fire. The arms are not visible anymore. However Cranach may have been drawing Christ before the fire damage. Did he have access to the Shroud? The injured right shoulder is more evident in this later painting by Cranach: *Christ as the Man of Sorrows with the Virgin and St John*.⁽²²⁾ Mary is weeping at Christ's side but she also seems to be reaching towards the displaced shoulder to offer comfort.



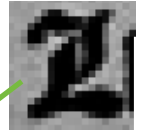
The evidence from Lucas Cranach's other work, particularly the *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* suggests that he saw the Shroud of Turin. The whip marks, crown of thorns and right shoulder dislocation suggests he had access to the Shroud in 1515. Lucas Cranach the Elder may also be

the creator of the Lier Shroud in 1516. He is certainly a very underrated artist of the Passion of Christ, based around the Shroud image.

Lucas Cranach and Protestantism.

Living in Wittenberg, and working for the Elector of Saxony, Cranach was significantly influenced by Martin Luther. One of the most recognised portraits he did was of Luther (below left) in 1529.⁽²³⁾ This association may have effected his popularity in the Catholic Church. The pamphlets Cranach illustrated criticising the Catholic Church may explain why an artist of his ability does not share the popularity of the Italian Renaissance masters.

The Reformers pamphlet seen below right was decorated by Cranach. It dates to 1523.⁽²⁴⁾ The way that Cranach has written the L of Luther's name (circled) makes an interesting parallel with the signature on the Lier Shroud.



Conclusion

Without a more detailed examination of the signature by an art expert it is not possible to confirm that Lucas Cranach painted the Lier Shroud in 1516. However it is a possibility that could be researched

further. Certainly his accurate paintings of *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* deserve more attention from Shroud researchers. In favour of Cranach being the painter of the Lier Shroud: what are the chances of there being two world class artists who worked for Maximilian I and Margaret of Austria, who spoke the Old Nuremberger dialect and had a surname beginning with a C viewing the Shroud of Turin in 1515 - 1516? The probability tips towards Cranach being the creator of the Lier Shroud.

If Cranach does prove to be the painter then we can learn more about the Shroud from his association: Cranach was a Renaissance master and capable of very accurate drawings. For example we can learn about the nature of the whip marks on the arms; possibly how the dislocation appeared before the fire; the length and condition of the cloth before the fire. It would confirm that in 1516 the corners were not missing and that there was probably more cloth beyond the feet than we can currently see.

Finally, if Cranach is the artist it raises problems for the medieval Radiocarbon date. If a painter as accomplished as Lucas Cranach the Elder cannot come close to replicating the complexity of the Shroud in his copy, how can we possibly believe an unknown medieval artist could create it from scratch?

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References for 'The Lier Shroud and Lucas Cranach the Elder'

All Shroud images ©1978 Barrie M. Schwartz Collection, STERA, Inc.

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- 12) as before Footnote 4
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