

Forcing in Christian Events: The Turin Shroud Case

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Abstract

In its totality and complexity, the theme of forcing in Christian events is almost impossible to investigate. In fact, a lot of scholars and a very long time would be necessary to analyse the numerous events. Thus, we decided to investigate such events only in the study of the Shroud of Turin, an archaeological find known worldwide. The above topic is essential for Christianity. Furthermore, we must take into account that also among the followers of other religions, atheists and agnostics, there is a considerable interest. We think this is due to the unexpected characteristics that the Body Image, which appears on the Burial Linen of the Nazarene, shows. In this article, we would like to demonstrate that the practice of forcing is still in use. These actions, which are also present on the other side, in the non-Christian world, are the result of conflicts of religious interests. To confirm the presence of the Almighty is not necessarily the forcing. Finding a solution to these problems is not our job. However, we want to highlight them through scientific literature.

Keywords

Shroud of Turin, Forcing, Sindonology, Aromas, Pollens, Radiative Hypothesis

1. Introduction

Sometimes, we experience seemingly incomprehensible events. In these cases, the behaviour of various Christians, both of those who directly witnessed the event and of others informed in the gathering places, is to pilot the event towards a Christian Catholic perspective. Unfortunately, these believers do not realize that attempts made to benefit the Church can cause only damage because, before or later, these errors will be discovered with results always only negative. Sometimes

these events occur, maybe in good faith, to convince ourselves and others that there has been a Miracle. Events of this type occur often in all places. However, they should not be discarded, but analysed *cum grano salis*. Otherwise, it will generate confusion to the detriment of the Church.

Over time, similar behaviours have led to situations that are no longer acceptable. Today, among tears, tears of blood, apparitions, discussions between self-styled Seers and Mother of Jesus Christ, phone calls received from the Madonna herself, disputes between the Seers to have a more privileged relationship with Jesus's Mother, the birth of new places of worship, etc. It is evident that there is a great confusion that could lead part of the faithful to the diaspora.

This can no longer be tolerated. Now, it is time for the Church to intervene on these themes that concern the Transcendent. This knowledge cannot be left in the hands of exploiters of ignorant and feeble-minded people. The intervention must have the severity necessary for a return to physiological normality and not pathological as it is now. These events risk obscuring the image of the Church itself, creating confusion and uncertainty, with incalculable spiritual damage due to the loss of churchgoers and, among them, young people. In this situation, the *mea culpa* can be charged: 1) To unscrupulous crooks who aim to make easy money by exploiting people's mental weakness; 2) To the continuous growth of ignorance, also due to cultural and educational deficiencies for an inadequate functioning of the school system; 3) To a part of us Catholic Christians who, faced with these events, try to see what is not there; 4) To the Roman Catholic Church which, due to internal clashes between Prelates, today appears inadequate to resolve these and other problems.

Perhaps in this writing, we should include the activity and results produced by many researchers and scientists who claim, with theories and experiments, that Turin Linen is a fake produced by an artist/forgery in the Middle Ages. A period where Western Europe was an ideal place to sell false relics, partly made in Europe itself together with many others that arrived directly from Palestine brought by the Crusaders. According to the traders, they were objects that had been in contact with Jesus Christ. However, beyond the conflict of religious interest that also the supporters of the fake undergo [1]-[3], in the scientific world, the possibility that the Shroud of Turin is a forgery is extremely slim.

2. Analysis and Discussions

In this article, we want to investigate the Shroud of Turin demonstrating that, too here, there are situations similar to those described above. In this case, there is the contribution of people of great culture as researchers, scholars and scientists. However, we would like to reiterate that, even if the Shroud had been a fake (an event, considered by us and others to be absolutely impossible), nothing would change for Christians as Relics and Icons are not part of the Catholic Christian belief.

Now, let's examine our archaeological find which is known, appreciated and

studied around the world by amateurs, scholars, researchers and scientists. This has been happening since May 1898 when an amateur photographer of Turin (Secondo Pia) obtained the first Image of the Shroud of Turin that showed the 2-D characteristic [4] [5]. The Image appeared with inverted colours as well as the right with the left. It was like seeing a photographic negative. From those extraordinary moments that generated great enthusiasm, as time passed, some Christians, due to the above conflict of interest and also to compensate for what happened on the opposite side, for the same reason, acted through forced declarations and results:

1) At the end of the fifties, a new science was born: the Sindonology. The scholars, experts in this knowledge, and the sindonologists were the right people to write and talk about the Shroud of Turin. This gave emphasis and scientific depth to the Burial Linen and the scholars [6]. However, also if Sindonology is not a new science, for intellectual honesty, it is necessary to affirm that among the sindonologists various scientists are very authoritative. Just look at their production, that appears in the literature, in the original fields of investigation to get the answer. In any case, it was not necessary to invent a new science and new scientists to understand ancient linen despite its complexities.

2) The search for the Aromas was very important because it would have demonstrated whether the Turin Linen was or was not a real burial linen. In the Gospel of John (19, 39), the Apostle writes: “*Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds* [7].”

Now, although the members of the STURP (Shroud of Turin Research Project) had already demonstrated that on the Shroud there were no Burial Ointments [8], the above verse of John triggered a rush of experiments to find Aromas on the Holy Linen. According to these scholars, the result has been the presence of Aloe and Myrrh: aromatic substances which in ancient times, in Palestine, were also used in Burial Rites [9] [10].

Today, we know with scientific certainty that the Aromas already mentioned are completely absent from the Shroud of Turin. Also here, a forcing is evident in the results. In fact, Apostle John writes about Aromas brought to the Tomb by Nicodemus and not Aromas used. Currently, there is no Aloe and Myrrh on the Linen, just as there are no other aromas present.

Those used to treat the Body of the Nazarene and the Burial Linen came, principally, from plants of the *Asteraceae*, *Cistaceae*, *Apiaceae* and *Anacardiaceae* families [11] [12]. We must not forget that in 1532, when the Shroud was in Chambery, a bad fire caused serious damage, and certainly the Aromas, thermolabile organic compounds, were destroyed [13]. We are certain of this result because the temperature reached (around 1000°C) was of molten silver.

One of our investigations, for the first time, demonstrated the original presence of aromas by analysing the abrupt changes in the intensity values of the dorsal image. Unfortunately, our investigation did not allow us to know which Aromas

were present [14] [15]. Furthermore, another recent article demonstrated that about 100 pounds of Aloe and Myrrh mixture (an enormous amount for a single body) was appropriate for Nicodemus' intentions [16].

The above intentions were for a more important anointing than the reserved for Kings. We must not forget that this man was a Doctor of the Law, a Pharisee and a Member of the Sanhedrin with a detailed and profound knowledge of all the Holy Texts. A man who was known to everyone in Israel for his authority. Today he is a Saint of both Catholic Church and Orthodox Church.

3) Pollen research on the Burial Linen of the Nazarene is a classic example of data forcing to ascertain that the Shroud originated in the Middle East. Starting from the seventies until 2016/2017, through several decades, a huge research effort has been made, with the participation of authoritative scientists (including Jewish experts in plants that grow in dunes and deserts). Attempts to identify Pollen, to ascertain the provenience of the Shroud of Turin, provide the same answer: *Gundelia tournefortii* and *Zygophyllum dumosum* [17]-[22]. This result allowed the Sindonologists to affirm that the Shroud came from the Middle East. In fact, *Gundelia tournefortii* is a wild plant that grows in the semi-arid climate of the Eastern Mediterranean. *Zygophyllum dumosum* is also a wild plant. It is present from Egypt to Syria including the territories of the Negev desert, Palestine and Lebanon.

Furthermore, thanks to the presence of other Pollen, these studies determined the path that the Shroud had taken from Palestine to Europe: Palestine, Anatolia, Constantinople, Cyprus, France, and Italy.

Consequently, all of us were certain of these results that were always confirmed by other studies and new research. Today, without any doubt, we know that the Pollen present in origin on the Shroud principally comes from plants whose flowers were used to produce aromatic oils of the highest quality: *Helichrysum* (*Asteraceae* family), *Cistus* (*Cistaceae* family), *Ferula* (*Apiaceae* family) and *Pistacia* (*Anacardiaceae* family) [11] [12] [23]. Below, we can see (Figure 1 and Figure 2) two images of the flowers of two of these plants.

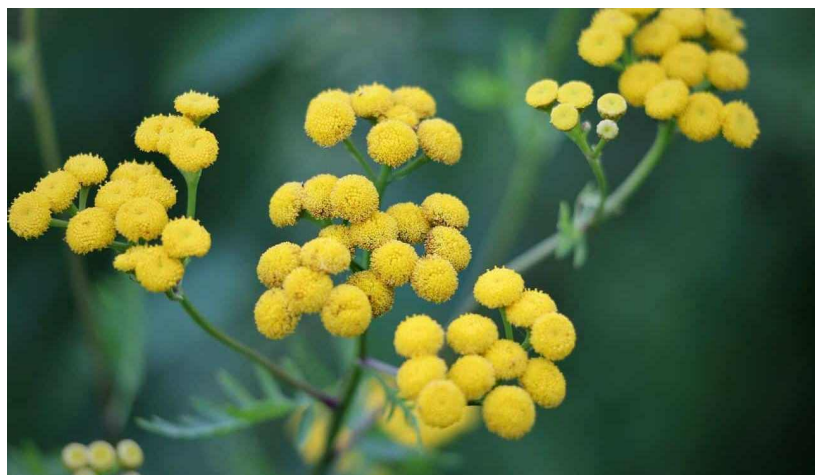


Figure 1. *Helichrysum* (Asteraceae).



Figure 2. Genus *Cistus* (Cistaceae).

This true result makes us understand that the Shroud cannot be a fake. In fact, we invite the readers to think the European counterfeiter is intent on using *Helichrysum*, *Cistus*, *Pistacia*, *Ferula*, etc. Therefore, like the Aromas, even the search for Pollen was forced.

4) The Holy Grail of the Shroud of Turin is the understanding of the process that led to the formation of the Body Image using the accumulated data together with new ideas. The past decades have seen the hard work done by researchers, scholars and scientists which, unfortunately, has not been able to provide a single result.

In fact, in scientific literature, there are so many results, different from each other, that it is possible to include three groups that could contain the possible mechanism capable of producing the Body Image: 1) Production of fakes; 2) Natural formation processes; 3) Supernatural events, *i.e.* Miracles. Today, we know many characteristics of the Shroud that allow us to affirm, without a shadow of a doubt, that the mere thought of a fake produced in the Middle Ages, by an extraordinary European artist/forgery, is impossible.

The fake hypothesis must be discarded because the scholars who support it are certain that the image visible on the Shroud had already been retouched before the experiments. For many of these, the blood was also placed on the Image shortly before the investigation. On the contrary, we know that the Blood Image is an Image of body-sheet contact. So, with this state of affairs, we confirm the exclusion of the above hypotheses.

In our opinion, the natural tendency to forcing, daughter of the conflict of religious interest, leads to the formulation of strange hypotheses. So, for decades several Christian scientists have claimed that the Shroud Body Image is the result of a Miracle. This idea, which seems extraordinary, gives the Shroud of Turin maximum importance and notoriety. This picture, which could already be criticisable, becomes completely unacceptable when trying to verify if the body, in the Tomb wrapped in the funerary linen, could emit electromagnetic radiations in the far ultraviolet or nuclear particles such as protons. For the above scientists, these radiations, hitting the linen, would be capable of forming an image [24]-[28].

This hypothesis is impossible to realize as the emitted radiations or particles cannot hit only the opportune fibrils which, yellowing the linen, will yield the desired image and leave the others with the optical density of the background (like the ones present in the areas where there is no image). Furthermore, it is even more difficult to think about a body that emits electromagnetic radiations with wavelengths close to those of soft X-rays or particles as protons. Theology cannot accept these emissions by humans; they would be Miracles [29] [30]. It is the same for physics; a human body can only emit thermal radiation and nothing else [31] [32].

Now, from scientific literature, we know that the depth of the Image in linen is about 200 nm while the range of discoloration effects is around 3.7 cm. Analysis shows there is no particle or radiation, with any energy, that can satisfy both values. Calculations relating to the penetration of particles and radiations into matter demonstrate that, in the case of the Turin Linen, the radiative hypothesis is not suitable for providing explanations [33].

For us, the burial linen of the Nazarene does not need to be “embellished” but to be understood. It is already extraordinary as it is.

3. Conclusions

Now let's take a step back to November 451 AD: IV Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (in modern-day Turkey). Here there was a bitter confrontation over the nature of Jesus Christ: monophysitism versus dyophysitism. After a long debate, the second hypothesis emerged from the Ecumenical Council: Jesus Christ has two natures, one human and one divine “*inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*” [34] which coexist in one person (*hypostasis*). Therefore, the supporters of the radiative hypotheses might think that the man wrapped in the Shroud, with his divine nature, could emit radiations.

Those who believe in the above emissions must consider that we are talking about Miracles, instantaneous events not accessible to Natural Sciences. In any case, the Sacred Texts, with Their Authority, show that the radiative hypotheses are inapt for the Shroud Body Image formation. The four Evangelists have written of Blood Image while they make no mention of Body Image. Today, we know that the Body Image is latent and develops slowly with latency times which, for certain hypothetical and non-miraculous processes, range from years to decades. Exactly, as happens in the case of individuals who have been weakly irradiated. Here, a part of people, due to subsequent chemical modifications, passes with the same latency times from life to death; for linen, the chemical action is reduced to a change in the optical density (*i.e.* colour) of a part of the fibrils. In fact, the optical density increases only for the fibrils which turn yellow and form the Body Image. The others maintain the same optical density that have the fibrils in the areas outside the image.

Now, the Christians have certainty that the man of the Shroud is Jesus Christ. At the same time, the Church of Jesus is experiencing dark times. We ask ourselves: is

this a temporal coincidence or a very specific sign about the future? The Image could have the same effects of great men of the past (e.g. Pope Celestino V and St. Francis of Assisi) when the Catholic Church was experiencing dark periods. We are in such a period but don't know which will bring us back to Christian life. Will it be a great man or the Shroud of Turin?

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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