

THE SHROUD

FACE TO FACE

CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS

ROBERT ORLANDO

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Next, we find the Shroud in a series of...
 These two...
 One developed...
 from that point...
 in 1988, these...
 The Pope...
 wherever the...
 side to the...
 There are many more

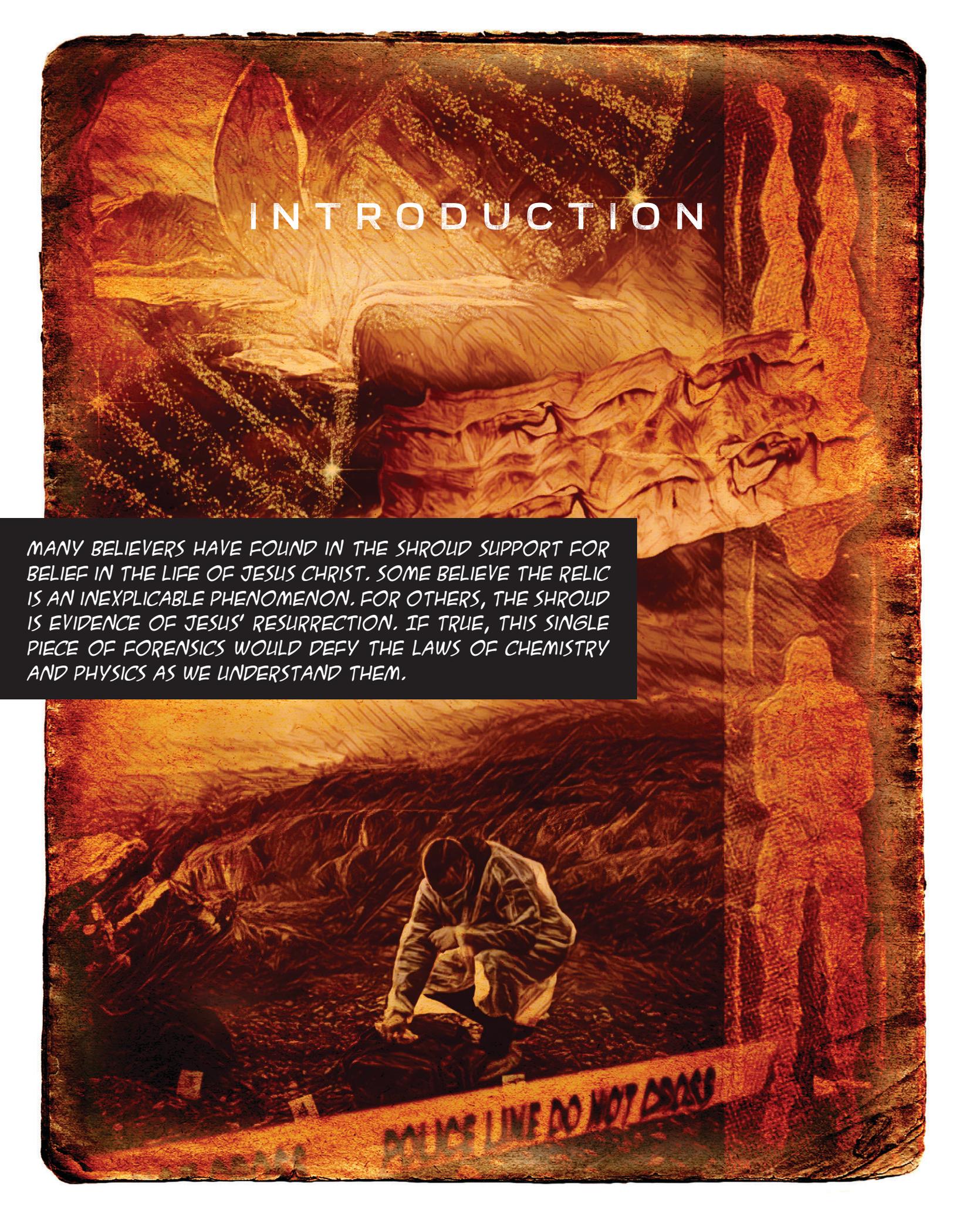
THE SHROUD - FACE TO FACE



The defenders of the Shroud's authenticity...
 They also challenged the findings...
 They also defended the Shroud's...
 The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) termed...
 Contrary to how Jesus is represented in art...

...and...
 ...and...
 ...and...

CONTRARY TO HOW JESUS IS REPRESENTED IN ART, THE SHROUD PORTRAITS A MAN WITH BURNING WOUNDS ON HIS WRIST, NOT HIS HAND.



INTRODUCTION

MANY BELIEVERS HAVE FOUND IN THE SHROUD SUPPORT FOR BELIEF IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST. SOME BELIEVE THE RELIC IS AN INEXPLICABLE PHENOMENON. FOR OTHERS, THE SHROUD IS EVIDENCE OF JESUS' RESURRECTION. IF TRUE, THIS SINGLE PIECE OF FORENSICS WOULD DEFY THE LAWS OF CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS AS WE UNDERSTAND THEM.

INTRODUCTION

The impetus for the Investigation, which I will discuss in detail throughout the book, may have begun as an internal quest. I hope it will broaden into a narrative that will not just inform but will engage, inspire and touch the heart and mind.

I will begin with the story of the Shroud of Turin through two millennia in which theories, beliefs, and scientific discoveries often collide. As was the case with many of my projects, especially the books and films on the Apostle Paul— I will sort through Greek texts with all their first-hand accounts and challenges.

Many believers have found in the Shroud support for belief in the life of Jesus Christ. Some believe the relic is an inexplicable phenomenon. For others, the Shroud is evidence of Jesus' resurrection. If true, this single piece of forensics would defy the laws of chemistry and physics as we understand them.

Many scientific, archaeological, and historical experts conclude that the linen held a body that absorbed significant radiation before transforming. But what lies behind these confident, dramatic, and far-reaching assertions?

Our Investigation begins with a riddle of the Shroud, and the stakes could not be higher. If we can prove its plausibility and link the linen to the Jesus of the first century, it becomes crime scene proof for the body and possible transformation.

I use the term "crime scene," given our knowledge that Jesus was an innocent man

framed by the powers of his time. The narrative will be a journey back into the most famous milieu of all time, face to face with Jesus of Nazareth.

In the spring of 33 A.D., a man on a cross hangs bloody and beaten. The execution was witnessed by Roman soldiers, his fellow Jews, and his family. A crown of thorns has been placed on his brow and overhead: a mocking placard reading "King of the Jews."

A man, Joseph of Arimathea, asks for permission to remove the body. To ensure Jesus is dead, a soldier plunges a spear into his side to release his lungs of blood and water. The body is of a man who has suffered tremendous torment.

Scholars will debate if his death was caused by the Jewish Sadducees or Romans in genuine fear of Jesus causing civil unrest. However, the latter bears little weight given an Empire that presided over myriad religious conflicts.

The time is the Jewish Passover, so when the body is brought to a tomb, it cannot be fully prepared for burial until the following day. A stone is rolled in front to block the entrance, and the Roman Guards are ordered to stand watch.

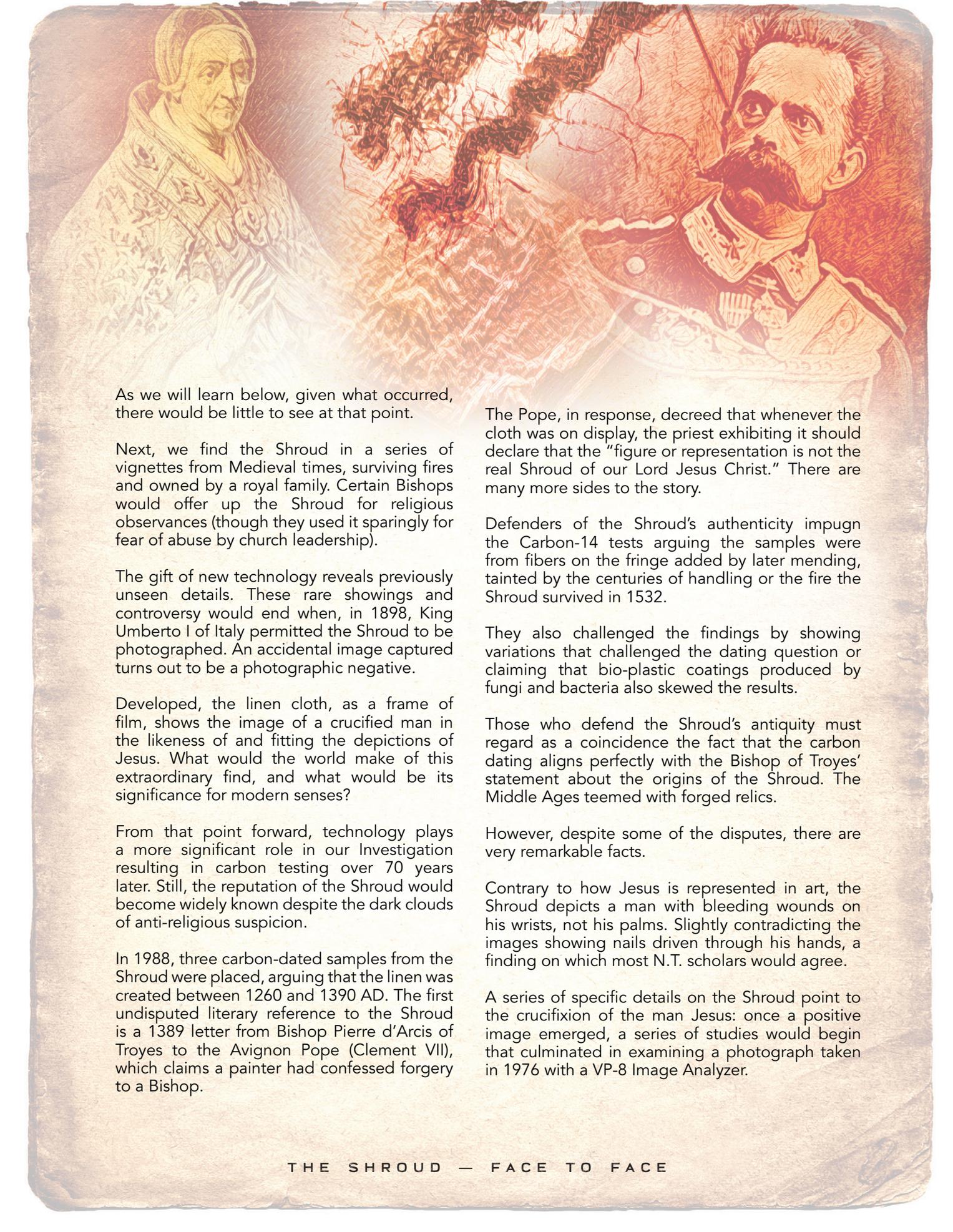
We know most of what happens next from Holy Scripture and some ancient sources. Still, our Investigation is not to tell historical tales but is a reinvestigation to explore the evidence left inside by the Shroud.

After a clear beginning with New Testament witnesses, the Shroud went underground when the Romans razed Jerusalem during the Jewish War 66-70 A.D. The early Jesus scattered into the diaspora.

Likely stored in clay jars, the Shroud was a dangerous artifact for a supposed insurrectionist, a figure to downplay as the leader of a nascent movement struggling to emerge in a pagan Roman world.

The Gospel of John relates that St. Peter, having entered the tomb, saw the linen clothes lying on one side and the folded napkin about his head on the other. He does report a miraculous "flash of light" leaving Jesus's features burned into these clothes (similar to something we might only attempt to create today with ultraviolet lasers).





As we will learn below, given what occurred, there would be little to see at that point.

Next, we find the Shroud in a series of vignettes from Medieval times, surviving fires and owned by a royal family. Certain Bishops would offer up the Shroud for religious observances (though they used it sparingly for fear of abuse by church leadership).

The gift of new technology reveals previously unseen details. These rare showings and controversy would end when, in 1898, King Umberto I of Italy permitted the Shroud to be photographed. An accidental image captured turns out to be a photographic negative.

Developed, the linen cloth, as a frame of film, shows the image of a crucified man in the likeness of and fitting the depictions of Jesus. What would the world make of this extraordinary find, and what would be its significance for modern senses?

From that point forward, technology plays a more significant role in our Investigation resulting in carbon testing over 70 years later. Still, the reputation of the Shroud would become widely known despite the dark clouds of anti-religious suspicion.

In 1988, three carbon-dated samples from the Shroud were placed, arguing that the linen was created between 1260 and 1390 AD. The first undisputed literary reference to the Shroud is a 1389 letter from Bishop Pierre d'Arcis of Troyes to the Avignon Pope (Clement VII), which claims a painter had confessed forgery to a Bishop.

The Pope, in response, decreed that whenever the cloth was on display, the priest exhibiting it should declare that the "figure or representation is not the real Shroud of our Lord Jesus Christ." There are many more sides to the story.

Defenders of the Shroud's authenticity impugn the Carbon-14 tests arguing the samples were from fibers on the fringe added by later mending, tainted by the centuries of handling or the fire the Shroud survived in 1532.

They also challenged the findings by showing variations that challenged the dating question or claiming that bio-plastic coatings produced by fungi and bacteria also skewed the results.

Those who defend the Shroud's antiquity must regard as a coincidence the fact that the carbon dating aligns perfectly with the Bishop of Troyes' statement about the origins of the Shroud. The Middle Ages teemed with forged relics.

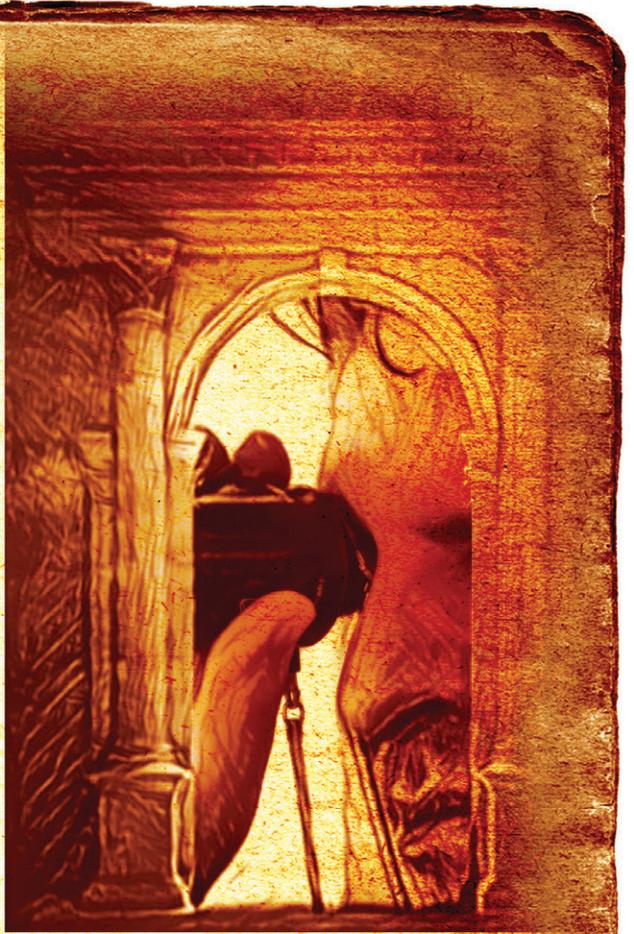
However, despite some of the disputes, there are very remarkable facts.

Contrary to how Jesus is represented in art, the Shroud depicts a man with bleeding wounds on his wrists, not his palms. Slightly contradicting the images showing nails driven through his hands, a finding on which most N.T. scholars would agree.

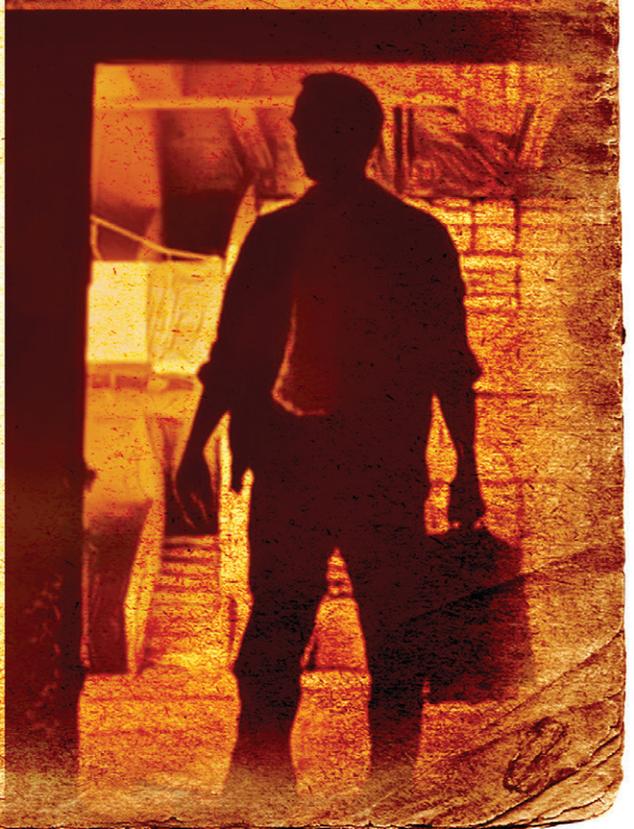
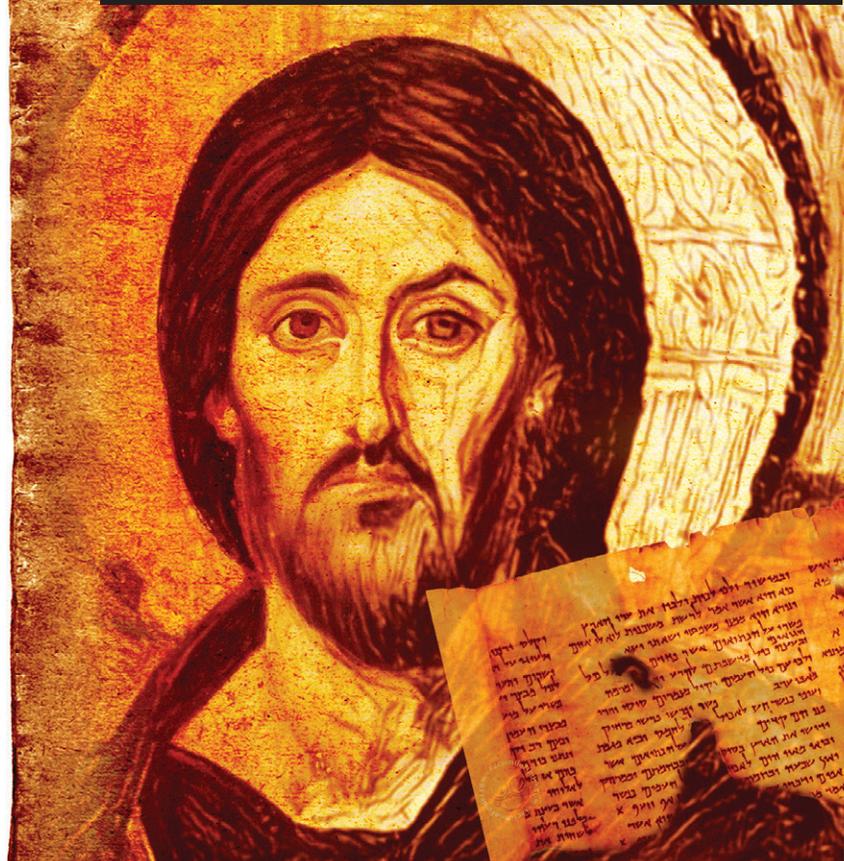
A series of specific details on the Shroud point to the crucifixion of the man Jesus: once a positive image emerged, a series of studies would begin that culminated in examining a photograph taken in 1976 with a VP-8 Image Analyzer.



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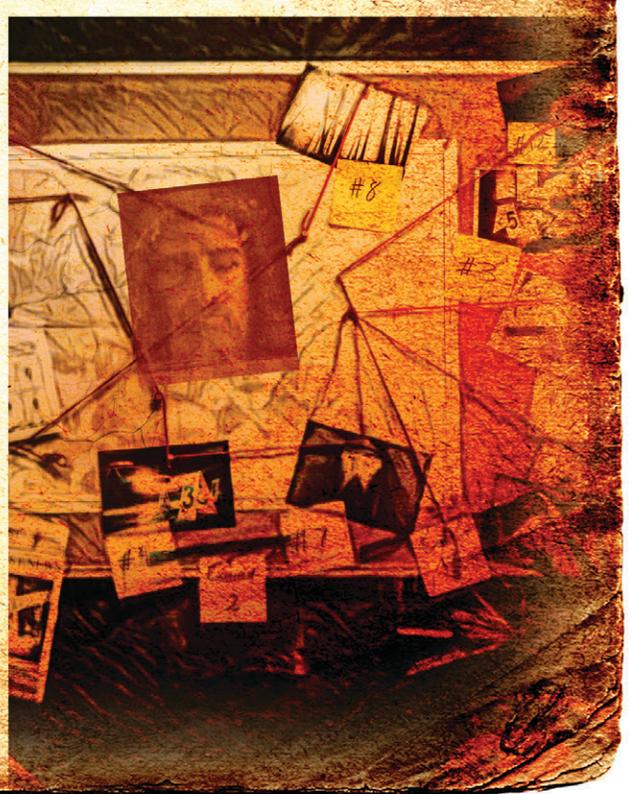
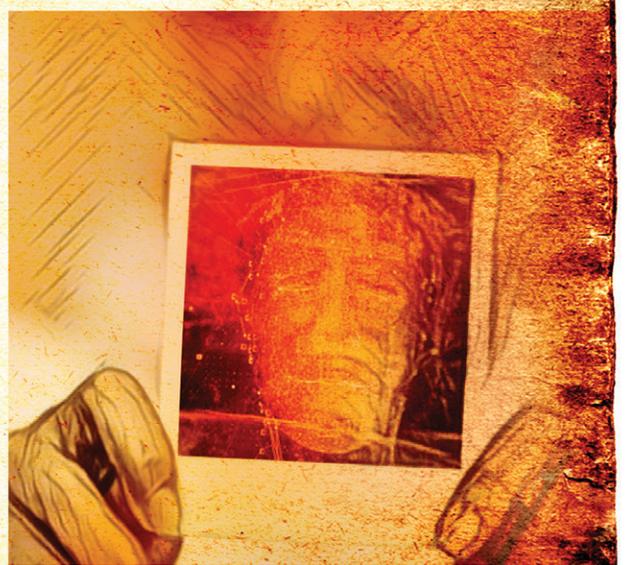
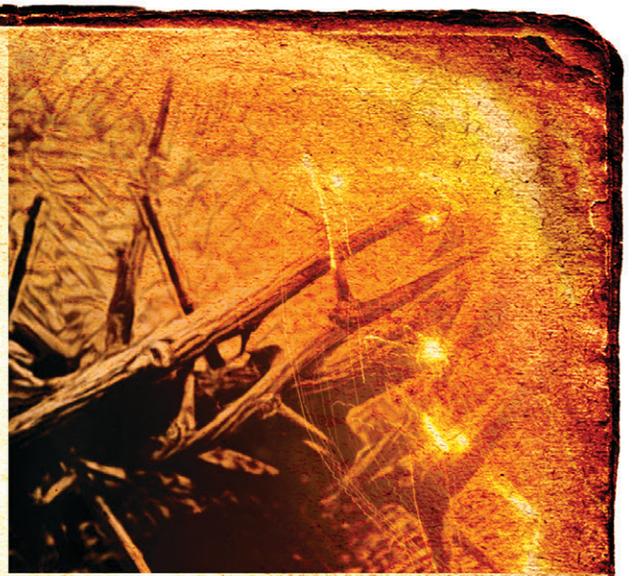


CONTRARY TO HOW JESUS IS REPRESENTED IN ART, THE SHROUD DEPICTS A MAN WITH BLEEDING WOUNDS ON HIS WRISTS, NOT PALMS.





THOUGH MY JOURNEY BEGAN ASSUMING THE SHROUD'S INAUTHENTICITY UNTIL PROVED OTHERWISE, IT WAS BECOMING MORE DIFFICULT TO DISMISS THIS AS AN ABNORMAL FINDING, OR BORN OF CREATIVE IMAGINATION, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?



The demonstration shows the Shroud encodes an object, unlike those from paintings and pictures, but appeared only on the surface. The faded sepia color penetrates the linen fibrils but extends only two or three fibers into the thread structure.

There are, furthermore, no signs of brush strokes, so how could it be a forged painting?

Having been to art school and done some painting myself, the hypothesis of a painted medieval forgery fell by the wayside.

An equally unrealistic possibility proposed is the idea of a reenactment. Grave robbers experiment on the recently dead by simulating crucifixion or experimentations with vapors and heat.

Though my journey began assuming the Shroud's inauthenticity until proved otherwise, it was becoming more difficult to dismiss this as an abnormal finding, born of someone's forgery, and for what purpose?

Supposed forgers could not make money or gain power when the Church leaders forbade the Shroud's showings. Until today the Catholic Church has yet to sanctify its complete authenticity.

Even Protestant icon John Calvin asked, "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?"

These facts undoubtedly deserve to be recorded, and I am not one to select a biased group of scientists to prove an argument. I intend to provide a full report, the crime scene, blood results, testimonies, and forensic evidence to construct the most plausible narrative before testing the story against Holy Writ.

Books, documentaries, and the internet are filled with falsehoods, uninformed assumptions, and those ignorant of the role of faith in science. So how is an author, filmmaker, and historian of early Christianity supposed to evaluate such phenomena?

Most of us, in fairness, know nothing-absolutely nothing-about Maillard reactions, colorimetric measurements, low-energy radiography, thermal neutron flux, or pyrolysis mass spectrometry.

Even with the scientific appeal to explain away God, the Shroud was persuasive, and questions would continue to abound. So, I could only follow the facts as recorded and leave the rest to the mystery.



Something the skeptics seemed unwilling to do.

The confirmation bias of the leading critics seemed more like a red herring to throw off my scent and dismiss the case before I could investigate the results, put together a timeline, and develop a plausible story.

Slowly, I became more suspicious of the skeptics and intrigued by the threat the Shroud's authenticity might pose. I started moving from the point of plausibility to possibility.

Some additional facts would also point toward the accuracy of the Holy record in the biblical 1st-century accounts.

The Shroud contains traces of pollen from plants that grow in the Middle East, and their proportion is high vis-à-vis pollen evidenced from other locales.

The figure on the Shroud has four fingers on each hand - No thumbs appear. Intriguing because we now know that driving a nail through a specific location in a wrist will cause the thumb to contract on the palm.

The bloodstains reportedly exhibit the clotting and serum separation that would result in real wounds, and there are no similar shrouds or any forgeries. The details would also expand the investigation to establish cause and effect with the scientific findings.

And whoever the man in the Shroud would turn out to be, he was now a 1st-century figure located somewhere in Palestine persecuted during the reign of Pontius Pilate.

Even if the conclusion was that the Shroud was definitively a medieval creation, what would follow? An unsolved case, with the Shroud remaining an enigma, an unsolved whodunit, even an artifact of unknown origin?

Jesus' crime of insurrection before Rome, accused by his brethren, would have meant a heavily policed tomb (under penalty of death if a Centurion was caught sleeping) in fear that his followers would steal the body and claim his status as a risen Messiah.

Most New Testament scholars have failed to broach the topic. Still, if it turns out that the Shroud is authentic, it dramatically strengthens the historicity of the Bible, depicting the grave as empty with only the linen remaining.

According to the Synoptic Gospels, Joseph of Arimathea wrapped Jesus in a linen garment (Mk 15:46; Mt. 27:59; Lk. 23:53). John 20:5-7 adds the fact that the empty linen wrappings were left in the tomb.

Our earliest sources make no additional claims about Jesus' burial garment, but they claim to have seen him raised from the dead with a body filled with great light. Why can't this be corona discharge, or neutron irradiation, despite the technical terms, just future explanations?

Advanced Physics itself points to an inexplicable origin for all matter.

Is it just biding our time until additional investigation tips the scales for early dating? For now, one could wager that the science is correct on either side, but the match with ancient texts in fine detail would be extraordinary.

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However, if one moves from the Shroud in Turin to Jesus' passion and resurrection in Jerusalem, what precisely is the relationship between a man rising from the dead and the physical properties involved?

We cannot raise people from the dead in an experiment. There is no testable theory here, but neither is there in the birth of a star or a black hole. The resurrection story is as plausible as any other explanation for those who believe.

In any case, the hardened skeptics have little ground to stand on.

With a full spectrum of cases to be made, our only next step is to use the undeniable Shroud evidence as a match against the ancient secular sources: to utilize the artifact as a pathway right into the center of a Golgotha crime scene.

We must confirm a timeline, possible suspects, witnesses, and the overall narrative that explains the collective facts? Who was there, what was the crime for which Jesus was accused, and who were his enemies?

How was he crucified, and his body placed in a tomb? And even for the skeptic and cynic, how else can we explain Jesus' missing body? We can't dismiss the unknown or speculate about metaphysical possibilities but can place the event in context.

Maybe Jesus vanished in the blink of an eye, like a three-dimensional object leaving a two-dimensional space without noticeable effects. Or perhaps he sat up, rolled up his linen wrappings, and walked unseen through the cave wall?





WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

No, it was a near impossibility, given the Roman guards charged with one task: guard the cave. They would have paid with their lives if they had not prevented his escape.

Whatever occurred at that moment had to happen inside the tomb. Our crime scene must be explained from the inside out and involved a source of light, the witness of others, and the only evidence left was his face napkin and the Shroud.

Do these factors posit a direct link between an event wholly beyond scientific analysis or at least to an enormous mystery at the origin of Western history? Our limited knowledge must, and probable evidence must conclude, yes.

According to the facts, we know the following:

— A man in the first century before 90 A.D. died a terrible crucifixion during Pontius Pilate's Roman rule.

— Cruelly beaten, he was spared desecration on the cross so that his body would be spared the elements and rested in a tomb.

— According to his followers, living in fear of their

inevitable martyrdom, we know that the authorities who watched the body of Jesus testified it was missing, or at least never reported stolen.

— According to these Apostles, God raised him from the dead.

— From this belief, a movement was born that would profoundly influence the West and change the entire world.

Whether the evidence is conclusive, persuasive, or even convincing, the question remains: how did a criminal's death transform the human race, offer unheard-of hope to millions, and bring deep meaning to our suffering?

Can the ultimate answers be found in the Shroud? Was it meant to confront the skeptic with the most evidentiary challenge: how one might rethink religious phenomena in scientific terms and reflect on Jesus?

Who do you say I am, once asked Jesus. The Shroud is our present opportunity to answer him Face to Face.



P R E F A C E

My fascination with the Shroud and its meaning in the Western world is relatively new, though as an author, filmmaker, and bible scholar, I have explored the ancient world, the Apostles, and the origins of the Church.

Flashback – though not very far into the past: Two weeks before the past Christmas, on a snowy eve in New York City, I was to appear in a T.V. interview on my previous film, *The Divine Plan*. The discussion was followed by a Plaza Hotel party, with a who's who, as one of the executives asked if I would ever consider a film on *The Shroud*.

Strangely the subject was brought to me by one of my film partners working on a Shroud Center out in California. My answer to the network and my partner was "fascinating," but not for me. Too much on my plate. Privately I was still suspicious of any relics, conspiracy theories, or other projects about the ancient past... or so I thought.

Flash forward two weeks later to Christmas Eve, 2021. My father was recovering in the hospital from a nasty fall but improving and set for rehab when he died unexpectedly. The suddenness, and shock of it all, stirred something unfinished in me. It raised questions that didn't at that moment have

answers. I needed a sign that my father was okay. I didn't doubt his faith, but it shook mine. It was my dark night of the soul.

As I sorted through my father's letters, written to encourage my lifelong journey of truth and faith in the weeks after the funeral, I turned inward toward fiction writing and poetry and away from films and books. I even decided to pursue my religion graduate studies at Princeton Theological Seminary with a well-known Jesus scholar also versed in the Shroud.

Still, I remembered the weeks before my father died, when my partner and the network executive asked if I had ever considered the Shroud of Turin as a subject. Was it a coincidence when I was about to dive back into the ancient world of Jesus and his passion and resurrection?

I consigned the Shroud as just one of many relics I had encountered over the years. As a Catholic, I had been to Europe and considered many unprovable artifacts, though icons of faith. I watched History Channel and B.B.C. documentaries on the subject. As I felt it all, I realized that they featured experts clashing historical and scientific facts—a challenge similar to my life in biographies, books, and other films.

Another factor that compelled me was that, although I had written about early Christianity, I had never explored the biography of Jesus. I knew the gospels well, but now I was ready to retake this journey with the Shroud as a critical piece of evidence to reopen my investigation: a new crime scene to reveal the nature of the Shroud.

My odyssey began to take route. Not only would my journey connect a new piece of science with the ancient past, but I envisioned it as the Greatest Scientific Project Ever Told. It intrigued the scholar/detective in me. What if this was the Shroud that enveloped Jesus?

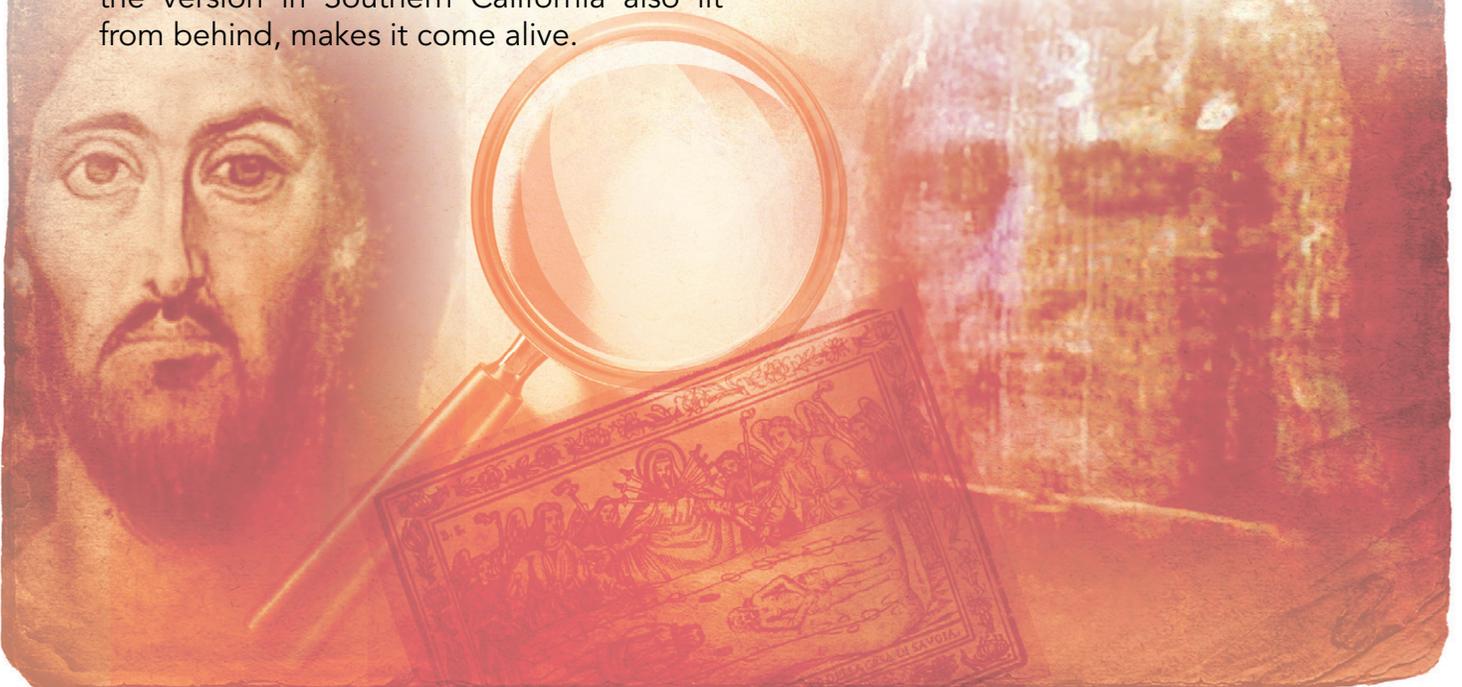
What if it matched early scripture to make a science-based story? My skepticism had to be convinced and shown incontrovertible evidence. Next, I was on a plane making a trip to the Shroud center in Southern California as a first step.

The fourteen-foot linen was first put in safe keeping in 1502 in what is now France; in 1532, a fire burned through the chapel and part of the Shroud; later validated by scientific analysis. Now under bulletproof glass in the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Turin, the version in Southern California also lit from behind, makes it come alive.

The site could illuminate the replica at the center with a light source from underneath to better express the image. I dug into the details of an 1898 accidental photograph on the cloth, itself was a faint sepia image of a man. Still, the picture was negative until it became a positive, revealing the detailed photographic body, beaten and blood-stained.

The Shroud also shows evidence of pollen from the Palestine region. All of this passed my detective's sniff test. Yes, it was from the right place and period and did not pass muster as a Medieval forgery. Yes, it shows a man who was crucified and scourged, but what could I find that it is indeed Christ's Shroud and not just that of another crucified?

Clues on the Shroud showed evidence of nails through his wrists and ankles and the spear wound through the side and a crown of thorns - not the common Roman custom. There was even the presence of ferritin and other enzymes, produced in blood only under immense stress, from a man who was severely tormented and tortured.



I needed to set up a grid and start to uncover the crime scene, Golgotha, the hill of skulls, where I could find the cross, and the body no longer in the tomb.

-- Could it have been stolen under Roman guard?

-- His followers expected to find his body the day after but did not.

-- Most hid from the ruling powers to emerge after claiming they saw him!

Could the skeptics' claims that all of these events were caused by...

-- mass hysteria or grief?

-- hallucination?

-- a conspiracy?

...be correct?

There was more here to the man in the Shroud, a promised king who died as a common criminal. Why did the Sadducees fear him and need to take him out? My discovery would not be an ancient myth or inspiring tale, but with the help of the Shroud, potentially a forensic pathway into something extraordinary, if not supernatural.

I realized my unveiling began when I was a young teenager who prayed: God, if you're honest, show me a sign. In light of my father's loss, could this be another sign to challenge a new generation hidden behind clouds of skepticism?

The way forward would be to trace the biblical roots, travel to ancient sites, interview experts, and explore the latest technology. Science keeps evolving, and new clues are bound to come to light.

The story would look like any crime scene viewed through a scientific lens. I would follow the fact pattern: What if, along with the bible and the church teachings, God was revealing himself through science? - something that would revolutionize the faith. A simple story about a man who profoundly influenced a two-thousand-year history.

As I redraw these chalk lines, would I find that the image on the Shroud was that of Jesus and finally erase the line between faith and science, forcing the present world to come face to face with the figure of Christ?

Let's open the case.

