



*The Shroud*  

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**Turin**

FIRST CENTURY AFTER CHRIST!

**Giulio Fanti | Pierandrea Malfi**

With an in-depth study by Marco Conca





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## Foreword

The use of the terms “first author” and “second author” in the book might come to the reader as a surprise. The reason is that two authors with different research paths and opinions about religion have collaborated constructively on the subject of the Shroud. The numerous discussions held together have both advanced them personally and improved the book’s content. Clearly, outside a strictly scientific context, religious considerations cannot merely be the outcome of an honorable compromise between authors. Whenever compromise is impossible, the opinions of each author are therefore distinguished. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to them as first author and second author.



## Preface

The Shroud of Turin, the linen sheet that according to tradition would have enveloped the body of Jesus in the sepulchre, is still the center of interest of public opinion, mass media, and the scientific world. Less than one year after the publication of his last work, written together with Saverio Gaeta, Professor Giulio Fanti, from the University of Padua, comes with a new book, this time written in cooperation with Pierandrea Malfi.

I am glad to be asked to write the preface to this further work of Professor Fanti, since I had the chance to know him also beyond his research.

One may ask, What is the point of publishing a new book about the Shroud? As it is well known, the scientific research on the Turin relic has been officially closed in 1988, the year of the radiocarbon test that decreed the controversial medieval dating. What news can still emerge? Actually, even if research is officially closed, many scholars are continuing their activities, carrying out increasingly accurate investigations, and putting forward new interesting hypotheses. In 2002 the so-called Shroud Science Group was formed. It is composed of more than 100 researchers of different nationalities, most of who are American, and is coordinated by Professor Fanti. The group discusses on the web the most interesting news about the Holy Linen: it already organized an international conference on the Shroud in Dallas in 2008 and another one, in the United States as well, was scheduled for 2014.

Further than this, in the last decade around 20 articles describing new hypotheses and scientific acquisitions on the Shroud have been published in specialized international reviews. It does not appear that other relics, considered as such by the Catholic religion or other

confessions, ever had the honor of such consideration in specialized reviews.

This is an overview that well paints a picture of how the Shroud is important also from the scientific point of view, despite the closing of official investigations in 1988.

How is it possible that the studies go on if the official research is closed, no analyses *in situ* are allowed, and no authorization for sample taking is granted? One has to be reminded that modern scientific tests do not need to handle samples of big dimensions and it is not always necessary to have the object of the research on hand (though it would be obviously more advisable). The number of photographs, from those taken in the past years to the recent ultrahigh-resolution ones taken by the Italian company *Haltadefinizione*, together with the samples officially taken in the past and now in possession of the various scholars throughout the world are sufficient, according to these researchers, for carrying on new analyses.

It is well known that the same Professor Fanti came into possession of some samples collected during the famous examinations carried out in 1978, the year in which also the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP) and the Italian group led by Giovanni Riggi di Numana and Pierluigi Baima Bollone took other samples. These consist of a few threads and linen fibers collected from different areas of the Shroud, but they are, according to the first author, more than enough for the microscopic tests needed to unveil the mysteries still concealed in the holy cloth.

Starting from the analyses of the chemical and mechanical properties of some Shroud samples, Professor Fanti, in a research project of the University of Padua, in cooperation with other professors of the University of Bologna, Modena, Parma, and Udine, sustains to have demonstrated that the radiocarbon dating test carried out on the Shroud in 1988 is unreliable from a statistical point of view. Therefore, results would be scientifically meaningless.

So, what are the innovations described in this book? Besides the as much understandable as possible description of the alternative linen dating methods, one of the most interesting chapters refers to an innovative numismatic investigation that would lead to further Shroud dating to the first millennium A.D.

The author's analysis involved the research and study of very rare coins minted during the Byzantine Empire and depicting the face of Christ. These faces have been compared to that of the Man of the Shroud. The surprising result, considering the number of figurative matches, was that the engravers should have been taken the Shroud face as a sample for reproducing the face of Christ during the centuries of the Byzantine coinage.

On the basis of this probabilistic counting, a theme highly supported by Professor Fanti, authors affirm that the Byzantine engravers would have seven chances in one billion of billions to hit all the particular features identified on the faces portrayed on the coins without having seen the Shroud. It is like saying that, referring to the roulette, it would be much easier to hit for 10 consecutive times the number 36 rather than an engraver having depicted the face displayed on the coins without having seen the Shroud.

Some typical details of the Shroud reproduced on the coins, such as the skewed nose, the eyes shut, asymmetric length of the hair, longer on the right side, closed eyes, and a long nose, are hints of the reference to the Shroud model. These particulars are according to the authors unthinkable to be reproduced by an artist who wanted to depict "the most handsome of the sons of men" (Psalm 45:2) instead of the tortured Jesus of the Shroud.

Also, pages that go through the different hypotheses of the body image formation do not miss, with an explanation on the most reliable possibility, that, according to Professor Fanti, it was an intense electric charge that, through the so-called corona discharge, could have reproduced many image peculiarities. Even if it was like that, the question about what would have triggered this high electric charge still remains.

Authors sustain, therefore, that radiocarbon dating is not reliable and that the Shroud is dating back to the first century A.D., accordingly compatible with the age in which Jesus lived. It is also known that the Man of the Shroud shows wounds and blows perfectly matching with the signs of the Passion of Christ described in the Gospels.

A good Christian knows that God's method leaves Man's freedom always untouched. Therefore, it would be a serious mistake to think of "demonstrating" something with the Shroud—least of

all, demonstrating the basis of Christianity, the Resurrection of Jesus. It is true that until the present days no Gospel's verse has been contradicted by scientific discoveries; rather, as the historical, archeological, and epigraphic studies made progress in the last decades, new confirmations about the historicity of the Gospels came. But it is likely that even in the future, the same light will be shining for people who want to believe and will be too faint for people who do not want to believe, this particularly for artifacts like the Shroud of Turin.

At the same time, it is positive that there are scientists and researchers willing to face all the questions remaining open. Science goes on for trials, hypotheses, discussions, and debates.

For example, the increase of the doubts of medieval dating is noteworthy. Asking questions, formulating hypotheses, trying to give answers, . . . we always will need it. Here is why any contribution based on honest research is welcome.

**Andrea Tornielli**

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**PART I**

**DESCRIPTION AND TRACES OF THE SHEET  
THAT CHALLENGES SCIENCE**

