

My Experience of the Shroud as a Catholic Engineer

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I am a lifelong Catholic and, as often happens, became disengaged with the Church at 17. A reawakening occurred when I was 45, [I am now 67] around the birth of the new millennium. I graduated from Glasgow University in 1978 with a first class honours degree in Civil Engineering and, until I retired in 2018, worked for Exxon Mobil. I was involved in the 'Upstream' extraction industry worldwide and specialised in deepwater drilling. I have always been scientifically focused and interested in Cosmology and so in such matters as Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity; I also have been fascinated by the ideas named after the Austrian physicist, Christian Andreas Doppler, concerning the redshift of light from receding galaxies in the expanding universe.

My reawakening, therefore, was caused by a direct *physical* Epiphany witnessed by me as an Engineer and not by something remote or spiritual. It happened in Aberdeen in a small garden area behind a flat I was temporarily renting. It was at a time of personal crisis and happened late on an evening in early January, around the Feast of the Epiphany. It followed my praying, prostrate, for the first time, in the same garden the night before. The sky was star-filled and there was ice underfoot. I felt on those two consecutive evenings as if I had been praying for the very first time in my life.

It was midnight on the second evening and my eye was attracted to a bright, white, moving light crossing the star field high in the crystal-clear night sky. Then, above the rooftops of the city buildings, the light far away in the sky stopped moving. It then moved rapidly towards me. As it did so, the brilliance of the light and its size increased. It stopped over a roof-top fifty yards from me. I got down on my knees and felt that the light was loving me. I could see no detail as the light was so intensely brilliant, but it seemed to be the size of a human being. I begged the light to come to me. After a few seconds, the light shot upwards at an angle of 45 degrees, towards the west, at an amazing speed. In fact, the white light left a distinct red trace as it accelerated straight out into space at a speed both jaw-dropping and awe-inspiring.



The light was seen hovering above the rooftop in the middle of this image

It was as if I had been a witness of the Transfiguration.

All my adult life I have been interested in the Shroud of Turin. From the first day I saw that photographic image of a real man. Not a painting, it is clearly a photograph of a real human being. The face is both strong and compassionate. The Shroud, it seems to

me, is evidence above all of resurrection, His Resurrection: it is evidence of Eternal Life. That transfigured body of light above the rooftops of Aberdeen that, Doppler red shifted before my eyes as I watched in awe, was evidence of my own resurrection. For an object to shift from white to red light in a second or a fraction of a second means, in physics, that something very definite and special is taking place. It means that the object is travelling away from the observer at a speed which is a significant percentage of the speed of light. No physical entity made of matter can do that from starting at rest in a second of time: only light is able to do so. Therefore what I saw was a body, a being made of light - the kind of body that can appear inside a locked room and request something to eat or ask a person there to put fingers in his wounds. A glorified body.

Many more experiences happened to me. In 2004, I was on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, I had the most beautiful experience. Praying outside, near a rock coloured white, but veined with blood-red, I became very emotional. I started to weep at Our Lord's suffering there and on the Cross. The immensity of his love was most clearly and unambiguously impressed upon me in a profound and direct way.

For me, one of the most interesting aspects of the Shroud image is that left by the Crown of Thorns, not the simple woven circlet found in Mediaeval paintings, but a full Crown, the result of the placing of a small thorn bush upon Our Lord's head. It reminds me very much of the thicket in which a ram was found, provided by God as a substitute when, out of obedience, Abraham showed he was willing to offer his own son Isaac. [Genesis 22, vs 13]. In Jesus, crowned with a small thorn bush, God showed that he was, in fact, willing for his own Son to be an actual offering. I find it fascinating, too, that on the Shroud the forehead bleeding from the Crown is marked with the Arabic number 3. Though not generally used in Western Europe until the 15th century, the number points to God as the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a doctrine which evolved in the Early Church. It is inexplicably prefigured in the image on the Shroud.

As a Civil Engineer, I find it fascinating, too, that even tiny particles of limestone dirt in the feet image area and almost invisible to the human eye, have been chemically matched, very precisely, to the location of Jerusalem! Effecting this would have been beyond the wit or ability of a Mediaeval forger.

In our age so many people, even in the Church, concerned with political and sociological matters, have lost real contact with the divine. In such times, the sacrifice of the God-man of the Cross photographed on the Shroud deserves our worship and the forgiveness He brings compels it.

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