

ANCIENT EDESSA AND THE SHROUD: HISTORY CONCEALED BY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SECRET

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THE IMAGE OF ANTIOCH

Modern sindonology, drawing substantially upon the Mandylion Theory,¹ appears to have established, within a reasonable degree of certainty, a substantial portion of the medieval biography of the Turin Shroud,² commencing with its historical debut, between 544³ and 569,⁴ as the Image of Edessa; however, the relic's whereabouts during the Missing Ancient Centuries, the half-millennium spanning its disappearance from Christ's tomb to its reappearance in sixth-century Edessa, remain the subject of debate.

The author's 1999 hypothesis,⁵ that the Shroud was taken, in apostolic times,⁶ to the Syrian city of Antioch, concealed and lost in 362,⁷ rediscovered in *ca.* 530,⁸ and conveyed to Edessa⁹ when Antioch was destroyed in 540,¹⁰ is supported by historical records which evidence the presence of a Christ-icon in both fourth-century Syria and sixth-century Antioch.¹¹

In the fourth century, Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria (*ca.* 328-373), affirmed that a sacred Christ-icon,¹² traceable to Jerusalem and the year 68, was then present in Syria:¹³

...but two years before Titus and Vespasian sacked the city, the faithful and disciples of Christ were warned by the Holy Spirit to depart from the city and go to the kingdom of King Agrippa, because at that time Agrippa was a Roman ally. Leaving the city, they went to his regions and carried everything relating to our faith. **At that time even the icon with certain other ecclesiastical objects were moved and they today still remain in Syria.** I possess this information as handed down to me from my migrating parents and by hereditary right. It is plain and certain why **the icon of our holy Lord and Savior came from Judaea to Syria.**¹⁴

This icon, which goes unmentioned after Antioch's Church treasures are concealed from the pagan plundering of the Golden Basilica, seemingly reappears during the period *ca.* 526-540, in the Cherubim district of Antioch. In the year 70, Titus, attempting to placate rising anti-Semitic sentiments, placed, atop the city's South gate, figures of cherubim seized from the Jerusalem Temple.¹⁵ This entry thereupon became known as the Gate of the Cherubim, and the adjoining district, which encompassed the old Jewish Quarter, or *Kerateion*, was called the Cherubim (**Figure 1**).¹⁶ In approximately 430, Theodosius II extended the southern city wall and installed a gate in the new wall;¹⁷ however, the old wall remained intact and sections of it could still be seen well into the late sixth century.¹⁸ St. Symeon Stylites the Younger, born in 521¹⁹ and just prior to the onset of the several calamities which destroyed the city's walls,²⁰ spent his boyhood in the Cherubim²¹ where, in an incident datable to *ca.* 527-533²² and reported in his late sixth-century biography,²³ he witnessed the appearance of Christ²⁴ "on the old wall of the Cherubim".²⁵ Professor Glanville Downey, the preeminent historian of Antioch, acknowledges the unique position held by the Cherubim in the years intervening between the great earthquake of 526 and the Persian conquest of the city in 540:

The Kerateion at this period was regarded as having special religious associations. **It possessed an image of Christ - whether a statue or other representation is not clear from the Greek term *eikon* that is used to describe it - which was an object of particular veneration...**²⁶



FIGURE 1
THE CHERUBIM GATE, THE WALL OF THE CHERUBIM (TIBERIUS),
AND THE KERATEION (JEWISH QUARTER)

This Antiochene Christ-icon is mentioned by John Moschos, a Byzantine monk of the sixth and seventh centuries,²⁷ in connection with an incident involving a *Kerateion* social worker who had chastised a poor man for having obtained four linen undergarments:

The next night, the supervisor of the social service saw himself standing in what is called **the Place of the Cherubim. It is a very sacred place and those who know say that in that place there is a very awesome icon bearing the likeness of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.** As he stood there in deep thought, he saw the Saviour coming down to him out of the icon and censuring him especially on account of the four garments which the poor man received. Then, falling silent again, Christ removed the tunic he was wearing and showed him the number of under-garments while saying: “Behold, two; behold, three; behold, four. Do not be dismayed; inasmuch as you provided those things for the poor man, they became my raiment.”²⁸

Several observations of sindonic import may be made with respect to the “very awesome” Image of Antioch which was venerated in the Cherubim: (1) in 362, the clerical custodian of the Shroud may have attempted to prevent its confiscation by concealing it above the city’s south Gate under the scripturally-traditional protection of cherubim;²⁹ (2) the sixth-century rediscovery of the Shroud in a niche located above the Gate of the Cherubim may well be the factual basis of the tenth-century Byzantine claim that the Mandylion was rediscovered in a niche located above the main gate of Edessa;³⁰ (3) the sixth-century veneration of the Shroud “in the *Kerateion*” may well be the factual basis of the tenth-century Byzantine claim that the Mandylion was rediscovered along “with the *Keramion*”;³¹ (4) the sixth-century *locus*, within the *Kerateion*, of the sepulcher of the Maccabees, famously associated with the miracle of unextinguished oil, may well be the factual basis of the tenth-century Byzantine claim that the Mandylion was rediscovered along with an unextinguished oil lamp;³² (5) the wearing of a linen garment by the Christ who emerged from the icon may be indicative that the icon itself was made

of linen; (6) during the Persian attack of 540, the Roman army and some Antiochenes escaped through the city's south gate "for from this gate alone the Persians kept away while the others were seized",³³ thus substantiating the opportunity and means for the transfer of a *Kerateion* Christ-icon to Edessa; and (7) in the very first historical reference to the sixth-century Image of Edessa, a Syriac poem datable to 569, the icon's accommodations in the city's new Hagia Sophia cathedral are described thusly:

In its midst is set the platform....The pillar that is in the place of the platform...above it is fixed a cross of light like our Lord between the robbers. **In it too lie open five gates....Ten pillars bearing the cherub of the sanctuary** are formed like the ten Apostles who fled at the time that our Saviour was crucified.³⁴

Ian Wilson has observed that, in constructing this cathedral to house the icon, "religious messages were...conveyed by symbolism in the architecture, every feature having a particular significance".³⁵ Given that (1) Antioch was served by precisely five gates,³⁶ one guarded by cherubim, and (2) in the cathedral, "the only images permitted, as in the Temple, were cherubim topping the pillars of the sanctuary",³⁷ one cannot help but wonder whether the Edessenes, in creating a new abode for the Shroud, not only employed five gates to symbolically reference its prior home in Antioch, but also added cherubim to represent and simulate its former hiding place in that city's old south gate.

THE PORTRAIT OF EDESSA

Mindful of the painted Christ-portrait (**Figure 2**) mentioned in the *Doctrine of Addai*,³⁸ a Syriac legend rooted in the late third century,³⁹ some would first place the Shroud in apostolic-era Edessa and then, adopting a tenth-century Byzantine embellishment of that tale, consign it to a niche above that city's main gate until its alleged rediscovery in the sixth century (**Figure 3**).⁴⁰



FIGURE 2
THE PRESENTATION OF THE LEGENDARY
PORTRAIT OF EDESSA TO KING ABGAR UKKAMA



FIGURE 3
THE LEGENDARY DISCOVERY OF THE MANDYLION
ABOVE EDESSA'S MAIN GATE

Although frequently invoked as filler for the gaping hole in the Shroud's ancient biography,⁴¹ the Abgar Legend is simply not historically sustainable. J. B. Segal, "the best modern authority on Edessa",⁴² has labeled it "one of the most successful pious frauds of antiquity",⁴³ astutely noting both that the conversion of a ruling monarch would not have been ignored in Christian literature for almost three hundred years,⁴⁴ and also that the actual occurrence of such an event would have made the Edessan Church so apostolically-preeminent that it would never have subordinated itself, as it did in the year 200, to the Church of Antioch.⁴⁵ Professor Robert Drews has concluded that the Byzantine accretion "cannot withstand critical scrutiny",⁴⁶ characterizing it as a blatant attempt to "explain how a divinely created icon could have gone uncelebrated for so many centuries"⁴⁷ and noting the "sheer improbability that the cloth and its case could have emerged unspoiled after five hundred years in the wall".⁴⁸

If, as the author suggests, the Shroud was brought to Antioch in the first century and remained there throughout the balance of the Missing Ancient Centuries, is it not, then, to be identified as the Portrait of Edessa, and does it have, then, no connection whatsoever to that city in ancient times? To the contrary, and as will be demonstrated, the relic did, in fact, play a brief, but critical, role in the evangelization of Segal's "Blessed City".

THE EVANGELIZATION OF EDESSA

The arrival of Christianity in Edessa is recounted only in the ancient Abgar Legend and, although Segal has concluded that this account is chronologically and historically deficient, he has acknowledged that it "may well have a substratum of fact".⁴⁹ If so, several important identification markers lie just beneath the surface of the Syriac

narrative, inasmuch as its protagonist king (1) is the contemporary of Pope Zephyrinus, Bishop Serapion of Antioch, Bishop Palut of Edessa,⁵⁰ and King Narsai of Adiabene,⁵¹ all personages of the late second century; (2) has a son, Severus, who is responsible for the death of the disciple Addai;⁵² and (3) permits the erection of a Christian church in Edessa.⁵³ This “substratum” of historical fact implicates but one Edessan monarch - Abgar the Great (**Figure 4**), a contemporary of the clerics and the king identified in the legend’s text, the father of a son and successor named Severus,⁵⁴ and the ruler of Edessa when its Christian Church was partially destroyed in a devastating flood.⁵⁵ This Abgar was a holy man, most pious and learned, and a believer,⁵⁶ who employed Christian imagery on his coinage⁵⁷ and reportedly permitted a Christian synod to meet in his kingdom.⁵⁸

Most modern scholars agree that Edessa was evangelized during the reign of Abgar the Great;⁵⁹ however, a satisfactory fixation of the circumstances underlying the event has remained elusive, and, in the resultant historical vacuum, speculation has abounded that the Gospel was first brought to the city by some unknown missionary from Nisibis,⁶⁰ Palestine,⁶¹ or Antioch.⁶² Whatever the case, it is self-evident that the Shroud did not arrive in Edessa in advance of a Christian missionary, and logic defies the belief that such a missionary could have appeared, completely uninvited, in pagan Edessa, and managed to convert the city and baptize its king.

Fortunately, two medieval texts appear to explain how this historic event transpired.⁶³ A sixth-century entry in the *Liber Pontificalis*⁶⁴ records that Pope Eleutherius (**Figure 5**), whose papacy extended from approximately 174 to 189, "received a letter from British King Lucius [*Britannio rege Lucio*] asking that he might be made a Christian through his agency".⁶⁵ In 731, the Venerable Bede reiterated this precise account



FIGURE 4
KING ABGAR VIII
(ABGAR THE GREAT)



FIGURE 5
POPE ELEUTHERIUS (ca. 174-189)

and further reported that Eleutherius' compliance with the king's request for baptism "was soon effected".⁶⁶ Nevertheless, because second-century Britain was under Roman rule and had no king, these two texts presented a historical conundrum, one which remained unsolved for almost fourteen centuries and until 1904, when Adolph Harnack, a respected Biblical scholar, deduced that the *Liber Pontificalis* entry had been intended to reference not Britain, but, rather, the *Britio Edessenorum*, Edessa's citadel (**Figure 6**), and not King Lucius, but King Lucius Ælius Septimius Megas Abgarus VIII of Edessa, otherwise known as Abgar the Great.⁶⁷



FIGURE 6
THE "BRITIO EDESSENORUM"

Thus illuminated, both the *Liber Pontificalis* and Bede's *History of the English Church* provide historical substantiation of Pope Eleutherius' receipt of correspondence from Abgar the Great requesting that an emissary be dispatched to Edessa so that he might receive baptism into the Christian faith. Harnack's literary solution also effectively

resolves the historical enigma which has surrounded Edessa's conversion, as the invitation of a papal missionary by the king himself completely explains how Christianity could be successfully preached in a pagan city.

Recognizing, first, the virtual certainty that Abgar the Great was not only the historical facilitator of Edessan Christianity but also the protagonist king of the Abgar Legend, and, second, the existence of two medieval records which confirm his request for baptism, it becomes quite evident that it is the account of a late second-century papal mission to Edessa which lies just beneath the surface of the ancient Abgar Legend.⁶⁸ The date of this Eleutherian mission to Edessa can be readily approximated, as Rome's century-long persecution of the early Church, which had continued throughout the reign of Marcus Aurelius,⁶⁹ was suspended by his son, Commodus, who came to power, during the papacy of Eleutherius, in 180 (**Figure 7**). Married to a Christian⁷⁰ and devoted entirely to the pursuit of his own pleasures,⁷¹ Commodus instituted a tolerant and *laissez-faire* reign recognized by historians as "13 years of profound peace for the Church";⁷² however, upon Commodus' assassination, on December 31, 192, a political power struggle ensued and, six months later, an anti-Christian emperor, Septimius Severus,⁷³ emerged victorious to rule the Empire for the next eighteen years. Thus, it seems very clear that only under Commodus could a papal mission to Edessa have been both safely undertaken and successfully completed, and the fact that Abgar the Great was converted during this period is further confirmed by his portrayal, with a cross-featured tiara,⁷⁴ on an Edessan coin which also bears the image of Commodus (**Figure 8**).⁷⁵ Upon the ascension of Septimius Severus in 193, however, Abgar promptly neutralized the Christian imagery of his coinage, substituting a cluster of stars, and a crescent moon, for

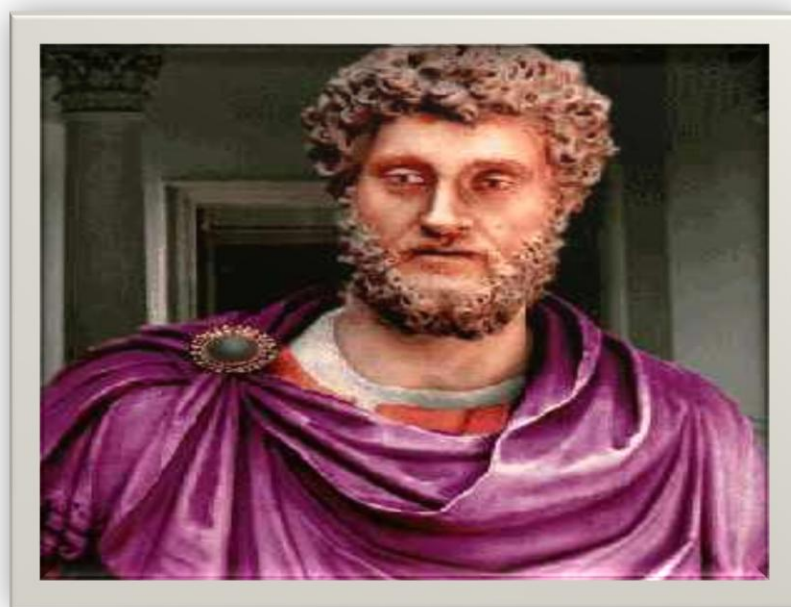


FIGURE 7
EMPEROR COMMODUS (180-192)



FIGURE 8
COMMODUS AND ABGAR THE GREAT

the cross on his tiara (**Figure 9**).⁷⁶ In 194, Abgar imprudently supported Parthia in its war against Rome⁷⁷ (**Figure 10**), leading Septimius Severus to take Edessa's rule from him and give it to a procurator.⁷⁸ Abgar remained politically impotent until 197-198 when he was restored to power after assisting in Rome's defeat of Parthia, thereby earning him an invitation to visit the imperial capital, an offer which he accepted sometime after 204.⁷⁹ The foregoing late second-century historical chronology well demonstrates two political realities: (1) Eleutherius would have dispatched a mission to Edessa only during the period defined by, at one end, the commencement of Commodus' rule (180) and, at the other, his own death (189); and (2) Abgar would not have accepted baptism after Septimius Severus became Emperor in 193.

Allowing the Church sufficient time to confirm the extent and sincerity of Commodus' religious policies, it seems likely that the Eleutherian mission to Edessa took place between 183 and 189. Professor Downey has concluded that Edessa was evangelized in two distinct phases; i.e., an initial and late second-century effort which produced a hybrid of Christianity and paganism in the city, and a second and final endeavor, instigated in 198 and completed by 200, which established orthodox Edessan Christianity.⁸⁰ The author suggests that it is the first, and incomplete, conversion of Edessa, one that included the baptism of its king, which was accomplished by the Eleutherian mission reported by the *Liber Pontificalis* and later confirmed by the Venerable Bede.



FIGURE 9
SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS AND ABGAR THE GREAT

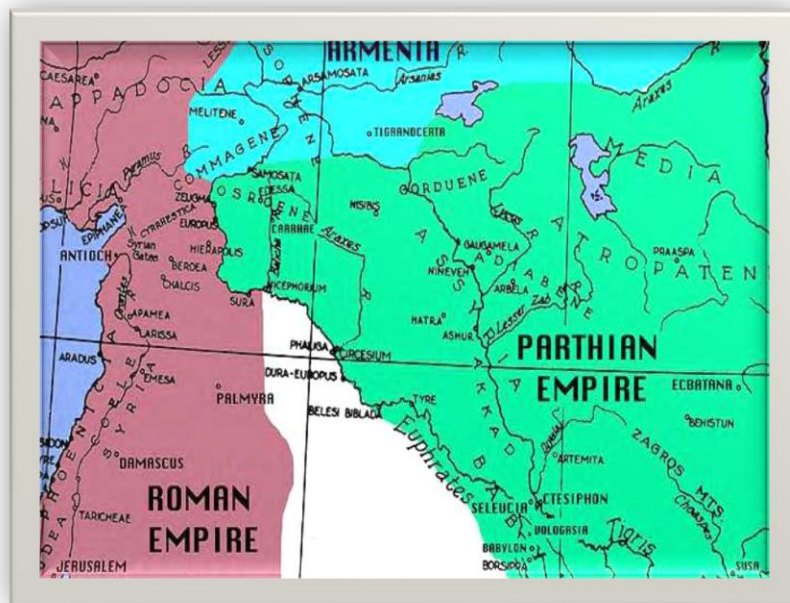


FIGURE 10
THE ENEMY EMPIRES OF ROME AND PARTHIA

There is but one documented, late second-century, ecclesiastical journey which began in Rome and ended in Mesopotamia; i.e., an expedition undertaken “well into the second half of the second century”⁸¹ by Avircius Marcellus (**Figure 11**),⁸² who served as the Bishop of Hieropolis *ca.* 180-200.⁸³ When he died, Avircius left behind an inscription recounting the details of this journey, an epitaph that was carefully constructed in accordance with the principles of an ancient Church custom now known as the Discipline of the Secret.



FIGURE 11
AVIRCIUS MARCELLUS
BISHOP OF HIEROPOLIS (*ca.* 180-200)

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SECRET

In the course of an intense theological debate which followed on the heels of the Protestant Reformation,⁸⁴ an ancient Church custom was identified and labeled the “Discipline of the Secret”.⁸⁵ Pursuant to this practice, the clergy was required, when speaking of Christian tenets, doctrines, mysteries, and rites, to employ coded language, symbolic representations, metaphorical expressions, and allegorical narratives in a manner conducive to making the message understandable only to advanced believers. Initially, the practice was designed to prevent catechumens from acquiring detailed knowledge of the faith, somewhat in accordance with Paul’s counsel that the “uninitiated and dull of hearing” be fed with “milk, and not with meat”;⁸⁶ however, after Roman persecutions had intensified and expanded, the Discipline was employed to conceal all critical faith-related information, in strict obedience to Christ’s commandment to “give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you”.⁸⁷ When employing the custom, “the technique was to speak of the realities and the rituals of the Christian life in an allusive manner, by hinting rather than by stating explicitly”.⁸⁸ By way of illustration, Christ was referred to as a fish, the Eucharist as “the honey sweet food of the Redeemer”, the consecrated bread and wine as “the symbols”, and Baptism as the “seal”.⁸⁹ Evidence of the prevalence of the Discipline throughout most of classical antiquity is found in both monumental inscriptions and theological writings. Archaeologists have long recognized that Christian inscriptions dating to the late second century implicate the purposeful use of arcane and metaphorical language.

It is natural and necessary that a Christian inscription (of) about A.D. 200, which was intended to be public, should be so expressed as not to offend the sense of the pagans; i.e. it must be capable of being read by the ordinary observer without its Christian origin being obvious....**it was the recognized duty of a Christian to use carefully veiled language.**⁹⁰

Such inscriptions were intended to bear both an exoteric sense, one which would satisfy an ordinary reader, and also an esoteric sense, one which, while carefully concealed behind seemingly-plain words, could be comprehended only by true believers.⁹¹ The late second-century *Inscription of Pectorius*,⁹² for example, metaphorically alludes to Christ in both deist and Eucharistic terms:

(Thou) the divine child of the heavenly fish, Keep pure thy soul among the mortals, because thou receivest the immortal fountain of divine water. Refresh thy soul, friend, with the ever flowing water of wealth-giving wisdom. Take from the redeemer of the saints the food as sweet as honey: Eat with joy and desire, holding the Fish in thy hands. I pray, give as food the Fish, Lord and Savior.⁹³

The ancient prevalence of the Discipline is also evidenced in the ecclesiastical writings of such second-century Church Fathers as Origen, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, who tells of how “Christians know one another by secret marks and insignia”,⁹⁴ and Clement of Alexandria, who advises that “the mysteries are delivered mystically, that what is spoken may be in the mouth of the speaker; rather not in his voice, but in his understanding”.⁹⁵ The practice of the Discipline continued unabated through the third and fourth centuries, as reflected in the works of Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil the Great,⁹⁶ Gregory Nazianzen, and Ambrose, and it was discarded only after the Church became fully established in the fifth century. Ironically, the custom was quickly forgotten and, as a result, it has never been properly taken into account in the investigation of the Missing Ancient Centuries; however, three ancient Christian texts, all of which were clearly

written in accordance with the precepts of the Discipline, reveal the Shroud's integral involvement in the late second-century evangelization of Edessa.

THE INSCRIPTION OF ABERCIUS

By applying the precepts of the Discipline of the Secret to the *Inscription of Abercius*, “the queen of all ancient Christian inscriptions”,⁹⁷ the historical circumstances which underlie the evangelization of Edessa, including the Shroud's role in that historic event, are revealed. The epitaph of Avircius Marcellus,⁹⁸ discovered in 1883, by Professor William M. Ramsay, near the southern gate of the ancient Phrygian city of Hieropolis,⁹⁹ “dates from the end of the second century”,¹⁰⁰ perhaps from the reign of Commodus (180-192).¹⁰¹ The text was substantially reconstructed from three independent sources: (1) the discovered stone fragments, now on display in the Vatican Museum (**Figure 12**); (2) a highly fictionalized fourth-century biography of Avircius, which fully quotes the then-extant epitaph;¹⁰² and (3) the *Inscription of Alexander*, an imitation of the epitaph, datable to the year 216 (**Figure 13**).¹⁰³ Specifically declarative of containing a concealed message understandable only by Christians, Avircius' epitaph rather emphatically proclaims itself to be a product of the Discipline: “*He that discerneth these things, every fellow-believer namely, let him pray for Abercius*”.¹⁰⁴ The inscription is “a poem of an allegorical and mystical character”¹⁰⁵ that is “written in a mystical and symbolical style, **according to the discipline of the secret**, to conceal its Christian character from the uninitiated”.¹⁰⁶ All of its previous translations and interpretations,¹⁰⁷ having been rendered by persons completely unmindful of either the Shroud's possible ancient provenance or its putative link to Edessa, are consequently devoid of any sindonic consideration; however, in light of the modern scholarly consensus which dates, to the same era, both the evangelization

of Edessa and the epitaph's creation, the text certainly merits closer examination in accordance with the precepts of the Discipline.



FIGURE 12
THE INSCRIPTION OF ABERCIUS

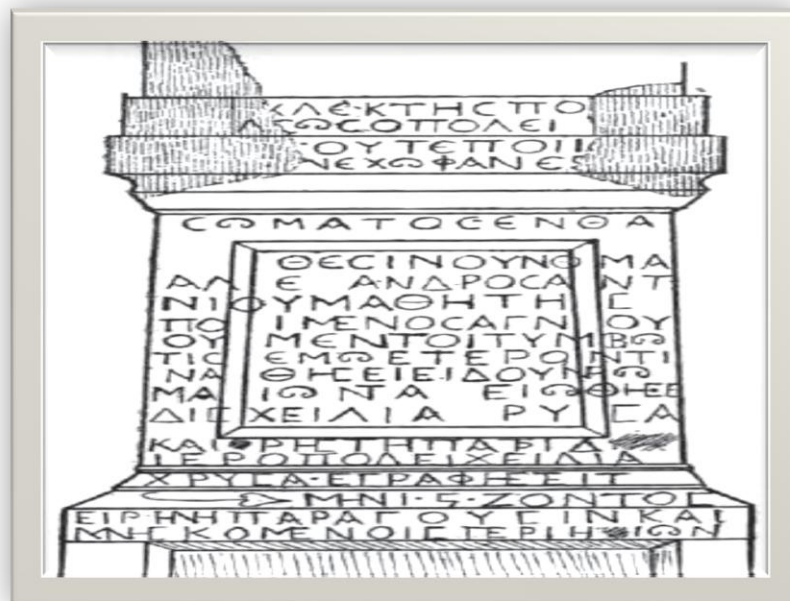


FIGURE 13
THE INSCRIPTION OF ALEXANDER (ca. 216)

Avircius begins his epitaph by confirming a visit to Rome,¹⁰⁸ made upon the command of a “holy shepherd”,¹⁰⁹ where he sees Christians “bearing a shining mark” of baptism.¹¹⁰

*The citizen of a chosen city, this monument I made while living, that there I might have in time a resting-place of my body, I being by name Abercius, the disciple of a holy shepherd who feeds flocks of sheep both on mountains and on plains, who has great eyes that see everywhere. For this shepherd taught me that the book of life is worthy of belief. And to Rome he sent me to contemplate majesty, and to see a queen golden-robed and golden-sandaled; there also I saw a people bearing a shining mark.*¹¹¹

With regard to the mysterious “holy shepherd”, it must be noted that Pope Eleutherius is best-known for checking the virulent spread of Montanism,¹¹² a Phrygian-based heresy, and that Avircius, a Phrygian bishop, is recognized as “the chief figure in the resistance to Montanism in the latter part of the second century”.¹¹³ During the papacy of Eleutherius, pilgrimages to the Holy City by orthodox and heretical clerics vying for papal support were very common,¹¹⁴ the most notable example being that of Irenaeus who consulted with Eleutherius, in 177 or 178, about the sect’s activities in Gaul.¹¹⁵ Consequently, Eleutherius would surely have called Avircius to Rome, at one time or another, to help plan and implement the Church’s strategy against Montanism; however, on the occasion described in his epitaph, Avircius precisely avers that he was summoned to Rome to “contemplate majesty” and to “see a queen”. These terms have previously been deemed metaphorical allusions to the Emperor and the Church;¹¹⁶ however, given Abgar the Great’s historically-documented request for baptism, Eleutherius may very well have summoned his selected missionary to, literally, “contemplate majesty” and “see a queen”, as Abgar’s sensitive correspondence would

surely have been carried to Eleutherius only by his closest confidantes. In the Edessan royal hierarchy, the king's most trusted official was called the *pasgriba*,¹¹⁷ and, inasmuch as Abgar's *pasgriba* was his father-in-law, Ma'nu,¹¹⁸ it becomes quite reasonable to assume that, on his journey to meet Eleutherius, he took not only Abgar's historic missive, but also Abgar's wife, and his daughter, Queen Shalmath.¹¹⁹ Evidence of Shalmath's appearance in Rome is to be found in the precise words employed by Avircius in his epitaph and what is known of an Edessan queen's regalia for, as Segal notes, "from the mosaics and, to a lesser extent, from sculptures, we obtain a remarkably clear picture of women's dress at Edessa at this period of history."¹²⁰ For example, in the Family Portrait Mosaic (**Figure 14**) and the Tripod Mosaic (**Figure 15**), both datable to the late second or early third century, the women wear golden robes or tunics.

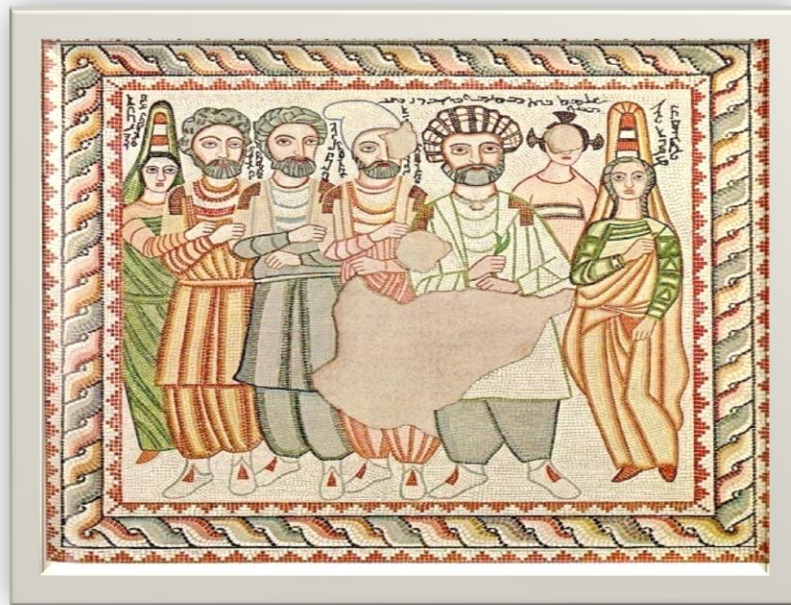


FIGURE 14
THE FAMILY PORTRAIT MOSAIC
 From "Vanished Civilizations", Edited by Edward Bacon
 Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1963

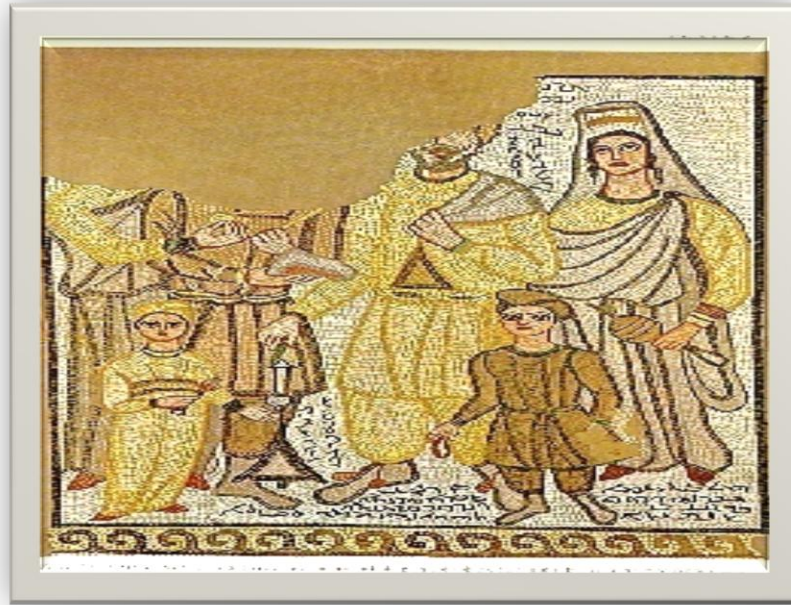


FIGURE 15
THE TRIPOD MOSAIC
 From "Vanished Civilizations", Edited by Edward Bacon
 Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1963

In the Funerary Couch Mosaic (**Figure 16**), datable to 278, the woman seated at the right wears an exquisite golden robe over a red tunic. Regarding all three of these beautiful Edessan mosaics, Segal has observed:

All the costumes are gaily coloured. The women wear jewelry, golden bracelets and a golden clasp to fasten the outer garment; the statues show women wearing a necklace either of tooth-shaped beads or pieces of gold.¹²¹

This “remarkably clear” evidence indicates that Abgar’s wife, Queen Shalmath, is the “majesty” contemplated, and the “queen, golden-robed and golden-sandaled” seen, by Avircius in Rome.

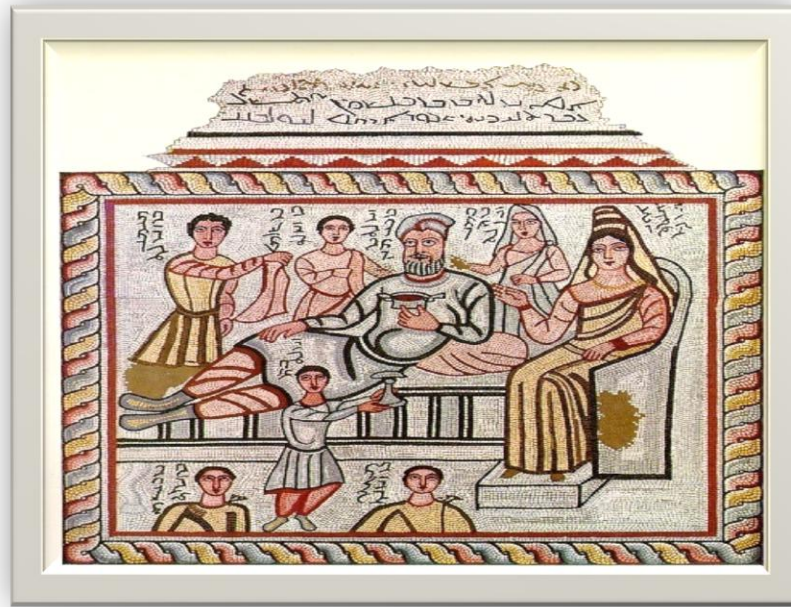


FIGURE 16
THE FUNERARY COUCH MOSAIC
 From "Vanished Civilizations", Edited by Edward Bacon
 Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1963

Upon departing Rome, Avircius travelled to Syria, as the succeeding portion of his epitaph reads: "*And I saw the land of Syria and all its cities, Nisibis I saw when I passed over Euphrates*". This passage virtually confirms that Avircius visited both Antioch and Edessa for Antioch was Syria's capital, and the third most important city in the entire Roman Empire,¹²² and, in the late second century, Edessa was still considered "the chief city in the eastern part of Syria".¹²³

Situated some forty miles beyond the Euphrates, Edessa lay about one hundred and fifty travel miles to the west of Nisibis.¹²⁴ The fastest, safest, and most-frequently travelled Syrian route from Antioch to Nisibis was the Silk Road, which ran directly past Edessa (**Figure 17**).¹²⁵

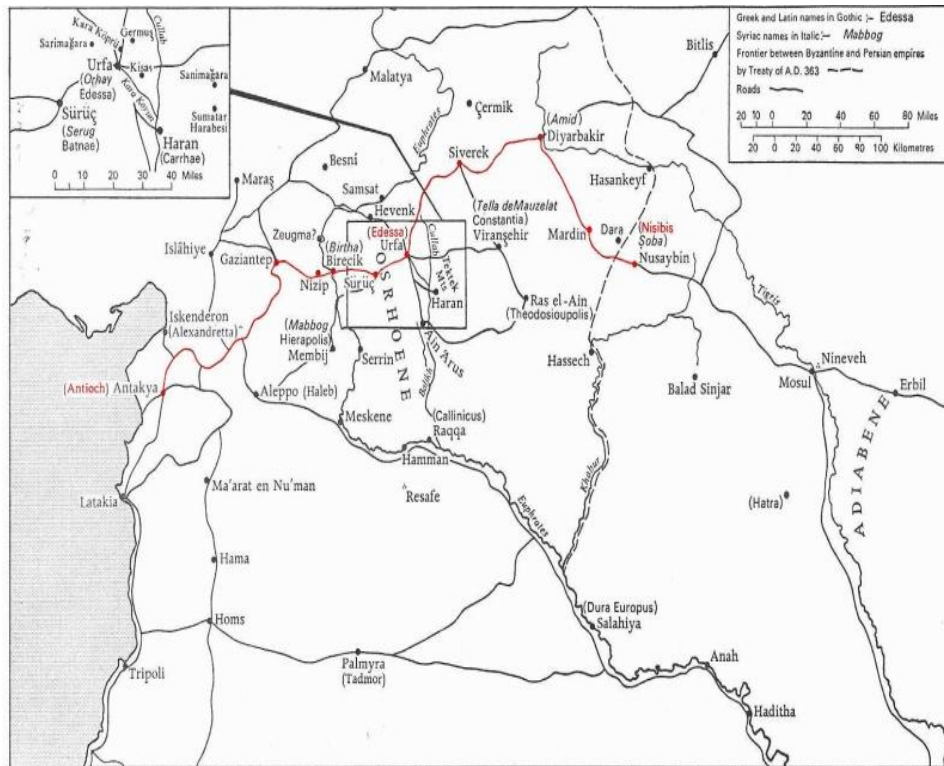


FIGURE 17
THE SILK ROAD FROM ANTIOCH TO NISIBIS
MAP FROM EDESSA, THE BLESSED CITY
BY SEGAL, J. B. (1970)
©By permission of Oxford University Press

It is simply unthinkable that Avircius would have bypassed either Antioch or Edessa on his way to Nisibis and, in fact, it is the glaring absence of the specific mention of either city, in a Syrian travelogue clearly authored in accordance with the precepts of the Discipline of the Secret, which makes it likely that something historic, yet far too dangerous to acknowledge, transpired there during the course of his travels.

The succeeding passage of the epitaph contains a gap which complicates precise translation¹²⁶ and it is usually rendered: “*But everywhere I had brethren. I had Paul.*” On its face, the inscription appears to recite that a Christian named Paul traveled with Avircius through Syria;¹²⁷ however, in the *Doctrine of Addai*, a Christian named Palut serves as an aide to the missionary Addai and, upon the death of Aggai, assumes

leadership of the Edessan Church,¹²⁸ while, historically, a cleric named Palut was delegated, in 198, by Bishop Serapion of Antioch,¹²⁹ to establish orthodox Christianity in Edessa and, two years later, was ordained the first bishop of Edessa.¹³⁰ Considering the identification of Palut as both the historical and legendary Edessan bishop involved in the city's evangelization, the inscription appears to confirm that Palut joined the Eleutherian mission when it reached Antioch, and this passage should be interpreted: "*Palut was my companion on my journey through Syria*".

The epitaph's succeeding passage appears to confirm that, in aid of the papal mission, the Church of Antioch provided Avircius not only with the services of Palut, but also with temporary custody of the Shroud:

*Faith everywhere led me forward, and everywhere provided as my food a fish of exceeding great size, and perfect, which a holy virgin drew with her hands from a fountain and this it ever gives to its friends to eat, it having wine of great virtue, and giving it mingled with bread.*¹³¹

Absent sindonic consideration, this passage has been deemed an early, and important, reference to the Eucharist; however, as previously illustrated by the *Inscription of Pectorius*,¹³² a Eucharistic serving would ordinarily be likened to a small fish which can be held in one's hands, and is not appropriately describable as being "of exceeding great size". Indeed, a purely Eucharistic interpretation renders the passage redundant, as the symbols of bread and wine are specifically mentioned at the conclusion of the same verse. By metaphorically describing the fish which had been provided to him for his journey as being "of exceeding great size, and perfect",¹³³ Avircius is clearly alluding to a fourteen-foot long linen cloth which bears an anatomically-perfect image of Christ's body.

THE ANCIENT ABGAR LEGEND

By applying the precepts of the Discipline of the Secret to the ancient Abgar Legend, the historical circumstances which underlie the evangelization of Edessa, including the Shroud's role in that historic event, are further revealed. The ancient legend consists of the Syriac tale, known as the *Doctrine of Addai*, and the Greek tale which was presented by Eusebius. Like the *Inscription of Abercius*, the *Doctrine of Addai*, which was composed originally in the late third century¹³⁴ and acknowledges Edessa's archives¹³⁵ as the source of its narrative,¹³⁶ specifically declares that it contains a concealed message understandable only by Christians and, thereby, proclaims itself to be a product of the Discipline. On his deathbed, Addai directs:

Do not investigate secrets nor ask concerning hidden things written in the sacred books which you possess nor be judges of the words of the Prophets. Call to mind and see that they were spoken by the Spirit of God. ...But the unbelievers give offence in them because they lack the concealed eye of the hidden mind which has no need for inquiries in which there is loss rather than profit.¹³⁷

In 325, Eusebius, apparently aware of the Syriac tale,¹³⁸ authored an abbreviated Greek narrative which quoted correspondence in which Abgar invited Jesus to Edessa and described the king's mysterious vision, but made no mention whatsoever of the portrait.¹³⁹ Like the anonymous author of the Syriac legend, Eusebius acknowledges that his story was drawn from the city's official records.¹⁴⁰

It is doubtful that, even under the tolerant Commodus, the details of Edessa's conversion would have been accurately recorded for fear of unforeseeable imperial consequences. Nevertheless, and despite what might have been originally reported, the archives were assuredly modified after Septimius Severus assumed power in 193, and

perhaps again, in about 201, when he issued an imperial edict banning conversions to Christianity.¹⁴¹ The recently-baptized Edessan king, as well as the city's new Bishop, confronted a serious dilemma: How could the most historically-significant event in Church history be recorded without incurring the resultant fatal consequences? The author suggests that by 200, and with orthodox Christianity now firmly established in Edessa, the quandary was overcome when the royal scribe, at the direction of Abgar and under the supervision of Bishop Palut, applied the precepts of the Discipline of the Secret and inserted, into the official archives, an allegorical narrative designed to protect Abgar and those who had participated in his baptism,¹⁴² and that it is this allegory which was subsequently transposed into the ancient Syriac and Greek Abgar Legends.

Abgar the Great, a second-century king seeking spiritual redemption, becomes, in both versions of the legend, Abgar Ukkama, a first-century monarch seeking a physical cure. Abgar's letter to Pope Eleutherius becomes, in the Greek narrative, his distant predecessor's correspondence to Jesus.¹⁴³ Ma'nu the *pasgriba*, a sixth-century emissary to Eleutherius, becomes, in the Syriac narrative, Hanan the archivist, a first-century emissary to Jesus. In both legends, Eleutherius, who authorizes a papal mission, becomes Jesus, who approves a posthumous apostolic mission, and Avircius, the papal missionary, becomes Addai, Christ's emissary. Palut, Avircius' companion and future bishop of Edessa, becomes, in the Syriac legend, Aggai, Addai's principal aide and future bishop of Edessa. The Shroud, that awe-inspiring proselytizing device which facilitated the success of the Eleutherian mission, becomes, in the Syriac tale, the "portrait of Jesus with choice pigments",¹⁴⁴ and, in both versions of the legend, a "marvelous vision (that) appeared to Abgar in the face of Addai".¹⁴⁵ These painstakingly-cautious, and allegorically perfect,

modifications of historical facts, fashioned in strict accordance with the precepts of the Discipline, served to effectively shield not only the participants in Abgar the Great's conversion, but also the precious Passion relic which played such a critical role in that event. It further appears that an attempt to corroborate the fabricated facts of the allegory, by "killing off" the missionary allegedly responsible for the city's evangelization, is reflected in the sudden construction of a tomb for the mysterious disciple Addai, a sepulcher which became a noted local landmark only in *ca.* 190;¹⁴⁶ i.e., precisely when the author's hypothesis brings Avircius and the Shroud to Edessa.

Both the legend¹⁴⁷ and history¹⁴⁸ concur that, despite the king's conversion, paganism continued to flourish in Edessa. Under such circumstances, the Shroud could not possibly be left there, even in the possession of the king himself, and it was surely returned, via Palut, to the safekeeping of the Church of Antioch. Once his mission had been accomplished, Avircius travelled on to Nisibis and returned to Hieropolis where he dictated his epitaph, which concludes:

These things I, Abercius, having been a witness of them told to be written here. Verily I was passing through my seventy-second year. He that discerneth these things, every fellow-believer namely, let him pray for Abercius. And no one shall put another grave over my grave; but if he do, then shall he pay to the treasury of the Romans two thousand pieces of gold and to my good native city of Hieropolis one thousand pieces of gold.

Unless he had, in fact, successfully completed a historic evangelization mission to Edessa, there would be no reason why Avircius would have desired to publicly inscribe the details of an otherwise unremarkable journey unworthy of protracted remembrance.

THE HYMN OF THE PEARL

By applying the precepts of the Discipline of the Secret to the Syriac poem known as the *Hymn of the Pearl*,¹⁴⁹ the Shroud's presence in Edessa during the late second century is revealed. Unlike the *Inscription of Abercius* and the *Doctrine of Addai*, the *Hymn of the Pearl* does not specifically declare itself to contain a concealed message understandable only by Christians and, thereby, proclaim itself to be a product of the Discipline; however, and as will be demonstrated, its anonymous author's utilization of an allegorical narrative to conceal a Christian message, superbly crafted in accordance with the precepts of the Discipline, is patent.

The *Hymn* is datable to the early part of the third century and was written no later than the year 224.¹⁵⁰ It was discovered as an interpolation amidst a Syriac translation of the Greek-language *The Acts of Judas Thomas the Apostle*, a work written in "the first decades of the third century" and at or near Edessa.¹⁵¹ The *Hymn* contains "not the remotest allusion" to the circumstances described in the narratives of the Acts which precede or follow it,¹⁵² it differs in style and content from such narratives, and it "is manifestly an independent document incorporated by the Syrian redactor, who introduces it in the usual naïve fashion of such compilations".¹⁵³ No other reason presenting itself, certain significance must be attached, from a sindonological perspective, to the fact that the *Hymn* was interpolated into the acts of the very apostle who, according to the Abgar Legend, dispatched Addai to Edessa.¹⁵⁴

The text itself refutes the *Hymn* being of Manichaean origin,¹⁵⁵ and its promotion of three specific heretical tenets¹⁵⁶ establishes it as a Bardesanist work,¹⁵⁷ one which, in all likelihood, was composed by, or at the direction of, Bardaisan

himself.¹⁵⁸ Bardaisan (154-222), a Gnostic Christian, a philosopher, and the composer of numerous Syriac psalms, was born of nobility at Edessa. According to tradition, he attended school, as a youth, with the future Abgar the Great,¹⁵⁹ and Segal concludes that “certainly he frequented the court of Edessa”.¹⁶⁰ As the king’s life-long friend and a frequent visitor to his royal court, Bardaisan would certainly have viewed the Portrait of Edessa, perhaps when it was first presented to Abgar, and certainly after it had been placed in one of the royal palaces,¹⁶¹ and he is, no doubt, the source of the several obvious metaphorical allusions to the Shroud which appear in the *Hymn of the Pearl*.

Like the *Inscription of Abercius*, the entirety of the *Hymn* has never been considered in a sindonic context,¹⁶² and, like the *Doctrine of Addai*, its mystical text presents, upon close examination, a perfect sindonic allegory. The protagonist prince, the son of the king, represents Jesus, the Son of God,¹⁶³ and his robe represents Christ’s burial cloth. At the beginning of the poem, the robe is as imageless as the new burial linen purchased by Joseph of Arimathea is clean. The mission assigned to the prince by his father, wresting a pearl from the hold of a serpent, represents the mission entrusted to Christ by his heavenly father – the redemption of humanity from the hold of the serpentine Satan. At the end of the poem, and only after his mission has been successfully completed, can the prince see his robe in an entirely different light:

On a sudden, as I faced it,
The garment seemed to me like a mirror of myself.
I saw it all in my whole self,
Moreover I faced my whole self in (facing) it,
For we were two in distinction
And yet again one in one likeness.¹⁶⁴

And the image of the King of kings
Was depicted in full all over it...¹⁶⁵

It is entirely clear that the post-mission appearance of a mirrored image of the prince upon his previously-imageless robe represents the post-Crucifixion appearance of a mirrored image of Christ upon his clean burial cloth (**Figure 18**). The robe's reflecting images symbolize the ventral and dorsal sindonic images, and the prince's declaration that he can see, on the robe, his whole self, confirms that Bardaisan, while present at the Edessan royal court, had observed the entire body image on the Shroud, just as Avircius Marcellus, the missionary who brought the cloth to Edessa, had seen the image of Christ, the anatomically-perfect fish, in its "exceeding great size".

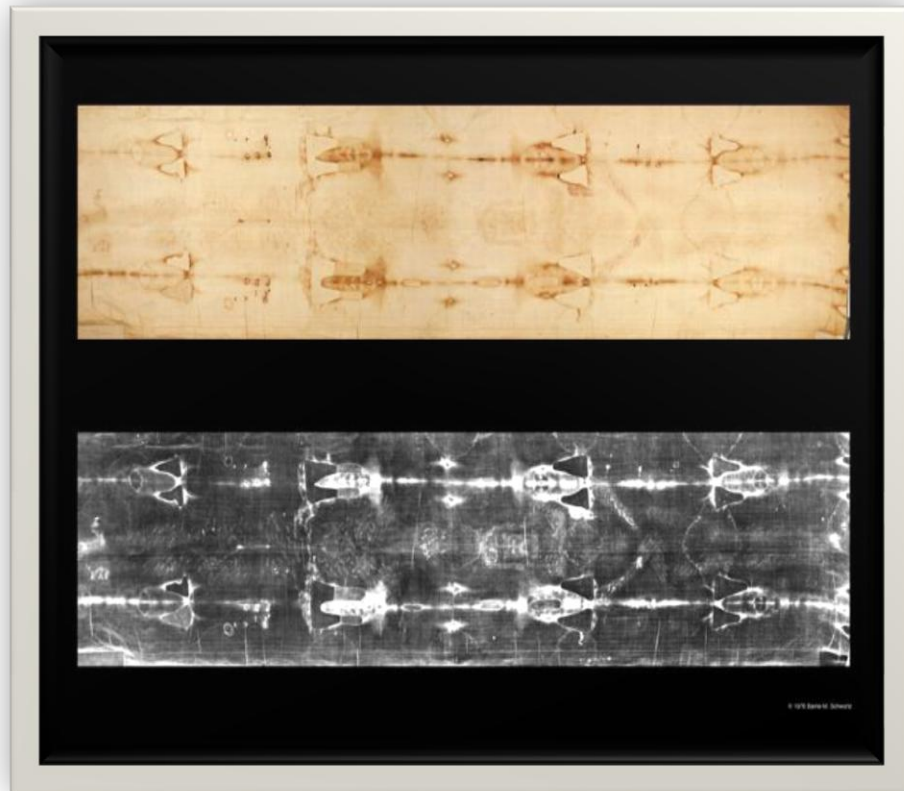


FIGURE 18
THE MIRRORED IMAGES OF THE SHROUD

More than a century before the *Hymn of the Pearl* was written, the Book of Revelations had referred to Jesus as the King of Kings¹⁶⁶ and the Lord of Lords,¹⁶⁷ and

the poem's pronounced depiction of the King of Kings, in full and all over the prince's robe, is an exact and precise replication of the Shroud's full portrayal of Christ's tortured and crucified body.

CONCLUSION

A late second-century evangelization of Edessa, accomplished by a papal mission, is historically established through medieval textual evidence confirming King Abgar the Great's request for Christian baptism and Pope Eleutherius' prompt effectuation of that request. The details of that mission are historically established through ancient textual evidence, adduced by an application of the precepts of the Discipline of the Secret, which reveals that Avircius Marcellus, the Bishop of Hieropolis, was summoned to Rome, where he was introduced to Abgar's wife, Queen Shalmath, that he then travelled to Antioch, where he was joined by Palut and provided with the Shroud, identifiable as the historically-documented sacred Christ-icon which had been taken from Palestine to Syria, and that he then proceeded to Edessa, where he displayed the imaged relic to the king and baptized him into the Christian faith, thereby resulting in the Shroud's commemoration, in legend, as the Portrait of Edessa. Promptly thereafter, the relic was restored to the Antiochene Church, by Palut, and, having been concealed, in 362, in a niche located above Antioch's Gate of the Cherubim it was rediscovered, in *ca.* 526-533, and was briefly venerated, as the historically-documented sacred Christ-icon of the *Kerateion*, during the period immediately preceding the city's fall to the Persian army. In 540, the Shroud was taken from Antioch to Edessa, thereby completing its ancient resume and initiating the succeeding medieval chapter of its hypothesized biography, one which has been so thoughtfully developed, and so thoroughly detailed, in the Mandylicon Theory.

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NOTES

¹ Ian Wilson's ingenious historical hypothesis was published in 1978.

² The Mandylion Theory holds that the Shroud was venerated in Edessa, as the Image of Edessa, from the mid-sixth to the mid-tenth century; in Constantinople, as the Mandylion, from the mid-tenth century to the beginning of the thirteenth century; and, again in Constantinople, in 1203-04, as the *sydoine* that was exhibited every Friday in the Church of My Lady St. Mary of Blachernae until it disappeared during the Fourth Crusade's sack of that city. See Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, pp. 115-147.

³ In *ca.* 593, Evagrius Scholasticus reported that, some fifty years earlier, the icon now known as the Image of Edessa had miraculously aided in setting the Persian siege works afire and thereby successfully thwarted an attack on the city. Evagrius, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Book VI. He noted that "Christ had sent this to Abgar, when he desired to see him". See Drews, p. 61. The anonymous author of the late sixth-century *Acts of Thaddaeus* related that Abgar Ukkama had been cured of a dreaded disease through the agency of an imaged linen *tetradiplon*, thereby evincing his knowledge that the Image of Edessa was, in fact, a linen cloth that had been "doubled in four". See Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, pp. 99-100. See also Drews, p. 40. Neither of these sixth-century works addressed the cloth's whereabouts during the Missing Ancient Centuries.

⁴ A Syriac hymn, datable to 569, compares the color of the icon now known as the Image of Edessa to the marble of the city's newly-constructed Hagia Sophia cathedral, where it was then safe kept. Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 123; Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, p. 158. This hymn derives from the thirteenth-century *Codex vaticanus syriacus* and a translation of its text appears in Segal, p. 189.

⁵ Markwardt, Jack, *Antioch and the Shroud*, Proceedings of the 1999 Shroud of Turin International Research Conference, Richmond, Virginia, Walsh, Bryan J., ed., Magisterium Press, pp. 95-108 (Glen Allen, Virginia, 2000); Shroud Library, www.shroud.com.

⁶ Peter, the first Apostle to enter Christ's empty tomb, was, according to tradition, the founder of the Church of Antioch and its first bishop. Downey, p. 281; pp. 583-586. Markwardt, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

⁷ The pagan emperor, Julian, directed the confiscation of Antioch's Church treasures, and the Arian presbyter, Theodorus, concealed them at the cost of his life. Markwardt, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-100.

⁸ Antioch was substantially destroyed by a great fire in 525, a great earthquake in 526, and a second earthquake in 528 which destroyed the Golden Basilica cathedral. Over the course of a decade, the city and the cathedral were rebuilt, the latter being rededicated in 538. Downey, pp. 519-533. The author has suggested that the Shroud was rediscovered during the course of this reconstruction. Markwardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

⁹ Downey, p. 527; p. 533; Markwardt, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-102. The author believes that the relic was rediscovered by Monophysites, whose persecution by the orthodox Church began early in the sixth century when they were led by Patriarch Severus. Downey, pp. 509-513. Edessa became the more hospitable place for Monophysites, particularly after 542, when the Empress Theodora caused Jacob Burd'aya to be consecrated as that city's bishop and "through him, Edessa became famous as a centre of Monophysite doctrine". Segal, pp. 97-98.

¹⁰ The great city of Antioch was destroyed forever by the Persian forces of King Chosroes I, who looted the Golden Basilica, burned the city (excepting the *Kerateion* which lay to the other side of an open urban area), and took captives to Persia. Downey, pp. 533-546; Markwardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-102.

¹¹ Downey, pp. 533-546. Markwardt, *op.cit.*, p. 101. The author had attributed the apparent absence of a historical reference to a sixth-century Antiochene Christ-image to the brevity of the period intervening between the Shroud's rediscovery and its transfer to Edessa, an understandable reluctance on the part of the Monophysites to impart knowledge of the relic's discovery to their orthodox persecutors, and the historical circumstance that, after 531, the recordation of all information regarding Antioch came "to an abrupt end" when the chronicler, Malalas, abandoned the city for Constantinople. Downey, p. 39. Markwardt, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

¹² Professor Scavone recently directed the author's attention to the passage which follows and noted that its citation appears in a section of *Christusbilder* which deals with the so-called Crucifix of Beirut, an object allegedly created by the disciple Nicodemus.

¹³ In the times of Constantine, when Athanasius would have made this statement, the area known as Greater Syria extended only to the Euphrates. This would seem to preclude his allusion to Edessa, which lay beyond that river and in the Roman province of Oshroena.

¹⁴ "*Sed biennium antequam Titus et Vespasianus eandem subverterent urbem, admoniti sunt a Spiritu Sancto fideles atque discipuli Christi..., ut relictā urbe ad regnum se transferrent Agrippae regis, quia ipse tunc Agrippa Romanis foederatus erat. Qui egressi ab urbe, omnia quae ad cultum nostrae religionis vel fidei pertinere videbantur, secum auferentes in has regiones transtulerunt se. Quo tempore etiam icona cum ceteris rebus ecclesiasticis deportata usque hodie in Syria permansit. quam ego ipse a parentibus ex hac luce migrantibus mihi traditam iure hereditario usque nunc possedi. haec certa et manifesta ratio est de icona sancta domini salvatoris, qualiter de Judea in Syria partes devenit.*" Dobschutz, vol. 3, p. 282, n. 3. Dobschutz derives this passage from Mansi, XIII, 584a = Athan. opp. II 353c.

¹⁵ Downey, pp. 204-206; pp. 586-587. These cherubim were to provide “perpetual memorials in Antioch of the humiliation of the Jews”.

¹⁶ *Id.*, pp. 553-554.

¹⁷ Called both the Golden Gate and the Daphne Gate. *Id.*, p. 452; p. 554.

¹⁸ *Id.*, p. 554. Evagrius related that “the old wall can be traced even in our own day”. *Id.*, p. 612.

¹⁹ *Id.*, p. 553.

²⁰ *Id.*, p. 613. The calamities are detailed in note 8.

²¹ *Id.*, pp. 553-554.

²² In a letter, Symeon recalled that he assumed permanent residence atop a pillar at an age when he still possessed some of his first teeth.

²³ Symeon’s biography was written almost immediately after his death in 597 and extensive selections therefrom were published in 1923 in *Saints stylites*, ch. 9, p. 238, ed. H. Delehay. *Id.*, p. 614.

²⁴ In this vision, Jesus was “accompanied by the multitude of the just”. *Id.*, p. 554.

²⁵ *Id.*, p. 614.

²⁶ Downey, p. 554.

²⁷ Moschos chronicled his extensive travels throughout Palestine, Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia, visited Antioch *ca.* 603-607, and died, in Rome, in *ca.* 619.

²⁸ Moschos, p. 212 (emphasis provided).

²⁹ From a theological point of view, images of Cherubim would be perfect companions to an image of God, as they appear to be the creatures continuously praising God in Rev. 4:6-9, and God himself flies upon a Cherub in Psalms 18:10 and II Sam. 22:11. They also provide protective services. Cherubim guard the Garden of Eden. Gen. 3:24. Two cherubim sit atop the Ark of the Covenant. Exod. 25:16-22; Num. 7:89. Two cherubim stand in the Holy of Holies facing the entrance. I Kings 6:23-35; II Chron. 3:7-14. Cherubim are embroidered on the Veil of the Tabernacle. Exod. 26:1. Finally, the proximity of the Gate of the Cherubim to the *Kerateion* (Jewish Quarter) seems to render the special Jewish blessing, employed at large communal meals, particularly appropriate to the putative presence of the Shroud in a niche above that gate: “Blessed is our God, the God of Israel, who dwells between the Cherubim”.

³⁰ See the Byzantine *Festival Sermon* which is fully recited in Drews, at pp. 56-58, and in Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, at pp. 235-251.

³¹ The *Keramion* was a tile which bore the same facial likeness as that of the icon. See the *Byzantine Festival Sermon* which is fully recited in Drews, at pp. 56-58, and in Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, at pp. 235-251. See also Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 111; Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, p. 161.

³² See the *Byzantine Festival Sermon* which is fully recited in Drews, at pp. 56-58, and in Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, at pp. 235-251. See also Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 111.

³³ Downey, p. 616, citing Procopius, *Wars* 2.8.25-26.

³⁴ Segal, p. 189 (emphasis provided).

³⁵ Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 123.

³⁶ The Gate of the Cherubim and the Daphne Gate both stood in the south, the Eastern Gate of Tiberius in the north, the Middle Gate of Trajan in the east, and the Gate of the Bull in the west and at the head of a bridge. Downey, pp. 615-621.

³⁷ Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 123.

³⁸ In the Syriac Abgar Legend, the disciple Addai presents a portrait of Christ painted in choice pigments to King Abgar Ukkama. Little is known of this ruler, who reigned from 4 BCE to 7 CE and, again, from 13 to 50, other than that, in 49, he betrayed his Roman allies to Parthia. Segal, p. 12.

³⁹ While the earliest extant version of the *Doctrine of Addai* is a *ca.* 400 edition, its original composition derives from the end of the third century. Segal, p. 76; p. 62, note 3; Drews, p. 63; p. 72. In the Syriac legend, Abgar converts to Christianity after viewing both the portrait and a marvelous vision which appears on the face of the disciple Addai. Howard, p. 13. Thereupon, and for some unspecified period, the portrait is placed in a palace; however, the rather lengthy balance of the tale fails to disclose its subsequent fate. Howard, pp. 9-11.

⁴⁰ The story is told in the *Byzantine Festival Sermon* which is fully recited in Drews, at pp. 56-58, and in Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, at pp. 235-251.

⁴¹ Wilson substantially incorporated the Byzantine accretion into the Mandylion Theory, but rejected its claim that the cloth was miraculously rediscovered in 544, suggesting, instead, that it was found during the rebuilding of the city's walls, a task necessitated by a disastrous flood in 525. Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, pp. 106-115. See also, e.g., Adams, Frank O., *Sindon*, Patrick Walsh Press, Inc. (Tempe, AZ 1982), p. 25; Iannone, John C., *The Mystery of the Shroud of Turin*, Alba House (New York 1998), p. 107. Antonacci, Mark, *The Resurrection of the Shroud*, M. Evans and Company, Inc. (New York 2000), p. 139.

⁴² Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 261, n. 1.

⁴³ Segal, p. 64.

⁴⁴ From *ca.* 30 to Eusebius' narrative of *ca.* 325.

⁴⁵ Segal, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁶ Drews, p. 69.

⁴⁷ *Id.* There is not a single reference to a Christ-icon present in Edessa during the fourth, fifth, and early sixth centuries, neither in the detailed diary entries of the pilgrim Egeria, nor in the prolific works of St. Ephraim and Jacob of Serug, nor in the *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*. See Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 111; Drews, p. 62.

⁴⁸ Drews, p. 69.

⁴⁹ "Nor, indeed, should we reject as wholly apocryphal the account of the conversion of King Abgar to Christianity; the legend may well have a substratum of fact". Segal, pp. 69-70.

⁵⁰ "Because (Addai) died speedily and rapidly at the breaking of his legs he was unable to lay his hand upon Palut. Palut himself went to Antioch and received ordination to the priesthood from Serapion, Bishop of Antioch. Serapion himself, Bishop of Antioch, had also received ordination from Zephyrinus, Bishop of the city of Rome...". Howard, p. 105. See also Cureton, p. 23.

⁵¹ "Narses, king of the Assyrians, when he heard the things which the Apostle Addai was doing, sent to King Abgar (saying): Either send to me the man among you who does these signs that I might see him and hear his message, or forward to me all those things which you have seen him do in your city". Howard, p. 75. See also Cureton, p. 16; Segal, p. 70.

⁵² "Addaeus preached at Edessa and in Mesopotamia, but he was from Paneus, in the days of Abgar the king. And when he was among the Zophenians, Severus, the son of Abgar, sent and slew him at Agel Hasna, and a young man his disciple." Cureton, p. 109.

⁵³ The king tells Addai: "Wherever you wish, therefore, build a church, a meeting-place, for those who have believed and continue to believe in your words". Howard, p. 65. See also Cureton, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Abgar the Great was succeeded, in 212, by his son Abgar Severus who had likely adopted his name to honor the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus. Segal, p. 14. Abgar Ukkama was succeeded by his son, Ma'nu. Segal, p. 15, n. 3.

⁵⁵ There is no indication that any of Abgar the Great's predecessors were sympathetic to Christianity. The great flood of November, 201 is described in the *Chronicle of Edessa*, a Syriac work with an earliest extant edition deriving from the sixth century. Segal, p. 20. This entry provides "possibly the first record of the existence of a purpose-built and obviously Christian church anywhere in the world". Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, p. 162. See also Segal, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁶ Segal, p. 70. Julius Africanus having called Abgar the Great a "holy man" and Bardesian having described him as someone who "believed", it is "hard to accept" that he could have been anything less than a Christian sympathizer. Fox, p. 279.

⁵⁷ See Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 214; Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, pp. 167-168.

⁵⁸ Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 5, 23, 2. Segal deems the account somewhat spurious, but not beyond credibility. Segal, p. 69.

⁵⁹ "Eusebius accepts the traditional view that the royal protagonist of Christianity at Edessa was Abgar Ukkama, the Black, who reigned in the lifetime of Jesus. The facts suggest otherwise." Segal, p. 67. Scholars have maintained, with good reason, that Christianity made a notable advance in Edessa during the reign of Abgar the Great. Segal, p. 70. During the second century, a Christian community existed in Edessa and Abgar the Great was converted to the faith. Chadwick, p. 61. Christianity arrived in Edessa during the reign of Abgar the Great. Scavone, Daniel C., *Chronological Listing of Supporting Texts for Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Grail, and the Edessa Icon*, British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter, No. 57, p. 33 (June 2003). Wilson has now acknowledged the distinct possibility that Edessa was first evangelized in the late second century and during the reign of Abgar the Great. Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, p. 167-169.

⁶⁰ Segal is able to conclude only that Edessa was substantially Christianized by the time that its ruling Abgar dynasty ended in 242. Segal, p. 15, n. 3. "It seems likely that Christianity...originated in the East. We would expect it to have been conveyed along the high road through Nisibis". Segal, p. 69.

⁶¹ Accepting the substance, but not the chronology, of the Abgar Legend, the traditional Catholic view has been that an unknown Palestinian missionary named Addai brought Christianity to Edessa in the middle of the second century, became Edessa's first bishop, and was succeeded by Aggai, and then Palut, who was ordained, in about 200, by Antioch's Bishop Serapion.

⁶² Professor Glanville Downey envisions a two-phased evangelization of Edessa, completed when a cleric named Palut came from Antioch to establish orthodox Christianity in Edessa and become its first bishop in *ca.* 200. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria*, p. 304. See full quotation at note 80.

⁶³ Professor Scavone first alluded to these references in an abstract entitled *Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Grail, and the Turin Shroud*, which he presented at the 1996 Esopus Conference. A lengthier exposition appears in Scavone, Daniel, *Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Grail, and the Edessa Icon*, British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter, No. 56, pp. 9-41 (December 2002).

⁶⁴ Known in the Middle Ages as *Gesta Pontificum Romanorum*, this work presents brief papal biographies, legal and liturgical decisions, and information relating to donations, ordinations, and the founding of churches. Its initial edition may have been completed as early as the middle of the third century, and the portion which mentions Abgar's correspondence to Eleutherius was certainly extant by approximately 530.

⁶⁵ The L.R. Loomis translation of "*Hic accepit epistula a Lucio Brittanio rege, ut Christianus efficerentur per ejus mandatum*" is presented in Scavone, *op.cit.*, p. 27, and a clearly spurious papal response is reported in Migne, (1894), cols. 1139-1144. *Id.*, p. 38, note 32.

⁶⁶ Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1955, p. 42. Professor Scavone has translated the critical passage as follows: "In 166 CE, when M. Antonius Verus, 14th from Augustus, began to rule with his brother Aur. Commodus, Lucius, king of the Britons, sent a letter to Eleutherus, the head of the Roman church, asking to be made a Christian through his agency. This was soon effected. And the Britons observed their new faith inviolate and whole, quietly in peace, until the rule of Diocletian." Scavone, *op.cit.*, p. 38, note 33 (December 2002).

⁶⁷ The entry was apparently drawn from a source document which had actually utilized the word "*Britio*", rather than "*Britanio*". Harnack, Adolph, *Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie*, Vol. I, pp. 906-916 (1904). There are several ancient references to Edessa's citadel as the *Britio Edessenorum*. See Scavone, *op.cit.*, pp. 29-30 (December 2002). See also, Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, pp. 171-172. Without elaboration, Segal suggests, in a footnote, that "there is no foundation for the hypothesis of Harnack that Abgar was in direct touch with Eleutherius, Bishop of Rome from 174 to 189". Segal, p. 70, n. 5.

⁶⁸ Professor Scavone previously raised the possibility ("I won't insist on this") that papal missionaries sent by Eleutherius may have presented Abgar the Great with the Shroud in an encased and folded state which revealed only its facial portion. Scavone, *op. cit.*, p. 30. For reasons set forth hereinafter, the author has concluded that the full-body imaged Shroud was displayed to the king.

⁶⁹ "Christians were persecuted fairly widely under Marcus Aurelius". Downey, p. 300.

⁷⁰ *Id.*, p. 303.

⁷¹ Commodus did not leave Italy after becoming emperor, electing, instead, to remain in Rome. *Id.*, p. 230.

⁷² Ramsay, p. 710.

⁷³ While there appears to have been no organized persecution of the Church under Septimius Severus, there were martyrdoms and, in approximately 202, he issued an edict affirming the imperial ban against conversions to Judaism and Christianity. Downey, p. 305.

⁷⁴ The wearing of a special head-dress, featuring a diadem with a tiara, was an Edessan king's prerogative. Segal, p. 18.

⁷⁵ This portrayal was first noted by Wilson. See Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, p. 167.

⁷⁶ Wilson describes Abgar's post-Commodus coinage portrayals as reflecting a more cautious approach, depicting tiaras which were plain, or decorated with pellets forming a cross-like shape, or having a pagan-style crescent ornament that was mixed up with stars and a setting often featuring crosses. "It was as if he were deliberately blurring the issue of whether he was or was not a full Christian." *Id.*

⁷⁷ Abgar helped Parthia to lay siege to the Roman-allied city of Nisibis, refused to yield forts to Rome, and prohibited imperial troops from entering his territories. Segal, p. 14.

⁷⁸ Abgar's divestiture is depicted on the Arch of Septimius Severus, located in the Roman forum.

⁷⁹ Abgar was accorded a very lavish reception by the Emperor. Segal, p. 14.

⁸⁰ "The history of the Christian community at Edessa during Serapion's bishopric gives us an insight into the influence that Antioch exerted among the Christian churches elsewhere in Syria. ...Antioch, both as the political metropolis of Syria and as the original center of Gentile Christianity, enjoyed special prestige, if not formal and official leadership, among the Syrian Christians. This hegemony is now well illustrated in the case of Edessa, which was the chief city in the eastern part of Syria. Edessa was not a Hellenic city, like Antioch, but remained predominantly Syrian in speech and culture. The circumstances of the arrival of Christianity in the city are, for lack of evidence, not clear, but it does appear that Christianity when it became established in Edessa---far away as it was from the great centers---took on a syncretistic character reflecting the influence of the native Syrian pagan cults. It appears---though again the evidence is not perfectly clear---that Serapion, while bishop of Antioch, undertook to correct this situation in Edessa and that he sent a missionary named Palut to the city in an effort to bring the community there into closer union with the body of the church. Palut was successful in introducing the accepted teachings of the time, and Serapion consecrated him as bishop of Edessa." Downey, p. 304.

⁸¹ Fox, p. 276.

⁸² Avircius' life was highly fictionalized in a fourth-century Greek biography, the *Acta S. Abercii*, written between 364 and 400. It includes a claim that he exorcised a demon from the daughter of Marcus Aurelius and then ordered it to carry a pagan altar from Rome to Hieropolis where it served as his tombstone. See Ramsay, pp. 713-714.

⁸³ *Id.*, p. 706. This city, located in Phrygia Salutaris, has often been confused with its more renowned namesake situated in Phrygia Pacatiensis.

⁸⁴ The debate centered on the validity of certain traditional Christian doctrines not specifically mentioned in the teachings of the Early Church Fathers.

⁸⁵ The term was coined, in 1666, by the Protestant theologian, Jean Daille. Many dissertations were catalogued under the terms *Disciplina Arcani* and *Arcandisciplin*. A detailed description of the custom may be found in *The Discipline of the Secret*, Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. V, Robert Appleton Company (New York 1907-1914).

⁸⁶ I Corinthians 3:1-2. In accord, Hebrews 5:12-14.

⁸⁷ Matthew 7:6 (the Sermon on the Mount).

⁸⁸ McNeil, Brian, *Avircius and the Song of Songs*, *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 23 (1977).

⁸⁹ See, e.g., Quasten, pp. 171-175.

⁹⁰ Ramsay, p. 789 (emphasis provided).

⁹¹ *Id.*, p. 711; p. 726.

⁹² Discovered in 1830 near Autun, in southern France.

⁹³ See Quasten, p. 174.

⁹⁴ *Octavius*, 9.

⁹⁵ *Stromata*, I, 1.

⁹⁶ Apostolic dogmas have been transmitted beneath the mystery of oral tradition. *De Spiritu Sancto*, 29, 71.

⁹⁷ “De Rossi, Duchesne, Cumont, Dolger, and Abel have successfully demonstrated that the content as well as the language proves beyond doubt its Christian origin”. Quasten, p. 172. “The inscription is certainly Christian”. Tixeront, p. 82. Shortly after its discovery, some scholars rejected the Christian nature of the inscription, while others staunchly defended its Christian character and the unity of its place and execution. *Abercius (Avircius), Pagan or Christian?, The Biblical World*, Vol. 7, No. 5, pp. 374-375 (May, 1896).

⁹⁸ “Abercius is probably the Avircius Marcellus, to whom the anonymous anti-Montanist ...had dedicated his work”. Tixeront, p. 82. See also Lightfoot, Part II, Vol. I, pp. 498-499. Avircius is a Latin name; however, towards the end of the second century, the Greeks began to replace the Latin V with a B, and this practice became commonplace in the third century. Ramsay, p. 737.

⁹⁹ The fragments contained lines seven through fifteen of the entire twenty-two line epitaph which is comprised of twenty-one hexameter verses and one pentameter verse (verse 2). *Abercius (Avircius), Pagan or Christian?, The Biblical World*, Vol. 7, No. 5, pp. 373-374 (May, 1896).

¹⁰⁰ “The text was composed at the end of the second century”. Tixeront, p. 82. See also Quasten, pp. 171-172. The inscription, in its language, symbolism, and paleographic characteristics, is quite similar to the *Inscription of Pectorius*. See Quasten, p. 174.

¹⁰¹ Ramsay, p. 710. “We can hardly date Avircius’s epitaph much later than 192, and it might well be earlier. But the boldness with which it was placed in a public position suggests that it was composed after peace for the Church had lasted some time: hence 192 seems a probable date, implying that Avircius was born in 121 A.D.” *Id.*, p. 713.

¹⁰² The author of the *Acta S. Abercii*, written between 364 and 400, reportedly copied the epitaph from the stone and incorporated it into his story. See Ramsay, pp. 713-714; however, because many errors have crept into the text as a result of corruption in the translation of manuscripts, too much stress must not be laid upon these manuscripts in settling upon an interpretation of the inscription. *Id.*, p. 723.

¹⁰³ In 1881, the epitaph of Alexander, son of Antonius, was also discovered by Professor Ramsay. It is almost identical to the *Inscription of Abercius* in lines 1 through 3 and 20 through 22; however, a mistake in meter, contained in line 2, establishes that it was copied from the epitaph of Abercius and not *vice versa*. *Abercius (Avircius), Pagan or Christian?, The Biblical World*, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 374 (May, 1896).

¹⁰⁴ This passage constitutes “an obvious reference to the esoteric sense that underlies the words” of the entire inscription. Ramsay, p. 711. In order to effectively deceive non-believers, the words employed “must be capable of a plain sense”. Ramsay, p. 726.

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ Quasten, pp. 171-172 (emphasis provided).

¹⁰⁷ Reconstruction and interpretation of the damaged text have long been the subject of lively debate. See, e.g., Ramsay, pp. 724-729. In 1939, a question arose over whether, in transporting the fragments, a single letter in line seven of the epitaph had been separated from the stone: "No disputed reading in the whole range of ancient Christian epigraphy has aroused keener controversy; no reading affects so vitally the whole purport of a document". See Calder, W. M., *The Epitaph of Avircius Marcellus*, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 29, Part 1, pp. 1-2 (1939).

¹⁰⁸ The fastest method of travel from Hieropolis to Rome was a five-day journey to Attaleia where one could board a ship coasting along from Syria or Egypt. Ramsay, p. 714.

¹⁰⁹ Quasten identified the Holy Shepherd as Christ. *Id.* Hilgenfeld, who rejected the Christian nature of the epitaph, suggested that Attis, designated in a Gnostic hymn as a shepherd, sent Avircius to Rome where he became acquainted with worshippers of Isis. *Abercius (Avircius), Pagan or Christian?*, *The Biblical World*, Vol. 7, No. 5, pp. 374-375 (May, 1896).

¹¹⁰ Quasten, p. 173.

¹¹¹ Emphasis provided. This paper employs the translation rendered early in the twentieth century by the noted scholar, H. Leclercq, and published in the original edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia. There are, of course, other translations. See, e.g., Quasten, p. 172; Zahn's "recension of the text" appears in *Abercius (Avircius), Pagan or Christian?*, *The Biblical World*, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 375 (May, 1896).

¹¹² Montanism was grounded upon the charismatic utterances of Montanus, a pagan priest of Phrygia who had converted to Christianity at about the middle of the second century. He claimed that the Holy Spirit spoke through him and his two female companions, Prisca and Maximilla. From about the year 160, the heresy quickly spread as far west as Gaul, and many cities of the Roman Empire had both orthodox and Montanist congregations. Olson, pp. 31-33. See also Chadwick, p. 52. While initially somewhat conciliatory, Eleutherius became a staunch opponent of the heresy and, in time, a synod of bishops excommunicated Montanus and his followers. Olson, p. 127.

¹¹³ Ramsay, p. 709. An anti-Montanistic treatise, datable to 192-193 (Ramsay, p. 710), was dedicated by its anonymous author to Avircius who had encouraged him to write it a "very long and sufficient time" beforehand. Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 5, 16, 3.

¹¹⁴ Quasten, p. 287-288.

¹¹⁵ At that time, Irenaeus was serving as a presbyter in the Lyons area of Gaul. Chadwick, p. 52.

¹¹⁶ The queen is, exoterically, the Empress, but esoterically the Church of Christ. Ramsay, p. 726. See also Quasten, p. 173. "We should take this as a reference, not as some have thought to the empress in her royal state, nor to the city itself, but to the church in Rome", as Avircius is employing language in two Old Testament passages familiarly applied to the Church; i.e, Psalm 45 and the Song of Songs. McNeil, Brian, *Avircius and the Song of Songs*, Vigiliae Christianae, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 23-34 (1977).

¹¹⁷ Segal, p. 19. The king's confidantes were known collectively as the *sharrire*, and they included the *tabulara*, or secretary to the king. Two *sharrire* were charged with the responsibility of maintaining the city's official archives. *Id.*, p. 20.

¹¹⁸ He may well be the Ma'nu who appears on an Edessan coin. *Id.*, p. 19.

¹¹⁹ "One of the columns on the Citadel was crowned...by a statue of Queen Shalmath". *Id.*, p. 33.

¹²⁰ *Id.*, p. 39.

¹²¹ *Id.*

¹²² Preceded in stature, at that time, only by Rome and Alexandria.

¹²³ Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria*, p. 304.

¹²⁴ See Segal, p. 69; map appears at p. 261. Nisibis had been captured by Rome in 165 and, in 196, was made a Roman colony, so "when Abercius visited...(it) was within the Empire's boundaries". Fox, p. 177.

¹²⁵ See Segal, pp. 41-42.

¹²⁶ Even in the fourth century, this line was damaged. *Abercius (Avircius), Pagan or Christian?*, *The Biblical World*, Vol. 7, No. 5, pp. 374-375 (May, 1896).

¹²⁷ Some believe that Avircius merely intended to indicate that he had journeyed with the writings of St. Paul in hand or, perhaps, that he had followed the path of that Apostle's third missionary journey on his return journey to Phrygia. Harnack concluded that a reference to Paul could not even be read into the inscription.

¹²⁸ Upon the death of Aggai. Howard, p. 105.

¹²⁹ Downey, p. 303. Serapion was also a staunch opponent of Montanism, as Eusebius reports that, in a letter addressed to Caricus and Pontius, he attacked the heresy. Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 5, 19, 1-4.

¹³⁰ Chadwick, p. 61. Segal, p. 81. Scavone, Daniel C., *op. cit.* “But Palut (the name is probably Greek) evidently represents a strain more acceptable to the dominant Greek-speaking church. He admitted the ecclesiastical authority of Antioch. Zephyrinus was Pope from about 198, and the submission of Edessa to Antioch may therefore belong to the early third century.” Segal, p. 81. For many years thereafter, Edessan Christians were called Palutians.

¹³¹ Emphasis provided.

¹³² “Eat with joy and desire, holding the Fish in thy hands. I pray, give as food the Fish, Lord and Savior.” Quasten, p. 174.

¹³³ Zahn renders the translation as “immense and clean”. *Abercius (Avircius), Pagan or Christian?*, *The Biblical World*, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 375 (May, 1896). Quasten employs the words “mighty and pure”. Quasten, p. 172.

¹³⁴ While the earliest extant version of the *Doctrine of Addai* is a ca. 400 edition (Segal, p. 76), its original composition derives from the end of the third century. Segal, p. 76; p. 62, note 3; Drews, p. 63; p. 72.

¹³⁵ The “sacred and profane archives of Edessa” consisted of a wide range of documents arranged into episcopal and lay categories. Segal, pp. 20-21.

¹³⁶ “As is the custom in the kingdom of King Abgar and in all kingdoms, everything which is said before him is written and placed among the records. Labubna, the son of Senaq the son of Abshadar, the scribe of the king, therefore, wrote the things concerning the Apostle Addai from the beginning to the end, while Hanan, the faithful archivist of the king, set the hand of witness and placed it among the records of the royal books, where the statutes and ordinances are placed. The matters belonging to those who buy and sell are also kept there with care and concern.” Howard, pp. 105-107.

¹³⁷ Howard, p. 89 (emphasis provided).

¹³⁸ “The Syriac *Acts of Thaddaeus* (i.e., *The Doctrine of Addai*)...was perhaps the source of the account of Abgar in Eusebius...” Segal, p. 62, note 3. The early form of the Syriac text was probably known to Eusebius. Drews, p. 72.

¹³⁹ Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 1, 13, 13.

¹⁴⁰ “You have written evidence of these things taken from the archives of Edessa, which was at that time a royal city. For in the public registers there, which contain accounts of ancient times and the acts of Abgurus, these things have been found preserved down to the present time. But there is no better way than to hear the epistles themselves which we have taken from the archives and have literally translated from the Syriac language...”. Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 1, 13, 5. See also Quasten, p. 141; Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, p. 166. As a leading cleric, Eusebius was bound to honor the Discipline in devising his version of the tale.

¹⁴¹ The imperial ban extended as well to Judaism. See Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria*, p. 305. Downey, *Ancient Antioch*, p. 133.

¹⁴² Segal believes that the first century milieu of the Abgar Legend may have been invented in order to bestow upon Edessa an artificial mark of apostolic foundation: “Upon the story of the evangelization of Edessa rests largely the claim of the city to pre-eminence in Christendom”. Segal, p. 64. It has also been suggested that the legend of the earlier Abgar’s letters from Jesus was created simply to glorify Abgar the Great: “A king’s Christianity deserved a noble ancestry, so the Edessans invented one.” Fox, p. 279.

¹⁴³ Eusebius, *Church History*, 1, 13, 6-9. Eusebius claims to have quoted the correspondence directly from the archives; however, it is interesting to note both that such correspondence is not mentioned in the *Doctrine of Addai* and also that the initial edition of the *Liber Pontificalis*, which reports Abgar’s letter, may have been completed as early as the middle of the third century (see note 64). The author suggests that Eusebius may have employed an ecclesiastical, rather than an archival, source for this portion of his narrative.

¹⁴⁴ Howard, p. 9. Some scholars have speculated that Eusebius may have suppressed reference to the portrait because of his iconoclastic views. See Drews, pp. 72-73. The author believes it more likely that, in accordance with the precepts of the Discipline, he omitted this part of the Syriac narrative to conceal the relic’s existence.

¹⁴⁵ Howard, p. 13. See also Cureton, p. 4; Eusebius, *Church History*, 1, 13, 13; Segal, p. 76.

¹⁴⁶ Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, p. 169.

¹⁴⁷ The *Doctrine of Addai* reports that Edessa’s principal pagan altar remained intact. Howard, p. 69.

¹⁴⁸ “At the beginning of the third century there was a Christian church in a prominent quarter of Edessa, but probably the majority of the population was still pagan”. Segal, p. 62. *Id.*, p.81. “...Christianity when it became established in Edessa...took on a syncretistic character reflecting the influence of the native Syrian pagan cults.” Downey, p. 340.

¹⁴⁹ The poem was first published and translated, in 1871, by Professor William Wright in his *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, and it has also been called *The Hymn of the Soul*, *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory*, and *The Song of Deliverance*. “The copy of the original Syriac text is found in a single MS. only (Brit. Mus. Add. 14645), which contains a collection of Lives of Saints, and bears the precise date 936 A.D.” Mead, p. 10.

¹⁵⁰ There is reference in the poem to the Parthian dynasty which was overthrown in 224. *Id.*, p. 10. In accord with its early third-century date is Kuryluk, Ewa, *Veronica and Her Cloth*, p. 216, Basil Blackwell, Inc. (Cambridge, Mass. 1991). Rev. Kim Dreisbach postulated that the poem was authored in the first century and, accepting the literal chronology of the Abgar Legend, suggested that it reflected knowledge of the Shroud’s presentation to Abgar Ukkama. While acknowledging that Kuryluk had dated the *Hymn* to the early third century, he cited J. B. Segal’s comment that it “may go back to the first century” and averred that Jean Danielou “seems to settle this debate” in his statement that certain Christian documents, including the *Hymn of the Pearl*, “go back, in part, to the end of the 1st century”. Dreisbach, Albert R., *Thomas & the Hymn of the Pearl*, Proceedings of the Sindone 2000 Shroud Conference, Orvieto, Italy (not yet published); Shroud Library, www.shroud.com. Neither Ewa Kuryluk nor Cardinal Danielou, a theologian, provided support for their opposing dating conclusions, and Segal elaborated no further on his said comment, while dating the *Acts of Thomas* to the third century.

¹⁵¹ Segal, p. 35. The *Acts of Thomas* “were written in Syriac in the first half of the third century.” Quasten, p. 139.

¹⁵² Bevan, p. 1.

¹⁵³ Mead, pp. 10-11. It is “an independent composition and may therefore be treated separately”. Bevan, preface.

¹⁵⁴ “After the Messiah had ascended to heaven Judas Thomas sent Addai, the apostle, one of the seventy-two apostles, to Abgar”. Howard, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵ The poem’s theme of a soul being dispatched to earth from heaven contradicts the Manichaean view that the soul and the body were commingled before the world was created. Bevan, pp. 3-4.

¹⁵⁶ A little more than a century after Bardaisan’s death, St. Ephraim charged him with promoting the following heretical tenets: (1) the denial of a bodily resurrection; (2) the existence of a divine Mother, as well as a divine Father; and (3) the existence of lesser gods. *Id.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁷ “The author most probably belonged to the sect of Bardaisan at Edessa.” Quasten, p. 139. It may also have been written by his son, Harmonius. Bevan, p. 6.

¹⁵⁸ Mead, pp. 11-12.

¹⁵⁹ Quasten, p. 57; Segal, p. 35.

¹⁶⁰ Segal, pp. 35-36.

¹⁶¹ Howard, p. 11.

¹⁶² Rev. Dreisbach, who appears to have been the first to appreciate the sindonic significance of that portion of the *Hymn* which is quoted at length hereinafter, did not address the allegorical content or meaning of the entire poem. See Dreisbach, *op.cit.*

¹⁶³ See Quasten, p. 139.

¹⁶⁴ Bevan, pp. 25-27, verses 76-78.

¹⁶⁵ *Id.*, pp. 25-27, verse 86.

¹⁶⁶ Rev. 17:14; 19:16

¹⁶⁷ Rev. 19:16