P.S. to the NEWS
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TWO MODERN MIRACLES

Doubting Thomases are far more numerous today than in the time of Christ. How often we hear sceptics say, "I can't accept miracles on faith. If I could see a miracle proved, I could believe."

Many people believe that the Holy Shroud of Turin is a miracle that should satisfy even the most skeptical. It was closely examined by 36 American scientists, many of them atheists, in Turin, Italy, last October. While the team has agreed not to discuss its findings in public yet, no scientific evidence has been produced to dispute the belief that it was the Shroud of Christ.

The Holy Shroud is an ivory-colored cloth, measuring 14 feet, 3 inches long and 3 feet, 7 inches wide. It bears the front and back images of a very muscular man between 5-foot-8 and 5-foot-10 and weighing about 165 pounds.

Blood spots around the image of the head indicate that the man was crowned with thorns. There is no record of any crucifixion victim other than Christ being tortured with a crown of thorns. Historical scholars believe that the Romans would not have crowned an ordinary criminal; they were solicitious to crown only royalty.

The Shroud shows that 280 lashes were inflicted on the back of the body with sharp metal whips. This was seven times the supposed legal limit, which was 40. The Romans did not scourge men they intended to kill by crucifixion. The Gospels tell us that Christ was scourged because Pilate thought that the vicious scourging would satisfy the blood lust of the mob.

The images on the Shroud, which are in light-to-medium sepia tones, clearly show another unique wound inflicted on Christ, the spear thrust in his side, as well as the wounds in the wrists and feet. The face is beaten and the nose broken. The long hair is cut in the style worn by young Jewish men of the first century.

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The Holy Shroud can be traced back to the time of the Crusades. It would have been impossible then to have made an image on cloth that would be a perfect reproduction of a man with the hair style and body wounds which were peculiar to the crucified Christ.

Among the hundreds of scientific tests performed on the Shroud by the American team that went to Turin last October, one used a scanning electronic microscope to examine pollen grains on the cloth. The tests show that the cloth had been in Palestine, Turkey and northern Europe, thereby helping to confirm its authenticity.

The Holy Shroud provides impressive proof that Christ suffered and died, exactly as described in the four Gospels.

Many people believe that another visible, tangible miracle exists in an old convent in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is called St. Joseph's stairs.

A hundred years ago, a chapel was built for the Sisters of Loretto there, designed as a miniature of Saint-Chappelle in Paris. Through the architect's error, no way was provided to get from the chapel to the choir loft.

The nuns prayed to St. Joseph, the carpenter, for help. On the ninth day, a gray-haired man on a burro, carrying an old tool box, appeared at the convent and offered to build stairs to the choir loft, provided no one went inside until he finished. After three months he invited the nuns to inspect his work: a beautiful, hardwood spiral staircase of 33 steps, with two complete 360-degree turns.

All spiral staircases have some external support such as a wall or a centerpole; this one has none. The cleaning woman who cleans the stairs says she can see no visible nails. The hard wood in the staircase is not native to New Mexico and the carpenter had no lumber when he arrived.

Experts say the stairs should have crumbled the first time weight was put on it. No one can explain how they have withstood a century of use.

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