

THE LANGUAGE AND SENSIBILITY OF RESEARCH PAPERS IN SINDONOLOGY

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I. Introduction:

I trust that the following paper will not cause offence to the learned scholars of Sindonology.

I am the author of *Third World Children Dreaming* (1), *The Tyranny of Karma* (2), *Dora* (3), *Jesus is Indian and other South African Stories* (4), *What Passing Bells* (5). I am a graduate of Pius XII University College (Lesotho), the University of York (UK), and the University of Zimbabwe.

My purpose in writing this paper is to propose a Sindonology style sheet. I will do this by raising awareness of the language and sensibility of Sindonology research papers, after I have placed the Holy Shrouds in context. (Kindly refer to the bibliography of Sindonology papers I have read and the web sites which I have visited.)

This paper is submitted here for consideration by the Custodians of the Holy Shroud of Turin and the Holy Sudarium of Oviedo, researchers, specialist journals, interest groups and interested individuals.

From my reading it is clear that most Sindonology research papers relate to the Holy Shroud of Turin. My analysis will therefore, focus on those research papers, but the style sheet that I am proposing is intended for use in research papers on the Holy Sudarium of Oviedo as well as the Holy Shroud of Turin. I will refer to the two cloths collectively as the Holy Shrouds; but to the Holy Shroud of Turin on its own as the Holy Shroud, and the Holy Sudarium of Oviedo as the Holy Sudarium.

I will not discuss the merits or demerits of research into the Holy Shrouds, the age of the cloths, or the mechanism by which the image was formed on the Holy Shroud of Turin. Instead I will focus on the language and sensibility of research papers. Where Shroud-related issues are mentioned, it will only be in relation to language and sensibility, and to the context of the Holy Shrouds.

II. The Context of the Holy Shroud of Turin and the Holy Sudarium of Oviedo:

(i) Religion and Faith, Science and Matter:

I cannot propose a Sindonology style sheet without a reasoned argument, and to establish the reasons for my focusing on the language and sensibility of Sindonology research papers, it is necessary for me to explain my perception of the context in which the Holy Shrouds are placed.

Cloths:

The undisputed facts about the Holy Shrouds are that each is a piece of cloth. One cloth is stained with blood and the other cloth bears two images that depict a dead man whom millions believe to be Jesus Christ. I could add that both cloths are stained

with blood, but that may be disputed. There are numerous disputed issues some of which relate to the image on the image-bearing cloth.

Both cloths may be categorized according to the use to which they were put. Because the image on the cloth is the life-size frontal and dorsal image of a dead man who is believed to be Jesus Christ, it is believed that the image-bearing cloth was used as a shroud. The cloth which bears blood stains is also categorized as a shroud because it is believed to have been in contact with the same man (Jesus Christ) whose image is on the image-bearing shroud.

From mere cloth each is categorized as a shroud.

(ii) Ownership as a determinant of context:

Shrouds:

Ownership of these shrouds adds a further dimension to their context. Were either shroud in the possession of archaeologists each would be an artefact in a museum in Europe or the Middle East. Each shroud is, however, in the possession of Christians, who venerate it; pray to it; have hidden it; gone in search of it; waged crusades to gain possession of it; and protect it as anyone would a priceless gem. In Christian hands each shroud is classed as a religious relic. From mere cloth they become, not just shrouds, but Holy Shrouds.

(iii) Believers and Non-believers in the authenticity of the Holy Shrouds

Holy Shrouds:

In addition to the element of ownership of the Holy Shrouds, there is the element of Belief contributing to the context. With regard to the Holy Shroud of Turin in particular, it is essential to note that people fall into two categories: that of believers and non-believers. These terms have no reference to any particular religion, but merely to belief in the authenticity of the Holy Shrouds - and disbelief. There are believers in the authenticity of the Holy Shrouds who are non-Christians; as well as Christians who doubt the authenticity of the Holy Shrouds.

The believers in the authenticity of the Holy Shroud of Turin believe that:

- a) the Holy Shroud is the actual cloth in which Jesus Christ was wrapped on the first Good Friday,
- b) the image on the Holy Shroud is the Image of Jesus Christ,
- c) the blood on the Holy Shroud is the Blood of Jesus Christ.

The believers in the authenticity of the Holy Shroud of Oviedo believe that:

- d) the blood on the Holy Shroud is the Blood of Jesus Christ.

It is important also, to note that an essential dogma of Christian faith is the belief that

- e) Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became Man, was crucified, died on the crucifix, and after burial, rose from the dead.

Christians who believe in the authenticity of the Holy Shrouds, also believe in the Divinity, Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Non-Christians who believe in the authenticity of the Holy Shroud do not share the belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ.

The element of belief and disbelief added to that of non-Christian belief could give rise to a situation where a researcher may believe that the Holy Shroud of Turin is the actual cloth that wrapped Jesus Christ, but that researcher, if a non-Christian,

will not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. For example, Muslims believe that Jesus was a prophet; Hindus believe that Jesus was a holy man equivalent to Mahatma Gandhi; Jews do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

Doubters of the authenticity of the Holy Shroud of Turin in particular, believe that it is a fake, a forgery, a painting, a primitive photograph, etc.

It is this element that is reflected in the language of Sindonology papers, which I will discuss later.

(iv) Dogmas of Faith :

The Holy Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo are, neither of them, dogmas of Christian faith. They may well become proofs, or even be used to disprove basic tenets of Christianity, but Christians are not bound to believe in their authenticity or fraudulence.

Dogmas of faith may be sustained by logical argument, but faith may not be proven by material evidence. The very nature of faith precludes material proof. Because each cloth is a tangible object, consisting of matter which may be seen and touched, the cloths themselves are not elements of faith. Should either the Holy Shrouds of Turin or Oviedo ever be scientifically proven to be authentic, then faith, which is a leap away from matter and proof, will cease to be a requirement for the tenets of Christianity that the Holy Shrouds relate to: Faith in Jesus Christ's Humanity and Divinity, as proven by His Death and Resurrection will cease to be dogmas of Christianity. The Resurrection will become instead a scientifically proven fact.

In summary, the Holy Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo, are in the possession of Christians who *believe* in the Incarnation, Divinity, Death and Resurrection of Jesus and who venerate the Holy Shrouds as religious relics of Jesus Christ. Their belief does not rest on proof. This is the context in which the Holy Shrouds are placed.

Proposal 1:

My first proposal is that all research conducted on the Holy Shrouds should be based on the assumption that these cloths *are believed to be* the religious relics of Jesus Christ, because this is the context in which the Holy Shroud of Turin and the Holy Sudarium of Oviedo are placed. Researchers should then formulate their hypotheses around this assumption.

III. Analysis of the Language and Sensibility of research papers:

As a result of the first photograph of the Holy Shroud of Turin taken by Seconda Pia in 1898, the Holy Shroud came under the scrutiny of researchers. Now, whereas the Holy Shrouds of Turin and Oviedo have, for centuries, been treated by Christians as the relics of Jesus Christ, the language and sensibility of the research papers written over the past century, reflect instead:

1. that the relics have no significance,
2. irreverence,
3. a failure to recognize the uniqueness of Jesus,

4. the loss of identity of Jesus,
5. the depersonalization of Jesus,
6. the use of euphemisms for the name of Jesus,
7. the dehumanization of Jesus,
8. a disturbing sensibility.

My analysis of the research papers will discuss the above points.

(i) The Significance of the Religious Relic

My first argument relates to the fact that the Holy Shroud *is* a religious relic.

William Meacham in a thoughtful paper 'An Authentication of the Turin Shroud: An issue in Archaeological Epistemology' (6) states,

"The fact that it is a religious relic associated with supernatural claims is of no consequence here; certainly there is no justification for employing different or stricter criteria than for any other important artefact, except perhaps in according greater consideration to the possibility of forgery." (my emphasis) (7)

I disagree. Not with the proposal of uniform standards and criteria for all research, - which is the reason for my paper - but with the basis of Meacham's argument that the classification of the Holy Shroud as a religious relic is of "no consequence". How can it be of no consequence that these are religious relics? It is of no small consequence that these Holy Shrouds are *believed* to be the relics of Jesus Christ. That is why there is so much interest in the Holy Shrouds.

Meacham's error is to refer to the Holy Shroud as both a 'religious relic' and an 'artefact'. This is a contradiction in terms. An artefact belongs to archaeology, a relic belongs to religion.

The fact that the Holy Shroud is a religious relic demands some consideration from all researchers, believers and non-believers in its authenticity, both Christian and non-Christian. Consideration should at least be perceived in the sensibility that informs the writing of research papers. Yes, the standards and criteria used when conducting research into the Holy Shrouds should be as stringent as for other research; so too should the writing of the research papers. Researchers should keep in mind that the Holy Shrouds *are* religious relics for Christians. One's disbelief should not empower one to scorn another's religious beliefs.

Proposal 2:

Research papers should reflect the awareness that the Holy Shroud of Turin and the Holy Sudarium of Oviedo are *believed* to be the relics of Jesus Christ.

(ii) The Universal Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

My second argument is based on 'Universal Uniqueness'. Where there is one person of a type, a person who is unique in the universe, our language permits us to

refer to that person with the article 'the'. But more specific to our purpose our language respects such people with specific forms of address. There is a protocol for Heads of States and for Royalty. For example, there is one Pope, one Queen, one Archbishop of Canterbury. Our language respects these people with forms of address, such as The Holy Father whom we accept to mean the Pope; Her Majesty the Queen who is the Queen of England and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. There is one Jesus Christ. Christians refer to Jesus as 'Our Lord'. Non-Christians cannot refer to Jesus as 'Our Lord' because of the possessive pronoun 'our'. Jesus is not 'Lord' to non-Christians. It therefore, becomes necessary to propose alternatives to be used in research papers written by non-Christians and by non-believers in the authenticity of the Holy Shroud, alternatives that affords the respect to Jesus Christ that our language affords the category of people who have what is called Universal Uniqueness.

(iii) Irreverence in research papers

My third argument deals with irreverence. Irreverence is a form of disrespect. It may be for a person or object that deserves some respect.

One unfortunate writer, Salman Rushdie, has had the death sentence pronounced on him by the late Ayatollah Khomeini, for Rushdie's novel '*The Satanic Verses*' (8) because it was deemed offensive to Muslims. That is one extreme. I do not condone such action against any writer, whatever the offence caused to the reader. But Sindonology research papers seem to have touched the other extreme.

A paper written by Emanuela Marinelli is titled "The Bloody Icon". (9) Whether intended or not, Marinelli's title contains a pun on the word 'bloody'. Countless words in the English language have several meanings one may be a verb, the other a noun e.g. book, stand, shop. The meaning depends on the sentence in which the word appears. However, when one uses the 'pun' the two meanings of the word are read together. The word 'bloody' in this title has two meanings, which because of the pun, are simultaneous. i.e. one cannot read only one meaning into the word 'bloody'. One has to read both meanings into it. 'Bloody' means 'stained with blood', so that the title reads, The Icon Stained With Blood. 'Bloody' also means 'damned' or 'accursed'. So our reading of the title is 'The Damned, Accursed, Icon, Stained With Blood'.

In case we have forgotten, this 'damned', 'accursed' 'icon' is believed to have enfolded the Body of Jesus Christ after He died a harrowing death by crucifixion.

Let us imagine that the Holy Shroud of Turin was the burial covering of the Prophet Mohammed; the Buddha; the former Dalai Lama. How would the research papers have been couched? Would there have been consultation with the relevant religious experts to ensure that there were no boundaries crossed, no offence caused to the believers?

I have the sense that Christians are embarrassed to ask for a small measure of respect for Jesus Christ.

Muslims have the Kaa'bah and Jews the Wailing Wall. We respect the beliefs surrounding these places. Christians entering a Hindu Temple, or a Mosque, will be requested to remove their shoes. Christians in a Mosque or Temple are not expected to be reverent, but irreverence would not be tolerated.

While not expecting research papers to show reverence. academic standards demand sensitivity to the reader. The absence of irreverence, ridicule, and blasphemy

when writing about a religious relic of whatever denomination, would certainly come within the scope of meeting academic standards.

I will therefore, go even further than William Meacham. I propose that research papers on the Holy Shrouds should not be written in a style that causes offence to the reader.

(iv) The Loss of Identity of Jesus Christ

My fourth argument relates to Jesus Christ's loss of identity in research papers. Robert Bucklin in his paper titled "An Autopsy on the Man of the Shroud", (10) proceeds in the same manner that he would if he were conducting an autopsy on a corpse: he determines the cause of death, then the identity of the deceased person. For the length of the paper Bucklin proceeds as if he does not know the identity of the corpse he is performing the 'autopsy' on, and the reader - believer and non-believer in the Holy Shroud's authenticity - goes along with him. Finally Bucklin states:

"It is the ultimate responsibility of the medical examiner to confirm by whatever means are available to him the identity of the deceased, as well as to determine the manner of this death. In the case of the Man of the Shroud, the forensic pathologist will have information relative to the circumstances of death by crucifixion which he can support by his anatomic findings. He will be aware that the individual whose image is depicted on the cloth has undergone puncture injuries to his wrists, and feet, puncture injuries to his head, multiple traumatic whip-like injuries to his back and postmortem puncture injury to his chest area which has released both blood and a water type of fluid. From this data, it is not an unreasonable conclusion for the forensic pathologist to determine that only one person historically has undergone this sequence of events. That person is Jesus Christ." (11)

Bucklin has identified the corpse. Having reached this conclusion following the so-called 'autopsy', the reader has a legitimate expectation that references to the 'Man of the Shroud' will be substituted with the name of the person identified by the 'autopsy', viz. Jesus Christ. Bucklin, however, reverts to his former style. He avoids the use of the name 'Jesus Christ'. Bucklin substitutes "decedent" and "the individual" for the name of Jesus.

"For the manner of death to be determined, a full investigation of the circumstances of death is necessary. In this case it would be determined historically, that the individual was sentenced to death, and that the execution was carried out by crucifixion. The manner of death would be classed as judicial homicide."(12)

This is interpreted as a loss of identity. The unknown, nameless 'Man of the Shroud' has been identified as Jesus Christ for the purpose of Bucklin's paper, but in the final analysis, there is a reluctance to attribute a name to the 'Man of the Shroud'. In the above paragraph, Bucklin could have written, 'In this case it would be determined historically that *Jesus Christ* was sentenced to death'

(v) The Depersonalization of Jesus Christ

My fifth argument relates to the absence of a referent or an agent in research papers. Frederick T Zugibe in his paper “Pierre Barbet Revisited”, writes about the ‘Cause of Death’ (13) as follows:

“In order to arrive at the most probable cause of death, it is necessary to examine the sequence of all the events from Gethsemane through Calvary, the severe mental anguish exhibited in the Garden of Gethsemane would cause some loss in blood volume both from sweating and hematodrosis and provoke marked weakness.” (14)

This is a passive clause because there is no referent to experience the mental anguish, the loss of blood, even the death. Zugibe in the paragraph the ‘cause of death’ refers to no-one. The ‘events from Gethsemane through Calvary’ relates to no-one. The mental anguish is ‘exhibited’ by no-one. These experiences could relate to the disciples, to Judas, to the Roman soldiers, to Jesus Christ. We are not told to whom they relate. Why is no-one experiencing Gethsemane to Calvary? Or the agony in the Garden?

Whereas there was no person as a referent in the above sentence, Zugibe then uses the term ‘victim’. The victim not having been identified as male or female, Zugibe then introduces ‘he’ into the paragraph. There is no antecedent for ‘he’ except the ‘victim’, who was neither male nor female. The name of Jesus Christ has not appeared. Yet Zugibe provides the reader with the names of Temney and Primrose, and gives both the common and botanical names for the thorns which went into making the crown of thorns on Jesus’ head.

What is the effect of writing in this manner? Where the pain, the suffering, the anguish, the cause of death, become subjects of the sentence? Writing that replaces the actual subject of the sentence who should be the person experiencing the pain and suffering? Where the acts committed against a person, and the experiences that a person lives through are communicated without that person being referred to?

The effect is for the person to be distanced from the action and the experience. The person is removed from the acts and experiences. Such writing renders the experiences less potent, less active, less dramatic, less meaningful, because it is not identified with a person. In effect, the suffering experienced by Jesus Christ, is removed from Him. Jesus Christ has been depersonalized in this type of writing.

(vi) Euphemisms for the name of Jesus

My sixth argument relates to the use of euphemisms by researchers when referring to Jesus Christ. A euphemism is a word substituted for another when the first word would cause offence. For example, instead of saying that a man is lying, one might say ‘he is being economical with the truth’. People use euphemisms when women are present, in the presence of children, for parts of the body etc. Holy Shroud researchers use euphemisms for the name of Jesus Christ in their research papers. Euphemisms that appear in research papers are ‘Cruciaris’, ‘victim’, ‘the man of the shroud’, ‘the decedent’, ‘the individual’ ‘the crucified’, ‘the deceased’, ‘the individual’ etc. The question one has to ask is, ‘What is offensive about the name of

Jesus Christ that would prompt researchers to use euphemisms for the name of Jesus? Surely nothing.

It may be because researchers base their hypotheses and begin their papers on the assumption that the identity of the Man whose image appears on the Holy Shroud is not known. If my first proposal is accepted, then the euphemisms for the name of Jesus Christ would become unnecessary.

(vii) Dehumanizing the Passion of Jesus

My seventh argument is the separation of the physical and physiological elements of Jesus' body from Himself. The research papers utilize the impersonal pronoun 'it' when referring to the experiences of Jesus. For example, 'It bled'. What is 'it'? 'It' refers to the wound, the head, the hand. Belonging to whom? Belonging to Jesus Christ. It should be 'He bled', or 'His hand bled, or 'His wounds bled'.

'It' refers to a thing. It is mainly used in connection with inanimate referents.'(5) If the argument for using 'it' when referring to Jesus suffering, is that Jesus was dead, my response is twofold:

1. Jesus was alive while His wounds bled.

2. Christians believe that Jesus lives. He is the living God. Because the Holy Shrouds are Christian relics, research papers should respect that belief.

There is no argument for using 'it' when referring to the suffering of Jesus Christ.

Researchers in their manner of writing, have dehumanized the suffering of Jesus Christ.

(viii) The Sensibility of Shroud research

My eight argument relates to the overall sense I have when reading the Holy Shroud research papers. In some the tone of writing is mocking, and derisory. It gives one some awareness of the sensibility of the crowd and the Roman soldiers at the time of the Passion of Christ. The research also includes work that is macabre and sado-masochistic. Frederick T Zugibe writes as follows:

“The large square iron nails driven through both hands into the cross would damage the sensory branches of the median nerve resulting in one of the most exquisite pains every experienced by people and known medically as causalgia.”(14) (my emphasis)

Zugibe is referring to the pain experienced when the Median nerve of an unnamed person is struck with a nail. The reader will be cognizant of the fact that this is the pain that was suffered by Jesus Christ.

Without meaning to offend, I respectfully request Sindonology researchers, interest groups and individuals to be sensitive to the fact that Christians love Jesus Christ.

IV. LANGUAGE STYLE SHEET PROPOSALS:

Research and academic institutions, and academic journals throughout the world, stipulate the format and the style sheet for articles, research papers, doctoral theses. For example the Modern Language Association of America has its own style sheet which is used by many universities. Sindonology research papers should also conform to a style sheet because the research is of an academic nature, and because Sindonology focuses on two Christian relics, the style sheet should conform to style sheets adopted by Christians when writing about Jesus Christ. My source is The Holy Bible: New King James Version. (57)

I am proposing that Sindonology research papers should maintain the same high standards in the use of language as researchers would use for any other form of research, and as the editors and translators of the Holy Bible would use.

Proposal 3:

Research papers should conform to an academic style that does not cause offence to believers in the authenticity of the Holy Shroud of Turin and the Holy Shroud of Oviedo as the relics of Jesus Christ.

I propose the following language style sheet as a guideline for future Sindonology research papers. I sincerely hope that researchers and journals will not be offended by my proposals. I welcome additions, criticisms, and corrections.

SINDONOLOGY LANGUAGE STYLE SHEET

- 1) Research hypotheses should be formulated to prove that the Holy Shrouds are not the authentic relics of Jesus Christ, the basic assumption being that these are *believed* to be the relics of Jesus Christ.
- 2) The language of research papers should meet academic standards and should not cause offence.
- 3) The Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo should be referred to as the Holy Shroud of Turin and the Holy Sudarium of Oviedo, using initial capitals.
- 4) Both the Holy Shroud of Turin and the Holy Sudarium of Oviedo may be referred to as the Holy Shrouds.
- 5) While not seeking for reverence, the writing should refrain from irreverence, ridicule, blasphemy.
- 6) Euphemisms should not be used in place of the name of Jesus Christ.
- 7) The article 'the' may be used to reflect the universal uniqueness of Jesus as in 'The Christ', 'The Messiah', 'The Saviour', 'The Lamb'.
- 8) When referring to Jesus Christ, the writer should use personal pronouns e.g. His, Him, He.
- 9) Personal Pronouns referring to Jesus Christ should use initial capitals i.e. You, Your, Yours, His, Him. He. (I am basing this point on the usage of the King James Bible)
- 10) The physical and physiological parts of the Body of Jesus Christ should be attributed to Jesus Christ by the use of the possessive pronoun and should not be referred to as if they had an existence of their own. The acceptable usage would be 'His Wounds', 'His Blood', 'His Body', 'His Hands', 'His Feet', 'His Head', etc.
- 11) Parts of the Body of Jesus Christ such as the wounds, the blood, the body,

- should not be referred to with the impersonal pronoun 'it'.
- 12) References to the parts of the Body of Jesus Christ e.g. Body, Blood, Wrists, Hands, Feet, Wounds, should be indicated with an initial capital.
 - 13) Words attributed to Jesus Christ, such as words quoted from the Holy Bible, should be marked off from the rest of the text by the use of Italics, underlining, or colour. (The King James Bible demarcates the words spoken by Jesus in red ink).

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