

SHARING THE SHROUD

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Presentation : First International Congress on the Shroud in Spain. (Valencia, 2012)

On an article signed by Javier Sierra, in its March- April number in 1989 on the magazine Universo Secreto...

...the true Shroud of Turin was exhibited until 1929.
...because at that moment the Vatican decided to change it for an exact copy.
...what is curious is that the informative source that has released this remarkable news is...
...a report made by aliens who dwell on the planet Ummo.

According to José Macca ,on his report written in Diario 16 the 29th of May in 1988, it is absolutely logical that the blood on the Shroud- only a painting to him- is clear red because red was in fashion in the middle Ages.

The 5th of August in 1988, the newspaper called El Independiente published an article by Valter Maggiorani that stated that Jesus was resurrected because he had a super blood having 11 million red blood cells per cubic millimetre instead of the five million that ordinary people have.

That is why this Italian wanted to artificially dehydrate a number of dogs in order to obtain from those animals new samples with superblood to demonstrate the resurrection with an experiment.

To embellish this striking piece of news I will comment that the word Síndone does not come as we believed, from the Greek, but the Sábana Santa (Holy Shroud) was found in the Phoenicia city Sidon, which is called Saida nowadays, as the newspaper El País published on the 27th of June in 1988, paradoxically in its column “culture”; Besides, ten years later this news was confirmed by Muy Interesante, the popular science magazine which is popular in Spain.

An odd report was published in Las Provincias and signed by Santiago Fernandez, on the 19th of April of 1989. It is an interview in which Williar Libby, a Nobel Prize winner and founder of the method to date the C14, complained about the enormous mistakes made in the radiocarbon dating in the previous months . The only problem was that the supposed interviewee had died on the 8th of September of 1980, that is, nine years before the interview.

If we add that in the same press conference held by Jorge Manuel Rodriguez - nowadays the president of the Centro Español de Sindonología, -a reporter judged the Cloth of Oviedo to be false and another journalist, having heard the same words from the same speaker the same day, judged it to be authentic, as a result, nobody in Spain should be surprised to find a great deal of confusion surrounding the subject of the Shroud.

In 2004 I discovered that nobody had done an in depth study about why there is so much difference between what researchers have found and what the media publishes; that is the reason why I decided to devote my doctoral thesis to this subject.

What I present here are the conclusions of this research which are presented in the hope that those reading will feel moved enough to attend the conference proceedings; as those who read my paper they will realize how serious the problem is give that between scientists and the public there is a filter called the media which does not always fulfil its obligations as it should.

I am a journalist and it is an honour for me to be one, and I don't wish anything I say to be taken as a generalization but as the reflection of the wrong way some media tackle such a complex and remarkable subject as the holy Shroud.

How is it possible to understand that a scientific matter is written about in an opinion column? Science is not an opinion. It is, to a certain extent, a topic to be discussed by scientists and never by somebody who gives an opinion.

What would we think about a journalist who dared to write that, in his opinion, water does not boil at one hundred degrees or that the Earth is flat? Why is this criteria not followed when discussing the Síndone? There is a problem with the word sceptical. Sceptical does not mean "objective". It would be as to say "I am going to study this subject from a believer's point of view". At the moment of working in a scientific way, it is not an obstacle to be a believer and being sceptical is not a virtue, because in no way is the evidence of the facts going to be changed. Water boils at a 100 degrees no matter if I am Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or sceptical.

I have also seen too many words such as "polemic" or "controversial". According to the real Academia dictionary "controversial" is what gives grounds for an opposite opinion, and that is why we see it as improper to apply it to a scientifically studied archaeological item where opinions are not worthy, only facts are sufficient.

Dr. Victor Sanz shows that he is very sceptical in his article written in the review "The Doctor", stating that he acts in defense of reason but he quotes statements which are scantily reasonable such as when Broch said that with the same test used for the Síndone the conclusion could have been that Jesus was a plant. But as Stevenson and Habermas state in their book Veredict on the Shroud, if this hadn't been an historical question, concerning anyone else instead of Jesus, the amount of evidence we have got about the Síndone would have been enough to identify the man on the Shroud. But as it is Jesus Christ many retreat in the face of all these historical and scientific tests, probably because they do not like the conclusion such evidence obliges them to.

My aim when writing my doctoral thesis was to show the differences among, rigorous checked scientific articles and the tabloid ones. Therefore, I tested about 700 articles choosing the 50 which representative the most common errors that the press makes when it talks about the Shroud.

One of these mistakes is known by journalists as a MUTILATED TRUTH. For instance, in the afore mentioned article about the superblood of Jesus there is also a mocking reference to a relic named the wings of the archangel St. Michael which Christians venerate in a church in Liria. However, it is not mentioned that these wings were remains of a burnt gothic wooden image of the archangel St Michael. The writer omits an important fact which clearly shows his prejudice. Something similar happens when it is said that John Jackson has theology skills but it is omitted that he is a doctor of physics.

It is easy to find THAT ALL SOURCES ARE EQUALLY VALUED; that is the reason why for many reporters give equal value to a statement made about the Holy Shroud by a Nobel Prize winner to that made by a magician, such as is the case of Joe Nickell , who without having scientific training showed off having made a perfect copy of the Síndone image with a tracing.

It is odd checking how all the adjectives are used, because eminent scientists or prestigious researchers are spoken of without the reader being told who they are, which papers they have done or what classifies them as prestigious people. We can find a good instance in Las Provincias, 2nd April ,1976 where it is said that several scientists have reached the conclusion that “Jesus Christ was buried alive “. The article does not explain who those scientists were, where the study was published, how they reached such conclusions or if there was any reply on behalf of the scientific community. There is such a lack of seriousness, handling of information and prejudice on behalf of some of the tested media that it could be concluded that the objectivity of some reporters is directly proportional to the ideology of the newspaper editor.

Let us stop to study two headlines published after the radiocarbon test done in the year 1988 :

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:Headline in El País “Silence of the Vatican about the supposed fake of the Holy Shroud of Turin.

Headlines in Diario 16 show as indisputable the result of the radiocarbon test. Therefore, what for them is” supposed,“ for the others is “demonstrated”.

“On a certain occasion-the current president of the Centro Español de Sindonología comments- I remained astonished to see that the journalist who was interviewing me didn’t even know that on the Síndone there is an image .As I remarked to her that there was indeed an image she confessed that the interview was ordered by her boss, that she did not have the slightest idea of the subject we were talking about, and, worst of all: that she did not care less about the subject. How can an editor write some news about the Síndone with a minimum efficiency if they are unaware of the topic or the main discoveries made by researchers?

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Now I go on showing you the main conclusions of my investigation.

1. A certain part of the Spanish press does not seem to have understood (and to make others

understand) what the Síndone is, and that is why a specialized review ,”Linteum” points at “El Mundo ,for instance, as an anti-Síndone newspaper just because they prefer a spectacular headline to serious information. This has led the newspaper to breed rumours instead of certainty and getting the consequent discredit by the sindonic forum.

2. The relic studied has a remarkable religious weight which no longer influences on the journalists who published about it.

3. Some journalists, far away from limiting themselves to their important role of being good “translators “ of scientific reports, have been led by their own prejudices for or against the authenticity of the fabric and have shown their own ideas consciously or unconsciously. We think this is an uncertain practice even on those journalist genres where opinion is admitted because we should not forget that the Síndone and the Cloth of Oviedo, being or not being authentic, can only be studied inside the scientific paradigm where –and we repeat it again- opinions are not worth anything and the need is for proven tests. Strictly speaking, no information should be published about the Síndone in the “Religion” column, since neither would one find anything published there about Tutankhamen, despite being an archaeological remnant deeply linked to understanding the idea ancient Egyptians had of the everlasting world.

4. We have seen in our analysis certain appealing arguments and at the same time inaccurate ones, either for or against the authenticity of the fabric:

For:

-Quoting NASA as an authoritative source to guarantee the analysis developed by the STURP in 1978.

-Making excessive statements out of the scientific paradigm that the Síndone demonstrates without any doubt the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Against:

-Quoting as non scientific sources some authoritative sources.

-Overvalue the radiocarbon dating as the only probable verifying element without collating the result obtained in 1988 with the rests of the analysis that place the fabric age before the fourteenth century and whose outline is, in most cases, in the media own newspaper library.

5. Articles “against” get carried away from 1988 onwards because of the radiocarbon dating and articles “in favour “, which are in the same media newspaper library are ignored. It is a lack of contextualization.

6. To understand and pass an empirical inform it is necessary to have a certain scientific information or at least having a wide culture of which not always can a journalist boast. We have seen on some reporters an insufficient culture not only in science matters but in theology(as they ignore, for instance the sequence related on the Gospels and generally

about history –because many mistakes are made, such as believing that Pablo VI was alive in 1983.)

7. We have also proved that the Cloth of Oviedo has been dealt with much more seriousness than the Shroud of Turin.

8. We also observe that newspapers belonging to conservative ideas seem in favour of publishing for the authenticity whilst those who are called progressive seem to stress that it is a fake. This implies an important journalist anomaly: the ideology of the media breaks the reader rights to know what the real facts are.

Nevertheless, we have also found fine articles and I want to put an example of it.”La Vanguardia” the 30th of March 1986 headlines “New scientific discoveries about the Síndone” signed by Josep M^a Serra and F.L. del Pino. We judge this article right because of its main characteristics, which are the followings:

- Six columns double paged.
- Three good illustrations which are complemented
- It starts describing the object to give a short explanation to who do not know the object.
- Before explaining the three dimensional characteristics of the image on the Shroud it is explained what is a three dimensional image. Therefore, it has a didactic purpose not supposing that the reader has these skills.
- Almost in all statements about discoveries it is written who made them.
- Dates and places are correctly pointed.
- It is not written any reporters opinion, just researches are collected.
- Bibliography is written to give the reader an opportunity to keeping on reading if he is interested.
- Every moment refers to the man on the Síndone , not to Jesus
- The text has been adapted to the space without interruptions or on the contrary a violation on the finished text.

Now I am going on with the most common mistakes I found on the journalist sample I analyzed. However, I will show you six out of thirty.

1.”El Levante” 16th of October 1988: It is about the aberrant nonsensical conclusions reached by the STURP team due to their lack of seriousness. These conclusions have been the ground for more nonsense which is an editorial success.

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*We appreciate here the adjectives given to the STURP scientists by two writers we ignore their scientific knowledge.

3.”El Norte de Castilla,16th of April 1989.It said: “A large group of protestants, catholics, orthodox ,buddhists , atheists and agnostic scientists coming from Japan, Russia and Europe , all belonging to the NASA , have met and have written a list of “enigmas and mysterious things” that the radiocarbon dating has created. They have examined the problems of the C14 dating method and they have concluded presenting a new list of

analysis to be done on the Turin Shroud to reach a conclusion of reasonable authenticity “.

*Generalization and lack of accuracy facts. It mentions the NASA as an authority. It mentions the religious beliefs of the experts, which do not have anything to do with a scientific dating matter.

12. ”(...) they have done the most important scientific effort of all times”.

*Evident exaggeration.

16.”A.B.C ., the 20th of August 1988.It said:”It is to remember now that when the NASA laboratories examined the fragments of the Turin Shroud it was concluded that the tridimensional effect on the image it was simply deliberately hand made.

*This is an example of chain mistakes: neither were the NASA laboratories nor fragments of the Síndone were examined and not even such a conclusion was reached analyzing the three dimensional effect.

21.”El Independiente” ,5th of August 1988.It said: the daguerreotypy miracle more popular is, however , the Holy Shroud, the sheet that evolved the corpse, and whose supposed reproduction of the human figure of Jesus Christ originated an ecclesial worshipping which echoes ,more and more polemic, are the subject of an interesting controversial between international science and the Italian church in 1988.

*This article is absolutely against and evidently in a mocking tone is referring to the theology of a scientific discussion. Worshipping to any saint or relic is totally prohibited by catholic religion because it is just an attribute only given to God. The author , consequently shows that he lacks of the general culture that would have stopped him writing this paragraph. Controversy never has occurred between international science and Italian church (it has always been neutral about the arguments) but between scientist for and against the Síndone authenticity.

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25.”Las Provincias”6th of November 1988.This report talks about the difficulties of conservation on the relic, specially due to the germs. But the headline is confusing because it gives the impression that the same germs would be able to disintegrate the Síndone wholly, which is not true.

What you have seen here is only a small sample. I keep on repeating that to know this analysis deeply you should read and study the Acts and then look into the articles reproduced there.

To pen off, I would like to give some practical recommendations to my journalist colleagues, something like the Ten Commandments for the journalist to be able to write about the Síndone:

Before writing the article about the Síndone or the Cloth of Oviedo, the editor should be much informed about the subject, and besides contrasting among all sources.

When the moment to write reaches, he should bear in mind next aspects:

- Starting putting the reader in the picture and see the subject in the eyes of somebody who has never heard about the Shroud.
- Avoiding using a lot of universal quantifiers(all ,nothing ,always ,never) unless they were reproduced from a source, which will always be quoted indicating who told that.
- Preferring the words “debate” or “ discussion” to “polemic” or “controversy” just for being more adequate according to the dictionary.
- No using adjectives for granted (for instance, “the eminent scientist” but ,if doing so, justify them implicitly or explicitly.
- Being very strict on the presentation and run away from tags such as “American scientists” ,”Vatican observers”, “English press” ...It is necessary to indicate who told that , and if it is possible when and why.
- Making differences between the fact and the interpretation . One and the other must be perfectly guaranteed: the fact by the person who discovers it and the interpretation by the one who does it.
- Never speaking on a mocking tone on the article. Apart from a lack of respect it shows little critical spirit.
- Limiting to the scientific atmosphere without leading it to the theological camp. It implies, for instance, no referring to the religious belief of the researcher , which does not help or difficulties the objectivity of his remarks.
- Giving up publishing a rumour and wait for the confirmation of the fact.

If the Holy Shroud is a fake or not ,so to say, if it puts us in contact with the historical Jesus this is a research that the reporters must give to scientists. We only must be honest transmitting all their discoveries. Not more ,not less.