

## OPEN LETTER TO THE POPE S. S. FRANCIS

In the name of science! Appeal to Pope Francis for the official recognition of the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin on the occasion of its 2015 ostension[1]. "And you, who do you say I am?" The supreme challenge of a Scientist to the Church, the survival instinct of Christianity shared with all those who have faith in the strength of the Spirit and the Word.

Paris, March 29th 2015, Palm Sunday  
Your Holiness,

At a time when we are confronted with the massacre of Eastern Christians, a claim to the "right to blasphemy" and a crusade to defend "freedom of expression", and given the upcoming ostension of the Shroud of Turin from April 19th to June 24th 2015, is it not high time to do away with the endless censorship which deprives this archaeological discovery – the best measured one in the world – from the official recognition of its "religious" authenticity by the Church, whereas the recognition of its "scientific" authenticity has been an admitted fact ever since its official announcement by the International Scientific Symposium in Rome, back in 1993?

True or false? Relic or icon? Object of science? Object of faith or rash speculations? The intolerable ambiguity remains and has been viciously distilled drop by drop in the media since 1988. It must stop! During your next "face to face" with the Shroud on June 21st in Turin, what will you answer "in truth" to the ultimate question it will ask you: "And you, who do you say I am?" From the courageous answer to this question is suspended the most decisive challenge to the "Freedom of Expression" for the scientific, political and religious future of humanity: its necessary relation to that Truth according to which the "Man of the Shroud" was truly the Incarnate Word! But as the Shroud is first a scientific object (since without the science, no one can conclude what it is, its meaning or use), it remains necessary for you to slash the knot of infamy of this ambiguity, so that you can invoke ALSO the most convincing scientific reasons that compel your Holiness, namely those that will forbid you from now on to say "I did not know"!

It is therefore as Director of the Rome Symposium, and in the name of the Science which has established the certain authenticity of the Shroud, that I must now address your Holiness to ask him that he kindly continues, on June 21st, the process of formal recognition by the Church of the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, an event expected worldwide. During his homily of May 24th 1998, stating that "the Shroud is a provocation to intelligence", Pope John Paul II trusted the scientists with the task of continuing to find appropriate answers to the problems [14C dating] related to this Shroud which, according to tradition, "wrapped the body of our Redeemer when he was taken down from the Cross". Now, after the confirmation of the intrinsic error in 1988 C14 dating of the Shroud, already certain at the Symposium of Rome and exposed as such at the 2010 ostension, not the slightest reason remains to postpone any further the formal recognition of the authenticity of the Shroud by the Church, a recognition which would simply consist in reverting to the *status quo ante* of real relic of the Passion and Resurrection, since the authenticity of the Shroud has been officially and continually recognized by the Church from 1473 to 1988, before this interruption of 27 years!

As a matter of fact, therefore, the Church has no choice! Unless she wants to persist in error, if she wants to follow the verdict of Science and John Paul II's commitment, she has now the overriding obligation to enact, in her turn, the official recognition of the authenticity of the Shroud.

But there is something more serious concerning your Holiness. The opening of the ostension and your next encounter – on June 21<sup>st</sup> – with the Shroud make this obligation of authentication extremely urgent, for imperative reasons more vital to Peter's Chair of Truth than to anyone else, since the later is particularly interested in getting the Shroud out of the intolerable ambiguity in which it has been immersed after its sharp downgrading from the status of real "Relic" to the rank of man-made "icon" by its Pontifical Custodian, Anastasio Ballestrero, on October 13th 1988, following the unfortunate C14 dating. Unless you might appear to join in this deception, how could you quietly prepare for your encounter, on June 21st, with the Face of the "Divine Redeemer"[2] if you were to tolerate that this Face can be seen by some, as the Christ of the Passion and Resurrection, by others as the greatest fake of all time, and by others still as a man murdered by Christians who sought to forge a false physical evidence of the Resurrection![3]

Finally, unless you accept to appear indifferent to the Truth itself, how could you continue to tolerate the persistence of the official status of [characterized ] fake that the Church has attached to the Shroud ever since 1988 and that its Custodian, Cardinal Giovanni Saldarini, at the opening of the ostention of the scientific centenary on April 18th 1998, insisted on vigorously proclaiming in front of the international press with the following statement excluding any doubt : "It is an icon, it is not a relic !"

Therefore, during your encounter of June 21st, how are you to name the true-false Shroud ? Relic or icon? Image or mirror ?... **Will you worship it or adore it ?** How could Your Holiness not face in awe the three imperative reasons requiring him to stop an ambiguity so utterly unbearable to human intelligence:

- 1) Regarding the ostension, if the official status of fake is not corrected and inverted, an invitation to participate would be the equivalent of telling the faithful : "Come and see my fake Shroud!";
- 2) Regarding your homily of June 21st, can you truly hide from the faithful the "liturgical status" of authenticity of the Shroud currently in force[4]? Can you reasonably let them ignore the authentication in 1473 by Pope Sixtus IV, who stated that "on the shroud" can be seen "the true blood and the image of Jesus Christ Himself "? Can you decently not feed their enthusiastic certainty by reminding them of the magnificence of the no uncertain terms of the bull of Pope Julius II, April 26<sup>th</sup> 1506, introducing the feast of the Holy Shroud based on its certain authenticity, combining science and theology, with its solemn formula "in consideration of the divine Blood by which it is tainted "... "... force us to worship and adore[5] the Shroud on which are visible ...traces of Christ's humanity and divinity which united in him ";
- 3) Finally, regarding your encounter of June 21st, the formula of introduction of the Mass of the Holy Shroud makes a duty for you to adore the Holy Shroud, due to the presence on it of the "divine blood" (and not just to worship it as you have announced in the press).

Failing an authentication, you would therefore be confronted with a double "impediment". If the Shroud is a fake (official position since 1988), you **cannot worship** it; if it is authentic, you **must adore** it! These are the imperative reasons compelling you to slash the persistent infamy knot of the Shroud (which forbids any decent face-to-face between the Vicar of the "Man of the Shroud" with its "Holy Shroud" as long as the deceptive double status of the later will not be abolished) by authenticating it on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2015.

Faced with such conflicting monstrosities – scientific, semantic and religious at the same time – how better convince you that the ambiguous status of duplicity currently applied to the Shroud cannot be reconciled with the Truth Incarnate of the Man of the Shroud ? Even less so if this status were to be confirmed by his Vicar, whom such monstrosities would condemn to an impasse and personal dishonor. Conversely, is it conceivable that the Vicar of Christ might not burn of enthusiasm to establish all the truth:

- 1) On the scientific object that His Shroud is; namely on the fact that it is a film bearing witness of the singular point at the origin of our era because it contains the "Evidence of scientific Evidence"[6] of Christianity's founding event: "dematerialization" of a body (cf. "Resurrection" spoken of by the Gospels), hence the possibility to date the Shroud according to the unique historical event at the origin of our calendar ;
- 2) On the object of faith resulting from the "prophetic" nature of the encrypted and highly topical Message which has been sealed in the frame of its linen since 2000 years : the "Sign of Jonah". In this respect, is it possible to ignore that the Shroud of Turin is precisely the object of the first act of faith of Christians, the one in reference to which the Apostle John said of himself in his Gospel "He saw and he believed", since the collapsed clothes had revealed to him the prophetic significance of the "sign of Jonah" mentioned by Jesus of Nazareth when he announced his future resurrection to the Jews: "You will only have one sign, the sign of Jonah!" A compelling sign to which will correspond the apostrophe of the Apostle Paul: "If Christ is not raised, your faith is futile!" This is why the Shroud of Turin is the Message bearer of its mark-image, an integral part of the Revelation because of its undeniable status of "object of faith" for our time;
- 3) On the historical role assigned to the Shroud by the demonstrated part it plays in the "economy of Revelation"; on its vocation to remedy the "general apostasy," to awaken the survival instinct of Christianity; on its symbolic predestination to represent the figurative return of the "Man of the Shroud", foreshadowing His second glorious coming of the Parousia, as represented on the royal gates of the cathedrals. How not to see the structure of logic inversion of the Shroud's positive-negative image as the emblematic figure of a disoriented world where, if we want to find the Truth, we are obliged to reverse things! Finally, how not to see that the most meaningful object of all times – in its three dimensions: scientific, semantic and religious – is the "geopolitical figure" giving the victory to intelligence because it is the key to the problems of the twenty-first century, which is riddled by the "war of civilizations" and which – according to the famous statement attributed to André Malraux – "will be religious or will not be at all"!

Finally, for their part, Science and scientists have taken up the supreme challenge to Intelligence laid down by Pope John Paul II when he officially proclaimed the recognition of the authenticity of the Shroud in Rome back in 1993, a recognition unanimously hailed by the press headlines: "Science was wrong, the Church was wrong, the Shroud is authentic"! None of the arguments that had been opposed to me by Pope John Paul II, in Rome, or by the Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See in Paris, can persist, and the falsity of the 1988 C14 dating has now been clearly established since 2010.

But for her own part, the Church herself has not yet fulfilled its obligation to take up the challenge to Intelligence she had launched; in other words, she failed to respect the Science's authenticity verdict by not reverting to the recognition of the authenticity she had established in 1473 (Sixtus IV), then sealed in her Introduction of the Mass of the Holy Shroud, as well as in her liturgy in 1506 (Julius II). And concerning the modern times, we refuse to be told any more that the Church cannot, as a matter of principle, implement its own resources of scientific research! President Nicola Cabibbo himself, as Chairman of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, wrote personally to me about the commitment that this Academy had made at the time of the

unfortunate C14 dating, not to mention its duty of ongoing scientific and technical involvement as far as the conservation of the Shroud is concerned. Beside, it is the Holy See which initiated the fatal C14 dating, and it is Cardinal Ballestrero who announced the erroneous result of such dating. It is therefore incumbent upon him to repair his own fault. All true scientists are able to understand that any hindrance to the urgent recognition by the Church of the authenticity of the Shroud could be justified now – in the absence of any traces of imperfection allowing to confound it, as admitted by the British Museum itself in its definition 117 – by "religious" reasons ONLY ; i.e. exclusively by the lack of courage to face the truth requirement inherent in its "*Acheiropoietos*" message: the "no man-made Evidence of Evidence" of the authenticity of the "unique" founding fact of our era, which witnesses the exclusive authenticity of our Christian religion itself. The "revelation" of the Holy Shroud as an "unparalleled" scientific witness places *de facto* our Religion in position of supremacy above any other religion. It reminds us of the absolute "I am the way, the truth and the life," "Est, Est, Non, Non", "Outside the Church no salvation ". It places the supreme challenge of "Religious Intelligence" on the same level as the "Scientific Intelligence" through the same requirement of Truth represented by the "excluded middle" of the logic of the Word! But does such a lack of courage fit Peter's Chair of Truth? How the Holy See could censor the supreme Truth without denying the very essence of its own mission, as opposed to the first popes and Christians, who have always exercised their "freedom of expression" of Truth to the point of martyrdom?

For Your Holiness, June 21st 2015 will be the time of Truth! You need to slash the infamy knot of the ambiguity in order to rehabilitate the Shroud of the One Who said "I will not be confounded!"[7] ; in order to do away with the deception, to proclaim Easter triumph by reversing the false definition from "It's an icon, it is not a relic" to "It's not an icon, it is the most notable authentic relic of Christianity, Passion and Resurrection!" Does it need so much courage only to revert to the situation that has always prevailed, namely the harmony between Science and apostolic tradition, as evidenced in the following statements?

- A scientific one by Pius XI, September 5th 1936, after five years of studies : "These are images of His Divine Son. They come precisely from this still mysterious object (but certainly not made by man, which can be considered as already demonstrated) represented by the Holy Shroud of Turin. We have said mysterious, because a lot of mystery still surrounds this sacred thing; but assuredly it is a sacred thing, perhaps more sacred than any other; and certainly we can now deem as a definitely proven fact (even apart from any idea of faith and Christian piety) that this is not a human work"[8];

- A religious one by John Paul II in 1980: it is "the most splendid relic of Passion and Resurrection "

If, in the prospect of your future "face to face" of June 21<sup>st</sup> with the Shroud of Christians AND the Shroud of scientists, I wished to remind you of all those compelling reasons to meet the requirement of entire and unadulterated Truth, which is your responsibility as Vicar of the "Man of the Shroud", it is in order not to leave any possibility to maintain the current duplicity blocking the recognition of the authenticity of the Shroud; it is so that you will never feel entitled to say "I did not know! ", lest than you might renew, 2000 years after, the denial of Peter who, by lack of courage in a face to face confrontation, said: "I do not know the man!"

That you proceed on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 to the announcement of the authentication of the Shroud, as a requirement of Truth by the Church, such is now the request of the international scientific community of researchers – in recognition of its unparalleled work – and of the entire world.

In this response to the supreme "challenge to the intelligence" launched by John Paul II, which you cannot but take up, the scientific community cannot but remind you of his famous apostrophe: "Do not be afraid! »

Be assured, Your Holiness, of my most respectful feelings.

Arnaud-Aaron Upinsky,

Director of the International Scientific Symposium in Rome

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[1] April 19th to June 24th 2015.

[2] Cf. Osservatore Romano May 1898

[3] cf. Mgr. V.. Saxer, rector of the Pontifical Institute of Archaeology

[4] As a result of the recognition of its authenticity by Sixtus IV in 1473, "On the Shroud ...see themselves : " True Blood and image Jesus Christ Himself". Benedict XVI has also given his blessing to the 2006 Nice red Penitents for the Fifth Centenary of the institution of the liturgical Feast of the Holy Shroud)

[5] Need I remind you of the place of blood during the famous "Blood Feud" in the fifteenth century?

[6] See CIHR, the impression-withdrawal-contactless reflecting the absence of tearing flax fibrils and fibrin.

[7] See Gospel of Palm Sunday

[8] *La Passion de Jésus-Christ selon le chirurgien*, Docteur P. Barbet, Editions Dillen et Cie, 1950, p. 31.