

John Jackson's Response to William Meacham's Book

I have read parts of Mr. Meacham's recent book, "The Rape of the Shroud", and I would like to clarify my position and public statements regarding the 2002 restoration of the Shroud.

In his book, I believe Mr. Meacham creates the impression that I did not properly address my concerns to the Turin authorities regarding important scientific data that was lost during the 2002 restoration of the Shroud. To support his position, Meacham presents, on page 194 of his book, excerpts of my remarks at a September 21, 2002 Press Conference in Turin that was hosted by His Eminence, Cardinal Poletto. Unfortunately, Mr. Meacham left out the portions of my remarks where I clearly stated my reservations about the 2002 restoration, in addition to my positive views.

The complete transcript of what I said is as follows (the material in italics was left out of Mr. Meacham's book):

"I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments of a scientific nature regarding the conservation operation on the Shroud. I first learned of the operation through a news report about one month ago. Naturally, I became concerned if the conservation action had affected any characteristics of scientific value on the Shroud. For over 30 years, I have wanted to learn what the backside of the Shroud looks like. A complete visualization required the removal of the backing cloth. Once this was done, then removal of the patches would necessarily follow. This would then expose the charred regions under the patches due to the 1532 fire. This material would logically then have to be removed to prevent contamination to the rest of the Shroud. Hence, the price to be paid for a complete visualization of the backside of the Shroud is the removal of the char. *While I certainly welcome the new photographs of the backside of the Shroud, and hope to study the other data in detail, I would be remiss if I did not mention that removing the char necessarily degraded some scientific information that is very important in showing that the Shroud has a history well before the reported radiocarbon date of only 14th century.* The 1978 radiographs show that an eight-wise historical folding pattern propagates into the char, which clearly shows that the pattern well predates the 1532 fire. *In fact, our analysis concludes that the folding pattern is from at least the Middle Byzantine Period.* Despite this unfortunate loss of scientific opportunity and data, I am very pleased to see, finally, photographs of the backside and I am also pleased to see that the quality of the conservation repair seems to be a very high quality. *I also appreciate the kind invitation of his Eminence to see the conservation work firsthand.*

The first two italicized deletions correspond to the two deletion marks (...) in Meacham's text on page 194. The above complete text comes from my handwritten record that I used to state my comments at the press conference. I want to emphasize that these remarks were made directly in the presence of Cardinal Poletto and in front of the international press personnel that had been assembled. When I had been invited to make

my remarks, I was told specifically by the Turin authorities that I could say whatever I wished, positive or negative.

Moreover, on the previous evening, Cardinal Poletto spoke about the 2002 renovation to an assembly of invited guests from around the world to which my wife, Rebecca, and I had been invited, along with Mr. Meacham. Following the presentation, Cardinal Poletto personally escorted the group to individually witness the results of the renovation on the Shroud itself. The Cardinal himself stood in front of the Shroud while we viewed it. Immediately afterwards, while still in the Church of the Shroud, the Cardinal asked for comments about what we had just seen, saying explicitly that he wanted to hear any comments that we might have, be they positive or negative. He was quite clear and emphatic about this. Several people then voiced their opinions, which I recall were generally positive. I told the Cardinal that, while the conservation renovation appeared to me to be of good quality, I was disappointed that the charred material, which contained an important historical fold mark, had been removed, thereby destroying some important scientific information. The Cardinal seemed to listen very carefully to what I said.

Therefore, it cannot be denied that I did state, both at the press conference and at the direct invitation of the Cardinal himself the evening before, that an important piece of scientific information was lost during the conservation renovation. On both occasions, I attempted to describe both my positive and negative impressions of the renovation in a manner that was respectful of the Cardinal who is the official custodian of the Shroud.

I remain to this day satisfied with what I said at the press conference in Turin, as long as what I said is not taken out of context, misinterpreted, or certain parts of what I said not deleted. I am very pleased that the 2002 renovation produced the very important backside images of the Shroud, which are extremely useful for scientific analyses. Without those images, we would not have Giulio Fanti's important paper concerning the evidence of a backside frontal facial image. I also consider the new backside photographs as important, necessary, and appropriate conservation archival documentations of the Shroud. These important documentations could not have been achieved without first removing the backing cloth, the patches, and then the exposed and fragile charred material between the patches and the backing cloth, a fact that I referenced at the press conference. To put the significance of the 2002 backside photographic documentations in further perspective, it is important to recall that in 1978, and again in 2000, attempts were made to partially photograph the backside of the Shroud using special optical instruments inserted between the Shroud and the backing cloth, but these attempts were not able to provide a complete documentation of the backside of the Shroud that would be suitable for scientific and conservation archival purposes. While I am quite pleased that a complete documentation of the backside of the Shroud has finally been achieved, I will, however, always be disappointed that the charred material containing an important historic fold mark was removed during the renovation without, to my knowledge, proper scientific documentation. Nevertheless, it is not an irretrievable loss, because the intersection is conclusively documented in a 1978 radiograph of STURP, which shows that the fold mark was clearly in place before the 1532 fire.

I wish to thank this website for giving me the opportunity to clarify my position on the Shroud restoration and the public statements I made regarding that position. I hope that the readers of the "Rape of the Turin Shroud" will read what was written about me in light of this clarification.

Sincerely,

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