

THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

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NUCLEAR STRUCTURE  
RESEARCH LABORATORY

October 27, 1987

Professor Carlos Chagas  
President  
Pontifical academy of Sciences  
Casino Pio IV  
00120 Vatican City  
Italy

Dear Professor Chagas:

Enclosed please find two documents. One is a letter to His Holiness Pope John Paul II Signed by representatives of \_\_\_\_\_ laboratories and the second is a press release. We propose to resort to the press release only if our appeal to the Pope fails.

We hope you might be willing to endorse the letter to His Holiness and to deliver it to him in person. However, if for any reason you feel it would not be appropriate for you to do so please let me know. In that case would you just arrange a transfer of the letter from your office in the Academy to the Pope. Please only mention the press release if you meet with His Holiness in person and then only if you think it appropriate.

The changes in the Turin Workshop protocol being proposed by His Eminence Cardinal Ballestrero, clearly on the advice of Professor Gonella, are extremely serious. They include the following:

1. Five AMS and two small counter laboratories reduced to three AMS laboratories.
2. No independent textile expert designated to remove the Shroud samples
3. Laboratory representatives not permitted to witness Shroud sample removal.
4. No suggested involvement by laboratory representatives in the final data analysis.
5. No official involvement by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at any stage. Professor Chagas invited to participate merely as a guest of the Cardinal of Turin.

We see no alternative but to appeal to the Holy Father to persuade the Cardinal of Turin that he is acting on unwise scientific advice. It would be better not to date the Shroud of Turin at all than to do it in the way he proposes.

Yours sincerely

Prof Gove to Prof Chagas



## DRAFT LETTER TO THE POPE

Your Holiness:

Following your specific instructions, representatives of scientific laboratories specializing in the technique of carbon dating small samples met in Torino on Sept 29-Oct 1, 1986, to discuss the protocol to follow should you permit the dating of the Holy Shroud of Torino. The workshop was held under the joint sponsorship of His Eminence Cardinal A. Ballestrero and of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. At the end of this workshop a detailed protocol was arrived at which was agreed upon by all participants. The two main guiding principles were:

- 1) Removal of a minimum amount of Shroud material. A total of 12.5 square centimeters, (less than 0.03 per cent of the total surface of the Shroud) will suffice for all the laboratories.
- 2) Absolute scientific credibility. It was unanimously decided that, to improve the statistical credibility of the analysis, a minimum of seven laboratories should perform the dating. It is important to note that they use different techniques.

In a letter dated October 10, 1987 to all the workshop participants Cardinal Ballestrero has ordered substantial modifications to the original protocol. In particular, the number of laboratories is reduced, without any explanation, to three. This change was made in spite of a cable sent on July 5, 1987 to Cardinal Ballestrero with a copy to the Secretary of State, Cardinal A. Casaroli, signed by all seven laboratories and the British Museum, in which the dangers of such a change were clearly spelled out.

It is our collective impression that Cardinal Ballestrero has received very unwise scientific advice. The proposed modifications will confirm the suspicion of many people around the world that the Church either does not want the Shroud dated or it wants to have it done in an ambiguous way. The procedure that the Cardinal of Torino is suggesting is bound to produce a result that will be questioned in strictly scientific terms by many scientists around the world who will be very skeptical of the arbitrarily small statistical basis when it is well known that a better procedure was recommended. Since there is great world expectation for the date of the Shroud, the publicity resulting from a scientifically dubious result will do great harm to the Church.

We respectfully urge Your Holiness to persuade the Cardinal of Torino that the scientific advice being given to him is not shared by the world experts in this field. He should be urged to seek the advice of the eminent scientific organization expressly created to advise you, namely the Pontifical Academy of Sciences that enjoys the respect of the scientific world at large.

Rather than following an ill advised procedure that will not generate a reliable date but will rather give rise to world controversy, we suggest that it would be better not to date the Shroud at all.