



The Sign: The Shroud of Turin and the Secret of the Resurrection

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Christianity was born nearly two thousand years ago in ancient Palestine. It has shaped the course of human history. Yet historians still cannot say how it really began. How did a first-century Jew called Jesus manage to spark a new religion?

It is one of the biggest and most profound of all historical mysteries. This extraordinary book finally provides a convincing answer.

Traditionally, the birth of Christianity has been explained via the miracle of the Resurrection. After Jesus died he was raised from the dead by God and appeared to his disciples, telling them to spread the gospel. Once they saw the Risen Jesus, nothing could shake their belief. Within a few generations Christianity had spread throughout the Middle East and Europe; within a few centuries it had taken over much of the world.

But historians have been unable to account for Christianity's remarkable success without the Resurrection to spark it. If no one really saw the Risen Jesus, how were his followers convinced that he was their immortal Messiah?

Art historian Thomas de Wesselow has spent the last seven years deducing the answer to this puzzle, and in doing so he has pieced together an entirely new picture of the birth of Christianity. Reassessing a familiar but misunderstood historical source and reinterpreting many biblical passages, de Wesselow shows that the solution has been staring us in the face for more than a century.

The Shroud of Turin, widely thought to be a fake, is in fact authentic. And it holds the key to the greatest mystery in human history.

The Sign: The Shroud of Turin and the Secret of the Resurrection Details

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Shannon says

Too many scholars get wrapped around their personal theories, to the point that they write 428 pages of circular reasoning around one piece of evidence. This book is a perfect example of "much learning doth make thee mad."

Abhishek Datta says

Marvelous. The author has researched very profoundly and it seems, ultimately, someone has really solved the mystery behind the birth of Christianity.

Steven Paglierani says

Having already read far too many religious-relic, "truth revealed" books, I approached this one with caution. In the end though, I was pleasantly surprised. This one is well written, comprehensive, logical, and thought provoking.

Does it prove without doubt that the shroud is authentic? Not really. I'm not sure this will ever be possible. But what it does do is a good job of discrediting the debunkers, as well as making an equally credible albeit largely circumstantial case for that there are too many coincidences for the shroud to be fake.

Perhaps what I enjoyed the most though was de Wesselow's non-judgmentally scientific professional attitude. Indeed, this book is worth reading even if all you're interested in is an overview of the kind of infighting, bad science, and biased claims these investigations provoke.

Steven Paglierani

Simon says

Golly. The first few chapters of this book are terrific. de Wesselow provides a reasonable scientific explanation as to how the image --- which he accepts is of the dead Christ --- emerged onto the shroud. That accomplished, I expected him to advance a rational interpretation of the Resurrection, i.e. that the body, which had to have been removed from its shroud before decomposition set in, had simply been taken away by either his followers or his enemies.

Nope. He proceeds to get lost in gnostic interpretations of the significance of the image in relationship *to* the Resurrection. Put briefly, it is the image that caused the apostles to assume that Jesus had ascended to a new, spiritual body, and it is this new form that is represented on the cloth. His physical form was still in the tomb, of course (de Wesselow does not believe in the divinity of Christ), but this remarkable byproduct of the Crucifixion was, in fact, the palpable Resurrection that launched the birth of the Church. In other words, when Saul of Tarsus encountered Christ --- as he says he did in the epistles --- he was remembering the first time he saw the image that is on what we now call the Shroud of Turin.

This sort of stuff is unbearable to read. I understand that if you are not a believer in the miraculous, the Shroud must be explicable as a natural phenomenon. de Wesselow is withering in his treatment of those who have attempted to pass the image off as a medieval forgery, or a painting. He also discounts the idea that it represents the after-image of the moment when the physical body of Christ was transformed into his resurrected state, pointing out that the energy released would have leveled Jerusalem. Of course, if it was an actual miracle, I think one could assume that *everything* was on the table, including the idea that Jesus' body must have become some sort of atomic bomb.

Two-thirds of the book is simply speculation that de Wesselow, who is lavish in awarding himself points for insights no one else has achieved, comes up with after a spell sitting in his garden and thinking. Really hard. The problem is that he doesn't come across as an historian, or a theologian, or a scientist (in fact, he is a youngish art historian). He comes across as Dan Brown, right down to the role that Mary Magdalene played in the entire story.

Which is a shame, really, because he does have some interesting reads on early Church history. But they have to be gleaned from a text that smothers them in unsupported speculations, suppositions, whatever you want to call his methodology. I rated it okay, because he can write --- in places it reads like a thriller, which is not totally a compliment given his subject --- and the first third of the book is very good. The rest is not, although I will give him this --- it is never boring.

Craig Barner says

This is an exhaustive study of the Shroud of Turin, and readers who want to learn about the relic for the first time might be better served by another book. Nevertheless, De Wesselow's book also works for the first-time reader. He presents an original thesis about the relationship between the Shroud and Christianity. His argument is not entirely convincing, but it got me thinking.

Stan Fleetwood says

He makes a convincing argument as to the authenticity of the Shroud. However, when he got into the role of the Shroud in the "birth" and early evolution of Christianity I wasn't so convinced. He makes a lot of assumptions and then proceeds to refer to them as facts. However, overall interesting, if a bit long.

Ashish Jaituni says

I really liked it! It is a good read! I liked the first part of the book which deals with the shroud not being a photography or a work of art. I agree with the author that the shroud is not a forgery. But having accepted that I am not at sure if one can say that it is the image of Christ. It is of a man who suffered something similar to what Christ must have experienced. De Wesselow, despite some speculation about vapours rising from the body, cannot explain how the image came to be on the Shroud. The second part of the book is not at all convincing because of various reasons. It is more of author's imagination than concrete proof. De Wesselow cannot explain the Shroud, but makes it explain everything.

Art historian Thomas de Wesselow believes that he has solved two great religious mysteries. One is the nature of the Turin Shroud. The other, is about 'the birth of Christianity' and how it can be integrated with the

shroud. I think he has done a good job with the former.

Susan Paxton says

The first half of this book is exceptionally interesting. De Wesselow has obviously done a great deal of detailed research on this fascinating artifact and he shares it in a clear and accessible manner. While some might believe that the carbon dating tests "prove" the shroud is a fake, it's not so simple. There's good evidence the shroud existed well before the earliest C14 date, and, as de Wesselow points out, there is no known artistic technique that would produce such an object. It's vital to remember that the shroud's real secret - the fact that it's a 3D image - was only discovered at the very end of the 19th century when it was photographed. If the shroud is a fake, this would have been an entirely accidental artifact of its means of production, and yet it's in perfect 3D. The jury is still very much out on this unusual length of linen.

The second half of the book falls down completely. Having suggested that the shroud is authentic, de Wesselow, as an agnostic, then needs to find a way to make it a natural artifact. He never really succeeds in doing this, and his suggestion that the shroud "explains" the appearances of Jesus after the Resurrection is strikingly ridiculous. It makes an odd visual picture to imagine Peter or some other disciple tearing the shroud off Jesus' body, leaving it rotting in the tomb, and then running around displaying it as "proof" that Jesus had been raised. It's just not convincing in any way, shape, or form.

The first half is very well worth reading; even the second half has some thoughtful insights, so if the subject is something you're curious about, it's worth reading.

Jazz Singh says

The Sign is another interesting take on the shroud of Turin. The endless debate continues: is it real, is it a fake? Was there a resurrection? What are the implications of these questions in terms of history; in terms of religion? The arguments put forth by de Wesselow make one think certainly, whether or not one agrees with him.

Todd says

Very well researched book. The author makes some assumptions about half way through the book that seem tenuous at best, but over all a good read.

Sujith Philipose says

Does it answer the question of the birth of christianity/easter? Not completely, but it comes close. The author has included tons of historical allusions of the linen to bring his point but to me it still isnt water tight. Nevertheless interesting read for people who like history and investigative threads.

Chris Lytle says

Focused on deconstructing the ongoing controversies surrounding both the birth of Christianity and its most pertinent relic, the Shroud of Turin, this well crafted work attacks these queries with an astounding level of research. With the author's theories presented early on, the overall conclusions may not come as a major surprise, however it's the consistent and thorough approach to building his case that keeps you engaged. While the subject matter, bouncing between scientific analysis, historical perspective and biblical interpretation, edges towards being too scholarly for the average reader, the style and flow provides a platform that is easily appreciated. Leaving no stone unturned, Mr de Wesselow delivers a powerful and thought provoking theory that inevitably comes down to Ockham's razor reasoning: the simplest hypothesis is the most likely one.

Margarida says

The first part, arguing the shroud is not a middle age fake is convincing, it is mostly logical from all the evidence that it is genuine. Whether it wrapped Jesus or someone else who died in a similar way in the same period, it is probably a leap of faith. The author argues there is no record of another person having died with a crown of thorns, however one could say that the absence of a record evidence is not evidence that it did not happen. If it did happen and was documented, would it have survived the Christian documentation "cleaning" that destroyed almost all the copies of the non approved gospels ? Anyhow, five stars on the first part of the book.

The second part, the theory about the resurrection and how it relates to the shroud, gets 3 stars from me. Though it provides an acceptably logical view, what the author presents as evidences seem too biased towards his view, too forced, reading too much into the texts.

Ron says

An exhaustive and exhausting examination of the founding of Christianity and the role played by the shroud. Don't want to be a spoiler, so if you want the gist of it contact me via Facebook or e-mail. Let's just say he believes that it is authentic but there is much more to the story!

Adilson says

Ao ver, numa livraria, a capa do livro O Sinal - O Santo Sudário e o Segredo da Ressurreição, de Thomas de Wesselow, devo dizer que o título me chamou a atenção de imediato. Logo minha ponta de interesse foi solapada ao imaginar que a obra provavelmente devia ser fruto de mais um fanático religioso ou aspirante de teorias absurdas sobre o controverso Sudário de Turim. Certamente, eu passaria muito longe desse livro, não fosse o preço mais que convidativo de uma recente promoção na Submarino e uma breve pesquisa sobre o seu autor e o escopo da obra. Para a minha surpresa, Wesselow não é um religioso mas um historiador de arte. Eliminei a primeira razão para não adquirir o livro, citada acima - capaz de desviar o meu interesse. Agora faltava descobrir se a minha segunda razão tinha fundamento ou se o autor apresentaria algum argumento verdadeiramente fenomenal para fazer valer o subtítulo pretencioso.

Okay. Dei uma chance ao livro e encarei suas quase 400 páginas com curiosidade.

O Sudário de Turim foi desacreditado pela comunidade científica após ter sido exposto a uma série de exames empíricos. Para muitos, trata-se de uma pintura engenhosamente produzida entre os séculos XIII e XIV - essa última, época oficial de sua primeira aparição pública em Troyes, pequeno povoado na França. O pano, contudo, é um artefato inacreditável. Nele, nota-se nitidamente, à distância de uns 2 metros, várias manchas amareladas e difusas que, descolorindo o linho, formam a imagem fantasmagórica de um homem nu - frente e costas. Sua posição, de recém sepultado, é anatomicamente surpreendente. Mas o que ressalta antes de mais nada a surrada peça são as manchas vermelhas que se fazem ostensivas nas mãos e braços, pés, cabeça, costas e uma estranha mancha do lado direito o peito. Mãos e pés parecem perfurados. As marcas nas costas sugerem dilaceramento da pele. Chibatadas. Sinais que lembram imediatamente uma das práticas da pena capital romana infligidas a criminosos e inimigos do Império, há 2.000 anos atrás, a crucificação. Ainda que não historicamente, o único personagem conhecido que corresponde exatamente as características de flagelo da impressão do Sudário é Jesus. O judeu que teria sido coroado com uma coroa de espinhos, morto crucificado, perfurado no lado por uma lança romana e ressuscitado, dando início ao maior movimento religioso e cultural da história da humanidade.

Era considerado uma fraude desde o século XIV, após o resultado de investigações a pedido do bispo de Troyes. Exibido publicamente na recém inaugurada igreja de Lirey, foi devolvido para a família de Godofredo I, detentora do pano e que o considerava autêntico.

De lá pra cá, a mortalha quase foi perdida num incêndio na Capela de Chambéry, em 1532. Foi salva por pouco. Apesar dos danos sofridos, a imagem não foi comprometida e as freiras do lugar lhe fizeram remendos e puseram um forro novo.

Em uma de suas raríssimas exposições públicas, foi fotografado pela primeira vez por Secondo Pia, em 1898. Enquanto revelava o trabalho em seu laboratório, ficou impressionado com rosto que surgia dos negativos. A imagem em negativo do Sudário revelava, diante de seus olhos, uma impressão que ninguém tinha visto até então. Estopim para novas pesquisas e teorias, a velha conclusão de que o tecido não passava de uma falsificação da Idade Média foi abalada pela inacreditável revelação e outras descobertas que atravessaram o século XX. Especialmente a década de 1970. Nenhuma delas contundentes. As tentativas de ligar o Sudário ao século I e, principalmente, a figura de Cristo, resultavam sempre em ambiguidades - embora o respaldo arqueológico indicasse que o linho pudesse provir da Palestina e os padrões de tessitura correspondessem àquela cultura. Em 1988, porém, pedaços do tecido foram expostos ao teste de carbono-14 e a comunidade científica pôs um fim à discussão. Os testes comprovaram que o linho foi produzido entre os séculos XIII e XIV. O resultado anacrônico abalou a comunidade de pesquisadores defensora da autenticidade do Sudário.

Thomas de Wesselow nos apresenta, inicialmente, um mistério. O mistério da Páscoa ou da Ressurreição de Cristo. A base da pregação do cristianismo, movimento que cresceu surpreendentemente nos primeiros séculos. O capítulo introdutório de O Sinal narra esses acontecimentos segundo os evangelhos, o testemunho de Paulo, o livro dos Atos dos Apóstolos e as poucas menções de historiadores da época.

Unido ao coro dos que não concordam com o resultado da datação por carbono-14, o autor passa então a se valer da pesquisa dos sindonologistas que tiveram contato com o sudário e com as evidências arqueológicas que remontam a possibilidade de origem no século I. Discorre sobre a impressionante impressão do homem do Sudário e as várias teorias e recriações da fraude, com resultados sempre aquém do original, a fim de atestar a impossibilidade de engenhosidade humana. Finalmente, parte para diversas suposições de impressão natural causadas por emanações corporais. Nesse ponto, o livro contém um apanhado de informações preciosas que seriam bem mais interessantes caso não estivessem dispostas para comprovar a autenticidade do Sudário com o fim de promover a sua ambiciosa teoria sobre a Ressurreição.

E é aqui que seu livro atesta minha segunda impressão inicial.

A segunda metade da obra é uma pretensão equivocada de explicar racionalmente a origem do cristianismo e o sucesso de sua rápida ascensão - obviamente ligado ao seu cerne, a inexplicável Ressureição de Jesus. Wesselow sugere, categoricamente, que o Cristo ressuscitado não pode ser outra coisa senão o próprio Sudário. Nessa tentativa ele reinterpreta algumas passagens dos evangelhos e do Novo Testamento, sempre se utilizando do texto grego original. Encaixa, de maneira nem sempre convincente, o Sudário nas situações que julga estar embasadas em testemunho histórico, aproveitando o fato dos evangelhos serem o resultado de tradição oral e resultarem em um registro não muito preciso e geralmente ambíguo. Faz também uso dos evangelhos apócrifos. Procura explicar a diferentes narrativas sobre a descoberta do túmulo vazio - surpreendentemente sustenta que o túmulo não estava nada vazio, para validar suas hipóteses - e elimina os testemunhos que classifica como complementos fantasiosos para tentar explicar e dar forma física ao Jesus Ressurreto (como a aparição de Jesus a duas testemunhas no caminho de Emaús). O resultado é uma interpretação forçada que se reconhece como uma visão racional e viável da origem do Cristianismo.

Não me convenceu.

Para validar sua teoria, Thomas de Wesselow se torna extremamente repetitivo, deixando a agradável exposição da primeira parte do livro dar lugar a uma série de pressupostos que reforçam seu argumento, já duvidoso desde o instante em que detalha a maneira como os apóstolos teriam interpretado a impressão na mortalha de Jesus. O início dessa exposição nos é apresentada como um insight repentino seu, uma ideia exclusiva - o que talvez não seja - que resultou nos cinco anos de pesquisa sobre o material que gerou o livro e cujas respostas entram para a já enorme onda de especulações sobre o Sudário.

Genuíno ou não, apesar de tudo, o Sudário de Turim é uma peça, no mínimo, desconcertante. E, penso, pode sim ter sido o tecido que envolveu Jesus no sepulcro quando, por conta da aproximação da Páscoa, não foi possível finalizar o ritual de sepultamento, ficando esse para ser concluído posteriormente. Na tentativa de identificar o pano como a mortalha que teria envolvido Jesus, a pesquisa do autor é abrangente e bastante esclarecedora, atestando ou contestando essa possibilidade. O livro seria melhor se ficasse apenas nisso.
