

Prophecy in the News Conference

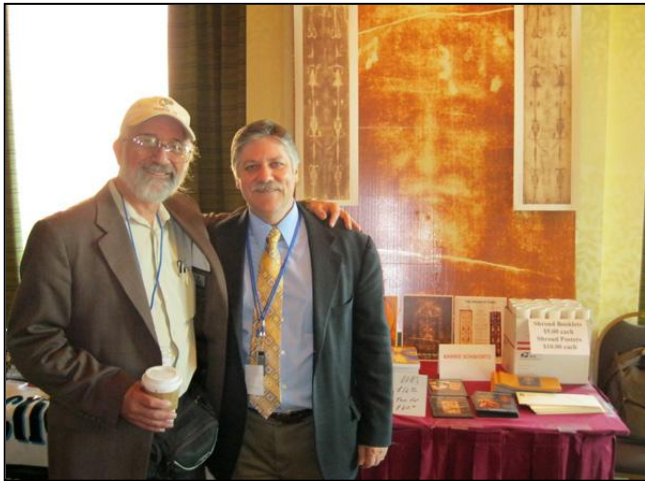
Colorado Springs, Colorado

July 26 - 28, 2013

By

Barrie Schwartz

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Barrie Schwartz and Russ Breault

On July 26, 27 and 28, 2013, Russ Breault (member of STERA, Inc.'s Board of Directors) and I attended and spoke about the Shroud at a Prophecy in The News Conference held in Colorado Springs. Also in attendance were our dear friends David Onysko, noted Shroud scholar and lecturer from Ohio, and John and Rebecca Jackson of the Turin Shroud Center of Colorado, who also participated in the question and answer period after my lecture.

Frankly, I was initially a bit apprehensive about attending and speaking at this conference, since my somewhat limited

personal experience with Evangelical Christians was that they usually had little if any interest in the Shroud and were often skeptical of its authenticity. Ironically, when I first announced I would be attending and speaking at the conference, I quickly received some rather harsh criticism on the Shroud blogs from the pro-Shroud folks! That was followed immediately by a very long and stinging public attack on me from the ultra-conservative Evangelical folks. Truthfully, this only added to my apprehension and neither criticism helped to bolster my confidence about the event. On the other hand, I have learned over the years that if I am attacked by both sides of an issue, I must be doing something right! Well, I am happy to report that all the critics (and even my own attitude) were completely wrong!

I was very pleased that Bob Ulrich, the organizer of the event, had also invited Russ Breault as a speaker. Russ, a long time Shroud scholar, is a member of STERA, Inc.'s Board of Directors, a brilliant Shroud lecturer in his own right and an Evangelical Christian himself. I personally believed he could better bring the spiritual message of the Shroud to an Evangelical group than I could. As I said in my January 22, 2013 posting on the blog defending my position:

“I am always happy to speak about the Shroud, no matter what the point of view is of the sponsoring organization. Since many Evangelical Christians do not accept the Shroud as authentic, the opportunity to address such a group is a great opportunity to inform them of the facts and perhaps open their minds a bit to the Shroud. I never involve myself in theology in my presentations and simply share the facts and my own personal experience with it over the last 35 years...”

I arrived at the Marriot Hotel in Colorado Springs on Friday morning, July 26th, to register for the event and meet up with Russ. I was still feeling a bit apprehensive about the conference, but was happy to be seeing Russ and also reconnecting with my old friend and noted Shroud lecturer, David Onysko, who had driven in from Ohio to attend the event with his friend, Terry Crockett. Russ, David and Terry had visited me at my house up on the mountain the day before and we were all looking forward to the conference.



Barrie Schwartz and David Onysko

Within minutes of walking through the door and meeting up with Russ, I was approached by a number of attendees who introduced themselves and told me they recognized me and knew of my work with the Shroud because of my appearance in *Watchers III*, a program produced and directed by L.A. Marzulli, a producer whose DVD programs are very popular and well known to this group. In fact, his was one of the few faces I recognized at the conference and we had a very warm and friendly reunion. It was the first time I had seen him since he interviewed me three years before. Frankly, I had no idea how broadly his programs were distributed when I first gave him the interview, so I was pleasantly surprised to find that I would not be a total stranger to the audience when I gave my only presentation on Sunday, the last day of the conference.

Russ was making his two presentations on Saturday, so he and I spent most of Friday just speaking with other attendees, answering their questions and listening to their points of view about the Shroud. Again, I was somewhat surprised to find a very strong interest in the Shroud from nearly everyone we spoke to. That was not what I was expecting, so my earlier concerns began to dissipate.

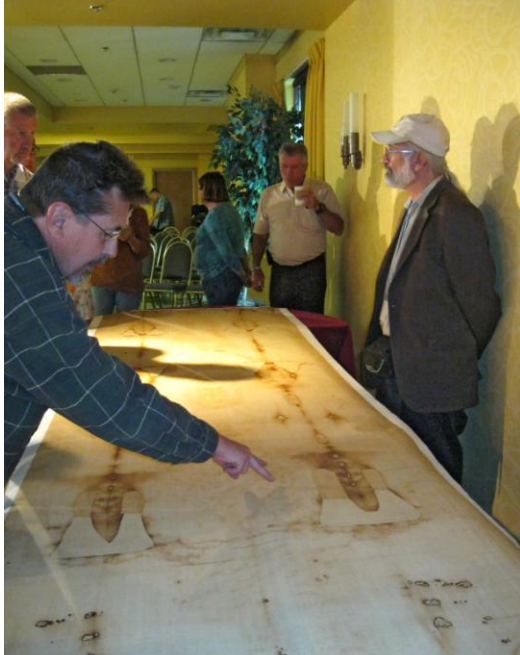
One thing I did notice was that many of the people I spoke with asked the same questions or made the same comments that I had heard many times in the past from those of Protestant or Evangelical denominations. It gave me the idea to do something that I had never done before: add something to my presentation at the last minute. But more about that a bit later.

Saturday morning, July 27th, I arrived at the conference early and met up with Russ, who was giving two talks that day. I was unable to attend his first lecture, titled, “The Shroud of

Turin - An Evangelical Opportunity,” as I was manning our Shroud table, but I did attend his final lecture titled, “The Shroud of Turin - A Preview of Coming Attractions,” later in the day.



Russ Breault



Lifesize Shroud Replica on Display

Sunday, July 28th was the final day of the conference and the day I was scheduled to make my presentation, titled, “35 Years of Shroud Science - A Personal Perspective.” But something was nagging at me and I decided I needed to say something more. I felt I needed to address those specific issues about the Shroud that are so often stumbling blocks for some Christians, and this conference was the perfect place to do it. So I jotted a few items down on an envelope under the heading: “Top 5 Reasons Why Some Christians Are Shroud Skeptics,” and carried that up on the stage with me when I began my presentation.

After a very kind introduction by Bob Ulrich and L.A. Marzulli, I started my presentation, but not in the usual way. I admitted that this moment was a truly unique experience for me (and might come as a shock to them), because I, a Jewish man, was about to tell them, an Evangelical Christian audience, that when it came to the Shroud, they were misinterpreting the Gospels! I said it and held my breath and was grateful to receive a nice laugh from the audience, so I continued.

I went through the five main objections I had heard over the years (and from some people at this conference) including: 1) The Shroud is a graven image; 2) It is only a Catholic relic; 3) The Shroud doesn't explain the second cloth or the “linen strips” mentioned in the Gospels; 4) The

Before Russ began his second lecture, we set up and put on display one of STERA, Inc.'s lifesize replicas of the Shroud and attendees were able to come up and study it closely, while I answered any questions they might have. Then, Russ gave his presentation. I have heard Russ speak on many previous occasions and he just keeps getting better. Russ' honest, relaxed and sincere approach and his in-depth knowledge of the Shroud make him a truly great speaker.

Afterwards, all of us “Shroudies” met up with John and Rebecca Jackson and went out and enjoyed a wonderful Mexican dinner together. It was like a mini Shroud reunion and everyone had a great time!



John and Rebecca Jackson, David Onysko, Russ Breault, Barrie Schwartz and Terry Crockett

man of the Shroud has long hair, forbidden in the Gospels and 5) The Gospels mention that his beard was plucked, yet the Shroud man has a full beard.

After expounding extemporaneously on the above items for about fifteen minutes and receiving a very generous reception, I proceeded on with my regular presentation. But in retrospect, and based on the many e-mails I received since the event, I plan to add the "Top 5 Reasons" to all my future presentations, particularly those given to Protestant and Evangelical groups.

After I completed my presentation, it was time for the Q&A session. I was joined on the stage by John and Rebecca Jackson, and we fielded a number of excellent questions during the next thirty minutes. I believe the audience appreciated having two original members of the STURP team attend their event and answer their questions sincerely and honestly. They were a most gracious and respectful group and it was obvious to me that they were very open and receptive when it came to the Shroud. To be honest, I felt a lot of love in the auditorium that afternoon.



John Jackson and Barrie Schwortz

In reflecting on the event, and in spite of all the earlier criticisms, I am really glad that I accepted the invitation to speak at this conference. I received more positive e-mail responses from those who attended this event than from most other presentations I make. In fact, I am going to do something I rarely do, and that is to share a few of them with you here:

I just wanted to say that I really appreciated your presentation at the Prophecy in the News conference. I've been watching the live streaming that they recorded. You have convinced me that it is real. We always just thought it must be one of the Catholic icon type things. - A.B.

I hope this is not inappropriate but I wanted to *thank you* on behalf of my wife and me for your graciousness in talking with us at the Prophecy in the News Prophecy Conference in Colorado Springs this past July. As I said in person you "always tickled me" with how honest and forthright you are and I really appreciated your candid comments in starting your presentation with regards to an evangelical audience. - J.K.

Your presentation on the Shroud was outstanding. You have a way of communicating with people on a level they can relate to, and your humor is contagious. Most importantly, the passion you have for your subject matter kept my attention, and I gleaned a great deal of information. That Shroud has got to be genuine. You are truly blessed to have seen it up close and personal. A.T., Baptist Minister

Recently, when referring to this conference, a blogger asked “Is the Shroud of Turin being hijacked by the wacko crowd?” Perhaps he has forgotten that most of us who have taken a public stand in favor of the Shroud’s authenticity over the years have also been labeled as “wackos!” (And, if I am not mistaken, they called Jesus names too)!

It is true that I do not necessarily agree with all of the ideas I saw presented at this conference, but that is also true of *every Shroud conference I have ever attended*. Whether I agree or not, I will vigorously defend their right to have and express those opinions.

I often remind people that the Shroud did not come with a book of instructions. Personally, I believe the answer to faith is not so much what is on the cloth, but what is in the eye and heart of the beholder. Each person must make up his own mind about it. With that in mind, I will continue to share this information with any group that invites me. In fact, I have already been invited back for next year’s conference here in Colorado Springs and have already accepted! See you there next year!