

C14 – A Personal and Inside View

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The specific problems of the C14 test carried out on the Shroud are detailed in the film I made with Pam Moon, *A Grave Injustice*. This can be viewed at www.shroudenigma.com.

Now, at last, thanks to the British “Freedom of Information Act”, the British Museum has been forced to make public the raw data from the test. Barrie Schwartz reports on this in some detail [here](#). (www.shroud.com) Here is the headline paragraph:

"In 1988, three laboratories performed a radiocarbon analysis of the Turin Shroud. The results, which were centralized by the British Museum and published in Nature in 1989, provided 'conclusive evidence' of the medieval origin of the artefact. However, the raw data were never released by the institutions. In 2017, in response to a legal request, all raw data kept by the British Museum were made accessible. A statistical analysis of the Nature article and the raw data strongly suggests that homogeneity is lacking in the data and that the procedure should be reconsidered."

From my experience there will be the strongest resistance from the labs to re-open this case. The dating of the Shroud of Turin did not take place in an inert historical vacuum. I believe that, for some of the key scientists involved, it was – and remains - a pivotal point in a struggle many centuries old.





Originally, *Science* had turned to *Religion* for validation as when Galileo sought approval for his theory of planetary movements and was imprisoned – albeit in comfort - for his pains. In more recent times, initially, *Religion* also rejected and scoffed at Darwin. (Some still do, of course.)

The decision by the Vatican to submit the Shroud to scientific validation was to be a significant “First”. There was a lot at stake. Arguably, Western Christianity was at a tipping point. Church attendance was in decline. The Shroud was more than just an ancient historical artefact that needed to be accurately dated. By its nature, it was the very “personage” of Jesus. There were claims then that the image could only have been the result of a miraculous “burst of radiation” which, by extension, if genuine, could validate the resurrection and even revive the Church.

The Vatican had every confidence that the test would produce a positive result. Recent research given wide publicity in both Ian Wilson’s book *Shroud of Turin* and my film *The Silent Witness* was persuasive about authenticity. It was important that the test should be carried out at arm’s length so, with almost touching innocence, and assuming that *Science* would regard this reversal of affairs as an opportunity to demonstrate the best possible example of detached and scrupulous methodology, they placed the whole matter in the “independent” hands of the British Museum. How misguided they were.

Through Peter Rinaldi I was invited by Turin to submit a proposal to film the process and I persuaded the BBC to allow me to do so under their auspices. The protocols established for the test included the vital provision for the tests to be done blind. i.e. With multiple samples given to the labs of various ancient linens of known diverse ages along with the actual samples taken from the Shroud. Only the British Museum and Turin would know which was which. This meant that the programme I proposed to make could not only chart the whole process

but reveal the result in real time “live” at the conclusion. That was the theory. What it did not allow for was the intervention of a combination of human nature and commercial forces both institutional and personal.

The various competing C14 labs capable of conducting the test, realizing the commercial value of (a) being chosen for the test and (b) doing so conclusively, fought like cats in a sack¹⁰ to be the “Chosen Ones” for the test. Among the contenders was Oxford. It was run by Edward Hall, an Old Etonian and archetypal English eccentric of independent means. He had made his name by exposing the Piltdown Man¹¹ skull as a fraud. Now he was ready to take on the Shroud. But, first, Oxford had to be one of the labs that the British Museum selected for the task.

The British Museum had chosen their Head of Research, Dr. Michael Tite, to preside over the process. While the choice of labs was still up in the air, Hall suggested to Tite that he might like to succeed him as Head of the Oxford Unit on his impending retirement.¹² This would, of course, have to be kept quiet and an “informal” arrangement so as not to compromise the selection of the Labs. Oxford was duly selected and Tite did duly succeed Hall. This might sound potentially libelous and indeed would be if it was not true¹³.



Dr. Michael Tite - Emeritus Professor, Oxford University

All was proceeding well until, one by one, the protocols established by Tite to ensure an accurate dating were, for various reasons, set aside. This included the “Blind Test” provision. Tite had failed to find suitable medieval linens with the

¹⁰ See both *A Grave Injustice* and *The Coming of the Quantum Christ: The Shroud of Turin and the Apocalypse of Selfishness* (book) by John Klotz at Amazon.

¹¹ A hoax set of skull and jaw bones designed to suggest the missing link between ape and man.

¹² This is reported in Harry Gove’s book: *Relic, Icon or Hoax? Carbon Dating the Turin Shroud*.

¹³ I have asked Michael Tite to confirm or deny this on several occasions, but he has declined.

same weave as the Shroud as control samples. At this point, my own film project fell down as its substantial budget was predicated on revealing the result of the test at the end of the transmission. This it could no longer do as the labs could not be prevented from knowing which sample was which.

With the protocols he, himself, had stipulated now in tatters Michael Tite should, in all conscience, have declared the test to be unsafe to proceed. However, he now had real skin in the game and needed it to go ahead. The Church could not, at this stage, call a halt as the only conclusion that the public would draw was that it had lost its nerve. So, this most significant and important test went ahead in the most unscientific way. Instead of multiple samples, *only one* was taken and that from the most unsuitable place – a corner, and, as we now know, highly vulnerable to several different forms of contamination that could skew the date.

This all might have been not so bad for the project if only Hall and Tite had been scientific about the way they announced their results. However, they could not afford to be equivocal. They did not make clear that the protocols had been abandoned. Indeed, they gave no hint that anything was other than perfect.¹⁴

It was never part of Tite's or Hall's brief to say what the Shroud was. Indeed, they was not qualified to. However, when a journalist's question gave him the opportunity, Hall did not equivocate. He damned it as a simply "faked up" medieval forgery. From such an apparently authoritative source, that verdict resounds to this day. Academia and most serious journalism have written the subject off and fear ridicule for opening it back up. *Science* has triumphed over *Religion* in this instance – certainly for the foreseeable future. The Church has not helped by becoming mired in scandals and its own loss of confidence. Even they are reluctant to take up its cause.

The victim in all this? The figure depicted so mysteriously on that cloth - whoever he is. However, at least Michael Tite¹⁵ got his 30 pieces of silver.

¹⁴ Hall had secured the promise of a £1m grant to fund the future of the lab but this would be compromised unless he could demonstrate that Oxford could produce a definitive date from the smallest sample.

¹⁵ Michael Tite was sent this article for comment but did not respond. He has revised his judgement about the Shroud. He now believes it must have wrapped the body of a medieval victim of a crucifixion. For details go to www.shroudenigma.com.