

British Society for the Turin Shroud
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Dr. Hartwig Fischer
Director
British Museum
Great Russell Street
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18th January 2018

Dear Dr Fischer

Carbon Dating the Shroud of Turin

I have recently published an allegation that your former employee, Professor Michael Tite, may have compromised the reputation and independence of the British Museum in connection with the above event. I have asked Prof. Tite to comment on the allegation on two occasions but, so far, he has refused to do so. I would be grateful if, having read the allegations, you would care to comment and perhaps ask him yourself if there is any substance to them.

It seems that there is a prima facie case that an injustice was done to a subject of such importance that, for scrutiny, only the British Museum was considered to be sufficiently qualified and independent enough to be relied on for academic and scientific authority and impartiality. The event in question happened nearly thirty years ago and you may wish to decide that it is too late to even consider looking at it. However, justice delayed remains justice denied. And there are other consequences detrimental to future study of the subject to such a view.

Your then employee, Professor Tite, had, as requested by the Church authorities, determined a set of protocols and safeguards to ensure an accurate result of the test. However, when Professor Tite eventually presided over the announcement of the results of the test he did so without any reference to the fact that these essential protocols, for various reasons, had been abandoned.

The allegations state that Michael Tite had come to have a vested interest in Prof. Hall, then head of the Oxford C14 facility, being able to announce an unequivocal result to the test as only this would trigger the investment into the Oxford facility which Tite, though still an employee of the British Museum, had been lined up to head after Hall and which he duly did. These allegations are set out in detail in the current edition of the BSTS Newsletter as well as setting the whole event into the context of its time. A copy of this is enclosed.

The effect of the dismissive manner of the announcement of the result, with no reference to the test's limitations, has resulted in the Shroud being regarded as a crude and cynical medieval fraud ever since by the vast majority. When asked to explain the Shroud at the time Prof. Hall stated that: "Someone just got a bit of linen and faked it up." A view which Prof. Tite endorsed. You may be interested to learn that Prof. Tite has been forced to recognise that this can no longer be sustained as the BSTS article and associated website also makes clear. However, this change of heart comes too late. The damage was done back in 1989 when the result was announced in the manner that it was.

The consequence of your appointed representative allowing such an unbalanced announcement for his own personal reasons has caused the subject to become so tainted that, ever since, it has been taboo for most serious scholars and scientists to take an interest in even though its history and an explanation for its unique image has yet to be determined. So much so that your own institution's recent "Treasures of Heaven" exhibition carried no reference to what had once been the most famous "relic" in Christendom.

My BSTS Newsletter article makes clear that I do not suggest that the authenticity of the Shroud as the burial shroud of Christ is the only alternative. On the contrary. I have come to believe that its unique and so-far unfathomable image has the potential to be relevant to all faiths as well as those with none. More importantly, it represents an unsolved scientific, artistic, and historical mystery. A mystery unlikely to become resolved while it remains mired in the "contempt" with which Professor Tite allowed the result to be announced. Until the blight of the distorted and possibly "corrupt" way the test announcement was handled there is little chance of the subject being returned to respectability as something worthy of further academic and scientific interest. The late Professor Hall and Professor Tite have frequently mocked those who do still take its study seriously as "flat-earthers". In view of the issues raised above I think it behoves the British Museum and Professor Tite to do something that will make clear to the public that the Shroud, though a "cold" case, must still be regarded as an open one.

I have no idea whether I will be able to interest the press in this story as, for the most part, they took Professor Tite's word, as the representative of the British Museum, as "gospel". However, it is my intention to pursue this issue as far as I reasonably can until Professor Tite provides a written denial of these allegations. If he does, I will, of course, take his word and publish a full apology in the next edition.

On the other hand, by questioning Professor Tite's integrity as I have, and, by extension, the British Museum's own independence in this matter, I realise that I have made myself vulnerable to whatever legal redress and associated damages may be justified.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Rolfe', with a horizontal line underneath it.

David Rolfe
Editor
BSTS Newsletter
cc Prof. Michael Tite
Prof. Christopher Ramsey
Dr. Rowan Williams.
Dr. Bruno Barberis, Turin.