

New Forensic Tests Determine Shroud of Turin Is Most Likely a Fake

A new high-tech forensic study of the blood flows on the Shroud of Turin, the mysterious linen some Christians believe is Jesus' burial cloth, is the latest analysis to suggest that it is most likely a medieval fake.

The results of the investigation, in which scientists used a volunteer and a mannequin and employed sophisticated techniques such as Bloodstain Pattern Analysis (BPA), was published in the latest edition of the Journal of Forensic Sciences.

The Roman Catholic Church has not taken an official position on the authenticity of cloth, which bears an image, reversed like a photographic negative, of a man with the wounds of a crucifixion.

It shows the back and front of a bearded man, his arms crossed on his chest. It is marked by what appear to be rivulets of blood from wounds in the wrists, feet and side.

Skeptics say the cloth, which measures 14 feet, 4 inches by 3 feet, 7 inches (4.4 by 1.1 meters), is a masterful medieval forgery. Carbon dating tests in 1988 put it between 1260 and 1390, but some have challenged their accuracy.

The latest study was restricted to blood flows that would have resulted from some wounds—those of the left hand, the forearms, a wound in the side that the Bible says was caused by a lance, and blood stains near the waist.

A tiny tube was inserted into the wrist of the volunteer to simulate dripping from a wound where a crucifixion nail would

have been inserted. A mannequin was used for the side “lance” wound.

Using instruments such a ballistic angle finder, the study showed that the direction and behavior of the rivulets of blood did not match those evidenced in high-resolution photographs of the shroud. The cloth is housed in a special case in the Turin Cathedral and goes on display only on rare occasions.

“When the volunteer was in (various reclining positions) the blood movement never matched the Shroud,” said the study.

“Assuming that the red stains on the Turin linen are actually blood from the crucifixion wounds, the results of the experiments demonstrate that the alleged flowing patterns from different areas of the body are not consistent with each other,” it said.

The accuracy of the 1988 carbon dating tests, carried out on small samples of the cloth by universities in the United States, Britain and Switzerland, was challenged by some hard-core believers who said restorations in past centuries had contaminated the results.

The history of the Shroud is long and controversial.

After first surfacing in the Middle East and France, it was brought by Italy’s former royal family, the Savoy, to their seat in Turin in 1578. In 1983 ex-King Umberto II bequeathed it to the late Pope John Paul.

The Shroud narrowly escaped destruction in 1997 when a fire ravaged the Guarini Chapel of the Turin cathedral where it is held. A fireman risked his life to save it. {eoa}

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