Chapter 1

The Turin Shroud (1355)

_Genuine Relic or Medieval Fake?

Hard-core criminality is nothing new. Catch the evening news, with its endless litany of drive-by shootings, armed holdups, and other scenes of urban mayhem, and it’s all too easy to run away with the notion that we are living in the most lawless era in history. Nothing could be farther from the truth; we’re just better informed. For sheer, unadulterated havoc and skulduggery, nothing can top the Middle Ages. Setting aside the blood-drenched wars and the ravaging plagues, it was a time when murder was commonplace; rape went unpunished; and incest thrived in remote rural areas. It was an age of quite extraordinary violence to person and property, and wholesale theft. From the highest in the land to the lowest peasant, nobody escaped the ravages of crime—not even the established church.

In the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church was a vast, sprawling corporation, the biggest business on earth; like most multinationals, it was riven by internecine feuding. Not all of the disputes were theological; greed played its part. For while it’s true that all financial roads may ultimately have led to Rome, across Europe hard-nosed priests were after their slice of the cake as well. Competition for the franc, florin, ducat, guilder, and groat was razor-sharp, with individual parishes fighting hard to attract the biggest congregation. Everyone was looking for an edge, and the biggest edge of all was undoubtedly a religious relic. Any house of...
worship that could boast within its precincts some artifact with a biblical connection or, better still, a scrap of human matter, was on the high road to hitting the pilgrim jackpot. Mere rumor of such a treasure was enough to bring the faithful flocking in droves. And with these pilgrims came money; oodles of the stuff. As a result, the most celebrated of these shrines developed into medieval theme parks, generating huge income streams, not just for the church but for the surrounding microeconomy as well. Needless to say, with so much money sloshing around, it was only a matter of time before someone decided to prime the relic pump. The result was a forger's bull market.

From the Mediterranean to the Baltic and across to Iberia, “relics” started sprouting up everywhere: crowns of thorns; assorted Holy Lances; even a foreskin or two from Jesus’ circumcision; and enough slivers of the True Cross to rebuild Noah’s Ark. In Loreto, Italy, they went one better, boasting an entire Nazarene house allegedly once inhabited by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, all flown there by angels in 1294. The twelfth-century Three Kings Cathedral in Cologne, Germany, houses bones purportedly belonging to the Magi who visited the infant Jesus. Another German city, Trier, plays host to the Holy Coat, the seamless tunic worn by Jesus at his crucifixion; unfortunately, the parish church at Argenteuil, just north of Paris, claims the same distinction.

When it comes to the single-minded pursuit of a desirable relic, pride of place must surely go to St. Hugh of Lincoln, England. The story goes that when shown an arm of St. Mary Magdalene in Provence, he attempted to remove a chunk with his knife to take back to his cathedral. When that failed, he gnawed some off and brought the morsel home. Such macabre souvenir-hunting did little to detract from his own sanctity, and his magnificent tomb in Lincoln Cathedral was itself a popular site of pilgrimage until it was despoiled during the Reformation.

Throughout medieval Europe, trickery was rampant. Relics were stolen, fenced, copied perhaps dozens of times, then slipped back into a hungry market. The undoubted scam capital of the age was Venice. As the greatest sea power in the Mediterranean, Venice controlled the major east–west trade routes, and its craftsmen were legendary for their ability to replicate treasures plundered from Asia Minor, which were then trafficked all over Europe.

Some relics may have been genuine. Most, palpably, were not. Yet their marketability remained unaffected. Because people tend to believe what they want to believe, unhampered by facts or reason, the charlatans were never in danger of going out of business. This trend is still with us. In 1988 Monsignor John Ellis, a Catholic Church historian, recalled with distaste...
his visit to St. Anthony’s Church in Padua, Italy, where the guide glibly pointed out a vial containing “the milk of the Blessed Virgin Mary.” As Ellis remarked, “Some relics are fed by sheer curiosity, but some are by fanaticism. I don’t say there are no real relics, but there’s so much fraud you can’t be sure.”

For six centuries and more, the undoubted king of relics has been the Turin Shroud. At a little over fourteen feet by three feet, it is also one of the largest. Superbly made from fine herringbone twill linen, it is, so millions believe, the actual cloth used to wrap the body of Jesus after it was taken down from the Cross and placed in a tomb. In making this claim, the Turin Shroud isn’t unique—researchers have identified about forty other alleged “shrouds” throughout the world—but what makes this particular specimen so special is its detail. Alone amongst all the claimants, the Turin Shroud actually depicts, in faint markings on a sepia background, a discernible human image.

Since it was moved to Turin in the sixteenth century, the Shroud has been an object of awe and reverence for generations of devout Catholics. They came in the millions to pray and marvel. On some days the crush was so great that pilgrims died from suffocation. But it was the events of May 28, 1898, that escalated the Shroud from devotional icon into an object of universal curiosity.

A prominent Turin councilor, Seconda Pia, had been commissioned to make the first official photograph of the Shroud, which hung in the cathedral. Working at night to avoid the crowds, he wrestled with his cantankerous equipment and the poor lighting until he eventually succeeded in capturing two plates of the faint image, front and dorsal. Harboring no great expectations of a successful outcome, Pia returned to his darkroom to develop the plates. There, to his astonishment, he found that when he examined the plates, the negative revealed an infinitely more lifelike image of the figure on the cloth than was visible with the naked eye.

The detail was remarkable: a nude, bearded male, almost six feet tall, with long hair, lay with his eyes closed, hands crossed over the groin, and his right foot slightly raised. There appeared to be a large, open wound in the chest near the heart, what looked like injuries to the wrists and feet, and a fretwork of lacerations across the back, such as might have been caused by scourging. One didn’t need to be a biblical scholar to realize that these injuries tallied unerringly with those recorded in Gospel accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus.

For Pia, the moment was an epiphany, and for the rest of his life he was convinced he had looked upon the face of Jesus, newly killed on the Cross. Reports of his discovery flew around the city, then the world, with
the result that even greater crowds besieged the cathedral, clamoring to
glimpse what most regarded as a miracle. Others, religious leaders and
scientists mostly, fearing a hoax, subjected Pia to a withering interroga-
tion, but the doughty councilor stood by his results.

So was this a genuine miracle, or was it, as many insist, the biggest
and most enduring art fraud in history?

The first person to address this conundrum scientifically was Yves
Delage, a distinguished French professor of anatomy and a declared agnos-
tic. For eighteen months, he and his assistant, Dr. Paul Vignion, pored over
both the plates and the actual cloth, studying every square millimeter.
Delage revealed his findings in a lecture given on April 21, 1902, at the
Académie des Sciences in Paris, saying that, in his opinion, the Shroud body
image and wounds were so physiologically flawless that he found it im-
possible to believe they could be the work of an artist. Moreover, micro-
scopic examination of the cloth revealed what he believed to be clear evi-
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dence of blood. The human impression, he said, had been caused by the urea of body sweat, and spices used to anoint a dead body. To breathless silence in the auditorium, Delage reached his dramatic crescendo, a declaration that he found no difficulty in believing that the body wrapped in the Shroud was that of Jesus. A huge burst of cheering greeted the announcement.

One would imagine that the church’s reaction to such an unqualified endorsement would have been unalloyed joy, but it wasn’t that way at all. When it comes to the Turin Shroud, the Vatican has always been jittery, preferring to keep a certain distance, perhaps fearful that here was a religious banana skin just waiting for an unwary foot.

Origins of the Shroud

To understand this ambivalence, we need to travel back to the mid-fourteenth century, and the first authenticated mention of the Shroud. In 1389 the then bishop of the French city of Troyes, Pierre d’Arcis, wrote angrily to Pope Clement VII in Avignon about a scandal he had unearthed in the tiny church of Lirey, which lay within his diocese. Much to his fury, the church’s canons had “falsely and deceitfully, being consumed with the passion of avarice and not from any motive of devotion but only of gain, procured for their church a certain cloth cunningly painted, upon which by clever sleight of hand was depicted the twofold image of one man, that is to say the back and front, they falsely declaring and pretending that this was the actual Shroud in which our Savior Jesus Christ was enfolded in the tomb.”

In trashing the Shroud, d’Arcis stepped on a lot of toes. Lirey was in the midst of a relic bonanza, with pilgrims snapping up medallions as mementos of their visit. Fortunes were being coined and such was the wealth in circulation that it led to murmured complaints of financial jealousy against d’Arcis, grumpy because he wasn’t getting his cut. This makes no sense whatsoever. As bishop of the diocese his power was virtually limitless. Had he wanted to sequester, if not all, then at least a sizable chunk of Lirey’s Shroud-based income, doubtless he could have. Instead, he seems to have wanted no part of the relic.

He amplified his concerns in the memo. The cloth, he wrote, had first been shown in Lirey in about 1355, at the time of his predecessor, Bishop Henry de Poitiers. When the matter was brought to his attention, Poitiers made inquiries and “discovered the fraud and how the said cloth had been cunningly painted, the truth being attested by the artist who had painted
it, to wit, that it was a work of human skill, and not miraculously wrought or bestowed."³

Since even the de Charny family—the Shroud’s original owners and, coincidentally, the founders of the church at Lirey—referred to the item in documents, not as a burial cloth of Jesus, but merely as a “likeness or representation,”⁴ ordinarily that would have been an end to the story. But in 1453 the cloth was willed to the Italian royal house of Savoy, and it was this journey to another country that really brought about a change in the Shroud’s fortunes and iconic status.

Just eleven years later, the future Pope Sixtus IV felt confident enough to describe it as “colored with the blood of Christ,”⁵ and it wasn’t long before the Shroud was even granted its own feast day. A brush with calamity came in December 1532, when a fire threatened to destroy the Shroud as it lay in a silver reliquary, locked behind a grille. Only quick work by a local blacksmith, forcing the bars and snatching the box from the flames, saved the day. Though the Shroud suffered some fire and water damage, this was patched in 1534 by a team of nuns, who also strengthened the relic adding a backing cloth. In 1578 the Shroud ended its travels when it was transferred to a specially built chapel in Turin Cathedral, where it remains to this day.

Actual ownership of the Shroud only passed into the hands of the Vatican in 1983, and since then, on those rare occasions when it has been removed from its wooden casket and displayed for all to see, it has continued to exert a magical spell. During the last showing, in 1998, an estimated three million visitors filed past in just eight weeks, with few of those spectators prepared to question the Shroud’s authenticity. They prefer to leave that argument to others.

For the most part the debate has been bilious and incredibly hostile. Normally phlegmatic, rational scientists have a tendency to work themselves into a monumental lather when it comes to the Turin Shroud, no matter which side of the fence they’re on. All of which makes sifting reliable evidence from the invective no easy task.

The first new evidence since the efforts of Yves Delage came in the 1970s, with a sensational announcement from a Swiss criminologist, Dr. Max Frei-Sulzer, that pollen grains he had scraped from the Shroud’s surface had come from no less than fifty-eight different Middle East plant species. Because pollen grains are extraordinarily durable—they can survive for thousands of years—this makes them an extremely useful forensic archaeology tool, and Frei-Sulzer’s pronouncement appeared to deal a knockout blow to those jeering skeptics who maintained that the cloth had never traveled any farther east than the Franco-Italian border.
Unfortunately for Frei-Sulzer, his credibility as an analyst plunged like a lead parachute in May 1983 when the notorious Hitler Diaries that he had “authenticated” were exposed as a flagrant hoax.* Death in March of that same year had spared Frei-Sulzer the embarrassment of the diaries fiasco, but did nothing to stifle persistent whispers that the flashy criminologist-cum-botanist from Zurich had resorted to spiking the Shroud sample with pollen personally acquired from repeated trips to Turkey and the Holy Land, though this was never proved.

Even before this revelation, the skeptics had begun to fight back. Leading the charge was Dr. Walter C. McCrone, an outspoken microanalyst from Chicago, who, in 1979, attempted to chemically analyze the image. Using more than two dozen samples taken from the Shroud with sticky tape, McCrone subjected them to a full range of forensic tests. His findings were delivered with customary bluntness: “There is no blood on the Shroud.” What he had found, though, was paint. Through the use of polarized light microscopy, he had identified what he believed to be clear traces of the pigment vermilion, in addition to red ocher and tempera, all paints in common use during the Middle Ages. Armed with this knowledge, an artist friend of McCrone’s, Walter Sandford, managed to produce a passable Shroud-like image, providing at least partial confirmation for McCrone’s view that the Shroud was a “beautiful medieval painting.” As there had been no reference to the Shroud before 1355, McCrone concluded that the Shroud had probably been painted shortly beforehand, then stored “to give the paint a year to dry” before being sold to the church in Lirey.

Predictably such an emphatic renunciation brought an avalanche of criticism crashing down on McCrone’s head, with accusations of sloppy methodology, grandstanding for the media, and an anti-Christian agenda. Some of the criticism was colorful, some was libelous, and it should be said that McCrone gave as good as he got in the acrimonious exchanges, but the most telling outcome of all this verbal sparring was the way it spurred other scientists into action. In 1981 Dr. Alan Adler, a renowned chemist, fired back a string of equally impressive test results, which did appear to show the presence of blood on the Shroud. However, even if true, there is nothing to say that this blood is two thousand years old, and plenty to suggest that it isn’t.

When the Shroud suffered fire damage in 1532, only the fact that it was housed in a silver reliquary saved it. Even so, it was still scorched.

*For a full account of this debacle see Colin Evans, The Casebook of Forensic Detection (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996).
Contemporary accounts record that the fire’s intensity melted some of the metal, causing a drop of molten silver to land on the cloth (the mark is visible to this day). As the melting point of silver is 961ºC—approximately the temperature used to cremate bodies—such extreme heat would drastically affect any blood proteins found on the cloth and compromise their analytical worth. Even if, as supporters—they call themselves Shroudies—claim, the cloth was folded and therefore slightly insulated from the worst of the heat, such a roasting must have taken its toll.

For this reason, what blood—if any—there is on the Shroud probably originated after the fire, most likely from one of the countless sick pilgrims who must have touched the Shroud over the centuries in hopes of a cure.

So if the scientists couldn’t agree on what the Shroud revealed chemically, what would a forensic pathologist be able to make of the image itself? At the request of the British Society for the Turin Shroud, Professor James Cameron, a man with considerable experience of violent death, brought his talents to bear on the puzzle.

Considering the paucity of material he had to work with—just a few photographs—some of his conclusions were eye-poppingly expansive. “The image of the face is indicative of one who has suffered death by crucifixion,” he wrote, without explaining in what way the face of a crucified person differs from that of someone who has suffered any other kind of death. Then, turning to the dorsal image, he discerned evidence of “deep bruising of the shoulder blades, indicating the angle at which the cross beam of the Cross might have been carried.” He also noted that “the scourge marks on the body would be consistent with a flagrum,” a particularly nasty short-handled Roman whip that had pellets of bone or lead attached to its thongs.

Cameron went on: “The image on the Shroud indicates to me that its owner— whoever he may have been—died on the cross, and was in a state of rigor when placed in it.” Given the sweeping scope of his previous observations, it came as something of an anticlimax when he rather tamely concluded, “It is my belief that we shall only be able to prove . . . that the Turin Shroud might be the burial cloth of Jesus Christ, not that it actually is.”

The forensic battle heated up. Scraps of “evidence” were tossed into the fray by both sides, and just as quickly shot down by the opposition. Finally, in 1988, came a breakthrough. In a surprise move, the Vatican gave permission for minute samples from the Shroud to be subjected to radiocarbon dating. Here at last, or so it appeared, the mystery would be solved once and for all.
How Radiocarbon Dating Works

Radiocarbon dating is the most widely used method of age estimation in the field of archaeology, and works by means of measuring the amount of carbon 14 left in an object. The principle was pioneered by Willard F. Libby at the University of Chicago in the 1950s, working with items of known age. This groundbreaking research earned Libby the 1960 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

Certain chemical elements have more than one type of atom, and different atoms of the same element are called isotopes. Carbon has three main isotopes: carbon 12, carbon 13, and carbon 14. Of these isotopes, carbon 12 is the most abundant, making up 99 percent of the carbon on Earth; next comes carbon 13 at 1 percent; and right down at the bottom of the scale is carbon 14, which makes up just 1 part per million. What makes carbon 14 so useful is that alone among these three isotopes, it is radioactive, and the gradual decay of this radioactivity is used to measure age.

Radioactive atoms decay into stable atoms by a simple mathematical process. Half of the available atoms will change in a given period of time, known as the half-life. For instance, if 1,000 atoms in 2000 had a half-life of 10 years, then in 2010 there would be 500 left. In 2020 there would be 250 left, in 2030 there would be 125 left, and so on.

Therefore, by counting the number of carbon 14 atoms in any object that contains carbon, it is possible to calculate either how old the object is, or how long ago it died. For this we need to know two things: the half-life of carbon 14; and how many carbon 14 atoms the object had before it died. The first part is straightforward: the half-life of carbon 14 is 5,730 years. However, knowing how many carbon 14 atoms something had before it died can only be estimated, but the assumption is that the level of carbon 14 in any living organism is constant—that is, when a particular fossil was alive, it had the same amount of carbon 14 as the same living organism today.

Dates derived from carbon samples can be carried back about 50,000 years. Beyond that, it is necessary to employ potassium or uranium isotopes, which have much longer half-lives. These are used to date very ancient geological events that have to be measured in millions or even billions of years.

This, then, was the technology. And on April 21, 1988, under the watchful gaze of Cardinal Ballestrero of Turin and a video camera, Italian microanalyst Giovanni Riggi cut a 1/2-inch by 3-inch strip of linen from the Shroud, well away from its central image and any charred or patched
areas. He divided the strip into three postage stamp–size samples and distributed them to representatives of laboratories in Zurich, Oxford, and Tucson. Each then performed at least three radiocarbon measurements on its sample.

Because of the small sample size, the method of measurement used was accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS). Although at that time AMS was a less well-developed technique than that used for the majority of radiocarbon datings, the participating laboratories had already measured several thousand dates by the AMS method, and its accuracy, both then and subsequently, has been shown to be comparable to the best of the laboratories using conventional methods.

All three laboratories, working independently and with controls, came up with the same result: the linen cloth used to make the Shroud was manufactured between A.D. 1260 and 1390, a time frame that covers exactly the Shroud’s first known appearance in Lirey.

The Oxford team made their announcement at a British Museum press conference, stating that the radiocarbon dating results “provide conclusive evidence that the linen of the Shroud of Turin is medieval.”14 According to nuclear physicist Harry Gove, the odds were “about one in a thousand trillion”15 against the Shroud’s having been woven in the time of Jesus. Edward Hall, another member of the Oxford team, decided to twist the knife. Anyone who continued to believe the Shroud was genuine, he jeered, must be a “flat-Earther.”16

Shroudies were stunned. At a stroke, centuries of unquestioning belief appeared to have been turned to dust.

But zealots are hardy souls, and soon the hunt was on to find some way to discredit the findings. Hysterical accusations that the laboratories had colluded in an atheistic conspiracy to rig the results were treated with appropriate contempt and when off-the-wall claims of sample switching started circulating, Robert Hedges, of the Laboratory for Archaeology at Oxford, just shook his head in disbelief. “Having witnessed the sampling operation, I find this assertion incredible.”17

Yet another noisy faction alleged that the samples had actually been cut from the backing cloth sewn on by nuns in 1534, and this accounted for the misleading results; though quite why the nuns used two-hundred-year-old cloth to patch the Shroud was not made clear, but by this stage some supporters were getting distinctly panicky.

Others, more rationally, zeroed in on the reliability of carbon dating, and cited instances where it had been shown to be inaccurate, though never by such a margin on such a recent artifact. For the carbon dating to be off by thirteen hundred years, something must have been radically wrong with
the sample. Soon, though, relieved Shroudies thought they’d found the answer.

In 1996 a team of researchers at the University of Texas announced that an alleged sample of Shroud fibers they had studied was mired in bioplastic contamination. This occurs when living organisms—bacteria and fungi, typically—add carbon of a “fresher” nature to an existing sample. If not thoroughly cleaned off, this contamination could distort any findings toward a much later date, which is what happened here, they claimed. Instead of sampling the fiber’s cellulose alone, the 1988 testers had sampled the contaminants as well.

Again Hedges was scathing, noting that “the degree of contamination required to shift a thirteenth-century date by thirteen hundred years is very large (such a shift would require the addition of about 50 percent more material of “modern” carbon), and this quantity, or indeed any amount above a few percent, can be totally ruled out.”

Further doubts about the Texas results surfaced from an unusual and authoritative quarter when Turin’s Cardinal Giovanni Saldarini, custodian of the Shroud, publicly questioned the origins of the Texas sample. On Italian television in 1996 he was quoted as saying: “There is no certainty that the material belongs to the Shroud so that the Holy See and the custodian declare that they cannot recognize the results of the claimed experiments.”

But Dr. Leoncio Garza-Valdes, the microbiologist who headed the Texas team, was nothing if not persistent, and in 1998 he was back, this time claiming that red areas on the Shroud, far from being paint, as McCrone and others had argued, were actually ancient blood stains. Furthermore, he declared, the type AB blood was “common among Jewish people.” This was a baffling statement. Not only is AB not especially prevalent in Jewish people, but according to a noted serologist, Dr. Peter D’adamo, AB is a “new” blood, probably caused by the intermingling of type A Caucasians with type B Mongolians in the fourth to seventh centuries A.D. There is no evidence for its existence beyond approximately a thousand years ago. Undeterred, Garza-Valdes plugged on, giving hope to Shroudies everywhere, by further claiming to have discovered a few fragments of oak—a common tree in Jerusalem—on the cloth, heightening speculation that these might have come from the Cross.

One year later, the question of pollen found on the Shroud was raised once again, this time by two Israeli experts, Dr. Avinoam Danin, professor of botany at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and Dr. Uri Baruch, an expert in pollen dating, at the Israel Antiquities Authority. Danin said the most common pollen was that of the plant Gundelia tournefortii. “This is a
thorny plant described in the Bible as tumbleweed. Some Christians say it formed the crown of thorns. It grows only in the Near East. Therefore the Shroud could only have come from the Near East.” Other pollen found on the Shroud is that of the bean caper, which is found between Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley.

It might be possible to attach more weight to these findings had they accrued from fresh tests, but since they were performed on grains of pollen taken from the Shroud in the 1970s—shades of Frei-Sulzer—doubts about their veracity persist.

From its earliest days the Shroud has been a money spinner and, judging from the endless chain of books and articles that appear on the subject, its commercial appeal is undiluted. Nowadays most commentators attempt to concern themselves with the Shroud’s “lost years,” those thirteen centuries between the crucifixion and its mysterious appearance in a French backwater, with some claiming to have charted the Shroud’s progress from the sepulcher in Jerusalem to Edessa in Mesopotamia, before it disappeared in the 1204 sack of Constantinople, all the way to Lirey in France. Sadly, the evidence they provide is of the kind that customarily accompanies breathless accounts of extraterrestrial architects, submerged civilizations, and landing strips on the Andes.

So if the Shroud is a forgery, how was it made?

No one has yet provided a satisfactory answer. It is inconceivable that merely pressing the cloth against a dead body would have produced such a perfect image; problems of scale and distortion would be immediately apparent as the two-dimensional cloth was peeled off a three-dimensional body. As Dr. Michael Baden, the former chief medical examiner for New York City, has noted, the image is “too good to be true . . . human beings don’t make this kind of pattern.”

Which leaves only some kind of painting? Or a variant of brass-rubbing? Or could it really have been caused, as some would have us believe, by vapors emanating from a crucified look-alike, sacrificed to manufacture a relic?

Or is it just an outrageous fluke, the unintended by-product of fiendishly clever trickery and degrading pigments, that happens to manifest itself in a photographic negative? It should not be forgotten that it was modern photography gave the Turin Shroud its current superrelic status. Without the camera, this strip of linen would be a lightly regarded curiosity, nothing more; though quite why it would be necessary to anticipate the invention of photography to share this miracle with the world is, frankly, beyond comprehension.
Whatever awe is accorded to the Shroud should be directed, instead, at its originator. More than six hundred years ago an unknown artist went into his studio and created a forgery of such subtlety and skill that it has fooled generations. Modern arrogance clings to the omnipotence of science, expecting it to solve all problems. When it fails to do so—as in this case—gloating enemies are quick to thumb their noses and trumpet the presence of paranormal intervention. This is just plain silly. History is littered with puzzles and artifacts that defy modern analysis—the pyramids at Teotihuacán in Mexico; Stonehenge; and the statues on Easter Island, for instance—and only the most fanciful would attribute any of these to mystical intercession.

Within years of its unheralded appearance in a tiny French church, the Shroud was condemned by the Vatican as a phony, and half a millennium later three independent teams of radiocarbon dating scientists reached the same conclusion.

Brilliant in its conception, magnificent in its execution, the Turin Shroud was a fraud in 1355, and the fraud continues, with no solution in sight. In that sense, it truly is the perfect crime.