

Telephone Calls to Tucson about the Suicide of Timothy Linick

Claude de Cointet was an associate of Bro. Bruno Bonnet-Eymard of the Catholic Counter-Reformation in the XXth (later XXIst) Century. The two visited the University of Arizona in Tucson late in 1990 to interview the labs' scientists regarding the 1988 C-14 dating on the Shroud. One of the scientists, Dr. Timothy Linick, had committed suicide on June 4, 1989. Bonnet-Eymard and de Cointet did not know that at the time of their visit. De Cointet placed some calls in late 1991 to the lab in order to learn more details. Some additional information regarding the Shroud samples the lab had received are also revealed.

De Cointet sent me a transcript of the various calls that were made. The transcript is very rough; de Cointet's English was not perfect. Since there is some valuable data in it, I have edited the document significantly, including deleting some irrelevant information, correcting spelling and spacing errors to make it easier to read. Commentary by de Cointet is in parentheses; I've made some remarks in italicized brackets.

Abbreviations used:

CdC: Claude de Cointet
TJ: Timothy Jull
DD: Douglas Donahue
PD: Paul Damon

24 September 1991, 09:00 -- Call to Tim Jull at the Tucson University

TJ: Tim Jull speaking.

CdC: I am speaking to Dr. Jull?

TJ: Yes.

CdC: I am Claude de Cointet; I am calling you from Paris in France. You remember, I visited you one year ago with Brother Bruno; and I was looking for some addresses. Brother Bruno has made a very interesting study about the d'Arcis Memorandum. You remember that we spoke about the d'Arcis Memorandum? A very interesting historical story, and we want to send this document to you and also to B.H. Gore. By the way, are you still in contact with B.H. Gore? He was a student?

TJ: Yes, he is a student. I have an address for him. [*Jull provided.*]

CdC: I was also looking for the address of Timothy Linick, but unfortunately I heard that he committed suicide. I wanted to express my warmest sympathy to you about this event. More than two years [*ago*] – we did not hear about this when we were in Tucson [*in October 1990*]. We spoke about different people and you told me that except [*for*] Donahue, Damon and yourself, the people who were part of the C-14 measurement were agnostic most of them. Linick, it is an Irish name? No? He was not Irish?

TJ: He was Jewish—but not practicing.

CdC: Ah, yes, he was young, like you, no?

TJ: He was about 40 or so.

CdC: The reasons why he killed himself are completely not

TJ: Yes, you know, he had some personal problems, which is a very long story; then he had a depression, so it is a very sad story but

CdC: Yes.

TJ: Anyway, O.K., you are going to send me

CdC: I will send you the story, yes.

TJ: OK and Dr. Donahue? Or just to me?

CdC: Oh yes, to Dr. Donahue also.

TJ: OK, thank you very much.

CdC: OK, fine, goodbye.

TJ: Goodbye.

24 September 1991 at 9:30 (Tucson time) – Call to Douglas Donahue, at his office in Tucson

CdC: Yes, good morning Professor Donahue, I am Claude de Cointet. I am calling you from Paris. I just wanted to express [to] you my warmest sympathy, I just heard that Mr. Timothy Linick who was part of your staff committed suicide a few months ago. I wanted to send you an interesting study about the d’Arcis Memorandum that we discussed when we were having lunch with Bro. Bruno in the Mensa [Society] of your University. I had an address for Gore for Timothy Linick I heard from Hathaway that he unfortunately, he committed suicide.

DD: Yes, two years ago. It was a very sad thing.

CdC: Yes, and do you know the reason for his suicide?

DD: Well, he suffered from emotional problems. Who knows such things?

CdC: Yes, of course. He was still young he was about 40 or something like this?

DD: Oh yes, but young people also have emotional problems. It was a very sad thing, he had a young child; we miss him very much.

CdC: Yes, he was a recent immigrant or he was living the US for a long time?

DD: No, no, he was born in the U.S.

CdC: OK, it is very sad.

DD: Yes, so it happened two years ago.

CdC: In June, in June of 1989.

DD: Ah yes. We had in *Radiocarbon*, the Journal of *Radiocarbon* an issue dedicated to him and it had a small picture, you know, sometime ago.

CdC: Yes, you made some publications, you say in *Radiocarbon*?

DD: *Radiocarbon*, that is a journal. In an issue, a year or two ago. I don’t remember the exact issue, but there was an obituary and his picture and a brief sketch of his life. The people in the business are aware. It is well known, but I can understand that you wouldn’t have heard. He published a big article in *Radiocarbon* in 1986. He was a prolific and an excellent scientist.

CdC: Yes, and he was part of your experiments on the Shroud?

DD: Sure.

CdC: As he signed ... [the Nature report].

DD: Yes, he was.

CdC: What was his role, what did he do specifically? (silence)

DD: Well, like others he did some of everything, mostly operating the machine, analyzing results, it is what he did always.

CdC: But he was not present when you received the samples?

DD: Not in Turin, no!

CdC: No, I mean in Arizona.

DD: He was certainly present when we made the measurement and when took the samples, sure. He was a full partner in all of everything we did.

CdC: Oh yes, but I am surprised because you never mentioned his name when we talked about these things.

DD: Well, when we talked it was a year later, and we keep trying to forget it. It was a big blow to us but we were slowly getting over it.

CdC: So you say he was [present] when you received the samples here in Tucson?

DD: We did not receive—we brought them back.

CdC: Of course, but then when you opened the container, and then did everything.

DD: Certainly.

CdC: OK, thank you very much professor. So I will send you our documentation.

DD: Documentation of what?

CdC: The article of Brother Bruno, he made a study and he was in Saint Louis at the Symposium and he made a very interesting presentation, a good paper about the d'Arcis Memorandum. You will see.

DD: When was the Symposium?

CdC: The Symposium of St. Louis? It was in June, just before the summer, and we attended this symposium. Dinegar was there and some other scientists.

DD: I think, about one year ago I was invited, but somehow or other it got lost, I think. I thought it was 1992 actually. What is the name of the man who ...? It was Brother Marino. *[I was a monk at the time.]* He is a friend of my son-in-law; my son-in-law works for the St. Louis paper.

CdC: Oh, yes.

DD: OK, so I was happy to hear from you.

26 September at 08:30 (Tucson time) -- Call to the home of Prof. Paul Damon. His wife gives number at the University

PD: Damon.

CdC: Hello, Yes. Professor Paul Damon?

PD: Yes.

CdC: Oh yes, good morning professor, I am Claude de Cointet, you remember me? I spoke with you on the telephone about one year ago, and I wanted to have a friendly conversation with you if it was possible. I am not disturbing you too much?

PD: No. I don't remember the connection.

CdC: Oh yes, I am French and I was speaking to you about the radiocarbon experiments, you know.

PD: Oh, yes. Yes.

CdC: I came, in fact I visited Tucson about one year ago.

PD: Yes, yes.

CdC: With Brother Bruno and we were looking for some details about the samples you received from Turin, etc. and at that time, there is something that we did not notice, we did not pay attention to it. In fact when we spoke with you and also with Dr. Jull, we never spoke about what was the exact role, what did Timothy Linick do, during these days, in Tucson. And in the meantime, I heard – I was informed that unfortunately he was dead, he committed suicide. It was in fact before we came, it was in June 89 and for us this may be very, very important, because ...

PD: No, no. He had had for a long time personal problems. He was separated from his wife, we all were (sigh) trying to encourage him to continue his work, he was an underachiever, quite brilliant—but with personal problems, and he had very little to do with the Shroud of Turin. Yes, he was ... very little to do with it, so you know that ... (he stops) ... in no way should that be associated with the Shroud of Turin. In fact, it is really an ugly thought—and has no foundation in reality. I think (sigh) it has been difficult for his wife, they were separated, not divorced, and—for his son—but he has had problems going back to ... a long ...his family, his parents. I mean these things are private ... (louder) (insisting) and (have) nothing at all to do ... You must remember if this had not been the Shroud of Turin, it would have been quite routine for us. We date linens all the time, and we have many other things on our mind besides the Shroud of Turin, and as I pointed out too, I think, to one of your colleagues, Doug Donahue is from an Irish Catholic family, and he was trying to be quite objective about the whole thing. He was not going to read up on it, etc—our job is just to date it, and within the first five minutes we could say it couldn't be first century. And I looked at him and looked very dejected. I said, “What's wrong, Doug?” and he said, ‘I didn't think that I would be disappointed, but I am terribly disappointed.’” So you see from our point of view this is very troublesome (sigh) to repeat it all over again. We are comfortable with the our results and all we can say is that the flax was harvested not before ... (silence) the twelfth century (quickly correcting) the thirteenth century as the very, as you know, the very ... astronomical statistics ... so we really ... we come back to this over and over again and if people don't believe our results were (accurate ?) somebody else can do it. What has happened is that there is a question of dishonesty. We know that we had a sample of the Shroud of Turin because of the weave and because it was wrapped in red silk, and we saw it microscopically, we saw two pieces—two threads—yes, so we know what we dated, and we did this routinely, we took very extra precautions. I developed in consultation with textile experts a very elaborate technique for purification, and it was really not necessary because the amount of impurities was negligible: about one part of a thousand so, you know, I mean (sigh) that is the way we looked at it ... but to bring Linick into this, is really a ... You should ... people should examine their motives in doing such a thing (he becomes aggressive) -- it really bothers me from a moral and ethical point of view, and a personal point of view, because he was our friend and colleague, and we knew he had these problems for a long period of time and it was not ... it was not really something that he was closely associated with ... These problems have occurred (sigh) many years!—well before we heard of the Shroud.

CdC: Yes, but he signed the *Nature* report, so he has been involved in the ...

PD: Yes, but involved peripherally; we put everybody on there, including the electrical, the physics engineer who helped to keep the machine ready. People most directly involved were

– first for the preparation—were myself, Tim Jull, and Larry Toolin and Doug Donahue; the other people were simply doing what they always do.

CdC: But Doug Donahue told me that Timothy Linick was also involved in the ... was present the day when you received, you opened the containers. He told me, “Oh, of course Timothy Linick was here.”

PD: No, no, who told you that?

CdC: Doug Donahue. Yesterday I asked him.

PD: Not, not the first day because the first day he was not even in. We came in on a Sunday. And later, yes everybody wanted to see, sure everybody in the laboratory wanted to see, of course, I mean it was ... But why are you bringing this up? I really, (excited) I really feel that this is almost obscene ... (silence). It is almost obscene, Sir.

CdC: We experiences unfortunately in Europe a lot of times in the past century and also unfortunately in these decades in some opportunities like this and in fact they ...

PD: You know, I think this is obscene. I think it's obscene, Sir! I think you ought to examine your conscience! And if you are truly religious, I think you ought to pray to God to close your mind ... (silence)

CdC: How did he commit suicide, did he hang himself?

PD: I beg pardon?

CdC: How did he commit ...?

PD: No, no, no, no, this ... (long silence) This, I mean, there is no ... (silence, great sigh) It is obscene! That is all I could say! (almost beside himself) I don't want to continue the conversation! What you are doing is obscene, to drain this man into this and to associate this with the Shroud of Turin, when it has absolutely nothing to do with it. (Suddenly calm and quiet) Well, let me say: if this objection, you people have, comes to a legitimate peer-reviewed journal, we will respond! But we cannot give up the rest of our work; this seems to be consuming you. It was ... it would have, if it had not been for the Shroud of Turin, been a routine matter for us, you see, you understand?

CdC: Yes.

PD: And what you're doing is obscene to mix Tim Linick with anything to do with the Shroud of Turin concerning his suicide, (insisting again) this is obscene!

CdC: Well, I am just asking questions!

PD: Examine your conscience, Sir, examine your conscience!

CdC: Yes, yes.

PD: There is no reason for me to continue this conversation, I mean, I am astounded, I am astounded that you can do this.

CdC: There have been a lot of times where Masons were killing people, in order they not be able to testify, to give testimony, and this is always disguised in suicide. It is just a question I was asking.

PD: No, we know exactly how he died.

CdC: I understand that he was a very good scientist, very prolific, very active man of 40 years, so I cannot understand how suddenly he disappeared.

PD: Because he had problems and he possibly committed suicide, that is how it happened. We have no doubts about it, his family has no doubts about it. He had threatened. I guess people couldn't think that he ... I see your point, you want a murder or something, well that's ...

CdC: Not but maybe, it was just to know. You know better than me, because you were present, you were in Tucson at the time, and ...

PD: Sure, sure, and we have doubt, Sir, about what happened.

CdC: There was an enquiry of the police?

PD: Well, I would have to ask the family, I suppose, of course, and you would have to ask the family about the intimate details.

CdC: Yes, of course.

PD: (Silence) I see what you are doing. I know that there is no ... no, I thought that you were ...

CdC: Sorry?

PD: I did not know what you were up to, but this ...

CdC: I was thinking, professor, that may be, if he had been killed, you also ignore this and everybody ignore that ...

PD: He just committed suicide, he threatened for ...

CdC: What?

PD: He threatened to commit suicide, before he committed suicide, but his wife did not believe it—his feelings were extreme.

CdC: It was in connection with his wife, with his family problems?

PD: It was the separation from his wife and of course they had a son, and there were problems from childhood with respect to his relationship with his mother (long silence and sigh). You know, this is a sad thing and in our lives here that this happened ...

CdC: But you are sure it cannot be this kind of accident or ...

PD: No.

CdC: How did it happen?

PD: (Silence) Well you know this is a personal matter. It happened on the spur of the moment.

CdC: I am sorry.

PD: It happened in the spur of the moment, that I mean in a moment of great depression; his wife did not think he would carry through with his threat.

CdC: Yes, but how did he commit suicide? He had a car accident?

PD: No, no, no.

CdC: He hung himself?

PD: No. What I am wondering now is if I am .. You are probing this ... if I should review the problems of the family. Well (silence) ... I think you should get these details from his wife.

CdC: Well, she is still in Tucson?

PD: Yes, she is still in Tucson.

CdC: She is married again?

PD: No, no, not married again. You see what you are doing is probing into a personal matter.

CdC: Yes, I understand.

PD: I feel that this should come from his ...

CdC: Yes.

PD: She knows the details and I don't think it should come from me.

CdC: OK, you are sure that it is related to personal problems.

PD: Oh yes, yes. You know he was really only peripherally involved in the Shroud. You know if somebody was going to do something like that it would have been Donahue or myself, not Linick. What he did was routine work: he did the computer programs and that sort of thing,

that is what he was doing, and the two people who really were so much known to the public (were) myself and Donahue, who did all the interviews and that sort of thing, so ...

CdC: Yes, but when during the experiment, it was a possibility, maybe in exchanging the vials, gas vials at this level, to exchange the samples.

PD: I mean ... we measured it sixteen times, we made sixteen different samples as I record, this is routine, but a very large number of times, and in my memory they were 16 and these were separate preparations. Now some of the measurements were of the same purification so when the statisticians decided to lump those because that is only those that were done completely from the first step ... but we made different targets, 16 targets, they went to the carbon sample ... but Timothy Linick was involved in the computer programs that we use all the time.

CdC: So he was involved when you had to give the different numbers to the samples, and the codification, etc. during the experiments?

PD: No, we of course, we did that ... together, beginning and that's the ... he was not involved in that ... (very long silence as if Paul Damon was realizing something ...)

CdC: OK. You are not coming to Europe in the next months?

PD: No.

CdC: If you were passing through Paris, I would have the pleasure to invite you to have a discussion with you more quietly; it is difficult not to see each other and speak just on the phone. OK. I thank you very much, I am sorry to disturb you with all these bad things and very sad story.

PD: You are bringing back bad moments.

CdC: It was just to clarify this point, I wanted to know what you were thinking about all this. OK, I thank you very much, professor. Bye Bye.

26 September 09:15 – short telephone call to Mrs. Damon

[No actual transcript here—just a short description by de Cointet about the call.] I wanted to ask her to let her husband know that if we suspected Tim Linick of switching the samples, it was meaning that we thought that her husband was not aware of the fraud: Tucson may have received a piece of the Shroud, but the switch may have occurred during the measuring process – at the level of the gas vials – or at the level of the treatment of the results by computers ... and Tim was the one who was able to choose the program used for the machine. He did the programs.

But Mrs. Damon did not allow me to give my explanations. She said that the 3 Laboratories dated the Shroud. She doesn't accept any comment.