



Freethought & Rationalism Archive

The archives are read only.

FRDB Archives > Elsewhere > ~Elsewhere~

"Lost Tomb of Jesus" scam tied to
Essene toilet claim

Welcome, **neilgodfrey**.

You last visited: 08-09-2015 at 01:16 PM

Search

Notices

FRDB is Closed

FRDB is now an archive. If you are a current member of FRDB, you can auto create your account on Talk Freethought here: [FRDB to Talk Freethought](#). FRDB user names are protected from registrations on [Talk Freethought](#) until further notice.

The FRDB Archive

Greetings neilgodfrey,

The conversion of the existing archive is not scheduled as of yet. I am looking into a few open source options for the conversion ([phpBB](#), [myBB](#), and [FluxBB](#)). Until that is completed, the current archive will remain available to members.

[The FRDB Archive](#)

You are seeing this notice because you are logged in.

Thread Tools Search this Thread

03-12-2007, 12:35 PM

#1

Charles Gadda

Regular Member

Join Date: Mar 2007
Location: New York, NY
Posts: 249

"Lost Tomb of Jesus" scam tied to Essene toilet claim

After all the hubbub of the past week, it should be pretty clear that the "Lost Tomb of Jesus" film is a hoax.

To begin with -- and this is something that has not been pointed out enough, although it lies at the core of the fraud -- the name "Jesus" is not legible on the so-called "Jesus son of Joseph" ossuary, as any serious semitics scholar will immediately tell you if you show him the tracing. The original transcriber himself (see the Israeli Catalogue of Ossuaries) put a question-mark after his reading, and two dots over the "Jesus" part of the name, thus indicating in standard fashion that he was making a conjecture (in this case one that is obviously remote). The film's producer, however, carefully omitted this fundamental point from his statements to the press, instead saying that the reading had been "conclusively confirmed" by unnamed experts. For details, see <http://jesus-illegible.blogspot.com/>

So I started to poke around to try and understand the

mechanics of this hoax.

What I found, somewhat astonishingly, is that James Tabor -- the religion professor who wrote a book called "The Jesus Dynasty" and who is promoting the Cameron film -- is the same character at the center of the recently debunked claim that an "Essene latrine" has been found near the site of Khirbet Qumran. This site, readers will recall, is the place where so-called traditional Qumranologists (including, it would appear, Tabor himself) continue to insist, in the face of mounting contrary evidence, that a sect of Essenes lived.

Tabor is also involved in the current biased and misleading exhibits of the Dead Sea Scrolls traveling around the country.

For details, see <http://jesus-crypt-fraud.blogspot.com/> and the other postings published by the authors of that blog.

For Tabor's "Essene latrine" efforts (also based in part on a misleading use of DNA evidence), see K. Galor and J. Zangenberg at <http://www.forward.com/articles/led-...d-sea-latrine/>, or the most recent article by N. Golb on the Oriental Institute website, <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/scr/>).

Professor Jim Davila's blog (March 6, 2007) <http://paleojudaica.blogspot.com/> quotes Tabor as asserting to him in an email: "I have never excavated even one tomb, and **I am not even an archaeologist and have never claimed to be such.**"

Yet Tabor himself, in an article published in the Charlotte Observer, excerpted on the same paleojudaica blog a year ago (February 13, 2006), wrote: "**As an archaeologist**, I have long observed and experienced the thrill that ancient discoveries cause in all of us. The look on the faces of my students as we uncover ancient ruins from the time of Jesus, or explore one of the caves where the scrolls were found, is unmistakable."

Tabor's Ph.D. was awarded to him by the University of Chicago's Department of New Testament and Christian Literature (which is housed in that institution's Divinity School building). The title of his dissertation was "Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise". He clearly has no training as an archaeologist, historian, or semitics scholar, and we will no doubt be left to wonder at the motivations that led him to become involved in these phony scams.



03-12-2007, 01:48 PM

#2

Toto

Contributor

Join Date: Jun 2000

Location: Los Angeles area

Posts: 40,549



I have been well aware that Tabor was connected to all of the dubious ventures, but I'm not sure that "hoax" is the right word. Hoax would imply that he knew his work was faulty, but kept at it for monetary or other gain. I get the impression that he does believe what he writes. The

problem isn't his honesty, but his drawing conclusions from gossamer threads of evidence. But that has been all too common in Biblical Studies.

And I don't know what to think of these anonymous bloggers who fear professional retribution. I find it hard to understand why anyone would ruin someone's career for ascribing to an alternate theory of Qumran. But what do I know.



03-12-2007, 03:14 PM

#3

Charles Gadda

Regular Member

Join Date: Mar 2007
Location: New York, NY
Posts: 249



Toto,

I think you may well be right in criticizing my somewhat glib use of the word "hoax". In fact, if I could edit my piece I would find another way of putting it -- even though one must ask why Tabor has refused to concede that his claims were unfounded when dozens of scholars have refuted his faulty logic. For example, why did they stop after testing only two ossuaries for DNA, instead of testing all of the nine ossuaries? It's hard to say whether this was simply gross incompetence, or an intentional omission to avoid taking the risk that the evidence would not support the theory.

From what I understand, more movies are in the making, and Tabor stands to profit from them. But this could well be an instance of the phenomenon noted by Rousseau, who said that there is no philosopher who "if he came to know the true and the false, would not prefer the lie he has found to the truth discovered by another; who would not gladly deceive mankind for his own glory; who in the secrecy of his heart sets himself any other goal than that of distinguishing himself..."

As for traditional Qumranologists ruining the careers of opponents of their theory, actual cases of this have been mentioned and in some instances documented in the past, so I have no problem believing that, even though it seems so totally deranged.

Charles



03-12-2007, 03:30 PM

#4

Steven Avery

Banned

Join Date: Apr 2005
Location: Queens, NY
Posts: 2,293



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Charles Gadda**
why did they stop after testing only two ossuaries for DNA, instead of testing all of the nine ossuaries? It's hard to say whether this was simply gross incompetence, or an intentional omission to avoid taking the risk that the evidence would not support the theory.

That was one area where Koppel was actually ok. First Simcha gave the answer about "we are just journalists ..

starting the ball rolling". That didn't fly too well, the switch next was to the idea that the other ossuaries had been cleaned out and would need super-science to find any DNA. (I am paraphrasing.) He was not convincing, but not totally unconvincing. It seemed a little ad hoc.

Shalom,
Steven Avery



03-12-2007, 03:51 PM

#5

Charles Gadda

Regular Member

Join Date: Mar 2007
Location: New York, NY
Posts: 249



I think part of the problem with all of these claims and explanations is that they simply rely on the fact that what is being said is not entirely implausible. But there has to be some kind of higher standard than that. When you add it all up -- the DNA, the illegible portion of the inscription, the statistical problem -- and compare with the misleading or disingenuous way they've been presenting it all, the whole thing begins to appear offensive to reason.



« [Previous Thread](#) | [Next Thread](#) »

Thread Tools



[Show Printable Version](#)

Search this Thread

Search this Thread:

[Advanced Search](#)

Forum Jump

~Elsewhere~



Go

All times are GMT +11. The time now is 12:14 PM.

[Top](#)

This custom BB emulates vBulletin® Version 3.8.2
Copyright ©2000 - 2015, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.