

WALTER McCrone

Anybody who has read about the Shroud of Turin over the last twenty years will surely be acquainted with the name of Walter McCrone, an incredibly active person, who published over 600 papers on microscope work, and 16 books and book chapters, including "The Particle Atlas" in 1970, still recognized as one of the best handbooks for materials analysts. He died aged 86 in July 2002, of congestive heart failure. Despite his many publications, in Shroud circles he will always be remembered for his stubborn affirmations that the image on the cloth is in fact a painting. In an obituary published in the USA it was stated that he had "confirmed for the Vatican that the Shroud of Turin was created 13 centuries after Jesus Christ was buried", a statement both misleading and even clearly untrue. One only has to remember how mistaken McCrone was about the Vinland map, which he declared a fake only to see it reinstated as genuine.

This should not be seen as a fanatical pro-authenticity post-mortem vengeance. While it is true that there is no scientific explanation that covers all aspects of the Shroud image and its properties, it can be stated quite confidently what it is not, and it is most definitely not a painting. The reassuring thing about McCrone's claim that the Shroud of Turin is a painting is that he was always alone in his affirmation. Not even other anti-authenticity investigators accepted his finding, which is hardly surprising given that one of the clear conclusions from the STURP investigations carried out in 1978 is that no matter what the Shroud is and no matter how the image was or was not formed, it is definitely not a painting.

The obituaries published in the Chicago press caused a certain amount of indignation the world over. BSTS member in the USA Gary L. LiVacari wrote to the two Chicago newspapers involved trying to put things straight in a calm but convincing way, ending with the words "About the only thing that can be said with certitude and universal agreement is that it is definitely *not* a painting" but his letter was ignored by both the Sun-Times and the Tribune.