

Mark Oxley

MA, Dublin University, 1976

MBA, University of Zimbabwe, 1991

Fellow of the Institute of Directors, 1991

Honorary Life Member, Institute of Directors Zimbabwe, 2016

Author of *The Challenge of the Shroud*, Authorhouse (UK) 2010, and *The Director's Handbook on Corporate Governance in Zimbabwe*, Weaver Press (Harare) 2015

Consultant, Oxley Consulting

mark.oxley@latilla.co.zw

*Mark Oxley is a businessman and consultant living in Harare, Zimbabwe. He has a business importing wine from South Africa for distribution in Zimbabwe and also provides consultancy services in corporate governance, business planning and private sector development. His interest in the Shroud began when he was a schoolboy at a Jesuit college in Harare, where he saw a film about the Shroud made by Leonard Cheshire. Some years later he was further influenced by Ian Wilson's book *The Turin Shroud*. In the early 2000s he wrote a book, still unpublished, about St Luke, and having completed that he decided to pursue his interest in the Shroud by writing a book on the subject. His book, *The Challenge of the Shroud*, was published in 2010. More recently he has developed a particular interest in the spiritual aspects and significance of the Shroud. He is currently working on a book on the history of gold mining in Zimbabwe.*

ABSTRACT

Spirituality and the Shroud

The image on the Shroud is an invitation to spiritual contemplation. In the words of Pope John Paul II, it is "an image of God's love as well as of human sin". It is also an image of silence, the silence of fruitfulness which allows us to delve to the roots of truth and life and to hear the voice of God. In the words of St Teresa of Avila "the contemplative should regard himself as being within a definite space, God everywhere around, and himself absorbed in Him". Contemplation is the awareness of God. It is not necessary to know how the image was formed. It is enough to understand what it represents – the sacrifice of Jesus for the redemption of humankind. The detail on the image allows us to contemplate every aspect of the Passion of Jesus, from his treatment at the hands of the Temple guards to the scourging and finally to the Crucifixion itself. Yet the image also shows calmness and peace in death. The horror of the Passion has been succeeded by the peace of the tomb. This inner peace itself reflects the teaching of Jesus. Writers over the centuries, from Athanasius to Thomas Aquinas to the unknown author of the mediaeval English classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, have emphasized how distractions arise to disturb contemplation and inner peace. The early writers pictured these distractions as demons. Today they would be more worldly. In perfect contemplation everything less than God is forgotten. The Shroud enables us to contemplate in a perfect manner and without distraction the Passion, death and resurrection of our Saviour. That surely is its purpose regardless of whether it is truly the burial cloth of Jesus or the product of human ingenuity.