

PILGRIMAGE OF 13 FRENCHMEN TO SOUFANIEH, DAMASCUS, SYRIA: EASTER 1990.

MY TESTIMONY AS A NEUROLOGIST.

Here is my opinion on the events of Soufanieh which I attended during the Holy Week of 1990 (Easter period). There, I met Myrna and her husband Nicolas along with Father Malouli.

I already knew Father Zahlaoui, who came to France in January 1990.

I watched Myrna many times outside the extraordinary of the phenomena. Her behavior seems natural, simple and without any affectation nor unsuited conversation. She is welcoming without any excess.

She smiles when required but not systematically. On the contrary, she sometimes is very meditative, very inward. I saw her laughing also. She participates to jokes (without judgement on their content, not knowing the Arabic language myself).

She seems to have a normal and natural behavior with her husband, her children, her parents, Father Malouli and Zahlaoui - I would add, a very respectful behavior toward both - finally with her friends, her family and the many visitors who come to her home to pray.

When Father Malouli asked me to examine her on Friday, April 13, 1990, the day after she experienced the stigmata, she said simply: "But, aren't you giving me too much importance?" She accepted the examination without prudishness nor false modesty.

I felt a great trust and no embarrassment in doing so, I observed no neurotic tendencies and in particular, no hysterical behavior that would assume a theatrical propensity, out of the extraordinary phenomena.

Furthermore, her husband is remarkable in the simplicity and generosity of his welcomes. His discretion and naturalness are exemplary, without omitting his realism. As this concerns a couple, we must take in consideration the effects the events may have on it.

It seems that we can talk about a well-lived acceptance much more than a resignation, which inspires our respect and admiration.

I will now approach the so-called events. On Holy Thursday afternoon of 1990, I was able to observe, film and take pictures of the stigmata, The opening of the wound on the forehead took place around 11:15 a.m.. I wasn't present yet.

When I arrived around 1:15pm, Myrna was lying on her bed, under a blanket placed at her left, her face turned in my direction, I noticed the scar of five fine vertical wounds on her forehead and the trace of a few lines of coagulated blood, it wasn't fresh blood but dry and starting to peel off. It looked like real blood. One of the wounds had the particularity of a round point on its paths indicating at this level a certain depth.

Myrna seemed to suffer, with a few peaks where she held her head in her hands, she could answer to some of Father Malouli's remarks, as he was at her immediate left (on the right side of the

bed). To me, she seemed quite conscious.

As she sat on the side of her bed, I noticed the back of her feet. There was a small pinkish growth (deeper, in color than her pale foot) which seemed to have slightly increased its volume during the few seconds of observation. Then Myrna laid down with a blanket always covering her. A little while before, I noticed that the palms of her hands looked normal (without any wounds), but I could not observe them as well as I did the feet.

I can't affirm if there were any callosity.

Around 1:30 - 1:45pm Myrna entered in a state of suffering where she became slightly agitated rolled in her bed and moaned at times. Then, I saw streaks of blood, on the back of the feet and in the palms of the hands.

This time it was fresh blood, glowing, that flowed in one line on the feet and along the horizontal line of the hand, crossed by the wound.

I certify, the normal aspect of the fresh blood and of the fine and regular wounds as if they had been drawn with a fine blade.

Neither Myrna nor any of the people around hers have executed the least suspect act with the held of an exterior object to accomplish such wounds. I have not left Myrna's room the whole afternoon of the stigmata. To my mind, there is no fraud in the happening of the stigmata.

Also, she abruptly put her hand on her left side, groaning. Only after 20 minutes, have we helped her loosen her dress and underwear, soaked with a large red stain evoking blood.

A fine, long, horizontal wound with a hemorrhagic aspect emerged under her left breast. We could not see any blood flow, which seems credible since the clothes covering her, had absorbed the blood. Myrna went through the examination very obediently with an expression of suffering and acceptance on her face.

Her attitude while suffering seemed modest and simple. She never screamed. A few moans at most, and her "reasonable" state of agitation lasted only a few minutes: during the opening of the stigmata. The rest of the time, Myrna lay on her bed, expressing rather a state of exhaustion, but once again, nothing that seemed hysterical or even neurotic in her behavior.

Around 6:00 p.m., she could get up and join the evening prayer. She sang many lovely songs with a solid voice, not revealing a simple human emotion but expressing an attitude of deep prayer.

The next mornings around 10:30, I examined Myrna's wounds. We also filmed them and I took pictures. The healing seemed normal in the palms of the hand as well as on the feet and her side.

Still, I have two reservations on the subject. First, Myrna didn't aseptinize her wounds by anything more than a regular washing. This morning, I caught her sweeping and washing her room. She held the broom stick without taking any precaution to protect her wounds. I didn't notice any trace of any running of the sore, a slight inflammatory reaction at the most which is classic in the healing process.

My second reservation to a normal healing, is the absence of any process to maintain the sides of the wound closed, In fact it is usual to have stitched or at least steristrips to assure the best healing of the scar.

No one seems to bother for Myrna but I attest that the healing of her wounds is done in the best aesthetic conditions. Alongside of the recent wounds on the back of her feet, I noticed two fine, unpigmented and very regular lines corresponding to former well-healed scars which confirm the existence of real wounds.

The length of the wounds on the hand is about cm (maybe a little less). They are vertical along the axle of the hand and cross the inferior, horizontal line. For the feet, their length is about one centimeter, and is also in a vertical axle.

The wound on her side measured 12cm. Not far, I also noticed the scar of a former wound. Myrna's stigmata seem to be real wounds in their actual aspect which healing I followed up to the 4th day (I left on Monday, April 16) as well as the aspect of former scars.

There is no trickery. As it has been raised about other stigmatized, we could bring up the question about hysteria, and again, the arguments could be discussed, but this is not our purpose,

Myrna's behavior during the opening of the stigmata as well as in her daily life, seems to brush aside such assumption and this as well as the healing itself presents if not supernatural at least exceptional particularities. But on this last point, I will only raise the question. I don't pretend to have definite answers.

Finally, on Holy Saturday of 19.00 (April 14), I was present during the afternoon (Around 3:00 to 4:00) and saw the oozing of oil from Myrna's eyes, hands and face which preceded her ecstasy. Myrna was talking in the yard when the phenomena took her by surprise in front of many witnesses.

Then again, no one has ever brought up the least doubtful gesture to make us suspect Myrna or her close ones of oiling her face and hands. In fact, this phenomenon was progressive and again it was filmed and photographed.

Fine drops ran down Myrna's face. She wiped her eyes with her fingers, not her hands. At the beginning the oily feature of the ointment didn't appear yet on the back of her hands. Then later, without having rubbed her hands, the oil also invaded the back of the hands.

Her sleeves were slightly rolled up. The oil didn't extend to the wrists. So, it evidently couldn't come from her forearms, from under the sleeves. At that time Myrna was stretched out on her bed, she was still moving,

Then she stood still during nine minutes, In her case we call this an ecstasy for she says to receive a message from Christ or the Virgin, while seeing a great light.

During the ecstasy, we didn't notice any gesture, blinking of the closed eyelid - although oil is very irritating for the eye movement of the chest while breathing nor swallowing movement, all things that should have been automatic.

She was in a catatonical state (dazed), rigid, but I didn't appreciate the eventual stiffness when I tried to have her change position, I didn't attempt to do so, knowing those tests had already been done.

After nine minutes she started to move a little, to swallow and recover her thoracic breathing. Then she started to open her eyes but it seemed she couldn't see the world around her yet. I noticed very wide pupils although the light of the projectors (for the video) should have caused them to retract; then again, I saw calm, collected, behavior without any affectation.

On Easter Sunday we saw oil in an urn placed under the small picture of Our Lady of Soufanieh. Shiny reflects were appearing on the picture and on the inferior part of the frame, with a few drops pearling beneath.

A little while later, one of them fell into the urn. The picture is undeniably penetrated with oil. Now, this picture isn't damaged afterwards, as if the oil dried very quickly (we could also observe this on Myrna during the declining period of the ecstasy)

Therefore, I allow myself to underline this fact as to challenge the expert appraisal of biologists and physicians.

Although I can't directly conclude on the supernatural character of this oil, as for its composition, the way it appears and disappears, drying without staining, seems really out of the common. An official investigation on this matter would seem relevant.

Two samples of oil given to me by Father Malouli were analyzed in Paris; we are in the presence of olive oil with a slight trace of cholesterol. Now, "A PRIORI," the origin is animals.

If the oil comes from a small picture it is really astonishing to have established up to now that it is 100% pure olive oil. Furthermore, this time we find a composite of an animal (or human) origin, which is incomprehensible.

Along with these facts, if we take the total gratuitousness of Soufanieh under consideration we can advance that Myrna and Nicolas' behavior have a great chance of being supernatural, for it can only reveal a purpose beyond pure human understanding. The theological coherence of the messages can then lean on this point.

Here is my opinion concerning Soufanieh. I remain available to whoever would like to have precision.

Statement written on Monday, November 26th, 1990.

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[TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL IN FRENCH, FROM THE BOOK: "CONSTAT MÉDICAL ET

