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«*Constat Médical et Analyses Scientifiques Des Événements de SOUFANIEH -*

12 - 16 avril 1990». - Philippe LORON, neurologue. (Pages 66-71)

Éditions F. X. de Guibert

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FRANCE

PILGRIMAGE OF 13 FRENCHMEN⁽¹⁾ 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 observed Myrna many times under normal circumstances. 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 13th, 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 events per se. 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. I was not present yet.

When I arrived around 13:15, 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 acute moments when 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 in volume during the few seconds of observation.

Then Myrna laid down with the 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 13:30-13:45, 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 her have executed the least suspect act with the help 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, did we help 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 18:00, she was able to 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 morning 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 broomstick 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 stitches 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 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 one centimeter (.4 inches) (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 1.5 centimeters (.5 inches), and are also in a vertical axle.

The wound on her side measured 12 centimeters (5 inches). 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 16th) as well as the aspect of former scars.

There is no trickery. As it has been raised about other stigmatized persons, 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 1990 (April 14th), I was present during the afternoon (around 15:00 to 16:00) 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.

There again, no one has ever noticed 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 lying down 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 she receives a message from Christ or the Virgin Mary, while seeing a great light.

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

She was in a catatonical state (dazed), rigid, but I was unable to evaluate 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 a 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 spots 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. Despite this fact, this picture is not 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 so as to invite further 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 extraordinary. An official investigation on this matter would seem relevant and desirable.

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 of animal nature.

If the oil comes from the 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 more clarifications.

Statement written on Monday, November 26th, 1990.

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religious stigmata - Myrna Nazzour