

TILMA, THE "MIRACLE" PICTURE OF THE SHRINE OF GUADALUPE IN MEXICO

The apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Guadalupe in Mexico are unique in the annals of Marian apparitions because this Lady allegedly left physical evidence behind her. The evidence is the painting of the vision made by herself in an instant of time on the cloak of the only witness, Juan Diego. This image is called the tilma.

The miracle that most believers associate with the image is that the cloth supposedly should have decayed centuries ago. This claim is untrue. The favourite lie is to say it is made of cactus fibres - the cloth then should last for a decade at the most if it is.

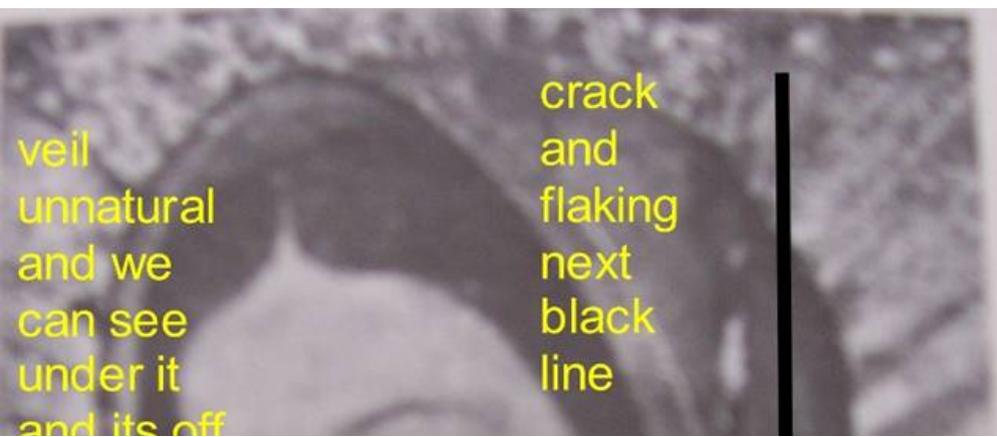
Brother John M. Samaha, S.M. put the following on the internet when he wished to publish a scientific perspective on the tilma. "Those who subscribed to the European origin theory said the tilma could not be a local Mexican product because it has lasted so long. Local cloth made from woven cactus fibers lasts about a decade at most. The tilma is almost five hundred years old, and has been on display in public daily. People behind this theory said the tilma must be woven from European linen or cotton. Two fibers of the tilma were lent to Professor Chiment for testing. These fibers had been removed from the outer edge of the tilma when it was stored during the Mexican Revolution. The test results showed that the fibers did not come from native cactus plants, nor did they come from cotton, wool, or linen -- fibers that might have been used in Europe. Rather, the tilma seems to have been woven from hemp, a plant native to Mexico. Hemp is one of the strongest fibers known, and hempen cloth can last hundreds of years. This could explain the tilma's remarkable state of preservation."

<http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/meditations/samaha7.html>

The image fits the tradition of forged self-portraits of the Virgin Mary and there is a picture of the Merciful Virgin that was painted in Spain that is several decades older than the Guadalupe image that looks too similar to it for the latter to have been of divine origin (page 32, *ibid*). It is striking that the Virgin called herself the Virgin and Mother of Mercy in her first appearance. The Catholic missionary magazine, *Far East* (May/June 2003), candidly confessed the following things. The angel bearing the body of the Virgin in the picture has nearly the same wings as the wings of an Aztec god who was worshipped locally. The colour of the mantle the lady was wearing matched the blue colour worn by Aztec nobility. The picture confirmed the Aztec astrological prediction of the times that there would be a imminent new age and the lady's hands indicate that this new age was indeed nigh. The picture then is definitely occult. It backs astrology which is clearly censured in the Bible and by the Church. The Church will say the picture is not sanctioning astrology but using it to get people's attention. But the Church is only assuming that. We don't want assumptions here. It is most likely that the lady is sanctioning astrology for we would not say the Virgin would use soft porn to get attention though she disapproves of soft porn. The image is occult and therefore stands condemned by the strict teaching given by God in the Law of Moses to avoid any semblance of paganism. When God comes first as the Law states it is clear that keeping anything that might lead to the worship of something else is forbidden and keeping it in the name of art is no excuse. The image is of man or of Satan or of a pagan god. Did Juan lie about the apparition really being Mary?

Science and its instruments have shown that there is evidence that the Lady was sketched before she was painted and the fingers have been shortened and the irises are outlined. This tells against the idea that the picture appeared as a result of an instant miracle by the Virgin Mary. The images of the people in the room are supposed to appear reflected in the right eye. But these images are so vague that they could be anything. Such delusions show what tone that books that defend the miracle take.

The evidence is that this image was naturally painted.





The Virgin's mantle is off-centre on the head and it hugs the sides of the face and the top floats above the top of the head. These errors betray a human origin. There is also the flaking that has taken place along the fold in the middle. A real miracle would not flake. The Lady stands on the moon which comes from the Book of Revelation which symbolises the Church as a woman on the moon. The Virgin is misidentified as the woman of Revelation which indicates forgery. Her crown was painted out. She is too short and broad. Her arms would stretch out to below her knees like a monkey if she laid them by her sides. There is an unnatural fold in the mantle next her left thigh where it bends one way and then the opposite way for no reason. And why does the angel hold her by the robes and not by the moon on which she stands? The robe even bunches up a bit under her where he holds her. But even then the bunching takes a rectangular shape which is unnatural and can't be explained by her feet and the bunching should fit the shape of the crescent moon but it does not.

The face of the Lady is in shadow which is strange when she is so luminous that she gives off a burst of light. The pro-Guadalupe book, *The Wonder of Guadalupe* (page 51) states that this is because no Lady likes being stared at! But it is only a picture and moreover the Virgin appears to people to be stared at in an ecstatic state. The shadowing shows a bad choice of colouring which refutes those who say the face is a miracle painting.

The allegedly miraculous three-dimensional quality that mainly surrounds the mouth which is due to roughness in the fabric (page 132, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*) could just be coincidence. It does not appear on the whole face or image which it would do if it were a true miracle.

The Lady does not look very Jewish so she is not Mary's self-portrait. Her face does not resemble the supposed face of Jesus her son on the Turin Shroud so the two miracles are in conflict. The two would have been nearly identical if Jesus inherited all his genes from Mary and had no father. The Turin Shroud is more convincing than the image of Mary so it should be taken to refute it even if it is a fake itself.

The Wonder of Guadalupe, admits on page 76 that the hands were shortened and the image was painted over to hide cracks. The sunburst surrounding the painting was repainted as were the tassels and the moon and the stars on the mantle and the brooch and the border on the mantle. Still, the book unconvincingly boasts about the ability of the image to survive damp and exposure to the smoke of burning candles and frequent kissing and handling through the years. When the forged parts of the picture are so durable why can't the original parts naturally be the same – the argument for miraculous preservation of the picture is unacceptable. There are horizontal lines showing fading and cracks on the image. Two of them can be seen on photographs even in *The Wonder of Guadalupe* which run along between the hands and the sash round the waist.

Rosales found the cloth was protected from rotting by its white primer coating comprised of calcium sulfate. Normally such cloth is fit only for throwing out about twenty years.

Perhaps the image has been replaced a few times like the Turin Shroud was. The replacement would be intended to defeat the countless objections to authenticity by artists and researchers who examined it so the image would be improved with every new forgery. The Church could not let the original image alone so why could and would it not forge a new image when the old deteriorates? It must have been replaced if it was able to withstand so much carelessness. In 1753, the image was subjected to rapid and frantic touching, kissing and rubbing five hundred times in two hours (page 118, *The Wonder of*

Guadalupe). Could it be that a duplicate passed of as the original was used when the public were allowed to handle the cloth so that the original would be safe?

Sceptical priests testified in 1556 that an Indian or Aztec had painted the image. Fr de Maseques named the forger as Marcos Cipac and it has been proved that there was such a painter. There was a severe persecution of Christians in the area at the time the image appeared so it could have been intended to bring in plenty of quick converts for persecutors soon give up when the intended victims become too numerous. With the bizarre errors of the image their verdict must be correct.

