

A look at The Vatican Prophecies: Investigating Supernatural Signs, Apparitions and Miracles in the Modern Age
 written by John Thavis

The Vatican Prophecies: Investigating Supernatural Signs, Apparitions and Miracles in the Modern Age is written by John Thavis. The title speaks for itself and it is a good interesting read. A bit more logical depth would have been a good thing. Some of the miracles give us lessons about caution.

The book tells us about Naples man Furgiero Onofri. This man told the truth about the St Januarius revelry of the crowd when the dry blood of the saint allegedly turns into fresh running blood in a vial. It was far from holy or godly. He “shook his head disdainfully. He wasn’t especially enthused about the day’s pageantry, he said, because it was all show and very little faith.”

He went on to say that he saw the saint while suffering a heart attack “It was Januarius, and I knew I was going to be saved.” Then he goes on to say that he visits the statue of the saint to pray to him and adds, “Well, I suppose it’s prayer”. And then he says, “We look at each other and communicate telepathically, even if he’s only a statue.”

This psychic stuff and depending on visions to tell you that you are going to be well and the paganism around the festivals of the saint point to the miracle being false. It fails the fruits criteria as set down by Christ. Christ was clear a true miracle is not marked by such nonsense. We must remember that fruits similar to this man's fruits, are never mentioned. Every apparition and supernatural claim attracts those who think it has ignited some occult or magical experience for them.

Of Medjugorje’s Mirjana, we read that the Gospa who appears to her avoids saying nonbelievers for that would be judging! So this politically correct apparition just says,” [those] who don’t yet know the heart of God.” So Mary cannot judge but surely she can if she is in Heaven and those in Heaven see all things in God!

The Virgin replied when the crowd asked for a sign at Podbrdo in 1981 that those are blessed who have not seen but believe. The problem is that the Church says an apparition being really is only a matter of opinion and for God it is about the message not the vision or miracles. Here Mary talks as if you should just believe and not care if it is true! It was different for Jesus to tell Thomas that those who have not seen his resurrected body but believe for that is part of Christianity’s required belief. A vision in its early days in Yugoslavia is not in the same league!

The book says that Mary telling St Bernadette at Lourdes that she was the Immaculate Conception was strange. As that moment was central in the whole story it makes the whole thing strange.

There is an interesting quote from expert in apparitions Father Mucci.

Here is the relevant line from the book: “Apparitions do not transpire in the objective material world, but in the subjective mind of the visionary. At Lourdes, the Madonna was not really in the grotto. She was in the mind of Bernadette, who was touched by a special grace”.

That would refute the apparition of Knock where something was on the gable wall and nobody had any special graces or holiness after. Nobody became a nun.

The Turin Shroud, purported burial cloth of Jesus carrying his image and blood has to get discussed.

The book mentions Fanti of the University of Padua who claimed that fibre analysis of the Turin Shroud using infrared and spectroscopic devices works out at “33 BC, give or take 250 years”.

It tell us how Avignon pope, Clement VII, at the time of the Lirey Shroud controversy decided to let the image be displayed as long as no claims that it was the real cloth Jesus was buried in were made. This amounts to declaring it just a holy picture not a relic.

Next shroudie is Jewish Barrie Schwartz. He regards it as Jesus’s cloth but devoid of any evidence that Jesus resurrected or came back to life. He sees no evidence of radiation and quotes Ray Rogers a STURP expert who found that some kind of low temperature, not radiation, caused the image to form. To quote Schwartz, “So it wasn’t a burst of radiation”.

A Maillard reaction is a highly favoured explanation for the image. Schwartz things low levels of ammonia came from the corpse and chemically bonded with saphonaria which was on the cloth to make a brownish image. Conveniently, when Rogers had a chance to test this he had no body available!

Few seem to pay attention to the image looks like an x ray. My question here is the reason man looks like an x ray particularly the fingers is that rotting has set in?

Another quote, "Nazi officials posed unusual and insistent questions about the Shroud and its custody. Hitler was believed to have been obsessed about certain objects related to the life of Christ, including the Holy Grail and the Holy Lance of Longinus, and now he appeared to have his eye on the burial cloth." Quite the man of faith wasn't he?

The book reminds us that the Vatican has never found any cure attributed to the shroud to be worth elevating to official recognised status. That is interesting. The drama about the shroud is about trying to bludgeon sceptics with science and is not about miracle healings of body or soul. The shroud is not a miracle by Christ's criteria about fruits.

Now exorcisms are going to be our topic.

A priest Maginot tested a possible possession victim by putting a cross on her head. "Latoya began to convulse. He withdrew the cross, and she calmed down". He said, "You have a classic sign, aversion to holy objects. That means you're possessed."

It is obvious how careless and irresponsible a diagnosis that is! And why did the demon let him put it on her and not react before that? It is play acting. Or she is.

It makes no sense for demons to fear blessed objects for they are just objects and not fear prayer far worse. "Maginot prayed the exorcism rite over Latoya as she sat in a chair, and she showed no reaction, even when he placed his crucifix on her head." Again we see proof that the demon is pretending to fear the cross.

It even tore up her rosary so how come it was able to go near blessed rosary beads?

At a future exorcism, Maginot prayed over Latoya, "I adjure you, Satan, enemy of human salvation, recognize the justice and goodness of God the Father, who has condemned your pride and envy with just judgment: Depart from this handmaid of God, Latoya." This is worth quoting for it is full of judgmental assumptions. Satan is not put on trial about assumed to be guilty. The references to God judging are interesting considering popular Catholicism tries to pretend he does not judge for he is too politically correct!

Maginot stated, "Latoya's exorcisms were not up to Hollywood standards." He went on to say there were no rotating heads or floating around in mid-air. There was no abnormal strength.

An exorcist called Bamonte says that it may take years for exorcism to get the demon out. The book goes:

Anyone who doubts the existence of the devil should attend one of his sessions, he said, and hear the demon speaking through the individual possessed. "You sprinkle holy water on the person and you hear him cry out: 'It burns! It burns!' One time a demon told me, 'It's like having muriatic acid poured on top of you!'".

Why would holy water burn a demon? Why can't it just hate it? The burning supports the notion that God burns the wicked in Hell. He even makes holy water like acid! That is not a very good endorsement for the use of holy water! Or the users! Are they trying to scald demons?

The book mentions exorcist Gabriel Amorth who "says he has performed more than one hundred thousand exorcisms, a claim that some church experts find implausible. He uses restraining ropes to hold down the possessed during the ritual, which can become violent." The use of ropes is criminal and advocating it should be criminal too!

Of the Mother Teresa miracle, the cure of Monica Besra that got her beatified/canonised the book has this to say,

As miracles go, though, this one was almost too perfect. In fact, the story had already begun to fray at the edges. Besra's husband, who refused to come to Rome for the beatification, told Time magazine that the supposed miracle was "much ado about nothing," declaring: "My wife was cured by the doctors and not by any miracle." A similar note was struck by the leaders of the Science and Rationalists' Association of India and by a former state health minister, all of whom claimed the healing was the result of medical treatment, not of prayers to Mother Teresa. Some Indian doctors questioned the original diagnosis of a cyst; it may simply have been abdominal swelling, they argued, that could have been resolved by the antitubercular drugs. Two of the doctors who cared for Besra testified that her recovery had come gradually, in response to their treatment.

A miracle story about Sister Matilde is interesting. She inhaled a two inch pin that ended up in the lung. She asked a possible saint Father Agostino Roscelli to cure her just before she was due for surgery. She was not ill but there was a risk of illness. X rays were taken and it was found the pin was gone and oddly enough was found in the colon. Additional scans revealed that it had traveled, inexplicably, to her colon. It ended up coming out of her body that way. The Vatican accepted

this as an official miracle! It fails the classic tests for a miracle as the healing was not instant and looks like a very strange natural occurrence that is not fully understood. If it is not a miracle, it shows that bizarre things happen in medicine. The obvious problem is there is no real way to tell a miracle from a non-miracle wonder. A wonder can even knock the evidence off so that what is not a miracle looks like one. Eg a doctor writing down the wrong diagnosis and swearing it was the right one then you seem to have a miracle cure.

One line goes later, "It certainly wasn't through his own merit, he says, so it must have been the power of prayer." It is Catholic doctrine that you don't get a miracle because you deserve it so it is the power of prayer. Most of us see that as blaming us as sinners for not getting results and we do feel we deserve miracles. We do deserve. Surely suffering terribly deserves help irrespective of what bad things you have done?

The bilocation, power to be in two places at once, of Saint Alphonsus de' Liguori comes up in the book. The saint was in Arienzo. He went into a trance and came out of days later to say he had been visiting the pope. "His aides thought he had simply been dreaming, until a messenger brought news of the pope's death, which had occurred at the very moment Alphonsus regained consciousness. Later, multiple witnesses claimed to have seen the saint in Arienzo and in Rome during the same time frame."

This is the kind of miracle that challenges the resurrection of Jesus account. What if Jesus was alive and did the resurrection appearances through bilocation? What if Jesus survived the cross and was lying in a house being nursed and was projecting the appearances? The miracle always has the same physical style that is reported of the resurrection of Jesus. The only problem is that while the indications are minor and few with Jesus, the duplicate when a bilocation is happening is very physical. And then there is the 'original'. Alphonsus was touchable when he was in his trance. The point is there are better miracles than the resurrection of Jesus.

If somebody was able to be in two places at the one time, then why was it not three places? Anybody could have been the Jesus imposter who appeared.

There is a good lesson on Catholic doctrine about visions, "The role of private messages or visions or prophecies...was not to complete or add to scriptural teachings. Nor did they demand a response of faith—Catholics were free to ignore them, even when approved...when the church 'approved' a private revelation, it was not endorsing any specific supernatural claim, but simply decreeing that its message contained nothing contrary to faith and morals."

Errors in the visionary book, Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Mary Catherine Emmerich are mentioned. Jesus and Mary supposedly told her what to write.

Emmerich was led by Mary so much that she "added details to Mary's life that struck some as excessive. She spent several hundred words describing her coiffure at her wedding, extending even to the little plaits that were interwoven with silk and pearls." Is Mary that frivolous?

What about the sainted secretary's racism? "At times she put a strange spin on biblical passages, as when she declared that because of God's curse, Noah's son Ham became the progenitor of 'the black, idolatrous, stupid nations.'" Jesus and Mary are certainly implicated in this!

At the end we think about religion and science.

Brother Guy Consolmagno of Mount Graham is cited, "People trying to reconcile science with supernatural signs make some fundamental mistakes. First, they think that both science and religion are big books of facts that you have to believe, and these two books are supposed to agree. But science is not a big book of facts. Science is a conversation about the data, and how to understand them. Religion is even less a big book of facts. It's the exploration of a relationship with God."

Science is based on facts and is a conversation about facts. Religion is more than a relationship with God for you don't need a long-winded Bible rambling about history etc for that. Consider how Catholicism is far more complicated than a system that was about merely loving God would be.

The brother is just trying to muddy science so that if it contradicts religion you will not pay attention or see it.

The book could use more critical perspectives but overall I highly recommend it.

Put on Amazon 4.12.2020