

Stigmata and the Initiatory Path

John F. Nash

Summary

This article examines the phenomenon of religious stigmatism and studies the lives of six stigmatics to identify characteristic patterns in their lives, conditions and experiences. Stigmata are bodily lesions resembling the wounds suffered by Jesus during his passion. The stigmatics studied also exhibited exceptional capabilities, indicative of major changes to their subtle bodies and transformation to a higher level of consciousness. The article focuses on stigmatism as part of a more inclusive set of phenomena that spans the physical and nonphysical.

Stigmatism is often dismissed as fake or a symptom of mental illness. The first charge is refuted by credible evidence to the contrary. The second has validity but is not applicable to the stigmatics discussed. In addition to displaying exceptional abilities, they enjoyed psychological stability and performed outstanding works of service, despite the challenges of their condition.

Renunciation of the lower nature, elevation in consciousness, and exemplary lives of service indicate that some stigmatics are on the initiatory path. For a few, the stigmata and accompanying phenomena could provide conditions favorable to, or even indicative of, attainment of the fourth initiation. The implications for both esotericism and Christianity could be considerable.

Introduction

Stigmata (Latin: “marks”) are painful lesions on a person’s body, resembling the wounds suffered by Jesus the Christ before and during his crucifixion. Lesions typically appear on the hands, feet and side but may also appear on the head, back, shoulders, and other parts of the body. A *stigmatic* is a person bearing the marks, and *stigmatism* is the condition charac-

terized by or relating to the appearance of stigmata.

Stigmatism is not a popular topic of discussion in modern religious, esoteric or secular circles. Suggestions that certain people might bear religiously significant wounds on their bodies are swept under the rug of hagiography, pious legend, and fairytale: the stuff of a credulous, superstitious past. If the incidents are too recent to be disposed of so easily, the individuals are written off as imposters and their wounds as fake or self-inflicted. Or incidents are given a pathological label, such as “hysteria,” to shield them from further consideration. A popular Theosophical dictionary provides yet another insight:

The whole matter of stigmata in human subjects is but intensification in very unusual circumstances of what biological science knows to occur commonly and automatically in the bodies of the lower creatures, which not merely change color, but undergo curious transformations under conditions of fright, anger, etc.¹

Critics evidently are capable of displaying as much hysteria as do the stigmatics of their imagination.

The older Christian traditions may accept stigmatism as a possible “supernatural,” or “preternatural,” phenomenon, but church leaders are reluctant to discuss the authenticity of

About the Author

John F. Nash, Ph.D., is a long-time esoteric student, author, and teacher. Two of his books, *Quest for the Soul* and *The Soul and Its Destiny*, were reviewed in the Winter 2005 issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*. *Christianity: The One, the Many*, was reviewed in the Fall 2008 issue. His latest book: *The Sacramental Church* was published in 2011. For further information see the advertisements in this issue and the website <http://www.uriel.com>.

individual cases. The Church of Rome, where most instances of stigmata have occurred, seeks to discourage curiosity seekers and personality cults. Occasionally, it attributes stigmata to diabolical agency.² Even when stigmatics are beatified or canonized, Vatican authorities normally decline to comment on the validity of their stigmata. While people of faith may be open to “miracles,” stigmatism raises questions that religious authorities are unable to answer.

No doubt there have been cases of fraud or sorcery, and skeptics eagerly seize upon them to bolster their case. Cases traceable to mental illness provide additional ammunition. Given the weight of evidence, however, it requires a greater leap of faith to attribute all reported instances of stigmata to irregularities or pathology than to acknowledge that some may be of genuine religious significance. Specific evidence will be examined in due course.

A scriptural passage: “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”³ is sometimes interpreted to mean that the Apostle Paul was a stigmatic. More commonly the twelfth and thirteenth-century Francis of Assisi is believed to have been the first stigmatic. Many more followed; one study identified a cumulative total of 321 stigmatics through 1908.⁴ An estimated twenty stigmatics are alive today.⁵ Recent cases generally may have more credibility because of improved documentation, greater opportunities for objective scrutiny, and an environment freer from the credulity that we suspect existed at earlier times.

Stigmatics form a tiny subset of mystics but share some of the lifestyle, experiences, and other characteristics of that larger population. In the past the great majority of stigmatics have been Roman Catholics⁶ from countries in southern Europe where devotion to Jesus’ sufferings is traditionally strong. Many were members of religious orders—though not, as might be expected, in enclosed, contemplative orders. Now the phenomenon has spread more widely. Stigmatism has been reported among laypeople, non-Caucasians, people in northern Europe and the Western Hemisphere, and members of multiple Christian denominations. At least three Anglicans, one Lutheran, a Bap-

tist, and a member of a Celtic-revival church have received the stigmata. At least two stigmatics were married, and one was in a same-sex relationship.⁷ One living stigmatic is an esotericist.

Of critical importance to the present study, some stigmatics acquire exceptional abilities. One such ability allows them to survive for years without eating or sleeping. Another allows them to view, even to participate in, scenes in the past or at distances from their physical bodies. Stigmatics may also have exceptional healing and counseling gifts. These and other abilities will be discussed in detail later. Suffice it to say that those stigmatics no longer function in the “three worlds” the way other people do.⁸ They have experienced changes to their subtle bodies and transformation to a new level of consciousness. The present article is concerned with individuals with this larger set of attributes. A group profile will be constructed, based on the lives and experiences of six notable stigmatics.

Stigmatism is obviously of religious interest. Some stigmatics are greatly revered saints of western Christianity, while many more have inspired local devotion or drawn people to the church. Stigmatics with healing and counseling gifts have served large numbers of people. Those who could view the passion or other biblical scenes have provided new information that can be compared with, or may complement, the scriptures themselves. Stigmatics’ exceptional abilities should alert Christians and others to what may lie ahead on the evolutionary path.

Stigmatism is also of considerable interest to esotericists. Stigmatics who bore their sufferings in a spirit of acceptance and love and devoted their exceptional abilities to service may have made significant progress on the initiatory path. While it is inappropriate to speculate on specific individuals’ initiatory status, we can do so for hypothetical stigmatics whose attributes resemble the composite attributes of the group studied. This article will inquire whether the activities, experiences and accomplishments of these hypothetical stigmatics meet the standards of the fourth initiation. If they do, we may conclude that receipt of the

stigmata, under soul guidance, can provide an environment allowing Christian initiates, who have made the necessary spiritual progress in previous lives, to attain the “crucifixion initiation.”

Six Stigmatics

This section presents brief biographical sketches of six notable stigmatics. Study of their lives will provide insight into what kind of people become stigmatics, what patterns can be identified in their experiences, and what kinds of activities they engage in.

Because several of the individuals are greatly revered in their religious circles, some accounts of their lives and accomplishments take the form of hagiographies. To skeptics, hagiographies are so full of exaggerations, even outright fabrications, that they can never be taken at face value. Certainly caution is in order, but we should also avoid bias and closed-mindedness. One of the assumptions of the present work is that the accounts should be read objectively but should not automatically be dismissed when they conflict with preconceived notions of what is ordinarily possible. We are, after all, dealing with extraordinary people and situations.

The six stigmatics are Francis of Assisi, Anne Catherine Emmerich, Therese Neumann, Francesco Forgione (“Padre Pio”), Dorothy Kerin, and Judith von Halle. Occasional references will be made to other individuals whose lives or experiences contribute to our theme.

Francis of Assisi (c.1181–1226), son of a rich merchant in the Italian city for which he is named, renounced privilege and pleasure to pursue a life of extreme asceticism. He and a small band of followers worked among the poor, sick and marginalized segments of society. Their ministry eventually earned papal recognition as the Order of Franciscan Friars Minor. In addition to his service work Francis is remembered for his love of the natural world. His famous hymn of praise: *Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon*, has inspired millions of people over the centuries and in our own time.

Francis received the stigmata on September 17, 1224 during a forty-day fast on Monte la Verana in central Italy. His hagiographer, the equally famous Franciscan friar Bonaventure, described the ecstatic experience in which Francis’ wounds appeared:

His soul became aglow with the ardor of fervent longing for heaven as he experienced within himself the operations of grace. . . . [O]ne morning near the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross . . . he saw what appeared as a seraph with six bright wings gleaming like a fire descending from the heights of heaven. As this figure approached in swift flight and came near [him] it appeared not only winged but also crucified. The sight of it amazed Francis and his soul experienced joy mingled with pain. He was delighted with the sight of Christ appearing to him so graciously and intimately and yet the awe-inspiring vision of Christ nailed to the cross aroused in his soul a joy of compassionate love.

When the vision vanished after a mysterious and intimate conversation it left Francis aglow with seraphic love in his soul. Externally, however, it left marks on his body like those of the Crucified as if the impression of a seal had been left on heated wax. The figures of the nails appeared immediately on his hands and feet. The heads of the nails were inside his hands but on top of his feet with their points extending through to the opposite side. His right side too showed a blood-red wound as if it had been pierced by a lance, and blood flowed frequently from it.⁹

Francis died in his mid-forties and was canonized two years later. He is one of the most beloved saints, revered by people of all Christian denominations and beyond.

Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774–1824) was born into a peasant family in Flamsche, Westphalia, a principality within the Holy Roman Empire (now Germany). As a child she conversed regularly with Christ, Mary, various saints, and her guardian angel. At age twenty-nine, after working a variety of manual jobs,

she entered an Augustinian convent. Soon thereafter she had an ecstatic vision in which she was offered a crown of flowers or a crown of thorns. She chose the latter, whereupon it was pressed onto her head, causing intense pain, swelling, and bleeding.

The convent was closed after the conquest of Westphalia by Napoleon's army and the nuns dispersed. Emmerich was taken in by a poor widow. By that time she was bedridden with debilitating sickness. On December 29, 1812, during an ecstatic experience, she received the stigmata on her side, hands and feet. Her scribe, the poet Clemens Brentano, recorded the event thus:

She . . . saw a light descending toward her, and distinguished in the midst of it the resplendent form of her crucified Savior, whose wounds shone like so many furnaces of light. Her heart was overflowing with joy and sorrow, and, at the sight of the sacred Wounds, her desire to suffer with her Lord became intensely violent. Then triple rays, pointed like arrows of the color of blood, darted forth from the hands, feet, and right side of the sacred apparition, and struck her The moment these rays touched her, drops of blood flowed from the wounds.¹⁰

In addition to the marks of the crown of thorns and the nail wounds on her hands, feet and side, Emmerich had the mark of a cross, three inches long, over her heart.

Anne Catherine had ecstatic visions in which she observed biblical scenes in vivid detail. For instance she described the naming ceremony after the birth of the Virgin Mary. It took place in the home of Mary's mother, Anne:

I saw a great feast in Anne's house; all was gladness. The wicker partitions in the front of the house had been taken away, and a large room was thusly [sic] made ready. . . . In the middle of the room was an altar covered with red and white, and a stand upon which scrolls were laid. . . . Enue, Elizabeth's sister, brought the infant Mary swathed . . . in red and transparent white, and gave her to Joachim. The priests approached the altar, the attendants bearing the chief priest's train, and prayed from the

scrolls. Joachim placed the child on the arms of the chief priest, who held her aloft, prayed for awhile, and then laid her in the little cradle on the altar.¹¹

Transcripts of her visions fill forty volumes, and several edited volumes are now available in English translation. Mindful of the suspicion that the visions might attract among ecclesiastical authorities, Emmerich preferred to call them "meditations," insisting that they were "no more than of human value."¹² For twelve years she ate nothing but Communion wafers. The ability to live for extended periods of time without eating is referred to as *inedia*. Emmerich remained bedridden and died at age 49. She was beatified in 2004, the first step toward possible sainthood. But ecclesial authorities set aside Brentano's transcripts of her visions as impossible to authenticate.

Therese Neumann (1898–1962) was born on Good Friday in the village of Konnersreuth, in Bavaria, and lived there all her life. She was a healthy child, but a series of accidents and medical emergencies in her early twenties left her paralyzed and blind. Allegedly, through the intercession of her role model Thérèse of Lisieux, then in process of canonization, Neumann was completely cured.¹³

Neumann received the stigmata, beginning on March 5, 1926, the first Friday of Lent. The first lesion, corresponding to Jesus' spear wound appeared above her heart. It was described as being one-and-three-eighths inches in length. A series of visions over the next several weeks culminated in an intense vision of the passion in which other wounds appeared. In addition to lesions on the hands and feet, she bore wounds corresponding to the scourging, crowning with thorns, and carrying the cross. In all she bore forty-five wounds.¹⁴ For the remaining thirty-six years of her life Therese's wounds bled regularly and often profusely. Like many other stigmatics, Friday was typically her "worst day." Photographs show her bleeding from the eyes as well as from other parts of the body.

Neumann endured almost continuous, intense pain. But she also had almost daily episodes of ecstasy. On important days in the church year

the episodes lasted twenty-four hours. It is estimated that she experienced Christ's passion 725 times, "all in exact conformity with the liturgical calendar."¹⁵ Like Emmerich she also had visions of other events in the Bible. On a few occasions she reported viewing current events at great distances from her physical body.¹⁶

From 1922 onward Therese—again like Emmerich—refused all food and drink. In fact, anything but the daily Communion wafer was immediately expelled.¹⁷ Far from showing signs of emaciation, however, her body weight increased from 140 pounds in 1927 to 215 pounds in 1953. Moreover, Therese rarely slept, though she remained full of energy.¹⁸

Neumann became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis in 1946.¹⁹ But she remained active in her community, tending the family's livestock and the local cemetery—wearing gloves to protect her hands—and receiving thousands of visitors. Among the visitors was Paramahansa Yogananda, who gave a favorable account of the meeting in his book *Autobiography of a Yogi*.²⁰ Therese also cared for the sick, and many healings were attributed to her. Konnersreuth became, and still is, a popular pilgrimage destination.

Francesco Forgione (1887–1968), Neumann's close contemporary, was born in Pietrelcina, a small farming town in southern Italy. An unusually pious child, he had "conversations" with Christ, Mary, and his guardian angel. At ten years of age he resolved to take religious orders, and in 1903 he entered the Capuchin novitiate.²¹ The Capuchins were founded in the 16th century as part of a reform movement to recover the Franciscans' original austerity. Although not cloistered, they are among the most ascetic of all religious orders. Forgione took the name Pio, and when he was ordained to the priesthood several years later he became "Padre Pio."

Pio cheerfully endured the rugged discipline of the Capuchins and came to embrace a "ministry of suffering."²² He considered suffering for Christ's sake to be a divine blessing, and frequently he prayed to suffer more if it would save others' souls or atone for the sins of hu-

mankind. But he also had episodes of ecstasy which brought him the utmost joy.

Padre Pio's visible stigmata appeared on September 20, 1918, in the final months of World War I. But he had already had a number of related experiences. For example, while hearing a boy's confession, he had a vision of an "Exalted Being" holding "some kind of weapon in His hand, something like a long sharp-pointed steel blade." The entity thrust the weapon into Pio's "soul," whereupon Pio felt such intense pain that he thought he was dying.²³ The visible stigmata appeared while Pio was reciting the thanksgiving prayer after Mass. In his own words:

[S]uddenly I was overtaken by a powerful trembling, then calm followed, and I saw our Lord in the posture of someone who is on a cross . . . lamenting the ingratitude of men, especially those consecrated to him and by him most favored He invited me to partake of his sorrows and to meditate on them I felt then full of compassion for the Lord's sorrows, and I asked him what I could do. I heard this voice: "I united you with my Passion." Once the vision disappeared, I came to. I returned to my senses, and I saw these signs here, which were dripping blood.²⁴

Pio prayed that the pain continue but that the lesions would disappear. The visible signs, he complained, "are an embarrassment and an indescribable humiliation."²⁵ His prayers were not answered, and Pio bore the marks for fifty years, though they became less clear with age and were gone by the time of his death. People claimed that the blood issuing from his wounds had a fragrant aroma, and some claimed to see rays of light emanating from it.²⁶

Pio had numerous visions, including "human manifestations," in which he witnessed events in the life of Christ and other biblical figures.²⁷ The "conversations" with heavenly figures that began when he was a child continued throughout his life. Pio was also tormented by demons, who made loud noises, threw furniture about his room, and beat him.²⁸ Despite the limitations imposed by the stigmata, Pio corresponded with thousands of people, offered spiritual

counseling, celebrated the Mass almost daily, and heard innumerable confessions. He seemed able to peer into people's souls and to know penitents' sins even before they entered the confessional. He is said to have been capable of levitation and bilocation. Padre Pio was always a controversial figure, and at least one pope doubted the authenticity of his stigmata.²⁹ But he was canonized in 2002 and now is officially known as Saint Pio of Pietrelcina.

Dorothy Kerin (1889–1963) was born in a poor London suburb³⁰ and brought up in the Church of England. She had an ecstatic vision early in life, but otherwise her childhood was uneventful. In young adulthood her health deteriorated and she contracted pneumonia, tuberculosis, and finally meningitis. By 1912, blind, deaf and hemorrhaging, Kerin lapsed into a coma, whereupon her physicians predicted imminent death. But in a near-death experience she had a vision of Christ and awoke, completely cured. Her sight and hearing were restored, and X-rays of her lungs showed no sign of the tuberculosis.³¹ She had numerous other visions of Christ and Mary and, on two occasions, visions of holding the child Jesus in her arms.

To escape curious visitors and newspaper reporters, Kerin went into seclusion for fourteen years, living with the family of her spiritual director. During that time she received the stigmata. The wounds appeared over a three-day period beginning on December 8, 1915, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. On the first evening Kerin felt intense pain in her right side, and a lesion appeared on her left hand.³² She had been experiencing diabolical assaults, and her first reaction was that the pain and wound were of that nature. More-

over, her knowledge of stigmata was rudimentary; for example, she did not know that Francis of Assisi's stigmata were visible.

The following afternoon, while kneeling in front of a crucifix, Dorothy again felt the pain "as if a knife were being driven into her side"

and collapsed. When she recovered consciousness a wound was visible on her side, in the shape of a cross; she also discovered the wound on her right hand. As recorded by her biographer: "There remained a mark on the back of her hand like the head of a flat triangular nail." On December 10 the wounds appeared on her feet.³³ The wounds "remained open for several days, and were visible for many years after."³⁴

Kerin emerged from her period of seclusion to launch a healing ministry.

She founded two nursing homes in west London and progressively expanded the homes, without any money of her own.³⁵ At each critical stage she expressed trust in divine providence, and money arrived, allegedly in the amounts needed. Dorothy declined an offer of marriage in order to devote her life to service. She adopted nine children during World War II and raised them to adulthood. To provide a better environment for them she moved her ministry to a restored stately home in Kent and served there until her death.

Dorothy Kerin believed that healings could sometimes restore physical health but insisted that outcomes depended on divine will. Some healings were dramatic, while others involve gradual improvement. On a few occasions she seemed to leave her physical body to minister to patients at a distance.³⁶ Toward the end of her life she gave lectures throughout Europe and in the United States. Kerin was an Anglo-Catholic, and her work contributed to the re-

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus uttered the timeless words: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson. . . commented that Jesus' "submission to martyrdom when he possessed the occult power easily to have saved Himself and confounded his enemies, is one of the sublime acts of submission . . . in the history of mankind."

vival of sacramental healing in the Anglican Communion.

Judith von Halle was born in Berlin in 1972 and had clairvoyant experiences as a child. She studied in Germany and the United States and graduated in architecture in 1998. By then she had developed an interest in Anthroposophy. While also practicing as an architect Von Halle was hired as a part-time staff member at the Rudolf Steiner House in Berlin to give lectures on esoteric topics. Her life changed abruptly in 2004, her thirty-third year, when she received the stigmata:

The stigmata . . . appeared in rapid succession The wounds bled especially in the Holy Week and on Good Friday. They bled during Eastertime until the Feast of Whitsun more or less every Friday and since then only sporadically on specific occasions The stigmata, which hurt more or less continuously, have since then remained essentially unaltered. Their peculiarity consists in the fact that they do not become inflamed but neither do they heal.³⁷

From the time she received the wounds on her body Judith von Halle has been unable to eat or drink. Her inedia is all the more surprising because “she previously loved cooking and eating.”³⁸ She also acquired the gifts of remote viewing, which focused on Jesus’ passion. In von Halle’s account, Jesus fell seven times on his way to execution. The last occurred at the end of the Via Dolorosa:

The Lord finally collapsed under the wood [the beams of the cross] and did not pick it up again. He was bathed in sweat and His senses were failing. The wooden beams were untied as, under the urging cries of the executioners, He slowly began to raise Himself again. Hardly had He got to His feet when he was dragged back to the ground, to be stretched upon the Cross which had now been put together, and to measure and mark the nail points. Simon wanted to stay with Him, but he was driven away, back down the hill, into the crowd of watchers and attendants.³⁹

Receipt of the stigmata, and particularly her gift of remote viewing, caused great controver-

sy in the Anthroposophical Society, and Von Halle and her supporters were dismissed from the Steiner House.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding that setback, she felt compelled to share her story. Judith interprets her visions in terms of Steiner’s teachings on the “Mystery of Golgotha.”⁴¹ She continues to write, lecture, and conduct workshops. Her most recent book (in German) was published in 2011. She is married and lives with her husband in Berlin. Whereas some of her predecessor stigmatics were uneducated peasants, von Halle is an educated professional woman.

Stigmata and Accompanying Phenomena

Based on the stories of the six stigmatics and additional information of interest, we now create a composite sketch of stigmatism and its accompanying phenomena—a group profile of the kind of stigmatics of interest in this article. We shall also discuss efforts to validate or dispute reported cases of stigmata and examine alternative theories for explaining the physical lesions.

The most common stigmata are on the hands, feet and side, matching the wounds suffered when Jesus was nailed to the cross and a spear was thrust into his heart. Francis of Assisi and Dorothy Kerin bore lesions on the hands and feet that included raised areas resembling nails. Some stigmatics have wounds on the head corresponding to the crown of thorns. Wounds may appear on the shoulders, corresponding to the carrying of the cross, or on the back corresponding to the scourging. A few stigmatics, including Anne Catherine Emerich, bore other marks of religious significance, like crosses. The wounds may bleed occasionally or on a regular basis. Bleeding seems to peak on Fridays and during Passiontide. Bleeding can be profuse; on one occasion Therese Neumann lost one-and-a-half quarts of blood.⁴²

The lesions may all appear on a single day but more typically manifest over a period of days or weeks. They may be temporary or permanent. In the case of Cloretta Robinson, a ten-year-old African American girl, the lesions lasted less than three weeks;⁴³ Padre Pio bore

them for half a century. Many stigmatics still bore the wounds when they died.

Stigmatics experience excruciating pain when they receive the wounds and may endure continual pain thereafter. As Padre Pio once remarked, the wounds are “not just ornamental.” The pain and bleeding seem to follow similar patterns of intensity. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) and a few other individuals bore no visible lesions but felt localized, intense pain in the hands, feet and side. Such cases of “invisible stigmata” may be relevant, particularly when the individuals also exhibited the other phenomena to be discussed shortly.

Most stigmatics engaged in focused contemplation of Jesus’ passion. Significantly, no cases of stigmata have been reported in the Eastern Orthodox churches, which emphasize Christ’s transfiguration and resurrection rather than the passion. Yet it is not easy to determine, from a study of western stigmatics, whether the impulse to engage in such contemplation is the cause or the effect of the bodily lesions. In some cases, focused contemplation did not begin until after the stigmata appeared. Moreover, contemplation of Jesus’ sufferings does not automatically result in stigmata.

Few stigmatics welcome the appearance of the lesions on their bodies. The wounds are hard to conceal, and the bleeding is real. Common reactions include embarrassment and frustration over limitations on their activities. Stigmatics also endure varying degrees of harassment or persecution. Investigation by religious or other authorities are intrusive and may lead to the publication of calumnious statements. Stigmatics may be mobbed by curious tourists or pilgrims seeking healings or counseling.

A number of stigmatics prayed that the lesions be removed, and some received medical treatment in an attempt to heal them. But there are no reports of successful treatment; stigmatics’ wounds do not heal, neither do they become inflamed or infected. In cases of temporary stigmata, the lesions eventually vanished of their own accord. We have no reports of people reacting to the stigmata in a totally negative manner, say, by committing suicide. The

typical attitude is one of acceptance, submission to divine will, and joy at being able to share Jesus’ sufferings. Therese Neumann and Padre Pio even invited additional pain: the one in the hope of relieving other people’s suffering, the other to participate in the redemptive mission.

Stigmatics lives are changed not only by appearance of the wounds and the associated pain but also by the manifestation of other phenomena. These latter include:

- Ecstatic states, often occurring during periods of intense pain or bleeding. Ecstatic visions seem to be an almost universal experience. Visions of Christ, Mary, saints and angels are common. Padre Pio, Anne Catherine Emmerich and Padre Pio had conversations with their guardian angels.
- *Inedia*: the ability to live without eating—except for the Eucharistic wafer—and sometimes without even drinking. Inedia may extend to the refusal or inability to take medications. Catherine of Siena, Therese Neumann, and Judith von Halle were inediatic.
- Voluntary insomnia, the condition in which a person rarely or never sleeps. Therese Neumann required little or no sleep and, from 1926 onward, never slept at all. Yet her energy level exceeded that of the people around her.⁴⁴
- Ability to experience scenes distant from the physical body. Therese Neumann reportedly viewed the coronation of Pope Pius XII in Rome while her body remained among witnesses in Germany.⁴⁵ In a few cases, suggestive of bilocation, people experienced the visitations and even touched the stigmatics’ bodies. Witnesses claimed that Padre Pio sometimes levitated while celebrating the Mass.
- Ability to experience scenes in the past. While Therese Neumann displayed that gift, Anne Catherine Emmerich and Judith von Halle stand out for the vivid detail of their reports.

Stigmatics typically view events of religious significance, the most common being Jesus' trial and crucifixion. Emmerich described events stretching back far in the Old Testament.⁴⁶ More than one stigmatic experienced holding the child Jesus.

- Ability to speak languages never studied. Therese Neumann, whose formal education was minimal, spoke a dialect of Aramaic that even local scholars did not know. More knowledgeable scholars later confirmed that the dialect was spoken in the first century CE.⁴⁷
- Healing gifts. Dorothy Kerin applied those gifts in a lifelong ministry. Therese Neumann, Padre Pio, and others facilitated incidental healings. Some stigmatics also became gifted spiritual counselors. Neumann, Pio, and Kerin counseled thousands of people.

These phenomena typically manifest concurrently with, or soon after, appearance of the wounds. Three categories of phenomena indicate activity in, or changes to, the subtle vehicles.

The first involves the dense physical body and the etheric body. The etheric body is the link between the physical and higher vehicles. The subtle energy known as *prana* circulates through pathways in the etheric body that correspond to the meridians of Chinese medicine.⁴⁸ The flow of prana keeps the physical body alive, nourishes its cells, and ordinarily heals wounds. The fact that the stigmata neither heal nor become infected indicates important changes in the etheric body.

Inedia and voluntary insomnia indicate further changes. Inedia must be distinguished from anorexia, practiced by some Christian ascetics, in which the individual denies him- or herself needed food and drink and suffers the consequences of dehydration and emaciation. Inediacs exhibit no such physiological symptoms; rather, they seem to enjoy relatively robust health. Likewise, voluntary insomniacs suffer none of the expected symptoms of delirium,

phobias, weight loss, and dementia. This ability must be distinguished from the psychiatric condition known as fatal familial insomnia, which has a typical survival span of eighteen months.

The second category involves the emotional and mental bodies. Virtually all stigmatics have exhibited an intense love of God and empathy with Jesus in his sufferings. This strong display of affect is emotionally based, though the mind may also be involved. Psychologists acknowledge that affect can be either pre- or post-cognitive, in other words, it can either precede or follow the mental processing of information.⁴⁹ The significant emotional activity should come as no surprise. In most mystics—in contrast to occultists—the rational mind may be relatively undeveloped, but a strong connection develops between the emotional body and the higher mental body, and in turn with the buddhic vehicle.⁵⁰

Remote viewing may also involve the emotional and mental bodies. The experience can extend beyond mere “viewing” to include mental, emotional, and even physical participation in the events. This ability could be attributed to “out-of-body experiences” or “astral travel.” More likely it is a form of higher clairvoyance. Instances of bilocation are rare and hard to substantiate, but if true they would seem to be of a different nature. Highly evolved beings are able to materialize a body, or *mayavirupa*, for specific purposes. The *mayavirupa* has a measure of solidity but is not constrained by physical laws.

The ability to view and participate in events in the past could be attributed to dreaming, vivid imagination, or simply creative storytelling, but the evidence does not support that kind of mundane interpretation. Alternatively, it could be attributed to past-life recall or to some form of higher clairvoyance. But Judith von Halle described the process as something more than clairvoyance:

[T]he experience is not based on so-called visions or pure clairvoyance, nor imaginative pictures, but rather on direct witnessing of what actually happened on Earth. Besides visual perceptions of the individuals

participating in the events at the time of Christ, together with their surroundings, culture, and way of life, all other senses available to us in normal waking consciousness are also involved. For instance the language being spoken can be heard, the ground beneath one's feet is felt, as are cold and heat.⁵¹

We note, however, that stigmatics' descriptions of biblical and other past events of religious significance are influenced by religious beliefs, prevailing scholarly opinion, or artistic convention. The accounts of biblical events given by different stigmatics show remarkable, but not complete, consistency.

The ability to speak archaic languages points to a connection between the mind and some higher source of knowledge. When Therese Neumann spoke in Aramaic, clearly she was not reading the minds of the scholars with whom she was in contact. If the source is a higher entity, one could interpret the process as a form of telepathy, not altogether different from the process by which the Master Djwhal Khul communicated with Alice Bailey (1880–1949). There is no suggestion that Neumann or other the stigmatics were functioning as trance mediums. In any event, the knowledge of ancient languages provides some assurance that some stigmatics are able to retrieve reliable information from antiquity.

The third category of phenomena involve use of the will. Stigmatics of naturally strong will readily surrender their wills to the will of God. For them the challenge of dealing with frequent bleeding and excruciating pain is immense, but those we have studied did not allow their problems to become a source of self-centeredness. Rather, they continually reached out to others, even seeking to take on additional suffering for altruistic reasons. Stigmatics' renunciation of worldly comforts and dedication to their work provides further evidence of definite use of the will.

States of ecstasy are hard to categorize with respect to the vehicles. Skeptics attribute all ecstasy states to psychiatric disorders or to neurological conditions that can be replicated by drugs or electromagnetic stimulation. Eso-

tericists may dismiss them as "astralism." But even a cursory study of the world's mystics indicates that ecstatic states involve activity extending far above the physical or emotional bodies; the highest states suggest significant activity at the buddhic level.⁵²

Healing ability is also hard to categorize. Like linguistic ability, however, it points to cooperation with a higher power. Dorothy Kerin commented on her own instantaneous cure and its message for those who doubt the possibility of healing:

My Healing came from God . . . The miracles Our Lord performed in Galilee and along the Jordan two thousand years ago, He can and still does, today. . . . Miracles of Healing and the recreation of new life are happening today, but many of us shut our eyes to them.⁵³

Healing, as her biographer pointed out, is not always of the body.⁵⁴ Notwithstanding, a number of people received dramatic and instantaneous healings of physical conditions. Even those healings were, "accompanied by healing of a broken spirit and reconciliation with, or a bringing closer, to God."⁵⁵ Kerin practiced the laying-on of hands and anointing with oil, but she approached healing primarily through prayer. In her own words, "[P]rayer is indeed the sharing of life. When we pray to God, we are sharing His life; and when we pray for others, we share His life with them."⁵⁶

The effectiveness of Dorothy Kerin's healing ministry came from trust in God. She had complete confidence that her prayers would be answered, though she never tried to prescribe outcomes. Hers was not the naïve faith of an ignorant person; rather it flowed from the experience of her own healing and probably from the encounters with Christ that brought about her healing. Dorothy's sense of mission, and the belief that she was undertaking divinely mandated work, were unshakable.

Broader Perspective

Combinations of these various changes at the physical, etheric, emotional and mental levels represent a profound transformation of the lower quaternary—and possible transformation

at still higher levels. The stigmatics we have discussed functioned at a level of consciousness beyond that of ordinary humanity.

Stigmatics are not just “ordinary people” who discover unexplained lesions on their bodies. The individuals whose lives we have examined seem to have been very special people, prepared for and dedicated to the challenges of their spiritual path. That path began early in their lives. Many were exceptionally pious and/or had visions during childhood. When visions continued into adulthood, they become ecstatic in nature, resembling the visions reported by other accomplished mystics. On the other hand, the adult visions were not always pleasant; for example, Padre Pio and Dorothy Kerin were assaulted by demons.

Several individuals, including Therese Neumann and Kerin, were healed of severely debilitating or life-threatening illnesses before they received the stigmata. The illnesses, which they faced with resignation if not total acceptance, may have provided a glimpse of the suffering to come. Several had near-death experiences, whereupon they received complete healings. Near-death experiences conceivably could provide opportunities for more advanced souls to take over soon-to-be-vacated bodies, but no stigmatics have identified themselves in such terms.⁵⁷

Occurrences of stigmatism in our own time demonstrate that it is not just a thing of a superstitious past. That said, we like to think that we live in an age of more practical spirituality. Stigmatism seems culturally out of place in the 21st century—more relevant to the asceticism and heroism of the Piscean Age. We flee from the very thought of bleeding wounds and pain, especially if, in some way, they are accepted voluntarily. Devotion to the passion has largely given way to a focus on Christ’s teaching and healing ministry, his present involvement in the world, and his anticipated reappearance. The only major esoteric teacher of modern times to place emphasis on the “Mystery of Golgotha” was Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), and, significantly, the contemporary stigmatic Judith von Halle is a student of Steiner’s work.⁵⁸ An important concept from Steiner’s teachings will be cited later.

On the other hand some of the associated phenomena seem very relevant to our times. Inedia holds out the promise of a mode of physical existence that minimizes the consumption of sentient plants—an expression of harmlessness that goes beyond vegetarianism. Along with voluntary insomnia, inedia may point the direction in which the human race is headed as lower forms continue to evolve.

Stigmatics’ ability to witness past events has the potential, not only to acquire historical knowledge and its cultural and linguistic contexts, but also to savor the sensations and emotions that accompanied past events. This ability could open up new avenues for research. Anne Catherine Emmerich, Therese Neumann, and Judith von Halle all reported that Jesus was crucified not on the familiar “cross,” with vertical and horizontal members, but on a Y-shaped structure. There is no reason why the viewing of past events need be restricted to events of religious significance. The ability to view and participate in scenes at a distance has similar potential.

Cases of stigmatism and its related phenomena have occurred in other cultures and among nonstigmatics. For example, stigmatism has been reported in tribes in Venezuela;⁵⁹ it also appears in Buddhist art. Some Indian holy men and women allegedly eat nothing but live solely on prana.⁶⁰ Others are said to be capable of voluntary insomnia, levitation and bilocation. Yogananda described a number of individuals exhibiting these abilities.⁶¹ In all cases the abilities are attributed to advanced levels of consciousness. Some psychics have demonstrated remote viewing ability under laboratory conditions, though none has described events in the vivid detail reported by Anne Catherine Emmerich and Judith von Halle.

Authenticity

Authenticating cases of stigmata is obviously of great importance to determine the validity of claims made by the individuals themselves or made on their behalf by others. The objective is to verify that the lesions are real, while also looking for signs that they might be self-inflicted or have a pathological explanation.

Some people have reported receipt of the stigmata but in fact were dreaming or hallucinating. Stigmata “seen” and “felt” during a state of ecstasy might not be visible or painful when the person returned to normal waking consciousness. Unconscious self-infliction of stigmata-like wounds might occur while a person was asleep or in an ecstatic state. Intentional self-infliction could be undertaken as an extreme form of penance or as a result of mental illness. Fake or self-inflicted wounds could be a publicity stunt or a scheme to extort money from gullible pilgrims. As discussed shortly, stigmata might appear spontaneously as a symptom of disorders known to medical science or clinical psychology.

The Roman Catholic Church has the greatest experience in investigating such matters. Its policy regarding stigmatism has been described thus:

Two extremes must be avoided in attempting to evaluate the stigmata: to assign too readily a supernatural cause for every such visible manifestation, and to see every such phenomenon as a purely psychosomatic disorder. The Church has accepted relatively few cases of stigmatization as authentic and has always demanded more proof than the mere appearance of visible signs in the body.⁶²

Among the listed criteria of authenticity was the following: “The appearance of the true stigmata is usually instantaneous, whereas in pathological cases it [sic] often appears gradually.”⁶³ Instantaneity was also cited as a criterion for discerning divine origin; the Devil would not be able to cause instantaneous stigmata because he lacked the necessary agility!

In recent times investigations of stigmatics have been detailed and thorough. Anne Catherine Emmerich was investigated both by an ecclesiastical commission, which included three physicians, and by a government commission, which kept her under continuous observation for three weeks. Neither reported any irregularity at the time, though a government official later accused her of fraud.⁶⁴

In 1927 a team of nurses and physicians watched Therese Neumann, day and night, for

two weeks. They took photographs, witnessed her bleeding, tested the blood, recorded her episodes of ecstasy, verified that she did not eat or drink, and made detailed measurements of her body weight, temperature, bodily discharges, and other factors.⁶⁵ Presumably the team was satisfied, because no critical statement was issued, and the church ordered no further investigation. Allegations that Therese secretly ate food in later years have not been substantiated.

The Church of England lacks the Church of Rome’s long experience in dealing with unexplained phenomena. It did not launch a formal investigation of Dorothy Kerin, and no official comment was made of her condition. Nevertheless, she was examined by an Anglican bishop and several other people, who signed depositions attesting that they had witnessed her stigmata and were convinced of their authenticity.⁶⁶ Physicians also testified that there was no medical explanation for the healing she received earlier.

Investigations by religious or other authorities sometimes have called the authenticity of stigmata into question. For example, Monsignor Carlo Maccari, later promoted to archbishop, investigated Padre Pio in 1960 at the request of Pope John XXIII and the Holy Office. Maccari’s 200-page report was highly critical, even accusing Pio of “immorality.” Yet Maccari reportedly recanted shortly before Pio’s death. Procedures for the canonization of Padre Pio included a detailed examination of documentary evidence for his stigmata, experiences and gifts as well as testimony by sixty-nine witnesses concerning all aspects of his life. The Church of Rome demands evidence of two “miraculous” healings attributed to a prospective saint. While no official statement was issued concerning the stigmata, it is unlikely that Pio’s canonization would have moved forward if suspicions had lingered of fraud, mental illness, or immorality.

Judith Von Halle displayed considerable piety but has not publicly disclosed a religious affiliation. Neither has it been revealed whether physicians examined her stigmata. The Anthroposophical Society never investigated her, but she was harshly criticized by leading

members, including the Executive Council at Dornach, Switzerland. The attacks ranged from accusations of fraud, and charges that her “clairvoyant” activities were damaging to the Society, to allegations that she claimed to be the reincarnation of a contemporary and co-worker of Rudolf Steiner! She publicly denied ever making such a claim,⁶⁷ and her books do not mention her reincarnational history. Some segments of the Anthroposophical Society continue to denounce her, but she has been embraced by others.

The attacks on Padre Pio and Judith Von Halle focused chiefly on matters peripheral to the validity of their stigmata. It would seem that, frustrated by their inability to make the phenomenon of stigmatism go away, critics try to discredit the stigmatics themselves. Stigmatics’ credibility is sometimes harmed by false, exaggerated or ill-considered claims made by supporters. One Internet website supportive of von Halle shows a photograph of bleeding hands, while another site points out that the hands are not hers!

Investigations have been conducted to authenticate accompanying phenomena. Some of these are also experienced by nonstigmatics, but not usually in the combination discussed here. The Church of Rome has policies for investigating inedia, voluntary insomnia, levitation, bilocation, sweet bodily odor, *hierognosis* (the ability to detect the sacredness of objects), clairvoyance, visions, and “revelations.”⁶⁸ The church has also developed strict criteria for judging the validity of “miraculous” healings. Physicians—but not, in her case, representatives of the Church of England—determined that Dorothy Kerin’s healing could not be explained by medical science. Aramaic words and sentences in Anne Catherine Emmerich’s “meditations” were examined by academic linguists and judged to be genuine.

Alternative Theories of Stigmatism

Skeptics have long claimed that the whole phenomenon of religious stigmatism is a hoax, or they attribute it to intentional self-mutilation. Faced with the growing number of documented instances of genuine stigmata,

such claims have become less common in recent years. Meanwhile, attempts to explain stigmatism as a medical, psychiatric or psychological condition have gained momentum. For example, Francis of Assisi is said to have suffered from the painful condition of quartan malaria, complicated by purpura, which can give rise to hemorrhaging on the hands and feet.⁶⁹

Aside from the time-honored “hysteria,” some of the psychological and psychiatric labels assigned to stigmata are: autosuggestion, psychosomatic purpura, dissociative identity disorder, obsessive compulsion disorder, and neurotic necrosis. The most viable theory is that the wounds result from autosuggestion by people with an obsessive level of religiosity.⁷⁰ It is supported by research showing that temporary skin lesions can be produced by hypnosis.

The field of biocognition has grown up seeking to relate health conditions to beliefs and cultural history. Proponents assert that “individuals are seen as an inseparable living field of mind, body and historical culture in constant search for contextual meaning.”⁷¹ Mario E. Martinez, “father” of biocognition, explained that the aim “is to show how our belief system impacts upon our immune system and directs the way in which we respond to and treat illness.” He went on to describe stigmata as “the epitome of cultural response.” Noting that most stigmatics have been Roman Catholics, Martinez declared they were surrounded by a culture which celebrates Christ’s suffering. “Unlike ordinary people,” he averred, “stigmatics welcome the suffering because it brings them closer to God. Instead of giving themselves permission to heal, they give themselves permission to suffer.”⁷² A recent conference of psychologists came to a similar conclusion. Stigmata, it asserted, “is a religious phenomenon reported only [sic] within the Roman Catholic Church, therefore could it also be a mental disorder evoked by the ultra-religious?”⁷³

We might respond by asking why only a very small fraction of the people exposed to an allegedly destructive culture actually become stigmatics. Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556) famously contemplated the passion and devel-

oped his Spiritual Exercises, used as the basis of month-long retreats by Jesuit priests and others.⁷⁴ An important purpose of the exercises is to create guilt and shame in the hearts of retreatants for Christ's sufferings. But Ignatius never received the stigmata, nor to the writer's knowledge has any other Jesuit.

Theories suggesting stigmatism is a psychological or psychiatric disorder have to confront the fact that the stigmatics studied herein seemed to lead well-adjusted lives. Far from being dysfunctional neurotics or religious fanatics, they performed meritorious service, despite the pain and other burdens they bore. Stigmatics typically accept the challenges in a spirit of cheerful submission to what they believe is divine will.

As far as the types of stigmatism considered in this article are concerned, medical, psychiatric and psychological theories miss the point. Purpura, autosuggestion, or cultural conditioning might explain the bodily lesions but cannot explain the inedia, voluntary insomnia, remote-viewing ability, knowledge of ancient languages, healing gifts, or other changes that may follow appearance of the lesions. It cannot explain the elevation in consciousness that stigmatics experience or their dedication to service. The set of phenomena we are interested in is much larger than the condition addressed by skeptics or health professionals.

Esoteric organizations and teachers have offered their own theories of stigmatism and, in the process, revealed negative attitudes. The harsh response of the Anthroposophical Society to Judith von Halle's stigmata has already been mentioned. The Theosophical explanation of stigmata, cited in the Introduction, reflected

an attitude of cynicism not just toward stigmatism but also to other religious topics.

Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891), co-founder of the Theosophical Society, declared that stigmatism is “always . . . the result of exalted imagination.”⁷⁵ She cited a case of alleged sorcery perpetrated by a Jesuit priest⁷⁶ and even attached phallic significance to the crucifixion nails.⁷⁷

Writing in 1903, Theosophist Charles Leadbeater (1854–1934) offered a similar viewpoint. He pointed to the case of Anne Catherine Emmerich as “a rather horrible example of the action of violent emotion upon the physical body.”⁷⁸ Leadbeater eventually became a leader of the “Christianization” movement within the Theosophical Society. By 1920

he was more sympathetic, acknowledging that stigmata could result from intense meditation on Christ's passion and death. But he would only refer to “the alleged crucifixion,” since he was convinced that Jesus had been stoned to death!⁷⁹

The psychologists and Theosophists are probably right that the process resulting in stigmatism originates at a nonphysical level. The process may begin with thoughtforms, which are then propelled by strong emotion through the emotional and etheric vehicles to the dense physical plane. Evidence that the mind is involved comes from observations that the form of the physical lesions is influenced by scholarly opinion. For example, examination of the Shroud of Turin suggested that Christ was nailed to the cross through the wrists, rather than the palms of the hands. Soon thereafter the position of stigmatic lesions in a number of cases followed suit. One involved James

Sacrifice and suffering extend down to the physical plane. As Rudolf Steiner pointed out: “We actually feel as if thorns were pressing into our head; we feel all the pain and suffering of the Crucifixion.” And as the sense of identification is driven deeply into the individual's nature, “then the stigmata, the marks of the bleeding wounds of Christ Jesus, may appear.” In other words, the stigmata form the outer manifestation of the inner transformation taking place.

Bruse, a Roman Catholic priest in Lake Ridge, Virginia, whose stigmata appeared in 1991.⁸⁰

On the other hand, evidence that the mind is involved does not necessarily imply that all stigmata result from faulty thinking. Neither does it force us to conclude that the thoughtforms originate in the lower mind. Appearance of the stigmata and manifestation of accompanying phenomena feature so prominently in the individual's life that it is hard to imagine that they would not be foreseen, and provided for, before the incarnation began. It would seem that the process would have to be approved, and might be initiated, at the causal level.

Clearly something is taking place on a much larger scale than the alternative theories address. Five of the six stigmatics studied received the stigmata relatively early in life. They spent many years responding to the stigmata and utilizing their exceptional abilities. Rather than describing them as stigmatics who happened to acquire additional gifts, perhaps we should describe them as people functioning at an elevated state of consciousness, who traced their experiences and accomplishments back to the transformative event of receiving the stigmata.

Stigmata and Initiation

This section examines stigmatism's relevance to the initiatory path: what it might imply about progress on the path, or perhaps what potential stigmatism offers for progress. The stigmatics discussed in this article led exemplary lives of self-denial, service, and devotion to God, despite their suffering and many other challenges. It is reasonably safe to say that they had attained the first initiation; some may have progressed farther. Because stigmatism involves a sense of sharing in Jesus' passion, one might ask whether some stigmatics have attained the fourth initiation. Before trying to answer that question—or considering whether we may legitimately do so—it will be helpful to review modern esoteric teachings on the first four initiations.

The Initiatory Path

The initiatory path takes us from ordinary human existence to the World of Souls and op-

portunities for spiritual growth beyond the Solar System. Of the seven major initiations available on this planet, the first five are of greatest relevance to our present phase of evolution. Christian esotericists relate them to events in the life of Jesus the Christ.

The first initiation, corresponding to Jesus' birth and presentation in the temple, is characterized by control of the physical nature and awakening to the reality of the soul. The second, corresponding to his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, is characterized by control of the emotional nature; the water of baptism symbolizes emotion. By the third initiation, corresponding to the transfiguration, the personality is completely formed and in control of the lower vehicles. The personality becomes "an agent of the soul."⁸¹ The antahkara links the lower and higher mind, access to the spiritual triad is achieved, and initial contact is made with the monad.⁸²

Long before the individual ever crosses the threshold onto the path of initiation he or she is urged to practice self-denial. This discipline prepares for the great sacrifice of the fourth initiation that lies ahead. To quote Alice Bailey, the individual makes "many lesser renunciations of many lives, consciously undertaken, so the many acts of spiritual detachment lead eventually to the severing of that final thread which involves the death of all personality attachments."⁸³

The fourth initiation, referred to as "the Great Renunciation," requires more than death of personality attachments. It demands renunciation of the personality itself, the psychic structure in which we have long invested our identity. To give up "who we are"—or who, for long eons, we thought we were—is a great sacrifice indeed. We are called upon to sacrifice that which was raised to its highest perfection in the third initiation. No lesser sacrifice is acceptable.

The fourth initiation is an ordeal of suffering and purgation through which the individual achieves liberation from the thrall of the lower nature. Quoting an ancient Indian source Helena Blavatsky declared: "Fire and Flame destroy the body of an Arhat, their essence makes

him immortal.”⁸⁴ An *arhat* [Sanskrit: “worthy”] is a fourth-degree initiate. Jesus is believed to have attained the fourth initiation at the crucifixion,⁸⁵ and Christian esotericists refer to it as the “crucifixion initiation.” Anna Kingsford (1846–1888) described it as “the death of the body; the rending of the veil of the flesh; the uniting of the human will with the Divine Will.”⁸⁶ Bailey described the fourth initiation thus:

The life of the man who takes the fourth initiation, or the Crucifixion, is usually one of great sacrifice and suffering . . . and even exoterically it is seen to be strenuous, hard, and painful. He has laid all, even his perfected personality, upon the altar of sacrifice, and stands bereft of all. All is renounced, friends, money, reputation, character, standing in the world, family, and even life itself.⁸⁷

Importantly, the fourth initiation requires the “uniting” of the human will with a higher will, or what is more commonly described as submission to a higher will. Christian understanding is that the higher will is the will of God. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus uttered the timeless words: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”⁸⁸ Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson (1886–1983) commented that Jesus’ “submission to martyrdom when he possessed the occult power easily to have saved Himself and confounded his enemies, is one of the sublime acts of submission . . . in the history of mankind.”⁸⁹ Bailey generalized that concept to the candidate for the fourth initiation:

There comes a dramatic moment when all desire is renounced; the will of God or the Plan is seen as the only desirable objective but as yet the man has not proved to himself, to the world of men or to his Master whether he has the strength to move forward along the line of service. There is revealed to him . . . some definite, active undertaking which embodies that aspect of the will of God which it is his peculiar function to appropriate and make possible of expression.⁹⁰

The arhat still incarnates in a physical body, but the fourth initiation brings about far-reaching changes to the initiate’s inner being. In Alice Bailey’s words:

At the fourth initiation, the initiate is brought into the Presence of that aspect of Himself which is called “His Father in Heaven.” He is brought face to face with his own Monad, that pure spiritual essence on the highest plane but one, which is to his Ego or higher self what that Ego is to the personality or lower self.⁹¹

The “Fire and Flame,” which Blavatsky referred to, destroys the initiate’s causal body. Or in Christian symbology, “the veil of the temple [is] rent in twain.”⁹² Destruction of the causal body, in Bailey’s words, “marks the completion of the building of the antahkarana and the institution of direct, unimpeded continuity of relationship between the Monad and the personality.”⁹³ At the same time the Solar Angel departs and “returns to his own place,” having completed its eons-long responsibility for overseeing the individual’s incarnational cycle.⁹⁴

The physical, emotional and/or mental pain; renunciation of lower-self-identity; and the departure of the Solar Angel combine to produce a profound sense of desolation. Jesus, who had already been betrayed by Judas and abandoned by his disciples, faced the departure of the Solar Angel—not to mention the departure of the Christ—cried out, from the cross: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” “A great ‘aloneness,’” Bailey declared, “is the supreme test of the fourth initiation.” But, giving voice to one who had already learned that lesson, she quickly reassured the candidate: “[N]ever, my brother, will you be alone, and this too you must have in mind.”⁹⁵

Bailey commented that the “fourth initiation is ruled or governed by the fourth Ray of Harmony through Conflict,” noting that, on this planet, “nothing is achieved except by struggle and conflict.” But she added the comforting thought: “after this fourth initiation, [the individual] is devoid of suffering.”⁹⁶ Just as Jesus’

crucifixion made possible the glorious resurrection and ascension, the suffering of the fourth initiation makes possible the glory of the fifth.

Theosophists Charles Leadbeater (1854–1934) and Gottfried de Purucker (1874–1942) both took up the theme of the fourth initiation. Notwithstanding his doubts about the method of Jesus' execution, Leadbeater related the fourth initiation to the crucifixion and also to a sequence of events, beginning with the raising of Lazarus from the dead and ending with the resurrection: "All these details on the Christ-drama have a relation to what really happens with the fourth Initiation."⁹⁷ He went on to describe the suffering to be expected:

Always at this stage [of the initiatory path] there is suffering, physical, astral and mental; always there is the condemnation of the world The peculiar type of suffering which invariably accompanies this Initiation clears off any arrears of karma which may still stand in the Initiate's way; and the patience and joyousness with which he endures them have great value . . . and help to determine the extent of his usefulness in the work which lies before him.⁹⁸

Leadbeater depicted the fourth initiation as the combination of great trial and great spiritual reward, which latter he related to the resurrection: "[A]lways there is the splendid triumph upon the higher planes—which, however, remains unknown to the outer world."

De Purucker saw the fourth initiation as a major expansion of consciousness, through which the individual acquires important new powers:

With the fourth initiation begins a new series of inner unfoldings that is to say, not only are the study, the aspiration, and the living of the life, continued in the future stages, but with this degree something new occurs. From that moment the initiate [sic] starts to lose his personal humanity and to merge into divinity, i.e., there ensues the beginning of the loss of the merely human and the commencing of the entering into the divine state. He is taught how to leave his physical body, how to leave his physical mind, and to advance into the great spaces

not alone of the physical universe, but more especially of the invisible realms as well. He then learns to become, to be, to enter into the intimate consciousness of the entities and spheres he contacts.⁹⁹

De Purucker continued: "Thus beginning with this fourth initiation the neophyte slips into new realms of consciousness; the spiritual fires of the inner constitution are most potent both in character and in functioning; the spiritual electricity, so to speak, flows with far more powerful current."¹⁰⁰ But he conceded: "One cannot really put these mystical things into everyday words."

Leadbeater's remarks about the fourth initiation's relationship to multiple events in the last days of Jesus' earthly life may have been influenced by comments made a decade earlier by Rudolf Steiner. The latter, whose work followed Rosicrucian rather than Theosophical tradition, identified seven stages of "Christian Initiation": the washing of the feet, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the mystic death, the burial, the resurrection, and the ascension.¹⁰¹ Steiner drew attention to the intense experience at the physical level: "We actually feel as if thorns were pressing into our head; we feel all the pain and suffering of the Crucifixion." He added that when we succeed "in driving these feelings so deeply into our nature that they have penetrated as far as the physical body . . . then the stigmata, the marks of the bleeding wounds of Christ Jesus, may appear."¹⁰²

Stigmatism and the Fourth Initiation

Nobody would claim that the mere appearance of lesions on someone's body, even if caused or accompanied by intense contemplation of Christ's passion, is indicative of the fourth initiation. Some lesions may be psychosomatic or explainable in some other way. Some stigmatics may just be at the stage of awakening, characteristic of the first initiation. Others may be mastering the emotional nature, with all the suffering that can involve, en route to the second initiation. In some cases stigmatics may be making "lesser renunciations," helping to overcome personality attachments and nega-

tive personal karma in preparation for the fourth initiation in a future life. The stigmata and intense pain provide opportunities to set aside substantial amounts of karma in a relatively short period. One wonders whether, in previous lives, stigmatics were Christ's tormentors or executioners.

The sufferings of Anne Catherine Emmerich, Therese Neumann, Padre Pio, and others could hardly be described as "lesser renunciations." Yet it is inappropriate to speculate on their or anyone else's initiatory status. From our limited perspective we simply do not see the whole picture of their karma, accomplishments, or states of consciousness.

It is legitimate, however, to ask whether those we have studied are *representative* of stigmatics who are approaching, or are in the process of attaining, the fourth initiation. Accordingly, we now discuss hypothetical individuals who fit the profile already developed: individuals whose lives resemble, in their broad features, those of the real stigmatics studied. These hypothetical individuals—whom for convenience we shall call "profile stigmatics"—receive the stigmata; endure ongoing, intense pain and bleeding; acquire exceptional abilities currently with, or soon after, receipt of the visible lesions; experience an elevation in consciousness; and dedicate their lives to service in the face of their own disabilities and persecution by others. We shall now inquire to what degree these profile stigmatics meet the requirements of the fourth initiation.

First, the profile stigmatics exhibit a high degree of personality integration and soul infusion, indicating that they have already attained the third initiation. Whether they possess a completed antahkarana is not known, but from an early age they seem able to move effortlessly from one level of reality to another. Glimpses of the monad may account for their comfort in communicating with higher entities, some of whom are considered divine.

Second, the stigmata create an environment of suffering in which, to quote Helena Blavatsky, "fire and flame" can destroy the body and purify the lower self. Stigmatics suffer enormously, enduring not only bleeding and continual,

intense pain but also embarrassment, disruption of life plans, and persecution from inside and outside their own religious or esoteric circles. They may be surrounded by people who do not understand or who exhibit hostility. The profile stigmatics feel very much alone, facing lives of great challenge with little support. Despite their great suffering they remain joyous, believing that they are sharing in Jesus' sufferings. As Charles Leadbeater affirmed, "the patience and joyousness" with which individuals bear suffering "have great value" and determine their usefulness in the work undertaken.

Some of the profile stigmatics suffer assault from demons. Critics may assert that such assaults are indicative of a struggle on the lower astral plane, but the profile stigmatics seem to have mastered the emotional/desire nature. More likely, they are attracting attacks by hostile entities because of progress toward the higher initiations. We recall the temptation of Christ in the wilderness.¹⁰³

Third, the profile stigmatics have overcome personality attachments and demonstrate renunciation to high degree. They embrace simple lifestyles and devote their lives to prayer and work, with no thought for their own health or wellbeing. They may enter strict religious orders or serve in the priesthood. Like Francis of Assisi they sacrifice "friends, money, reputation, character, standing in the world, [and] family."

Fourth, submission to a higher will is an obvious quality. The profile stigmatics are not weak-willed people of simple piety, easily swept up in religious fervor. They have strong wills, but readily submit their wills to what they believe is the will of God.¹⁰⁴ They sense what God wishes them to do and perform "some definite, active undertaking which embodies that aspect of the will of God," despite the debilitating effect of their physical condition. In carrying out their missions they overcome enormous internal and external challenges.

Fifth, the accompanying phenomena are significant enough to indicate liberation from the normal constraints of physical existence.

Abilities like remote viewing, “visiting the past,” and bilocation exemplify the new powers envisioned by Gottfried de Purucker—“how to leave [the] physical body, how to leave [the] physical mind, and to advance into the great spaces not alone of the physical universe, but more especially of the invisible realms as well.” Healing ability also exemplifies the transformation de Purucker envisioned. Through abilities like inedia, and voluntary insomnia, the profile stigmatics demonstrate liberation from the thrall of the lower self. In

other cultures such abilities are regarded as evidence of high levels of consciousness.

Table 1 summarizes the evidence considered. Every one of the requirements of the fourth initiation, listed in the first column, appears to be satisfied by the suffering, renunciation, experiences and accomplishments of the profile stigmatics. Based on this evidence we can scarcely avoid the conclusion that those hypothetical stigmatics are approaching, or are in process of attaining, the fourth initiation.

Table 1. Evidence that “Profile Stigmatics” Meet the Requirements of the Fourth Initiation.

Requirements of the Fourth Initiation	Characteristics of the Profile Stigmatics
Already attained the third initiation	Evidence of personality integration, mastery of lower vehicles, soul infusion, ability to move from one level of consciousness to another, contact with divine spark (monad).
“Many lesser renunciations”	Serious illnesses early in life, renunciations in previous lives (?)
Ordeal of suffering and purgation, desolation	Intense pain, limited activities, embarrassment, persecution, assault by demons
Renunciation of personality attachments	Indifference to the “things of this world,” dedication to service regardless of personal cost, membership of ascetic religious orders
Submission to higher will, performing “some definite, active undertaking which embodies that aspect of the will of God,”	Joyous acceptance of suffering, readiness to take on additional suffering, submission to the will of God, lives of selfless service despite the challenges of stigmata
Liberation from the normal constraints of physical existence, “slip[ping] into new realms of consciousness”	Inedia, voluntary insomnia, remote viewing, experiencing events in the past, healing and counseling gifts

This conclusion could meet with resistance among esotericists. The fourth initiation customarily is viewed as the achievement of a lifetime of selfless service that ends with heroism in the face of grave suffering and death. Critics may complain that stigmatics’ suffering cannot be equated in value to that of other fourth-degree initiands: that it is in some way self-serving. Some embrace a “ministry of

suffering.” Whatever we might think of such a ministry, clearly it is undertaken in a spirit of selflessness and compassion rather than masochism or self-hatred. In any event we do not know what larger effects stigmatics’ suffering may have. The profile stigmatics may have gained permission to take on racial, national or group karma, as Christ did 2,000 years ago. We understand that such permission, though

rare, may be given to highly evolved individuals. Heroism is not necessarily demonstrated exoterically.

Another potential stumbling block for esotericists is the notion that individuals whose world-view is molded by Christian teachings and by the path of mysticism could attain the fourth initiation. We might be tempted to think that the higher initiations are restricted to persons with occult training, speaking the language of esoteric philosophy—perhaps even restricted to students of a particular esoteric teacher. A moment's reflection should warn us away from assuming that we alone have earned recognition by the Planetary Hierarchy.

Another issue we need to address is the precise role the bodily lesions may play in the fourth initiation. Presumably their purpose is more than simply to create pain, since that purpose could be achieved by other means. Their more specific role would seem to be explained by the significance western Christianity attaches to Jesus' passion and death. Even though most Christians may be unaware on an intellectual level of the nature of the fourth initiation, Jesus is seen as the model of suffering and renunciation. When Christians come to a time when suffering and renunciation are inevitable they instinctively identify with him. What better role model could a Christian initiate select than the one we now call the Master Jesus?

Sacrifice and suffering extend down to the physical plane. As Rudolf Steiner pointed out: "We actually feel as if thorns were pressing into our head; we feel all the pain and suffering of the Crucifixion." And as the sense of identification is driven deeply into the individual's nature, "then the stigmata, the marks of the bleeding wounds of Christ Jesus, may appear." In other words, the stigmata form the outer manifestation of the inner transformation taking place.

It would seem that the phenomenon of stigmatism overlaps—to a significant degree but not completely—with the Great Renunciation. Not all stigmatics are approaching the fourth initiation, and not all fourth-degree initiates manifest the stigmata. It is the area of overlap that interests us. Conditions exist therein for certain

individuals to experience a kind of reenactment, or re-presentation, of Jesus' passion. Ray type and previous lives spent as a Christian mystic may be factors influencing the choice of such a path. The path of stigmatism may well be suited to individuals whose souls or personalities are on the Sixth Ray or—to recall Alice Bailey's comment—the Fourth Ray.

It was proposed earlier that appearance of the stigmata, acquisition of exceptional gifts, and expansion of consciousness would be foreseen ahead of the lifetime in which they occur. By the time of the third initiation the human soul is well developed and operates in collaboration with its mentor, the Solar Angel.¹⁰⁵ The Angel's responsibilities have long included planning the entity's incarnations to reflect individual karma and provide opportunities for spiritual growth. The Angel would doubtless be involved in the decision to embark on a lifetime in which stigmatism plays so large a role. Participation in that decision, ahead of the fourth initiation, takes on special poignancy because of the Solar Angel's imminent departure.

Concluding Remarks

This article has examined stigmatism to assess its authenticity, spiritual significance, and relevance to the initiatory path. To that end, it has examined the lives of six notable stigmatics to gain an understanding of their background, experiences and accomplishments. Stigmatics come from the larger population of mystics, and some, like Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, and Padre Pio, are counted among the foremost saints of western Christianity.

Many individuals, throughout the last eight centuries and living today, have borne lesions on their bodies resembling the wounds suffered by Jesus during his trial and execution. Some of them have experienced less visible but potentially more important changes to their etheric, emotional and mental vehicles. Not every stigmatic experiences the whole inventory of accompanying phenomena. Yet combinations occur with sufficient frequency to suggest that they form a coherent and interrelated set. This article has focused on individuals

who exhibit both visible wounds and some combination of the less visible phenomena.

The combination of physical and nonphysical phenomena, or what might be considered the “exoteric and esoteric” aspects of stigmatism, dramatically change stigmatics’ lives. The individuals’ lower vehicles are beginning to function very differently from those of other people. Such individuals are undergoing a transformation to a new state of consciousness, in which they no longer need to eat or sleep, in which they can live without harming sentient life of any kind, in which indeed they tread lightly on the Earth.

The visible lesions seem to be the end-product of a process that begins with mental activity and then descends, via the emotional and etheric vehicles, to the dense physical body. Precisely how this occurs is not yet understood either by the health sciences or by esoteric psychology, though strong emotion no doubt plays a role. Medical, psychiatric or psychological theories may be able to explain the physical stigmata, but they cannot explain the exceptional abilities, the changes in the lower vehicles, or the elevation in consciousness. They cannot explain the transformation in stigmatics’ lives or their dedication to service. While no one should underestimate the challenges posed by the stigmata and the associated pain, one could argue that the wounds may serve primarily as an outward sign of the inner transformation taking place.

Self-denial, long suffering, elevated consciousness, commitment to high ideals, and exemplary lives of service leave little doubt that some stigmatics are making progress on the initiatory path. At the very least they are setting aside negative karma and making the “many lesser renunciations” in preparation for the fourth initiation in a future life. The important question is whether some stigmatics can attain the fourth initiation in their current lifetime. No assertions are made about the possible initiatory status of the six stigmatics studied, or any others mentioned in this article; it is not our place to do so. But hypothetical individuals who fit the group profile *representative* of the six stigmatics appear to meet the standards of the fourth initiation, as discussed in the

esoteric literature. Stigmatics’ suffering may be no less “heroic” than the suffering of fourth-degree initiands who undergo torture and violent death; it may have beneficial effects extending far beyond themselves.

The possibility that some stigmatics could attain the fourth initiation is highly significant for both Christian spirituality and esotericism. It would indicate that, far from being antithetical to the initiatory path, Christian beliefs and practices can support and nurture progress even to the higher initiations.

Stigmatism would seem to resonate more with the Sixth Ray and with the Piscean Age than with the incoming Seventh Ray and Aquarian Age. What role it will play in the future is an open question, but Sixth Ray personalities and souls are found in all ages, and the continued incidence of stigmatism, inside and outside traditional Christianity, suggests that it will remain relevant for some time to come. Twenty living stigmatics is a small, and declining, fraction of the world’s population, and the subset who fit the profile we have developed is smaller still. But if only a few stigmatics in each age reach the fourth initiation, their achievement could hardly be dismissed as insignificant.

Stigmatism is not a pleasant topic to discuss; nor, for that matter, is Jesus’ passion or any other plausible scenario of the fourth initiation. As soon as we move beyond the generalizations of Christian or esoteric teachings we encounter the horrific suffering of real people. While we, like the stigmatics we have studied, strive always to maintain a joyous attitude, we must not forget that the Great Renunciation lies ahead for all who aspire to higher consciousness. The examination of this one scenario can be a “lesser renunciation,” consciously undertaken as we move forward on the path.

¹ Source: “Stigmata,” *Encyclopedia Theosophical Glossary* (Theosophical University Press, 1999.) <http://www.theosociety.org/passadena/et-gloss/sr-sum.htm>. Accessed April 7, 2012.

² Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology* (1980; reprint; London: Continuum, 2006), 421.

³ *Galatians* 6:17. All scriptural citations in this article are from the King James Bible.

⁴ Ted Harrison, *Stigmata: a Medieval Phenomenon in a Modern Age* (New York: St Martin's, 1994), 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁶ For the record, the present author is not a Roman Catholic.

⁷ Harrison, *Stigmata*, 81-99. Also C. Bernard Ruffin, *Padre Pio: the True Story* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1991), 158-160.

⁸ In esoteric teachings the "three worlds" are the physical, emotional, and lower mental planes

⁹ Bonaventure, "De Stigmatibus Sacris," *Legenda Minor* (trans: Fr. Quaracchi), 1941, 202-203. http://www.franciscanfriarstor.com/archive/stfrancis/stf_stigmata_of_st_francis.htm. Accessed March 15, 2012.

¹⁰ Clemens Brentano, "Life of Anne Catherine Emmerich," Introduction to *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, trans, anon. (Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, 1983), 19.

¹¹ Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Life of Jesus Christ and Biblical Revelations*, trans, "an American nun" (Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, 2011), vol. 1, 154-15

¹² Brentano, "Life of Anne Catherine Emmerich," xv.

¹³ Adalbert A. Vogl, *Therese Neumann: Mystic and Stigmatist* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1987), 1-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11, 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59-61

¹⁷ Allegedly Neumann could tell the difference between an unconsecrated host, which she could not swallow, from the consecrated host. The ability to distinguish between sacred and other objects is known as *hierognosis*.

¹⁸ Vogl, *Therese Neumann*, 25-26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁰ Paramahansa Yogananda, *Autobiography of the Yogi* (1946; reprint; New York: Philosophical Library, 2005), 351-359. From the vantagepoint of higher consciousness Yogananda was able to observe the content of some of Therese's ecstatic visions.

²¹ Ruffin, *Padre Pio*, 29-42.

²² *Ibid.*, 60. As punishment for minor offenses Pio and the other novices were forced to beat themselves with chains until blood ran onto the floor.

²³ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁴ Vittorio Messori, "I Am a Mystery to Myself," Preface to *Padre Pio: Under Investigation: The*

Secret Vatican Files, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011, xiii.

²⁵ Ruffin, *Padre Pio*, 155.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁸ The noises reportedly were loud enough to annoy neighbors.

²⁹ Pope John XXIII allegedly was among the skeptics.

³⁰ The present author grew up nearby.

³¹ Dorothy Kerin, *Fulfilling* (Tauton, UK: Wessex Press, 1952), x. See also Dorothy M. Arnold, *Dorothy Kerin: Called by Christ to Heal* (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1965), 59-60.

³² Arnold, *Dorothy Kerin*, 31-32

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Johanna Ernest, *Dorothy Kerin 1889-1963: Her Ministry of Healing*, 1987. http://www.ny-arrow.demon.co.uk/Johanna_folder/D_Kerin.-html. Accessed March 8, 2012.

³⁵ "Nursing homes" of the time served people of all ages who, for any of several reasons, were not admitted to hospitals. They employed licensed nurses, and physicians were on call.

³⁶ Arnold, *Dorothy Kerin*, 33.

³⁷ Judith von Halle, *And If He Had Not Been Raised*, trans, B. Stevens (Forest Row, UK: Temple Lodge, 2007), 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁹ Judith von Halle, *Secrets of the Stations of the Cross and the Grail Blood*, trans, M. Barton (Forest Row, UK: Temple Lodge, 2007), 117. In the traditional devotion of the Stations of the Cross Jesus falls three times.

⁴⁰ Peter Tradowsky, *The Stigmata*, trans, M. Barton (Forest Row, UK: Temple Lodge, 2010.)

⁴¹ Rudolf Steiner's works are available from SteinerBooks, Inc., Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

⁴² Vogl, *Therese Neumann*, 13.

⁴³ Harrison, *Stigmata*, 87-90. Robinson's case was reported in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* of 1974.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁵ Vogl, *Therese Neumann*, 59-60.

⁴⁶ Emmerich, *The Life of Jesus Christ and Biblical Revelations*, vol. 1, 1-116.

⁴⁷ Vogl, *Therese Neumann*, 48-51.

⁴⁸ John F. Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2004), 100.

⁴⁹ See for example, Jennifer S. Lerner & Dacher Keltner, "Beyond Valence: Toward a Model of Emotion-Specific Influences on Judgement and Choice," *Cognition and Emotion* (vol. 14, no. 4, 2000), 473-493.

- ⁵⁰ John F. Nash, "Prayer and Meditation in Christian Mysticism," *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Fall 2011), 17-41.
- ⁵¹ Von Halle, *Secrets of the Stations of the Cross and the Grail Blood*, 5.
- ⁵² Nash, "Prayer and Meditation in Christian Mysticism."
- ⁵³ Dorothy Kerin, *Fulfilling* (Tauton, UK: Wessex Press, 1952), viii.
- ⁵⁴ Arnold, *Dorothy Kerin*, 96.
- ⁵⁵ Stevens Heckscher, "Dorothy Kerin: Sign and Significance," *Journal of Christian Healing* (vol. 23. no. 2, Fall/Winter 2007), 14-31.
- ⁵⁶ Kerin, *Fulfilling*, 39.
- ⁵⁷ People whose souls took over another's adult body are referred to in the popular literature as "walk-ins."
- ⁵⁸ For a comprehensive explorations of Steiner's work in that field see his *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, trans. M. Miller (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2006.)
- ⁵⁹ Johannes Wilbert, Occasional Papers of the Museum of Cultural History, University of California at Los Angeles (no. 3, 1975), 5-6
- ⁶⁰ See for example Ernest E. Wood, *Is This Theosophy?* (London: Rider, 1936), 183ff.
- ⁶¹ Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, numerous references.
- ⁶² Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, 432.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 433.
- ⁶⁴ Source: *Catholic Encyclopedia*. <http://www.-newadvent.org/cathen/05406b.htm>. Accessed April 4, 2012.
- ⁶⁵ Vogl, *Therese Neumann*, 80-87.
- ⁶⁶ Copies of the depositions are included in Arnold, *Dorothy Kerin*, 32-38.
- ⁶⁷ Steiner predicted that two members of his early group would reincarnate before the end of the 20th century, but von Halle stated categorically that she was not one of them. See Piero Cammerinesi, "Preconception and Free Thought: Reflections on Judith von Halle," July 2011. <http://www.philosophyoffreedom.com/node/5518>. Accessed May 29, 2012.
- ⁶⁸ Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, 426-441.
- ⁶⁹ Edward F. Hartung, "Saint Francis and Medieval Medicine," *Annals of Medical History* (n.s., 1935), 85-91. See also "St. Francis' Stigmata," *Time Magazine* (March 11, 1935).
- ⁷⁰ See for example O. D. Ratnoff, "The Psycho-genic Purpuras: a Review of Autoerythrocyte Sensitization, Autosensitization to DNA, 'Hysterical' and Factitious Bleeding, and the Religious Stigmata," *Seminars in Hematology* (vol. 17, no. 3, 1980), 192.
- ⁷¹ Source: Institute of Cognitive Science. <http://www.biocognitive.com/biocognitive/>. Accessed June 2, 2012.
- ⁷² Sinead O'Neill, "Exploring the Truth behind 'Holy Wounds' of Stigmata." <http://www.-biocognitive.com/images/pdf/DailyIreland-stigmata.pdf>. Accessed June 2, 2012.
- ⁷³ Carol Roach, "The Religious and Psychological Implications of Stigmata: Conclusion," 2011. <http://www.examiner.com/article/the-religious-and-psychological-implications-of-stigmata-conclusion>. Accessed June 2, 2012. One wonders how Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, and other stigmatics would react to the news that their condition only affects Roman Catholics!
- ⁷⁴ Loyola, a Basque nobleman and soldier, founded the Society of Jesus, popularly known as the Jesuits, as a religious order dedicated to missionary work and teaching. They became the "foot soldiers" of the Counter-Reformation.
- ⁷⁵ Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (New York: J. W. Bouton, 1877), vol.1, 398.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.2, 633.
- ⁷⁷ Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1888), vol. 2, 56.
- ⁷⁸ Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Other Side of Death: Scientifically Examined and Carefully Described* part 2 (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1903), 611.
- ⁷⁹ Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Monad and Other Essays Upon the Higher Consciousness* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1920), 34. Leadbeater's belief concerning Jesus' death is detailed in the posthumously published *Christian Gnosis*, revised edition, Wheaton, IL: Quest, 2011. 127-132.
- ⁸⁰ Harrison, *Stigmata*, 80-87.
- ⁸¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II* (New York: Lucis, 1955), 759, 398.
- ⁸² The spiritual triad, consisting of *atma*, *buddhi* and *manas*, is the threefold vehicle of the monad, the divine spark within us. The antahkarana is the "bridge" in mind-stuff providing continuity of consciousness between the lower and higher mind.
- ⁸³ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I* (New York: Lucis, 1944), 312.
- ⁸⁴ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, 6.
- ⁸⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (New York: Lucis, 1922), 19,
- ⁸⁶ Anna B. Kingsford, *The Perfect Way: or the Finding of Christ*, reprint: 1881; (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), 111.
- ⁸⁷ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 89.

⁸⁸ Luke 22:42.

⁸⁹ Sandra Hodson (ed.), *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition* (Manila, Philippines: Theosophical Publ. House, 1992), 258.

⁹⁰ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis, 1951), 392.

⁹¹ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 117.

⁹² Mark 15:38. See also *Matthew 27:51*; *Luke 23:45*.

⁹³ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (New York: Lucis, 1953), 406.

⁹⁴ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 137. For an expanded discussion of the solar angel and its responsibilities see Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny*, 177-206.

⁹⁵ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 759. We do not know when Djwhal Khul, for whom Bailey wrote, attained the fourth initiation, but he attained mastership in the late 19th century.

⁹⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis, 1960), 701.

⁹⁷ Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path*, 225.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁹⁹ G. de Purucker, *The Initiatory Cycle*. <http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/path/oc-gdep.htm>. Accessed June 1, 2012. Less extensive remarks can be found in Purucker's *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* (Theosophical University Press, 1979), 323.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Rudolf Steiner, lecture October 14, 1911. Included in *From Jesus to Christ* (Forest Row, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1991), 165.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 168. Emphasis added.

¹⁰³ See for example *Mark 1:12-13*.

¹⁰⁴ The apostle Peter comes to mind in that regard.

¹⁰⁵ See for example Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny*, 252-253.