

gists know that Genesis gives no certain data. Even the cautious and conservative Abbé Vigouroux, in his *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, sets down its chronology thus:

Creation	?
Deluge	?
Abraham leaves Ur	2138 B.C.

So there may be gaps in the patriarchal record long enough to allow for physical degeneration, as well as for the moral corruption of which we read. Moreover, Archbishop Sheehan¹ significantly reminds us that, whilst we are bound to believe that the present human race are all descended from Adam and Eve, the Church has never condemned the opinion that a race of men lived on the earth, but became extinct before the creation of Adam. The Catholic apologist, as we have often pointed out, should be at great pains to ascertain the exact limits of revelation in regard to human origins and primitive history, for it is in that direction that the rationalist finds it easiest to advance to the attack. There is room for a detailed and popular "harmony" between the Book of Nature and the Bible which only those well acquainted with both should attempt. Such a reconciliation would at once satisfy the intellectual demands of the Catholic and provide him with a needed defence of the Faith. For the rationalist is most effectually discomfited when he finds that there are no real grounds of conflict between Church teaching and the assured results of scientific research.

THE EDITOR.

NOTE. It must not be implied from the foregoing that there is any real dearth of Catholic literature on subjects involving the reconciliation of revelation and science, but only that it is not available enough either for the young in their formative years or for the Catholic "man (or woman) in the street." The information that is contained in such books as that under review, Father Husslein's "Evolution and Social Progress," Professor Windle's "The Church and Science," "Moses and the Law," edited by Father Lattey, Father Gerard's "Old Riddle" and "Essays in Un-Natural History," Canon de Dorlodot's "Darwinism," Dr. P. L. Mills's "Creation versus Evolution," and a host of articles in the great Catholic Encyclopedia, needs digesting and simplifying for youthful consumption, and, for popular use, should be presented in a carefully thought-out series of C.T.S. pamphlets. False and misleading doctrines are already propagated in attractive form: truth should be elaborated with at least equal care.

¹ *Apologetics and Christian Doctrine*, Part II., p. 56.

SOME PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF MYSTICISM

INCENDIUM AMORIS.

THAT emotional ardours of a more intense type are often attended by an actual rise of bodily temperature may be regarded as a fact of everyday experience. There is nothing therefore particularly astonishing in the statements which we so often encounter in the lives of the great mystics, to the effect that when some transport of love took possession of their souls their countenances became inflamed, that they could hardly endure the clothing which seemed to stifle them, and that in the coldest of winter weather they threw open doors and windows, panting for air and half unconsciously seeking the same kind of relief as our Lord has indicated in His parable of Dives and Lazarus. Let us begin by taking a few well-known examples. In Father Goldie's *Story of St. Stanislaus Kostka* we read:

St. Francis de Sales in his book on the Love of God, says, "Stanislaus was so violently assailed by the love of Our Saviour as often to faint and to suffer spasms in consequence, and he was obliged to apply cloths dipped in cold water to his breast in order to temper the violence of the love he felt." One day, he was found by his Superior walking alone at night time in the little garden which the Novitiate then possessed, when a very bitter cold wind was blowing, and on being asked by the Father Rector what he was doing there, he replied with all simplicity and straightforwardness, "I am burning, I am burning," as he felt his heart still on fire with the love of God, although his prayer was over. Stephen Augusti bore witness to the fact that the Socius to the Master of Novices, Father Lelius Sanguigni, had often to bathe his chest to temper the scorching heat.¹

Similarly in the case of St. Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi, who was born in 1566, two years before St. Stanislaus died, we are told how her transports of love transformed her outward appearance, "for her face," says her biographer and confessor, Father Cepari, "losing in a moment the paleness which had been produced by her penances and austere re-

¹ *The Story of St. Stanislaus Kostka*, pp. 136--137 (ed. 1893). This is based upon the details furnished in the *Analecta Bollandiana*, c. xiii., pp. 143-5.

ligious life, became glowing, beaming and full; her eyes shone and sparkled like stars, and she cried out, saying, 'O Love! O God of Love!' etc." But, more in particular, the same biographer, whose statements are in every way confirmed by the depositions of the witnesses who gave evidence in the process of beatification, declares that:

Sometimes, overpowered by the excess and abundance of this love, she said, "I can no longer bear so much love, retain it in Thyself;" and through the great and consuming flame of this Divine Love which she felt, she could find no rest, but tore her clothes, went into the garden and tore up the plants, or whatever came to hand. In the midst of winter she could not bear woollen garments, through that fire of love which burned in her breast, but cut and loosened her habit.

Or again:

Feeling so great a flame in her face, she fanned herself with her veil, then ran to the well and drank a quantity of fresh water, bathed her face and arms, poured it into her bosom, and so great was the flame which burned in her breast that even externally she seemed to consume.¹

Not less remarkable was the devotional ardour of St. Philip Neri, the contemporary of both the saints last named.

Philip [says Father Bacci] felt such a heat in the region of the heart, that it sometimes extended over his whole body, and for all his age, thinness and spare diet, in the coldest days of winter it was necessary, even in the midst of the night, to open the windows, to cool the bed, to fan him while in bed, and in various ways to moderate the great heat. Sometimes it quite burned his throat, and in all his medicines something cooling was generally mixed to relieve him. Cardinal Crescenzi, one of his spiritual children, said that sometimes when he touched his hand, it burned as if the saint was suffering from a raging fever. . . . Even in winter he almost always had his clothes open from the girdle upwards, and sometimes when they told him to fasten them lest he should do himself some injury, he used to say he really could not because of the excessive heat he felt. One day, at Rome, when a great quantity of snow had fallen, he was walking in the streets with his cassock unbuttoned; and when some of his penitents, who were with him were hardly able to endure the cold, he laughed at them and said it was a shame for young men to feel cold when old men did not.

¹ Oratorian Translation, pp. 235—237.

Elsewhere the biographer records how—

Sometimes in saying office, or after Mass, or in any other spiritual action, sparks, as it were of fire, were seen to dart from his eyes and from his face. This inward fire was such that it sometimes made him swoon, forcing him to throw himself on his bed, where he is said to have lain occasionally a whole day without any other sickness than that of divine love. On one occasion it so burned his throat that he was ill for several days.¹

There can be little doubt that the discovery which was made in the autopsy performed after St. Philip's death must be closely connected with the same intense fervour of divine love. During more than fifty years of his long life he had suffered from a strange and inexplicable palpitation of the heart, which was noticed, not only by himself, but by many of his companions and friends whom in the tenderness of his affection for their souls he often pressed to his bosom. The surgeons, when they opened his body, found a swelling under his left breast, which proved to be due to the fact that two of his ribs were broken and thrust outwards. In view of the positive testimony of the surgeons, there can be no dispute that the injury was there and had been there for many years. His biographers seem therefore fully justified in tracing it to that strange incident of the coming to him of the Holy Ghost in 1544 under the guise of a globe of fire. "Thereupon," we are told, "he was suddenly surprised by such an ardour of love that, unable to bear it, he threw himself down upon the ground, and, like one trying to cool himself, bared his breast, to temper in some measure the flame which he felt." Certain it is in any case that from that time forth his body was liable in moments of deep emotional feeling to tremble convulsively with intense palpitations, while he became conscious of the presence of a swelling on the left breast, the size of a man's fist. This he retained for all the rest of his life.² It is curious that a displacement of the ribs, similar in cause and character, but apparently less in degree, is recorded in the case of St. Paul of the Cross, the founder of the Passionists, who lived two centuries later. An even more striking modern example is

¹ Bacci, *Life of St. Philip Neri*, edited by Father Antrobus (1902), Vol. I., pp. 26, 141.

² The fullest account of the autopsy will be found in the *Life* by Father Gallonio, St. Philip's intimate friend and disciple. See AA. SS. May, vi., 510. Capecciatro (Eng. Trans. II., 463) and the Bollandists do not quite agree as to the names of the surgeons. But the medical testimony given on oath seems to have been submitted in the process of Beatification. Several of the Oratorian Fathers were also present at the autopsy.

that of Gemma Galgani (*Life*, pp. 259, 352, 423), who died at Lucca in 1903.

Nevertheless, such physical manifestations as these, however wonderful in themselves, can hardly be regarded as witnessing to any abnormal increase of the temperature of the body. So long as we have no evidence of a more objective kind than the mystic's longing for fresh air or cool water, or his statement that he is suffering from a sensation of suffocation and burning heat, there obviously is nothing which takes us beyond the range of the symptoms which may be observed in any hospital fever-ward. None the less, the claim is made in many hagiographical writings that phenomena do occasionally occur for which no parallel can be found in the pathological records known to medical science. I have heard it stated, for example, that in the case of Padre Pio da Pietrelcina, the young Capuchin priest of Foggia, who is marked with the stigmata, the clinical thermometer used by his doctor in visiting him professionally has on more than one occasion been unable to register the high temperature of the patient, and has consequently been broken by the unprecedented expansion of the mercury within. The same allegation has also been made to me, by persons who seemed to be well informed, in connection with another modern mystic. But in neither case have I authority which I could quote in print. In earlier ages, of course, there were no clinical thermometers, and the only proofs which can be offered in evidence are of a much ruder description. Still, some such tests are recorded in hagiographical literature, and the authenticity of these alleged examples affords interesting matter for discussion.

Probably the best-known case is that of St. Catherine of Genoa, which, thanks in large measure to the very learned and painstaking study of Baron Friedrich von Hügel, has been brought to the notice of many English readers for whom the ordinary Saint's Life offers little attraction. St. Catherine was a mystic of the seraphic type, and perhaps nothing more beautiful has ever been printed about the love of God than is to be found in the utterances and writings attributed to this noble Genoese matron. Assuming for the moment the authenticity of the whole content of the *Vita e Dottrina di Santa Caterina da Genova*, which was first published in 1551, we find that the book abounds in references to the extraordinary physical state into which

Catherine was frequently thrown by the intensity of her consuming love. Quite at the beginning, and in reference to her "great fasts," which lasted from 1476 to 1499, it is stated that, for twenty-three lents and as many advents, the Saint took no solid food at all, but occasionally drank a glassful of a beverage compounded of water, vinegar and pounded salt.

When she drank this mixture it seemed as if it were thrown upon a red-hot flag-stone and that it was at once dried up in the great fire which was burning within her. An astounding and unheard of thing! For no digestion, however healthy, could bear a drink of this kind fasting, but she declared that the interior sweetness she experienced was so great that even this unpalatable beverage gave refreshment to her body.¹

I omit chance references which seem to point to some similar state of suffering which recurred at intervals during the intervening years. What is certain is that in her last sickness, which continued from January to September, 1510, she was over and over again the victim of sensations of intense burning. For example:

On one day she was stabbed with a still sharper arrow of the divine love. . . . The wound (*ferita*) was so poignant that she lost speech and sight, and abode in this manner some three hours. . . . She made signs with her hands of feeling as if it were red-hot pincers attacking her heart and other interior parts.

Later on there was a day when she suffered such an intensity of burning that it was impossible to keep her in bed. She seemed like a creature placed in a great flame of fire, so much so that human eyes could not endure the spectacle of such a martyrdom. This anguish lasted a whole day and night and it was impossible to touch her skin because of the acute pain which she felt from any such touch.²

But this was by no means all. We are told a little later of another attack (*assalto*)—

This was so violent that her whole frame seemed to be in a tremble, especially her right shoulder (which appeared as though severed from her body, and similarly one rib seemed to be forced out of its place with so much pain, anguish and racking of muscles and bones, that it was a terrible thing to

¹ *Vita e Dottrina*, Genova, 1847, pp. 10—11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 152. No one who recalls the details given in one of my Stigmatization articles regarding Domenica Lazzari (see *THE MONTH*, Oct. 1919, pp. 294—295) can fail to note the many points of resemblance between her case and that of St. Catherine.

look upon, and it seemed impossible that a human body could endure it).¹

The words which I have enclosed in brackets are regarded by Baron von Hügel as not forming part of the primitive text of the *Vita*, in spite of the fact—so at least I infer from him—that they are found in the manuscripts as well as in the first printed edition of 1551. He asserts, in regard both of the alleged injury to the shoulder and the displaced rib, that these details “have precisely the same ‘colour,’ and no doubt proceed from the same contributor, as the longer passage relative to her supposed stigmatization, absent from all the MSS., but given in the printed *Vita* on the authority of Argentina.”² It requires, I think, a very robust sceptic to reject nowadays the possibility of the phenomena of stigmatization, and some injury to the shoulder is of frequent occurrence in the case of stigmatized persons. To take but a single example, the *post mortem* examination of the body of St. Veronica Giuliani attested the existence of “a very considerable curvature of the right shoulder, which bent the very bone just as the weight of a heavy cross might have done.” The surgeon, Gentili, who performed the autopsy, stated in his sworn deposition that “if this curvature had occurred by natural means it would have prevented her moving her arm, but I have myself frequently seen Sister Veronica during her last illness move her right arm without the least difficulty.”³ But whatever we may think of the inference thus drawn, there can be no reasonable doubt of the fact that some extraordinary deflection of St. Veronica’s right shoulder was observable, together with the marks of the five wounds, when her body was examined on July 10, 1727, thirty-four hours after her death. Now the *Vita e Dottrina*, as we have it, was actually printed in 1551, so that such precedents as St. Philip Neri’s displaced ribs, and St. Veronica Giuliani’s flexed clavicle could not possibly have been known to the compilers. Consequently it seems, in my judgment, much saner to suppose that these additional details, if additions they were, are derived from Argentina’s faithful memory of what her eyes

¹ *Vita e Dottrina*, p. 154. *Una costa levata dall’altre* are the words of the original.

² *The Mystical Element of Religion*, I., 197, note.

³ Salvatori, *Life of St. Veronica Giuliani* (Eng. Trans.), p. 163. This biography is based upon the evidence given in the process of Beatification, and its statements of fact may be regarded as trustworthy.

actually saw in St. Catherine's last illness, than to attribute them to the fervid imaginations of irresponsible panegyrists.

But the most curious and interesting record of the internal conflagration by which the last remnants of Catherine's vitality were consumed has still to be noticed. On August 28th, when the tragedy of suffering began to near its end, she was again all on fire. She cried aloud that "all the water which the world contains could not give me the least refreshment." Later her tongue and lips became so parched with the burning heat within that she could not move them or speak. At such times, if anyone touched a hair of her head, or even the edge of the bed, or the bedclothes, she would scream as if she had been stabbed. Her confessor sometimes hesitated to bring her Communion in this state, for she could swallow nothing, neither food or drink, "but, with a joyous face, she would make him a sign that she was not afraid, and then, when she had received, she remained with her countenance glowing and rosy, like that of a Seraph."¹

An explanation of all this suffering was afterwards given by her devoted handmaid, Argentina, who declared that Catherine had predicted it before it came about, and had confided to her that before her death she was destined to endure the sufferings of our Lord's Passion, together with the anguish of the five wounds (the Stigmata), at least interiorly, on account of the great love she bore to her Saviour and her desire to resemble Him in all things.²

None the less, it is added that Catherine never allowed a word to escape her in public which could throw light upon the cause of these torments and betray their entirely supernatural character.³ When Argentina also bears witness that her mistress, throwing out her arms in the form of a cross, presented the counterpart of her crucified Saviour, one of her arms being stretched more than five inches beyond its natural length,⁴ I must confess that this detail, instead of discrediting her statement, as Baron von Hügel declares it to do, seems to me to supply a notable confirmation of the general trustworthiness of our witness. Certain it is, in any

¹ *Vita e Dottrina*, p. 166.

² *Ibid.* pp. 167—168.

³ *Ibid.* p. 168. "Giammai disse pure una parola donde si prodecessero tante pene."

⁴ *Ibid.* "Ebbe (Caterina) grandissima pena ad un braccio, di tal sorte che si allungò più di mezzo palmo del solito."

case, that when the Blessed Stefana Quinzani in 1497 represented in ecstasy the incidents of the Passion of our Lord, her left arm in the crucifixion scene was "stretched considerably beyond its natural length" (*assai sopra la lunghezza sua naturale*¹). If Argentina was romancing, it is extraordinary that she should have embellished her story with just those striking features for which parallels, attested by the best of evidence, can be found in the case of other mystics. No doubt it may be said that Argentina might easily have read or heard an account of Blessed Stefana Quinzani's ecstasies which took place in 1497. This is true, but it is much more likely that the story would have been known to an educated lady like her mistress, St. Catherine, and in that case it is quite conceivable that the impression made upon Catherine's mind may have contributed to produce the same physical phenomenon in her own mystical transports.

During the whole of the Saint's last illness, and especially in its closing phases, these long-protracted seizures, characterized by a sensation of intense burning (*fuoco*), are a constantly recurring feature. In particular, the printed *Vita* records two special occasions when material proof was given of the intensity of the heat developed. Let me copy the first in Baron von Hügel's translation:

In proof that this holy woman bore the stigmata interiorly, a large silver cup was ordered to be brought in, which had a very high standing saucer; the cup was full of cold water for refreshing her hands, in the palms of which, because of the great fire that burned within her, she felt intolerable pain. And on putting her hands into it, the water became so boiling that the cup and the very saucer were greatly heated.²

One is conscious of a certain temerity in differing from an authority who has devoted so much time and so much learning to the elucidation of his subject; moreover, I can make no claim to any expert knowledge of Italian. Nevertheless, I find it hard to accept the Baron's rendering of this passage, and still more his rejection of the whole incident as unhistorical. To begin with, the "large silver

¹ See a paper of mine in the *Proceedings of the S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXII., p. 196; and cf. the account I have given of the elongations of the Ven. Veronica Laparelli in *Journal S.P.R.*, Vol. XIX. (1919), pp. 51 seq. The phenomena in Blessed Stefana's case were attested by the signed and sealed declaration of twenty-one eye-witnesses.

² *The Mystical Element of Religion*, I., 452. The original Italian occurs in the *Vita e Dottrina* (ed. Genova, 1847), p. 167.

cup" (*gran tazza d'argento*) was surely a standing cup with a stem and a shallow bowl, more or less like an exaggerated champagne glass in form, though probably the stem was shorter in proportion. Cups and saucers were not known in Europe until long afterwards, and, in any case, there is no mention of a "saucer," but simply of the *piede della tazza*, the stem or pedestal of the cup. Anyone who leaves a silver spoon in a cup of hot tea is apt to discover with a start that silver is an excellent conductor of heat. It seems to me natural to suppose that Argentina made a similar discovery. She had carried the cup in by its pedestal full of the coolest water she could procure. After St. Catherine had bathed her hands Argentina came to remove it and the stem burned her when she touched it. Such an incident is likely to have impressed itself upon her memory, and the use of the word *bollente* (boiling) is only a very natural exaggeration. She was surprised to find that the stem had become unpleasantly hot.

Between the 13th of September and the 15th, on which last day she died, Catherine lost immense quantities of blood. The temperature of this discharge, we are told in the *Vita*, was such that (1) it heated the vessels in which it was caught; (2) it scalded her flesh wherever it touched it, so that the places had to be cooled with rose-water; (3) being on one occasion received in a silver cup, it heated the base of the cup and left a mark which could never be washed out.¹ Baron von Hügel comments that only the first of these observations is to be found in the manuscripts, and that "purely secondary, physical matters are thus, with a short-sighted good faith and admiration, eagerly utilized to naturalize and obscure a soaringly spiritual personality."² No doubt it is true that these physical matters are "purely secondary"; but after all, for our present inquiry, the question is, Is the statement accurate? If these things did happen they were worth recording, and while I agree that the evidence taken by itself is not conclusive, we cannot ignore the precisely similar declarations which have been made by eye-witnesses in the case of other mystics.

¹ *Vita e Dottrina*, p. 172.

² *The Mystical Element of Religion*, I., 214. Without disputing the possibility, and even the likelihood, of subsequent interpolations in such a work, I must confess myself frankly distrustful of all attempts to reconstruct the primitive text. Textual criticism is a very necessary science, but it offers many pitfalls to the pioneer who easily allows conjecture to crystallize into assurance.



Let us take for example the instance of the Venerable Serafina di Dio, a Carmelite nun of Capri, who died in 1699. Her life, which was written by the two Oratorian Fathers, Sguillante and Pagani, was published at Rome in 1748. They seem to have based it almost entirely upon the evidence furnished in the Process of Beatification. In this biography we read:

Her nuns say that they have often seen her—for example, when she was in prayer, or after Communion—with her face glowing like a flame and her eyes sparkling. It scorched them if they touched her, even in winter time and even when she was quite old, and they declared that they had repeatedly heard her say that she was consumed with a living fire and that her blood was boiling. Her throat, palate and lips became so parched that it was necessary to cool them with fresh water; but this expedient by no means sufficed to allay the burning she felt. . . .

The doctors, who did not understand the cause of her sufferings, applied many kinds of cooling remedies and frequently bled her; while our Saviour Himself, in order to give her some relief, especially when these blood-boilings (*li bollori del sangue*) lasted for two or three days, as was often the case at times when she entertained an intense desire to die a martyr, so disposed matters that she lost great quantities of blood through the nostrils or by the mouth. It was a matter of intense astonishment to all observers to see a body so emaciated as hers lose such a vast quantity of blood without being incapacitated for everyday duties.¹

Those who are familiar with the story of St. Catherine of Genoa will remember that, in her case too, her recoveries were as marvellous as the mysterious indispositions which repeatedly brought her to death's door. But the most striking phenomenon recorded in the Life of the Venerable Serafina is the statement made regarding her holy remains after she breathed her last:

For the space of twenty hours the body retained so great a heat, particularly in the region of the heart, that one could comfortably warm one's hand by holding it there, as many of the nuns discovered on making the experiment. Indeed the warmth was perceptible for thirty-three hours after death, though somewhat less in degree, in spite of the fact that the month was March and the weather chilly. The corpse did not completely lose its heat until it had been opened and the heart extracted.²

¹ Sguillante and Pagani, *Vita della Ven. Serafina di Dio*, Rome, 1748, p. 260.

² *Ibid.* p. 462.

One's first instinct is to conclude that the nuns and their doctor must have been mistaken in supposing that life was extinct, but there are a good many similar cases, and it is difficult to believe that mystics, after long and exhausting illnesses, were peculiarly exposed to the danger of being buried alive.

Take, for example, the case of the Dominican nun, Suor Maria Villani at Naples. She died on March 26, 1670, at the age of 86, and her *Life* was published four years afterwards, in a volume of more than 600 pages, by Father Francis Marchese, O.P. In his very first sentence the biographer informs us that his heroine was a furnace of love, and this is the note upon which he harps throughout the whole book. It is plain, also, from the letters and other writings of the Sister herself, that the idea that she was continually consumed by an almost insupportable flame of love dominated all her thoughts. The *Life* states that the physical effects of this interior conflagration were such as to compel her to drink as much as 36, and sometimes even 45, *libre* of water in a day. I do not exactly know the English equivalent of the Neapolitan measure of a *libra*, but 36 *libre* probably falls not much short of 28 pints or three gallons and a half. Moreover, we are told that the drinking of this was attended by a hissing sound like that of water falling on a sheet of red-hot iron.¹ It is impossible not to suspect a certain amount of exaggeration in all this, but on the other hand, there are definite physical facts connected with the case which cannot readily be explained away. Suor Maria believed that she had been wounded in the side and heart by a fiery spear of love, and there is good evidence that the wound was really there. At any rate, her biographer prints three formal depositions signed by three of her confessors, who had been permitted, at different times, to see, touch and even probe the external wound. These Fathers were well-known Dominicans, and one, Lonardo di Lettere, had a great reputation for sanctity, so that the cause of his Beatification was introduced after his death. The *Life* of Maria Villani appeared with the fullest ecclesiastical sanc-

¹ Marchese, *Vita della Serva di Dio, Suor Maria Villani* (Napoli, 1674), pp. 203—204. An exactly similar statement is made by Canon Martinon regarding his penitent the Venerable Agnes of Jesus, a French Dominican nun. He declares that he himself had been present when water was poured upon her breast to cool her in her transports of burning fervour, and that the water sizzled like water poured on to red-hot iron. Luest, *Vie de la V. Agnès de Jésus*, II., p. 134.

tion, and both the General of the Dominicans and the Cardinal Archbishop of Naples gave it their *imprimatur*. But perhaps the most remarkable statement which the book contains is the account of the opening of the body nine hours after death. The corpse of this woman of 86, which, when she breathed her last, had been dried up, emaciated and dark in hue, became fresh-coloured and supple like that of a living person. When the surgeon opened the breast, a quantity of bright fluid blood issued both from the incision made and from the heart. Some of this blood, the biographer assures us, had been preserved in two little flasks, and at the time of writing (1673) still remained liquid and incorrupt. But what most astonished the onlookers present at the autopsy was "the smoke (*sumo*) and heat which exhaled from the heart, that veritable furnace of divine love." The surgeon found the heat too trying to proceed. He was compelled to draw back for a while, but afterwards returning, "he put in his hand to extract the heart, but he found it so hot, that burning himself (*scottandosi*), he was compelled to take his hand out again several times before he succeeded in effecting his purpose." The biographer declares that a formal affidavit regarding these facts was made by the surgeons Domenico Trifone and Francesco Pinto.¹ With regard to the heart itself, an open wound was found in it of the very same form and shape as the dead nun had drawn with her own hand on a page of her tractate, *De tribus divinis flammis*. "This wound (in the heart)," the biographer goes on, "I have seen and touched and examined. The lips of the wound are hard and seared, just as happens when the cautery is used, to remind us, no doubt, that it was made with a spear of fire."²

There are other examples more or less similar to those of Serafino di Dio and Maria Villani, but I have no room to discuss them at any length. It must be sufficient to note that in the case of the Franciscan missionary, the Ven. Antonio Margil, an apostle who was often seen raised in the air in his ecstasies of love, it is stated that after death "his face which had been pale during lifetime became of a beautiful rosy hue, his eyes remained bright and his limbs flexible, while his flesh continued warm down to the moment when his

¹ *Vita di Maria Villani*, pp. 609—610. This statement must carry some weight when we remember that the book was published in Naples itself, and that less than four years had elapsed since the autopsy took place.

² *Ibid.* p. 610.

body was consigned to the tomb."¹ So, again, we are told of Blessed Andrew Ibernón, another holy Franciscan who was entirely penetrated with the seraphic spirit of the Poor Man of Assisi, "it was observed when they laid his body in the coffin (three days after death) that the flesh was still warm and soft, and all the sinews and muscles flexible, just as if he had only expired the moment before."² These two Lives last mentioned were written in each case by the Postulator of the Cause, who had all the sworn depositions before him.

Among other instances of phenomenal heat manifestations might be cited the case of the Venerable Rosa Maria Serio († 1725), Prioress of the Carmelite convent of Fasano, who for seven successive years had an extraordinary experience on Whit-Sunday. On the first occasion a ball of fire descended upon her visibly in the sight of all the nuns. When they undressed her they found her underlinen above the breast burned in the form of a heart. The same burning took place for six other years, but there was no visible ball of fire.³ Again in the Life of the Venerable Francesca dal Serrone († 1601), a Franciscan nun who, like Maria Villani, had a wound in the side, we read that the blood, which on certain occasions came from her side or was vomited by the mouth, was so hot that it cracked an earthenware vessel used to receive it, and had to be caught in a metal bowl.⁴ Similarly of St. Theresa's companion, the Carmelite Agnes of Jesus, as well as of two or three other candidates for beatification, we are told that in some of her illnesses, the nuns who nursed her could hardly touch her flesh on account of the burning heat.⁵ The evidence for these cases is inconclusive, but it is certainly not contemptible.

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¹ G. M. Gusmán, *Notizie della Vita etc del Ven. Fr. Antonio Margil* (Rome, 1836), p. 102. He died at Mexico in 1726 at the age of 69.

² V. Mondina, *Vita del Beato Andrea Ibernón* (Rome, 1791), p. 172. Blessed Andrew Ibernón was 68 years old when he died at Gandia in Spain in 1602.

³ G. Gentili, S.J., *Vita della Ven. Madre Rosa Maria Serio* (Venezia, 1741), Preface, p. vii., and pp. 34 and 74-75.

⁴ G. B. Cancellotti, S.J., *Vita della Ven. Francesca dal Serrone* (Rome, 1665), pp. 29-30, 134, and 154 seq.

⁵ Berthold-Ignace, *Vie de la Mère Anne de Jésus* (Malines, 1882), Vol. II., p. 493.