

Richard Wiseman is the UK's most popular psychologist, with books topping the bestseller charts, over 10 million views on his YouTube channel and more than 60,000 followers on Twitter. A former professional magician, he has spent the past 20 years investigating the psychology of the paranormal. His new book, *Paranormality*, tackles the psychology of seemingly supernatural phenomena.

'Take, for example, our ability to unconsciously see faces and figures in meaningless stimuli', Professor Wiseman says. 'This strange phenomena, known as pareidolia, is a fundamental quirk of the human perceptual system and fools us into seeing a face on Mars, the man in the Moon; Jesus in the Crystal Palace FC turf, Mother Teresa in a cinnamon bun, or, as shown here, a UFO in lenticular clouds' (for more examples, see tinyurl.com/5dbwfe).

If it all seems trivial, consider that someone paid \$28,000 for the Virgin Mary on a piece of toast! A similar phenomenon is at work when people claim to hear satanic messages in songs being played backwards, such as Led Zeppelin's 'Stairway to Heaven' (have a listen at tinyurl.com/48trcqm).

Wiseman is also the Professor of Public Understanding of Psychology at the University of Hertfordshire, and it is a role he takes very seriously. He will be speaking at the British Psychological Society's 'Psychology 4 All' event on 26 March, and he says: 'It is great to tell the public about the findings from academic

Why we see what isn't there

Richard Wiseman on Paranormality. Photo: Magrath/Folsom/Science Photo Library. Adapted from *The Psychologist*, published by the British Psychological Society.

research and help to make a difference in people's lives.' 'Psychology 4 All' is a one-day event to promote psychology and demonstrate its scientific basis and relevance. To book, see tinyurl.com/psych4all.

I WANT TO BELIEVE...

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Paranormality

Why we see
what isn't
there

Professor
Richard
Wiseman

FROM THE
AUTHOR OF
:59
SECONDS

...but the evidence is an illusion