

Critical Study of Medical Explorations of the Medjugorje Visionaries

Has the Virgin Mary, under the title of Our Lady, Queen of Peace been appearing in Medjugorje in the former Yugoslavia since 1981? Six young people have reported these visions and have been subjected to tests.

Remarkably, parapsychologists show no interest in the aparleged apparitions. People staring at a wall and saying they see a woman is nothing compared to somebody reporting a ghost that seems to affect machines and can move objects! When ghost hunters are not interested what can you say?

Independent research follows.

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In recent years several books have been published about the apparitions of Medjugorje, a village of Yugoslavia (Herzegovina), which in the last five years has become a place of pilgrimage attracting huge crowds. The following study will focus specifically on medical expertise published in the book: "Etudes médicales et scientifiques sur les apparitions de Medjugorje" [Medical and Scientific Studies On the Apparitions At Medjugorje] by Professor H. JOYEUX and Father R. LAURENTIN (published by O.E.I.L., 1985). Additional data from Italian source, have been added thanks to the kind cooperation of Professor Ch. TRABUCCHI. [...] Prof. TRABUCCHI wanted to present in detail a book published in Italy: "Dossier scientifico su Medjugorje" [Scientific Report on Medjugorje] written by L. Frigerio, G. Mattalia, and L. Bianchi (1986). [...]

Critical Reflections

1. We must first recognize the good point and the merit of the tests carried out: they are the first that have been implemented in ecstasy, during an apparition. Experts have overcome many obstacles, the last and most important being the opposition of the seers - which is understandable. The latter took refuge behind the authorisation of the Virgin, who has expressed her consent, and sometimes her denial: "It is not necessary." In that case, experts have complied.
2. Despite all efforts, as to their level, these tests remain superficial. The most important was the EEG: with 8 electrodes in contact with the scalp, to explore approximately 50 billion neurons working in the brain, we can - very roughly - compare this accuracy with that of a plane, flying over Paris at a height of 10,000 meters [more than 32,000 feet], wanting to take note of the activities of the city and of its inhabitants. One should know that the EEG provides valuable information in relation to global changes in brain activity (sleep, dreaming for ex.) or to perturbations concentrated in a "focus": brain tumor, softening, epilepsy etc. On the other hand, it does not provide any usable data on mental activity, emotional and affective states, neurotic disorders, psychoses. It is rarely used in psychiatry except in cases of suspected organic lesion.
3. Despite this, all the sophisticated techniques impress the simple-minded readers and may make them believe that, given the evidence of the normality of the seers, subjective visions are excluded and, at the same time, objective apparitions are scientifically proven. The very title of the book itself "Medical And Scientific Studies On the Apparitions At Medjugorje" tends to induce that belief.
4. What is really disconcerting is to see that the expertise is limited to those instrumental tests to which some superficial clinical observations are added. It presents itself as an example of neurobiological reductionism currently in vogue in the milieu of materialist neuroscience. Clearly, the problems raised by apparitions or visions relate mainly to psychology or psychopathology and require the assistance of a psychiatrist. The team thought they could do without that assistance, and gave no explanation for this: it is a serious fault. Some examinations carried out by Italian and Yugoslav psychiatrists are mentioned: they are superficial and, at most, consist of tests: they allow nothing but the description of the temperamental profile. We can say that there is a sort of short circuit between the neurobiological data and the spiritual approach to the phenomena.
5. Every psychiatric observation requires several interviews with the subject and possibly his parents, dedicated to attentively listening to information:
 - a) curriculum vitae, as detailed as possible, of the subject, since his early childhood, noting physical or mental diseases and injuries, investigating critical phases, school adjustment, relationships with peers, the entry into work etc;
 - b) family history, relationships between parents and between generations, any conflicts at all levels;

c) in this case, the religious evolution of each of the seers would have to be very important: their first approach to prayer, forms of family religiosity, peculiar devotions, religious education received, the way the Bible was presented to them etc., possible participation in pilgrimages;

d) details of the psychiatric state of everybody in the weeks and the days preceding the first apparition; genesis of the group of seers.

The careful observation of each seer during these interviews, his attitude, his emotional reactions and all information collected would have enabled the psychiatrist to achieve a fairly accurate knowledge of his personality, its evolution and psychological condition. Certainly it was a difficult undertaking, requiring an interpreter, but perhaps not impossible, and in any case, essential to an investigation that wants to draw conclusions.

6. Curiously, only one psychological personal datum is mentioned, not in the expertise but in the story of the first apparitions, reduced to a mere allusion. It concerns the first seer, Ivanka, 15 years old, who had lost her mother a few weeks before the first apparition (May 1981).

More can be said: she was the one who, in the second apparition, asked the Virgin the first question, a personal question, asking for news of her mother. Response of the Virgin: "Your mother is fine, she is with me."

It could be that the death of her mother has played, on a psychological level, an important role in the genesis of the first vision of Ivanka. But no one could give his opinion, of course, on this issue without more information. Everyone knows, in fact, that the loss of a mother, especially for a teenager, can be a profound and disturbing emotional stress.

In the case of Ivanka, precise information would be required about the disease (or possibly the accident) and the death of her mother, the personality of the latter, her role in the family, her religious life and her behavior, the reactions produced by her death etc.

The "elaboration of mourning" will, however, be the subject of a further development.

This example illustrates the vital importance of the psychological approach to the difficult problems of visions and apparitions. They will be presented in a general plan in the second part of the report.

Th. Kammerer
September 1986

CONCLUSION

There is no scientific evidence that Mary is appearing at Medjugorje. The fact that people with bad motives and proclivities were involved in showing she was appearing shows she was in fact was not. No God would send an apparition that had to depend on fraudsters to "verify" it. And there are too many problems. The believers have countless objections to deal with and even on this page we have met comparatively few. Something so hard to defend is plainly a fraud.

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Videos

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Contact:
Network 5 International
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Liverpool
L69 3EE

THE WEB

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