

LA SALETTE**Did Mary appear on the Holy Mountain?**

La Salette is a mountain near Grenoble in France. There on September 19th, 1846, the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ who is God in Catholic dogma, allegedly appeared to Melanie Mathieu and Maximin Giraud when they were tending cows. This apparition was given the approval of the Church in 1851 (page 111, The Thunder of Justice).

Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion by Hilda Graef insists that in relation to the La Salette “apparition” the Virgin would not speak as if she had to hold Jesus back from taking revenge on the people. Nor would it ring true that the long and complicated discourse she gave could be genuine and remembered so well. And it matches a letter from heaven too closely - a dubious letter to boot. Another problem is how the prediction secrets the Virgin gave are so vague and look like somebody guessing at the future. Let us look at all the problems in depth.

Maximin and Melanie saw a bright light. Melanie said that the light started to whirl and turn in on itself and went up to the height of a person. She said she saw hands and an oval face materialise in the light but it was very unclear at first. Maximin said that if the entity came near him he would hit it with his stick. See page 29, Encountering Mary. Anyway the light opened to show a Lady sitting inside weeping. This sounds more like Spiritualism than Christianity with entities gradually taking shape! And it is odd that the children stood there considering the fear of ghosts they would have had. It seems more likely that they saw an ordinary woman and made up all the mystical stuff.

The woman wore white shoes with different colours of roses on them and a gold apron. A white cap with a crown and roses reposed upon her head. The crown rose to a little peak at the front. Her face was pale and she shone like a bright light. The Catholic encyclopaedia says that the sun was shining at the time.

The real Virgin would not have had white skin for in the New Testament, Mary is a Jewess. Christians claim that she is the mother of God for Jesus her son was not only man but was God as well.

The costume is bizarre. The Virgin Mary's dress sense in apparitions was limited to a plain dress with maybe a veil. Sometimes she wore a crown. Never shoes. The La Salette Virgin wore jewellery around the neck - this was never heard of before.

Melanie said that the apparition said, “If my people do not submit, I shall be forced to let go the hand of my Son. It is so strong and heavy, that I can no longer withhold it. For how long a time do I suffer for you! If I would not have my Son abandon you, I am compelled to pray to Him without ceasing. As to you, you take no heed of it.”

She is saying she cannot stop him as if she could stop him. This is blasphemy. God is his own boss. Some try to play down what Mary said. They say its only symbolism to imagine she can hold Jesus back. They say that rather than doing that, what she meant was that she was giving a message for people to repent so that Jesus might not have to punish them. That is not restraint but giving him no reason to punish. But why did she use the image of restraining Jesus? A child ignorant of religion would have no choice but to take her as meaning she was restraining Jesus. Its the law of interpretation that if something is said, its true meaning is what the listeners would have made of it.

And how could the Virgin suffer when she is with God? To see God is to be perfectly happy for it is possessing infinite goodness and love. She will also see the outcomes of sin and suffering out of which God brings good so how could she be so sad? Surely the real Virgin Mary would have reached a high enough degree of personal development to be able to keep the focus on the good side of things!

The apparitions plainly infer that the Virgin is the real god. They infer that she is better than God for he cannot even fill her heart with joy. So he is not much of a God then. She must be better than him.

The Virgin complained about people breaking the Sabbath day. Next she said that they could do nothing without using the holy name of Jesus in a rude way. “These are the two things which make the hand of my Son so heavy”. She said that the failure of the potatoes of the previous year was a warning but one which was ignored. That was silly. If God is so mysterious then how can you tell if it is a warning or just a way to do some good? The Lady predicted a famine for the region which actually did happen. The Lady said that if the people converted “the rocks will change into loads of wheat, and the potatoes will be self-sown on the lands.” So this Lady knows the non-existent future so well that she is sure that God will be able to do such miracles! How ludicrous! The miracles are silly as well considering how God likes to be fairly secretive. They are really super-miracles. Believers don’t take her literally here. They take her metaphorically. But should

they? No- they only take her that way because the rocks didn't turn into wheat and angels didn't come to sow the potatoes. If an ordinary person said that I might take her metaphorically but if a being from Heaven says it I would take it literally. Remember the rule, if it can be literal then it must be taken literally.

And the metaphorical meaning, assuming that it is the right interpretation, would have to mean that the harvest would be strangely exceptionally good but not miraculous. An expression such as the potatoes planting themselves would mean that they would be over-abundant. This did not happen.

The Lady told the children to say at least an Our Father and Hail Mary well morning and evening and more if they had the time. The real Virgin would have told them they could pray anytime even while washing themselves in the stream for prayer is a wilful desire for God.

Many say that the Virgin's prophecies were fulfilled. Were they? They were vague enough to seem to be fulfilled. "There is no doubt that the content of the La Salette messages was made known publicly before these prophecies were fulfilled" (The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary, page 139). But the prophecies were understandable considering that the crops went bad the previous year. They could have been good guesses helped along by good luck. But if the Virgin promised miracle crops if the people repented then why didn't this happen those who did turn back to God? But with so many apparitions making predictions and many of them being wrong this is hardly impressive. It is only natural that some apparitions will get it right. It only means their guesses came true.

The Virgin told Melanie a secret and Melanie said later that she was permitted to tell it in 1858. Keeping something a secret like that and then telling it seems silly. There was no reason for it. Plainly, Melanie concocted the secret. The Church believes that the secret Melanie revealed was made up by her for the secret is silly. That is the Church's excuse for believing in the apparitions but not in the secret. We must remember that the church didn't want to look foolish by rescinding its decree that the apparitions were real when Melanie started making outrageous claims about what the Vision had said. To accept the apparition as real is to break the law of God given in Deuteronomy 18 that if a prophet claiming to be inspired by God gets it all right and then makes one blunder that the prophet is to be rejected entirely as a fraud. The miracle of correct prophecy then must be attributed to some other source but not God for God never inspires error or makes mistakes. To accept Melanie's account of the apparition then is heretical and sinful. The lady she saw was not the Virgin Mary. The real Virgin would choose the right messenger.

The secret says, "There is no one left worthy of offering a stainless sacrifice to the Eternal God for the sake of the world". This is frankly impossible for some Catholics will always do penance. It contradicts the Catholic doctrine that there will always be true Catholics around.

The Devil will be unloosed from Hell in 1864 to chip away at the faith bit by bit. He could do this from Hell so his getting out is impossibly ridiculous. "People will be transported from one place to another by these evil spirits". This is the miracle of teleportation. This harks back to the Middle Ages when people believed that miracles were all over the place.

The Virgin even said that the dead will be brought back to life! Rome would become the seat of the antichrist who will be born of a Hebrew nun who pretends to be a Virgin. She says the Church will be supported by few and predicts many awful things including wars and people being misled by the Devil's miracles and earthquakes which swallow countries up.

If the Devil hates the Church then he wrote this prophecy in order to make people suspicious of the Church and accuse it of apostasy so that it develops an uncontrollable tendency to schism. Catholics will say it has not but that is not the point for it should still be doing that. You don't say that because a murder turned out to save lives in unexpected ways that the murder was right.

Melanie certainly invented her secret for she could not remember it all for she was not bright and it was very long. If she made that up it is most likely that she made up the vision too.

La Salette was recognised by the Catholic Church because a spring appeared and there were cures. But medicine makes mistakes today and so it would have been worse in those days so the cures could have been natural. The fulfilled prophecy was not sufficient proof.

The pope granted a plenary indulgence to all who came on pilgrimage to the site of the apparition.

Mc Clure states that the children called the vision, "The Lady", rather than giving her any kind of religious title" (The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary, page 34). This proves that the children had doubts about the Lady's identity and had suspicions even though the lady spoke of Jesus as her son! Maximin said he believed it was Our Lady but added that he never said it was Our Lady.

Melanie said that when she first saw the light the apparition was inside and sitting down in it and Maximin said, "Keep your stick; if it does anything I will give it a good knock". Obviously he was not sure if it was a woman so Melanie told a little lie for they had no idea what if anything was inside the light. The vision occurred in the sunny afternoon so the light could have been a reflection on the golden apron. Or perhaps the Lady had not come in the light at all but they in their bewilderment they thought she had. Perhaps there was somebody shining the sun from a mirror unto the lady to make her seem bright and the children said they found her hard to look at for she dazzled them. That is why we cannot believe this was the Virgin Mary. In other apparitions, the vision is encased in light but nobody is dazzled.

The Sceptical Occultist indicates that the lady wasn't very youthful when Melanie said she was a mad mother who would kill her children. Maximin indicated the same thing when he said the lady was beaten by her son. These clues have been ignored by researchers as to the identity of the apparition. Melanie must have been terrified of the apparition which makes it hard to believe her account of what the lady did and said. It is more likely that she got Maximin to run with her when she and he saw it and later they started embellishing what had happened. After all, an apparition that might kill her children would kill Maximin and Melanie as well.

The Lady wore a lot of shiny stuff so that could be why she dazzled the children. The children could not look at her for very long they said for that reason. If she was that bright they would not have been able to look at her at all. If she was brighter at times, the reflection of the sun could have been the reason. The children had been asleep before they saw the light and tiredness could account for their imagining lights and/or mistakenly mixing what is real with imagination (The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary, page 30).

Melanie had problems understanding the vision which was talking in French. When she asked Maximin to help her understand the vision the Lady realised she should have been talking in the local dialect to make them understand and this was what she did (page 120, The Sceptical Occultist). The real Virgin would have known not to talk in French. The Lady could not even read minds so she was not a supernatural being.

After the Lady disappeared Maximin tried to grab the remaining brightness which shows how easily fooled he would have been. The way the Lady disappeared – the head vanishing first, then the abdomen and then the feet suggest that she climbed up into something - a tree? With a light shining on her mistakes could have been made by the witnesses. Perhaps she just jumped behind a stone or something and the children thought the light was her abdomen and then assumed that her feet were the last to vanish.

The way the lady disappeared is so comical that it is unworthy of the Virgin Mary to vanish like that. It is grotesque for the head to vanish first and then the middle and leaving only the feet left to disappear!

Then Maximin said, "Perhaps it is a great saint". After they had claimed to have listened to the Lady saying she was the mother of Christ! They did not know who she was at all! They were not even sure if she was a saint! This surely suggests that there was a lot of exaggeration in their original story though they stuck to the public version of it and that Our Lady of La Salette was possibly some nut in fancy dress. Nobody denies that after the apparition the children did embellish their story but it is the original story that the Church believes.

The children came down the hill and Melanie said she was sure the Lady was a mad woman who would kill her children but she was less sure because she rose up into the air.

Melanie said, "If I hadn't seen her rise up into the air, I would have believed that it was some woman whose husband wanted to kill their children" (page 31, Encountering Mary).

She proves here that the Church's claim that her account was consistent is a lie. She indicated that apart from the rising up into the air, the woman was ordinary. Had the woman really talked as if she were the Virgin Mary, Melanie would not have taken her for a woman married to a would-be child-killer. Did the clergy manage to manipulate the children to remember it very differently and in such a way that suited the Church and its teaching? The complexity and theology of the lady's discourse shows that the children would have been unable to remember it so well. Its a fabrication.

Maximin said he would have thought that she was a woman beaten by her son and who was wandering about. This tells us that the woman was thought to be mad and evil and had bruises and was older than Mary looked in her reported apparitions. This shows that the children lied about the holiness of the vision lady. They thought at first the vision was a mad bad woman and later on, probably as a result of priestly influence, changed their tale to make it appear that they had encountered the Virgin Mary.

Maximin said that if it had not been for the woman rising up into the air he would have thought the woman was somebody whose son had given her a beating and abandoned her. See Encountering Mary page 31. If the lady was Mary she did not give a good impression of Jesus. He told another person that she could have been somebody from Valjouffrey, a nearby

town (page 31, Encountering Mary). Why there? Did he know somebody there who fitted the bill for being the mysterious stranger? So he was lying that he thought she was a supernatural being! She was ordinary except for the rising up. The story of her materialising out of light must have been false.

Maximin only disclosed the apparition story when he got back to his employer who wanted to know why he was late. Was the story made up as an excuse? Remember they were stupid children. The children were emotionally isolated (page 121, The Sceptical Occultist) and they might have convinced themselves that they saw someone who cared about them. Maximin's employer questioned him severely which would have proven to the children that they needed to stick to the same story. The Sceptical Occultist says that the vision may be supernatural because it fits patterns from previous apparitions that the children never knew about. But the clothes of the Virgin were completely different from her usual fashion. She goes walking with the visionaries instead of standing in one place to be admired. She tells the children things they must have already known.

The spring that appeared has nothing to do with the springs tradition - ie Mary making water flow miraculously - for it was already there (page 120, The Sceptical Occultist). Now it was "alleged" - to quote my source - that the spring did not flow all the time until the apparition. Before that it was dry most of the year (page 217, Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture). Encountering Mary, page 35, tells us that Pra testified that the spring was there before the vision.

The request for prayers and the making of threats would have been thought of anyway without any knowledge of previous apparitions. And so we must disagree with The Sceptical Occultist.

Psychologists have said that Maximin hallucinated the vision to come to terms with his horrible and lonely past that triggered the same in Melanie whose mind saw what Maximin was describing to her (page 120-121, The Sceptical Occultist). It is possible that Melanie did not see what he saw but saw something in her mind and later Maximin told her of his experience and she subconsciously manipulated her imagination and memory so that she thought she had experienced exactly what he experienced. It was false memory and there is no evidence that it was not. It is certain that with eccentric Melanie, false memory would have been the least of her mental afflictions.

It was unfair for the Virgin to expect two children who had suffered enough to suffer the sneers and scorn of the neighbours by telling them they saw a Lady from Heaven with a frightening message. It would have been different if it could have been discreetly investigated and verified first. The Devil, if he exists, would be a plausible explanation. The Lady never said that she should be listened to not because of the threats but because she was right. Instead she just made threat after threat in her own name. The Lady advocated false spirituality based on fear and selfishness.

Critics say the message given was too long and complicated to be remembered so well. The children would have needed photographic memories. Also Mary forcing her vindictive son Jesus to behave is blasphemous. We can be sure though there is no chance the children misunderstood the entity about her nasty son. Maximin said after the vision that her son must have given her a beating.

Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture

The following information is taken from Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture.

The Bishop, Philbert de Bruillard, set up two commissions to investigate the apparition. The first one consisted of the cathedral canons. The second one was of the Seminary Professors. They were content with the testimony of the children but "there are certain things which arouse some caution about the truth of Our Lady's words" (page 217). This can be taken as showing the commissions were undecided. The authenticity of the vision then was inconclusive. Though the bishop has to decide if the apparition is authentic or not and that is his right, the right does not apply if the bishop refuses to listen to his commission. He set up the commission to check it out and if he goes against its recommendation then his approval for the apparition lacks true authority.

Four years after the apparition he declared that the apparition can be believed in without question and that "it bears all the marks of truth." Doubtlessly that was going too far. Even official Catholic teaching asserts that such apparitions may be convincing but still false.

Donal Anthony Foley

Donal Anthony Foley complained in his book Marian Apparitions, The Bible and the Modern World (page 144) that after the apparition was accepted as approved and believable by Bishop Philbert de Bruillard and despite the implicit approval of the Pope, the hostility to the authenticity of the apparition was still strong in certain parts. Now Foley knows that the Pope's opinion carries no significance for the Pope never gave any official approval. He only approved as a Catholic man and not as pope. The Bishop had to discipline Abbe Deleon for having a girlfriend. It is said by Foley that the Abbe sought revenge

by trying to refute the apparition. In 1852, the priest's book *La Salette - A Valley of Lies* appeared. Foley and nobody else gives any real evidence that the priest's motive was spite. So was he sincere after all? His claims casting doubt on the apparition were dismissed as lies. Another diocesan priest Abbe Cartellier wrote a book to support Deleon's view that the vision was a hoax. In 1865, Cartellier was putting a new book together to refute the vision. But he didn't complete it and recanted and then claimed to believe. Deleon wrote another book debunking the apparition after that time. Some have complained that the apparition never mentions social sins such as hurting others. The Virgin only criticised breaking the Sabbath and blasphemy. The Church replies that these sins lead to social sins. That is nonsense. There are people who miss Mass on Sunday and who blaspheme and who are outstanding neighbours.

No proof is given against the allegations of those who went to huge lengths to refute the apparition.