

THE INCREDIBLE CLAIM THAT MARY IS PHYSICALLY AT MEDJUGORJE

Jesus' Resurrection and Marian Apparitions: Medjugorje as a Living Laboratory By Dr. Hector Avalos at 4/29/2013 contends that Christians lay too much trust in Bible statements that faith in Jesus as a risen physical being who had been dead and that this faith only happened in a context that strongly indicates that the events leading to faith such as the resurrection are true. He does this by showing that the nonsensical apparitions of Medjugorje actually surpass the resurrection accounts in credibility. Not all nonsense is equal.

Medjugorje is the site of alleged apparitions of Jesus' mother since 1981 to about six people.

Fr. René Laurentin

Laurentin interviewed all the six visionaries, and his careful questioning showed that they saw the Virgin as clearly as any disciple perceived Jesus. For example, consider these questions and answers (Is the Virgin Mary Appearing? pp. 45-46):

“What did Our Lady look like?

1. ‘She had a grey robe.’
2. ‘...she had a grey robe...’
3. ‘She had a grey robe, white veil, a crown of stars, blue eyes, black hair, rosy cheeks...’
4. ‘...Blue eyes, black hair, which came out a little from under her veil...’
5. ‘...Her face was white with rosy cheeks. You could make out her curly black hair under the veil...’
6. ‘A beautiful face, happy, blue eyes. You couldn’t see her hair.’”

Laurentin also asked: “How do you see her?” They answered:

- “1. Like a person.
2. A living being.
3. Like you, right now, the same. A living being.
4. Like a human being.
5. Like you right now as I talk to you. I can touch her.
6. Like you.”

In addition, Laurentin asked if the visionaries: “Have you touched Our Lady?” They responded:

- “1. Yes, I touched her robe; each time I touched it, it was with my whole palm. Many also touched her.
2. Yes, I touched her robe.
3. Yes, I touched her robe, but it is resistant like metal. I want to say that when she moves her hands or head, she moves, that’s normal; but when you touch, there is resistance, like metal.
4. Yes.
5. I can touch her...At the beginning, I looked on her as something inaccessible, but now, when she is with me, I look on her as a Mother, as my best friend who helps me.
6. I touched her robe.”

How are such descriptions not physical or claiming to be as objective as anything found in the Jesus narratives?

In fact, the Jesus narratives have a substantial amount of descriptions that are not compatible with a purely physical blood-and-flesh Jesus.

In particular, the appearances mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, may not refer to a flesh-and-blood Jesus. When speaking of post-resurrection bodies, 1 Corinthians 15:50 states: “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”

Since in 1 Corinthians 15:8, Paul includes himself as one to whom Jesus has appeared just as Jesus has to the others in the preceding verses, then we also can surmise that such an appearance was not like that of a flesh-and-blood person. Paul, after all, claims that whatever he experienced was not accessible to others in quite the same way (Acts 9:7, 22:9).

In the following portions of the post-resurrection appearances reported in Luke 24, one sees that physicality alternates with acts not normally performed by purely physical beings:

-Luke 24:15:

“But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.”

-Luke 24:31:

“And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight.”

-Luke 24:39

“See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

So, if the Bible admits that people walking alongside Jesus are “kept from recognizing him,” then why would Samples object to the possibility of a similar experience at Medjugorje? That is to say, it may be possible, given biblical concepts of different types of bodies, that he may not be able to see what others can.

Even Donal Foley, an ardent critic of Medjugorje who is familiar with the earliest interview material, concedes: “The transcripts of the tapes certainly give a very strong impression that the visionaries did actually see something during those first crucial days on Podbrdo, and that on this point they were telling the truth” (Foley, *Understanding Medjugorje*, p. 60).

MARY NOT SENSED BY OTHERS?

When we examine the purported evidence given by Miller and Samples for why the Marian apparitions are not real, they only adduce arguments that can also undermine biblical stories or arguments that do not really pertain to the original apparitions of the visionaries.

To understand this, one has to realize that there were at least two claimed phases for these apparitions:

A. The initial apparitions at a hillside (June 24, 1981 + next few days)

B. Subsequent apparitions in the local St. James church from about a week later and apparently still occurring (See Foley, *Understanding Medjugorje*, pp. 55-56).

Miller and Samples have, at best, direct empirical information about events in B, but not in A.

It is the first appearances that were viewed as the most external and physical, and the subsequent ones were often or increasingly described with a spiritual sense or spiritual vision.

However, this variation also would not be unbiblical. Jesus said that his disciples would see him only for 40 more days on earth in Acts 1:3, and then he would be taken up and not be present physically on earth any longer. However, according to Acts 9 and 22, Paul did subsequently perceive Jesus communicating with him.

In any case, Samples (*The Cult of the Virgin*, pp. 114-15) says he was present, along with a cleric named Father Slavko Barbaric, when Marija Pavlovic, one of the original visionaries, had one of her experiences in the St. James church. Samples reports: “I sat beside Marija when she experienced a vision...I saw nothing, and sensed no other presence in the room except the three of us.” Samples concludes that Marija is not really perceiving Mary.

Samples also interviewed Ivan Dragicevic, another of the original visionaries, who told Samples: “We see our Lady in three dimensions, which means that we can see her just as I can see you now” (Miller and Samples, *The Cult of the Virgin*, p. 155).

Dragicevic relates that his experience may be a form of ecstasy that cannot be experienced by everyone who is present alongside them. So, Campbell suggests that does not reflect an objective reality and concludes: “We have no reason to think that Ivan’s or anyone else’s experiences have been any different than Marija’s” (ACC, p. 298).

There are many problems with just accepting Samples’ assessment without giving Marian apologists an opportunity to address these issues, and they have many times.

Biblically, the claims of the visionaries are consistent with the concept that God does not reveal himself in the same way to everyone. This is shown by Numbers 12:6-8:

“[6] And he said, ‘Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. [7] Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. [8] With him I speak

mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the LORD.”

Samples also does not seem to recall that there was a similar disjunction between the claimed experiences of Paul, and the experiences of those around him.

According to the well-known story of Paul’s conversion, the latter encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus in Acts 9:3-7:

“[3] Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him.

[4] And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’

[5] And he said, ‘are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; [6] but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.’

[7] ‘The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.’”

So, clearly even the Bible concedes that it is possible for one person to perceive what others don’t even when they are standing in close proximity. The fact that Paul is seeing Jesus should be clear by the fact that he can identify him as Jesus.

When Paul related his experience, in Acts 22:9, he said:

“Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me.”

There is another relevant example with Stephen in Acts 7:55-57:

“[55] But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

[56] and he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.’”

[57] But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him.”

It seems as though Stephen is seeing something others do not, as otherwise it would be odd for them to kill him if they saw God and Jesus in heaven. That pairing would have been proof that Stephen was telling the truth for any audience. The biblical author also seems to explain why Stephen is able to perceive what others do not (i.e., because Stephen was “full of the Holy Spirit”).

So, should we not believe that Paul or Stephen had those experiences because others with them either did not see or hear what they did? Clearly, Samples is demanding proofs at Medjugorje that he does not demand of biblical stories, and that reflects a religious bias, not a sound historical procedure.

In fact, the claims of the visionaries are consistent with what scripture promises for the “last days” in Joel 2:28: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.”

VISION VERSUS APPEARANCE

According to Campbell: “So what are we to think of these apparitions of Mary? They may be authentic. Or they may be inauthentic. Whatever they are, they are nothing like the experience of the disciples had with the risen Jesus. It is important to note that the apostles could clearly distinguish between a vision and an appearance” (ACC, p. 298).

However, it is untrue that such a similar distinction is not made by the visionaries themselves or by their apologists. This is clear by the reports of Jelena Vasilij, the so-called “seventh visionary.” Mark Miravalle, a Catholic scholar who supports the apparitions, reports (The Message of Medjugorje, p. xvi):

“Since December 15, 1982, Jelena has reported messages received from the Blessed Virgin Mary by means of inner locutions, seeing and hearing Mary, in Jelena’s words, ‘with the heart.’ Jelena does not at present experience Mary in the external three-dimensional manner as do the other six youths, nor does she share knowledge of the reported ‘secrets’ given to the other youths by Mary.”

So, clearly the visionaries themselves reportedly have been careful to make such distinctions.

Similarly, René Laurentin, a Marian scholar, was careful to distinguish between different types of visionaries (Is The Virgin Mary Appearing...? p. 41):

“Eight young people at Medjugorje have seen the Virgin Mary. However, two of them, Ivan Ivankovic and Milka Pavlovic, saw only the first apparition of June 24, 1981. They did not speak to Our Lady, and they do not belong to the group any longer...”

That is why only six are the ones usually numbered as the main group of original visionaries.

More importantly, the initial experiences of the visionaries are reported in as objective a language as anything encountered in the New Testament.

SOURCES

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<http://www.truthinmydays.com/do-apparitions-of-mary-undermine-the-case-for-jesus-resurrection/>

