

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Apparitions and Roman Catholic Doctrine

Timothy F. Kauffman

Editor's note: February 2008 is the 150th anniversary of the appearance of a Marian Apparition at Lourdes, France, to an illiterate peasant girl named Bernadette Soubirous. Since that time, Lourdes has been a destination for millions of Roman Catholics who seek both healing and salvation. In 2007 Benedict XVI established regular airline flights from Rome to Lourdes and offered plenary indulgences to the Roman Catholic faithful in order to encourage pilgrimages to the site of the Apparition. This month he is scheduled to proclaim the Jubilee of Lourdes. We here offer an essay about these Marian Apparitions at Lourdes and the role they have played in the development of Roman Catholic doctrine.

*Timothy Kauffman was reared from birth as a Roman Catholic, and he became a Christian in 1991 when he was 24 years old. He was trained by his mother from his youth to follow the Apparitions of Mary, pray the rosary, and wear his scapular and the Miraculous Medal. He now works as an engineer in Huntsville, Alabama, where he lives with his wife and three children. He has written and published several books since his conversion, including *Quite Contrary: A Biblical Reconsideration of the Apparitions of Mary*; *Graven Bread: The Papacy, the Apparitions of Mary, and the Worship of the Bread of the Altar*; and *Geese in Their Hoods: Selected Writings on Roman Catholicism* by Charles Haddon Spurgeon.*

As meaningful quips go, it is hard to compete with Julius Caesar's brief summary of his exploits at the battle of Zela: *Veni, vidi, vici*: I came, I saw, I conquered. If not its equal, then at least in the same league, is Sir Charles James Napier's alleged 1843 report that he had taken control of the Indian province of Sindh: *Peccavi*, or, literally, I have sinned. Sir Francis Drake joins their ranks with his report of the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588: *Cantharides*, the name of an aphrodisiac, here used cleverly as a proposition: The Spanish fly.

These statements (some of which may be apocryphal) have achieved notoriety because so much meaning was

packed into so few words. The semantic density was prodigious, each statement being made even more meaningful by its timing and context. They are brought to the fore here because, as Marian Apparitions go, the message from Lourdes stands out for its brevity and its content among Roman Catholic theologians the same way Caesar's, Napier's, and Drake's do among historians.

Apparitions typically arrive with extensive messages for popes and pilgrims alike. The Marian Apparition at Paris in 1830 gave Roman Catholics the devotion and design of the popular "Miraculous Medal." The Marian Apparition at La Salette in 1846 gave explicit, and sometimes secret, messages to the children, some of which were addressed to and sent directly to the pope. The Marian Apparition at Fátima in 1917 had months of meetings with visionary Lucia Abóbora, coupled with public and private messages for the pope, culminating in a dramatic display of light. The (officially unapproved) Marian Apparitions at Medjugorje since the 1980s have provided more than 30,000 messages, so many that they have since been compiled concordance-style into a tome called *Words from Heaven*, along with more secrets for the visionaries and for John Paul II. In these and many, many more occurrences of Apparitions, the visionaries have been encouraged to write down the messages (or images) and pass them on to others.

Marian Apparitions at Lourdes, France, 1858

But the Marian Apparitions at Lourdes were different. At the third of 18 appearances, illiterate Bernadette brought pen and paper asking the Apparition to write a message for her. The Apparition responded, "There is no need for me to write down what I have to say to you." Aside from an occasional imperative directing pilgrimages and a chapel, and a few secret messages for Bernadette alone, there were no messages of any substance for anyone else. The Lourdes Apparitions were almost wholly silent on matters of doctrine. *Almost.*

After weeks of public pressure for Bernadette to identify the Apparitions, the vision finally provided a name. At the

16th Apparition, when Bernadette asked once again for her name, the woman of the visions replied: *Que soy era Immaculada Conception*, or, I am the Immaculate Conception. The timing and context of the message was of monumental significance to Roman Catholics. The implications of this reply are better left to them to describe (emphases added):

The proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception gave back vigor, in the mid-nineteenth century, to an exhausted Church.... *And it is amazing that, four years after the proclamation of the dogma, on February 11, 1858, Our Lady appeared in Lourdes calling herself the Immaculate Conception, confirming the dogma.*¹

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was of some political importance to nineteenth-century Catholicism.... [It] was to most people as unapproachable as the idea of the Trinity itself. Nevertheless, enthusiasm for the baffling new dogma was an important part of the French clergy's attempts to lead a nineteenth-century religious revival. *Bernadette could hardly have provided a more welcome, or a more unexpected, name.*²

This message [of Lourdes] can be summed up in the following four points [only the first of which is listed here]:

1. *It is a heavenly confirmation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception that had just been defined by the Church a few years before.*³

These are just a few citations from Roman Catholic sources. There are many more. The point is this: In 1854 Pius IX proclaimed a "baffling new dogma" that Mary was conceived without sin, and when the resulting controversy was in full bloom, the Apparition at Lourdes in 1858 confirmed that the dogma was true. Thus, an Apparition known largely for its brevity is believed to have played a role in confirming a controversial Roman Catholic doctrine, and at the same time confirming the authority of a pope to speak infallibly, simply by uttering five words in illiterate Bernadette's native dialect. What timing. What substance. As quips go, this was one for the record books.

Thus Lourdes enjoys and deserves a place of prominence among all Marian Apparitions, for it was the culmination of decades of its influence on the papacy, and also set the stage for two more of the most arrogant Roman Catholic doctrines of all time: the Infallibility of the Pope and the Bodily Assumption of Mary.

¹ Vincenzo Sansonetti, in an interview with ZENIT, "Dogma of Immaculate Conception Opened a New Era," Rome, January 7, 2005.

² Patrick Marnham, *Lourdes: A Modern Pilgrimage*. New York, 1980, 4, 8-9. Brackets added for clarity.

³ (Bishop) Donald Montrose, *The Message of the Virgin at Lourdes*, cited from CatholicCulture.org.

The Immaculate Conception of Mary

The belief that Mary was conceived without sin was not a new one, but nowhere is it recorded in the Scriptures, and nowhere had the church spoken unequivocally on it in all of its 1800 years. It certainly was not an article of faith. But in 1830, appearing to Catherine Labouré, the Apparition asked that a medal be struck in honor of Mary, explicitly referring to the immaculate conception:

At this moment, where I was or was not I do not know, an oval shape formed around the Blessed Virgin, and on it were written these words in letters of gold: "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Then a voice was heard to say: "Have a medal struck after this model. Those who wear it will receive great graces; abundant graces will be given to those who have confidence."⁴

This would come to be known as the Miraculous Medal, and again, those who know of and study the Apparitions understand from this just how influential an Apparition can be in the Roman Catholic religion. The Apparitions do not merely reinforce existing beliefs; they actively introduce and influence new Roman Catholic teachings and practices:

While it is generally acknowledged that the great popularity of this "Miraculous Medal" helped prepare the way for Pope Pius IX's proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, it would seem that it also contributed substantially to the Church's formal approval of the authenticity of Catherine's visions.⁵

Apparitions and the Papacy

This extraordinary liaison between the papacy and the Apparitions is what makes Lourdes so important. Nowhere has the reciprocity between the Apparitions and the papacy been more clearly displayed than in the declaration of the Immaculate Conception doctrine:

Indeed, it is certain that the Apparitions of the Miraculous Medal to Catherine Labouré in 1830 hastened the solemn declaration of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, just as the Apparitions of Lourdes, wherein Our Lady declared: "I am the Immaculate Conception," set the seal of Heaven's approval on it. There was great joy in France in 1858 when it became known that Mary had appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, a peasant girl of the French Pyrenees. No one was happier than Catherine Labouré. "You see," she exclaimed, "it is our own Blessed Mother, the Immaculate!"⁶

⁴ Ann Ball, *A Litany of Mary*. Huntington, Indiana, 1988, 73.

⁵ Sandra L. Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary*. New York, 1991, 26.

⁶ Joseph Dirvin, D.M., *Saint Catherine Labouré of the Miraculous Medal*. See www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/CATLABOU.htm.

Though it is not official Roman Catholic dogma that Marian Apparitions directly influence Vatican policy and teaching, it is clearly official Roman Catholic history. It is also very clearly a beloved and enthralling concept held by laity and clergy alike. Take for example the instructions from the Marian Apparition at Fátima in 1917. Visionary Lucia Abóbora explained: "What Our Lady wants is that the Pope and all the bishops in the world shall consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart on one special day. If this is done, she will convert Russia and there will be peace."⁷

On March 25, 1984, John Paul II performed the consecration as the Apparition had instructed, making no secret of the fact that he was "responding to what Our Lady had requested at Fatima."⁸

Likewise, the Marian Apparition at La Salette sent secret messages to Pius IX in 1846.⁹ Twenty-four years later, just five months before the first Vatican Council would proclaim the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, Pius IX received visionary Don Bosco in a private audience. Bosco had received certain "revelations" from an Apparition about the advancement of the doctrine of Papal Infallibility and needed desperately to relate the vision to the pope. The Apparition had provided directions for Pius IX to proceed with the doctrine even if he had only two bishops supporting him.¹⁰ On July 18, 1870, the Vatican Council proceeded with the vote and Pius IX accomplished his desired infallibility,¹¹ showing that the Apparitions were intimately involved in the formalization of the infallibility doctrine, as well.

Keeping in mind that clergy and laity concur that the Marian Apparitions influenced the proclamations of the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility, it must be pointed out that these two dogmatic achievements by Pius IX led necessarily to the next "infallible" proclamation. In 1950 Pius XII proclaimed the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. In the preamble to the proclamation of the new dogma, Pius XII referred both to Mary, who was immaculate in her conception, and to the authority of the papacy, which was infallibly enabled to proclaim such a doctrine.¹² Thus, the Assumption Dogma rested on two very significant pillars that the Marian Apparitions at Lourdes had helped erect, pillars which simultaneously demanded the proclamation of the dogma and made the proclamation possible: Mary was assumed bodily into Heaven, without decay or corruption, *because* she was immaculate; and the papacy could proclaim the Assumption, *because* it was infallible. The Marian

Apparition at Lourdes was central to them both, so significant was its simple utterance in 1858: *Que soy era Immaculada Conceptionu.*

Demonic Apparitions

Not surprisingly, almost as soon as Pius XII proclaimed the Assumption, the Apparition began a new campaign for yet another Marian dogma to be declared.¹³ But for its simplicity and its profound effect on Roman Catholic teaching, the Lourdes Apparition accomplished more, and said less, than practically any other speaking Apparition in history. On that note, what cannot be omitted in any discussion of the Marian Apparitions is that, in addition to being on speaking terms with both clergy and laity, they are also categorically demonic, something of which the papacy is apparently not aware. The extent to which the papacy and the Apparitions have communicated with each other is documented in this writer's other works,¹⁴ as have their many teachings that show the Apparitions to be enemies of Christ. For example, the Marian Apparition at Fátima explicitly denied the finality of Christ's sacrifice, teaching that we should endure sufferings from God in order to pay for the sins of others:

Do you wish to offer yourselves to God, to endure all the suffering that He may please to send you, as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and to ask for the conversion of sinners? ...Pray, pray a great deal, make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to Hell because they have no one to sacrifice and pray for them.¹⁵

The Marian Apparition at La Salette taught that Mary suffers in our place, and that Mary serves as mediatrix to protect us from the wrath of her Son:

For a long time I have suffered for you; if I do not want my Son to abandon you, I am forced to pray to Him myself without ceasing. You pay no heed. However much you would do, you could never recompense the pain I have taken for you.¹⁶

If my people will not obey I shall be compelled to loose my Son's arm. It is so heavy, so pressing that I can no longer restrain it.¹⁷

Note that it is Jesus' arm, Jesus' wrath, Jesus' righteous indignation that would destroy us were it not for Mary's suffering, Mary's intercession, and Mary's offering of our sacrifices. This is the diabolical subtext of the Apparitions' teaching that Mary saves us from Jesus' wrath: God is enraged at the wounds inflicted on his Son

⁷ William Thomas Walsh, *Our Lady of Fátima*. New York [1947] 1954, 221.

⁸ ZENIIT.org, "John Paul II Again Entrusts World to Mary, Renews Act of Consecration of 1984," March 24, 2000.

⁹ Zimdars-Swartz, 177-179.

¹⁰ *Dreams, Visions & Prophecies of Don Bosco*, Eugene M. Brown, editor. New Rochelle, New York, 1986, 114.

¹¹ Vatican Council, Session IV, Chapter IV, July 18, 1870.

¹² Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, AAS 42 (1950):761.

¹³ Zimdars-Swartz, 257-258.

¹⁴ See, for example, *Quite Contrary: A Biblical Reconsideration of the Apparitions of Mary*.

¹⁵ Walsh, *Our Lady of Fátima*, 51-52, 120.

¹⁶ Zimdars-Swartz, 30. Message of September 19, 1846.

¹⁷ Bob and Penny Lord, *The Many Faces of Mary: A Love Story*. Westlake Village, California, 1987, 70. Message of September 19, 1846.

and seeks repayment from us for the atrocity. The Marian Apparition at Medjugorje taught, "Dear children, this evening I pray that you especially venerate the Heart of my Son, Jesus. Make reparation for the wound inflicted on the Heart of my Son. That Heart is offended by all kinds of sin."¹⁸ This statement portrays Christ's sufferings as the cause of our separation from God, when in fact Christ's sufferings are the cause of our reconciliation to God.

These evil teachings are so un-Biblical that any schoolboy could refute them with the Scriptures: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (*Hebrews* 10:17-18). "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (*1 Timothy* 2:5). "He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied" (*Isaiah* 53:11). "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (*Romans* 5:10).

That the Apparitions could be so plainly wrong on the Gospel indicates their true origins. In *Galatians* 1:8 the Apostle Paul wrote: "But even if we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." There is therefore a simple message to be taken from the Marian Apparition at Lourdes, but it is not that Mary was conceived without sin, nor that the pope is infallible, nor that Mary was assumed body and soul into Heaven. Rather, the true message of the Marian Apparitions is deduced from *Matthew* 16:18: "And I say also unto you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; *and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*"

The Marian Apparitions are from Hell itself, and they have had their way with the Roman Catholic Church, leaving Rome in the damnable position of promulgating doctrines of demons. The conclusion cannot be avoided:

1. *The gates of Hell shall not prevail against Christ's Church.*
2. *The gates of Hell have prevailed against the Roman Catholic Church.*
3. *Therefore, the Roman Catholic Church is not Christ's Church, and the pope is not His spokesman.*

Otherwise intelligent men (James Dobson, Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, Charles Colson, Joel Osteen, and many, many more) have ignored this simple truth. But the Reformers knew it, embraced it, and even died for believing it. Let us hold fast to the faith of our forefathers, and recognize the passing of the 150th anniversary of the Marian Apparitions at Lourdes by acknowledging an inescapable truth: Hell has the ear of the Roman Catholic Church and speaks through her Magisterium. *Ephesians*

¹⁸ *Words from Heaven: Messages of Our Lady from Medjugorje*, fifth edition. Birmingham, Alabama, 1991, 162. Message of April 5, 1985.

5:11 requires this of us saying, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, **but rather reprove them.**" Caesar, Napier, and Drake sent messages about famous battles, warfare, and shipwrecks. Let us be sure that our spiritual descendants hear a good report from us as well:

This charge I commit unto you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before you, that you by them might war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck [*1 Timothy* 1:18-19].

Acknowledging the truth about the Apparitions at Lourdes is a great place to start.

Free Book Offer

During February 2008 The Trinity Foundation will give away 250 copies of our new edition (greatly improved from The Banner of Truth edition) of Benjamin Warfield's classic book, *Counterfeit Miracles*, which discusses the "healing miracles" at Lourdes. Requests for free books must be submitted in writing (emails and faxes are acceptable) and must include your name and U.S. address. Postage to U.S. addresses is free. Foreign readers may have a free copy if they pay \$11 in air mail postage. Additional copies of *Counterfeit Miracles* may be purchased for \$12 postpaid to U. S. addresses. The retail price of the book is \$19.95.

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The Fruit of Biblical Theology

"The old paradigm taught that if you had the right teaching, you will experience God. The new paradigm says that if you experience God, you will have the right teaching. This may be disturbing to many who assume propositional truth must always precede and dictate religious experience. That mindset is the product of systematic theology and has much to contribute.... However, biblical theology looks to the Bible for a pattern of experience followed by proposition" (Leith Andersen, *A Church for the 21st Century*).

Like the Biblical Theology movement, the "Emerging Church" movement is based on the irrational and Antichristian notion that event/experience/history somehow precede propositional truth/theology.