

The Discerner

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A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

Volume 42, Number 1

January • February • March 2022

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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*

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The Discerner

A Christian Apologetics & Counter-
Cult Ministry

Volume 42, Number 1

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WITH THIS ISSUE

Scientist Neils Bohr famously stated that predictions are difficult, especially about the future! We simply cannot predict what events will transpire.

But we have a God that knows the future as well as He knows the past, so He is worthy of our worship and our trust. Accordingly, we can face 2022 with the confidence that no matter what happens, God will be there with us each step of the way. Our great God is alive and doing marvelous things in our world, and it is our privilege as Christians to be a part of building His Kingdom!

At the same time, we know Satan continues to oppose God's Kingdom. One way the devil opposes God is through spiritual deception and false teaching. We are thankful that God has raised up Religion Analysis Service to be a light for God's truth and to oppose the wiles of the devil.

We also remain thankful for your continued support of our ministry with your prayers and gifts!

Our first article in this issue is the second part of a two-part article regarding the Roman Catholic Church and Mary. Sadly, we must take exception to unbiblical and distorted claims of Mary as taught and/or promoted by Roman Catholicism.

The author of the second article about Mary is Lydia Montes of Exalt In Truth Ministries. She provides an excellent overview of the history and claims of alleged Marian apparitions and quotes.

Our final article is a short but thought-provoking piece by Freddy Davis that exposes the very fragile foundations for evolutionary theories in science—a continuing legacy from Darwin's time to ours.

Finally, check out our Quiz, this time on false teachings about Jesus in the early church period.

Don't forget to take advantage of our website (ras.org). We hope to continue updating and refining our archive of past Discerner issues dating back to our beginnings in 1946–1947. It is a priceless resource for those searching for articles about cults, false teachings, and great apologetics in defense of God and His Word. There is also

a comprehensive links page where you can find additional Christian ministries engaged in similar ministry to Religion Analysis Service.

God bless,

Steve Lagoon
President

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND MARY: A BIBLICAL EXAMINATION, PART 2

by Steve Lagoon

But did Jesus have brothers and sisters?

A more important question is the identity of those the *King James Version* calls Jesus' brethren.

"Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" (Matthew 13:55–56)

"There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." (Mark 3:31–35)

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him." (Mark 6:3)

"After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days." (John 2:12)

"But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." (Galatians 1:19)

Another passage that bears on this question is the incident in which some came to take charge of Jesus, fearing that he was out of His mind, literally besides Himself (Mark 3:21). The *New International Version* (NIV) makes it a clear reference to Jesus' immediate family, his mother and brothers:

"When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said: 'He is out of his mind.'"

Other translations are vaguer about the identity of those who came to take possession of Jesus. For instance, the *King James Version* (KJV) merely says it was his “*friends*.” Yet, I agree with the opinion of Ralph Earle:

“The Greek is *hoi par’ autou*—literally, ‘those from the side of him.’ This could mean “friends”. But verse 31 rather clearly indicates that they were ‘Jesus’ mother and brothers,’ who set out when they ‘heard’ (v. 21) and finally ‘arrived’ (v. 31). So ‘family’ is better.”¹

That is, it is almost a certainty that it was Jesus’ own family, at least biological siblings, that sought to take charge of Him.

Meaning of the Greek words for brothers and sisters

So the question is answered by evangelicals and Protestants in a straightforward manner that the brethren were, in fact, Jesus’ biological siblings, children also born to Mary after Jesus.

But this just can’t be the case for Roman Catholics, since they are bound by the supposed infallible papal pronouncement of Mary’s perpetual virginity, and thus must have an alternate explanation for the identity of these ‘brethren.’

The first order of business is a consideration of the Greek words for *brethren* in these texts. Catholic theologian Raymond Brown addressed that very question:

“While the New Testament uses the language of the ‘brothers and sisters’ of Jesus, it never actually states that these are children of Mary.”²

Brown is technically correct, but neither does the New Testament controvert the idea that they are Mary’s children.

Dave Armstrong explained the possible meanings for the underlying Greek word in view:

“It is evident, therefore, from the range of possible definitions of *adelphos*, that Jesus’ ‘brothers’ need not necessarily be siblings of Jesus on linguistic grounds, as many commentators, learned and unlearned, seem to

1 Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, One-volume Edition, Grand Rapids MI (Baker Book House, 1986) 34.

2 Raymond E. Brown, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible*, 93.

assume uncritically . . . Many examples prove that adelphos has a very wide variety of meanings.”³

The brethren were kin relatives, but not brothers

One common explanation by Catholic apologists is that the brethren were near kin, but not blood brothers of Jesus, and that this view enjoys the support of many of the church fathers. Bertrand Conway explained:

“Although a few of the Fathers, like St. Epiphanius . . . St. Gregory of Nyssa . . . and St. Cyril of Alexandria . . . held that ‘the brethren of the Lord’ were children of St. Joseph by a former marriage, the vast majority held with St. Jerome that they were cousins of Jesus.”⁴

The Catholic scholar Philip Van Linden stated:

“Because of the Catholic church’s teaching on the virginity of Mary, this mention of Jesus’ brothers and sisters causes questions to be asked. However, neither this section [Mark 6:3] nor 3:31–35, where his brothers and sisters are mentioned again, says anything definitive about Mary’s virginity or Jesus’ blood family, because in Mark’s day ‘brothers and sisters’ could refer to cousins, stepbrothers or stepsisters, or members of the extended family, as well as to blood sisters or brothers.”⁵

Alan Schreck agreed:

“The Greek words for ‘brothers and sisters’ (e.g., of Jesus) were also used to refer to other close relatives—cousins, nephews and nieces, and so on.”⁶

The “brethren” as the cousins of Jesus

Along the same lines, Raymond Brown explained that in an effort to encourage the celibate life, an argument developed that Christ’s brethren were neither the children of Mary nor Joseph:

“In the Western Church, St. Jerome became the spokesman for a solution that differed from the one offered in The

3 Dave Armstrong, *A Biblical Defense of Catholicism*, Manchester NH (Sophia Institute Press, 2003) 194.

4 Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, C.S.P., *The Question Box*, 354.

5 Philip Van Linden, *Mark*, in *The Collegeville Bible Commentary*, Dianne Bergant and Robert J. Karris, General Editors, Collegeville MN (The Liturgical Press, 1989) 915.

6 Alan Schreck, *Catholic and Christian*, 174–175.

Protevangelium of James. Jerome was interested not only in Mary's virginity, but also in Joseph's virginity as a symbol for encouraging the monastic life. Accordingly, he disliked the explanation offered by the Protevangelium that Joseph had children by a previous marriage. An alternative explanation was that they were the children of Joseph's brother or Mary's sister . . . In any case, an approach that would make the 'brothers and sisters' cousins of Jesus became the almost universal view in the Western Church, and that is why it is familiar to Roman Catholics."⁷

Pohle and Preuss referred to the same tradition:

"According to Jerome, one of the doctors of the Church, Joseph 'was Mary's protector rather than her husband, and like her, had a celibate life.'"⁸

While not denying these references could possibly refer to near kin rather than biological siblings, the natural and plain meaning of these passages in their contexts strongly favors the interpretation that they are in fact, just that, Jesus' biological siblings.

The brethren were the sons of Joseph from previous marriage

The other popular explanation among Catholics is the claim that Jesus' brethren were children of Joseph from a previous relationship, step-children of Mary (as the *Protevangelium of James* suggested).

Because the Church has committed to the belief in Mary's perpetual virginity, it must accept either that the brethren were cousins or other close kin, or that they were Joseph's children, and Mary's stepchildren.

Meaning of "behold thy Son" and "behold thy mother"

In an effort to support their claim that the brethren of Jesus were not his biological siblings, Catholic apologists often appeal to the scene at the cross. Does John 19:26, in which Jesus stated to His mother Mary, "*Woman behold thy Son,*" and to the apostle John, His corresponding statement, "*behold thy mother*" imply that Mary had no other children, else the dying Jesus would have entrusted His mother's care to them? That is what Catholics often argue, and so Philip St. Romain asked:

7 Raymond E. Brown, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible*, 95.

8 Pohle-Preuss, *Mariology*, St. Louis MO (B. Herder Book Co., 1914) 41, as cited by J. C. Macaulay, *Truth vs Dogma*, 72.

“If Jesus had brother and sisters, then one must ask why he commended Mary to the care of John (John 19:27).”⁹

Likewise, Bertrand Conway:

“If Mary had other children, why should Jesus dying on the Cross, have intrusted His Mother to the care of St. John? (John XIX. 26, 27).”¹⁰

This is a peculiar line of reasoning that does not really advance the argument of the Catholics. This is because whether the brethren were Mary’s step-children by Joseph, or were near kin, they were still ‘family’ and hence the same question would apply; why did Jesus not entrust Mary to their care?

The Holy Family’s visit to Jerusalem

A similar argument is advanced by some Catholic apologists related to the Holy Family’s visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve. For example, Armstrong argued:

“In Luke 2:41–51, the story of Mary and Joseph’s taking Jesus to the Temple at the age of twelve, it is fairly obvious that Jesus is the only child. Since everyone agrees he was the first child of Mary, it there were up to five or more siblings, as some maintain . . . they were nowhere to be found at this time. This passage alone furnishes a strong argument for the implausibility of the ‘literal brothers’ theory.”¹¹

This again, is a weak argument, a so-called ‘argument from silence’. Merely because they were not mentioned does not mean that they were not present. There was no reason to mention the other siblings since it was Jesus alone that became separated from his parents.

Did Mary sin by losing Jesus?

John Wilder made this observation about Jesus being ‘lost’ at the Temple in Jerusalem as described in Luke 2:41–52:

“The loss of the little boy in Jerusalem raises a question about Mary’s care over her Son. It is a little difficult to imagine a careful mother leaving her child in a great city

9 Philip St. Romain, *Catholic Answers to Fundamentalists’ Questions*, Liguori MO (Liguori Publications, 1984) 41.

10 Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, C.S.P., *The Question Box*, 354.

11 Dave Armstrong, *A Biblical Defense of Catholicism*, 195.

and not even missing him until the family has gone a day's journey toward home."¹²

No disrespect to Mr. Wilder, but I believe he overstated the case. In an apparent end-around-attempt to implicate Mary of sin, and thus deny the Roman doctrine of Mary's sinlessness, Wilder failed to take into account evidence that exonerates both Mary and Joseph.

My mentor in the faith, Dr. William BeVier¹³, explained what probably occurred in this incident. When Jewish families traveled in caravans, the men and women tended to travel in groups. Children eleven and under tended to travel with the group of women, and when little boys reached the age of twelve, they were allowed to travel with the men.

It is easy to see how Joseph assumed that Jesus was with Mary as usual, and how Mary may have assumed that Jesus was with Joseph, now being twelve. It is undeniable that Mary and Joseph should have confirmed His presence, but their mix-up concerning Jesus is understandable.

Ray Summers explained the cultural background to this story:

"In many religious things a Jewish boy assumed the responsibility of a man when he became twelve. In reckoning for building synagogues, a boy of twelve was counted as a man. At twelve he became a 'son of Torah' (son of the law) . . . Joseph and Mary assumed that Jesus was with the other children in the caravan . . . When night came and the caravan broke up into family camp groups, it became evident that Jesus was not in the caravan."¹⁴

Likewise, Bruce Larson explained:

"Usually the women and young children traveled at the front of the caravan and the men and boys in the rear. We can imagine Joseph saying on the return trip, 'Jesus must be with his mother,' while His mother assumed He was back with the men. It was probably not until they made camp at night that they realized He was missing."¹⁵

¹² John B. Wilder, *The Other Side of Rome*, 71.

¹³ Read about Dr. BeVier's life and past RAS ministry at <https://www.startribune.com/obituaries/detail/13061644>.

¹⁴ Ray Summers, *Commentary on Luke: Jesus, the Universal Savior*, Waco TX (Word Books, 1972) 42-43.

¹⁵ Bruce Larson, *The Communicators Commentary: Luke*, Waco TX (Word Books, 1983) 62.

Mary's ongoing association with the brethren of the Lord

It is important to consider the ongoing and apparently close relationship that Mary had with the brethren of Jesus, taking note of Raymond Brown's concession:

“True, the brothers are frequently associated with Mary (e.g., Mark 3:32; 6:3; John 2:12, Acts 1:14).”¹⁶

I think this fact is decisive. If these brethren are merely close kin, cousins or something akin to that, but not Jesus' actual brothers, it is difficult to understand why they figure so prominently in the gospels, and are frequently in Mary's close company, unless it be that Mary and Joseph have raised them as their own.

The natural implications of the biblical texts, however, supports the traditional Protestant understanding that the brethren were Jesus' natural or biological brothers, the offspring of both Joseph and Mary following the birth of Christ.

Jesus' treatment of Mary in the Gospels

It often comes up for discussion just how Jesus treated His mother as presented in the gospels. More specifically, some will suggest that Jesus went out of his way to down-play or even denigrate His relationship with His mother.

For instance, such critics point to the wedding in Cana (John 2:1–10) and how Jesus seemed to refer coldly to his mother as “Woman,” and rebuked her by saying that “mine hour is not yet come.” (John 2:4)

I do not accept such an interpretation; I do not accept that Jesus was ever disrespectful to His mother, at the wedding of Cana, or any other time.

Further, when a woman cried out to Jesus, “*Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.*” (Luke 11:27)—rather than taking the perfect opportunity to honor His mother—Jesus instead shifted attention away from her saying, “*Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.*” (Luke 11:28)

Jesus did the same thing when He was told, “*Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.*” (Mark 3:32) Again, Jesus passed up an obvious time to honor His mother, and instead said:

“*Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For*

¹⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible*, 93.

whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.” (Mark 3:33–35)

I agree with the church father St. Ambrose, who said:

“Jesus did not mean to reject the attentions of His Mother, for He Himself commands: ‘Let whosoever dishonors father or mother die the death’ . . . His Mother is not disowned here, as some heretics insidiously pretend; even from the Cross He acknowledges her’ (In Luc, viii, 20).”¹⁷

Schreck further explained:

“The point is that even though it was a privilege to bear Jesus in her womb, Mary is even more to be honored because her life was devoted to doing the will of God: ‘I am the servant of the Lord (Luke 1:38).’”¹⁸

Yes, Jesus wanted His hearers to understand that His family, the kingdom of God, included, not just blood relatives, but all who put their faith and trust in the Lord.

It is most likely that it was Jesus’ biological brothers that were there to take charge of Jesus. About this incident, Dreyer and Weller argued:

“We can sympathize with Mary having to live in a home where Jesus’ own brethren did not believe in Him. ‘For neither did his brethren believe in him’ (John 7:5). But Mary appears to have done wrong when she came with them to restrain our Lord and take Him back home by force if necessary . . . It seems evident that on this occasion, torn by natural anxiety, and perhaps under pressure from our Lord’s brethren, Mary went with them to stop Him. Her action was not prompted by faith but by fear, and she was evidently not in the will of God in thus coming.”¹⁹

Dreyer and Weller seem too zealous to convict Mary of sin. That Mary was present need not imply that she was in agreement with their plan to take charge of Jesus. For instance, James Stevens explained:

“One need not suppose that Mary agreed with her sons’ conclusion about Jesus. She probably joined her sons to prevent them from doing something rash.”²⁰

¹⁷ Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, C.S.P., *The Question Box*, 366.

¹⁸ Alan Schreck, *Catholic and Christian*, 169.

¹⁹ F. C. H. Dreyer & E. Weller, *Roman Catholicism in the Light of Scripture*, 187–188.

²⁰ James D. Stevens, *The Gospel According to Mark*, in *Liberty Bible Commentary-New Testament*,

It is very possible that Mary had heard reports about Jesus that concerned her, and that she wanted to visit Jesus in person to assess His condition. It is unfair to suggest that Mary acted improperly in this situation.

MARY APPARITIONS

by Lydia Montes

While the Scriptures reveal that angels have appeared to people, Catholic church tradition reports the appearance of Mary. In the last century there have been countless alleged apparitions of Mary. It is reported that Mary, the mother of Jesus, appears supernaturally and gives messages that need to be passed on to all people, especially in the Catholic church. The following table gives details of some alleged apparitions.

Marian title	Year	Location	Seers
Our Lady of Guadalupe	1531	Mexico City, Mexico	Juan Diego
Mary appeared to an Aztec man named Juan who had recently converted to the Catholic faith. Her message was to build a church on the spot of the apparition. Her image was imprinted on Juan's cloak to convince the local bishop. This image is still on display in Mexico and is a symbol of the Catholic faith in Mexico.			
Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal (Our Lady of Graces)	1830	Paris, France	Catherine Laboure
Catherine was a novice at the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. She reported that Mary appeared to her one night and asked her to make a medal called the Miraculous Medal and that whoever wore it would receive great graces.			
Our Lady of La Salette	1846	La Salette-Fallavaux, France	Melanie Calvat, Maximin Giraud
Two shepherd children saw Mary weeping because of the disrespect people showed to Sundays and they got a secret message which they gave to Pope Pius IX. This Pope proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Papal infallibility and introduced Peter's Pence which was money donated (sometimes as a tax) by Catholics for financial support to the Bishop of Rome (the Pope).			
Our Lady of Lourdes (The Immaculate Conception)	1858	Lourdes, France	Bernadette Soubirous

Marian title	Year	Location	Seers
A 14 year old shepherd girl said Mary appeared to her identifying herself as the Immaculate Conception and revealed the location of a miraculous spring of water which would heal many people.			
Our Lady of Fatima (Our Lady of the Rosary, The Immaculate Heart of Mary)	1917	Fatima, Portugal	Lucia Santos, Jacinta Marto, Francisco Marto
Three shepherd children said they saw an angel and then Lucia saw Mary. They were told to make personal sacrifices to save people from hell, that the Immaculate Heart of Mary would triumph and there was a sun miracle. All popes who have reigned since this apparition have believed in its authenticity. Pope John Paul II credited Our Lady of Fatima for saving his life when he was shot in Rome on her feast day.			
Our Lady of Akita	1973	Akita, Japan	Sister Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa
A statue of Mary became illuminated and wept and told Sister Agnes messages which she heard even though she was deaf. The messages were about God who would punish humanity like never before, and wipe out most of the world unless people pray the Rosary.			
Our Lady of Medjugorje (Queen of Peace)	1981-	Medjugorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Jakov Colo, Ivan Dragicevic, Mirjana Dragicevic, Marija Pavlovic, Ivanka Ivankovic, Vicka Ivankovic
Since this date, there are reports of rosary beads turning gold, conversions to the Catholic faith and personal visions. The main requests of the apparitions are: pray the whole rosary daily; fast on Wednesdays and Fridays; attend Mass frequently; go to Confession at least monthly; read the Bible daily.			
Our Lady of Warraq	2009	Giza, Egypt	3000 people
About 3000 people of the Coptic Orthodox church say they saw Mary appear in luminous white robes above the middle dome of a church in Giza. The apparition lasted from 1am to 4am in the middle of the night.			

(Sourced from List of Marian apparitions, Wikipedia. Retrieved 23 January, 2021.)

This table lists just some of the alleged apparitions of Mary. There are countless more all over the world. Interesting to note is that most of her titles start with ‘Our Lady’ and that her appearance is distinctly representative of the cultural heritage of the person who sees her. For example, in Japan, Mary appears to look Japanese. In Portugal, she looks Portuguese. In the Mexican image, she looks like a native Mexican. Don’t you think that this is strange, since the Mary of the Bible was of Jewish heritage and would have most likely looked Hebrew? The apostle Paul warned that “even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). Either these visionaries are making this all up or they are really witnessing something supernatural. If these visions are real, how can we know if they are a deceiving wonder or a genuine message from God? There is only one way—read what is written in the Scriptures. What does the Word of God teach? If the messages from these apparitions are contrary to God’s Word then they are undoubtedly satanic in nature. The real mother of Jesus would never speak contrary to God’s Word. No matter how convincing these apparitions or accompanying miracles may be, we need to test them against what is said in the Scriptures, since demons have the power to delude people with supernatural wonders.

What are these messages about anyway? Most messages from this Mary request believers to pray and make sacrifices to save sinners from hell. They are instructed to pray the rosary and to be devoted to Mary honouring her with exalted titles. They are told to take part in more Catholic church practices like going to confession and Mass. None of these messages agree with what is written in the Scriptures. They are more focused on keeping people loyal to the Catholic church and all its teachings and doctrines. In the alleged apparitions at Fatima, Portugal, which are supported by several popes to be true, Mary is referred to as the “Most Holy Mother” and having an “Immaculate Heart.” The Scriptures never mention anywhere that Mary is sinless, instead it teaches that everyone except God is a sinner. The apparitions at Fatima proclaim the rosary as the remedy for sin and evil in the world. Seers are told that if they pray the rosary to Mary, they will save souls from hell and stop disasters happening upon earth. This is not biblical. There is only one mediator and saviour for sinners, it is Jesus Christ. “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).¹

1 RAS Note: Mary herself recognized the need for and praised God as “my Savior” (Luke 1:47). Additionally, God’s offer of salvation for sinners extends only to all mankind (cf. John 3:16), not fallen angels (cf. Hebrews 2:16).

In Scripture we are always told to pray only to the living God (Romans 15:30; Acts 8:24; Acts 12:5). God teaches us in the Scriptures that we should not be in contact with the dead in any form. It is forbidden. Would God allow Mary to do something that he has forbidden? “There shall not be found among you anyone who... inquires of the dead...” (Deuteronomy 18:10–12). A repeated message of Fatima is the call for reparation and penance. This is a Catholic church teaching that states every human being must make amends with God and Mary for sins committed against them. In contrast, the Scriptures teach that when a person repents and believes in Jesus Christ their Saviour, they are forgiven of all their sins and the punishment they deserve has been paid in full by Jesus Christ who “was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). The apostle Paul taught “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1–2). If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and repent of your sinfulness before him, then he will forgive every past, present and future sin you may commit. He has paid the price of all your sins for you. All God wants of his believers is to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1–2).

Another message from the Lady of Fatima is she wants people to bow down and venerate images associated with the apparition. One of the ten commandments God gave Moses was: “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below” (Exodus 20:4). When Cornelius met the apostle Peter and got on his knees to worship him, Peter told him to “stand up; I too am a man” (Acts 10:25–26). All worship is to be directed to God alone. Praying to Mary is contrary to the scriptural admonition to pray to God alone. To pray to Mary on a worldwide basis is to ascribe her with attributes which only God possesses, such as omnipresence and omniscience. She does not have God’s powers otherwise she would be like God. No one is like God. It is idolatry to worship anyone but God alone. How does God want us to worship him? “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

While Satan’s power is limited, he can perform miracles to deceive people and draw them away from God. These apparitions of Mary

direct people away from Jesus Christ their only true Saviour and tell them to venerate and pray to Mary. Paul the apostle warned that the Antichrist would come with “power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception” (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10). Matthew warns in his Gospel that “false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24). Apparitions of Mary are believed by millions of Catholics all over the world today, even though most of the messages contradict the Word of God. The messages encourage devotion to Mary and salvation to be earned by works. They never teach that Jesus is the only mediator and intercessor between God and man (Hebrews 7:25). Only by reading and believing the Word of God, can we know the truth.

Here are some apparition statements allegedly given by Mary to the seers taken from the documentary called ‘Messages from Heaven’ (Tetlow, 2004). These quotes are from Marian apparitions with either full Catholic church approval or with an imprimatur of a bishop or affirmed by the Pope and many cardinals. These messages are then contrasted to what is written in the Scriptures.

List of the alleged messages of Mary

In this list, the alleged message of the Marian apparition is provided first, and then below is provided a biblical response.

Apparition Message

Our Lady of Medjugorje: “Dear children, today I invite you to ask yourself why I am with you this long. I am the Mediatrix between you and God.”

Message to Father Gobbi: “Do not let yourselves be seized by fear of discouragement. Have great confidence in the powerful work of intercession and mediation of your heavenly mother.”

What is written in the Scriptures

“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

Apparition Message

Our Lady of Betania, Venezuela: “Little children, I am the mother

of good counsel, mediator, who is trying to persuade you to listen to the call. My messages are faith, love and hope. More than anything it brings reconciliation between people and nations. It is the only thing that can save this century from war and eternal death.”

The Lady of all Nations: “The world is degenerating so much so that it was necessary for the Father and the Son to send me into the world among all the peoples in order to be their advocate and to save them.”

Our Lady of Medjugorje: “I call upon you to open yourself completely to me so that through each of you I may be able to convert and save the world.”

Our Lady of Akita, Japan: “I alone am able still to save you from the calamities which approach. Those who place their confidence in me will be saved.”

Message from Our Lady of San Nicolas: “My daughter, in this time I am the ark for all your brethren. I am the ark of peace. I am the ark of salvation. The ark where my children must enter if they wish to live in the kingdom of God.”

What is written in the Scriptures

The Scriptures teach that God sent Jesus Christ to save people and the Holy Spirit to be their advocate:

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). “Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:11–12).

Apparition Message

Our Lady of Fatima: “You will never be alone. My Immaculate heart will be your refuge and the way which will lead you to God.”

What is written in the Scriptures

The Mary of the Scriptures was a humble obedient handmaid of God. She is not omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent. These are qualities God alone possesses, otherwise he would fail to be God and the person with these qualities would be God:

“The Lord is exalted over all the nations, His glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, the One enthroned on high?” (Psalm 113:4–5).

The only way to God the Father is through Jesus Christ his Son as written in the Scriptures:

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (John 14:6).

Apparition Message

Message to Father Gobbi: “At every moment you must be just as I would have you be. At every moment you must do just what I would have you to do. Do not be afraid. I will always be near you.”

Message to Bernardo Martinez of Cuapa, Nicaragua: “Do not be grieved. I am with all of you even though you do not see me. I am mother of all you sinners.”

What is written in the Scriptures

Before Jesus ascended into heaven he gave the great commission to his disciples saying:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20).

Apparition Message

Lady of all Nations, Amsterdam: “I stand here as the Co-redemptrix and Advocate. Everything should be concentrated on that. Repeat this after me: The new dogma will be the dogma of the Co-redemptrix.”

Message to Father Gobbi: “Until I am acknowledged there, where the most Holy Trinity has willed me to be I will not be able to exercise my power fully in the maternal work of co-redemption and of the universal mediation of graces.”

What is written in the Scriptures

The throne of God is for God alone! Who else wants to sit there in place of the most Holy Trinity? None other than Lucifer and all who want to be like God themselves!:

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high;

I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north” (Isaiah 14:12–13).

Do you think Mary, the humble servant of the Lord, would ever want to be like God and sit on his throne to rule the world?

Apparition Message

Our Lady of Medjugorje: “I love you even when you are far away from me and my son. I ask you not to allow my heart to shed tears of blood because of the souls who are being lost through sin.”

Our Lady of La Salette, France: “For a long time I have suffered for you. If I do 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.”

What is written in the Scriptures

“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation’” (Revelation 5:9).

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified . . . Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin” (Hebrews 10:12–14,18).

Over 2000 years ago, Jesus Christ suffered a bloody death on the cross which was the offering of himself as the perfect sacrifice and ransom for all the sins of humanity. Since that time, there is no longer any offering or sacrifice anyone can make for the forgiveness or reparation of sin! The price has been paid by God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Nothing you or I or anyone else can do, can add to that perfect sacrifice.

Apparition Message

Message to Father Gobbi: “As mother I want to tell you that I am here with you represented by the statue you have here. Each of my statues is a sign of a presence of mine and reminds you of your

heavenly mother therefore it must be honoured and put in places of greater veneration. You should look with love at every image of your heavenly mother.”

Our Lady of Guadalupe: “I ardently desire a temple built for me here where I can show and offer all my love, compassion, help and protection. For I am your merciful mother.”

What is written in the Scriptures

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in the heavens above, on the earth below, or in the waters beneath. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:4–5).

“So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female” (Deuteronomy 4:15–16).

Apparition Message

To St Brigid, Sweden: “I am Mary the Queen of Heaven and the Queen of angels.”

What is written in the Scriptures

“The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven. And they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger . . . Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched” (Jeremiah 7:18, 20).

People are only saved through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; 16:30–31). God did not change his plan of salvation to go through Mary! For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). False apparitions claiming to be Mary are leading people to accepting Antichrist. A visionary at Medjugorje said that Mary has come for all her children, whether they are Catholic, Muslim, Protestant and other religions (Weible, 1989). This Mary speaks of religion as divisive and wants people of all faiths to unite under her, which essentially means to unite all religions

under the Roman Catholic church. In fact, many non-Catholics have converted to the Roman Catholic faith after an apparition experience.

Satan is a master deceiver and can appear as an angel of light. The Word of God is light—so Satan can manifest himself in the form of truth and appear to be true and yet be deceptive (Oakland, 2004). The apostle Paul stated that Satan is the god of this world and plans to deceive the whole world. He blinds minds so that they cannot see the light of the true glorious gospel of grace that leads to salvation. After the amazing experience of witnessing the transfiguration of Christ on Mt Tabor², Peter the apostle made it clear in his teachings that it was important to make judgments based on the Word of God and not on personal experiences. We must be careful to always examine everything we read, see, or hear against the Scriptures, whether it be traditions, religious doctrines, supernatural occurrences, myths or individual opinions. “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).³

About the Author

We want to thank Mrs. Lydia Montes for sharing her article and her witness with us and you, our readers. Please read how the Lord has worked in her life, setting her free from deception and finding faith alone in Jesus!

“I used to be a traditional Roman Catholic who took my religion very seriously. I worked as a teacher and taught the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to children and adults. I was involved in the Marian Movement of Priests, prayed the rosary daily, made pilgrimages to Marian shrines and listened to messages from apparitions occurring all around the world. I even made pilgrimages to Fatima, Portugal, to pray to Mary and I had an audience with Pope John Paul II in Rome whom I admired and whose teachings I followed. I also spent some years involved with the Catholic cult, Opus Dei.

2 RAS Note: “Tradition holds that [Mt.] Tabor was the site of Jesus’ transfiguration (Mark 9:2), although no evidence exists to validate the claim.” Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (“Tabor”, p. 1528) Butler, Trent C., Chad Brand, Steve Bond, and E. Ray Clendenen, eds. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.

3 This article represents Chapter 6 of the book “*What do we really know about Mary? An Examination Of Scripture In Contrast To Popular Beliefs*” Copyright © 2021 Lydia Montes. Used by permission. Lydia’s book with all supporting references (accessed January 15, 2022) is located at <https://d2114hms07dut1.cloudfront.net/customers/c6c15290-b8d0-11eb-b10f-0614187498c1/sites/c6f4ef1a-b8d0-11eb-8655-0614187498c1/files/426c9c00-4be9-11ec-8ecd-3f1cce1cdd1e/original/file.pdf>.

It wasn't until years later, when I got married and moved to another location in Australia, that I cut ties with the Catholic organizations. I stopped praying to Mary and the saints but felt guilty about it. I focused more on God my Father but I was afraid of losing my faith. So, I prayed to Jesus about this and various thoughts came into my mind such as: "You will know a tree by its fruit," "I am the way, the truth and the life," and "I am the good shepherd that looks after his sheep."

Around that time, a Christian friend invited me to a Bible study. After several months of reading some of Paul's letters in the Bible, it became increasingly clear that much of what I had been taught by the Catholic Church was not in Scripture. In fact, it even contradicted Scripture. This was a horrifying shock to me at first but then it made me very sad to have been so deceived for so long.

Once I understood that grace was a free gift from God, I put my complete faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone as my Lord and Savior. In the days that followed, although I felt great joy in my heart, having been set free by the truth, I felt great sorrow for all those Catholics I knew who were living believing a false Gospel. I also felt anger towards the religious institution of the Roman Catholic Church for misleading millions of people and not teaching them the true Gospel.

I also thought about the millions of Catholics who were following the messages of Mary from the apparitions. I wondered what I could do about this, so I prayed and felt led to write the book *What do we really know about Mary? An Examination Of Scripture In Contrast To Popular Beliefs*. I hope that this book will reach many deceived Catholics so that they can know what the real Mary is like and stop believing false teachings about her."

EVOLUTIONARY JUNK SCIENCE

by Freddy Davis

Elizabeth C. Turner is an Earth Science professor at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada. She is a geologist and paleobiologist. In a recent article, she asked the question, “Ever wonder how and when animals swanned onto the evolutionary stage?” You can read the article for yourself at <https://theconversation.com/a-new-fossil-discovery-may-add-hundreds-of-millions-of-years-to-the-evolutionary-history-of-animals-167945>.

Well, to begin with, she has made a *massive* assumption that she has no way to support—the assumption that naturalistic evolution actually explains reality. She is, obviously, totally committed to her belief that it does, but she must do it without evidence. It is her religious belief. Look at some of the comments she actually makes in the article:

“Although scientists have been investigating the evidence of biological evolution for over a century, some parts of the fossil record remain maddeningly enigmatic, and finding evidence of Earth’s earliest animals has been particularly challenging.”

(In other words, evidence isn’t there.)

“The seemingly sudden appearance of diverse, complex animals, many with hard parts, implies that there was a preceding interval during which early soft-bodied animals with no hard parts evolved from simpler animals.”

(Notice the word “implies.” There is no actual evidence so she gets her implications from her philosophical beliefs, not from science.)

“Unfortunately, until now, possible evidence of fossil animals in the interval of “hidden evolution” has been very rare and difficult to understand, leaving the timing and nature of evolutionary events unclear.”

(Hidden evolution? Unclear? Hidden means evidence doesn’t exist. It is unclear because there is no hard evidence.)

“This conundrum, known as “Darwin’s dilemma,” remains tantalizing and unresolved 160 years after the publication of *On the Origin of Species*.”

(It remains unresolved because there is no hard evidence to back up the theory.)

“There is indirect evidence regarding how and when animals may have appeared.”

(Indirect evidence? May have? Indirect evidence means they have taken data and tried to interpret it using a theory that they can’t prove.)

“It is widely accepted that sponges are the most basic animal in the animal evolutionary tree and therefore probably were the first to appear.”

(Probably?)

“Based on these reasonable assumptions, sponges may have existed as much as 900 million years ago.”

(Reasonable assumptions? It can only be considered reasonable if the assumptions can be demonstrated to be true—which they can’t.)

“I am a geologist and paleobiologist who works on very old limestone. Recently, I described this exact microstructure in 890-million-year-old rocks from northern Canada, proposing that it could be evidence of sponges that are several hundred million years older than the next-youngest uncontested sponge fossil. Although my proposal may initially seem outrageous, it is consistent with predictions and assumptions that are common in the paleontological community If these are indeed sponge fossils, animal evolution can be pushed back by several hundred million years.”

(Could be evidence? If these are ...? There is nothing here but speculation. There is no actual science to back it up.)

“My unusual fossil material may provide a new perspective on Darwin’s dilemma. However, radical new ideas are generally not fully accepted by the scientific community without vigorous discussion... At some point, probably years in the future, a consensus may develop based on further work.”

(May provide? Consensus may develop? Seriously?)

Good grief! All of the assumptions and speculation in this article was beginning to make my head spin.

I have read tons of articles where evolutionary scientists have put forth their ideas about how the life forms that currently exist on earth got here, and they all do the same thing this writer has done. First, they assume, without any hard scientific evidence, that naturalistic evolution is true. Then, based on that assumption, they begin speculating about what “may have” happened.

What you need to know is that there is not one bit of science to be seen. These “scientists” gather all kinds of data (fossils, anatomical studies, DNA sequences, etc.) for their studies. But data is not science. Data is data. It has to be interpreted through some philosophical lens. So what do these folks do? They pick the naturalistic lens, then begin trying to figure out how the data can support their beliefs. Did you notice? They don’t start with science. They start with their assumption that evolution is true. The truth is, though, there is no actual science that shows naturalistic evolution is even possible. There is no science able to demonstrate that less complex life forms can naturally evolve to more complex forms. It is assumed to be true, then the speculation begins as they try to figure out how it might be possible. What you are looking at here is religion, not science.

Honestly, it is easy to get intimidated by all of these academics with their advanced degrees—especially when they start blasting away at those who don’t believe in Naturalism. They are convinced that people who don’t believe like they do are ignorant oafs—and they are not shy about talking down to the “peons.”

But don’t be intimidated! When they do that, they are not sharing science, they are sharing their religious beliefs—and those beliefs are simply false. Before you allow yourself to be intimidated like that, make them show you the actual science that shows naturalistic evolution is even possible. Push back on them as hard as they push on you and make them show you the science. If you do that, they will eventually just walk away. They will walk away because there is no science to show.

Freddy Davis is the president of MarketFaith Ministries. He is the author of numerous books and has a background as an international missionary, pastor, radio host, worldview trainer, and entrepreneur. Freddy is a graduate of Florida State University with a BS in Communication, and holds MDiv and DMin degrees from

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QUIZ: THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST IN THEOLOGY

1. Which is a correct statement about the historical development of Christology in the Church Age?
 - a. The belief that Jesus is God developed in the Church over time.
 - b. The Eastern Church resisted belief in Christ's deity.
 - c. Belief in the deity of Christ began at the Council of Nicaea in 325.
 - d. The Church has always believed in the deity of Christ.
2. Nestorianism was an early Church heresy that taught:
 - a. Jesus was Nestorian rather than Jewish.
 - b. Jesus was really two persons—one human and the other divine.
 - c. Jesus denied being God.
 - d. Jesus didn't exist as a real historical figure.
3. Which is not true of Arianism?
 - a. Jesus was a created angel.
 - b. Denied the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - c. Jesus came to Earth from another planet.
 - d. Opposed valiantly by Athanasius.
4. Which is not true of Docetism?
 - a. Denied the deity of Christ.
 - b. Denied that Jesus had a human body.
 - c. Jesus left no footprints when He walked.
 - d. Docetism was a form of Gnosticism.
5. What did Eutychianism teach?
 - a. The divine and human natures of Christ were mixed—a tertium quid.
 - b. Jesus and John the Baptist fused to become one personality—a baptize unito.
 - c. Jesus lost His divinity when He descended to Hades.
 - d. Jesus' soul (His Eutychian) became trapped in Hades for a time.

6. Which is a correct statement about Jesus?

- a. He has existed for all eternity as the Son of God.
- b. He was the first creation of God the Father, and that He created everything else.
- c. Jesus pre-existed only as a perfect idea in the mind of God the Father.
- d. Jesus began as an emanation from God.

7. Which is a correct statement about Jesus?

- a. Jesus gave up His divinity at His incarnation.
- b. Jesus was semi-divine while on Earth.
- c. Jesus denied His deity while on Earth.
- d. Jesus remained fully God at His incarnation

8. Which is a correct statement about Jesus?

- a. Jesus (the Son of God), the Father, and the Holy Spirit are each distinct gods.
- b. Jesus is God the Father.
- c. Jesus is God the Holy Spirit
- d. Jesus (the Son of God), the Father, and the Holy Spirit are distinct divine persons present as one eternal monotheistic God.

9. Which is a correct theological statement about Jesus?

- a. Everything is Jesus and Jesus is everything (pantheism).
- b. Jesus is the creator of all things.
- c. Jesus and the universe have co-existed for eternity (dualism).
- d. Jesus is divine like we are all divine.

10. Which is not true of Jesus?

- a. Jesus was born of a virgin.
- b. Jesus rose bodily from the grave.
- c. Jesus called down fire and brimstone on the Pharisees.
- d. Jesus was crucified for the sins of the world.

Answers:

1d, 2b, 3c, 4a, 5a, 6a, 7d, 8d, 9b, 10c.

Personal Notes on the Articles:

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