

# Marian Visionaries Explored Afterlife Realms

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*Abstract: In the first two parts (April, 2011, July 2012) the author summarized the major events and supporting medical and para-psychological observations relative to the Medjugorje apparitional occurrences. In the third part (Oct. 2012), he explained how visionary experiences differ from hallucinations and offered arguments against the Superpsi hypothesis. In this fourth part, he examines the reports of the Medjugorje and other Marian visionaries concerning the afterlife planes or realms.*

## **Mental State of the Percipients**

The terminology used to describe the mental state of the Marian visionaries has been a matter of controversy. Those of us who have witnessed the apparitional events unanimously agree as to the normalcy and the healthy nature of the experience. Trance was a term used in the past to denote the mental state of visionaries when they see the apparition. This term has become outmoded and irrelevant, as we now know more about the apparitional experience. Trance is an abnormal state of awareness and attention and can be induced by autosuggestion or by another individual as in hypnotic suggestion or in mass experience with high emotion.

Ecstasy was a term introduced to replace trance and has been used loosely in theology to explain various religious experiences. Though short lived, ecstasy (or euphoria) is a normal phenomenon. Psychiatrists tend to associate this term with psychopathology. In psychiatry, it is defined as a heightened state of happiness observed in psychotic states, epilepsy and other organic conditions. A characteristic of ecstasy is that it is self-referent; for example, the flowers of spring 'open for me' (Sims, 1988) and is not a collective experience. In its extreme form, the patient becomes uncommunicative and so this term is not suitable to explain the collective visionary experience unless objective and subjective ecstasies are distinguished. Terms like ultra-consciousness, super-consciousness are also not helpful communicating terms because they can be self-induced mental states. I simply suggest that the Marian visionaries are in a unique mental state or in an apparitional psychic state; the specific characteristics of this mental state are induced and controlled by the apparition.

Terms like 'ecstasy' and 'trance' cannot explain the unique mental state of the visionaries, and are misleading. Stevenson suggested that the word 'idiophany' might be used to differentiate the unshared sensory experiences of the mentally ill (hallucinations) from the experiences – often paranormal – of those who are not mentally afflicted (Stevenson, 1983). Those experiencing what we may call true apparitions are in a private mental state – an idiophanous mental state, to modify the Stevensonian terminology (Pandarakalam, 1998). During the apparitional mental state the Medjugorje percipients are more alert, animated, and also more articulate. They appear less inhibited than in the non-apparitional periods.

## **Cognitive Dissonance**

When individuals entertain conflicting beliefs, they are in a state of conflict leading to cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Such a state of imbalance becomes intense if they are prompted to take contradictory courses of action. Consequently, the positives will be magnified and the negatives will be ignored and vice versa. Cognitive dissonance is an unpleasant mental state resulting from conflicting beliefs that prompt contradictory courses of action. This phenomenon occurs quite commonly among the people who have to judge a paranormal event. Witnesses tend to dress the truth or attempt to falsify the truth. This situation can be clearly observed when individuals are put under pressure to make up their minds about the authenticity of the apparitional occurrence at Medjugorje and subjective empiricism crumbles.

Only part of the experiences of the visionaries is provable objectively. Consequently, the initial witnesses of

the Medjugorje apparitions had to go through cognitive dissonance and this explains the reported division among the ecclesiastical authorities who had to investigate the apparitional events. There are also dogmatic goats and sheep as well as scientific goats and sheep associated with every paranormal occurrence. Medical tests helped to arrive at a correct judgment about the mental state of the visionaries and ease the tension among the people of different views. They have also been helpful to reduce the time lag that exists between the adoptions of convictions in the progressive medical quarters and in the more hidebound circles of general public. I have a professional duty to doubt subjective claims but the author respects the human fundamental right to enjoy unexplainable subjective beliefs.

### **Assertive Human Rights**

All human beings have individual rights and paranormal investigators in particular must be mindful of those rights. Gael Lindenfield(2001) lists them as follows:

1. The right to ask for what we want (realising that the other person has the right to say “No”).
2. The right to have an opinion, feelings and emotions and to express them appropriately.
3. The right to make statements which have no logical basis and which we do not have to justify (e.g. intuitive ideas and comments).
4. The right to make our own decisions and to cope with the consequences.
5. The right to choose whether or not to get involved in the problems of someone else.
6. The right to know about something and not to understand.
7. The right to be successful.
8. The right to make mistakes.
9. The right to change your mind.
10. The right to privacy.
11. The right to be alone and independent.
12. The right to change ourselves and be assertive people.

### **Discarnate Existence**

The main stream sciences seem to have never attempted to develop the conceptual tools and the vocabulary to handle the possibility of post mortem existence. The fact may be that science will not accept the possibility of discarnate survival without a new theory of physical reality. So the scientists of the early part of the twentieth century took the stance that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than to prove the existence of life after death – though of course they would not habitually have adopted such a metaphor as this. Attitudes have evolved, and we are now in a position, in which it may be postulated that there is scientific evidence to enable a suspension of disbelief in life after death (Braude, 2003).

The commonly cited types of evidence for discarnate existence are as follows: a) Clinical death experiences, b) Pre-death visions, c) Shared death experiences, d) Collective apparitions, e) Some forms of mediumship, particularly those that involve cross correspondence, drop in communications and physical phenomena, f) Children’s memories of previous lives, g) Electronic voice phenomenon, h) Instrumental trans-communications, i) Transplant cases. Some of the evidence for discarnate existence may not satisfy the criteria of physical sciences but follow the court room logic, and rely also on the information obtained through visionary experiences.

According to die-hard sceptics among survival researchers, there is now only as much evidence to justify belief in life after death as there is for the historical existence of dinosaurs. The likelihood that Marian apparitional experiences are authentic has been demonstrated scientifically. If we supplement the categories of evidence itemised above with the phenomenon of the Marian apparitions of the Twentieth Century, we find that there are compelling reasons to support those who are proponents of a belief in discarnate survival. Christianity is characterised as being less revelatory about the nature of discarnate existence than are certain oriental religions. This may be postulated as an outcome of the Judaic roots of Christianity, which account for its being a faith predicated on the living rather than on the dead. As a corollary of that, it is little concerned with the essentials of life after death.

Marian apparitions complement the teachings of the Bible, specifically by presenting evidence of different forms of discarnate existence. In her manifestations to visionaries, Mother Mary has reinforced the actuality of

the highest form of reality and pre-heavenly stages of existence. The events at Fatima, Medjugorje and Kibeho incorporate both a plane of purification and an eternal negative reality. Marian apparitions have also reaffirmed the existence of positive entities. Almost all the percipients at Medjugorje were shown heaven, purgatory and hell in their visions – the exceptions were Mirjana Dragicevic and Ivanka Ivankovic, who did not want to see hell. Two of the seers, Vicka and Jakov, claim that they were teleported to other realms by the apparition they experienced. Jakov, the youngest of the children, initially resisted because it required him to leave his sick mother behind (Bubalo, 1987). H.M. Brown records that these two visionaries were bodily transported to different realms, and during that time they are reported to have disappeared for 20 minutes (Brown, 1992). When I interviewed Ivan Dragicevic, he was adamant that what happened to the visionaries was not an out-of-the-body experience in which they experienced scenes of paradise. As for Vicka and Jakov, they insist that they experienced true transportation. All the visionaries that were vouchsafed a vision of hell assert that the realm features an especially distinctive environment and strange kinds of people. Teleportation involves destroying an object and recreating it – dematerialisation and materialisation. So the term teleportation may not be appropriate in this context but we have no substitute term. According to Vicka, she walked only a few meters with the apparition to enter into the new dimension. So it was not a distant travel. (Tele means distant.) The visionaries were physically transferred to another dimension, an inter-dimensional transportation.

The visionaries of 1917 at Fatima in Portugal were shown a vision of hell, and the Marian apparition at Fatima featured a realm of bewildered spirits as well as a heavenly one. Two of the Kibeho visionaries of 1981-89, in Rwanda, were also privileged to have otherworldly visions. Ilibagiza Immaculée, who was one of the observers at Kibeho from the very beginning, gives a detailed account (Ilibagiza, 2008) of their otherworldly guided expeditions. The direct personal awareness and contact with celestial dimensions of the seers has similarities to and differences from both other reported near-death experiences and astral travelling. Alphonsine Mumureke, who was a student at Kibeho College in Rwanda during the apparitions and the first visionary to see the Virgin, was told in advance that Our Lady would take her to travel with her. On 20 March 1982 Alphonsine announced to one of the sisters, the director of the college, and one of her classmates that she would appear to be dead, but that they were not to bury her as she had been promised by an apparition that she was to be taken on a mystical voyage. As pre-announced, Alphonsine was found to be lying in her bed on the following day. The subsequent commission of enquiry, which included medical experts, was told that all the tests possible were done to ascertain whether she was dead or in a deep sleep. Four men tried rolling her on to her side, but they couldn't move her. Then six men together tried to lift the slim teenager, but in vain (she weighed approximately 200 lb / 90 kg).

In the renowned Garabandal Marian apparitions that took place in Spain from 1962 to 1965, gravitational anomalies occurred in the form of inexplicable weight gain and loss in the visionaries during their apparitional experiences (Bebie, 1986; Gallego, 1994). The mechanism involved in such an increase of weight is the reverse of levitation; both are gravitational anomalies, and they add to the authenticity of the apparitional experiences. The occurrence of externally induced gravitational anomalies implies that the apparition is capable of exerting a powerful influence on the force of gravity and suggests that the events may involve a psychokinetic type of phenomenon (Pandarakalam, 2007). Alphonsine woke up after 18 hours of the externally induced death-like sleep and described her experiences over that passage of time. She recounted that she was initially transported to a very dark zone filled with shadows and groans of sadness and pain. She was taken to many other planes across the stars until arriving in a place of golden light filled with happiness and laughter, in which she could hear songs sung by many joyous voices – she could not see anyone singing. When she asked Mary why she could not see the happy souls, Our Lady replied that she could not glimpse them because of her terrestrial status.

Anathalie Mukamazimpaka, another Kibeho visionary, was also privileged to have mystical voyages to other dimensions. At the end of a five-hour experience, she collapsed to the ground, her limbs having become frozen with the same rigidity that Alphonsine had experienced. That marked the beginning of a seven-hour expedition to different dimensions, accompanied by Mary. In the first world they visited landscapes of varying shades of vivid colour and light, in which spirits travelled from place to place by sliding through the light. The description is reminiscent of the upper astral dimension or summerland mentioned in survival research literature (Fontana, 2009). Another unusual land visited by Anathalie was illuminated only by white light. In it

she saw seven handsome men wearing white cloaks, who were creating the most melodious music, without any instruments. Our Lady described it to her as the place of communion and told her that the men were angels watching over Earth and ministering to humanity.

Anathalie recollects that she floated to another three different worlds with Mary – who identified herself as the Mother of the Word – each of which had its own characteristic colour and light. The plane next to the dimension of angels was also a blissful place; there she saw millions of people dressed in white. It was described as the place of the cherished of God. From there they moved to a world in which the light was as dim as dusk. Although the people who inhabited this dimension were apparently content, they appeared also to be sad and suffering – this was the place of purification. The last place they visited was a land of twilight where the only illumination was an unpleasant shade of red. It reminded Anathalie of congealed blood and there the inhabitants were thoroughly unhappy. Their anguish pained her intensely and Anathalie recognised it as hell.

The mystical voyages of the Kibeho visionaries would make sense to those who are familiar with Robert Monroe's trilogy and with his para-physical and transcendent extra-somatic experiences, which have been an inspiration for particle physicists (Monroe, 1977, 1985, 1994). Maria Simma, an Austrian clairvoyant visionary, also had encounters with poor souls from purgatory, and they described their situation as having three planes (Eltz, 2002). Emanuel Swedenborg, the 18<sup>th</sup> century scientist, statesman, and visionary, while exploring the realm of heaven and hell, also described pre heaven stages (Swedenborg, 2000, 2010). The pre-heaven stages revealed by Marian visionaries, Swedenborg and Maria Simma encapsulate a parallel with the 'three rings' of Monroe. Being in purgatory may be explained as like someone having to re-sit an examination, their background knowledge being only that of an out-of-date syllabus. Even the highest truths humans cherish are only half truths. The Marian visionaries had a glimpse of eternity or just heard a few murmurings of it. The words of the late Fr. Slavko Barbaric, the then spiritual director of the visionaries who was familiar with paranormal literature, are highly significant. He said: "I think they were permitted to see...so that they could witness to us...So they are naive witnesses – we know it exists, we saw it" (Connel,1990). Kibeho apparitions were adapted to the prevailing local culture.

Narrations of near-death experiences reveal that the level of the dimension that the traveller experiences is dependent upon the energy levels and frequencies of light in the spiritual body of the individual. Those are based on individual human behaviour while on Earth, and possibly also depend on the energy level and frequencies of light of the helpers who come to assist their transition (Lundahl and Gibson, 2000). The universe may be compared to a moral gymnasium. The moral gravity we acquire in our terrestrial life pulls us to our allotted slots in the afterlife, and those follows the law of affinity. Colloquially, birds of a feather flock together.

It is my contention that people who place reliance on ill-informed details of discarnate existence which are obtained through mediumistic communications may become even more confused in the immediate post-mortem situation, after they pass over into the eternal realm. The Catholic Church has a cautious approach to mediumship practice in that it can lead to spiritual passivity and spirit attachments. Mediumistic practices carry a spiritual health warning. Marian apparitions recommend self communication to heavenly realities through prayer and Eucharistic communion. Certain cases of mediumship provide some possible evidence for a kind of discarnate existence that is confined to the lower astral planes. A Chinese saying declares 'One day of earthly life is not equivalent to a thousand days of ghostly experiences.'

There are references to an eternal dismantlement (hell) and a higher sphere beyond the comprehension even of discarnate spirits in mediumistic literature. Mediumship is all about lower astral existence, and sometimes it is misrepresented. In fact, this type of existence may correspond to purgatory, which is a both a place and a state of consciousness. It would be a mistake to consider the dense grey lowest plane from which discarnate spirits eventually become elevated as hell and substituting it for the real hidden hellish existence revealed through Marian apparitions or through biblical and other religious doctrines. Discarnate spirits themselves misconstrue the lowest astral plane as hell. The existence of hell was taken for granted over the years as the world view and world picture changed with scientific revolution; it was written off as a medieval priest-craft or laughed at as a private torture chamber of God. Medjugorje visionaries state that the apparition told them: "The truth is that God does not send anyone to hell, people choose to go by their own rebellion and God honours their choice." Theologians argue that impure spirits being deceitful try to hide themselves most cunningly from being discovered and convince the humans that hell does not exist.

Mother Mary has reaffirmed the existence of negative spirits more than a hundred times at Medjugorje. Impure spirits succeed in making our lives abnormal, misleading us so that we deliberately turn away and thereafter become destructive. Awareness of the existence of wild animals generates anxiety and discomfort in a person who travels in a forest, and that knowledge will force them to take precautions against attack. A person who is unaware of or denies the presence of wild animals in the forest may be relaxed for a while, but become prey to them during their journey. The knowledge of negative entities for us human beings who are struggling on this earthly planet is analogous to this. They influence us through the machineries of civilisation. Behind the veil of the visible world there is a spiritual struggle involving all human beings. We will become powerless in this situation if we are not well equipped to cope with it. The negative entities have been hiding behind the psychiatric terms of delusion, hallucination and psycho-dynamic jargons, and they have been more active than ever before. Their spiritual influence on us means that human behaviour has also a parapsychodynamic element. Our Lady is urging us towards global liberation from the captivity of Satan through prayer and fasting. Our Lady's confirmation of the spiritistic component in the conflicting life events we all have to face is priceless information, and indubitably of deep significance to us.

All the Marian visionaries unanimously agree on the existence of an unending negative realm. Survival researchers have not shed much light on this most tragic place, in which some incarnates may end up owing to their own choice and unwillingness to overcome their spiritual shortcomings. In general, the Kibeho and Medjugorje visionaries' narrations about the para-physical and spiritual dimensions tally with F.W.H. Myers' seven planes (Fontana, 2009), provided an eighth plane of eternal dismantlement is added to them. Commencing with the Earth plane, these different levels may be summarised as follows.

The four planes of form

1. Earth (including earth-bound spirits)
2. Hades, which includes the lowest level of purgatory
3. The plane of illusion or lower astral, which may include another level of purification
4. The plane of color, or upper astral or summerland

The three formless planes or planes of pure consciousness

5. The plane of pure flame – the sphere of the Holy Spirit
6. The plane of pure light – the Christ sphere
7. The plane of contemplation of the supreme consciousness – the sphere of God the Father.
8. A hidden plan – negative realm

The above narration is only an approximate mapping of after-life. We are trying to understand the incomprehensible. Michael Tymn (2011) concluded his discussion on the nature of after life: "In effect, the celestial world does not easily lend itself to analysis by using terrestrial methods and reasoning. Those desiring to understand the celestial world must open their minds and forget about applying only the five senses and known science." Smythies (1988) drew attention to human limitations, concluding his conjectures on higher dimensional spaces by comparing our situation to an imagined race of scientist fish living at the bottom of the sea and constructing a system of physics, which they considered, gave a complete account of events of their world. Their scientific system would not include any mention of the surface of the sea because they had never seen it – nor would they even be aware of its existence. Our scientific ignorance and fundamental human limitations become evident when investigating discarnate survival from a scientific perspective. Perhaps, we are in a comparable situation to that of the scientist fish. Let alone the transcendence, our cognitive closure limits us in appreciating even our own consciousness fully. Time-fullness is like eternity; in it, past, present and future are harmoniously blended. Formless planes may be planes of form-fullness. It would be foolish – and perhaps deceitful – to deny the existence of an eighth plane, of hell, one that is confirmed by Marian apparitional experiences. Survival research is a human search through science to find their destiny in time and Marian apparitions are a Motherly attempt to guide her children to find their destiny in eternity: scientific findings should be compared and contrasted with Marian apparitions. In my view, Marian apparitions are a guiding star for survival researchers.

Marian apparitions add to our existing scientific knowledge about life after death in a healthy way. It appears that the human brain is designed to have some doubts about discarnate survival for some reason and a fool proof evidence of post-mortem existence may have its down side in that somebody who is fed up with life might use it to justify ending his earthly life voluntarily (Fontana, 2001). An ultra-optimistic view of

discarnate life is spiritually counterproductive. While we try to prove discarnate existence, we should also highlight the sanctity of life. It may also be remembered that suicide bombers also have a strong/abnormal conviction of life after death. Suicide victims only transfer the location of their sufferings from physical reality to a non-physical dimension (Tymn, 2011). In this trapped condition they are tormented with their unfinished earthly issues and become more disabled to solve them. Their discarnate relatives and friends can only watch their sufferings helplessly.

The Marian apparitional occurrences of the twentieth century are urging us to recognise the discarnate existence of the higher planes. Survival researchers need to move on and focus on these, the richest realities. The theological stance has always been that Marian apparitions are essentially a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Essentially, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, is the 'spirit control' in Mary's terrestrial appearances. Physicists recognise four fundamental physical forces; by analogy, parapsychologists should consider the importance of recognising the Holy Spirit as one of the three fundamental spiritual forces.

### **Strategies for a Paradigmatic Shift**

John Beloff (2001) postulated four strategies to challenge the scepticism of mainstream scientists regarding paranormal phenomena. One of these is a public demonstration of a blatantly paranormal phenomenon that could be recorded in a permanent form, enabling others to share in the experience. Another is the production of a permanent paranormal object that would transfer the onus of explanation to the physicalist. The apparitional experiences at Medjugorje and Garabandal have been recorded on video and are therefore publicly demonstrated, fulfilling the first of Beloff's requirements. The recordings are available internationally as videos and on YouTube.

As for the second strategy, the spring that arose at Lourdes, exposed by St. Bernadette in 1858, and the image of Mary that appeared on the cloak of Juan Diego, the seer at Guadalupe in Mexico in 1531, are permanent objects arising out of Marian apparitional experiences. We shall examine first the latter of these two examples. According to oral tradition and historical documentation, in 1531 the Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego, an Aztec Indian, in Mexico. During a second visit an image of the Virgin appeared on his cape. In modern times entomology, biophysics, ophthalmology and computer engineering technology have all contributed to scientific study of the image, supporting its mystical origin. The fabric, made of ayate fibres used by the Indians, generally deteriorates after 20 years, but the image and the fabric on which the image of Mary is imprinted have lasted for about 480 years, in spite of exposure to infrared and ultraviolet radiation from the tens of thousands of candles near it and the humid, salty environment of Mexico City, where it is kept. It has been found that the image is not made from naturally occurring pigments of animal or mineral origin, though there were no synthetic colourings in the sixteenth century. Infrared analysis has demonstrated that there is no under-drawing and no brush strokes, and that the fabric has not been subjected to any known technique. The eyes of the Virgin have the quality of reflecting some viewers in the pupils. The image also demonstrates iridescence: the image changes in colour slightly according to the angle from which it is viewed, a quality which is not achievable by painters. All these findings point to the conclusion that the image on the cloak is more like that of an instant photograph than a man-made painted picture (Johnston, 1981).

The events that led to the emergence of the spring at Lourdes on 25 February 1858 are well documented. The absence of unusual ESP powers on the part of Bernadette Soubirous, the percipient, and her reluctance to drink the muddy water emanating from the new spring and eat the grass – though asked to do so by the apparition – rule out an alternate paranormal explanation, that might otherwise be postulated, and would have involved the percipient's own clairvoyant detection of the spring. Moreover, all of the following point to a true Marian apparition at Lourdes: strong motivation on the part of the apparition, quasi-physical features of the apparition, integration of the apparition with the natural environment, utmost loyalty and obedience by the percipient to the image she saw, and controlled psychokinetic type manifestations. A manifestation of promised visible signs is awaited on the rocky hills of Medjugorje and among the pines of Garabandal.

### **Church's Position**

The Catholic Church is the official care taker of Marian apparitions even though Mary is the Mother of all nations. The Church's stance has always been very stringent, devoid of sentiments in discerning Marian apparitions, and that is the case with Medjugorje as well. The Bishop in the diocese to which Medjugorje belongs, Msgr. Zanic of Mostar, who was initially favourable towards Medjugorje events, changed his mind

and became highly critical as he noted minor inconsistencies in the statements of two of the visionaries, but four of them remained strictly consistent with their uttering. One has to remember the young seers were in the most unexpected and extraordinary circumstances in the early days of the apparitional occurrences and the inconsistencies were due to their own perplexity of the situations they were committed to. Therefore, they are insignificant in the whole picture of Medjugorje phenomenon. The Bishop organised two committees, neither of which could not find solid proof to conclude that Marian apparitions had occurred at Medjugorje. Bishop Ratko Peric, his successor, currently follows the same view. There was an official church investigation in 1991 which did not come to any conclusions about the supernatural nature of Medjugorje. Interestingly, Medjugorje has grown robustly with the hidden blessings of Pope John Paul II, who is well known for his Marian devotion. Pope Benedict XVI organised a commission in 2010 to investigate Medjugorje and the commission is expected to finish its search towards the end of 2012. Scientific evidences cannot counter cultural or dogmatic scepticism. My contention is that an ideal theological conclusion should be that Medjugorje apparitional occurrences are true Marian apparitions until proved otherwise; scientists can think only in terms of probabilities. Science insists on full evidences and theologians depend on sufficient evidences to prove their case. Scientists are permitted to falsify, modify and confirm their observations in the course of their investigations whereas theologians are expected to be more fallible and this puts the latter in a difficult predicament. A true scientist of the paranormal should have a minimal degree of initial gullibility that would break the opening scepticism and should be prepared to set his boggle threshold to infinity.

If the intention is to find evidences for debunking a paranormal phenomena, it is better to investigate the phenomena individually rather than forming a group. Many high ranking church officials have visited Medjugorje, either out of piety or because of personal investigatory intent. One such lone investigator was Cardinal Christopher Schorborn of Vienna who openly expressed his conviction that the Virgin Mary does appear in Medjugorje. He officially visited Medjugorje during the Christmas season of 2009 while I was also in attendance. He has hosted two of the Medjugorje visionaries for public apparition in St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. As the director of the current catechism of the Catholic Church, he has been unable to find anything contrary to Christian teaching in the Virgin Mary's messages. He also notices that if there had been a certain sensation, everything surely would have disappeared because it is impossible to give sensational messages every week, month and years. According to the cardinal, the messages are almost the alphabet of Christian life of faith and it is his wish that the phenomena of Medjugorje cease to be dramatized by overenthusiastic witnesses and informants (Marschner, 2011). The astute observer and believer of Medjugorje, Cardinal Schorborn states that Marian apparitions have a common grammar and a special style, and theologians have to study the syntax of Mary's appearances and in that context to study the phenomenon of Medjugorje.

"Hold on to Christ and for the rest, remain uncommitted" is the traditional attitude of the Church. In a technologically minded world society nurtured by scientific culture, the Marian apparitional occurrences offer scientific pointers to Christ. Dr.N. Bartulica (1991), the American psychiatrist with a Croatian background, after interviewing the visionaries, concluded that Medjugorje will remain in the history of either unusual human behaviour or authentic apparitions, regardless of the Church's final verdict. Unlike the traditional Catholic teachings, both Medjugorje and Kibeho visionaries urge the Christians to give due respect and appreciation to all religious faith, while critics of Medjugorje find such an attitude as an objection to their authenticity. All religions may not be similar or identical and equal, but they are all complementary to each other.

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