

**OUR  
CELESTIAL VISITOR  
(The Flying Virgin  
and  
Space Age Astronomy)**

by  
**F.A. RIDLEY**

*Dedicated to the memory of Joseph  
McCabe, historian of Catholic dogma and  
author of 'Twelve Years in a Monastery'.*

*"The Hebrew patriarchs in their adversity  
were comforted by the thought of the Immaculate  
Conception of the Mother of God."  
— Pope Pius X, 1903-14.*

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Prologue: The Assumption of the Virgin
3. Celestial Visits:
  - i. Guadalupe
  - ii. Lourdes
  - iii. Fatima
  - iv. Our Celestial Visitor: A Critical View
4. Epilogue: The Flying Virgin and Space Age Astronomy

# OUR CELESTIAL VISITOR

## (The Flying Virgin and Space Age Astronomy)

by F.A. RIDLEY

### Introduction

The visit to England of Pope John-Paul II in the Summer of 1982 has naturally aroused much interest. It is actually the first visit ever paid by a reigning Pope to these islands during the fourteen centuries (597-1982) during which Christianity has been established in this country.

The present writer, with several publications on the Papacy to his credit, does not propose however to add to their number here. Instead, the author proposes to devote the following pages to the most recent dogma promulgated by an earlier Pope (Pius XII, 1935-58), the Assumption of the Virgin Mary bodily into heaven and some of the more remarkable consequences of that notable event.

For the Virgin Mary is obviously nostalgic to revisit the planet that she formerly inhabited, at least if we are to judge by the frequency of her appearances? The three most notable of such reappearances seem to have been respectively Guadalupe (1531), and Lourdes (1858) and Fatima (1917). In reviewing the circumstances of these celestial reappearances, the author will seek to draw attention to contemporary trends in Vatican policy which the appearances of the Virgin so opportunely supported. It has frequently been remarked that the Roman Catholic Church represents a totalitarian organisation of extraordinary intelligence

and comprehension. If its views of the next world may be legitimately questioned, nobody can reasonably doubt its comprehensive knowledge of this terrestrial planet on which it actually operates. In which connection the author seeks to establish the fact that our 'celestial visitor' has frequently acted as a powerful auxiliary to contemporary Papal policy.

However, by a curious coincidence and one which poses grave doubts on the alleged infallibility of the Papacy, within the self-same decade (1949-59) that witnessed the promulgation of the dogma of the bodily ascension of the Virgin Mary, another and more terrestrial kind of ascension took place — the first Sputniks left the atmosphere behind and began to penetrate the infinite gulfs of the universe. The space age had begun!

Our final section accordingly shall be devoted to some of the peculiar consequences of Mary's bodily ascension into heaven and her repeated returns to Earth, features that the author hopes to survey both from the standpoint of Catholic theology and of contemporary space age astronomy.

With the coming of the space age, universal history has entered a new era. It is time to review the latest dogma of religion from the standpoint of contemporary science. This the author hopes to do in the ensuing pages.

### Prologue: The Assumption of the Virgin.

According to the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person in the Blessed Trinity, was born of a virgin, a surprising fact only noted in two of our four Gospels, respectively the Gospels of Mathew and Luke. Never, however, has any doctrine ever appeared to be established on weaker evidence. Of the four canonical Gospels that alone record the life of Christ, two (Mark and John) say nothing about any virgin birth

(John, in fact, goes out of his way to talk of Joseph and Mary as father and mother of Jesus!). Whilst the two Gospels which alone record the miraculous birth are immediately followed by genealogies, in the one case from Adam and in the other from Abraham, both of which trace the ancestry of Jesus through his father Joseph, from which fact it would appear to be indisputable that the stories of a miraculous birth represents late interpellations and were entirely unknown to the

original authors of the Gospels. Assuming, at least for present purposes, that Jesus was an historical character, it appears to be reasonably clear that his earliest disciples did not regard him as literally the Son of God (though they may have used the term metaphorically in accordance with Hebrew usage) but regarded him as a Jewish messiah, a prophet raised up by God, and the son of Joseph who though a humble village carpenter appears to have claimed descent from the national hero, King David (the word Christ represents a Greek translation of the Jewish term Messiah).

Amongst the Jews virgin births of deities were unknown. But in the Graeco-Roman pagan world of the Roman Empire they were extremely common. For example, the god Mars was born of a virgin, as was Romulus, the founder of Rome, and the same story was told of Alexander the Great and other heroes of antiquity who were deified after death. How then did the virgin birth become interpellated into the Christian legend?

The answer to this question is fairly simple. Christianity did not start as an independent religion but as an heretical sect on the fringe of Judaism. Its earliest followers were Jews but this state of things did not long continue. With the spread of the new religion throughout the Roman Empire, an expansion usually ascribed to St. Paul and his followers, pagan converts began to enter the church and by the end of the second century at least, had probably become the majority. Such converts brought up in pagan households were accustomed to worshipping miraculously conceived and born Gods. Virgin god and goddesses were two-a-penny! By about the middle of the second century, as far as we can judge from the scanty records available, the belief that Christ was born of a virgin began to make its appearance in Christian circles, and, as we noted above, eventually entered the Gospels of Mathew and Luke themselves. By the fourth century, when under Constantine and his successors Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, the idea of the virgin birth appears to have become universal and only flagrant heretics denied it. The Mother of God became the most important figure after

Christ himself in the celestial heirarchy! The victory of Christianity was soon followed by the fall of the Roman Empire and the inauguration of the Middle Ages. Throughout this period (c.500-1500) it is now common knowledge that an 'age of faith' ensued during which the Christian church became the dominant social and economic force in medieval Europe. During this period also, the Bishops of Rome rose from being of merely provincial status to the rank of universal bishop and ruler of the Western Church. Similarly, the Virgin Mary was steadily promoted in the celestial heirarchy. Successively she was declared to be sinless, a perpetual virgin and eventually to have been not only the Mother of God but also to have been herself immaculately conceived.\* Finally, in 1950 Pope Pius XII (1939-58), proclaimed the bodily Assumption of the Virgin to be a dogma and an article of faith. It is now firm Catholic doctrine not to be doubted except under the mortal guilt of heresy that the Virgin Mary ascended bodily into heaven, at some still unknown date, presumably in the first century of the Christian era.

So far so good! But probably this celestial promotion is not yet finished. Already there is a growing demand in Catholic theological circles to declare the Virgin 'co-redemptoris' with Christ of the human race, from which it would appear only a short step to proclaim her an actual goddess — the fourth person of the Trinity!

This last promotion, however, has not yet occurred. At present the Virgin Mary is still a saint — though a most exalted one. She has been bodily transplanted from Earth to heaven in a miraculous flight, but evidently still feels nostalgic longings for her original

---

\* The Immaculate Conception does not imply, as some critics seem to imagine, that the Virgin herself was born of another virgin, but merely that God, by miraculous interposition, removed the state of 'original sin' which, according to Catholic theology, all mortals inherit from the Fall of their principal ancestors Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

habitation for, as already noted, she has repeatedly descended from heaven to Earth and given her worshippers a brief glance of her dazzling brilliance. The three most important of such visitations are, Gaudelupe, Lourdes and Fatima. The

author will accordingly now turn his attention to these celestial visits, to the circumstances that surrounded them and also to certain contemporary developments of Papal policy that appear to have been powerfully assisted by these opportune arrivals.

## Celestial Visits

*"I am the Immaculate Conception" — Mary to Bernadette at Lourdes. 1858.*

### Introductory Note

As the author has noted above, after the Virgin Mary had been enthroned as Queen of Heaven, to which she had ascended by Papal decree, she has not rested on her laurels. On the contrary, at least if we are to believe catholic accounts, she has returned to this Earth many times. The evidence of these successive appearances varies in strength and up to the present at least none of them has been declared a canonical dogma in the sense of the earlier Papal decrees about, successively, her perpetual virginity, her immaculate conception and, finally, her bodily assumption into heaven. As far, again, as the author is aware, none of these celestial visits, not even Lourdes and Fatima, have so far been elevated to the rank of 'an article of faith' though, as a recent historian remarked, it is very unlikely that any theological work denying, or even calling into question at least, her appearances at Lourdes and Fatima would be granted official recognition. Discounting, for the moment, merely local appearances, commemorated in merely local stories, we may note three principal appearances of our celestial visitor at, respectively, Guadelupe (Mexico), Lourdes (Pyrennean France) and Fatima (northern Portugal). All these three visits are now commemorated by magnificent shrines and attract international pilgrimages.\*

The author will defer his brief consideration of the reality of these celestial phenomena until a later stage in this pamphlet. Here we are not so much concerned with the subjective validity of these visions as and when they appeared to their recipients as to the remarkable way in which they fitted-in with the contemporary policies of the Roman Catholic Church. Accordingly, we turn to these three major occurrences.

### Guadelupe

In 1492 the Italian mariner Christopher Columbus, flying the flag of the Spanish King of Castile, arrived in the West Indies and thus discovered a new continent, a 'new world' shortly to be denominated America. The following year, the then Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia, 1492-1503) officially divided the new world between the Iberian empires of Castile and Portugal. During the following century, with the military assistance of iron, horses and gunpowder, not to mention the blessing of the Papacy and the spiritual blessing of the Roman Catholic Church, the European conquerors made good their claim to the southern half of the newly-discovered continent. In 1521, a band of Spanish conquerors, led by Hernando Cortez, succeeded in overcoming the ferocious resistance of the aborigines and in conquering the Aztec Empire of Mexico — a conquest that was soon followed by others in

---

\* One of the more local celestial visits, to Knock in Ireland, has recently attracted a good deal of attention from a visit of the present Pope, John Paul II, upon its centenary in 1979. On this occasion the Virgin Mary is alleged to have appeared ac-

companied by her "husband" St. Joseph and the Evangelist St. John. However, so far at least, Knock has not attained international status comparable with the visits of the Virgin enunciated above.

South America, notably that of the Incas of Peru. In the case of Mexico, the Spanish conquest against heavy numerical odds was considerably facilitated by the Aztec tradition that a white god, Quetzalcatal, had formerly ruled over Mexico and had predicated that his descendants would return.\*

In December 1531, ten years after the completion of the conquest, the Virgin Mary put in an appearance at Guadalupe in Mexico, where she appeared to a group of Indian converts. Without, for the moment, discussing the details of her appearance, the author would draw attention to its extraordinary congruency with the current policy of the Papacy and of the Spanish colonial empire. A white god had once ruled Mexico, his white descendants had returned and now a white goddess appeared to legitimise the conquest. The time and place were so opportune that it is difficult to acquit the Virgin Mary of conscious collusion with the Vatican and the Spanish conquerors. It is accordingly hardly surprising that the grateful Spaniards built a magnificent shrine in honour of the Virgin and that 'Our Lady of Guadalupe' has now become a figure of international significance throughout the Americas attracting vast crowds of pilgrims, not least among them the present Pope, an ardent devotee of the cult of Mary, John Paul II.\*

Accordingly, this early sixteenth century manifestation of the Mother of God may be said to have cemented the decree of the Papacy handing over the Catholic Empires of Spain and Portugal. In the worldwide policy of the Vatican, her celestial allies also play their part, including the greatest of all, 'Our

Celestial Visitor'.

## Lourdes

We now turn to the Old World, to which our celestial visitor, perhaps naturally, appears to be especially partial as a large majority of her visits have been in this area. The most famous of such celestial visits is still probably that which occurred in 1858 when the Virgin Mary is alleged to have appeared as a dazzling apparition to a young shepherd girl, Bernadette Soubirous, aged 14, in a grotto at the Pyrennean town of Lourdes, not far from the Franco-Spanish border. Subsequently, the Virgin appeared several times and declared categorically to the young shepherd girl, "I am the Immaculate Conception". Since that date, July 16th, Lourdes has become the centre of a miraculous cult in which miracles, chiefly of healing, are recorded over the last century. The grotto in which the Virgin appeared to Bernadette is now a place of universal pilgrimage to such an extent, indeed, that it would hardly be an exaggeration to compare Lourdes as a place of international pilgrimage with such renowned sanctuaries as Mecca and Jerusalem. At this time of writing it is still the most famous scene at which the Virgin appeared and might also be described as a Marian metropolis — the GHQ of the worldwide cult of Mary. Again deferring any examination of the subjective occurrence when Bernadette allegedly encountered Mary, we must point to the remarkable manner in which the vision collaborated with and confirmed the current policy of the Vatican. At the time of the original vision the reigning Pope Pius IX (1846-78), an ardent

---

\* It seems to be possible that this religion embodied an authentic reminiscence of a Viking raid in the Caribbean, since it is now known that Norse settlers actually reached the eastern seaboard of North America.

\* Not only did the decree of Pope Alexander VI legitimise the Spanish conquest of the Americas, but the Catholic Church actively supported the Spanish invasions and subsequent conquests. For example, when

the most powerful aboriginal dynasty in South America, the Incas of Peru, was finally conquered, the last Inca, Tupac Amaru, was actually captured by a Spanish captain, Garcia Loyola, a nephew of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of what still remains the most powerful religious Order in the Roman Catholic Church, the 'Company of Jesus', usually described as Jesuits. At a later stage the Jesuits ruled the state in Paraguay for at least 150 years. Circa 1610-1760.

devotee of Mary, was engaged in an ambitious policy for enlarging the powers of the Papacy in order to deal with the wave of scepticism unloosed by the French Revolution of 1789. In 1858 the infallibility of the Pope was not yet an "article of faith" and new doctrines can only be formulated officially by a general council of all Catholic bishops. A few years earlier, in 1854, the Pope had boldly proclaimed the Immaculate Conception of Mary as a canonical doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church — an implicit assertion of infallibility. It was accordingly highly agreeable to the Vatican when the apparition of Lourdes explicitly stated to Bernadette, "I am the Immaculate Conception". Could there be any doubt after this that the Pope was indeed infallible when so soon after his decree his action in proclaiming the Immaculate Conception of Mary was personally authenticated by the divine person concerned?

Consequently, when the Pope, in 1869-70, convened the First Vatican Council, an overwhelming majority endorsed the Papal claim to infallibility since when the personal infallibility of the Pope has been a major dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. (The dogma was officially proclaimed on 18th July 1870). We are again impressed at Lourdes, as previously at Guadalupe, by the remarkable congruency between the visitation of the Virgin and the policy of the Papacy. It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that throughout the chequered career of the Roman See, the recurring visits of the Mother of God here represent a most valuable auxilliary.

### Fatima

The most recent, and in the author's opinion the most interesting and ultimately the most important, of the visits of the Virgin occurred at Fatima in Northern Portugal in the year 1917. Upon this occasion the glorious apparition appeared to three young shepherds (male and female) as formerly to Bernadette at Lourdes. Between the first of October and the following first of April 1917 successive visions took place on the first day of each month. What the Virgin said on that occasion will be discussed a little further on

when we turn our attention to its possible effects on Papal policy. Here we will merely note that the Virgin appeared to three young children, two of whom died shortly afterwards but the third, Lucia dos Santos, subsequently retired to a convent from which she later emerged with startling tidings.

At the times of the vision Portugal had recently overthrown its Catholic monarchy and was regarded at the Vatican as a secular Masonic republic. However, a few years later Dr. Salazar, a pupil of the Jesuits, succeeded in transforming Portugal into a clerical fascist state in which the Church of Rome recovered its lost privileges and, no doubt, the growing fame of the Virgin's appearance at Fatima indirectly but effectively assisted this process. However, the real drama of Fatima only began later when, in 1929, the Bishop of Leira, the diocesan Bishop of Fatima, instructed Lucia, the last survivor of the vision, to publish, for the Church and the world, what the Mother of God had actually said to her. The result was extremely startling! For Lucia revealed that the celestial apparition had warned the world and the Church against the dire effects of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in the year that she appeared, 1917. The purpose of Fatima, therefore, was to issue a celestial warning against the Russian Revolution and its possible outcome in world war and the ruin of Christianity. It is again necessary to note how exactly this prediction fitted-in with Papal policy of the time when Lucia gave her message to the world in 1929. For, by this time, Russian communism had become public enemy number one and the bug bear of the Vatican. It was the arch heresy of the twentieth century, and its survival posed a menace not only to the power but to the very existence of the Church. However, at this point the author suggests that there is a certain ambiguity, for while the Vatican's denunciation of Bolshevism in 1929 accurately reflected the current policy at the Vatican, which even since the accession of Pope Pius XI (1922-39) had regarded Russia as its mortal enemy, the actual policy of the Church in 1917, when the Virgin allegedly appeared at Fatima, was still a long way from



having reached this point of view. As the author has pointed out elsewhere, the Vatican at first showed a marked tendency actually to welcome the Russian Revolution which had deposed the Czar, the former 'Anti-Pope' of the Russian 'Orthodox' Church which was a traditional rival of Roman Catholicism. In the author's earlier book 'Pope John and the Cold War' (1962), contemporary evidence was cited to the above effect. When, accordingly, in 1929, Lucia recorded the stern warning given in 1917 in Fatima by our celestial visitor, either her memory must have played her a trick or else the Virgin must have antedated her remark by several years? We leave it to the theologians to sort out this divine mystery!

The author has expressed the opinion above that though not quite as famous as Lourdes, Fatima is actually, on a long-term view, the most important, at least for terrestrial purposes, of the Virgin's visits to this planet. For it not only refers to the past but also points to new developments in the future. To observe what these are it is necessary to recapitulate a little in the history of Portugal.

For the name Fatima is not the name of any Christian saint nor has it any association with Christianity. It is the name, in fact, of the daughter of the great rival of traditional Christianity, Mohammed the founder of Islam. Fatima was the daughter of the prophet and in some Islamic sects holds an elevated position somewhat similar even to that of the Virgin Mary in Catholic theology. Certainly she is the most famous woman in the Muslim hierarchy. Furthermore, the name Fatima may quite possibly denote an earlier Muslim cult long prior to 1917? For between 711 when the Moors conquered Spain and about 1000 when Portugal was liberated from their dominion, the whole Iberian peninsula, including Spain and Portugal, was dominated by the Moorish empire and the Muslim religion. It would appear to be probable therefore that if the Muslim conquerors of Portugal named a place after the prophet's daughter Fatima, that there was some kind of Muslim cult in existence there long before the Virgin appeared? It would appear to the author that the existence of

Fatima may be future as well as past. It is even possible that from the present ecumenical movement designed to form an alliance of the christian churches under Vatican leadership against the growing forces of atheism and scepticism, may ultimately emerge a unity of religions embracing the two most powerful, Catholicism and Islam. In which not impossible case, Fatima may eventually far outshine Lourdes and even perhaps become the HQ of a united religious front named after the most famous woman in the annals of Islam and visited by Christianity's most celebrated saint, if indeed the Virgin Mary has not been elevated to the full rank of divinity.

### Our Celestial Visitor: A Critical View

According to the Roman Catholic Church, the apparitions of the Virgin at Lourdes, Fatima etc. etc. represented the actual bodily appearance of a semi-divine personage, Mary the Mother of God. They were also corporeal visions in which she appeared in flesh and blood (a very important point which we shall see later when we come to consider contemporary astronomy). People outside the Roman Catholic Church, who probably greatly outnumber those within it, will take a more sceptical view. What kind of view? The following brief analysis endeavours to establish some possibilities regarding it.

In the first place it must be remarked that all these apparitions of Lourdes, Guadalupe, Fatima, Knock etc. etc. appeared to illiterate or semi-literate people and people, at that, brought up in a religious atmosphere probably heavily charged with superstition. There is no example known to the writer of any scholar or even reasonably well-educated person having witnessed these apparitions. The recipients of these visions were all peasants and mostly shepherds since our celestial visitors seems to have a predilection for shepherds and sheep. There is no need, in the author's opinion at least, to accuse the recipients of Lourdes and Fatima etc. (Bernadette, Lucia etc.) of deliberate deception. In a primitive religious atmosphere untempered by knowledge and unaffected by criticism, such visions would appear to be

nothing abnormal — anymore than, to take a rather crude analogy, the appearance of a blue elephant to confirmed alcoholic. None could doubt his sincerity! What, however, are we to make of a practically universal acceptance of celestial occurrences based upon such meagre evidence — particularly as we have noted that, whether miracles or not, these apparitions corresponded with the urgent needs of Papal policy in an almost miraculous way!

It is difficult, I suggest, to believe that the hard-headed men of affairs with nineteen centuries of world-wide experience behind them, the people once humourously described as 'the backroom boys of the Vatican', were really as credulous as say Bernadette and Lucia who formed the audience of celestial apparitions at Lourdes and Fatima? One could perhaps suggest that in dealing with the visitations of the Virgin, the Church of Rome has adopted a selective policy. It has chosen those, and only those, for acceptance which were useful to its policy at a particular time. As we have noted above, Guadelupe, Lourdes and Fatima, the three most celebrated of the Virgin's visits, all conformed admirably with the current policy of the

Papacy and of Catholic imperialism. Be that as it may, the historical and theological problems associated with these apparitions are further exacerbated by astronomical problems, particularly as these have taken on quite new forms since the Virgin's last visitation in 1917.

If we turn from the visitations themselves to their fundamental cause, to the dogma which explains and presumably justifies them, the Assumption of the Virgin, we will find that this also confronts us with problems of an intricate and bizarre character. For within the same decade that witnessed the most canonical propagation of the doctrine of the Assumption, a new era commenced for astronomic science — an era that can hardly be considered irrelevant to the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary or her subsequent journeys through outer space to and from this planet. Accordingly, we propose to conclude this pamphlet by reviewing the whole question of the Assumption of the Virgin and her visits from outer space in relation to the astronomy of the space age and the galactic universe that the astronomy of the space age discloses.

## Epilogue: The Flying Virgin and Space Age Astronomy

*"I saw no angels" — Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space.*

The last occasion upon which our celestial visitor is alleged to have visited this planet was at Fatima in 1917. Since then no further 'sighting' of the Virgin there has been reported — at least as far as the author knows. However, as we noted above, the cult of the Virgin continued to evolve until the final declaration by Pope Pius XII in 1950 of the Assumption of the Virgin, the feast of which is annually celebrated on August 15th. In the course of the long ascent of the wife of the village carpenter of Nazareth to the exalted rank of Queen of Heaven, the cult of the Virgin has borrowed heavily from earlier pagan divinities. In particular, from the cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis, the honorific title of whom, Star of the Sea, has now been appropriated by the Christian Queen of Heaven!

For centuries past the Assumption of the

Virgin has been a prominent feature of Catholic art, including such masters as Velazquez etc.

Up to the present time, again as far as the author is aware, the return visits made by the celestial visitor to Lourdes, Fatima etc. have not been officially proclaimed as canonical dogmas of the Catholic religion. But since the Assumption of the Virgin was officially recognised it would probably be heresy to deny them and it would certainly be heresy to doubt their *possibility*. As Catholic dogma is irrevocable we must presumably conclude that Lourdes, Fatima etc. are here to stay.

Meanwhile, however, since the proclamation of the Assumption as an article of faith, a new scientific era was inaugurated when in 1957 the pioneer Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin penetrated the Earth's atmosphere and followed the Virgin into

outer space. Since then the space age has got into its stride. Today a large number of man-made objects are hurtling around space. Most of the planets of the solar system have already been visited by unmanned spacecraft and it appears a reasonable conjecture that by the end of the present century every sizeable object in the solar system, whether planet or satellite, will have been visited by unmanned spacecraft. The ultimate landing by human beings on several of these celestial bodies may probably be regarded as a reasonable assumption.

Traditionally, since the famous case of Galileo in 1633 when Copernicus' astronomy was officially banned by the Papacy, repeated clashes have taken place between religion and science. The doctrine of the Assumption, proclaimed immediately before the inauguration of the space age in the 1950s, probably heralds another collision. In order to consider this objectively one must briefly consider the character of the latest dogma of the Roman Catholic Church.

Since the thirteenth century when, under the influence of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Church officially adopted the Aristotelean philosophy, the reality of matter has been a dogma of the Catholic Church. Theologically speaking, it is obvious why this is so. Since, if Bishop Berkley and other idealistic philosophers are correct in denying the reality of material substances, the central doctrine of the Catholic mass, the real transformation of the body and blood of Christ into bread and wine could not possibly take place. Philosophical idealism, that is the doctrine that matter is only apparent and not

real, is consequently a heresy in the Catholic Church. Actually, a contemporary Pope, Clement XIV, denounced Berkley as a 'brilliant lunatic'.

Let us accordingly turn to the doctrine of the Assumption. According to this, the Virgin Mary at some unspecified date ascended bodily into heaven. Her body being, presumably, a material substance. This clearly implies that she must have ascended at no greater than the speed of light (186,000 miles per second) since it is an astronomical fact that no material substance can exceed this velocity without disintegrating. Accordingly, when the Virgin returned to Earth on several occasions such as Lourdes, Fatima etc., her celestial path must have proceeded at no greater velocity. A new problem has therefore been added to the contemporary space age, for somewhere among the stars the Virgin Mary must be travelling! It is not even impossible that as the space age gets into its stride and more sophisticated aircraft plunge further into the vast recesses of the universe, a fantastic "encounter of the third kind" might actually take place!

Be that as it may, we are now faced with the intriguing certainty of Catholic astronomers crouching behind the powerful telescopes of the Vatican observatory, sweeping the skies with their optical instruments, seeking to catch a glimpse of the flying Virgin as she glides from galaxy to galaxy. Certainly, the Assumption of the Virgin and her celestial returns to Earth appear to have added a new and exciting dimension to the present and future astronomy of the space age.

FINIS

Published by the London Secular Group, 11 Glengall Road, NW6. Tele: 01-328 8076  
Photoset by Windhorse Photosetters, 247 Globe Road, E2 OJD. Tele: 01-981 1407  
Printed by the Aldgate Press, 846 Whitechapel High Street, E1. Tele: 01-247 3015