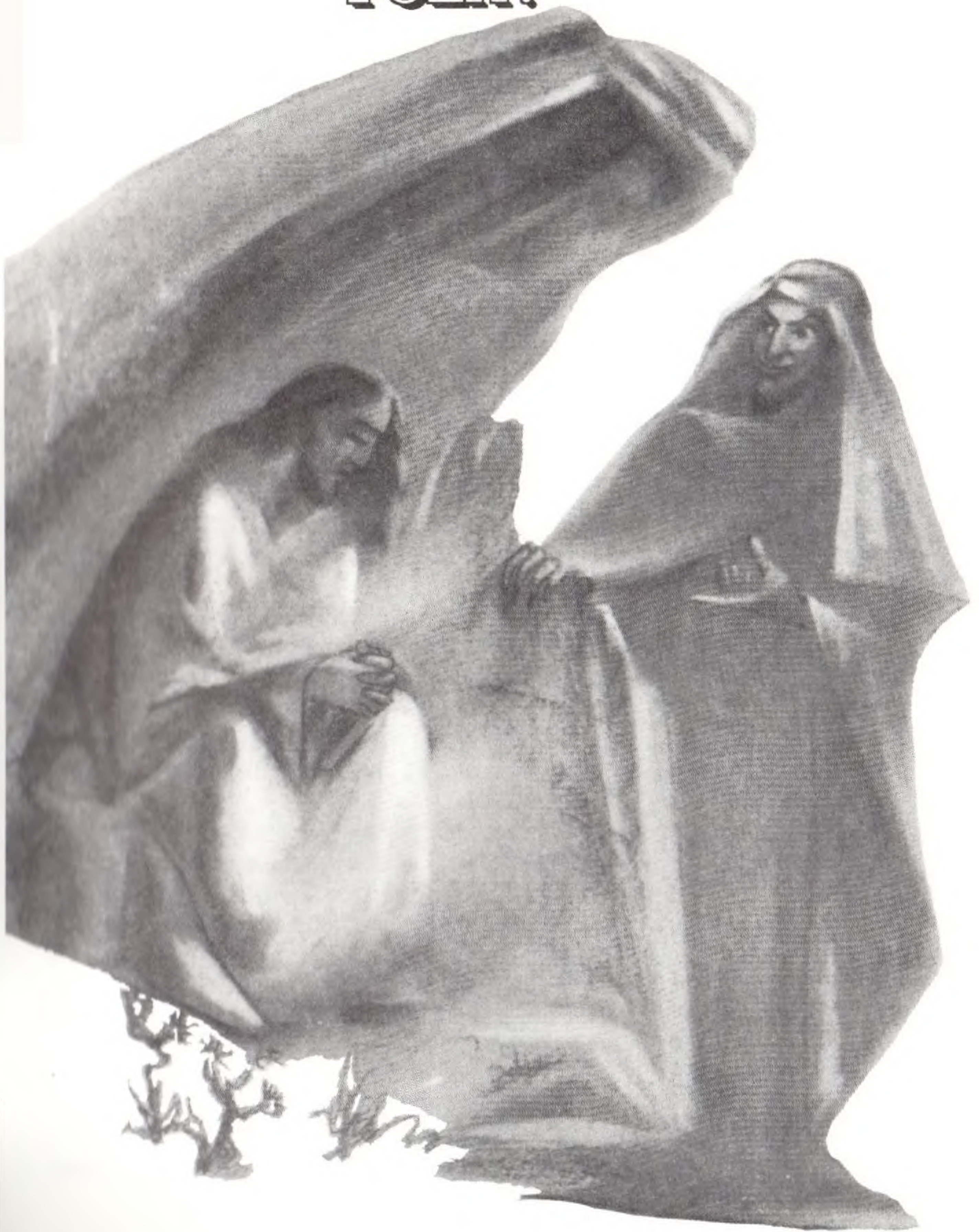


**THAT WONDERFUL
POEM!**



An Appreciation of *The Poem of the Man God*

by John M. Haffert

On the cover is a drawing of the temptation of Jesus which appeared in the original Italian edition of *The Poem of the Man-God*, a 3,327 page life of Christ as revealed to a 20th century mystic, Maria Valtorta. Below is her description (pg. 246, Vol. I, Eng. Ed.):

²Leaning against a huge piece of overhanging rock which, because of its shape, forms a kind of a grotto, there is Jesus sitting on a stone that has been taken into the cave. That is how He protects Himself from the scorching sun. And my internal adviser informs me that the stone, on which He is now sitting, is also His kneeling-stool and pillow, when He takes a few hours rest, enveloped in His mantle, under a starry sky in the chill air of the night. Near Him, there is the haversack which I saw Him take before departing from Nazareth. It is all He has. And from the way it is folded, I realise it has been emptied of the little food Mary had put into it.

Jesus is very thin and pale. He is sitting with His elbows resting on His knees, His forearms forward, His hands joined and His fingers interlaced. He is meditating. Now and again He looks up and around, then looks at the sun, almost perpendicular in the blue sky. Now and again, particularly after looking around and at the sun, He closes His eyes and leans on the rock sheltering Him, as if He were seized by dizziness.

³I see Satan's ugly face appear. He does not show himself in the features we imagine him: horns, tail etc. He looks like a bedouin enveloped in his robe and in a large mantle that resembles a domino. He is wearing a turban on his head and its white flaps fall along his cheeks, down to his shoulders protecting them. Thus only a very small dark triangle of his face can be seen, with thin, sinuous lips, very black hollow eyes, full of magnetic flashes. Two eyes that penetrate and read into the bottom of your heart, but in which you can read nothing, or one word only: mystery. The very opposite of Jesus' eyes, also so magnetic and fascinating, which read in your heart, but in which you can also read that in His heart there is love and bounty for you. Jesus' eyes caress your soul. Satan's are like a double dagger that stabs and burns you.

⁴He approaches Jesus: «Are you alone?»

Who Was Jesus?

In its year-end issue of 1994, LIFE Magazine had a special feature titled *Who Was Jesus?* And one cannot fail to be amazed at the variety of concepts different persons reached, all from the same source: The Gospels.

A Professor from Dartmouth College said: "I don't think we know who Jesus was." A Dead Sea scrolls scholar deduced that he was not even from Nazareth (because of the special Hebraic meaning of the word *Nazarite*). The celebrated Baptist minister, Rev. Jerry Falwell, said: "I believe He ran and played with His friends as a child. I believe He enjoyed good food and fun, and frolicking with His buddies and pals. The Gospels say He grew in stature and in wisdom..."

From the very same Scripture some said He was Divine and others said He was not. It all seemed to depend on personal views and personal faith. Cardinal O'Connor, Catholic Archbishop of New York, said: "You can study the Scriptures until your eyes fall out, but without the gift of faith you are not going to believe Christ was the Son of God."

So Many Biographies of Our Lord!

To discover the *real* Jesus, a member of the Society of Jesus who was a personal friend of the writer of this booklet read the gospels every day.

A fellow member of the Society one day remarked to him: "Since you read the new testament every day you will surely write a Life of Our Lord. It happens all the time." And he did.

I was in charge of AMI Press at the time. When my friend eagerly presented the manuscript, the product of years of enlightened and scholarly work, I knew how much it

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meant to him. In his eyes it was little less than a minor revelation of the life and times of Our Lord.

How could I protest that many others before him had done the same? My own small library (which would fill a wall 40 feet long from floor to ceiling) had almost an entire shelf full of biographies of Jesus. All those many books searched the scanty details of the gospels to understand His Person, at once human and divine. Was He was born in ignorance even though as God He was omniscient? What was He *really* like?

My whole shelf of books never gave me a clear answer. I marveled at the erudition of the scripture scholars and at the brilliance of their deductions. But that is all they were: deductions.

In the end, all these books told me nothing more than what the authors themselves had deduced from the Gospels. And too often, to the bewilderment of an average person, one author's deductions were different from another's.

My Jesuit friend went into the Divine Light before I had to make the publishing decision. His book was indeed great. It was written by a man of holiness and faith and it was his personal discovery of Jesus. But who, in two thousand years, has been able to flesh out the gospels with sufficient enlightenment and realism?

In my book "You, Too, Go Into My Vineyard" (published by LAF, Jan. 1995, 225 pgs.) I tell how I came to discover *The Poem of the Man-God* by Maria Valtorta.

Discovery of the Poem

I happened to be in Rome with the Most Rev. John Venancio, the Bishop of Fatima, when he sought out a special bookstore to purchase the ten volumes of the Italian edition. It had been recommended by a highly esteemed friend in Paris, the celebrated author-editor, Abbe Andre Richard.

Years later, after Bishop Venancio retired, whenever I visited him our conversation seemed to turn to the *Poem*. In his last years *the Bishop read from it every day*. He must have read all ten volumes over and over. *I began to wonder what could be so special about it*. The Bishop was widely read and had a sizable library. He had been a professor of dogmatic theology in Rome before becoming the Bishop of Fatima. Yet now, when he had ample time to read anything he wished, he seemed to spend all his time on this one book.

At the time it was available only in Italian which was not my best language. But I found my way back to the same bookstore in Rome and bought the ten volumes. Next I bought each volume in French (my "second" language) as it came out. Finally I read the entire work a third time (3,327 pages) when the English edition became available. Today, I continue, like Bishop Venancio, to read it over and over.

A First Hand Account

The *Poem* is unique in that it is a *first hand* account of visions of the life of Jesus recorded by a naturally gifted writer named Maria Valtorta. She personally wrote down descriptions of the visions *as she saw them*. She describes actual scenes and records, word for word, the conversations she hears.

The gospels, in these vivid scenes and conversations, *come alive*. There has never been a book like it.

A Victim Soul

Maria Valtorta was severely injured by a wanton act of violence when she was 23 years old. While walking with her mother, a crazy youth struck her in the back with an iron bar. Suffering became her constant companion. Five years later, after reading the autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux she offered herself as a victim soul. She renewed the offering every day.

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Her health deteriorated until she was barely able to walk. After April 1, 1934, she was bedridden for the remaining 27 years of her life.

Ten years later began her visions of the life of Our Lord. Recording them was a colossal work during which she was often in physical pain, often exhausted. Before she died she wrote her own epitaph: "*I have finished suffering, but I will go on loving.*"

One has the impression that Maria Valtorta would prefer to be forgotten like a pencil layed aside. But from now until the end of the world readers of the *Poem of the Man-God* will bless the day she offered herself as a victim soul and became what Jesus liked to call her: "My little John"... likening her to St. John the Evangelist.

As was said above, what is special about the work of Maria Valtorta is that it is *first hand*.

The visions of Therese Neumann and Catherine Emmerick are *as told to someone else* and therefore incomplete and perhaps even somewhat distorted. (The latter may especially apply to Brentano's accounts of the visions of Catherine Emmerick.) Consider this example:

Therese Could Not Remember

During Therese Neumann's vision of the annunciation Father Naber (her pastor and confessor) could not write down quickly enough what Therese said. He interrupted to ask her what word followed another. Therese (and this was only a few words later!) said: "You should have written it down faster, Father, *I don't know anymore.*"

So we can imagine how much conjecture may have been necessary for writers who had to fill out the description of visions not exactly remembered.

We know there are no such distortions in the *Poem* which was written while the visions were being heard and seen. But even so they are not always meant to be taken

literally. As the Holy See warned in approving the *Poem* for general reading, historical and geographical data are not always to be taken literally as we shall explain in a moment.

A Celebrated Advocate

Father Gabriel Roschini, O.S.M., was an old man when he wrote his masterpiece on Our Lady as he had discovered Her “*a real person*” in the *Poem*. He was an advisor to the Holy Office, founder of the Marianum (a Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Rome) and author of 130 books.

This celebrated author and theologian had been a skeptic about the *Poem* and finally “discovered” it during a holiday in the mountains. “Wow!” is probably the best word to describe his reaction. In the preface of the book mentioned above he wrote:

“I have been studying, preaching, and writing Mariology for over half a century. I had read innumerable works and articles of all kinds on Mary, *a veritable library*. And I must candidly admit *that not even the sum total of EVERYTHING I HAVE READ AND STUDIED gave me as clear, as lively, as complete, as luminous, or as fascinating an image...*”

Speaking only of the reality of Our Lady as found in the *Poem* (which is not a book about Our Lady but about the life of Jesus!) the learned theologian exclaimed: “It seems to me that the conventional image of the Blessed Virgin, portrayed by myself and my fellow Mariologists, is merely a *papier mache* Madonna compared to the living and vibrant Virgin Mary envisioned by Maria Valtorta... If anyone believes my declaration to be one of those ordinary hyperbolic slogans abused by publicity, I will say this only: Let them read before they judge!”

One tends to become childlike in old age and I sometimes wonder if it is not necessary to be like children to grasp the wonder of Jesus as we find Him in the *Poem... truly a man, while at the same time God.*

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After I wrote this booklet I asked the opinion of two life-long friends. The first was Father Venard Poslusney, O.Carm., a Carmelite specialist in mystical theology who had spent many years in a contemplative hermitage in Austria. He was in his seventies before he discovered the *Poem*. He became so enthralled that he began recording a commentary of the entire work on audio tapes. Over and over on the tapes one hears him exclaim: "Oh! How could anyone think that this work was not supernatural!"

I eagerly sought his opinion because: 1) He was well schooled in theology; 2) He had read the *Poem* over and over and was well acquainted with all the criticism. Indeed, he himself had answered much of it. His only suggestion was that I write more. His comment: "This is what we need!"

The second person whose criticism I eagerly sought was the superioress of a religious community I had long known and respected but who, unlike Fr. Venard, had never wholeheartedly accepted the *Poem*. I thought that perhaps the size of the work could have intimidated her since she was the busy superioress of a community. But she had read substantial parts.

To my surprise, I learned in discussing this booklet, that it was not the size of the work but *the very work itself* which had proved intimidating. The *Poem* reveals Jesus to be really man. And it is possible to feel that our utter faith in His Divinity is tested when we admit that He was a Man. Many of us have so constantly affirmed His Divinity that we cannot dare to think of Him as a Man born in human ignorance, even though as God He was omniscient.

But if we read the *Poem* through we do not have to dare. Little by little we come to *SEE the reality of Jesus as a Person with two very real natures*. And that is the WONDER of the *Poem*.

I wish Fr. Roschini were still alive to tell us what prevented him for years from accepting the *Poem* and then,

at the end of his life, becoming perhaps its greatest proponent of the 20th century. (There may be a greater in the 21st!)

But I think he would have told us that he began by reading “parts.” And perhaps he did not have the example of someone more learned than himself as I did in the case of Bishop Venancio (to me both theologian and saint), the joy of whose old age was discovering Jesus in the *Poem*.

Another benefit I had was to read the *Poem* before it was published in English, my native tongue, in which words seem often like weathered coins while those in a second or third language seem quite often to sparkle like new, not clouded by the same range of different usages.

While editor of *Soul Magazine* (which at the time had some 240,000 subscribers) I had introduced the *Poem* to the English public. Later one reader wrote and told me that a priest denounced the *Poem* because he had read it in French and it said Jesus died on a “St. Andrew” cross and mentioned one or two other contradictions.

I knew at once this was not true. But I went back to the French edition to make sure. I could not imagine that a priest would want to defame the *Poem* with lies. But indeed what he said was just not true.

Another person wrote that a certain passage seemed to say that Jesus favored women priests. And sure enough, at least out of context, that seemed to be the case... But it was due to an ambiguity in the English translation. Moreover the following paragraph made the true position perfectly clear.

One can find fault here and there in almost any work, *including scripture*, by taking words too literally or taking them out of context.

It is interesting that Father Slavko Barbaric of Medjugorje said: “*If we want to know and love the Gospels, read the Poem of the Man-God.*” (We are told that *Our Lady said* that the *City of God* by Mary of Agreda and the *Poem* were “*true*”

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according to the visionary Marija speaking on a live EWTN telecast.)

But another priest, who was a guide and interpreter at Medjugorje, is one the of Poem's major critics to whom, oddly enough, we owe a great debt because his criticisms have elicited a scholarly defense written by Bishop Roman Danylak of Toronto which has become widely diffused. His Excellency wrote:

“My initial reaction (to this criticism) was one of apprehension. I went back to the original Italian... and reviewed again the major work of Fr. Gabriel Roschini... It soon became evident to me that the criticism stems from interpretations of *hearsay* comments and interpretation of *episodes* in the *Poem*.”

Testimony of Ven. Gabriel Allegra

The Ven. Gabriel Allegra, O.F.M., whose process for canonization was opened in 1984 just 8 years after his death, was a theologian and a biblical exegete. He wrote:

“The *Poem* never contradicts the Gospel but admirably completes it, making it living, and powerful, tender and demanding... the crowds move, shout, are agitated. The miracles you would say are SEEN. The discourses of Our Lord, even the most difficult in their conciseness, become of solar clarity... Whoever reads this work *breathes at last the atmosphere of the Gospel* and almost becomes one of the crowd which follows the Master.”

So say we all: The gospels come *alive*.

Answering a critic in 1961 the Venerable Father Allegra realized that the critic *had never read the entire work*. He wrote: “When *completed* the *Poem* makes us better understand the Gospel but does not contradict it. I still do not know how to explain to myself, and perhaps I will never know, how the Lord had ever shown His earthly life to a soul of the 20th century, but I believe in the Love which can do all...”

In one of my books I suppose I was expressing the same thought when I called the *Poem* a special gift from God to our time... and perhaps especially for the time that is coming, the time of the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary when the world will be very different. It will be the time of the reign of Jesus, and it is near.

Fr. Al Wishman, S.J., of the Marian Renewal Ministry in Boston, wrote: "The *Poem* has not only opened the life of Jesus, Mary and the apostles to me, but has challenged me through the life and preaching of Jesus and His training of the apostles *to follow Him more closely*. Using this work I have enjoyed being with Jesus in prayer in a the way a teenager insightfully described prayer as *hanging around with Jesus*."

That's it! That is what is WONDERFUL about the *Poem*. We enjoy being like a child "hanging around with Jesus"...and Oh! how we come to love Him!

That's the bottom line... knowing the tree by its fruit.

One must pity the critics and the hearsayers who keep some of us from this joy. We should pray that more and more will have the grace (and that is what it is!) of the *Poem* experience.

But for the sake of the critics, and for our own peace of mind, as we said before it is important to realize that the very real visions of Maria Valtorta are meant to convey a spiritual message rather than an historical one.

The SPIRITUAL Realities

To realize that visions sometimes are intended to convey spiritual realities more than geographical or historical ones, consider the following example:

Our Lord is seen carrying the entire cross on the way to Calvary in the *Poem*. Maria Valtorta herself seemed surprised. She comments that others say Our Lord carried only the horizontal beam. But she had to describe what she saw.

Different visionaries are shown different aspects of the supernatural realities.

The Venerable Mary of Agreda writes in *the City of God* (Vol 5, pg. 304): “I was made acquainted with the many contrary opinions of ecclesiastical historians concerning things which I am describing as, for instance, the departure of the Apostles from Jerusalem... But I have no commission from the Lord to clear up these and other doubts or to decide controversies... If what I write follows naturally *and does not contradict in any way the sacred text* and at the same time maintains the dignity corresponding to the matter, I cannot undertake to add to the authenticity of this history *and Christian piety will ask for no more.*”

Those who read such works *in a spirit of piety* indeed ask for no more.

If one saint sees Our Lord carrying only one beam and another sees Him with the entire cross, *one may be factual and the other symbolical.* The entire cross symbolizes better than a beam the death He was to endure. Moreover it symbolizes much better His own words: “If I be lifted up I will draw all men to Myself!” That is what He was carrying: ALL of US. That is WHY He was going to Calvary. The truth is in the Scriptures. There is only additional light in the visions, a light clearly seen by those sincerely seeking to understand what the scriptures reveal.

One thing is certain: In the Poem we *know that what we read* (barring faults of translation from the original Italian, some of which are unfortunate) *is what Maria Valtorta heard and saw.* She herself, while seeing and hearing, wrote it down.

Why Different Accounts?

There are at least three reasons why different visionaries may see the same event, even the same scene, in different ways (always for *our* benefit).

1) Some depict *unseen* truths; 2) God intends *that we look beyond* the visible facts to their meaning; 3) Some visions are symbolical.

In the case of the life of Our Lord *on the supernatural level* things are happening *which we cannot see*. If some vision does not show St. Joseph with Mary at the moment she greeted her cousin Elizabeth, was he not there in spirit? Indeed, by his love and in his thoughts was He ever absent from Her?

Catherine Emmerick saw Our Lady's dormition in Ephesus and others in Jerusalem. Could She not have been present spiritually (or even by bilocation) to all whom She loved at the moment of Her transition wherever they were? If bilocation was not uncommon with ordinary saints, how much more likely in the case of Our Lady! No single vision could show all *that really happened*.

But even more does not the very fact of *different* images cry out to us: "*Look beyond the images!*" Do not read out of curiosity. Read to *understand*.

Therese Neumann saw her pastor, Father Naber, at the foot of the Cross in one of her visions of the crucifixion. Was he really there? At the actual crucifixion 2,000 years ago, no. At the crucifixion renewed in the Mass, of course! *And all of us have that privilege*. That is the message... so much more important than what is seen.

No Real Contradictions

At first it may be disconcerting to meet apparently contradictory statements from persons like Therese Neumann or Ven. Mary of Agreda whom we know beyond reasonable doubt to be credible. Many of us have felt confused because some saints have seen Our Lord nailed through the Hands, the Shroud shows the nail marks in the Wrist, some mention ropes, some do not. Whom should one believe?

They are all correct according to the account in the *Poem*:

Holes had been drilled in the Cross in advance. After the first Hand of Our Lord was nailed through the Wrist it was found that the other Hand did not reach the pre-drilled hole.

Our Lord was pulled so strenuously that His shoulders were dislocated, but still the nail had to be put through the Hand...and further secured by rope because the Hand could have torn away. Furthermore the strain on the other Wrist was so great that the wound tore down into the base of the Hand. So all were there: Wrist wound (which shows on the only Hand visible on the Shroud), Hand wound, rope.

And we must always look beyond what is seen. The stigmata of the saints are comparatively small wounds not intended to show the ghastly reality of Calvary but to be seen as signs of coredemption.

A further illustration of apparent contradiction is found in the case of Therese Neumann's description of the veil given to Our Lord when He was stripped to be crucified. She said:

"A courageous woman takes off her shoulder cloth and hands it to Him."

That is as much as Father Naber recorded.

This seems to contradict the *Poem*, which says that it was *Our Lady* who gave Her veil to Jesus. Why would Therese Neumann not say so? Or was there something Father Faber missed? Why did she exclaim that it was a "courageous woman"?

These words remind us of the courage of the "Woman", as Our Lord referred to Her, at the foot of the Cross. She was not, as could be supposed, immobilized by grief. She was *actively participating* with and in the sacrifice of Her Son. How important!

Important to Read with Trust

Reading with trust that God would not deceive His saints, what might at first appear to be contradictory becomes profoundly illuminating. In this case Maria Valtorta describes the event. Therese Neumann's exclamation further illuminates it.

Our Lord has revealed Himself more and more during the past 2,000 years. And now when there is much confusion He has given us this great gift, *The Poem of the Man-God*.

Until I read the *Poem*, I had begun to think it was impossible this side of Heaven really to KNOW Jesus as God and man, both natures operative in one person.

But little by little the *Poem* reveals Jesus in action from day to day, sometimes from hour to hour and we begin to grasp WHO He is. Little by little we are overwhelmed by the realization that God truly is LOVE, and Jesus is God Who has become incarnate to redeem us and to reveal to us Infinite Love.

That having been said, it remains that the *reality* cannot be summarized in a paragraph. It is to be found in the more than three thousand pages of the *Poem*.

Having struggled like millions before me with the mystery of the dual nature of Jesus, I said one day to Bishop Venancio before I myself had begun to read the *Poem*: “Does it help you to understand Jesus at once as God and man?”

The holy bishop (and let it be remembered he was a learned theologian who had taught dogmatic theology at the university in Rome) seemed to be looking into the Divine Light as he sighed: “*Oh, more and more!*”

Most who read the *Poem* will have this experience. They will discover Jesus. But how... except by those more than 3,000 pages... will they be able to tell others what He is really like?

He GREW in Knowledge

One of the problems most of us face in trying to understand Jesus is the fact that He was omniscient as God, but as a man He had to *learn*.

In the *Poem*, sometimes when the apostles asked: “Do you know this road, Master?”, He would reply that He did not. Yet many times He journeyed to be at a certain place at a precise time He was needed. *Sometimes He knew. Sometimes*

He did not. And perhaps here, more than in any other circumstance, we have the key to understanding Him as we see Him living and speaking in the pages of the Poem.

Blessed Anne Marie Taigi's miraculous light gives us an example.

This saint had constantly at her side what could be best described as "supernatural television" (*television* being from the Greek word meaning to see what is far away). It was a globe of light beneath a crown of thorns, framed on both sides by long thorns.

The light was borne by an angel who apparently told Anne Marie when to look into it. When she obeyed she would see events of the present and the future, sometimes events of world-shaking importance and sometimes an event as ordinary as that of a husband and wife quarrelling, in need of help.*

For Jesus the light was His own Omniscience. As man (since He came into the world to be like us in everything but sin) He *lived by the Will of His Father*. He looked into the Light of His Omniscience *only when He knew it was His Father's Will* that He know something He could not know merely by human faculties.

What Lessons for Us All!

During His first thirty years it was apparently the Will of His Father that, even though He knew Who He was, He live *most of His childhood as though blind* to His Omniscience. The people of Nazareth, who must have felt that they really knew Him, had no idea whatever Who He really was. For 30 years! This included even his four cousins, two of whom were educated with Him. The older brothers and their father reproached Jesus when He first began His public life.

The *Poem* says that St. Joseph lived by faith without ever having seen the miracles of his foster Son. Scriptures confirm that Jesus performed his *first* miracle at Cana.

Oh! What lessons for us all! *The ordinary circumstances of life* are our means of sanctification. Holy fulfillment (which is sanctification) of every day activities is the alpha and omega of holiness.

Oh! Blessed *Poem* which reveals this reality!

Consider again that the *Poem* remarks that St. Joseph lived by faith as do we all, having never seen the miracles of Jesus. Then note again that the scriptures say that Our Lord's *first miracle* was at Cana. From this we may gather that Dr. Jerry Falwell was not far from the truth when he expressed the belief that Our Lord as a child seemed, and was, like any normal child of His town. (Although, had he read the *Poem*, I don't think Dr. Falwell would have used the word "frolicking.") And Dr. Falwell, like many enlightened Protestants today, is firmly secure in his belief that Jesus was God.

The *Poem* does not replace the gospels, as almost every scholar who has commented on it repeats over and over, but enhances them. Indeed the more we read the *Poem* the more we feel a real *need* to read the Bible, both the Old Testament and the new. *One thousand and six hundred and thirty five times* in the *Poem* Our Lord quotes from the Old Testament. A Benedictine Abbot in Georgia completed the laborious task of identifying all 1,635 references. Many read the *Poem* with the bible and the Abbot's list at hand.

Leads Us To Read Scripture

The *Poem* often leads us to a certain moment and simply adds: "*What followed is as told in the Gospel.*" And how *very* often (1,635 times!) Jesus, speaking to the people of Judea and Samaria, refers in detail to passages in the Old Testament, passages with which all Jews were familiar. How woefully ignorant those who do not read scripture must feel as they read these many important references while recalling that Jesus said *all the prophecies were marvelously fulfilled in Him.*

At first curiosity will cause you to rush through. You will think you have READ the Poem and you will have only sampled it. It is likely that the few critics of the *Poem* have sampled not enough. But even *they* must admit it is a wondrous work even *if* it were not supernatural.

Those of us who read as Pope Pius XII advised will find the truth of his words: "Those who read it (with a sincere *desire to know*) will understand."

* For a better understanding of this miraculous light which accompanied Blessed Anne Marie Taigi, see the author's book *You, Too! Go Into My Vineyard*. Other works by the same author include:

On the SCAPULAR: *Sign of Her Heart and Her Glorious Title.*

On the ROSARY: *Sex and the Mysteries.*

On the EUCHARIST: *The World's Greatest Secret.*

On FATIMA: *To Prevent This* (concerning the chastisement),

Meet the Witnesses (On the great miracle),

Her Own Words to the Nuclear Age (Commentary on the memoirs of Lucia and the chastisement)

On AKITA: *The Meaning of Akita and Tears and Message* (translation/edition of book by Father Yasuda)

On the LAY APOSTOLATE: *"You, Too! Go into My Vineyard!"*

Autobiographical: *The Brother and I* and *Dear Bishop!*

All the above books, as well as *THE POEM OF THE MAN-GOD*, may be obtained from

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It is with good reason that, while approving the *Poem* for general reading, the Holy See warns that it is NOT “revelation.” It does not replace or even add to “public revelation.” It is essentially like all those other books about the Life of Our Lord which are approved by the Church as pious reading to help us to a better knowledge and deeper love of Him.

But with Fr. Roschini, that learned author of 125 books, we can say that all the other books give us little more than a paper image of the living, real Person of Jesus we find in the *Poem*.

We have already suggested that a childlike attitude and a truly open mind, plus a sincere desire really to know Our Lord, will best prepare us to experience this great work.

Pope Pius XII, after reading the *Poem*, told the Servite Fathers to publish it saying: “Those who read it will understand.” His Holiness further instructed that they “*Publish the work as it is*. There is no need to give an opinion about its origin, whether it be extraordinary or not. Those who read will understand. One hears of many visions and revelations. I will not say they are all authentic, but there are some of which it can be said they are authentic.”

Cardinal Gagnon certified that the above was *a papal imprimatur, given before two witnesses* (whose meeting with the Pope was reported in the Vatican newspaper).

As one who first struggled to read the Italian edition, then read all ten volumes in French and finally the English edition, over and over, I have not found it necessary to keep the words of Pius XII in mind. I experienced them. If there is a passage difficult to understand, or which seems quite different from what might be expected, it can become clear with prayerful thought and a sincere desire that Jesus make Himself known to us.

There are some passages (very few) which critics delight to take out of context. *It is important to read through.*



Above: Most Rev. John Venancio, Bishop of Fatima, with John Haffert. The bishop had been reading *The Poem of the Man-God* when Haffert asked whether this book truly made it possible to *understand* the mystery of Jesus as God and Man. On pg. 2 of this booklet Haffert writes:

Until I read the *Poem*, I had begun to think it was impossible this side of Heaven really to KNOW Jesus as God and man, both natures operative in one person.

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