

MADONNA HOUSE, Combermere, Ontario: One person's 'ESCAPE' from deception.

I must begin by confessing that up until quite recently I had never heard of **MADONNA HOUSE, Combermere, Ontario, Canada**. All of that changed when I received an email on 25th August 2020, part of which read –

Hello Cecil,

I found your website Takeheed after watching a video called '**Demonic Apparitions of Mary**'... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnGuuVR9JYw>. Your comments were very reassuring to me. My life got turned upside down about 30 years ago after getting involved with a cult-like experience at a Roman Catholic community called Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario. The combination of Mary worship, Marian apparitions, Charismatic Movement ideas especially claims of individuals getting prophetic messages, and socialist-type gospel teachings caused me psychological damage which has taken many years to overcome ...

XXXX XXXXXXXX

Part of my response read as follows –

Hello xxxx,

What a joy and a thrill to hear from you – also very humbling. Over the years the feedback on this video (the full version is '**Messages from Heaven**') has been very encouraging so we praise God for that. On my own web site there is a link to the full version and also to 2 other helpful videos (on 'Mormonism' and 'Creation v Evolution') and these can be accessed via

<https://www.takeheed.info/pdf/2020/August/three-helpful-videos.pdf> ...

Just in closing, I did visit the web site of the **Madonna House in Combermere** that you mentioned – everything looks and sounds so lovely and so peaceful – 'seducingly deceptive'. Perhaps at some stage I may write an article about it ...

If I can ever be of any further help, I am your servant for Christ.

Yours by His grace

Cecil

'Take Heed' Ministries

www.takeheed.info

The main founding force behind **MADONNA HOUSE** was a lady called **Catherine Doherty**. There is much detail on her upbringing etc to be found in the section bearing her name on this link - <https://www.madonnahouse.org/about/> Although born in 1896 into a family that was associated with the **Russian Orthodox Church** due mainly to the fact that for 3 years she attended a **Roman Catholic school** overseen by the **Sisters of Zion** she formally sought to be received into the **Roman Catholic Church** in 1919. The reality is that this was not really a significant 'spiritual change' as **Russian Orthodoxy** and **Roman Catholicism** share much in common as regards 'salvation'. A helpful article on **Russian Orthodoxy** is located on <https://www.gotquestions.org/Russian-Orthodox-Church.html> and it includes this

their doctrine has much more in common with Roman Catholicism than with evangelical Christianity. Russian Orthodox services are liturgical and filled with symbolism. Mary has a special place in Russian Orthodoxy as the Mother of God. The Russian Orthodox Church promotes the use of icons (sacred images) and teaches that salvation is conferred through the observance of the sacraments — the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone is not taught in Russian Orthodoxy.

There are however a number of differences that my contact identified when he wrote the following to me –

Although a sacrament-based Church, the Orthodox have retained theological beliefs which are much closer to first century Christianity. This Church has important doctrinal differences compared to Catholicism. The Orthodox do not accept the Roman Catholic doctrines of the universal supremacy of the Pope or Papal infallibility. Orthodox theology differs radically from Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the Trinity, original sin and grace.

The Orthodox reject the Roman teachings of purgatory and indulgences. They do not permit statues, medals or scapulars. The Orthodox do not have the Rosary. They use a prayer rope and pray to Jesus Christ, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God. Have mercy on me a sinner." (the Publican's Prayer). The Orthodox do not believe in the Immaculate Conception, nor do they accept the Roman dogma of the Assumption. They venerate Mary, but do not place her on equal footing with Jesus Christ, nor do they in any way accept the claimed apparitions of Mary. <http://www.orthodox.org/Fatima.pdf>

Traditional Orthodox Christians do not believe in the Charismatic movement, Ecumenism, the Socialist Gospel or Liberation Theology. They recognize the divergence of Roman Catholicism from true Christianity and have steadfastly resisted the encroachment of Roman Catholic **Uniatism** (Cecil - Oxford Dictionary definition - The Christianity of the **Uniate Church**; also, the adoption of some Roman Catholic doctrine by Orthodox or other Christians - **Uniate** is the name given to former Eastern Christian or Orthodox churches that have been received under the jurisdiction of the Church of Rome and retain their own ritual, practice, and canon law), a **trojan horse which attempts to devour Eastern Orthodoxy**. A true Orthodox Christian perceives Roman Catholicism to be a false religion. Indeed, Dostoevsky claimed that, Catholicism had continued the tradition of Imperial Rome and had thus become anti-Christian and proto-socialist, inasmuch as the Church's interest in political and mundane affairs led it to abandon the idea of Christ. For Dostoevsky, socialism was "the latest incarnation of the Catholic idea" and its "natural ally".

The details of how **MADONNA HOUSE** came about are to be found in the section headed 'A Brief History' located on - <https://www.madonnahouse.org/about/>

On 28th August 2020 I then received this email from my contact –

Hello Cecil,

Thank you very much for the reply. I was pleased to hear back from you ...

Madonna House is steeped in the “Social Gospel” and a melding of Christianity with Socialist principles.

There was a priest member of that community named Fr. Eugene Cullinane who had gotten into trouble with his bishop for promoting socialism.

A woman Dr. Carol Byrne (Irish) wrote some exposé articles about **Madonna House** and a similar movement called “the Catholic Worker”.

https://www.traditioninaction.org/HotTopics/b025_Madonna_1.html

https://www.traditioninaction.org/HotTopics/b027_Madonna_2.html

https://www.traditioninaction.org/bkreviews/A_033br_DorothyDay.htm

For me, this socialism was the most deceptive and harmful aspect of this community.

There seemed to be a mysterious underlying spirit of anger or sarcasm among many of the members.

I remember being told, “If you can’t hack it here, there are two buses out of town every day.”

Wishing you continued success with your ministry

XXXX XXXXXXXX

These are informative articles showing how **Catherine Doherty** sought to blend together **Russian Orthodoxy** and **Roman Catholicism** and to pursue a socialist, almost communistic agenda that would later flower under others into ‘Liberation Theology’ as we read towards the end of the third article –

Starting from the early ecumenical and “social justice” work of Archbishop McNeil, through the work of Friendship House and after Madonna House, we can see how the seeds of Socialism were planted in the Canadian Church in the first half of the 20th century. Few Canadians then could have foretold that in the next generation one of their Bishops, expanding on McNeil’s original groundwork, would place the Church on the road to Liberation Theology.

On 31st August 2020 I then received this email –

Best wishes Cecil,

I am very glad to have met you ...

I have attached two documents tracing the theological pedigree of Catherine de Hueck Doherty, the Russian woman who founded **Madonna House**. She was very much devoted to the Russian religious philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, who had three bad ideas: **Sophiology, Catholic Ecumenism and Socialist Christianity**. Solovyov also badly influenced the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian émigrés after the revolution founded a theological school in Paris. Some of the theologians got addicted to Sophia the Divine Goddess. The Sophiology doctrine seems to be related to Mary worship and feminist theology (Goddess worship etc.). Very destructive ideas.

The Catholic priest who is the postulator for the sainthood of Catherine Doherty is proud of her intellectual ties to Vladimir Solovyov. They are stumbling about because of pride of the intellect.

<http://www.catherinedoherty.org/articles/2011/11/catherine-and-the-russian-religious-renaissance/>

It has taken me years to get released from the experience I went through in 1984-1985 as a guest at Madonna House. **It was a brain washing.**

Best wishes,

XXXX

The Religious Thought of Vladimir Solovyov

Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov (1853-1900) was a Russian religious philosopher of the late 19th century whose thought had a profound influence on many Russian thinkers of the early twentieth century, especially Sergius N. Bulgakov and Pavel Florensky.¹ Solovyov's main influence on theology can be summed up as Sophiology or Sophianism, Ecumenism and the Social Gospel. Although Solovyov's writings are usually termed religious philosophy; his thought was speculative, syncretic and has been described as Gnosticism.² In addition to his philosophical base, Solovyov was also known to have studied Kabbalism, occult practices such as seances,³ and theosophy⁴.

1. Solovyov and Sophiology

One of the most noteworthy ideas of Solovyov was his religious doctrine of Sophiology. For Solovyov, Sophia was the personification of Divine Wisdom or the Divine Feminine principle. Some later theologians began to describe Sophia as the ousia (essence) by virtue of which the the three hypostases of the Trinity are held together in unity. Solovyov's influence on Sergius N. Bulgakov resulted in some of Bulgakov's writings being condemned as heretical in 1935 by the Bishop's Council of ROCOR. The heresy was named Sophianism.

There was a so-called "mystical" element in Solovyov's writings; he claimed to have had three mystical visions of the woman Sophia, the Incarnate Wisdom of God. For Solovyov, Sophia was his muse. In his poem, "Three Meetings," he describes his visions of a beautiful woman, the divine feminine, Wisdom incarnate—Sophia—and her role in his philosophy of total unity.⁵ The great Russian poet Alexander Blok, inspired by Solovyov, also wrote poetry dedicated to Sophia.

¹ See Wikipedia article, *Russian Religious Renaissance*

² Slesinski, Robert "Toward an Understanding of V.S. Solovyov's Gnosticism"

³ Kornblatt, Judith Deutsch, *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov*
Rosenthal, Bernice G. Essay entitled: *The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture*

⁴ Theosophy is a collection of mystical and occultist philosophies

⁵ Giragosian, James G. Virginia Polytechnic Ph.D Thesis: *Wisdom as Sophia: An Analysis of the Sophiologies of Three 19th-20th Century Russian Philosopher-Theologians*

The Religious Thought of Vladimir Solovyov

2. Solovyov and Ecumenism

Another important aspect of Solovyov's religious philosophy is ecumenism. The ecumenism of Solovyov has become very attractive to Roman Catholics and many books and articles allude to this aspect of his writings.⁶ Karl Stern considered Solovyov to be one of the precursors of modern ecumenical thought.⁷ Solovyov's theocratic vision was that of a Russian nation integrated into the Roman Catholic Church.⁸ He considered the Russian Orthodox Church to be a severed branch of the Universal Church headed by the Pope. This ecclesiology is known as the Branch Theory. In his book, *Russia and the Universal Church*, Solovyov calls the Roman Pontiff, the wonder-working icon of Christian unity.⁹ However, it is evident that the ecumenism that Solovyov advocates is actually Uniatism i.e. people of Orthodox tradition joining the Roman Catholic Church while keeping their Eastern Christian rituals and rules.

3. Solovyov and the Social Gospel

Pavel Florensky once said, "Solovyov's whole creative career may be understood as a quest for social justice".¹⁰ According to Solovyov, the Christian's task is to regenerate and transform social institutions and make them compatible with the Kingdom of God.¹¹ Although such intentions are good, there is a modernist tendency to frame the whole of the Christian message in social justice terms. Like many of his contemporaries, Solovyov was a committed socialist in his youth. The social element was always a strong theme in his writings. Another one of his beliefs was that the Christian message needed to be put into a new and suitable form using

⁶ An example is Van den Bercken, William: *The Ecumenical Vision of Vladimir Solovyov*.

⁷ Wild, Fr. Robert. article: *Catherine Doherty and Vladimir Solovyov*

⁸ Solovyov, Vladimir: *Russia and the Universal Church*

⁹ Wild, Fr. Robert. article: *Catherine Doherty and Vladimir Solovyov*

¹⁰ Zenkovsky, V. A History of Russian Philosophy, Volume 2 , page 481

¹¹ Likoudis, James: *Vladimir Solovyov, the Russian Newman on Christian Politics and Ecumenism*.

The Religious Thought of Vladimir Solovyov

contemporary knowledge and philosophy.¹² Solovyov approached Christianity from without, not from within.¹³

The social justice Gospel tends to focus on exterior transformation of the world rather than the interior life and our relation with the Holy Spirit. The true Gospel instructs Christians to seek God within the interior Kingdom of the heart, “ For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”¹⁴ The interior change of the human heart must come before the exterior changes to the world.

Conclusions

Although Solovyov is touted in the West as the greatest Russian philosopher, his thought and writings may have negative implications for Orthodox Christianity. He should be approached with caution by the Orthodox as his writings are complex and often speculative. At the present time, Solovyov’s writings are more studied in the Western intellectual and religious milieu rather than the Orthodox world.

¹² Zenkovsky, V. A History of Russian Philosophy, Volume 2 , page 481

¹³ Ibid, page 481

¹⁴ Ephesians 6:12

I received a further email on 2nd September 2020 and it read as follows –

Hello Cecil,

I wanted to send you one last note about **Madonna House**. Their way of life is based on "the Little Mandate" <https://www.madonnahouse.org/mandate/>. This is their version of the Gospel.

They refer to it as "a distillation of the Gospel" as **Catherine received it from Jesus Christ**. However, her Gospel cherry-picks a few items from the true Gospel and re-writes it as a Socialist Gospel. Become poor and live with the poor. Almost claiming that redemption can only be found if you go and live among the poor.

The spirituality is similar to Dorothy Day <https://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/>. Again, a socialist version of Christianity. As though Christ came to bring economic and social equality. So deceptive.

Thanks again Cecil, for your guidance and best wishes for your ministry,

xxxx xxxxxxxx

Then I received this email and VERY informative attachment on 3rd September 2020

Hello Cecil,

I have written out my testimony of my cult experience at Madonna House. I used an anonymous name. Feel free to use this for your future research.

Best wishes and thank you for your friendship in Christ,

xxxx

An Anonymous Testimony from a Cult Survivor.

My name is xxxx (a pseudonym) and I am a cult survivor. I was born into a comfortable family who lived outside of Toronto, Canada. My family was Roman Catholic and were good living people who lived out their life in charity and humble service towards their fellow man. Being a rebellious fellow and indifferent towards religion, I gradually fell into drink, pot smoking and promiscuity as soon I as could break away from the family constraints. I was able to finally graduate from university and took a position as a sales rep for an industrial manufacturer. The difficult balancing act between holding down a job and carrying on with my wild lifestyle became increasingly difficult and I began to suffer from an anxiety disorder and panic attacks.

Around the age of 28, I met a woman who was conservative and religious and we began to go out. My hope was that her lifestyle would help me to get back on the straight and narrow. Over time, she introduced me to her friends who were pretty much from the fanatic side of Roman Catholicism, espousing scary views about the End Times and the reign of the Antichrist. They told me that they were **Fatima Crusaders** and believed that “**Our Lady**” would save the world from communism using the rosary and a cohort of Marian priests. This should have been a red flag but I jumped right in.

Years later, I can see that I was susceptible to cult-like doctrines because of my own mental instability and substance abuse. They suggested that I was in danger of losing my soul and becoming one of “Satan’s Trophy Pieces”. Apparently, Satan collected lost people like me and put them on a shelf as trophies. They suggested that I go stay at **Madonna House** in Combermere, Ontario to get straightened around and learn how to learn the Christian life in a safe environment.

Within a few days, a priest arrived at my house in an old car with a statue of “Our Lady of Fatima” strapped into the back seat with a seat belt. He drove me down to Combermere.



When I arrived at **Madonna House**, I soon noticed a creepy art-deco statue of “Our Lady of Combermere” - a gaudy, bronze image that looked like the Flying Nun. The members of the community seemed to only talk about Mary. Within a few weeks, I started getting ready to make my Consecration to Our Lady. According to St. Louis de Montfort, the most direct route to heaven was to become a Slave of Mary through an Act of Consecration. I began to read and pray in preparation for my big day when I too could become a slave of Mary and follow her humble way.

I began the daily routine of manual labour, **daily services and mass**. Within a short time, I was assigned **a spiritual director** who was heavily involved with the **charismatic movement**. The weird other-worldly look in his eyes was like Darth Vader on drugs. After hearing my general confession - **he pronounced the verdict that I was infested by demons** and on my way towards full possession by Satan.

Thus began our weekly spiritual counselling sessions which were completely medieval. His “therapy” involved reciting prayers of exorcism over me in a darkened room with a few lit candles while I tightly held onto a crucifix. In addition, I was constantly berated for my pride, sinfulness and evil ways. These sessions went on throughout the whole year I spent at **Madonna House**. **This gradually broke me down into complete submission**. In addition to my Consecration, **I began to wear a scapular with the words, “Whoever dies wearing this scapular will not suffer eternal fire.”** It was like a Get-Out-of-Jail-Free card. As a slave of **Mary**, **I prayed rosaries and novenas incessantly, motivated by the fear of losing my soul.**

My daily routine was to chop wood, shovel snow, weed gardens and other menial tasks. It was constantly pointed out to me that my previous career was based on pride and that I needed to do Nazareth type work to imitate the Lord. In fact, my spiritual director constantly talked about my pride as the source of all my problems and my need to acquire humility. **The exorcism prayers and negative reinforcement by my spiritual director continued to wear me down.** It was like being a member of some sick, religious army out to save the world.

There was a strange book everyone was talking about, by a Father Steffano Gobbi called, **Our Lady Speaks to Her Beloved Priests**. Apparently, Fr. Gobbi was receiving “interior locutions” or direct speech from our Lady which he wrote down and passed along to his followers. His message talked about the End Times, the Red Dragon of Communism, and Our Lady saving the world with her Peace Plan. The peace plan was to be carried out by a faithful cohort of priests consecrated to Mary. Father Gobbi was endorsed and promoted by many at Combermere. Other popular subjects were Our Lady of Fatima, End Times prophecy, the Three Days of Darkness and various other apocalyptic themes. All of this fed into my terror about being possessed by Satan, losing my soul and going to Hell for all eternity.

Over time, I began to suffer depression, tension in my chest, terrible anxiety and confusion, only relieved by periods of intense sobbing when I went for long walks in the bush near Madonna House. By the end of the year, a loss of identity began to take hold. I held out for as long as could - as a faithful slave of Mary - offering up my suffering as a “victim soul” to help her mission of bringing peace to the world.

Eventually, they asked me to leave. I returned to Toronto and sought out psychiatric care. I was under a regime of heavy medication and psychotherapy to help me pull out of the severe depression caused by this cult experience. After a few more years, I entered a 12 Step program and got free of the prescription tranquilizers. I came to understand that the 12 Step programs are derived from the simple Gospel principles of the Oxford Groups from the 1930's.

I have come to learn a simple spiritual path to sanity and stability. **In 2010, I renounced Roman Catholicism and was baptised by full immersion into my new church (anonymous)** I follow my 12 Step program and maintain a simple daily regime of studying the Word of God. After 30 years, I am finally free of this horrible cult experience which caused so much upset to me, my parents and siblings.

My research has shown me that **Madonna House** was based on three main errors: **The Socialist Gospel, Mary Worship and Ecumenism.**

I have come to believe that Roman Catholicism, in general, has been gradually taken over by the Great Delusion of Mary worship. Over the past 200 years, we have seen in Roman Catholicism, the rise of Marian Apparitions and a series of dogmatic statements about Mary.

These two trends buttress each other and are producing in the Roman Catholic religion, a Deification of Mary. The two foundation stones are the following dogmas:

- **Immaculate Conception:** “The Virgin Mary was free of original sin from the moment of her conception.” (Not to be confused with the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ).
- **Assumption:** “When the course of her earthly life was finished, Mary was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven”.

The Assumption dogma is stated ambiguously but implies that Mary did not die. As death is a consequence of original sin, these two dogmas complement each other and basically declare/proclaim the immortality of the Blessed Virgin.

There is also a so-called Fifth Marian Dogma being pushed which would define the Blessed Virgin to be Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate. There are several theologians clamoring for this dogma to be enacted and they circulate petitions and widely publicize this demand.

These apparitions, interior locutions, writings of Marian saints and Vatican doctrines and dogmas have created a new religion based on Goddess worship. **My educated guess is that these so-called Marian apparitions are all demonic.** What is actually appearing is probably a goddess called Semiramis or Ishtar, from the Babylonian religion who is claiming to be the Blessed Virgin. **This is a huge deception and delusion within the Roman Catholic faith, carrying it further along its destructive path.**

Anonymous

In closing, I want to list some articles and recordings that seem relevant to what my contact made reference to in their testimony of how they eventually ‘escaped’ from the ‘soul-destroying’ deception that is found at **Madonna House**.

Reference was made to the wearing of a ‘**scapular**’ and this article addresses that superstition - <https://www.takeheed.info/pdf/2015/August/Scapular-Superstition.pdf>

There is a real blend of New Age/Occultism hinted at and a talk given by former Roman Catholic and Mary ‘devotee’, Tim Kauffmann, may prove instructive – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f3pV9Fg6nQ>

Assorted audio talks on Mary also include – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ltgB8wR804&t=16s>
<https://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=531035317>

Assorted video debates on Mary include –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAgy95TMltI&t=6s>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYZgUiB20rM> (Part one)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzcBWW2CtFQ> (Part two)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoSeGla-2Uw> (Part one)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8vKDE86hNk> (Part two)

It was just wonderful to read of how my contact was graciously rescued from the cultish deception of how Rome portrays MARY and my prayer is that this article and, in particular, the word of testimony; may also be used to rescue souls similarly deceived.

Cecil Andrews – ‘Take Heed’ Ministries - 8th September 2020