

Chapter 1

A “Private” Revelation?

In discussing the controversy between Antonio Socci and Cardinal Bertone concerning the Third Secret of Fatima, we must first dispense with the banal objection that the Message of Fatima is “just a private revelation” the faithful can take or leave as they wish. Given the facts and circumstances surrounding the Fatima event, that contention is simply ludicrous.

Like the rest of the Fatima message, the Third Secret was confided by the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1917 to three shepherd children, Lucia dos Santos and her two cousins, Jacinta and Francisco Marto, in a series of apparitions on the 13th of six consecutive months in a field called Cova da Iria near Fatima, Portugal. The apparitions at the Cova culminated with “the Great Secret” the Virgin revealed to the children on July 13, 1917. The “Third Secret” is the popular name for what is really the third part of the “Great Secret,” which in turn is popularly referred to as “the Message of Fatima,” although there is more to the Fatima message than the Great Secret at its core.¹³

By its very terms the Message is not “private,” but rather is addressed to the whole world, even if the Virgin Mary chose to deliver it to three children. Accordingly, Lucia pleaded with “the Lady in white” “to work a miracle so that *everybody* will believe that you are appearing to us,” for the local anti-Catholic authorities and other critics were mocking the apparitions and suggesting that the children were liars and fakes. In fact, at one point Lucia and her cousins were literally kidnapped and carted off to jail by the Freemasonic mayor of nearby Ourem, seat of the local judicial district. The children were threatened with torture and death if they did not recant what they had seen and heard in the Cova. All

¹³For a complete history of the Fatima-related apparitions in all their detail, see, for example, Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima* (Buffalo, New York: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989), Vols. I, II and III. See also www.fatima.org for a vast amount of information on the Message of Fatima and the history of the Fatima controversies, including the controversy over the Third Secret.

three refused to do so, and the mayor released them after two days of captivity.¹⁴ To silence the critics and persecutors of the children, the Lady promised that on the 13th of October, the date of the last apparition at the Cova, “I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe.”¹⁵

A miracle like no other in history

On October 13, 1917, a crowd of 70,000 people assembled in the rain-drenched Cova to witness the first pre-announced public miracle in the history of the world, and the first miracle Heaven had ever deigned to grant in answer to a challenge by the Church’s enemies: the Miracle of the Sun. At precisely the moment pre-announced—noon, solar time—the Miracle began. Over the next twelve minutes the sun danced in the sky, threw off a stunning array of colors that transformed the landscape, and then plunged toward the terrified crowd, instantly drying the muddy field and the clothing of the rain-drenched witnesses before the phenomenon ended with the sun returning to its normal place in the sky. The amount of solar energy involved in that feat would have incinerated everyone present, but not a soul was harmed. Quite the contrary, at the same moment numerous miraculous cures and—hardly surprising!—instantaneous conversions took place among the witnesses.

As the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, D. Jose Alves Correia da Silva, wrote shortly afterwards: “This phenomenon, which was not registered in any astronomical observatory, and could not, therefore, have been of natural origin, was witnessed by people of every category and class, by believers as well as unbelievers, journalists of the principal daily papers, and even by people kilometers away, a fact which destroys any theory of collective hallucination.”¹⁶ One of those remote witnesses was none other than the poet laureate of Portugal, Afonso Lopes Vieira, who, having forgotten about the apparitions at Fatima, was dramatically

¹⁴This incident is abundantly documented in the historical sources, both secular and religious. See e.g., Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Volume I: Science and the Facts (Buffalo, New York: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989) pp. 214-231; and “The Seers Kidnapped (August 13-15, 1917)”, at <http://fatima.org/essentials/opposed/seerkidn.asp>.

¹⁵In *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Vol. I, pp. 180-181.

¹⁶John De Marchi, *Fatima from the Beginning* (Fatima: Edicoes: Missoes Consolata, 1950), p. 140.

reminded of them by the solar phenomenon he observed from his veranda, 25 kilometers distant from the Cova.¹⁷

There is no place in this short work to give the voluminous testimonies concerning the Miracle of the Sun in the acts of the diocesan investigation that led to ecclesiastical approval of devotion to Our Lady of Fatima and her Message and its spread throughout the entire Catholic Church.¹⁸ Suffice it to say that even Hollywood took notice of the Miracle by producing a very popular movie entitled *The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima* that still sells quite well today.¹⁹

What is the "Great Secret" of Fatima?

What is the "Great Secret" the Virgin confided to the three children whose contents continue to cause controversy to this day? As Sister Lucia explained when committing the Great Secret to paper in her Third Memoir (written in 1941): "[T]he secret is made up of *three distinct parts*, two of which I am now going to reveal." Stated otherwise, within the Great Secret there is a First Secret, a Second Secret and a Third Secret. In her Memoir Lucia revealed the First and Second Secrets only. The First Secret is a vision of hell:

Our Lady showed us a great sea of fire which seemed to be under the earth. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in a huge fire, without weight or equilibrium, and amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repulsive likeness to frightful and unknown animals, all black and transparent. This vision lasted but an instant. How can we ever be

¹⁷Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁸The historical record of numerous testimonies concerning cures and conversions resulting from this phenomenon is surveyed in *The Devil's Final Battle* (Terryville, Connecticut: The Missionary Association, 2002), pp. 8-14; see also <http://www.devilsfinalbattle.com/ch1.htm>.

¹⁹*The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima* (Warner Brothers: 1952).

grateful enough to our kind heavenly Mother, who had already prepared us by promising, in the first Apparition, to take us to heaven. Otherwise, I think we would have died of fear and terror.²⁰

But the “Lady in white” did not simply leave the children in fear and terror. She immediately *explained the vision* the children had just seen—a fact that will be critical to our inquiry into the Third Secret—and then provided the Second Secret:

We then looked up at Our Lady, who said to us so kindly and so sadly:

“You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end: but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the Pontificate [reign] of Pius XI.²¹ When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he [sic] is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father. To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”²²

²⁰Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Message of Fatima* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000) (*Message*), p. 13; photo-reproducing in its entirety and quoting from Lucia’s handwritten text in her Third Memoir.

²¹As can be seen from the handwritten text photo-reproduced in *Message*, the Vatican translation of Lucia’s original Portuguese arbitrarily substitutes “Pontificate of Pius XI” for Lucia’s “reign of Pius XI” (“*renado de Pius XI*”)—one of many signs of the “modern” and “ecumenical” attitude that has militated against the authentic Fatima message since Vatican II, as will be apparent from the rest of this discussion.

²²*Message*, p. 16.

The content of the first two parts of the Message, conveyed with so few words, is staggering in its scope, theological richness, and implications for the Church and the world: Innumerable souls will be lost for eternity, the world will be punished by war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and the Pope. Yet these calamities can be avoided by establishing in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart—through the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays, among other things—and by consecrating Russia to the same Immaculate Heart. And then, nothing less than a terrible ultimatum from Heaven itself: "If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; *if not*, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; *various nations will be annihilated.*" Finally, however, a promise of God's mercy:

"In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

We know, of course, that every one of the calamities the Virgin predicted in the first two parts of the Great Secret (except the ultimate "annihilation of nations") did in fact happen: World War I ended, World War II ravaged the globe, Russia spread its errors—including international Communism—throughout the world, there were persecutions of the Church, the good were martyred and the Holy Father had much to suffer. The fulfillment of these predictions verifies the authenticity of the Message even more effectively than the Miracle of the Sun, for the very nature of true prophecy is that it unerringly predicts what comes to pass.

A consecration undone?

Jacinta and Francisco died soon after the apparitions, also precisely as the Virgin predicted²³ and long before she returned, as she had promised in 1917, to request from Lucia the First Saturdays devotion (1925) and the Consecration of Russia (1929). While a detailed discussion of these elements of the Fatima message is

²³"I will take Jacinta and Francisco soon." In Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima: Science and the Facts* (Buffalo, New York: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1989) (hereafter WTAF), Vol. I, p. 158.

beyond the scope of this work,²⁴ the Consecration of Russia must be kept in view. Socci, representing a substantial constituency in the Church, maintains that Russia's consecration remains undone, despite the claim that the consecration of Russia was effected by papal ceremonies consecrating the *world* in 1982 and 1984, from which any mention of Russia was *deliberately omitted* to avoid "offending" the Russian Orthodox.²⁵ Contradicting this claim, John Paul II himself twice stated on March 25 *after* the 1984 consecration of the world that the Virgin was still "awaiting"²⁶ Russia's consecration, but that he had done all he could "according to our poor human possibilities and the measure of human weakness..."²⁷

As Socci notes: "precisely this lack of a specific object (Russia)" is why Sister Lucia "has repeated a thousand times... that there has not been a response to the request of the Virgin."²⁸ Both before and after the 1982 and 1984 ceremonies Sister Lucia insisted that Our Lady had requested nothing less than the explicit public consecration of Russia by the Pope and the bishops and that, accordingly, a consecration of the world would not comply with

²⁴On the First Saturdays devotion, see *The Fatima Crusader*, No. 49 (Summer 1995), also at <http://www.fatimacrusader.com/cr49/toc49.asp>; see also "The Five First Saturdays" at <http://www.fatima.org/essentials/message/default.asp>. On the Consecration of Russia, see Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Vol. II; Father Nicholas Gruner, *World Enslavement or Peace* (Fort Erie, Ontario: The Fatima Crusader, 1989) (also at <http://www.worldenslavementorpeace.com>); and "Consecration of Russia" at <http://www.fatima.org/consecrussia/default.asp>.

²⁵As one of the Pope's "closest advisors," later identified to this author as Cardinal Tomko, told *Inside the Vatican* magazine, Russia was not mentioned in the 1984 ceremony because "Rome [i.e. certain of the Pope's advisors] fears the Russian Orthodox might regard it as an 'offense' if Rome were to make specific mention of Russia in such a prayer, as if Russia especially is in need of help when the whole world, including the post-Christian West, faces profound problems..." *Inside the Vatican*, November 2000. Tomko added: "Let us beware of becoming too literal-minded." Evidently, Tomko and his collaborators thought themselves more prudent and less "literal-minded" than the Virgin Mary.

²⁶*L'Osservatore Romano*, March 26-27, 1984 Italian edition, pp. 1, 6 (See Appendix V, p. 246): "Illumina specialmente i popoli di cui Tu aspetti la nostra consacrazione e il nostro affidamento." ("Enlighten especially the peoples whose consecration and entrusting *you are awaiting* from us."); *Avvenire*, March 27, 1984, p. 11: "We wished to choose this Sunday, the Third Sunday of Lent, 1984—still within the Holy Year of Redemption—for the act of entrusting and consecration of the world, of the great human family, of all peoples, especially those who have a very great need of this consecration and entrustment, *of those peoples* for whom *you yourself are awaiting* our act of consecration and entrusting." *Avvenire* is the official episcopal newspaper of the Italian Bishops Conference.

²⁷*Avvenire*, March 27, 1984, p. 11.

²⁸Socci, *Fourth Secret*, pp. 29-30.

the Virgin’s request.²⁹ Cardinal Bertone’s contention that during private, unrecorded “interviews” Sister Lucia abruptly changed her testimony on this matter presents an entire controversy unto itself, the details of which cannot be explored here.³⁰

At any rate, one would think it beyond debate that a consecration of Russia needs to *mention* Russia. As Dr. David Allen White has put it, attempting to consecrate Russia without mention of Russia is like “publishing a recipe for beef stew that never mentions beef.” Consequently, if the Fatima message is taken seriously, as it ought to be, the world remains under the Virgin’s ultimatum: consecrate Russia or face the annihilation of nations and the eternal loss of countless souls. As should be apparent from the rise of Vladimir Putin as the militaristic, neo-Stalinist dictator of Russia—a development even the *New York Times* has noticed³¹—there is an integral relationship between what Socci calls the “message-warning” of the Third Secret and Russia’s consecration. I shall return to this point in Chapter 12.

The Church gives her highest approval

Lucia, who became a Carmelite in 1948, would live on until February 13, 2005, when she died in the Carmelite convent at Coimbra, Portugal at the age of 97. Since those dramatic days in the Cova, the Message Lucia was given has been treated as worthy of belief by a series of Popes. Pope John Paul II, who attributed his

²⁹For example, on May 12, 1982, the day before the 1982 consecration of the world, the Vatican’s own *L’Osservatore Romano* published an interview of Sister Lucia by Father Umberto Maria Pasquale, a Salesian priest, during which she told Father Umberto that Our Lady had never requested the consecration of the world, but *only* the Consecration of Russia:

At a certain moment I said to her: “Sister, I should like to ask you a question. If you cannot answer me, let it be. But if you can answer it, I would be most grateful to you ... Has Our Lady ever spoken to you about the consecration of the world to Her Immaculate Heart?”

“No, Father Umberto! *Never!* At the Cova da Iria in 1917 Our Lady had promised: *I shall come to ask for the Consecration of Russia ...* In 1929, at Tuy, as she had promised, Our Lady came back to tell me that the moment had come to ask the Holy Father for the consecration of *that country* (Russia).”

³⁰But see, e.g., Christopher Ferrara, “A New Fatima for the New Church,” *The Fatima Crusader*, No. 75 (Winter 2004), pp. 65ff (also at <http://www.fatimacrusader.com/cr75/cr75pg08.asp>) for a thorough treatment of this subject.

³¹See, e.g., “With Tight Grip on Ballot, Putin is Forcing Foes out of Parliament,” *New York Times*, October 14, 2007 (detailing the moves by which Putin has created an authoritarian one-party regime in Russia like that of “the old days.”).

escape from death on May 13, 1981 to the intervention of Our Lady of Fatima (on the very anniversary of the first Fatima apparition), definitively removed the Fatima apparitions from the category of the so-called “private revelation” by a series of papal acts. The Pope beatified Jacinta and Francisco in May 2000, proclaiming February 20th as their feast day, elevated the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima on May 13th to the altars of every church in the world by ordering its inclusion in the Roman Missal, and declared at Fatima in 1982 that “The appeal of Our Lady of Fatima is so deeply rooted in the Gospel and the whole of Tradition that the Church feels herself bound by this message.”³² Moreover, the Fatima prayers (“O my Jesus, etc”) have been incorporated into the Rosary, while the First Saturdays devotion is practiced throughout the entire Church.

In view of these facts and circumstances, Socci has best summed up the approach any Catholic should take to the Message of Fatima: “The Fatima event has received on the part of the Church—which in general is very cautious concerning supernatural phenomena—a recognition that has *no equal in Christian history*. . . . It is really impossible—after all this—to continue to speak of a ‘private revelation’ and of the relative importance of the Message.”³³ It is not only impossible but completely irrational to dismiss the Fatima message, and the Third Secret in particular, as a “private revelation.” Any reasonable Catholic, and even a non-Catholic inclined to believe in supernatural phenomena, should be prepared to agree that the Message of Fatima is in a category by itself.

The scope of this work does not permit anything like an examination of the fullness of the Fatima message. What I have just presented must suffice for context, for we must focus on the subject at hand: Socci’s sensational allegation of a Vatican cover-up of the Third Secret.

³²“Il contenuto dell’appello della Signora di Fatima è così profondamente radicato nel Vangelo e in tutta la Tradizione, che la Chiesa si sente impegnata da questo messaggio.” *Sermon at the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Fatima*, May 13, 1982, at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1982/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19820513_fatima_it.html.

³³Socci, *Fourth Secret*, p. 17.