

## Chapter 11

### Bertone's Method

In the preceding pages we have reviewed the evidence that led Antonio Socci (like millions of other Catholics) to conclude that it "is certain" there is a separate but related text of the Third Secret of Fatima, not yet revealed, containing "the words of the Madonna [which] preannounce an apocalyptic crisis of the faith in the Church starting from the top" and "an explanation of the vision (revealed on June 26, 2000) where there appear the Pope, the bishops and martyred faithful, after having traversed a city in ruins."<sup>303</sup> The hidden words of the Madonna would predict, as Socci writes, the "assassination of a Pope in the context of an immense martyrdom of Christians and of a devastation of the world."<sup>304</sup>

On these pages we have also examined how Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone has conducted an elaborate public relations campaign designed to give the appearance, but not the substance, of an explicit "official" denial that such a text exists, and how over the course of this campaign the Cardinal has only dug for himself a pit of inconsistencies, self-contradictions and new disclosures which have undermined his position. I stress that it is *his* position, not that of the Holy Catholic Church, that Bertone has undermined. For in his privately published book, *Last Visionary*, his radio broadcast, and his two television appearances, Bertone has in no way spoken with the authority of the Church's Magisterium, which is not his to exercise in any event. Nor, we must remind ourselves, is *The Message of Fatima* commentary of June 2000 in any way a binding teaching of the Church. Once again, as Cardinal Ratzinger himself made clear, the commentary presents nothing more than an "attempt" to interpret the vision of the bishop in white, and the Church has not limited the freedom of the faithful to reach their own conclusions about what it means. In the end, therefore, all of

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<sup>303</sup>Socci, *Fourth Secret*, p. 82.

<sup>304</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

Bertone's affirmations concerning this controversy are merely his own statements, not the Church's. And, when all is said and done, so is the "official" account as a whole.

### *The big picture*

If one examines carefully the parade of presentations Bertone has conducted since Socci's *Fourth Secret* was published in November of 2006, as indeed we have done on these pages, one will discern the following elements of the "big picture":

*First*, Bertone has assiduously avoided making any unequivocal statement—much less a simple yes or no—about whether there is a text that contains the words of the Virgin following the famous "etc" and explaining the vision of the bishop in white. Instead, he harps on the idea of an "authentic text" in the archives of the Holy Office, and fails and refuses *either to ask or to answer* precise questions concerning a text involving the "etc" and the Virgin's explanation of the vision.

*Second*, Bertone will not disclose the existence of such a text, but neither will he deny it explicitly, since that would require an outright lie. However, his repeated references to an "authentic" text in the archives—as opposed to the text (and envelope) his own witness now admits was located in the papal apartment—evince a mental reservation concerning another text, not yet published and privately deemed "not authentic" by himself and others.

*Third*, Bertone and his collaborators have conducted a series of elaborate presentations which give the appearance of responding to the need for transparency, but which are really exercises in obfuscation—

- the commentary (*Message*) and press conference of June 26, 2000, which ducks the "etc" issue by using the Third instead of the Fourth Memoir;
- ten hours of purported interviews of Lucia in Coimbra, for which Bertone provides no videotape, audiotape, transcript or any other independent record, and from which he purports to extract only a few words of the seer in "quotations" which constantly change, seemingly as the need arises;
- a book co-written with De Carli (*Last Visionary*), published in May 2007, only a few pages of which even purport to

address Socci's conclusions, but in fact evade them all;

- a television appearance on *Door to Door* on May 31, 2007, during which Bertone likewise fails to answer any of Socci's conclusions;
- a radio appearance on Vatican Radio on June 6, 2007, suffering from the same deficiency;
- a further television appearance on *Telepace* on September 21, 2007, a show filled with celebrities and speeches, but likewise failing to rebut Socci or the evidence he presented—including the testimony of Archbishop Capovilla to Solideo Paolini, which is not the least affected by the videotaped interview Bertone's agent, Giuseppe De Carli, conducted in a failed attempt to obtain a "retraction" that only further demonstrated Bertone must be hiding something.

Not one of these presentations addresses the very heart of the matter: whether Lucia wrote a text containing the Virgin's words following the "etc" and explaining the vision of the bishop in white. On the contrary, all of these presentations are designed precisely to avoid and obscure that question by focusing on matters not in dispute: that the text of the vision is authentic, and that John XXIII read the text of the vision.

*Fourth*, despite all these presentations, the testimony of Capovilla to Paolini that there are two texts and two envelopes comprising the Third Secret is not only not denied *but further confirmed* by the presentations themselves. The same is true as to the testimony of Cardinal Ottaviani that there is a one-page, 25-line text of the Secret.

*Fifth*, having done absolutely nothing with these presentations to disprove the accusations of Socci and the "Fatimists," but rather having actually *confirmed* the accusations, Bertone nonetheless projects a suave assurance that his position has been vindicated.

*Sixth*, Bertone has used the trappings of authority—his title, his ornate Vatican offices, his associates in the hierarchy, the dog and pony show featuring powerful and influential friends—to endow with a patina of officialdom what is really nothing more than a failed personal and private initiative to vindicate himself against Socci and all the other members of the faithful who are not persuaded by his representations.

*Seventh*, neither the Pope nor the Holy See has officially joined Bertone's campaign against Socci and the position he represents so ably. Quite the contrary, the Pope has made it a point to thank Socci for having written a book that resoundingly rejects Bertone's version of the facts and openly declares that Bertone and his collaborators have engaged in a cover-up!

One must pause to consider the wholly extraordinary nature of what the Cardinal has attempted here. In an effort to silence his critics, the Cardinal has written a book and appeared on television and radio like any other guest in the "crossfire" of a public controversy. When these public relations maneuvers backfired, the Cardinal even went so far as to arrange private sponsorship from bankers and other supporters for a television special of his own, assembling an audience of the elite and a panel of luminaries who had nothing important to say. These initiatives, all undertaken in less than a year following the publication of Socci's book, do not suggest a man confident he has nothing to hide and content to let the truth speak for itself. Rather, they suggest a man working furiously to create a distraction from the growing perception that he is, in fact, hiding something.

Consider also the audacity of the Cardinal's method. While resorting to the mass media to argue his case, the Cardinal refuses to answer questions from any member of the media except the one journalist he has handpicked to assist him in his media campaign: Giuseppe De Carli, his co-author. And when even De Carli attempts to pursue certain questions, the Cardinal ignores the questions or provides evasive answers, as we saw in Chapter 7. Yet the Cardinal expects the faithful to accept uncritically his claim that he has laid to rest all doubts about the completeness of the Vatican's disclosure of the Third Secret when (a) he will not answer questions, (b) neither his book, nor his radio or TV appearances, nor anything else he has said over the past seven years denies or refutes a single point Socci and the "Fatimists" have raised, and (c) his shifting statements and new disclosures have only heightened the certainty that there exists a hidden text of the Secret, just as Socci has observed.

Bertone says, in essence, "Trust me!" even as he refuses to address the many facts that cast doubt on the veracity of his account—facts that Socci, a devout and loyal Catholic, has so effectively marshaled. As these pages have shown, there are, quite literally, at least 101 grounds for doubt. (See [Appendix II](#).) Relying

on a publicity blitz that is all show and no substance, as opposed to providing forthright answers to simple questions, Bertone evidently believes the faithful will simply overlook the facts merely because the Cardinal Secretary of State has made appearances in various private forums, surrounded by prestigious and powerful friends, and we should “trust” and “obey” the pastors of the Church. But once again, contrary to what Messori has suggested, Cardinal Bertone has no pastoral authority over the faithful, nor has the Pope declared by his own authority that Bertone’s version of the facts is to be accepted. If anything, the Pope has indicated (by his letter to Socci) that the faithful are entirely free to accept Socci’s position as opposed to Bertone’s. Much less does Bertone have any authority to compel assent to his statements where, as here, he acts in a private capacity as an author and a guest on a TV or radio show.

Therefore, regardless of the imposing manifestations Bertone’s method has produced, the faithful have no obligation to believe a word he has said over the course of this controversy, unless what he has said is objectively worthy of belief. That Bertone’s account is objectively *not* worthy of belief ought to be obvious from all the evidence presented here, much of it revealed by Bertone himself. Bertone’s method—the simulation of authority, the semblance of a denial, the dog and pony show, the high-handed refusal to answer or even acknowledge serious questions, the appearance of imperturbability in the face of damning evidence—cannot trump the demands of truth. As Bertone himself has recently observed in another context: “The truth is the destiny for which we were made. For every human being, thirst for the truth has always been a deep desire and demanding challenge. Indeed, man is by nature ‘curious’: he is prompted to find answers to the many ‘whys’ of life and to seek the truth.”<sup>305</sup> Irony of ironies, in the very midst of this controversy Bertone himself publicly proclaims the reason the faithful cannot accept his account.

*Failing, yet still in charge*

And yet the Third Secret of Fatima remains firmly under

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<sup>305</sup>HOMILY OF CARDINAL TARCISIO BERTONE, Auditorium in the Trade Fair district, Rimini, Sunday, 19 August 2007, at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/secretariat\\_state/card-bertone/2007/documents/rc\\_seg-st\\_20070819\\_meeting-rimini\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/card-bertone/2007/documents/rc_seg-st_20070819_meeting-rimini_en.html).

the control of the Vatican Secretary of State, despite Bertone's increasingly embarrassing failure to persuade the faithful that everything has been revealed, that the Mother of God had nothing to say to her children about a vision Bertone, following Sodano, has taken it upon himself to "interpret" on the Virgin's behalf. It seems that Bertone, no less than his predecessor, is exercising a kind of shadow government in the Church that holds itself accountable to no one and believes it can say or do anything without fear of contradiction, even by the Pope.

In a column written two days after he was ejected from the Urbaniana during "The Cardinal Bertone Show," Socci makes this dramatic appeal to the Pope:

Holiness, govern the Church which is falling into ruin! For charity, do not leave the sheep of Christ, already lost and suffering great trial, in other hands. The cardinals to whom you have improvidently consigned the government of the Church are not one with you... Let Padre Pio—of whom today is the feast—and the Madonna of Fatima illuminate you. We implore you, let yourself be guided by Heaven, taking the hand of the Mother of God who at Fatima came to rescue us... Have no fear. Do not flee. Be courageous. Thus will Benedict and his pontificate truly be a blessing for the Church. To the glory of God.<sup>306</sup>

In the accompanying article Socci notes that Pope Benedict finds himself surrounded by those who are tempted to govern the Church in his stead, including opponents of the Pope's historic *motu proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum*, which "liberated" the Latin Mass from its captivity under a non-existent "prohibition" for the past forty years. "But who commands the Vatican?" Socci asks. "The fact is," he writes, "that Benedict XVI is practically alone in the apostolic palace and the barque of Peter is tossed this way and that by clerical bureaucrats..." In an unmistakable reference to the alliance between De Carli and Bertone, Socci notes that "opportunism, servility and clericalism dominate the Catholic world. The intellectuals, generally, are dominated by hostile ideologies or are interested only in kissing the slipper of the powerful prelate of the moment."<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>306</sup>"Appeal to the Pope!," *Libero*, September 23, 2007.

<sup>307</sup>Antonio Socci, "There is a caste, even in the Church," *ibid.*

Socci recalls Pope Benedict's "dramatic perception of conditions in the Church. This is shown by the cry he uttered during the historic Way of the Cross on March 25, 2005: 'How much filth there is in the Church, even precisely among those who, in the priesthood, should belong completely to Him. How much pride, how much self-complacency!'"<sup>308</sup> Certainly the Pope recognizes the situation that confronts him, the situation surely foretold in the missing words of the Virgin that belong together with what he himself (writing as Cardinal Ratzinger) called the "difficult to decipher" vision of the bishop in white. But, as Socci asks: "when, where and how is the cleansing to be done after such a resounding denunciation? The Pope alone cannot do it, but even he will sooner or later have to make courageous choices."

One of the "courageous choices" the Pope will have to make is finally to put an end to the charade that Bertone and his predecessor have been conducting. As Socci recognizes, giving voice to Catholics around the world, the text that explains the enigmatic vision of the Third Secret must be revealed for the good of all humanity, no matter what private opinions have been expressed as to its "authenticity." But if the Pope will not act, what can the faithful do to liberate that heavenly text from its captivity in human hands? How will they learn the whole truth the Blessed Virgin conveyed to her children for their earthly protection and eternal salvation? What is the remedy for an injustice that threatens the welfare of the Church and every living soul?

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<sup>308</sup>Ibid.; quoting Homily of Benedict XVI during the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday 2005.