

Chapter 11

Muzzling and Hiding the Witness

Few revelations have been as unconvincing as the Vatican's version of the Third Secret of Fatima. Those who thought, or hoped, that publication of the vision of the "Bishop dressed in white" and the commentary in the CDF's *The Message of Fatima (TMF)* ended matters were probably surprised by the tumult that followed. There should be no surprise, however. For over forty years nearly every tactic—silence, intimidation, bad theology, disinformation—has been used to bury the real Message of Fatima. Among these tactics: the imposition of silence on Sister Lucy for forty-five years; the suppression of Father Alonso's 5,396 documents on Fatima; a virtual campaign by the Vatican Secretary of State to prevent public events promoting the authentic Fatima Message, including baseless threats of suspension and even excommunication directed at Father Nicholas Gruner, the most successful and determined public advocate for Fatima; and the promotion of Fatima "experts" who distort and falsify the Message in order to conform it to the Vatican Party Line that "Fatima belongs to the past."

Yet the cork keeps bobbing to the surface. On May 16, 2001, Mother Angelica of the Eternal Word Television Network made a declaration on live TV that reflected the growing skepticism of millions of Catholics the world over:

"As for the Secret, well I happen to be one of those individuals who thinks we didn't get the whole thing. I told ya! I mean, you have the right to your own opinion, don't you, Father? There, you know, that's my opinion. Because I think it's scary."

There could have been nothing more embarrassing to the Vatican's "official version" of the Secret than this remark by a world-renowned nun whose loyalty to Church authority was beyond question and who could not be dismissed as "one of those Fatimists." Mother Angelica had committed the unpardonable crime of going against the Party Line and so, by December 2001, "Mother Angelica Live"—that is, her regularly programmed, live, spontaneous broadcasts shown every week—were yanked off the air. Since December 2001, never again has she been on the air live!

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 triggered a chain reaction of Fatima stories. The buzz in the press and on the Internet was that the attacks were part of the Third Secret of Fatima, which had still not been fully revealed. How exasperating for the drafters of *TMF*, who insist the entire secret of Fatima is contained inside its covers. They simply are not

believed, in part because they are not believable, but also because of a certain collective awareness, a shared sense of our impending doom. Deep down we know that a “civilization of love” is utopian nonsense. It has never existed. The real Message of Fatima implicitly confirms this: hell is real and many souls are going there because there is no one to pray and make sacrifices for them. Heaven’s remedy is *not* the well-publicized inter-religious prayer meetings, but the consecration and conversion of Russia, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the Rosary. The real Message of Fatima is not a request for more papal apologies. It is a plea to Jesus to “forgive us our sins,” to “save us from the fires of hell”. We are not experiencing the new advent of humanity. We are on the Titanic as it slides into the blackness, and the world senses the impending doom even as it continues to heap judgment on itself.

Yet not even the events of September 11, 2001 had deterred the Vatican apparatus from continuing to promote Sodano’s Party Line that Fatima “belongs to the past.” On the contrary, the effort to impose the Sodano Interpretation of Fatima on the Church only intensified, as if Cardinal Sodano, *et al.* had recognized that the events of September 11 might actually jolt Catholics into an awareness that—just a moment!—Fatima is *not* finished, because we are obviously not witnessing anything like the triumph of the Immaculate Heart and the promised period of peace. Some sort of bold action to reassert the Party Line was needed.

On September 12, 2001, literally within hours of the fall of the Twin Towers, the Vatican Press Office released its top bulletin for the day: a “Declaration” from the Congregation for the Clergy concerning, not the terrorist attacks, not the horrendous scandals erupting almost daily from the ranks of the priesthood, not the profusion of heresy and disobedience among the clergy over the past forty years, but Father Nicholas Gruner, “the Fatima priest.” The “Declaration” stated that it had been issued “by mandate of a higher authority”—Vatican-speak for then Secretary of State, Cardinal Sodano, not the Pope (who is *the* highest authority).

The “Declaration” warned the entire Catholic world about a serious threat to the good of the Church; a threat of such magnitude that the Congregation for the Clergy could not even wait until the dust had settled over the former Twin Towers. The threat consisted of a *conference on world peace and Fatima* in Rome, sponsored by Father Gruner’s apostolate.

Yes, the Vatican’s top priority within hours of the worst terrorist attack in world history was to tell everyone to shun a conference on world peace and Fatima. Why? Because, said the “Declaration”, the conference “does not enjoy the approval of legitimate ecclesiastical authority.” Of course, the issuer of the “Declaration” knew quite well that no “approval” for conferences of clergy and laity is necessary under Church law. The Code of Canon Law promulgated by Pope John Paul II (Canons 212, 215, 278, 299) recognizes the natural right of the faithful to meet and discuss issues of concern in the Church today without any

“approval” by anyone. Indeed, the Vatican issues no announcements about the lack of “approval” for innumerable conferences conducted by advocates of women’s ordination and uncountable other heresies, even though the participants in these conferences are abusing their natural right and causing grave harm to the Church. One might as well say that the apostolate’s Rome conference had not been approved by the American Medical Association. What of it?

But that was not the worst of it. The “Declaration” also stated that Father Gruner had been “suspended” by the Bishop of Avellino. Suspended for *what*? For nothing, apparently, since no grounds were stated. The reason for this curious omission was clear to anyone with a knowledge of Father Gruner’s canonical proceedings: the “grounds” were so flimsy that to state them publicly would be to invite laughter.

As we have already noted, the only pretext ever given for the “suspension” was that Father Gruner must return to Avellino, Italy (where he was ordained in 1976) or be suspended. Why? Because he had “failed” to find another bishop to incardinate him. But the “Declaration” failed to mention that three successive friendly bishops had offered to incardinate Father Gruner with express permission to continue his apostolate, and that all three incardinations had been blocked (or declared “non-existent”) by the same Vatican bureaucrats who had now announced the resulting “suspension”. That is, Father Gruner had been “suspended” for failing to “obey” an order *his accusers themselves had prevented him from obeying*. (Not to mention that the Bishop of Avellino by September 12, 2001 had absolutely no authority over Father Gruner—since Father Gruner was now incardinated in another diocese.)

Nearly forty years after the “springtime” of Vatican II began, the Consecration of Russia—not the world, not “youth in search of meaning,” not “the unemployed,” but *Russia*—remains undone. The world is convulsed by regional wars, Islamic terrorism and the holocaust of abortion, as it becomes clearer by the hour that we are heading for an apocalypse. The Islamic fundamentalists, whom Vatican diplomats now like to call “our Muslim brothers”, hate us and wish to subjugate or kill us in accordance with the dictates of their Koran. After forty years of utterly useless “ecumenical dialogue,” the Protestant sects are even more decrepit than when they began, and the Orthodox are more adamant than ever in rejecting submission to the Vicar of Christ. The Church is gravely wounded by heresy and scandal in dioceses throughout the world, where She has lost all credibility because of the corruption of Her human members. The new orientation of Vatican II is a total debacle; a ruinous failure. Yet in the midst of all this death, chaos, heresy, scandal, and apostasy, all now reaching their respective apogees, the Vatican had considered it imperative—right *now!*—to alert the world to the “menace” of Father Nicholas Gruner.

So, one day after September 11, 2001, Father Gruner—who had committed no offense against faith and morals, who had kept his vows

for the entire 25 years of his priesthood, who had not molested any altar boys or women, who had not stolen any money or preached any heresy—was publicly condemned before the entire Church in a so-called “Declaration” that gave no grounds for the condemnation, and which cited the “mandate” of an anonymous “higher authority” who did not even have the courage to name himself. In the living memory of the Church, nothing like this had ever happened to a faithful Catholic priest. The Secretary of State’s obsession with destroying Father Gruner—symbol of resistance to the Party Line—had reached the level of obscenity.

Why? It could only be a deep-seated antipathy toward the Message of Fatima and all that it implies for the new orientation of the Church, which Cardinal Sodano (friend of Gorbachev) and his collaborators implement so unswervingly. Fatima, it seems, alarms them more than the current state of the Church and the world. And yet the state of the Church and the world would surely change radically for the better if only Father Gruner’s persecutors would simply *do* what Our Lady requested at Fatima: “If My requests are granted, many souls will be saved and there will be peace.”

But Cardinal Sodano had surely miscalculated. The issuance of this baseless condemnation of “the Fatima priest” within hours of September 11 had such a stink about it that many who might otherwise have been disposed to accept the “Declaration” at face value began to wonder about its grotesquely inappropriate timing. *In a Church being undermined and disgraced by clerical traitors in every nation, why was the Vatican apparatus so concerned about this one priest, who was not even accused of any specific wrongdoing?*

The scapegoating of Father Gruner would be no more successful than the other anti-Fatima stratagems. Contrary to what some Vatican prelates seem to be hoping, the Fatima controversy cannot be reduced to the status of one priest. In the weeks following the “Declaration” on Father Gruner, other prominent Catholics began to express serious doubts about Sodano’s Party Line on the Third Secret. It was not only Mother Angelica who believed that “we didn’t get the whole thing.”

On October 26, 2001, the story “broke wide open”, as reporters say, when *Inside the Vatican* news service (along with various Italian newspapers) ran an article entitled: “The Secret of Fatima: More to Come?” The article reported that: “News has just emerged that Sister Lucia dos Santos, the last surviving Fatima visionary, several weeks ago sent Pope John Paul II a letter reportedly warning him that his life is in danger. *According to Vatican sources*, the letter, claiming that events spoken of in the ‘Third Secret’ of Fatima had not yet occurred, was delivered sometime after September 11 to John Paul by the bishop emeritus [retired] of Fatima, Alberto Cosme do Amaral.”

When asked about the letter, the then-Bishop of Fatima, Serafim de Sousa Ferreira e Silva, “*did not deny that Sister Lucia had sent a letter to*

the Pope, but said [drawing a Jesuitical distinction] ‘there are no letters from the seer that express fear for the life of the Pope.’” The *Inside the Vatican* report further revealed that “Sources have also suggested that Sister Lucia’s letter encourages the Pope to fully reveal the Third Secret,” and that her letter to the Pope “is said to contain this warning: ‘Soon there will be great upheaval and punishment.’”

The *Inside the Vatican* article reports on yet another secret encounter with Sister Lucy behind the convent walls—only this one does not follow the Party Line. According to *Inside the Vatican*, an Italian diocesan priest, Father Luigi Bianchi, “claims to have met Sister Lucia dos Santos last week at her cloistered Carmelite convent in Coimbra, Portugal.” Echoing the suspicions of Mother Angelica, Father Bianchi “speculated on the possibility that the Vatican *did not reveal the full secret* to avoid creating panic and anxiety in the population; to not scare them.”

Concerning the ludicrous “interpretation” of the Secret as a prophecy of the 1981 attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II, Father Bianchi stated that “The message doesn’t speak only about an attempt on the pontiff, but speaks of ‘a Bishop dressed in White’ who walks amongst the ruins and bodies of murdered men and women ... This means that the Pope will have to suffer greatly, that some nations will disappear, that many people will die, that we must defend the West from becoming Islamicized. That is what is happening in these days.”

Inside the Vatican was careful to point out, as has *The Fatima Crusader*, that Sister Lucy “is not allowed to speak with anyone who has not received prior permission from the Vatican ...” Accordingly, *Inside the Vatican* hedged its bets by stating that “it is not immediately clear whether Bianchi received that approval, circumvented the need for it, or did not actually meet Sister Lucia as he maintains.” But no one, including Sister Lucy herself, has ever denied that the meeting with Father Bianchi took place.

That at least some of *Inside the Vatican’s* sources are within the Curia itself was suggested by Cardinal Ratzinger’s response to these developments. *Inside the Vatican* quoted him as having said that the “rumors about this alleged letter are the continuation of ‘an old polemic fed by certain people of dubious credibility,’ for the purpose of ‘destabilizing the internal equilibrium of the Roman Curia and of troubling the people of God.’” Notice, however, that neither does Cardinal Ratzinger actually deny the existence of the letter from Sister Lucy to the Pope.

This remark by the Cardinal who became Pope was quite telling. How could people of “dubious credibility” destabilize the “internal equilibrium of the Roman Curia”? If their credibility were so dubious, the Roman Curia would hardly be destabilized by what they say. And just who are these people of “dubious credibility”? The *Inside the Vatican* piece suggested that Cardinal Ratzinger might have been referring to Father Gruner. But what about Mother Angelica? What about Father

Bianchi? What about *Inside the Vatican* itself, whose editor, Robert Moynihan, is, if anything, beholden to the Vatican apparatus, as the title of his magazine suggests? And what about the millions of other Catholics who harbor the well-founded suspicion that Msgr. (now Cardinal) Bertone and the former Cardinal Ratzinger are not being entirely forthcoming in their claim that the prophecies of the Message of Fatima, including the Third Secret, “belong to the past,” and that its warning of a great chastisement of the Church and the world need no longer concern us? Indeed, what serious Catholic really believes this in his heart, given the perilous state of the world today?

Despite a determined effort to impose Sodano's Party Line (an effort that now included a Soviet-style declaration that Father Gruner is to be regarded as a “non-person” in the Church), Catholics the world over continue to wonder what has happened to the words which follow the key phrase “In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc.” Why had *TMF* run away from this phrase by removing it from the Message of Fatima and placing it in a footnote? *What has happened to the missing words of the Virgin? Where is the promised conversion of Russia? Why has there been no period of peace in the world, as the Virgin promised?*

In the face of these questions that would not go away, the Vatican apparatus made yet another attempt to put a lid on the rising speculation of a cover-up, before the pot boiled over and became uncontrollable. Indeed, Cardinal Ratzinger's statement about a destabilized curia would indicate that the Party Line on Fatima was now meeting with resistance from within the Roman Curia itself, perhaps in view of the increasing destabilization of the world at large, which hardly squares with the notion that Fatima's warnings belong to the past.

The stratagem this time would be another secret interview of Sister Lucy in her convent in Coimbra. The interview was conducted on November 17, 2001 by Archbishop Bertone, who in five years would succeed Cardinal Sodano as Vatican Secretary of State, thus becoming the standard-bearer for the “official” account of the Secret and the one whose own revelations would (as we shall see in Chapter 14) break the Fatima “case” wide open.

For some reason the results of this secret interview were not revealed for more than a month. It was not until December 21, 2001 that *L'Osservatore Romano* (Italian edition) published Msgr. Bertone's brief communiqué about the interview, entitled “Meeting of His Excellency Mons. Tarcisio Bertone with Sister Maria Lucia of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart”. This was followed by an English translation in *L'Osservatore Romano*'s English edition on January 9, 2002.

The substance of the communiqué was that, according to Msgr. Bertone, Sister Lucy said that the 1984 consecration of the world sufficed for a consecration of Russia, and that “everything has been published; there are no more secrets.” As we demonstrated in Chapter

6, the former statement contradicts everything Sister Lucy has said to the contrary for the better part of seventy years. The latter statement is presented as Sister Lucy's answer to a question about the Third Secret—but the question, oddly enough, is not provided.

Now, when a newspaper or magazine publishes an interview with a person of note, the reader rightly expects a series of complete questions followed by complete answers, so that the reader can see for himself—in its full context—what the interviewee had to say in his or her own words. Not in this case. Although we are informed that Msgr. Bertone and Sister Lucy conversed for “more than two hours,” Msgr. Bertone had provided only his summary of the conversation, sprinkled with a few words attributed to Sister Lucy herself. No transcript, audiotape or videotape of the two-hour session has been produced. In fact, *less than ten percent* of what Sister Lucy is quoted as saying had anything to do with the stated purpose of the interview, namely, to address continuing doubts in the minds of millions of Catholics about the Consecration of Russia and the completeness of the Vatican's disclosure of the Third Secret.

Perhaps we should have become accustomed to suspicious irregularities in the way the Vatican apparatus handled Sister Lucy, and this belatedly disclosed, elliptical “interview” was no exception. The Msgr. Bertone communiqué demonstrates that Sister Lucy was still being treated as if she were a member of the federal Witness Protection Program. Yes, of course, she was a cloistered nun. But an interview is an interview, and two hours of talk is two hours of talk. Where is the interview, and what happened to the two-hour conversation? And how can one square this curious substitute for a real interview with the claim that Sister Lucy had told us everything there was to know about the Message of Fatima? If she had told us all she knew, then there was nothing to hide. If there was nothing to hide, why not publish everything she was asked and all that she answered during those two hours? Indeed, why wouldn't they have simply allowed Sister Lucy to speak to the world herself, and lay all the questions to rest?

Yet despite publication of *TMF*, which was supposedly the last word on Fatima, revealing all that remains to be known, Sister Lucy was still being kept far away from open microphones and neutral witnesses. She was completely invisible during the process of “revealing” the Third Secret in May-June of 2000, and she remained invisible until her death, even though—so the Party Line goes—Fatima “belongs to the past.”

Before addressing the particulars of the “interview” of November 2001—including the grand total of *forty-four words* attributed to Sister Lucy herself during an alleged *two hours* of conversation about the matters in controversy—it must be noted that Msgr. Bertone's communiqué undermines its own credibility immediately with the following claim: “Going on to discuss the problem of the third part of the secret of Fatima, she [Sister Lucy] says that she has read attentively

and meditated upon the booklet published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [i.e., *The Message of Fatima (TMF)*], and confirms *everything* it says.”

This could not possibly be anything but a deception. To begin with, Msgr. Bertone is asking the faithful to believe all of the following:

- Sister Lucy “confirms” *TMF*’s contention that the vision contained in the Third Secret incorporates images Sister Lucy “may have seen in devotional books” and her own “intuitions of the faith”. In other words, Sister Lucy “confirms” that she made it up.³¹¹
- Sister Lucy “confirms” Cardinal Ratzinger’s praise of the modernist Jesuit Edouard Dhanis as an “eminent scholar” on Fatima, even though Dhanis dismissed as “unconscious fabrications” every prophetic aspect of the Message of Fatima—from the vision of hell, to the prediction of World War II, to the consecration and conversion of Russia. (This is discussed more fully below.)
- Sister Lucy “confirms,” in essence, that she could very well be a sincere and pious fake, who only imagined that the Virgin Mary called for the consecration and conversion of Russia, so that *TMF* was quite correct in ignoring these key elements of the Message of Fatima, treating them as if they did not exist.

One must be sensible about this. When a Vatican functionary, no matter what his stature, comes out of a locked convent and declares that a 94-year-old nun inside “confirms everything” in a forty-page document he has co-authored, reasonable minds expect a bit more in the way of corroboration. All the more so when the forty-page document politely suggests that the nun in question concocted a pious fable that has held the Church in suspense, needlessly, for more than 80 years.

On these grounds alone one must conclude that the last secret Sister Lucy interview was but another attempt to manipulate and exploit a captive witness, who had yet to be allowed to come forward and speak at length to the faithful in her own unfiltered words. The last surviving Fatima visionary was still being subjected to closeted interviews during which she was surrounded by handlers, who then reported her “testimony” in little bits and pieces—an answer without the question, a question without the answer. And now the faithful were being asked to swallow the whopper that Sister Lucy, the divinely chosen seer of Fatima, agreed with “everything” in 40 pages of neo-

³¹¹ On the contrary, as Father Alonso documents, Sister Lucy affirmed that “everything connected with the apparitions of the Lady was seen no longer as a simple recollection, but as a presence impressed upon her soul as though by fire. She herself points out to us these things remain impressed upon her soul in such a way that she could not possibly forget them. These reminiscences of Sister Lucia, therefore, are rather like re-reading inscriptions which are forever engraven in the deepest depths of the soul of the authoress. She appears to be ‘seeing’ rather than ‘remembering’. The ease of her ‘remembering’ is indeed so great that she has only to ‘read’, as it were, from her soul.” Father Joaquin Alonso, “Introduction”, *Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words*, p. 13.

modernist “commentary” which, as even the *Los Angeles Times* could see, “gently debunks the Fatima cult.”

While it is clear on these grounds alone that the “interview” of November 17, 2001 is—to say the least—highly suspect, there is still an obligation to demonstrate the point more amply for the historical record.

To begin with, the Bertone interview was expressly conducted to squelch growing doubt among the faithful about the Vatican’s blatant campaign to consign the Message of Fatima to the dustbin of history. As Msgr. Bertone’s communiqué admits:

In recent months, above all after the sad event of the terrorist attack of last September 11th, in foreign and Italian newspapers have appeared articles regarding presumed new revelations of Sister Lucy, announcements of warning letters to the Supreme Pontiff, apocalyptic reinterpretations of the Message of Fatima.

Moreover, emphasis has been given to the suspicion that the Holy See has not published the integral text of the third part of the ‘secret’, and some ‘Fatimist’ movements have repeated the accusation that the Holy Father has not yet consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

For this reason it was considered necessary to organize a meeting with Sister Lucy ...

We recall here that the Message of Fatima contains both promises, if the Virgin’s requests are obeyed, and warnings about the consequences of a failure to obey:

The Promises:

If Russia *is* consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary—

- the Immaculate Heart will triumph,
- Russia will be converted,
- many souls will be saved from hell (which the three seers were shown in a terrifying vision),
- and a period of peace will be granted to mankind.

The Warnings:

If Russia is *not* consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary—

- Russia will spread its errors throughout the world,
- raising up wars and persecutions against the Church,
- the good will be martyred,
- the Holy Father will have much to suffer,
- and *various nations will be annihilated.*

While the *eventual* fulfillment of the Fatima prophecies is inevitable—"In the end, My Immaculate Heart *will* triumph. The Holy Father *will* consecrate Russia to Me, which *will* be converted, and a period of peace *will* be granted to mankind"—the question for us today is whether the world will first have to suffer the predicted chastisements in full, including the annihilation of nations, an event clearly suggested in the half-ruined city outside of which the Pope is executed in the Third Secret vision. We recall Sister Lucy's warning to the Pope (one year after the assassination attempt in St. Peter's Square) in the purported letter dated May 12, 1982, reproduced in *TMF* itself:

And if we have not yet seen the complete fulfillment of the final part of this prophecy, *we are going towards it with great strides*.³¹² If we do not reject the path of sin, hatred, revenge, injustice, violations of the rights of the human person, immorality and violence, etc. And let us not say that it is God who is punishing us in this way; on the contrary *it is people themselves who are preparing their own punishment*.

The Bertone interview, however, had failed to address continued public concern in the Church concerning the Fatima warnings. Quite the contrary, Msgr. Bertone had staked his entire position, and indeed the fate of the world, on the Party Line, to which he had adhered quite faithfully with his preposterous claim in *TMF* (his own commentary) that **“The decision of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to make public the third part of the ‘secret’ of Fatima brings to an end a period of history marked by tragic human lust for power and evil ...”** Thus, the Bertone interview had one aim: to persuade the world that peace is at hand, that the Fatima saga is over and can now safely be considered a part of history.

Let us examine the circumstances of the interview with reference to the standards of credibility even godless civil tribunals require for the acceptance of testimony from an important witness. We do not suggest that Sister Lucy ought to have been subjected to anything like the indignity of a civil trial, but only that the proponents of “Sister Lucy’s” last “testimony” should have been held to these minimal standards in asking us to believe it.

Suspicious Circumstance #1: Although Sister Lucy was available to testify in person, she had never been produced by the party who controls access to her, at the time, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

The Bertone communiqué revealed that Sister Lucy *could not even speak to Archbishop Bertone* without permission from Cardinal Ratzinger. This confirms what *The Fatima Crusader* has been reporting for years and what the aforesaid article in *Inside the Vatican* also noted: no one was allowed to speak to Sister Lucy without the Cardinal’s permission.

³¹² See footnote 267 in Chapter 9.

That is a very curious restriction on the liberty of a witness who, so we are told, had nothing to add to what she has already said.

Under the minimal standards of trustworthiness in civil proceedings, witnesses are required to testify in person if they are available, so that the parties to the case, whose rights may be affected by the testimony, will have the opportunity to pose questions to the witness. If one party has control over a witness but fails to produce him or her, civil judges instruct juries that they may draw the conclusion that *the witness' testimony would have been unfavorable to that party*. This is only common sense: a party would not fail to produce a favorable witness, but would very likely fail to produce an unfavorable one.

Sister Lucy was available to “take the stand” before the bar of history in the Fatima Case. She was not bedridden, crippled or otherwise unable to make an appearance. On the contrary, the Bertone communiqué claims that on the date of the secret interview Sister Lucy “appeared in great form, lucid and vivacious.” Why was this lucid and vivacious witness, who was available to testify, never produced by the party who controls all access to her? Why was her latest “testimony” obtained behind closed doors and presented secondhand in a communiqué from Archbishop Bertone?

What would happen in a civil case if one of the parties offered a fragmentary report of a key witness' testimony when the witness herself could readily testify in person? The jury would rightly conclude that something was being hidden. In the Fatima Case, the inference can and should be drawn that Sister Lucy had been kept “off the stand” because her live, uncontrolled testimony would have contradicted Sodano's Party Line. If Sister Lucy could have been counted on to hew to the Party Line, then she would have been produced long ago to testify in person, and at length, before the Church and the world. Instead, it was *Msgr. Bertone*, not the witness herself, who testified.

But even if we assume that Sister Lucy had been bedridden or otherwise unavailable to testify, the other circumstances of the purported interview could not have failed to raise suspicion in the mind of any reasonable person. Let us proceed.

Suspicious circumstance #2: The interview of this 94-year-old nun was conducted in secret by Archbishop Bertone, an authority figure with a clear motive to manipulate the witness.

In a civil law context, undue influence is presumed when someone in a position of authority or dominance over a very elderly person extracts a statement from that person, such as a will or power of attorney. In this case, Archbishop Bertone is clearly a dominant party with the imposing authority of a Vatican title, whereas Sister Lucy was not only very elderly but has vowed to submit in holy obedience to the requests of her superiors, by whom she was surrounded during the two-hour session.

Furthermore, Msgr. Bertone was clearly intent on using the

“interview” to defend his own credibility against mounting public skepticism toward the Party Line that Fatima is finished. Given recent world events, Archbishop Bertone was obviously suffering a massive loss of face over his utterly indefensible statement in *TMF* that the *decision to publish* the Third Secret vision “brings to an end a period of history marked by tragic human lust for power and evil ...” Msgr. Bertone, being only human, would have had every motive to induce Sister Lucy to confirm his ridiculous claim of a world at peace due to the great “fulfillment” of the Third Secret in 1981, when the Pope survived the assassination attempt. (Even the secular radio commentator Paul Harvey was openly contemptuous of the Ratzinger/Bertone “interpretation” of the Third Secret as found in *TMF*.)

Under these circumstances, Msgr. Bertone conducting the “interview” and then reporting its results was akin to a prosecutor interviewing a key witness and then testifying in place of the witness, who is kept out of the courtroom. Objectively speaking, Msgr. Bertone was the last person who should have conducted the interview. The Church and the world are entitled to hear from this vital witness directly, rather than to receive reports from a partisan interrogator with an axe to grind.³¹³

Suspicious Circumstance #3: The Bertone communiqué is extremely brief, occupying a mere quarter-page in *L'Osservatore Romano*. Yet the communiqué states that the interview went on “for more than two hours.”

What did Bertone and Sister Lucy discuss for more than two hours, given that the entire communiqué can be read in less than two minutes? By way of comparison, a one-hour address delivered at a normal rate of speech would require roughly 14 single-spaced typewritten pages to transcribe; a two-hour address would require about 28 pages, or approximately 14,000 words.

Yet Bertone’s communiqué concerning an alleged two-hour interview provides *a mere 463 words*³¹⁴ purportedly from the mouth of Sister Lucy herself. These 463 words break down as follows:

- **165 words:** A verbatim quotation of Cardinal Ratzinger’s opinion in *TMF* (the June 26, 2000 Ratzinger/Bertone commentary) that the phrase “My Immaculate Heart

³¹³ Unfortunately, “a partisan interrogator with an axe to grind” was mistranslated in the Italian version of this book to read: “a partisan interrogator with an axe in his hand.” In *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*, which we discuss in Chapter 14, Antonio Socci criticized the mistranslated phrase as excessively harsh. (“With some excess, Kramer writes: ‘... a partisan interrogator with an axe in his hand.’” *Fourth Secret*, footnote 177.) The harshness is the result of translator error, not polemical excess.

³¹⁴ When referring to or quoting the Bertone communiqué, this chapter sometimes uses the *Vatican Information Service* English translation of the December 2001 Italian original. At other times, the English translation in the *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition of January 9, 2002 is used. And very rarely, our own translation of the Italian version is used.

will triumph” (from which, as we have mentioned, the Cardinal deleted the words “In the end”) does not refer to events somewhere after 1917 but rather to Mary’s *fiat* in consenting to be the Mother of God 2,000 years ago.

Here we are asked to believe that Sister Lucy “confirms” that when Our Lady of Fatima predicted four future events—“In the end, My Immaculate Heart *will* triumph. The Holy Father *will* consecrate Russia to Me, which *will* be converted, and a period of peace *will* be granted to the world.”—She was referring to the Annunciation in 1 B.C.! Bertone’s Lucy apparently also “confirms” Cardinal Ratzinger’s removal of the key words “In the end” from Our Lady’s prophecy.

We note that the verbatim quotation (of 165 words) from *TMF* not only includes Cardinal Ratzinger’s parenthetical citation to John 16:33 but also a summary of the rather complex theological conclusion to his 40 pages of commentary. To quote all of this verbiage word-for-word from memory is a feat very few people—if any—could perform. Either Sister Lucy had developed a photographic memory at age 94, or someone added the entire quotation to her “answer”—along with the parenthetical Scripture citation. (Or perhaps *TMF* was placed in front of Sister Lucy for her to read aloud in “obedience” to her superiors.)

- **100 words:** The significance of the heart Sister Lucy saw in the left hand of the Virgin during the apparitions at Fatima.

The Bertone communiqué informs us that this was “an unpublished particular” which Sister Lucy had added to the Message of Fatima. That is very interesting, but what does it have to do with the subject of the interview for which Bertone traveled to Portugal on such an emergency basis?

Notice also that the Bertone communiqué announces this new detail with great excitement—in italics, no less. Suddenly, Sister Lucy was the reliable visionary again, as opposed to Cardinal Ratzinger’s impressionable child who made things up from what she had read in devotional books. Of course, this detail was a calculated distraction from the issue at hand.

- **69 words:** Sister Lucy denies press accounts that she is “very worried about recent events” and that she “can no longer sleep and is praying night and day.”

Again, this is beside the point. But at any rate, Bertone’s Lucy gives this rather flippant answer: “How could I pray during the day if I did not rest at night?” Obviously, no one had actually claimed that she never slept at all. Another distraction.

Sister Lucy is said to have added: “How many things they are putting in my mouth! How many things they make me seem to do!” Yes, but who was it that was falsely putting words in Sister Lucy’s mouth and

ascribed to her actions she had never taken? The objective witnesses we have previously quoted, who spoke to Sister Lucy openly and during unguarded moments, or the authority figures who surrounded Sister Lucy during Bertone's secret two-hour interrogation?

The reader will notice that Bertone's Lucy never denied that she is very worried about recent events. Who in his right mind would not be? Most tellingly, she *was never asked about her urgent letter to the Pope* (we mark this as the **First Glaring Omission** in the interview) *or her face-to-face meeting with Father Bianchi*, during which, according to Bianchi, she cast doubt on the Ratzinger/Bertone interpretation of the Third Secret (this is **Glaring Omission #2**).

- **39 words:** The effect the Fatima apparitions had on Sister Lucy's life.

What do these reminiscences have to do with the stated purpose of the emergency secret interview in the convent? Sister Lucy had covered this subject exhaustively in her voluminous memoirs. For *this* a Vatican functionary traveled to Portugal for a two-hour encounter?

- **34 words:** Sister Lucy denied that she has received any new revelations.

Oddly enough, while Bertone's Lucy denies any further revelations from Heaven, in the same communiqué she declares—contrary to all her prior testimony—that the 1984 consecration of the world “has been accepted in Heaven.” (See her alleged words regarding this on a later page in this chapter under the heading “**21 words on the Consecration of Russia**”.) How would she know this, absent any new revelations?

- **12 words:** Sister Lucy said the Carmelite community had rejected the petition forms Father Gruner's apostolate is circulating for the Consecration of Russia.

What of it? What about the Consecration of Russia? Is it done or not?

Thus far we have accounted for 419 of the 463 words attributed to Sister Lucy in the communiqué's purported verbatim quotations. Only 44 words remain to deal with the questions being posed by millions of Catholics.

Yes, incredibly enough, the loudly trumpeted Bertone communiqué contains only *forty-four words* of “Sister Lucy” concerning the very matters—the Consecration of Russia and the disclosure of the Third Secret—that supposedly prompted Bertone to travel all the way to the convent in Coimbra on an emergency basis. Here is how the forty-four words break down:

- **9 words** concerning (so we are told) the Third Secret: “*Everything has been published; there are no more secrets.*”

The question that elicited this answer is not provided. Instead, Bertone's communiqué declares: "To whoever imagines that some part of the secret has been hidden she replied: ..."—followed by the nine quoted words.

Replied to what? What *exactly* was Sister Lucy asked about the Vatican's disclosure of the Third Secret? What was the full context of the question and the answer? And why was Sister Lucy not asked the one question millions of people around the world were asking: *Where are* the words of Our Lady which follow the phrase "In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc."? We mark this as **Glaring Omission #3**.

Notice also that here, at the very crux of the matter, we are not shown that Sister Lucy was asked even one precise question, such as:

- *What are* the words of Our Lady following "In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc"?
- Were any words spoken by Our Lady to explain the vision of the "Bishop dressed in White" seen in the Third Secret?
- Does the Third Secret include a separate text that explains the vision of the "Bishop dressed in White"?
- What did Sister Lucy say about the testimony of numerous witnesses (including the Bishop of Fatima and Cardinal Ottaviani) that the Third Secret was written in 25 lines of text, as opposed to the 62 lines of text in which the vision of the "Bishop dressed in White" is written?

All such particulars are studiously avoided. We are not even given the wording of the one question that *was* asked. This is **Glaring Omission #4**.

- **14 words on the Ratzinger/Bertone interpretation of the Third Secret:** "That is not true. I fully confirm the interpretation [of the Third Secret] made in the Jubilee Year."

Here Sister Lucy allegedly denied press reports that she expressed doubts to Father Luigi Bianchi and Father Jose dos Santos Valinho about *TMF's* interpretation of the Third Secret. Yet Bertone *never asked Sister Lucy about her letter to John Paul II*, as reported by Father Bianchi, nor does she deny that she met face-to-face with Father Bianchi at the convent in Coimbra and that they discussed Sodano's interpretation of the Third Secret.

We are thus expected to believe that Lucy agrees that the Third Secret was fulfilled with the failed assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1981, even though her own letter to the Pope on May 12, 1982—a year later—says nothing about the attempt but rather demolishes the Party Line by warning that "we have *not yet seen*

the complete fulfillment of the final part of this prophecy.” And, once again, in the same letter Sister Lucy makes no connection between the assassination attempt and the Third Secret.

- **21 words on the Consecration of Russia:** “I have already said that the consecration desired by Our Lady was made in 1984, and has been accepted in heaven.”

These words were allegedly uttered by Sister Lucy in answer to the question: “What do you say to the persistent affirmations of Father Gruner who is gathering signatures in order that the Pope may finally consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which has never been done?”

First of all, that the Secretary of the CDF would travel to Coimbra to obtain comments about Father Gruner for publication to the entire Church is a dramatic demonstration that the Vatican apparatus views Father Gruner’s apostolate as a prime locus of opposition to the Party Line.

Furthermore, what did “Sister Lucy” mean by the curious affirmation that a consecration of the world was “accepted” in Heaven as a consecration of Russia? Was “Sister Lucy” seriously claiming that Heaven “accepted” a compromise imposed by Vatican diplomats? Since when does Heaven accept a human substitute for a precise act that God has commanded? Further, how would “Sister Lucy” know what Heaven has “accepted” if, as Msgr. Bertone claims, she also said there have been no new revelations to her?

Now, it may be that God “accepts” our refusal to comply with His will in the sense that He will allow us the freedom to disobey Him in this life. But that does not mean that what God has “accepted” is pleasing to Him.

What is more, by saying that the act of consecration of the world in 1984 was “accepted”, was not Sister Lucy saying nothing more than that it was “accepted” in the same sense as the 1942 consecration by Pius XII? Jesus said on the occasion of the 1942 consecration of the world that it would shorten World War II, but Our Lord also explains that it would not bring world peace because it did not fulfill the request of Our Lady of Fatima concerning the Consecration of Russia. Was Sister Lucy perhaps attempting to answer the question in a way that satisfied her questioner, Msgr. Bertone, yet still signaling that while what was “accepted” might confer some benefit on the world, it would not be the period of world peace that the Virgin of Fatima promised if Her precise request were honored? Indeed, where is the period of peace She promised? That we have not seen it only demonstrates that even if Heaven “accepted” the 1984 ceremony for what it was worth, Heaven has not deemed that ceremony to be the fulfillment of Our Lady of Fatima’s specific request. No matter what the authority of Msgr. Bertone and his Vatican collaborators, they cannot simply declare the existence

of something that our own senses tell us does not exist: the conversion of Russia and the worldwide epoch of peace that would follow a proper consecration of that nation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In any case, we have already demonstrated abundantly that Sister Lucy testified repeatedly, in widely reported statements, that the consecration ceremonies of 1982 and 1984 did not suffice to honor Our Lady's request, because on neither occasion was Russia mentioned, nor did the world episcopate participate. According to the Bertone interview, however, the witness has reversed her testimony, and now testifies that the 1984 consecration ceremony "has been accepted in heaven."

What "accepted in heaven" means is anybody's guess. Did Heaven decide to "accept" something less than what Our Lady of Fatima had requested after negotiations between Heaven and Cardinal Sodano?

In any case, notice that *Sister Lucy was not questioned about her many prior statements to the contrary*, and was not asked to explain her purported change of testimony. This is **Glaring Omission #5**. We are evidently supposed to assume that nothing Sister Lucy ever said before carries any weight, and that only when she speaks *in secret* to Msgr. Bertone does she tell the truth about this matter.

It is quite significant that Bertone's Lucy does not tell us *when, where or to whom* she has "already said" that the 1984 consecration she once deemed unacceptable is now acceptable. Why such vagueness, when Msgr. Bertone had every opportunity to nail down this issue by eliciting specific testimony? Why did he not ask her, for instance, to authenticate any of the various computer-generated letters which began mysteriously to appear over her purported signature in 1989, the letters which assert the consecration had been accomplished in 1984?

And this is most suspicious: As we have noted, *TMF* relies entirely on one of these dubious letters, dated November 8, 1989, as proof that the consecration has already been accomplished. We noted also that this letter's credibility was extinguished by its false statement that Pope Paul VI consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart during his brief visit to Fatima in 1967—a consecration that never happened. *Why did Bertone make no effort to have Sister Lucy authenticate this hotly disputed letter, when it was the only evidence cited in TMF?*

Most telling in this connection is that Father Gruner's Fatima apostolate had published proof that the letter (whose addressee, Walter Noelker, is not even revealed in *TMF*) is an obvious fake. The proof was published in Issue No. 64 of *The Fatima Crusader*, of which there were some 450,000 copies in circulation as of the date of the Bertone interview in November of 2001.

Now Msgr. Bertone was surely aware that *The Fatima Crusader* had exposed the fraudulence of the 1989 letter; yet he failed to ask Sister Lucy to authenticate the letter and thereby deliver a serious blow to the credibility of Father Gruner's apostolate. This failure could not have

been an oversight, since an attempt to refute the position taken by Father Gruner and his apostolate was *the very reason* Msgr. Bertone had conducted the interview of Sister Lucy in the first place.

Why would Msgr. Bertone pass up a golden opportunity to use Sister Lucy, his “star witness”, to refute Father Gruner’s claim that the 1989 letter was a fake? Obviously, because Msgr. Bertone must have known that it *was* a fake, and thus he would not have dared to ask Sister Lucy to authenticate it during the interview. We must mark this as **Glaring Omission #6**.

This, then, is the sum total—forty-four words—of what Sister Lucy was alleged to have said during a two-hour interview on one of the greatest controversies in the history of the Church. We are asked to accept these forty-four words from a closeted witness as the end of the story of Fatima. These words are supposed to allay all the doubts, questions and fears of millions of the faithful—even though Russia has manifestly failed to convert and the gathering forces of violence and rebellion against God and His law loom larger by the day.

Suspicious Circumstance #4: No tape recording or transcript of the interview has been made available.

Why has no transcript, audio tape, video tape or any other independent record of the interview been produced in order to show the precise questions Msgr. Bertone asked, the full answers Sister Lucy gave, the sequence of the questions and answers, and any comments or suggestions Msgr. Bertone and others might have made to Sister Lucy during the “more than two hours” they were in the same room together? *Where is the give and take one always sees in published interviews?*

Further, why did Msgr. Bertone require more than two hours to extract forty-four words from Sister Lucy about the matters at issue? Assuming it took Sister Lucy a full minute to utter those 44 words, what did she say, and what did Msgr. Bertone, Father Kondor and the Mother Superior say, during the remaining 119 minutes of the encounter? Was Sister Lucy reminded of her duty of “obedience”? Was it implied that the whole Church was depending on her to give the answers that would end this “divisive” controversy? Was it suggested that loyalty to “the Holy Father” required that she accept the Party Line, even though her own purported 1982 letter to the Pope contradicts it? Was she told how important it was to the Church that she assure everyone that Russia has been consecrated, despite everything she has said to the contrary throughout her life? Was she given the impression that to say otherwise would be to contradict the Pope himself?

Or did Sister Lucy perhaps give many answers that were unsatisfactory to her questioner, only to be asked the same questions repeatedly and in different ways until she got the answers “right”? To what subtle, or not-so-subtle, importuning was the witness subjected during the two hours she was surrounded by imposing authority figures

in a closed room?

Surely, if there was nothing to hide Msgr. Bertone would have made certain that such a crucial interview with the only surviving witness of the Fatima apparitions, age 94 at the time, was recorded on audio or video tape, or at least transcribed *verbatim* by a stenographer so that the witness' testimony could be preserved in case of her death—which at her age was certainly very near (she died on February 13, 2005). We would wager, however, that there is no recording, no transcript, no independent record whatsoever of the Bertone interview. For it seems there had been for the last 45 years of her life a terrible fear of allowing this witness to speak at length, in her own words, in response to a series of simple and direct questions. Every one of the forty-four words from “Sister Lucy” which appear in the Bertone communiqué is carefully measured out, as if from an eyedropper.

No doubt the risk of creating such a record was too great. What if Sister Lucy consistently gave the “wrong” answers? What if the answers she did provide had to be extracted through leading questions or subtle persuasion by the interviewer or the others in attendance? What could be done with a record that revealed such things? How could it be kept from the public or only partially released? How could it be hidden or destroyed once it was created?

We would be happy to be proven wrong. Perhaps there *is* a tape or transcript of the entire two-hour session. But if there is, it will be most telling if the Vatican never produces it. (As of December 2009, the tape has never been produced.)

Suspicious Circumstance #5: The Italian communiqué purports to be signed by both Msgr. Bertone and Sister Lucy, but the English version drops her “signature.”

In the first place, why would Sister Lucy have signed *Msgr. Bertone's* statement in Italian about what she allegedly told him in *Portuguese*? Why did Sister Lucy not make and sign *her own* statement in her own language? If Sister Lucy really spoke with Msgr. Bertone for more than two hours, why not simply prepare a faithful transcript of her own words in Portuguese and then have her sign that, instead of Msgr. Bertone's self-serving communiqué?

Further, why was Sister Lucy's “signature” dropped from the English translation of the communiqué? In fact, to what document was her “signature” actually affixed in the first place—the Italian communiqué or a Portuguese original of the same document that has not yet been produced?

Of what value, in any case, was Sister Lucy's “signature” on a document written in a language she does not speak, which partially quotes her testimony, but only in Italian translation (Sister Lucy did not speak Italian) and without setting forth the full questions she was asked or the full answers she gave?

The inescapable conclusion is this: *Msgr. Bertone and the Vatican apparatus had no intention of ever allowing Sister Lucy to give her own statement at length, entirely in her own words, about the major questions which remain concerning the Message of Fatima.* This is borne out by the next suspicious circumstance.

Suspicious Circumstance #6: Sister Lucy's published 303-page book on the Message of Fatima completely avoids any of the subjects supposedly covered in the secret Bertone interview.

In October 2001 the Vatican Library publishing house published a book by Sister Lucy entitled *The Appeals of the Message of Fatima*. Sister Lucy's introduction to the book, which was reviewed and approved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, states that it is intended to be "an answer and a clarification of *doubts and questions* addressed to me." The preface, by the current Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, likewise observes that Sister Lucy had asked the Holy See's permission to write a book on Fatima in order to "answer *multiple questions* in a global manner, not being able to answer every person individually."

Yet despite the book's stated purpose, its 303 pages fail to address *any* of the prevailing "doubts and questions" about the Message of Fatima. The errors of Russia, the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart, the consecration and conversion of Russia, the period of peace promised by the Virgin as the fruit of the Consecration, and the Third Secret *are not even mentioned* in the book, let alone discussed. Not even the vision of hell is mentioned in Sister Lucy's discussion of eternal life and seeking God's pardon. In short, the book presents a thoroughly expurgated Fatima message, stripped of every one of its prophetic and admonitory elements—precisely in keeping with the Party Line. The version of Fatima presented in this book hardly required a Miracle of the Sun to confirm it.

Now this is very curious: When Sister Lucy was allowed to write a 303-page book to address "doubts and questions" concerning the Message of Fatima, she said nothing about the doubts and questions millions of people really have. Only when she was interviewed *in secret* by a self-interested questioner, who happened to be an imposing authority figure, was "Sister Lucy" allowed anywhere near these doubts and questions. But even then her answers were fragmentary and did not come from her directly, in her own language. Instead, they were conveyed by Archbishop Bertone, who provided us with forty-four relevant words out of two hours of conversation with his captive witness.

Now let us sum up the suspicious circumstances surrounding the handling of the key witness in the Fatima Case:

- No one was allowed to speak to the witness without the permission of one party to the case, who controlled all access to her, even though

we are told she had nothing further to say.

- When doubts arose about official versions of the witness' testimony, she was subjected to a secret interview at the age of 94, conducted by an imposing authority figure who then presented her fragmentary answers to his questions in a communiqué to which her signature was affixed, even though the communiqué was not in her own language.
- One version of the communiqué purports to bear the witness' signature below that of her interrogator, but her signature was removed from another version, on which only the interrogator's signature appears.
- The communiqué failed to provide the full questions asked and the answers given by the witness, in their full context.
- Out of 463 words attributed to the witness in the communiqué, only 44 related to the matters in controversy—out of two hours of conversation!
- No transcript or other independent record of the witness' testimony was provided.
- The secretly elicited, fragmentary testimony contradicts many prior statements by the same witness.
- No effort was made by the witness, or by anyone else, to explain her prior inconsistent statements.
- During the secret interview of the witness, no attempt was made to have her authenticate "letters" attributed to her whose authenticity was clearly in doubt, nor was any effort made to authenticate the very "letter" *on which the interrogator himself had placed sole reliance* as proof of the witness' alleged change of testimony (regarding the Consecration of Russia).
- The secret examination of the witness avoids any specific questions about widely known major discrepancies in the case of which the witness had peculiar knowledge—including the six glaring omissions set forth here.
- When the witness was allowed to publish an entire book to address "doubts and questions" she had received regarding the Message of Fatima, the book contains no references to any of the doubts and questions that actually concern millions of people, which doubts and questions are addressed only in a secret interview for which there is *no transcript or other independent record*.

Archbishop Bertone, now Cardinal Bertone, is a man with a very high office in the Church. With all due respect to his office, however, nothing can overcome the reasonable doubts that these suspicious circumstances and glaring omissions engender in reasonable minds. No court on earth would accept the testimony of a witness fraught with so

many indications of unreliability. Surely in the Church we could have expected at least that measure of openness and disclosure a civil judge would require. If there exists a video or audio tape of the interview, *let us hear the witness, for Heaven's sake!*

We must, in candor, state the conclusion that would be obvious to any neutral observer of the mysterious handling of Sister Lucia of the Immaculate Heart: There is every reason to believe that a key witness—in fact the last surviving witness—was being tampered with. This witness tampering is another element of the major injustice of *de facto* hiding the full Fatima Message and prophecies. Indeed, Antonio Socci would cite the inexplicable suspiciousness of this interview as part of the overwhelming evidence that led to his “conversion” to the “Fatimist” position. As he wrote of the interview in his bombshell of a book on the Third Secret controversy: “The few words attributed to her [Sister Lucy]... are such as to not have objective credibility.”³¹⁵ As Socci concluded, with devastating effect for the “official” account:

Let us reflect on this. Sister Lucia in November-December 2001 was a very old person, who lived in isolation from the world with a prohibition on meeting anyone, who was bound to silence and obedience and *was not able to control the account of this meeting and the words that were attributed to her.*³¹⁶

But why would Bertone perpetrate such a manipulation of the only surviving Fatima seer and her precious testimony, less than four years before her death on February 13, 2005? Beyond the apparent motive already demonstrated—that of furthering at all costs the new orientation of the Church, which collides with the Message of Fatima—we believe a further motive exists. We base this conclusion on what we discussed in Chapter 8: the express approbation in *TMF* of the views of Edouard Dhanis, S.J.—the neo-modernist “debunker” of Fatima. With the endorsement of Dhanis as an “eminent scholar” on Fatima, Cardinal Ratzinger had made it perfectly clear that he, with Dhanis, held that the prophetic elements of the Message concerning Russia and so forth—again, what Dhanis belittled as “Fatima II”—are little more than fabrications by a simple and well-intentioned, but seriously misguided person.

As we noted earlier, *TMF* followed the line of Dhanis by stating that the Third Secret itself may be largely a concoction: “The concluding part of the ‘secret’ uses images which Lucia may have seen in devotional books and which draw their inspiration from long-standing intuitions of faith.” If that were true of the Third Secret, it would also be true of the entire Message of Fatima. What other conclusion could the Cardinal have intended to suggest?

We recall also that the culmination of the Message of Fatima—the triumph of the Immaculate Heart—was reduced to nothing more than

³¹⁵ Antonio Socci, *Il Quarto Segreto di Fatima* [*The Fourth Secret of Fatima*], English ed., p. 117; popular ed., p. 82; Italian ed., p. 125.

³¹⁶ *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*, English ed., p. 116; popular ed., p. 81; Italian ed., p. 124.

the Virgin Mary's *fiat* 2,000 years ago. In like manner, *TMF* deconstructed the Virgin's prophecy that "To save them [i.e. souls from hell], God wishes to establish *in the world* devotion to My Immaculate Heart." Under Cardinal Ratzinger's interpretation (which would surely please Dhanis), devotion to the Immaculate Heart means nothing more than acquiring an "immaculate heart" of one's own. To quote *TMF* again: "According to Matthew 5:8, the 'immaculate heart' is a heart which, with God's grace, has come to perfect interior unity and therefore 'sees God'. To be 'devoted' to the Immaculate Heart of Mary *means therefore* to embrace this attitude of heart, which makes the *fiat*—'your will be done'—the defining centre of one's whole life." Cardinal Ratzinger removed the initial capitals from "Immaculate Heart" in order to reduce it to an 'immaculate heart' that anyone can have by simply conforming himself to God's will. This exercise, however, removed every bit of the Message of Fatima's explicitly Catholic prophetic content.

Here we arrive at the precisely additional motive in the former Cardinal's case: Disbelief or skepticism (at least before his elevation to the papacy) concerning the authenticity of the Message of Fatima³¹⁷—an attitude he shared with Dhanis, the only Fatima "authority" the Cardinal cited. Thus, far from intending to perpetrate a fraud, the Cardinal may have believed that the suppression of Sister Lucy's full and unfettered testimony was actually a service to the Church. If the Cardinal *did not really believe* in the prophetic elements of the Message of Fatima concerning the need for the consecration and conversion of Russia and the triumph of the Immaculate Heart in our time, or the disastrous consequences to the Church and the world in failing to heed these elements of prophecy, he would have considered the suppression of these elements as the protection of the Church from falsehoods that are "troubling" the faithful, and "upsetting the balance of the Roman Curia", to recall his own words, however much Sister Lucy may have believed them to be true.

It is clear enough from everything the Cardinal himself said, that the then-Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, like Dhanis, placed little or no credence in the testimony of Sister Lucy that the Virgin requested the consecration and conversion of Russia in order to bring about the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the world. The Cardinal evidently did not believe that with the Miracle of the Sun God authenticated this testimony beyond any doubt. What other conclusion can one draw from the former Cardinal's prominent endorsement of the very "theologian" who attempted to debunk the entire Fatima prophecy?

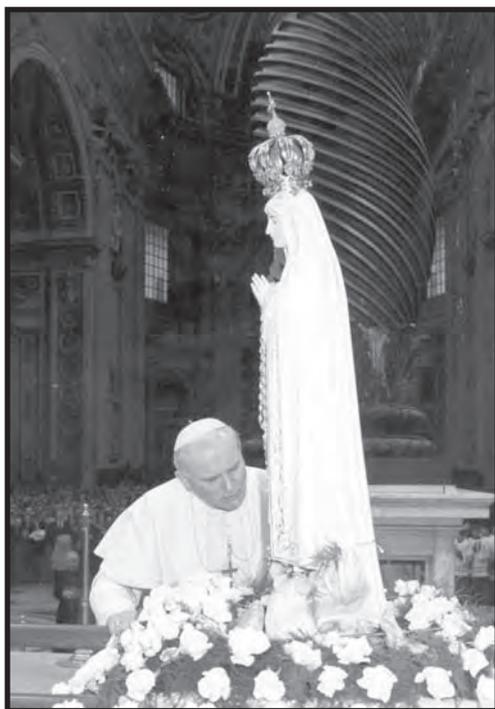
But then he owed it to the Church and mankind to be candid about his

³¹⁷ It should also be noted, in defense of Cardinal Ratzinger, that in writing his commentary in *TMF* he relied upon the credibility of the testimony of Msgr. (now Cardinal) Bertone as to what exactly Sister Lucy had agreed to during the meeting of April 2000. Had Cardinal Ratzinger had the benefit of the now-overwhelming evidence that Bertone's testimony is simply not reliable, and is, in fact, demonstrably false—see, in particular, Chapter 14—Cardinal Ratzinger might have commented differently.

real intentions. It seems that the Cardinal may have shared the attitude of other “enlightened” Vatican insiders who think that the “simple faithful” are too naive to appreciate what is best for them. This may explain why the Cardinal did not reveal his prejudices to the “unenlightened”, but rather expected that everyone would trust his judgment.

Cardinal Ratzinger, speaking now as the Pope, has exhibited what would appear to be a change of heart concerning the veracity of the Fatima prophecies. He said in Brazil that Fatima is the most prophetic of all Our Lady’s apparitions in the 20th Century. In particular he also states he hopes in the yet-to-take-place Triumph of the Immaculate Heart (as we have shown in the preceding pages). Nevertheless it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Message of Fatima remains in the custody of those *who simply do not believe in it* and who wish to have done with it once and for all, as they set their sights on the Vatican’s new policies of ecumenism, “interreligious dialogue”, a world brotherhood of religions and a “civilization of love” under the guidance of the United Nations. This will become quite clear in Chapter 14, where we examine the leading role assumed by Cardinal Bertone, now Vatican Secretary of State, in the Fatima affair.

It remains for us, however, first to examine more closely the evidence pertaining to the actual contents of what is clearly a yet-to-be disclosed text of the Secret, a text whose existence Bertone’s own words and actions have subsequently confirmed.



Sunday, March 25, 1984, 4:00 p.m.: Pope John Paul II venerates the Pilgrim Virgin Statue inside St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City. His Holiness admitted at that time that Our Lady of Fatima was still awaiting the Consecration of Russia by the Pope in union with all the Catholic bishops. See *L’Osservatore Romano* article photographically reproduced on page XVI in the photo section for more details.