

Fatima

and the

Third Secret

**A Historical Examination based on
a Letter of Sister Lúcia and
the Carmelite Biography**

Second Edition
Revised & Enlarged

**Why Was the Third Secret of Fatima
Not Released in 1960?**

An Interview with
Antonio Augusto Borelli Machado

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Preserving Christian Publications
P.O. Box 221
Boonville, New York 13309
Tel: 315-942-6617
info@pcpbooks.com
www.pcpbooks.net

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A Serious Error Regarding Fatima

Introduction: The Debate about the Third Secret

The death in 2015 of Father Nicholas Gruner, known to many as “the Fatima Priest,” coincided with the publication in the United States of the Carmelite biography of Sister Lúcia of Fatima. What the timing of these two events means in the plan of Divine Providence may be unknown, but developments since then show that Fatima remains uppermost in the minds of many Catholics throughout the world. Shortly after the English edition of the biography appeared, for example, attorney Christopher Ferrara criticized a passage in the translation involving words of Our Lady, and he interpreted the mistranslated passage as a deliberate attempt to alter the facts relating to the Third Secret. David Carollo of the World Apostolate of Fatima posted a respectful reply to Mr. Ferrara on the WAF web site, and on another site, Catholic Stand, Kevin Symonds provided historical facts relating to the American edition of the biography, showing very clearly why the translation error was simply an honest mistake, not part of a conspiracy to hide the truth.

Since then Christopher Ferrara published a reply to Mr. Carollo, and a response but not a refutation of the specific facts of the case as reported by Kevin Symonds. A possible reason for Mr. Ferrara’s avoiding of these facts is that he considers them to be of secondary importance, when seen in the broader context of the debate about the Third Secret and whether or not the Holy See has published the Secret in its entirety. For the underlying assumption of writers such as Mr. Ferrara is this: The Secret by itself is not clear, and even ambiguous, and therefore needs an explanation, and this explanation could only have come from Our Lady through Sister Lúcia.

The first problem with this theory is that it is wrong to say that the text of the Third Secret is “ambiguous,” for Catholics have two thousand years of Catholic Tradition to help them understand the Secret. Specific symbols in the Vision are drawn from Scripture and Tradition, and therefore provide evidence of what the Vision represents. The Secret refers, for example, to “a *great city half in ruins*,” and this city is mentioned in conjunction with a *mountain*. In *A Commentary on The Book of Psalms* by St. Robert Bellarmine, which Preserving Christian Publications reprinted, this Doctor of the Church explains that in Psalm 86 the city on the mountain symbolizes the Church. And the Catechism

of the Council of Trent¹ teaches us that oftentimes in Sacred Scripture the “*great city Jerusalem*” represents the Church. The Catholic Church, therefore, is the City of God, and she is a City on a Mountain, because the Mountain in Sacred Scripture is one of the symbols of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christopher Ferrara’s conclusions, drawn from a mistranslated word, are therefore incorrect. But the mistranslation itself serves as a “happy fault,” a *felix culpa*, because it provides an opportunity to resolve the question about the text of the Third Secret once and for all.

Christopher Ferrara Replaced a Mistranslation with Another Mistranslation

Mr. Ferrara’s argument is based upon the assumption that a mistranslation of a statement of Our Lady to Sister Lúcia was part of a broader effort to hide the true meaning of the Secret – the meaning that would have come from an explanation dictated by Our Lady Herself – and to replace this explanation with a mere opinion of its meaning which the translator would have attributed to Sister Lúcia alone. However, Mr. Ferrara’s own translation is inaccurate, because he leaves out a preposition at the end of the sentence. A complete word-for-word translation from the Portuguese of the key words of Our Lady reads as follows: “. . . write what you were told, not however that which is given you to understand *of* its meaning [*do seu significado*].” The word “*do*” in Portuguese is a contraction of the preposition “*de*” (of) and the article “*o*” (the). This omission of the preposition “*of*” by Mr. Ferrara may seem insignificant, but it is not when examined within the context of his theory, and of his interpretation that comes four paragraphs later, where he writes: “. . . WAF continues to pretend that in the phrase quoted above the Mother of God was referring to *Sister Lúcia’s* understanding of the vision rather than what the *Virgin Herself* had given Lúcia to be able to understand it.” Mr. Ferrara makes an implicit distinction here between “*what*” Our Lady had given to Sister Lúcia, and Sister Lúcia’s being “*able to understand*” as a result. The original Portuguese and a literal English translation do not contain this distinction. Instead they indicate an altogether different one, a distinction between “that which” and “of its

¹ English edition of Fathers McHugh and Callan, Part I, art. IX; Latin edition (Ratisbonae: G. J. Manz, 1905), Pars I, Cap. X.

meaning” – that is, between a *part* (“that which”), on one hand, and *the whole* (“of its meaning”), on the other hand. To appreciate this distinction, one can think by way of analogy of the angels and saints in heaven. All see God face to face in the beatific vision, but no creature can know God infinitely as He is in Himself. Each saint and angel has a finite knowledge of that divine essence, and each sees that divine essence in a different aspect, so that the totality of all the angels and saints represents a most perfect manifestation of God outside of Himself, but always in a finite and limited way.

What a correct translation of the words of Our Lady indicate is that Sister Lúcia was given an understanding of something of the meaning of the Third Secret, an aspect of the Secret that may have been intended primarily for her and her alone. What Our Lady’s words do not indicate is that Sister Lúcia was given some means by which, according to Mr. Ferrara, she would “be able to understand” the Secret in all its significance, because, as we shall explain below, it was not the mission of Sister Lúcia to interpret the full meaning of the Secret to the world, but rather this was left in some manner to the theologians and ultimately to the magisterium of the Church. Before we demonstrate that this was in fact the case, we should consider something of the background and history of the current debate.

A Brief History of the Controversy

The theory of the missing document of the Third Secret, which acquired the name “fourth secret” after the publication of a book by Italian journalist Antonio Socci in 2006, began to spread almost immediately after the Secret was published on June 26, 2000. With the appearance of Father Paul Kramer’s *The Devil’s Final Battle* in 2002, individual articles gave way to this book as a principal vehicle for promotion of the theory. When Antonio Socci first entered the controversy sometime later, he did so with the intention of refuting the arguments. But as he pursued the matter he became convinced by the theory, through the argumentation that its proponents had assembled and by the publicity they had generated, with the result that the theory continued to pick up momentum.

However, in spite of all the publicity, and furthermore in spite of the popular international appeal acquired by the addition of a noted Italian journalist to the ranks of its defenders, the theory did not go unchallenged. In the Roman journal *Lepanto*, edited by lay Church historian Roberto de Mattei, a lengthy essay appeared in October 2007

by Brazilian Fatima scholar Antonio Augusto Borelli. The author challenged one by one a number of the popular arguments that Mr. Socci and his predecessors had advanced. But because the essay was officially published only in Italian, it did not attract worldwide attention until, about two and a half years later, Christopher Ferrara posted a 44-page article on Father Gruner's web site, in which he attempted to respond to the arguments of Antonio Borelli, doing so at the request of Father Gruner's Fatima Center.

Since the Brazilian Antonio Borelli had analyzed various arguments of the Italian Antonio Socci, replying to them very systematically, it would have been useful in the debate if Mr. Ferrara had adopted the same scholarly approach, addressing specific historical facts relating to Fatima and its documents. But he chose a different method, one with a perspective that was partly sociological and partly theoretical, rather than primarily historical as Antonio Borelli's had been. On the sociological level, for example, Christopher Ferrara questioned the influence and importance of the Italian journal in which Antonio Borelli's essay was published. Similarly, he questioned Antonio Borelli's own importance and influence as a Fatima scholar, and of his book on Fatima, which had gone through numerous editions in a variety of languages, and of which several million copies had been distributed. Roberto de Mattei published the essay precisely because he knew of the reputation that Antonio Borelli enjoyed as a Fatima scholar, whereas Christopher Ferrara's article tended to downplay these factors, instead of simply addressing the arguments that Antonio Borelli had presented.

On the theoretical level, Mr. Ferrara challenged, in the very title of his response, Antonio Borelli's sincerity in naming his own essay "*Friendly Reflections for the Clarification of a Debate*." Mr. Ferrara replied with his own title: "*Friendly Reflections?*" How could they be friendly, Mr. Ferrara reasoned, when Antonio Borelli was simply siding with the Vatican in a cover-up to hide part of the Third Secret? But the central issue, in Antonio Borelli's mind, was not about siding with the Vatican against the many Catholics who are devoted to Fatima but while promoting a theory that was open to question, regarding the completeness of the Third Secret. For the importance of Fatima and its central significance relating to the crisis in our time were the points on which Antonio Borelli was agreeing. The question of whether or not there is a missing document, on the other hand, is an issue simply of historical fact. Is there or is there not such a document? Antonio Borelli was advocating an objective discussion of the evidence.

One example suffices for now to illustrate what was missing in Christopher Ferrara's reply. He came into possession of an English translation of Antonio Borelli's essay just as his own book *The Secret Still Hidden* was being published in early 2008. Eleven times in his book he attributes to Cardinal Ottaviani the statement that the alleged missing document contains only 25 lines, not the 62 lines of the published text of the Secret. One of the points shown very clearly by Antonio Borelli was that the source for the hypothesis of 25 lines was Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, who advanced it as a mere hypothesis, not as a verifiable fact. Cardinal Ottaviani himself never spoke of 25 lines. Nor did Bishop Venâncio, nor Sister Lúcia herself, both of whom Mr. Ferrara identified in his book as additional sources for the theory of 25 lines. Here it is a question of historical fact.

As a way around this evidence, Mr. Ferrara cites Cardinal Bertone as also referring to Cardinal Ottaviani and the 25 lines. How did Cardinal Bertone arrive at this conclusion? There is no direct evidence, only circumstantial evidence, to answer this question. There are two transcripts, one in Italian and one in French, of Cardinal Ottaviani's address on February 11, 1967, and neither mentions 25 lines. Since there are no known documents showing that Cardinal Ottaviani said this, we have only circumstantial evidence, leading to the conclusion that Cardinal Bertone thought this merely because the proponents of the "fourth secret" were insisting that Cardinal Ottaviani had said it, but, unlike Antonio Borelli, Cardinal Bertone did not carefully examine all the documents, and instead was misled by none other than his own opponents. But Mr. Ferrara does not end here. He also cites Bishop Venâncio, but he misquotes him. In citing Frère Michel, who quoted Bishop Venâncio and afterwards added his own hypothesis, Mr. Ferrara confuses the two, leading the reader to the wrong conclusion that Bishop Venâncio himself had said it, rather than simply Frère Michel.

Sister Lúcia's Role and the Interpretation of the Secret

Father Joaquin Maria Alonso, in Part II, Chapter 8 of *The Secret of Fatima: Fact and Legend*, quotes the Carmelite mother prioress as distinguishing in precise terms the role of Sister Lúcia: "The mission of Sister Lúcia of the Immaculate Heart was to transmit Our Lady's message Do not ask her, however, to interpret what she has written or said. Ask this of the theologians, ask the hierarchy and the apostles of Fatima, whom the Holy Spirit raises up when and where He wills."

This observation of the Carmelite mother prioress might seem to diminish Sister Lúcia's role, and clearly it establishes an obstacle to those arguing that Sister Lúcia most certainly had to have written an explanation of the Third Secret. And yet it was when Sister Lúcia was still young, before entering the religious life, that Our Lord made clear to her exactly what her mission was, and how He would provide for its fulfillment. She had been concerned about the limits being placed on the education she was receiving, due to the necessity of her remaining somewhat secluded from the academic world in order to protect her from the curiosity of others. She was concerned that without an adequate education she might not be able to communicate the message of Fatima intelligently. Our Lord assured her by explaining that He would provide her not with knowledge, but with wisdom. All of this is explained in the Carmelite biography, and serves to describe the nature of Sister Lúcia's role.

Father Alonso himself explained it this way: "We may ask Lúcia to recall Our Lady's words; but perhaps we should not ask her to interpret their meaning." The history of the Church certainly provides us with other examples. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque was given the mission by Our Lord to spread devotion to His Sacred Heart. But she herself was not the theologian of this devotion. She lived from 1647 to 1690, but already before her in the same century came St. John Eudes (1601-1680), who became the Church's theologian of both the Sacred Heart of Jesus as well as the Admirable Heart of Mary. Then there was her director, Saint Claude La Colombière. And another priest, Father Jean Croiset, also became known as a theologian of the doctrine of the Sacred Heart. Finally, there were the Popes themselves, who had the ultimate authority in explaining that devotion.

St. Paul speaks of the various gifts granted within the Church by the Holy Ghost, distinguishing specifically between wisdom and knowledge. In order to explain doctrine, a theologian must have sufficient knowledge of divine revelation, whereas a seer such as Sister Lúcia was able to fulfill her mission simply with the wisdom that Our Lord promised her instead. In yet other centuries one finds ample examples. St. Dominic and St. Francis founded their respective Orders, but it was the theologians of these Orders, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, who wrote specific theological treatises explaining and defending the legitimacy of the mendicants against others who did not understand them and criticized them. In an earlier century it was St. Benedict who founded the Order named after him, inspiring true learning throughout the Catholic world.

But it was a later Benedictine monk, St. Anselm, who perfected this learning and came to be regarded as the Father of Scholasticism.

The role that Mr. Ferrara and other proponents of a “fourth secret” seek to assign to Sister Lúcia, and even to Our Lady Herself, is not rooted in sound theology and Catholic Tradition. Our Lady is the Queen of Prophets, Apostles, and Confessors, as the Mediatrix of all grace. She does not replace the role of the doctors and theologians, nor that of the hierarchy, as we can see by examining in greater detail the recent developments in devotion to Fatima.

The Third Secret Vision is not “Ambiguous” – The Role of the Theologians

In late 2002 we received a telephone call from Father Nicholas Gruner. During that conversation the member of our staff who spoke with Father at length mentioned to him that seven times in the initial printing of Father Paul Kramer’s book, *The Devil’s Final Battle*, the Third Secret was referred to as “ambiguous.” In reply to his comment that it is not appropriate to refer to something from Our Lady as “ambiguous,” Father Gruner agreed that it was not the proper term. In a later printing of the book, all of the seven references to “ambiguous” were either removed or the wording was changed to “obscure,” a more appropriate term. In Christopher Ferrara’s recent article he begins by using “obscure,” but later he uses the word “ambiguous.” In doing so he reverts to the term that Father Gruner had decided against more than a decade ago.

Supernatural revelations cannot be called ambiguous, because God Himself, and, in the case of Fatima, Our Lady, do not speak in equivocations. God does not deceive nor can He be deceived. What God does do at times, however, is reveal Himself within a certain obscurity. In the first question of the *Summa*, article IX, St. Thomas explains how Revelation oftentimes makes use of metaphors or symbols, and he gives various reasons for their use. Physical symbols are related to the manner in which the human mind works, whereas much of modern culture, which ultimately gave rise to rationalism, drew its inspiration from the “*cogito*” of René Descartes. For Descartes it was mathematical reasoning that became the model of human thought, not the contemplative understanding of creation characteristic of the medieval theologians. Nature contains its own mysteries because it reflects the mystery of God, but these obscurities can be clarified through faith and

reason. This is the attitude that should guide any consideration of the Third Secret of Fatima.

Father Nicholas Gruner displayed this contemplative attitude shortly after the Third Secret was published. While holding to the position now espoused by Mr. Ferrara that there is more to the Secret, he did not dismiss the Vision as ambiguous or unintelligible. “What we have been given,” he stated, “is a very great key.... I will try to help people understand this as best as I know myself.” And then in a manner appropriate to his role as a theologian he proceeded to explain:

... the Pope goes through a great city. What is that city? That city is the City of God. What is the City of God? It is the Catholic Church and the Catholic civilization. It is half destroyed. We can see this taking place, already, before our eyes, spiritually speaking.

... now it is also described as a mountain. And if you look at Isaias 2:3, it says: ‘Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.’ This mountain is the Catholic Church. . . . You have here a vision of the Pope going towards the Cross; going towards his final destination as it is for all of us to go towards Heaven. But on his way he is going through the city and the city is half desolate.”²

Long before Father Gruner interpreted the Third Secret in these terms, St. Louis Grignon de Montfort in his famous Prayer for the Apostles of the Last Times also appealed to this same Biblical symbol that is found in the Third Secret. In a prophecy of Ezechiel the mountain represented Our Lord as the future Messiah, as explained by the great commentator Cornelius a Lapide. Father Gruner saw the mountain as a symbol of the Church. And St. Louis de Montfort saw the mountain as a symbol of Our Lady: “Lord God of Truth, Who is this mysterious mountain, of which thou sayest to us such wonderful things, if not Mary, Thy dear Spouse, whose foundations Thou has placed upon the tops of the highest mountains?”

Neither St. Louis de Montfort, nor Cornelius a Lapide nor Father Gruner saw the Biblical symbols such as the city and the mountain as ambiguous, but as clear revelations of the supernatural. Christopher Ferrara criticized Antonio Borelli’s interpretation of the Third Secret as

² Father Gruner interviewed by Tom Massett, “The 3rd Secret Vision Explained,” *The Fatima Crusader*, no. 64 (summer 2000), 20-21.

representing the chastisement foretold by Our Lady of Fatima and the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart, dismissing this as mere opinion, rather than as events clearly represented in the Secret. Mr. Ferrara is forced into such a criticism because he insists that the Secret by itself has to be ambiguous. But Father Gruner was not treating it as ambiguous in his summer 2000 interview. It is part of the task of theologians such as the late Father Gruner to interpret such symbols as spiritual representations in the way explained by St. Thomas in the *Summa*. The theologians themselves do not provide the explanations in their entirety, however, and it is for this reason that it is necessary to turn also to members of the hierarchy.

The Role of the Hierarchy – Pope Benedict XVI and Bishop Bernard Fellay

Pope Benedict XVI caught the attention of traditional Catholics devoted to Fatima when, at the time of his trip to Fatima in 2010, he spoke of the Third Secret not merely as revealing an external assault against the Church, but also as an internal moral crisis, and in this context he spoke of the *passion* of the Church. Proponents of the “fourth secret” interpreted Benedict XVI’s remarks not simply as a reference to the published Third Secret, but even more so to the hypothetical missing document. But no “fourth secret” was necessary to speak in these terms about a crisis in the Church, the crisis to which Benedict XVI had referred. This passion of the Church had been described exactly five years earlier, in precise detail, by the Superior General of the Society of St. Pius X, Bishop Bernard Fellay, and he was not talking about a missing document but about the Third Secret itself:

I wonder if the released part of the 3rd secret of Fatima does not deal with this Passion. At the end it speaks of a massacre: a procession which follows the pope, with bishops, religious and faithful from all walks of life, and they are all killed. This vision ends with angels offering this blood to God, and this blood will return as graces on those who are left. It looks as if there is an apparent disappearance of the Church. This interpretation is not exactly that given by Rome, but I am doing nothing more than describing purely and simply, the vision.³

³ Conference by Bishop Bernard Fellay, Brussels, June 13, 2005, *Christendom*, no. 1 (September-October 2005), 11-12

Bishop Fellay repeated this same interpretation of the Third Secret eight years later during a conference in October 2013 in Kansas City, Missouri, but while acknowledging that some had objected to this interpretation. It is beyond the purpose of the present chapter to enter into speculation as to what those objections might have been, for this question must wait for a future article. For now it is simply a matter of recording this interpretation, as well as that of Benedict XVI, as evidence that there is not a general consensus among the theologians, nor among members of the hierarchy, to support Mr. Ferrara's argument that the Third Secret is ambiguous, and therefore that an interpretation offered by a layman such as Antonio Borelli must therefore be considered purely arbitrary.

Conclusion: Growing Resistance to the Hypothesis of the Fourth Secret

Mr. Ferrara presents his position as that of the virtual unanimity of serious Fatima scholars. In so doing he implies that all those who do not hold to his opinion are simply not to be taken seriously. But there are some recent historical facts that contradict this perspective. It was in 2009 that the English edition of Antonio Socci's book appeared. In 2012 the same publisher released the English translation of another work, the history of Vatican II by Roberto de Mattei, himself the publisher of the refutation of Antonio Socci by Antonio Augusto Borelli. In this history of the Council Roberto de Mattei mentions the importance of Fatima, and cites the book on Fatima by Antonio Augusto Borelli as the best compendium giving a concise account and history of Fatima's message. Furthermore, he also cites Antonio Borelli in response to the thesis of Antonio Socci, referring to the former's essay as a balanced view of the controversy.

In conclusion, we are obliged to observe that Mr. Ferrara's attempt to claim a general consensus for the position he has taken is not supported by the facts. There is no universal consensus among genuine Fatima scholars that a "fourth secret" exists. Antonio Borelli was the most articulate spokesman in providing a response to Antonio Socci's book, and was given a forum by a reputable Church historian, Roberto de Mattei, who repeated his acknowledgement of Antonio Borelli's authority regarding Fatima in two separate references in his history of the Council. Finally, the posted responses both by David Carollo of the World Apostolate of Fatima, and Kevin Symonds on the site Catholic Stand, both in reply to Mr. Ferrara, clearly demonstrate that there was

not a conspiracy, aimed at falsifying the Third Secret, when the publication of the English translation of the Carmelite biography of Sister Lúcia appeared.

A Controversial Letter of Sister Lúcia

Introduction: The Interpretation of Sister Lúcia's Letter

In the controversy regarding the Third Secret one of the most important documents is the letter that Sister Lúcia wrote to Pope John Paul II on May 12, 1982, in anticipation of her meeting with him the following day during his visit to Fatima. The authenticity of the letter as published by the Vatican and by the Carmelites of Coimbra, however, has been called into question because Sister Lúcia mentions to the Pope that he was “anxious to know” the Third Secret, whereas in fact Pope John Paul II had previously read the Third Secret on two different occasions. The argument is made that Sister Lúcia could not have made such a mistake, and therefore the letter was either forged, or was not addressed to John Paul II on that particular occasion.

The primary problem with this argument is the English translation of Sister Lúcia's Portuguese. Sister Lúcia used the word “*conhecer*,” which is more specific than the English word “*to know*.” It comes from the Latin word “*cognoscere*,” which gives rise to various words in English, such as “*cognition*,” “*cognizance*,” etc. Cassell's Latin-English dictionary in defining *cognoscere* cites a passage from Cicero where a clear distinction is made between a mere knowledge of the existence or content of something, on one hand, and a deeper understanding of its meaning, on the other hand. In this particular case Sister Lúcia was referring not simply to John Paul II's awareness of the contents of the Secret, but even more so to his understanding of what the Secret signified.

Once one focuses on this aspect of Sister Lúcia's letter, everything that follows in the letter becomes clear. Sister Lúcia begins by referring to the Secret as a “symbolic vision.” Proponents of a “fourth secret” have argued that the Third Secret vision is only a part of the Secret, and that there is another text containing the “words of Our Lady” which the Vatican has refused to publish. However, Sister Lúcia in this letter is indicating that the vision *itself* is the Secret, the Secret in its entirety, but which requires an explanation, and which she then proceeds to provide to the Pope.

The Secret as Distinct from Its Explanation

In the previous chapter we discussed the words of Our Lady to Sister Lúcia in January 1944, when Our Lady instructed Sister Lúcia to write down what she saw, but not what was given to her “to understand of its meaning.” The proponents of a missing document find in this information from the Carmelites of Coimbra, in their biography of Sister Lúcia, a proof that there is more to the Secret than the Vision, insofar as Our Lady Herself had made this distinction between the Vision and its interpretation. However, Our Lady instructed Sister Lúcia not to write down the interpretation at that time, in January of 1944, when she was to write the Third Secret itself – which was the Vision, not a separate document explaining it.

The advocates of a missing document argue that this command to Sister Lúcia applied only to January of 1944, but certainly not to a later time, because eventually Sister Lúcia had to have written the explanation, for otherwise the Secret would have remained forever unintelligible. In analyzing this hypothesis, we cited in the previous chapter Father Alonso, and the Carmelite prioress whom he himself quoted, both of them stating that it was the mission of Sister Lúcia to present to the world the message of Fatima, but not to be its interpreter, and that this latter responsibility belonged to the theologians, to the apostles of Fatima, and ultimately to the magisterium of the Church.

When, however, we read Sister Lúcia’s letter to Pope John Paul II of May 1982, we find what is in fact an explanation of the meaning of the Secret. On this point we give credit to the proponents of a missing document for arguing, after the publication of the Carmelite biography, that at a later date Sister Lúcia must have written down an explanation. But their problem in the application of this principle is that the explanation given by Sister Lúcia in her letter is not what they previously expected the Third Secret would be.

For example, Christopher Ferrara criticized the Brazilian Fatima scholar Antonio Borelli for giving an interpretation of the Secret which, according to Mr. Ferrara, reduces the Third Secret to nothing more than what was already revealed in the Second Secret – the chastisement of the world and the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Sister Lúcia’s letter, however, contains an indirect response to this very objection. She explained very clearly to John Paul II that the Third Secret “refers” to a part of the Second Secret. Our Lady in the Second Secret had said that if we did not heed Her requests, Russia would spread its errors. And this,

Sister Lúcia stated, is what has happened: We have not heeded Our Lady's requests, and as a result Russia has spread its errors throughout the world. For this reason Antonio Borelli's explanation of the Third Secret is perfectly justified. For after the Secret was published in June 2000, he could show how this fulfillment of Our Lady's prophecy in the Second Secret was represented in the symbolism of the Third Secret – which is what Sister Lúcia appropriately told John Paul II when stating that the Secret was a “symbolic vision.” Sister Lúcia's letter to the Pope was written precisely to explain the meaning of this symbolism.

Sister Lúcia, however, does not enter into a detailed explanation to the Pope. She is content to give a general reference to the “errors of Russia” but without giving a complete analysis of all the ways in which these errors affected the Church and temporal society, or in precisely what manner they have been spread to other countries throughout the world. To understand more precisely Sister Lúcia's role in providing an explanation, we must turn to the teaching of St. Thomas on the nature of supernatural revelations.

St. Thomas Aquinas and Prophetic Revelation

If we study the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas about the nature of prophetic knowledge (the Latin *cognitio*, or cognition, from *cognoscere*, in the sense explained above in reference to Sister Lúcia's Portuguese word *conhecer*), we find in it all the distinctions necessary for understanding the perspective of Sister Lúcia and her mission. In the Third Secret Sister Lúcia writes, “*we saw in an immense light that is God. . . .*” Sister Lúcia describes the revelation that she, Francisco and Jacinta saw as a “*light*” that comes from God. St. Thomas uses the same word in Latin, or *lumen*, to describe this divine communication. He distinguishes this “*light*” from the “*species*,” knowledge from the senses, imagination and intellect, but different from the *judgment* regarding its ultimate meaning (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 173, a. 2).

In the case of Sister Lúcia and the other seers, the *species* was knowledge of the Third Secret Vision itself, and the *light* was the understanding of its meaning. But to communicate the meaning of a prophetic revelation, God also uses secondary causes or instruments, which in this case was Our Lady Herself speaking to the seers. The words of Our Lady at Fatima that served this purpose were those of the second part of the Secret of Fatima, popularly known as the Second Secret. The first part, or First Secret, was the vision of hell, and the second part begins with Our Lady referring to hell as the place where

poor sinners go. In this Second Secret Our Lady also prophesied the coming of the Second World War, and the spreading of the errors of Russia if mankind did not heed Her warnings. But Our Lady did not leave the seers without reasons for hope, for She ended with the words that have become the center of the debate about the Third Secret: “*In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved.*”

Proponents of a missing document argue that these final words are the beginning of the Third Secret. If this were the case, however, Sister Lúcia would have been revealing part of the Third Secret before she was authorized to do so. For she wrote these words in her Fourth Memoir in 1941, whereas she wrote the Third Secret in January of 1944, only after she had been told to do so by the bishop of Leiria-Fatima and afterwards by Our Lady. A further argument they use to identify these words with the Third Secret is that they appear to contain a message different from that of the Second Secret, a prophecy relating to a crisis in the Church or a crisis of faith, rather than what are perceived to be events concerning primarily temporal society, such as the Second World War.

The “Errors of Russia” versus “the Dogma of the Faith”

The problem with this argument is that it is missing a correct doctrinal understanding of the relationship between the Church and temporal society in the light of modern papal teaching. Preserving Christian Publications recently published *Pope Leo XIII and the Prayer to St. Michael* by Kevin J. Symonds, a book that shows the relationship between the vision of Pope Leo in the late nineteenth century and the events prophesied by Our Lady in Fatima in 1917. The prayers that the Pope ordered to be recited after low Masses were a development of earlier prayers introduced by his predecessor, Blessed Pius IX, because of the growing assaults against the Church. Related to these facts is another book that we published, Juan Donoso Cortés’s *Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism*, in which this English translation of 1862 contains a handwritten blessing from Pius IX to the translator. This Pope identified himself in some way with the prophetic insights of Juan Donoso Cortés, who, as a renowned Spanish statesman and European diplomat, saw the direction in which modern society was going and what this meant for the Church.

In 1849, two years before the publication of his book in 1851, Donoso Cortés gave an address to the Spanish Parliament, in which he analyzed the crisis in the following manner. When religion prospers, he

explained, the power of the State diminishes, because the Church attends to man's needs so profoundly that the role of government is reduced to a minimum. However, when the influence of religion declines, the power of the State increases. And, he warned his listeners, the world of his time – contrary to what many of them assumed – rather than making great social progress, was heading in the direction of the greatest tyranny the world has ever seen. Not only did Donoso Cortés foresee what was coming, but he also foretold the rise of Russia.

What Donoso Cortés foresaw in the nineteenth century became the reality of the twentieth century, and now into the twenty-first century. Our Lady appeared in Fatima just as the Communist revolution was taking place in Russia. In the context of the Secret of Fatima, the meaning of Our Lady's twofold prophecy becomes amply clear. The "errors of Russia" have spread precisely to the degree in which the "dogma of the Faith" is no longer acknowledged within society. These two aspects of Our Lady's prophecy in the Second Secret are inseparably related, and together they point to the Third Secret.

Conclusion: Sister Lúcia's May 1982 Letter Is Her Explanation of the Third Secret

We have attempted in this brief chapter to summarize the *state of the question* regarding the controversy surrounding the Third Secret, as it has developed since the publication of the Carmelite biography of Sister Lúcia in 2013, and in the English translation in 2015. Advocates of a missing part of the Third Secret are now faced with the evidence that Our Lady told Sister Lúcia in January of 1944 to write down the Third Secret itself, the Vision, and not its explanation. In this way the two would not be confused. But by May 12, 1982, Sister Lúcia could freely write to Pope John Paul II and explain to him that the Third Secret was this "symbolic vision," and the explanation of its meaning was that the errors of Russia foretold by Our Lady had indeed spread throughout world, bringing war and persecution of the Church. The present day loss of faith has resulted in part from an internal crisis within the Church. This in turn has amplified the crisis in temporal society. All of this is represented in the Vision of the Third Secret, in the manner in which it was explained in the first chapter – in the interpretations of Pope Benedict XVI, Bishop Bernard Fellay, and Father Nicholas Gruner, whose explanations are fully understood only by referring to Sister Lúcia's 1982 letter to Pope John Paul II

The Mission of Sister Lúcia

Introduction: Sister Lúcia Defines Her Own Mission

The first in this series of articles on the Third Secret of Fatima analyzed and responded to the theory of a missing text or “fourth secret,” showing why the Third Secret vision is not “ambiguous,” and why no second explanatory document constitutes a part of the Secret. The second article was devoted to Sister Lúcia’s letter of May 12, 1982, in which she described the Secret as a “symbolic vision,” explaining to Pope John Paul II how the vision referred to the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Second Secret, where Our Lady said that if Her requests were not heeded, Russia would spread its errors throughout the world – a prophecy that has been fulfilled, as Sister Lúcia explained to the Pope, because Our Lady’s requests were not met.

Theories about a missing document, which would explain the vision in more detail than what Sister Lúcia provided in her letter to the Pope, have not taken into account Sister Lúcia’s own explanation of the nature of her mission as the messenger of Fatima. The Carmelites of Coimbra in their biography of Sister Lúcia, after presenting the key texts from Sister Lúcia’s diary relating to her writing down the Third Secret after Our Lady appeared to her in January of 1944, cite Sister Lúcia’s own words preceded by their explanation: “She never said a word of personal opinion about the meaning which was given to her to understand, always affirming: *The interpretation belongs to the Church.*”

Previous to this passage in the biography the Carmelites had already cited Sister Lúcia’s letter to Pope John Paul II, in which she did in fact interpret the Secret, and therefore there might at first appear to be a contradiction. But the apparent contradiction is easily resolved simply by noting that Sister Lúcia only gave the general outline of the interpretation of the Secret, not the specific details. Therefore, in the context of all the available documents one sees clearly what Sister Lúcia meant regarding the nature of her own role in the interpretation of the message of Fatima.

Sister Lúcia wrote the First and Second Secrets in 1941, during Second World War. Before considering the early reactions within the Church to these revelations, and how Fatima therefore was being

interpreted throughout the Church, it is important to consider in more detail what St. Thomas taught about the way in which prophetic knowledge is received within the mind of the recipient.

St. Thomas Aquinas on the Passing Nature of Prophetic Knowledge

St. Thomas raises the question of whether the recipient of prophetic knowledge possesses this grace in a continual state, a *habitus* in Latin, or instead in a more transitory fashion (II-II, q. 171, a. 2), and he replies by explaining that it comes at specific moments and not in a permanent manner. For this reason, St. Thomas further explains, the recipient has to rely at times on his or her human judgment (q. 171, a. 5). Some conclude from such a distinction that seers can be in error in their testimony. For example, the two seers of La Salette, Melanie and Maximin, have always been objects of debate. They have been described by some as being unreliable in parts of their testimony, but while being staunchly defended by other very reputable voices within the Church.

A similar controversy arose regarding Sister Lúcia. The Portuguese journal *Brotéria* and the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon in recent years provided a detailed summary of much of the controversy about the interpretation of the message of Fatima and the testimony of Sister Lúcia, centered around the debate over the critical writings of the theologian Father Edouard Dhanis. However, it is not simply due to Sister Lúcia's critics, but also among those who have taken her more seriously, that divisions have appeared in the interpretation of all that she said and wrote. It is for this reason that the publication of a new biography by the Carmelites of Coimbra is an immensely significant development for students of Fatima. The Carmelites present Sister Lúcia as she appears in her personal diary, giving a picture of both her interior life as well as her apostolic zeal in making known the message of Fatima in a profoundly supernatural manner – her joining the contemplative life itself with a zeal for souls, a zeal instilled in the three seers of Fatima from the day of Our Lady's first apparition to them on May 13, 1917.

The Hierarchy and Fatima During the Second World War

The author of the Portuguese study from *Brotéria*, José Barreto, points out that members of the hierarchy during the Second World War interpreted the prophecies of the Second Secret in diametrically opposed

ways, based upon the sides their various countries were taking during the War. The author's summary was based in part on a study by the American Jesuit historian Father Robert Graham, published in the Italian Jesuit journal *Civiltà Cattolica* in 1981, which explained the reactions of the bishops following the radio message of Pope Pius XII of October 31, 1942. The Portuguese article cites the example of how Cardinal Hinsley of Westminster, as well as Catholics of the French Resistance and Catholics of the United States, saw in the mentioning of the conversion of Russia in the Second Secret a reference to the Russian people defending their country against the Nazi invasion. But a spokesman within the hierarchy on the opposite side was Cardinal Schuster, archbishop of Milan, who characterized the efforts of the Italian soldiers as a sacrifice that could become "the most beautiful and the most complete victory of Roman Catholicism over Bolshevism." The Nazis even wanted to use Fatima to their advantage, but some in the Vatican tried to counter this by issuing a version of the Second Secret that left out the reference to Russia, in order to offset any efforts of Nazi propagandists to use it for their own purposes.

As Catholics of the present generation examine these diverse reactions of members of the hierarchy during the Second World War, they have a historical perspective that Catholics of that previous generation did not yet have, insofar as the latter were in the midst of the conflict. In retrospect, it would seem more accurate to conclude that neither side in the War represented the signs either of the conversion of Russia, or of the defeat of Communism. For Russia's errors were in fact spreading to other countries in the conflict, as seen with Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy. Nor can the analysis stop there, for the Allied nations themselves allowed for the occupation of eastern European nations by Soviet Russia, and soon Communism was spreading to China, Korea, Vietnam and elsewhere.

Sister Lúcia did not see it as her mission to enter into all the details or the specific causes of the spread of the errors of Russia, but rather the general outline of these developments. She left it to the Church to provide the more specific theological and historical interpretations. But within the universal Church there was not a unified consensus of opinion, and as a result the debate among Catholics was to continue in the decades that followed. That debate was only to intensify as the year 1960 arrived, which was the year when it was thought the Third Secret would be revealed.

The Year 1960 in the History of the Church

At a Rome symposium in May of 2010, retired Bishop Manuel Pestana Filho of Anápolis, Brazil revealed that during the Second Vatican Council a certain commission from the Council went at the time to see Sister Lúcia, and that he himself had an opportunity to submit a question to her in writing through this commission, and his question was precisely on this point: Is there a relationship between the Third Secret and the Second Vatican Council? He then explained that Sister Lúcia was very reserved in her response, and that she indicated that she did not have permission to discuss this matter.

Arguments have been made, based upon the testimony of a German-speaking priest, Father Dollinger – who had significant contact with Pope Benedict XVI as Cardinal Ratzinger – that the Cardinal had stated to him that the Secret speaks specifically not only of the Council, but also of the liturgical changes following it. A more logical conclusion, based upon all the evidence, is that Father Dollinger was talking not about the Secret specifically, but about statements that Cardinal Ratzinger had made to him in other contexts, regarding the abuses he saw as coming from the liturgical changes, and what later as Benedict XVI he referred to as the “spirit” as opposed to the “letter” of the Council. Although Benedict XVI’s distinction is not universally accepted, it clearly represents what he as Cardinal Ratzinger would have said to Father Dollinger. For there is no evidence from Sister Lúcia herself that such details are part of the Third Secret, insofar as she said nothing of them in her May 1982 letter to Pope John Paul II.

The events as they unfolded during the Council, on the other hand, are what reveal the significance of what actually occurred. Whereas during the Second World War various bishops had conflicting opinions about which side in the conflict represented either the errors of Russia or Russia’s conversion, during the Council the bishops were divided on the question of the role of Fatima in relation to the Council, precisely the question that Bishop Pestana had formulated to Sister Lúcia. While Sister Lúcia chose not to reply, not being authorized to speak on this subject, she did not have to do so because subsequent events were to speak for themselves.

Two petitions were submitted to the Council, the first calling for the condemnation of Communism, and signed by 213 bishops from 54 countries, and the second requesting the consecration of Russia to the

Immaculate Heart of Mary, signed by 510 bishops from 78 counties.⁴ In spite of the significant number of bishops making these requests, the petitions were not submitted to a vote. But in the decades following the Council the questions did not go away, and continued to present themselves to the attention of the universal Church.

When Sister Lúcia wrote her May 1982 letter to Pope John Paul II, the Pope's native Poland had just experienced a crisis in which martial law was imposed on the country, in the face of domestic conflict revolving around the Solidarity movement. Poland under Communism had a history of attempts of Church authorities to negotiate with the Communist government, from the days of Cardinal Wyszyński to those of Cardinal Glemp, and yet in 1982 Sister Lúcia was not proclaiming victory over Communism, but, instead, its opposite: Russia had now spread its errors *throughout the world*, and this was the meaning of the Third Secret according to her explanation to the Pope.

Conclusion: Sister Lúcia and the Magisterium of the Church

When looking back at the history of devotion to Fatima and to the various responses of the hierarchy of the Church, one notices the different interpretations from bishops during the Second World War, followed by the divergent attitudes about the degree of importance of Fatima and its message after 1960, or during the Council and the decades that followed. From this it becomes obvious to Catholics devoted to Fatima that the Church's final word on the Fatima message has yet to be spoken, and that theologians and apostles of Fatima are still free to study and meditate on its message in order to apply it to the spiritual needs of our time.

In the meantime the role of Sister Lúcia is becoming better known and understood after new information came to light through the publication of the Carmelite biography. That is, Our Lady told her not to write down her own understanding of the Secret as though it were the Secret itself, but only what she was told to write, namely, the vision that Our Lady had shown to her, Blessed Francisco and Blessed Jacinta.

⁴*Cf.* Antonio Augusto Borelli Machado *et al*, *Half a Century of Epic Anticommunism* (Mount Kisco, NY: Foundation for a Christian Civilization, 1981), pp. 424-425

Only later, in May of 1982, did Our Lady provide Sister Lúcia with the opportunity to present to the Holy Father what she understood of the meaning of the vision. With the publication of the Carmelite biography, Catholics worldwide now have better means of understanding the full message of Fatima and Sister Lúcia's mission in transmitting it.

Our Lady of Fatima and Russia – Part I

Introduction: The Day of the January 1944 Apparition

In his well known book on the Third Secret, Fatima archivist Father Alonso indicated very clearly – at the time when he wrote, still prior to the publication of the Secret – that the exact day of Our Lady’s apparition to Sister Lúcia in January of 1944 was unknown.⁵ Other sources, however, gave an approximate date based on the testimony of Mother Cunha Matos. That hypothetical date was January 2. But after the publication of the Secret, and later the publication of the Carmelite biography of Sister Lúcia, it became known that Sister Lúcia herself had indicated, in the text of the Secret itself and in her diary, that it was on January 3 that Our Lady appeared to her and that she wrote the Third Secret.

This discrepancy of one day has recently given rise to yet another theory by proponents of a “fourth secret” – that there was not one January apparition but two, on *both* January 2 and January 3, and from two apparitions came *two separate documents*. However, based upon Father Alonso’s statement that the exact date was unknown, previous speculation about January 2 could only be considered hypothetical, and after the publication of Sister Lúcia’s own statements the hypothesis of January 2 gave way to the reality of January 3 instead. For the proponents of the fourth secret, on the other hand, it is the theory that guides the interpretation of the facts, so that the former hypothesis of January 2 becomes itself a “fact,” added to the *known facts* revealed in Sister Lúcia’s texts regarding the January 3 date.

There is another and equally important reason behind this reluctance of the defenders of an alleged missing document to abandon the theory, even in the face of growing evidence against it. If the Third Secret is about the errors of Russia, as Sister Lúcia explained to Pope John Paul II in 1982, proponents of a missing document are not likely to accept or even understand what Sister Lúcia explained if they do not understand

⁵Father Joaquin Maria Alonso, CMF, *The Secret of Fatima: Fact and Legend* (Cambridge: The Ravengate Press, 1979), p. 41.

what Our Lady Herself meant by the errors of Russia. The same author who launched the theory of two January apparitions also wrote a book touching on the recent history of Russia, in which arguments were advanced to portray the Western democracies *rather than Russia* as the focal point of the contemporary crisis threatening the Church and the world.

Pius XII, Communism and the Western Democracies

Behind this historical perspective of the above cited author, motivating the continued promotion of the theory of a missing document of the Third Secret, there is a specific interpretation of the history of the Church in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Outstanding among the documented histories of Fatima is the famous three-volume work by the French author Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité. Students of Fatima are very indebted to Frère Michel's research, but they are also confronted with the author's political perspective brought to play in the interpretation of Fatima. The Second World War, as shown in the previous chapter, found Catholics and members of the hierarchy on both sides giving different interpretations and applications of how the message of Fatima applied to the events of the conflict. Influenced by one such interpretation, Frère Michel is understandably critical of the manner in which England and the United States carried out their alliance with Soviet Russia to defeat Nazi Germany. Not limiting himself to criticizing the errors of the Allies, however, he also questions the wisdom of a radio address that Pope Pius XII gave in 1944, concerning the role of the Church in relation to the democracies.

What is not sufficiently clear in Frère Michel's analysis is that Pius XII was not exalting democracy above other legitimate forms of government, but seeking instead to Christianize the existing democracies of the time, just as the Church had Christianized the monarchies of the past, for the purpose of defending Christian Civilization. A body of doctrine was developed by St. Pius X, and Popes Benedict XV, Pius XI and Pius XII, under the name "*Catholic Action*," to show how the laity within the Church were to be mobilized in the defense of the Church and a Christian political order.

Among the Catholics of France, however, suspicions arose during the pontificates of Pius XI and Pius XII, which involved not only their judgments relating to political affairs, but also their understanding of the papal role in formulating and guiding Catholic Action. Frère Michel

received training in the religious life from the Abbé Georges de Nantes, a priest well known for his political views and his suspicion of democracy. He was part of a French school of political thought that was influencing traditionally minded Catholics in other countries, an evolving perception of political events which, more and more, would see not Russia, but Western democracy, as the primary danger to the Church.

While this school of thought was developing, a different perspective arose in South America under the leadership of the Brazilian layman Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. His 1943 work *In Defense of Catholic Action* not only explained the doctrine of the Popes in a way that showed its continuity with all of Catholic Tradition, but also made the specific applications to the moral and political crisis of the twentieth century. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, in a manner consistent with a consensus among theologians and canonists, saw Catholic Action as the Church's answer to the emerging totalitarianism, as a moral and religious response that also had political consequences.

In the midst of these separate perspectives on two continents, led from France and Brazil respectively, a common consensus about the fundamental importance of Fatima, to help guide the Church through the present crisis, began to form throughout the Catholic world among those adhering to these two schools of thought. Both perspectives converged in the 1960s in their agreement about the threat of Russian Communism. While differing in their judgments about how to mobilize Catholics worldwide, and in their understanding of various national and political movements, they were able nevertheless to come together to form a common consensus regarding certain Catholic principles on which to act. This unity of action began to form during the first session of the Second Vatican Council in 1962.

Debate at the Council on the Church and the Secular State

While the Popes of the modern period prior to the Council were expressing their concerns about the threat to the Church posed by the modern secular State, a debate began, already in the Preparatory Commission prior to the Council, about the Church's understanding of the relationship between the Church and modern governments. The traditional doctrine had emphasized that in Catholic countries the State should recognize the Catholic Church as the true Religion. The newer theological opinion, on the other hand, focused on a concept of the rights of conscience and the religious liberty of the individual citizen. From

this debate the following question arose: If the State no longer recognizes the authority of the Church, what will be the resulting attitude of governments toward the Church, her authority and her rights? Among those who were warning of the dangers of the secular State were the voices of a layman, and of bishops themselves, who expressed their common concerns during the Council.

a) A Warning from the Laity

The lay voice was that of Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. To explain the moral dangers that he saw as a layman, he wrote *The Freedom of the Church in the Communist State*, a book-length essay that was distributed to all the bishops at the Council. He argued that the Church can never co-exist with Communism, even when the Communist State would offer the Church a certain freedom of worship. For the Church, he argued, must preach not only the theological virtues, but also the moral virtues, which include the virtue of justice and the right of private property, upheld by the seventh and tenth commandments. Communism, on the other hand, determined to abolish all private property, is in total opposition to the Church's teaching with regard to these commandments of the Decalogue.

b) A Warning from a Group of Bishops

The second warning against any abandonment of the traditional doctrine of the Church came from a group of bishops within the Council, led by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. Central to their argument was the fact that Blessed Pius IX had condemned in *Quanta Cura* the proposition that religious liberty must be the norm, and that it can only be limited when the public order requires it.

The proposition affirmed by the Council seemed to be saying the same thing, word for word, that Pius IX had condemned. Years later, with the publication of *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, this conflict between the pre-Conciliar and post-Conciliar teaching was partially addressed with the explanation that what Pius IX condemned, by the term "*public peace*," was a naturalistic notion of society completely separate from the influence of religion, whereas the Council understood "*public order*" as having broader social significance to include the role of the Church. The Church, in other words, is free to carry out her mission to influence society. But a question still remained regarding how this principle was to be applied.

Conclusion: St. Ambrose, Cardinal Burke, and the Archbishop of Kiev

In the fourth century, when the emperor Theodosius ordered the killing of seven thousand inhabitants of Thessalonica, St. Ambrose of Milan reacted by proclaiming Theodosius excommunicated. Theodosius promptly learned his lesson and repented, and was readmitted to Communion. Today, more than sixteen centuries later, an analogous situation prevails when various Catholic politicians and judges support the killing of untold numbers of unborn babies, by enacting and enforcing laws that approve of abortion, and often even financing the procedure.

In the face of this abuse of political authority by certain nominal Catholics, Bishop Raymond Leo Burke, the former bishop of La Crosse, Wisconsin, later archbishop of St. Louis, and subsequently Cardinal of the Roman Curia and of the Knights of Malta, published two pastoral letters on the duties of Catholic citizens and Catholic public officials. In the meantime he insisted that Catholic politicians who oppose Catholic moral teaching cannot receive Communion, thereby giving an example of the episcopal leadership manifested centuries before by St. Ambrose. Various other bishops, however, have countered Cardinal Burke's action, making the *conscienc*es of these politicians the norm of their behavior rather than the authoritative judgment of the hierarchy of the Church.

It is the modern totalitarian State, epitomized and brought to power by the Communist Revolution in Russia, that spread such errors throughout the world, claiming for the secularized State an absolute power over the life and death of its citizens. The leadership of Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke is a manifestation of the steadfastness of the Church in the face of such claims of the secular State, and of the moral obligation of Catholics in public life to uphold the Church's teaching, lest the very sanctity of the Church and of her Sacraments be compromised, and in order that the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ might be extended over all of human society.

While Western democracies in recent decades have allowed these errors to spread within their own societies, it would be another error itself to assume that Russia has in some way already converted. When Pope Francis met with the Russian Orthodox Patriarch in Cuba and signed a joint declaration, the Major Archbishop of Kiev on behalf of the Catholics of Ukraine appropriately responded by warning fellow Catholics that Russian aggression has not ended in Catholic Ukraine, and

by questioning whether the recent Russian military action in Syria truly merited the title of “holy war” claimed for it by Russian Orthodox bishops. The fact that other nations have joined Russia in spreading its errors does not mean that Russia itself has ceased from exercising its leading role, but, on the contrary, that it has been successful in promoting its errors worldwide, bringing wars and persecution of the Church as Our Lady foretold.

Our Lady of Fatima and Russia – Part II

Introduction: Two Elements of a Single Prophecy

Behind the mistaken notion of a “fourth secret” of Fatima, there is the implied separation of two expressions used by Our Lady in the Second Secret: the “errors of Russia” on one hand, and the “dogma of the Faith” on the other. The “errors of Russia” are wrongly understood as representing merely a political phenomenon, while “dogma” is seen as a reference to purely Church-related considerations, and specifically to events involving the Second Vatican Council and the liturgical changes that followed it.

In reality, however, these two expressions of Our Lady manifest two aspects of a single prophecy involving both the Church and the world together. Our Lady’s reference to the dogma of the Faith mentioned a particular country, Portugal, and the errors of Russia refer to yet another country. Our Lady was not implying that Russia was the embodiment of all that is evil, while Portugal alone represented the Church’s resistance to this evil. Pope Leo XIII taught that “no people is altogether without worth” (*Exeunte Jam Anno*, Dec. 25, 1888).⁶ And Pope Pius XII referred to Russia as “an immense people...renowned in history...for piety toward God and the Virgin Mary” (Apostolic Letter *Carissimis Russiae Populis*, July 7, 1952). What Our Lady was indicating, rather, was that all nations do not play identical roles in fulfilling Our Lord’s command to His Apostles, to preach the Gospel to all nations. Therefore, to understand the message of Fatima, we must reflect on what Our Lady was revealing about the history of the Church in the modern world.

The Spiritual and the Temporal Orders

Possibly the very first public launching of the theory later called the “fourth secret” was a monthly circular letter of the controversial Bishop Richard Williamson, formerly a member of the Society of St. Pius X, but now acting independently of that priestly society. Writing on July 4, 2000, from the German seminary where Bishop Williamson gave his

⁶ Pope Leo XIII, *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1903), p. 176.

provocative interview about Nazi Germany eight years later, he used the argument that the Secret was written on a single sheet of paper, whereas the published text was a different document because it had four separate pages – an argument that was disproved when Cardinal Bertone appeared on Italian television in May of 2007 showing the original text, *a single folded sheet with four sides*.

Underlying Bishop Williamson’s argument, however, was the assumption that the Secret had to speak specifically about the internal crisis within the Church. What Our Lady revealed in the Secret, however, concerned the Church and society together, or the nations of the world, because it is in human society itself that the Church fulfills her mission as she labors to convert the nations. In the Third Secret Vision the Church is under attack. Why, one must ask, is the Church opposed, and in what manner have governments turned against her?

In the Catholic society of medieval Europe, Church and State were firmly united, with the Church increasingly gaining respect as her authority within society was more and more recognized in society’s laws and in its institutions. This harmony between the Church and the State was later challenged by Protestantism in the sixteenth century, with the Holy Roman Empire becoming divided by the Lutheran revolt, with England becoming officially Protestant, and with France’s unity being threatened by Protestant minorities. Spain and Portugal, on the other hand, preserved their Catholic unity, and after the discovery of America a new development was taking place in the relationship between the Church and temporal society. When English colonies in North America declared their independence, Catholics in the state of Maryland supported their new nation because it provided them with religious freedom denied to them by the Protestant Church of England.⁷

This historical move toward independence among the nations of the Americas has been interpreted in a purely negative manner by the previously mentioned Bishop Williamson, who sees it as a work of Freemasonry. The secret societies, however, were not active merely in North America, but also in the mother counties of Europe. It was the French Revolution, not the American war of independence, that brought

⁷ Cf. Donald D’Elia, *The Spirits of ’76: A Catholic Inquiry* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom College Press, 1983), pp. 55-71; Thomas O’Brien Hanley, “Catholic Political Thought in Colonial Maryland Government: 1632-1649,” *The Historical Bulletin*, vol. 32 (November, 1953), 27-34.

persecution of the Church. The Napoleonic wars that immediately followed led to the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by Napoleon, and as a result the royal family of Portugal went to Brazil. When the royal family returned to Portugal in 1821, the son of the king of Portugal remained in Brazil as Pedro I, the first of two emperors of Brazil, making Brazil itself an independent nation, under a monarchy from 1822 until 1889. In the meantime when the Spanish colonies in the New World claimed their independence from Spain, the Holy See, working through the papal nunciature in Rio de Janeiro – since Brazil had led the way as a South American nation in being recognized by Rome – gradually established diplomatic ties with the new Spanish American countries.⁸

Freedom and Authority

The move toward independence on the part of new nations cannot be reduced to a simple formula, for circumstances vary in different parts of the world. But a central question in all the modern political debate concerned the relationship between authority and freedom. Juan Donoso Cortés showed in *Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism* that the proper equilibrium between freedom and authority can only be provided by Catholic dogma.⁹ During the Second World War the totalitarian regimes of Communism, Nazism and Fascism, representing the ultimate abuse of government authority, have been seen in contrast with secular western democracies, viewed at times as embodiments of false liberty or libertarianism. However, the errors of Russia referred to by Our Lady of Fatima were manifested most aggressively in the totalitarian regimes. During World War II, as in the First World War that preceded it, Europe became an immense battlefield – and France, Eldest Daughter of the Church, was invaded by the totalitarian forces of Nazism. During this time, in 1942, a Eucharistic Congress was held in Brazil, and Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, as a leader of Catholic Action in the country, was called upon to speak to those attending. In his address he recalled the famous adage which states that God works through the French – *Gesta*

⁸ Father William J. Coleman, M.M., *The First Apostolic Delegation in Rio de Janeiro and Its Influence in Spanish America: A Study in Papal Policy, 1830-1840* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1950).

⁹ Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essay on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism* (Preserving Christian Publications: 2014), pp. 160ff.

Dei per francos. He then added that if Brazil lived up to its role as a Catholic country, it would come to be said also of that nation: *Gesta Dei per brasilienses*. He himself measured up to that role in his 1943 book on Catholic Action, when he wrote that while “liberalism was an evil,” it is also true that “totalitarianism is a catastrophe.”¹⁰ He was calling attention to the fact that the Communist errors in Russia, and with them Nazism and Fascism, represented the central threat that was menacing the contemporary world and ultimately the Church herself, and that totalitarianism is never the answer to a false concept of liberty, known as liberalism.

The Errors of Russia: Caesaropapism

The temptation today, seven decades later, is one of assuming that after the political collapse of the Soviet Union, the errors of Russia are now a phenomenon of the past. To reach such a conclusion is to ignore history, and above all it is to ignore the implications of the message of Fatima. Russia posed a problem for Christendom because historically it aligned itself with the Greek Orthodox schism and therefore joined in the separation from Rome. This had consequences for Russia not only religiously, but also socially and politically. The Orthodox never completely abandoned the pagan Roman ideal of State superiority over religion and the Church. Religious and political developments in Western Europe, on the other hand, developed during the Middle Ages a more profound doctrinal and legal definition of the respective roles of Church and State, and of the rights and duties of the faithful as members of both spiritual and civil society. The West gradually replaced purely Roman and tribal laws with statutes and customs that manifested the principles of ecclesiastical and civil law guided by the Catholic Church.

In both Western Europe and its colonies, Catholic principles of international law continued to be articulated by the Church’s theologians, when the discovery of new lands raised questions about pagan nations and how they were to be treated in anticipation of their conversion, how relations between the European nations themselves were to be governed, and how the Church was to carry on relations with governments having non-Catholic populations that did not recognize the authority of Rome.

¹⁰ Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, *In Defense of Catholic Action* (Spring Grove, PA: The American TFP, 2006), p. 98.

Russia was involved only as an outsider to these developments, led by a legal tradition different from that of the West – one lacking a full recognition of the Church as having an authority higher than that of the State, and not having the West’s understanding of the relationship between authority and freedom within civil society itself. There were times when Russia could join forces with the West, such as in the defense of legitimate authority after the Revolution in France had overthrown the monarchy. But its role could never be fully receptive to Catholic influences over society, since it did not recognize the authority of the Catholic Church, nor give full freedom to the practice of the Faith by members of the Church.

The Church, Russia and Western Nations

Whereas Russia had separated from the Catholic Church by its identification with the Eastern schism, the revival of ancient culture during the Renaissance became the occasion for governments in the West to challenge the Church’s authority through the gradual secularization of its political institutions. However, in the face of this revolt, the laws and institutions that the Church’s influence had brought to Western societies left the Church as a force within society that not even governments could fully overpower. The Church summoned and mobilized a militant Catholic laity, under the guidance of the popes and the hierarchy, that allowed the Church to influence Western nations even in the face of persecutions.

The form that this took with the rise of totalitarian governments was mentioned in the previous chapter. The Popes called it *Catholic Action*, to distinguish it from the term previously used, *action of Catholics*, insofar as it was not merely the private initiative of Catholic laity, nor even the organization of Catholic political parties, but the action of the laity in union with the hierarchy – working at times outside the strictly political realm, but influencing politics according to the guiding principle of Pope St. Pius X, that of restoring all things in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Something changed, however, in the 1960s, the decade of the Second Vatican Council. Lay Italian Church historian Roberto de Mattei points out in his history of the Council that from 1963 to 1979 enrollment in Catholic Action in Italy declined from 3,600,000 to a mere eight hundred thousand. Catholics not only in Italy but throughout the world ceased to be as organized under the hierarchy as they had been in previous decades. How and why did this come about?

In the previous chapter we mentioned the case of Catholic politicians who depart from Catholic teaching in their political offices, and the failure of many bishops to follow the example of Raymond Cardinal Burke, who continually insisted that such politicians cannot receive Communion as long as they persist in ignoring Catholic teaching. This has prompted many of the laity to ask why the bishops are not providing appropriate moral leadership. An article¹¹ by former associate publisher of *Our Sunday Visitor*, Msgr. Owen F. Campion, blames Catholics in general – implying thereby the laity – by arguing that it is they who elect dissident Catholic politicians. However, it is the bishops who were given the mandate by Our Lord to teach, govern and sanctify the faithful. If certain Catholic politicians violate Catholic teaching in public office, and if it is the laity who vote them into office, it is members of the hierarchy who have allowed this to happen and even encouraged it, when they permit such politicians to receive Communion while not adhering to Catholic teaching. Such bishops fail to uphold the “dogma of the Faith” mentioned by Our Lady of Fatima, thereby allowing the errors of Russia to spread, and the Faith itself, which Our Lady promised would be preserved in Portugal, to be compromised throughout many nations of the world.

¹¹ Msgr. Owen F. Campion, “Divided on Abortion,” *Our Sunday Visitor*, vol. 105 (June 12, 2016), no. 7, p. 18.

Our Lady of Fatima and Russia – Part III

Introduction: Our Lady’s Reference to the “Dogma of the Faith”

Our Lady of Fatima’s reference to both the errors of Russia and the dogma of the Faith in Portugal – as explained in the previous chapter – does not involve a separation of the Second and Third Secrets, as proponents of a “fourth secret” have advocated. Rather, as Sister Lúcia explained to Pope John Paul II in May of 1982, the Third Secret refers back to the Second Secret, as a fulfillment of its prophecy about Russia.

The spreading of the errors of Russia represents an attack on the dogma of the Faith. This assault on the Faith includes an attack by hostile governments, but it also points within the Church to the duty of Catholics themselves to heed the requests of Our Lady of Fatima. We are obliged to pray and do penance, and if we fail in this duty our faith is compromised and weakened.

A significant aspect of the loss of faith among Catholics was illustrated recently by previously quoted Msgr. Owen F. Campion of *Our Sunday Visitor*, when he attempted to assign blame within the Church for the election of Catholic politicians who fail to uphold Catholic moral teaching. In a more recent article he referred to the large numbers of Catholics in the United States who have left the Church.¹² Another significant example is that of the Catholic countries of Latin America, demonstrating more clearly the nature of the present crisis of Faith. The defection of many Latin American Catholics to Protestantism has coincided with the promotion by much of the clergy of so-called Liberation Theology. Presented as a manifestation of concern for the poor, Liberation Theology has brought priests and bishops into the realm of politics, the proper domain of the laity, while depriving the laity of the proper spiritual guidance that they normally expect to receive from their bishops and priests. In his article Msgr. Campion does not address this political involvement of the clergy, whether in the United States, Latin America or elsewhere, as a cause of the loss of faith of many former Catholics.

¹² Msgr. Owen F. Campion, “Politicians in the Pews,” *Our Sunday Visitor* (August 7, 2016), p. 18.

Foreseeing these defections from the Catholic Church, Our Lady of Fatima identified the present crisis of the Faith with the spreading of the errors of Russia. What history teaches about these specific errors concerns two in particular: 1) the subordination of the Church to the State, and 2) the violation of the seventh commandment by socialism and Communism, the denial of private property through government confiscation and control of the property of the citizens.

The twentieth-century Popes prior to the Second Vatican Council saw these errors that were threatening the Church and modern society, and they organized the laity through Catholic Action in order to resist those errors. During this period of Church history, the teaching of the Church clearly defined the role of the layman, that of working to defend what Pope St. Pius X in his encyclical on Catholic Action, *Il fermo proposito*, called “Christian civilization.” At the same time the Church’s laws forbade priests and religious under strict penalties from engaging in business activities. A clear distinction was therefore made between the respective roles of the priest, the religious and the layman, while at the same time the Church emphasized lay collaboration with the hierarchy in the apostolate of the Church.

Cardinal Ratzinger’s June 2000 Press Conference

When the Third Secret was published on June 26, 2000, Cardinal Ratzinger, the future Benedict XVI, held a press conference in which he indicated a change that had taken place within the Church in this response to the errors of Russia. His Eminence was asked by one of the reporters why Rome had waited so long to make the Third Secret public. Cardinal Ratzinger replied by explaining that in 1960, the time of the expected publication of the Secret, preparations were being made for the Second Vatican Council. There was a move, he further explained, for an opening of the Church to the contemporary world, and for establishing more favorable relations with Communist governments. Since the Third Secret seemed to represent a perspective different from these plans for the Council, the Secret was not published in 1960.¹³

Insofar as this new orientation differed from that of the Church prior to the Council, it is important to examine a very fundamental point in this

¹³ A detailed analysis of Cardinal Ratzinger’s observations was given by Brazilian Fatima scholar Antonio Borelli Machado, *Catolicismo*, October 2016. See Appendix to the present study, pp. 43-62.

change. In chapter four mention was made of Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira's essay *The Freedom of the Church in the Communist State*, which had been distributed to all the bishops at the Council. This work showed the diametrical opposition of Communism to Catholicism, because of Communism's rejection of the seventh commandment through government control of all of a nation's wealth, denying private property.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent went into extensive detail in explaining many of the different ways in which the seventh commandment is violated – how those who break this commandment unjustly deprive others of their property. Sister Lúcia herself followed an identical approach in the explanation of the seventh commandment in her book “*Calls*” from the *Message of Fatima*.

Reflecting the new orientation mentioned by Cardinal Ratzinger in the June 2000 press conference, the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* discusses the role of government in the distribution of property. But warning of the danger of abusing such a role on the part of modern governments was Juan Donoso Cortés, in his 1851 *Essay on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism*. Juan Donoso Cortés had explained how modern liberalism assaulted the rights of the Church and of the family in the ownership of property, and limited this right to the individual and the state. With socialism this development is taken a step further, as governments take control of all property, increasing thereby their power over the Church, over families, and over all institutions within society. In the face of these errors, it is important to consider how the analysis of Donoso Cortés reflects the traditional mind of the Church, and how this is manifested in turn in the Third Secret of Fatima.

Communism, Private Property and the Church

That government has a role in the distribution of wealth, the principle taught in the new *Catechism*, has always been the teaching of the Church, derived from the mandate of Our Lord to “render to Caesar.” However, this authority is often and at times aggressively misused by those in positions of political power. The Catechism of the Council of Trent refers to one such abuse when mentioning bribes that are accepted by judges, whereby they enrich themselves and others instead of using their authority for the common good. St. Augustine illustrates this in *The City of God*, by citing the case of a pirate apprehended for his piracy, who then responds by explaining that theft is committed by the emperor

himself, who steals possessions from the whole empire – far more, the pirate argued, than what he, the pirate, had stolen.¹⁴

The above mentioned opening up to the modern world, including to the Communist governments which represent the ultimate abuse of political authority, marked the decades of the Church after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. Historian Eric O. Hanson describes how this trend brought a reaction from within the Church, and he selected two prominent figures as representing this reaction – French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, and Brazilian layman Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. Prof. Hanson does not treat these two recent historical figures in isolation, but within the context of the religious traditions of their two nations, France and Brazil.¹⁵ They represented the ways in which these Catholic countries had served the universal Church – France through its leading role in the work of its clergy in the foreign missions, and Brazil in what Prof. Hanson describes as “Latin-American neo-Christendom,” the ideal of a social order inspired by the doctrine of the Church. Furthermore, both reactions represented opposition to the errors of Russia mentioned by Our Lady of Fatima, which can be seen in both a false ecumenism and in collaboration with political forces hostile to the Church.

Conclusion: Ecumenism and the Errors of Russia

The Catholic Church’s relationship with other Christian religions was always marked in the past by the Church’s desire to restore Christian unity, by returning non-Catholics to the unity of the Catholic Church. This manifested itself also in the Church’s relationship with governments, and in particular with that of Russia. When Czar Alexander I in the early nineteenth century was advocating religious and political collaboration between Catholic Austria, Orthodox Russia and Protestant Prussia, Pope Pius VII warned Austria against collaboration with schismatics and heretics.¹⁶ This was a clear indication from the Church that Catholic statesmen must not compromise the truths of the Catholic

¹⁴ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 112-113.

¹⁵ Eric O. Hanson, “Traditional Catholicism: Marcel Lefebvre (France) and Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira (Brazil),” *The Catholic Church and World Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 102-105.

¹⁶ Cf. Carlton J. H. Hayes, *A Political and Social History of Modern Europe*, Vol. II (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 12.

Faith. As the Greek Orthodox were confronted with Moslem persecution at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in the 1820s and appealed to Orthodox Russia for help, Russia's support for Greece received help in turn from France, but not from Catholic Austria, nor from the Holy See, for fear that Russian persecution of Catholics might be worse than persecution from the Sultan. As a defense of Christian Europe, however, Russia's response in the face Moslem domination might be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the final conversion of Russia foretold by Our Lady of Fatima. But before this was to happen, Russia became the victim of the Communist Revolution of 1917, and as a result Russia for decades served not as a defender of Christian Europe, but as the leader of a world revolution against the Church, a role foreseen in the nineteenth century by the previously quoted Juan Donoso Cortés.¹⁷

With the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's position in the world entered a new phase. However, at the present time, a quarter of a century later, Archbishop Sviatoslav of Kiev, speaking as the representative of the Ukrainian bishops, critically analyzed the political motivation of Russian Orthodoxy, when the Patriarch of Moscow signed an agreement with Pope Francis in Cuba. In an interview shortly afterwards the Ukrainian archbishop indicated that the Moscow Patriarch "openly supports the aggression of Russia against Ukraine," while, on the opposite side, "Churches and religious organizations in Ukraine never supported the war." His Beatitude Sviatoslav describes Ukrainian Catholics as seeking the welfare of Ukraine while at the same time desiring peace, whereas the Russians committed acts of aggression against Ukraine.

Furthermore, Russia dominates the Greeks and the other Orthodox because of its size, and it dramatically reflected religious division among the Orthodox when it declined to participate in the recent Orthodox Council on the Island of Crete, due to rivalry with the Greeks over the question of primacy. Insofar as the Orthodox fail to recognize the primacy of Rome, national and therefore political divisions define their religious affiliations, instead of allowing them to benefit from the supernatural unity that comes from the Catholic Church. In the nineteenth century the Russian convert Vladimir Solovyev, even before his conversion to the Catholic Faith, refuted a Russian Orthodox theory

¹⁷ Donoso Cortés's statement about Russia is cited by Father Edmund Walsh, S.J., famous Catholic expert on Russian affairs, in his *Total Power* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1951), p. 266.

aimed at seeking a primacy outside of Rome, that of making Jerusalem the center of Christendom. It was a proposal, Solovyev argued, that had no foundation in Christian tradition.

In the meantime, Russia's political role in the present international crisis is seen not only in Ukraine, but also in the Syrian civil war. Whereas many Syrian Catholics were supportive of their government before the present conflict, and therefore have seen a positive significance in Russian military involvement, Catholics in neighboring Lebanon have viewed the Syrian government as a threat to their own country, because of Syria's alliance with the Moslems in Iran and its support for militant Moslems within Lebanon. Catholics throughout the world do not yet have a united consensus about the role of Russia in the present Syrian crisis. Our Lady of Fatima's words about Russia therefore continue to manifest their prophetic significance. However, the interpretation of Her prophecy still awaits a time when the world will arrive at a complete understanding of its meaning. Sister Lucia's May 1982 letter to Pope John Paul II, describing the Third Secret as revealing the spreading of the errors of Russia, remains the explanation that must guide the interpretation of Fatima and the Third Secret.

MESSAGE OF FATIMA

Why Was the Third Secret of Fatima Not Released in 1960?

An Interview with

Antonio Augusto Borelli Machado

Catolicismo, October 2016, volume 66, number 790

Translated from the Portuguese

On July 13, 1917, Our Lady communicated to the three little seers of Fatima a message that they should not reveal to anyone. When asked, shortly after the Apparition, what the Virgin had told them, they answered that it was secret. In this way it was soon learned that there was a secret in the Fatima Message.

In doing so, Our Lady obviously wanted to attract the world's attention to something very important, the content of which would only be made public at the time that Divine Providence deemed appropriate.

All this created an aura of mystery around Fatima and the Secret, which has grown over the years and decades, stressing thereby the importance of its contents.

The first two parts of the Secret were disclosed by Sister Lúcia, by inspiration of Our Lady, in the third Memoir, written by the seer on August 31, 1941. On January 3, 1944, at the request of the Bishop of Leiria and with appropriate permission from the Mother of God, Sister Lúcia wrote the third part of the Secret, which she had delivered to the Bishop through a carrier, in a sealed envelope with a note that it could not be released before 1960. Bishop José Alves Correia da Silva placed the envelope he received from Sister Lúcia inside another envelope, which he in turn sealed and kept in the vaults of the episcopal Curia.

In early 1957, the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, now the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, asked that the document be sent to Rome. For this purpose, it was delivered to the Apostolic Nunciature in Lisbon, where the Nuncio, Archbishop Fernando Cento, took it to the Vatican, when it was filed in the Secret Archives of the Holy Office on April 4, 1957.

Requested by John XXIII on August 17, 1959, the Pope received the document from the hands of a Commissary of the Holy Office, opening it a few days later for the first time and reading it with the help of the Portuguese translator of the Secretariat of State. Having decided not to publish it, he returned it to the Holy Office.

That decision, predictably, caused great frustration around the world, giving rise to more reasonable or unreasonable predictions about the contents of the Secret.

The pontiffs that followed, Paul VI, and John Paul II initially, confirmed the decision.

John Paul II, when he went to Fatima on May 13, 2000, announced that the Third Secret was finally going to be revealed with an appropriate commentary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which occurred on June 26 of the same year.

On that date, in a formal ceremony presided over by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in the Vatican Press Office, the text of the Third Secret was presented to journalists accredited to the Holy See, and then was published around the world.

At the time, the principal Vaticanologists were authorized to formulate questions for clarification.

One of these questions concerned specifically the reason that led the Holy See in 1960 to frustrate the global expectation that the Third Secret would be revealed in that year. Cardinal Ratzinger's response is highly revealing regarding the major reasons that guided the decision of the Holy See.

We could not neglect bringing such important information to the attention of our readers. For this purpose we asked our collaborator Benoît Bemelmans to interview in this regard a respected expert in this area, Antonio Augusto Borelli Machado, and from this came information that explains problems afflicting the Church and the world, in this long period of one hundred years that have elapsed since the apparitions of Fatima.

Although there is disagreement among experts about the fact of whether the text released by the Vatican corresponds to the entire Third Secret or not, we publish the following interview in which the text of the Secret is taken such as was released, without analyzing or entering into polemics with other positions on the matter.

Catholicismo, Editorial Staff

* * *

Catholicismo – In 1960, the expectation that the Third Secret would be released reached its peak. But this revelation did not occur, causing great frustration. Only forty years later, at the end of the millennium, did the Holy See publish it. During the presentation, journalists asked about the reason for the delay. What was the explanation of Cardinal Ratzinger, who presided over the session?

Antonio Borelli Machado – When this part of the Secret was released on June 26, 2000, the Holy See decided to do it with a launching and a display of grand publicity, under the auspices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Journalists accredited to the Vatican were invited. Those present were given a copy of the booklet *The Message of Fatima*, containing the text of the Secret. The session was presided over by Cardinal Ratzinger, with the participation of Archbishop Bertone, secretary of the same congregation, and the director of the Holy See's Press Office, Navarro Vals. Television stations from all over the world broadcast it live. After the presentations of Cardinal Ratzinger and Archbishop Bertone, the director of the Press Office opened the floor to the journalists who were present, for them to formulate questions. Among these, three were specifically about the reasons that led the Popes to postpone the release of the Third Secret for exactly forty years after the expected date. The best articulated question was that of the writer and Vatican expert **Gian Franco Svidercoschi**, who was deputy editor of *L'Osservatore Romano*. His question (taken from the video of the session as provided by the Vatican Press Office) was as follows:

“Your Eminence: Let me talk about the why of the delay, of this prolonging of the prudence of the Church from 1960 until today. You somehow already answered, speaking specifically about the evolution of history. . . . There is also the description given by Archbishop Bertone of the various decisions made by the popes, the historical and political

situations having changed. But I ask you: **Did not the Church end up paying too high a price for this long silence, this long secret about the Secret?** In the final analysis, does not the third part of the secret already contain the second part, while signaling the bishop dressed in white? Is not the third part of the Secret after all simply, say, the corollary of what is already said in the previous parts? This martyrdom [described in the Third Secret] already existed in 1960. Is there not a different way, on the part of the Church, not only in relation to Fatima, to take a position regarding private revelations – which do not affect the deposit of the Faith – and, therefore, **could one have avoided causing this whole series of exploitations and scandals that occurred precisely because of this silence that lasted so long?** Thank you.”

To this, Cardinal Ratzinger replied without hesitation:

*“Certainly the decision of the three Popes not to publish the secret – because also the current Pope [John Paul II], in 1981, did not want to publish it – was a decision that was not dogmatic, but prudential. And one can always argue about the wisdom of a decision, if politically another prudential judgment would have been preferable. Therefore, one should not dogmatize this attitude of the Popes. However, considering retrospectively, I will say: **certainly we paid a price for the speculations that occurred in recent decades.** But on the other hand, I think it was appropriate to wait for a moment to have a vision in retrospect. **In 1960, we were at the threshold of the Council, this great hope of being able to reach a new positive relationship between the world and the Church, and also to open a little the closed doors of Communism. The same was true also in the time of Pope Paul VI: we were still, so to speak, in the assimilation of the Council, with so many problems, that this text [the third Secret] would not have had its proper placement.** The same was true soon after the attack [against John Paul II]: to come out immediately at that time with this text would not have produced, it seems to me, a sufficient understanding. I think, without dogmatizing this decision, but personally with sincere conviction, I think it was good, all in all, to wait a little later until the end of the century, to have a more global view, and to better understand the true imperative and true indications of this view.”*

Catholicismo – Therefore Cardinal Ratzinger recognizes that the disclosure of the Secret in 1960 would upset very important policies that the Holy See had in mind . . . What are those goals that would be

harmed by the disclosure of the Third Secret at that time in the twentieth century?

Antonio Borelli Machado – Three political and religious goals of primary importance marked the Church's life in the second half of the twentieth century, mentioned in succession by Cardinal Ratzinger in his response:

1) The *ralliement** of the Church with the modern world: "***this great hope of being able to reach a new positive relationship between the world and the Church***";

*Agreement, adherence.

2) The Vatican's *Ostpolitik*, that is, the *ralliement* of the Church with Communism: the hope "***to open a little the closed doors of Communism***";

3) The implementation of the Council's directives aimed at promoting this double *ralliement*, which were the cause of "***many problems***" of "***assimilation***" of the *conciliar innovations* by the Catholic world.

Catholicismo – In what does the Third Secret of Fatima collide with these goals?

Antonio Borelli Machado – The Third Secret consists in a vision that shows "***an Angel with a flaming sword,***" which, "***flashing, gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire.***" Now, a world that God wants to punish in this way is a world that is provoking the divine rejection... It was not a world that would authorize "***this great hope of being able to reach a new positive relationship between the world and the Church.***" Therefore, to disclose the Third Secret in 1960 would have been moving in the opposite direction of the *ralliement* of the Church with the modern world.

I use here the word *ralliement* in reference to the famous policy of Leo XIII towards secular states installed in the world in the wake of the French Revolution. In particular, the secularist republic in power in France. As you know, that pontiff came to regret, in his old age, the failure of his hopes.*

*Concerning the *ralliement* of Leo XIII, see the book by PLINIO CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, *Nobility and Analogous Traditional Elites in the Allocutions of Pius XII*, Appendix IV, 3, *Leo XIII Intervenes* (York, Pennsylvania: The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family & Property, 1993), pp. 415-418. See also ROBERTO DE

MATTEI, *Il ralliement di Leone XIII – Il fallimento di un progetto pastorale*, Le Lettere, Firenze, 2014, 366 pp.

In the Second Vatican Council, influential Council Fathers were animated by similar optimism to promote a *ralliement* of the Church with the modern world – in perfect harmony with Leo XIII. If they had devoted due attention to the two parts of the Secret of Fatima by then already revealed, they might perhaps have moderated their optimism: it suffices to pay attention to the phrase "*various nations will be annihilated*," contained in the *second part* of the Secret. The revelation of the *third part* in 1960, if widely disseminated, with appropriate commentaries – one thinks of the "*great city half in ruins*". . . – could open their eyes; or at least make them understand that Catholic public opinion would not comprehend such a *ralliement*, something which might possibly deter them from taking this step.

As churchmen were determined to achieve, at any cost, this accommodation to the world, they had to opt for the non-disclosure of the Third Secret and pay the price of estrangement that this would produce among Catholics, as indeed occurred.

Catholicismo – Such a great punishment hanging over the world indicates that the conduct of human society is in contradiction with the principles that God wanted to establish within it. Is it possible to highlight the point in which this contradiction essentially lies?

Antonio Borelli Machado – For the public of our day to understand how far the world is from the right order of things it is appropriate to quote a famous text of Leo XIII: "**There was a time when the philosophy of the Gospel governed States. During that age, the influence of Christian wisdom and its divine power penetrated the laws, the institutions, the customs of peoples, all categories and all relations of civil society. Then the religion instituted by Jesus Christ, solidly established in the degree of dignity that is due to her, was everywhere flourishing, thanks to the favor of princes and to the legitimate protection of magistrates. Then the priesthood and the empire were linked together by a happy concord and by the friendly exchange of good offices. Organized in this way, civil society produced fruits superior to all expectations, fruits the memory of which remains and will remain, enshrined as it is in numerous documents which no artifice of its opponents will be able to corrupt or obscure**" (Encyclical *Immortale Dei*, of November 1, 1885, n° 28).

However, the governments of our day, consistent with the secularism that they profess, feel themselves free from the obligation of adjusting the norms of individual and social behavior to the Ten Commandments of the Law of God, and of giving to the Church "*the degree of dignity that is due to her.*" As a result, they implant throughout the world every kind of transgression against the natural and divine Laws, such as divorce, abortion, homosexual union, etc.

Thus, the **secularism of the State**, which proclaims itself neutral in matters of Religion and Morals, reveals itself as the obstinate enemy of the Catholic Church and of Christian Morality. And it is a constant of history: he who declares himself neutral between truth and error, in reality positions himself in favor of all the errors against the one truth. Such is the position of **secularism** in the face of the true Church.

Secularism is not neutral in matters of religion, but militantly atheistic. And this is indicated by Leo XIII, in the same encyclical *Immortale Dei*: "*With regard to religion, to think that it is indifferent to have disparate and contrary forms simply amounts to not wanting or choosing or following any of them. It is atheism minus the name*" (paragraph 37).

Secularism is, therefore, the "**no religion**" of the modern world, that is, **atheism; doctrinal and practical atheism**, which pervades all society. Over this hovers the Message of Fatima, which warns: either society converts and does penance, or there will come a Chastisement of cosmic proportions.

How does one nourish "*this great hope of being able to reach a new positive relationship between the world and the Church*"? – For those people who were enthused by such a hope, it was absolutely not suitable that the Third secret would be revealed in 1960 . . .

Catholicismo – When did there arise in the Church that desire to establish a "positive relationship" with the world?

Antonio Borelli Machado – The word **world** appears in the Gospels sometimes with a generic meaning, and at other times to designate those who did not accept the preaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ and opposed Him. In this second sense it appears, for example, in the Gospel of St. John, in verses 18 and 19 of chapter 15: "*If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before you*" (Jn 15:18). And then immediately: "*But because you are not of the world . . . therefore the world hates you*" (Jn 15:19).

This same fate applies to all the disciples of Christ, from that time until the present day. Hence the fact that the more lukewarm portion of the Catholic camp tries to cool the hatred of the world by entering into compromise with it. It is in the fallen nature of man and is therefore manifested in all periods of Church history. It suffices to open its compendiums in order to observe this fact.

With this there is a characteristic that is easy to observe: those who give in to this temptation seek to remain halfway between truth and error.

Let us go directly to modern times: **Erasmus of Rotterdam** (1466-1536), the celebrated humanist, promoted "*a spirit of reaction against scholasticism, of freedom of thought and the simplification of Christianity*,"* which led to an attempt to get closer to Luther – which failed because of the bellicose nature of the latter. Thus, **from the Protestant Pseudo-Reformation and the Renaissance, a current of thinking among Catholics, largely inspired by Erasmus, tried to enter into collaboration with the errors of their time.**

*GUILLERMO FRAILLE, *Historia de la filosofía*, BAC, Madrid 1991, 3rd ed., Volume III, p. 74.

The idea of a rejoining of the Church with the world emerging from the French Revolution was advocated by liberal Catholics of the nineteenth century, beginning with **Félicité de Lamennais**, soon afterwards condemned by Gregory XVI (1831-1846).

Pius IX (1846-1878) summarized the errors of Catholic liberalism in the *Syllabus praecipuorum nostrae aetatis errorum (Syllabus of the principal errors of our time)* of December 8, 1864, which he synthesizes in proposition 80: "*LXXX. The Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile and adapt himself to progress, liberalism and modern civilization.*"

It should be noted at the outset that the Church's opposition was not against progress itself, but against what this brought of revolutionary in its wake in order to demolish what the society of the time, already decaying, kept of good and in conformity with the principles of natural and Christian order.

The firm position of Pius IX, however, was in contrast with that of the Pontiff who succeeded him, Leo XIII (1878-1903), who promoted in France the policy of *ralliement* with the republic born from the French Revolution, which was alluded to above (*cf. 2nd Question*). This Pontiff hoped that such a policy, conducted with firm determination throughout his pontificate, would be continued by successive Popes. That certainly would have happened if his Secretary of State, Cardinal Mariano

Rampolla del Tíndaro, had been elected Pope, as was expected. The unforeseen election of Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto, with the name of Pius X (1903-1914), rendered unfulfilled the immediate continuation of this policy.

It resurfaces already in a manner well-defined, in the mid 1930s, in the Pontificate of Pius XI (1922-1939), on the wings of optimism and openness to the world advocated within the development of Catholic Action.* In the intellectual field, an analogous position was fed by authors who were much appreciated in these same circles of Catholic Action, especially Jacques Maritain with his book *Humanisme intégral* (1936).

*Cf. Plinio, *Em defesa da Ação Católica*, Editora Ave Maria, São Paulo, 1943. English edition: *In Defense of Catholic Action*, Spring Grove, Pennsylvania: The American TFP, 2003.

Since then, the attitude of *ralliement* with the modern world has continued to clearly manifest itself in liberal Catholic circles, but was only publicly adopted, almost a half century later, by Pope John XXIII (1958-1963). In the opening speech of the Second Vatican Council (October 11, 1962), referring to those who "*in the present conditions of human society, are only able to see ruins and calamities,*" the Pope declares, "***But to Us it seems we must disagree entirely with those prophets of doom, who always announce unfortunate events, as if the end of the world were imminent***" (subtitle *Opportunitas celebrandi Concilii*).

With the promulgation of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, by Paul VI (1963-1978), at the end of the Council (1965), the policy of *ralliement* with the modern world was finally enacted and extended to the whole globe. **The pastoral line advocated by *Gaudium et Spes* does not constitute a novelty conceived by the Council Fathers of Vatican II, but the effective implementation of a "pastoral" as advocated by Lamennais in 1830!**

Thus, instead of warning Catholics of the Chastisement announced by Our Lady of Fatima, the Second Vatican Council proposed establishing good relations between the Church and the world, sponsoring the advent of an era of *joy and hope* for humanity in our day .

Such was a **subliminal effect produced simply by the title** given to the conciliar document – *Gaudium et Spes* – which expressed, regardless of its complex content, new and benevolent dispositions that the Council assumed before the world of our days.

The Message of Fatima, however, went in a diametrically opposed direction!

Catholicismo – This notion of the coming great Chastisement is also not very much present in commentaries on the Third Secret made by scholars and preachers . . .

Antonio Borelli Machado – Nevertheless, it is present in the principal commentator, which Cardinal Ratzinger certainly was . . .

Indeed, in the interpretation of the Third Secret made by him, and which completes the booklet *The Message of Fatima*, it is said: "**The key word in this part of the 'secret' is the threefold cry: 'Penance, Penance, Penance!' It returns us to the thought of the beginning of the Gospel: Paenitemini et credite evangelio' (Mk 1:15). To understand the signs of the times means to accept the urgency of penance, conversion, faith. This is the right answer to a historical period characterized by great dangers, which will be outlined in the successive images The angel with the flaming sword on the left of the Mother of God recalls similar images of the Apocalypse: it represents the threat of judgment which looms over the world. The possibility that this might be reduced to ashes in a sea of fire, today no longer appears in any way as pure fantasy: man himself prepared, with his inventions, the sword of fire**" (*The Message of Fatima*, p. 24, Vatican English online version).

The conclusion is clear: the world of today – the **modern world** – is set before the following alternatives:

a) either it converts, and such a conversion involves abandoning the false principles on which it is constituted, and thus ceases to be secular, atheist ..., "modern";

b) or it does not convert, and will be reduced to ashes by fire.

In the second hypothesis, **on its ruins there will rise a new civilization**, which St. Louis de Montfort named the Reign of Mary (*Treatise on True Devotion*, n° 217) – in perfect harmony with the Message of Fatima: "*Finally, my Immaculate Heart will triumph*" (Second Secret).

Catholicismo – Could this be said to be the central point of the Message of Fatima?

Antonio Borelli Machado – Exactly. The imminence of a great Punishment.

Many preachers imagine that by announcing it they would scare their listeners, and therefore they do not do it. Nevertheless the mission of the prophets has often been to call the people to penance, announcing punishments.

If they are listened to, the punishment will be avoided. If they are not heard, the punishment will be let loose.

It is a matter of fidelity to Our Lady to proclaim the Message of Fatima in its entirety.

In fact, **there are a considerable number of souls who, by themselves, have formed the notion of the disorder of the modern world, and that without an extraordinary intervention of Providence, this world has no remedy.** Such souls cultivate the hope of this intervention in the secret of their hearts, and they would feel confirmed by hearing the same diagnosis from the lips of the pastors of the Church.

Therefore, it is not to be feared that such souls would be frightened by the prophecy of Punishment; on the contrary, they will exult with the harbinger of the victory of good over evil. As the prophet Simeon was comforted to see the Messiah in the arms of the Blessed Virgin: "*Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace; because my eyes have seen thy salvation*" (Lk 2: 29-30).

The fact is that, **without the mention of the Punishment, the Message of Fatima is emptied of its specific character for the present day.** One does not understand how the core point of this Message is omitted.

Preachers **should not** therefore **fear** that their hearers might be frightened. For some it will be the confirmation of what they thought, and a consolation! For those who are startled, it will serve as a warning, perhaps **an occasion to open their souls to the grace of Fatima.**

Nor is it enough to say – as many do – **that the Message of Fatima, by the fact that one preaches prayer and penance, is in perfect conformity with the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.** It is true, and it is good that they say it. But it is also necessary to emphasize the enormity of the Punishment that hangs over the world. Only then will a large number of souls be moved to serious penance. And only then can they constitute the living stones of the Reign of Mary that will come!

***Catholicismo* – With reference to Communism, the use of word *ralliement* may seem excessive. Could one not say that the Vatican *Ostpolitik* aimed only at alleviating the persecution unleashed by**

Communist governments? Cardinal Ratzinger expressly refers to "opening a little the closed doors of Communism."

Antonio Borelli Machado – This involves a process. At first, the *Ostpolitik* seems only a relaxation, a cessation of hostilities. Then, this *détente* becomes a normal interaction. Finally, it ends in cooperation for a common purpose. But this purpose is not chosen in a common agreement: it is that which benefits the Communist partner. Thus, it produces in the Catholic partner a gradual abandonment of inalienable principles, which fall into oblivion, being replaced in practice by the principles and goals of the enemy. It is the result of the process of unperceived ideological transshipment, as it was called by Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira.*

*Cf. *Baldeação ideológica inadvertida e diálogo*, Editora Vera Cruz, São Paulo, 1974, 5^a ed., 118 pp. Online English translation: *Unperceived Ideological Transshipment and Dialogue*,

<http://www.tfp.org/TFP-home/books/unperceived-ideological-transshipment-and-dialogue.html>.

See also by the same author, *Acordo com o regime comunista: para a Igreja, esperança ou autodemolição* (originally published in *Catolicismo*, n° 152, under the title *A liberdade da Igreja no Estado comunista*), Editora Vera Cruz, São Paulo, 1963, 128 pp. Online English translation: *The Church and the Communist State: The Impossible Coexistence*:

<http://www.intratext.com/X/ENG0163.HTM>

The secretary-general of the Spanish Communist Party, Santiago Carrillo (1915-2012), asked by some "comrades" if cooperation with Catholics would not change the ideological content of the party, answered with a question: "Since we started this policy, how many comrades do you know who have become believers? On the other hand, how many Catholics became Communists?"* It is a question that does not require an answer . . .

* SANTIAGO CARRILLO, *Mañana España*, Colección Ebro, Paris, 1975, p. 232.

This *détente* was inaugurated by Maurice Thorez (1900-1964), in a famous speech on Radio Paris on April 17, 1936, which proposed to Catholics, on behalf of the French Communist Party, the *politique de la main tendue* (*politics of the outstretched hand*).*

* Cf. MAURICE THOREZ, *Oeuvres*, Éditions Sociales, Paris, 1954, volume XI, p. 203.

The proposal found, on the part of Pope Pius XI, a lively rejection expressed in the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (On Atheistic Communism), on March 19, 1937. This document was succeeded by another – the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* of March 15, 1937 – which condemned the persecutions suffered by the Church at the hands of the German Reich, under the Nazi regime. The near simultaneity of the two documents – only four days apart – makes us think that the intention was to avoid the allegation that with the condemnation of one system, the other was not being condemned. In fact, **Nazism and Communism were two sides of the same socialist coin**, against which the Pope simultaneously warned the Catholic rank and file.

Nevertheless, the proposal of Thorez made its way among Catholic militants. A clear manifestation of this was the appearance, much later, of a theological current of a Marxist nature, against which we were warned in the *Instruction on Certain Aspects of "Theology of Liberation,"* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, of August 6, 1984, signed by Cardinal Ratzinger.

On the diplomatic level, it is appropriate to note another important manifestation of *ralliement*: the so-called Vatican *Ostpolitik*.

Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Secretary of State of the Holy See during the pontificate of Paul VI and promoter of this policy, declared in 1974, when he was in Cuba, that Catholics of that country considered themselves happy there under the current regime. It was a clear way to indicate that such a policy was aimed at the "fall of the ideological barriers" between the Church and Communism.*

. *Cf. PLINIO CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, *The Vatican Policy of Détente with Communist Governments – Should the TFPs Stand Down? Or Should They Resist?* <http://www.tfp.org/TFP-home/statements/the-vatican-policy-of-detente-towards-the-communist-governments.html>

This *détente* of Catholics in the face of Communism developed on two fronts. The properly diplomatic front – indicated by the word *Ostpolitik* – and the pastoral front, expressed in the Second Vatican Council by the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (in Latin, *Constitutio Pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo hujus temporis*), better known by its opening words *Gaudium et Spes*, which we have already mentioned (cf. *5th question*). The words *hujus temporis* (literally *of this time*) mean the *modern world*, and in this way it was well understood by English translators.

Such openness of the Church to Communism did not pass unnoticed by the leaders of the party. Thus, Roger Garaudy (1913-2012),

a prominent member of the French Communist Party (who was later excluded for his independent positions, having adhered to Islam, after passing through Protestantism and Catholicism), wrote in the book: *Intégrismes**: “The great novelty of Vatican II – expressed in the text *Gaudium et Spes*, of 1966 [sic! read: 1965] – **was the opening to the world**, the renunciation of the claim to govern it, in order, on the contrary, to serve it, in the light of evangelical humility, recognizing ‘the autonomy of earthly realities’... Nowhere else in the world, except in Latin America, did this message on the Church's liberating mission have greater echo. Starting from a historical situation of misery and oppression, and the concrete practices of 'ecclesial base communities,' there was born of this double experience, starting from 1970, the theologies of liberation. They were based on the preferential evangelical option for the most deprived.”

* Pierre Belfond, Paris, 1990, pp.50-51.

Today it is known that John XXIII urgently desired that in this Great Assembly there would be present representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Russian Soviet government agreed to give permission for the Russian Orthodox Church to send these representatives, on the condition that the Council refrain from any condemnation of Communism. The Pope accepted this condition.*

*Cf. ROBERTO DE MATTEI, *Il Concilio Vaticano II — Una storia mai scritta*, Lindau, Torino, 2010, pp. 172-180, 360-364, 422-426, 492-504, 512-514, 563-567, 580-588.

This fact explains that the petition of 213 Council Fathers in the opposite direction – that is, that the Council condemn the Marxist errors, socialism and communism* – had not been taken into account either by John XXIII or by Paul VI.

*Cf. *Catholicismo*, no. 157, January 1964, p. 5.

Gaudium et Spes limited itself to an ultra-comprehensive analysis of various forms of atheism (GS paragraphs 19, 20 and 21), an analysis that concludes in a statement that “*credentes et non credentes*” “*should contribute to the just construction of this world in which they live in common,*” “*which certainly cannot be done without a sincere and prudent dialogue*”(GS n ° 21).

But can there can be “*a sincere and prudent dialogue*” with atheistic leaders of a secular State showing hostility against the Church, as *Gaudium et Spes* describes in the very next sentence?: The Church

"deplores therefore the discrimination between believers and nonbelievers, which some rulers, not recognizing the fundamental rights of the human person, introduce unjustly" (GS n ° 21).

How can one imagine, therefore, that these rulers give themselves to collaborating toward a "**just building of this world in which they live in common**"? – It was a frustrated hope, as the fifty years since then have proven.

Therefore, it is not excessive to use the word *ralliement* to indicate that the Vatican *Ostpolitik* effectively sought a collaboration of Communist atheists for a common work.

The Third Secret of Fatima presents us with an immense array of lay Catholics from all walks of life, preceded by Pope, bishops and priests, religious, ascending a steep mountain, on top of which they are received with bullets and arrows by a group of soldiers. This scene evokes the firing squads of Communist regimes . . .

Such a reminder would have been inopportune in times of *ralliement* with Communism!

Thus, if revealed in 1960 and with opportune commentary, the Third Secret would raise difficulties for such a policy. Its custodians considered it safer not to disclose it.

***Catholicismo* – What consequences did this openness to the modern world bring as a consequence to the life of the Church?**

Antonio Borelli Machado – Very serious consequences, for it eliminated the barriers that protected the faithful from the contamination of the errors of the modern world. Indeed, the *fall of the ideological barriers* between the Church and the world has resulted precisely in leading the faithful to abdicate inalienable principles of Catholic doctrine – which, in all conscience, they could not do – and to assume to a large degree the way of thinking and acting of the world, exacerbating all the problems that the Church's pastoral life must face in our days.

This result, in fact, did not escape the sagacious glance of Cardinal Ratzinger. Elected Pope in the conclave of 2005, in an important speech to the Roman Curia on the occasion of the presentation of Christmas wishes, on December 22 of that year, he warned: "*The issue becomes clearer if, instead of the generic term 'world today,' we choose another more precise one: the Council had to determine in a new way the relationship between the Church and the modern age.... Whoever was*

expecting that with this fundamental 'yes' to the modern age, all the tensions would dissolve and 'openness to the world' thus realized would transform everything into pure harmony, such a person underestimated the inner tensions and even the contradictions of the modern age itself: one underestimated the dangerous fragility of human nature which, in all periods of history and in every historical setting, is a threat to the path of man.... Also in our time the Church remains a 'sign of contradiction' (Lk 2:34).... It could not be the intention of the Council to abolish this contradiction of the Gospel in the face of dangers and human errors."

Now, had the Third Secret been understood and had it oriented the options of the hierarchy of the Church, **it would have prevented the faithful from being contaminated with the errors of the secularism of the modern States.**

Catholicismo – How did they finally arrive at disclosing the Third Secret?

Antonio Borelli Machado – Pope John Paul II was the victim of a sacrilegious attack by bullet on May 13, 1981, on the day that marked the first appearance of Our Lady at Fatima. This coincidence of course led the Catholic world to wonder if there was any link between the attack and the prophecies of Fatima. It is understandable that the Pontiff himself would give special attention to the Third Secret. Thus, even in the Policlinico Gemelli, in which he was between life and death, he asked as soon as he could to see the Secret. The association between the attack that he had suffered and the martyrdom of a Pope described in it was impressive, although not absolute, since in the Secret the Pope dies and he had survived. This did not prevent him from believing that there had been a miraculous intervention of the Virgin, diverting from vital organs the trajectory of the projectile, which was later handed over to those responsible for the Shrine of Fatima, and encased in the crown of the Statue venerated there.

The theme of Fatima was no stranger to the Pontiff, because he was one of the 510 signers of the petition to Paul VI to take advantage of the presence of bishops from around the world in Rome, on the occasion of the Council, to make the consecration of Russia and the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This consecration was requested by Our Lady as a pledge of the conversion of that Communist country and the suspension of the punishments hanging over the modern world.

Having recovered from the effects of the attack, John Paul II repeatedly made the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The one closest to the conditions required by Our Lady was that of March 25, 1984, in which, however, constrained by the engagements of the Vatican *Ostpolitik*, he did not utter the name of Russia, though – according to declarations – he would have mentally included it in the consecration.

Finally there remained the question of the disclosure of the Secret. The saying has it that "*Rome is in no hurry.*" However, as shown by Svidercoschi in his question to Cardinal Ratzinger, quoted at the beginning, sensationalist speculations about its content left the faithful anxious and the highest administration of the Church embarrassed.

So it was that in December 1999 – eighteen years after the assassination attempt – John Paul II decided to authorize its publication, putting the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima in charge of announcing that the Secret would finally be revealed when the Pope would go to Fatima on May 13, 2000.

On this date, there was a small delay. The Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, pondered with the Pope about the need to clarify the faithful on the scope of private revelations, even those of Fatima, however much approved they be. Indeed, they do not require the acceptance of the faithful as a dogma of faith.

Incidentally, the fact that the Secret was not released in 1960 was the result of a prudential decision and not a dogmatic one, as noted by the same Cardinal Ratzinger: "*Certainly the decision of the three Popes not to publish the Secret . . . was not a dogmatic, but a prudential decision. And one can always argue about the wisdom of a decision, if politically another prudential act would have been preferable. Therefore, one should not dogmatize this attitude of the Popes.*"

And not being a dogmatic act it is not guaranteed by the charism of infallibility: "*One can always argue about the wisdom of a decision.*"

Finally, the Third Secret was revealed in 2000. And there occurred what Cardinal Ratzinger predicted early in the beginning of his *Theological Commentary*: "*A careful reading of the text of the so-called third 'secret' of Fatima, published here in its entirety long after the fact and by decision of the Holy Father, will probably prove disappointing or surprising after all the speculation it has stirred. No great mystery is revealed; nor is the future unveiled. We see the Church of the martyrs of the century which has just passed represented in a scene described in a*

language which is symbolic and not easy to decipher. Is this what the Mother of the Lord wished to communicate to Christendom and to humanity at a time of great difficulty and distress?" (A Mensagem de Fátima, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2000, p. 31).

Preserving all the reverence merited by the author of that commentary, besides being elevated to the pontifical throne in the conclave of 2005, **the Third Secret reveals two important points of "the future unveiled,"** today very present to the world's attention: **the prophetic announcement of the martyrs of the 21st century, and the prospect of a universal scale of destruction.** Moreover, as we have seen, it is Cardinal Ratzinger himself who points out, in his *Theological Commentary*, these two points: martyrdom and destruction.

***Catholicismo* – What will be the intensity of the Chastisement announced in Fatima: does it signify a destruction of the world to its foundations?**

Antonio Borelli Machado – It is very suggestive that, in the Third Secret, "*a great city half in ruins*" is described. What is "*half in ruins*" is not totally destroyed. So, of what exists today, something will remain standing. One might think that the destruction will be selective . . .

In the passage of the encyclical *Immortale Dei*, cited above, Leo XIII observed that, in times past – and it is obvious that he is referring to the Middle Ages – "*civil society produced fruits superior to all expectations, fruits the memory of which remains and will remain, enshrined as it is in numerous documents which no artifice of its opponents will be able to corrupt or obscure.*"

If such "*documents,*" "*no artifice of its opponents will be able to corrupt or obscure,*" *a fortiori* one must conclude that God will preserve them, when the Chastisement is let loose.

What ***documents*** are these?

The memory of the past remains not only in **historical documents**, but also at the heart of **laws** and **institutions** consolidated over the centuries; and, even more visibly, in the **monuments** that time and men have not destroyed. An example to cause a chill and fear was the intention of the revolutionaries of 1789 to demolish Notre Dame of Paris – this jewel of medieval Christianity. It came to the point of being put up for sale and even a buyer emerged. With the disruption of the Revolution, the buyer failed to pay and the negotiation fell apart.

Now, with the approaching centenary of Fatima, **the revolutionaries of today try to deliver the final assault against Christian civilization**: they attack with blind hatred the sacred principles of the family that still remain standing, and they strive, among other evil designs, to upset the very biological nature of man, advocating what they call *Gender Ideology*. According to this, one is not born man or woman, but each one becomes male or female according to his or her personal inclinations. An unprecedented design!

It is comforting to see **that many of our contemporaries, who once passively watched the revolutionary advances, today begin to react** and create unexpected obstacles to that final boldness of the Revolution.*

*For an insightful analysis of the revolutionary process that came to erode Christian Civilization from the late Middle Ages until today, see *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, PLINIO CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, published in Portuguese (original language), with several editions in other languages: German, Belorussian, Spanish, Estonian, French, Hungarian, English, Italian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian:

<http://www.tfp.org/TFP-home/books/revolution-and-counter-revolution-in-other-languages.html>

Given the above, one can predict that the revolutionary process will not reach the total destruction which it longs for – of the principles, institutions and monuments of Christian civilization – but will be thrown into shock against the resistance of a small but growing number of faithful souls.

It is not without deep emotion that one sees emerge, **in the final scene of the Third Secret, the unexpected ranks of those were far from God, and who, coming again to approach Him, are anointed with the blood of martyrs**, collected right before by two Angels, in crystal watering cans, under the arms of the Cross.

To these unknown beneficiaries of the blood of martyrs, according to the principle enunciated by Tertullian, it will be fitting to join with love the **remains** of Christendom – the **documents** to which Pope Leo XIII made reference – and rebuild on them the Christian Civilization of the future, bringing it to its maximum splendor, not reached during the Middle Ages.

For this purpose, one should remove all the debris of the secular, egalitarian and atheistic State, which will have remained on the face of the earth, and rebuild over them a "*Christian, austere and hierarchical civilization, fundamentally sacral, anti-egalitarian, and anti-liberal,*" as

taught by Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira in *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*.*

*Part II, ch. II.

All of this with a profoundly Marian tone, as St. Louis de Montfort foresaw in the *Treatise on True Devotion* (No. 217):

– **"When will the day come when souls will breathe Mary, as the body breathes air?"**

We do not know when this will occur. One thing, however, is certain: this in truth will take place because Our Lady promised at the end of the Second Secret: **"Finally, my Immaculate Heart will triumph!"**