

# Chapter 7

## THREE FALSE FRIENDS AND THE THIRD SECRET

On June 26, 2000 the Vatican published the famous vision of the “Bishop dressed in White,” giving the impression that the vision constituted the whole of the Third Secret of Fatima. Tellingly, Sister Lucia was not even permitted to watch the internationally televised press conference on television. Sister Maria do Carmo, custodian of Sister Lucia’s convent in Coimbra, told *Corriere della Sera* that “We watch TV, but only in exceptional cases. The press conference on the Secret of Fatima is not such.” This prompted Socci to ask: “And what are these exceptional cases for the Carmelites of Coimbra? Perhaps the finals of the world soccer championship?”<sup>152</sup>

By the date of the press conference informed members of the faithful were aware of a vast body of evidence, provided by direct witnesses to the content of the Secret. A full review of the evidence, presented fully in other sources,<sup>153</sup> is beyond the scope of this book. Suffice it to note that the evidence as of June 26, 2000 clearly pointed to the existence of a Secret involving the following elements:

- something so terrible that Sister Lucia could not commit it to paper without a direct order from her bishop in October 1943 and then a direct intervention of the Virgin Mary in January 1944;
- two parts, one of which contains the words of the Virgin that are the “logical continuation” of her statement “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc.” (source: Father Joseph Schweigl in 1952);
- a single page of some 25 lines of text (sources: Bishop Venancio [1959] and Cardinal Ottaviani [1967]);
- a text in the form of a letter to the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima in a sealed envelope (sources: Sister Lucia, Bishop da Silva, Father Jongen [1946]);
- a text that was lodged in the papal apartment during the pontificates of Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI (sources: Sister Pasqualina, Robert Serrou [1958], Father Caillon, Archbishop Capovilla [2006]);

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<sup>152</sup> Socci, *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*, p. 34.

<sup>153</sup> For a detailed exposition of the evidence on this score cf. Christopher A. Ferrara, *The Secret Still Hidden* (New York: Good Counsel Publications, 2009), Chapters 2-3.

- a text that contains difficult expressions Pope John could not read without a written translation prepared in 1959, unlike the text he read in 1960, which he understood without need of translation (source: Archbishop Capovilla);
- a text whose prophecy would become clear in 1960, by which time Vatican II (which would have a disastrous aftermath) had been announced (source: Sister Lucia);
- a “divine warning” about “suicidal” alterations in the liturgy, theology and soul of the Church (source: the future Pius XII in 1931);
- a prediction that after 1960 “the devil will succeed in leaving the souls of the faithful abandoned by their leaders,” by causing “religious and priests [to] fall away from their beautiful vocation... drag[ging] numerous souls to hell,” and that “nations will disappear from the face of the earth” (source: Sister Lucia to Father Fuentes in 1957);
- contents “so delicate” that they cannot be allowed “for whatever reason, even fortuitous, to fall into alien hands” (source: Cardinal Ottaviani in 1967);
- a text “diplomatically” withheld because of the “seriousness of its contents” and which predicts, *after 1980*, “great trials” and “tribulation” for the Church which “it is no longer possible to avert” and the destruction of “whole areas of the earth” so that “from one moment to the next millions of people will perish” (source: John Paul II at Fulda, 1980);
- details that could be “badly interpreted” (source: John Paul II in 1982);
- a “religious prophecy” of “dangers threatening the faith and the life of the Christian and therefore of the world” (source: Cardinal Ratzinger in 1984);
- matters which would make for the “sensationalistic utilization of its contents” (source: Cardinal Ratzinger in 1985);
- a prediction of apostasy in the Church that “begins at the top” (source: Cardinal Ciappi in 1995);
- “details” that would cause “disequilibrium” in the Church (source: Cardinal Ratzinger in 1996);

- a warning of a material chastisement of the world which accompanies the great apostasy in the Church, like that predicted in the approved apparition of Our Lady of Akita in 1973, whose message is “essentially the same” as the message of Our Lady of Fatima (source: Cardinal Ratzinger to Howard Dee, as reported in 1998);
- a warning to avoid the “tail of the dragon” (the devil) referred to in the Book of the Apocalypse (12:3-4), which sweeps one-third of “the stars” (priests, bishops, cardinals and other consecrated souls) from Heaven and cast them into the earth (source: John Paul II in 2000).<sup>154</sup>

The vision published in 2000 involves *none* of these elements, but rather depicts a white-clad prelate, evidently a future Pope, being executed by a band of soldiers on a hill outside a half-ruined city filled with cadavers, followed by the execution of other prelates, priests, religious and laity—all without the least explanation from the Virgin of the meaning of the apocalyptic tableau. Besides the details provided by various witnesses and numerous other evidentiary facts indicating the existence of a companion text (see the table of 10 facts in *The Devil’s Final Battle*, Chapter 13), the vision’s ambiguity and the conspicuous lack of any explanation by the Virgin led Catholics around the world to conclude that there must be a missing companion text in which the Virgin would explain precisely what it signifies, and the “who, what, where and when” of the apocalyptic scenario.

By the end of the June 26 press conference at which the vision was published, however, it was clear that the Party Line would continue to advance with the assistance of three “false friends” who would pay tribute to the Fatima event even as they attempted to relegate it entirely to the past: Cardinal Sodano; then Archbishop (later Cardinal) Bertone, who would succeed Sodano as Secretary of State; and then Cardinal Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, who would ultimately repudiate the Party Line and “reopen the file” on the Third Secret controversy. (See Chapter 11.)

### ***Something is Missing***

Some six weeks before the press conference, Cardinal Sodano had announced during the papal Mass for the beatification of Jacinta and Francisco at Fatima that the Secret would be published along with “an appropriate commentary.”<sup>155</sup> The text of the purported Secret, spanning four pages and 62 lines, was photostatically reproduced as part of a booklet containing that commentary, entitled *The Message of*

<sup>154</sup> For a detailed exposition of the evidence on this score cf. Christopher A. Ferrara, *The Secret Still Hidden* (New York: Good Counsel Publications, 2009), Chapters 2-3.

<sup>155</sup> Vatican Information Service, May 13, 2000.

*Fatima (TMF)*. Aside from the commentary, written by then Cardinal Ratzinger, serving at the time as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), *TMF* included an Introduction by then Archbishop Bertone, serving at that time as Secretary for the CDF but soon to succeed Sodano as Secretary of State and enforcer of the Party Line on Fatima. According to *TMF*, the Third Secret that had been suppressed and kept “under absolute seal” since it arrived at the Vatican in 1957 is nothing more than the following:

J.M.J.

The third part of the secret revealed at the Cova da Iria-Fatima, on 13 July 1917.

I write in obedience to you, my God, who commands me to do so through his Excellency the Bishop of Leiria and through your Most Holy Mother and mine.

After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: “Penance, Penance, Penance!”. And we saw in an immense light that is God; “something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it” a Bishop dressed in White “we had the impression that it was the Holy Father”. Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersion in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God.

Tuy-3-1-1944.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>156</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Message of Fatima (TMF)*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, June 26, 2000) p. 21, <http://www.vatican.va/>

That this vision is *part* of the Third Secret can hardly be doubted. But the worldwide reaction of the Catholic faithful to its disclosure can be summed up with a single incredulous question: “*That’s it?*” Yes, the vision is dramatic, but its meaning is far from clear: An angel with a flaming sword. Flames from the sword threatening to set the world afire, but repelled (temporarily?) by the Virgin. The angel thrice demanding penance from humanity. A “Bishop dressed in White,” who seems to be the Pope, hobbling through a half-ruined city filled with corpses (what city? how ruined?). The execution of the Pope by a band of soldiers (who are they?) as he kneels before a rough-hewn cross on a hill outside the city (is it Rome?). And then the martyrdom of countless bishops, priests, religious and laity (who? when? where?), as two other angels gather up the blood of the martyrs to sprinkle on Heaven-bound souls.

*What does it all mean?* The vision as published does not contain a single word from the Virgin by way of explanation. Yet Our Lady had taken care to confirm for the seers the vision of hell they had clearly understood upon the very sight of it: “You have seen hell, where the souls of poor sinners go.” *TMF* offered no explanation for the missing words of the Virgin, as if no one should be puzzled by this. But it defied belief that the Virgin had *nothing* to say about the dramatic but ambiguous content of the vision. Doubting questions immediately abounded:

- Where are the *words* of the Virgin which are the “logical continuation” of Her statement “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved **etc**” as Father Schweigl revealed?
- What is so terrible about this ambiguous vision that Sister Lucia could not commit it to paper without a direct intervention of the Virgin Mary?
- Where is the letter to the Bishop of Fatima, comprising some 25 lines of text?
- Given that *TMF* stated that the text of the vision had been kept in the Holy Office archives,<sup>157</sup> where is the text that a living witness said was kept in the papal apartment under the Pope’s personal custody during the reigns of Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI?
- Why is the vision devoid of any reference to a crisis of faith in the Church and dramatic consequences for the world,

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[roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000626\\_message-fatima\\_en.html](http://roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html)

<sup>157</sup> *TMF*, p. 5.

alluded to by a train of witnesses who had either read the Secret or had indirect knowledge of it?

- Why is it 62 lines when Cardinal Ottaviani spoke of a text of only 25 lines?
- What of the testimony of various witnesses concerning the location, paper size, and date of delivery of the text to the Vatican, which did not at all correspond to the “official” account, thus indicating the existence of another text that accompanies and explains the vision?<sup>158</sup>

There was, on the face of it, no rational explanation for the Vatican’s refusal to disclose the text of this vision in 1960, standing alone, or the rigorous suppression of it for forty years thereafter. Indeed, in his commentary on the Secret in *Message*, the same Cardinal Ratzinger who said in 1984 that the Secret is a “religious prophecy” concerning “dangers to the faith and the life of the Christian and therefore of the world”, was now saying that in the Secret “No great mystery is revealed; nor is the future unveiled. We see the Church of the martyrs of the century which has just passed...”<sup>159</sup> If that were true, then why did Cardinal Ratzinger not simply say so back in 1984? As Portuguese bishop Januario Torgal declared: “If the Vatican knew it was not apocalyptic, why on earth did it make it public only now?”<sup>160</sup>

As even Mother Angelica of the Eternal Word Television Network declared on live television a year after the vision was published: “As for the Secret, well I happen to be one of those individuals who thinks we didn’t get the whole thing.... Because I think it’s scary.”<sup>161</sup> She spoke for millions of skeptical Catholics around the world.

### **What about 1960?**

Moreover, on its face the vision has absolutely nothing to do with 1960, the year the Secret was supposed to be revealed because it would be “more clear” then. Evidently in recognition of this problem, then Archbishop Bertone claims in *Message* that during an unrecorded “conversation” with Sister Lucia at Coimbra on April 27, 2000, weeks before the press conference, she allegedly told him that the Virgin *had never said anything* about 1960:

<sup>158</sup> Cf. *The Devil’s Final Battle*, Chapter 13 for the pertinent facts.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>160</sup> *The Washington Post*, “Third Secret Spurs More Questions; Fatima Interpretation Departs From Vision,” July 1, 2000, quoted in Mark Fellows, *Sister Lucia: Apostle of the Immaculate Heart*, p. 190.

<sup>161</sup> “Mother Angelica Live,” May 16, 2001.

Before giving the sealed envelope containing the third part of the “secret” to the then Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, Sister Lucia wrote on the outside envelope that it could be opened only after 1960, either by the Patriarch of Lisbon or the Bishop of Leiria. Archbishop Bertone therefore asked: “Why only after 1960? Was it Our Lady who fixed that date?” Sister Lucia replied: “*It was not Our Lady*. I fixed the date because I had the intuition that before 1960 it would not be understood, but that only later would it be understood...”<sup>162</sup>

Tellingly, *TMF* failed to mention that on the envelope Sister Lucia had written: “*By express order of Our Lady*, this envelope can be opened only in 1960...” Nor does *TMF* include a copy of the envelope as part of its supporting documentation. During the famous telecast of May 31, 2007 (see Chapter 10). Bertone would finally reveal the envelope—or rather, *two* such envelopes bearing the same express order of the Virgin respecting 1960. But on June 26, 2000 Bertone had the temerity to claim that Lucia declared to him in private weeks earlier: “*It was not Our Lady*. I fixed the date!” We say temerity, because the future Secretary of State knew then that his representation was flatly contradicted by what Lucia had written on the envelopes he had chosen not to reveal.

One cannot overestimate the significance of what Bertone is claiming here. If the “express order of Our Lady” concerning revelation of the Secret in 1960 was purely Sister Lucia’s invention—if she had misled Canon Barthas, Cardinal Ottaviani, the Bishop of Fatima, the Cardinal Patriarch of Portugal, the whole Church and the entire world—why should anyone believe anything she claimed to have heard from the Blessed Virgin? Why should anyone believe a single word of the Message of Fatima?

There are only two alternatives: Either Sister Lucia lied about this crucial matter throughout her life, which is inconceivable, or the words attributed to her by Bertone were not hers. In the latter case, Lucia’s purported statement would be either an outright fabrication by Bertone, the product of undue influence upon the seer, or an utterance arising from a loss of mental capacity due to her advanced age. Here, in and of itself, is reason to doubt the entire “official” account of the Third Secret, as Socci does.<sup>163</sup> To quote

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<sup>162</sup> *TMF*, p. 29.

<sup>163</sup> By “official account” I do not mean any teaching of the Holy Catholic Church regarding the Third Secret controversy, for there is no such teaching. As will become clear in the course of this discussion, the “official account” means nothing more than the representations of Cardinal Bertone and his collaborators in the Vatican apparatus, who have not been given any papal authority to bind the faithful to their version of the facts or their purported “interpretation” of the vision of the Third Secret. On the contrary, as we will see, the Pope has not intervened in this controversy, and the former Cardinal Ratzinger made it quite clear in 2000 that the commentary on the

Socci: “[B]ut Lucia would never have dared to establish herself a date to make it [the Secret] known to everybody: only the Madonna, who had imposed secrecy on the message, could do it.”<sup>164</sup>

### ***What about the Telltale “etc”?***

And what of the famous “etc” in Sister Lucia’s Fourth Memoir? To recall again Father Schweigl’s testimony, the Third Secret includes the “logical continuation” of the Virgin’s discourse following the phrase that ends with Sister Lucia’s “etc”—“In Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved etc”. In fact, the attention of Fatima scholars had always been focused on the “etc” as the key to the Third Secret, since it was obvious that the Virgin’s words to the seers had not trailed off in the middle of a thought.

Yet, in a maneuver that has undermined all confidence in the official account, *TMF* evades any discussion of the “etc” by taking the text of the Message of Fatima from Sister Lucia’s *Third* Memoir, where Our Lady’s prophecy concerning Portugal does not appear, rather than the more complete Fourth Memoir. Like *TMF*’s attack on the credibility of the “express order of Our Lady” regarding 1960, this conspicuous avoidance of the Fourth Memoir could only engender suspicion. Why rely on the Third Memoir when the more complete Fourth Memoir was available? In his Introduction to *TMF* Bertone attempted to explain this curious behavior as follows: “For the account of the first two parts of the ‘secret’, which have already been published and are therefore known, we have chosen the text written by Sister Lucia in the Third Memoir of 31 August 1941; some *annotations* were added in the Fourth Memoir of 8 December 1941.”<sup>165</sup> Significantly, Bertone’s Introduction *does not specify* what is contained in these “annotations,” which is none other than the very phrase of the Virgin he had to know was at the heart of the entire controversy.

According to *TMF*, then, the only difference between the Third and Fourth memoirs is “some annotations” by Sister Lucia, the suggestion being that no one should think it amiss that the drafters of *Message* had “chosen” the former document, which was not cluttered by these “annotations.” The suggestion was less than honest, for the Virgin’s words concerning the preservation of dogma in Portugal were manifestly not Lucia’s “annotations” but *an integral part of the Fatima message*, immediately after which Our Lady Herself had said: “Tell this to no one. Yes, you may tell Francisco.” Yet Bertone, having characterized the very words of the Virgin as “annotations”, buries

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Secret in *Message* has not been imposed upon the Church. Socci rightly recognizes that the faithful are at liberty to question the “official account.”

<sup>164</sup> *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*, p. 38.

<sup>165</sup> *TMF*, p. 3.

the very words of the Mother of God in a footnote that *TMF* never mentions again.<sup>166</sup>

Socci calls attention to an evasive but extremely revealing comment by Bertone at the June 26<sup>th</sup> press conference. When asked about whether the “etc” is indeed the beginning of the Third Secret, Bertone stated to the press: “It is difficult to say if it [the “etc”] refers to the second or the third part of the secret [i.e., the Great Secret of July 13, 1917]... it seems to me that it pertains to the second.”<sup>167</sup> The implications are astonishing: *Bertone does not deny that the “etc” could in fact be part of the Third Secret*, which would mean that the Third Secret includes the Virgin’s *spoken words*. In a curious equivocation, Bertone stated that it “is difficult to say” whether this is so, and that it “seems” to him that the “etc” pertains to the second part of the Fatima message. It *seems* to him? Why would he not have determined the answer to this crucial question before the momentous Vatican presentation on June 26, given that he had a “conversation” with Sister Lucia concerning the content of the Third Secret only weeks before, on April 27, 2000, as his own Introduction to *TMF* reveals?<sup>168</sup>

Furthermore, even if it were the case that, as Bertone suggests, the “etc” pertains only to the Second Secret—i.e., the part of the Great Secret that predicts World War II, the spread of Russia’s errors “throughout the world” and so forth—then it follows that the Vatican *has yet to reveal the Second Secret in its entirety*. Thus, no matter how it is viewed, Bertone’s comment is a major blow to the credibility of the official account.

Socci poses the pertinent question: “How can one elude that explosive *incipit* [beginning] of the Virgin Mary as if it were a marginal ‘annotation’?” There is, writes Socci, “a clear sense of a great embarrassment before a phrase of the Madonna that one cannot succeed in explaining and that one tries to remove silently.”<sup>169</sup> Why the embarrassment? Because, as Socci and so many others have concluded, the “etc” is the gateway to the missing words of the Virgin that complete the Third Secret of Fatima. Hence the “etc” must be downplayed and ignored if the gateway is to remain closed.

### ***A Telling Discrepancy***

Bertone’s Introduction to *TMF* contains another point that would prove to have decisive importance in the Third Secret controversy.

<sup>166</sup> *Message*, p. 15. The footnote reads: “In the ‘Fourth Memoir’ Sister Lucia adds: ‘In Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved etc. ...’”

<sup>167</sup> *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*, p. 89; citing Aura Miguel, *Totus Tuus*, p. 141.

<sup>168</sup> *Message*, p. 8.

<sup>169</sup> *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*, pp. 75-76.

According to Bertone, John Paul II did not read the Third Secret until July 18, 1981, a full three years into his papacy, when the text of the Secret was taken from the Holy Office archives and brought to him at Gemelli Hospital, where the Pope was recovering from the assassination attempt.<sup>170</sup> But according to papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls, as reported by *The Washington Post*, John Paul II read the Third Secret in 1978, within days of his election.<sup>171</sup> There is no record, however, of any text of the Secret being brought to John Paul from the Holy Office archives in that year.

Thus, whatever text John Paul read in 1978 must have been located elsewhere—evidently in the papal apartment, as attested by the witnesses and photographs already cited (see Chapter 6). It is highly significant that *neither Navarro-Valls nor the Pope ever denied the report that the Pope had read the Secret in 1978*, even though (with explosive implications) that report flatly contradicted Bertone’s own representations to the press.<sup>172</sup> But it could hardly be the case that John Paul II, the very Pope of Fatima, would have waited until three years after his election to read the Secret. This major discrepancy between the accounts of Bertone and Navarro-Valls in itself indicates the existence of two distinct but related texts of the Third Secret. (Cf. *The Devil’s Final Battle*, Chapter 13, “The Third Secret Consists of Two Distinct Texts,” for further explanation.)

### **Cardinal Sodano’s “Preventative Interpretation”**

The credulity of the faithful was strained past the breaking point by what Socci has called “the preventative interpretation” of the vision launched by Cardinal Sodano in May-June 2000—that is, an interpretation designed to prevent anyone from finding in the Third Secret what Sodano, Bertone and others did not wish them to find. Sodano, who had been busy covering up the Maciel scandal, journeyed to Fatima with the Pope in May 2000 to announce that the Secret would soon be published. Why did he, not the Pope, make the announcement, while the Pope sat behind him? Because Sodano was executing the Party Line, to which even the Pope had been induced to adhere. Sodano’s announcement already suggested,

<sup>170</sup> *Message*, p. 5.

<sup>171</sup> Bill Broadway and Sarah Delancy, “3rd Secret Spurs More Questions; Fatima Interpretation Departs From Vision,” *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2000: “On May 13, Vatican Spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the Pope first read the secret within days of assuming the papacy in 1978. On Monday, an aide to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger [Bertone], Prefect of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said that the Pope first saw it in the hospital after his attack.”

<sup>172</sup> The Associated Press, “Vatican: Fatima Is No Doomsday Prophecy,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 2000: “John Paul II read for the first time the text of the Third Secret of Fatima after the attack,” a top aide to Ratzinger, Monsignor Tarcisio Bertone, told journalists during a news conference to present the document.”

in a “preventative” manner, that the Secret was nothing more than a prediction of events that had already come to pass, culminating in the 1981 attempt on the life of John Paul II. According to Sodano:

The vision of Fatima concerns above all the war waged by atheist systems against the Church and Christians, and it describes the immense suffering endured by the witnesses to the faith *in the last century* of the second millennium. It is an interminable Way of the Cross led by the Popes of *the twentieth century*.

According to the interpretation of the “little shepherds,” which was also recently confirmed by Sister Lucia, the “bishop dressed in white” who prays for all the faithful is the Pope. As he makes his way with great effort towards the Cross amid the corpses of those who were martyred (bishops, priests, men and women religious and many lay persons), he too falls to the ground, *apparently* dead, under a burst of gunfire.

After the assassination attempt of May 13, 1981, it appeared evident to His Holiness that it was “a motherly hand which guided the bullet’s path,” enabling the “dying Pope” to halt “at the threshold of death.”...

The successive events of 1989 led, both in the Soviet Union and in a number of countries of Eastern Europe, to the fall of the Communist regime which promoted atheism. For this too His Holiness offers heartfelt thanks to the Most Holy Virgin....

*Even if the events to which the third part of the Secret of Fatima refers now seem part of the past, Our Lady’s call to conversion and penance, issued at the beginning of the twentieth century, remains timely and urgent today....*<sup>173</sup>

In essence, Cardinal Sodano would reduce the Third Secret to the *Second* Secret—i.e., the second part of the Great Secret of July 13, 1917—which, as we saw in Chapter 1, predicted World War II, the spread of world Communism and the consequent persecution of the Church, the martyrdom of the faithful and the suffering of the Holy Father. But if the Third Secret merely predicts the very events Our Lady had already predicted in the Second Secret, what is the point of the Third Secret? Why would Sister Lucia have found it so difficult to commit the Third Secret to paper? Why would Our Lady have refrained from directing Sister Lucia to write down the Secret until 1944—*after* World War II and the spread of Communism were already well under way?

As for Sodano’s claim that the Pope executed by soldiers outside a half-ruined city filled with bodies was John Paul II, it was manifest that Sodano had misled the public when he declared at Fatima

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<sup>173</sup> Vatican Information Service, May 13, 2000.

the previous May that the Pope in the vision “falls to the ground, *apparently* dead, under a burst of gunfire.” In truth, the Pope in the vision “*was killed* by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him” outside the half-ruined city. John Paul II, on the other hand, was *not* killed by a lone assassin during the attempt that took place in a perfectly intact Saint Peter’s Square.

Any attempt on the life of a Pope is a grave affair, and John Paul II had suffered greatly at the hands of his would-be assassin. Nevertheless, the Pope had completely recovered from his wounds and resumed an active life that included skiing and hiking in the Italian Alps and swimming in the built-in pool he had installed at Castelgandolfo shortly after his election. His physical condition after recovery was rightly described as “impressive.”<sup>174</sup> The Pope’s death *a quarter century* after the attempt resulted from the complications of Parkinson’s disease, not the shot fired by Ali Agca in 1981. Moreover, why would Our Lady of Fatima give an “express order” (to recall Sister Lucia’s writing on the envelope) that the Secret be revealed in 1960, when that year has no relation to the 1981 assassination attempt or to *any other particular* in the vision? In short, the suggestion that John Paul II is the Pope in the vision is not merely a “stretch,” it is patently unbelievable. Sodano had blatantly twisted the content of the vision to suit his contrived interpretation.

It should go without saying that Catholics are not required to accept Sodano’s “interpretation.” As Cardinal Ratzinger stated during the June 26<sup>th</sup> press conference: “*It is not the intention of the Church to impose a single interpretation.*”<sup>175</sup> Ratzinger’s own commentary in *TMF* would speak only of “attempting” an interpretation. And, ironically enough, *TMF*’s own supporting documentation demolishes Sodano’s patently unsustainable construction. Bertone’s Introduction cites a purported letter from Sister Lucia to John Paul II in 1982 regarding the contents of the Secret. Curiously, both the translation and the photo-reproduction of the original handwriting appended to *TMF* present only a fragment of the purported letter, without any address or salutation to the Pope or signature by Sister Lucia. The attempt on the Pope’s life is not mentioned even glancingly in the fragmentary

<sup>174</sup> “He has been a terrific sportsman,” said George Weigel, author of a biography of John Paul. Weigel said the Pope had a swimming pool built at his summer residence at Castelgandolfo during the first summer of his papacy. “The story goes that he justified it by saying it was cheaper than building a new conclave,” he said. “The first 15 years of his pontificate [i.e., until 1993, 12 years after the assassination attempt] he took breaks to go skiing, and the miracle about that was the Italian paparazzi actually left him alone.” Quoted in “Pontiff Was Sportsman as Well as Leader,” Associated Press, March 4, 2005. After the assassination attempt the Pope “went on to a full recovery, and sported an impressive physical condition throughout the 1980s.” *Pope John Paul, Short Biography* at wikipedia.com.

<sup>175</sup> “Vatican releases additional Fatima information,” United Press International, June 27, 2000.

text, and there is nothing about the fragment to indicate that it was meant for the Pope as opposed to anyone else. But here, in pertinent part, is what the fragment says:

Since we did not heed this appeal of the Message, we see that it has been fulfilled; Russia has invaded the world with her errors. And if *we have not yet seen the complete fulfillment of the final part of this prophecy*, we are going towards it little by little with great strides...<sup>176</sup>

That is, in *TMF*—the very document which argues that the vision of the bishop in white depicts the assassination attempt—Sister Lucia herself is quoted to the effect that, fully a year *after* the attempt, we have *not yet seen* the complete fulfillment of the Third Secret. Furthermore, Lucia makes *no reference whatsoever* to the attempt. As the fragment from the letter shows, the attempt was not even on Sister Lucia’s “radar” in 1982, much less at the very center of her understanding of the Secret.

It must be noted that the Portuguese original of this strange epistolary fragment contains a phrase that negates any possibility it was addressed to John Paul II: “The third part of the secret, *that you are so anxious to know*, is a symbolic revelation...” It could not possibly be the case that in 1982 John Paul II was “so anxious to know” the Third Secret, because by all accounts he had already read it by then. The words “that you are so anxious to know” reveal beyond doubt that the addressee of the purported 1982 letter was someone other than the Pope. But, attention: The English and other translations of the fragment in *Message* all *omit the words* “that you are so anxious to know” so that the phrase reads simply: “The third part of the secret is a symbolic revelation” followed by the remainder of the sentence.<sup>177</sup> No ellipses are used to indicate the omission, as honesty would require. The systematic excision of the key phrase from translation after translation could only be a calculated deception. It would require a Portuguese reader, closely examining the photo-reproduced fragment, to discover the ruse.<sup>178</sup>

### ***Ratzinger Follows Sodano—But Why?***

Despite these enormous problems with Sodano’s “preventative interpretation,” Cardinal Ratzinger’s theological commentary in *Message* adopts it uncritically, albeit while acknowledging that it is only an “attempt” at an interpretation:

<sup>176</sup> *TMF*, p. 9.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>178</sup> From the English translation: “The third part of the secret [deleted: “that you are so anxious to know”] is a symbolic revelation...” The photo-reproduced fragment reads: “A terceira parte do Segredo, *que tanto ansiais por conhecer* [that you are so anxious to know], e uma revelacao simbolica ...” *Message*, p. 9.

Before attempting an interpretation, the main lines of which can be found in the statement read by *Cardinal Sodano* on 13 May of this year ...<sup>179</sup>

For this reason the figurative language of the vision is symbolic. In this regard *Cardinal Sodano* stated ...<sup>180</sup>

As is clear from the documentation presented here, the interpretation offered by *Cardinal Sodano*, in his statement on 13 May...<sup>181</sup>

First of all we must affirm *with Cardinal Sodano*...<sup>182</sup>

Cardinal Ratzinger's commentary follows Sodano in pronouncing the Third Secret a thing of the past:

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.

We must affirm with Cardinal Sodano that the events to which the third part of the 'secret' of Fatima refers now seem part of the past. Insofar as individual events are described, *they belong to the past*.<sup>183</sup>

These affirmations are plainly impossible to accept, for if the vision reveals "no great mystery" and concerns only 20<sup>th</sup> century events, there would have been no reason to keep it under lock and key at the Vatican since 1957, or to declare in 1960 that it would be kept "forever under absolute seal." Nor would there have been any reason for Cardinal Ratzinger to have declared in 1984 that the Secret speaks of "dangers threatening the faith and the life of the Christian and therefore of the world."

There is a mystery here: Cardinal Sodano's competence to "interpret" the Secret is never explained. The Vatican Secretary of State has no doctrinal authority over the Church, and Sodano did not receive any papal authority to undertake his "interpretation," which is presented as a mere "attempt" to explain the vision. Why, then, was Sodano even involved in the matter? We already know the answer: the ascendancy of the Vatican Secretary of State to the level of a veritable "prime minister" of the Church in keeping with the radical

<sup>179</sup> *TMF*, p. 32.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 42.

restructuring of the Roman Curia carried out by Cardinal Villot after Vatican II.<sup>184</sup> The Party Line on Fatima would now extend to the Third Secret. Just as the Secretary of State had declared—without authority—that the Consecration of Russia was over and done with, so had he arrogated to himself the “interpretation” of the vision. This is why even Cardinal Ratzinger, then head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, deferred to Sodano as “prime minister” when he had no moral or doctrinal obligation to do so.

### *Did Our Lady Give Us a Cipher?*

Sodano’s “interpretation” of the Third Secret was said to be necessary because, as Cardinal Ratzinger states in his commentary, the vision is “not easy to decipher.” But were the faithful really expected to believe that in 1917 the Blessed Virgin gave the visionaries a *cipher* that would have to be deciphered by—of all people—the Vatican Secretary of State in 2000? That hardly seemed consistent with the clarity and detail of the Second Secret, which, as we have seen, predicted a whole train of clearly specified *future* events: the end of one war and the beginning of another “worse” war following an unknown light in the night sky; the very name of the Pope who would reign in the days leading up to that war; the very name of the nation that would spread its errors throughout the world; precise admonitions concerning war, famine, persecutions of the Church, the martyrdom of the good, the suffering of the Holy Father and the annihilation of various nations; and the ultimate conversion of Russia and the triumph of the Immaculate Heart.

The “not easy to decipher” vision would *not* require deciphering, however, if—as with the first two parts of the Great Secret of Fatima—there are *words* of the Virgin to explain it, as opposed to Vatican prelates “attempting an interpretation, the main lines of which can be found in the statement read by Cardinal Sodano on 13 May of this year ...”<sup>185</sup> The very claim that the Third Secret could not be understood without an “interpretation” suggested by Cardinal Sodano only demonstrated that there must be something more to the Secret than the vision standing alone.

### *Dispensing with the Consecration of Russia*

Lest the Party Line concerning the Consecration of Russia be forgotten, Bertone’s Introduction to *TMF* purports to enlist Sister Lucia for the proposition that Pope John Paul II’s consecration of the world in 1984 sufficed for a consecration of Russia: “Sister

<sup>184</sup> For a detailed discussion of this development see *The Devil’s Final Battle*, Chapter 8 (also at <http://www.devilsfinalbattle.com/ch8.htm>).

<sup>185</sup> *TMF*, p. 32.

Lucia personally confirmed that this solemn and universal act of consecration corresponded to what Our Lady wished.... Hence any further discussion or request [for the Consecration of Russia] is without basis.”<sup>186</sup> But how could Sister Lucia “confirm” that the same sort of ceremony that did not suffice during the reigns of Pius XII and Paul VI—a consecration of the world with no mention of Russia and no participation by the world episcopate—was suddenly sufficient?<sup>187</sup>

Curiously, Bertone cites only one solitary piece of evidence in support of his claim: a purported letter from Sister Lucia, identified only as “Letter of 8 November 1989,” in which Sister Lucia is alleged to have written: “Yes it has been done just as Our Lady asked, on 25 March 1984” (“*Sim, está feita, tal como Nossa Senhora a pediu, desde o dia 25 de Março de 1984*”).<sup>188</sup> Even more curious: the addressee of the letter is not identified, nor is a copy of it provided as part of *Message’s* supporting documentation.

As already noted, the purported letter, generated by a computer at the dawn of the personal computer age, contained a blatant error: a statement by “Sister Lucia” that Paul VI consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart during his visit to Fatima in 1967, when in truth he had consecrated nothing at all on that occasion. Sister Lucia, who was present throughout the Pope’s visit, would hardly have made such a mistake. Nor was it credible that an elderly cloistered nun, who had written thousands of letters by hand over her lifetime, would suddenly switch to a word processor at age 80 to peck out a one-page note to a Mr. Noelker, especially when even many business offices in Portugal were without personal computers at that time.<sup>189</sup>

Still more curious: the dubious “letter of 8 November 1989” was the only evidence Bertone cited even though, as *TMF* states, Bertone had “conversed” with Sister Lucia on April 27, 2000, only two months earlier, and could have obtained her direct testimony on this question at that time—or indeed at any other time. The failure to cite *any* direct testimony by Lucia, when such testimony was readily

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<sup>186</sup> *TMF*, p. 8.

<sup>187</sup> Concerning the consecration of the world by Pius XII and several bishops on October 31, 1942, Sister Lucia wrote: “The Good Lord has already shown me His contentment with the act performed by the Holy Father and several bishops, *although it was incomplete according to His desire*. In return He promises to end the war soon. The conversion of Russia is not for now.” Letter to the Bishop of Gurza, February 28, 1943; quoted in *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Vol. III, pp. 60-61.

<sup>188</sup> *TMF*, p. 8.

<sup>189</sup> Flatly contradicting himself, Bertone would admit seven years later that Sister Lucia “never worked with the computer.” See *The Last Visionary of Fatima*, p. 101 (“Sister Lucia never worked with the computer, nor visited any website.”) This is one of the many self-contradictions in which the Cardinal has embroiled himself, as Socci has noted.

obtainable, speaks volumes. And note well: During the April 2000 “conversation” Bertone *did not ask Sister Lucia to authenticate the “Letter of 8 November 1989”*, even though Bertone had to have known of the worldwide circulation of articles by Father Gruner’s apostolate decisively debunking the letter.<sup>190</sup> The only reasonable inference is that Lucia was not asked to authenticate the letter because the letter was indeed a fake that could not be authenticated.

To knowledgeable Catholics, it was not surprising that Bertone had been forced to rely *entirely* on a non-authenticated and previously publicly debunked 11-year-old “letter” to an unidentified addressee. That purported letter was the only thing Bertone could pit against a lifetime of contrary testimony by Sister Lucia, which we have already surveyed.<sup>191</sup>

### *A Funeral for Fatima?*

All in all, Sodano’s “preventative interpretation” was patently designed to consign the Third Secret in particular and the Fatima message in general to the dustbin of history, evidently in the hope that all questions would cease after June 26, 2000. Following Sodano’s lead, Bertone’s Introduction goes so far as to declare:

The decision of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to make public the third part of the ‘secret’ of Fatima brings to an end a period of history marked by tragic human lust for power and evil, yet pervaded by the merciful love of God and the watchful care of the Mother of Jesus and of the Church.

Not only is the Message of Fatima consigned to the past, but also the very lust for power and evil! But if the Pope had brought an end to the era of the lust for power and evil by publishing the vision of the “Bishop dressed in White” in the year 2000, why had he not ended that same tragic era by publishing the vision much sooner, indeed at the first opportunity? Bertone, however inadvertently, makes a mockery of the Vatican’s suppression of the Third Secret for so many years.

Even worse than *TMF*’s defense of the “preventative interpretation” is its suggestion that Sister Lucia’s entire witness might be suspect. The theological commentary cites one, and only one, “authority” on Fatima: the late Flemish theologian Edouard

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<sup>190</sup> This letter was published and critiqued on pp. 10-11 of the May 1990 (No. 229) issue of *The Catholic Counter-Reformation* (CRC, English edition, published by Maison Saint-Joseph, F-10260 Saint-Parres-lès-Vaudes). This critique was explicitly referenced in *The Fatima Crusader*, No. 35 (Winter 1990-91), with a circulation of some 500,000 copies, in a story debunking the Noelker letter (on pp. 12ff, or at [www.fatimacrusader.com/cr35/cr35pg12.asp](http://www.fatimacrusader.com/cr35/cr35pg12.asp)).

<sup>191</sup> For a detailed presentation of Lucia’s testimony from 1946-1987, see *The Devil’s Final Battle*, Chapter 8 (also at <http://www.devilsfinalbattle.com/ch8.htm>).

Dhanis, S.J., whom the commentary identifies as an “eminent scholar” in the field of “private revelations.” Cardinal Ratzinger knew, of course, that Dhanis, a modernist Jesuit, made a veritable career out of casting doubt on the Fatima apparitions. Dhanis proposed that everything in the Message of Fatima beyond a call for prayer and penance was cobbled together in the minds of the three children from things they had seen or heard in their own lives. Dhanis thus categorized as “Fatima II” all those things the “eminent scholar” arbitrarily rejected as fabrications—without ever once interviewing Sister Lucia or studying the official Fatima archives. Dhanis, in fact, flatly refused to speak to the seer or study the archives when invited to do so.<sup>192</sup> His intellectual honesty is non-existent when it comes to Fatima.

As Dhanis put it: “All things considered, it is not easy to state precisely what degree of credence is to be given to the accounts of Sister Lucia. Without questioning her sincerity, or the sound judgment she shows in daily life, one may judge it prudent to use her writings only with reservations. ... Let us observe also that a good person can be sincere and prove to have good judgment in everyday life, but have a *propensity for unconscious fabrication* in a certain area, or in any case, a tendency to relate old memories of twenty years ago with embellishments and considerable modifications.”<sup>193</sup> In other words, according to Dhanis, Sister Lucia was a very sincere and pious fake.

Yet Dhanis, neo-modernist debunker of the Message of Fatima, is the one and only “eminent scholar” cited by *Message’s* theological commentary on the meaning of the Third Secret and the Fatima message as a whole. The commentary even follows Dhanis’ methodology by suggesting that, after all, Sister Lucia may have concocted the vision from things she had seen as a child: “The concluding part of the ‘secret’ uses images which Lucia may have seen in devotional books and which draw their inspiration from long-standing intuitions of faith.”<sup>194</sup> But if that were true of the images in the vision of the bishop in white, it could also be true of any and all aspects of the Fatima apparitions. With a single sentence inserted into the middle of things, the commentary, like Dhanis, undermines the credibility—at least in the minds of a gullible public—not only of the Third Secret proper, but the entirety of the Message of Fatima. No wonder the headline in the *Los Angeles Times* read: “The Vatican’s Top Theologian Gently Debunks a Nun’s Account of Her 1917 Vision

<sup>192</sup> See Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, “Part II: The Critical Study of Fatima,” *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Vol. I: *The Science and the Facts*, pp. 381-535.

<sup>193</sup> Dhanis’ attack on the veracity of the Fatima message is explained and critiqued in more detail in *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Vol. I, Part II, Chapter 1. All quotations of Dhanis are from this source.

<sup>194</sup> *TMF*, p. 42.

that Fueled Decades of Speculation.”<sup>195</sup> Even the secular press could see what was going on: the attempt at a funeral for Fatima.

### *Bouquets of False Friendship*

What was obvious to the secular press—that Sodano, Bertone and Ratzinger wished to be done with Fatima—was certainly obvious to Catholics who believed in the Message of Fatima and knew that its imperatives had been ignored on account of that same “blindness of the pastors” remarked by Antonio Socci.

And yet, in the usual style of those we call here the false friends of Fatima, *TMF* abounds in professions of respect for the Fatima event, while “remodeling” it to suit the Party Line. Hence Cardinal Sodano’s announcement at Fatima on May 13, 2000, included in *TMF*, speaks of “Our Lady’s call to conversion and penance... [which] remains timely and urgent today” and “[t]he insistent invitation of Mary Most Holy to penance” as “the manifestation of her maternal concern for the fate of the human family, in need of conversion and forgiveness...” Even as he was in the process of purging from the Fatima message the very prescriptions the Virgin had given for the protection of the Church and the world from calamity and the salvation of souls—the Consecration of Russia and the Third Secret—Sodano was exhorting his “brothers and sisters” to “thank Our Lady of Fatima for her protection. To her maternal intercession let us entrust the Church of the Third Millennium.”

With a grand rhetorical flourish, Sodano even added some Latin, although the Roman liturgy had long since been ruthlessly stripped of that “dead” language in the name of Vatican II: “Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei Genetrix! Intercede pro Ecclesia. Intercede pro Papa nostro Ioanne Paulo II. Amen.” Translation: “We gather together under your care, Holy Mother of God. Intercede for the Church. Intercede for our Pope John Paul II”—the same Pope who had been induced by Sodano and his collaborators to eschew the intervention of the Mother of God by the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart.

In like manner, Archbishop Bertone, the man who would be Sodano’s successor, offered pious sentiments concerning “The action of God, the Lord of history, and the co-responsibility of man in the drama of his creative freedom,” adding that “Our Lady, who appeared at Fatima, recalls these forgotten values. She reminds us that man’s future is in God, and that we are active and responsible partners in creating that future.” Our Lady of Fatima was thus lowered to the level of a kind of high-powered “life coach,” who came to Fatima to provide some generic advice on how we can better cooperate with

<sup>195</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 2000.

God by recovering “values” that will help us to improve the human condition.

Finally, then Cardinal Ratzinger offered this strange rendering of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and its relation to the Third Secret:

I would like finally to mention another key expression of the “secret” which has become justly famous: “my Immaculate Heart will triumph”. What does this mean? The Heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of every kind. The fiat of Mary, the word of her heart, has changed the history of the world, because it brought the Saviour into the world—because, thanks to her Yes, God could become man in our world and remains so for all time.

The very core of the Message of Fatima—devotion to the Immaculate Heart—was thus facilely equated with prayer and contemplation of God by individual Catholics, whose personal purification of heart would be what overcomes the threat of war and destruction. There would be no need to worry about effecting a specific consecration of Russia to *Mary’s* Immaculate Heart to avoid the annihilation of nations of which Our Lady of Fatima had warned. Nor would there be any need to worry about the content of the Fatima message that so alarmed the future Pius XII, when he foresaw in the light of Fatima the “suicide” of the Catholic Church by means of altering the Faith in the liturgy, theology and soul of the Church.

And so on June 26, 2000 the Message of Fatima was piously invoked by those who seemed to be its friends, even as it was stripped entirely of its prophetic content, its warnings to the Church and the world, and reduced to only a prescription for personal piety and holiness.

### ***Exit Our Lady, Enter Gorbachev***

The Third Secret having been “gently debunked” on June 26, “Prime Minister” Sodano immediately got down to what he considered the serious business of the Church. The very next day none other than Mikhail Gorbachev appeared at a Vatican press conference, seated as a guest of honor between Cardinals Sodano and Silvestrini, the Vatican diplomat who was instrumental in carrying out the policy of *Ostpolitik*—i.e., conciliating instead of confronting Communist regimes that oppress the Church. Gorbachev had come to the Vatican to help promote the posthumous publication of the memoirs of Cardinal Casaroli, the foremost architect of *Ostpolitik* and Cardinal Sodano’s predecessor in office.<sup>196</sup> No questions from the press were permitted at this curious press conference—a press

<sup>196</sup> “Gorbachev Helps Introduce Casaroli Memoirs,” *Catholic World News*, June 27, 2000.

conference without questions from the press! Evidently, Sodano wanted to be certain that no one inquired about the Third Secret, or why the Vatican was honoring the likes of Gorbachev, a man who admits he is still a Leninist and whose tax-free foundations are promoting the use of abortion and contraception to eliminate billions of people from the world's population.<sup>197</sup>

What can one conclude from all of this but that the Party Line of “prime minister” Sodano, soon to be carried forward by his successor, Cardinal Bertone, is radically inconsistent with the Message of Fatima, “that great sign of contradiction that makes evident a kind of blinding of the pastors”? And what Sodano and Bertone would impose from above would continue to be advanced by their allies below.

### The Continuing Plot Against Our Lady of Fatima



**Two False Friends of Fatima Meet  
Cardinal Sodano (on right) and Carlos Evaristo (on left).**

<sup>197</sup> In September 1995, Gorbachev held his “State of the World Forum” in San Francisco. Over 4000 of the world’s “elite” paid \$5,000 per person to attend the 5-day event. In a closing plenary session of the forum, a philosopher/author named Sam Keen provided a summary and concluding remarks on the conference. It reveals the forum’s anti-life, anti-Christian ethos. To the conference participants, Keen said: “There was very strong agreement that religious institutions have to take the primary responsibility for the population explosion. We must speak far more clearly about sexuality, about contraception, about abortion, about the values that control the population, because the ecological crisis, in short, is the population crisis. *Cut the population by 90 percent and there aren’t enough people left to do a great deal of ecological damage.*” See “World’s Elite Gather to Talk Depopulation,” John Henry Western, *The Interim*, April 1996.