

Chapter 9

***THE WANDERER:* THE PRAVDA OF THE “NEW” FATIMA**

Every Party Line needs its *Pravda*, the Soviet-era newspaper laughably named “Truth.” The compliant journalist plays an indispensable role in persuading the mass of the people to accept uncritically what the authors of the Party Line have dictated for public consumption and in denouncing the hardy few that question it.

So it is with the weekly newspaper *The Wanderer* and the Party Line on Fatima. Under editor Alphonse Matt, *The Wanderer* has become nothing less than the “paper of record” for promoting the Modernist version of the Message of Fatima, which consigns the entire Fatima event to oblivion. Indeed, *The Wanderer* has been a reliable promoter of the entire program of the party of the innovators during the post-conciliar epoch, as sketched in Chapter 1. Like the Mensheviks during the Russian Revolution, *The Wanderer* deplors the worst excesses of the Bolsheviks while promoting the Revolution’s general direction. Hence, in addition to “decommissioning” the Message of Fatima, *The Wanderer* has also doggedly defended the entire basic regime of unprecedented changes in the Church after the Council, from the New Mass to the new ecumenism, along with the New Fatima.

Declaring Father Gruner a Non-Person

In its role as the *Pravda* of the Party Line on Fatima, *The Wanderer* could be expected to declare a non-person the priest who has done more than any other to preserve the memory of the unreconstructed Fatima message in opposition to the Party Line: Father Nicholas Gruner. Hence, on October 25, 2001, *The Wanderer* published an attack piece by Farley Clinton entitled “The Strange Case of Father Gruner.” Clinton’s reportage was presented as “objective” coverage of a conference sponsored by Father Gruner’s apostolate in Rome from October 7-13, 2001. But what Clinton delivered was a hatchet in Father Gruner’s back, a rambling assortment of unproven accusations and snide remarks.

- “*There seems to be the suggestion [in Father Gruner’s literature] that we may be seeing the last days described in the Apocalypse, at the time when a third of the stars of Heaven (the bishops, some commentators think) are dragged down by the tail of the dragon.*”

There was indeed such a suggestion in Father Gruner's literature. It was found in his reprint of *the sermon by Pope John Paul II* at the beatification of Jacinta and Francisco in Fatima on May 13, 2000. As the Pope, not Father Gruner, declared on that occasion: "The Message of Fatima is a call to conversion, alerting humanity to have nothing to do with the 'dragon' whose 'tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth'." (Apoc. 12:4)

Evidently, Clinton had not read Father Gruner's literature with a great deal of attention as to who was saying what. But then, as we shall see, Clinton's article really had nothing to do with Father Gruner's literature or, for that matter, the talks given by the many speakers at the conference in Rome which he purported to "cover." In fact, Clinton's article said nothing about the details of the conference. There is a reason for this: Clinton could find nothing wrong with it, as he admitted to this author over dinner in Rome during the conference. But the editor of *The Wanderer* was expecting a hatchet job, and Clinton delivered the goods.

- "I spent three or four days with the inner circle of his pious associates."

Inner circle (read: cult) of his pious (read: phony) associates. It all sounded rather sinister, even though Clinton admitted there was nothing amiss with the conference as such. And it was rather curious that Clinton had no clear idea of how many days he had actually spent attending the conference: "three or four days" hardly bespeaks careful journalistic attention to the proceedings. But then, Clinton was not there as a journalist; he was there as a hatchet man.

- "Father Gruner is a benign and kindly looking priest ... Superficially, he seemed exemplary from every point of view."

Superficially, yes! But underneath the appearance of good there must be something wrong, mustn't there? Clinton provided no evidence in support of the poisonous implication, yet he let it sit there, undermining the reputation of a priest who is indeed exemplary.

- "I knew he is supposed to have an obsession with 'the visions of Fatima'."

A familiar tactic of Communist regimes: opponents of the Party Line must be mentally imbalanced.

- "Someone said to me, 'Father Gruner claims to be the only expert on Fatima. On a scale of respectability, from 1 to 10, he is about a 2'."

Someone said this? Who? And on what grounds? Back in the

dark ages before the springtime of Vatican II, it would have been considered a mortal sin publicly to damage a priest’s reputation by repeating the backbiting of an anonymous accuser. *The Wanderer’s* brand of Catholic journalism dispensed with such quaint conventions.

- “[Father Gruner’s] recent letter to the Pope considerably undermined the impression of piety, sanity and good humor which I took away from the conference.”

In what way was Clinton’s good impression undermined? What did Father Gruner say in his canonically justified complaint to the Pope that Clinton found objectionable? He offered no particulars. Instead, he launched the calumnious implication that Father Gruner is impious, insane, and without a sense of humor.

- “*The complaint [to the Pope] sets out a good deal of the history of Fr. Gruner’s strange quarrels with the hierarchy and the Holy See.*”

What was so “strange” about them? And why were they “quarrels” as opposed to legitimate grievances about the abuse of power by certain Vatican prelates, who had made a career out of hounding Father Gruner while doing little or nothing about clerical predators who molest children or preach heresy in nearly every diocese of North America? Once again, Clinton provided nothing but empty pejoratives.

- “*It [the complaint] does not inspire confidence.*”

Why not? Clinton failed to say. Had he even read the document?

- “*What really disturbs me is that Fr. Gruner’s writing seems to imply that the Pope ought to choose Fr. Gruner as his personal confessor, and if the Pope does not, he cannot fulfill his most essential duty. This is never said, yet it is hard to draw any other conclusion.*” (Emphasis added)

Amazingly enough, Farley Clinton accused Father Gruner of believing something he had never actually stated. But, Clinton claimed, it was “hard” not to conclude that Father Gruner believed what he had never said, because what Father Gruner did say “seems to imply it.”

“Seems to imply” is a stock phrase of the shifty accuser, who hides behind ambiguity to evade the accusation that he is guilty of calumny. “Seems to imply” is calumny double-wrapped in ambiguity: as an implication *seems* to state something, but does not state it expressly, to say that someone “*seems to imply*” a given proposition is to say, in effect, that *it seems that he seems to propose it*. The accusation was utterly vaporous, but nonetheless had the desired

effect: further damage to the victim's good name. And here we see again the tactic of Communist regimes: Father Gruner must be crazy, for only a priest who is crazy would think that he must serve as the Pope's confessor. Of course, Father Gruner had never actually *said* anything of the kind, but it *seemed* that he had implied it. Well, that was good enough for a front-page article in *The Wanderer*, wasn't it?

A small point for the reader to consider: Since Clinton was at the conference for "three or four days," why did he not simply *ask* Father Gruner whether, in fact, he believes what Clinton contends he "seems to imply"? I myself put the matter to Father Gruner after Clinton's hatchet job appeared on Uncle Al's front page. Father Gruner's reply to Clinton's accusation that he wishes to be the Pope's confessor was: "Are you kidding? Who would want *that* responsibility?"

This, then, is *The Wanderer's* notion of "Catholic" journalism: send a "reporter" to "cover" a conference featuring a certain priest; then have the reporter write about something the priest *never said*, on a matter concerning which the reporter asked the priest *not one single question*.

The Verdict of Self-Appointed Canonists

The Wanderer's campaign to declare Father Gruner a non-person continued with an article entitled "Yes, Virginia, Father Gruner Is Suspended," which appeared in its issue of June 6, 2003. The piece was written by a pair of young laymen, Pete Vere and Shawn McElhinney, who purported to address Father Gruner's canonical status as experts on Canon Law.

Vere and McElhinney based their entire presentation on a Vatican *press release* which advised that "the Congregation for the Clergy, upon a mandate from a higher authority [Vatican-speak for the Secretary of State], wishes to state that Rev. Nicholas Gruner is under an *a divinis* suspension, which has been confirmed by a definitive sentence of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura." In other words, the anonymous author of a press release had stated that the anonymous "higher authority" had said that the Congregation should say that the Apostolic Signatura said that Father Gruner's "suspension" has been "confirmed."

Notice that nowhere in this chain of hearsay and buck-passing is there any indication of (a) *who* had "suspended" Father Gruner (note well: it is not the Vatican that has done so), (b) *when* he was "suspended" or (c) *why* he was suspended. There was a very good reason these particulars were missing from the press release: to reveal the particulars would be to reveal the lack of any grounds for Father Gruner's "suspension"—no offense against faith or morals, no violation of any law of the Church, nothing.

As we saw in Chapter 3, the essence of the canonical gambit to “suspend” Father Gruner deployed by Cardinal Sodano was to demand that Father Gruner be incardinated outside the Diocese of Avellino or else return there, prevent the incardination elsewhere, and then declare him “suspended” for “failing to return” to Avellino after “failing” to be incardinated in another diocese. We saw also that Father Gruner defeated the gambit by achieving incardination in the Archdiocese of Hyderabad, whose Archbishop refused to be cowed by Vatican bureaucrats into rescinding the incardination, declaring to Father Gruner: “Evil forces cannot destroy your work of love.”

In essence, therefore, Father Gruner had been declared “suspended” on the basis of, quite literally, nothing at all. His alleged “offense” was to have failed to do precisely what his accusers had attempted to prevent him from doing: achieve incardination outside of the Diocese of Avellino, which in fact he had done despite Sodano’s best efforts to prevent it. Man’s God-given sense of justice tells him, first of all, that one cannot be punished for an offense unless one has *committed* an offense. If the five-year-old were spanked vigorously and consigned to his room all day for stealing cookies he had not in fact taken, his piteous cry of “That’s not fair!” would melt the heart of anyone who knew the truth. Few cruelties of the human condition evoke more compassion than the knowledge that someone has been punished for nothing; and the more severe the unmerited punishment, the greater our compassion for its victim.

Likewise, even a child can understand the injustice of punishing someone for failing to do that which it was impossible for him to do. Let us suppose that our hypothetical five-year-old was spanked by his father and sent, weeping, to his room for not having put away his toys in his toy chest, when the father himself had padlocked the chest so that it could not be used. One could scarcely imagine a father who would treat his own child this way, and we would look with horror upon such stupefying cruelty.

The law of the Church, reflecting the justice and mercy of God, prohibits such cruel injustices by providing that no one may be punished unless he is actually guilty of an offense,²¹⁵ nor may anyone be punished for failing to do that which it was impossible or gravely inconvenient to do.²¹⁶ Thus, for example, if a bishop were to “suspend” one of his priests for failing to perform some arduous duty while the priest was in a hospital bed suffering from double

²¹⁵ The Code of Canon Law explicitly provides that no one can be punished for the commission of an external violation of a law or *precept* [i.e., particular command] unless it is *gravely imputable* by reason of malice or culpability. (Can. 1321§1)

²¹⁶ The law of the Church, in its mercy and its justice, also recognizes that no one may be punished for violating a precept if necessity or grave inconvenience prevents compliance. Code of Canon Law, Can. 1323, 2°, 4°, 7°.

pneumonia, the “suspension” would be null and void because it was impossible or at least gravely inconvenient for the priest to obey the bishop’s unjust and unreasonable command.

What did Vere and McElhinney have to say about Father Gruner’s point that, as Canon Law explicitly recognizes, a priest cannot be suspended when he has not committed any offense? The authors merely repeated that “Father Gruner’s suspension was upheld by a sentence of the Apostolic Signatura.” What suspension? Imposed by whom? And for what reason? Recognizing that they should make at least some effort to show what *offense* Father Gruner is supposed to have committed, Vere and McElhinney wrote:

Father Gruner was ordered by his legitimate ecclesiastical superior to return to the diocese of his incardination [Avellino]... He was also warned that failure to return to his diocese of incardination would result in his suspension *a divinis* [and] subsequently his competent ecclesiastical superior followed through with the suspension.

But here the authors conveniently omitted every one of the crucial facts outlined above: that Father Gruner was ordered to return to Avellino *only if* he did not find another bishop; that his very accusers tried to prevent him from finding another bishop; that nevertheless he *did* find another bishop (the Archbishop of Hyderabad).

Thus, Vere and McElhinney’s argument reduced to little more than the contention that Father Gruner had been “suspended” because a press release said that a “definitive sentence” of the Signatura “confirms” that he is “suspended”; and no one need care if the “suspension” had any legal, moral or factual basis. As the authors stated in reply to Father Gruner’s objection that he has been suspended for no real reason: “Given the fact that Father Gruner’s suspension was upheld by a sentence of the Apostolic Signatura, this [Father Gruner’s objection] is simply amazing.”

In other words, the authors essentially advocated the Orwellian notion that the sentence *is* the crime, whether or not any actual crime had been committed. For them, it was “amazing” that anyone would think to look behind a piece of paper to see if there were any basis for what the paper declares. Worse, the “suspension” the Signatura had supposedly upheld was not a suspension by anyone in authority at the Vatican, but only a purported suspension by the Bishop of Avellino. “The Vatican” itself had never even claimed to have imposed any discipline on Father Gruner, but merely pointed out what the Bishop of Avellino (under pressure from Sodano) was supposed to have done. But the Bishop of Avellino *had never actually done it*. Even Vere and McElhinney admit that the Bishop of Avellino merely “warned that failure to return to his diocese of incardination [within

30 days] would result in his suspension *a divinis*.” But they misled the reader when they claimed that “subsequently his competent ecclesiastical superior followed through with the suspension.” On the contrary, the Bishop of Avellino did not “follow through with the suspension.” In fact, the only one who had followed through in this matter was Father Gruner, who notified the Bishop of Avellino of his incardination by the Archbishop of Hyderabad—who had insisted that his incardination of Father Gruner was valid—to which notice the Bishop of Avellino had offered no objection, nor indeed any response whatsoever.

Vere and McElhinney might have argued—although they did not do so—that Father Gruner’s suspension took effect automatically, without any further decrees, after the 30-day period for his supposed “return” to Italy (after 16 years!) had elapsed. Church law describes such an “automatic” suspension as *latae sententiae*. But even if the bishop’s threatened suspension were viewed as a *latae sententiae* penalty, the suspension could not operate against Father Gruner, because, as mentioned above, Church law forbids the imposition of penalties for actions that were taken out of necessity or to avoid grave inconvenience.²¹⁷

To this, Vere and McElhinney could only reply that the provision of Church law exempting one from any penalty in cases of necessity or grave inconvenience does not apply to any act which is “intrinsically evil or tends to be harmful to souls.” The authors then asked: “Is not disobedience to the lawful command of one’s ecclesiastical superior harmful to souls?” But here the authors only beg the question. As just shown, however, the command to “return” to Italy was impossible to obey and no one is held to do the impossible. Nor was the command “lawful” since it amounted to a punishment for something Father Gruner had not in fact done—that is, he did not “fail” to find another bishop, and therefore he could not lawfully be ordered to “return” to Italy for a “failure” that had never occurred. The authors’ position thus reduces to the absurdity that “failure” to obey an unfounded, unjust and impossible command is “harmful to souls” merely because the command has not been followed. What is truly harmful to souls, not to mention the very credibility of the Church, is the sort of ruthless abuse of power we see in Cardinal Sodano’s overseeing of the persecution of Father Gruner.

Furthermore, Church law specifically provides that a bishop (or other legislator) may not threaten a *latae sententiae*—that is, an automatic—penalty except for a grave and malicious offense that cannot otherwise be corrected.²¹⁸ But Father Gruner had not

²¹⁷ Code of Canon Law, Can. 1323, 2°.

²¹⁸ The threat of “*latae sententiae*” (i.e. automatic penalty) by the Bishop of Avellino was

committed any offense at all, let alone a grave and malicious offense. He is accused only of “failing” to be incardinated when he was incardinated, and “failing” to return to a country whose immigration law *bars* his return. Father Gruner’s “offense,” therefore, rests on nothing but canonical thin air. This seemed to be of no concern to our authors, however, who take the position that no one may question a piece of paper stating that Father Gruner’s “suspension” had been “confirmed.”

A Pharisaical Notion of “Obedience”

The defense of the Vatican Secretary of State’s Party Line on Fatima depends heavily upon the same false notion of obedience that has demanded passive acceptance of the entire program of the party of the innovators since Vatican II—none of it actually imposed by the Pope as a requirement of the Faith, but rather by Vatican functionaries who cloak themselves in papal authority they do not in fact possess.

Nevertheless, our two young authors, doing *The Wanderer’s* bidding, piously invoked the example of St. Gerard, an 18th century saint who remained silent in the face of a false accusation that he had engaged in fornication. They suggested that Father Gruner should likewise quietly endure his non-existent “suspension.” But what does remaining silent in the face of a false *accusation* have to do with “obedience” to an unjust, unfounded and impossible *command* of a superior—especially when the superior in question can no longer rightly claim authority because the priest in question has been incardinated by another bishop? No one *commanded* St. Gerard to remain silent, and thus his case in no way involved the question whether Catholics ought to obey an unjust command and submit to an abuse of power by a superior. The authors’ reference to the example of St. Gerard made no sense at all. Equally senseless was

null and void from the beginning. Canon 1318 does not allow the bishop to threaten a “*latae sententiae*” penalty unless (“*nisi*”) perhaps for “certain particularly treacherous offenses (*singularia quaedam delicta dolosa*). For a crime to be “*dolosum*” it must be a “deliberate performance of an unlawful act ... involving trickery or deceit,” and “bad faith.” (Lewis & Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, p. 570)

No one can reasonably claim that Father Gruner acted “*dolose*”, i.e. deliberately and in bad faith, when he refused to obey a precept to reside permanently as an illegal alien in Italy. Therefore, the threatened penalty is null and void.

Moreover, Father Gruner was not subject to “any penalty” (*nulli poenae*) because one is exempt from penalty if acting “out of grave fear, even if only relatively grave, or out of necessity or out of serious inconvenience.” (Canon 1323, 4^o) Now one who is subject to arrest by the Italian authorities, imprisonment and deportation can most reasonably claim to have not obeyed for reasons of grave fear, necessity and grave inconvenience. Even one, who without fault, thought that such condition existed, cannot be penalized (Canon 1323, 7^o), and one who “erroneously and culpably thought” that such conditions of grave fear, necessity or grave inconvenience” (Canon 1324, 8^o) existed is exempt from “*latae sententiae*” penalties. (Can. 1324§3)

the authors’ reference to the Virgin Mary’s consent to become the Mother of God. What did this have to do with the right of the faithful under Church law not to be punished for “failing” to “obey” unjust and impossible commands?

Equally unavailing was the authors’ claim that Father Gruner should follow the example of Sister Lucy herself, who has lived her life “as a holy example of submission and obedience to legitimate authority.” Father Gruner had the perfect right under Church law not to be punished if he had done nothing wrong, and Church law excuses one from any penalty if the act penalized was done out of necessity or to avoid grave inconvenience. Moreover, the authors failed to note that as the member of a religious order, Sister Lucy was required to take a vow of holy obedience which is more demanding than the promise of ordinary due obedience taken by diocesan (secular) priests like Father Gruner, who live and work in the world. A diocesan priest has many rights that priests and nuns in religious orders do not have, including freedom of association and the right to found and operate associations of the faithful, such as Father Gruner’s Fatima apostolate.²¹⁹ The Code of Canon Law provides a whole host of protections against unjust commands for priests in Father Gruner’s position, including the protections and excuses from operation of penalties I have discussed here. Is Church law of no account? Must a priest submit to any injustice imposed upon him, no matter what rights the law of the Church might guarantee? In that case, why have a Code of Canon Law at all? If “obedience” is the only law, why not repeal the Code and replace it with the dictum: “All commands of superiors, no matter how unjust, must be obeyed.” That, essentially, is what the authors were advocating.

At any rate, as Father Gruner had pointed out many times, we are not dealing here with an injustice merely personal to him, as was the false accusation against St. Gerard. Father Gruner might well have preferred to suffer the personal injustice of “returning” to Avellino and living a quiet life with his books and superior Italian cuisine, rather than undergoing the constant stress of defending his apostolate and his good name against constant attacks from every Tom, Dick and Harry that would like to take a potshot at him, including our two young authors. But the injustice against Father Gruner personally extended beyond him to threaten the very existence of an apostolate that was (and is) inarguably the world’s most effective promoter of the Message of Fatima, which is precisely why the Party Line requires its extinction. If the apostolate’s position is correct—i.e., that the failure to consecrate Russia will lead to the worldwide calamity Our

²¹⁹ See, e.g. Canon 278, 298, 299: “Secular clerics have the right of association with others for the achievement of purposes befitting the clerical state.”

Lady of Fatima described as the *annihilation* of various nations—then millions of lives and the eternal fate of millions of souls are bound up in fulfillment of the Message. That being the case, the destruction of the apostolate would have significant consequences for the Church’s common good, to say the least.

The Right to Resist an Abuse of Power

Furthermore, to recall the words of the Archbishop of Hyderabad: “evil forces have conspired to destroy your work of love... bureaucratic forces cannot stifle God’s work.” Indeed, a true example of Catholic virtue in the face of injustice is the Archbishop himself, who had the courage to stand up to high and mighty bureaucrats of the sort that have plagued Rome throughout the Church’s long history. The Archbishop’s own actions reflect the *Catholic* teaching, rooted in the natural law, that the faithful have a God-given right to resist a prelate’s abuse of power, even if that prelate is *the Pope himself*. The eminent 16th century Catholic theologian Francisco Suarez explained the same principle as follows:

If [the Pope] gives an order contrary to right customs, he should not be obeyed; *if he attempts to do something manifestly opposed to justice and the common good, it will be lawful to resist him*; if he attacks by force, by force he can be repelled, with a moderation appropriate to a just defense.²²⁰

Likewise, St. Robert Bellarmine, a Doctor of the Church, taught that:

Just as it is licit to resist the Pontiff that aggresses the body, it is also licit to resist the one who aggresses souls or who disturbs civil order, or, above all, who attempts to destroy the Church. I say that it is licit to resist him by not doing what he orders and by preventing his will from being executed; it is not licit, however, to judge, punish or depose him, since these acts are proper to a superior.²²¹

Thus, for example, Polycrates of Ephesus and the synods of Asia Minor were within their rights in *refusing to obey* the command of Pope St. Victor I that they abandon the quartodeciman Easter. As the *Catholic Encyclopedia* notes: “The *resistance* of the Asiatic bishops involved no denial of the supremacy of Rome. It indicates solely that the bishops believed St. Victor to be abusing his power in bidding them renounce a custom for which they had Apostolic authority.” If even a sainted Pope can be resisted when he abuses his power attempting to destroy an ancient custom in the Church, all the more

²²⁰ *De Fide*, Disp. X, Sec. VI, N. 16.

²²¹ St. Robert Bellarmine, *De Romano Pontifice*, Book II, Chapter 29.

can Vatican bureaucrats be resisted when they abuse their power by attempting to orchestrate the bogus “suspension” of a faithful priest in order to further the illicit aim of burying any recollection of the Mother of God’s prophetic warnings to the Church and the world at Fatima.

But Vere and McElhinney not only ignored the natural law principle that members of the faithful have the right to resist an abuse of power, they ignored the teaching of the Magisterium on the proper exercise of authority by a bishop over his priests. The relation between a bishop and his priests is like the relation between a father and son. As the Council of Trent teaches: “Bishops and all ordinaries must be pastors not persecutors. They must rule their subjects but not dominate them. They must love their subjects as brothers and sons...”²²² This means, obviously, that prelates, like natural fathers, have no right before God or man to punish their priests when no offense has been committed or to “suspend” them for “failing” to do the impossible.

In short, the notion of priestly “obedience” the authors advocated was more appropriate to Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia than the Catholic Church. But is it not this very notion of a false and blind obedience to every command that has reduced the post-Conciliar Church to a shambles? Are we not today witnessing a situation in which faithful priests are routinely punished for “disobedience” while true enemies of the Church are ignored or even rewarded for their acts of ecclesiastical treason? Do we not see precisely that condition of injustice lamented by Saint Basil the Great at the height of the Arian heresy?: “Only one offense is now vigorously punished, an accurate observance of our fathers’ traditions.”

Despising the Fatima Prophecy

In the process of defending the Party Line on Fatima, it was only a matter of time before *The Wanderer* had to attack the very credibility of the Message of Fatima itself. For the Party Line’s defenders have gotten themselves in a terrible bind. For decades they have maintained that Russia was consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1984 and that anyone who says otherwise is “disloyal to the Holy Father”—who himself has conspicuously refrained from pronouncing authoritatively on the matter. But, for decades, the evidence of Russia’s ever worsening spiritual and material condition has been piling up. As the tension between reality and the Party Line becomes unsustainable, it finally becomes necessary to drop

²²² Council of Trent, quoted in Canon 2214 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law: *Meminerint Episcopi aliique Ordinarii se pastores non percussore esse, atque ita praeesse, sibi subditis oportere, ut non in eis dominantur, ses illos tamquam filios et fratres diligant.*

the pretense of respect for the Fatima event and openly declare that perhaps it was never really worthy of belief in the first place, which was precisely the innuendo of the “official” Vatican commentary on the Third Secret with its citation to Father Dhanis, a leading Fatima skeptic. Better that than to admit the Party Line is a fraud.

At *The Wanderer* that moment came in October 2001, just over a year after the Vatican’s disclosure of the vision of the “Bishop dressed in White.” In the aforementioned article by Farley Clinton, *The Wanderer* revealed that it was to be numbered among Our Lady of Fatima’s false friends. Wrote Clinton:

Father Edouard Dhanis suggested, not implausibly, in the early 1940s that *the Blessed Virgin could not have asked for the consecration of Russia by the Pope and the bishops—for it is morally impossible. God does not demand impossibilities.* Sixty years ago, the Church looked much less infested by imposters than now, the bishops less likely to be recalcitrant. But Dhanis saw great practical difficulties even then from the fact that Russia was a Marxist nation, of Orthodox tradition.

There it was, right on the pages of *The Wanderer*. Siding with a Modernist Jesuit who contributed heavily to the infamously heretical Dutch Catechism,²²³ a leading neo-Catholic organ now openly repudiated the Message of Fatima, daring to suggest that the Blessed Virgin never asked for the Consecration of Russia and that Sister Lucy simply made the whole thing up. In other words, *The Wanderer* was now willing to say that perhaps *Sister Lucy was a liar*—a very pious liar, to be sure, who sincerely believed her lies, but a liar nonetheless, who had misled the entire Catholic Church for the better part of a century until her death in 2005.

As Dhanis himself had 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 Lucy. 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.”²²⁴ That Sister Lucy’s testimony was authenticated by an unprecedented public miracle witnessed by 70,000 people did not impress Dhanis.

²²³ See, *The Devil’s Final Battle*, edited and compiled by Father Paul Kramer (Terryville, Connecticut: The Missionary Association, 2002), Chapters 5-9, “Appendix: A Chronology of the Fatima Cover-up”; Francis Alban and Christopher A. Ferrara, *Fatima Priest*, Fourth Edition, Chapters 9-13, 18-20.

²²⁴ Dhanis’ entire thesis against Fatima is explained and critiqued in Frère Michel, *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, Vol. I, Part II, Chapter 1. All quotations concerning the writings of Dhanis are taken from this chapter of Frère Michel’s work.

No, according to him, God worked a miracle in order to vouch for His choice of *an unreliable witness*. This borderline blasphemy was now being advanced by *The Wanderer*.

In Chapter 5 we saw how, in the Vatican’s commentary on the Third Secret, Cardinal Ratzinger called Dhanis an “eminent scholar” on Marian apparitions, including the apparitions at Fatima. But this “eminent scholar” refused to examine the official Fatima archives which are the very basis of Fatima scholarship. Then, relying on his willful ignorance of the facts, Dhanis cast doubt on every aspect of the apparitions that did not accord with his Modernist theology: the prayer taught by the angel he called “inexact”; the vision of hell he called an “exaggeratedly medieval representation”; the prophecy of “a night illumined by an unknown light” heralding the advent of World War II he described as “grounds for suspicion”. And as for the consecration of Russia, Dhanis flatly declared that: “Russia could not be consecrated by the Pope, without this act taking on the air of a challenge, both in regard to the separated hierarchy, as well as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. *This would make the consecration practically unrealizable.*” Thus, Dhanis declared that the consecration of Russia would be “morally impossible by reason of the reactions it would normally provoke.” Says who? Says Dhanis, who evidently considered himself more prudent than the Mother of God.

Dhanis’ deconstruction of the Message of Fatima is a typical example of how Modernists undermine truth based upon premises they themselves invent. Since the consecration of Russia is morally impossible—a premise Dhanis assumed without proof—how could Our Lady of Fatima have requested it? Having thus stacked the deck against Sister Lucy, Dhanis stated the “inevitable” conclusion: “But could the Most Holy Virgin have requested a consecration which, taken according to the rigor of the terms, would be practically unrealizable? This question indeed seems to call for a ‘negative response’. Thus, it hardly seems probable that Our Lady asked for the consecration of Russia.”²²⁵ Based entirely on his own premise he had not bothered to demonstrate, Dhanis pronounced Sister Lucy’s testimony a fake. The entire process of “refutation” occurred in Dhanis’ head, with no examination by this “eminent scholar” of the crucial documents contained in the Fatima archives.

But there was one premise Dhanis—and *The Wanderer*—forgot, a premise that Catholics are bound to accept: With God, all things are possible. On the other hand, the omnipotence of God has never figured very prominently in the thinking of “eminent scholars” like the Modernist Dhanis. Nor, it would seem, is divine omnipotence of any account in the editorial policy of “establishment” newspapers

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

like *The Wanderer* respecting the Fatima event. Rather, their faith would appear to lie in the dictates of Vatican bureaucrats who have no authority over the matter in the first place.

Why?

There have been at least a dozen *Wanderer* articles attacking Father Gruner on one pretext or another, although not even *The Wanderer* can deny his orthodoxy and commitment to the sacred priesthood. This is a priest who has traveled the world spreading authentic Roman Catholicism, including devotion to the Blessed Virgin; a priest whose sound preaching and distribution of millions of Brown and Green Scapulars have helped to obtain innumerable conversions; a priest whose apostolate supports an orphanage in one of the most impoverished regions of the world.

Another example of this bizarre anti-Gruner editorial campaign was an article condemning Father Gruner's opposition to Communion in the hand and women attending Mass with uncovered heads.²²⁶ Generally, however, *The Wanderer* assails Father Gruner for his objection to the effort by members of the Vatican apparatus to revise the Message of Fatima to suit the Secretary of State's Party Line—including a 1984 "consecration" of Russia that deliberately avoided any mention of Russia so that the Russian Orthodox would not be offended.

The Wanderer's obsession with discrediting Father Gruner is a very curious editorial priority, given the widespread moral and doctrinal corruption in the priesthood today. But what is to account for it? The answer would appear to be that *The Wanderer's* editorial policy is in keeping with its general line of enabling the post-Conciliar revolution in the Church by helpfully denouncing anyone who opposes the "reforms" of the revolution. *The Wanderer* is not merely a servitor of the Party Line on Fatima, but also the entire program of the party of the innovators, whose disastrous handiwork was foreseen by the future Pius XII in light of the Fatima revelations.

Be it the ruinous imposition of the New Mass, Communion in the hand, altar girls, or even papal prayer meetings with witchdoctors, *The Wanderer* has been there to defend the innovation and to condemn any significant opposition to it by tradition-minded Catholics. Hence the famous family split between Al Matt, editor of *The Wanderer*, and Walter Matt, his cousin, who left *The Wanderer* to found *The Remnant* newspaper in 1967 in order to offer loyal opposition to the changes already being imposed on the Church by Vatican bureaucrats, including Bugnini, with disastrous effect.

²²⁶ That attack on Father Gruner was responded to at length in the article "Defending the Revolution," in the March 2003 issue of *Catholic Family News*.

As the human element of the Church descended ever deeper into chaos and apostasy, *The Wanderer* became ever more obstinate in its defense of destructive novelties the great pre-Conciliar popes would undoubtedly have viewed with utter horror. Just imagine St. Pius X’s reaction to what *The Wanderer* would defend as “reverent” Novus Ordo Mass, complete with altar table, Communion in the hand, lay ministers—*The Wanderer*’s editor is himself a lay “lector”—and banal music.

Only a perverse determination to defend indefensible changes in the Church—the very changes foreseen with dread by Pius XII—could explain *The Wanderer*’s preoccupation with Father Gruner. Since Father Gruner is clearly the world’s foremost exponent of the “old”—that is to say, the authentic—Message of Fatima, *The Wanderer*’s ongoing defense of the post-Conciliar “reform” of the Church in general would logically impel it to condemn the most prominent opponent of the “reform” of Fatima. Just as *The Wanderer* defends the scandalous novelties of Communion in the hand and altar girls (while perhaps “preferring” more traditional practices), so it now defends a Fatima message scandalously innovated according to the dictates of the Vatican Secretary of State and his collaborators.