

Chapter 2

Gateway to the Secret

One cannot appreciate why Socci has reached the conclusion that there is “a part of the Secret not revealed and considered unspeakable” without at least a basic understanding of the evidence he reviewed. That evidence falls into two categories: (a) evidence of the general nature and location of the undisclosed text of the Secret, and (b) evidence of the specific content of this text. This chapter will consider the first category of evidence.

The Secret was too terrible to write

In Chapter 1 I noted that in her Third Memoir Sister Lucia made it clear that at that time (1941) she was going to reveal only the first two parts of the Great Secret of July 13, 1917. But when it came to writing the third part, the Third Secret, the historical record shows that Lucia, who had written freely of something as dire as the annihilation of nations, was subject to a mysterious impediment.

According to the account of Father Joaquin Alonso, the official Fatima archivist, in the summer of 1943, fearing that Lucia would die of pleurisy and take the Secret with her to the grave, Bishop da Silva and Canon José Galamba Oliveira, the Bishop’s friend and close advisor, suggested during a conversation in September with the seer that she reveal the Secret if she “wished” to do so. Lucia gave this surprising reply: “Now, if His Grace wants, I can *tell* it to him.” When the Bishop objected that he did not want to “meddle” in such a serious matter, Canon Galamba suggested that at least Lucia “write it down on *a piece of paper* and give it to you [the Bishop] in a sealed envelope.”³⁴

And there the problem arose. Lucia declined this suggestion without a direct formal order from the Bishop, protesting: “It seems

³⁴Quoted in Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima: The Third Secret* (Buffalo, New York: Immaculate Heart Publications, 2001) (hereafter *WTAF*), Vol. III, p. 40.

to me that to write it down is already, in a way, to disclose it, and I do not yet have Our Lord's permission to do that. In any case, as I am used to seeing the will of God in the wishes of my superiors, I am thinking of obedience and I don't know what to do. I prefer an express command which I can rely on before God, so that I can say in all security, 'They ordered me to do that, Lord'...."³⁵

The order was given in mid-October of 1943 by way of a letter from Bishop da Silva. As Lucia recorded: "They have ordered me to write down the part of the Secret that Our Lady revealed in 1917, and which I still keep hidden by command of the Lord. They tell me either to write it in the notebooks in which I've been told to keep my spiritual diary, or if I wish, to write it on a sheet of paper, put it in an envelope, close it and seal it up."³⁶ Note well Sister Lucia's reference to two different modes of writing the Secret, pointing already to the possible existence of two different but related texts.

Yet despite having received a direct written order from her bishop, Lucia, who had lived a life of holy obedience, could not obey. For more than two months she struggled to write the Secret, but could not bring herself to put pen to paper. In a letter to Archbishop Garcia y Garcia, Lucia confided that this impediment "was not due to natural causes."³⁷ As Lucia later revealed, it was only after the Blessed Virgin appeared to her in the convent at Tuy on January 2, 1944 to confirm it was indeed God's will, that she was finally able to comply with Bishop da Silva's order.³⁸

The inference is inescapable: The contents of the Third Secret must be terrible indeed if this obedient cloistered nun required a special apparition and directive of the Mother of God in order to obey her own bishop's command to write it down. The Secret must involve something even worse than the world wars and the annihilation of nations Sister Lucia had already revealed in the first two parts of Great Secret. Father Alonso, who spoke from the experience of sixteen years as the official archivist of Fatima and had many conversations with Sister Lucia, aptly observed: "Had it been merely a matter of prophesying new and severe punishments, Sister Lucia would not have experienced difficulties

³⁵Ibid., p. 42.

³⁶Father Joaquin Alonso, *La verdad sobre el Secreto de Fátima* (Madrid: Centro Mariano, 1976), p. 39; quoted in *WTAF*, Vol. III, p. 44.

³⁷Alonso, *La verdad sobre el Secreto de Fátima*, p. 41; quoted in *WTAF*, Vol. III, p. 45.

³⁸See *WTAF*, Vol. III, pp. 40-48 for a full historical account of this episode.

so great that a special intervention from Heaven was needed to overcome them."³⁹

The Secret involves a letter to the Bishop of Fatima

Although the Secret was committed to paper in January 1944, it was not until June 17 of that year that Sister Lucia entrusted it to the Archbishop of Gurza for personal delivery to Bishop da Silva on the evening of the same day. Lucia had placed the Secret in a sealed envelope which was, in turn, placed inside one of the notebooks containing her spiritual notes. As Lucia wrote to Bishop da Silva on January 9, 1944: "I have written what you asked me; God willed to try me a little, but finally, this was indeed His will: it [the Secret] is sealed in an envelope *and it is in the notebooks...*"⁴⁰

That is, in obedience to the order to write down the Third Secret, Lucia had consigned *both* a sealed envelope *and* her notebooks to Bishop da Silva, giving another early indication that, just as Socci has concluded, there are two distinct but related texts of the Third Secret: one written in Sister Lucia's notebook, which would be the vision of the "Bishop dressed in white" that the Vatican revealed in 2000, and a separate text in a sealed envelope, which Socci and millions of other Catholics believe is being concealed. As we will see, that is exactly the case.

Here it must be noted for future reference that when the Bishop of Fatima received the sealed envelope from Lucia, he placed it in a sealed envelope of his own, on which he wrote the following inscription:

This envelope with its contents shall be entrusted
to His Eminence Cardinal D. Manuel [Cerejeira],
Patriarch of Lisbon, after my death.

Leiria, December 8, 1945
† Jose, Bishop of Leiria⁴¹

As for what was in the sealed envelope that Sister Lucia gave

³⁹Alonso, *La verdad sobre el Secreto de Fátima*, p. 82.

⁴⁰Joaquín Alonso, *Fátima 50*, October 13, 1967, p. 11; quoted in *WTAF*, Vol. III, pp. 46-47.

⁴¹*Ibid*: *Este envelope com o seu conteudo sera entregue a Sua Eminencia O Sr. D. Manuel, Patriarca de Lisboa, depois da minha morte.*
Leiria, 8 Dezembro de 1945
† Jose, Bispo de Leiria

her bishop, she described it as “a letter to the Bishop of Leiria.”⁴² Therefore, we know from Sister Lucia herself that the Secret was written in the form of a letter to Bishop Jose da Silva. On this point we also have the testimony of Father Hubert Jongen, a Dutch Montfortian, who traveled to Fatima to conduct research in order to defend the authenticity of the Fatima apparitions against attacks by the modernist Dutchman, Fr. Edouard Dhanis. During questioning of Sister Lucia on February 3-4, 1946, Father Jongen had the following exchange with the seer:

“You have already made known two parts of the Secret. When will the time arrive for the third part?”
 “I communicated the third part *in a letter* to the Bishop of Leiria,” she answered.⁴³

Thirteen years later Pope John XXIII’s diary would note the following, according to the Vatican’s official account: “Audiences: Father Philippe, Commissary of the Holy Office, who brought me *the letter* containing the third part of the secrets of Fatima...”⁴⁴ A year after this entry, the Vatican’s announcement concerning the Third Secret, discussed further below, would refer to “*the letter*... in which Sister Lucia wrote down *the words* which Our Lady confided as a secret to the three little shepherds in the Cova da Iria.”

Thus, we know from the historical record that a text of the Secret *in letter form*, revealing the *words* of the Virgin, was contained in an assemblage of *two* envelopes: Sister Lucia’s inner sealed envelope, and Bishop da Silva’s own outer sealed envelope on which was written his instructions for the disposition of the Secret after his death. This fact will have decisive importance later on, as we shall see in Chapter 8.

The Secret is found in a telltale “etc”

What is in this letter? Sister Lucia herself provided a crucial hint in her Fourth Memoir, written between October and December 1941 at the direction of Bishop da Silva, who wanted a more complete record of the apparitions. In the Fourth Memoir

⁴²Revue *Mediatrice et Reine*, October 1946, pp. 110-112; see also WTAF, Vol. III, p. 470.

⁴³Revue *Mediatrice et Reine*, October 1946, pp. 110-112; see also WTAF, Vol. III, p. 470.

⁴⁴*The Message of Fatima*, p. 4.

Sister Lucia declared that she would write of everything “With the exception of that part of the Secret which I am not permitted to reveal at present...”⁴⁵ But, after restating the first and second parts of the Great Secret as already set forth in her Third Memoir (August 1941), Sister Lucia added to the integral text the words which have, ever since, been at the heart of the Third Secret controversy: “In Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved etc.”⁴⁶ *Tell this to no one. Yes, you may tell Francisco.*” (Francisco had only seen, but not heard, the Virgin during the apparitions.)

Sister Lucia had added “etc” to Our Lady’s words to indicate a discourse by the Virgin that involved a subject clearly different from the first two parts of the Great Secret. Without more—much more—the reference to the preservation of dogma in Portugal would make no sense at all in the context of the first two parts. Yet there it was in the Fourth Memoir, set forth as an integral part of what Our Lady had confided to Lucia, the last surviving visionary of Fatima, for the good of the Church and the world.

Hence it was apparent as early as 1941 that the interrupted *words* of the Virgin were continued in the Third Secret, wherein the Virgin has other things to say besides what she had said in the first two parts of the Great Secret as a whole. And, indeed, when Sister Lucia was asked about the contents of the Third Secret in 1943, she replied: “In a certain way I have already revealed it.”⁴⁷ That is, she had revealed it with the phrase “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc”, which appears in the Fourth, but not the Third, Memoir, and is the only significant difference between the recording of the Great Secret in both memoirs.

The Secret has two parts

That Sister Lucia’s “etc” held the place for words of the Virgin which belong to the Third Secret was confirmed in 1952, when an Austrian Jesuit, Father Joseph Schweigl, was sent by Pius XII to interrogate Sister Lucia in her convent at Coimbra. The interrogation took place on September 2nd of that year. While

⁴⁵Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité, *The Whole Truth About Fatima: The Secret and the Church* (Buffalo, New York: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1990) (hereafter WTAF), Vol. II, p. 37.

⁴⁶“*Em Portugal se conservera sempre o doguema da fe etc.*”

⁴⁷Father Joaquin Alonso, *La verdad sobre el Secreto de Fátima*, p. 64; see also WTAF, Vol. III, p. 684.

bound not to reveal the precise contents of Sister Lucia's statements regarding the Secret, Schweigl did make the following statement: "I may not reveal anything with regard to the Third Secret, but I am able to say that it has two parts: One part concerns the Pope. The other part is the logical continuation—though I may not say anything—of *the words*: 'In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc.'"⁴⁸

To this testimony must be added that of Canon Casimir Barthas (a renowned Fatima expert), who interrogated Sister Lucia concerning the Third Secret on October 17-18, 1946. Barthas likewise reported: "The text of *the words of Our Lady* was written by Sister Lucia and enclosed in a sealed envelope."⁴⁹ Further, no less than Cardinal Ottaviani, then Secretary of the Holy Office, interrogated Lucia in 1955 concerning the Secret, later revealing that "She wrote on a sheet of paper [*folha* in Portuguese] *what Our Lady told her* to tell the Holy Father."⁵⁰ Ottaviani read the Secret himself and can hardly have been mistaken in his reference to what Our Lady *told* Lucia to *tell* the Holy Father.

So, it was clear very early on that the Third Secret of Fatima has two parts, one of which presents the *spoken words* of the Virgin Mary embraced within Sister Lucia's "etc".

The Secret is written on a single page

On orders from Rome, the Secret was taken from the custody of the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima and delivered to the papal nuncio, Monsignor Cento, in Lisbon on March 16, 1957, by whom it was delivered to the Vatican in April of that year, along with the accompanying notebooks of Sister Lucia and photocopies of all her writings on file in the chancery of Leiria.⁵¹

Before the Secret was transmitted to Rome, however, auxiliary Bishop Venancio held Bishop da Silva's outer envelope up to the

⁴⁸WTAF, Vol. III, p. 710.

⁴⁹Quoted in Laurent Morlier, *The Third Secret of Fatima* (Éditions D.F.T., 2001), p. 196.

⁵⁰Remarks during the Fifth Mariological Conference in the great hall of the Antonianum in Rome, February 11, 1967; quoted in Alonso, *La verdad sobre el Secreto de Fátima*, p. 65. Cardinal Ottaviani's phrase "to tell the Holy Father" appears to be an extrapolation of his, which if anything would highlight the importance of the Secret. In any case, the Cardinal confirms the hard fact that the Secret contains words of the Virgin Mary.

⁵¹WTAF, Vol. III, pp. 479-481.

light and was able to see that it contained Sister Lucia's inner envelope, wherein he could discern "an ordinary sheet of paper" with $\frac{3}{4}$ centimeter margins on which were written approximately 25 lines.⁵² He took the exact measurements of the interior envelope—12 centimeters by 18 centimeters—and recorded this information in a document preserved in the Fatima archives.⁵³ Cardinal Ottaviani would later affirm that the Secret was indeed written on a single page comprising 25 lines.

The Secret was lodged in the papal apartment

We know that the sealed envelope containing the Secret was lodged, not in the Archives of the Holy Office proper, but rather in the papal bedchamber of Pius XII for personal safekeeping by the Pope himself as a "secret of the Holy Office," of which the Pope was then head. Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité provides the historical evidence:

... we now know that the precious envelope sent to Rome by Msgr. Cento was not placed in the Archives of the Holy Office, but that Pius XII wanted to keep it in his own apartment.

Father Caillon received this information from the mouth of journalist Robert Serrou, who himself got it from Mother Pasqualina, in this way. Robert Serrou was doing a photo story for *Paris-Match* in the apartments of Pius XII. Mother Pasqualina—this woman of great common sense who directed the handful of Sisters acting as the Pope's housekeepers, and who sometimes received his confidences—was present.

Before a little wooden safe placed on a table and bearing the inscription '*Secretum Sancti Officii*' (Secret of the Holy Office), the journalist questioned the Mother:

⁵²Ibid., p. 81; Frère François de Marie des Anges, *Fatima: Tragedy and Triumph* (Buffalo, New York: Immaculate Heart Publications, 1994), p. 45. Cardinal Ottaviani would later state that the text of the Secret comprised 25 lines, as also revealed by the renowned Mariologist Rene Laurentin (who had spoken to Ottaviani about the Secret). Cardinal Bertone would acknowledge Ottaviani's testimony in his book *The Last Visionary of Fatima* and on national television in Italy on May 31, 2007 (on the *Door to Door* TV program), while claiming to be "amazed" by it.

⁵³See "Bertone nel 'Vespaio' delle Polemiche" ("Bertone in the 'Wasp's Nest' of the Polemics"), *Libero*, June 2, 2007.

“Mother, what is in this little safe?” She answered:
 “The third Secret of Fatima is in there ...”

The photograph of this safe—which we have reproduced here [see photo in [photo insert section](#)]—was published in *Paris-Match* a year and a half later, in two instances, on the occasion of Pius XII’s death...⁵⁴

The details of Serrou’s testimony were later confirmed in a letter to Frère Michel on January 10, 1985:

... I can confirm for you that I did indeed do a story in Pius XII’s apartment on May 14, 1957, in the late morning, that is a little over a year before the Pope’s death.... It is exact that Mother Pasqualina did tell me, while showing me a little safe bearing a label with the mention, “Secret of the Holy Office”: “In there is the third Secret of Fatima.”⁵⁵

In written replies to questions from Father Joaquin Alonso, the official Fatima archivist, dated July 24, 1977, Archbishop Loris Capovilla, the personal secretary of Pius XII’s successor, John XXIII, confirmed that Pope John read a text of the Secret on August 17, 1959. Socci notes Capovilla’s contemporaneous written account that Pope John directed him to write on the outside of “the envelope” (*plico*) or “wrapping” (*involucro*): “I give no judgment.”⁵⁶ Capovilla also recounted that after Pope John read the Secret, he returned the text to its envelope, which was kept “in the bureau of his bedroom until his death. Paul VI asked for information about the envelope shortly after his election.”⁵⁷

In a letter dated June 20, 1977, to Fatima scholar Father José Geraldes Freire, Capovilla likewise confirmed that the Secret “was kept in the writing table of John XXIII’s apartment until his death.”⁵⁸ Archbishop Capovilla has further testified that Paul VI retrieved the envelope containing the Secret from that same writing desk for reading within days of his election in 1963.⁵⁹

⁵⁴WTAF, Vol. III, pp. 484-485.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 485-486.

⁵⁶Socci, *Fourth Secret*, pp. 143, 165.

⁵⁷*Lampade viventi*, March 1978, pp. 72-74; quoted in WTAF, Vol. III, pp. 570-571.

⁵⁸José Geraldes Freire, *O Segredo de Fátima, A Terceira Parte e sobre Portugal?* (Santuário de Fátima, 1978), pp. 181-182; quoted in WTAF, Vol. III, p. 572.

⁵⁹See further discussion in Chapter 6.

Thus, a text of the Secret—recall that the Secret has two parts, per Father Schweigl—was located in the papal apartment, not the Holy Office, during the pontificates of Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI. It was most probably still in the papal apartment when Pope John Paul II was elected in 1978 and read the Secret himself in that year—a fact Cardinal Bertone is at pains to evade, as we shall see in Chapter 7.

The Secret contains difficult Portuguese expressions

Archbishop Capovilla has also revealed that when Pope John opened the envelope and tried to read the Portuguese text of the Secret in August of 1959, he was unable to do so because of “difficulty caused by expressions proper to the language,”⁶⁰ and “Portuguese dialect expressions,”⁶¹ and that the Pope had to wait for a translation to be prepared by Father Paulo Tavares, a native Portuguese translator attached to the Secretariat of State.⁶²

On the other hand, Cardinal Ottaviani testified that Pope John read a text of the Secret in 1960, that was contained in *another sealed envelope*: “Still sealed, it was taken later, in 1960, to Pope John XXIII. The Pope *broke the seal*, and opened the envelope. Although it was in Portuguese, he told me afterwards *that he understood the text in its entirety*.”⁶³ Here we have another early indication of the existence of two distinct but related texts of the Secret. As Socci concludes: “These two opposed affirmations [by Capovilla and Ottaviani] can be explained by holding that the matter treats of two different readings of two different texts.”⁶⁴ That is, there are two texts: one read in August 1959, containing especially difficult expressions of the Portuguese language the Pope could not understand without the aid of a translation provided days later; and another text, read in 1960, which the Pope found perfectly comprehensible, evidently because it did *not* contain any such difficult expressions.

As Socci demonstrates in an appendix to *Fourth Secret* prepared by a Portuguese linguist, *there are no difficult idioms or expressions of*

⁶⁰WTAF, Vol. II, p. 556.

⁶¹Socci, *Fourth Secret*, p. 150; citing *Perspective in the World*, VI, 1991.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³WTAF, Vol. III, p. 557.

⁶⁴Socci, *Fourth Secret*, p. 150.

Portuguese dialect in the text of the vision published by the Vatican in June 2000.⁶⁵

The Secret is linked to 1960

Sister Lucia provided yet another early clue to the content of the Secret when she insisted that the Bishop of Fatima promise that the sealed envelope in which she had sent him the Secret “would definitely be opened and read to the world either at her death or in 1960, whichever would come first.”⁶⁶ On the outside of the envelope Sister Lucia had described as “a letter,” she had, accordingly, written: “By express order of Our Lady, this envelope can only be opened in 1960 by the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon or the Bishop of Leiria.”⁶⁷

Sister Lucia later explained the significance of this date to Cardinal Ottaviani during the 1955 interrogation. As Ottaviani revealed in the aforementioned public address: “The message was not to be opened before 1960. I asked Sister Lucia, ‘Why this date?’ She answered, ‘Because then it will be clearer (*mais claro*).’”⁶⁸ In answer to the same question from Canon Barthas in 1946, Lucia replied simply: “Because Our Lady wishes it so.”⁶⁹

Thus, Sister Lucia, acting on “the express order of Our Lady,” linked the Secret to the year 1960. One can only conclude that there must be some major historical event in close proximity to that year which would make the contents of the Secret “more clear.” Only one such event was in view as of 1960: the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which John XXIII had announced on January 25, 1959. This date was *the very anniversary of the “night illumined by an unknown light”*, January 25, 1938, which the second part of the Great Secret predicts as the sign of the beginning of World War II

⁶⁵See linguistic analysis of the text of the vision by Dr. Mariagrazia Russo at Socci, *Fourth Secret*, pp. 241ff.

⁶⁶Quoted in Alonso, *La verdad sobre el Secreto de Fátima*, pp. 46-47. See also WTAF, Vol. III, p. 470.

⁶⁷“Por ordem expressa de Nossa Senhora este envelope só pode ser aberto em 1960, por Sua Ex.^{cia} Rev.^{ma} o Senhor Cardeal Patriarca de Lisboa ou por Sua Ex.^{cia} Rev.^{ma} o Senhor Bispo de Leiria.” (Envelope shown by Cardinal Bertone on May 31, 2007 on national television in Italy—see photo on p. 126.) The emphasis is mine.

⁶⁸*Documentation Catholique*, March 19, 1967, Col. 542; cited in WTAF, Vol. III, p. 725.

⁶⁹Canon Barthas, *Fatima, Merveille du XX^e Siècle* (Fatima-Editions, 1952), p. 83.

and the other dire events predicted in the Second Secret.⁷⁰

It can hardly be a mere coincidence that immediately after the Council's conclusion in 1965 the Church suffered the ecclesial equivalent of a world war: a catastrophic decline in every aspect of her life, from the number of religious vocations to Mass attendance to baptisms and conversions.⁷¹ Within a few years of the Council seminaries and convents emptied, while tens of thousands of priests and nuns defected from their vocations. According to the Vatican's own statistics, published in *L'Osservatore Romano* in 2006, in 1965 there were 455,000 Catholic priests in the world, but by 1975 there were only 400,000.⁷² That is, 55,000 priests left the priesthood within ten years after the Council. Such a mass defection of priests had never been seen before in the Church's history. To this day the Church has not recovered. There are now only 406,000 priests in the world, 49,000 fewer than there were 42 years ago, when the Catholic population was much smaller.⁷³

The Secret was to be revealed in 1960

Given the "express order of Our Lady," Cardinal Cerejeira, the Patriarch of Portugal, publicly promised that the Secret "will be opened in 1960." Rome at first voiced no objection. Quite the contrary, Vatican Cardinals Ottaviani and Tisserant publicly echoed the promise of Cardinal Cerejeira, as did numerous other Church authorities.⁷⁴ There was even an American television show entitled "Zero 1960," which took its theme from the universally expected disclosure of the Secret in that year. Produced by the once-militant Blue Army, the show was so popular it received a "star" rating in *The New York Times*.⁷⁵

⁷⁰As the *New York Times* reported the following day: "Aurora borealis startles Europe. People flee, call firemen," January 26, 1938, p. 25.

⁷¹For a definitive statistical analysis see Kenneth Jones, *Index of Leading Catholic Indicators: The Church Since Vatican II* (Oriens Publishing, 2003).

⁷²*L'Osservatore Romano*, April 30, 2006, pp. 8-9, reporting on the publication of the *Annuarium statisticum Ecclesiae 2004* by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴WTAF, Vol. II, p. 528.

⁷⁵Cfr. WTAF, Vol. III, pp. 470-478 for a complete review of the historical evidence that, in keeping with the wishes of the Virgin, the Secret was to be disclosed not later than 1960.

The Secret suppressed, but its format confirmed

As the year 1960 began, the world awaited the Vatican's disclosure of the Third Secret. But it was not to be. On February 8, 1960, the faithful received the news that Pope John had decided to bury the Secret. Acting through a Portuguese press agency, anonymous "Vatican sources" let it be known that the Secret would not be disclosed and "would probably remain, forever, under absolute seal." A reading of the full text of the press release confirmed that the Third Secret involved *words* of the Virgin Mary, presented in the form of a *letter* to be opened *in 1960*:

According to Vatican sources (February 8, 1960), the Secret of Fatima will never be disclosed.

It has just been stated, in very reliable circles of the Vatican, to the representatives of United Press International, that it is most likely that *the letter* will never be opened, in which Sister Lucia wrote down *the words* which Our Lady confided as a secret to the three little shepherds in the Cova da Iria.

As indicated by Sister Lucia, *the letter* can only be opened *during the year 1960*.

Faced with the pressure that has been placed on the Vatican, some wanting the letter to be opened and made known to the world, *others, on the supposition that it may contain alarming prophecies, desiring that its publication be withheld*, the same Vatican circles declare that the Vatican has decided not to make public Sister Lucia's letter, and to continue keeping it *rigorously sealed*.

The decision of the Vatican authorities is based on various reasons: 1. Sister Lucia is still living. 2. The Vatican already knows the contents of *the letter*. 3. Although the Church recognizes the Fatima apparitions, she does not pledge herself to guarantee the veracity of *the words* which the three little shepherds claim to have *heard* from Our Lady.⁷⁶

⁷⁶Francisco, of course, heard Our Lady's words indirectly from Lucia, who had been given permission by Our Lady to tell him, as revealed in the Fourth Memoir: "Yes, you may tell Francisco."

In these circumstances, it is most probable that the Secret of Fatima will remain, forever, under absolute seal. (A.N.I.)⁷⁷

The Secret must be terrible indeed if the Vatican “sources” had decided to place it *forever* under “absolute seal” and even call into question the veracity of the seers themselves in order to attempt a justification for this otherwise inexplicable action. Whatever the Virgin had said following Sister Lucia’s fateful “etc” must be nothing less than sensational, and it must have some relation to the year 1960, the year immediately following Pope John’s announcement to the world of the Second Vatican Council.

Pope John buries the Secret

Socci concludes that the Vatican’s action reveals why it had taken possession of the Secret in 1957: “[T]he bishop of Leiria, Monsignor da Silva, and the patriarch of Lisbon, Cardinal Cerejeira, following the indications given by the Madonna through Sister Lucia, had already announced that they would have divulged the Secret in 1960. It was to ward this off that the Holy Office intervened.”⁷⁸ That is, the Vatican simply did not want the members of the Church or the world at large to know the contents of the Third Secret. Why?

Clearly, the Secret is so explosive that Pope John decided to suppress it despite the “express order” of the Virgin Mary that it was to be opened in 1960. Socci contends that Pope John, who could have read the Secret immediately upon his election to the papacy in October of 1958, deliberately declined to do so because its contents might have impeded his plans for the Council: “[I]t was thought to read the Third Secret immediately, but John XXIII said ‘No, wait.’ First he wanted to announce the convocation of Vatican Council II, almost as if to put before Heaven a *fait accompli*.”⁷⁹ Then, once he had read the Secret, Pope John made the decision to suppress it after convincing himself it was “not entirely supernatural,” but without having “the courage to give such a judgment solemnly and publicly,” because this would involve “almost demolishing all of Fatima.”⁸⁰ Socci refers to the contemporaneous documentation

⁷⁷WTAF, Vol. III, pp. 578-579.

⁷⁸Socci, *Fourth Secret*, p. 36.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 205.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 164.

of Archbishop Capovilla, who records that Pope John, having read the Secret, stated: "I give no judgment."⁸¹

Socci does not hold back in his criticism of Pope John's decision to bury the Secret: "[T]hat Message of the Queen of Prophets [not being] to his liking, before the request of the Madonna that she wished her words to be revealed to the world in 1960, Pope Roncalli decided to do exactly the contrary: he decided to hide that message and not give any explanation either to the Church or the world."⁸² Pope John's decision, writes Socci, "weighed like a boulder on his successors,"⁸³ and may account for the "compromise solution" mentioned in the Introduction: to reveal the text of the vision, while revealing the hidden text of Our Lady's own words indirectly in the papal sermon of John Paul II at Fatima in May of 2000.

Pope Paul VI buries the Secret, and disaster follows

As for the other Pope of the Council, Paul VI, he likewise did nothing about the Secret after having read it within days of his election in 1963, but simply put it away in the same desk drawer from which (as we will see) it had been retrieved for his perusal. Yet as early as 1968 Pope Paul was lamenting that "The Church is in a disturbed period of self-criticism, or what could better be called self-demolition."⁸⁴ And in 1973 Pope Paul admitted "the opening to the world became a veritable invasion of the Church by worldly thinking. We have perhaps been too weak and imprudent."⁸⁵ A year earlier, in perhaps the most astonishing remark ever made by a Roman Pontiff, Paul VI declared that "from somewhere or other the smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God. In the Church too this state of uncertainty reigns. It was believed that after the Council a sunny day in the Church's history would dawn, but instead there came a day of clouds, storms and darkness."⁸⁶

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 164-165.

⁸²Ibid., p. 206.

⁸³Ibid., p. 164.

⁸⁴Speech to the Lombard College, December 7, 1968.

⁸⁵Speech of November 23, 1973.

⁸⁶Address of June 30, 1972; quoted in Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum* (Kansas City: Sarto House, 1998), p. 6.

Socci is no less candid in his criticism of Pope Paul's decision to keep the Secret buried. Socci relates that Paul VI (per his friend and confidant Jean Guittou) dismissed Sister Lucia as "a simple peasant" for whom he had no time, this attitude being in keeping with his "generic aversion to visionaries." Pope Paul was expecting a "laity animated by the spirit of prophecy" as "fruits of the Council," rather than "by the election (and gift) of heaven, as with the children of Fatima." As Socci remarks acidly: "We are still awaiting the 'prophets' of Vatican II. In compensation, we soon saw the fruits of the Council. Terrible." And while Paul VI came to lament that the smoke of Satan had entered the Church, "he persisted in error: the most devastating of the errors was the traumatic surprise attack of a 'minority revolution' that imposed the liturgical reform (with its thousand abuses), hailed by Paul VI, but clearly not blessed by God.... The mode and contents of this 'surprise attack' have had disastrous effects on the orthodoxy and on the faith of the people while—as the writer Guido Ceronetti has noted—that folly 'pleased communist authorities... they were not stupid, having perceived in their bestial ignorance of the sacred that a crack had been opened.'"⁸⁷

Was disclosure of the Secret in 1960 "optional"?

In response to the objection that disclosure of the Secret by the conciliar Popes was merely optional, it suffices to say that the Mother of God would have had no reason to deliver the Secret in the first place had she intended that it would be kept "forever under absolute seal." The Mother of God would not speak in order to be silenced—even by a Pope. As Pope John Paul II himself declared at Fatima in 1982: "Can the Mother, who with all the force of the love that she fosters in the Holy Spirit and desires the salvation of every man, can she remain silent when she sees the very bases of her children's salvation undermined? No, she cannot remain silent." Nor can even the Pope silence her.⁸⁸

And clearly, as Socci concludes, the Virgin must have had something to say about the terrible and unprecedented developments in the Church after 1960, developments that afflict

⁸⁷Socci, *Fourth Secret*, pp. 209-211.

⁸⁸"Può la Madre, la quale con tutta la potenza del suo amore, che nutre nello Spirito Santo, desidera la salvezza di ogni uomo, tacere su ciò che mina le basi stesse di questa salvezza? No, non lo può!"

the Church to this day. We shall consider the evidence for that proposition in the next chapter.

Summing up the evidence

To sum up the evidence thus far, as of 1960 it was already clear that the Third Secret involved—

- something so terrible that Sister Lucia could not commit it to paper without a direct intervention of the Virgin Mary in 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.”;
- a single page of some 25 lines of text;
- a text in the form of a letter to the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima in a sealed envelope;
- a text that was lodged in the papal apartment;
- 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;
- a text whose prophecy would become clear in 1960, by which time Vatican II (which would have a disastrous aftermath) had been announced;

The document the Vatican disclosed in the year 2000 does not correspond to *any* of these elements. But there are other aspects of the Secret, also revealed before 2000, which do not correspond to the vision of “the Bishop dressed in white.” Let us examine those as well.