

“RUSSIA WILL BE CONVERTED”

**“RUSSIA WILL BE CONVERTED”:
THE FATIMA CRUSADE’S MARIAN APOCALYPTIC DISCOURSE
DURING AND AFTER THE COLD WAR**

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ABSTRACT

It is increasingly acknowledged in treatments of the Cold War that any definitive narrative regarding this historical period must account for the role of religion in the public discourse of the time. Yet limited attention is accorded to the role of more marginal Catholic devotional organizations and their voice in Cold War discourse, most notably in the North American context.

The Fatima Crusade is one such organization, founded in 1978 by Fr. Nicholas Gruner and based in Fort Erie, Ontario. Devoted to the serial apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Fatima, Portugal in 1917, the Fatima Crusade developed the call for Russia's conversion made explicit in Mary's revelations at Fatima into the focus for a peripheral yet extremely vocal conservative element of the Catholic Church in North America. This organization vehemently opposed Soviet Communism in the pages of its quarterly magazine during the latter years of the Cold War era.

Fr. Nicholas Gruner's Fatima Crusade, marked by its apocalyptic Marianism and conservative Catholicism, provides a privileged vantage-point from which to examine the role of religiously-informed ideology in fashioning an anti-Communist polemic during the Cold War era in North America. This thesis explores the Fatima Crusade's development of the Fatima messages into an authoritative Marian apocalyptic worldview, its conflicts with the Church hierarchy regarding the interpretation of these messages, and the Crusade's ability to adapt its message to the latest historical developments and social issues following the collapse of the Soviet Union. While the Crusade's greater emphasis on social issues after the end of the Cold War tapped into larger Protestant apocalyptic discourses in North America, it still constitutes the latest articulation of a distinct and long-standing Marian apocalyptic tradition in Roman Catholicism.

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I

Introduction

Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you.¹

-First Letter of Peter

Despite the collapse of Soviet Communism in 1991 and the heralding of the supposed supremacy of Western liberal democracy and free market capitalism, the Cold War period which marked global politics for nearly half of the preceding century continues to capture the popular imagination. Marked by a polarized global ideological framework, which halved the world into spheres of influence as the United States and the Soviet Union competed for supremacy, the Cold War era has also become a privileged area of research interest particularly for historians and political scientists.

It is increasingly acknowledged however in recent academic treatments of the Cold War that any narrative regarding this historical period must necessarily account for the role of religion in the public discourse, worldviews, and foreign policy initiatives of the time. The death of God and the eventual erosion of religion as a dominant player in the public and private spheres, as heralded by the Enlightenment rationalist paradigm, certainly have not borne fruit to the degree that was initially anticipated. Many scholars have observed, at least on a surface

¹ 1 Peter 5:8-10 (Revised Standard Version).

level, a resurgence of religion as a significant player in global politics in recent years, pointing to the terrorist attacks on targets in the United States on September 11, 2001, and the response that followed, as one especially poignant example of this development.²

Yet even to the casual observer it is readily apparent that the resurgence (or perhaps it may also be said, the reassertion) of religion in the West certainly precedes the unnerving events of that Tuesday morning, and could be legitimately traced to numerous historical benchmarks, one certainly being the advent and duration of the Cold War. It is necessary to take a longer term historical perspective when seeking to identify the place of religion as a factor in mediating and informing perspectives and global political ideologies. The foreign policy positions and initiatives of the West, and particularly the United States during the course of the Cold War, cannot be sufficiently accounted for simply as a readily discernible power play informed by the more nuanced self-interest of *realpolitik*. Ideology, above and beyond more concrete geopolitical considerations, and most notably as it is informed by religious beliefs and values, was critical in determining the lens through which the Soviet Union was perceived, shaping both personal and even state responses to the Communist threat.³

² Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion after September 11th* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

³ David S. Foglesong, "'Roots of Liberation': American Images of the Future of Russia in the Early Cold War, 1948-1953," *The International History Review* 21 (March 1999): 64.

For those religious adherents particularly in North America who subscribed to an anti-Communist ideology, the global ideological polarization marking the Cold War period was not simply confined to a contest between opposing systems of governance and economic management. More importantly from their perspective, it was a religious battle of cosmic proportions pitting atheistic Soviet Communism against Christian liberal democracy, the godless against the god-fearing, evil against good. This particular facet of North American attitudes during the Cold War period has been extensively analysed in existing scholarship. The present study aims to add to this body of work by examining one particular Roman Catholic lay organization which adopts an anti-Communist stance as its *raison d'être*, and from this starting point constructs an entire worldview beyond visible geopolitical machinations and manoeuvres.

The Scriptural Underpinnings of an Apocalyptic Cold War Worldview

The verses from The First Letter from Peter, noted in the introduction, signal a cautionary exhortation to the early Christian community; to be confident in God's protection, yet nevertheless to be prepared for great tests of faith and to be alert to those forces which threaten their spiritual integrity. Peter, the 'rock' upon which the early church would be erected, instructs the faithful to establish and maintain spiritual ramparts against the voracious appetite of the devil, made manifest here in the image of the lion. The letter accounts for the suffering experienced by the persecuted *ecclesia*, establishes the Church's universality, and

most significantly holds out the promise of salvation for those who guard against the adversary and defend the Faith.

This selection from 1 Peter is worth reflecting upon when setting out to consider the worldview that frames a religious organization such as the International Fatima Rosary Crusade (IFRC).⁴ These few sentences from the epistle capture remarkably well the spirit which sustains the organization's religiously informed eschatology, its politically and socially conservative ideologies and polemics, and the activism of this Roman Catholic lay apostolate which will be explored in subsequent chapters. Peter's words evoke the self-declared mission of careful vigilance which the Fatima Crusade and its members have enthusiastically embraced since its founding by Fr. Nicholas Gruner in 1978. Envisioning their role within the Roman Catholic Church as the gatekeepers of what they deem to be the unfiltered and orthodox message conveyed by the Virgin Mary in her alleged series of apparitions at Fatima, Portugal in 1917, the *modus operandi* of the organization is to foster devotion to Mary (and specifically to the apparitions at Fatima), and to ensure that her requests are faithfully adhered to and fulfilled.

Most importantly however, at the very heart of this mandate is the goal to broadcast widely a particular reading of the Marian pronouncements delivered at

⁴ While the Catholic apostolate headed by Fr. Nicholas Gruner is officially entitled the International Fatima Rosary Crusade or simply "Our Lady's Apostolate" in some of its literature, it is more commonly referred to (both by the apostolate itself and many other Catholics) by its abbreviated form, as the Fatima Centre (its headquarters in Fort Erie, Ontario, and the Fatima Crusade. I will privilege this latter term for the duration of the paper.

Fatima, a religious worldview described by sociologist Michael Cuneo as Marian apocalypticism,⁵ which fuses the popular piety of the Roman Catholic cult of the Virgin Mary to a preoccupation with eschatological concerns. For those who subscribe to this particular brand of Christian eschatology, including many of the Catholic faithful who count themselves as devoted followers of Fr. Gruner and his apostolate's interpretation of the Fatima message, Marian apparitions such as those at Fatima serve as revelatory experiences to the entire world. They often present a broad and cataclysmic vision of world history marked ultimately by a cosmic battle between good and evil, with the temporal world as the stage and humanity its actors. In conjunction with this apocalyptic drama, heavenly warnings and admonitions are issued. Those who devote themselves to this eschatological vision, by taking heed of the warnings and fulfilling the requisite demands made of them, position themselves for salvation; those who fail to do so quite literally consign themselves to the fires of hell.

Returning to the initial Biblical verses quoted from the First Letter of Peter, we may begin to see how it is possible to suggest that the spirit or perhaps more precisely, the overarching religious worldview that sustains the work of the Fatima Crusade and its founder Fr. Gruner can be traced out in the selected verses, particularly when they are read not only as a caution against temporal temptations that threaten the faith, but as indicative of a much broader cosmic

⁵ Michael Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130.

battle between good and evil. Given their classification by Cuneo as a Marian apocalyptic movement and the inherent interpretive gloss that springs from their deeply held worldview, it is more than likely that devotees of the message of Fatima as mediated by Fr. Gruner's Crusade would privilege this reading.

The passage illuminates line by line each hallmark of the Fatima Crusade's worldview, as it is articulated through various modes of media communication. It reflects the apostolate's vigilance as the self-proclaimed gatekeepers of the true message of Fatima, and its guarding of the Faith from enemies within and without. While from the Fatima Crusade's perspective there are several 'devils prowling around like a roaring lion,' the most threatening of all (warned against by the Virgin herself at Fatima) is Soviet Communism. In the course of her series of apparitions at Fatima, the Virgin Mary is believed to have provided the appropriate tool for resistance through her request that Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart by the Pope in union with the entire Roman Catholic episcopate, in order to bring about the defeat of Communism and the realization of world peace. Believing that this request has not been appropriately fulfilled, the Fatima Crusade continues (even after the end of what is generally regarded as the Cold War period) to demand that the portion of the Fatima message regarding Russia be heeded, and to caution against and confront the Communist threat in the pages of its quarterly newsletter *The Fatima Crusader*. This publication continues to serve as the premiere textual body of anti-Communist polemic in the North American Catholic milieu.

The universality of the Church and the suffering it is predicted to endure, which is acknowledged in Peter's letter, is also affirmed by the Crusade in its preoccupation in many issues of *The Fatima Crusader* with the status of Roman Catholics behind the Iron Curtain and those under the thumb of other Communist regimes within the broader Soviet sphere, such as China and Cuba. The final component of the eschatological worldview of the Fatima Crusade, which again coheres with the prophetic cautionary tone of both the passage from Peter and the message of Fatima, consists of a promise that this period of suffering and trial for the Church (only if Mary's warnings are heeded) will ultimately culminate with the victory of the Catholic faith over its Communist adversary, ushering in an era of temporal peace, and most importantly, of eternal redemption.

Theoretical Considerations

A historical review concerning the Cold War period and Catholicism in North America will comprise much of the second chapter of this study. It is important however to highlight here those theoretical underpinnings, primarily from anthropological and sociological treatments of religion, which will inform and flesh out some of the terms and conceptual frameworks upon which this study rests, particularly in seeking to establish the general contours of the Fatima Crusade's identity as a religious community.

In his far-reaching survey of apocalyptic belief both religious and secular in the United States, Daniel Wojcik notes that despite popular notions of its vague connotations of doom, the term apocalypse and the beliefs that shape its narrative

are slippery and diverse, with no unifying scholarly consensus on the precise meaning of the term.⁶ However, John Collins provides an avenue through which to refine the terminology of apocalypse in order to arrive at a definition that accurately evokes the Marian apocalyptic worldview of the Fatima Crusade (outlined earlier in relation to the verse from 1 Peter). Collins notes that in Christian theological terms from the 2nd Century CE onward, apocalypse has been predominantly understood to designate “a specific type of literature characterized by mysterious revelations communicated by a supernatural figure that involve the ultimate defeat of evil, the judgment of the world, and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.”⁷ This concise understanding of apocalypse adequately captures the particular brand of Marian eschatology supported by the Fatima Crusade as it has been traced out thus far, and constitutes the definition of the term as it is used throughout this study.⁸ In keeping with Collins’ definition, the Crusade’s quarterly publication *The Fatima Crusader* (a close reading of which

⁶ Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 11. In accounting for the wide range of meanings within the terminology of apocalypse, Wojcik notes several significant distinctions. Two prevailing conceptualizations of the term include that held by Biblical scholars, where apocalypse often refers specifically to a particular body of Jewish and Christian literature (such as the Book of Revelation from the New Testament) involving revelations and prophecies concerning the end of temporal time and the establishment of a new world, articulated in esoteric or symbolic language. Others have favoured a broader application of the term, to refer to the sense of an ending, decline, or societal crisis, whether this is represented in actual historical events, or in more contemporary terms as a theme in modern literature, or in science fiction films, plays, and television series.

⁷ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 3-4.

⁸ Wojcik (1997) privileges a much broader application of apocalypse as a term utilized for the classification of a wide array of beliefs, polemic, and aesthetics concerning the cataclysm and end times both secular and religious, and takes issue with more limited definitions such as that which is put forward by Collins. Given that I am only concerned here with the religious connotations of apocalypse as they relate to the Marian apocalypticism of The Fatima Crusade, I favour Collins’ more restricted definition.

comprises the bulk of analysis in Chapters Three and Four) in its entirety can then be understood as indicative of an apocalyptic literary genre.

Evidently, when such apocalyptic beliefs are linked to a grander eschatology there is an associated worldview informed by those beliefs. According to Clifford Geertz, a group's worldview is their picture of the way things in reality are, their concept of nature, of self, and of the society in which they belong.⁹ It reflects their most comprehensive ideas of order, and is made emotionally acceptable to those who subscribe to it by being presented as an accurate image of an actual state of affairs of which their particular way of life is an authentic expression. In contrast, the ethos of a group, while intricately linked to their worldview, is "...the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects."¹⁰ Geertz argues that this reciprocal relationship between the values a group holds and their perception of the general order of existence is an essential element in all religions. I will suggest in Chapter Three that this relationship between worldview and ethos is particularly central for a religious organization such as the Fatima Crusade. The dialogue between worldview and ethos provides Fatima Crusade members with a ready-made lens through which the drama of world history and their own personal lives can be infused with a larger spiritual import. The apostolate's worldview and ethos,

⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 127.

¹⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 127.

informed by its devotion to apocalyptic Marianism, are significant arbiters for the construction of meaning¹¹ for its members.

In his seminal text *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Victor Turner presents the anthropologist of religion with the necessary tools one can employ in tackling questions regarding modes of kinship, ritual phenomena, and most importantly for our purposes here, group/organizational dynamics and polarities. Much of his treatment of particular ritual processes (such as those concerning status elevation and status reversal) and the subsequent impact they have on group identity may not be neatly conducive to a greater understanding of the Fatima Crusade. Yet I would suggest that Turner may lend some resources for understanding Fr. Gruner's apostolate as a form of religious community, since it is a religious group which mediates an attractive worldview and ethos to those willing to subscribe to it, and thus develops a particular sense of place in the larger scheme of world events.

One of Turner's best-known contributions, the concept of *liminality*, may be stretched in its application to indicate one facet that defines the Fatima Crusade as a religious community. Liminal entities for Turner are "...neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law,

¹¹ Geertz adds to his discussion of ethos and worldview that ultimately meaning can only be stored in symbols, which relate an ontology and a cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality (127). The efficacy of such sacred symbols will be addressed in Chapter Three, which includes an analysis of prevalent images depicted in *The Fatima Crusader*.

custom, convention, and ceremonial.”¹² Liminal entities may be classified according to several defining characteristics, including sexlessness, anonymity, submissiveness, and inferiority. They are often on the social margins. Informed by Turner’s sense of the term, my examination of the polemics of the Fatima Crusade will draw attention to its liminality. It is a religious group “neither here nor there,” which self-identifies as a Roman Catholic apostolate yet often revels in conflict with the institutional hierarchy of the Church itself. Moreover, the Fatima Crusade is viewed by many Catholics as a fringe devotional organization on the margins of the mainstream life of the Church.

Within the parameters of the Roman Catholic tradition, John Eade and Michael Sallnow recognize the potential for the type of conflict noted above in their survey of Christian pilgrimage. Here, they observe that present within many of the ritual enactments of pilgrimage is a *contestation of the sacred*. Eade and Sallnow propose a new agenda for pilgrimage studies that departs from Turner’s *communitas*, in suggesting that “...pilgrimage is above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, for both the official co-optation and the non-official recovery of religious meanings, for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups, for drives towards consensus and *communitas*, and for counter-movements toward separateness and division.”¹³ Ellen Badone

¹² Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1969), 95.

¹³ John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London: Routledge, 1991), 2.

demonstrates in her ethnography of the Marian apparition shrine at Kerizinen in Brittany that the narratives associated with apparition events are malleable entities that are exposed to the tension of competing interpretative discourses concerning their import. To highlight this she notes that “At Kerizinen, there are in fact two sets of competing ‘authorities’: diocesan clergy and bishops from the institutional Church; and the lay group, *Les Amis de Kerizinen*.”¹⁴ This contribution to the study of Marian apparitions is also relevant to the North American context, helping to understand the often tenuous relationship between the Catholic episcopate and the Fatima Crusade which both claim authority over divergent interpretations of the implications of the message of Fatima.

This brief survey of a segment of the theoretical literature that concerns religious organizations such as the Fatima Crusade attempts to introduce, distinguish, and clarify the terminology on which this thesis is predicated. Concepts of apocalypse, worldview and ethos, liminality and contestation of the sacred allow for a general overarching framework to be developed and refined in order to navigate the observations of this thesis.

To further develop a sense of the Fatima Crusade as a religious community grounded in the concepts defined above, it is necessary to classify it within an even larger categorical system of religious movements and phenomena. Direction for such an endeavour is provided by Rodney Stark and William

¹⁴ Ellen Badone, “Echoes from Kerizinen: Pilgrimage, Narrative, and the Construction of Sacred History at a Marian Shrine in Northwestern France,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13 (2007): 464.

Bainbridge. In their extensive study of contemporary religious movements, Stark and Bainbridge distinguish between the characteristics of church, sect, and cult with a set of criteria they themselves acknowledge are slippery and imprecise. Churches often consist of a membership determined on the basis of birth, and administer the formalized means of grace and maintain supporting systems of hierarchy and dogma. Sects are typically identified by a sense of separatism from the general society and withdrawal from or defiance of the world and its institutions and values, and adopt an attitude of ethical austerity.¹⁵ One of the key factors that distinguish cults from churches and sects is that they typically do not have a prior tie with another established religion.¹⁶ Suffice it to say, the Fatima Crusade does not fit neatly into any one of these categories, but indeed borrows particular hallmarks from all three. It springs from and indeed claims legitimacy by virtue of its association with Roman Catholicism, yet often takes a defiant stand toward the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the point of subversion and disobedience of authority.¹⁷ And while certainly not a cult in the purest sense of Stark and Bainbridge's definition, the mission and activities of Fr. Gruner's apostolate lend themselves to being conceived of as the type of religious

¹⁵ Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 21.

¹⁶ Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 25.

¹⁷ Indeed, some Catholics who view the Fatima Crusade with suspicion would consider it a sect in many ways distinct from contemporary mainstream Roman Catholicism before they would grant its status as a legitimate lay apostolate of the Church.

community which Stark and Bainbridge term an *audience cult*.¹⁸ As these researchers state, “Most who take part in audience cults do so entirely through the mass media: books, magazines, newspapers, TV, astrology columns, and the like.”¹⁹ Audience cults require little commitment outside of adherence to and consumption of the messages mediated via this spectrum of communication technologies (and perhaps the occasional token of financial support). People attracted to audience cults often continue to be members of wholly conventional religious institutions, while participating in the audience cult “on the side.”²⁰ I privilege this particular theoretical conceptualization of religious movements as indicative of the structure of the Fatima Crusade and its modes of interaction with its wider religious community, often marked by a ‘provider-consumer’ relationship.

Objectives

This thesis explores the significant social and political implications of the series of apparitions of the Virgin Mary alleged to have occurred at Fatima, Portugal over several months in 1917, as they are developed and communicated by Catholic devotional organizations, particularly the Fatima Crusade, founded in 1978 by Fr. Nicholas Gruner and based in Fort Erie, Ontario. My study determines how the call for Russia’s conversion made explicit in Mary’s reported

¹⁸ This term is noted regarding Catholic conservative movements in Cuneo’s (1997) text; however the term is not fleshed out to the degree that it is by Stark and Bainbridge.

¹⁹ Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 209.

²⁰ Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 213.

message at Fatima has supported the religious worldview traced in broad strokes in the preceding pages, which upholds a peripheral yet extremely vocal conservative and militant element of the Catholic Church in the United States and Canada that actively opposed Soviet Communism during the Cold War era and continues to do so into the present day.

While its roots are grounded in the American socio-political context from which it developed, the Fatima Crusade now claims global reach, its message disseminated via print media, television, and the Internet. While identifying as a Catholic network of those faithful dedicated to the Fatima narrative, the Crusade has had to carefully negotiate its role within the Church, as proponents of a particularly cataclysmic interpretation of the Fatima message promulgated by a renegade priest who is often dismissed by the Catholic episcopate as sensational, if not subversive.

Fr. Nicholas Gruner's Fatima Crusade, marked by its apocalyptic Marianism, conservative Catholicism, and its particular socio-political context, provides a privileged vantage-point from which to examine the role of religiously-informed ideology in fashioning an anti-Communist polemic during the Cold War era in North America. This study considers the process by which a religious message communicated during an encounter with a vision is adopted and transformed into an anti-Communist polemic which conforms to the social and political climate of the time in which it was formulated. Furthermore, the thesis examines the transition and adaptation of that message, necessitated by such

historical events as the collapse of Soviet Communism. Also crucial in understanding the unique dynamics of the Fatima Crusade is careful attention to its relationship with wider Roman Catholicism, particularly the episcopate, a relationship in which authority over the message of Fatima and its implications is often contested.

It is my contention that, given the socio-political context of the original apparitions at Fatima, where the Virgin is believed to have called for the conversion of Russia at the onset of the Bolshevik Revolution, the narrative stemming from the apparitions at Fatima provided a religious framework well-suited to those conservative American Catholics during the Cold War era who were concerned about the perceived political and religious threat posed by Soviet Communism. Out of the Fatima narrative, conservative Catholics such as those active in the Fatima Crusade have developed a unique and indeed marginal worldview in which American political and Catholic religious goals are fused and couched in eschatological terms.

Yet the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 necessitated a considerable re-evaluation of that worldview and the rhetoric which sustained the work of the Fatima Crusade in the 1980s. While the Fatima Crusade steadfastly denies that much has changed since the lowering of the hammer and sickle over the Kremlin, and maintains that Communism remains a threat to the Church and the world as a whole, the Crusade has inevitably had to alter its focus. The disintegration of a clear and present danger posed by the Soviets has forced the Fatima Crusade,

while still clinging to an anti-Communist stance, to shift its emphasis in interpreting the Fatima message toward its more tangible social implications. I argue that this development has brought the Fatima Crusade more in line not only with other conservative Catholic organizations, but particularly with the activities of the Moral Majority movement and similar politically insistent religious conservative bodies in American evangelical Protestantism, which defined much of the public discourse on moral questions in the early 1990's.

Although the Fatima Crusade is often viewed as a marginal, if not extreme element of Catholic life in North America, its marriage of political and religious concerns in the Cold War era, and its more recent reliance on the standard subjects of concern for Christian social conservatives, continues to appeal to a significant constituency, and thus represents the latest articulation of a distinct and long-standing stream of apocalyptic discourse within the Catholic cult of the Virgin Mary, worthy of sustained academic consideration.

Research Materials

The materials on which this thesis is based are derived primarily from a close examination of the Fatima Crusade's quarterly publication, *The Fatima Crusader*, which represents the most accessible and consistent mode of communication between the Fatima Crusade and its followers. With ninety-four issues of the *Crusader* published to date and a circulation of 330 000, this newsletter serves as the premiere outlet for the apostolate's anti-Communist polemic and its Marian apocalyptic worldview. I also engage with a wide range

of additional data found in other forms of communications media that the organization employs, including devotional booklets, texts, and audio-visual materials, accessed both through the organization's website at www.fatima.org, the one-stop shop for all things Fatima, and through a visit to the Crusade's headquarters in Fort Erie, Ontario. Secondary scholarship on Marian apparitions, Catholic anti-Communism, and the North American socio-religious milieu is also utilized to enhance and provide context for my analysis.

Discussion of the Chapters

Chapter Two takes stock of the historical antecedents which gave rise to a religious organization such as the Fatima Crusade, exploring the role of religion and particularly Roman Catholicism within the North American socio-political milieu during the course of the Cold War. Beginning with the words of President Dwight D. Eisenhower on the subject, I move from a discussion of alternative notions of an American civil religion, to an overview of the role of Catholicism in North American public life. Finally, I consider religiously informed attitudes toward Communism in the United States and Canada.

Chapter Three begins by briefly introducing the general characteristics of Marian apparitions in Roman Catholicism, before moving to a hillside pasture in south-western Portugal, with the account of the serial apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Fatima in 1917. In the process of detailing these events I consult both academic and devotional treatments. I then briefly sketch out the history of the Fatima Crusade before shifting my focus to the development of its apocalyptic

Marian worldview and vehement anti-Communism, as espoused in the pages of *The Fatima Crusader*. Central to this analysis is a discussion of the use of symbolic imagery in the newsletter, following Geertz's emphasis on the mediation of religious meaning through symbols. Particular attention is paid to the emphasis on the conversion of Russia for the realization of world peace, the so-called "Third Secret" of Fatima, and the contestation over the message of Fatima between Fr. Gruner's apostolate and officials in the Catholic episcopate.

Chapter Four is primarily concerned with the activities of the Fatima Crusade in the years subsequent to the collapse of Soviet Communism. Here I argue that this historical event has brought the Crusade more in line with its ideological bedfellows on the Christian Right through its growing engagement with the social issues that typically occupy conservative religious concerns. I survey the positions of the Fatima Crusade on a range of issues, including abortion, homosexuality, and sex education, and tie these positions to the historical concerns of other Catholic and particularly Protestant fundamentalist movements. In this transition away from the originating locus of its religious mission, I argue that the Fatima Crusade has to some degree (yet not completely) replaced the foreign threat of Soviet Communism with more domestic questions of morality as the central application of the Fatima message.

Chapter Five concludes my thesis by summarizing my principal observations and arguments, and setting out further methods of identifying the Fatima Crusade as a vehicle for religious apocalyptic rhetoric.

II

Catholicism and ‘American Religion’ in a Time of Cold War

*In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource, in peace or in war.*²¹

-US President Dwight D. Eisenhower

During the celebration of Flag Day in the United States in 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the above statement as he signed into law a bill to include the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance. Here the former President explicitly and without reservation guarantees a position of prominence for religion at the apex of American public life, formative in the birth pangs of the nation, and indicative of its destiny. Of course, the spiritual weapons noted point to a privileging of an American religious sensibility framed largely by a general Judeo-Christian religious framework, which guards the purity of the American body politic against the threats of what is perceived to be an atheistic and morally devoid Communist antithesis.

As T. Jeremy Gunn highlights in *Spiritual Weapons*, on the further development of an American national religion during the Cold War period (which draws its title from Eisenhower’s statement), the Truman and Eisenhower presidencies ushered in an increasing penetration of religious themes and motifs into public discourse generally, and at the highest levels of American governance

²¹ John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online], <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9920> (accessed March 9, 2010).

particularly. From the declaration of dedicated national days of prayer and thanksgiving, an explicit call to prayer in Eisenhower's first inaugural address, the enshrining of the phrase "In God We Trust" as the national motto, the institution of the National Prayer Breakfast meeting in Washington (which catered to the political and social elite), to Eisenhower's own baptism,²² religious traditions became increasingly and inextricably linked to the American national project as Cold War anxieties intensified following the Second World War. As it is suggested in President Eisenhower's signing statement on Flag Day, the constitutional separation of church and state certainly has not confounded the process of developing the American national story with a religious gloss. The reservation of a prominent place for religion in the public sphere, albeit intensified parallel to increasing Cold War tensions, is not entirely novel however. As religious historian Sidney Mead attests, the intertwining of religious and national goals has been a recurring process from the time of the founding of the United States.²³

In order to develop an understanding of the antecedents of a religious movement such as the Fatima Crusade, and to situate it within its North American religious and political context, it is essential first to explore in broad strokes the development of a civil or national religion over the course of the history of the

²² T. Jeremy Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American Nationalist Religion* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 64-67.

²³ Sidney Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 65.

United States, the emergence of Roman Catholicism in American culture and public life, and its particular ability to inform anti-Communist attitudes in North America during the Cold War.

Competing Visions of American Civil/National Religion

A comprehensive and detailed accounting for the historical place of religion in the American political climate is outside the purview of this paper, and would not serve to illuminate our understanding of the Fatima Crusade as a particularly North American Catholic movement forged in the religious and political tensions of the Cold War era. Neither would a precise and sustained discussion of church-state relations in the United States historically and contemporarily add to the discussion. Yet it is worth briefly considering on a more general conceptual level the correlations between religious sentiment and state affairs in the United States, and how we might proceed in placing the Fatima Crusade as a movement developing within that process.

In briefly addressing this question of the relationship between church and state in the United States, R. Laurence Moore argues that what was initially envisioned by the Framers as a clear division between church and state has evolved into new patterns of church/state interaction that have confounded the constitutional separation. Further to this, Moore adds:

Although the First Amendment to the Constitution banned a national establishment of religion, although Thomas Jefferson recommended a wall of separation between church and state, and although most states enforced a purported separation of church and state long before the

Constitution's proscription was formally applied to them in the 1940's, religion and politics in America have remained closely related.²⁴

The examples provided at the beginning of the chapter, of the enshrining of the motto "In God We Trust" and the incorporation of the phrase "under God" into the Pledge of Allegiance, indicate this blurring of the distinction between public and private, between the secular and religious spheres. This blurring or even fusion of religious motifs with the development of an American national myth is episodic²⁵; it ebbs and flows in accordance with significant events and various social, economic, and political conditions that may mark a particular epoch in the American historical narrative. As has been noted in the list of examples from the Eisenhower Administration provided earlier from Gunn, certainly the Cold War period is one such epoch, where this blurring or fusion was most acutely expressed.

This fusion has perhaps been most adequately accounted for in a general and non-sectarian sense by Robert Bellah's seminal concept of an American *civil religion*,²⁶ which is woven into the fabric of the national imaginary, infusing historical events in the life of the nation, state ceremonies, and national values

²⁴ R. Laurence Moore, "The End of Religious Establishment and the Beginning of Religious Politics: Church and State in the United States," in *Belief in History: Innovative Approaches to European and American Religion*, ed. Thomas Kselman, 237-264 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 238.

²⁵ Martin E. Marty, "Two Kinds of Two Kinds of Civil Religion," in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, 139-157 (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 143.

²⁶ Bellah's concept of civil religion, while seminal, has been the subject of considerable critique and reinterpretation since it was first introduced in 1967. For a helpful synthesis on the debate around civil religion and its potential for adaptability to contemporary social currents, see Peter Luchau, "Toward a Contextualized Concept of Civil Religion," *Social Compass* 56 (September 2009): 371-386.

with a sense of transcendental significance. Acknowledging the quandary posed by the existence of an American civil religion in light of a constitutional separation of church and state, Bellah argues that while this separation is enshrined in the highest law of the land, it nevertheless does not deny the political realm a religious dimension. Although religious belief and practice is typically conceived of as a largely private affair, concurrently there are certain elements of religious belief that are widely shared by the majority of Americans. Bellah suggests that these common religious elements "...have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere."²⁷ Providing a concise yet sweeping overview of the contours of American history and particularly the addresses of its Presidents and other leading figures, Bellah demonstrates how they always have and continue still to incorporate non-specific but undeniably religious motifs into the process of defining and telling the national story. Bellah then moves in "Civil Religion in America" toward defining precisely what is indicated by the term; civil religion:

...from the earliest years of the republic is a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity. This religion – there seems no other word for it – while not antithetical to and indeed sharing much in common with Christianity, was neither sectarian nor in any specific sense Christian...Behind the civil religion at every point lie biblical archetypes...But it is also genuinely American and genuinely new. It has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols.²⁸

²⁷ Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96 (Winter 1967): 3-4.

²⁸ Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," 8, 18.

In fleshing out and providing a basis for his insight that the United States does indeed enact much of its national drama with a religious gloss, Bellah points to figures such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson as saviours and prophets, Abraham Lincoln and (more recently) John F. Kennedy as martyrs, Memorial Day and Thanksgiving Day as sacred commemorations, and Arlington National Cemetery and national monuments as sacred shrines.²⁹ Bellah's observations are not entirely novel. They are certainly informed by the work of Emile Durkheim and his observation that "...religion is first and foremost a system of ideas by means of which individuals imagine the society of which they are members..."³⁰ Bellah develops Durkheim's notion and applies it specifically to the American context, and notably as he writes during the height of the Cold War, we may be able to draw some import from Bellah's observations for our understanding of the Fatima Crusade and the place it might (seemingly counterintuitive to its ultramontanist)³¹ occupy in the development of the American civil religion.

²⁹ Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," 11.

³⁰ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 227.

³¹ As Margaret Lavinia Anderson notes in "Piety and Politics: Recent Work on German Catholicism," *The Journal of Modern History* 63 (December 1991), the term ultramontanist can be controversial, being "...a slippery, protean, perhaps even dangerous term, but certainly a necessary one" (705). Yet it can be justifiably applied to specific movements particularly in the nineteenth century which continued in certain segments of the Catholic population into the twentieth, and influenced groups such as the Fatima Crusade. A useful definition of the term particularly in the American context is provided by John T. McGreevy, who writes that ultramontanist: "...is shorthand for a cluster of shifts that included a Vatican-fostered move to Thomistic philosophy, a more intense experiential piety centred on miracles and Vatican approved devotions such as that of the Sacred Heart, an international outlook suspicious of national variations within Catholicism, and a heightened respect for church authorities ranging from the

Civil religion in the United States, while always residing in the collective national subconscious, especially emerges and asserts itself in response to a threat to national security, foreign or domestic, real or imagined.³² In sketching out the historical contours of American civil religion, Bellah notes three ‘times of trial’ out of which the civil religion, its symbols, prophets, and tropes were forged. The first trial was the struggle for independence, the second the question of slavery, and now (contemporary to Bellah’s time in the late 1960s) the United States is gripped by a third trial to which civil religion must be brought to bear and reinvigorated, that is, what Bellah refers to quite generally as “...the problem of responsible action in a revolutionary world.”³³ The confrontation between American democracy and Soviet Communism is a corollary of this trial, and certainly constitutes a threat to national security to which the resources within civil religion must appropriately respond. Marking each of these periods as part of a consistent thread of American civil religion is a belief that God is actively interested and involved in history, with a particular concern for America,³⁴ and that this religion is in fact not the worship of the American nation but “...an

Pope to parish priests. All this was nurtured in the world of Catholic parishes, schools, and associations, whose members understood themselves as arrayed against the wider society.” *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 14.

³² Lee Canipe, “Under God and Anti-Communist: How the Pledge of Allegiance Got Religion in Cold War America,” *Journal of Church and State* 45 (Spring 2003): 306.

³³ Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” 11.

³⁴ Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” 7.

understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate and universal reality...”³⁵

These hallmarks of the American civil religion outlined by Bellah: the third time of trial, a belief in God’s hand in history, and a transcendental goal derived from a providential understanding of the American experience, allow for a particularly North American religious movement such as the Fatima Crusade to be tied into the national narrative of the civil religion. As noted in the Introduction regarding the Fatima Crusade’s Marian apocalypticism (and as will be detailed further in the next chapter), this third time of trial facing America is understood by the Crusade as the cosmic battle between good and evil, Christian democracy vs. atheistic Communism, in line with the narrative developed out of the apparitions at Fatima. Historical events are interpreted as indicating the consequences of not adhering to the Virgin’s warnings at Fatima, with the ultimate goal of bringing the faithful and state actors into harmony with the divine order according to the course of action prescribed in the Marian apparitions.

The American civil religion identified by Bellah and others is largely derivative. It melds vaguely Judeo-Christian concepts of God and various biblical motifs such as sacrifice, redemption, a chosen people, and the promised land,³⁶ and imprints them onto the American story in order to develop a unifying, recognizable, and compelling national myth. In American civil religion,

³⁵ Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” 18.

³⁶ Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” 18.

foundational religious values, insofar as they are commonly held across denominational lines, reinforce and legitimize an otherwise secular ethical framework that seeks to instill law and order and safeguard the general welfare of the citizenry.³⁷ This derivative construction of civil religion, borrowing widely shared notions of God and co-opting vaguely religious motifs in order to infuse the project of the state with transcendental meaning, it may be argued, poses a challenge for the established churches in the United States, particularly more militant religious movements such as the Fatima Crusade. President Eisenhower is reported to have said following his election to the Presidency in 1952: "...our Government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith and I don't care what it is. With us of course it is the Judo-Christian [sic] concept, but it must be a religion that all men are created equal."³⁸ In this statement Eisenhower explicitly articulates the basic parameters of civil religion, fifteen years before they would be theorized by Bellah.³⁹ Here he does not hesitate to assert that the actual particularity of the religious faith is quite secondary, as long as it invokes some belief in a supreme order that guarantees and legitimizes the state. It must be a religion that is consistent with the principles of the state apparatus and serves

³⁷ Mead, *The Lively Experiment*, 65.

³⁸ "President-Elect Says Soviet Demoted Zhukov Because of Their Friendship," *New York Times*, December 23, 1952, 16.

³⁹ In a collection of autobiographical essays, President Harry S. Truman espoused a similar view, although he was more pointed in arguing the case of a common religious sentiment supporting the state in its struggle against Soviet Communism, stating: "Minor, and even major differences in how we choose to worship God strike me as being of relatively little importance in the face of an aggressive foe threatening to destroy all freedom of worship and other individual liberties." *Mr. Citizen* (Independence, MO: Independence Press, 1960), 119.

to reinforce them. This movement of appropriation is largely traced out by Bellah and others as linear and singular, from the collection of what is universal in religious traditions into a coherent, and vaguely religious, yet secular set of beliefs and rituals. The initiative for the construction of civil religion is on the part of state actors first and foremost; the established religions are generally passive in this process.

Yet I would propose (as it will become more evident in Chapter Three) that this seemingly linear process is in fact cyclical. What is appropriated and digested by the state into a civil religion is then fed back into those religious traditions from which the motifs of the civil religion were borrowed. Much of the Fatima Crusade's appeal in the latter decades of the Cold War era in the United States stems from its fusion of American political and Catholic religious goals, which is then translated into a Marian apocalyptic historical vision. For those conservative American Catholics during the Cold War era, concerned about the perceived political and religious threat posed by Soviet Communism, and not satisfied by civil religion and its slippery concepts of God and country, the Fatima Crusade offered in its newsletter and other publications a worldview that took stock of the Manichean dissonance between East and West. It is an undeniably conservative Catholic reading of the threat facing the United States that wedded, counterintuitively it would seem, Catholic ultramontanist with American exceptionalism. While the Crusade certainly stressed that morally the United States was far from achieving a more perfect union, in the polarity between

American democracy and Soviet atheistic Communism, God clearly possessed a preferential option for the former.

The alternative reciprocal relationship between civil religion and institutional religion which I propose, especially as it relates to the modes through which the Fatima Crusade participates in this process, may be further illuminated in its Cold War context by T. Jeremy Gunn's concept of an *American National Religion*, tied to yet distinct from Bellah's civil religion thesis. This American National Religion consists of three elements: governmental theism, a military second to none, and capitalism as freedom, that came together to form a consensus ideology in American public discourse beginning in the 1950s, as a response to Cold War conditions.⁴⁰ Unlike civil religion, governmental theism for Gunn is "...less spiritually evocative and more politically insistent...The 'God' of governmental theism was deployed less in an attempt to evoke 'mystic chords of memory' and more as a spiritual weapon to attack atheistic Communism."⁴¹ I would suggest that this concept of governmental theism, as stemming from civil religion yet more blatantly militant and given a particularly Cold War gloss, embraces not only government itself, but also reflects the attitudes and beliefs of anti-Communist religious movements like the Fatima Crusade. Yet one critique that has been directed at the civil/national religion thesis is that it does not, as I have attempted briefly to do here, sufficiently account for the history,

⁴⁰ Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons*, 201.

⁴¹ Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons*, 9.

particularity, and agency of specific religious traditions in this process.⁴² I will briefly address this issue now.

Roman Catholicism: An American Religion?

Garbi Schmidt, in her ethnography of Sunni Muslims in Chicago, begins by articulating two overarching questions that guide and inform her analysis. The first is whether or not Islam can be properly considered to be an “American” religion, rather than one which, while situated geographically in the United States, is completely foreign and distant to American social and political realities. The second regards the topic of social cohesion, and inquires into whether or not the Muslim-American community, at least in Chicago, can be identified as a unified community despite its ethnic divisions.⁴³ While it may seem paradoxical to begin a discussion of the role of Roman Catholicism in American politics and culture by noting the experience of Sunni Muslims, the questions set out by Schmidt are indeed quite instructive in how we might approach the position of Catholicism in America. It is readily apparent that these questions apply similarly to the Catholic situation, and that Catholicism, especially in the past, and Islam in the present share some common experiences in their gradual and often tenuous integration into the American religious and social fabric. We can ask, following Schmidt’s question and addressing the criticism of the civil religion thesis noted earlier:

⁴² Robert Fowler, Allen D. Hertzke, Laura R. Olson and Kevin R. Den Dulk, *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 303.

⁴³ Garbi Schmidt, *Islam in Urban America: Sunni Muslims in Chicago* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 2.

Does Roman Catholicism constitute an “American religion”? What might be American about it, and how does it engage in the discourse of the American public sphere? How has Catholic identity been influenced by American social pressures, by immigration, and out of these influences carved a unique position in the cultural milieu of the nation? I put forward these questions to navigate and focus a cursory glance at the history of Roman Catholicism in America as it has developed primarily in the twentieth century and most notably during the Cold War era, and how this history informs a particular understanding of the relationship between Roman Catholicism and the American polity, from which the Fatima Crusade emerges.

The question of whether or not Catholicism does indeed constitute an American religion, however that may be defined, is necessitated by the significant history of anti-Catholicism in the United States, particularly spanning the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Anti-Catholicism largely sprang out of concerns regarding the perceived hostility of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to republicanism, religious and political liberty, the dissemination of knowledge, and to Protestant denominations;⁴⁴ essentially, to all things deemed inherently American and enshrined in its civil religion. The Catholic Church, as an institution more than as a basis for individual religious

⁴⁴ McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 93-94.

identity,⁴⁵ was understood by many prominent American political figures succeeding the Civil War, including Presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, and James Garfield,⁴⁶ as a serious threat to the cohesion and indeed, to the very security of the just recently tested republic. Even the famed political cartoonist Thomas Nast, drawing for the journal *Harper's Weekly*, depicted Catholic bishops, priests, and men vaguely resembling leprechauns in place of Confederate soldiers laying siege to Fort Sumter,⁴⁷ the site of the opening salvo of the American Civil War.

Into the first decades of the twentieth century this perceived threat posed by a hegemonic and foreign Roman Catholicism, antithetical to American tenets of pluralism, freedom, and democracy, continued to haunt the imaginary of certain factions in America. In 1926 the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan declared that America “must remain Protestant,” and two years later, when Alfred E. Smith became the first Roman Catholic to run for the Presidency, anti-Catholic rhetoric among Protestants spiked accordingly.⁴⁸ The further development of a largely Catholic-Protestant divide intensified with successive waves of immigration from predominantly Roman Catholic countries, particularly Ireland, Italy, southern Germany, and Poland, and to a lesser extent at this time, Latin

⁴⁵ William R. Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 207.

⁴⁶ McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 90.

⁴⁷ McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 94.

⁴⁸ Edwin S. Gaustad, *Proclaim Liberty Throughout all the Land: A History of Church and State in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), xiv.

America.⁴⁹ Catholics were seen as profoundly “other,” confined to ethnic enclaves and further instilling a sense of isolationism from the larger American culture by founding separate institutions, most notably the Catholic hospital and parochial school, to shield themselves from the dominance of Protestant culture and maintain seeds of the Catholic faith and concomitantly ethnic identity within the American state.⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, the isolationism of Catholics in America, regardless of their ethnic origin and particularly in urban centers, continued to feed long-standing suspicion toward Roman Catholicism as a threatening homogenous monolith,⁵¹ its allegiances elsewhere, “...epitomizing the perverse and evil exercise of power and authority in religion.”⁵² This long-standing suspicion of Catholics and their true allegiances came to a head when John F. Kennedy, a Roman Catholic, received the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination for the 1960 general election. Protestant religious leaders questioned whether his loyalties while occupying the Oval Office would be to the American people or to the Vatican, and anti-Catholic articles emerged by the thousands, evoking historical condemnations of “Romanism” and “papists.”⁵³

Yet in the years surrounding the election of the first Roman Catholic to the Presidency of the United States (although I would refrain from suggesting this

⁴⁹ Mark Hulsether, *Religion, Culture and Politics in the Twentieth-Century United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 58.

⁵⁰ Fowler, et al., *Religion and Politics in America*, 44.

⁵¹ Jon Butler, “Historiographical Heresy: Catholicism as a Model for American Religious History,” in *Belief in History: Innovative Approaches to European and American Religion*, ed. Thomas Kselman, 286-309 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 291.

⁵² Butler, “Historiographical Heresy,” 300.

⁵³ Albert Menendez, *Religion at the Polls* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 128.

occurred as a direct consequence), Catholicism began to “emerge from the ghetto”⁵⁴ of entrenched ethnic ties, insularity and parochialism, and increasingly integrated into the larger American cultural milieu.⁵⁵ Sociologist and Catholic priest Andrew M. Greeley identified a process of “Americanization” as a trajectory in American Catholic religious history,⁵⁶ a process essentially of assimilation by which “...individuals and identifiable social groups shed the characteristics that mark them as foreign, adopt the cultural norms of American society, become fully integrated into American life, and come to think of themselves simply as Americans.”⁵⁷ This process of “Americanization” first observed by Greeley in the 1960s, this move toward the immigrant assimilation of Catholicism into the greater American religious aesthetic, made it increasingly difficult to view the institutional Church generally, and immigrant Catholics particularly, as a foreign other. Catholicism was beginning to be acknowledged as an “over-all American religion,”⁵⁸ and while still a significant mode of social identification, did not confer “outsider” status within the American social climate

⁵⁴ Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan*, 10.

⁵⁵ In his review of Cuneo’s text, William D. Dinges takes exception to Cuneo’s classification of pre-conciliar American Catholicism as a ghetto within the larger society, characterized by cultural imperviousness. Review of *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism*, by Michael Cuneo, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36 (December 1997): 632. Yet assessments of American Catholicism similar to Cuneo’s are found in Fowler and Gleason, discussed above.

⁵⁶ Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Experience: A Sociologist’s Interpretation of the History of American Catholicism* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

⁵⁷ Philip Gleason, *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism Past and Present* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 60.

⁵⁸ Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 87.

to the degree it had in the past.⁵⁹ Not only did a reduced reliance on the ethnic identity of Catholicism in America lead to a more “Americanized” Church, but also the achievement of economic and social parity with Protestants, increased access to higher education, and greater social mobility,⁶⁰ all contributed to Catholicism’s greater integration into the larger American religious framework.

The American Catholic “emergence from the ghetto,” driven by the social conditions noted above, inevitably granted Catholics a more prominent role in American public life (the election of President Kennedy as the first Catholic to hold the office still being the most significant example). While Catholics certainly do not represent a political monolith as historical anti-Catholic rhetoric often claimed, Catholic voters have traditionally been a key well of support for the Democratic Party.⁶¹ Yet their positions on several contested issues in American political debate are highly diffuse. While they are generally comfortable with the liberal Democratic agenda on social welfare, labour laws, civil rights, and the death penalty, concurrently, they may also share with conservative Republicans a steadfast opposition to abortion, advocacy for parental choice in education options, and the promotion of so-called traditional moral values.⁶² This malleability of the Catholic voting bloc in the United States, if we may indeed call it that, propels Catholics into each American election campaign as a swing vote, a

⁵⁹ Gleason, *Keeping the Faith*, 63.

⁶⁰ Gleason, *Keeping the Faith*, 64-65.

⁶¹ Fowler, et al., *Religion and Politics in America*, 122.

⁶² Fowler, et al., *Religion and Politics in America*, 122-123.

demographically significant and highly coveted segment of the voting population characterized by its diverse vacillating political allegiances. Their support is essentially ‘up for grabs.’

Outside of electoral politics, Catholics, be it the Church hierarchy in the form of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) or in the form of less denominational lobby groups, are most often identified politically by their sustained involvement in the anti-abortion movement. Catholics are heavily represented in organizations such as National Right to Life, and Catholic politicians such as Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Illinois) have successfully attached amendments to legislation banning federal funding for abortion, outside the exceptions of complications that pose a risk for the mother, or when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.⁶³ The Hyde Amendment has recently re-inserted itself into public debate in the United States, during the drawn-out negotiations over President Barack Obama and the Democrats’ package of health care reforms. Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Michigan), a devout Catholic and leading abortion opponent in Congress, was able to guarantee the votes needed to pass the health care bill after securing a pledge from President Obama to sign an executive order placing restrictions on abortion coverage. He has acknowledged the influence particularly of the USCCB in informing his decision.⁶⁴

⁶³ Fowler, et al., *Religion and Politics in America*, 125-126.

⁶⁴ Monica Davey, “Under Fire for Abortion Deal, Stupak to Retire,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/10/us/politics/10stupak.html>.

I highlight this last and most recent example in particular to demonstrate just one of the modes by which Roman Catholicism in America has entered the public sphere, and elected politics more specifically. In questioning to what degree Catholicism has become “Americanized” or can now be considered a legitimate American religion (a notion that defies a precise and generally accepted definition), we may look to the recent success of American Catholics in prominent civic roles. Perhaps the most notable recent example, that gained media attention in 2010 with the announced retirement of Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, is the fact that six of the nine justices on the United States Supreme Court are now Roman Catholic.⁶⁵ While even at the time of Kennedy’s election to the Presidency this religious profile for the Supreme Court would have been unfathomable, it is a superficial reality that is yet no less significant in indicating that the “Americanization” of Catholicism has in tangible ways occurred. Despite fears in some quarters in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Catholicism was antithetical to American religious pluralism and civil liberties, the secular institution which is largely entrusted with arbitrating these tenets of the American civil religion now has Catholics as the majority, and the religious affiliation of those occupying the highest judicial bench in the land is generally a non-issue, as Catholicism increasingly accommodates and engages in secular politics.

⁶⁵ Adam Liptak, “Stevens, the Only Protestant on the Supreme Court,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/11/weekinreview/11liptak.html?scp=1&sq=Stevens%20Retires%20Catholics&st=cse>.

*Catholics and Comrades*⁶⁶

Another factor that may have led to Catholicism's gradual integration into American public life and, as noted previously, to Kennedy's election to the Presidency, was the considerable concern in the political discourse of the Cold War era regarding the Communist threat, and the Catholic Church's perceived uncompromising opposition to it. Within this context, Kennedy's Catholicism was indeed viewed as an asset to his election prospects and his ability to go 'toe-to-toe' with Khrushchev and the Soviets. Some political commentators during the 1960 presidential campaign characterized his Catholicism as the one guarantee of the candidate's anti-Communism, while others noted that the Church's rigid anti-Communism protected the Catholic Kennedy from conservatives who might challenge his credentials on national security strategy.⁶⁷

To highlight this perception that was applied to Kennedy, what is often understood as the utter incongruence of the tenets of the Roman Catholic faith tradition (and particularly the institutional Church) with Communist ideology and historical praxis, is both to in some ways state the obvious, and to paint over the nuances of this relationship with a simplistic brush. While many examples indeed exist (such as the historical tradition of Catholic social teaching), the development of Liberation Theology in Latin America in the mid-twentieth century is perhaps

⁶⁶ David I. Kertzer, *Comrades and Christians: Religion and Political Struggle in Communist Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁶⁷ Thomas J. Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?: Religion, Politics, and John F. Kennedy's Presidential Campaign* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 113.

most apt in demonstrating the blurring of the supposed lines of hostility between the Church and Communist theory.⁶⁸ Yet from the opening salvo contained in Karl Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* published in 1843, the charge that religion is the "opium of the people,"⁶⁹ the relationship has indeed been tenuous, with many Catholics, almost instinctually, adopting an anti-Communist stance in response to the perceived threat of the atheistic tenets of its ideology. Indeed, long before the outbreak of the Cold War, the Roman Catholic Church was engaged in an effort to foster anti-Communism.

Most notable perhaps in the development of an officially-sanctioned Catholic anti-Communist polemic in the latter half of the nineteenth century through the Cold War period has been the succession of Papal encyclicals (letters addressed by the Pope to various audiences, often to the bishops of the world and the wider Catholic faithful on a particular subject) concerning Communism. These encyclicals vehemently condemned Communism both for its perceived disruptive social ramifications and its desire to establish a secular institution completely separate from and indeed entirely antithetical to a role for religion in the public sphere, particularly any role taken on by an entrenched and hierarchical religious institution such as the Roman Catholic Church. It is worth providing a

⁶⁸ While theological movements such as Liberation Theology that emphasize the social commentary and criticism contained in the Gospels, exist within Catholicism, there has been a highly publicized struggle regarding the orthodoxy of Liberation Theology between the episcopate and Liberation theologians, at the Curia, diocesan, and parish levels. For an excellent ethnographic perspective on this debate, see Robin Nagle, *Claiming the Virgin: The Broken Promise of Liberation Theology in Brazil* (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁶⁹ Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 54.

representative but by no means comprehensive overview of some of the more significant Papal writings on Communism.

In one of the earliest Papal encyclicals devoted solely to the subject of socialism, Pope Leo XIII, after bemoaning the ills plaguing society and the Church in the latter half of the nineteenth century, then states:

You understand, venerable brethren, that We speak of that sect of men who, under various and almost barbarous names, are called socialists, communists, or nihilists, and who, spread over all the world, and bound together by the closest ties in a wicked confederacy, no longer seek the shelter of secret meetings, but, openly and boldly marching forth in the light of day, strive to bring to a head what they have long been planning - the overthrow of all civil society whatsoever...The church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of truth, hands down those doctrines and precepts whose special object is the safety and peace of society and the uprooting of the evil growth of socialism.⁷⁰

Here in abundantly clear and forceful terms, the battle lines marking the stark polarities of Roman Catholicism and Communism, which would reach their height with the Revolution in Russia and the subsequent Cold War, are being drawn.⁷¹ On one side, the encyclical posits an atheistic and subversive force which threatens civil order, and on the other, the Church, as the vanguard of truth, the paternal shepherd, entrusted with the unique charge to dispose of the evil made manifest in socialist/communist movements. Elements of the sensationalist prose regarding the Soviet threat composed in the pages of *The Fatima Crusader* find some of their antecedents in the earliest Papal encyclicals on socialism and Communism.

⁷⁰ Leo XIII, *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1878).

⁷¹ Pope Pius IX initiated the Church's anti-communist polemic in his encyclicals *Qui Pluribus* and *Noscitis et Nobiscum*, not to mention his inclusion of Communism in the *Syllabus of Errors*.

Arguably the foremost anti-Communist papal polemicist was Pope Pius XI (reigned 1922-1939), who noted systematically in several encyclicals (particularly in *Divini Redemptoris*) the long list of evils and transgressions perpetrated or planned by Communists. Understandably, the increasing intensity of the rhetoric emerging from the Vatican likely corresponded to the further entrenchment of Soviet Communism under Stalin in the interwar years. In his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* on “reconstruction of the social order” Pius XI distinguished between Communism and socialism, asserting that Communism “...teaches and seeks two objectives: unrelenting class warfare and absolute extermination of private ownership...To achieve these objectives there is nothing which it does not dare, nothing for which it has respect or reverence; and when it has come to power, it is incredible and portentlike in its cruelty and inhumanity.”⁷² Socialism, Pius acknowledges, is considerably more moderate, rejecting violence and some of the perceived extremes of Soviet Communism, in some instances even approaching something akin to Christian social justice. Nevertheless, by virtue of its material emphasis, “Socialism, even after it has yielded to truth and justice on the points which we have mentioned, cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth.”⁷³

⁷² Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1931).

⁷³ Ibid.

Although *Divini Redemptoris* is rife with examples of the intensification of anti-Communism within the Church in the interwar period, one particular section is worth noting given the eschatological lens through which many Christians (such as those associated with the Fatima Crusade) viewed the struggle between Western (Christian) liberal democracy and atheistic Soviet Communism, as described in the Introduction. In this encyclical to the episcopate of the Church “on atheistic Communism,” Pius IX writes:

Nevertheless, the struggle between good and evil remained in the world as a sad legacy of the original fall. Nor has the ancient tempter ever ceased to deceive mankind with false promises. It is on this account that one convulsion following upon another has marked the passage of the centuries, down to the revolution of our own days. This modern revolution, it may be said, has actually broken out or threatens everywhere, and it exceeds in amplitude and violence anything yet experienced in the preceding persecutions launched against the Church. Entire peoples find themselves in danger of falling back into a barbarism worse than that which oppressed the greater part of the world at the coming of the Redeemer. This all too imminent danger, Venerable Brethren, as you have already surmised, is bolshevistic and atheistic Communism, which aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization.⁷⁴

By explicitly linking the cosmic battle between good and evil with the contemporary struggle between the Church and Communism, Pius infuses temporal machinations with a sense of the transcendent and timeless, as the concrete manifestation of otherwise metaphysical phenomena. Soviet Communism, it is clear in the selection, is one further tool in the “ancient tempter’s” arsenal, seeking to overturn the social order and persecute the Church, and it is the obligation of the Church to vocally condemn and actively resist

⁷⁴ Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1937).

Communist advances. Such a Papal interpretation of the struggle between comrades and Catholics would serve Marian apocalypics such as Fr. Gruner and the Fatima Crusade well as the Cold War crystallized in the decades succeeding the encyclical.

The Vatican would not confine itself to Papal pronouncements alone. Although questions still remain regarding Pius XI's successor, Pope Pius XII, and his relationship with the Third Reich, the scholarship on Vatican-Soviet relations during his Pontificate is united about his utter contempt for the Soviet regime, not only expressed in his encyclicals and apostolic letters,⁷⁵ but more importantly, in his concrete, active participation in anti-Communist endeavours. He reasserted the conviction that one could not be a faithful Roman Catholic and a Communist concomitantly, sanctioning the excommunication of any Catholic participating in Communist Party activities. Although this ruling was rarely enforced, the message was clear.⁷⁶ In perhaps one of the more notable examples of Church involvement in political affairs during the twentieth century, the Vatican embroiled itself in the first parliamentary election of the new Italian Republic in 1948. As Robert Ventresca notes, "The election was not so much about 'issues' as it was about 'ideology,' a clash between two competing visions of Italian society - a conservative, Catholic, capitalist Italy envisioned by Christian Democracy, versus

⁷⁵ For a representative selection of Pius XII's writings on Communism and the situations in China and Hungary specifically, see his encyclicals *Luctuosissimi Eventus* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1956), and *Ad Apostolorum Principis* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1958).

⁷⁶ Kertzer, *Comrades and Christians*, 106-107.

a revolutionary, secular, socialist Italy envisioned by the Popular Front.”⁷⁷ The Pope himself encouraged Catholic organizations and groups in Italy, such as Catholic Action, to campaign for the Christian Democrats to ensure the Communists would not gain power, and Italian clergy were instructed to impress upon their congregations the urgency of combating anti-Christian forces in politics and society.⁷⁸

Although such levels of blatant Church intervention in electoral politics (understandable given the hegemonic nature of Catholicism at the time in Italian public life) to halt the advance of Communism are not apparent in the American context during the Cold War, Catholics in the United States were no less strident in opposing Communism from a position of faith. Perhaps one of the most well-known Catholics in America during the 1950's was Bishop Fulton Sheen, a popular radio and television host, who railed against Communism in many of his broadcasts and branded it the Antichrist,⁷⁹ and also dedicated a book he had written critiquing Communism to Our Lady of Fatima.⁸⁰ Another prominent Irish-Catholic, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wisconsin), in his campaign to rout out Communist infiltration of the federal government in his role as chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, was actively supported in his

⁷⁷ Robert A. Ventresca, “The Virgin and the Bear: Religion, Society, and the Cold War in Italy,” *Journal of Social History* 37 (Winter 2003): 439.

⁷⁸ Frank J. Coppa, “Pope Pius XII and the Cold War: The Post-war Confrontation between Catholicism and Communism,” in *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Dianne Kirby, 50-66 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 61.

⁷⁹ Coppa, “Pope Pius XII and the Cold War,” 60.

⁸⁰ Thomas A. Kselman and Steven Avella, “Marian Piety and the Cold War in the United States,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 72 (July 1986): 412.

effort by Francis Cardinal Spellman, the most powerful Catholic cleric at the time.⁸¹

Anti-Communism also found expression in American Catholic devotional life. Bishops called on all Catholics to set aside December 30, 1951 as a national day of reparation and mourning for persecuted Christians behind the Iron Curtain. Acts commemorating the day included recitation of the Litany of the Saints and reception of Holy Communion.⁸² May Day, commemorated as a significant public holiday in the Soviet bloc celebrating the worker, with massive parades and rallies, was adopted by some American Catholics as a day of group action designed to counteract Communism, pray for those under Soviet rule, and declare loyalty to democratic principles. A typical May Day celebration would include the national anthem, an address on the basic principles of peace, and the recitation of a prayer for civil authorities.⁸³ In Canada as well, Catholics were engaged in anti-Communist activism at the parish level, particularly in Toronto, viewed by some as a hotbed of Communist organizing in the first half of the twentieth century.⁸⁴ Marjorie Lamb, the director of the Toronto Alert Service, a secular organization devoted to gathering information and alerting the public to the subversive activities of Communists in Canada (which was provided financial support by the

⁸¹ Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons*, 159.

⁸² Joseph P. Chinnici, "The Catholic Community at Prayer, 1926-1976," in *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. James M. O'Toole, 9-87 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 57.

⁸³ Chinnici, "The Catholic Community at Prayer," 58.

⁸⁴ Paula Maurutto, "Private Policing and Surveillance of Catholics: Anti-Communism in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, 1920-1960," *Labour/Le Travail* 40 (Fall 1997), 113.

Catholic Women's League), was often invited to give talks at Catholic gatherings in Toronto.⁸⁵ In one such talk, given as part of a "Religion and Life Lecture Series" on January 28, 1962, Lamb states:

My subject, as you know, is "Communism and You." My message is that in Communism we face a challenge and a danger - a challenge and danger which must be met both adequately and soundly by every responsible citizen of the Free World. And we must do it at once, for the sands of time are running out...⁸⁶

Particularly when viewed next to the Papal encyclicals noted earlier, and other examples of anti-Communist polemic during the Cold War era, Lamb's address is rather staid, lacking the hyperbole and incorporation of religious tropes often found in similar tracts of the time. Yet her invitation to speak at a Catholic lecture series indicates the interest on the part of Catholics in Toronto in Communism as a subject and as a movement to be actively engaged against, and the perception by otherwise secular organizations like the Toronto Alert Service that Catholics were natural allies in the fight against Communism both abroad and in Canada itself, a significant constituency that must be reached out to and utilized.

While anti-Communist activism on the part of Catholics in North America has undoubtedly abated since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (although my discussion of the Fatima Crusade's anti-Communism will demonstrate this is not entirely the case), one segment of the mainstream Catholic population in the United States where anti-Communist attitudes are still clearly evident is the Cuban-American community. Thomas Tweed highlights in his ethnography of a

⁸⁵ Maurutto, "Private Policing," 133.

⁸⁶ Marjorie Lamb, *Communism and You* (Toronto: The Catholic Information Centre, 1963), 1, 2.

Cuban-American shrine in Miami, dedicated to the Virgin Mary under her title of Our Lady of Charity, that the shrine serves as “...the religious center for most in the antisocialist Catholic community...”⁸⁷ He also observed that during a mass and concert on September 7th (the vigil of the Catholic feast day commemorating the birth of the Virgin), the celebrations were often punctuated by petitions of “Virgencita del Cobre, give Cuba liberty.”⁸⁸ In this context, devotion to the Virgin Mary is explicitly linked with anti-Communism among Catholics in the Cuban diaspora in Miami. Yet this connection is not unique to this Catholic community alone. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries anti-Communism was a hallmark of Catholic devotion to the cult of the Virgin Mary, only intensifying with the onset of the Cold War. This link will now be explored in greater detail in relation to the visions and messages of the Virgin Mary at Fatima, Portugal in 1917.

⁸⁷ Thomas A. Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 88.

⁸⁸ Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*, 127.

III

The Mediums and Their Message

*The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.*⁸⁹

-Our Lady of Fatima, spoken to Sr. Lucia

The level of devotion tied to the cult of the Virgin Mary within Roman Catholicism is perhaps one of its most distinctive hallmarks. From her representation in the art of the catacombs,⁹⁰ the cult of the Virgin has developed into a central facet in both Church dogma (Mary as *Theotokos*, her perpetual virginity, Immaculate Conception, and bodily and spiritual Assumption into heaven) and in popular piety (demonstrated in the praying of the Rosary, the Angelus and Magnificat, candle-light processions and the crowning of statues during the Marian month of May, and pilgrimage to shrines honouring the Virgin). Many Marian shrines, especially those that have developed since the mid-nineteenth century, are imbued with significance by and indeed credit their establishment to Marian apparitions. In her seminal work on Marian apparitions in Roman Catholicism, Sandra Zimdars-Swartz defines an apparition as:

...a specific kind of vision in which a person or being not normally within the visionary's perceptual range appears to that person, not in a world apart as in a dream, and not as a modification of a concrete object

⁸⁹ Louis Kondor, *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words* (Fatima, Portugal: Dominican Nuns of the Perpetual Rosary Postulation Centre, 1976), 169.

⁹⁰ Geri Parlbay, "The Origins of Marian Art in the Catacombs and the Problems of Identification," in *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder, 41-56 (London: Burns & Oates, 2008), 42.

as in the case of a weeping icon or moving statue, but as a part of the environment, without apparent connection to verifiable visual stimuli.⁹¹

These visions assume various forms across several religious faiths,⁹² and not necessarily with religious import. In the Catholic tradition specifically, apparitions may be of Christ, the saints, or other holy persons, but particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, visions of the Virgin Mary have dominated. From LaSalette to Lourdes, Knock to Fatima, Garabandal to Medjugorje, common threads have ran through these modern vision experiences. They predominantly tend to occur in rural locations where the Church is relatively entrenched, and often to children from a low socio-economic background with little formal education.⁹³

Perhaps most significantly given the concerns of this paper, Marian apparitions in nearly every case occur and proliferate during times of great social, political, and economic upheaval, when the Church is understood to be most acutely threatened by malevolent forces within and without. Since the Reformation the Virgin Mary has been promoted by the Church as a spiritual weapon against the Protestant Reformers, rationalists, liberals, Masons, secular

⁹¹ Sandra L. Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary: From La Salette to Medjugorje* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 4.

⁹² In her study on stories of the jinn in the West Bank, Celia Rothenberg notes that a jinn may appear to the one that s/he wants to possess or choose to remain invisible, or may manifest itself in the form of an animal. *Spirits of Palestine: Gender, Society, and Stories of the Jinn* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 35.

⁹³ In what might be deemed a more 'liberal' reading of the historical cult of the Virgin Mary, Marina Warner suggests that it is the supposed inherent goodness of the simple and uncorrupted nature of the child that allows their testimony regarding visions to be more acceptable. *Alone of all her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 312.

humanists, up to socialists and Communists more recently,⁹⁴ at times descending from heaven herself to reassure, caution, and instruct the faithful. William Christian notes in his analysis of the incredible proliferation of apparitions in southern Europe in the mid-twentieth century the particular efficacy of these apparitions in times of crisis. Their value, Christian writes,

...once authenticated, is that they provide information on what the Divine Will is at a given historical moment. It is much simpler, if the visionaries can be believed, to hear what God has to say through his messengers about such-and-such a place right now, than try to extrapolate correct conduct from what Christ said two thousand years ago and the accumulated wisdom of the Church.⁹⁵

The well-known apparitions of the Virgin to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, France in 1858 followed a series of political conflicts, significant anti-clericalism amongst French intellectuals,⁹⁶ and the French transition to a secular republican nation.⁹⁷ In concert with other Marian apparitions occurring throughout France during the nineteenth century, the Lourdes narrative had a tremendous impact in the recuperation and reinvigoration of French Catholicism in the wake of the 1789 Revolution.⁹⁸ The more obscure apparitions at Ezkioga, Spain in 1931, the subject of Christian's *Visionaries*, occurred in a similar time of political upheaval and persecution, during the fall of the monarchy and the founding of the secular

⁹⁴ Paula M. Kane, "Marian Devotion Since 1940: Continuity or Casualty?" in *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. James M. O'Toole, 89-129 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 101.

⁹⁵ William Christian Jr., "Religious Apparitions and the Cold War in Southern Europe," in *Religion, Power and Protest in Local Communities: The Northern Shore of the Mediterranean*, ed. Eric R. Wolf, 239-266 (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), 249.

⁹⁶ Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (New York: Viking, 1999), 117.

⁹⁷ Harris, *Lourdes*, 12.

⁹⁸ Christian, "Religious Apparitions and the Cold War," 249.

Second Spanish Republic which was openly hostile to the Church. Here the Virgin relayed messages condemning the ordered removal of crucifixes from public buildings.⁹⁹ Nearly fifteen years prior, a similar situation unfolded in Spain's Iberian neighbour to the west, Portugal, with the Revolution of 1910 which resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the first Portuguese republic, ushering in a secular government that instated the separation of Church and State,¹⁰⁰ and which was similarly hostile to the role of the Church in public life as its Spanish counterpart.

The Virgin Comes to Fatima

It was in the midst of this political and religious tumult that from May to October 1917, in the rural village of Fatima, Portugal, ten year old Lucia dos Santos and her cousins Jacinta and Francisco Marto claimed to have witnessed an apparition of the Virgin Mary during a series of six encounters.¹⁰¹ While the sequence of these events were well-known at the time and truly public apparitions attended by thousands (although only the three children could see and hear the apparition), it was not until 1937 that it was publicly announced by Lucia in her memoirs that the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in 1917 were preceded the year

⁹⁹ William Christian Jr., *Visionaries: The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 14.

¹⁰⁰ Douglas L. Wheeler, "The Portuguese Revolution of 1910," *The Journal of Modern History* 44 (June 1972): 189.

¹⁰¹ My account of the apparitions is gleaned primarily from three sources: Sandra Zimdars-Swartz's description in *Encountering Mary* (77-91), widely regarded as an authoritative survey of Marian apparitions in Catholicism; William Thomas Walsh's more pious treatment of the events, *Our Lady of Fatima* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947); and the memoirs of the eldest of the seers Lucia dos Santos, edited by Louis Kondor, postulator for the causes of beatification of Jacinta and Francisco. The beatification was bestowed on the brother and sister by Pope John Paul II during a visit to Fatima in 2000.

before by three encounters with an angel, who identified himself as the Angel of Peace. During these encounters the angel taught prayers to the three shepherds, and offered them Holy Communion, saying: “Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Repair their crimes and console your God.”¹⁰² These encounters with the angel and the messages contained therein introduced the general tenor of the subsequent apparitions.

The first of the six successive apparitions of the Virgin Mary occurred on May 13, 1917 while Lucia and her cousins were tending their sheep on a high slope in the Cova da Iria, a popular meadow for grazing. After being startled by a sudden flash which they assumed to be lightning, they began to hurriedly make their way home when they saw another flash, followed by the appearance of a woman dressed all in white above a small oak tree, radiating an intense light “more brilliant than the sun.” When the children asked where the woman was from, she replied that she was from heaven, and instructed the children to return to the Cova at the same time on the 13th day of each month for six months and meanwhile, to pray the Rosary daily. The cousins agreed to keep the matter amongst themselves, but having been so impressed by the vision, the youngest of the three, Jacinta, inevitably told her parents, claiming it was “Our Lady” who had appeared to them. Word of the apparition quickly spread through the area.

While the identity of the woman was not immediately apparent to the visionaries (also referred to as seers) after the first apparition, during the

¹⁰² Kondor, *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*, 163.

appointed second apparition on June 13 it was becoming increasingly clear that the woman was indeed the Virgin Mary. She repeated her request to the children to come to the Cova on the 13th of the next month, and this time revealed a vision of the traditional Catholic devotional image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, surrounded by thorns, outraged by the sins of humanity and seeking reparation.

When the three children honoured the Virgin's request by returning in July, now with large crowds that grew with each apparition, she revealed to the children the so-called three-part 'Secret of Fatima.' The first part of the secret, initially released in Lucia's *Third Memoir* in 1941, was a horrifying vision of hell. Opening her hands, the Virgin emitted powerful rays of light, depicting a sea of fire in which blackened demons and souls were embroiled amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, the image terrifying the children. This was followed by the second part of the Secret, concerning devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary:

You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end; but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the pontificate of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.

To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy

Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.¹⁰³

By the July apparition, a well defined pattern in the apparition experience emerged, with the children approaching the oak tree (the site of the initial apparition), reciting the Rosary, Lucia's announcement of the Virgin's impending arrival, the presumed conversation between the two, and the Virgin's eventual departure toward the east. Some of those in attendance claimed to hear a faint voice, an inaudible buzzing sound as Lucia spoke with the apparition, while others said that the top of the short oak tree appeared to bend and curve under some invisible weight, just before Lucia began to speak.

The three children were taunted and mocked by family members, peers, public officials and skeptics, at one point even being imprisoned temporarily in the jail at Ourem, where they were interrogated and threatened with being boiled to death in a cauldron of oil if they did not recant their claims. Sensing the skepticism of some, during the July apparition Lucia requested that the Virgin tell the children explicitly who she was, and to perform a public miracle so that all would believe that she was appearing to them. She agreed to these requests, promising their fulfillment in October. On the appointed day of October 13, between 70 000-100 000 gathered in the Cova da Iria for the final apparition and the highly anticipated miracle. In her final vision to the three children, the woman identified herself as "the Lady of the Rosary," and requested the erection of a

¹⁰³ Kondor, *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*, 169.

chapel on the site of the apparitions in her honour. After the Virgin departed, a series of visions seen exclusively by Lucia depicted various religious tableaux, including the Mysteries of the Rosary and the Holy Family (Jesus, Mary, and Joseph). These visions were then followed by the promised “Miracle of the Sun” visible to all, during which the sun began to gyrate or dance as some witnesses described it, whirling rapidly and emitting powerful rays of the whole spectrum of colour, before plunging precipitately in a zigzag pattern toward the crowd. The crowd panicked, convinced that the end of the world was at hand, but as quick as it had so terrifyingly descended, the sun returned in the same zigzag movement to its proper place and appearance. The entire episode lasted ten minutes, but it was enough to convince those in attendance that the Virgin had indeed descended to Fatima. Both Jacinta and Francisco died in 1919 during the Spanish influenza outbreak, while Lucia would later join a Carmelite convent in Coimbra, Portugal, where she remained in the religious life until her death in February 2005. As the only remaining seer, she would be entrusted with the transmission of the message of Fatima, including the Secrets, and serve as the final authority on its interpretation.

The apocalyptic nature of the “Miracle of the Sun” and the prophetic content of the secrets revealed at Fatima captured the imagination of the Catholic world in the subsequent decades. While the apparitions were initially little known outside of Portugal until the early 1940’s, the outbreak of the Second World War, the publishing of Sr. Lucia’s memoirs, and the devotion of Pius XII to the

apparitions (like John Paul II, Pius XII has been called the Pope of Fatima), encouraged the circulation of the narrative throughout Western Europe.¹⁰⁴ Statues of the Virgin Mary, bearing the image and title of Our Lady of Fatima, also began to tour throughout southern Europe, drawing significant crowds, and other Marian apparitions with narratives similar to those at Fatima emerged across the continent.¹⁰⁵

In the United States specifically, devotion to Our Lady of Fatima found a sympathetic constituency. Many of the popular pre-conciliar Marian devotions in the United States took root in the interwar period following the European model, with the establishment of shrines (especially miniatures of the grotto at Lourdes on parish grounds), the founding of the Sodality Movement, and the publication of such periodicals as *Madonna Magazine*, *Marist Messenger*, and *Our Lady's Digest*.¹⁰⁶ In the decade following World War II, as concerns regarding the heightening tension of the Cold War began to deepen, the message of Our Lady of Fatima (including the first and second secrets relayed in Lucia's *Third Memoir* in August 1941), began reaching the United States. It was heavily publicized in the Catholic press and even gained significant attention in secular media, and was promoted by Marian devotional organizations and the clergy¹⁰⁷ as a spiritual antidote to the Soviet threat, given Mary's emphasis on the conversion of Russia

¹⁰⁴ Christian, "Religious Apparitions and the Cold War," 246.

¹⁰⁵ Christian, "Religious Apparitions and the Cold War," 250-251.

¹⁰⁶ Kane, "Marian Devotion since 1940," 110.

¹⁰⁷ Kselman and Avella, "Marian Piety and the Cold War," 409.

in the second part of the three-part Secret of Fatima. The unreleased third part of the prophetic Secret (which was locked in a safe in the secret archives of the Vatican's Holy Office in 1957) contributed to its popularity and became the focus of many Fatima devotees during the Cold War, who hypothesized as to its contents. The detonation of atomic weapons destroying Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 and the escalation of the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union led some to believe, given the Virgin's prediction of the annihilation of nations if her requests were not obeyed, that the third secret predicted nuclear warfare.¹⁰⁸ It would remain undisclosed until its partial release at the beatification ceremony of Jacinta and Francisco by John Paul II at Fatima in 2000, and the full release of the text with theological commentary by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) the following month.

The growing popularity of the Fatima devotion, the US-Soviet tension of the Cold War era, and the intrigue associated with the unreleased third secret, spurred the founding of several Marian organizations with an interest in Fatima. The largest such organization devoted specifically to promoting the Fatima apparitions and message was the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, founded in 1950. Numbering ten million, members were instructed to wear a blue ribbon, by which they would be recognized as a member of the Blue Army, opposing by

¹⁰⁸ Nicholas Perry and Loreto Echeverria, *Under the Heel of Mary* (London: Routledge, 1988), 233.

prayer and penance the Red Army of Soviet Communism.¹⁰⁹ While the Blue Army's militant Marianism spurred by the threat of Soviet Communism has significantly diminished with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the lay organization has a relatively positive relationship with the Catholic hierarchy,¹¹⁰ another American lay movement founded a few decades later, likewise devoted to the Fatima messages, would maintain and indeed ratchet up the militant rhetoric in the face of opposition within the Church.

Fr. Nicholas Gruner and The International Fatima Rosary Crusade

Born into an affluent Catholic family in Montreal, Quebec in 1942, Nicholas Gruner graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce from McGill University before deciding to enter the priesthood. Moving his studies to the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, he was eventually ordained in the diocese of Avellino in 1976, and granted permission by the bishop to seek out a diocese in North America to take him on. In the mean time Gruner, as an intense devotee of the Virgin Mary, was offered the opportunity to take charge of the Canadian Pilgrim Virgin statue, similar to those that toured southern Europe. The Canadian statue was one of seventy of Our Lady of Fatima blessed by Pope Paul VI in 1967, and Gruner began touring North America in a van with the statue in order to promote devotion to Fatima.¹¹¹ The International Fatima Rosary Crusade was founded by Gruner in 1978, evolving from the Committee for the National

¹⁰⁹ Perry and Echeverria, *Under the Heel of Mary*, 252.

¹¹⁰ Perry and Echeverria, *Under the Heel of Mary*, 298.

¹¹¹ Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan*, 137.

Pilgrim Virgin of Canada, although the new apostolate continued with the Pilgrim Virgin tours throughout Canada and the United States. Its headquarters were established at The Fatima Centre on a quiet side road in Fort Erie, Ontario on the Canada-US border,¹¹² and over the subsequent thirty years expanded with a network of offices in Brazil, India, Ireland, Italy, the Philippines, Spain, and in Coimbra, Portugal, where the last surviving seer, Sr. Lucia, resided in the Carmelite convent.

With its founding the Fatima Crusade began publishing a free quarterly magazine, *The Fatima Crusader*, billed as “the largest and most influential publication on Fatima in the world.”¹¹³ It began as an eight-page black and white newsletter detailing developments on the Pilgrim Virgin tour, accounts of the apparitions at Fatima, and traditional Catholic devotional material, eventually moving to a 64-page colour magazine format with the mission of fostering devotion to the Virgin Mary and disseminating the urgent warnings of Our Lady of Fatima. Its circulation has fluctuated during the over thirty years of its publication, from a modest 30,000 in 1982, then sky-rocketing to 500,000 in the mid-1980’s during the height of the controversy over the consecration of Russia (to be detailed shortly), before leveling off to its current circulation of 330,000.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Although Fr. Gruner is a Canadian citizen and his ministry is based in Ontario, he estimates that over 70% of his supporters are in the United States. Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan*, 205.

¹¹³ *What is the International Fatima Rosary Crusade?* (Fort Erie, ON: The Fatima Centre, 1998), 3.

¹¹⁴ Nicholas Gruner, “Dear Friends of Our Lady,” *The Fatima Crusader* 9 (October-December 1982): 1; Nicholas Gruner, “You Must Help Break the Plot to Silence Our Lady,” *The Fatima*

The overarching apocalyptic tone that would nourish the publication in the decades to come and which will be analysed in greater detail shortly was made evident in the very first issue in 1978, where, in his inaugural letter to fellow devotees of Our Lady, Fr. Gruner wrote:

But since the hour is critical She also came to warn us that we must listen to Her, if not out of filial love for Our Mother, then at least out of prudent self-interest. If we ignore Her we do so at our own collective and individual peril. Human history is not only subject to the free will of men but also to God's providence. Through Fatima God is warning us, despite what our press and T.V. may tell us, that the world is in a serious crisis and we are on the brink of destruction. Let us therefore heed Fatima before it is too late.¹¹⁵

As I noted in the introduction, Fr. Gruner's Fatima Crusade may be understood as an *audience cult*, according to the criteria established by Stark and Bainbridge, in which members take part primarily through the consumption and patronage of mass media such as television, magazines, and books. In the late 1980's the Fatima Crusade sought to utilize more fully the various media forms at its disposal and extend its reach. In the spring of 1987 Gruner began broadcasting *Heaven's Peace Plan*, a daily radio program carried by stations in the United States and Canada. He followed this program in September 1989 with the launch of *Fatima: The Moment Has Come*, a half-hour weekly television series featuring conversations with guests on a host of subjects also reflected in the pages of the *Crusader*, some of which will be discussed in the remainder of this paper. Greater

Crusader 21 (November-December 1986): 2; and "Help Make a Difference," *The Fatima Crusader* 94 (Spring 2010): 63.

¹¹⁵ Nicholas Gruner, "Letter from the Executive Director," *The Fatima Crusader* 1 (Summer 1978): 1.

accessibility to the Internet in the mid-1990's allowed Fr. Gruner's Fatima ministry to broaden its outreach even further, with their website www.fatima.org emerging as the go-to site for all things Fatima. Since establishing the website in 1996, the Fatima Crusade has demonstrated an admittedly surprising technological savvy in their exploitation of various internet functions, with their current Fatima Challenge campaign and conference extensively utilizing the social networking tools of Web 2.0 such as YouTube and Facebook. In the past thirty years Fr. Gruner's Crusade has gradually developed into a significant Marian mass media apostolate on the subject of Fatima.¹¹⁶

The Fatima Crusade is notable by virtue of its militant anti-Communism which dovetails with a Marian apocalyptic worldview, and its contestation with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church over varying interpretations of the import of Fatima. In the following pages I will explore some of the themes and issues where these attributes of the Fatima Crusade are most clearly expressed.

The Consecration of Russia

Fr. Gruner and his Fatima Crusade are perhaps best known for their emphasis on the act of consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which was requested as part of the 'Secret of Fatima' during Our Lady of Fatima's apparition to the three children on July 13 (see page 55). Pope John Paul II first performed a public consecration of Russia and the entire world to Mary on May 13, 1982, at the shrine at Fatima on the sixty-fifth anniversary of the first

¹¹⁶ *Studio 2*, "Profile: Father Nicholas Gruner," TVO, January 20, 1999.

apparition. At the time this act satisfied Gruner, who in fact praised the consecration as satisfying Our Lady of Fatima's request that it be performed collegially in spiritual union with all the bishops of the world, whereas an earlier attempt by Pius XII, Gruner argued, was not sufficient in that it was performed by the Pope alone.¹¹⁷ However, Fr. Gruner's stance on the fulfillment of the Virgin's request, in order to stave off quite literally the utter annihilation of the world, began to shift by the spring of 1983. He argued that the collegial consecration of Russia must include every member of the Catholic episcopate, joining with the Pope in a simultaneous ceremony on a specific day, and that the Pope's 1982 consecration did not meet this stipulation, given the fact that not *every* single bishop in the Catholic Church had joined the Pope in the consecration at the same time. As a result Gruner cautioned, the fate of the entire free world hung in the balance, remaining vulnerable to the militant, atheistic Soviet Communists, who would continue unabated to spread hatred, war, persecution, and death, and to accumulate massive stockpiles of nuclear armaments. The solution to the impending nuclear catastrophe from Gruner's perspective, "...is not in seeking unilateral disarmament but rather in praying and working so that the Catholic bishops obey Our Lady of Fatima"¹¹⁸ by consecrating Russia according to the prescription set out in the apparitions. The same issue of the *Crusader* also included the first salvo in what would be an insistent campaign to petition the

¹¹⁷ Nicholas Gruner, "Dear Friends of Our Lady," 1.

¹¹⁸ Nicholas Gruner, "World Peace Depends on the Catholic Bishops and You," *The Fatima Crusader* 11 (May-July 1983): 4.

Pope to sufficiently enact the consecration, with a template provided for those wishing to write the Pope.¹¹⁹

Whether or not this petition campaign had any discernible impact is unclear, but on December 8, 1983, the Catholic feast day of the Immaculate Conception, John Paul II wrote to the bishops requesting their participation in a collegial consecration of the world to Mary on March 25, 1984. In the Act of Entrustment performed before a statue of Our Lady of Fatima in St. Peter's Square on that day, the Pope implored the Mother of the Church:

In a special way we entrust and consecrate to you those individuals and nations which particularly need to be thus entrusted and consecrated...The power of this consecration lasts for all time and embraces all individuals, peoples and nations. It overcomes every evil that the spirit of darkness is able to awaken, and has in fact awakened in our times, in the heart of man and in his history... Mother of the Church! Enlighten the People of God along the paths of faith, hope, and love! Enlighten especially the peoples whose consecration and entrustment by us you are awaiting. Help us to live in the truth of the consecration of Christ for the entire human family of the modern world.¹²⁰

Yet in the first issue of *The Fatima Crusader* published following the March 1984 consecration, Fr. Gruner insisted the consecration requested by the Virgin *still* was not satisfied. Although the 1984 consecration was a step in the right direction, Gruner asserted that given its failure to mention Russia by name, and

¹¹⁹ "What You Must Do," *The Fatima Crusader* 11 (May-July 1983): 24.

¹²⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "The Message of Fatima," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html (accessed January 12, 2010).

the belief that not all bishops had participated in the ceremony at the same precise moment, the consecration still waited to be accomplished.¹²¹

Despite every assurance from the Vatican that the Virgin's request for the consecration of Russia had indeed been met, Fr. Gruner continued his one-man quest to broadcast his certain insistence that the consecration had not been realized. He appealed to the Pope himself to acknowledge this and perform the consecration again, this time referring to Russia specifically, and compelling the bishops by a papal order to perform the consecration in collegial union with him. On July 12, 1995 the Crusade took out an ad in the Roman daily *Il Messaggero*, in order to publish an open letter to John Paul II calling publicly for the consecration according to their interpretation of the request, and at the Third Fatima Congress convened by the Crusade in Rome in November 1996, passed a formal resolution calling on a date to be set for the proper consecration (naming Russia and in union with the bishops at precisely the same hour) to occur.¹²² These demands would continue through the first decade of the twenty-first century, with one issue of the *Crusader* expressing the wish that "...Pope Benedict XVI will be the one who finally consecrates Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary exactly according to

¹²¹ Nicholas Gruner, "The Pope Moves a Step Closer," *The Fatima Crusader* 15 (April-June 1984): 4.

¹²² "Fatima 2000: The Third Fatima Congress Resolutions," *The Fatima Crusader* 54 (Winter 1997): 49.

the request of Our Lady of Fatima”¹²³ upon his election to succeed John Paul II as Pope.¹²⁴

The Blue Lady and the Red Dragon

The urgency of Fr. Gruner and those who support his Fatima apostolate regarding the consecration of Russia is quite understandable given their highly apocalyptic reading of the messages of Fatima, particularly the second part of the three-part Secret. According to this Secret, if the consecration was not enacted Russia would continue to spread her errors throughout the world, causing more wars, the persecution of the Church, and the annihilation of whole nations. North America and the United States specifically were viewed as particularly vulnerable to this threat due to the perceived marked divergence between the two solitudes, with militantly atheistic Soviet Communism on one end of the spectrum, and Western liberal democracy, informed by a Judeo-Christian ethical framework, on the other.

One only needed to look at political developments in the 1980’s (from the perspective of the Fatima Crusade), to be convinced that the consecration of Russia had not been fulfilled and that Communism continued unabated to wield

¹²³ “Prayers Urged for Pope Benedict XVI,” *The Fatima Crusader* 80 (Summer 2005): 7.

¹²⁴ For selected additional articles representing The Fatima Crusade’s denial that the consecration has been accomplished (there are indeed many), see: Joseph de Sainte-Marie, “Our Lady of Fatima’s Demands Concerning Russia Not Yet Fulfilled,” *The Fatima Crusader* 13 (October-December 1983): 10-13; Robert Sullivan, “Russia Is Not Yet Properly Consecrated,” *The Fatima Crusader* 24 (March-May 1988): 9; Nicholas Gruner, “We Must Love the Pope, We Must Love the Bishops,” *The Fatima Crusader* 33 (Summer 1990): 5-9; Augustine Smith, “News Update on Consecration of Russia,” *The Fatima Crusader* 56 (Winter 1998): 44; and “But Wasn’t the Consecration Already Done?” *The Fatima Crusader* 91 (February 2009): 23-26.

its malevolent influence in the world. Stoking anti-Communist sentiment amongst its readers in the earliest issues of the *Crusader*, one article claims privileged access to the Red plan to spark revolution in the United States:

Flying squads of Communists are to seize control of the water supply and shut it off; also the electrical power and gas. This means that no elevators or street cars are to be running. Homes would be without water, fuel or light. It would be impossible to communicate with friends or loved ones, even in another part of the city. Goon squads of professional murderers are to round up the people in business districts. Men are to be held as hostages in some of the larger buildings... These are exactly the methods used in Russia, Spain and other places where the Communist Party has been allowed to organize and come to fruition. They firmly expect to do the same thing in the United States.¹²⁵

This form of discourse is only a foretaste of the ratcheted up anti-Communist rhetoric that follows in issue after issue, imbued with increasingly apocalyptic tones. *The Fatima Crusader* itself is trumpeted as worthy of one's financial support, as it is the only publication disseminating the full and accurate message of Our Lady of Fatima, and the privileged information it offers is needed to insure the faithful against otherwise inevitable Communist enslavement.¹²⁶ The facts supporting the threat of Communist enslavement are clear. If Russia had been consecrated as requested long ago, the Crusade maintains, the world would not have witnessed the Second World War, and the hundreds of millions of deaths and persecutions of the Church occurring behind the iron and "bamboo" curtains

¹²⁵ Edward A. Newman, "Has the Crusade of Fatima Failed?" *The Fatima Crusader* 5 (Spring-Summer 1980): 9.

¹²⁶ "The Fatima Crusader Needs Your Help," *The Fatima Crusader* 11 (May-July 1983): 31.

would have been prevented.¹²⁷ The antidote to all this cataclysm is devotion to Mary and the consecration of Russia, and if this is not undertaken immediately, the entire world including the United States and Canada will be enslaved by Russia.¹²⁸

The urgency of this warning that the spread of Soviet Communism's tentacles were bound to reach every corner of the globe threatening the Church, the American way of life, and enslaving entire peoples as prophesied by the Virgin at Fatima, propelled the mission of The Fatima Crusade forward through the last decade of the Cold War. It is quite adequately synthesized in a letter by Fr. Gruner to the readers of his magazine in 1985. It is worth quoting the letter at length here as a representative tract of the *Crusader's* vehement anti-Communism informed by its Marian devotion to the apparitions and message of Fatima:

ONLY by obedience NOW to God's Message to the 20th Century given through Our Lady of Fatima will *we avoid* Nuclear Annihilation and Communist Enslavement of the world. THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA IS MOST URGENT. It is literally and truly a matter of life and death. The lives of millions and millions of people are literally dependent upon our response to Our Lady's Urgent Message at Fatima. Many of us will die very soon if the predicted "ANNIHILATION OF VARIOUS NATIONS" takes place. This will certainly happen if people do not respond now to Our Lady's Message. Already we see that Her prophecies given in 1917 have been fulfilled to the letter because the world did not respond. World War II took place with 55,000,000 dead. Russia, which was one of the weakest countries of

¹²⁷ Running through many issues of the *Crusader* is a preoccupation with the status of Catholics and their persecution in Communist countries, understood as a fulfillment of the Virgin's prophecy at Fatima that the Church would be persecuted if Russia was not converted. For examples, see: "The Continuing Soviet Persecution of Christians," *The Fatima Crusader* 7 (Spring 1981): 19-20; "Communism is Coming Closer to Home," *The Fatima Crusader* 21 (November-December 1986): 7; and "Persecution Towards Catholics in Cuba," *The Fatima Crusader* 66 (Winter 2001): 14.

¹²⁸ "Ignore the Message of Fatima...At the Cost of Your Enslavement and Nuclear Destruction," *The Fatima Crusader* 15 (April-June 1984): 16.

the world in 1917 has, as Our Lady predicted, spread her persecution over the world enslaving 1,537,829,000 people. The *whole world* will soon be dominated by Russia after various nations are ANNIHILATED - completely reduced, in this world, to nothingness. This is the clear prophecy of Our Lady of Fatima that YOU NEED TO KNOW.

This is not being sensational, this is relating the Message of Fatima and surely no one would dare to accuse Our Lady of Fatima of sensationalism. Rather it is telling you the truth so that you will know what must be done. By being informed, YOU can do something about it NOW. As Jesus said to Sister Lucy of Fatima, "It is never too late to have recourse to Jesus and Mary."

Some people say it will never happen here. They reason, "It can't happen to us in North America because the United States has the greatest technology and economic power." The fact is that the U.S. military acknowledges Communist Russia is superior to them in a number of areas. No one in 1917 even thought Russia, by 1985, would be dominating over half the people of the world. In 1917 the world's political leaders promised that World War I would be the war to end all wars. So much for human wisdom unaided by God.

Poor misguided people. They seem to think that they know more than God Himself. They forget that only God knows the future with certainty. Let us remember that Sister Lucy, the one to whom God gave the Message of Fatima, was left on earth to make this Message be known and understood. She has stated, clearly, categorically, that unless we respond, the whole world, including the United States of America (or what is left of it) will be under Communist Russian domination. Today, just 68 years later we can see that it is just a matter of time as we see one country after another fall, betrayed into Communist Russia's cruel hands.¹²⁹

Although Fr. Gruner claims in the letter that his apocalyptic interpretation of the message and its application to political developments in the twentieth century is not sensationalist, the tenor of the magazine in subsequent issues certainly brings such a claim into question. In a similar letter in the next issue, Communist Russia is referred to as "The Beast of the Apocalypse"¹³⁰ murdering and persecuting countless millions, and later Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the

¹²⁹ Nicholas Gruner, "Dear Friend of Our Lady," *The Fatima Crusader* 18 (October-December 1985): 3.

¹³⁰ Nicholas Gruner, "Dear Friend of Our Lady," *The Fatima Crusader* 19 (February-April 1986): 2.

Communist Party in the USSR, is said (rhetorically one would presume) to have a “cloven hoof.”¹³¹ A year prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gruner continued to drive home his message that the apocalyptic annihilation of nations, brought about by Russia as the instrument of chastisement punishing the world for its sins, was less than ten years away, and could only be prevented by honouring Mary’s request at Fatima.

The impassioned, anti-Communist and Marian apocalyptic discourse lining the pages of *The Fatima Crusader* is punctuated with illustrations that visibly represent the worldview articulated in the various articles. In his *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Clifford Geertz argues for the efficacy of symbols as the only repository of meaning. Religious symbols for Geertz, “...dramatized in rituals or related in myths, are felt somehow to sum up, for those for whom they are resonant, what is known about the way the world is, the quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it.”¹³² The images from the pages of *The Fatima Crusader* included below demonstrate Geertz’s observation, serving effectively to synthesize in simple yet dramatic fashion the prevalent themes that nourish the worldview of the Crusade, to entrench that worldview, and to provoke an emotional response from those who subscribe to it.

¹³¹ Hamish Fraser, “The Increasingly Imminent Menace of Communism,” *The Fatima Crusader* 25 (August-September 1988): 27.

¹³² Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 127.



Figure 1

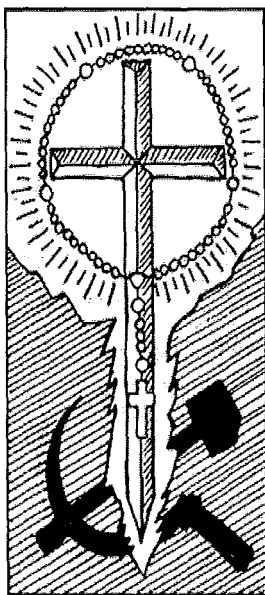


Figure 2



Figure 3

The first of the three images,¹³³ in spite of possessing the aesthetic of a sophisticated children's drawing, is laden with symbolic meaning derived both from the Marian apocalyptic worldview traced out thus far as it is interpreted and applied by the Fatima Crusade to historical events in the twentieth century, namely the Cold War period, as well as pre-existing apocalyptic notions of the vengeful Virgin developed from the Book of Revelation. We see the Virgin Mary portrayed in the traditional Catholic image of the Madonna, holding her infant son Jesus, who suspends Rosary beads in his hands. The Virgin is surrounded by an immense radiating sun which may represent the "Miracle of the Sun" apparition on October 13, and/or an allusion to chapter 12 in Revelation, which reads in part:

¹³³ Figure 1: *The Fatima Crusader* 8 (April 1982): 1; Figure 2: *The Fatima Crusader* 4 (Winter 1979-80): 4; Figure 3: *The Fatima Crusader* 11 (May-July 1983): 3.

A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads...¹³⁴

As early as the fifth century an interpretative tradition developed, understanding that the “woman clothed with the sun” referred to the Virgin Mary, engaged in a great cosmic battle with the forces of evil.¹³⁵ The apocalyptic Biblical narrative is taken quite literally by the Fatima Crusade. The woman clothed with the sun is considered to be Our Lady of Fatima during the “Miracle of the Sun” apparition on October 13, and the red dragon is identified as Communism and its red star that the Virgin cautioned against, constituting evil’s most recent manifestation.¹³⁶ Also depicted beneath the Madonna is a serpent writhing underfoot. This image too has apocalyptic significance in the historical cult of Mary, with Mary being referred to by some theologians of the Early Church as “the new Eve,” conquering the temptation of evil where the Eve of Genesis failed, and bringing forth renewal as the Mother of Jesus, the new Adam.¹³⁷ Further below this we see that the Madonna is resting on a mushroom cloud,¹³⁸ the connotation of which is abundantly clear, referring to the warning of the annihilation of nations in the

¹³⁴ Revelation 12:1-3 (Revised Standard Version).

¹³⁵ Warner, *Alone of all Her Sex*, 93-94.

¹³⁶ Joseph de Sainte-Marie, “Our Lady of Fatima is the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy,” *The Fatima Crusader* 17 (February-April 1985): 13.

¹³⁷ Warner, *Alone of all Her Sex*, 59.

¹³⁸ This image of the mushroom cloud seems from my perspective to be an interesting spin on reports during the apparitions at Fatima by spectators in the crowd that, although they were not privileged to see or hear Our Lady of Fatima, observed a small cloud that would descend and rest above the oak tree, before rising again and disappearing toward the east, apparently denoting the apparition’s presence. Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary*, 80.

second secret of Fatima. In the image, the entire North American continent is engulfed in flames. Generally speaking, the entire episode depicted here seems to visually reinforce for the reader the consequences of not praying for the reparation of sinners and consecrating Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The second illustration (Figure 2), which was included in more than one issue of the *Crusader*, depicts a cross, its end sharpened as though it were a sword and ringed with luminous Rosary beads, piercing through the archetypal symbol of Soviet Communism, the hammer and sickle. The notion of the Rosary as the Virgin Mary's spiritual weapon of choice dates back at least to the victory of the Holy League during the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. That victory, according to the Pope of the time, Pius V, was due to the intercession of the Virgin obtained by the rosaries offered on the part of the faithful, petitioning for a victory against the Turks.¹³⁹ The Fatima Crusade utilizes this concept of the Rosary as a spiritual weapon against both metaphysical and tangible foes, in this case being wielded against Soviet Communism. This theme is fleshed out in a special issue of *The Fatima Crusader* on the Rosary, commemorating the apostolic letter of John Paul II on that subject. In one article, it is noted regarding the Rosary that:

This most powerful prayer to Our Lady has indeed earned the title of "Sword". For it is not only a powerful weapon in the hands of Her spiritual children against the attacks of hell, it has made the difference on many a battlefield on which Christian armies were engaged in mortal conflict with infidels.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Warner, *Alone of all Her Sex*, 308.

¹⁴⁰ Lawrence Underdonk, "No Sword Like It," *The Fatima Crusader* 72 (Winter 2003): 20.

Beyond being one of the most popular elements of a typically subdued and pre-conciliar Marian piety, the Rosary is viewed by those who take the message emanating from the apparitions at Fatima seriously, and who generally subscribe to a militant Marianism, as one of the spiritual weapons referred to by President Eisenhower in the quotation at the beginning of the second chapter. The Rosary is believed to wield significant temporal efficacy in suppressing the Communist threat and ensuring the spiritual integrity of the Church and the national security of the United States and Canada.

The final image included here, drawn from the *Crusader*, is perhaps more ambiguous than the first two, and is not steeped in discernible historical Marian apocalyptic symbolism. It is more unique to the particular worldview held by Fr. Gruner and his supporters. Given what has been explored thus far regarding the Fatima Crusade's insistence on the consecration of Russia for its conversion from atheistic Communism, this image appears to illustrate, in hopeful expectation, the post-conversion era of peace promised by Our Lady of Fatima during the July 1917 apparition. A figure that appears to be a soldier is shown kneeling in reverence to the Virgin. Departing from the previous image, the serpent under the heel of Mary is replaced by a tattered and partially obscured hammer and sickle, and in the background, we see the familiar skyline of St. Basil's Cathedral and the Kremlin's Spasskaya Tower. Such a longing for a post-conversion era of peace for Russia is envisioned in an article by Gruner calling for the consecration: "On that day, Russia will be delivered from the grasp of Satan, and meekly submit to

the sweet yoke of Our Lady, giving incomparable glory to God. From there the Queenship of Mary will spread over the whole earth, preparing the world for the universal reign of Christ the King.”¹⁴¹ In this sequence of three images, as compiled here, the overarching tone that forms the contours of the Fatima Crusade’s worldview are highlighted: the inevitable calamities that will annihilate entire continents if the Virgin’s requests are not heeded, the praying of the Rosary for the reparation of sinners and the consecration of Russia as the sole means to prevent disaster, and the Marian era of peace that will spring forth from faithful adherence to the message of Fatima.

This link between Marianism and popular notions of the apocalypse is certainly not unique to the Fatima Crusade, although the level of its militancy, its trafficking in conspiracy theories, and its exceptionally literal reading of the unfolding of history in the twentieth century is particularly notable. In the first centuries of Christianity the Virgin Mary was depicted as a key figure in representations of the apocalypse in art,¹⁴² drawing inspiration from the vision of the Apocalypse in Revelation noted previously. And as highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, apparitions of the Virgin Mary have tended to proliferate at times of great social and political upheaval. Coinciding with these tumultuous times, Marian apparitions often included messages calling for prayer

¹⁴¹ Nicholas Gruner, “Only ‘BY THIS MEANS’ Will You Avoid World Enslavement,” *The Fatima Crusader* 24 (March-May 1988): 2.

¹⁴² John Herrmann and Annewies Van Den Hoek, “Apocalyptic Themes in the Monumental and Minor Art of Early Christianity,” in *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity*, ed. Robert J. Daly, 33-80 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 75.

and penance lest great chastisements rain down upon the world, the apparitions at LaSalette, France in 1846¹⁴³ and the visions in Ezkioga, Spain¹⁴⁴ which began during the Second Spanish Republic being two such instances.

For our purposes then, marked as it was by the perceived threat of atheistic Communism, the strong hostility toward this threat by many Catholics in the United States and Canada, and its tie to the apparitions at Fatima, the Marian apocalypticism of the Cold War period demonstrated by the Fatima Crusade is only a continuation of a larger historical trend. Catholics in North America devoted to Our Lady of Fatima understood her messages to Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco, and the application of those messages to the Cold War context by movements such as Gruner's Fatima Crusade, as providing otherwise temporal developments with great cosmic meaning and significance. For them, the apparitions served as an interpretive key through which both religious and seemingly secular historical events could be understood and reconciled with their pre-existing religious worldview. Each move on the chess board of twentieth-century foreign relations was understood to contain great cosmic import, confirming the fulfillment of the Virgin's prophetic warnings. In the Cold War climate, events such as the arms race between the United States and the Soviets, and as will be noted later, the *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies under Gorbachev were imbued with cosmic significance. Following the Cold War, the most

¹⁴³ Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary*, 40.

¹⁴⁴ Christian, *Visionaries*, 357.

prominent historical event to which the Fatima Crusade would attach its Marian apocalyptic worldview would be the September 11th terrorist attacks (to be discussed in Chapter 4). Events like September 11th, Fr. Gruner reminded, could easily have been avoided if the consecration of Russia and its subsequent conversion had been realized. However, it became increasingly apparent to Gruner and his supporters that there existed subversive agents infiltrating the highest levels of the Church itself, seeking to prevent the success of his apostolate and the “full” message of Fatima from being released and adhered to.

Religious Regimes and Ownership of the Fatima Message

In the introduction to her survey of Marian apparitions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Sandra Zimdars-Swartz observes that “Marian apparitions are not simple events with self-evident meanings...these are very complex phenomena that have been pared down and subjected to a considerable amount of interpretation by those who have sought to make them publicly accessible.”¹⁴⁵ The apparitions at Fatima and the history of their interpretation are certainly evocative of this process. The prophetic nature of the visions, the specific requests made by the Virgin, and especially the three-part Secret of Fatima (the final portion remaining a mystery for over eighty years), all made this particular apparition a more than hospitable environment for the flourishing of divergent discourses on the import of the messages for the Church and for the world.

¹⁴⁵ Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary*, 11.

Most importantly for our purposes here however, the malleability of interpretation rendered possible by apparitions acting as an open plane of meaning not only leads to divergent interpretations, but in some instances, to heated contestation over their orthodoxy or lack thereof. Elements of this contestation have been highlighted in previous sections, such as the conflicting interpretations over whether or not the consecration of Russia prescribed by the Virgin in the July, 1917 apparition had indeed been fulfilled. What began initially as a rather subdued yet persistent call on the Church by the Fatima Crusade to finally and sufficiently consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, would soon balloon into a full-blown contest between Fr. Gruner and Church officials at the highest levels of the Roman Curia (the administrative body of the Church) over the interpretation and fulfillment of the Fatima message. While the pages of the *Crusader* are indeed saturated with examples of this contestation over Fatima between Gruner and the Vatican, I will focus specifically on the supposed Vatican-Moscow agreement that prevents the full message of Our Lady of Fatima from being fulfilled, conflicts over the release and interpretation of the “Third Secret,” and Gruner’s own status within the Catholic Church.

To Gruner and his supporters, it became increasingly clear that a subversive hand was at work, blocking the mission of the Fatima Crusade to have the consecration of Russia properly enacted. In every issue of the *Crusader* from the fall of 1984 to the spring of 1987, and sprinkled throughout various other issues since that period, Gruner continued to impress upon his readers the truth

behind the failure to consecrate Russia and save the world from annihilation: the purported Vatican-Moscow Agreement. According to the *Crusader's* first article on this subject, the agreement was concluded in 1962, and since that time the attitude of the Church toward Soviet Communism has been governed by assurances conceded during the negotiations. The essentials of the agreement were reported as follows:

John XXIII had conceded to the Soviet negotiator, Mgr. Nikodim, the promise not to attack the people OR THE REGIME of Russia. This was done to secure Moscow's permission for the Russian Orthodox observers to attend the Council. Since then, the Holy See has considered itself to be still bound by the commitments of John XXIII. Communism is no longer ever mentioned in any papal document.¹⁴⁶

One of the chief supporters of this agreement according to the *Crusader* was Agostino Cardinal Casaroli, the former Vatican diplomat and Secretary of State from 1979-1990. He is largely credited as the architect of the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*, its formal policy toward the Soviet bloc countries of Eastern Europe during the Cold War.¹⁴⁷ Casaroli is accused of continuing to enforce the 1962 agreement in the name of political expediency, and to actively oppose the honouring of Our Lady of Fatima's request by consecrating Russia, for it would contravene the conditions of this agreement.¹⁴⁸ While there was indeed a general thaw in

¹⁴⁶ Jean Madiran, "The Vatican-Moscow Agreement," *The Fatima Crusader* 16 (September-October 1984): 6. I would note that the last claim, that Communism is no longer mentioned in papal documents, is not borne out. In one instance, two years following the supposed compact, Pope Paul VI (who succeeded John) strongly condemned Communist ideology in his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1964).

¹⁴⁷ "Vatican Foreign Policy Supremo Dies," *BBC News*, June 9, 1998, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/109581.stm> (accessed July 5, 2010).

¹⁴⁸ "Casaroli: Main Supporter of the Agreement to Silence the Vatican," *The Fatima Crusader* 18 (October-December 1985): 5. For additional articles on the Vatican-Moscow agreement,

Vatican-Soviet relations under Pope John XXIII,¹⁴⁹ I have seen no mention of a secret compact along the parameters claimed by Gruner and *The Fatima Crusade* in the academic scholarship on Catholic-Soviet diplomacy during the Cold War.

The Crusade's emphasis on the existence of the Vatican-Moscow Agreement as a betrayal of the Church and a clandestine attack on the message of Our Lady of Fatima is only exhibit A in its long list of evidence that corrupt forces within the Church itself are either spreading misinformation about the import of the Fatima message or seeking to suppress it entirely. In one article, the Roman Curia of the Holy See is portrayed as the "Big Brother" of Orwell's *1984*, controlling the faithful in totalitarian fashion, silencing Sister Lucia (who is viewed by the Crusade as the final voice of authority on the apparitions), and manipulating Catholics to think that the consecration of Russia as requested at Fatima was enacted by the Pope in 1984, when it was clear to true devotees of Our Lady of Fatima that it had not taken place.¹⁵⁰ There are claims that many of the cardinals walking the halls of the Apostolic Palace are secret Masons, whispering in the Pope's ear, counseling him not to honour the Virgin's requests.¹⁵¹ Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), is condemned for

continuing even after 1991, see: Paul Leonard, "Up to Now - The Vatican-Moscow Agreement Has Silenced Our Lady," *The Fatima Crusader* 22 (April-May 1987): 12-15; Nicholas Gruner, "Jesus Tells Us to 'Make it Known,'" *The Fatima Crusader* 39 (Winter 1992): 2-4; and Atila Sinke Guimaraes, "Obstacle to the Consecration of Russia: The Vatican-Moscow Agreement," *The Fatima Crusader* 73 (Spring 2003): 32-39.

¹⁴⁹ Perry and Echeverria, *Under the Heel of Mary*, 263.

¹⁵⁰ Christopher A. Ferrara, "When Black is White," *The Fatima Crusader* 66 (Winter 2001): 7.

¹⁵¹ Nicholas Gruner, "Straight is the Road and Narrow is the Gate that Leads to Victory," *The Fatima Crusader* 50 (Autumn 1995): 4.

having apparently told the faithful that they do not have to believe in or obey the messages of Fatima, and other more anonymous forces in the Church are criticized for excluding Fr. Gruner from publishing in Catholic periodicals, forcing his television program off the air, ignoring his militant interpretation of the Fatima message¹⁵² and seeking generally to discredit the work of his mission.

The tension between Gruner and Vatican officials came to a head with the unveiling of the so-called “Third Secret of Fatima” in the spring of 2000, following the beatification of the two youngest seers Jacinta and Francisco by John Paul II at the Fatima shrine. In the first two decades of its existence, the Fatima Crusade continuously implored the Pope to finally release the third part of the Secret,¹⁵³ the first two secrets having been previously made public in the memoirs of the eldest seer Sister Lucia. When the Third Secret was released, it depicted a vision of a great persecution of the Church, with a “Bishop dressed in white” understood to be the Pope being gunned down by a group of soldiers in a hail of bullets, followed by countless other bishops, priests, and members of religious orders.¹⁵⁴ It was interpreted by the Vatican as largely having been fulfilled, with the assassination attempt on John Paul II on the anniversary of the first apparition at Fatima on May 13, 1981, and the persecution of the Church during the twentieth century. At the May 2000 beatification ceremony, Angelo

¹⁵² Nicholas Gruner, “God Have Mercy On Us All,” *The Fatima Crusader* 71 (Autumn 2002): 5.

¹⁵³ Nicholas Gruner, “Our Lady is So Sad and We Must Console Her!” *The Fatima Crusader* 53 (Summer 1996): 6.

¹⁵⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “The Message of Fatima.”

Cardinal Sodano (then-Vatican Secretary of State) announced that the full text of the Third Secret would soon be published, but cautioned that while its messages of penance and conversion were still relevant, the historical events it referred to now belonged to the past.¹⁵⁵

Their demands for the release of the third part of the Secret of Fatima now met, *The Fatima Crusader* then quickly challenged the official Vatican line on the text, alerting its readers that the document published by the Vatican in June 2000 in fact was not the full Third Secret! This conclusion was based on the conviction that there were in fact two separate manuscripts which together composed the Third Secret in its entirety; but what was released by the Vatican was only the first half. Secondly, the *Crusader* claimed that the interpretation of the text that had been released by officials in the Roman Curia was utterly flawed. Cardinal Sodano's suggestion that the Third Secret primarily concerned events now in the past, supported by Cardinal Ratzinger in his theological commentary that accompanied the release, was deemed unsound by the *Crusader*. How could the Third Secret only concern past events, the *Crusader* asked, when the consecration of Russia had yet to be fulfilled, leaving all of humanity still vulnerable to imminent and unparalleled chastisements?¹⁵⁶ Rather, from the perspective of the Crusade, this second part of the Third Secret was believed to prophesy even more treacherous developments to come, including a wave of apostasy, of open

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Paul Kramer, "Third Secret Revealed, But Not All of It!" *The Fatima Crusader* 64 (Summer 2000): 30.

rebellion within the Church itself.¹⁵⁷ Interpretation of what is meant by this apostasy has been extended to include events such as the series of child abuse scandals which have rocked the Church in the two decades since 1990. According to the *Crusader*, for those concerned Catholics seeking an explanation for such corruption, one need not look further than the un-revealed segment of the Third Secret.¹⁵⁸ Over the past decade, the Fatima Crusade has continued to challenge what it perceives to be the claims of high-placed officials in the Holy See seeking to suppress the true message of Fatima: claims that the Third Secret has been fully revealed, and that the events it predicted have been fulfilled and are now part of the historical record.

In the midst of this contestation between Fr. Gruner's Crusade and Church officials over the release of the Third Secret, the strongest disdain has been reserved for Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the time of the Third Secret's release, now a cardinal and current Secretary of State under Benedict XVI. Bertone is accused in the *Crusader* of having silenced Sr. Lucia to ensure that she did not speak out on the still undisclosed portion of the secret, and generally of acting as a subversive force in the Vatican spreading misinformation on the true contents of the Virgin's message in the Third Secret.¹⁵⁹ In 2006 Italian conservative Catholic journalist

¹⁵⁷ Nicholas Gruner, "The Chastisement of the Hidden Secret," *The Fatima Crusader* 89 (Summer 2008): 41.

¹⁵⁸ "What Every Man and Woman Must Know," *The Fatima Crusader* 89 (Summer 2008): 22.

¹⁵⁹ Gerard Mura, "The Third Secret of Fatima: Has It Been Completely Revealed?" *The Fatima Crusader* 70 (Spring 2002): 68.

Antonio Socci published *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*, which shared many of the same reservations about the Third Secret's release expressed by Gruner and the Fatima Crusade. In 2008, Cardinal Bertone felt compelled to enter the debate personally with his own book *The Last Secret of Fatima*, compiled from a series of interviews with a journalist on the subject of Fatima. Surprisingly, even Pope Benedict XVI himself seemed to enter the fray, in a letter to Cardinal Bertone serving as the foreword to the book detailing his position on the interpretation of the Fatima message. In the letter the Pope writes, regarding the decision to release the text of the Third Secret:

It was time for illumination, not only so that the message could be known by all, but also so that the truth could be revealed amid the confused apocalyptic interpretations and speculation that were circulating in the Church, disturbing the faithful rather than inviting them to prayer and penance.¹⁶⁰

With what appears to be an unequivocal Papal condemnation of the Fatima Crusade's reading of the Fatima messages in place, Cardinal Bertone presses forward in his apologetic text to contest many of the principle arguments surrounding the interpretation of the apparitions put forward by Gruner and others that support a similar position. Bertone strongly denies that any second envelope containing the rest of the Third Secret exists, and on this matter names Gruner specifically, saying "Hard-core Fatimists, like the followers of Father Nicholas Gruner and the readers of his magazine, *Fatima Crusader*, are in for a

¹⁶⁰ Benedict XVI, "Presentation of His Holiness Benedict XVI of the book written by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone *The Last Secret of Fatima*," http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20070222_present-bertone_en.html (accessed June 28, 2010).

disappointment.”¹⁶¹ Further to this point, Bertone takes exception to the charge that he attempted to silence Sister Lucia, and argues against the claims in the *Crusader* that the consecration of Russia remains to be completed, asserting that it was accomplished in 1984 with Sister Lucia confirming its efficacy.¹⁶² In an article responding to Bertone’s book, the *Crusader* argued that the text was riddled with inaccuracies and contradictions, and only served to further unravel the Vatican cover-up of the true, uncensored message of Fatima.¹⁶³

This rhetorical back and forth between Bertone and Gruner’s apostolate has taken place with questions over Gruner’s status as a Roman Catholic priest in the backdrop. By 1989, Gruner had yet to submit himself to the authority of a Canadian bishop, functioning as the Catholic equivalent of a “free agent.”¹⁶⁴ As early as 1990, the *Toronto Star* reported that the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto had cautioned parishioners against donating money to the Fatima Crusade. It cited a statement from the Archdiocese, which advised the faithful: “In consideration of his present standing and his attitude toward the Church, it is completely inappropriate for members of the faithful to give any money to Father Gruner, his private organization, or his television program.”¹⁶⁵ It is important to note here the emphasis on Gruner’s Fatima mission as a private organization, presumably outside the purview of the Catholic Church and thus not in

¹⁶¹ Tarcisio Bertone, *The Last Secret of Fatima: My Conversations with Sister Lucia* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 64.

¹⁶² Bertone, *The Last Secret of Fatima*, 82-83.

¹⁶³ “Time for the Truth,” *The Fatima Crusader* 89 (Summer 2008): 26-35.

¹⁶⁴ Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan*, 141.

¹⁶⁵ “Archdiocese Warns Against Fringe Group,” *Toronto Star*, June 17, 1990, A10.

communion with it. In the same article it is reported that the Canadian interfaith television network VisionTV had pulled Gruner's television program *Fatima: The Moment Has Come* from its schedule, citing numerous violations of the network's code of ethics including controversial comments on women in the Church and homosexuals. A heated tug-of-war between the Church and Gruner over his status continued through the 1990's until September 2001, when the Vatican's Congregation for Clergy announced that Gruner had been suspended by the Avellino, Italy diocese where he was originally ordained. This suspension was then confirmed by a sentence of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, barring Gruner from performing the functions of a Catholic priest.¹⁶⁶ In the first issue of the *Crusader* following his suspension, Gruner insisted that due to the intricacies of Canon Law the suspension was invalid and that he was in fact still a Catholic priest in good-standing, and that the announcement by the Congregation for Clergy was a ruse with the principal aim of undermining the credibility of the true message of Fatima by attacking its most vocal champion.¹⁶⁷

Marian apparitions, as unbound and complex phenomena lacking self-evident meaning, by their very nature encourage a polyvocal range of discourse. The life and mission of Fr. Gruner's Fatima Crusade has been marked by claims of possessing ownership over *the* authoritative discourse concerning the message of Fatima and its full and accurate interpretation. As I have shown, this claim of

¹⁶⁶ "Controversial Fatima Priest Suspended by Vatican," *National Catholic Reporter*, September 28, 2001, 11.

¹⁶⁷ Coralie Graham, "Don't Shoot the Messenger," *The Fatima Crusader* 69 (Winter 2002): 16.

ownership has been challenged by those with a divergent reading, including those at the highest levels of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, most notably Cardinal Bertone. Apparition narratives, analogous to Eade and Sallnow's observation regarding Christian pilgrimage noted in the Introduction, are above all an arena for competing discourses, a site for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups. The intrigue surrounding such elements of the Fatima apparitions as the release of the Third Secret, and the very prophetic and historical nature of the events associated with the Fatima message, encourage this contestation between rival religious groups.

In his study of the Marian apparitions at Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina (which unlike those at Lourdes and Fatima were not only serial, recurring over several months, but still continue to occur), Mart Bax contextualizes the avid promotion of the apparitions by local members of the Franciscan Order and the more marked reluctance to do so on the part of diocesan priests as part of a larger, long-range historical rivalry between Franciscan priests and diocesan clergy in the area. Bax argues that by latching on to the growing popularity of the apparitions, an increasingly threatened group of Franciscan priests were able to develop an effective strategy against diocesan expansion into parishes traditionally under Franciscan control.¹⁶⁸ From Bax's perspective, this contestation between the Franciscans and the diocesan authorities highlights the

¹⁶⁸ Mart Bax, *Medjugorje: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Rural Bosnia* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1995), 24.

fact that “...the Roman Catholic Church is not seen as a relatively passive monolith, but as a complex configuration of competing religious regimes that are continually directed toward expansion and consolidation.”¹⁶⁹

Furthering Bax’s concept of competing religious regimes, we can apply some of the general contours of his theory to the particular context of Fr. Gruner’s Fatima Crusade and its competition with other groups in the Church, most notably the hierarchy of the Vatican itself. In her ethnography of a Marian apparition shrine in Brittany, Ellen Badone notes some of the differences between the situation in Kerizinen and that in Medjugorje. At Kerizinen, competition involves diocesan clergy and a lay group with no official status within the Church, and this lay group, *Les Amis de Kerizinen*, strategically chooses to emphasize the similarities between its own discourse and that of the Church.¹⁷⁰ While the same dynamic of contestation between the Church and an unrecognized lay group also exists in the Fatima Crusade’s conflicts with the Church, there are also a few notable differences. The Fatima Crusade-Church contestation over the message of Fatima does not conform to Bax’s religious regimes model in that the Crusade is not an entrenched historical religious order with Church sanction like the Franciscans. However, as a self-proclaimed lay apostolate, the Fatima Crusade argues that it is an entirely legitimate organization under Canon Law, which gives

¹⁶⁹ Mart Bax, “Marian Apparitions in Medjugorje: Rivaling Religious Regimes and State-Formation in Yugoslavia,” in *Religious Regimes and State-Formation: Perspectives from European Ethnology*, ed. Eric R. Wolf, 29-53 (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 30.

¹⁷⁰ Badone, “Echoes from Kerizinen,” 465.

it the right to form an apostolate within the Catholic Church without requiring permission from ecclesiastical authorities.¹⁷¹

Moreover, while Gruner takes great pains at times to declare oaths of fealty to the Holy Father and to emphasize his good-standing as a Catholic priest,¹⁷² many of the *Crusader's* issues also include (as highlighted earlier) accusations of apostasy within the Church, charges that certain Cardinals have participated in Masonic ceremonies, are secret Communists that have betrayed the Church through a compact with Soviet Russia, and have actively sought to undermine Gruner and suppress the true unfiltered message of Fatima. On the matters of the consecration of Russia and the Third Secret particularly, the Fatima Crusade vehemently challenges the Vatican line on Fatima. Cuneo notes at the beginning of his study of Catholic traditionalism a reported quote by Pope Paul VI that "Satan's smoke has made its way into the temple of God through some crack."¹⁷³ From the viewpoint of the Crusade, this smoke is indeed billowing and now suffocates the chair of Peter.

While the Fatima Crusade may not qualify as a religious regime according to a strict application of the term following Bax's definition, certainly the conflict between such regimes is strongly reflected in the campaign by Gruner and his Crusade against the interpretation of the Fatima message put forward by the most

¹⁷¹ *Frequently Asked Questions about Father Nicholas Gruner* (Fort Erie, ON: The Fatima Center, n.d.).

¹⁷² "The Fatima Crusader is Loyal to Pope John Paul II and Denounces Schismatic Fatima Group," *The Fatima Crusader* 19 (February-April 1986): 21.

¹⁷³ Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan*, vii.

powerful religious regime in the Church, the Holy See itself. If we cannot classify the Crusade as a Catholic religious regime, I would suggest that at the very least the apostolate qualifies as an *institutionalized counter-Church structure*. Debates about its Catholic orthodoxy aside,¹⁷⁴ it is a liminal entity occupying the margins of Catholic discourse, contesting the Church hierarchy on the question of Fatima with a dwindling yet still significant and active support base. Moreover, the Crusade possesses an extensive media network through which it solidifies its base of support through a shared discourse and broadcasts its competing reading of the Fatima message.

¹⁷⁴ In his study of the ecclesiastical politics surrounding the Marian apparition cult of The Lady of all Nations in Amsterdam, Peter Jan Margry argues that some of the depictions of the Virgin Mary by the cult conflict with Catholic dogma by portraying the Virgin as co-redemptress with Christ. This designation has been the subject of great debate and is not supported by Church teaching. While the Fatima Crusade vehemently contests the Vatican line on the message of Fatima, its rhetoric has not reached the extent of challenging official Church dogma directly. “Marian Interventions in the Wars of Ideology: The Elastic Politics of the Roman Catholic Church on Modern Apparitions,” *History and Anthropology* 20 (September 2009): 249.

IV

The Collapse of Communism? New Threats and Potential Allies

*It is the evils of Communism that have caused the breakdown of our Holy Church, the spread of soul-stealing dangers like drugs, pornography, abortion, illicit sex, religious persecution...*¹⁷⁵

-*The Fatima Crusader*, Fall 1991

The lowering of the hammer and sickle for the last time over the Kremlin compound on December 25, 1991 supposedly heralded the victory of Western liberal democracy over Soviet Communism. The Cold War, it seemed to many, had finally concluded on generally peaceful terms, with the cataclysmic annihilation of nations forewarned by such Marian apocalyptic groups as Fr. Nicholas Gruner's Fatima Crusade having been prevented. Through arms treaties committing to a significant reduction in nuclear stockpiles and an overall thaw in diplomatic relations between the two principle state actors in the Cold War conflict, the United States and the Soviet Union, the predicted great chastisement with Russia serving as its instrument had been averted. Even the Catholic Church played a significant role in eroding Soviet influence in several Eastern bloc countries in the late 1980's, before the Soviet Union itself dissolved, most notably by providing spiritual sustenance to the Solidarity movement in Poland led by Lech Walesa.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Nicholas Gruner, "Only She Can Help You," *The Fatima Crusader* 38 (Fall 1991): 2.

¹⁷⁶ Zdzisława Walaszek, "An Open Issue of Legitimacy: The State and the Church in Poland," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 483 (January 1986): 132.

Yet for an organization like the Fatima Crusade, which offered a fervent brand of anti-Communism wedded to a Marian apocalyptic cosmology that occupied the locus of its mission and worldview, the historical developments surrounding the ultimate disintegration of the Soviet Union presented a significant dilemma. In the face of this new development, how could the particular form of anti-Communist polemic which had nourished their readers over the preceding decade be maintained? Another Catholic organization centered on devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, the Blue Army, interpreted the collapse of the Soviet Union to underscore the efficacy of the consecration of Russia by John Paul II in 1984, and the relevance of the message of Fatima to Cold War events.¹⁷⁷ For the Fatima Crusade to adopt a similar position however, would have been to undermine their insistence throughout the 1980's that the consecration of Russia had in fact not been enacted according to the Virgin's prescribed formula at Fatima, thus continuing to expose the Church and the entire world to Communist enslavement. Instead, from the early 1990's to the present, Fr. Gruner and his Crusade have insisted that the entire collapse of the Soviet Union and the adoption of liberal democracy and open markets in its former spheres of influence, is a manufactured ploy instigated by the Communists. This strategy is intended to deceive the West and assuage its concerns regarding Soviet hostility, lulling it into a state of complacency, before the now-clandestine Soviets ultimately strike.

¹⁷⁷ Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan*, 143.

Prior to the USSR's final dissolution in December 1991, the Fatima Crusade acknowledged the necessity of repudiating at every turn each historical development pointing toward the gradual closing of the Cold War period. Perestroika (Gorbachev's package of political and economic reforms) was declared by the Fatima Crusade to be a hoax to appease the West.¹⁷⁸ Rather than eroding, the strength of the Soviet state apparatus was "...restructuring, rearranging, reorganizing, and rearming preparatory to its final thrust for world domination in the next five to ten years. Communism is not dead, as long as the Marxist-Leninist religion and dream of world conquest lives on in the minds of its leaders in the Kremlin."¹⁷⁹ The reforms initiated by Gorbachev were viewed, as one headline in *The Fatima Crusader* states, as "perversion, not conversion."¹⁸⁰ This perspective rejected the historical reading of the Blue Army and other groups devoted to Fatima that developments in the USSR and eastern Europe were the fruits borne out of the 1984 consecration and general adherence to Our Lady of Fatima's message. In subsequent issues, Fr. Gruner and his Fatima Crusade continued to steadfastly deny that Soviet Communism had indeed collapsed and no longer posed a clear and present danger to Catholicism and to the West in the

¹⁷⁸ "Gorbachev's Perestroika is a Hoax," *The Fatima Crusader* 29 (September-November 1989): 2.

¹⁷⁹ Donald S. McAlvany, "Mesmerized by the Bear: The Great Soviet Deception," *The Fatima Crusader* 33 (Summer 1990): 25.

¹⁸⁰ John Cotter, "The Changes by Russia Mean Perversion, Not Conversion," *The Fatima Crusader* 36 (Spring 1991): 13.

manner it once had.¹⁸¹ Former Russian President and current Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is accused of being “the new Stalin,” reassembling the never-quite-dismantled authoritarianism of the Soviet period and silencing dissent. The role of Putin in Russian public life is pointed to by the Crusade as evidence that the consecration of Russia has not been fulfilled and that Russia is about to embark on a reinvigorated quest to enslave the world.¹⁸²

As with its Marian apocalyptic discourse described in Chapter Three, the Fatima Crusade’s insistence on the continuing menace posed by Soviet Communism in the post-Cold War period is not unique to this organization. Rather, it is shared by other apocalyptic movements in North America as well, both religious and secular. Daniel Wojcik helpfully provides a larger context for this denial of Soviet Communism’s collapse in his study of apocalyptic beliefs in the United States in the twentieth century. He notes that many of those from across the spectrum of religious belief and secular conviction, who hold apocalyptic worldviews that include a role for the Soviet Union in ushering in the end times, similarly view US-Russian relations after 1991 as a “false peace” before the end of the world. Rather than a refutation of their apocalyptic vision of

¹⁸¹ For additional *Crusader* articles on the continuing Communist menace, see: Donald S. McAlvany, “America Disarms While Russia Still Prepares for War,” *The Fatima Crusader* 39 (Winter 1992): 10-12; Paul Kramer, “Paving the Way for Antichrist: The Fatima Consecration Hoax Continues,” *The Fatima Crusader* 41 (Summer 1992): 18-23; Augustine Smith, “Communism is Dead...Again,” *The Fatima Crusader* 61 (Autumn 1999): 28-39; and “The Ongoing Threat from Russia,” *The Fatima Crusader* 71 (Autumn 2002): special supplement.

¹⁸² *Fatima: Only Way to World Peace* (Fort Erie, ON: The Fatima Center, 2008), 45.

the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union is only the latest fulfillment of God's eschatological plan.¹⁸³

Although the Fatima Crusade maintains a Marian apocalyptic worldview that denies the collapse of Soviet Communism and insists that Russia will serve as the instrument of chastisement, inevitably the progression of historical events necessitate a re-evaluation of that worldview. Regarding the adaptability of apocalyptic narratives, Wojcik notes: "Interpreters of apocalyptic prophecy are masterful *bricoleurs*, skillfully recasting elements and themes within the constraints of their respective traditions and reconfiguring them to formulate new, meaningful endtimes scenarios."¹⁸⁴ Fr. Gruner and the Fatima Crusade likewise have demonstrated a certain degree of malleability in altering the focus of their rhetoric to cohere with larger contemporary social concerns. Since 1991 they have revealed the core interpretation of the message of Fatima they had developed up to that point to possess a wide panoply of meanings, addressing not only the cosmic consequences of the struggle between Judeo-Christian liberal democracy and atheistic Soviet Communism during much of the twentieth century, but also containing more tangible social implications. As the quotation from the *Crusader* highlighted at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the Crusade has broadened its apocalyptic rhetoric in order to acknowledge a great range of social ills, while still clinging to an anti-Communist stance as the locus through which all other

¹⁸³ Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 153.

¹⁸⁴ Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 148.

issues are interpreted. A broad spectrum of social evils are incorporated into the pre-existing discourse of the Crusade as consequences of the refusal of many to adhere to the Virgin's requests at Fatima, and as the first signs of the impending cataclysm to fall upon humanity if Russia is not consecrated and the reign of Christ restored. Essentially, every possible threat is melded into the Crusade's anti-Communist apocalyptic vision, in order to ensure its continuing relevance during the so-called "culture wars."

In recognizing this shift toward a greater inclusion into the Fatima Crusade's pre-existing discourse of a host of ills poisoning the social body, it becomes increasingly apparent that there is a marked preoccupation particularly after 1991 in the pages of *The Fatima Crusader* with the traditional concerns of both religious and secular social conservatism. Throughout the 1990's and beyond the Fatima Crusade tapped with greater frequency into the right-wing public discourse concerning such topics as abortion, homosexuality, sex education, and the erosion of the nuclear family. In concert with these relatively new, primarily domestic moral threats, new international institutional threats would also enter the ring allied with Communism and indeed springing from it, including the UN and the supposed construction of a New World Order, both seen as additional fulfillments of apocalyptic prophecy. In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss these issues as they are articulated in *The Fatima Crusader*, and explore potential links between the development of the Crusade's more all-encompassing worldview and the ascendancy of socially conservative Christian fundamentalist

movements in the United States, such as the Moral Majority and Pat Robertson's ministry.

Mary as the Mother of Life and the Ideal Woman

The pro-life movement since its inception has been closely identified with the Roman Catholic Church and its marked opposition to abortion and contraception. In the American context specifically, as early as the mid-nineteenth century the Catholic Church had already established itself as the foremost defender of an absolute ban on abortion, with prominent Catholic bishops condemning the procedure as an "abomination" and threatening the excommunication of those women seeking out abortions and the doctors performing them.¹⁸⁵ With the US Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the Conference of Catholic Bishops called for every legal option to be explored in order to challenge the Court's opinion.¹⁸⁶ The cult of the Virgin Mary has also been associated with pro-life activism in the Church, with the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe specifically being associated with the movement, and reaffirmed in one instance with John Paul II's prayer to Mary as "the Mother of God and the Mother of Life" during a homily on the sanctity of life delivered on the Capitol Mall in Washington in 1979.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 226-227.

¹⁸⁶ Timothy A. Byrnes, "The Politics of the American Catholic Hierarchy," *Political Science Quarterly* 108 (Autumn 1993): 503.

¹⁸⁷ John Paul II, *Homily of His Holiness John Paul II at the Capitol Mall* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, October 7, 1979).

It is natural then that anti-abortion rhetoric would flow through the pages of a conservative Catholic Marian publication such as *The Fatima Crusader*. Of all the socially conservative issues that would receive increased attention after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, abortion has had the greatest longevity. Prior to 1991, many of the articles that broached the topic of abortion did so while connecting it seemingly inextricably with the evils of Communism. Accompanied by graphic images of supposedly aborted fetuses, the *Crusader* warned its readers that abortion was “compulsory in Communist lands,” and such forced abortions would be exported to the west with the inevitable Communist advance.¹⁸⁸ Post-1991, articles on abortion continued, still linking it inextricably with the errors of Communism, but taking on a more domestic emphasis. The *Crusader* asserts that owing to ignorance of the message of Our Lady of Fatima: “Even in these so-called free democratic countries such as Canada and the U.S., parents proclaim their freedom to kill that which is the most valuable to them, their own children, and thank their government for supplying the means to do this.” Lax abortion laws, according to Fr. Gruner, are just another example proving that the errors of Russia have spread into North America itself.¹⁸⁹ The *Crusader* also waded into the debate regarding the Portuguese referendum on abortion held in February 2007, observing that an earthquake which struck the country the day after the referendum was a clear sign of God’s displeasure with the result, which had

¹⁸⁸ “What Will Happen to Us...If the Pope and Bishops Do Not Consecrate Russia in Time,” *The Fatima Crusader* 18 (October-December 1985): 15.

¹⁸⁹ Nicholas Gruner, “God Have Mercy On Us All,” *The Fatima Crusader* 71 (Autumn 2002): 5.

registered nearly 60% of voters in favour of relaxing restrictions on access to abortion.¹⁹⁰

Beyond their opposition to abortion and contraception, the Crusade also pronounces on other issues of particular concern to women. Consistent with their traditional Catholicism, the Fatima Crusade not only strongly opposes the ordination of women to the priesthood, but also opposes women taking on any significant leadership roles within lay organizations in the Church. In one article, derived from an address given by Fr. Patrick Perez and published in the *Crusader*, he states:

Avoid the spirit of feminist irrationality and emotionalism which is already destroying our societies and even our Church. There are women in the Church who have no business being where they are. They're using their feminism to try to gain roads into places where men should be ruling the church and directing the church and the parishes. They have no business there.¹⁹¹

The Crusade is also preoccupied with enforcing modesty in women's dress, holding up the Virgin Mary as a model of humility and an example of the ideal woman. This is consistent with Marian devotional rhetoric in the United States in the mid-twentieth century, when the cult of the Virgin was often deployed by concerned Catholics in an attempt to secure the innocence of adolescent girls, showing particular concern for the modesty or lack thereof of the latest trends in women's fashion.¹⁹² This campaign for the modesty of women's clothing is

¹⁹⁰ John Andrade, "Behind the Scenes of the Portuguese Abortion Referendum," *The Fatima Crusader* 85 (Spring 2007): 15.

¹⁹¹ Patrick Perez, "What Priests Can Do," *The Fatima Crusader* 84 (Winter 2006): 12.

¹⁹² Kane, "Marian Devotion Since 1940," 104-105.

continued in the pages of the *Crusader*, where women are instructed to be “Mary-like” in their dress, for if they are not, their immodesty will draw men into sin by arousing impure thoughts and actions, and women themselves will be consigned to the fires of hell for having caused this through their revealing clothing.¹⁹³

Homosexuality

The Catholic Church has historically disapproved of homosexuality.¹⁹⁴ More recently, in the first months of his Papacy in 2005, Pope Benedict XVI approved an instruction from the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education barring homosexuals from the priesthood, who “...present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called ‘gay culture.’”¹⁹⁵ The Church has also been active in debates surrounding same-sex marriage in countries moving toward its adoption, with Catholic bishops in Canada (one of the first countries to fully legalize same-sex marriage) actively urging their congregations to oppose the move.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ “Our Lady of Fatima Stressed Modesty in Dress,” *The Fatima Crusader* 19 (February-April 1986): 29.

¹⁹⁴ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the definitive compendium of Church teaching: “...homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.”¹⁹⁴ The Catechism goes on to state however that homosexual tendencies are distinguished from acts, and while still disordered, these tendencies are considered by the Church to constitute a trial for those who exhibit them, and people with such tendencies are deserving of acceptance and respect. (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 625-626.

¹⁹⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, “Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders,” http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20051104_istruzione_en.html (accessed July 8, 2010).

¹⁹⁶ Brendan M. O’Brien, “Pastoral Letter to Catholics in Canada on Redefining Marriage,” *Ecclesia: Official Newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of Pembroke* (March 2005): 3.

As with the issue of abortion, the Fatima Crusade's condemnation of homosexuality at its most basic level is consistent with Church teaching. On both of these questions, the Crusade in fact coheres much more closely with the official Vatican line than it does on the message of Fatima and its interpretation. What does distinguish the Crusade from the mainstream Catholic Church, however, is an increasing preoccupation with homosexuality as the Cold War struggle for supremacy drew to a close, and the vitriolic nature of the Crusade's rhetoric concerning homosexuality. This rhetoric, while perhaps slightly more subtle than that employed by Fred Phelps and his Westboro Baptist Church,¹⁹⁷ is no less vigorous. Mention of homosexuality is sparse in the first decade of the *Crusader's* publication. Beginning in the early 1990's however, references to homosexuality began to abound. Before this period, *Heaven's Peace Plan*, Fr. Gruner's daily radio program broadcast on stations across the United States and Canada, dedicated several episodes to the Third International Conference on AIDS held in Washington in 1987. These episodes consisted of discussions between Gruner and Joe Bissonette, the Crusade's own correspondent at the Conference. It is worth citing at length here an excerpt from one such program:

NICHOLAS GRUNER: Our Lady of Fatima has told us that more souls go to hell for sins of the flesh than any other reason, and we can see

¹⁹⁷ The Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas is headed by Fred Phelps, an infamous preacher who, with his extended family and supporters of his ministry, travels the nation protesting gay pride marches, as well as the funerals of gay activists and those who have died from HIV/AIDS. They are most well-known for their slogan "God Hates Fags," which often adorns placards at their protests. Almas Sayeed, "Making Political Hay of Sex and Slavery: Kansas Conservatism, Feminism and the Global Regulation of Sexual Moralities," *Feminist Review* 83 (2006): 120.

AIDS as being a friendly reminder from our creator that we are not to abuse the powers of procreation that he has given us, we are to use them according to his laws. Apparently (not only apparently, but it is true that) there are many people who are not living according to God's laws, who are committing these sexual sins, sins of homosexuality for example. That kind of sin is what caused fire to rain down from heaven. In the Old Testament we read about Sodom and Gomorrah, that were destroyed by God, by a direct intervention, by God sending down fire on those cities because of the sins of homosexuality. We see that God has not treated us differently. That is, that our age still has to account for its sins. It's not as though the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were punished for the sin of homosexuality, but we living in the twentieth century don't have to be accountable to God even in this fight, for these kinds of sins. And so, AIDS is primarily transmitted by homosexuals, is that not right Joe? JOE BISSONETTE: That's true Father. GRUNER: Nevertheless, this AIDS virus is not only killing the guilty, it's also killing the innocent, isn't that so?¹⁹⁸

In the above selection from the program, Gruner (as other religious conservatives did at the time) drew what was to him a logical direct link between the outbreak of HIV/AIDS and its prevalence amongst homosexual men, concluding that it was abundantly clear that this epidemic was an act of divine retributive justice brought upon the great majority of those with HIV/AIDS for their sinful lifestyle; in Gruner's words, "the guilty." Even the apparitions at Fatima were enveloped into the arc of this narrative, with HIV/AIDS viewed as one more fulfillment of the Virgin's prophecy, rendered possible by humanity's refusal to adhere to her warnings.

In articles of the *Crusader*, Bill Clinton's inauguration as US President in January 1993 is lamented, with the expectation that his administration will pass

¹⁹⁸ *Heaven's Peace Plan*, Episode #130, 1987.

“...legal protections for abortion and homosexual perversions.”¹⁹⁹ And although the issue of sex education in public schools will be explored in more detail shortly, it is worth noting here that central to the Fatima Crusade’s opposition to sex education is the belief that within the curriculum homosexuality is being not only condoned but taught to the nation’s children by homosexual teachers.²⁰⁰

Perhaps the most sustained vitriol directed toward homosexuality is found in the *Crusader*’s autumn 2002 issue, which dedicates significant focus to the child abuse scandals facing the American Church at that time. It is alleged in one article that homosexuals have successfully targeted the Catholic Church for infiltration in order to weaken its opposition to their lifestyle, and that the abuse scandals shaking the confidence of many of the faithful are not a matter of pedophilia, or as some have suggested the residual effects of the priestly vow of celibacy, but rather: “Most of today’s clerical scandals are not true cases of pedophilia (preying on pre-adolescent children) but of priests preying on teenage boys. That’s homosexuality. Further, the homosexual network by and large is favorable to pedophilia and same-sex liaisons with teenagers.”²⁰¹ Catholic seminaries in particular have been identified by the *Crusader* as homosexual strongholds, institutions within the Church with their own “gay sub-culture,” and are referred to as “feminaries” rather than seminaries. Members of the hierarchy

¹⁹⁹ Stefan Zachartowicz, “Clinton’s Inauguration Day Marks a Milestone: Rejection of God...Embrace of the Devil,” *The Fatima Crusader* 44 (Spring 1993): 27.

²⁰⁰ Coralie Graham, “Please...Save Our Children,” *The Fatima Crusader* 44 (Spring 1993): 6.

²⁰¹ John Vennari, “Clerical Scandals and the Negligence of the Pastors,” *The Fatima Crusader* 71 (Autumn 2002): 17.

of the Church are accused of being either ignorant of the gay agenda taking hold in the clergy, religious orders, and Catholic schools, or entirely complicit in its entrenchment.²⁰²

Sex Education and the Integrity of the Family

According to John McGreevy, in concert with their recognition by many in American society as the foremost defenders of the sanctity of life, leading Catholic figures during the twentieth century also became increasingly active in public discourse as the guardians of morality. McGreevy highlights one of the first battlegrounds where this moniker would be tested as the debates over sex education in public schools in the early twentieth century.²⁰³ Such debates would only increase and intensify in subsequent decades, and as the Soviet threat diminished (although the Crusade refused to concede this change), the Fatima Crusade entered the sex education fray with greater zeal. The first article on sex education in *The Fatima Crusader* appears in 1991, claiming that sex education programs are designed to break down children's natural inhibitions, undermine what has been taught at home, and encourage sexual activity.²⁰⁴ In addition to the encouragement of homosexuality in sex education programs noted earlier, the *Crusader* also bemoans the invitation of medical professionals into Catholic schools to discuss birth control options not approved by Church teaching.²⁰⁵ In

²⁰² Vennari, "Clerical Scandals," 21.

²⁰³ McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 155.

²⁰⁴ Thomas Sowell, "Our Children Are in Danger!" *The Fatima Crusader* 36 (Spring 1991): 23.

²⁰⁵ Virginia Dolajak, "The Assault On Our Children Continues: One Mother's Report," *The Fatima Crusader* 44 (Spring 1993): 17.

one article, the *Crusader* synthesizes Papal quotes relating both explicitly and more ambiguously to sex education as affirmation that from a Catholic perspective sex education is to be condemned.²⁰⁶

While sex education was perceived as a malevolent effort to corrupt the nation's children, the integrity of the entire traditional family unit was also understood to be under threat. Again, as I have attempted to demonstrate in the examples of abortion and homosexuality, a Catholic preoccupation with the integrity of the traditional family is certainly not unique to the Fatima Crusade. In fact, Marian devotion has often been tied to defense of the family, one notable instance being the formation of several Catholic groups such as the Catholic Marian Family Movement in Ireland in the mid-1980's, during debates in that predominantly Catholic country on the Family Planning Bill liberalizing the law on the sale of contraceptives, and the national referendum on divorce.²⁰⁷ The disintegration of a clear and present danger posed by Soviet Communism required the Fatima Crusade to broaden its rhetorical focus to other malevolent forces threatening society and the Church, and the issue of the erosion of the traditional family allowed the Crusade to tap into existing conservative Catholic concerns. Naturally abortion and homosexuality were seen as threats to the traditional Catholic vision of the family, but so too were "explicit XXX rap music"

²⁰⁶ "Sex Ed Condemned by Rome," *The Fatima Crusader* 46 (Winter 1994): 5.

²⁰⁷ James S. Donnelly Jr., "Opposing the Modern World: The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Ireland, 1965-85," *Eire-Ireland* 39 (Spring-Summer 2004): 242, 244.

corrupting the nation's children,²⁰⁸ drugs, pornography, divorce, and television spewing out the "poison of hell into our minds,"²⁰⁹ amongst other problematic aspects of late twentieth century society.

While increased focus by the Fatima Crusade on these additional issues typically of concern for conservative Catholics was necessitated by the collapse of Soviet Communism, for the Fatima Crusade, this development did not negate the role of the atheist Marxists in the corruption of traditional moral values and the integrity of the family. Fr. Gruner observed in 1993 in an issue of the *Crusader* containing five separate articles on threats to the family that an orchestrated "propaganda war against the family" was at hand. He continued by claiming that we would all be mistaken to believe that the spread of Russia's errors had ceased with the end of the USSR. Rather, with the United States and Canada seeing tens of millions of abortions, millions more divorces and sales of contraceptive devices, and the alienation of parents from their children who were becoming wards of the state housed in daycare centers, the Marxist vision was taking hold in North America,²¹⁰ and the traditional family was the first bastion of morality under attack.

²⁰⁸ Jim Condit, "Even the Smallest Person Can Change the Future," *The Fatima Crusader* 78 (Autumn 2004): 44.

²⁰⁹ Nicholas Gruner, "Our Lady of Fatima Warned About the Propaganda War Against the Family," *The Fatima Crusader* 45 (Autumn 1993): 2.

²¹⁰ Gruner, "Propaganda War Against the Family," 2.

New Institutional Threats

This multitude of social ills, still linked to the errors of Communism and viewed as the tangible consequences of ignoring the Virgin's prophetic warnings at Fatima, could not in and of themselves legitimate the continuing relevance of the Crusade's interpretation of the Fatima message as the twentieth century gave way to the twenty-first. The rhetoric lining the pages of the *Crusader* continued to hammer away at the threat of Communism post-1991, a threat remaining unchecked as a result of the inability of the Pope to sufficiently consecrate Russia to Mary. Nevertheless, there is a discernible acknowledgment on the part of Gruner and the Crusade that not only did the moral threats which typically occupied the minds of Catholic conservatives need to be incorporated into the pre-existing apocalyptic cosmological framework of the Crusade to supplement its anti-Communist focus, but so too did new monolithic international organizations need to be raised up as straw-men, as the latest fulfillments of the Virgin's warnings. In the pages of the *Crusader*, two such purportedly monolithic international organizations seeking global hegemony and pushing humanity toward the brink are the United Nations and the supposed ongoing development of a "New World Order."

As mentioned previously, the autumn 1993 issue of the *Crusader* contained several articles warning of the dangerous consequences of the disintegration of the traditional family unit. An additional threat to the family, which was granted attention in a separate article, was the United Nations.

Specifically, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was perceived by the *Crusader* as an insidious threat to the family in the legal arena. The article warned its readers regarding the Convention: “If the UN Charter Treaty becomes law in the U.S.A., your children could be taken from you forever sometime in the near future. Prayer, vigilance, and keeping informed are crucial in this battle.”²¹¹ The article continues, listing a host of detrimental consequences brought on by the UN convention which would destroy family cohesion, including: giving children rights independent of their parents, giving teenagers the right to contraceptives, prohibiting parents from providing religious instruction to their children, and forced enrollment in universal state-run child care. Yet the *Crusader* insisted that even the UN was another confirmation that Russia’s errors continued to spread unabated. According to the *Crusader*, the UN Charter was largely copied word for word from the Soviet Constitution and has therefore fostered the Soviet conquest of the world. The magazine maintains that the UN Charter is atheistic and specifically anti-Christian, and its ultimate aim is One World Government.²¹² It is significant that this rhetoric effectively links the Crusade’s pre-1991 institutional threat – Soviet Russia – with the new institutional threat constructed after 1991 by the Crusade through its portrayal of the United Nations.

²¹¹ John Vennari, “The UN Charter Attacks the Family,” *The Fatima Crusader* 45 (Autumn 1993): 14.

²¹² “Russia, the United Nations, and the Antichristian One World Government,” *The Fatima Crusader* 46 (Winter 1994): 20.

Coinciding with the readily visible threat of the United Nations, the latest international body to be infiltrated by the Communists, a more covert operation with similar aims was perceived by the Crusade to be underway to undermine national sovereignty, fulfilling the apocalyptic predictions of the Fatima warnings about the consequences of ignoring the Virgin's requests. There is not a single reference to the existence of a plot to construct a New World Order in the pages of the *Crusader* prior to 1991. However, after the Soviet Union's collapse we see cautionary tales about such a plot with increasing frequency. The magazine warns its readers that once this development of a New World Order is completed:

...it will be modern man's greatest achievement: a global economy controlled by a global government which knows no national boundaries. Of course, the new order will not be Catholic, or even nominally Christian. It will be utterly godless in its laws and institutions.²¹³

Worst of all according to the *Crusader*, despite the promotion by this New World Order of contraception and abortion on demand, the general contours of the project are entirely supported by the Vatican! The New World Order, the One World Government supported by the United Nations, and the One World Religion together embodied the Satanic influence that Our Lady of Fatima had warned the world about on the hillside in Portugal in 1917.²¹⁴

²¹³ Francis Alban and Christopher A. Ferrara, "The Great Amnesia," *The Fatima Crusader* 61 (Autumn 1999): 9.

²¹⁴ Cornelia R. Ferreira, "The New Age Movement: The Kingdom of Satan on Earth," *The Fatima Crusader* 46 (Winter 1994): 21.

Apocalyptic and Social Conservative Parallels

I have suggested thus far that relative to its unorthodox interpretation of the message of Fatima, the Fatima Crusade's turn toward a greater emphasis on social issues and moral questions has aligned it more closely with mainstream Catholic conservatives and to some degree with official Church teaching. Similarly, the Crusade's increasing focus on the threats posed by the United Nations and the development of a New World Order parallels the convictions of other non-Catholic religious and secular apocalyptic discourses. As Wojcik notes, post-Cold War apocalyptic prophecy has generally become increasingly preoccupied with the dangers of political and economic unification. Many contemporary groups that adhere to this apocalyptic vision see the UN, the New World Order, the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the reunification of Germany, the creation of the European Union, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank all as signs of the coming one-world economy and one-world government overseen by the Antichrist.²¹⁵ Viewed in this context, the malleable rhetoric of the Fatima Crusade's apocalyptic discourse following the end of the Cold War era is an extreme Catholic articulation of larger, more general apocalyptic trends in North American conservative worldviews.

I submit that through its ability to fuse apocalyptic polemics with a religiously-informed social conservatism, which finds greater expression in the

²¹⁵ Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 160.

Crusader beginning in the early 1990's, the Fatima Crusade taps into and in fact coheres closely with existing apocalyptic and socially conservative discourses formulated by Protestant Christian fundamentalist groups in the United States during the latter half of the twentieth century. Some of the most visible conservative Protestant leaders and their associated movements, such as Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority coalition,²¹⁶ and host of *The 700 Club* Pat Robertson among others, share much of the same worldview and ethos as the Fatima Crusade, without the Catholic Marian gloss.

Religious anti-Communism certainly was not restricted to Roman Catholics in the United States, but was also strongly articulated by Protestant leaders, many of whom held a cosmological vision of events during the Cold War period generally similar to that of Fr. Gruner and his Fatima Crusade. Many of the earliest sermons of evangelical preacher Billy Graham built on fears that escalations in the battle between the United States and the Soviet Union for supremacy were part of prophetic scenarios regarding the end of history.²¹⁷ *Christianity Today*, a periodical founded by Graham in 1956, also trafficked in anti-Communist rhetoric, referring to Jesus as the “great democrat,” opposed to Communists and their propaganda machine which was “dedicated to the service

²¹⁶ For an ethnographic account of Falwell and his ministry, see Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

²¹⁷ Hulsether, *Religion, Culture and Politics*, 100.

of the Antichrist.”²¹⁸ Anti-Communism was a natural cause for conservative Protestants to take up as it was for many Roman Catholics, given their inclination to view the polarization of god-fearing Americans and godless Soviets as a concrete historical manifestation of a cosmic battle between good and evil.²¹⁹

Although the Fatima Crusade and Protestant fundamentalist groups do share an apocalyptic vision of the Cold War period, their alignment is much clearer in regard to their apocalyptic rhetoric which interprets social ills (perceived from a religious and socially conservative vantage-point) and disasters as divine chastisements for not adhering to the will of God. Falwell’s Moral Majority movement was founded in 1979, and was certainly more politically insistent than Gruner’s Fatima Crusade in its public advocacy on socially conservative issues, such as opposition to abortion, promotion of the traditional family, opposition to homosexuality, and the call for the inclusion of prayer in the rhythm of the public school system.²²⁰ Paralleling the Fatima Crusade’s consequential reading of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, a 1989 study of popular support for the platform of the Moral Majority found that many of its supporters held the belief that AIDS was God’s punishment for homosexuality.²²¹

²¹⁸ Mark G. Toulouse, *God in Public: Four Ways American Christianity and Public Life Relate* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 85.

²¹⁹ Clyde Wilcox, *God’s Warriors: The Christian Right in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 6.

²²⁰ Steve Bruce, “The Moral Majority: The Politics of Fundamentalism in Secular Society,” in *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism*, ed. Lionel Caplan, 177-194 (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), 184.

²²¹ Wilcox, *God’s Warriors*, 212.

Pat Robertson, with his Presidential run in the 1980's and his television program *The 700 Club*, has often encountered controversy for his apocalyptic interpretations of historical events as consequences for ignoring divine law. Robertson suggested that the turn of the millennium in 2000, while not quite ushering in the end times, nevertheless did hold eschatological importance.²²² He also speculated in 1980 that according to Biblical prophecy the Antichrist was now roaming the world and was twenty-seven years old at the time.²²³ More recently, he argued on his television program that the earthquake which struck Haiti in January 2010, and the entire unfortunate history of that country, was the direct result of a supposed compact made by the Haitian people with the devil in order to gain independence in the early nineteenth century.²²⁴ Robertson also redefines apparent social ills including those which preoccupy the Fatima Crusade, along with various other calamities in the world, asserting that while truly manifestations of evil, they are ultimately positive signs of the collapse of social order which will in turn usher in the promised earthly restoration of the Kingdom of God.²²⁵

Much more could be said about the history of apocalyptic and socially conservative discourse within Protestant fundamentalism in the latter half of the twentieth century. For our purposes here, in order to draw out parallels between

²²² Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 212.

²²³ Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 163.

²²⁴ Helene Cooper, "Obama Pledges Aid to Haiti," *New York Times*, January 14, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/15/us/15prexy.html?scp=12&sq=Pat%20Robertson%20Haiti&st=cse>.

²²⁵ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 42.

this branch of Christianity and Catholic Marian apocalyptic groups including the Fatima Crusade, such an analysis is best served and synthesized by examining one specific example in which these parallels are particularly clear: religiously-informed responses to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on targets in the United States. Bruce Lincoln's text on religion after September 11th includes in the appendix a partial transcript from Robertson's *The 700 Club* broadcast two days after the attacks. It is worth quoting the most controversial segment of the broadcast:

JERRY FALWELL: And, I know that I'll hear from them for this. But, throwing God out successfully with the help of the federal court system, throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools. The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say: "You helped this happen."²²⁶

In his interview with Falwell, Pat Robertson largely concurs with Falwell's consequential reading of the terrorist attacks, claiming that "...God Almighty is lifting his protection from us" owing to rampant sin and efforts to remove God from the public sphere which have corrupted America and rendered it ultimately deserving of divine chastisement. While the transcript does not invoke overt apocalyptic imagery, certainly such a consequential reading is evocative of Christian premillennialism, which holds a view of humanity and the world as inherently evil, only redeemable through catastrophe and supernatural

²²⁶ Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 110.

intervention.²²⁷ September 11th then, from the perspective of premillennialists such as Falwell and Robertson, is a catastrophe brought about by the sinful lifestyles and liberal politics of certain segments of the American population, serving to register God's displeasure.

A generally congruent religiously-informed understanding of the September 11th attacks is held by Gruner and his Fatima Crusade. The key difference between the Protestant rhetoric and that of the Fatima Crusade is that the same type of narrative espoused by Falwell and Robertson was neatly folded into the Crusade's pre-existing Marian apocalyptic paradigm founded upon the apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Fatima. In an article leaving little room for ambiguity regarding the *Crusader's* reading of the attacks, entitled "A Taste of Annihilation," September 11th is placed within the *Crusader's* larger historical frame, as the latest evidence that the Virgin's messages have not been adhered to:

Ground Zero also gives us a foretaste of hell. The raging fires, the intense heat, the loss of thousands of lives with no warning, and perhaps for some, little time to adequately prepare themselves to meet God...God does not want even one of His children to go to Hell. It is out of His love and compassion for us, that He allows this foretaste of Hell to happen, so that upon seeing and experiencing the Hell on earth, we will take heed and repent in time to avoid the Hell of eternity...Ground Zero is only the beginning. Our Lady warned us of annihilation of entire nations if we do not obey her Fatima requests.²²⁸

Note that this selection does not include a laundry list of sinful lifestyles and liberal interest groups calling for God's retribution, as Falwell and Robertson do in their *700 Club* discussion which depicts September 11th as an act of divine

²²⁷ Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 35.

²²⁸ Coralie Graham, "A Taste of Annihilation," *The Fatima Crusader* 69 (Winter 2002): 5.

retributive justice. Given the Fatima Crusade's incorporation of a socially conservative agenda beginning in the early 1990's however, the same message of divine retribution is certainly implied by the call for repentance and obedience to the Virgin's requests. At the most basic level, the Fatima Crusade shares with conservative Protestant groups the view that September 11th was a cataclysmic event with significance that extends far beyond geopolitical concerns. More importantly from this shared perspective, September 11th was a sign of God's displeasure with the world, particularly America. Within the specific framework of the Crusade's Marian apocalyptic discourse, September 11th was an urgent reminder that the consecration of Russia must be fulfilled lest similar events of even greater magnitude rain down upon the earth.

Consistent with its view of a whole host of social ills as the "errors of Communism" spreading throughout the world unchecked, the Crusade does not hesitate to expose the supposed Russian involvement in the September 11th attacks. The *Crusader* charges that Russian criminal organizations supplied Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda with the necessary components for chemical, biological and even nuclear weapons, and that this connection constitutes unimpeachable evidence that the consecration of Russia was never fully enacted by the Pope, allowing Russia to enable terrorists to attack the United States.²²⁹

²²⁹ Christopher A. Ferrara, "The Russian Connection to bin Laden: More Evidence Surfaces," *The Fatima Crusader* 69 (Winter 2002): 9.

To conclude, in this chapter I have briefly sketched out some of the basic similarities between the Fatima Crusade and forms of Protestant fundamentalism in terms of their religious social conservatism and apocalyptic discourses.

However, as I have suggested, these Catholic and Protestant movements have most clearly aligned in their respective responses to the September 11th attacks.

V

Conclusion

I began my discussion of the Fatima Crusade and its militant apocalyptic Marianism in part by exploring how we might go about classifying this organization with respect to broader historical trends and characteristics evidenced in the development of religious movements. In light of my brief overview of some of the overarching parallels between the Fatima Crusade's shift in rhetoric following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the rhetorics of more mainstream Catholic conservatism and most notably Protestant fundamentalism, it is important to revisit the project of classifying the Fatima Crusade.

Following my attempts to highlight the parallels between the Fatima Crusade's anti-Communism, social conservatism, and apocalyptic reading of historical events, and similar discourses among Protestant fundamentalists, the primary question to ask is whether Fr. Gruner and his Fatima Crusade are the Catholic equivalents of Protestant millenarianism and dispensationalism? In fact, sociologist of religion Michael Cuneo implies this exact conclusion in passing, during his discussion of Marian apocalypticism.²³⁰ Although I have demonstrated that there are indeed several points of correlation between the Fatima Crusade's

²³⁰ Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan*, 180.

Marian apocalyptic worldview and Protestant forms of apocalypticism, it must be stressed that key differences do exist.

It is valid to suggest that the Marian apocalyptic discourse espoused by Gruner and the Fatima Crusade shares the premillennial dispensationalist conviction that the world is inherently evil and warrants imminent chastisement, as revealed by prophecy. Yet these two forms of apocalypticism differ in the types of prophecy referenced and the exact sequence of the apocalyptic scenario envisioned. Again, Daniel Wojcik's study of the apocalyptic in contemporary America is instructive in illuminating these divergences. Regarding the Marian apparitions to Veronica Leuken in Bayside, New York, which articulate a Marian apocalyptic vision quite similar to that formulated by the Fatima Crusade, Wojcik notes that Protestant dispensationalism attempts to correlate current events with an inerrant Bible. Supporters of the Bayside apparitions, on the other hand, see such interpretive efforts as unnecessary, for prophetic admonitions regarding the end times are communicated by the Virgin herself in our own time.²³¹ This reliance on direct, unmediated contact with the divine rather than scriptural authority is also apparent in the Fatima Crusade and its unwavering insistence on the significance of the Fatima messages. While the Crusade has made efforts to legitimate the apparitions by linking the visions of Our Lady of Fatima to the biblical "woman clothed with the sun" mentioned in the Book of Revelation, this connection to the Bible is of secondary importance in the Crusade's discourse.

²³¹ Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 74.

More crucially, the entire apocalyptic worldview of the Crusade is legitimated by the Virgin herself and her messages to the three shepherd children at Fatima.

Protestant dispensationalist prophecies also differ from Marian apocalyptic visions in terms of their fatalism. Dispensationalists assert that the end of the world is inevitable and cannot be deterred by any human attempts to suspend its arrival. Marian apparitions on the other hand, which often contain apocalyptic warnings, typically leave a “panic-button” available, so that the countdown to annihilation may be postponed or ended altogether if people repent their sins and return to God.²³² As I have demonstrated in this thesis, this distinction articulated by Wojcik certainly applies to the Fatima Crusade. In issue after issue the *Crusader* continues to impress upon its readers that the proper consecration of Russia as prescribed by Our Lady of Fatima *must* be sufficiently enacted, in order to halt the impending annihilation of whole nations, curb the spread of Communism’s errors throughout the world, and usher in an era of peace.

Most notably, I would argue that while it is important to draw out parallels between Catholic and Protestant forms of apocalyptic discourses where these parallels do indeed exist, as I have attempted to do in this thesis, it must be recognized that the Marian apocalyptic rhetoric of the Fatima Crusade, while extreme in its Cold War era anti-Communism and its views on perceived post-1991 social problems, is a modern articulation of a longstanding and unique

²³² Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It*, 90.

Marian apocalyptic tradition in Roman Catholicism. As I noted in Chapter Three, the Virgin Mary has long been associated with apocalyptic imagery and cosmological narrative, and especially since the mid-nineteenth century, Marian apparitions have been perceived by Catholics as the primary vehicle for divine communications admonishing the world for its sins, comforting the Church in the face of social and political unrest, and delivering prophetic warnings regarding cataclysmic events that will occur if the heavenly warnings are not heeded. Thus, while there are indeed points of correlation between Protestant and Marian forms of apocalypticism, the latter, by virtue of its long history within the Catholic tradition and the fact that the cult of the Virgin Mary is a significant feature of the historical divergence between the two branches of Christianity, constitutes a distinct form of apocalyptic discourse. The Fatima Crusade is the latest articulation of this distinctly Marian form of apocalypticism.

The visions at Ezkioga, Spain documented by Christian allowed concerned Catholics to make sense of the political unrest surrounding the formation of the Second Spanish Republic. The earlier apparitions of the Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes punctuated the French transition to a secular republican style of governance. And so too, the visions and messages associated with the Virgin Mary at Fatima in 1917 have provided a framework within which concerned Catholics in the United States and Canada during the Cold War and onward have been able to make sense of the modern world. The apparitions have enabled Fr. Nicholas Gruner and supporters of his Fatima Crusade to construct a

Marian apocalyptic worldview uniquely suited to the task of making the Cold War polarity between the United States and the Soviet Union conform to a historically-interpreted cosmology. The Crusade fomented Catholic anti-Communism in the face of the Soviet threat, and when this threat diminished, proved itself adaptable to the broader social concerns of religious conservatives. In the development and dissemination of its apocalyptic worldview, the Fatima Crusade has (happily it seems) occupied the margins of the Church, as a liminal entity often straddling the line between conservative Catholicism and outright defiance of ecclesiastical authority. With its continuing ability to adapt the core tenets of its worldview to the pressing crises of the day, and to exploit the latest communication tools to further broadcast its interpretation of the full message of Fatima, the Fatima Crusade constitutes a significant, albeit extreme example, of apocalyptic belief within the Catholic cult of the Virgin Mary.

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