

Millennial Fixations:
A Russian Orthodox Response to the Ideology of Fatima

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In 2005 or so, I wrote several articles on Fatima, the essential event of the Catholic traditionalist movement today. Afterwards, several other Orthodox writers plagiarized parts of it in their own analysis of the phenomenon in what has become almost a ritual. Regardless, I'm pleased that I spurred a greater Orthodox concern with this most bizarre of issues.

The emphasis on Russia never fails to fascinate me. There are many ways one can deal with this idiosyncratic Catholic obsession. One can deplore her clearly unhealthy worry over private revelation and its implicit rejection of her previous tradition, but one might also view this as a concern over Russia's size and strength, despite her present and temporary weakness in foreign affairs [*this, of course, is no longer the case – MRJ*].

Regardless, its true that private visions have been at the center of dogmatic controversies in the past, such as with “The Vision of St. Adamnan” and those of St. Macarius of Egypt, now largely considered spurious. In the cases of the 20th century apparitions of “Mary” to various children throughout western Europe, there are detailed instructions, with much political and social content never found in previous private revelations, either east or west. Since Roman Catholics are abysmally ignorant of ante-medieval church history, they know only a smattering of ancient revelations.

Such revelations are radially distinct from those of the 20th century, both in form and in content. Almost all 19th and 20th century apparitions have an entire personality of their own qualitatively distinct from previous versions. Today, as all Catholics know, every other pious character, especially women, claim to have such revelations, my own Sunday-Catholic mother included.

A Catholic today might ask – as I did years ago – why there were no private revelations warning about the Arian or Monophysites crises, Islam, the eastern schism, Avignon, King Henry VIII, the destruction of Poland in the 1790s, the French Revolution, the fall of the Habsburgs, the persecutions in Republican Spain or the Warsaw Pact? Why only this?

The use of private revelations for Roman Catholics, especially since the radical changes to the church after the Second Vatican Council, has offered many traditionalists a cudgel against the extreme modernist mentality dominating Rome, made into a cartoonish farce under “Francis.” It has provided self-styled “Mariologists” a platform to preach to the world, being able to claim they are indirect recipients of special revelations which permit them to bypass the hierarchy.

The fathers of the ancient church warned tirelessly against visions and private revelations. With a few exceptions, such visions were considered delusions of the devil to trick even the elect. It might also be noted that the exceptions mentioned, those of St. Adamnan of ancient Ireland or Pseudo-Macarius of Egypt, never required any ecclesiastical “approval,” nor were they ever considered doctrine.

There was no formal “approval” of such things, another major difference between the ancients and modern western practice. Such warnings have been heedlessly disregarded by modern, alienated Roman Catholics looking for external proofs for their beleaguered faith, a position to which many Orthodox can sympathize. Here is a popular citation from the *Life of St. Antony*:

Some brothers came to find Abba Anthony to tell him about the visions they were having, and to find out from him if they were true or if they came from the demons. They had a donkey which died on the way. When they reached the place where the old man was, he said to them before they could ask him anything, “How was it that the little donkey died on the way here?” They said, “How do you know about that, Father?” And he told them, “the demons showed me what happened.” So they said, “That was what we came to question you about, for fear we were being deceived, for we have visions which often turn out to be true.” Thus the old man convinced them, by the example of the donkey, that their visions came from the demons.

In the normal course of things, the ancients were convinced that the Scriptures, tradition and the writings of the fathers were more than sufficient for everyone and therefore, due to the strong possibility that visions are from the evil one, such things are to be *a priori* rejected as both dangerous and unnecessary. It might be noted in the famous passage quoted above, St. Antony makes mention of the fact that the mere notion of a vision being “true” in no manner excludes the question of demonic influence, as even demons can speak truth, if only to create confidence and deceive later.

The lives of the Desert Fathers are saturated with stories of visions brought to holy men from demons. In all cases there are a few similarities: primarily, its the manifest holiness and ascetic life of the man in question that permits him to see the deceit of the demon; but secondly, demons always clothe themselves in the most pious manner possible, making it nearly impossible to tell when a truth is spoken from good or evil purposes. Therefore, visions granted to children, who are inexperienced in the ascetic life, can never be trusted, if the most pious visions given to holy men are to be rejected.

The apparitions of Fatima just prior to the end of World War I, have been at the center of controversy for a number of reasons, not the least of which concerns a curious demand that “Russia” be “consecrated” to the “Immaculate Heart of Mary.” Devotion to the “Immaculate Heart” in terms of doctrinal history, is also curious. It's been noted that this heart is really a devotion upon the virtues and love of Mary towards her Son, which, of course, is at the root of all devotions to the Mother of God, thus rendering this specific devotion superfluous. Therefore, it must be more complex than that.

This specific devotion, however, goes back to John Eudes, a saint in the Roman church, whose office for this devotion was rejected by Rome during his own lifetime, and again rejected in 1729 under different circumstances. It did not become an “official” devotional office until the desperate straits of pope Pius VI just after the French Revolution that saw the crown of the church torn to bits by organized Masonry.

There are many problems with the apparitions, and some are detailed in the book

Celestial Secrets. First, Jacinta claimed that the woman she saw had a “knee length skirt,” which even prostitutes at the time wouldn't wear. It was shocking and a scandal. She also said that the “war is ending that very day” and that these were the “direct words” from the vision. This was October 19 1917.

Francisco said that the woman didn't move her lips as she spoke and, in fact, didn't move at all, looking like “some kind of doll.” Lucia had a “light within” that made her understand the woman. In other words, there was no direct communication implied in the earliest revelations. Mary didn't even appear as a human being. She was also accompanied by a “buzzing sound.” Worse, they were granted certain and unquestioned access to heaven, which is an odd thing to say to a child. No Christian apparition would make such a claim or promise.

Regardless of its specific doctrinal history, which has always been tolerated though only recently receiving public approbation, it has absolutely no history among the Orthodox people or the ancient church in general. All devotion to the Mother of God has revolved around her maternal care of Jesus, the fact that it was her flesh that clothed divinity and that He lived under obedience to her for 30 out of His 33 earthly years. There is no specific devotion to her (or his) “heart” and its still a matter of controversy what this term actually means.

It might be worthwhile to examine a few of the words of Fatima's most tireless crusader, Fr. Nicholas Gruner [*he's died since this was first written – MRJ*]. I know little about him, except that he is either loathed or loved by Roman Catholics, a position I know well. I spoke to him briefly over the phone over 20 years ago on unrelated liturgical issues today I can't recall. I think it had something to do with the Chaplet of the Angels and its relation to the Rosary. He, despite his extremely busy life, took plenty of time with me, was cordial and answered all my questions fully. I was impressed.

Some view him as a crusader for the proper devotion of Mary, others view him as a monomaniac, and a priest without “faculties” besides. Regardless, he is at the center of this storm, and considered by nearly all Catholics as an authority on these apparitions and specifically, the “consecration [or conversion] of Russia.” He says:

At Fatima, on July 13, 1917, Our Lady told Sister Lucy that “God 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 Communions of reparation and for the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart. In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, which will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.” Our Lady's request is very simple: Russia—the fount of so much evil in the 20th Century—must be set apart and made sacred by its consecration to the Mother of God.

Keep in mind also that Lucy kept these statements of “Mary” secret until after the Second World War. Given the time period, Russia was bleeding white, as was Germany, France and Austria. It will be the USSR (not Russia) that will become the center of global violence and unrest. Notice it says nothing about the destruction of the Austrian empire, the Catholic stronghold in central Europe. This is, to say the least, a peculiar omission. Austria had many times attempted to forcibly convert the Serbs who spent to much blood and treasure defending

Austria's borders against Turkey, only to fail each and every time. Even more, the only reason the Austrian empire even existed to fight at all was that Tsar Nicholas I intervened after the revolutions of 1848 to reinstall Franz Joseph I back to his throne in Vienna, "to prevent the Hungarian insurrection developing into a European calamity."

The specifically ignorant comment is that Russia is the "fount [sic] of so much evil in the 20th century." I should take a few minutes here to remind [the late] Fr. Gruner that Marxism came from Germany, with plenty of revolutionary potential from France and elsewhere. It's the godson of the French Revolutionaries and is the grandson of the western European Enlightenment both churches fought. Marxism and revolution were alien, semi-European exports into Russia, while the Tsars did all in their power to stop the tide. In fact, all Enlightenment materialism and liberalism was imported from the west into Russia with no exceptions whatever. Fr Gruner continues:

At Fatima, Our Lady warned that if the consecration were not done as She requested, then "Russia will spread its errors throughout the world, raising up wars and persecutions against the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, and various nations will be annihilated." By the same token, the miraculous conversion of Russia after its consecration by the Pope and the bishops, and the resulting peace in the world, will be a sign of the power of God's grace acting through ministers of His Church and the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The context seems to suggest that the USSR is referenced here, since, as in Spain, sponsored the persecution of the church there, though this isn't explicitly mentioned. The popes have had much to suffer, though it is all of their own making. It might be asked here why the invasion of Russia by Poland in 1603 didn't succeed in converting the country – with a Roman Catholic "Tsar" in Moscow no less – and why there was no private revelation at this very propitious time for Catholicism there. If the pope was going to convert the country, it would have been then, though by force. These revelations are abstract and offer no historical or social content due to what I think is the author's ignorance. The comment that the war would "end" in October of 1917 taught that lesson.

Thus, without the act of consecration there will be no conversion of Russia, and without the conversion of Russia, "Russia's errors" will continue to infest the world, producing the persecution of the Church, the martyrdom of the good, the suffering of the Holy Father and ultimately the annihilation of nations forewarned at Fatima. The notion of Russia "spreading her errors" was spoken in 1929. Russia was not a "country" in 1929, rather she was an administrative unit of the USSR. As a cultural entity, she was under attack and the victim of Soviet genocide, though there is a curious lack of interest of this fact from the apparitions. There was no "Russia" at the time in any legal sense, and the abbreviation "USSR" was already well known.

Why didn't these apparitions refer to the USSR or the revolution? Why only Russia? Were her "errors" Marxism? Could "Russia" be held responsible for this Jewish ideology? The USSR was officially atheist at the time and its church violently persecuted like at no other church was ever persecuted, but even this isn't mentioned. Even more, nations were not "annihilated" in any sense.

Millions were murdered due to both Soviet and Chinese style Marxism, though the nations affected, such as Tibet and Ukraine, continue to survive. “Russia” as a cultural entity was not involved in this. She was submerged into a prison camp called the USSR with her best men either dead, in prison or in exile. Here again Fr. Gruner says, “In 1929, at Tuy, Spain, as She had promised, Our Lady came to tell me that the moment had come to ask the Holy Father for the consecration of that country.” No mention of Marxism or the persecutions. As a province of the USSR, she was a defined territory. As a people, she was spread throughout the world in suffering exile. Whoever authored these lines was ignorant of world events and sought to keep his comments as general as possible as a means to fudge facts later.

In consecrating the “world” on that date without mentioning Russia, the pope acknowledged in the presence of tens of thousands of witnesses, both during and after the ceremony, that the people of Russia were still “awaiting our consecration and confiding.” This is highly optimistic. Fr. Gruner says

Most telling of all: Since the “consecration” of 1984, more than 600 million children have been slaughtered in the womb around the world—including Russia, where legalized abortion began. The war on the unborn is the greatest war in the history of the world. Thus, it should be obvious to anyone with common sense that the period of peace promised by Our Lady if Russia were properly consecrated has yet to occur.

There's no evidence at all that legal abortion “began” in “Russia.” Abortion was (poorly) practiced in ancient Greece and Rome and raised to a level of a sacrament in the Postmodern west. The Spartans and the later Roman Empire made infanticide obligatory for deformed children, as did many pagan civilizations of antiquity. If this is a reference to Stalin, he was not Russian, nor were the ruling clique of the empire under Stalin and beyond. Stalin banned abortion in a law dated June 27, 1936, which slapped a two year GULag term for procuring or performing an abortion. Far worse offenders can be found in New York and Paris, except they've not lived under 70 years of totalitarianism and enforced atheism. Russians might have an excuse; westerners do not. If this is a criterion for consecration, then it is the west that must be consecrated by Russia, not the reverse.

Most disturbingly of all, the consecration of Russia is linked to world peace. This is a bit of a new twist. It is not merely that Russia should convert to a religion that has been manifestly hostile to her for over 700 years, but that this conversion will create utopia. They pull no punches in this respect. This aspect of the Fatima ideology has rarely been considered, neither has the idea that the “consecration” will bring conversion by an unknown force that overrides free will. According to the Fatima Network, an earthly utopia will result from the consecration of Russia:

When the Consecration of Russia is done, this proper relationship between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities will be realized. There will be no clash between the Church’s teachings and the laws or governance of a country. For example, when we have the triumph of the Immaculate Heart, no government will have “legalized” abortion, divorce, contraception, etc; the laws of God will guide the laws of the state. The peace of Our Lady, as indicated by Isaias above, also

includes the conversion of the world to Catholicism. This is the clear meaning of the first part of the passage, which states that nations will flock to the house of the Lord. . . The peace Our Lady promised is the peace that Isaias prophesied in Sacred Scripture: “The house of the Lord shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go, and say: Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. . . they shall turn their swords into plowshares, and their spears into sickles. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war” (Is. 2:2-4; cf. Mic. 4:1-3). This was prophesied over 2,500 years ago, and will be brought to fruition when the Immaculate Heart triumphs and reigns.

The most striking aspect of the Fatima movement is that its a millennial sect. Sin will have been obliterated as the church and state merge into one another, creating a theocracy bringing all men to the truth. The mechanism of this isn't explained and we're left to assume this will be a direct intervention of God. The book of Revelation and the entire patristic understanding of the end times are thrown out the window if the pope somehow converts the nation of Russia to some version of the Roman church. We must also assume that its the pre-Vatican II mass as well, a highly unlikely scenario. It would have to take over Rome first.

Its also an implicit rejection of Antichrist, the final persecution of the church and the Second Coming. Fatima is a utopian ideology without the slightest anchor in reality, logic, history, Scripture or tradition. This utopianism was shared by Pope Pius XI in his *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio*, which reads in part

The peace that will result from the Consecration of Russia will not merely be the absence of war. It will be the peace that results from the reign of Jesus Christ among individuals, families and society: “Christ [will be] all, and in all” (Col. 3:11). The Social Kingship of Christ will be recognized and lived by all. As Pope Pius XI explained, “Jesus Christ reigns over the minds of individuals by His teachings, in their hearts by His love, in each ones life by the living according to His law and the imitating of His example. Jesus reigns over the family when it, modeled after the holy ideals of the sacrament of matrimony instituted by Christ, maintains unspotted its true character of sanctuary. In such a sanctuary of love, parental authority is fashioned after the authority of God, the Father. The obedience of the children imitates that of the Divine Child of Nazareth, and the whole family life is inspired by the sacred ideals of the Holy Family. Finally, Jesus Christ reigns over society when men recognize and reverence the sovereignty of Christ, when they accept the divine origin and control over all social forces, a recognition which is the basis of the right to command for those in authority and of the duty to obey for those who are subjects, a duty which cannot but ennoble all who live up to its demands.

Since this is the official ideology of the church of Rome, its fallen into the ancient heresy

of millennialism. The Antichrist will not come to power nor will Christ have any need of coming again. In fact, the condition of the earth traditionally viewed as the result of the Second Coming is now granted to the papal “consecration of Russia.” Its endorsement by all popes from Pius IX to John Paul II makes it an important, if not critical, part of church dogma. Its theological implications are staggering.

Once Russia is converted, utopia will be realized. Free will will be overridden and the church of Rome will reign supreme. All other institutions will immediately give way to the juggernaut of the Roman papacy voluntarily. Sin will disappear and all injustice will be destroyed. There will be no more wars, sickness or suffering. Russia alone stands in the way.

When, at any time, did the church of Rome accept such a bizarre theory before this? There will be no “end times” if the “consecration” is accomplished. There will also be no suffering. It is almost a Catholic version of the rapture. If it is not done, “9/10 of the human race will be wiped out.” Mary's “immaculate heart” holds the world hostage due to Christ's rage over man's sin.

Insofar as the “annihilation of nations” is concerned, the Fatima Network mentions the following:

We do not know which nations will be annihilated from the face of the earth if the Consecration of Russia continues to be delayed. Our own nation could be one of them. Thousands of nuclear warheads exist throughout the world. Russia and Communist China, which are allies, both regard the United States as their enemy. While the nuclear warheads in Russia and China – or those possessed by other countries – may not be currently aimed at the United States, they could be aimed there within two minutes.

First, Russia, whether Marxist or no, is the primary threat to world peace, and this is defined as the global dominion, both in the civil and religious spheres, of the Church of Rome. Second, the annihilation of nations, since it was not realized under the domain of Marxism, now must be realized between an exchange of nuclear weapons between Russia and the US. Now, Russia's hostility to the US is based upon its interference in its internal affairs, as well as funding anti-Russian movements in the Baltics, Ukraine and Georgia, not to mention Russia proper. Therefore, its the Americans provoking Russia's hostility, not an unseen visceral drive to bring about this brand-new version of the (sort of) Apocalypse.

Fatima has always been based on circular reasoning. Unless you accept Fatima, none of it makes sense. The Bible is overthrown as the seers of Fatima now are the sole interpreters of word events. For the consecration to be done “properly,” the pope must have the consent of all the world's bishops. This is strange since it endorses a conciliar ideology the Fatima movement strongly condemns in other contexts. If even one bishop is absent, the “power” of the pope to force “Mary's” hand will fail and she will permit the destruction of all things. If this is true, then the pope is not the supreme ruler of the church, but the head of a college of bishops. Given the absolutist claims of the papacy, why would he need bishops to support him? Gregorian papal ideology states clearly that bishops exist as no more than appendages of the Roman pontiff and have no authority in their own right. Here, suddenly, their consent is needed?

Russia is not a Marxist country any longer. The only place where Marxism is taken

seriously is in the US and EU. Her foreign and domestic policy is firmly nationalist or Eurasianist, where Putin has a current popularity rating at roughly 80 percent [*it remains unchanged from 2006 to 2019 – MRJJ*]. Private property is permitted, though with legitimate reservations. The church is currently free from the Party's power and is spending a fortune in rebuilding its infrastructure. Russia is gaining in wealth under Putin. In the process, she is developing an ethnic basis for protecting the Orthodox church.

Many of the exiles, under the Synod Abroad, have officially unified with the Patriarchate, making the church even more powerful and giving it a truly global reach. While from a political point of view, this is good news. It is otherwise from a theological viewpoint. Today, thousands of Catholics, fleeing the *novus ordo*, have converted to it, this writer included. Protestants, entire jurisdictions of evangelicals, have recently converted. In other words, the worst fears of the Vatican are being realized – a strong unified Russia with a strong and unified Orthodox church facing a weak, liberal and vacillating Vatican. This is at the root of this “consecration” demand.

Most of the material found under the “Russia” section of the Fatima Network is woefully dated, largely using arguments from the Cold War as if that still mattered, or if even such a war existed. Outdated charts of nuclear parity between “Russia” and the US are presented, as well as a stern condemnation of the McGovern candidacy. Now that the Cold War is over, the Fatima Network makes no sense, so Putin has been transformed into a Marxist while the fall of Marxism in “Russia” and Eastern Europe has been reinvented into a conspiracy to gain western aid (I guess the joke was on them). Obviously, no citations are to be found and no evidence is granted.

The development of these revelations is worth summarizing. In 1915, Lucy had already been approached, with three others, by a kind of “angel whiter than snow,” while they were watching over their sheep. In 1916, they again saw this angel three times. It seems that on all these occasions all the children saw the same phenomenon, something which confers a certain reality to it. The abbot Laurentin himself, one of the experts on apparitions of the Virgin Mary, deplored the fact in an issue of *Figaro* (May 10 1967), that the description of these initial events only appeared 20 years after the fact.

From here on, the source material I use comes from the English translation of the French *Ovinis L'armee de Masquee*, or *UFOs: The Military Unmasked* by Emmanuel Dehlinger (2003). It is available for free online in both languages. Near the end, there is a full description of the Fatima apparitions. This writer certainly doesn't accept the overall argument of the book, but, of all the work on Fatima, this summary is the best and the most interesting.

On Sunday, May 13th 1917, Lucy, Francois and Jacinthe saw an apparition of Mary above an oak-tree at the heart of the Cova da Iria, a natural basin about 500 yards in diameter. All around them suddenly became silent, at least according to Lucy who hears nothing except the Virgin. The woman asks the children to come back five times, on the 13th of each of the following months at noon.

On Wednesday June 13th 1917, the children come with around fifty people. Lucy sees a bright flash and “communicates with a being” that the others present neither see nor hear. Some of the assembled people do hear, on the other hand, a kind of humming, like that of a beehive. The group then hears an explosion “like the blast of a firework when you hear it going up in the distance” and all of them see a small white cloud rise towards the east and fade away. Its very strange that both Francois and Jacinthe died a few years after these events, in 1919 and 1920

respectively, as if it had been necessary to ensure their silence.

On Friday 13th, July 1917, the children arrived, now accompanied by several thousand people. Lucy sees the apparition and talks with it. The sources for this information do not specify whether Francois and Jacinthe also saw and heard the woman, but those present didn't see anything. Francois already admitted that he could hear nothing at the time of the apparitions, but Jacinthe could hear Lucy after each apparition, explaining to Francois what the woman said, creating a unified account.

In 1942, Lucy finally revealed the three secrets of Fatima. The first two are well known and less interesting. The third secret was revealed at Fatima on the 13th of May 2000 in the presence of Pope John Paul II which put an end to speculations about it. This third secret described the vision of a "bishop, clothed in white clerics" passing, with other religious, through a ruined town filled with corpses. There was a mountain, the top of which could be seen a cross. When the group arrived at it, the kneeling pope and his flock were massacred by a squad of soldiers of unnamed nationality.

On Monday, on the 13th of August 1917, the children are temporarily confined by local law enforcement worried about the social disturbances these are causing. The woman doesn't appear, but the around 18,000 people gathered for the event see a flash, a thunderclap, a small white cloud and increasing darkness. On that day, the sky is partially covered by clouds and colored lights appear on them as well as "a luminous globe turning around on itself," according to one of the witnesses.

Another witness points out that "the faces of all the people had all the colors of the rainbow: pink, red, blue. . . The trees did not seem to have branches and leaves, but only flowers; all seemed laden [with flowers], and each leaf appeared to be a flower. It was as if the ground was covered by tiles of different colors. Their clothes too were all the colors of the rainbow."

Then, on the 19th of August 1917, the children are on the pastures at Valinhos. The temperature suddenly fell. Colored lights appeared on the clouds along with a bright flash. Then a figure dressed in white and gold appeared. The apparition soon faded away, along with a sound similar, or so they said, to a motor. This might be the same buzzing mentioned above.

On Thursday, the 13th of September, 1917, the bishop, convinced this is a fraud, sent two priests to investigate. They showed with a crowd of 30,000 people already present. It quickly became dark on a bright, cloudless day. Suddenly, people begin to point at a bright ball in the sky coming from the east. The crowd yelled out, "Here She comes! Here She comes!" as a figure appears and disappears. Then the crowd yelled "She's vanished, She's vanished!" A luminous globe appeared on a small oak tree close by and Lucy begins speaking to something. She says that a great miracle will occur next month.

Then comes the 13th of October 1917. Although it had been raining, 70,000 people were present. The Portuguese historian Leopoldo Nunes remarks that "at the time of the great miracle, there were present some of the most illustrious men of Letters, Arts or Sciences of the day, almost all non-believers, who had come out of simple curiosity." Even the Minister for National Education was there. This is something the Fatima movement stresses.

As noon approached, Lucy became entranced with something. Lucy conversed with the woman as the rain stopped. Around the children was "a column of smoke fine and bluish, perfectly visible, but that dispersed suddenly. The same phenomenon took place 3 times, a bit like a warning to keep alert."

Then “the clouds parted” allowing the sun to appear “at its zenith.” Actually, the Sun on that day was at less than “45 degrees above the due south horizon” and it may or not have been the Sun that was observed. This “Sun” is described as “a sharply outlined disk,” by others “a flat piece of dull silver,” “having variations similar to the luster of a pearl,” “neither veiled nor indistinct, which shone without hurting one’s eyes.” Though many were staring at it, no one felt any pain in the eyes.

The clouds which covered the sky gave “the impression of passing behind the sun.” At the time, a group of “scholars” tracking UFOs claimed they saw the marks of a “flying saucer.” “Let us remember that the sun has an apparent size of 0.5 degrees and that it was therefore sufficient to project from the ground a very bright circle with a diameter of about 12 meters onto clouds situated, for example, at a height of 1 kilometer in order to give the appearance of the sun” or so says Dehlinger.

While I personally am not convinced this was a “projection,” some present suggest it was. One reason is that “two brief interruptions, during which the sun again sent out dazzling rays compelling the onlookers to turn their eyes away,” which might happen if the real Sun were to become visible for a time. This would imply that the two disks were approximately one on top of the other, but the projection idea runs into a problem here.

For a period of about 10 minutes, the luminous disk behaved strangely, later called the “dance of the Sun.” It suddenly started to spin “like a disk of fire, it trembled, it made strange and sudden movements,” and some said “it seemed to come closer as if it were at the same height as the clouds.” One said “At a certain moment it seemed to come closer, threatening to fall on us” and the crowd was seized with terror.

It seemed “to detach itself from the sky and, red with blood, advance towards the earth threatening to crush us with its fiery mass. These were terrifying seconds” according to one witness. Then the object began again “its strange waltz” while, at the same time, the typical shades of color appeared on the clouds. “The sun threw off beams of light, bestowing different colors on everything.”

Francois and Jacinthe, who were actually very tough and healthy children raised in a mountainous region, died a few years after these events. The circumstances here are uncertain. It does seem convenient. It has been said that the children were infected by the Spanish flu, which is certainly possible. Francois died on April 4th 1919 at almost 11, while Jacinthe died on February 20th 1920, almost 10 years old. This flu ravaged the planet, beginning on the very day Tsar Nicholas II “resigned.”

Jacinthe’s flu apparently degenerated afterwards into pneumonia. Canon Formigao wrote later about these premature deaths: “The general opinion among people was that the whole family of the visionaries of Fatima and the visionaries themselves were condemned to disappear within a short space of time.” And, indeed, Lucy’s parents also died quickly. From 1921, the orphaned adolescent was kept in hiding, illegally and with a false name, in various religious establishments, up to her coming of age and the pronouncement of her first vows in 1928.

Overall, even if the apparitions were accurate, what the Marian movement did with them was bizarre, heretical and at war with the entire Christian tradition. Fatima, as I’ve proven though both the movement itself and papal statements, is Catholic doctrine, which makes the Church of Rome a millennial sect. Now, the accuracy of the accounts is highly dubious. Little was told until a full generation later. In that time, details were added and subtracted. The deaths of the two little

ones is suspicious. I need to repeat that the Dehlinger book is dubious on several counts, but his account of the Fatima phenomenon is generally on target.

For years as a Catholic I was impressed with the “miracle of the Sun.” Unfortunately, too many witnesses say otherwise. Even so, I doubt the entire Dehlinger “projection” thesis, which may or may not have even been technologically possible at the time. It may well have been supernatural. Yet, the historical inaccuracies, the initial rejection of the apparition by the local clergy, the strange selectivity of apparitions, the length of time between accounts and the maddening use of generalities rather than specific prophesies all point to this being at best a fraud, at worst a demonic delusion.