

Fatima and the Cultural Upheavals of the 1960s: the Reception of the Messages of Our Lady in the *North American Voice of Fatima*, 1962-1969

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The newspaper *North American Voice of Fatima*, from its foundation in 1962 through the end of 1969, applied the message of the Marian apparitions at Fatima to historical events occurring in the United States during this countercultural and revolutionary decade, focusing especially on three major themes in its news articles and editorials. The first theme is the anti-communist dimension of the message of Fatima, which was applied to the event of the Vietnam War. The second theme is the message of modesty from Saint Jacinta, as applied to the event of the Sexual Revolution, and the third theme is the message of the preservation of dogma, as applied to the situation of dissent and doctrinal and moral confusion in the Catholic church in the years following the Second Vatican Council. These themes are all interrelated, because they express the damage that a counterculture of secularism and moral relativism has created for the Catholic church and the attempt of its clergy, religious, and laity to live in holiness. The message of Fatima proposes reparation for this damage and promises a restoration under the reign of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Historical Context

Before exploring the three themes of this article, it is necessary to offer a brief historical description of the Marian apparitions in Fatima, and also to provide some historical background in regard to the newspaper *North American Voice of Fatima*. In the official account of the apparitions, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared six times to three shepherd children in the rural village of Fatima, Portugal, between May and October 1917. The children were the siblings Jacinta Marto (1910-1919) and Francisco Marto (1908-1919), both of whom died in childhood shortly after the apparitions concluded, and their older cousin Lucia dos Santos (1907-2005), who later entered the Discalced Carmelites as a cloistered nun. The central message of these apparitions was the urgent need for prayer for the conversion of

sinners, especially the daily recitation of the Rosary, for acts of penance in reparation for sin, and for devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.¹

The most famous of the apparitions occurred on July 13, 1917, when the Blessed Virgin Mary conveyed to the children three secrets. The first secret involved a vision of hell, which moved the children to commit themselves fully to acts of prayer and penance on behalf of sinners. In the second secret, the Blessed Virgin Mary stated that World War I was a punishment for the sins of mankind, and that the war would soon come to an end. However, she gave the dire warning that if humankind continued to sin, an even worse world war would break out, and that the nation of Russia would spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars, persecutions, the annihilation of various nations, and the martyrdom of many people. This part of the secret was widely interpreted as referring to the spread of atheistic communism by the Soviet Union, especially since the Bolshevik Revolution occurred in October 1917, the very same month as the final apparition at Fatima. The Blessed Virgin Mary also requested in the second secret that Russia should be consecrated by the pope to her Immaculate Heart, and that subsequently there would be a period of peace granted to the world. Sr. Lucia published these first two secrets in her memoirs in 1941, and as a result anti-communism became an integral part of the Fatima message, as we shall see in more detail in section one below.²

¹ For popular accounts of the apparitions of Fatima, see for example Joseph A. Pelletier, *The Sun Danced at Fatima* (New York: Doubleday, 1983) and John de Marchi, *The True Story of Fatima: a complete account of the Fatima apparitions* (Constable NY: The Fatima Center, 2009). Jacinta and Francisco Marto were officially canonized as saints in the Catholic Church by Pope Francis on May 13, 2017.

² A critical edition of Sr. Lucia's memoirs has recently been published as Lúcia de Jesus, *Memórias*, ed. Cristina Sobral (Santuário de Fatima, 2016). The most recent English-language translation of her memoirs is *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*, ed. Louis Kondor, trans. Dominican Nuns of Perpetual Rosary, 19th ed. (Fundação Francisco e Jacinta Marto, 2014). See Una M. Cadegan, "The Queen of Peace in the Shadow of War: Fatima and U.S. Anticommunism," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 22, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 1-16, for an account of the origin of

The third secret was written down by Sr. Lucia in 1944 and sent in a sealed envelope to the pope, with the instruction not to open the envelope until 1960. However, in 1960 Pope John XXIII announced to the world that the third secret would not be made public. This gave rise to much speculation and conspiracy theory about the content of the third secret, especially in the years following the Second Vatican Council. It was widely believed that the phrase that had been written by Sr. Lucia at the end of the second secret, “in Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved, etc.” was the beginning of the text of the third secret, as we shall discuss in more detail in section three below. The third secret was officially revealed by the Vatican in 2000, consisting of a vision of a pope being shot and killed, and numerous bishops, priests, religious, and lay faithful being martyred. This was interpreted as referring to the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II by a close-range gunshot on May 13, 1981 (the anniversary of the first apparition of Fatima), and as a prophetic vision of the numerous persecutions and martyrdoms of Christians that occurred during the twentieth century. Pope John Paul II himself interpreted his survival as due to the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima, and on May 13, 1984, he placed the bullet from the attempted assassination into the crown of the statue of Our Lady at the shrine in Fatima, as an act of thanksgiving.³

It is also necessary to provide some historical context regarding the *North American Voice of Fatima*. It was an English-language weekly newspaper founded in 1962, and published from the National Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, run by the Barnabites in Lewiston, New York. Its editor during the 1960s was Robert Francis Bergin (1914-1996), who lived in Brisbane, Australia and was the leader of the Blue Army in Australia. As part of his journalistic work, he traveled extensively to North America and other locations including Vietnam. Later in his life he founded the organization Fatima International, which published

anticommunist interpretations of the message of Fatima in the United States in the 1940s following the publication of Sr. Lucia's memoirs.

³ See the official account published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The message of Fatima* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice, 2000).

two of his books.⁴ The format of *North American Voice of Fatima* was generally four pages per week, with an occasional unnumbered four-page insert, printed on inexpensive newspaper. Its articles were written for a readership of devout English-speaking Catholics at a popular level. Despite its similar name, the newspaper had no affiliation with the Portuguese-language periodical *Voz da Fátima*, published by the Santuário de Fátima at the site of the Marian apparitions in Portugal. In terms of its political orientation, the *North American Voice of Fatima* typically expressed viewpoints that would now be associated with the center-right, due to its strong rejection of communism, and its emphasis on traditional dogma and sexual morality.

North American Voice of Fatima was not as widely read as *Soul*, a more slickly produced 24-page (later 32-page) bimonthly English-language magazine, published by the Blue Army of Fatima in Washington, New Jersey. The Blue Army of Fatima (now known as the World Apostolate of Fatima) was well-known for its embrace of the anti-communist message of Fatima, as seen by its name which deliberately contrasts with the Red Army of Soviet Russia. However, a review of the articles published by *Soul* during the time period of 1962-1969 shows that very few of them addressed the conflict in Vietnam, and most of those were simple news stories about religious events in Vietnam such as the Blue Army bringing the pilgrimage statue of Our Lady of Fatima there. Only four articles in *Soul* magazine in that time period analyzed the war in Vietnam from the standpoint of the spiritual and political struggle against atheistic communism, and two of those articles were authored by none other than Robert Bergin.⁵ This

⁴ Information about Robert F. Bergin was obtained from the following sources: sites.google.com/site/robertfbergin; R.F. Bergin, "Memories of Vietnam," *Soul* vol. 18, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1966): 3; Christopher Rengers, *The Youngest Prophet: The Life of Jacinta Marto, Fatima Visionary* (New York: Alba House, 1986), 142. Books published by R.F. Bergin by Fatima International include: *This apostolic age: a commentary on prophecies relating to these times and their portents* (Stoke-on-Robert: Voice of Fatima International, 1970), and *The triumphant third century, 1976-2076: authentic and reliable prophecies foreshadow a great victory over Communism and a brilliant future for America and all the world* (Hamilton: Ontario Fatima International, 1976).

⁵ See "How bad is communism in America?," *Soul* vol. 14, no. 5 (Sept. -Oct. 1962): 12-13; R.F. Bergin, "Memories of Vietnam," *Soul* vol. 18, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1966): 3,

comparison highlights the uniqueness of the perspective of *North American Voice of Fatima*, which I will refer to subsequently as “the paper.” The paper offers an excellent example of the interpretation of a Marian apparition and its application to countercultural historical events in North America during the 1960s.

I. “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.”⁶

These quoted words from the message of Our Lady of Fatima were prophetic, and when they were first communicated in July 13, 1917, very few could have predicted the Russian Revolution a few months later, and the subsequent spread of Marxist communism throughout the world through military battles, political coups, and ideological propaganda. The *North American Voice of Fatima* took a strongly anti-communist stance during the 1960s, and it is filled with straightforward political news stories about wars, peace talks, events happening behind the Iron or Bamboo Curtains, and even editorial speculations about

23; and R.F. Bergin, “Vietnam Report,” *Soul* vol. 18, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1966): 18-20; Joseph A. Breig, “How can the Vietnam War be ended?,” *Soul* vol. 19 [sic], no. 2 (Mar.-Apr. 1968): 3. In fact, the article “Vietnam Wonder,” in *Soul* vol. 19 [sic], no. 4 (July-Aug. 1968): 19, states that “[t]he Blue Army of Our Lady does not take sides” in regard to Americans who protest against the war, but rather prays all involved to be converted through the message of Fatima. Regarding the other themes of this article, from 1962-1969 *Soul* magazine published only five articles on modesty, and only one article on the relationship of post-Vatican II dissent to the message of Fatima, which again was written by R.F. Bergin, “Trojan Horse,” *Soul* vol. 19, no. 2 (Mar.-Apr. 1967): 7-8. There was only one article about the Third Secret, namely a reprint of an address by Cardinal Ottaviani on the subject, titled “What Happened to the 1960 secret?,” *Soul* vol. 18 [sic], no. 3 (May-June 1967): 3.

⁶ *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*, ed. Louis Kondor, trans. Dominican Nuns of Perpetual Rosary, 19th ed. (Fundação Francisco e Jacinta Marto, 2014), 124, see also 179. The original text from the Third Memoir reads: “Para a empedir, virei pedir a consagração da Rússia a meu Imaculado Coração e a Comunhão reparadora nos primeiros sábados. Se atenderem a meus pedidos a Rússia se converterá e teram páz, se não espalhará seus erros pelo mundo, promovendo guerras e presseguições á Igreja” from Lúcia de Jesus, *Memórias*, ed. Cristina Sobral (Santuário de Fatima, 2016), 186-87.

the hidden strategies and motivations of the Soviet Union or of Red China. However, we are interested here especially in those articles that give a religious interpretation of the Vietnam War in light of the spread of communism predicted by the message of Fatima.

The paper's primary objection to communism is that it imposes atheism, suppressing the truth about God and causing the loss of souls. In an article during its first year, the paper characterizes Marx as proposing "nothing less than war to the death against the very idea of God, a carefully thought out plan of dialectical materialism which would exclude God utterly from the world he created, which he loved with an infinite love, which he redeemed at the cost of his blood. Today the flag of atheistic communism flies over one third of the human race."⁷ Another article from the same year states that "[c]ommunism is based on the most grotesque of errors, the idea that there is no God. It is the heresy of heresies and as such destined to be destroyed by Mary Immaculate."⁸ Atheistic communism represents a turning away from God and thus towards Satan, for "there can be no neutrality."⁹ Indeed the paper frequently quotes Sr. Lucia who in 1946 stated that "the world would indeed be overrun by atheistic Communism unless men returned to God and did penance for their sins."¹⁰

The stark, even apocalyptic contrast between the two worldviews was clearly expressed in the following pithy quote:

⁷ "Background to the Fatima apparitions," *North American Voice of Fatima* 1, no. 2 (July 2, 1962): 3.

⁸ "The world hungers for sound doctrine," *North American Voice of Fatima* 1, no. 9 (Nov. 5, 1962): 3. In the same issue, in the article "The Cuban crisis," 1, we find the claim that "Every mortal sin helps the cause of Communism, every prayer, every act of penance helps the cause of freedom, the American cause."

⁹ "What do the prophecies say of this age?" *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1967): 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. See also "An incredible prophecy," *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1967): 1, which stated that "[i]t is difficult to understand, in the spiritual darkness of the sixties, what a sensational statement this appeared to those hushed journalists who were speaking to Lucia in the forties."

In 1917 two drives were launched for the dominion of the souls of men. One of these drives made its headquarters in Moscow, the other in Fatima. The drive led by Moscow wants men to abandon all belief in God and religion.... The drive led by Fatima wants men by prayer and penance to free themselves from the slavery of sin.... Mary, the Mother of God, is the Commander-in-Chief of the Fatima forces. Her symbol is hands joined in prayer. The men of the Kremlin are the Commanders-in-Chief of the Moscow forces. Their symbol is the clenched fist.¹¹

Therefore, the paper interpreted the Vietnam War in religious terms, stating that “Vietnam may well be the most crucial war in history. It is far more than a military confrontation. It has become a clash between two world ideologies, between two diametrically opposed visions of man.”¹² Vietnam was seen as a battle against “atheistic collaborators in all countries to subvert democracy and destroy our Christian civilization.”¹³ It was the “cockpit of the great ideological struggle, the hot front line where irreconcilable spiritual forces meet.... All who believe in God, should appreciate and identify the godless foe which threatens them.”¹⁴ The paper frequently exhorts its readers to view Vietnam primarily as the ground of a spiritual war that ultimately can be won through spiritual means. Because Our Lady of Fatima stated that “war is ‘a result of the sins of mankind’” and prophesied that “Russia would spread her errors throughout the world provoking wars and persecution,” it is only through prayer, penance, and reparation that the war will cease.¹⁵ Christians can participate in this spiritual war through their “sincere consecration to Our Lady, [their] resolution to

¹¹ “War famine persecutions: a few questions on the message of Fatima,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 5 (Mar. 15, 1968): 1.

¹² “The end of an era,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 21 (Nov. 30, 1968): 1.

¹³ R.F. Bergin, “News of the world: the nuclear pact,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 8 (Apr. 15, 1968): 1.

¹⁴ “Saigon seeks divine help,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 20 (Nov. 15, 1969): 1.

¹⁵ Gregory Pope, “Peace is the only alternative,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no.1 (Jan. 8, 1966): 3.

pray the Rosary, and [their] own self-discipline as reparation to God for the excesses and blasphemies of this age.”¹⁶ One of its articles compared this spiritual warfare with that of the Battle of Lepanto, stating that “every fervent Rosary, every Mass and Holy Communion strike at the powerful colossus of evil which dominates the world today.”¹⁷

While recognizing that the battle was primarily spiritual, the paper strongly supported the military struggle against communism on the battlefields of Vietnam, a country with many devout Catholics. For example, the paper assures “Catholic parents in America that their sons are serving and dying in Vietnam in an honorable cause, the cause in fact of Christ himself. For it is certain that, if the Communists were not resisted, they would overrun South Vietnam, burn and profane the churches, hinder the preaching of the Gospel and kill and persecute Christ’s anointed,” hence the soldiers who paid the supreme sacrifice there have not died in vain.¹⁸ The soldiers fighting in Vietnam “are, in reality, fighting the organized atheism of the world. They are fighting for man’s inalienable right to know, love and serve God.”¹⁹

Conversely, the moral decline occurring within the United States during the 1960s was seen as aiding the cause of communism. R.F. Bergin, the editor of the paper during this time period, characterized the United States as a great country which was succumbing to internal corruption and decay, leading to social anarchy, and that its moral confusion and turning away from God would cause its morale to

¹⁶ “Fatima and the future,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 10 (May 30, 1968): 3.

¹⁷ “The last great challenge: the light on the hill,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 7 (Apr. 15, 1967): 4.

¹⁸ “The report of Msgr. Pignedoli,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 21 (Nov. 21, 1966): 1.

¹⁹ R.F. Bergin, “Vietnam: past and future,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 6 (Mar. 30, 1968): 1.

collapse so that she abandons the war against communism in Vietnam.²⁰

The paper actively criticized those who opposed the war. For example, calling for withdrawal of troops “implies that America is completely in the wrong in Vietnam, and by inference that the Communists are right... [i]t implies that Americans are aggressors in Vietnam, when in fact they are dying for the right of self-determination for the Vietnamese people with nothing to gain for themselves.”²¹ The paper occasionally suggested that opposition to the war was the result of left-wing secular propaganda within the West. Bergin states that the American people “have been confused and divided in the classical tradition by left-wing propagandists. They have lost the will to win. A majority would opt out of Vietnam.”²² Dean Manion echoes him by writing that “our influential secularists who are guiding us so skillfully into godlessness do not want us to disturb the godless Communist anywhere, whether it is in East Berlin, Moscow, or Vietnam. That is why, for the first time in our history, we are witnessing massed public resistance to our government in wartime, a resistance that is marched publicly around the White House.”²³ Furthermore the paper expressed an increasing disappointment with the leadership of Johnson and Nixon as their resolve to continue the war diminished.²⁴

Although the paper frequently took a critical stance and had a very dark view of the state of American culture during the 1960s, it relied on the message of Fatima to provide a counterbalance of hope. Following the “tremendous struggle between good and evil, between

²⁰ R.F. Bergin, “Looking back at 1965,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 8, 1966): 1; see also “The enemy within: above all, hold the fort,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 1, no. 7 (Oct. 5, 1962): 1.

²¹ R.F. Bergin, “Vietnam and the leftwing,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 6 (Mar. 26, 1966): 1.

²² R.F. Bergin, “The crucial war,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 22 (Dec. 15, 1969): 1.

²³ Dean Manion, “The corked bottles,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 17 (Sept. 30, 1969): 2.

²⁴ “Missiles of Soviet Russia,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 8 (Apr. 30, 1969): 1.

Christ and the forces of anti-Christ... [t]he great Christian civilization of the West will reassert its supremacy under the leadership of Mary Immaculate whose historic mission it is to crush the serpent's head, to cause Jesus Christ to triumph."²⁵ The paper occasionally felt the need to defend itself by reminding readers that "[i]f we have referred to a likely third world war or a possible 'reign of Antichrist' it is only to state that it is the catharsis that will precipitate the great victory of Our Lady and the era of peace."²⁶ The paper even anticipated the eventual collapse of communism in Soviet Russia which occurred under the pontificate of St. John Paul II, by stating that "[t]he fact that the conversion of Russia is mentioned in the Fatima prophecies may indicate successful uprising behind the Iron Curtain, an uprising which would destroy the present regime of the godless."²⁷

However, it is clear today that despite the fall of communism throughout much of the world, the message of Fatima which calls us to prayer, penance, conversion, and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is still relevant in combating the many spiritual and material evils that remain in the world. The paper addressed this future situation by stating that "[t]he peace of the world is not helped, necessarily, by the failure of Marxism. Unless men return to God another evil ideology will surely take its place. The cross alone saves the world."²⁸

II. "The sins by which more people are lost are the sins of the flesh; it is necessary for people to give up luxuries, that they must

²⁵ "The incredible tomorrow: why the future is full of promise for all the world," *North American Voice of Fatima* 1, nos. 3-4 (Aug. 10, 1962): 1.

²⁶ "Pope Paul in Fatima," *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 10 (May 30, 1967): 3; see also "Hate the error," *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 10 (May 30, 1968): 1.

²⁷ "Missiles of Soviet Russia," *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 8 (Apr. 30, 1969): 2.

²⁸ "The Czech crisis," *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 4 (Feb. 28, 1969): 1. Of course, the world is still threatened by the real and potential aggression of Communist or formerly Communist nations, and few would dispute that even in areas of the West where political and economic communism did not take hold, cultural Marxism is alive and well, particularly among academics.

not be obstinate in sin, and it is necessary to do much penance.”²⁹

These words of Our Lady of Fatima, given in a private apparition in 1919 to St. Jacinta shortly before her death, introduce the second theme of our article. We will examine articles from the *North American Voice of Fatima* during the years 1962-1969, regarding the decline of morality during the so-called Sexual Revolution in North America, and will address three topics covered by the paper during those years: immodest dress, pornography and its link to atheism, and the decline of parental rights to regulate exposure of sexually explicit material to their children.

In addition to receiving the message described above, regarding sins of the flesh, St. Jacinta was especially concerned with modesty in dress. She viewed immodest dress as an occasion of sin, enticing others to the sin of lust, and thus leading to the damnation of souls. She lamented the vanity of following transitory fashions, especially when contrasted with the eternal punishment of hell.³⁰

The paper referred numerous times to these words of Our Lady and of St. Jacinta when treating of forms of immodest dress in the 1960s, of which miniskirts are probably the most recognizable. It quotes Sr. Lucia who, while speaking with American visitors, said “[w]hen I think about the United States I think about this: One of the things that Our Lady asked for is modesty in dress. There doesn’t seem to me to be much modesty in the life of women in your country. But modesty

²⁹ “Afirmava a vidente que Nossa Senhora lhe havia comunicado: ‘que o pecado que leva mais gente à perdição, era o pecado da carne, que era preciso deixarem-se de luxos, que não deviam obstinar-se no pecado como até aqui, e que era preciso fazer muita penitência.’” These words from St. Jacinta are documented in *Documentação crítica de Fátima*, vol. 2, *Processo canônico diocesano (1922-1930)* (Santuário de Fatima, 1999), 187-88.

³⁰ *Ibid.* The same source also documents the lament of St. Jacinta regarding “certain immodestly dressed persons” in the hospital (“algumas pessoas, imodestamente vestidas”), regarding whom she said “para que serve aquilo!? Se soubessem o que é a eternidade!” (“what good is this? If they only knew what eternity is.”)

would be a good sacrifice to offer to Our Lady and it would please her.”³¹ The paper continues by stating:

[W]e must let Our Lady once again become a *living* model of purity and modesty and not remain just a statue or picture that we admire. Let her little angel of purity and modesty, Jacinta Marto, who is considered a candidate for beatification, be our guide to truly high Christian standards for these virtues. In this age of sensuality and body worship and impurity and immodesty and pornography, she is indeed a much-needed messenger of God for all.³²

This emphasis on Mary as a model of purity and modesty is also found in an exhortation to young women not to follow the immodest fashions of the 1960s, as found in the following quote: “Every mature person recognizes the close relationship between a girl’s or woman’s morals and the clothes she wears. If you are striving to imitate the virtues of Mary, you cannot dress in the likeness of sinful women who have perverted the true meaning of beauty and sex, and who deliberately seek to lead men into temptation and sin.”³³ The paper advocates resistance to both peer pressure and commercial trends by stating “[b]e a true and loyal child of Mary by your own example of uncompromising modesty, by your refusal to buy or wear immodest styles and by your unflinching zeal in promoting this cause.”³⁴

In numerous articles, the paper exhorted young women that “[y]ou are to blame for immodesty if you appear in suggestive, provocative, or sinfully revealing styles.” These styles included low necklines, “sweater[s] or other garments that cling too closely, especially when worn over improper bra styles,” shorts, mini-skirts, bikinis, and clothes

³¹ Martin Stepanich, “Jacinta, Apostle of Purity and Modesty,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 15 (Aug. 13, 1966): 4.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ “Who is to Blame for Immodesty?” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 12 (June 25, 1966): 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

with “colors, designs or transparencies which create the illusion or equivalent of indecent exposure.”³⁵ The paper expressed the view that wearing these styles of clothing was sinful, having an effect not only upon individuals but also upon the country, and advised young women that “you do not wish, I feel sure, to seriously harm our country by irresponsible and selfish behavior.”³⁶

The paper was especially critical of wearing immodest clothing in church, as expressed in the following editorial: “I know that God is offended, often very grievously, by women and girls who show so little dignity as to come to church even to Holy Mass and Communion, while wearing clothes that overexpose and overemphasize the figure.”³⁷

Additional material was provided by sayings or anecdotes related to recent popes, such as this one by Pope Pius XII, who was more willing to ascribe ignorance rather than sinfulness to the young women in question in his own exhortation: “How many young women there are who see no wrong in following certain shameless styles like so many sheep. They certainly would blush if they could guess the impression they make and the feeling they evoke in those who see them.”³⁸ A more humorous anecdote was attributed to Cardinal Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII, who supposedly gave an apple to an immodestly dressed woman in Paris. When asked why, he replied that “it was only after Eve ate the apple that she realized that she was naked.”³⁹

Finally, Pope Paul VI was quoted on the subject as saying:

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2, and “Modesty, Please, Girls,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1967): [2b].

³⁶ “Modesty, Please, Girls,” [2b].

³⁷ “Code of Attire for Church and other Sacred Places,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 13 (July 15, 1967): 5.

³⁸ “The Decay and Fall of a Nation,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 8 (Apr. 23, 1966): 2.

³⁹ R.F. Bergin, “News of the World: Give Her an Apple,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 12b (June 30, 1968): 2.

Innocence and purity are virtues that one is almost afraid to mention nowadays... We know for example how immodesty in dress is required by the dictates of fashion, how the provocative, even pornographic illustrations of certain papers, some shows and advertisements are deliberately intended to excite the basest passions and profane life; and this not only in external matters but in the most sacred ties, in the psychological field, in our hearts, so that they are no longer the fount of pure feelings, but of vicious and inhuman fantasies and thoughts, and so sometimes the cause of terrible crimes.⁴⁰

This quote provides a fitting transition between concerns about immodest dress, and concerns about the rise of pornography, which was viewed by the paper as both a cause and an indicator of moral decline in American culture.

The paper frequently lamented the trend of allowing pornographic materials to be sold and distributed on the basis of freedom of speech, and often pointed out the link between the availability of such materials and the moral decline of American culture. “The Church has always understood that pornography and lewd literature is inspired by the devil to bring about the damnation of souls... For this reason She has always advised statesmen and legislators to ban obscene books and illustrations in order to guard, in this way, the moral stability of the nation.”⁴¹

The decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court in his regard were explicitly criticized in light of the message of Fatima:

⁴⁰ “Pope Calls for Purity,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 20 (Nov. 15, 1969): 3, quoted from his Angelus address of Sept. 14, 1969, following his visit to the Shrine of St. Maria Goretti.

⁴¹ R.F. Bergin, “News of the World: America’s Problem,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 7 (Apr. 15, 1969): 1.

It is not surprising that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that possession of obscene films and pornographic books is not itself a crime. This is logical enough, granted the 'liberal' outlook of the seven judges who interpret laws and do not concern themselves with morals, with philosophy, or even perhaps with history... This is a purely secular-humanist outlook. It is the 'death of God' philosophy in public life.... God is not dead. He is risen. And he spoke to the world through his Mother in 1917 and warned it in effect that 'blue' films and pornography are more destructive than atom bombs.⁴²

Atheism was seen as the underlying concept behind the growing emphasis on "separation of church and state" in the decisions of the Supreme Court in the 1960s, as the following citation demonstrates: "The 'wall of separation' which the Supreme Court insists on erecting between the Church and State has resulted in decisions in the name of liberty which have opened the floodgates of Hell and unleashed a torrent of evil and lascivious literature upon American youth."⁴³

The moral decline signaled by widespread pornography was linked with weakening resistance against Communist intrusion as expressed through protests against the Vietnam War: "This [pornographic literature] is certainly Communism's secret weapon in the struggle with the U.S.A., for how long can we depend upon an American youth, degraded by this filth to fight and die on foreign battlefields for freedom?"⁴⁴

The paper saw a common effect of both pornography and atheistic communism, in that both have a destructive influence on Christian

⁴² R.F. Bergin, "News of the World: U.S. Supreme Court," *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 9 (May 15, 1969): 1.

⁴³ R.F. Bergin, "News of the World: the Tidal Wave," *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 17 (Sept. 30, 1968): 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

moral traditions, leading to a collapse of the moral foundations of western nations such as the United States:

It is curious how the mass media, the newspapers, radio and television are combining with the left wing forces to drag down the moral fiber of the Western nations. Most newspapers and commentators on radio and TV deride censorship as old-fashioned, unnecessary. They are right in there with the Communists, anxious to destroy the Christian traditions of our people... As always, the flesh lusts against the spirit. The disorderly passions, blind to reason, defy reason and plunge the whole man into ruin. And when enough men are plunged into ruin the nation collapses in tyranny... Our Lady calls upon us to help her save souls from *irreparable* disaster.⁴⁵

The paper also lamented the decline of the rights of the parents to determine the education of their children in matters of sex, or to protect their children from obscene or pornographic materials. For example, one article stated that “[p]arents bear a heavy responsibility in seeing that their children are not harmed by exposure to filthy literature. It is the duty of parents—through their example and counsel—to provide their children with a solid foundation of spiritual and moral values.”⁴⁶ A more specific example cited by the paper is the Mingolello case in Connecticut, in which neighborhood boys were sharing pornographic materials with the sons of the Mingolello family. According to the paper, the parents of the neighborhood boys, the police, and the Juvenile Court were all unsympathetic to the Mingolello’s complaint, with one Juvenile Court case worker criticizing “the parents for being too rigid with the children and said that the nuns teaching them were also too strict. She suggested that the children

⁴⁵ R.F. Bergin, “News of the World: Censorship,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 17 (Sept. 30, 1969): 1. Emphasis in original text.

⁴⁶ “Poison for our youth: a warning from FBI Chief, J. Edgar Hoover,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 11 (June 11, 1966): 2.

would probably be happier at a state school.”⁴⁷ The two boys were eventually removed from the Mingoello’s home and the parents were not allowed to defend themselves in court. One of the boys was encouraged to read anything he wanted “except for the religious books his mother sent him from home. These were termed ‘damaging to his mental health.’” The overall assessment of the paper based on this case is that “More and more we see on all sides the shocking evidence that America is in an advanced state of moral decline... Christian parents who try to raise their children in an atmosphere of decency and respect are hated and ridiculed for their beliefs... Equally alarming, our courts in many instances are becoming instruments of tyranny and injustice.”⁴⁸

In this section we have seen that the rise of immodest dress, the proliferation of pornography, and the decline of parental rights with regard to the education of their children in matters of sexuality during the 1960s, were viewed by the paper as symptoms of a decline in the morality of the United States and the West in general, with harmful temporal and spiritual consequences for the entire culture and especially youth. The inability of members of Western society, individually and collectively, to regulate immoral sexual desires, coincides with the spread of an atheistic communism as described in the previous section of this article. In such a culture of practical atheism, the love of God and fear of eternal punishment as warned by Our Lady of Fatima, no longer motivate members of a post-Christian society to practice the virtues of temperance and fortitude necessary to resist the spread of atheistic communism and sexual immorality.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ “A State of Moral Decline: The Mingoello Case,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 16 (Sept. 10, 1966): 3. I was unable to find independent confirmation of the facts or existence of this sensitive juvenile court case.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁹ The paper addressed other areas connected to sexual morality as well, such as a bill to legalize abortion in Great Britain, although it had not yet been legalized in the United States at that time; see for example R. F. Bergin, “News of the World: Heresy Does Matter,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 12 (June 15, 1968): 1; “Changing the Flag,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 1 (Jan. 15, 1969): 1; “Fight against Legalized Abortion takes on National Proportions,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 5 (Mar. 15, 1969): 1.

III. “In Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved, etc.”⁵⁰

This section will address the coverage by the *North American Voice of Fatima* of the doctrinal confusion within the Catholic church during the mid- to late-1960s as interpreted through the lens of the message of Fatima, and will address the following interrelated themes: the interpretation of the Third Secret, the weakening of traditional dogma within the Catholic church during the post-conciliar period and the resulting confusion among the faithful, and the message of Fatima as powerful remedy.

During the years 1962-1969, the paper did not engage in conspiracy theories regarding the Third Secret of Fatima. It did not place blame on Pope John XXIII or Pope Paul VI for refusing to reveal to the public the third secret, nor did it address the question of why neither pope had consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as requested in the message. Furthermore, it did not place blame on Pope John XXIII or Pope Paul VI for the doctrinal confusion that ensued during or after the Second Vatican Council. Instead, it depicted Pope Paul VI as a heroic defender of Catholic doctrine and morals, especially in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, in the face of widespread dissent and disobedience by theologians and clergy.⁵¹

Nevertheless, it did include articles that speculated about the content of the Third Secret, building upon statements made by Sr. Lucia in the second part of the secret regarding the annihilation of nations, and her

⁵⁰ The original text from the Fourth Memoir reads: “Em Portugal se conservará sempre o Doguema da fé etc.” in Lúcia de Jesus, *Memórias*, 232-33.

⁵¹ See for example, “Church teaching not determined by public opinion, pope insists,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 8 (Apr. 30, 1967): 3; “The Pope Stands Firm,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 15 (Aug. 15, 1968): 1; “The Meaning of the Crisis,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 19 (Oct. 30, 1968): 1; “The Pope’s Strong Words,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 9 (May 15, 1969): 2. For a recent, exhaustive summary of the controversies surrounding the Third Secret, see Kevin J. Symonds, *On the Third Part of the Secret of Fatima* (St. Louis MO: Enroute Books and Media, 2017).

cryptic elliptical phrase regarding the preservation of the dogma of the faith in Portugal in her fourth memoir.

For example, an article that discussed a purported copy of the text of the Third Secret that “seems of doubtful authenticity to us,” nevertheless stated that “it seems to be correctly forecasting a schism in the Church and a third world war” and reminds readers that the known message of Fatima offers predictions of “the suffering of some Pope, and the annihilation of some nations” that had not yet been fulfilled.⁵²

The elliptical and mysterious phrase of Our Lady of Fatima about Portugal preserving the dogma of the faith, as reported by Sr. Lucia, suggests by implication that other nations will not preserve the dogma of the faith, and this theme of apostasy is explored in many ways by the paper during this time. The paper is filled with articles describing radical departures from traditional Catholic dogma and morals in various nations such as the Netherlands in the post-conciliar period. These departures are described variously as apostasy, heresy, and disobedience.⁵³

⁵²“Revealed! The Third Secret,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 20 (Nov. 15, 1968): 1. Regarding the special mention of Portugal, the paper quoted a 1939 letter from the Bishop of Leiria, who said that war was a punishment for “nations that wanted to destroy the Kingdom of God in souls,” and who cited the Spanish Civil War as an example of such a punishment. The bishop expressed the view that Portugal was a nation that, while guilty, has been chosen by God to offer the message and example of prayer and reparation for sinful nations, quoted in “The Secret: Problem of Fatima,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 6 (Mar. 30, 1967): 1.

⁵³ See for example, R.F. Bergin, “A Trojan Horse enters the City of God,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 22 (Christmas 1966): 3; “No Sin, No Hell, in the New Child Catechism,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1967): [2b]; R.F. Bergin, “News of the World: The French Bishops,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 7 (Apr. 15, 1967): 1; “The Dutch Problem,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 17 (Sept. 30, 1967): 1; “The Fourth Church? Errors Old and New,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 13 (July 15, 1968): 1; “The Church in Holland,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 19 (Oct. 30, 1969): [2a insert].

This doctrinal confusion within the Church was blamed on the laxity of institutional Church leaders: “It is certain that Our Lady, in 1917... saw far too many tepid, worldly Bishops, instead of the zealous, saintly prelates her Son wanted... She saw vast numbers of laity falling away from the Church, saw the wolves scattering and devouring the flocks, and the demons reaping a great harvest of souls... [who] were being lost forever because no one cared enough to save them.”⁵⁴

The paper suggested a causal connection between this situation of doctrinal confusion within the Church during the 1960s and the neglect of the message of the Fatima by Catholic clergy and laity (again not including the popes), stating for example that “the failure of the Church generally to treat with respect and reverence the important message of Fatima was the root of the general problem.”⁵⁵

Furthermore it suggested that this decline of the institutional Church had a causal connection with the moral decline of the broader society: “If the Fatima message means anything, it means that the Church stabilizes society; when the Church is strong, society is strong. When the Church is weak, the social structure is imperiled.”⁵⁶ Thus the internal destabilization of the institutional Church during the 1960s, reflected in doctrinal confusion and widespread dissent, was linked by the paper with the moral decline of Western society during the same

⁵⁴ “Warning and Anarchy: The Institutional Church,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 8 (Apr. 30, 1967): 1. The same article stated that the failure of the Church to fulfill the requests of Our Lady of Fatima for prayer and penance, was the cause of the destruction of the institutional Church in many Communist lands, and that heeding this message was the only way to destroy Communism and establish a new Christian world order of peace, *ibid.* 1, 4.

⁵⁵ R.F. Bergin, “A Trojan Horse Enters the City of God,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 22 (Christmas 1966): 3.

⁵⁶ “The America of 1969: a national ‘nervous breakdown?’” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 16 (Sept. 15, 1968): 1. This article makes the interesting observation that “the new President, elected in November, will inherit a nation that is ungovernable,” referring to the then-unknown winner of the Nov. 1968 presidential election, Richard M. Nixon.

decade, reflected in its failure to resist the spread of communism and the erosion of traditional sexual morality.⁵⁷

Heeding the message of Fatima was proposed by the paper as the solution to this problem of doctrinal confusion within the Church, and therefore of the problem of the moral decline of Western culture:

It is very significant that the Fatima apparitions, sent by Heaven to save the Church in this age, brought into the twentieth century almost the entire corpus of traditional Christian theology. Clearly God foresaw the doctrinal confusion to come, and His Mother acted to defeat the infernal enemy. The Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the Mass, the existence of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory, the existence of angels and devils, the Immaculate Conception and the implied doctrine of original sin, the absolute necessity of prayer, penance and reparation—all these powerful and traditional dogmas of our Faith were brought into sharp relief at Fatima and reinforced by the great public miracle.⁵⁸

The paper placed particular stress on the practice of prayer, penance, and reparation, which are necessary for the salvation of souls, for the conversion of Russia, for the end of war, which is caused by sin, and especially to avoid the danger of a nuclear war, which would result in the destruction of many nations.⁵⁹

Conclusion

⁵⁷ See for example “The Pope’s Strong Words,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 8, no. 9 (May 15, 1969): 2, which states the opinion of the article’s author that “the massive corruption of the world, the rising power of Communism, the widespread heresies and disobedience... are a Frankenstein monster of our own creation [for not heeding the message of Fatima].”

⁵⁸ “The Pope Stands Firm,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 15 (Aug. 15, 1968): 1.

⁵⁹ See for example, R.F. Bergin, “The Uncertain Future,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 3 (Feb. 12, 1966): 1; Thomas McGlynn, “Fatima on War and Peace,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 5, no. 13 (July 1, 1966): 3; “The Last Great Challenge: the Light on the Hill,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 6, no. 7 (Apr. 15, 1967): 1, 4. The paper during this time is filled with devotional articles and photos meant to encourage a spirit of prayer, including for example a photo of Robert Kennedy lying on the ground after being shot, clinging to a Rosary, in “The Rosary and Death,” *North American Voice of Fatima* 7, no. 12b (June 30, 1968): 1.

As shown throughout this article, the *North American Voice of Fatima* frequently takes an exhortatory tone in its articles, by encouraging its readers to resist the spread of communism, to resist the spread of sexual immorality, and to resist departures from traditional Catholic dogma. It linked these trends with historical events occurring in North America during the 1960s, such as protests against the Vietnam War, the Sexual Revolution, and post-conciliar doctrinal confusion in the Catholic Church.

The *North American Voice of Fatima* proposed the message of Fatima, with its call to prayer, penance, acts of reparation, and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as the best means to combat these three secularizing trends. Despite its bleak and occasionally apocalyptic reading of historical events of the 1960s as they were unfolding, it frequently reminded its readers of the promise of Our Lady of Fatima that “[i]n the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph... and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”⁶⁰ The message of Fatima, given by the Blessed Virgin Mary to three shepherd children in a small Portuguese village over one hundred years ago, was seen as the interpretive key to the signs of the times in North America during the turbulent countercultural decade of the 1960s, and as the most trustworthy source of hope for the future.

⁶⁰ *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*, 124; the original text from the Third Memoir reads: “por fim o meu Imaculado Coração triunfará... e será condesido ao mundo algum tempo de paz.” from Lúcia de Jesus, *Memórias*, 187.