Editor's Note: This article appears in the current issue (Sept. 2018) of *Catholic Family News* (click HERE to subscribe; current subscribers can access the E-Edition HERE). As the clergy sexual abuse crisis continues to unfold, the whole truth about Fatima and particularly the Third Secret is becoming ever more urgent. Cardinals Sodano and Bertone, two of the principal agents involved in covering up the full Third Secret, have recently been indicted by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò in his now-famous testimony. This is yet more evidence that the main architects of the Vatican Party Line on Fatima cannot be trusted, and further motivation to continue opposing those who promote the party line.

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In early July of this year, I published a piece entitled "Sexual Abuse and the Third Secret – A Timely Reminder" on the mounting crisis of unnatural vice among the hierarchy and its connection to apostasy, all in light of the Third Secret of Fatima (subsequently reprinted here and here). I provided testimony from several key witnesses and scholars to demonstrate that Our Lady of Fatima did indeed warn of "apostasy in the Church" (Cardinal Oddi), that is, of "sin within the Church" that continues to manifest itself "in a really terrifying way" (Benedict XVI, May 11, 2010).

Several days after its publication, I stumbled upon a response to my article written by Kevin Symonds, author of *On the Third Part of the Secret of Fatima* (En Route Books and Media, 2017), who debated Christopher Ferrara last fall at the Angelus Press Conference on the question, "Is the Third Secret Entirely Revealed?"

Here, in part, is what Mr. Symonds had to say:

> "I met and visited with Gaspers last October after my debate with Christopher Ferrara (later described by Gaspers as 'perhaps the most exciting event of the weekend'). Gaspers struck me as being a good man. We engaged in private conversations about Fátima. He listened to what I had to say and was genuinely respectful. Our conversations were meaningful and were a personal highlight of the weekend. Thus, I was saddened when I read Gaspers' recent article and it greatly pains me to write this response. I do so in all charity and with no ill-will."

As a result of our cordial conversations at the Angelus Press Conference last October, Symonds apparently thought he had won a new convert to "Fatima Lite,"[1] which he now realizes is not the case. Thus, he continues:

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> "Gaspers is associated closely with those who promote the 'hermeneutic of suspicion and conspiracy' (as I call it) on Fátima. In his recent article, Gaspers appears to have reverted to form and walk lock-step with his friends by providing the boiler-plate interpretations of that hermeneutic. This is perplexing after last October. Gaspers disregards the challenge issued and which remains open. Why continue to promote the hermeneutic without first silencing the critique? Is it a case of the hermeneutic's narrative being considered as '*über alles*' (above all)? The promoters of the hermeneutic think the critique is wrong, but why are they not comprehensively rebutting it?"

I don't presume to know what Mr. Symonds would consider to be a comprehensive rebuttal of his critique (Mr. Ferrara's remarks during their debate certainly constitute a refutation, as do his subsequent responses here and here). However, since Symonds has issued a challenge (similar to his supporters at Preserving Christian Publications), I will answer by offering a counter-critique of his book,[2] the source to which Symonds directed the readers of his blog post concerning my piece:

> "It is not my intention here to issue a comprehensive response to Gaspers. Instead, I defer interested readers to my book *On the Third Part of the Secret of Fátima* where most of Gasper's [*sic*] points are already addressed in detail."

I have no expectation of "silencing" (i.e. converting) Mr. Symonds on the subject of Fatima (only God can change his mind); nevertheless, I will demonstrate that his book not only fails to refute the so-called "hermeneutic of suspicion and conspiracy" (translation: honest appraisal of the facts), it also reveals that his own "hermeneutic" is one of naïveté and denial, especially in regard to apostasy within the Church.

Symonds' Connections – First Red Flag

Towards the beginning of his book's Introduction, we learn the following from Symonds about the origins of his work:

> "The present book grew out of research from my book *Pope Leo XIII and the Prayer to St. Michael*. I had discovered a link between Pope Leo's vision and the requests of Our Lady of Fátima and was exploring this connection. Between January and February, 2015, I was talking with Deacon Bob Ellis of the World

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> Apostolate of Fatima, USA Inc. (WAF-USA). WAF-USA had obtained the English translation rights to a new biography of Sr. Lúcia entitled *A Pathway Under the Gaze of Mary*. I sought permission to place an English translation of a chapter from this biography in my book.
>
> At one point of our conversation, Deacon gave me an idea to write an essay on a Fátima-related matter. That essay was completed (though never published) if memory serves, by the end of February or April, 2015. Coinciding with this essay were two articles that I wrote for the web site *Catholic Stand* entitled *Is There a 'Fourth Secret' of Fatima?* (February) and a book review of *A Pathway Under the Gaze of Mary* (April). What I did not realize at the time was how these writings would become the basis for an entire and new book project."[3]

The World Apostolate of Fatima (WAF) is none other than the premiere purveyor of "Fatima Lite," that is, a watered-down version of Our Lady's message devoid of all prophetic relevance for "today" (again, Benedict XVI in 2010). Mr. Ferrara provides the background and rationale for this term as follows:

> "In 2006 the Blue Army, now renamed 'World Apostolate of Fatima' (WAF) in keeping with the general 'demilitarization' of the Church Militant since Vatican II, was granted the status of an 'international association of the faithful' by the Pontifical Council for the Laity.[4] The former Blue Army claimed that this constituted explicit 'papal approval' of its activities, although the council is not an organ of the papal magisterium but merely a Vatican department whose decrees are issued by its President and Secretary, not the Vicar of Christ.
>
> Worse, WAF immediately began boasting that it is 'the only Fatima organization that speaks with ecclesiastical authority on the message of Fatima.' The claim borders on false advertising. WAF has not been endowed with any more 'ecclesiastical authority' to speak for the Church regarding Fatima than is possessed by any knowledgeable member of the laity. WAF, whose U.S. branch is headquartered in Asbury Park, New Jersey, has no teaching authority in the Church, and as a mere 'association of the faithful' it can bind no one to its opinions on Fatima, which are manifestly dubious to say the least, as we shall see. …
>
> With good reason had Father Gruner's Fatima apostolate never sought the formality of Vatican approval as an association of the faithful or any other form of

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> 'ecclesiastical approval,' for it comes at the price of fatal compromise: adherence to the Party Line on Fatima dictated by the Secretary of State. The Pontifical Council's decree 'erecting' WAF as an association of the faithful was clearly a reward for its willingness to proclaim that the Consecration [of Russia] has been done, the Third Secret has been revealed, and all that remains of the Fatima message is prayer and penance on the part of the faithful. In short, WAF is willing to purvey 'Fatima Lite' instead of the real thing, with its politically incorrect, all-too-Catholic elements."[5]

The fact that Deacon Ellis, WAF-USA's National Coordinator, helped plant the seeds of Symonds' book is a significant red flag. For those who might dismiss Symonds' relationship to WAF-USA as one of neutrality, I would direct them to his article "In Defense of the World Apostolate of Fatima" published in July of 2015.

Questionable Motivations

In addition to the book's origins, Symonds also reveals his reasons for offering a "charitable critique" of those who disagree with the Vatican Party Line. He states, for example, in his Introduction:

> "The nature of the topic herein discussed is highly specialized and presents a narrow focus. Others in the Church have also taken an interest in the topic and written about it. I am grateful to them for their efforts, even if we may disagree on some finer details. A body of literature has been formed that must be treated if justice is to be done. Regretfully, there is not much by way of critiques or responses to this literature, at least in the English language. Some good questions have been raised over the years, while other questions or assertions may not be as viable. If during my examination of the facts I come across as harsh towards any particular group, I am to be read as critiquing from charity. No ill will or polemics are intended."[6]

This sounds respectful enough, I suppose, but if we back up just a couple of pages we find the following:

> "Concerning any other area of importance that is not addressed in these pages, I ask the reader to consider the sheer vastness of the topic at hand. I am one man

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> and a comprehensive treatment of the topic is best performed by a panel of experts. Speaking within the context of the English language, I appear to be one of the *very* few willing to 'take the bull by the horns' and provide a treatment on the subject. My book is thus to be understood as an *attempt* to address some difficulties associated with the third part of the secret of Fátima."[7]

This statement strikes me as rather prideful, not to mention inaccurate. What of Frère Michel de la Sainte Trinité's *The Whole Truth About Fatima*, a three-volume library of research consisting of well over 2,000 pages and hundreds of scholarly citations, all of which were translated into English and published by none other than the late Fr. Nicholas Gruner's Fatima apostolate?[8] What of the hundreds-more pages contributed by Frère François de Marie des Anges, Christopher Ferrara, and others who have been researching Fatima for *decades* (as opposed to Symonds' *year or so* of research)[9] and whose work was likewise published by Fr. Gruner? And yet, the following is all that Mr. Symonds can bring himself to concede regarding these monumental contributions: "For our purposes, it suffices to say that Gruner engaged in various efforts at promoting Fátima that had a noticeable impact on the English-speaking world."[10]

A "noticeable impact"? Mr. Symonds is apparently unaware of the international, multi-lingual, and even curial reach of Fr. Gruner and his associates. A perfect case in point is Italian Cardinal Renato Martino,[11] a retired Vatican diplomat and former president of two pontifical councils, who attended the Fatima Center's Rome conference (along with several other prelates) in 2011[12] and 2012.[13] Moreover, at the 2011 "Consecration Now!" conference, Cardinal Martino "took Father Gruner's hand upon departing and said: 'Corragio!' — Italian for 'Courage.'"[14]

Next month, we will continue our counter-critique by exploring Mr. Symonds' focus on minutia while missing the big picture, his dubious explanation of Our Lady's crucial words ("In Portugal the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc."), his ignoring of critical sources, and what appears to be a Conciliar agenda on his part.

Part II is available here.

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Notes

[1] A term coined by Christopher Ferrara in his book *False Friends of Fatima* (Pound Ridge:

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Good Counsel Publications, 2012 – Chapter 14), a broader follow-up to his groundbreaking work *The Secret Still Hidden* (Pound Ridge: Good Counsel Publications, 2008), which focuses primarily on the Third Secret. Both books are available in full and free of charge online (see links above).

[2] All quotes and citations will be provided from the Kindle edition.

[3] Kevin Symonds, *On the Third Part of the Secret of Fatima* (En Route Books and Media, 2017), Kindle Locations 85-93.

[4] According to the international World Apostolate of Fatima's website, WAF was erected as a public association of the faithful by the Pontifical Council for the Laity on Oct. 7, 2005, with its Statutes approved for a five-year probationary period (*ad experimentum*). WAF's Statutes were then given "definitive approbation" on Oct. 7, 2010.

[5] Ferrara, *False Friends of Fatima*, pp. 233-234.

[6] Symonds, *op. cit.*, Kindle Locations 142-148.

[7] *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 134-138.

[8] Colloquially known as "The Fatima Center", the formal name of the apostolate that Fr. Gruner led (not "founded", as Symonds incorrectly asserts) from 1978 until his death in 2015 is the National Committee for the National Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima (NPV) (cf. Francis Alban with Christopher A. Ferrara, *Fatima Priest* [Pound Ridge: Good Counsel Publications, Fifth Ed. – 2013], pp. 35-37).

[9] Symonds states in his Introduction: "For over a year I have studied and examined various matters on this subject." (Kindle Location 119).

[10] Symonds, *op. cit.*, Kindle Locations 477-478.

[11] **Editor's Note:** Particularly astute readers may recognize that Cardinal Martino was mentioned unfavorably by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò in his now-famous testimony (a brief passing reference). While *Catholic Family News* fully supports Viganò's testimony (as evidenced here and here), we also wish to remind readers that Cardinal Martino publicly supported the famous *dubia* submitted to Pope Francis by Cardinals Brandmüller, Burke, Caffarra, and Meisner (see here and here). Thus, we are hopeful that Cardinal Martino has distanced himself from the "current" with which Archbishop Viganò associates him.

[12] Cf. *The Fatima Crusader*, Issue 99, p. 13.

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[13] *Ibid.*, Issue 102, p. 3.

[14] The Fatima Center, Our Lady's Electronic Newsletter: May 2011.

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