

Fatima Apparitional Experiences

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An apparition may provide evidence of the authenticity of its manifestation at a physical site by offering predictions that are to be fulfilled at a later date. One of the distinctive features of the events at Fatima in Portugal in 1917 is the fulfilment in our own time of the predictions made. Ever since the occurrence of these famous visionary experiences, among observers and believers there has been an exponential interest in the third secret. Voice phenomena observed during Marian apparitions such as those at Fatima have analogies with externally controlled recurrent spontaneous psychokinetic (RSPK) activity, and visionary experiences involving RSPK or RSPK-like activity may be instances of apparitions at a physical site. The voice extinction and sensory disconnection demonstrated in the Fatima percipients could be explained as psychokinetic-like activity on the part of the apparition. True apparitional experiences prove the existence of psi-like phenomena and discarnate survival. In general, paranormal phenomena involve non-physical, physical and social events. Only physical events are accessible to scientific study. Marian apparitional experiences may be subjected to scientific analysis, but Marian apparition is beyond the scientific realm. The Fatima apparitional events inform research into post-mortem existence and offer a complementary insight into our current knowledge of the discarnate realm. Marian apparitions may be regarded as an antidote to the afflictions of the present century.

Introduction

Several hundreds of apparitional experiences have been claimed to have occurred in the twentieth century. Marian apparitional experiences have been reported in nearly all the continents of the world in the later half of that century. Most of them have undoubtedly been intense spiritual or inner psychological experiences. A few of them may be considered authentic.

Marian apparitions have a pattern that is characterised by a preparatory phase, followed by true apparitions and a post-apparitional phase, supplemented by periodic reassuring apparitions. This pattern has been particularly clear in the reports of apparitional phenomena at Fatima (1917), Beauraing (1932), Garabandal (1961–5) and Medjugorje (1981–present).

Lucia Santos was the principal percipient of the Fatima apparitional occurrences. The others were her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto. All three were from poor but respectable families. On 13 May 1917, these Portuguese children were occupied in their village near Fatima in

caring for the sheep that belonged to their families when they saw 'a Lady, all of Light' above a small oak tree.¹ At that time they were grazing the sheep on a piece of land owned by Lucia's parents at Cova da Iria, a natural amphitheatre about five hundred metres wide. The apparition asked them to return to that place on the thirteenth day of each month for the next five months. She promised the children that a great miracle would be performed in October, so that everyone would believe in her appearances and in the messages she gave. The lady also confided to them special messages that were to be revealed later. One of them is popularly known as the third secret of Fatima.

Each apparition lasted about ten minutes. From the second one onwards, they were witnessed by an ever-increasing number of onlookers. Some 70,000 people saw the aerobic miracle that immediately followed the sixth and final appearance. This startling spectacle of light, enacted in a noonday sky, has been termed 'God's own fiery signature' by believers. Prior to the six apparitional experiences, there had been a preparatory phase in which the percipients had the experience of seeing an angelic figure on three occasions.¹

Visions and hallucinations

Hallucination is a waking sensory experience that has no identified external physical stimuli. In general, people have a limited understanding of the terminology, and as a result the term is often wrongly attributed to some healthy human experiences. Visual hallucinations may occur in hysteria, severe affective disorders and schizophrenia, but they also occur commonly in organic brain conditions.² True visual hallucinations appear in objective space and are three dimensional, like an apparitional figure. Hallucinatory experiences are more common in those in psychopathological states than in the general population, but they may occur to people who are not subject to psychopathological conditions.

The indications are that pseudo hallucinations are a special class of psychological phenomena, a type of mental image that – although clear and vivid – lacks the substance of perception. They are seen or heard in full consciousness, and they are not located in objective space but in subjective space. Pseudo hallucinations are most frequently visual, and characteristically comprise complex scenes or fragments of action, often reproducing a past event of emotional significance to the individual. Some lonely people would like to have a visible companion in the form of an apparition, while a few deeply religious people fantasise religious apparitions as a step towards spiritual advancement. These hypnotic hallucinations occur in subjective space. They are usually black and white or are limited in colour. The movements of the figures reported are highly restricted and are very much under voluntary control. The hallucinatory figure is also always within the imaginary capability of the

individual. Pseudo hallucination is the most likely phenomenological form to describe apocalyptic visionary experiences.³ It has been found that even a few hours of social isolation, combined with a reduction in sensory stimulation, will produce a state of mental confusion in most normal people which often progresses to systematised hallucinations such as processions of animals and convictions of inner truth. Visual imagery is a matter of seeing in one's mind an object that is not actually seen, and it is a voluntary process, whereas pseudo hallucinations are involuntary. Pseudo visual hallucinations and imagery are liable to be confused with apparitional experiences, just as hallucinations are.

Hallucinatory experiences are not often confined to a single sensory modality, and the same applies to apparitional experiences. True and pseudo hallucinations are unshared experiences, except in extremely rare cases when strong suggestion causes the experience to transmit to a second person. Conversely, apparitional experiences may be shared. This is a feature that is therefore germane to distinguishing pseudo hallucinations from apparitional experiences. The form of psychiatric symptoms has more diagnostic value than their content,³ whereas the content has more research value in psi research.⁴ There is no evidence of true or pseudo hallucinatory experiences being followed by any form of RSPK activity. Just as there are pseudo hallucinatory experiences, there are pseudo apparitional experiences. For instance, atmospheric apparitional experiences that are due to retrocognitive memory are not the manifestation of a discarnate intelligence at a physical site. It has been hypothesised that psychopathology opens a chemical window to another dimension and the patient's experiences probably contain psychologically edited paranormal components.

Theories of apparition

Psychological experiences may be triggered by natural or man-made phenomena. An example of the former is tectonic-strain-induced luminosity, sometimes misunderstood as apparitional. The fundamental question of whether apparitions are subjective fantasies, or whether they reflect an objective reality, continues to pervade scientific circles. On the assumption that apparitional experiences are associated with shifts in consciousness, two suggestions to explain apparitional experiences have been promulgated. The first is that certain altered states of consciousness may instigate powerful, objective and physical effects in the environment. The second is that certain fluctuations in the environment may cause dramatic shifts in consciousness. Accordingly, it is hypothesised, an apparition may be the objective result of mind-matter interaction phenomena, or it may be the outcome of a subjective effect caused by external energies. Apparitions accompanied by controlled RSPK present something of a problem apropos of these views.

Even though there are many natural explanations for apparitions, they are not all congruent with natural interpretations. Six theories relating to apparitions dominate discussion of the phenomena in the scientific literature of parapsychology: phantasmogenic theory, etheric body theory, ESP-PK theory, retrocognition theory, clairvoyance theory and telepathy theory.⁵ The first three theories suggest the presence of the apparition at the physical site, whereas the last three postulate that the apparition is constructed by the percipient.

Phantasmogenic centre theory promotes the view that the appearer generates an image of themselves in the mind of the percipient that is analogous to a projected hologram, which is then seen as a phantom. The discarnate personality is present at the apparitional site, but the seer does not perceive the soul of the dead individual. According to etheric body theory, the astral body of the appearer is present at the physical site and is seen as an apparition – through normal senses, not through ESP or PK powers. ESP-PK theory postulates that the appearer is present at the physical site. The psychokinetic powers of the appearer and the ESP powers of the seer result in the actual sighting of the apparition. Both paranormal perception and perception through the normal sensory channels of the percipient are involved. I consider that this theory has great advantages as an explanation of apparitional occurrences that are accompanied by psychokinetic activity.

Retrocognition theory is very popular; it suggests that certain apparitions demonstrate the persistence and localisation of something that carries traces of small and superficial – probably obsessive – fragments of the experiences of a deceased human personality. In other words, the apparition is the result of the percipient's ESP or psychometric reading of past events. In psychometry, the percipient is offered an object that belonged to the individual about whom information is sought (Duncan and Roll, 1995);⁶ the percipient's response to that object has been interpreted by paranormal investigators in the past as a real phenomenon.^{7,8,9} In a similar way, the impression left by a deceased individual takes the form of a visual image, and this may lead to the belief that the departed is haunting a particular location. The theory is that stored psychic traces from the past can evoke apparitions – objects absorb psychic impressions and then play them back to psychically sensitive people; they are like psychic echoes. In residual haunting, the image will not interact with a living person. The activity and sightings are random, without any consciousness behind what is seen. The systemic memory theory of Schwartz and Russek (1999) may illuminate this theory.¹⁰

According to clairvoyance theory, the apparition is entirely created by the percipient, utilising a clairvoyant impression of the appearer. The telepathic theory advocates the view that the apparition occurs only in the mind of the percipient, but collective apparitions and site-specific apparitions cannot be explained by this hypothesis.

Psychokinetic events

Psi has a sensory aspect (ESP) and a kinetic aspect (psychokinesis or PK). ESP is passive and receptive, while psychokinesis is projective and active. It is the influence of mind on external objects or processes without the mediation of known physical energy or forces. PK is further divided into micro-PK, where the target is the output of a random event generator; and macro-PK, mental influence on macroscopic physical events. RSPK is a form of macro-PK, and involves spontaneous physical effects that occur repeatedly over a period of time and are inexplicable in terms of known physical energies.

Living and discarnate agents as well as natural causes may account for RSPK. L.E. Rhine has promoted an explanation that does not assume a discarnate agency in RSPK phenomena.¹¹ She also proposed that the observer's own psychic forces are instrumental in producing the apparition. It is generally assumed that psychological factors, especially emotion, are involved in RSPK.^{12,13,14}

In the case of RSPK that is related to a living agent, a build-up of tension released as psychic energy in the surrounding agents interacts with physical objects and their energy. Such an accumulation of energy may be converted into familiar forms, mainly kinetic and sonic energy. It is gravity or inertia that keeps objects in place. The role of the RSPK agent would therefore be to cause an elimination of the gravity/inertia of the object and to direct some form of energy towards the object. This process can be better understood if the zero point energy (ZPE) theory is combined with psi-wave theories and the concept of observer participation.¹⁵ It is postulated that if an emotionally charged object is freed of gravity/inertia, that object may levitate. The electromagnetic component of psi waves could bring transient attenuation of the gravity/inertia by interacting with the ZPE.

Walker (1974) believes that for macro-PK to happen, an outside source of energy is required. His view has been backed by other researchers into RSPK.^{16,17,18} This source could be the zero-point energy – or another, hitherto unknown energy source, if the discarnate realm is brought into the equation. ZPE replaces Myers' concept of ether which is continuous with the metetherial environment.¹⁹ RSPK activities are involuntary on the part of agents, who are not consciously aware of inducing them. Just as the driver of a car requires sensory feedback, PK may be guided by the ESP that powers the agents.²⁰ If that is so, then RSPK due to living agents is a form of telekinesis (RSTK). In isolated cases, RSPK agents have been reported to bring the phenomenon at will, and theoretically the process could then become conscious – particularly in cases where the manifestation runs a prolonged course.¹⁴

The onset of RSPK has been observed to be associated with geomagnetic perturbations. There are currently research findings

suggesting that known physical energies may contribute to or initiate RSPK activity.^{21,22,23,24,25,26,27} These energies may include ionisation radiation, geomagnetic activity, and electromagnetic and electrostatic fields. Cohesion of the electromagnetic field of the vacuum may account for the weight losses of RSPK objects, and this could explain anomalous electromagnetic readings near RSPK objects or areas. Several RSPK agents have shown signs of their brains being subjected to sudden electromagnetic discharges in the form of symptoms of complex partial seizure.¹⁴ RSPK agents may be influenced by bursts of electromagnetic activity in the brain that can cause complex partial seizures, but it is unlikely that an increase of brain electromagnetic activity alone causes RSPK. It is also postulated that electromagnetic components of the mental state can interact with electromagnetic energy in the environment to produce RSPK events.²⁸ Joines (1975) detected an emission of 146 MHz in an RSPK area.²⁹ Changes in underwater currents and electromagnetic fields are sometimes thought to be the natural causes of RSPK, but the recent findings prompt us to revise our view of natural causes for RSPK, specifically by considering whether they are the outcome of RSPK rather than the instigator.³⁰ Hence RSPK has become more of a generic term. In fact, some of the cases reported may be only recurrent spontaneous kinesis (RSK). According to Roll (2004), atmospheric changes are observed more commonly in RSPK, due to discarnate intelligence.²⁰ He recognises that RSPK activity has great explanatory significance in clinical sciences. It is even possible that living RSPK agents may be acting as transducers for discarnate agents.

Intentional RSPK

Roll (2004) has made preliminary analyses of two cases of haunting, and he has opined that the process may be different from that in poltergeistic cases that are linked to living agents.²⁰ He recognises that such instances may point towards a survival hypothesis. RSPK may be associated with living and discarnate agents as well as with natural causes. Rhine's hypothesis, mentioned earlier, has a fundamental weakness: the difficulty of explaining why a significant psychokinetic effect occurs simultaneously with an apparitional experience to certain people who have never produced such an effect before, and who never do so again. The late Karles Osis, who was sceptical about Rhine's explanation, commented that no psychiatrist had reported a hallucination by a patient that could open the windows of a psychiatric ward. Furthermore, manifestations attributable to discarnate agents are controlled, whereas those produced by a living agent are neither deliberately nor even consciously controlled. Apparitional occurrences that involve physical action powerfully suggest the involvement of an external agency.

Dr Ian Stevenson has contributed to discussions within the field of RSPK with his attempt to identify the differences between the conduct

and powers of living and discarnate intelligence,³¹ and Roll has also made a few suggestions²⁰ – as did Alan Gauld and A.D. Cornell.³² The generally observed features of RSPK due to unseen agencies are noted in table1.

Table 1. RSPK due to discarnate intelligence

Apparitions and visual phenomenon occur abundantly and collectively even before physical manifestations. Preparatory phase and reassuring apparitions after the main events in the case of apparitions of a higher order. Reassuring apparitions continue until the motive is fulfilled.
Area oriented and person oriented.
Flight paths are complicated trajectories with sharp-angled turns, deflections and marked changes of speed.
Objects are rarely or never broken.
In RSPK due to living agents, objects land forcefully; in RSPK due to discarnate intelligence, objects seem to be carried and deposited gently.
In RSPK due to living agents, the movement of objects is motiveless; in the case of controlled phenomena, movements suggest purpose.
Rare occurrences of teleportation are reported.
RSPK due to living agents is localised around a particular person; in RSPK which has a purpose it may be localised around a person or a place.
There is no typical age for the controlled form of RSPK, but it usually happens to subjects under the age of 20.
Resolution of physical disturbances may be achieved through intercession, placation, exorcism or some other activity directed toward the presumed discarnate intelligence.
Atmospheric changes are observed.
Animal and bird reactions can occur
Mediumistic trance and auditory communications from apparent discarnate personalities are usually present.
PK activity is more sustained in RSPK due to discarnate agents; bursts of PK come and go in RSPK due to living agents and will peak early and slowly fade away.

Apparitions at a physical site

Visions that occur before RSPK manifestations take place are likely to be genuine visual apparitions of the discarnate personality manifesting

at a physical site.³³ Visions that occur after RSPK occurrences may be explained as a form of secondary elaboration.

Collective visions + Externally controlled secondary RSPK or RSPK-like activity = Likelihood of visual apparition of a discarnate agent at physical site.

An apparitional experience does not have to be collective to receive the accolade of scientific approval, provided it is associated with the manifestation of some form of RSPK. But true apparitional experience may occur without the accompaniment of RSPK. Apparitions of a higher order (e.g. Marian apparitions) have been recognised as demonstrating inexplicable RSPK-like activity.

Psychokinetic-type activity at Fatima

The books describing the visions at Fatima record unanimously a distinct form of selective inaudibility of voice of the apparition. This was noted with regard to all the six apparitional experiences that took place there. There were three percipients at Fatima, of whom it was reported: 'Lucia sees the Lady, speaks to her and hears her. Jacinta sees the Lady, hears her, but does not address her. Francisco sees the Lady, but neither hears nor speaks to her.'³⁴ From a parapsychological point of view, this may be termed 'internal inaudibility' on the part of the visionaries; Jacinta and Lucia heard the voice of the apparition while Francisco could not hear her. Jacinta and Francisco were silent, and Lucia spoke. One of the witnesses of the events at Fatima confirmed the external inaudibility of the voice of the chief percipient. Maria Carreira reported,³⁵ 'when the children started running to the tree we did that too ... then we started to hear something. It sounded like "a high frequency voice", but no one could understand a single word. It was like the sound of bees.'

In a paper published elsewhere, I have argued that the selective inaudibility observed in the Marian apparitional experiences is a form of high-grade psychokinetic-like activity, and visionary experiences associated with externally controlled psychokinetic activity point towards a true apparition at the physical site.³³ The unusual aerobic phenomenon reported on the last day of the Fatima apparitions was also due to the cascading of psychokinetic-like power from the apparition. Fulfilment of predictions, collective percipience, quasi-physical features of the apparition, stronger motivation on the part of the apparition, the utmost loyalty and obedience of the percipients to the agent and controlled 'psychokinetic-like' manifestations are all indicative of an authentic apparitional experience at Fatima.

Anomalous cognition

Precognition is a controversial subject in parapsychology, and there is very little scientific evidence to support the phenomenon. Scientific investigation into the subject has resulted in several contradicting theories.^{36,37,38} In precognition, the prediction has a fortuitous characteristic in the sense that these are unanticipated and unexpected events, and are rationally unpredictable.³⁹ Spontaneous experiences suggestive of precognition have been recorded since ancient times. A requirement of accurate precognition may be that the precognised event is determined.⁴⁰ Chance coincidence is a likely explanation for many cases of ostensible precognition. Errors of memory may lead a person to believe after an event has taken place that they had some knowledge of it beforehand when in fact they did not.⁴¹ A percipient might bring about an apparent fulfilment of a precognition by his own action. In this situation precognitive experience itself unleashes powerful psychokinetic energy, which then brings about the envisioned future event.

Emotional shocks generate precognitive experience and other types of ESP, but not necessarily true precognitions. Subconsciously made normal inferences from paranormally derived information are projected in the form of visual or other images, which a person relates to the future. In a period of crisis, a person gains access to information paranormally, from which they infer the future course of events. Precognition is apparently the sum of these inferences projected in the form of visual or other images relating to the future.⁴² In fulfilled precognitions, it is even assumed that an event that has not yet taken place has somehow caused a mental event in the present – that is, a precognitive experience. This phenomenon is not in line with our habitual concepts of the causation of events or our sense of time.

In the human mind, the future normally has no existence. Precognition infers either that causation can run backwards or that the future has already been determined. For a prediction to be true, an event has to take place backwards in the mind of the predictor. The issue of inverted time is difficult to comprehend as we are conditioned to think only in the physical sense of time. If the precognition happens spontaneously, it could be argued that what has been predicted was simply one of a range of possible futures, and that on the occasion in question it was this one that became actuality. J.B. Rhine's laboratory tests merely concluded that what has happened is not precognition of a future event, but clairvoyance of an existing one; the target had been determined before the experiment was carried out, even if neither experimenter nor subject knew what it was. To wriggle out of this controversy, two otherwise identical tests of precognition were carried out on the same subjects at the Koestler unit at Edinburgh.⁴³ In one of them the target was stored in a computer, and only revealed after the test; this experiment was productive. In the other test the target choice depended on a combination of the future stock market index and the future temperature in one of a list of cities; this test proved statistically

insignificant. The conclusion reached was that subjects who are able to discern the present contents of a computer clairvoyantly are unable to determine a future event.

It is possible that only a rehearsal of the future event takes place in the mind of the foreseer. We would not believe that an event had been determined if we happened to see a facsimile of the event before it had happened.⁴⁴ If telepathy can be explained by assuming that some people are very sensitive to the electromagnetic energy signals from another person's brain or field consciousness, true precognition indicates a deep spiritual space or a spiritual reality of wholeness in which all of time, space, energy, individual consciousness and information are mysteriously connected.

Many fulfilled predictions can be explained with by a spiritistic hypothesis. Discarnate spirits are in an advantageous position to predict the consequences of human actions, just as someone on the top of a hill has a wider vision of the surrounding area than those who are in the valley. To use another analogy, the spectators on the balcony are capable of a better prediction about the outcome of the game than the players in the stadium. The hypothesis is that discarnate spirits are capable of better predictions of our future, but are not infallible. In Mary's appearances, the precognition takes place in the mind of the apparition and the information is passed on to the living percipients, who are simply passive recipients. It may also be commented that theologians believe Mary to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Fatima seers have never demonstrated any unusual psychic ability that would suggest the predictions were the product of their own psi faculties. In general, the Fatima predictions have been conditional.

The present author visited Fatima in January 1983, and was able to hold a lengthy conversation with Sister Lucy's eldest sister, who was aged 93. This lady was a witness to the solar phenomena. She narrated the events to me and recounted how her initial scepticism dwindled until she became convinced of the reality of the apparitional experiences of Lucy and her cousins. She had a very vivid memory of the Fatima events and of her sister's childhood. She even recollected that when Sister Lucy was born, she was in the bathroom.

The most authentic book about the Fatima events is the memoirs of Sister Lucy.¹ During an interview, Sister Lucy admitted that even her own book contained some errors since it was not originally intended for publication. She explained that she simply wrote some notes for future reference which contained inaccuracies in dates and places. These notes were published without her authorisation or consent, and also additions were made by others. Detailed discussion of Fatima events is beyond the scope of this paper. They have been amply written about.^{45,1,46,47,48}

Fatima predictions

Sister Lucia is the key figure in the apparitions at Fatima as it was she who, during the events, spoke to the apparition and received the famous Fatima predictions. She died at the age of 97 on 13 February 2005. Her long life itself is the fulfilment of a Fatima prediction; the apparition is said to have told her in 1917 that she would have to live a long time to spread her messages and that the other two seers would die shortly after the apparitional occurrences. Francisco died in 1919 and Jacinta died in 1920 (see Box 1). Sister Lucy lived as a cloistered nun in the convent of St Avila in Coimbra, which is fifty miles away from Fatima. It was on 13 July 1917 that the apparition confided the special messages – or the secrets, as they are popularly known – with the instruction that the children were not to talk about them to anyone at that time.⁴⁹ Lucia received permission to reveal the first two parts in 1927, and in 1941 she was allowed to reveal the third secret when she was in the convent of Toy. Lucia was instructed to write down that part of the secret and send it to the Pope. She sent a letter with the report, suggesting that the Pope could, if he considered it wise to do so, make public the content of that secret after 1960. But the third secret remained unknown to almost everyone until 13 May 2000. Cardinal Angelo Sodano revealed part of it on that day, the anniversary of the beginning of Fatima apparitions.

First and second secrets

The first secret is a vision of eternal punishment and is presented in a symbolic way. It was as if a vision were inserted to a vision. If the first secret is a vision within a vision, the second secret is a special verbal message. 'If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my immaculate heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.'

There is a faint prediction of an apocalyptic period in the second secret and a clear reference to the suffering of the Pope.^{48,49,50} The apparition also referred to the past dark period in human history in the form of a conditional prediction. The apparition is alleged to have foretold these turbulent times in the second secret. The period from 1960 has been a time of social and political crisis coupled with regional wars and unprecedented natural disasters.

Box 1. Fulfilled Fatima predictions

Short life, and death of Jacinta and Francisco
Long life of Lucy
End of First World War
Global spread of communism
Second World War
Papal sufferings
Conversion of Russia, partially accomplished

The third secret

The third secret was written down by Sister Lucy by order of the Bishop of Leira and the apparition on 3 January 1944. The envelope enclosing it was placed in the archives of the Vatican on 4 April 1957. Pope John XXIII was shown the third secret on 17 August 1959. After some hesitation, he decided to return the sealed envelope to the archives and not to reveal it. Pope Paul VI read the secret on 27 March 1965 and again returned the envelope to the archives. Pope John Paul II asked for the sealed envelope when he regained consciousness after the assassination attempt made on him on 13 May 1981.

On 26 June 2000 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the congregation for the doctrine of the faith and the Pope's doctrinal guardian since 1982, released the text of the third secret – written by hand in Portuguese by Sister Lucia in 1944 – and still kept in the Vatican archives.⁵¹ It has been revealed to be in symbolic language. Condensation of time is a feature that often accompanies a prophecy made in symbolic terms. Centuries of events are compressed in symbols without a set time interval. The third secret is undoubtedly all about a suffering pontiff.

Scientists, theologians and historians all divine the future and try to gain some insight into the years ahead, even though futurology is a very tricky issue and human assessment is always founded on past and present events. The apparition mentioned in the second secret that there would be a period of peace following the conversion of Russia. 'A period of peace' also means that the apparition does not guarantee permanent peace. In other words, the period of peace that succeeds the present apocalyptic period may be followed by chaotic times again.

The Fatima visions notably shed some light on a hard time in the distant future. The apparition was referring to a crisis of faith when she told the visionaries at Fatima in 1917 that 'The dogma of faith will be preserved in Portugal till the end.' In the years to come the pathological developments resulting from researches conducted by parascientists and theologians may lead to a crisis of faith, a loss of faith, and even

reversal of faith.^{52,53} Christ predicted such a situation. 'When the son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18.6). This is obviously a conditional statement. Theologians recognise a gross diabolical disorientation ahead of our generation, and seem to blame this on deficiencies in the higher ranks of the world religions and internal conflicts within them.⁵⁴

In the years to come, due to certain pernicious developments, parasciences may be perceived as contributing to a world crisis in religious faith. It is a well-known fact in scientific circles that if psi threatens mainline science at its core of physicality, it threatens religion at its theological centre.⁵⁵ While Christian parapsychologists recognise that parapsychology has the advantage of explaining theological issues in modern scientific perspectives, and that parasciences have a lot to offer in regard to the confusions of faith, they also fear that the message of the Bible will be attenuated as parasciences advance.⁵⁶ The inclusion of Marian apparitional studies in parascientific researches assists in reorienting people in their present state of loss of faith, and will possibly avert the anticipated crisis of faith that looms over all world religions. At present the agent that could destroy the weeds in the garden of faith may be the parasciences but unfortunately, the same agent could turn out to be the killer of faith in a future period.

Particle physics may help us to appreciate certain unknown aspects of mind, but it can also confuse the concept of spirituality. While proof-oriented research is harmless and useful, process-oriented research is potentially dangerous, unveiling many new and hitherto unknown destructive forces. The discovery of the energy underlying ESP will be equivalent to the discovery of atomic energy. A cautious leap into the probable future of the world may reveal that paraphysics will create a state of 'paraphysicalism' leading to theories of human spirituality dethroning the idea of an omniscient entity. Though illustrative in several aspects, Wassermann's shadow-matter theories of psi phenomena that strive to account for all human subjective experiences is a distant example.^{57,58,59} The scientific idea of reincarnation is highly vulnerable and is running the risk of being glorified in the future so that it will camouflage theories of other forms of discarnate survival. The future critics of spirituality will find the parasciences a goldmine in which to sink long-cherished spiritual convictions. Many ideas from the parasciences could be presented to project a worldview that is totally different from the biblical one. It may not be the parasciences that are responsible for such a crisis of faith, but there is a possibility that the parasciences may get into the wrong hands.

Concluding remarks

There are fulfilled Fatima predictions, and there are unfulfilled and partially fulfilled ones. The Fatima apparition offers a modern proof of different forms of discarnate survival and of non-physical entities.

Survival researchers are ushered by them into coming to terms with the timeless questions of the meaning of life and of death. They also support the faith traditions' belief in a negative reality and a richer reality. Regardless of the differences in the interpretation of the third secret, the Fatima apparition is a guiding star for both theologians and psychiatrists interested in parapsychology.

Parapsychology is mind centred and religion is God centred. The former is not a substitute for the latter, but both can support each other.⁵⁶ Over the last four decades a number of books and papers have been published about the survival of the human personality after the dissolution of the physical body. Unfortunately, many are the result of armchair research and run the risk of being regarded as fictional, perhaps even leading to the creation of a kind of intellectual Disneyland. Promises of life after death have almost without exception been ultra-optimistic, and have lacked clear supporting evidence. The first secret of Fatima challenges the cold comfort embedded in such publications, and prompts us to re-evaluate them.²¹

Paraphysics has the advantage of separating magical belief systems from true mysticism. The parasciences may help to explode the many superstitions that have clouded our understanding of human ancestry. The science-inspired crisis of faith could be averted or moderated by looking at things differently. The recent Marian visitations may be seen as a counterbalance to the crisis of faith, which is a threat to all world religions.

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