

# The History of the Twentieth Century

## Episode 153

### “The Visionary and the Evangelist”

#### Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

*Physical vigour is as necessary for the maintenance of our Empire as mental vigour... To the philosopher of any nation (not excluding our own) the spectacle of the Englishman going through the world with rifle in one hand and Bible in the other is laughable; but to Englishmen, who are neither logicians nor idealists, it is not. We wish to see his skill with the one and his faith in the other strengthened and increased. If asked what our muscular Christianity has done, we point to the British Empire. Our Empire would never have been built up by a nation of idealists and logicians.*

J.G. Cotton Minchin *Our Public Schools: Their Influence on English History.*

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 153. The Visionary and the Evangelist.

William Ashley Sunday was born on November 19, 1862 in a log cabin near Ames, Iowa, the son of William and Mary Jane Sunday. William Sunday the elder had been born in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania and was of Pennsylvania German extraction. The family had anglicized their German name “Sonntag” into the English “Sunday.”

Three months before Billy was born, William Sunday walked the thirty miles from Ames, leaving behind two older sons and a wife six months pregnant, so he could enlist in the United States Army during the Civil War. Sadly, a few days after Christmas 1862, Mary Jane Sunday received a letter from the War Department informing her that her husband had died of pneumonia. Young Billy Sunday thus never knew his father, although later in life, he would speak with great emotion about his father’s noble sacrifice and his hope that one day he would meet his father at last, in the world to come.

His mother remarried, to a man named Leroy Heizer. Leroy was a drunkard who abused his family. The couple separated when Billy was nine and eventually divorced. This aspect of Billy’s

life is significant because of the lesson he drew from it: that alcohol ruined not only the drunkard but the lives of the people around him as well.

After the separation, Billy lived for a time at a home for orphaned children of Civil War soldiers. He left there early, at the age of fourteen, and struck out on his own, ending up in Nevada, Iowa, where he went to school, worked odd jobs, and discovered he had a talent for baseball. As a notably fast runner, he was especially adept at fielding fly balls and stealing bases.

When he was eighteen, he was recruited to join the volunteer fire company in the larger community of Marshalltown. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Iowa, the volunteer fire companies held tournaments involving running, ladder climbing, racing pumps to fire hydrants and so on. A fire company that did well in these competitions was a source of pride to its community, and so the city fathers of Marshalltown had sought out Billy Sunday. They found him work in the town and put him in the fire company for the sake of a better showing in the competitions. He also began playing baseball for the Marshalltown baseball team, and his fleet feet made the teenager a fan favorite. With Billy Sunday on their roster, Marshalltown became an Iowa baseball powerhouse, so much so that a group of citizens in Des Moines, the largest city and capital of Iowa, challenged Marshalltown to come play Des Moines's team. Marshalltown accepted the challenge and defeated the home team easily, 15-6.

One of the most famous baseball players of this era was Adrian Anson, known universally as "Cap" Anson. Cap Anson was 30 years old at this time and player-manager of the Chicago White Stockings, a team that would win three National League pennants in a row from 1880 to 1882. Cap Anson was from Marshalltown himself, and his Aunt Em, who attended the Des Moines game, told her nephew all about this amazing young kid in Marshalltown, Billy Sunday.

Aunt Em's scouting report won Billy Sunday a tryout with the White Stockings, and since he was reputedly fast, Cap Anson asked him to race Fred Pfeffer, the team's fastest runner. Billy Sunday borrowed a uniform from another player and ran in his bare feet since he didn't own baseball shoes, but nevertheless beat Fred Pfeffer handily in a footrace. Anson hired him for the team and asked, "How are you fixed for money?" Sunday had exactly one dollar to his name and told Anson so. Anson gave him a \$20 gold piece and this began a close relationship between the two ball players. In some sense, Cap Anson became the father Billy Sunday never had.

Sunday was never much of a batter. He struck out in his first seven major league at-bats, but his running and fielding made him an asset to the team, and his unusual name endeared him to sportswriters. When Sunday first appeared on the roster, the *Chicago Tribune* quipped, "This was a surprise to many, as it had been supposed the league allowed no Sunday ball-playing."

I should mention here that this team, the Chicago White Stockings, is the ancestor of the baseball team known in our time as the Chicago Cubs. The American League Chicago White Sox of our time are a different team that took up the "White Stockings" name in 1900 after the older club abandoned it.

Sunday's rookie season, 1883, was not a good year for him or for the White Stockings. They failed to win the pennant that year, finishing second. The team president, Albert Spaulding, a former baseball player and a current sporting goods magnate, believed excessive drinking and partying among the players was to blame and instructed Cap Anson to crack down. This went over with the players about as well as you'd expect. Still, Anson himself was not a drinker and neither was Billy Sunday. Both of them supported the new policy.

In 1884, the league changed the rules to allow pitchers to pitch overhand for the first time. Maybe that was why it was an even worse season for Billy Sunday, who batted only .222, and for the White Stockings, who fell to fifth place in the league.

Albert Spaulding still blamed demon rum and instituted a policy of total abstinence for his players during the season. Maybe it paid off, because 1885 saw the White Stockings take the pennant once again. It also saw the emergence of Billy Sunday as a favorite and a player to watch. The newspaper *Sporting Life* declared, "Sunday is about as good an every-day player as Chicago can boast. The man doesn't live who can beat him at base running, he is a strong, safe batter, and his fielding play is generally faultless."

The following year proved to be life changing for Billy Sunday, but not for anything that happened on the playing field. One Sunday he and some of his fellow players visited the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago, a mission operated by associates of the great Chicago-based American evangelist Dwight Moody, who often preached there. Billy began attending services at the mission and soon joined the Jefferson Park Presbyterian Church, where he met his future wife Helen Thompson, daughter of a wealthy Chicago businessman who needed some time to warm to the idea of his daughter marrying such a ne'er-do-well as a baseball player. *Sporting Life*, its tongue firmly in its cheek, reported that "Bill Sunday has joined a Presbyterian Church in Chicago, and will now proceed to convert his wicked brethren on the Chicago team."

Billy Sunday played for the White Stockings through the 1887 season, after which he was traded to the Pittsburgh Alleghenys, a team that had just joined the National League the previous season. Sunday played well enough in Pittsburgh to become a fan favorite there as well. In 1889, he married Helen Thompson, better known since as Nell Sunday. He joined the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, where he taught Sunday School and found himself fielding questions about baseball as often as questions about Scripture.

Most of the Alleghenys' 1889 roster left to join the new Players' League in 1890, but not Billy Sunday, who felt morally obligated to stick with the Alleghenys. Still, with that kind of turnover, 1890 was a disastrous year for the team. They ended the season at the bottom of the National League, and reportedly one Alleghenys game that year racked up an attendance of exactly 25, who must have been really dedicated fans. Pittsburgh traded Billy Sunday in August, to the Philadelphia Phillies, and he played out the rest of the season with them, but at the close of 1890,

Billy Sunday walked away from attractive offers from the Phillies and the Cincinnati Reds to take a position as assistant secretary at the Chicago YMCA at a 70% pay cut.

[music: “Bringing in the Sheaves”]

In Victorian England, there had arisen a religious movement that is sometimes known as “Muscular Christianity.” It was in part a reaction against Christian churches that were seen as overly intellectual and effeminate and it emphasized the masculine qualities of discipline, sacrifice, and martial and athletic virtues.

By 1901, the British author J.G. Cotton Minchin could write in his book *Our Public Schools: Their Influence on English History*, the passage I read at the top of the episode, extolling this “Muscular Christianity.” One of the other most obvious expressions of it at the turn of the twentieth century was the Young Men’s Christian Association, or YMCA. The first YMCA was organized in London in 1844 and the idea quickly spread to other countries, including the United States. From the beginning, YMCAs emphasized the development of “body, mind, and spirit.” YMCAs saw their mission in part as protecting young men from the temptations of tobacco, gambling, and alcohol, and providing athletic facilities as an alternative and promoting good sportsmanship was always considered part of the mission. The games of basketball and volleyball—both indoor games, you’ll note—were invented in YMCAs.

In the United States this new ideal of Muscular Christianity was taken up by fundamentalist evangelists like Dwight Moody, who often worked in and through the YMCAs. In this connection I should also highlight Theodore Roosevelt who in many ways embodied the ideal of Muscular Christianity. Unsurprisingly, Roosevelt was an admirer of Billy Sunday.

Sunday’s early years at the YMCA were spent giving talks to young men, but by 1896, he was out traveling the country, preaching at revivals. These traveling tent revivals were a common feature of life in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, and there was no shortage of evangelists. But there was none who rose to such prominence, and there was no preacher in the land better suited to preach Muscular Christianity than the baseball player turned evangelist, whose most famous sermon was entitled “Shew Thyself a Man,” Billy Sunday.

Billy Sunday was a man’s man. He had name recognition from his baseball career and he used it to attract attention to his revival meetings. He would travel from town to town, preaching for several evenings in a row in large, nondenominational gatherings, often in tents at first and later in wooden buildings specially constructed for the purpose. Between these evening meetings, he would make daytime appearances, offer lectures, give talks, and sometimes organize baseball games. The purpose of these events was to recruit new members for, and revive the spirits of old members who had fallen away from, the Protestant churches in the town, hence the term “revival.” Billy Sunday’s energetic preaching was meant to recruit new Christians and get them fired up and into the pews of local churches, after which Billy would move on to a new town. Churches would often band together to organize, publicize, and finance these revivals.

From 1896 to 1908, Billy Sunday worked his revivals in relative obscurity in small Midwestern American towns, principally in his home turf of Illinois and Iowa. He called this the “kerosene circuit,” in reference to the fact that most of these communities had not yet been electrified and thus their citizens relied on kerosene to light their homes at night.

Sunday had an ordinary background and spoke in the common person’s language. And he preached his own brand of Muscular Christianity. And he pulled no punches. In a 1923 sermon, he told his audience: “It takes manhood to be a Christian, my friends...No man can be a man without being Christian and no man is a man unless he is Christian. Therefore, if you want to be a man, be a Christian; if you want to be less than a man, serve the devil and go to Hell.” His preaching style was acrobatic. He would prowl the stage, shout, wave his arms, leap onto a table, point, spar, re-enact moments from his baseball career one minute and smash a chair the next.

Now it is often the case that women are more likely to attend church than are men. Billy Sunday blamed conventional preachers for this state of affairs. He declared, “Lord save us from off-handed, flabby-cheeked, brittle-boned, weak-kneed, thin-skinned, pliable, plastic, spineless, effeminate, ossified three-carat Christianity.” He preached an unabashed fundamentalism and didn’t shy from criticizing by name clergy who disagreed with him on theological issues. His preaching on sexual morality was graphic by the standards of the time and it was claimed that his shocking language induced audience members to faint, although I have to say I find that one hard to believe.

And I would be remiss to quote from Billy Sunday’s preaching without mentioning his most famous homiletic remark, which was that “[g]oing to church on Sunday does not make you a Christian any more than going into a garage makes you an automobile.”

All this was entertainment, you must remember. There wasn’t much else to do in those days, especially if you lived on the kerosene circuit, so this kind of preaching drew crowds. Billy Sunday fully understood this, and was happy to take advantage of it, since it meant saving souls. He was a preacher, an orator, an athlete, a comedian, a one-man show. As one of his biographers, Roger Bruns, puts it, Billy Sunday did to evangelism what William Randolph Hearst did to journalism. He made it yellow.

And he worked like a dog. This was demanding stuff, and Billy was at it ten months out of the year. He often regaled his audiences with tales of how his doctors wanted him to slow down and how he kept rejecting their advice.

By the second decade of the century, Billy Sunday’s revivals had outgrown the kerosene circuit and moved on to bigger cities, the electrified ones. Youngstown. South Bend. Denver. Syracuse. Kansas City. By 1916, Billy Sunday had held revivals in Detroit, Boston, Buffalo, and Philadelphia. These were huge operations, organized months in advance, held in temporary purpose-built wooden tabernacles that seated thousands. And Billy Sunday preached without benefit of electric amplification. In lieu of floors, these tabernacles had sawdust scattered over

the bare earth to keep down the dust and provide a nice smell. If you answered the call and came forward at the end of the meeting, you were said to be taking the “sawdust trail.”

Billy Sunday became the biggest name in American religion, and one of the biggest names in America, period. When Billy Sunday came to town, the local newspapers gave him more column inches than the Great War.

These big city revivals ran up big city tabs, which were underwritten in part by small donors, but also by the wealthiest men of the age, giants of business and industry, many of whose names you might still recognize today: John Studebaker. Henry Clay Frick. Sebastian Kresge. John Wanamaker. Louis F. Swift. Henry J. Heinz. Some of these revivals cost \$10,000 or more, and Billy Sunday paid himself a good salary out of the proceeds. It is estimated that his personal income from 1910-1920 was over a million dollars, a phenomenal amount of money in an era when the average American made less than two thousand dollars a year.

The magazine *Literary Digest* decided to dig into this question and published an article laying out that Billy Sunday took in over a quarter of a million dollars over his last eighteen revivals, an amount of money equivalent to about 6.3 million US dollars in our day. But those eighteen revivals also claimed over 160,000 converts, leading his supporters to point out he was saving souls at a rate of \$1.60 each, which, they argued, was quite a bargain. These converts were people who accepted Billy Sunday’s invitation to come forward and fill out a pledge card at the end of the meeting. When the revival was over, Billy Sunday’s organization would distribute the cards to local churches according to the stated denominational preference of the convert. However, other follow-up studies showed that many of these so-called converts never actually joined a church, though Sunday’s supporters would argue that was not his responsibility and was the fault of the churches for not being able to hold onto the converts Billy Sunday had won for them.

He had many critics, both clergy and lay. One Methodist bishop called him “grotesque.” Catholic priests were known to warn their parishes that attending a Billy Sunday revival would be a mortal sin. The American writer Sinclair Lewis, whose first novel, *Main Street*, would become a breakout best seller in 1920, included in his second novel, *Babbitt*, published in 1922, an itinerant evangelist and ex-boxer named Mike Monday, an obvious parody of Billy Sunday. Five years later, he would publish *Elmer Gantry*, a novel about a corrupt fundamentalist preacher that is less obviously based on Billy Sunday but was surely inspired by him, at least in part. Isadora Duncan publicly declared that “[i]f Mr. Sunday believes there is a Hell, I advise him to go there, where he may speak with more authority.” And the socialist poet Carl Sandburg wrote a piece titled “To a Contemporary Bunkshooter,” in which he proclaimed, “What the hell do you know about Jesus? Go ahead and bust all the chairs you want to. Smash a whole wagonload of furniture at every performance. Turn sixty somersaults and stand on your nutty head. If it wasn’t for the way you scare women and kids, I’d feel sorry for you...”

Socialists held Billy Sunday in particular disdain. To them, Billy Sunday was distracting working people from the crucial business of organizing and demanding their rights by selling them a pie-in-the-sky vision of how one day they'll live in a heavenly mansion if only they give up drinking. Likewise the anarchist Emma Goldman, whom we last met all the way back in episode 16, when she was arrested following the assassination of William McKinley. Now 46 years old, she dismissed Billy Sunday as a "frothing, howling huckster," and a "good clown." On April 19, 1915, during Billy Sunday's revival in Paterson, New Jersey, his largest to date, Emma Goldman and a group of prominent radicals held a counter-rally in a union hall across town. Goldman and the other speakers told the audience that the hell of which Billy Sunday preached was no match for the hell of living in the slums of Paterson and challenged them to ignore Billy and work to build a better world in the here and now. Later that evening, no more than an hour after the Goldman rally concluded, a fire destroyed the building where it had been held. Billy Sunday himself maintained a discreet silence on this affair, but there were those among his followers not afraid to say that God Himself had openly declared which side He was on.

The high water mark of Billy Sunday's career was surely 1917, the year he held a revival in America's largest city and its most notorious den of sin, corruption, and loose morals, New York City. It was partially underwritten by oil baron and philanthropist for Christian causes John D. Rockefeller, Jr., whom we last met in episode 132, when he was presiding over the Ludlow Massacre. Rockefeller had initially had doubts about Billy Sunday's finances also, and he had hired private investigators to insure that Sunday was on the up and up. They gave Sunday a clean bill of health, and Rockefeller was in.

It was an enormous operation, housed in an enormous tabernacle in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, at 168<sup>th</sup> and Broadway. The temporary structure seated 18,000 and had its own post office, telegraph office, and phone booths. New Yorkers called it the "Glory Barn."

Billy Sunday's revival began at 2:00 in the afternoon on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1917, with a packed house giving an energetic rendition of "When the Roll Is Called up Yonder," that they must have heard all the way down to the Bowery.

As you know, the United States Congress had declared war on Germany just two days earlier, on Good Friday, April 6. Because of this, America's new role as a combatant in the war would inevitably be part of Billy's preaching, and he engaged the topic with enthusiasm, in addition to his usual topics. He endorsed the war, endorsed draft registration, and supported the Wilson Administration, framing the conflict as God versus Satan. He quipped that if Hell could be turned over, you would find "Made in Germany" stamped on the bottom.

Billy Sunday wrapped up his New York revival on June 17, after ten weeks. It was the biggest success of his career, netting over 100,000 pledge cards, more than double his previous record, though again, *Literary Digest* did a follow-up study a few years later and was only able to

identify about two hundred regular churchgoers in New York who began attending church as a result of Billy Sunday's revival. So take that for what it's worth.

Billy Sunday continued to tour the country, preaching and conducting revivals, although he never again achieved anything on the scale of 1917 in New York City. This was not because of a decline in evangelism; far from it. But the 1920s would see the introduction of radios into the homes of ordinary people, and a new kind of evangelism, preached by a new kind of evangelist, ones whose techniques were better suited to modern mass media.

As for Billy Sunday, he never let the declining numbers deter him. He kept at it until the early 1930s, when poor health finally forced him to stop. He died in 1935, at the age of 72.

The greatest impact Billy Sunday had on American life was probably his contribution to the Prohibition movement, the outlawing of alcoholic beverages in the United States, which was enacted in 1919 and took effect in 1920. During the 1910s, many of his revivals were timed to coincide with campaigns on the state and local level to outlaw alcohol, and he was happy to rally voters to the cause at any opportunity.

Billy Sunday was such an influential figure in the Prohibition movement precisely because of his background as an athlete and his espousal of Muscular Christianity. The Prohibition movement was largely led by women, as evidenced by the largest temperance league of the day, the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Drinking, particularly of hard liquor, was in this era very much thought of as a men's activity, mostly conducted in saloons, which provided their patrons opportunities to participate in other stereotypically manly pursuits such as smoking and gambling, and to engage in them in an environment away from the disapproval of the women in their lives. Consequently, the temperance movement often framed its cause as a defense of the needs of women and children against the temptations of alcohol and vice that drew their husbands and fathers away from the family and turned them neglectful, even abusive.

But this was a difficult argument to sell to men, that saloons were evil because they provided men with opportunities to get out of the house and hang out with their buddies once in a while. Billy Sunday held the key that unlocked that conundrum. As an admired athlete who could testify from his own experience in baseball that abstinence from alcohol made a man a better athlete and a tough, physical preacher not afraid use strong language nor even to box with Satan right there on the stage, he could make the argument that alcohol was a weakness, that indulging in it, far from making you more of a man, made you less of one. In short, Billy Sunday made it manly to renounce alcohol. It was just what the temperance movement needed.

Billy himself counted Prohibition as one of his greatest achievements. He was proud of his role in Prohibition, dismayed by its repeal, and continued to campaign for it to the very end of his life.

[music: "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder."]



As you all know from episode 128, Portugal entered the Great War in March 1916. That same month, a rural Portuguese peasant girl who lived near the village of Fátima named Lúcia dos Santos had her ninth birthday. Lúcia was typical of Portuguese peasant children of that time. Her family was poor, they were Catholic, Lúcia was illiterate, and by the age of nine her family had already put her to work minding the sheep. She was also typical of children in this time and place in that she was musical. She liked to sing and dance and composed her own songs. She also enjoyed storytelling and could tell a pretty good one herself. When there's no television or cinemas, people learn to make their own entertainments.

Lúcia was different from the other children in that she was unusually religious. Her devotion came to the attention of her elders, and she'd already had her First Communion at the early age of six and was deeply moved by the experience.

In the summer of 1916, Lúcia was tending the sheep along with two of her younger cousins, Francisco Marto, aged seven, and his younger sister, Jacinta, who was six. Perhaps I should say that Lúcia was tending the younger children along with the sheep. Francisco and Jacinta, like their cousin, were typical, unremarkable Portuguese peasant children, until that summer. Lúcia would later report that that summer, while they were in the fields with the sheep, the children were visited three times by an angel. On the first visit, the angel identified itself as the "Angel of Peace," and the second time as the Guardian Angel of Portugal. The angel was said to have encouraged the children in prayer and devotion.

The children did not mention these visits to anyone else at the time, but the following spring, on May 13, 1917 to be precise, in the same field, the children saw an even more dramatic apparition, described as a "Lady more brilliant than the sun," whom the children took to be the Virgin Mary. In this, what would be her first of six visitations, she is said to have encouraged the children in penance and prayer, and in particular in the saying of the Rosary, and said that these things could help bring about the end of the Great War. It's worth noting here that the first detachments of Portuguese soldiers sent to the Western Front had departed less than a month earlier, so the war was likely a topic in the minds of many Portuguese at this time. The apparition was also said to have told the children they would see her again in one month, on June 13.

Lúcia says she told the other children to keep this experience a secret, but little Jacinta told her family and the story got around. It appears few took it seriously at the time. When June 13 came around, Lúcia's mother asked her parish priest for advice on what to do; the priest told her to allow the child to go to the field on the appointed day and then allow him to talk to her afterward.

In Lúcia's recounting, the Virgin Mary did appear to them again on June 13. Lúcia asked her to take them to Heaven, and the Virgin replied that Francisco and Jacinta would go to Heaven soon, but Lúcia would remain behind.

There would be another apparition on July 13, at which the Virgin is said to have told the children a secret. More about that later. She also told the children that her visits would continue until October, at which time she would perform a miracle.

The stories of these visitations were attracting attention by now, and when August 13 came round, a local administrator ordered the children imprisoned to prevent the meeting. You'll remember that King Manoel had been deposed in 1910, and a secular Republic established, so it would have been natural for a loyal, secular republican-appointed official to suspect that some kind of anti-republican pro-Church chicanery was going on. By Lúcia's account, the children were interrogated, particularly over the secret the Virgin had told them not to tell; they answered all the questions honestly, except for the secret, which they would not divulge even under threat of being boiled in oil.

This imprisonment caused the children to miss their appointment with the Virgin, but she appeared to them anyway, a few days after their release, though apparently she had little new to say on this visit. Lúcia described the September 13 visitation as accompanied by a large number of pilgrims following the children and begging for miraculous cures. Finally came October 13, the date of the promised miracle. It attracted crowds that are supposed to have numbered in the tens of thousands. On that date, the children were supposed to have seen a wide range of visions. The crowd did not, although some witnesses claimed to have seen the sun spin or dance or move about the sky. At least one photographer was present, though his photographs show nothing unusual, other than large numbers of people looking up at the sky.

Two of the three children, the siblings Francisco and Jacinta, died within two years of these events. Francisco died in April 1919 at the age of ten, and Jacinta died in February 1920 at the age of nine. Both of them are reported to have died from complications from the 1918 influenza epidemic. The surviving child, Lúcia, would enter holy orders in 1925, when she reached the age of 18.

We know beyond a doubt that *something* happened in rural Portugal during those months in 1917. There are contemporary Portuguese newspaper accounts of the gathering of believers on October 13, although the crowds appear to number more in the thousands than the tens of thousands. Those newspaper accounts confirm that the children claimed they had seen the Lady on the 13<sup>th</sup> of every month, beginning the previous May.

These events attracted little notice outside of Portugal, initially, but the local people did not forget. Over the next ten years a chapel, then a church, were erected at the site and large numbers of pilgrims would visit. In 1930, following an inquiry, the local bishop declared the apparitions of the Lady "worthy of belief." In 1935, the bodies of the two children, Francisco and Jacinta, were exhumed and reinterred in the basilica built at the site.

At this time, the appearance of the Lady was understood primarily as a message calling on believers to pray the rosary to end the Great War. But by the mid-1930s, Sister Lúcia began

writing various memoirs. When I told you of the Lady's apparitions a few minutes ago, what I told you about them and about the Lady's messages to the children was drawn from Sister Lúcia's memoirs, which were written decades after the events, and notably, decades after the deaths of the only other witnesses. So make of that what you will. The publication of these memoirs brought the events at Fátima to a much wider audience beyond Portugal and attracted the attention particularly of Catholics everywhere.

In one of these memoirs, written in August 1941, she revealed that the secret given to her and the other children on July 13, 1917 was in fact three secrets. The first was a vision of Hell. The second was that the Great War would end, but if people continued to offend God and, in particular, if Russia were not consecrated and converted, there would be a second, even worse, war to follow.

I feel obligated to point out that the Second World War had already begun when this secret was revealed. As for Russia, well, the call of the Virgin for the consecration of Russia is a subject Sister Lúcia had been talking about since the 1920s. The Soviet Union at this time was an explicitly atheist state, hostile to religion, and it is unsurprising that religiously devout people would be alarmed by this state of affairs, but it would have been quite remarkable indeed if an apparition of the Virgin Mary had expressed these concerns in July of 1917, months *before* the October Revolution that put the Bolsheviks in control of Russia and allowed them to institute antireligious policies. And call me a jerk for saying this if you like, but I can't help but think that a warning about impending Bolshevik religious persecution might have been more effective if it had been given in Petrograd rather than to a group of rural peasant children on the opposite end of Europe.

But never mind what I think. After 1935, the appearance of the Virgin came to be understood more as a gesture of heavenly disapproval of the Soviet Union and of communism, rather than the war, and her call for the "consecration of Russia" was interpreted as an implicit prophecy of the Soviet Union's fall.

As for the third secret, Sister Lúcia declined to reveal it. In 1944, in response to a direct order from her bishop, she wrote down the third secret in a letter which she sealed in an envelope with instructions that it could be opened in the year 1960. It was opened and read at the Vatican in that year, but the Church declined to make the contents public, announcing instead that "the Secret would remain forever under absolute seal."

This announcement had exactly the effect you might expect, that is, it attracted more attention than ever to the third secret and provoked widespread speculation for the rest of the twentieth century. In the Cold War 1960s and 1970s, many suggested the secret was a prophecy of nuclear war and widespread death and devastation, which the Church was keeping under wraps so as not to create panic. Later in the century, as the Cold War receded and a more cynical attitude toward

authority figures developed, you began to hear suggestions that the prophecy was about evil and corruption within the Church, or of schism or apostasy.

Finally in the year 2000, the text of Sister Lúcia's letter was released. It describes a procession of a pope and bishops past a city half in ruins and on to a mountaintop, where they are killed by soldiers. Some read this as a prophecy of persecution of the church, culminating in an attack on the Pope, which might be taken to refer to the May 13, 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II. The date of that assassination attempt, by the way, is also the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first appearance of the Lady to the children of Fátima. John Paul II himself credited his survival to the Virgin Mary, and one year later, on the first anniversary of the assassination attempt and the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparition, he traveled to Fátima and placed a bullet fragment from the assassination attempt into the crown of a statue of the Lady.

When the third secret was made public, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and future Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, wrote that "[a] careful reading of the text of the so-called third secret...will probably prove disappointing or surprising after all the speculation it has stirred. No great mystery is revealed; nor is the future unveiled...The purpose of the vision is not to show a film of an irrevocably fixed future. It's meaning is exactly the opposite: it is meant to mobilize the forces of change in the right direction." Personally, I think that's a very sensible way of looking at these things.

The then-Cardinal was quite correct in saying that the text might prove disappointing to some. Suggestions were made that the text revealed was a forgery, or at least not the complete text of the third secret, and accusations of a Vatican cover-up of the "real" third secret are still being made to this day.

The tales of the Lady of Fátima were told and retold for the rest of the twentieth century, and were interpreted and reinterpreted to relate to many of the most important events of the century, from the Great War to the Second World War to the Cold War, to communism, the rise of the first Polish pope, the attempt on his life, and even to scandals in the Church. Miraculous or mundane, it was a story that intertwined with many of the most important events in the history of the twentieth century.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thank you for listening. I'd also like to thank Geleen for making a donation, and thank you, Bryan, for becoming a patron of the podcast. It actually costs a bit of money to keep a podcast going, and I am ever grateful to our donors and patrons for helping to bear these costs and keeping Mrs. History of the Twentieth Century patient with my little hobby. You can also help out by sharing the podcast on Facebook, or Twitter, or wherever it is the kids hang out nowadays. And if you haven't already done it, do leave a rating and review at the iTunes store. This will help other listeners find the podcast, listeners who hopefully will enjoy it as much as you do.

I couldn't do *The History of the Twentieth Century* without the scholarship of a lot of good historians. I've been trying to identify on the website some of the books I use most heavily, though I am way behind on doing that, for which I apologize to my listeners and to those historians. I promise I will try to get caught up on posting more and better information about my sources. Most of them are pretty well known in the scholarship of the early twentieth century, so I don't imagine anyone would be *too* surprised to find out what books I rely on, but when I do find a resource that is particularly useful or obscure, I feel an obligation to name it on the show. Today, I want to acknowledge that one of my sources on the evangelist Billy Sunday was "Billy Sunday and the Masculinization of American Protestantism," the master's thesis of A. Cyrus Hayat—I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly—at Indiana University. So Cyrus, if you're listening, thank you.

And I hope Cyrus and all of you will join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we return to the topic of the war, and investigate the situation in the Near East as the British government issues the Balfour Declaration. That's next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. Sister Lúcia lived through all the events I recounted in today's episode. She survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, passing away on February 13, 2005 at the age of 97. Her death was marked with a day of national mourning in Portugal. On February 13, 2017, the thirteenth anniversary of her death, Lúcia was given the title "Servant of God," the first step on the path to canonization. The other two children, Francisco and Jacinta, were canonized on May 13, 2017, which was the one hundredth anniversary of the first apparition. This includes them among the youngest persons ever canonized.

[music: Closing War Theme]