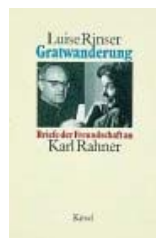


Karl Rahner's Girlfriend

by John Vennari

Father Karl Rahner, the progressivist Jesuit who "set the direction for the Second Vatican Council,"¹ carried on a secret 22-year "romance" with German writer Luise Rinser.

This revelation came to light in 1994 when Rinser published her autobiography which contained her half of the correspondence between herself and Rahner, a correspondence that lasted from 1962 to Rahner's death in 1984. The book was entitled *Gratwanderung*, loosely translated as "a walk on the edge". Published in Germany, it has not yet been translated into English.



The Jesuits have never denied the truth of the Rinser-Rahner relationship, but refused to allow Rinser to publish the letters Rahner sent to her, claiming that Rahner's letters are the property of the Jesuits, not Rinser.

The subject of Rahner's bizarre romance received little press in the English-speaking world. England's *Tablet* published a brief 1995 report about Rinser's book. The *National Catholic Reporter* ran a story about it in late 1997, which was not the result of NCR's own investigative reporting, but spotlighted the work of Pamela Kirk, Associate Professor at Saint John's University in Jamaica, New York, who is described as a Rahner specialist.

Luise Rinser's writings fascinated Kirk, who published two academic papers² on the German author: "Luise Rinser's Celebration and Suffering" in *Theology and the New Histories*;³ and "Reflections on Luise Rinser's *Gratwanderung*" in *Philosophy and Theology: Marquette University Journal*.⁴

Kirk writes, "Rinser (b. 1911) was first brought to my attention in 1995 because of the publications of her letters to Karl Rahner, which revealed Rahner's passionate attachment to her."⁵

None of this received any mention at a recent conference at Rome's Lateran University that celebrated Rahner's Centenary. The Congress was attended by Vatican dignitaries who praised Rahner's vagaries as "orthodoxy".

"My Fish, Truly Beloved"

Luise Rinser, who died two years ago, met Rahner in 1962 when she was a widow and two-time divorcee. She initially wrote to Rahner to consult him on a theological matter for an essay she was working on. Rinser visited Rahner at Innsbruck early in 1962, and afterward "their theological exchange became suddenly more personal".⁶

At this time, when Rahner was being praised by the liberal Cardinal Frings as the "greatest theologian of the 20th Century,"⁷ and as he was becoming the prime progressive theologian of Vatican II, he began the heavy correspondence with Rinser, sometimes writing to her 3 to 4 times a day.⁸ In all, Rahner would write her more than 2200 letters, 758 of them written from 1962 to 1965, the years of the Second Vatican Council, while he was steering the Church into its brave new future.

According to Rinser, theirs was a non-physical romance. Rahner said that he wanted to be "faithful" to his vow of celibacy, but this did not prevent his kneeling before her in a protestation of love. Rinser speaks of the incident in a letter to him dated August 12, 1962. "My fish, truly beloved," she writes, "I cannot express how shaken I was as you knelt before me. You were kneeling before the Love that you are experiencing and before which I also kneel in amazement, in reverence, with trembling and with an exultation that I hardly dare to allow myself to feel. We are both touched in the innermost part of our being by something that is much stronger than we anticipated."⁹

Rinser and the Jesuit priest employed pet names for each other. Rahner called her *Wuschel*, the German rendering for the Woozel character in A.A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh* (a nickname first given to Rinser by her two sons). She called him "my beloved *Fish*," a reminder of the ancient Christian symbol, and a nod to his Zodiac sign of Pisces.

Curiouser and Curiouser

The story becomes more bizarre when we learn that Rinser and Rahner were two parts of a love triangle that also involved an unnamed Benedictine Abbot referred to as "M.A.". All three were at Vatican II. Rahner was the liberal theologian directing the Council's course; Abbot "M.A." was a voting member at the Council and an expert on Eastern Orthodoxy; Rinser covered the Council as a correspondent for the German newspaper, *Die Welt am Sonntag*.

Rinser's letters reveal Rahner as impatient and jealous that Rinser favored the Abbot over him. In a 1964 letter, alluding to a situation that seems too pathetic to be real, Rinser addresses Rahner's jealousy: "I have M.A. and you. You shouldn't say, write or think that you have to be afraid of the one person ... You are part of the very fabric of my life."¹⁰

NCR's Pamela Schaeffer wrote, "As the relationship progressed, Rahner was petulant, reproachful, wanting greater loyalty from Rinser, who warned him that another man, a Benedictine abbot and her spiritual director, took priority over Rahner in her affections. All three parties to this apparently celibate love triangle — Rinser, Rahner and 'M.A.', as she refers to the abbot — connected at Rinser's second home near Rome during the Second Vatican Council."¹¹

Rinser's letters go on to indicate that Rahner was miffed because "M.A." had been the one to bless her house near Rome and had celebrated Mass in her chapel. Rahner also celebrated Mass at her home, but his jealousy burned nonetheless because Rinser attended the abbot's daily Mass during the Council years. In order to make his presence more manifest in her life, Rahner would show up at her house unexpectedly, sometimes very early in the morning. The word obsession springs to mind: not exactly a model of what Saint Ignatius intended a Jesuit to be. Rinser says in her autobiography that Rahner increasingly wrote of his despairing love.¹²

Pamela Kirk, who does not necessarily reprove Rahner for his illicit affections, writes "Compared to Rahner's very frequent letters to her, Rinser's average of two or three letters a week are the cause of one of his most frequent reproaches: she doesn't answer his letters. She has to keep reassuring him. She does pay attention to his letters. She tries to set aside time to answer them, but sometimes she is involved in building a house, she has guests coming, she has to cook, go grocery shopping, do a lot of things he doesn't have to do, in addition to her writing in order to make a living. Rahner's repeated accusations of her neglect of him, her betrayal of the early phase of their friendship are nearly overwhelming. He rebukes her for not taking him seriously enough as a thinker. She doesn't read what he sends her. She doesn't really care for him. She ought to care for him. These reproaches force Rinser repeatedly to renew her commitment to the abbot, a man who refuses to acknowledge that he once said he loved her ..."¹³

Despite Rahner's reproaches, Rinser tells him that the Abbot still has the first place in her heart, even though "M.A." appears cool and distant. She tells the love-sick Jesuit that after the Abbot and her two sons, Rahner is the main man of her life. Rahner is not satisfied, as he wants Rinser's exclusive affection.¹⁴

These petty jealousies are what swirled in the mind of Karl Rahner at the same time that he set the course for the Second Vatican Council.

A "Divine Experiment"?

Rahner wrote Rinser 2,203 letters that were both theological and personal. According to Kirk, he wrote her 110 letters in 1962, 123 in 1963, 276 in 1964, 249 in 1965, 222 in 1966, along with sending her the diary of his U.S. trip. Rahner wrote her 252 letters in 1967, and more than a hundred letters per year from 1968 to 1970. The correspondence started to slacken in 1971 when he sent her 75 letters and 50 in 1972 (beginning in the 70s, they communicated more frequently by telephone). From then until Rahner's death in 1984, he sent her about 3 to 15 per year.¹⁵

Rinser writes of her relationship with Rahner, "We were both clearly aware of the implications of a relationship which became gradually closer, a spiritual pilgrimage along a rocky mountain edge" — the *Gratwunderung*, as she called her book — "We did not see it as a lurid tasting of forbidden fruit but as a divine experiment, being wholly man and wholly woman, flesh and blood, and yet intent to live in a spiritual way."¹⁶

Few Catholics would call a Catholic priest's open protestations of love to a woman a "divine experiment". Imagine a wife who learns her husband writes love-letters to another woman, calls her by a pet-name, and kneels before this woman in a pageantry of affection. The wife further learns of her husband's jealousy that the woman prefers another married man to him. She learns that her husband shows up at the woman's house in the early morning hours. Would the wife simply wink at her husband's oddities as a "divine experiment"? Far from it. She would recognize it for what it is: an infidelity that reeks of the underworld, whether the "experiment" is physical or not.

Yet a priest's shower of affection for a woman is worse than a husband making cooing noises to anyone but his wife,

since the priest is consecrated to God Whom he is commanded to love and serve “with all his heart, all his mind, all his soul, all his strength.” In the masterful work *The Priest, The Man Of God, His Dignity and Duties*, Saint Joseph Cafasso does not mince words about the danger – and scandal – of a priest becoming familiar with a woman.

“I shall not stop to quote,” writes the Saint, “the many passages from Scripture and from the Doctors of the Church telling priests to be on their guard against visiting women and remaining in their company. They all cry out, threaten and grieve over the inevitable ruin of the priest who is not on his guard. It is useless for him to put forth pretexts of relationship, suitability, urbanity, good motives, honest intentions, blameless life, irreprehensible conduct, not even the shadow of danger. No one will listen to such excuses, and people will just repeat: woe to the priest who trusts himself to them, who does not seek safety in flight; he is lost.”¹⁷

“God” says another writer, “has always demanded a higher degree of chastity and continence of His priests than of other persons not having been selected for His special service.”¹⁸ Saint Joseph Cafasso thunders against the type of transgressions that “the greatest theologian of the 20th Century” exhibited. It should be noted that the Saint’s condemnations encompass the “non-physical” hankerings indulged in by Rahner:

“... that a priest trained in the school of the Divine Master, modeled after Him, a man separated from the rest and distinct, who should have nothing to do with this world, a man destined to represent the Divinity upon earth, that this man, I say, should lower himself, debase himself, so cover himself with the mire of the world as to look after a woman, think on a woman, visit her frequently, become familiar with her, is such an ignominy, such an opprobrium that I say frankly that I can find no words to express myself, and if I could, I would not have the heart to use them. Let these people, therefore, be kept as far away from our person as possible.”¹⁹

Yet Karl Rahner broke so many of the rules of Catholic theology, caused so much damage in the Catholic world, that it is no surprise if his personal life was also a walk on the wild side.

“My Way” Religion

Rahner and Rinser certainly had one point in common: they were both “religious” individuals who approached God on their own terms.

Born in 1911 in Germany, Rinser grew up a Bavarian Catholic. In the 1930s, she married Conductor Horst- Günther Schnell. The couple were anti-Nazi, which is admirable. Rinser had two sons by Schnell, but Schnell was drafted in the autumn of 1942 and was dead by Christmas the same year.²⁰ Rinser herself then ran into trouble when she wrote *The Glass Ring*, a novel with an implicit anti-war tone. She was arrested in 1944.

While in prison she drafted her prison diaries, writing on any scraps she could find, including bathroom tissue and edges of newspaper. Sentenced to execution for high treason (undermining morale in the war effort), she was rescued by the Allies in 1945. Her prison diaries were published a year later.

In 1943, before her arrest, she married the author Klaus, who was a homosexual and a Communist. She did this to save him from the Nazis, who would have executed him because he was both red and lavender, a crime on both counts in the Third Reich. The marriage would “mitigate the suspicion of his homosexuality and allow him to be registered in Bavaria where he was less known.”²¹ These “nuptials” apparently ended in divorce, as she subsequently married composer Karl Orff in 1954. Five years later, this too ended in divorce.

By 1962, she was involved with Father Rahner and Abbot “M.A.,” and corresponded with Rahner until his death on March 30, 1984 (Kirk said the couple spoke by phone just hours before Rahner’s death).²² As of 1994, Rinser was keeping up some sort of relationship with Abbot “M.A.”²³ She died on March 17, 2002.

Rinser was a recognized author in Germany, publishing more than 30 novels, four memoirs and an autobiography. Some of her titles made the best-selling list in her native country and many of her works were translated into various languages. She was also well known for her leftist leanings, both politically and religiously.



Luise Rinswer with North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung

The German-American Institute eulogized her as “a feminist, an environmentalist, and a protestor against atomic weapons”. Though she claimed to be “deeply rooted in Catholicism in her heart,” she indicated many times that she “lived a blend of Christianity and Eastern religions, seeking a universal harmony”. An admirer of Teilhard de Chardin, “she crafted a universal world view of her own in her blending of Buddhism and Christianity.”²⁴

The *London Times* wrote of Rinswer at her death, “She remained a practicing Roman Catholic to the end of her days, but campaigned for abortion and against celibacy, as well as against the power of the priesthood. In spite of that, she counted among her personal friends Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger ... She stood for the German Presidency in 1984 at the age of 73, as the Green Party’s candidate ... and campaigned in the West for the North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung.”²⁵

Rahner the Radical

Karl Rahner himself showed a similar maverick strain. Remaining “deeply rooted” in his own version of Catholicism, he undermined perennial Catholic truth at every turn. Unlike the great Father Denis Fahey, whose motto was “the world must conform to Our Lord, not He to it,” Rahner’s motto was effectively, “Our Lord must conform to the world, not it to Him.”



Two progressivist shirt-and-tie priests at Vatican II. Father Joseph Ratzinger (R) was a co-worker with Father Karl Rahner (L) at the Council

Rahner’s influence was enormous. He satisfied a modern world, and modern churchmen, whose ears were itching for doctrinal compromises under the pretext of “enlightenment”.²⁶

Rahner was one of the leaders of the New Theology, which held that religion must change with the times. Father David Greenstock in 1950 warned against this madness, and exposed the movement’s subversive methods. “The main contention of the partisans of this new movement,” wrote Greenstock, “is that theology, to remain alive, must move with the times. At the same time, they are very careful to repeat all the fundamental propositions of traditional theology, almost as if there was no intention of any attack against it. This is very true of such writers as Fathers de Lubac, Daniélou, Rahner, ... All of whom are undoubtedly at the very center of this movement.”²⁷

Rahner, along with other progressivist theologians such as Fathers Congar, de Lubac, and Chenu were rightly deemed “suspect of heresy” under Pius XII’s Holy Office, and were forbidden to write on various topics. Pope John XXIII, “whom the progressives believed to favor their cause,”²⁸ invited these theological hippies to become expert advisors at Vatican II, thus “rehabilitating” them, even though they never corrected their heterodox teachings.²⁹ These were the progressivists who gained control of Vatican II, where Rahner’s influence was supreme. Father Ralph Wiltgen in *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber* illustrates Rahner’s impact:

“Since the position of the German-language bishops was regularly adopted by the European alliance, and since the alliance position was generally adopted by the Council, a single theologian might have his views accepted by the whole Council if they had been accepted by the German-speaking bishops. There was such a theologian: Father Karl Rahner, S.J.”³⁰

Bishop Aloysius J. Wycislo (a rhapsodic advocate of the Vatican II revolution) spoke of theologians such as Rahner who had been “under a cloud” for years. These men “surfaced as *periti* (theological experts advising the bishops at the Council), and their post-Vatican II books and commentaries became popular reading.”³¹ Wycislo further praises Rahner as one of the “leading lights” of post-Vatican II theology.³²

Johann Baptist Metz, Rahner’s student and friend, wrote that by the time Rahner died, “he had become probably the most influential and important Catholic thinker of his day.”³³ A priest from the southwestern U.S. said that of his 1970s seminary training, “Everything was Rahner; Rahner was in; Aquinas was out.”³⁴ Metz said elsewhere, “Karl Rahner has renewed the face of our theology. Nothing is quite as it was before.”³⁵

“Rahner Fever” had struck indeed. The Church worldwide remains gripped in the epidemic.

Rahner: The One-Man Disaster Area

Karl Rahner "originated a new religious category, 'Anonymous Christianity,' saying it embraced Buddhists, various other non-Christians and even atheists who are conscientious, upright and caring."³⁶ "Some kind of faith in God is basically there, whether they know it or not," said Rahner. "They are a part of a "Christianity that does not call itself Christianity ... 'pagans' who have received grace, but who are not aware of it."³⁷

This heterodox concept, which defies the thrice defined infallible dogma that "outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation"³⁸ is what made Vatican II's pan-religious ecumenism possible. The "Spirit of Assisi" rests upon it.³⁹ The modernist Father Jacques Dupuis relies heavily on Rahner to advance the false notion that all members of all religions are equal members in the "Reign of God".⁴⁰ The *Dictionary of Modern Western Theology* acknowledges, "The council's openness to other religious traditions can be linked to Rahner's notions of the renovation of the church, God's universal salvific revelation and his desire to support and encourage the ecumenical movement."⁴¹

Indeed, Rahner was a "single theologian" who had his "views accepted by the whole Council" with catastrophic results. The gale force from Vatican II that uprooted dogma, dislodged morals, blew apart revered Catholic customs, destroyed Catholic landscapes, swept away Catholic landmarks, and toppled the entire Catholic edifice, could rightly be called "Hurricane Karl".

Father Karl Rahner also

- * implicitly denied original sin,
- * confused the natural and supernatural orders,⁴²
- * supported "a broader role for the laity and for women in the Church,"
- * had major input in the Council document *Lumen Gentium* which stated that the Church of Christ "subsists" in the Catholic Church: meant to imply, contrary to Catholic teaching, that the Church of Christ is bigger than the Catholic Church and somehow includes other "Christian" denominations.

This last point was driven home in Rahner's last book *Unity of the Churches: an Actual Possibility*, co-authored with fellow theologian Heinrich Fries. The book proposes that Catholics and Protestants agree on enough fundamental concepts to unite into one "Church," provided that all participating bodies accept the Creeds up until the 4th Century.

In other words, Protestants who reject the solemn teaching of the Council of Trent, Papal Infallibility, and any Catholic dogma promulgated since the 4th Century, should unite with Catholics in this super-church in which their ministers will share pulpits. The book also lays the ground work for inter-communion. The Pope would still be the head of this new construct but only in the capacity as a "sign of unity" rather than as a ruler with autonomous, God-given authority. The pope would only pronounce dogmas *ex cathedra* that had achieved the consensus of the "churches within the Church"⁴³.

"Catholic Down to His Toes"?

Yet none of this stopped Vatican dignitaries from celebrating the Centenary of Karl Rahner on March 4-5, 2004 in Rome, and from pronouncing the Jesuit's unwholesome writings as safe for consumption.

The high profile conference held at the Lateran University boasted participants including Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples; Archbishop Angelo Amato, secretary of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (under Cardinal Ratzinger); Bishop Rino Fisichella, rector of the Lateran; Jesuit Fr. John Michael McDermott of the Josephinum in Ohio; and Jesuit Fr. Luis Ladaria of the Gregorian University.

The conference concluded that Karl Rahner was an orthodox Catholic. The *National Catholic Reporter's* John Allen, a weekly voice of progressivism, gloated, "for all those who fear the influence of right-wing extremists on Catholic officialdom, it might be some comfort that the VIP speakers at the Lateran came to praise Rahner rather than to bury him."⁴⁴

Archbishop Amato from the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said, "Notwithstanding some ambiguous formulae, Rahner was an orthodox Catholic theologian." Father McDermott said the controversial Jesuit has been "misinterpreted," but that Rahner was "Catholic down to his toes".⁴⁵

Yet the first person who would contest the claim that Rahner was “Catholic down to his toes” would be the late Cardinal Joseph Siri of Genoa. In his 1981 book *Gethsemane: Reflections on the Contemporary Theological Movement*, the Cardinal unmasked as unorthodox three “sacred cows” of the post-Conciliar period: Henri de Lubac, Jacques Maritain and Karl Rahner. The bulk of the Cardinal’s criticism, in fact, landed on Rahner.

For example, Cardinal Siri points out that Rahner effectively claimed that the heretical Protestant notion of “The Bible Alone” is just as valid a tradition as the true Catholic teaching that the two sources of Revelation are both Sacred Scripture *and* Sacred Tradition. Rahner says:

“In view of the experience of the faith and theology of our reformed brothers, it is our duty to take as seriously as possible the Protestant principle of Scripture alone, because that implies an authentic religious experience and in my opinion, *an equally authentic theological tradition* which goes back to Catholicism of the past.”⁴⁶

Quoting this and similar statements, Cardinal Siri concludes that Rahner effectively undermines the Catholic teaching on Sacred Tradition. Cardinal Siri laments that:

“To maintain (as Rahner does, *Ed.*) ... on the one hand that ‘Scripture is virtually the only material source of the faith’, and on the other hand, that ‘tradition is not excluded’,⁴⁷ is equivalent to denying Tradition its fundamental characteristic as original channel (source) of Revelation.”⁴⁸

Cardinal Siri goes on at length to explain that Karl Rahner confuses the notion of the natural and supernatural orders, attempts to “demythologize” (i.e. undermines) Catholic truth, introduces the heterodox notion of the “anonymous Christian,” and effectively denies original sin.

This denial of original sin surfaces in various ways, without Rahner stating it explicitly. In this connection, Cardinal Siri spotlights Rahner’s treatment of Our Lady’s Immaculate Conception.

Doctrinal Subversion

Cardinal Siri explains that in 1953, Rahner cited the Definition of Pius IX, and seemed to accept its infallibility.⁴⁹ Here, Rahner recognized that Our Lady was preserved from original sin of which every man carries the stain in coming into the world. Rahner’s acceptance of this dogma, says Siri, “is enveloped in a multitude of considerations concerning the common destiny of man; and this with uncertain and sometimes very contradictory nuances, which attenuates the character of doctrinal certainty. But in any case he seems to admit in these texts, the doctrine of original sin and the preservation of the Blessed Virgin from the stain of original sin.” By 1970, however, in his *Theological Meditations on Mary*, Rahner writes:

“The dogma (of the immaculate conception) [sic] **does not mean in any way that the birth of a being is accompanied by something contaminating, by a stain, and that in order to avoid it Mary must have had a privilege.** — The immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin therefore consists simply in the possession, from the beginning of her existence, of the life of divine grace, which was given to her. — From the beginning of her existence Mary was enveloped in the redeeming and sanctifying love of God. Such is, in all its simplicity, the content of the doctrine that Pius IX solemnly defined as a truth of the Catholic faith, in the year 1854.”⁵⁰

However, the definition of the dogma in *Ineffabilis Deus* says clearly and repeatedly that the Most Holy Virgin was preserved from all stain of original sin. The text reads:

“We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine is revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful, which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of Her conception was, by a unique grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Savior of the human race, *preserved from all stain of original sin.*”⁵¹

Cardinal Siri goes on to show the fallacy of Rahner’s teaching: “... if man at his birth” says the Cardinal, “is not accompanied by a stain, of what stain does the Bull of Pius IX speak? How can one claim, as Rahner does, that there was not any stain to avoid and that Mary did not need a privilege?”⁵²

In short, this is nothing more than Rahner’s implicit denial of original sin. It also undermines the infallibility of Papal pronouncements, since Rahner’s words clearly contradict Pius IX’s solemn definition.

Catholic down to his toes?

How many thousands of Catholic college students, who at a crucial juncture of their lives, have had their faith

destroyed or dismantled by reading Rahner in theology courses? Rahner does not confirm the faith of his brethren, rather, through the introduction of doubt and confusion, he pulls the Catholic rug from under his reader.⁵³

Rahner also undermined the doctrine of the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Herbert Vorgimler, a disciple of Rahner, relates, "In 1960 Rahner had written an article in which he had questioned the Catholic doctrine of the *virginitas in partu*, the doctrine that Mary had remained a virgin perpetually after the birth of Jesus." This article, says Vorgimler, caused serious disturbance in Roman circles.

According to Vorgimler, Rahner "attempted to interpret this doctrine ... in his 'typical' manner. He sought the 'nucleus' of the statement ... Now the invention of all the ancient writers who had said anything about the virginity of Mary was certainly not to express the biological or anatomical aspects ... He came up with a religious and theological content; a person is virgin who is wholly oriented on the fulfillment of the will of God, who is 'at God's disposal.' Of course in this deeper sense, married people, too, can be virgin..."⁵⁴

Here Rahner, as in his other writings, plays with fire. The Lateran Council of 649 taught clearly, "If anyone refuses to confess, in accordance with the holy Fathers, that Mary was properly speaking and of a truth the Holy Mother of God and always an Immaculate Virgin ... That She conceived of the Holy Ghost without seed and gave birth without corruption, Her virginity remaining inviolate also after parturition, let him be anathema."⁵⁵

Incidentally, Rahner's redefining of "virginity" in order to undermine Catholic dogma reminds one of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's "redefinition" of the Immaculate Heart in his document that accompanied the "release" of the Third Secret. Here Ratzinger defines "immaculate heart" (lower case "i," lower case "h" in Ratzinger's document) as *any* heart that says "yes" to God.⁵⁶ This downsizing of Marian devotion was not lost on the *Los Angeles Times*, who observed that Ratzinger "gently debunked the Fatima cult".⁵⁷ It seems that Ratzinger learned well from Karl Rahner, as the two of them worked closely at Vatican II. The technique is simple: do not deny a doctrine openly. Rather, keep the existing terminology, but *redefine* it. No wonder Rahner's "orthodoxy" is now celebrated in post-Conciliar Rome.

Rahner's undermining of Marian doctrine demonstrates that he loved the wrong lady. Rather than truly devote himself to Our Lady and Holy Mother Church, he divided his heart between his own rendering of Catholicism, and Luise Rinser, a woman for whom he pined in forbidden love and petty jealousy.

A Walk on the Edge

The publication of Rinser's book received some initial publicity in Germany where it received both scorn and praise. One writer criticized her "perhaps unconscious intellectual-spiritual vanity". Another called Rinser a "priest-hunting lioness". On the other side, Paul Konrad Kunz in *Frankfurter Ellgmiener Zeitung* praised the book as "the most moving human happening in German Catholicism in the second half of the 20th Century." Another reviewer honored it as a "frank, but never exhibitionist testimony of a relationship of which neither of these people should be ashamed ..." ⁵⁸

Right-thinking Catholics would disagree with this last statement, for there is nothing honorable about a Catholic priest – worse, a Jesuit lauded as the "greatest theologian of the 20th Century" – hovering like a love-dove around a two-time divorcee, demanding her affections, and bombarding her with over 2,000 letters. The fact that the Jesuits refuse to allow Rahner's letters to Rinser to be published only deepens the impression that there is something squalid to suspect.

It is no surprise that Rahner's obsession with Rinser receives little worldwide press, especially in the English-speaking world.⁵⁹ Nor is it a mystery why Rahner's Order is adamant that his love letters to Rinser never see the light of day in publication. The last thing today's Jesuits want is to have their prize revolutionary exposed for what he really was: a weirdo who nursed an adolescent fixation on a pro-abortion feminist; a freak who should neither be admired nor imitated.

Yet in the "New Springtime" of Vatican II, where Catholics faithful to Tradition are treated as spiritual lepers, Karl Rahner remains one of the star-studded "heroes" whom our post-Conciliar shepherds fawn over, celebrate and set loose upon the flock.

Notes:

1. "Karl Rahner's Secret 22-Year Romance," Pamela Schaeffer, *National Catholic Report*, December 19, 1997.

2. These papers were not yet published when *NCR* wrote its story, nor were their titles given.
3. *Theology and NewHistories*, The Annual Publication of the College Theological Society, Volume 44, Gary Macy, Editor, (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1998).
4. *Philosophy and Theology: Marquette University Journal*, 1996, Vol. 10.
5. "Luise Rinser's Celebration and Suffering," Kirk, *Theology and NewHistories*, p. 188.
6. "A Walk on the Edge," Roland Hill, *The Tablet*, September 9, 1995.
7. *The Rhine Flows Into the Tiber*, Ralph Wiltgen, (Rockford: Tan, 1985), p. 80.
8. "Karl Rahner's Secret 22-Year Romance," *National Catholic Reporter*.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. "Reflections on Luise Rinser's *Gratwanderung*," Kirk, p. 298.
14. Ibid.
15. *National Catholic Reporter*, December 19, 1997.
16. *The Tablet*
17. *The Priest, The Man of God, His Dignity and Duty*, Saint Joseph Cafasso [1811-1860] (Rockford: Tan, 1979), p. 132. The entire section of this book "The Company of Women" is well worth reading. St. Joseph Cafasso goes on to say, "Women and priests have to be as distant from each other as two opposite poles, if not in actual distance apart, at least in heart and will. Let women come to the church, to the confessional, if they have need of a priest; let them meet outside these places, if it is necessary; but let it be as rarely as possible and with proper precaution; for the rest, let them keep their own places and look after their own business; and when a necessity to speak occurs let the priest remember: *Sermo brevis cum mulieribus et rigidus est habendus*, and as Saint Bonaventure says: "*let thy conversation be dignified and serious*". St. Joseph Cafasso goes on to say, "The houses of women are not made for priests. 'Let him go and say his Breviary, this is not the place for him,' was said by a lady about a priest who wanted to prolong his visit." pp. 132-3.
18. *Guidance of Religious*, Father Ignaz Watterott, OMI, (St. Louise, Herder, 1950), p. 332.
19. *The Priest, The Man of God, His Dignity and Duties*, Cafasso, pp. 133-4.
20. In her article in *Theology and NewHistories*, Kirk writes that Schnell was dead by Christmas, 1942 (p. 142). In her piece published in *Philosophy and Theology*, Kirk places Schnell's death in 1943. (p. 295).
21. "Revealing Resistance: Luise Rinsers Celebration of Life and Suffering," Pamela Kirk, *Theology and NewHistories*, p. 193. This essay spotlights Luise Rinser's resistance to Nazism.
22. "Reflections on Luise Rinser's *Gratwanderung*," Kirk, *Philosophy and Theology: Marquette University Journal*, p. 293.
23. *National Catholic Reporter*, Dec. 19, 1997.
24. "One of the Great Story-tellers: Luise Rinser," Paul A. Schons, Published by the German-American Institute, November, 2002.
25. "Luise Rinser," *The London Times*, April 17, 2002.
26. And when doctrine collapses, morals fall with it, as doctrine is the foundation on which moral teaching is based.
27. "Thomism and the New Theology," Father David Greenstock, *The Thomist* (October, 1950). The entire article is well worth reading if one wishes to grasp the erroneous nature of the New Theology.
28. Vicomte Leon de Poncis, *Freemasonry and the Vatican* (Palmdale, CA: Christian Book Club, 1968), p. 14.
29. This story is laid out in "A Model of Papal Authority, Saint Pius X," John Vennari (*Catholic Family News*, August & September, 2003). Section II spotlights the fact that Pope Saint Pius X's effective anti-modernist measures were weakened by John XXIII and subsequently discarded by Paul VI. This collapse in discipline led to the breakdown of doctrinal and moral teaching in the Church, since purveyors of unsound doctrine were not only free to teach, but even encouraged. (The articles are now published in a single booklet form for \$6.00 post-paid from Olyn Library Services, 2316 Delaware Ave., PMB 325, Buffalo, NY 14216).
30. *The Rhine Flows Into the Tiber*, Father Ralph Wiltgen, (Rockford: Tan Books, 1985), p. 80.
31. Most Reverend Aloysius S.J. Wycislo, *Vatican II Revisited, Reflections By One Who Was There*, Alba House, Staten Island, New York, 1987, p. x.
32. Ibid. See pp. 28-34.
33. Quoted from *A Critical Examination of The Theology of Karl Rahner, S.J.*, Robert McCarthy, (Buchanan Dam: Carthay Ventures, 2001) pp. 1-2.
34. Ibid., p. 2.
35. Ibid., p. 3.
36. "God's Twentieth Century Giants," George Cornell, *Associated Press*, December 22, 1988.
37. Quoted from Ibid.
38. The most forceful and explicit definition of "outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation" was pronounced *de fide* from the Council of Florence: "The Most Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches that none of those existing outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews, heretics, and schismatics can ever be partakers of eternal life, but that they are to go into the eternal fire 'which was prepared for the devil and his angels,' (Mt. 25:41) unless before death they are joined with Her; and that so important is the unity of this Ecclesiastical Body, that only those remaining within this unity can profit from the sacraments of the Church unto salvation, and that they alone can receive an eternal recompense for their fasts, almsdeeds, and other works of Christian piety and duties of a Christian soldier. No one, let his almsgiving be as great as it may, no one, even if he pour out his blood for the Name of Christ, can be saved unless they abide within the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church." (Pope Eugene IV, Council of Florence, Feb. 4, 1442).
39. Professor Howard Kasimow writes, "To my knowledge, the Pope has never used the term 'anonymous Christian'. Yet John Paul's position on this issue seems to be similar to that of Karl Rahner," *Pope*

John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue, (Maryknoll: Orbis, March 1999), p. 7.

40. The Jesuit Father Jacques Dupuis takes ecumenism to the next logical step claiming that members of all religions are part of the Reign of God. This was the topic of the speech he gave at Fatima in October, 2003. Dupuis said that he based his new theology on that of Karl Rahner. Dupuis also openly denounced the Council of Florence as a "horrible text". I attended this Congress at Fatima and wrote subsequent reports about it. See "Fatima to Become an Interfaith Shrine? An Account from One Who Was There by J. Vennari, *Catholic Family News*, Dec., 2003. Also available on the web at <http://www.fatima.org/sprep111303.htm>. This new pan-religious concept, based on Rahner's theology, is also covered in Dupuis' books, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 1997, and *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, 2003.

41. *Dictionary of Modern Western Theology* (from the web through <http://people.bu.edu>)

42. These first two points, and other flaws in Rahner's theology, are dealt with succinctly and in an easy-to-understand manner for the layman in Robert McCarthy's noteworthy book, *A Critical Examination of The Theology of Karl Rahner*, S.J. This book also summarizes Rahner's impact on the post-Conciliar Church, manifest in the Protestantized New Mass as well as the upsurge of "lay ministries" carrying out priestly duties. Rahner's confusion of natural and supernatural, and the denial of original sin are too complex to cover here. These points are dealt with at greater length and on a more complete theological level in Cardinal Siri's superb book, *Gethsemane*, discussed later.

43. See *Unity of the Churches, An Actual Possibility*, Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner, (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1983). The book is a commentary on eight theses for "Church Unity". According to *U.S. News and World Report*, an editorial in a late February 1985 edition of the Vatican's *L'Osservatore Romano* attacked the Fries-Rahner book for its "grave errors". See "Church Unity Scores Some Quiet Gains," *U.S. News and World Report*, Joseph Carey, April 8, 1985.

44. "The Word from Rome," John Allen, *National Catholic Reporter*, March 12, 2004.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Sacra Scrittura e Tradizione*, in *Nuovi Saggi I*, Ed. Paoline, Rome 1968, p. 192). (emphasis added) Quoted from Cardinal Siri's *Gethsemane* p. 33.

47. Karl Rahner says, "For theology, Scripture is practically the only material source of the faith, to which it must refer as to the source clearly original, not derived and 'orma non mormata'. With that, we are not excluding the tradition of theology." (Rahner, *Sacra Scrittura e Tradizione*, in *Nuovi Saggi I*, p. 168). (Emphasis added.) Quoted from *Gethsemane*, Cardinal Joseph Siri, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981) p. 33.

48. *Gethsemane*, Cardinal Joseph Siri, *Ibid.*

49. K. Rahner, *L'Immacolata Concezione*, and *Il dogma dell'immacolata e la nostra pieta*, in *Saggi d Cristologia e di Mariologia*, ed. Paoline, 2nd ed., Roma 1967, p. 413 and ff. Quoted from *Gethsemane*, p. 87.

50. K. Rahner, *Maria Mediazioni*, Herder-Morcelliana, Brescia, 1970, 3rd ed. (1st edition, 1968), p. 50. Quoted from *Gethsemane*, p. 88.

51. *Denzinger*, 1641. Emphasis added

52. *Gethsemane*, p. 89.

53. I personally know two people who entered college full of good will, and whose Catholic faith suffered as a result of being forced to study Rahner (and Teilhard) at a Jesuit University. One left the Church altogether, and returned to the traditional (non- Rahnerized) Catholic Faith many years later. The other rescued her faith by trashing her Rahner books and reading the lives of the Saints, who were walking catechisms of Catholic truth.

54. Herbert Vogrmler, preface to *Understanding Karl Rahner*, (New York: Crossroads, 1986), p. 91. Quoted from *A Critical Examination of The Theology of Karl Rahner*, McCarthy, pp. 39-40.

55. Cited from *Mariology*, (Volume IV of *Dogmatic Theology*, a 12 Volume set) by Pohle-Preuss, (St. Louis: Herder, 1953), p. 97.

56. Ratzinger said in the June 26, 2000 document "The Message of Fatima" that accompanied the release of the Vision of the Third Secret: "To reach this goal, [salvation] the way indicated — surprisingly for people from the Anglo- Saxon and German cultural world — is devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. A brief comment may suffice to explain this. In biblical language, the 'heart' indicates the center of human life, the point where reason, will, temperament and sensitivity converge, where the person, finds his unity and his interior orientation. According to Matthew 5:8 the 'immaculate heart' is a heart which, with God's grace, has come to perfect interior unity and therefore 'sees God'. To be 'devoted' to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means therefore to embrace this attitude of heart, which makes the fiat — "your will be done" — the defining center of one's whole life." [p. 24].

57. Referring to Ratzinger, the paper said, "The Vatican's top theologian gently debunked the Fatima cult". "Catholic Church Unveils 'Third Secret of Fatima'," *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 2000.

58. All quotations and references of German reviews are from *The Tablet*, September 8, 1995.

59. The *National Catholic Reporter* said there was concern that Rahner's letters "would provide grist for Rahner's conservative "theological adversaries". England's *Tablet* was more explicit, quoting one reviewer who said, "there are many, in Rome and elsewhere, for whom Rahner has always been too liberal and humane ... Now at least he provides them with ammunition which in the Church always has the desired explosive effect: a celibate priest betraying his oath, if not in bed, then in the depth of his soul, and this is held to be much worse than being incapable of love or betraying a fellow man".

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