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Re- CONSIDERATIONS

Historical (and often neglected) texts in the Catholic intellectual tradition with contemporary comment and reflection

HANNA-BARBARA GERL-FALKOVITZ

“Only the Lover Discerns”: A Brief Introduction to Ida Friederike Görres

All translations from German by Jennifer S. Bryson

TRANSLATOR’S PREFACE

On April 17, 1970, in Badenweiler, Germany, Ida Friederike Görres (1901–1971), an Austrian Catholic, delivered a rousing lecture titled “Trusting the Church” to an audience of Germans dismayed, maybe even in shock, about developments in the Catholic Church in Germany after the Second Vatican Council. At the time, she was a well-known Catholic voice in German-speaking Europe. She had dedicated her life to lay ministry and writing about her faith, the Church, and her critical perspective on the unfolding of modernity in the Church, particularly in Germany.

In this lecture, she depicts the rapid implosion of Catholic tradition in Germany at the time. She mentions that many fellow believers reached out to her expressing their dismay and even fear: “People are isolated and feel aban-

done in their parish, more so than they ever did before in the unbelieving environment of their workplace. Many letters, many conversations bear witness to this. Whom should we trust?"

In this situation, which many believers found harrowing, the core message of her lecture was also the core message she communicated to the world through her life and her writings, "I believe in God's faithfulness."

On May 19, 1971 in Freiburg, Germany, then-Father Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, picked up on this theme in his eulogy following the death of Ida Görres. His eulogy quotes this 1970 lecture repeatedly.

In the decades since then, Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, now professor emerita at the Theological-Philosophical University of Vallendar in Germany, has led the way in studying and editing the works of Ida Görres to preserve the memory of this remarkable woman. Included in this translation are two biographical sketches of Görres by Gerl-Falkovitz.

Dr. Jan Bentz assisted in editing this translation.

—JB

*About Ida Görres: Part One*¹

THE AUTHOR WAS BORN December 2, 1901, and given the mellifluous name Friederika Maria Anna von Coudenhove, as the sixth child of the Austrian diplomat Dr. Heinrich Graf von Coudenhove-Kalergi and the Japanese mother, Mitsuko Maria Thekla Aoyama at the Ronsperg estate in the Bohemian forest. In appearance, she clearly reflected her twofold European-Japanese ancestry. She also experienced her spiritual ancestry, from two so very different cultures, with intensity and not infrequently painfully: "Whether this great sadness, the merciless view of the world, is my inheritance from Asia? It may well be that I am part of something very old, wise in an ancient way, yet an *unredeemed* ancientness and wisdom."

Her father, whom she barely remembered, died already at the age of fifty. Regarding her mother, she wrote:

Oh, her deeply tragic destiny could only be written by a great next-generation novelist, like Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. Do you think she was even asked if she wanted to marry a European when all she knew of Europeans was that they were "white devils with red hair and fish-eyes"? Her later bitter comment was that "It was worse than death. But Japanese girls obey." A command from the father, not to be disobeyed. . . . Of her seven children, my mother only liked the two oldest, who were born while she was still in Japan, and she left us no doubt about this. . . . When I hear people here complain about "lack of warmth at home," I almost have to laugh. We did not even know that there is such a thing to miss.

Having grown up in Austrian convent schools, the young girl first encountered the Church in its sheltering, though also its rigid form. It was not until the Catholic youth movement after 1918, in the Austrian Confederation of Neuland, that this image of the Church deepened to unanticipated vitality. She played a leading role in this religious renewal.

From 1923–1924, this young woman (she had chosen the name Ida as a childlike form of Friederike) was a novice with the Maria Ward nuns in Sankt Pölten for a brief period. Studying political science from 1925 to 1927 in Vienna, then the social sciences (1927–1929) in Freiburg at the Women's School for Social Work, then history, church history, theology, philosophy from 1929 to 1931 at the university there brought her into contact with the concrete challenges of the era. She served from May 1932 until Easter 1935 as a "Diocesan Secretary for Young Women's Ministry" in the diocese of Dresden-Meissen, more precisely as a spiritual thought-leader for Catholic youth. In Dresden, in particular, her lively, even fiery way of developing her thinking was already pronounced; her leadership was inspiring.

At this time of palpable external success, however, she was also burdened by a personal loneliness that she experienced deeply, grounded in "a childhood of bearing the weight of a stone," a pecu-

liarily loveless and parentless education. This loneliness was resolved by surprise, and yet not without a reluctant struggle, by attracting a slightly younger man.

When Ida Coudenhove met Carl-Joseph Görres (1905–1973), from Berlin, in Dresden, some people were almost disappointed with their engagement in the fall of 1934 and their marriage at Easter 1935 in Leipzig, because their ideal of a “Virgin of Orleans” seemed destroyed. Through his work as an engineer and business consultant, her husband, who complemented her in his spirituality on par with hers, selflessly made it possible for her to have the opportunity to work as a writer and theologian. In quick succession, her lengthier works emerged alongside many lectures and shorter writings on current issues, revolving around the Church and the saints. “Since I have no family,”—sorrowfully, she did not have children of her own, “all my strength . . . has been focused on the Church.”

In these years, the creative output of Ida Görres was astonishing. In 1943, in the middle of the war, she published a significant book about Therese of Lisieux,² and in 1946 a consequential, critical *Letter about the Church*. In 1949 three books followed simultaneously, which had ripened in the preceding years: The volume of poetry *The Hidden Treasure*; then *Nocturnes: Diary and Notes*; and *On Marriage and on Being Single*.³ This “brood” continued in 1950 with *The Incarnate Church*. This astonishing, indeed exuberant, output was curbed in October 1950 by fierce episodes of illness, which of course, did not entirely interrupt this creative force and which she experienced as a purification.

The suffering did not leave her but was alleviated to the extent that she continued to write tirelessly. She lived through the Second Vatican Council at first with joyful attention but later more anxiously and continuously occupied with the consequences, which in her eyes were ambiguous. She made an effort to be open to new articulations and expressions, but she instinctively saw that which is indispensable in limbo. A telling title of hers reads: *Demolition Squad in the Church*. In 1969 she received an invitation to take part in the Würz-

burg Synod, at which the council was to be implemented in a timely manner. On May 15, 1971, Ida Görres presented her perspective on *Worship Service and Sacrament*⁴ and collapsed immediately afterward. Although she had recently felt rejuvenated and refreshed, her brain hemorrhage was fatal. She died the same day in the Frankfurt Marian Hospital.

It was her request to be buried in her white kimono and with a “white requiem” at the Bergäcker cemetery in Freiburg. White is the Japanese color of mourning; this may have expressed “reconciliation” late in life with her mother. Joseph Ratzinger, who was then a professor at Tübingen, gave the memorial address at the Freiburg Cathedral on May 19, 1971. On her tombstone, next to the warrior Archangel Michael, so dear to her, are the words *Cave adsum!* —“Take heed. I’m here!”

*About Ida Görres: Part Two*⁵

The current generation has almost forgotten the once famous author of the [early twentieth-century] German *renouveau catholique*, i.e. *Catholic Renewal*. Thirty years after her death [in 1971] and 100 years after her birthday, historian and theologian Ida Friederike Görres . . . has effectively been overtaken by silence—not only from the “classic” fading in the memory of the next generation, but also due to the cultural break after 1968, which was painful for her to observe.⁶ Nothing seemed so distant then as her issues: the Church, the saints, marriage and virginity, woman in a highly charged complementarity with man. Concern with transmitting the truth of Christ consumed her towards the end of her life; she died in the very heated atmosphere of the Würzburg Synod in 1971, where she collapsed after passionately making a statement in a presentation about “Sacrament.” Her friends, of course, and those who met her, who were even accompanied, indeed led, by her, remember her—if they are still alive—with a veneration that indicates reverberation from a deep impression.⁷

Nevertheless, some harbingers of new recognition are surfacing today: Theological doctoral theses have been written in Innsbruck and Vienna,⁸ in memory-rich Mooshausen,⁹ they observed her centenary,¹⁰ after several small depictions of her life,¹¹ a new edition of her poems appeared,¹² and a collection of letters is forthcoming.¹³ Efforts to preserve the material with traces [of her] have begun. The existing publications, by no means exhaustive, testify to passionate yet restrained thinking, a supple and sparkling intellect, a youthful, romantic, and then more vocal faith tested by suffering.¹⁴

The newly accessible significance of Ida Friederike Görres is—apart from her sometimes enchanting language and analytical sharpness—undoubtedly in her hagiographic achievement, which encompasses an image of the Church that is equally established as well as open to development. Starting in the 1930s she became a public figure through striking biographies of saints, above all about women: Elisabeth of Hungary, Mary Ward, Redegund, Hedwig of Silesia; among male [saints] she dealt with Francis, and figures such as Heinrich Suso and Teilhard de Chardin. Her books were standard in the collections of Catholic libraries. With her masterpiece about Therese of Lisieux, Görres opened the door to a new way of looking at not only the “great little one,” but also a complex approach to the phenomenon of holiness. While she presumably did not underestimate the word “modern,” it could be said that she initiated “modern hagiography”—a grasp of the inner, “human” face of the saints. Or as she wrote in her diary, “[...] the story of a person who turns from an ‘arch-Catholic’ into a Christian; a path *within* the Church from the exterior of ‘denomination’ to the interior of divine reality.”¹⁵

ReCONSIDERATIONS

IDA FRIEDERIKE GÖRRES

Trusting the Church¹⁶

A Lecture

*Delivered in Badenweiler, Germany, on April 17, 1970.*¹⁷

TALKING ABOUT THIS TOPIC publicly requires overcoming more inhibitions than just stage fright. This stems from respect for the topic and respect for the listeners, from a concern of not doing them both justice.

The subject matter this evening is a particular challenge: not because of the audience, but because of our era and our own heart and mind. After all, who dares to ask the question: “Do you trust the Church? Do you yourself trust the Church?” And not with short-term caution, for example: “Do you still trust? still today?”—but entirely and in general, yesterday, today, and until death—who dares to ask this if not a person who has affirmed the question himself with a pure yes? But how difficult it is to justify such a yes.

The fact that I come before you with this does not serve, of course, as a personal outpouring in the style of well-known pious groups from Oxford or Geneva. How did I get here and, especially, how did you get here? I can refer to Newman, who is said to have

commented: “Sharing mere private views, which I think no one else holds but me, makes me feel like a juggler who entertains people with his leaps at the market.”¹⁸ Rather, I think with the following that I speak on behalf of many who remain silent or are at a loss for words, but not as a criticism of their attitude, least of all in our overly loud, verbose time. Many years ago a theologian said to me: “Faith makes mute, unbelief makes eloquent,” which is certainly often, if not always true, like the way love also makes some mute, while seduction usually requires a well-trained eloquence. And it is precisely in our current ecclesiastical confusion that many serious, deeply engaged people only know how to reply against the overwhelming theological opinion with concerned silence. This in no way indicates that they have no ideas or that they would lack responses. Newman has a whole book showing how much genuine faith there is which *has* reasons, but which is not reflected in and certainly not empowered through words.

It is on behalf of such people that I would now like to speak to you.

Much of the criticism is certainly incomplete and, even when justified, for many it is unsatisfying. During the whole painstaking reflection on this ahead of time, I kept seeing the image of a huge ball of mercury, slipping away from any grasp. Because it is a single whole that we have to talk about and it is one; it is one thing with immense variety and complexity, and a whole that cannot be sliced up and presented piece by piece. (At least not by me.) Each selection is arbitrary and lacks important information, every fragment is only understandable against a well thought out background.

So, trusting the Church: today, in the turmoil, in the confusion, in the dissolving of clear boundaries, in the shouting of demands and claims, in the wavering of principles, in the extinguishing of ancient lights, in the breaking down of walls, in the drying up of the old wells. Trusting the Church as if this crisis might be a fever, but a healing-deliverance at the same time.

Doesn't every act of trusting, consciously or unconsciously, pre-

suppose something solid, something strong and powerful? Something that assuredly, protectively, and reliably enables us to partake?

But what is still firm and tranquil today in the Church, in Christianity, in our faith? What does not waver and wobble? What is not being challenged from the outside and, most harshly, from the inside by theologians, by priests?

Doesn't this apply even to the most basic principles?—Let's just pick a few:

The Ten Commandments: The grim anecdote comes to mind, which Ortega y Gasset told fifty years ago, of the gypsy, who, when asked about her knowledge, dodges the question: "I wanted to learn [the Commandments], I heard rumormongering, I heard they would be done away with, I let them be!"¹⁹ That's how far we've come. It is said that the new catechism presents only ten words to schoolchildren—impeccably philological, isn't it, according to the Decalogue—but by no means compulsory: nice ideal concepts, ethical dreamy aspirations, but that's not how reality is.

The Creed: each and every part is contested. It is treated as cumbersome. It is cleverly and eruditely negated—it is deleted or "re-interpreted." God the Creator and Incarnation, the God Man, born of the Virgin Mary, our salvation through His Cross, Resurrection and Ascension, the Second Coming, the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, her birth from the Spirit, her completion at the end of time, eternal life in heaven and hell, and the new earth.

Everything is denied, rejected, ridiculed—not by officially godless people, but by consecrated priests, by theologians, preachers, pastors appointed to preach.

The Sacraments? Misunderstanding and magic is most of what we believed: of Baptism, especially Baptism of children through water and Word and Spirit, of the Real Presence, the consecration of the Eucharist, of Ordination, which priests themselves passionately deny, rejecting the rite as a farce; what are Confirmation and Anointing of the Sick when the laying on of hands and anointing are also just magical remnants from various forms of paganism? Confession:

for the first time in some dioceses this year children were led to first communion without this; when a child asked, "And what do I do with my sins?" the pastor replied, "I don't care about your sins"; this is exactly the same answer that a relative of mine received when, getting married late in life, he wanted to make a general confession before the wedding. As if until now we had confessed in order to share some interesting gossip for the curiosity of the priests! Marriage is to be "reformed" so that it can be revoked, with the possibility of repetition, and in marriage, practices are to be permitted which every form of paganism, pre- and post-Christian, has cooked up but which are an abomination to the Hindus and pious Jews. The state of holy orders loses its foundation and its roots when the concept of the Evangelical counsels is lost along with the sense of sacrifice and virginity. Monks run away on all sides, abbots marry—and, more incomprehensible than these events: the highest authority in Rome also legalizes such conditions.

Angels and devils have been abolished with laughter, veneration of saints is so taboo that one has to bring the pious Reformed pastor Walter Nigg from Zurich to Germany if an anniversary calls for a lecture, as if no priest among us had the knowledge or courage for such a topic.

With the belief in the Eucharist, of course, building tents for the presence of Christ among us, "houses of God," loses any meaning that would go beyond the parish hall, which is consequently required to be a "multi-purpose building," for political discussion and with all the comforts for chatting, smoking, and even dancing, as a student chaplain recently explicitly and literally called for. Logically, of course, the cemeteries, the fields of God, too—what embarrassingly magical words!—must be liquidated and the corpses handed over to the trash removal without any big to do. In this regard there is still some inconsistency.

It is not only small groups of intellectuals who are hacking at the roots as well as the branches of the tree of faith. They have gotten down into the smallest "Catholic" publications, church bulletins, and

women's group newsletters, eager to be henchmen who, with their combined strength, distance themselves from the old-fashioned, idiotic stupidity of previous beliefs.

Whom should we trust? A theology that continually explains its own bankruptcy via leading speakers; an interpretation of revelation that turns it into a rather unimportant science destroying its own foundations, rejects tradition, dissolves the Bible, denies the highest magisterium and, finally, as the capstone of their wisdom, invents absolute blasphemy, unutterable by any Jew, Muslim, or Gentile, which one can only quote to report on and say with physical reluctance: "God is dead." (But their unfortunately endless production fills the shelves of Christian bookstores very profitably.)

Which theologian can one read carefully and without reservations, without being so on edge it hurts, holding one's breath tensely? And when you are happy and thankful—do you know what he will say tomorrow?

Every twist, every excess seems conceivable, seems possible. For the noblest as well as for the basest motives. Yes, even for the noblest, because the burning zeal to understand even the erring brother compels some to go not only two miles instead of just one, but up to and over the limit; because some, who want to throw off tradition and faith, are willing to offer not only their coat as well as their cloak, but they also are willing to tear off their skin as a sign of fraternal solidarity to satisfy them. Only God can judge what is happening here. Personally, this may be enough for some to be holy. But the calamity of the frustration for the little people, the confusion into which they plunge, is at the same time enormous.

Whom should we trust? A morality that willingly and complacently adapts to all the developments of everyday behavior, justifying everything if possible, that fears nothing as much as a distinct separation of good and evil, as much as a clear "non licet" [i.e. "not allowed"], conforming anxiously to the zeitgeist, attentive to the approval of the greatest number.

Whom should we trust? A liturgical reform, which comes from

the highest, legitimate authorities of the Church, undoubtedly from the best intention of the supporters, who have indeed given us some beautiful, precious, fruitful innovations—nevertheless frighteningly shot through by tendencies clearly of foreign origin, too willing to make compromises and concessions to certain cliques and their followers, which, in hard-to-comprehend accommodations to overt as well as subtle demands, gradually cut through many fine, unnoticed roots that anchored general worship in the hearts of the people and nourished Catholic piety: fasting and feast days, customs and traditions, oral prayers and gestures of prayer, the mourning of Good Friday, the expression of the compassion of the Church with the human pain of separation in the use of black of the liturgy of the dead (not the annual commemorations!), the sustained familiar recurrence of the annual readings, the rhythm of which was still one of the few living harmonies with the Protestant church, like the Kyrie with the Eastern one. (And this is in the ecumenical age!) Lots of small, petty interventions, strange unimportant ones, which dismantle an irreplaceable, gradually matured habit of prayer, literally spoil the worship service for countless believers.

Whom should we trust?

“Ministers” who vehemently no longer want to be priests, who deny the name itself as a pagan relic, who only want to be functionaries, nothing different from the layperson, functionaries with a right to resign, on a part-time basis, as a side job. Clerics, whose self-diminishment and desertion disgusts even outsiders, clerics who constantly explain to us out loud what their service is NOT worth to them, the importance of which they measure against subjective “happiness” claims, who fear nothing so much as to be recognized as a Catholic priest, assiduously hiding this affiliation, and who no longer want to acknowledge their status as such; clerics whom one would be embarrassed to ask for their blessing?

We are so used to everything, so hardened, that nothing surprises us anymore. If we don’t hear for a while from friends who are a married couple, we don’t usually worry and ask ourselves the question:

“Do they still live together? Aren’t they already divorced and remarried?” But I have to confess: if I don’t hear from a chaplain friend for half a year, I get worried: “Is he still with us? Did he get married in the end?”

The elderly painfully remember the years of the Third Reich, the war—the situation of constant rumors, the shocking revelations—“Have you heard?” At that time there was talk of the fallen and the arrested, today of those who have fallen away, been seduced, done a U-turn; then bombs and devastation, today scandal and abominations in the sanctuary. Yes, really, abominations—and today as it was then: if one rejected something too extreme, too drastic as if it must be just a tendentious tale, it turned out to be true afterwards: the story of the religion teacher who told children to bring their rosaries, little images of saints, and religious medals to school, and then commanded them to burn all of them; the report from the Dutch pastor who married two homosexual men in church; from the Sunday sermon in which the words “Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, but a poor devil like us; this is the truth” were said.

In the Third Reich, external persecution united believers firmly and faithfully. The new confusion divides families, monasteries, homes, old circles of friends. People are isolated and feel abandoned in their parish, more so than they ever did before in the unbelieving environment of their workplace. Many letters, many conversations bear witness to this.

Whom should we trust?

Even where we find unshaken loyalty to the whole faith of the Church and its pastors: isn’t the milieu, the situation, there often even more problematic?

Our *Confiteor* cannot be honest and thorough enough. Do you not understand from the bottom of your soul that a lot of young people who are honest seekers would not even think of looking for the living reality of God here? Don’t people understand that the thousand-fold impulses to disappointment, indignation, flight, or resignation, are in fact a reaction to the many spectacles: everything the world

in its *schadenfreude* has always criticized about the pious—dreariness and stubbornness, boundless blindness to the pressing needs, resentment, stagnation, severity, and dishonesty? How few are really affected by the movement of the Spirit, how much shadow play, sloganeering, and patching together fake exteriors there is!

Do we have even *one* monastery with the radiance of Taizé? Do we have even *one* publication of clear distinctive character, of *niveau*, fire, and heft, which meets the unbelievable cheek of penetrating unbelief with calm, fearless, and engaging superiority?

Whom can we trust?

Our bishops are, thank God, without exception honorable, irreproachable men. But do you have the impression that they are up to the situation, even superior to it? Even with the best will the answer is no—you can feel a painful, pitiful helplessness and that they are at a loss. Of course, we cannot demand strategic ingenuity as proof of proficiency in the pastoral office—but how longingly we look for at least one who passes from hesitant defense to enlightened, enlightening initiative! If power means being able to protect, preserve, prevent—actually enforce commandments and prohibitions—then the ecclesiastical authorities were far from being so powerless. The behavior of the rebellious clergy, even those who disobey calmly, shows this most clearly. No school class behaves like this with a teacher who actually has authority, who doesn't just deputize it.

And our Holy Father—I choose this lofty name on purpose, which expresses the longing of all mankind, especially in an era of fatherlessness—he too is an honorable and venerable person, but he is truly overloaded beyond the limits of what is humanly possible. He simply *cannot* conduct himself properly continuously and everywhere, no one could—he too is bound to swerve and get sidetracked. And every sign of his weakness is immediately trumpeted around the world with tremendous glee. (I do not mean, by the way, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which I on the contrary consider to be a great prophetic act; only posterity will do it justice—but here too the message was mingled with such hapless phrases that it opened

itself to cheap criticism, factually honest as well as infamous.) Even with him we always have to fear and hope and pray that he will not make disastrous mistakes that do more harm than good.

Where is there a prophet in Israel?

If we consider the almost absolute trust that the fully committed, reverent, grateful, and obedient people of faith have been accustomed to give to the Church and especially to its priests, only then can one measure the disaster which shock, poisoning, and ostracism in the depths of the soul has brought to these people.

Because this attitude was by no means just a form of stupidity, a result of stuck-in-the-mud naivety, infantility, servility in the face of feudalistic-paternalistic authority, threats of the hereafter, and the way that whole ignorant belittling gibberish goes. Certainly, such did exist, as a matter of course and inevitable incidental factors. But those who despised these people completely failed to discern the heart of the matter. It was something vast and unique. It was the last manifestation in that realm we know of the great ancient trust in the world, the harmony of the individual with his comprehensive divinely ordained order, the grace-enabled transposition of pagan trust in the cosmos into the new creation. The attempt in the name of enlightenment, ameliorating Catholic backwardness, maturity of the laity, and so on to not shine light on this unspeakably deep, happiness-generating, mysterious anchor but rather to smash it with an ax and hammer is an assassination attempt on a most precious legacy of the world. It is a form of outright soul-murder and not only to individuals, it is a spiritual genocide.

Is it any wonder when the worst, creeping fear sometimes invades even people of the best intention, in quiet hours, in the silence of sleepless nights: What if they might be right? There are so many, such smart people among them, in such high, responsible positions, priests and lay people! Can I alone be right against this throng of opposing witnesses? Against this immense flood, which is bursting forth out of the mass media—not least of all in Church radio and in printed works with ecclesial imprimatur and financed by the hierar-

chy? What am I to do, a poor individual, against a power that even the bishops seem to tremble at and tiptoe around?

What if the rebels really were to own the future? What if this process, which seems to us like destruction and betrayal, were actually God's will and to resist it were impious and an act of petty faith? What if—an agonizing thought in the midnight hours—what if I were tied to a great but inexorably dying body, through merely emotionally stirring, but ultimately subjective, unreasonable inhibitions, habits, prejudices, antiquated piety, wrongly grounded loyalty? What if the people from whom we received faith and guidance were themselves blind guides for the blind?

Are we living on a leaky ship sinking inch by inch, from which not only the rats but also the sensible, sober people jump off just in time?

Who provides an answer for us in such hours? Whom else can we ask?

Only the Church herself.

Only the great, the whole, the long-lived, immortal on earth, the one that is identical with her own beginning, that is also identical with her Lord in a manner befitting her alone. Because, in spite of all the fashionable concerns about this terrifyingly weighty discourse of older theology, she is *nevertheless* the “continually living Christ” who speaks and responds to us in the Church as the place of His grace, as His custodian. The recipient of that rock-solid trust of our fathers is *still the same one*.

The Church: the word, of course, is used in its old full sense, which means not only the temporal segment of the Catholics living today. It is not a system, an idea, an ideology, a structure, a society, but the tremendous living establishment, which has existed since the apostles until today, fulfilling her history from century to century, growing, unfolding, struggling, ailing, recovering, living out her destiny and maturing toward the return of the Lord.

The strangest creation of God, so unique in kind, so large, so contradictory, so colorful that no single person can take stock of her

and figure her out, and certainly no outsider can ever take her all in, let alone understand her and judge her. Only she herself can do this, comprehending herself in faith, endlessly considering herself in her faithful theology, looking at herself through her mystics, loving herself in her children. Only the believer *as* the cell of this body, embedded, suffused with her life-process of knowledge, faith, love, participates also in her consciousness and in the spirit in which she understands herself.

Her secret and what can be vexing about her (as with her Lord: “Blessed is he who is not vexed by me!”²⁰) reside in her twofold nature. In terms of her empirical visibility, concreteness, and conceivability, she, like any worldly phenomenon, is subject to the observation and analysis of history, sociology, religious studies, philosophy, and psychology, and their findings are correct in many ways. *At the same time* she is what faith and its theology know and proclaim about her from the beginning: the People of God, body of Christ, vine, city of God, yes bride: each of the visual names, symbols of inexhaustible depth of interpretation, tries in alternating cycles to stammer out the unspeakable aspect of her “second nature.”

Unacceptable to the critical intellect. For certain. The critical intellect reaffirms that every day. As for Christians, however, if they take their faith seriously, it is not unlikely that they have to accept something analogous, albeit in a lesser version, *about themselves* every day.

That I am the person I am: the empirical individual, object of all the natural sciences, object also of psychology and psychoanalysis, suffering object of history and civilization, social structures, a product of ancestry, milieu, and education, on top of all the influences of the present, the decadence, the flow of suggestions in a hundred forms, conscious of my personal destiny and character, its advantages and disadvantages, its limitations, hindrances, and my failures in the middle of this. The sum of all these statements has so much that is uplifting and valuable, so much that is shameful, unappetizing, depressing—what a concoction!

So that's me, that's you, that's each of us in unpredictable variations. And at the same time I am supposed to believe—and I do believe: I am created in the image and likeness of God, known, wanted, loved from eternity, formed by His hands, a continuation in the whole endless stream of my heritage, every hair of my head counted. I am a brother or sister of Christ, redeemed by His blood, co-heir and aspirant to glory. I am on the way to eternal bliss—yes, the new taboos are also good for something, rarely heard words unfold their unbearable force again: oriented to eternal bliss in the perfect unity of God, in the physical resurrection in a new heaven and a new earth.

And I am supposed to believe that about myself—and everything that is seething around me? This is, however, a lot to swallow for those who are attentive and who view themselves and their loved ones even a little critically.

For those who accept this message, the double nature of the Church can be quite clear. Even in today's situation.

What is more self-evident than that there is ALWAYS an abyss gaping between the first and second basic condition of the Church? Because there has to be a gap, because the distance between mission and realization is too great, between the one who reveals Himself and the manifestation that proclaims Him.

Always, in every era, the earthly Church *at the same time* contradicts her "other," actual nature. She is always in need of reform. Her best children, the saints, are always unhappy with her and cry out in love and suffering for repentance and penance.

For me, Church history is *the* great book of consolation. It really is not just a lavish "Chronique scandaleuse," a Chronicle of Scandal, for ravenous agitators. Today, more than ever, it is necessary for us to be able to see through the torrent of events and even put them halfway in perspective and weigh them. The outright ignorance of an unbelievable number of otherwise educated Christians in this area counts as one of the calamities.

The darkest chapters are exactly the ones we should know—not just the boring Renaissance vices. No, we should know the great her-

esy battles of the early Church, the Viking and Saracen assaults at the beginning of the Middle Ages, which almost choked Christendom, barely awakened, in blood and ashes. We should know the age of the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the era of secularization, which at the time of our great-grandparents simply swept away a large portion of the German pastoral care centers and educational institutions. We also have to unlearn confusing the “calm” times of the Church with good, and the agitated with bad.

It was Innocent III, of all people, the man who distributed the crowns of Europe from the vertiginous summit of the papacy, who saw the Church sway and crumble in a dream until a dark little stranger supported it with his shoulder—whom he then recognized in Francis. At the time of Romanticism, which was also an era of secularization, but today is misunderstood by many as a Catholic heyday, Anne Catherine Emmerich saw the body of the Lord hanging on a pole—blackened, mangled, mutilated. She saw crowds, among them priests and bishops, who zealously carried away the Church of St. Peter, stone by stone, and built an “Anti-Church” with the help of demons.²¹

Times of ascent and decay perpetually alternate—early spring, naked, bleak, but bursting with buds, alternates with sterile, visually stunning autumn splendor. Time and again ripeness changes into apparent death, and this breaks open into new life. The Church IS the Phoenix.

Today, it seems to me, two opposite, but often eerily similar currents are tangled up: *renewal and revolution*. The two-sided nature of this, this tremendous ambiguity, is the peculiarity and the particular danger of our hour.

The key term for renewal is: *the Council*. This is incorrect, by the way, or let’s say shallow and superficial if one sets it as the absolute beginning. Because in fact, it was itself the fruit and result of a re-birth movement that was strong yet scattered widely among many small points of tension that grew out of invisible factors (“all beginnings are invisible,” says Teilhard de Chardin) since about the First

World War. Over a half century, brooks grew and flowed together into this basin. The Council raised, confirmed, legitimized, and radiated ideas, impulses, premonitions, and approaches, as well as ready-made formations developed over many generations, to the awareness of the whole Church.

Just at this moment, after that long, arduous, patient preparation, the second stage of the great, indeed Spirit-led rebirth—this is how the small charismatic circles always understood them!—that is, the second phase of general realization should, properly speaking must, follow. That was the tremendous, intoxicating hope of the sixties, crystallized around the shining figure of John XXIII.

And exactly here is where the counter-play, the adversary, intrudes.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the great charismatic missionary, said to me a few years ago: “That the Devil would try so hard to distort the meaning of the Council, to turn it upside down, suggests that it must have been a big deal.”

Because it is becoming clearer and clearer that there is now a movement alongside, within the renewal, a movement that is not concerned with purification, strengthening, development, rebirth, but rather with the downfall of the Church, with her replacement by an alien new structure. This truly genuine revolution uses all means of political upheaval—that is, so far with the finer means, since it is not yet openly in power. They work with “psychic artillery”: with suggestion, surprise, infiltration, and as a fifth column with an extensive strategy, occupying key positions in mass media and using sophisticated disguises. Friedrich Heer, who ought to know, calls the method they use “nicodemite” (why actually? poor faithful Nicodemus!). That is to say they use the vocabulary of conventional theory while line by line attributing alien meanings.

It seems to me that the characteristic of this revolution is that *unbelievers and the ignorant* lead the “reform” of the church—and with great success.

Well now, this is quite strange.

The mark of previous waves of renewal in the Church was surely that they originated from piety, from repentance, that is, from an inner change oriented towards God. Sometimes they were started by saints. Sometimes by Christians of more humble calling but who aligned with the spirit and model of the saints. Even with all their shortcomings and failures: the baseline of such movements nevertheless showed that in those people the Church herself converted in repentance from corruption, sliding, or sleep. There was no talk first of rights and claims, of relief and more comfortable ways, but of willingness to bow to the Gospel and its demands, of joyful submission even to the strictness of the commandments of God, of bitter purification in love and humility, in renunciation and obedience to be able to live up to the mission and rediscover the neglected legacy.

I cannot discern these features in the guise of today's revolt. Of course, there have always been unbelievers in the Church—probably in large numbers, one suspects also among priests. We know this well from some periods—for example, the High Enlightenment—from others it can be conjectured. As is well known, there is conscious theoretical and repressed but practical unbelief. I use the word “unbelieving” here with no moral judgment. In thousands of very different fates hide the innocent, the guilty, and every shade in between. I simply mean those who, for whatever reason, deny belief in or obedience to the Church, or both, and who place themselves internally or externally (or again, both) outside of her. Whether as lukewarm Catholics or as “non-practicing” Catholics, in the jargon of the pious, they were still in the parish registers, and they did so whether they called themselves free-thinkers, free-spirits, or liberals—there were certainly priests among them. Still, the last thing they wanted was to attract attention.

In spite of all their differences, they had one distinguishing feature in common and it characterized them: total disinterest in the whole of the Church's internal affairs and inner life, in dogmas and liturgy (if they knew there was such a thing), in piety as well as in religious organizations. Volunteering for such things seemed simply unspeak-

ably boring, bourgeois, tasteless, narrow-minded; any attraction to such subjects seemed to them tactless and impossible.

They didn't want to have anything to do with all this, and they stuck by that. And that was lucky. Because it did not occur to them even in their sleep to interfere in Church matters and tell us how we should run them.

But this is exactly what they are doing today and with vigor. It's a strange spectacle: a number (an army or just a leadership corps?) of people who really only believe in the alternative religion of the zeitgeist, that is, in progress, science, moral autonomy, and a future paradise resulting from all three, rush upon the Church to remodel everything they find in her according to their dimensions, goals, and desires. And they want to dictate to and rule over all the other believers.

In Christianity they find some very useful material for their undertaking, next to a huge pile of ballast—as they assess it. With uninhibited energy and great intelligence, they begin to carve up some things, recast other things, and to dissolve the rest. And properly so—because they are least of all dumb. They recognized a splendid vehicle in the major reform that set into motion and they know how to use it. To do this, they provide themselves with the necessary, thorough information in all areas—a completely new, uncanny kind of religious and theological interest.

They have many types and layers of fellow travelers and tools. On occasion the *ignorant*; they too have always been in abundance in the Church. This includes both the faithful, who believed in the whole and were content with it—not a bad way, by the way—and others who were indifferent to everything because they knew nothing, and vice versa. Both types behaved passively, leaving thinking and doing to those who were better equipped or simply appointed. Among us today, this layer still has a special historical imprint.

Remember the last thirty years: National Socialism with its monopoly on schools, media, culture, especially youth; evacuation and cities reduced to rubble, shipping children to the countryside, com-

pulsory participation in the Hitler Youth, mandatory labor, anti-aircraft helpers, and so on; the complete standstill of almost all forms of advanced religious education, religious instruction reduced to a minimum, the constant change of school and teacher, and non-stop manipulation by propaganda. Afterwards came debris, refugee misery, the struggle for existence of their parents' generation. The likes of this does not leave younger generations without a trace. As for those who were not among the innermost circles of pious believers at the time, who did not later come to church through personal conversion, somehow the newly consolidated conditions also brought masses flowing back, carried along by the current, into the Church structure, without catching up on lost foundations, without personal conviction. As previously in politics. It is clear that these people are the ones most vulnerable to the mass media. A great many remained dyed in the wool from the ideological imprint of their childhood and youth, including in what they had repressed—at least with a tremendous inclination for distrust, suspicion, criticism, and dissatisfaction with Church and religion.

Naturally, one could say, the majority of this type would probably be among the uninterested who prefer to deal with anything other than religion and what is related to it. But today under the all-encompassing honorary title, "laity," an active participation is imposed on them—on people from both currents!—something they would never have sought out. They are forcefully—from both sides!—talked into believing that they understand everything, even better than the experts, that they have a say in evaluating and judging even the most difficult and complicated matters. Their most random impressions and reactions are researched as extremely interesting and important and are supposed to provide norms and corrections for the established situation. It's actually grotesque. Isn't it clear that they provide the real revolutionaries with just what they need, namely gullible supporters?

There are other factors. Every revolution has to base itself on the groups of *those who are dissatisfied*. They are, of course, abundant in

the Church, including among the clergy. I have already touched on the reasons. They can be multiplied endlessly, the good and the bad, from misunderstanding and from clear insight, out of actual negative experiences and in the spirit of going along with the crowd.

There is the urgent unrest of those who are truly religiously moved and religiously gifted. There is the dull, irritated resentment of those who believe that Church authorities prevent them from fulfilling their personal happiness—for example, in marriage, ambition, or other private interests. Everyone will pay attention when someone promises to be responsive to their complaints, quickly to stop what bothers them, to fulfill their wishes.

Here everything is mixed in. There may be many who would have dedicated themselves to genuine renewal with enthusiasm if they had encountered it. Or they were deceived. The frontlines of those who sought both to preserve and renew appeared to them—rightly or wrongly!—too lukewarm, too dawdling, too willing to compromise, too petty, too careful. How very understandable in so many situations! They throw themselves in the arms of those who promise them direct action and rapid radical change, who appeal to the jam-packed explosive forces of the youth. This is how the corrupters reach out to many—to useful people with more passion than discretion, more anger than patience, perhaps also more desire for validation and assertiveness than willingness to accept their integration into the Church and sacrifice themselves. There are also those who are just naive, willing to trust, easy to deceive—all of whom, in character and vocation, genuinely belonged to the Church's actual rebirth movement and are severely missed among us.

I see the treacherous, the grueling aspect of our situation in the fact that the two fundamentally contradictory currents seem to intersect, overlap, get tangled up, even seem to merge in aggrandized speech and writing—often on the same page, even in the same person! So much so that a clear distinction at first glance and in all areas is simply not possible. Oh, how much we need to pray for discernment of spirits, just to hang in there day after day. We certainly notice

this when it comes down plain and simple to the basics. But they are not always directly at play. The lines of approach—for defense as well as for offense—are often lengthy and convoluted. Also, a house does not only consist of its foundation and a person does not only consist of his skeleton. Both can still be intact while the dissolution, the disfigurement, has already progressed considerably. And how unmanageable is the potential diversity in development of often inconspicuous points of departure! How imperceptible are built-in timed fuses and creeping infections!

Perhaps—probably—this terrible opaqueness also plays a role in the often-strange attitude of our hierarchy during this “soft upsurge.” (I say: “also”—and plays “along”!) One never knows. Does it have to do with the Lord’s words about leaving the weeds until the harvest, about leaving the dimly burning wick and bent reed? Or is it an expression of uncertainty and indecision, a tactical retreat, a fearful attempt at compromise—or even unconscious infiltration of some officially rejected ideology?

With a slight horror one often thinks of Ernst Jünger’s remark: “The irresistible power of a metaphysical attack, is that the attacked person himself chooses the means of his downfall and does so apparently voluntarily.”²²

A rather dark image. And what about that which is *holy coming out of the crisis?*

I believe in this. I believe with confidence and trust in the indestructible future of the old and new, the one holy Catholic and apostolic Church. Now we are simply being put to the test whether we take the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount seriously and that the gates of hell will not prevail against her.

The prognoses are of course very bad, according to human judgment. Seduction and decay have by no means reached their full velocity; many dragon teeth have only just been inserted. The defense is mostly as weak as the anti-aircraft guns in our cities were when faced with a huge squadron of bombers. Based on calculations, we would probably need to pack up soon.

How are things looking with our young priests, for example—in number and quality? What can we expect? How about our theology departments? As with the relevant literature—one doesn't want to call it "Catholic" anymore. Thank God I have nothing to do with school and teaching, but sampling and assessments—praise and acclaim as well as horrified warnings—about the new catechism and its additions can prepare us for a rather dark harvest. A generation of those who are essentially skeptics, grumblers, as well as arrogant and irreverent meddlers appears to be involved.

I can very well imagine that tomorrow will be pitch-black. For example, to start with the smaller issues, I can imagine that old churches will in fact be transformed into mere museums and new ones will be built with bars and dance programs. Home-Masses—sorry, Eucharistic celebrations—with champagne breakfast at the same table are already in vogue—exactly what Paul, greatly displeased, did away with.

I can imagine that the *appearance* of the Church, deprived of all the beautiful traditions, the liturgical spaces, vestments, vessels, customs, places of pilgrimage, most of the monasteries and other "magical remains," will resemble an ugly, hewn willow stump. The City on the Hill will be reduced to the ruins of the city wall, devoid of its shining light that once irresistibly attracted so many seekers from afar. I can also imagine that in some areas, after some time, the Catholic Church will only continue by vegetating as a shabby variation of the neighboring Protestant Church. It won't even be like the solid state-church or an authentic living sect, but only as a slavish copy of figures gutted and in decay. I can imagine a widely denied but practically implemented schism, connected to Rome only by insincere verbal threads—and unfortunately without a clean cut through the Gordian knot from there [i.e. from Rome].

I also know that in view of these (and other) conditions, some people who are to be taken seriously consider apocalyptic fulfillment to have come and they prepare for the end of all things, not just Germany or Europe or the white race. What can I say? I can understand

this even if I don't share this opinion. We've long since deserved this. However, Philipp Dessauer used to say: "The last day has many dress rehearsals." And we have been told that it will surprise us.

As I said: I can imagine the darkest development and also, I expect it.

But I by no means believe, first, that it *must* happen, and second, that it will *come to stay*. Isn't world history already full of great surprises, despite the cleverest predictions? Isn't it full of sudden reversals, wonderful rescues, incomprehensible victories of small groups of fighters against unlikely odds? In no way has God always been with the strongest cannons. Think of Salamis and the fall of the Persian fleet, the mysterious retreat of the Mongols in the middle of their victory at Walstatt, the strange fates in the struggle of the West with the Turks—at the gates of Vienna, in Corfu—and the tiny, almost invisible origins of world-threatening powers like the Nazis and Bolsheviks out of ridiculed, weak groups. Good and evil make the strangest leaps—even in the most profane realms of military power, politics, and economics. How can one then think accurately to predict the fate of the spiritual struggle—in which, as we know, not only flesh and blood are involved, but very different powers and forces—on both sides!

To start with the simplest aspect: as for those of us who believe we are on the right side by God's grace and the people we trust—do we all come from "ideal religious backgrounds"? Probably only a small portion. Think how many of us come from lukewarm to unbelieving families, are converts, grew up under annoying priests, with miserable religious instruction, more than inadequate pastoral care, dreadful sermons, neglected or even twisted liturgy, uptight religious education at home or in boarding schools attached to religious orders. And after our conversions and renewals, think what else did we run into, what kind of dead ends. Think how often we had to break out of unbearable situations, how often were we peeled down to the skin—and this on top of everything else. Did we fall from God's hand for even a moment? Didn't He send us His angels at

the crossroad—even in strange disguises—or the raven with bread? Didn't He strike open a spring out of sand and stone in the desert? How could He deny His Church what He does for us gnats, does every day?

I believe in God's faithfulness.

And I just don't believe that the Holy Spirit will abandon His own Pentecost-like flare-up, the great promise of the Council, to poisoning and distortion—unless it were to happen through our own out-sized fault if we were to surrender prematurely.

I trust the Church's tremendous powers of regeneration—they will be awakened when the need is at its greatest. Precisely because she is a poor bride in misery now, she is more at the mercy of His grace than ever.

I trust in her invisible allies, in the community of the saints in the old sense, in which we living are only a tiny part, embedded in the old image of the "three-story" Church: we the struggling, pilgrim Church between the suffering, where there is purification, and the triumphant (yes, in spite of the foolish narrowing of this forbidden word!), the Church of Heaven, perfected in the victory of Christ. With them in mind, not only the solitary Christian facing the pressure of external persecution, but also the one almost despondent in the internal pressure of isolation, I can answer with Thomas More as he did when his judges, alluding to their numerical advantage, urged him to conform: "From among the holy bishops I can oppose any of your hundred. For this one council or parliament (and God knows what kind it is!), there are all the councils over a thousand years. This is why I am not obliged to conform my conscience to the council (synod) of a single country."²³

I believe and trust that even the ugliest and worst manifestations of this revolution represent phases of a necessary self-cleansing of the Church body and at the same time a well-deserved judgment. As Anne Catherine Emmerich already said about her nightmarish visions of apostasy and betrayal in the Church, "It is good that there are such people. They drive the matter forward, and finally it erupts.

And then good and evil part ways." The invaders may have a role similar to that of the Assyrians and Babylonians in obstinate Israel. And at revolutionary tribunals, alongside the innocents, real guilt is called out.

Even more, I trust the *suffering* in the Church. There is immense suffering, silent and down to the base. Above all, the suffering among the many, many good, faithful priests, who hardly appear in the press and on television, but who, with the commitment of their lives, known only to those close to them, are consumed for those entrusted to them, even if they themselves are externally the weaker ones and have to watch the debauchery defenselessly. Their bitter suffering, which goes as far as physical and mental breakdowns, is not in vain. It is invisible martyr blood. It sprouts the seeds that grow in the winter night.

I believe in the *praying* Church made up of laity and priests, the forbearing, the *atoning* Church. These are all terms that have become alien or ridiculous to many, yet they are the dormant powers among the people of Christendom. They are currently the anvil under the hammer, but their defenselessness is not a weakness. "[Everyone seems to think that being the hammer is more praiseworthy and more desirable than being the anvil, but] this is not part of what it takes to endure the endless, recurring blows. The greatest force is only inwards and used only as a counter-pressure to ward off extreme unpleasantness,"²⁴ said Goethe somewhere.

I believe in the hidden *saints*—there are certainly many—who participate today in Christ's concealment of Holy Saturday. Well, unfortunately we see few of the impressive figures on which the weak faith would so much like to lean. Yet it seems that those who are called today are not in the form of the towering lighthouse shining into the distance, but rather the heating system, sunk in the basement, unnoticed yet preserving life.

But I also believe that some visible messengers of God may be closer than we suspect. I believe in the many pure and good hearts among the youth who are concerned with what is real, who hunger

and thirst for justice, who bide their time critically and are maturing gradually. God already knows them. He will call them at their hour. Didn't Augustine even say, when his church was almost empty because of a circus festival: "Who knows how many future bishops are now sitting in the stands at the circus and applauding the gladiators!"²⁵

Maybe their grandchildren—out of generational contrariety!—will have had enough of trampling and rejection and will extract great discoveries from that which is defamed and withheld from them today.

They will receive the immortal seeds of life from the holy inheritance in their own way, and in their way, different from ours, bear them to bring forth many fruits. Whether we older people experience this is really a matter of minor importance.

We must be satisfied with the knowledge that the City on the Hill is still there behind the fog that makes it invisible to many, and that the enemies can often smash only the backdrop sets and artificial images. We must be able to wait through snowmelt and flood, and even starless nights knowing that stars are more enduring than clouds. What is up to us is to plead without ceasing for discernment and love, for justice and patience—and for unshakable love for the Church. Because only the lover discerns. And what people who do not love her, maybe secretly hate her, tell us about her need not frighten us. But we also have to pray for the inner freedom to let go of much that is beloved and precious to us if doing so is really necessary for the renovation and peace of the city of God. Because God not only takes away bad and worthless things, but very often also precious things.

You're the one who gently shatters
 down upon us what we build
 so that we may see Heaven:
 this is why I don't complain.²⁶
 (Eichendorff)

We must always pray from now on to defend the *courage* that has been entrusted to us, to defend that which is holy tenaciously, bravely, stubbornly, and at all costs. Because even in worldly history those wonderful rescues and victories did not happen to the cowardly and idle ones, but really only those engaged in the highest or lowest moments of struggle. This courage must grow with darkness and threat. A great saying has come down to us from King Alfred of England, a contemporary of Charlemagne, who said under the Danish onslaught when the barbarians flooded his homeland and forced him back into the last free corner: "Tougher the spirit, bolder the hearts, stronger the courage when power diminishes!" And I wholeheartedly believe in the theology of moon symbolism, the strangely prophetic theology of Origen, which Hugo Rahner has once again made accessible to us: The Church is the moon, the splendor of which is tarnished by our sins and fades to seemingly total darkness. But in the darkest hour Christ, the sun, touches her anew and fills her again with increasing light.

ReCONSIDERATIONS

FR. JOSEPH RATZINGER

Eulogy for Ida Friederike Görres

*Eulogy at the passing of Ida Friederike Görres,
delivered by Professor Doctor Joseph Ratzinger at the Requiem Mass
in the Cathedral of Freiburg, Germany on May 19, 1971.²⁷*

THE CHURCH ENGAGES IN WORSHIP by commemorating the death of her Lord. She does this gratefully because she knows that this death has given life to suffering. With such knowledge, the Church dares to give thanks at the graves of her dead. She can do this because she believes that the death of those who believe in Jesus Christ is held in His death and thus in His resurrection. It is overcome in advance. It is not destruction but merely transition into a new and final way of being with God and with all who belong to the Lord.

Nevertheless, humanly speaking, this is something shocking, and sometimes we feel this outrageousness, such as when the words from the Song of Zechariah, which had been a song at the birth of a long-awaited child, are used at the open grave: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people."²⁸ In the face of tears and pain, in the face of all the hardship and abandonment that a person's departure can mean, the Church

praises God and sees in this fate of death His visitation, His closeness that gives salvation. And even before that, in the center of the liturgy, the words ring out: It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks—even at this hour.

Even at this hour: can we give thanks? Can we give thanks at the death of Ida Friederike Görres, with which a voice has been taken away from us, a voice which seems irreplaceable to the Church in this situation, when we are in a desert of conformism or embarrassed silence? She spoke with an insightful certainty and a fearlessness about the pressing questions and tasks of the Church today, something which is given only to the one who truly believes. And where else are there such voices?

This wasn't all easy for her. She had grown up in the liberal Catholicism of the waning Habsburg monarchy. Her education at a convent provided access to faith, rooted her in it, but everything remained strangely stale, inanimate, dry. Encountering the [Catholic] Youth Movement was what brought the great turning point, which determined her entire further path until the end. She realized what from then on remained the center of her thought and work: the living Church. She realized that the Church is not just an organization, a hierarchy, an administrative office, but an organism that grows and lives through the centuries. She realized that the Church is not just the small spatial and temporal segment to which we belong, but that the whole community of believers throughout all time and all places belongs to the Church. In her own words: the Church is "not a system, an idea, an ideology, a structure, a society, but the tremendous living establishment, which has existed since the apostles until today, fulfilling her history from century to century, growing, unfolding, struggling, ailing, recovering, living out her destiny and maturing toward the return of the Lord."²⁹ This very community throughout the eras, the whole that lives from the Lord—this is the Church in which the Lord Himself continues to walk through time and to draw her to Himself.

From this point of view, a decisive insight had become a self-ev-

ident matter for her, which at the same time made it possible for her to survive the darkening of the past few years and to maintain independence and serenity in them: a church built in this way must be the Church of sinners. In her last letter to me, she supported this idea passionately: A church of the elites—what would that be? No, it is precisely this that belongs to the Church: that she reaches down to the lowest misery of man, is disfigured by it, wounded, often almost completely concealed. However, still, this permeates everything again and again, that she calls all illness her own and, in this way, brings this to the Lord who desired to take on our weakness.

Certainly, it was not easy at the same time for Ida Friederike Görres to deal with a Church that no longer seemed to know herself, and which often appeared to be her own opponent. One of her most recent presentations, her speech “Trusting the Church?,”³⁰ gives us a rousing insight into her questions and struggles with what was becoming an ever new necessity of groping one’s way along in the Church:

What if the rebels really were to own the future? What if this process, which seems to us like destruction and betrayal, were actually God’s will and to resist it were impious and an act of petty faith? What if—an agonizing thought in the midnight hours—what if I were tied to a great but inexorably dying body, through just emotionally stirring, but ultimately subjective, unreasonable inhibitions, habits, prejudices, antiquated piety, wrongly grounded loyalty? . . . Are we living on a leaky ship sinking inch by inch, from which not only the rats but also the sensible, sober people jump off just in time?³¹

But all this questioning is offset by a great, indestructible confidence. It is expressed in the simple yet likewise great affirmation: “I believe in God’s faithfulness.”³² From this center, she was able to survive during the crisis of this mysterious organism, even to advance during the crisis and grow to a deeper understanding. I believe in God’s faithfulness—this statement is followed by what is almost a

hymn of confidence, hope, and joy: “I trust the *suffering* in the Church . . . I believe in the *praying* Church made up of laity and priests, the forbearing, the *atoning* Church.” “I believe in the hidden *saints*.”³³ She, who had been ill for a long time, belonged to a great extent to the suffering and the praying Church, to that living center, that is the assurance for all of us. And in all of this, there was no fanaticism, no rigidity in her. It was especially in the loyalty that imbued her life that she stayed lively, kept going. Until the very end, she emanated an unrestrained cheerfulness that is only possible for a person who knows himself or herself to be in harmony with the truth.

And so, we ask again: can we be thankful at this death? I think we can and must say yes. We thank God that she existed, that this insightful, brave, and faithful woman was given to the Church in this century. We give thanks for her writing, for the way she was and will continue to be present to many people through her writing. We give thanks for the path along which God led her, step by step. And we give thanks for the death that He gave her: she was called from the midst of her witness, from her work on the synod commission. She had been invited by friends to vacation in Styria, but ministry was more important to her—no matter how much she had been looking forward to pleasant days in her beloved Austria. We can give thanks—most deeply because we know that she has not been taken from us, just changed her location, as it were, in the communion of the saints, in that living Church spanning across all time and borders, in which she believed and for which she lived.

She followed a path to the end, whose goal for her was hope. In the lecture that I mentioned there is the witness of this hope of hers: “The new taboos are also good for something, rarely heard words unfold their almost unbearable force again”; I am on the way “to eternal bliss in the perfect unity of God, in the physical resurrection in a new heaven and a new earth.”³⁴ I am on the way to eternal bliss—for her, that was not a figure of speech but calm certainty. I am on the way to eternal bliss: at this hour, we want to ask God to say His definitive yes to such faith. Amen.

Notes

1. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, "Zur Einstimmung," in *Von Ehe und von Einsamkeit: ein Beitrag in Briefen* by Ida Friederike Görres (Vienna, Austria: Kairos Publications, 2012), 11–14. Görres first published this book in 1949. (I have translated this book into English, forthcoming 2021, tentatively titled *On Marriage and on Being Single: Four Letters*. —Translator.)
2. Ida Friederike Görres, *The Hidden Face: A Study of St Thérèse de Lisieux*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (first published in London: Burns & Oates, 1959 and New York: Pantheon, 1959), reprinted in 2003 by Ignatius Press. Initially published in German as *Das verborgene Antlitz. Eine Studie über Therese von Lisieux*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1943). The 1943 edition was destroyed during the war; it was republished in 1946 and then republished again later as *Das Senfkorn von Lisieux: Neue Deutungen* (Freiburg: Neue Deutungen, Herder, 1958), and then republished in German also in 1964 and 1998.
3. Ida Friederike Görres, *On Marriage and Being Single: Four Letters*, trans. Jennifer Bryson, forthcoming 2021.
4. Görres compiled the reflections on marriage that were prepared for the Würzburg Synod into a book: *What Marriage Binds Forever: Reflections on the Indissolubility of Marriage*, trans. Jennifer Bryson, forthcoming 2021.
5. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, "Weltüberwindung," Eine Neue Entdeckung: Ida Friederike Görres über Newman. Vorwort" in *Der Geopferte: Ein Anderer Blick auf John Henry Newman* by Ida Friederike Görres (Vallendar-Schönstatt, Germany: Patris Verlag, 2003), 6–8. (I am currently translating this book into English, publication 2022. —Translator.)
6. See, for example, Ida Friederike Görres, "Wirklich die neue Phönixgestalt?" *Über Kirche und Konzil: Unbekannte Briefe 1962–1971 an Paulus Gordon*, ed. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz (Heiligenkreuz, Austria: Be & Be Verlag, 2015). These letters, explains Gerl-Falkovitz, "contain sharp, on target commentary about the societal and ecclesial severance with 'the old ways.'"
7. In her footnotes to this introduction, Gerl-Falkovitz remarks that she recalls this from her time as director of studies at Burg Rothenfels, in discussions with, among others, Alfons Rosenberg, Fr. Manfred Hörhammer, Beatrix Klaiber und Dr. Maria Kallab, and from conversations on the occasion of the conference there about Ida Friederike Görres in May 1980, documented in Burgbrief Burg Rothenfels, March 1980. Conversations with Fr. Paulus Gordan in the [19]90s and with Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn in 2000, who called her "the smartest woman" he had ever met, confirm the impression from that time. See for example the observations by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn in *Weltweite Kirche. Begegnungen und Erfahrungen in sechs Kontinenten 1909–1999*, Stein am Rhein, (Christiana) 2000.
8. Anna Findl-Ludescher, "Stützen kann nur, was widersteht," Ida Friederike Görres—ihr Leben und ihre Kirchenschriften (Dissertation, Innsbruck 1998), Innsbruck/

- Wien 1999 (STS 9). Michael Kleinert, *Es wächst viel Brot in der Winternacht. Theologische Grundlinien im Werk von Ida Friederike Görres* (Dissertation, Vienna 2000). Michael Kleinert, *Studien zur systematischen und spirituellen Theologie* 36, Würzburg (Echter) 2002.
9. "From 1917 to 1966 Mooshausen was the residence of Parish Priest Josef Weiger (1883-1966), [Father Romano] Guardini's best friend. A large circle of friends gathered in this rectory, and Guardini himself lived in the rectory from 1943-1945 when he had to leave Berlin . . . Ida Görres knew Fr. Weiger . . . Her sister Olga, who is buried near M[oooshausen] in Altstadt an der Iller, may also have been acquainted with Fr. Weiger." Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, email to the translator, March 16, 2020.
 10. At a conference September 28-30, 2001, on the topic "Piety and Revolution," Andreas Batlogg discussed the conference in "Zwischen Pietät und Revolution. Neuentdeckung von Ida Friederike Görres?," *Stimmen der Zeit* 12 (2001), 857-60.
 11. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, "Görres, Ida Friederike," in B. Ottmad (ed.), *Baden-Württembergische Biographien II*, (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999), 161-63; Gerl-Falkovitz, "Zwischen den Zeiten: Ida Friederike Görres (1901-1971)," in *Ibid. Freundinnen. Christliche Frauen aus zwei Jahrtausenden*, (Munich:ewel Verlag, 1994), 121-32. Susanna Schmidt, "Ida Friederike Görres (1901-1971)," in Jürgen Aretz et al. (eds.), *Zeitgeschichte in Lebensbildern. Aus dem deutschen Katholizismus des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts 10* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2001), 179-90.
 12. Ida Friederike Görres, *Gedichte*, ed. and with an introduction by Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, (Mooshausen, Germany: Edition Mooshausen 2001, 2nd ed., 2002).
 13. Since Gerl-Falkovitz wrote this in 2003, she has since published this set of letters: Ida Friederike Görres, "Wirklich die neue Phönixgestalt?" *Über Kirche und Konzil: Unbekannte Briefe 1962-1971 anan Paulus Gordon*, ed. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz (Heiligenkreuz, Austria: Be & Be Verlag, 2015).
 14. There are archives in Freiburg and Burg Rothenfels, as well as the private archive of Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz in Erlangen.
 15. Ida Friederike Görres, *Nocturnen. Tagebuch und Aufzeichnungen* (Frankfurt/Main, Germany: Knecht, 1949), 102.
 16. Ida Friederike Görres, "Vertrauen zur Kirche," in *Im Winter wächst das Brot: Sechs Versuche über die Kirche* (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Johannes Verlag, 1970), 103-31.
 17. In a letter dated April 4, 1970, to Fr. Paulus Gordon, OSB, Görres described her preparation for this lecture:

I recklessly agreed to give a lecture in Badenweiler on April 17: "Trusting the Church"!!!! With this, I'm getting myself into hot water!! This is like a Tunic of Nessus that doesn't leave one a minute's rest. Today on the 4th, I have no idea what I'm going to say in 13 days. But it is actually quite amusing to have to reflexively conquer the deepest, sustaining foundation in oneself, from which one actually lives. Because I know that this is THERE, precisely because I live from it

and any tribulations only go to the reflexive and conscious level, thick as swarms of hornets sometimes, but still ONLY in the foreground, they never reach the foundational reason for existence—thank God. But this rather eludes expression, articulation. The desire to force oneself into this level is almost too much. At any rate, I myself am curious to see what the result will be.

Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, ed, *Wirklich die neue Phönixgestalt? – Ida Friederike Görres über Kirche und Konzil: Unbekannte Briefe 1962 – 1971 an Paulus Gordon* (Heiligenkreuz, Austria: Be & Be Verlag, 2015), 456–57. (Special thanks to Dr. Gerl-Falkovitz for bringing this reference to my attention. —Translator.)

18. This appears to be spurious. I have not been able to find such a reference in the works of St. John Henry Newman. —Translator.
19. The context of this anecdote:

The gypsy in the story went to confession, but the cautious priest asked him if he knew the commandments of the law of God. To which the gypsy replied: “Well, Father, it’s this way: I was going to learn them, but I heard talk that they were going to do away with them.’ Is not this the situation in the world at present? The rumour is running round that the commandments of the law of Europe are no longer in force, and in view of this, men and peoples are taking the opportunity of living without imperatives.”

José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1932), 135. Accessed at: https://archive.org/stream/TheRevoltOfTheMassesJoseOrtegaYGasset/Philosophy+-+The+Revolt+of+the+Masses+-+Ortega+y+Gasset+Jose_djvu.txt

20. Luke 7:23.
21. See Anne Catherine Emmerich, *Schöpfung und Heilsgeschichte. Geheimnisse des alten Bundes. Visionen. 8. September 1774—9. Februar 1824 Selig gesprochen am 3. Oktober 2004 Entnommen aus den Aufzeichnungen des Clemens von Brentano*, ed. Josef Stocker (Vienna, Austria: Mediatrix-Verlag, 2013), 7, 76, and 81.
22. This appears to be a paraphrase, not a direct quote, from Ernst Jünger’s “The Worker” (1932) available at <https://nupress.northwestern.edu/content/worker-0>.
23. This is a paraphrase from St. Thomas More’s Speech at His Trial, 1535, from this passage:

If the number of bishops and universities should be so material as your lordship seems to think, then I see little cause, my lord, why that should make any change in my conscience. For I have no doubt that, though not in this realm, but of all those well learned bishops and virtuous men that are yet alive throughout Christendom, they are not fewer who are of my mind therein. But if I should speak of those who are already dead, of whom many are now holy saints in heaven, I am very sure it is the far greater part of them who, all the while they lived, thought in this case the way that I think now. And therefore am I not bound, my lord, to conform my conscience to the council of one realm against the General Council of Christendom.

- Gerard B. Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage* (New York: Scepter Publishers, 1995), 216.
24. From a discussion between Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer, April 1806. https://www.xn--gedichteundzitatefralle-tpc.de/2019/10/woldemar-von-biedermann-gesprache_3.html. “Hammer zu sein scheint Jedem rühmlicher und wünschenswerther, als Ambos, und doch was gehört nicht dazu, diese unendlichen, immer wiederkehrenden Schläge auszuhalten.”
 25. This appears to be a loose paraphrase of the story St. Augustine tells in Book 7 of *The Confessions* about his friend Alypius who used to squander time at the circus in Carthage but then later, to the surprise of St. Augustine, became a Catholic priest.
 26. Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (1788-1857), from the poem “Ergebung” (i.e. “Submission”).
 27. Joseph Ratzinger, “Gedenkworte zum Heimgang von Ida Friederike Görres,” in Ida Görres, Walter Nigg, and Joseph Ratzinger, *Aufbruch—aber keine Auflösung. Briefe über die Kirche und anderes* (Freiburg, Germany: Jung Verlag, 1971), 145–51.
 28. Luke 1:68.
 29. Ida Friederike Görres, *Im Winter wächst das Brot*, (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Johannes Verlag, 1970), 114.
 30. This question mark in the title “Trusting the Church?” appears only in the 1971 version of the Ratzinger eulogy. In the 1970 printed edition of the Görres lecture, “Vertrauen zur Kirche” [“Trusting the Church”], there is no question mark in the title of the lecture. —Translator.
 31. Görres, *Im Winter wächst das Brot*, 113.
 32. *Ibid.*, 127.
 33. *Ibid.*, 129.
 34. *Ibid.*, 115–16.

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

JENNIFER S. BRYSON has a PhD in near Eastern languages and civilizations and an MA in history from Yale University, and a BA in political science from Stanford University. She has worked for the Department of Defense and several think tanks. She learned German while she was in high school in Austria and while studying Marxism-Leninism at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig in the former German Democratic Republic during college. She developed an interest in translation theory during graduate school at Yale. Bryson plans to publish her translations of *On Marriage and on Being Single* (1949) and *What Marriage Binds Forever: Reflections on the Indissolubility of Marriage* (1971) by Ida Görres in 2021 and she has begun translation of two other books by Görres as well.

PETER FELDMEIER is the Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo. The author of ten books and numerous articles, Feldmeier focuses on systematic theology, Christian spirituality, and interreligious dialogue.

SR. ELINOR GARDNER, OP, is a member of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia. She earned her PhD in philosophy from Boston College in 2009, and has taught at The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, Aquinas College in Nashville, Tennessee, and the University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas. She is currently an affiliate assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Dallas.

IDA FRIEDERIKE GÖRRES (1901–1971) was the daughter of a Habsburg empire diplomat and his Japanese wife. Görres grew up on the family estate in Bohemia in a Catholic family and was educated in Austria and Germany. She became active in the Catholic Youth Movement in Germany in the 1920s and then worked in lay ministry in the Church, especially with girls and women. She was a talented and prolific author who rose to some prominence during her lifetime among German-speaking Catholics. Her major works were hagiographical-biographies of St. Therese of Lisieux, St. John Henry Newman, and others. She also published many essays on the Church, social issues of her time, and the Catholic faith.

HANNA-BARBARA GERL-FALKOVITZ is professor emerita and chair of the European Institute for Philosophy and Religion at the Hochschule Heiligenkreuz in Austria. She earned her PhD and Habilitation at the University of Munich, Germany. She served as director of studies in Burg Rothenfels and she has an honorary doctorate from the Catholic Philosophical-Theological Hochschule Vallendar, Germany. She has taught at the universities in Munich, Bayreuth, Tübingen, Eichstatt, and Dresden. Her research, with an emphasis on the Catholic tradition, is focused on the intersection of modern religion and philosophy as well as phenomenology and the anthropology of the sexes. Her extensive list of publications includes books and academic articles on Romano Guardini, Edith Stein, Simone Weil, and many others. Gerl-Falkovitz has played a key role in preserving the legacy of Ida Friederike Görres.

RANDALL B. SMITH is full professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas. His book *Reading the Sermons of Thomas Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide* is available from Emmaus Press. His next book, *Aquinas, Bonaventure, and the Scholastic Culture at Paris: Preaching, Prologues, and Biblical Commentary* will be available from Cambridge University Press fall 2020.

JAMES MATTHEW WILSON is associate professor of humanities and Augustinian traditions at Villanova University, poet-in-residence of the Benedict XVI Institute for Sacred Music and Divine Worship, and director of the Colosseum Institute. He has published nine books, including, most recently, *The River of the Immaculate Conception* (Wiseblood, 2019), and is the author of many articles and essays on philosophical-theology and literature.