

Martyrs at the Hearth

The Social-Religious Roles of Resistance Women During Nazi Germany

Barbara Okker Hassell

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Brian M. Britt (Chair)

Stefanie Hofer

Timothy W. Luke

Michael B. Saffle

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Else Niemöller's Prayer for the Children of the World:

“Lover of humanity, who cares for even one sparrow’s fall, we thank You that Your infinite eye is upon all the children of the world. Whatever the circumstances, we pray that we may help to release them from the forces that scar: hunger, homelessness, hatred, and lies. Give to each of us some sense of responsibility that all children everywhere may come into their full human heritage.” (Else Niemöller, 2008)

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ABSTRACT:

German resistance to Nazi oppression existed within the ranks of academe, the military, the working classes, and the established churches. The Catholic Church, under the leadership of Pope Pius XI, entered into a non-interference agreement with Hitler, but the Evangelical Church experienced a severe split. From this division grew the Confessing Church. A number of leaders within the Confessing Church were arrested or killed during Nazi Germany, and it was the women of the church who continued the work overtly and covertly. The work of these women has mostly been marginalized by history – in part because historic writings belonged to the male hegemony, and in part because the women did not seek recognition. As most of the women about whom I am writing came of age during Weimar Republic (1919-1933), I argue that the women of the resistance received their empowerment to rise up against Nazi oppression from the women's movement of the interwar years. To understand the normative influences, one must consider the societal and political forces that helped shape that time. What led Germany on this path of destruction and caused it to vote for a leviathan in 1933? How did the work of the resistance women serve to fight against the forces of evil that threatened to drown out all reason? What motivated these women to disregard their own safety in their struggle against evil?

DEDICATION

THIS PROJECT IS DEDICATED TO
MY MOTHER (1925 - 2013)
WHO TAUGHT THE VALUE OF HARD WORK
AND
TO MY DEAR FRIEND EMILY DONNELLY
WHO ENCOURAGED ME
TO BECOME A TEACHER

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1. Foreword

Each year as I begin teaching a new German class, I ask my students to mention the first thought that comes to mind when I mention the word ‘Germany.’ Invariably the first or the second word associated with the concept of Germany is Hitler, Nazi rule, and persecution of Jews. No one has ever mentioned the women’s resistance to Hitler, the *Confessing Church*, or the Kreisau Circle. Germany continues to suffer from the Hitler years and the atrocities that were committed against humanity. Right from the onset, I want to state emphatically that I am not trying to diminish or take away Germany’s responsibility for what happened during those dark years – what I do want to accomplish, however, is to add to people’s understanding that not everyone fell in lockstep with Nazi ideology and that some resisted, even to the point of death.

Interest in resistance to Nazi oppression in Germany has only in recent years gained a wider audience in the United States. Of the books written and published in the US over the past seventy years that deal with resistance to Nazi tyranny, nearly half of them have been written during the past four years (see chart). When the search in the Library of Congress is limited to “women and resistance” only eleven books have been published on that subject, and all of them appeared in print in the past twelve years.

In her book *Freya von Moltke. Ein Jahrhundertleben 1911 - 2010*, Frauke Geyken (2011) supports my claim that interest in the resistance has grown in recent years. She writes that in 1951 only 43 percent of men and 38 percent of women had a positive view of the resistance and not until 2004, when most of the *Erlebnisgeneration* (the generation that lived through Weimar and Nazi Germany) had passed away, that a clear majority had a favorable view of the resistance (p. 162).

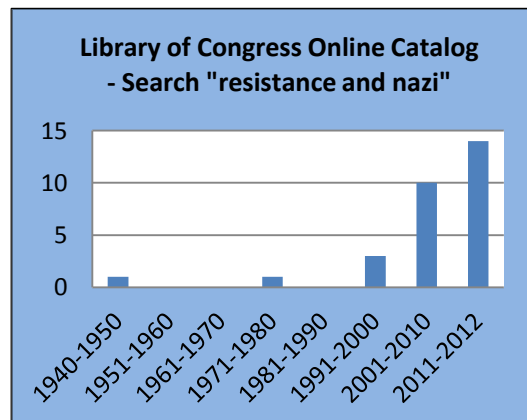


Figure 1: Books Published on the Topic of Resistance in Germany During Nazi Germany

As part of the “baby boomer” generation in Germany, I, too, carry the “collective guilt” of history¹. The sheer outrage over the events that took place in Germany between the years 1933 and 1945 cannot be expressed in words, and the guilt over what my parents and

¹ This collective guilt was first addressed by Pastor Martin Niemöller during his famous "Gesamtschuld" sermon in Stuttgart, Germany in October 1945.

grandparents allowed to happen in my beloved Germany staggers my imagination. How could this have happened in a country that is so proud of its past? How could the teachings of Kant, Schiller, and Goethe have been so utterly denied and ignored? As a graduate student, I became more keenly aware of the circumstances that surrounded the demise of the democracy, when I wrote my Master's thesis on "How the Weimar Republic Prepared the Way for the Third Reich." During most of my educational years in the sixties in Germany, I was taught that Weimar Germany failed because of the world-wide economic crisis of 1923 and 1929, and it was not until I looked at the social, political and cultural aspects of Weimar Germany that a more complete picture began to emerge in my own mind. Only after I understood the complexity of that historic period did I begin to develop some empathy for the decisions the previous generations had made, and through this I appreciate even more the heroic deeds of those who resisted a madman. Here I want to honor those who attempted to stem the flood of evil that threatened to drown out all reason

Additionally I hope to find a belated cure for the shame that bears on my mind and the minds of many Germans who either lived through the dark years of Hitler's oppression or followed after. Martin Niemöller opined during his famous "Gesamtschuld" Sermon delivered in October 1945 in Stuttgart that all those who lived through those dark years and did not speak out bear the collective guilt of those horrific events. This may suggest that those who did speak out may be exempted from that guilt. What I have been able to ascertain from the archival materials of the resistance women is that they never sought to be excluded from the national accountability. Those who opposed Nazism in Germany were willing to accept the collective guilt of those events along with their fellow countrymen. None of the resistance women tried to distance herself from a nation that has brought so much evil and suffering to the world.

As already noted, women were not recognized for their work, and their activities were often viewed with a certain amount of skepticism. I like to think that there was no malice attached to their lack of recognition – it was simply how things were done during that time. Freya von Moltke confirms this view in her interview with Gauke Freyken (2011). The resistance women did not seek to be in the center of the discussions, never took credit for their contributions, and were content to live in the shadows of the men. Each of these women exemplifies what it means to be truly humble and for that I want to honor them and give them the long overdue recognition they deserve.

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Finally, as I contemplate the examples the women of the resistance have provided for our present day, one thought continually comes to mind: evil continues to exist in our day, and we must not give up the struggle against it so that the sacrifices of those who came before us will not have been in vain. Their lives serve as an example for us. Regardless of the dangers they faced, they chose to count the lives of their fellow human beings as more important than their own. By their heroic actions, they have transformed Browning's (1992) concept of "ordinary men" who committed unspeakable acts of violence against humanity to that of "extraordinary women" who resisted the evil of their day.

“*Die Geschichte kennt kein letztes Wort*”

WILLY BRAND (CHANCELLOR OF WEST GERMANY 1969-1974)²

2. Introduction

This research project has several overarching objectives. The first objective is to establish a connection between the women’s emancipation movement that emerged during Weimar Germany and the women of the resistance during Nazi Germany. This particular claim is new to the field of women's studies. I believe that it was precisely the paradigm of *die neue Frau* that enabled the women to view their roles differently and resist the terror of Nazi oppression. The three women, Else Niemöller, Marga Meusel, and Freya von Moltke, reached adulthood during the Weimar Republic, and each models, in some aspect of their lives, the drive to be accepted in the sphere that was traditionally viewed as belonging to men. There is no doubt that the concept of the new woman and the ensuing cultural change inspired these women to throw off the stereotypical gender roles of the old Wilhemian era. In the foreword to the book that was compiled to honor Else Niemöller at the event of her 100th birthday celebration, the church president of the Evangelical Church in Hessen and Nassau addressed the issue of the women's movement and feminist theology. Spengler (1990) argues that traditionally women in Germany had been forced into a role of marginalization, but the women's liberation movement and feminist theology removed those restraints from the duties women have in the Church in recent years. I am certain that President Spengler was referring to the post-war women's liberation movement, but what I argue is that this liberation movement started not in post-war Germany but during the time of the Weimar Republic. During that time, women first began to find their voice in society and were ready to do away with the traditional gender roles (*Die Frau eines bedeutenden Mannes. Else Niemöller geb. Bremer. 1890-1990.*, 1990).

I would like to offer further proof of the influence of *die neue Frau* through a small snapshot of Marga Meusel and her ties to the women's movement in Weimar Germany. Meusel studied under the renowned Alice Salomon, the founder of *die Akademie für soziale und pädagogische Frauenarbeit* in Berlin, and published a chapter in Salomon's seminal thirteen volume series. Alice Salomon was an ardent advocate of women’s rights in Germany. In a later chapter I will go into more detail about Marga Meusel's association with Alice Salomon, at this juncture I want to underscore that the connection to the *neue Frau* existed (Hamm, 1992/93).

² Brand, W. (1996)

Die neue Frau is indeed a fascinating and broad theme in German culture. The women's movement in Germany began in the 1860s, but reached its zenith during Weimar Germany. During this period women gained the right to vote, and a large number of women were elected to parliament. Women gained access to higher education and were employed outside of their homes in increasing numbers.

Some women, such as Marianne Weber³, wife of Max Weber, advocated for the traditional roles of women as nurturer and home makers; while other women, and men for that matter, wanted to see women leave the traditional gender expectations placed on them by society. The goal of the latter group was to create equality between the genders in the workplace, in society, and in the home (Kaes, 1994). The resistance women, on whom my research focuses, also struggled with these societal pressures.

In this respect German culture was no different from American culture. Ann Douglas (1977) describes the antipathy that existed between male and female leadership in the church during the emergence of the feminists' movement of the past century in her book *The Feminization of American Culture*. American and German cultures were both dominated by men, with women given leadership roles only reluctantly. A similar study was conducted by Relinde Meiwes (2000) as a dissertation project which was later published in the book *Arbeiterinnen des Herrn - Katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert*. As part of her research, Meiwes delineates the women's movement within the Catholic Church in Germany during the nineteenth century and demonstrates that women were instrumental in changing the male hegemony of the church (Meiwes, 2000). Their sphere of influence was limited to the monastic extension of the church. They had committed themselves to asceticism and had founded the order of nuns called *die Schwestern des armen Kinde Jesu*. Their mission was to alleviate the plight of the working class in Aachen (Meiwes, 2000, p. 29). Equality for women and in particular the ordination of women as pastors and shepherds of congregations in the Protestant church equality continued to be elusive. Not until the late fifties, the first woman was ordained as pastor of a church in Germany. Ulrike Milhahn (2001) writes in her article "Ordination of Women in Germany" that it was only during the second World War, that women were permitted to step into the pulpit, and as late as the turn of the twentieth century only one quarter of the offices held in the Lutheran Church were filled by women (Milhahn, 2001). While

³ It is interesting to note that Marianne Weber later on became an ardent supporter of the women's movement when she started her salon in Freiburg during her husband's tenure at the Freiburg University. At the end of World War I, however, she felt that society would be best served by women fulfilling their traditional gender roles (Kaes, 1994).

Germany's view of women's ordination changed considerably after World War II, in the American church the struggle was and is far from over. Some time passed before women were allowed to assume leadership roles in the church. The struggle that Ann Douglas (1977) describes in her book is mirrored by early post-war Germany and her principles and observations can easily be applied and extended to the women of the resistance (Douglas, 1977).

As already stated, it was the trickledown effect of the new woman that empowered the women of the resistance to save a number of lives during Nazi oppression. To establish proof of this link to feminism in their lives, I searched archives in Berlin, Darmstadt, and Stanford University. I looked for references of the women's movement in the personal stories and effects of Niemöller, Meusel, and Moltke. My searches focused on finding some mention of the feminists' influence during the Weimar Republic. While I could find only a limited number of references in their personal writings, I concluded that they were simply not aware of the extent of influences to which they had been subjected, even as we are not fully aware of the impact our culture has on our thinking and behavior. Nonetheless their lives bear out a number of characteristics so typical of the "new woman," and in a later chapter I will go into greater detail about this phenomenon.

Beate Schröder (1992) offers a glimpse into the thinking of the religious women of that period. Her interview with Dr. Gertrude Freyss in the book *Die Schwestern mit der roten Karte*⁴ clearly shows that a number of women who came of age during the Weimar Republic embraced the fact that some were willing to end the male dominated stratagem that relegated them to the home and to taking care of children. Many women sought employment outside of the home, and pursued higher education, all of which is evidenced in the three women on whom my writing focuses (Schröder, 1992). Beate Schröder interviewed a number of women in the creation of her monograph, but one stands out in relation to the phenomenon of the *neue Frau*. Schröder asked Dr. Gertrude Freyss⁵ about her view of the feminist movement, to which she replied,

On the one hand I was fascinated [with the women's movement], that the long-held ideas of what a woman should be and the old attitudes that a woman should obey her husband, and that the man had the final say-so in the marriage, in the family, as well as in the professional life were being abandoned. And that there were women who were employed

⁴ The "rote Karte" was a red card which identified its member with the *Confessing Church*.

⁵ When Dr. Gertrude Freyss (born 1904) decided to study Chemistry and Engineering at the University in Karlsruhe, she was the only woman during one semester, and she writes that of the 2000 students enrolled there were at most 20 women who were admitted.

outside of their homes, who had their own ideas, and pursued college careers – that was fascinating. But that they went into the streets and thought that they must announce by their manner of dressing that they were ready to abandon the old virtues – that was not the correct venue for me. This conflict had to be resolved with the older generation, not through confrontational behavior. (Schröder, 1992, pp. 79-80) [MY TRANSLATION]

My second objective in this research project is to highlight the works of Else Niemöller, the wife of the famous resistance pastor, Martin Niemöller; Marga Meusel, a resistance worker within the Inner Mission of the Confessing Church; and Freya von Moltke, the wife and partner of Helmuth James Graf von Moltke (subsequently called Helmuth von Moltke), founder of the *Kreisau Kreis*. These extraordinary women exemplified what it means to resist even to the point of risking the loss of their own lives. Niemöller, Meusel, and Moltke were not only educated during a time when women did not typically pursue a university education, they also demonstrated their resolve when they stepped out of the roles society had determined for them and into the roles of leadership within the church after many of the pastors had been arrested, imprisoned, conscripted, or killed. Their labor within the Confessing Church was of paramount importance as they filled the empty pulpits, led prayer groups (forbidden by the Nazi authorities), assisted Jews in securing false documents, took care of the physical needs of others, and carried messages from the imprisoned pastors to the congregations. In spite of the constant dangers and threats, they remained steadfast in their struggle against Nazi tyranny and in their commitment to a higher calling. The Confessing Church would not have been able to survive Nazi oppression had it not been for the active role these women took in maintaining the integrity of the church.

Theodor Thomas (1995) writes in the epilogue to his chapter on the "Confessing Church's Legacy" in his book *Women Against Hitler. Christian Resistance in the Third Reich*, titled, "What about the Women?" that the women played a unique role in the Confessing Church (p. 73). He opines,

... although historians have ignored them. Confessing women participated in the synod meetings, sat as members of 'brotherhood' councils, raised money, administered parishes, taught Bible classes, and published and distributed clandestine literature. They served as secretaries, teachers, and social workers, often at the risk of their own lives. They experienced Gestapo interrogations, arrests, and loss of employment. They were part of the conspiracy for good that resisted the Nazi takeover of the Christian Churches. In tens of thousands of cases they were the ones left to conduct the Church Struggle at home

while their men were in prison or at the front. Their stories, if we could discover them all, would provide expansive reading. (Thomas, 1995)

Thomas recognizes, as do I, that the women have mostly been marginalized in the recollection of the resistance. He delineates how the women who fought against Hitler were predominantly from the middle class, a fact that “facilitated their ability to lead in the crisis” (Thomas, 1995, p. 52). The women whom I have studied were no exception. Each of these women, Niemöller, Meusel, and Moltke, held deep spiritual convictions and these, combined with the empowerment they had received during Weimar Germany, enabled them to become the heroic *Women of the Resistance*⁶. To my knowledge, no one has ever tried to establish this link before and this underscores the uniqueness of my project. Moreover, the extent of the sphere of influence of social religious activities within the church during the Nazi period has not been explored previously, and I argue that these three women, whether consciously or unconsciously, were influenced by the changed role of women.

Wilhelm Niemöller (1975), brother of Martin Niemöller, offers some anecdotal insights into the life of Else Niemöller regarding the famous Stuttgart sermon in his book *Neuanfang 1945*. After receiving a car and travel authorization, Martin and Else Niemöller drove to Stuttgart to attend a church gathering. Much to his surprise and dismay, Martin Niemöller discovered that he was to be the featured speaker the following day. Since he had not prepared a sermon for the assembly, his wife assisted him, as she was accustomed to do, and suggested a Bible passage from the book of Jeremiah in preparation for his talk (Niemöller W., 1975). The verses she chose were Jer. 14:7-11. Verse seven, which became the nexus of his speech, states, “We have sinned against you.” Else Niemöller understood, as did her husband, that the only way Germany could experience healing and restoration was by confessing its sins before the nations of the world and God. The interesting aspect about this anecdotal account is that nowhere in any of Else Niemöller's personal effects did she ever mention this important contribution. Even Wilhelm Niemöller, I believe, mentioned it more parenthetically than as a major point. Women from that time period did not seek to be in the foreground of important conversations. They were

⁶ The late Professor Klemens von Klemperer (1992) addresses the enigma of the resistance during Nazi Germany in his book *German Resistance Against Hitler. The Search For Allies Abroad 1938-1945*. Dr. Klemperer states, that a well-meaning, albeit misguided, friend claimed that it was a moot point to speak of a resistance in Germany. Firstly, Germany had lost the war, secondly, Germany never had a well-organized *Résistance* as did France. Nonetheless, a resistance existed, but it consisted of splinter groups among the nobility, the military, the church, the working class, the bourgeoisie, and the academics (Klemperer, 1992). German resistance, so argues Dr. Klemperer, rose from character and convictions and not simply from class or *Stand*.

content to use their influence behind the scenes, while men were willing to be honored for their contributions. Marga Meusel also lived in relative obscurity after the end of the war and died a lonely death eight years after the end of the war. Lothar Beckmann (n.d.) describes her passing in the article “Marga Courage” as follows,

Marga Meusel died on May 16, 1953 abandoned by her congregation and her family. Her grave is located in the “Onkel Tom Graveyard.” No pastor from the congregation in Berlin-Zehlendorf buried her, noted Dr. Ludwig. The social welfare office had to leave the community building shortly after her death. Later on her office was also cleaned out and valuable documents were destroyed, unintentionally or intentionally or simply out of caution. (Beckmann, n.d.) [MY TRANSLATION]

My third objective is to include the contributions of women during Nazi Germany in historical conversations. History has been written predominately by men and the male perspective prevails even in our day. Admittedly this practice has changed during recent decades, but corrections to the past historic records are appearing only slowly. Women's contributions are often relegated to a secondary place, in part because women did not view their work as important enough to be included in historic narratives. That is not to say that historic recollections are invalid; I simply believe that they are incomplete.

To accomplish these objectives, I want to set the stage by offering a brief overview of the history that led Germany on this path of destruction. This will serve as the background canvas to the lives of the resistance women. In order to apprehend the complexity of the Nazi's rise to power and ultimately the founding of the Confessing Church, where my research focuses, it is imperative to study first the end of World War I and the interwar years. The Weimar Republic, which lasted from 1919 until 1933, was Germany's first attempt at democracy and was brought to life in the spirit of Goethe and Schiller, of tolerance and humanistic ideals. At the time of its birth, Germany was still smarting from the Peace of Versailles and the failed revolution of 1918.

Germany had lost the war. Kaiser Wilhelm II had abdicated his throne at the urging of his cabinet and had fled across the border to Holland. In the chaos that ensued and because of the political instability that followed during the first few months after the end of the war, the socialist factions of the country attempted to seize power. Following the failed *coup* and after Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were brutally murdered in Berlin, the first National Assembly was elected on January 19, 1919. The deputies decided to meet in the *Nationaltheater* in Weimar, a hallowed place in the minds of many Germans, as it was in Weimar that Johann

Wolfgang von Goethe founded the *Nationaltheater*; it was in Weimar where he lived for most of his life; and it was in Weimar where he wrote some of his greatest works such as *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* and the final version of *Faust*. All of Goethe's works advocate freedom of thought and freedom from oppression. The assembly elected Friedrich Ebert as *Reichspräsident* and Gustav Scheidemann as *Reichskanzler*. When the deputies drew up the constitution of the Weimar Republic, they were guided by principles of fairness and equal access to power and justice. From all appearances, the assembly was off to a good start. What happened to destroy this fledgling democracy and to lead the German people to vote for a leviathan in 1933? One of the first blows the Weimar Republic suffered, as already mentioned, was the consequences of the *Peace Treaty of Versailles*.

Winston Churchill and others are credited with saying that, "History is written by the victors," and so most accounts of the aftermath of World War I fail to present a complete picture of how its conclusions affected the German people. My intent with this brief historic overview is to present some facts that are often glossed over in the recollection of World War I, and to demonstrate how this situation set the stage for a madman like Hitler to come to power. The results of the Treaty of Versailles were felt profoundly by all Germans, men and women alike, and as is often the case in western civilizations, the task of reconciliation and reconstruction of societies falls on the women. Graf von Brockdorff-Rantzau shed some light on the plight of the women during and after the war in his speech before the Assembly in Versailles. He stated, "The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who have perished since November 11, 1918, as a result of the blockade, were killed with cold deliberation, after our enemies had been assured of their complete victory"⁷ (Reinhardt, 1950, p. 653). This profound effect on the women of Weimar cannot be underestimated, as they were the ones who made up the majority of the "non-combatants" of whom Brockdorff-Rantzau spoke.

More than thirty nations had been involved in the execution of World War I, including sixty-five million soldiers. At the end of the war the casualties world-wide totaled eight million dead combatants and civilians and over twenty-five million injured people (Reinhardt, 1950). Toward the end of the war the German people had lost the will to fight and simply wanted the

⁷ I believe that this food blockade of Germany was a retribution on the part of France for the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Germany laid siege of Paris and its citizens nearly starved to death. The food shortage was so extreme that the people of Paris began to kill and eat first horses, then dogs, cats, and rats and finally their prized elephants Castor and Pollux were killed to feed the starving people of Paris. France finally agreed to Bismarck's terms of surrender (Naranjo, 2003)

war to come to an end⁸. The armistice of November 11, 1918, required German troops to withdraw from all Western lands within a matter of weeks. Additionally, Germans were required to deliver to the Allied powers 5000 locomotives, 5000 trucks, “150,000 freight cars, immense quantities not only of war material but of farm equipment, including horses (150,000), cattle (880,000), sows (15,000), sheep (897,000), and goats (25,000)” (Reinhardt, 1950). Germany fulfilled all of these demands. But this was only the beginning for the defeated German nation. Prior to the end of the war the allied forces had ordered a food blockade of Germany which was not lifted until July 12, 1919 – seven months after the armistice had been signed. The German peace delegation under the leadership of Graf Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau was invited to the peace negotiations in Paris during the summer of 1919. The delegates were kept in a hotel behind barbed wires and were only allowed to issue written responses to the terms agreed upon by the conquering powers (Reinhardt, 1950). During the peace negotiations, Germans were made out to be a wanton, murdering, brutal, and insane lot (Kaes, 1994, p. 13). Germany did not shrink back from accepting responsibility⁹ for the destruction caused in Belgium and France¹⁰ as Graf Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau assured the assembly, but what Germany could not accept was to take the sole responsibility for the war. The reparation payments demanded of the German people staggered the imagination of the average citizen. Germany lost all its colonial holdings and was placed under the aegis of the League of Nations¹¹. Kurt Reinhardt (1950) argues in *Germany: 2000 Years* that it is false to claim Germany was placed under the administration of the League of Nations, “actually they were added as ‘mandates’ to the colonial empires of the allied powers. The holders of such mandates were legally authorized to expropriate and expel all German nationals from those territories. The only place where Germans were not expelled was in the South African Union” (Reinhardt, 1950). As a parenthetical note, I would like to point out that Freya von Moltke had family ties in South Africa and when her family encouraged her and her husband to stay in South Africa until the war was over, they both refused.

⁸ This absence of the will to fight had been addressed by Paul von Hindenburg at his famous *Dolchstoßlegende* speech before the National Assembly on November 18, 1919. This report was based on the assembly transcripts published in *Stenographischer Bericht über die öffentlichen Verhandlungen des 15. Untersuchungsausschusses der verfassungsgebenden Nationalversammlung*. Vol. 2 (Berlin 1920), pp. 700-701

⁹ The German magazine *Der Spiegel* reported on September 28, 2010 that Germany will make the last installment on the war debt incurred during World War I on its twentieth reunification anniversary October 3, 2010. The initial sum was 269 billion gold marks or 96,000 tons of gold. In 1929 the debt was reduced to 112 billion gold marks.

¹⁰ This obligation had already been clarified in Article 231 of the Weimar Constitution (Reinhardt, 1950).

¹¹ It was not until December 10, 1926 that Germany was allowed to join the League of Nations (Reinhardt, 1950).

The terms of the Peace Treaty of Versailles placed an enormous strain on the German economy and on German families. Political upheaval and rabid inflation¹² were characteristic of the early twenties and threatened the existence of the democracy. The *Kapp Putsch* of 1920 was but one of many that threatened to overthrow the established government. Wolfgang Kapp temporarily seized the governmental offices in Berlin and demanded that the *Treaty of Versailles* be rescinded. One political assassination followed another and political volatility was the order of the day. With each *coup d'état* the German people hoped for a relief from their war debts. The allied powers, primarily France, countered this by threats of invasion if reparation payments were not made. The devaluation of the *Reichsmark* also caused economic instability, which ultimately led to a request for a moratorium on the reparations. In studying this period one might be inclined to agree with the Schmittian assessment that democracy destroys cultures. These were but the birth pangs of the new Republic. Peter Gay (1968) sums it up best when he writes, “[t]he Republic was born in defeat, lived in turmoil, and died in disaster.” The political upheaval continued throughout its ephemeral existence. He continues,

Its tormented brief life with its memorable artifacts, and its tragic death – part murder, part wasting sickness, part suicide – have left their imprint on men’s minds, often vague perhaps, but always splendid. When we think of Weimar, we think of modernity in art, literature, and thought; we think of the rebellion of sons against fathers, Dadaists against art, Berliners against beefy philistinism, libertines against old-fashioned moralists; we think of *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *The Magic Mountain*, the *Bauhaus*, Marlene Dietrich. (Gay, 1968, p. xiii)

The cultural aspect of Weimar Germany and its normative influence on the resistance women will be addressed in a different chapter as it ties in more closely to the development of feminism during that time period. Ostensibly the political climate in Germany was ripe for new leadership.

National Socialists took advantage of the political instability in Germany during the late 1920s. Since Germany had always been ruled by an upper class and had never experienced a real revolution, the National Socialists’ rise to power was deemed a great achievement for the working class. Some post-war European sociologists such as Hendrik de Man, Heinrich Stiefler, and Theodor Geiger have claimed that it was predominantly the lower classes and women who voted for Hitler. Falter (1991) dispels that notion.

¹² The official exchange rate in November 1923 was 4.2 Trillion Reichsmark to one dollar. On the black market a dollar could be exchanged for as much as 12 Trillion Reichsmark (Sax & Kuntz, 1992, p. 53).

Jürgen Falter (1991) addresses the issue of the female vote for the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers Party) in his book *Hitlers Wähler*. The chart, which graphically depicts Jürgen Falter's research, proves his claim that it was not the women who acquiesced to Hitler's strong-man image as some sociologists have asserted. As the chart indicates, fewer women than men (even though women outnumbered men in the Weimar Republic) voted for the NSDAP during the four elections leading up to March 1933.

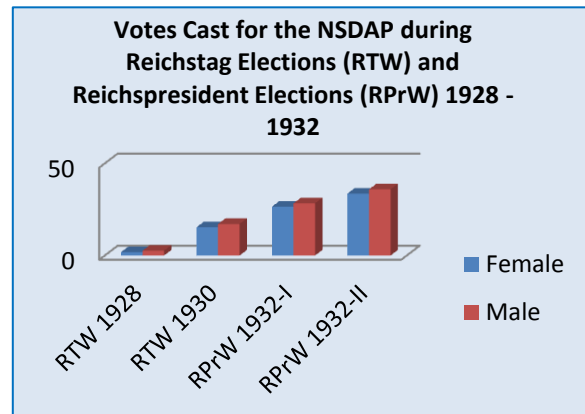


Figure 2: Male and Female Voters for the Nazi Party

Additionally, during the last quasi-free election on March 5, 1933 the difference between men and women who voted for the NSDAP is statistically insignificant (49.7 percent men, 50.3 percent women). What is more telling of the election in March 1933 is that sixty percent of the middle class voted for Hitler compared to only forty percent of the working class (Falter, 1991, p. 371). Many conservatives, men and women alike, from the middle and upper classes had become disillusioned with Weimar Germany. They believed that Germany needed a change in leadership, or it might be more accurate to say that they believed Germany needed leadership, and they perceived in Hitler a means to that end.

Within a few short months, Hitler usurped power in Germany. After the elections of 1933 and as a result of the political unrest in Germany, Hitler claimed that the *Notstandsgesetz* (emergency law) should be put into effect, and this suspended most individual freedoms. During his first year in power, Hitler effectively eliminated or rendered ineffectual many of the political parties in the *Reichstag* and could “declare on July 6: ‘Political parties have finally been abolished... now we must abolish the last remnants of democracy’” (Hoffmeister, Gerhart and Frederic C. Tubach, 1992, p. 8). What started out as a promise for a better future would soon turn into a twelve year long nightmare for much of Germany and indeed for the world.

The National Socialist Party attempted to bring all aspects of German society under its power. Hoffmeister and Tubach (1992) succinctly outline these developments of *Gleichschaltung* (synchronization) in their book *Germany: 2000 Years*. Initially, the Communist party and the unions were declared illegal and their properties seized. The churches, though

placated at first through seemingly religious overtures, soon realized that their existence was threatened by Nazi ideology. The Catholic Church, under the leadership of Pope Pius XI, entered into a concordat with Hitler which was “a kind of friendly agreement of noninterference in each other’s affairs” (Hoffmeister, Gerhart and Frederic C. Tubach, 1992, p. 17). This concordat served to calm the fears of Roman Catholics in Germany (Hoffmeister, Gerhart and Frederic C. Tubach, 1992). The Protestant Church also suffered from the iconoclastic efforts by the Nazis. The various aspects of the Church’s resistance and the women's efforts will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter. The Press and the Arts, also victims of *Gleichschaltung*, became forthwith an institution of the government. Hitler did not stop there. A similar fate befell institutions of higher education. By 1935, three hundred academicians had left their posts at German universities. Incidentally, Freya von Moltke, was one person who was affected by the expulsion of Jewish academicians. She was not able to finish her Doctorate in Jurisprudence until 1935, because her *Doktorvater* had been dismissed from his position at the University in Berlin (Geyken, 2011). The infamous book burning, which took place at the *Opernplatz* in Berlin on May 10, 1933, was not simply intended to expel all writers, philosophers, and scientists who had polluted the German mind but also to disconnect Germany from its past (Hoffmeister, Gerhart and Frederic C. Tubach, 1992). Authors who were considered to pollute the German race either by their Jewishness or because of the formative influence in the Weimar Republic were publicly condemned and their books burned. Erich Kästner, one of the condemned authors and whose books were burned, watched the spectacle and later commented on what he had observed. “Es war Mord und Selbstmord in einem” (It was murder and suicide all in one) (Lakotta, 1997). Finally, Nazi ideology also dominated the film industry. Just as was the case with many in academe, German film makers, especially Jewish film makers, fled Germany. Hitler took over the film industry and used it to advance his ideology of the “super race” and his anti-Semitism. Films such as Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph des Willens* and Veit Harlan’s *Jud Süß* were welcome fodder for the Nazi propaganda machine. From all appearances Hitler’s will had triumphed over the German people. They had become the proverbial lump of clay in the potter’s hand and he could shape them at his will. He had control over the public and the private sphere and was free to go about his goal of making Germany *Judenrein* (cleanse Germany of Jewish influence). Life for Jews became increasingly difficult. At the beginning of Nazi reign, Jews were permitted to leave Germany; they just could not take any valuables with them. Marga Meusel recognized the dangers of such actions very early on, as I will explain in

more detail later. She sounded the alarm to the leaders of the Confessing Church to speak out on behalf of the oppressed, but her admonitions fell mostly on deaf ears. The initial wave of persecution began in April 1933. Jews were banned from holding any public office. This was brought about by the establishing of the *Aryan Law*. The Aryan Law or *Arierparagraph* which prevented non-Aryans from holding public office. The Nazis used this law in 1933 as a stepping stone to enact whole-sale “cleansing” of the public sphere of any Jewish influence. Following that, Jews were forbidden to marry Aryan spouses under the law for the “Protection of German Blood” which was put into effect in 1935. Marriages between Jews and Germans were forbidden, and those who were married to a Jewish spouse were encouraged to divorce their spouses. The law also stripped Jews of their German citizenship. The Bindel family was one of the families that was affected by this law. Max Bindel was a Jewish business man in Berlin, who was married to an Aryan wife. After he was killed by the Nazis, Meusel hid Frau Bindel and her young daughter, Irene, in Berlin and supplied them with false papers (see Appendix B). The *Kristallnacht* of 1938 ushered in the “second wave of persecution” (Hoffmeister, Gerhart and Frederic C. Tubach, 1992). After Hitler invaded Poland, he started his resettlement of German and Polish Jews; all Polish and German Jews were required to wear a yellow star, and men had to add 'Israel' and women 'Sarah' to their first names. Large concentration camps were built in Eastern Europe that had the capacity to burn as many as 12,000 bodies daily (Hoffmeister, Gerhart and Frederic C. Tubach, 1992). The horrors of those years defy description.

With this brief outline of sometimes overlooked or underrepresented historic facts, I have attempted to describe both the political turmoil that existed during the Weimar period and the oppressive tactics Hitler put into action after assuming leadership in Germany. The majority of the German people remained silent during these dark years, but the heroic efforts of men and women who rose up against Hitler cannot be overlooked and should be illuminated in history.

Through my research I want to contribute to the recent trends of bringing historic discussions of women's work into the foreground. To accomplish this task, I will employ several methodologies. First, from the standpoint of literature, I will evaluate women's representations during Weimar Germany. Since some view literature and art as the repositories of history, much can be gleaned from the cultural stereotypes that are represented in some of these works. Secondly, I will look at the feminists' ideas propagated during Weimar Germany. I will use these models to compare the philosophical and artistic representations to the “real life” experiences of the three women who were associated with the Confessing Church and the Kreisau Circle and

MARTYRS AT THE HEARTH

demonstrate how these three women fit to some extent the idea of the *neue Frau*. Finally, I will connect in an interdisciplinary fashion history, literature, and archival artifacts with the lives of these women.

*Work on good prose has three steps: a musical stage
when it is composed, an architectonic one
when it is built, and a textile one
when it is woven.*

WALTER BENJAMIN (GERMAN–JEWISH INTELLECTUAL, 1892-1940)¹³

3. Methodology

The research methodology I have chosen seeks to find intersections among the cultural, historical, and sociological phenomena and the normative influences each had on the other. I hope to create what Walter Benjamin calls “good prose” in writing about the lives of the three women I have chosen (Benjamin, 1996, p. 455). As I describe the lives of the resistance women, I move chronologically from the historical to the cultural and reach the locus of my writing after all of the other aspects have been provided. This helps to set the stage for the foundation of the Confessing Church and ultimately the work of the resistance women. To describe the life and circumstances surrounding another person encompasses certain challenges because of the complexity of life. The human experience is shaped by a multitude of forces. These include but are not limited to history, philosophy, sociology, politics, literature, and culture all at the same time. The resistance women, too, felt the pressures of history and culture, and could have accepted the status quo in Germany; yet they chose a different path of dealing with society's pressures in order to withstand the floodtide of evil that threatened to drown out all reason. They rejected in part the roles into which their society had forced them and chose a different way to be true to their convictions. Their heterotopian space represents the otherness of the male dominated hegemony. They have distinguished themselves through their extraordinary efforts. Therefore, in order to describe their lives and their work accurately, interdisciplinarity proves to be the logical methodology to reach this goal.

3.1 Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity in qualitative and quantitative research has become the paradigm of contemporary academe, and my project reflects these recent developments. I have categorized my interdisciplinary methodology into three parts – the cultural aspect, the social aspect, and the culture identification.

Interdisciplinarity does not mean drawing equally from each discipline. Rather it is finding commonalities within the various disciplines and connecting them in an interdisciplinary

¹³ (Benjamin, Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings, 1996)

manner. In my methodological approach, I seek to address the importance of interdisciplinarity in qualitative research as it applies to my project, as well as to the social and cultural methodologies. Thus I hope to create a more complete picture of the social-religious roles of several women, who lived through Weimar Germany and fought actively against the tide of National Socialistic ideologies that threatened their country.

For the cultural aspect the scholarship of Julie Klein and Norman Denzin are particularly helpful. Julie Klein (2005) argues in her book *Humanities, Culture, and Interdisciplinarity*, that interdisciplinarity is a “broad based set of interests located within and across disciplines (Klein, 2005). Norman Denzin (2008) also addresses the issue of interdisciplinary research in his book *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, when he states that qualitative research cuts across at least eight major “historical moments”.¹⁴ The two time periods which are of particular interest to my research are the *traditional* and the *modernist*. Denzin claims that each time period serves to situate the observer within a framework of history. Moreover, it “consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible” (Denzin and Giardina, 2007). He goes on to say that this course of action is a more naturalistic approach to qualitative research. As the researcher situates him- or herself into the world of the subject, s/he can begin to make sense of the phenomena that surround the life of the person to be studied (Denzin, 2008, p. 4). This is particularly helpful to me, as I, too, have undertaken a study where I have considered these cultural phenomena from the viewpoint of a traditional as well as that of a post-modernist observer (Conner, 1999).

Looking at the historical segment defined by Denzin (2008) as the *traditional* period, one discovers that the tendency among researchers was to create a “museumlike picture of the culture to be studied” (p. 21). When one attempts to do this much of the natural chaos that is and was part of everyday life is subjected to an artificial order. This representation does not do justice to the complete picture (Denzin, 2008, p. 21). Male dominated research tends to put things right and find solutions to problems; this leads to the oversimplification of a much broader cultural problem. Michael Connor (1999) postulates that this male dominated research paradigm has to do with left brain dominance in males, which helps men to solve problems in a linear manner. Women, on the other hand, are more right brain oriented and focus not so much on finding a solution to the problem. They have a tendency to make the focal point the relationships that are

¹⁴ Some of those historical movements are *the traditional* (1900-1950), *the modernist* (1950-1970), *blurred genres* (1970-1986), *the crisis of representation* (1986-1990), *the post-modern* (1990-1995),

created in the process of solving a problem as is evidenced in the personal artifacts of the resistance women (Conner, 1999).

In modern feminist studies there is a great deal of debate about essentialism vis-à-vis constructivism. Those who hold to the essentialist's position argue that women are different by virtue of nature and they behave “womanly” due to the biological difference. The constructivists, on the other hand, believe that women act in a gender specific way, because of their association with other women who teach them to behave in a genderized manner (Bohan, 1993). My own position is somewhere in the middle. I do not believe, as does Joyce Mushaben (2004), that women behave in a certain manner simply because they are trained to act as women but the intersection of biology and nurture affords women a view of history and life, for that matter, through a “gendered lens.” (Mushaben, 2004). In a later chapter, I will go into greater detail about how women dealt differently with suffering in the concentration camps. At this point I would like to reiterate my position, that offering simply a male perspective on historic events creates a skewed, incomplete picture.

Looking at history simply from a traditional point of view, Denzin (2008) argues that this kind of research creates the illusion of a solution to a social problem, when in fact reality is far from any solution. He offers proof to substantiate his theory, by extending this application to the genres in film and literature. These are rife with the “classic morality tale, which [describes] being in a state of grace, being seduced by evil and falling, and finally achieving redemption through suffering” (Denzin, 2008, p. 21). None of these characteristics are evidenced in the lives of the women about whom I am writing. Their lives and work bear out none of these “neatly organized” morality tales.

The second category relevant to this discussion is, according to Denzin (2008), the *modernist* phase. This time is characterized by “canonical works from the traditional period” (p. 22). Denzin describes this time as the “golden age”, which reinforced the perceived notion of a qualitative researcher as a cultural romantic, who “[was] imbued with Promethean human powers... and valorized the villains and outsiders as heroes to mainstream society. They embodied a belief in the contingency of self and society and held to emancipatory ideals for ‘which one lives and dies’” (Denzin, 2008, p. 23). These researchers viewed society with irony and aligned themselves with writers/philosophers such as Emerson, Marx, James, Dewey, Gramsci and Martin Luther King Jr. (Denzin, 2008, p. 24). For my particular research, I have

chosen to look at the past neither with irony, nor as through the lens of a cultural romantic, but objectively, and this certainly must include the gender based point of view.

Denzin (2008) readily admits that these classifications are somewhat arbitrary, because it is difficult to create clear lines of distinction in history. For Denzin, history does not present itself in absolutely definable segments, since historical moments impact the past and the present. Either they still operate in the present or they are a “legacy or a set of practices” that cannot be separated (p. 27). He further states that modern day interdisciplinary researchers seek methods that will enable them not only to analyze their findings in terms of empirical data, but also to “uncover the meaning their subjects bring to their life experiences” (p. 29). Denzin does not dismiss the critique of the post-modernists and post-structuralists, who claim that there is no objective manner in which to study people. He admits that all research is clouded by one’s “language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity.” Since it is nearly impossible to study any person objectively, it is all the more necessary that the researcher utilize many different methods to evaluate his or her findings. Nevertheless, these classifications are of importance. For my research, I have used historical narratives, sociological perspectives of Weimar Germany, political documents from that time period, and personal artifacts of Niemöller, Meusel, and Moltke.

There is another aspect of interdisciplinarity, which is important to my work. Allen Repko (2008) calls this the “jigsaw puzzle” phenomenon. He states that in the past interdisciplinarity has often been compared to a jigsaw puzzle in which the pieces fit together tightly (Repko, 2008). Repko, however, finds this problematic for the following reasons:

A jigsaw puzzle...

(1) is finely milled to fit together. Interdisciplinarity on the other hand fits together in varying degrees, that is to say that some disciplines are more closely related than others, while at the same time some commonalities can be identified in those which at first glance may not appear to be very similar.

(2) is created by a predetermined pattern. For Repko this again is problematic because as he writes, “With disciplinary insights, however, there is no predetermined pattern that the student can consult to see if the ‘new whole’ or new understanding or new meaning or cognitive advancement is consistent with it and if one is ‘getting it right’” (p. 118). It is only after “discovering common ground” that a pattern can be established.

(3) creates a picture that is not new, but pre-existed prior to its assembly. Not so with interdisciplinarity. It creates an entirely “new picture” through newly gained insights, meanings and solutions.

(4) filled a geographic space prior to its disassembling that can be expressed in geometric numbers, that is to say, that the square footage of the pieces is not more and not less than the sum of its individual pieces. With interdisciplinarity, however, one may safely say that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Repko, 2008, p. 118).

Interdisciplinary thinking does not do away with traditional investigations, rather it offers an expanded version of those methods. It considers, for example, the point of view of the investigator and looks at the whole rather than the individual parts. Repko (2008) states, “Whereas perspective taking is the ability to understand how each discipline would typically view the problem, holistic thinking is the ability to see the problem in terms of its constituent disciplinary parts,” in other words, looking at the problem in the broadest sense possible (p. 122). Interdisciplinarity must be both deep and wide. Repko (2008) defines depth as drawing on various disciplines and their insights and breadth as drawing on disciplines that are epistemologically distant, i.e. the natural sciences and human sciences. Integration, explains Klein (2005), “does not result from ‘simply mastering a body of knowledge, applying a formula, or moving in linear fashion from point A to point B. It requires a triangulation of depth, breadth and synthesis [i.e. integration]” (Klein, 2005, p. 125).

3.2 Historical

The choice of historical methodology for my research project began with the recognition of a particular problem, namely the marginalization of the resistance women during Nazi Germany. In their effort to sustain the Confessing Church through its tumultuous existence, they risked their own lives and the lives of their families. In order to gather as much material as possible for evaluations, I have consulted a number of primary sources in German archives in Darmstadt, Berlin, Sachsenhausen, and the Hoover Archives at Stanford University in California. I have analyzed these documents in light of my thesis. I did not simply evaluate the content, but I drew inferences from and about those times from these documents, and these issues will be addressed in the final analysis of this research project.

I am ever cognizant of the fact that I am looking at the materials from a post-war perspective and my research has been conducted from that standpoint. I appreciate Walter

Benjamin's analysis of laying bare, as it were, historical facts. He writes in his essay "Excavation and Memory" that language is not the instrument with which to uncover the past, but only a medium. He likens historical searches to archeological discoveries, where not only the final discovery is crucial for identifying the artifact, but also what has to be unearthed in the process of arriving at the artifact. "In this sense, for authentic memories, it is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them... [G]enuine memory must therefore yield an image of the person who remembers" (Jennings, 1999). In the same manner cultural research must be viewed with this point of reference in mind.

C. Wright Mills (1959) offers some guidance in conducting research when he suggests in *Sociological Imaginations* that a researcher should ask him- or herself the following questions in order to clarify a project:

1. How difficult and complex is my subject?
2. When I write, which status am I claiming for myself?
3. For whom am I trying to write? (p. 219).

My research focuses on the social-religious roles several resistance women filled and the lasting impact they had on society. I want to determine how and if the epistemological concept of *die neue Frau* and *die neue Sachlichkeit* (the new objectivity) helped shape the perceptions these women had of themselves, and how it ultimately led them to perform heroic deeds.

In terms of the first question C. Wright Mills (1959) poses, this is a difficult project, as it contains a certain complexity. To look at another person's life and to evaluate why he or she acted in any given way is indeed a complex, if not an impossible task. Nevertheless, the primary documents I have evaluated allowed me an insight into the lives these women lived.

To answer C. Wright Mills' second question, I would like to think that I am claiming for myself the status of a neutral observer. This is sometimes difficult to achieve when one's roots are so closely linked to one's research, but more than that, I believe that because of my extensive research dealing with Weimar Germany and because of my own background, I can understand this culture much better than someone who is a stranger to German language, history, sociology, culture, and politics. The third answer to Mills' question will be addressed in the conclusion of this research project.

3.3 Cultural

In order to evaluate the scope of the salient features of gender roles during Weimar Germany, the works by Walter Benjamin are particularly useful, as is his extensive analysis of various aspects of literature, culture, and politics, during Weimar Germany. Furthermore, his analysis of Europe at that time is especially relevant. Benjamin argues in his essay “Theories of German Fascism” that those who decided to prosecute the first war have done the middle and lower class a great disservice, in that he writes,

What is special about the present and latest stage in the controversy over the war, which has convulsed Germany since 1919, is the novel assertion that it is precisely this loss of the war that is characteristically German. One can call this latest stage because these attempts to come to terms with the loss of the war show a clear pattern. These attempts began with an effort to pervert the German defeat into an inner victory by means of confessions of guilt which were hysterically elevated to the universally human (as cited in Kaes, Anton et al, 1994, p. 161).

He not only attacks the right wing of German politics but is also quite outspoken against left-wing extremists. He writes in his essay “Left-Wing Melancholy”, that left wing activities of the order of Kästner, Mehring, and Tucholsky, “are the decayed bourgeoisie’s mimicry of the proletariat. Their function is to give rise to the politically peaking not to parties, but to cliques, literarily speaking not to schools but to fashions” (as cited in Kaes, Anton et al, 1994, p. 305). His views on Weimar society are poignant and precise. Benjamin’s reactions to various phenomena in Weimar Germany offer the reader a more rounded and complete picture of the time (Kaes, Anton et al, 1994). As Benjamin approached history from a theoretical point of view, so I, too, want to approach the history of the resistance women from that point of view. Empathy and detachment are difficult to separate, and I want to be mindful of the Benjaminian caution to maintain a disciplined perspective.

Not only do I want to remain objective, I also want to study this time of history from a female perspective as already mentioned. With the aid of several authors such as Vibeke Rützou Petersen, Peter Gay, Anton Kaes, et al., I will explore more fully the episteme behind the concept of *die neue Frau* about which a large body of literature already exists and evaluate *a priori* how it affected the women of the Confessing Church. This particular relationship has not been explored fully in the study of women during Nazi Germany.

Evelyn Fox Keller shows, as does Nancy Chodorow that “the fundamental congruence between maleness as culturally defined and the scientific world view dominated Western thought.” Furthermore she claims that “modern Western thought is ‘genderized’ – that is to say that it is associated in the cultural sense with ‘maleness’ and ‘masculinity’” (Levesque-Lopman, 1988, p. 50). Levesque-Lopman further argues that men have “constructed Western thought and history”, and have set the values that have become the guiding principles for society. Men have objectified women and have constructed them as the “Other”, which allowed them (men) to be the “Not- Other”. Historical writers have treated women’s experiences “as secondary or invisible” (Levesque-Lopman, 1988, pp. 51-52). Certainly these factors helped to define historicity. The fault cannot be assigned to men only; some of the responsibility must be borne by women as well. Women allowed themselves to be marginalized by history and accepted their contributions as secondary, while not demanding to be included in historic narratives.

*“We are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants
so that we can see more than they,
and things at a greater distance,
not by virtue of any sharpness of sight
on our part, or any physical distinction,
but because we are carried high
and raised up by their giant size.”*

JOHN OF SALISBURY (BISHOP OF CHARTRES 1120 – 1180)¹⁵

4. Theoretical Framework

Theory is the undercurrent of cultural, social, and political developments and as John of Salisbury stated so clearly, “we are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants” (The Phrase Finder). Theory is important to the study of cultural phenomena since the theorists helped shape the thinking of their societies. I have chosen several theorists to assure my analysis is relevant of Weimar and Nazi Germany culture and to serve as a basis of my hypothesis. The difficulty is often not which theorists to choose, but which not to choose. I have limited my discussion to the following eight philosophers: Immanuel Kant, Max Weber, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, Carl Schmitt, Michel De Certeau, and Michel Foucault. Modern thought began with Immanuel Kant, and he has had a profound influence on German culture. The Kantian sense of duty is evidenced in the lives of the resistance women. Max Weber is often called the father of modern sociology. His analysis of modernity and capitalism is poignant and demonstrates the struggle between Marxism and capitalism during Weimar Germany. Walter Benjamin embodies the true intellectual of Weimar Germany. He rejected the philosophy of existentialism and he was neither a Marxist nor a capitalist. His struggles dealing with the upheaval of the interwar years are characteristic of society as a whole. Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno help to “demystify enlightenment,” and Michel De Certeau emphasizes everyday life and how we engage in the mundane things of life, such as shopping, cooking, etc. The way these practices express our cultural sense of belonging is extremely helpful when analyzing the contribution of women in the struggle against National Socialism. In a later chapter, I will demonstrate how Marga Meusel used the apparently socially mundane to draw inferences about the home life of un-wed mothers in Germany. Certeau is not so concerned with the metanarratives of life, rather he focuses on the small things. These mundane events come together to create a larger picture. Thus I can use his analysis to place the quotidian activities of

¹⁵ (The Phrase Finder)

the resistance women into the framework of the greater whole. Carl Schmitt had a tremendous influence on jurisprudence in Weimar Germany and the Third Reich. He believed that democracy destroys cultures and advocated an authoritarian form of government. He legitimized, perhaps unintentionally, the Nazi political orientation through his friend – enemy concept. The last theorist is Michel Foucault, and I have chosen him because of his writings about power structures and how easily people are assimilated into these systems. Finally, I will connect the theorists discussed in this section with the theoretical basis of feminism. My goal is to demonstrate how these philosophers influenced feminist writers during the early part of the twentieth century.

4.1 Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804)

Immanuel Kant was the foremost German philosopher of the Enlightenment and the one with whom “modern thought” began (Schönfeld, 2008). He advocated that all human beings be treated equally and justly, simply because it is the right thing to do and a well-ordered society depends on it. What is right and acceptable for one person must be applicable to all members of society (*Categorical Imperative*), and that includes women. Unfortunately, Kant leaves much to be desired where emancipation of women was concerned, as was typical for German and French philosophers of that time. For example, the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau believed that the woman’s duty in life was to serve the patriarchy. These Enlightenment philosophers reflected the thinking of their time, and it is a far stretch to call them misogynists. Indeed, one can see the beginnings of the idea of equality in Kant’s writings.

Kant was a religious man, although not of the Pietistic persuasion, which he knew from his mother. He applied human reason to the ability to know and understand God. For Kant “the exercise of human moral freedom in both its individual and social dimension” is paramount to the human experience (Rossi, 2011). He was more of a pantheist than a monotheist and rejected to a certain degree the teleological arguments of the Enlightenment. Kant incorporated many different religious ideals into his books and lectures. In his *Lectures on Ethics*, he regards the idea of loving one’s neighbor as the fundamental paradigm for any society (Kant, 1963). For Kant this was not necessarily an abstract, religious concept that is often accompanied by “warm fuzzy feelings.” Rather it is a conscious choice to respect the rights and properties of other human beings. These paradigms can be observed in the actions the resistance women chose to embrace; whether consciously or unconsciously, they were clearly influenced by Kant's

teachings. Kant prefers to have a cool-hearted neighbor on whom he can depend than to have someone who is emotional but is not dependable. This Kantian ideal of one's sense of duty toward others, regardless of emotions, is reflected in Niemöller, Meusel, and Moltke. These women were motivated by their convictions to help those who were abused by the regime and were subjected to cultural oppression.

Schönfeld (2008) argues that Kant's mother probably had the greatest influence on his enlightened thinking. Although she was one of the first Pietistic converts in eighteenth-century Königsberg, she taught her children tolerance and love for nature. Kant writes, "I will never forget my mother, for she implanted and nurtured in me the first germ of goodness; she opened my heart to the impressions of nature; she awakened and furthered my concepts, and her doctrines have had a continual and beneficial influence in my life" (Schönfeld, 2008). Some feminist writers have accused Kant of misogyny, yet Kant did not hesitate to credit his philosophical basis to a woman.

4.2 Max Weber (1864 – 1920)

Max Weber's epistemological influence on early twentieth century social theory is evidenced in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber, often called the "father of modern sociology," was trained as a jurist and was a professor at the University of Freiburg, where he taught economics. Being greatly influenced by the teachings of Karl Marx, he advocated social justice within a democratic system. Yet his focus was more on sociological thought than on economics. He had served in the military during World War I and desired to be part of the political structure in the Weimar Republic. Incidentally, Weber was also a member of the peace negotiation group sent to Paris at the end of World War I – a group which would later be called the *Novemberverbrecher* (November Criminals) by Hitler (Kim, 2012).

Weber perceived the idealism portrayed in capitalism and its roots in Protestantism as a danger to German society, and viewed the role of the church, not only in England and the United States, but also in Germany, with some skepticism. For Weber the church had abandoned its irenic duty to society. Rather it had chosen to promote the antithesis of social justice in its pursuit of capitalism and women as well as men were drawn into its abyss. He claimed that ancient societies had already practiced capitalism, but not with the religious sanctioning which had emerged in the post-Reformation years. He writes, "the Reformation meant not the elimination of the Church's control over everyday life, but rather the substitution of a new form of control"

(Weber M. , 2003, p. 36). For Weber the role of the church during the Middle Ages was characterized by a more *laissez faire* attitude, as it remained mostly uninvolved in economic matters. During post-Reformation Germany, however, the church demanded an all-encompassing control of the public as well as the private sphere. This underscores the control the Church had over the lives of Else and Martin Niemöller, which will be addressed in a later chapter. The Catholic Church, according to Weber, had often displayed lavish materialism, in spite of its preaching asceticism, yet he did not view Catholic doctrine as the origins of capitalism. Rather the source was the Protestantism, which grew out of Luther's Reformation. He considered Calvinists and Pietists as the ones most 'guilty' of perpetuating this lifestyle. Weber also believed that this "Spirit of Capitalism" was influenced by Jews. He writes,

The Jews stood on the side of the politically and speculatively oriented adventurous capitalism; their ethos was, in a word, that of pariah-capitalism. But Puritanism carried the ethos of the rational organization of capital and labor. It took over from the Jewish ethic only what was adapted to this purpose. (Weber M. , 2003, p. 166)

Weber foresaw that an "icy darkness" lay ahead in Germany's future when he gave his famous "Politics as a Vocation" speech at the University of Munich shortly before his death in 1920 (Kaes, 1994, p. 95). In this speech, he claimed that politics is not for the faint of heart, but that this fledgling democracy required strong leadership. Unintentionally, I believe, he set the stage in the minds of some Germans for the need of a strong leader who was to emerge in German politics in the person of Adolf Hitler.

Weber was an ardent nationalist and believed that even within a democratic system domination of the ruled by rulers is unavoidable, argues Kim Sung-Ho (2012), a renowned scholar of Max Weber (Kim, Max Weber, 2012). "Utterly devoid of any normative qualities, for instance, the modern state is defined simply as 'a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory [Weber 1919/1994, 310],' whether that legitimacy derives from charisma, tradition, or law" (Kim, Max Weber, 2012). Weber further argues that if genuine self-rule is not available within a democracy, strong leadership is the only choice (Kim, Max Weber, 2012). Sung-Ho claims that Weber's theory of democracy is fraught with ideas of authoritarian elements that "can support Jürgen Habermas's famous critique that Carl Schmitt, 'the Konjurist of the Third Reich' was 'a legitimate pupil of Weber's'" (as cited in "Max Weber", 2012). Naturally it would be a grave injustice to blame Max Weber for the rise of National Socialism in Germany since he had already died by the time

Hitler came onto the political scene. Nonetheless he influenced academe of the early twentieth century, not only with his ideas of social justice, but also by articulating out the need for strong leadership.

4.3 Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)

A study of Weimar Germany would be incomplete without including Walter Benjamin. He was one of the great intellectuals of that period and his ideas contribute greatly to understanding the mindset of academe. While Benjamin was known during Weimar Germany, he was not famous. This is Hannah Arendt's claim in her essay about Walter Benjamin, which introduces Benjamin's book *Illumination*. Benjamin was plagued by a deep melancholy, perhaps because he could not fulfill his father's expectations of him, or because he expected too much of himself. Arendt claims that Benjamin viewed his life as "piles of debris" (Benjamin, 2007, p. 7). Benjamin felt powerless to change life, even "if it was about to crush him" (p. 7).

Walter Benjamin's valuation of Weimar Germany is important to this research project, because he poignantly analyses society of that time and the reader gains enormous insights into the esoteric nature of Weimar thinkers. Benjamin saw the conflict within German society of the bourgeoisie vis-à-vis the aristocracy and of the working class against both the upper classes. Benjamin viewed the attempt to create the *New Objectivity* by the literati as a futile endeavor to identify with the common man. No matter how hard the intellectual may try to become a proletarian, argues Benjamin, he will never succeed in this endeavor, for his class or *Stand* prevents him (Jennings, 1999).

The resistance women who came of age during that time period undoubtedly struggled with the issue of *die neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) they encountered in the art work by Georg Grosz and Otto Dix as much as Walter Benjamin did. From their actions, however, it becomes clear that they identified more with Käthe Kollwitz than with Grosz and Dix as they spoke out and acted on behalf of the downtrodden and outcasts of society.

Undoubtedly Goethe and Marx had a normative influence on Walter Benjamin – Goethe¹⁶ because of his humanistic approach to society and striving for goodness in himself and the people around him, and Marx because of his ideals of social justice. Benjamin held to many Marxist ideals, much to the dismay of his father. He enjoyed a close friendship with Theodore Adorno who was an accomplished musician and was associated with the *Frankfurt School*. He

¹⁶ See "Goethe" in *Walter Benjamin's Selected Writings* (2005) edited by Michael W. Jennings, et al.

was a critical theorist and immigrated to the United States after Hitler came to power because he was Jewish. Benjamin and Adorno continued to interact with each other through the exchange of lengthy letters. Benjamin's correspondence with Adorno concerning his *Arcades Project* demonstrates the deep respect they had for each other.

While Benjamin embraced aspects of Jewish intellectualism in Weimar Germany, he also criticized it for its "politicization of the intelligentsia" (Jennings, 1999, p. 417). His overt criticism of *Expressionism* is found in his essay "Critique of the New Objectivity." In this disquisition, he writes that "on the one hand, it is undoubtedly hostile in fictions removed from reality...on the other hand, it attacks theory" (p. 417). He felt that "never before has a generation of young writers been less interested in the theoretical legitimation" than what he observed in Weimar Germany (Jennings, 1999). Benjamin rejected both elitism and nationalism.

This dichotomy between the Jewish intellectuals' position and his own theoretical orientation contributed to Benjamin's loneliness. Hannah Arendt argues that Benjamin was like a man from another time who never felt "at home in twentieth-century Germany" (Benjamin, 2007, p. 19). When he moved to Paris, he finally felt that he had returned to where he belonged. His trip from Berlin to Paris was not a trip from one country to another; rather it was a return to the nineteenth century from the twentieth (p.19). He loved the city and its architecture. For Benjamin the *flâneur* became the object of his imagination, more than likely because he was that *flâneur* himself. As much as Paris "taught Benjamin *flânerie*, the nineteenth century's style of walking and thinking," so equally Berlin had alienated and isolated him. The city had contributed to his *transcendental homelessness*, so typical of Weimar Germany (Benjamin, 2007, p. 99).

Benjamin, as well as many of his contemporary Jewish intellectuals, struggled with the paradigm of the Jewish middle class. He found the display of material goods distasteful. The favored alternatives to this bourgeois existence were either Zionism, of which Gershom Scholem availed himself, or Marxism, and Benjamin was committed to neither. Instead Benjamin sought "consistency in truth". His work in philosophy was clearly inspired by theology, and truth for Benjamin "concerned a secret and the revelation of this secret had authority" (Benjamin, 2007, p. 41).

4.4. Carl Schmitt (1888 – 1985)

Carl Schmitt was one of the other great thinkers and jurists of Weimar Germany but rejected the liberal policies within the Weimar society. There are three different aspects of Carl

Schmitt's book *The Concept of the Political* that I would like to address. The first part demonstrates Carl Schmitt's rejection of liberal politics in Weimar Germany. The second and third parts are intertwined. These are his justification of war and his concept of friend-enemy relationship. I can empathize to some degree with the first aspect of his writing, but I view the second and third aspects as dangerous, because of how easily they lend themselves to misinterpretation, as shown by the National Socialists, who used these ideas to justify their aggression.

Schmitt's political views were greatly influenced by Weimar Germany where he saw liberalism carried to its extreme. He believed that liberalism brings about the death of democracy. "In a liberal state, Schmitt fears, the political nation will slowly wither and die as a result of spreading de-politicization, it will succumb to internal strife, or it will be overwhelmed by external enemies who are more politically united" (Vinx, 2011). This view is not surprising given the instability of Weimar politics. The government struggled not only economically and culturally, but also politically. In its attempt to create a state of democracy, leadership from above was mournfully absent. The women of the resistance felt this vacuum as much as most of Germany did. They, along with many other Germans, saw in Hitler someone who could change the direction of society.

War for Schmitt was not a "social ideal", but he never entirely dismissed it as an option (Schmitt, 2007, p. 7). Schmitt felt that this option applied predominantly to the public sphere. He not only distinguished between the public and the private domain, he distinguished between an external and an internal enemy. Concerning the public domain he writes,

The enemy is not merely any competitor or just any partner of a conflict in general. He is also not the private adversary whom one hates. An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly to a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship. (Schmitt, 2007)

The private sphere is guided by a different principle. Schmitt clarifies his position by the biblical interpretation of love for one's adversaries. "Love your enemies" might be a principle that guides the personal lives of Christians, but it is never to be applied to the political sphere. This first attitude is aptly demonstrated in the lives of the resistance women. They showed compassion for their fellow human beings and rejected the oppressive tactics of the Nazi regime. Some

resistance fighters, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, even felt that it was morally justifiable to kill out of love for one's fellow man. Schmitt (2007) argues, "Never in the thousand-year struggle between Christians and Moslems [sic] did it occur to a Christian to surrender rather than defend Europe out of love toward the Saracens or Turks" (p. 29). While in the private sphere loving one's enemies is a matter of personal choice, in the public sphere, so argues Schmitt, it is decidedly harmful.

Perhaps one of the theories for which Schmitt is best known is his definition of friend-enemy, and this concept relates directly to his justification for war. Tracy Strong, in the foreword of Schmitt's book *The Concept of the Political*, argues that this definition was an adaptation of Hegel's 'Master and Slave' concept (Schmitt, 2007). The disturbing aspect of the friend-enemy concept is that as long as a nation can clearly identify its enemies, war becomes completely justifiable. I want to add here that the women of the resistance succeeded in identifying their common enemy, namely the rabid excitations of a madman.

Referring to the First World War, "the war that was to end all wars," Schmitt (2007) writes, that the advocates of that war "degraded the enemy into moral and other categories [and thereby were] forced to make of him a monster, that must not only be defeated but also utterly destroyed" (p. 38). Undoubtedly this normative view was welcomed by Hitler, who used it to justify his own war. Hitler claimed that the German people had not chosen war as an option; rather war was forced upon them by their adversaries. He first turned his propaganda machine toward the German public by portraying Poles and European Jews as the 'enemies' of Germany, and then swayed the public to follow him on his path of destruction. Schmitt, and Hitler for that matter, wanted to see Germany reassert itself in its world role, and advocated intensely the restoration of an authoritarian order.

As a parenthetical note on the post-World War II experience of Carl Schmitt, I would like to add that Schmitt received much criticism after the collapse of Nazi Germany. He joined the Nazi party in 1933 and was an ardent supporter of the regime – perhaps out of political expediency, or perhaps out of disillusionment with Weimar Germany. After the collapse of the Third Reich, Schmitt was detained for eighteen months by the Allied Forces but was never charged with any war crimes (Schmitt, 2007). Because of his tainted image brought about by his Nazi sympathies, he never taught at a German university again after the war.

4.5 Michel de Certeau (1925 – 1986)

Thus far I have focused on philosophers from the Enlightenment and early twentieth century periods. Each of these philosophers focused on grand narratives and society as a whole. On the other hand, Michel De Certeau focuses on life within a cultural group. He argues that the neighborhoods we frequent, and the manner in which we relate to our family and peers comprise “the setting and staging of everyday life” (De Certeau, Michel, et al, 1998). While Edmund Husserl (1970) claims that culture is a shared communality of language, of spiritual life and common goals, de Certeau might argue that it is more than shared spirituality, habitus, and language that define culture. Michel de Certeau’s focus is on relationships within a social structure.¹⁷ He wants to resist a return to individualism, since relations for Certeau are always social. The individual is both part of society and separate from it at the same time. When one juxtaposes the idea of the *flâneur* in Walter Benjamin’s writings to the *flâneur* to which Michel de Certeau refers, the contrast becomes increasingly clear. For Certeau the *flâneur* and the city become one, while Benjamin’s *flâneur* becomes more alienated. These concepts of alienation will be addressed in greater detail later on in chapter dealing with Weimar literature.

Michel de Certeau also agrees with the post-structuralists that the social life is chaotic and disorganized and that the “signified signifiers have become destabilized” (Appelrouth, Scott and Laura Desfor Edles, 2007). While modernists believe that knowledge can be found in science, post-modernists argue that the theoretical approach must give meaning to society in culture. In this respect Certeau agrees with the post-modernist. For Michel de Certeau the notion of “product” is less important than the means by which it is consumed and acquired. Additionally, marginality no longer applies to fringe groups only; marginality has become the silent majority (De Certeau, Michel, et al, 1998). Certeau also extends what Benjamin calls the disappearing of the bourgeoisie from the public gaze. Prior to modernity, the bourgeoisie was able to display its wealth and culture on the environs. The city however, has robbed it of that status, and this garish display of status has now moved within the walls of the houses. For Certeau, culture and status are now displayed in the market place, in the food that is prepared or consumed, and in the language that is employed in inter-personal activities (De Certeau, Michel, et al, 1998). Tactic has also become a means of “getting away with things.” In this manner, the weak gain victory over the strong – the complete antithesis to the Nietzschean (Nietzsche, 1989)

¹⁷ I am most grateful to my colleagues in the ASPECT program at Virginia Tech and especially Dr. Tim Luke who collectively shared their insights regarding Michel de Certeau in our Methodology Course during the Spring Semester 2011. Some of the points made in this section are the results of our seminar discussions.

paradigm – and this is accomplished through subversive actions (stealing envelopes and pens from one’s employer, etc.) (De Certeau, Michel, et al, 1998).

4.6 Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984)

Michel Foucault is important to this research because of his analysis of power and its all-encompassing control of one group over another. Much of his analysis can be compared to Hitler's tactics of forcing the individual to submit to a dictatorial regime, and the women of the resistance were no exception. As much as Walter Benjamin personifies the intellectual of modernity, Michel Foucault claims that position in post-modernity. Foucault cannot be easily categorized, but for the sake of argument, I would like to place him in the intellectual framework of the existentialist and post-structuralist. He rejected the structuralist’s notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Post-structuralists are much like post-modernists in the sense that they focus on people’s thought processes and try to find reasons for their behavior. Post-modernists believe that all the great metanarratives of history have been written and feminists in this present time struggle to have the women included in the grand narratives. Perhaps Foucault’s greatest contributions are in the studies of history, language, and prison reforms. More than that, he advocated for the marginalized segments of society.

Foucault is sometimes difficult to follow and especially his book *The Order of Things* provides a number of challenges to the reader. He appears repetitive and unclear at times. Notwithstanding, this section focuses on his two seminal works – *The Order of Things* and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prisons*. The latter I find somewhat easier to understand. This book appeared some years after *The Order of Things*, and in it he discusses the development of the penal system.

The two salient points Foucault makes in these two books, which relate to this research project are as follows. First Foucault believes that post-modernity demands a specific conduct of the human sciences – not so different from the women who fought against Nazi oppression. As he is perhaps the most outspoken critic of modernity, he believes that man cannot be explained in simple rational, that is, mathematical or scientific terms. This coincides with the view many feminists hold concerning women's contributions in history. Second, Foucault desires to see a more humanized society. This is clearly the focus in his book *Discipline and Punish*.

In his lengthy introduction to *The Order of Things*, Foucault (1970) describes Velasques’ painting *Las Meninas*. The essence of this lengthy discussion underscores Foucault’s idea that

society cannot be interpreted from one single point of view, as the focus shifts when the vantage point is changed. He sometimes pushes this idea into the realm of the absurd, as when he begins the discussion of categorization. He then extends this grouping into the sciences and literature. The most meaningful discussion of the book, for me, was the idea of the human sciences. Foucault dispels the notion that man has “emancipated himself from himself” when he discovered that “he is no longer the center of the universe” (Foucault, 1970, p. 348). Instead, human beings have now become the interlocutors between nature and man. Foucault argues that man is the only creature that speaks, and that language has made it possible for him to interact, create, produce, and exchange. Man occupies the realms of “life, language, and labor” (p. 351). Man never ceases “to exercise a critical examination” of himself (p. 364), and if he ever should, he “would be erased like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea” (p. 387).

In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1995) seeks to analyze the role of the power structure within society. Undoubtedly his views were greatly influenced and shaped by the post-war perspective. In order to delineate Foucault’s view of the history of prison reforms, David Boyns’ overview of post-structural and postmodern theories proves to be very helpful (as cited in Appelrouth et al., 2007, p. 379). Boyns writes that Foucault’s work can be characterized by two distinct methodologies, one being archeology and the other genealogy. Foucault employs archeology as a way of “unearthing” or peeling back layers of history of past civilizations. These layers of history are compared to discourses, which he explains in his book *Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse of Language*. To Foucault, discourse is the sequencing of statements used in a particular situation, for a particular purpose at a particular time. So, too, *Discipline and Punish* can be classified as a discursive archeology. The discussions in Foucault’s book span several time periods, i.e. the time of the monarchy prior to 1789, the French Revolution, modernity and post-modernity.

According to Boyns, Foucault views genealogy as a means of socio-historical analysis of the impact of power on discourse. Archeology differs in that it does not “seek to examine the role of discourse in the production of knowledge”, instead, it “articulates the dependence of the production of knowledge on relationships of power” (Appelrouth, Scott and Laura Desfor Edles, 2007). Nietzsche had a significant influence on Foucault, especially his idea of what a society values as right and wrong at any given time. Nietzsche (1989) writes in his book *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* about this phenomenon. He illustrates the role of power and of guilt by the examples of the birds of prey and the lambs. The essence of this example is

that we [man] should not judge the stronger for oppressing the weaker. They only do what comes naturally for them. For Nietzsche the actions are separate from the actor. This point of view is the complete antithesis to that of the women of the resistance. For them the paradigm of faith and actions as described in the Book of James were paramount to their giving a voice to the oppressed and persecuted in German society.

Foucault also addresses the idea of the relationship of power and knowledge. For Foucault the statement “knowledge is power” is inverted. He believes that “power is knowledge”. Foucault distinguishes between the brute force that a ruler may have over his subjects and the coercive power someone in authority may have over another person. Power makes people do what they may not naturally want to do. Marga Meusel was certainly keenly aware of the coercive powers government can exert on an individual as she recognized the Nazi influence over the Christian church in Germany in denying rights to non-baptized Jews. She did not shrink back from pointing that out to the church leaders, but her admonitions did not fall on receptive ears. During Nazi Germany power was indeed knowledge, but coercion of the individual was certainly a significant method of Nazi oppression as Christopher Browning (1992) asserts in his book *Ordinary Men*.

4.7 Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Theodore Adorno (1903-1969)

Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno ‘demystify’ Enlightenment. Enlightenment rejects the authority of the church, embraces scientific methods, places emphasis on the individual, and uses reason to better one’s society. This emphasis on the individual is rejected by Marxian thinking. Both authors belonged to the *Frankfurt School* and were critical theorists; certainly their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was written from that perspective. Their judgment on Enlightenment was “that humanity was unable to use its knowledge for the betterment of its condition” (Horkheimer, Max and Theodore Adorno, 2002, p. 1). This astute observation certainly rang as true during Nazi oppression, as it does now. Large groups of people, whether they live in Northern Africa, in Eastern Europe or in the United States, are still oppressed and mistreated even though we have more knowledge available to us now than at any other time in history. The authors further argue that mythological thought must be thrown overboard, because it is the only way man believes himself to be a free agent. Enlightenment and in particular Kant, have turned men into “things, and centers of modes of behavior” (Horkheimer, Max and Theodore Adorno, 2002, p. 67). Whereas only the poor had previously

been subject to naked violence, now even the bourgeoisie is no longer shielded from capitalistic oppression (p. 67). And the former religiously based fear that kept the people 'in line' with the governing authorities has now been replaced by a penal code.

Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) also deconstruct the notion of the weak as described in Nietzschean literature. "It is the weak who are guilty, according to Nietzsche's doctrine, since they use cunning to circumvent the natural laws" (p. 78). The weak are also the ones who inflict society with disease and not the beast of prey of which Nietzsche so eloquently speaks. The strong oppress the weak only because it comes naturally to them, and they should not be judged for it. This notion of the strong having power over the weak is, in Marxian terms, the justification of capitalism. The authors argue that "By elevating the cult of strength to world-historical doctrine, German fascism took it to its absurd conclusions" (p. 79). Enlightenment has changed pity as a virtue into a human weakness, practiced by women and effeminate men.

Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) argue that not only have the various classes been victimized by capitalism, the culture industry has also succumbed to capitalism and exploitation. Technology has become the very venue of domination according to the authors. They write, "Technical rationality today is the rationality of domination. It is the compulsive character of a society alienated from itself" (p. 95). Films have attempted to reproduce a reality that mirrors that of everyday life. While film denies the viewer the ability to engage in creative thinking and freely flowing imagination, it has also become a "gigantic economic machinery" and contributes to the lack of "expansion of the mind" (p. 100). The culture industry has promised the working class much, but did not make good on its promise.

Anti-Semitism is another point of contention for Horkheimer and Adorno for those who have been shaped by Enlightenment. They claim that Nazi ideology taught that "Jews are to be wiped from the face of the earth and the call to exterminate them like vermin finds an echo among the prospective fascists of all countries" (p. 135). This desire to annihilate them stems partly from the inherent jealousy many Western European countries felt towards them, as well as from religious reasons. The Jews were the ones who nailed their Lord to the cross, because they could not believe in Him (p. 138). Horkheimer and Adorno believe that "Anti Semitic behavior is unleashed in situations in which blinded people" have lost all subjectivity and this blindness "encompasses everything because it comprehends nothing" (p. 140). Marga Meusel clearly understood the consequences of these actions, as she demonstrated in her numerous memoranda. The Jew in German society had become the scapegoat. Even though baptized Jews had been

allowed to attain high positions in industry during Weimar Germany, they were always viewed suspiciously and had to ‘earn’ the respect of their countrymen by proving themselves to be more diligent, harder working, more self-denying than did their non-Jewish German counterparts. For Horkheimer and Adorno, modernity has exchanged freedom for unfreedom, and enlightenment for barbarism, and has led to the atrocities described in Christopher Browning’s book *Ordinary Men*.

4.8 Feminist Theory

Feminist thinkers, like Enlightenment or modernity thinkers, have their foundations in the theoretical, and they, like the theorists of the past centuries, have evolved in their perspective on and their concepts of feminism. For example, marriage during the eighteenth century was viewed as “insoluble in principle” because it has its roots in religious rituals, thus explains Ute Frevert (1989) in her book *Women in German History* (p. 52). Philosophers during that time began to reject the hegemonic dominance of politics and religion. Immanuel Kant advocated for natural law rather than positive law. Frevert explains that Kant no longer viewed marriage as a divine ordinance, but as a contract into which two people of the opposite sex enter. This contractual agreement should enable the marriage partners to leave the union if circumstances so dictated (Frevert, *Women in German History*, 1989).

Feminism and feministic thought began to flourish in nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe. Among several noteworthy women who contributed to the movement, Marianne Weber distinguishes herself. She was the wife of the famous sociologist Max Weber, and during her husband’s tenure at Freiburg University, Marianne Weber developed an interest in feminism. Apparently she thought highly of Kant’s theories as she makes numerous references to him in her writings. She agrees with Kant, that human beings have certain rights which superseded those any earthly authority might have over the individual. First, women had the right to demand recognition from the state as fully emancipated individuals. Second, they could demand an inner and outer freedom from society as well as demand a private sphere. Marianne Weber aligns these freedoms with German Idealism ushered in by Kant and Fichte. She believed that the following was of primary importance: “Der Mensch ist als Träger der Vernunft bestimmt, sich selbst zu bestimmen, d.h. zu handeln nicht etwa nach der Willkür seiner

Triebe, sondern gemäß seines dem Sittengesetz unterstellten Gewissens”¹⁸ (Weber M. , 1919, p. 71). For Weber, these freedoms were always coupled with moral responsibility, not one that is imposed on them by a political force, but one that arises out of one’s conscience. With these freedoms, or treasures as she called them, came the responsibility to create something new (Weber M. , 1919, p. 137). Her life exemplified those maxims. She and her husband started a salon in Freiburg intended for open political discussions, and later she became one of the first female members of Parliament in 1920 – all this while being the wife of a prolific writer (Ritzer, 2004).

Weimar women struggled as much with feminist ideology as does society nowadays. Much of the struggle centered on the idea of Foucaultian power and status. Louise Tilly and Joan W. Scott (1987) argue in their book *Women, Work and Family* that wage earning alone has not improved the status of women in our present society, and it did not improve the lives of women during the Weimar Republic either. Women struggle with their identities and with the social roles into which society and their own expectations have forced them. As was the case in the nineteenth century, it is still true in the twenty-first century, that “women still have to balance between productive and reproductive activities” (Tilly, 1987, p. 228). Mothers are responsible for the physical, mental and moral health of their children, and these are indeed not easy priorities to juggle (p. 231). Women’s work was then as it is now “shaped by the intersection of economy, demography and family” (p. 232).

Women have complied with rules and have taught their daughters to do so as well, argues Anna Arroba (1996), in her article “A Voice of Alarm: A Historian’s View of the Family. ” What they have achieved by this is the “protection of men, family, and society” (p. 11).

Simone de Beauvoir, an early feminist and companion of the famous existentialist Jean Paul Sartre, bemoans the fact that women have been forced into gender roles from which they want to break free. Yet this desire for freedom is limited by not wanting to be perceived as too liberated and risking the rejection of the opposite sex (Beauvoir, 2010). This certainly describes the conflict women faced before World War I and during the interwar years. Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor assert that a feminist is no less a feminist because she has reached a point at which

¹⁸ TRANSLATION: "A human being is as a bearer of reason destined to determine his own destiny, that is to say, that he cannot act according to his desires, but is subject to act according to his conscience which in turn is subject to moral law."

she dare develop every side of her human nature” (Rupp, 1999). True feminism, according to Marie Stritt¹⁹, is the struggle against any and all forms of violence.

4.9 Summary of the Theoretical Framework

There are several salient points which apply to the women of the resistance. The first principle is the Kantian idea of *The Categorical Imperative*. Did the women of the resistance indeed embrace the Kantian notion of what is right must be right for everyone? The second principle can be gleaned from Max Weber. Typically well-functioning societies depend on strong leadership. Without a doubt Max Weber did not envision a man like Hitler when he addressed the assembly at the University in Munich in 1920. Instead, I believe that he felt Germany needed a man of intellect and tolerance who would be able to guide a nation to renewal. As demonstrated earlier, the idea that the women fell for the strong man image of Hitler has been proven incorrect by Jürgen Falter (1991). Having said that I do not know how Niemöller, Meusel, and Moltke voted in the elections of 1933, or if they voted at all. One thing I can assume with relative certainty is that they were inclined to lean toward conservative and nationalistic parties and as such, there is a good possibility that they, too, voted for Hitler initially. After all, he promised a restoration of the old order and the majority of the middle class longed for that. The third principle can be drawn from Michel de Certeau's writing. How did the quotidian tacitness of the women of the resistance reflect their true heart? In later chapters I will go into greater detail about their daily “quiet” activities and how they reflected the deeply held spiritual convictions that distinguished them as extraordinary women. The fourth principle applies to the use of power. Foucault, Horkheimer, and Adorno warn of the abuse of power and a form of idealism that fails to recognize human rights as a fundamental basis for all of human actions. Finally, feminist writers describe the dilemma of women's struggle for recognition and equality, and recognize that women are often faced with the choice between productive and reproductive responsibilities, or to put it in terms of some of the women of the resistance, the decision to choose what is best for their families as opposed to following their ideological calling.

¹⁹ Marie Stritt to Mrs. Bompas, February 13, 1928, printed in *Jus Suffragii* 22, No. 6 (March 1928).

*Life belongs to the living, and those
who live must be prepared for changes.*

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE (1749-1832)
(FROM: *WILHELM MEISTERS WANDERJAHRE*)²⁰

5. Literature Review Dealing with Weimar Germany

Weimar culture became the catalyst that propelled the women of the resistance toward assuming roles that had traditionally been reserved only for men. They took over leadership roles in the church so that it might survive the years of oppression, and the importance of understanding Weimar culture cannot be underestimated in the creation of a complete picture of women during that time. The women of the resistance, as well as all of society, were subjected to the influences of Weimar culture. In this rather lengthy discussion that follows, I want to demonstrate the antithesis to the established norms of the previous century that interwar literature provides. Undoubtedly, as can be seen in later discussions about the women, the feminist movement impacted Else Niemöller, Marga Meusel, and Freya von Moltke. What is noteworthy in this discussion is that while they embraced some of the ideals, they rejected others. These three women were not necessarily conscious of the influences their culture had on them, even as already stated, we are not necessarily aware the forces that shape our thinking. Their *Stand* (class) still seemed to be the dictum that directed their lives and work. Nonetheless they forged their own paths.

5.1 Cultural

As already noted in the introduction, the changes that took place in Germany during the interwar years were unprecedented, and the political upheaval was but an indicator of the social upheaval that was to ensue. Class or *Stand* was still the determining factor of one's success in life, but the middle class had become impoverished during the Weimar Republic. Various social forces were at play during that time. The youth were longing for harmonious wholeness, and being disenchanted with the ruling class, they showed their rebellion in part by forming what Peter Gay calls "homosexual friendships" (Gay, 1968, p. 77). The working class continued to be influenced by Communist ideologies while the middle and lower class adults rejected the normative social rules. These changes brought about a "revolution" within the female population as well.

²⁰ (Goethe, J.W., 1889)

As Bridenthal and Koonz (1973) suggest in their essay “Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women at Work,” the role of women during Weimar Germany suffered greatly from male domination not only in the public domain, but also in the private sphere. They write, “[d]espite much rhetoric about the rights of women, Germans did not envision a change in the traditional role of women. . . . Without an appealing alternative, women persisted in their loyalty to the familiar *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* ethos and saw emancipation more often as a threat than as a blessing” (Roos, 2006). A vast chasm existed between the women who sought to advance women's liberation, and those who wanted to persist in the old order. My research, however, has borne out the fact that women in large numbers pursued higher education and the professions in the male dominated work world (Schröder, 1992). My critique of Bridenthal and Koontz is that they operate from a somewhat stereotypical assumption about Weimar women, because the women highlighted in this research – as well as a number of other women – do not fit this schema. In a later chapter, I will present proof that this assumption was an oversimplification of “Weimar women.” Manja Seelen (1995) addresses the emergence of the *neue Frau* of the interwar years in her book *Das Bild der Frau in Werken deutscher Künstlerinnen und Künstler der neuen Sachlichkeit*. She writes that women sought a new way of expressing themselves, and a new way of defining their roles as mothers, friends, lovers, and wives. The *New Woman* had found its way into the hearts and minds of women, and Seelen claims that the refrain from an operetta *Eine Frau, die weiß, was sie will* (A woman, who knows what she wants) becomes the *Leitmotif* of the Twenties and early Thirties (Seelen, 1995).

Germany was by no means alone in this societal change. The United States and Russia displayed similar transformations of traditional gender roles. Fredrick Lewis Allen (2000) argues in his book *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties*, that American women after World War I, underwent the same kind of social revolution as did the women of Weimar Germany. They refused to “settle down into the humdrum routine of American life as if nothing had happened, to accept the moral dicta of elders who seemed to be living in a Pollyanna land of rosy ideals which the war had killed for them” (Allen, 2000, p. 82). American women celebrated their new found freedom in their clothing, hairstyles, and their public and private behavior (i.e. smoking parties, drinking gin, etc.) They rejected the traditional “Gibson Girl” paradigm for the image of the “Flapper” (Allen, 2000). The Communist revolution in Russia had also liberated women. Lenin criticized men for forcing their wives into traditional gender roles and encouraged them to “purge their minds of this ‘slave-owner’s point of view’, take on their

share of the housework, and encourage their wives to concentrate on useful occupations in the public sector” (Clements, 1997, p. 192).

The contradiction in Weimar Germany was that some women longed to hold on to the traditional roles prescribed by society, while others sought a cultural revolution. The first group viewed themselves as wives and mothers and the one constant in the maelstrom of society’s upheaval, while the other group demanded more freedom and equality and pursued those goals vigorously. This phenomenon is explained in Anton Kaes’ book (1994) *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* in an essay by Siegfried Kracauer²¹ titled “Working Women” (*Mädchen im Beruf*). Although women were often portrayed in popular films as secretaries or typists, whose goals were to marry either the boss or a rich American, reality was quite different. Women flocked to the workplace in unprecedented numbers, but their goals were not those portrayed on the silver screen. Kracauer points out that women of the impoverished middle class and working class made up the bulk of the female workforce. Most were single women – only seven to eleven percent were married. This increase in female employment was partly caused by the large number of German men who died or sustained injuries during the war. The preferred profession of women was that of the *stenotypist* (as cited in Kaes, Anton et al, 1994, p. 217). Society viewed this as the appropriate profession for women, because of the innate dexterity they possessed (Kittler, 1999). While few were encouraged to pursue higher education, the Weimar *Reichstag*²² (Parliament) had an unprecedented number of female representatives. The *Verfassung* (German constitution) punished women for having abortions²³ while at the same time many women explored their newly found sexual freedoms (Kaes, 1994).

As women were beginning to find their voice in Weimar Germany, and in fact in all of modernized Europe and the United States, they were no longer willing to submit to male domination. Instead, according to Else Herrman, they lived for the present and followed their own desires (Kaes, Anton et al, 1994). (NB: The Nazi party viewed this social upheaval as bad for society and used it later to call for a renewed order and stability in society.)

²¹ Kracauer's writing was for years the standard work on early German film. His book *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film* (1947) carries the psychological analysis to the extreme.

²² Approximately 10 per cent of the elected officials in Weimar Germany in 1919 were women. Germany did not reach this level of representation again until 1983. (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung)

²³ The story is told by Gabriele Tergit in her essay “Paragraph 218: A Modern Gretchen Tragedy” of a young woman who was coerced into having an illegal abortion by her boyfriend. This “illegal act” was then brought to trial and both the woman and the man were punished with jail time. She received two weeks, suspended to probation and he received two months in jail, which he served (Kaes, Anton et al, 1994, p. 203).

5.2 Fictional Portrayal of Weimar Women

Literature is often called the repository of history, and so it is imperative to take a close look at the literature of Weimar Germany. The evidence provided in literature, film and cultural studies during the interwar years shows that German society was open for an extremist power to usurp leadership and that unfortunately led the nation on a path of destruction from which it has not recovered to this day. To support this argument, I want to look at the normative trends in Weimar culture, the paradigm of the *New Woman* that emerged in the twenties, and the rejection of contemporary values. In studying the literature from that time period, and if one accepts the notion that literature is indeed reflective of societies, one cannot help but wonder how this portrayal of women had affected the women of the resistance. I found no discussions to that effect in their personal papers, but as already mentioned, most individuals are not aware of society's influences over their lives and the formation of their value systems.

As one considers the literary works of the interwar years, several male and female authors emerge as leading figures of that time. While the works of Thomas Mann, Bertold Brecht, Irmgard Keun, and Else Lasker-Schüler are still popular today, for the purpose of this study, however, I have chosen only a few select authors. These writers are Alfred Döblin (1961) and his masterpiece *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Irmgard Keun (1992) and her novel *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (The Artificial Silk Girl) and a poem by Else Lasker-Schüler (1945), a German Jewish expressionist poet and novelist, who struggled with the shame over the abuse of Jews in her native country. These works will provide the basis from which I will derive some of the iconoclastic trends that emerged in Weimar Germany that threatened the very fiber of society. Additionally, I will discuss from a feminist's perspective the changing role of women as they are typified in Joseph von Sternberg's (1931) adaptation of the Heinrich Mann's novel *Der blaue Engel*. Furthermore, books such as *Lustmord* by Maria Tatar (1995) support my argument that the destructive nature of cultural change led to a widespread acceptance of the promise to restore national sanity.

Any study of Weimar Germany would be incomplete without considering the contributions of Alfred Döblin. His life has often been called that of the modern Renaissance man²⁴. Döblin was an agnostic Jew, but later converted to Catholicism. He was a trained psychiatrist, a novelist, and a student of Nietzsche, Kant, and Schopenhauer. His psychiatric

²⁴ I am indebted to my colleagues and scholars at the NEH seminar at Stanford University during the summer of 2010. Their contributions to my understanding of Alfred Döblin and Irmgard Keun were invaluable; many of the comments offered in this section were the result of the class discussions that took place in our seminar.

practice was located at Berlin Alexanderplatz. This area of Berlin has both a cultural and a geographical significance. Culturally, the Alexanderplatz was the center of nightlife in Berlin and was surrounded by working class neighborhoods. Many of his patients came from the lower segments of society, and it becomes rather clear from Döblin's literary works that he was sensitive to the plight of the common man. Geographically the Alexanderplatz is the center of Berlin even as far back as the middle Ages, and it has been the busiest square dating back to the nineteenth century.

Döblin's (1961) novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was first published in 1929 and was made into a film in 1931. The novel's overarching theme is that of a man wanting to become a decent person. After his release from prison, the protagonist, Franz Biberkopf, uses women indiscriminately. His objectification and abusive treatment align with themes in Georg Grosz's and Otto Dix's artwork. The novel presents life in a degraded manner and underscores what Georg Lukács calls "transcendental homelessness" (Benjamin, 2007, p. 99). Biberkopf decides that he wants to become a good person, yet fate or *Schicksal* prevents him from doing so. At the conclusion of the film economic pressures get the better of him, and he resorts to criminal behavior again (Döblin, 1961).

The novel also highlights the diversity of female space vis-à-vis male space. Women are portrayed in this novel as sexual objects, who want to break out of this stereotype, but are nonetheless dependent on men for their survival. Döblin indicts women as being complicit in the destruction of men and society.

This indictment is also seen in Irmgard Keun's (Keun, 1992) novel *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*. Keun deconstructs the idea of *die neue Frau*, the woman who is emancipated and free to do as she pleases. This is evidenced in her main character Doris, a young girl who tries to survive in urban Berlin. Her newly found freedom has also come with the realization that no one is there to take care of her. Work for Doris is sexual harassment and subjugation to male dominance. She wants to break out of the role of secretary and sexual object of her boss and flees to Berlin. There she decides to become an actress, but she fails miserably and is dismissed from the troupe. Condemned to live on the streets of Berlin, she has several unhappy liaisons with various men, but she simply uses them for her survival. When she finally meets with Ernst, a businessman, whom she calls "Green Moss," she experiences the warmth and protection of a home of her own. He treats her well and does not expect any sexual favors in return. Ernst's wife has left him in pursuits of her own fulfillment and has broken his heart. The kindness he

shows to Doris repulses her initially, as she is not used to being treated kindly. She finally comes to accept his generosity. When Ernst tells her, that his wife has experienced a change of heart, he sends Doris away. She realizes that her dependence on him is much deeper than she had admitted to herself. During the final pages of the book, Doris reveals just how much she has come to care for “Green Moss.” “I could cut myself into pieces, if that had made you love me” she writes to him in a letter she never sends (Keun, 1992, p. 184). While she lives the life of a prostitute on the streets in Berlin, Doris never admits to being one. In fact she vehemently denies her prostitution, because in her mind prostitutes “do it” for money; she only expects food and shelter in return. The artificial silk girl lives in a world of make-believe. A statement her mother had made to her - “it’s only real if it’s like a film” – seems to underscore this (Keun, 1992). The type of proto feminism, that Irmgard Keun both advocates and exposes as a fallacy, appears to be typical for Weimar culture.

Weimar culture was also a time of experimentation with new ideas, as was the case with Else Lasker-Schüler’s expressionistic poetry. In his book *Else Lasker-Schüler. Zur Kritik eines etablierten Bildes*, Dieter Bänisch (1971) argues that after World War II, Else Lasker-Schüler’s poems were forced into a role of reconciliation, as her works initially were forbidden when the Nazis came to power. This is much like after World War I, so argues Bänisch, when a similar fate befell Thomas Mann and Gerhardt Hauptmann. These writers were expected to guarantee that the bourgeois literature would continue (Bänisch, 1971). As Else Lasker-Schüler was no longer allowed to write after 1933, she fled to Switzerland after having been brutally beaten on the streets in Berlin (Else Lasker-Schüler. *A New Generation*). While living in Switzerland, she made several trips to Palestine, but was disillusioned with what she experienced there. After the start of the war she was no longer able to return to Switzerland and died in Jerusalem in January 1945. She was among the young Jewish intellectuals in Berlin who were hopeful that the old bourgeois order and its complacency might be abolished in favor of a more tolerant world. They had become disenchanted with the established religiosity of their fathers, and hoped for progress for all the German people including those who belonged to the Jewish communities.

Expressionism was a means of finding one’s place in this cultural upheaval and many young Jewish intellectuals sought to be included in this group – Else Lasker-Schüler was no exception. (Else Lasker-Schüler. *A New Generation*). At her funeral on January 22, 1945 the following poem was read in German:

*Eine Blume brichst du mir zum Gruß -
Ich liebte sie schon im Keime.
Doch ich weiß, daß ich bald sterben muß.
Mein Odem schwebt über Gottes Fluß
Ich setze leise meinen Fuß
Auf den Pfad zum ewigen Heime.*

This was one of her last poems, and it appears that she knew that death was at hand. The flower probably represents her own broken life that had grown out of the seed of hope, but hope did not hold any promise for her any longer. Her spirit had already left her, as it was floating across God's river; the only thing that was left for her was to move her physical being into that realm as well. In spite of her lost hope, she was prepared to abandon her life to God, where she would be released from her sufferings and her striving for a more perfect existence. Much of her poetry had been devoted to mystical descriptions and escape from her oppressive reality, but the above poem speaks of her final impenetrable hope – a befitting end to a life that was fraught with negative self-reflection.

Another life that finally let go of the world's burdens was that of Professor Rath in Sternberg's film adaptation of Heinrich Mann's novel *Der blaue Engel*. Thomas Elsaesser argues that "In Sternberg's Marlene Dietrich films spectacle often draws attention to the (absurd, improbable, even tragic) disproportion of means to ends, causes and effects" (as cited in Ginsberg, *Perspectives on German Cinema*, 1996). While he is referring to films such as *The Scarlet Express* and *Shanghai Express*, the description nonetheless applies to *Der blaue Engel* as well (Ginsberg, 1996). All of these descriptors – absurd, improbable, and even tragic – aptly characterize this film.²⁵

Lola, played by Marlene Dietrich, fits the perceived role of the *neue Frau*. While the resistance women were influenced by the phenomenon of the woman, in some respects Niemöller, Meusel, and Moltke have embraced some of the aspects of the women's liberation and rejected others as will be discussed in a later chapter. Marlene Dietrich, however, in many ways represents the archetype of the new woman and the role she plays in Lola personifies some

²⁵ As a parenthetical note, I would like to point out that this was to be Emil Jannings' first sound film. Its success also had perhaps the unintended effect that it helped propel Marlene Dietrich to international stardom. Emil Jannings, who played Professor Rath in this tragic depiction of a life, had made a film with Joseph von Sternberg before. The actor and the director did not part ways on a pleasant note, but von Sternberg decided to let bygones be bygones (Mann, 1979).

of the cultural stereotypes of this time period. Her obdurate dominance of the bourgeois professor finds its culmination in his complete humiliation. The professor is forced to don the costume of a clown, crow like a rooster, and sell pictures of the woman to whom he is married – all of which he had refused to do initially. Their marriage was not based on mutual respect or even love. He simply marries her because he finds himself in bed with her one morning and feels honor bound (a bourgeois characteristic) to protect her good name. While Lola laughingly accepts the marriage proposal, she does not love him any more than he does her. He is a toy to her, or perhaps a means to improve her standing in society for having married “up.” Professor Rath is no more to her than a pesky moth that circles the light, as the *Leitmotif* of the film articulates. When the professor finds out that Lola has been unfaithful to him with another actor, his already demeaned life suffers another humiliation. The final blow to his self esteem comes when the troupe returns to the night club *Der blaue Engel* in his home town, and Rath is forced once again into the degrading role of the clown. As the clock strikes midnight, he returns to his old classroom where he sits down at his old desk and passes from this life (Ginsberg, 1996).

Two very different worlds are highlighted in this literary work; both are typical of Weimar culture – the well-ordered world of the bourgeoisie as reflected in Professor Rath’s life, and the life of a woman who lives for her own desires disregarding others. Lola (and for that matter, Marlene Dietrich) embodies all the characteristics of the *new woman*. She is independent, follows her own desires and pleasures, and is in need of no one. She flaunts her female sexuality to anyone who wishes to indulge in moments of fantasy. The *Leitmotif* of the film – “Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt, denn das ist meine Welt und sonst garnichts,”²⁶ personifies her life. She accepts no responsibility for those whom she leaves in her wake of destruction – “Männer umschwirren mich, wie Motten um das Licht, doch wenn sie verbrennen, ja dafür kann ich nichts”²⁷ [I chose the German version of the song, as the English adaptation does not express it as well as the original song] (Mann, 1979, p. 338). Marlene Dietrich immigrated to the United States in 1930, as she was a staunch opponent of National Socialism, and became a U.S. citizen in 1937.

Marlene Dietrich may have been the archetype of *die neue Frau* – strong, independent, and flaunting her sexuality – but there are historic accounts of women who defied authority and

²⁶ TRANSLATION: My focus from head to toe is love, because that alone is my world

²⁷ TRANSLATION: Men surround me like moths surround the light, and if they burn it is not my fault.

asserted themselves without resorting to self-destructive behavior or destroying lives in their wake. Three of those women are the focus of this study.

5.3 Social Developments and Phenomena of Weimar Germany

The social developments of the Weimar Republic are discussed in Maria Tatar's (1995) book *Lustmord*. Weimar Germany was a time period in which sexual murders or *Lustmorde* captivated the attention of the press and the public. Several mass murderers are described in Tatar's book *Lustmord*. The most infamous ones are Haarman, Denke, and Kürten. These serial murders occurred not in Berlin, the city of decadence, but in Hanover, Münsterberg, and Düsseldorf respectively. Haarman's homosexual killing instincts and his insatiable appetite for young boys shocked the public. His notoriety and attention in the press also inspired the mass murderer Kürten. Kürten would send letters to the press informing them where he had disposed of the bodies and would give them clues as to where his next victim could be found (Tatar, 1995, p. 42). Tatar also describes the spectacle of his trial. Not only were one hundred reporters, foreign and domestic, in attendance at the trial, but there were also fifty physicians, psychiatrists, and educators who were part of the spectacle. The trial was called "the people's need for justice" (*das Rechtsempfinden des Volkes*) (p. 43). During the trial, according to Tatar's account, Kürten ceremoniously bowed to the reporters for having become complicit in his crime.

Denke, who was the mass murderer of Münsterberg, lived in seclusion, and, according to Tatar's account, kept meticulous records of his victims, such as their height, body weight, etc. He enjoyed an "unblemished reputation in his neighborhood" (Tatar, 1995, p. 42). The *Frankfurter Zeitung* trivialized his murders by claiming that they were a result of "survival in difficult times", and bordered on the ridiculous by suggesting that "the pots of fat" and the preserved human flesh were an attempt to survive the years of hunger many Germans experienced in the early twenties (Tatar, 1995, p. 44). Time and again, not only in Germany but also in the United States, this deviant psychopathic behavior was excused by pointing to the struggles of dealing with the *Great War* and by simply attempting to survive. Great emphasis was also placed on the perpetrators' being victims of "*erblicher Belastung*" (genetic predisposition) (p. 44). Tatar (1995) argues that that was a means of escaping the "social and cultural issues at stake" (p. 44).

This kind of widespread press coverage of the crimes led to what the *Frankfurter Zeitung* called "*Angstpsychose unter der Bevölkerung*" (psychotic fear among the public), as numerous innocent men were subjected to arrests, because people became more and more fearful (Tatar, 1995, p. 45). The unintended effect was that the mass murderer Kürten admitted receiving

sexual satisfaction from the attention, as much as the actual killing had aroused his deviant fantasies. The *Lokal Anzeiger* in Berlin was much more restrained in its reporting of the Kürten trials, and called it “a textbook case of the banality of evil, to borrow a phrase first coined by Joseph Conrad” (Tatar, 1995, p. 51).

Violence against women was so widespread in Weimar Germany, that the *Berliner Illustrierte* offered the following explanation:

[T]he revenge of men against women drove them to murder. That phrase not only reinscribed the division between the sexes by insisting upon an us-against-them mentality, but also reconstituted male sadism – the initial marker of that division – as nothing more than a defense against female attachment to the carnal and material. (as cited in Tatar, 1995, p. 53)

Weimar society possessed the uncanny ability to “justify” murders of prostitutes, as these murderers were doing a service to society in ridding it of its polluting influence. In the case of Haarman, who killed boys, an interesting “twist” was applied to his persona. As gender was a dominant issue during the interwar years, and women were often portrayed as sexual predators, Haarman was feminized in his psychological and physical descriptions. His body was described as possessing overt feminine characteristics and his voice as “that of an old woman” (Tatar, 1995, p. 55). All of this served to underscore the male perspective of the “vile female.” The Nazis then used this interpretation of the psychopathic enigma and labeled it as a conspiracy “spearheaded by Jews, who were protecting and promoting deviant sexuality and criminal behavior, all in the name of greater social tolerance” (Tatar, 1995, p. 56).

Tatar (1995) argues that sexual mutilation and murder of women was a continuation of the battlefield scenes of World War I which many men experienced in the trenches of war. Two prominent painters, who used this aberration as the themes of their art work, were Otto Dix and Georg Grosz. Both spent several years fighting in the war, and Tatar argues that these experiences were the normative force behind their art. She writes, “What we find in Dix’s postwar artistic production might be called a continuation of war by other means and with a very different adversary” (p.68). The underlying reasons for sexual violence committed against women during the post-World War I period are due to the asymmetrical effects of war (Tatar, 1995). She further argues that since women were spared the cruelties of war to which men had been subjected, the returning soldiers took ‘revenge’ on the women by dismembering and cruelly killing them. Not only were crimes of passion or *Lustmorde* part and parcel of Dix’s repertoire,

he also resorted to portraying women as dwarfing and oppressing men, as becomes evident in his painting *Portrait of the Painter Karl Schwesig with His Model*. This work of art created in 1925 shows a large, naked, “fleshy” woman in the foreground and the almost crouching painter in the background. “Yet even as Dix moves toward displacing female fecundity and plentitude with images of male artistic autonomy, he relentlessly invests the feminine with exaggerated biological, social, and political power” (Tatar, 1995, p. 74). For Dix, so argues Tatar, male autogeny can only occur by debasing and violating women.

When one looks at Otto Dix’s paintings, the question arises whether his misogynistic portrayal of women was a deep-seated antagonistic view of women or whether it was a reaction to the position for which women were vying in society. Degas claims that in order to paint these kinds of pictures, the artist must put himself into the role of the perpetrator of the crime (Tatar, 1995, p. 4). Dix’s artwork is unsettling to say the least, and I cannot help but think that his intent was more than simply reflecting what was happening around him.

Concluding the discussion on the cultural aspect of Weimar Germany, one may readily observe that (1) the literati's portrayal of women were often one of contributing to the destruction of male hegemony and (2) the culture of Weimar sought to make sense of sociopathic and psychopathic behavior. In doing so, it came to the defense of the social deviant. Weimar was indeed a time of social experimentation and cultural upheaval. German society was ill-prepared for either, and this smoothed the way for Hitler's rise to power.

*I have never concealed the fact...
that I came from an anti-Semitic past and tradition..
but I returned home after eight years of imprisonment
as a completely different person.*

MARTIN NIEMÖLLER (1892–1984) (LETTER TO DR. ALFRED WIENER – 1956)²⁸

6. Literature Dealing with Nazi Germany

Much has been written surrounding the rise of Nazism in Germany and their subsequent terrorization of the world, but often the connections to Weimar Germany are not made. The interwar years had such a profound effect on German culture that the promise of a better future resounded in the hearts and minds of many Germans. This section focuses on analyses of (1) the German engagement in the Holocaust, (2) the perspective of two *Zeitzeugen* who were complicit with Nazi ideology, and (3) the juxtaposition of two resisters who lost their lives fighting against the rise of Nazism. Finally, as the focus of this project is the women of the resistance who are associated with the Confessing Church, I will also (4) delineate the development of the Confessing Church, and its theological foundation. The post-war role will be addressed in the conclusion.

6.1 Political

Of the books written on German complicity during World War II, three scholars are paramount. These are Christopher Browning, Daniel Goldhagen, and Hannah Arendt.

The atrocities committed at the hands of German soldiers are detailed in Christopher Browning's (1992) book *Ordinary Men. Police Battalion 101*. Christopher Browning was shocked and appalled when first set out to explore the Nazi crimes committed against European Jews. His research led him to Ludwigsburg, Germany where all the archival materials surrounding the Nuremberg Trials were kept. He writes,

Though I had been studying archival documents and court records of the Holocaust for nearly twenty years, the impact this indictment had upon me was singularly powerful and disturbing. Never before had I seen the monstrous deeds of the Holocaust so starkly juxtaposed with the human faces of the killers. (Browning, 1992, p. xvi)

His research led him to discover some of the horrific realities of human abuses for which he was unprepared. Browning (1992) saw in the Police Battalion 101 a total denial of humanity that was unlike anything else he had experienced. These men turned into “professional killers”

²⁸ (Bentley, 1984)

(p. xvii). The crimes these “ordinary men” performed were unspeakable. What is particularly striking when reading these accounts is the banality with which they viewed their tasks.

Accounts such as: the Jews were trying to escape through various places in the train cars so that they had to be closed off with barbed wire; since the guards were out of ammunition, they had to resort to throwing stones at escapees; the train engineer was told to drive faster so that the Jews could not jump from the moving train; 2000 Jews died in transport from heat and exhaustion. These descriptions are but an indication of the casualness with which the perpetrators of these crimes viewed their ‘task’ (Browning, 1992).

Browning (1992) claims that the members of the Police Battalion 101 were ordinary men. Most had come of age during Weimar Germany. They were either from working or lower middle classes. For the most part they had completed the *Volksschule* (lower level secondary school). Most came from Hamburg, “by reputation one of the least nazified cities in Germany, and the majority came from a social class that had been anti-Nazi in its political culture” (p. 48). Contrary to these ordinary men who were not psychologically disposed toward Nazi ideology, the extraordinary women of the resistance initially, by all appearances as they belonged to the middle class, were supportive of National Socialistic ideas. Once they realized, however, what Hitler’s true intentions were, they put aside all concerns for their own well-being as well as those of their families and fought actively against the evil that was embodied in the person of Adolf Hitler.

The killings that were carried out by Battalion 101 were not forced upon the men. While those who refused were labeled “shithead” and “weakling”, they were not subjected to discipline by their superiors for their refusal, nor were they punished in any other manner (Browning, 1992). This underscores what Goldhagen (1997) demonstrates in his book *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*. He writes, that Germans cannot claim that they knew nothing of the cruelty that was going on right under their proverbial noses. Goldhagen also questions the widely held notion that Germans are “ineluctably prone to follow orders” and claims that it has no merit (Goldhagen, 1997, p. 381).

Children were killed just as indiscriminately as were men and women. Goldhagen argues that the killing of children removed any hope of “renewal and continuation of the Jewish people, a future which the Germans sought to obliterate emotionally and in deed” (Goldhagen, 1997, p. 308). Battalion 101 was eager to assist in this endeavor. Major Trapp, the commander of Battalion 101, “appealed to this generalized notion of the Jews as part of the enemy in his early-

morning speech.” The men should remember “when shooting Jewish women and children, that the enemy was killing German women and children by bombing Germany” (Browning, 1992, p. 73). Somehow in the minds of these vile men, that was enough justification to continue with their crimes.

Not all the men in the police battalion were complicit and some asked to be excused from the killing, but the majority continued on with their ‘work.’ Alcohol seems to have been what allowed them to assuage their feelings of guilt and disgust. Browning describes the reaction of one of the policemen: “Most of the other comrades drank so much solely because of the many shootings of Jews, for such a life was quite intolerable sober” (Browning, 1992, p. 83).

Concluding his book on Police Battalion 101, Browning (1992) is confronted with the question that has been asked over and over and for which no satisfactory answer can be found: How was this possible? How could “ordinary men” turn so cruel? Browning turns to Theodore Adorno for some of his answers. Adorno argues that some people are predisposed to such cruelty. He claims that “deep-seated personality traits made ‘potentially fascistic individuals’ particularly susceptible to antidemocratic propaganda” (p. 166). Adorno lists several character traits that make a person more willing to submit to authoritarian rule. Among those are “rigid adherence to conventional values; submissiveness to authority figures; aggressiveness toward out-groups; opposition to introspection, reflection, and creativity; a tendency to superstition and stereotyping; preoccupation with power and ‘toughness’; destructive cynicism; projectivity (‘the disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world’ and ‘the projection outward of unconscious emotional impulses’) and an exaggerated concern with sexuality” (as cited in Browning, 1992, p. 166). Browning adds that subsequent studies have revealed that ‘nature’ had as much to do with it as ‘nurture.’ There exists, so argues Browning, a certain “self-selection for brutality”, which cannot be discounted. While there is the predisposition found in those who “self-select”, there is also a group to whom Browning refers as “sleepers.” These individuals, once roused from their sleep, possess the ability to commit acts of violence and are then able to resume to a well ordered life when they return to their normal environment. Most disturbing, I might add, is Browning’s indictment based on Staub’s findings concerning the human family. He writes, “Evil that arises out of ordinary thinking and is committed by ordinary people is the norm, not the exception” (Browning, 1992, p. 167).

Browning details the acts of ordinary men who commit unimaginable crimes, but in his analysis he overlooks the anti-Semitism (I will describe the development of anti-Semitism in a

later section) that had existed among the German people for centuries – I must quickly add the paradigm that dictates my life: explaining is not excusing! When the connections to Weimar Germany and the anti-Semitism that existed in most of Europe are glossed over in historic writings, the picture that emerges is incomplete and the understanding of the reader is hindered. Not knowing all of the facts would lead to the question Browning raises, how is this possible? Again I want to state emphatically, that just because one understands or is able to explain does not in any way excuse their behavior. Knowing these facts simply help to explain why they were capable of such unspeakable acts of violence. The rejection of Weimar culture was precisely what gave rise to Hitler's nationalistic raving, and the propaganda machine he set in motion did the rest. This wide-spread manipulation, among other factors, predisposed the followers of Nazi ideology to be so cruel and to act so indifferently to other groups of people. When I think about my own research project in light of Browning's discoveries, I have to come to the conclusion that the women of the resistance were subjected to the same societal and ideological pressures. Nonetheless they distinguished themselves from those “ordinary men” in that they for one did not accept the anti-Semitism that was so prevalent in Europe dating back to the Middle Ages, and they valued the lives of other human beings. They risked everything in order to save a life.

Hannah Arendt's (1963) further advances this notion of ordinary men and women committing unspeakable acts of violence in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Arendt, who describes the “show trial” of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem after he had been captured by the Israeli *Mossad* in Argentina, makes several points with her writing. First she demonstrates how completely innocent Eichmann felt throughout the trial. His contention throughout the trial was that he had only followed orders from above. The women of the resistance could have chosen not to come to the aid of the oppressed in society, but they decided instead to move against cultural and political dicta. Eichmann's self-perceived innocence was further supported by his claim that he had helped many hundreds of Jews to emigrate from Germany. “I never killed a Jew, or a non-Jew, for that matter – I never killed any human being” was Eichmann's contention to the end. However, he later qualified this statement by saying that he was never asked to do it. It was a common belief that he would have killed his own father if he had received orders to do so (Arendt, 1963, p. 22). His insistence that he was favorably predisposed to Jews stemmed from the fact that he had relatives who were Jewish. His allowing Jews to leave Germany was not for purely humanitarian reasons. During the first wave

of Jewish expulsion, Jews had to show a *Vorzeigegeld* (a kind of ransom money) in order to obtain their visa. These monies had to be paid in foreign currency. According to Arendt's account, Eichmann sent Jewish functionaries abroad to solicit these funds. These funds then in turn were sold to prospective emigrants at the exchange rate of one dollar to ten or twenty Reichsmark (the official exchange rate at that time was \$1.00 to 4.20 Mark) (p. 46). That Hitler's intent was the complete annihilation of the Jewish population of Europe seems to have escaped Eichmann's attention. The fact that he was moving thousands of Jews from countries such as Hungary, Serbia, etc. to concentration camps in Eastern Europe ostensibly did not sound an alarm in Eichmann's thinking. More than likely, he was simply given over to mendacity.

Arendt (1963) also addresses the complicity of the Jewish representatives. She argues that the elders of the Jewish community cooperated with the Nazis in the perpetuation of the crimes against humanity. Had these *Judenräte* (elders of the Jewish community) sounded the alarm and warned the Jews of what was to come, perhaps things would have turned out differently. Arendt and Browning both argue that several thousand Jewish inmates could have risen up against a few hundred guards. Arendt writes, "Why did you not protest? Why did you board the train?" (p. 11). Why did people arrive at the train station at the appointed time? Why did they dig their graves, undress, and neatly fold their clothes just to lie down to be murdered? (p.11). Why did they go to their death like lambs to the slaughter? (p.5). No one has been able to provide the world with a satisfactory answer to these questions. Arendt's accounts of complicity among the Jewish intellectuals bargaining with the Nazi government are extensive, and she has received a great deal of criticism from within the Jewish communities for that. What Hannah Arendt seems to overlook in her critique of the German Jews was that Germans had never lived as a free society, except for Weimar Germany (1919-1933) and did not know how to deal with democracy. They had lived either under a monarchy or under absolutism. They were not accustomed to asserting themselves, and they did what they were told. Of course this does not in any way diminish the responsibility the German people bear, but it demonstrates that the problem was much more complex than what many are led to believe. The antithesis to these commonly held theories is provided by the women of the resistance. They, too, were subject to all of these forces but chose not to comply with them. Instead they fought actively against them.

The third aspect of Arendt's book that is relevant to this discussion is the shameful apathy of the rest of the world. Why did the Allies not come to the aid of the victims in Germany, when as early as 1935, the world was made aware of Hitler's intentions? The world

just stood by and did little to help the Jews leave Germany. Many of the intellectuals had already fled Germany when Hitler came to power, but the vast majority remained in Germany. When some sought refuge in the United States, they were sent back to Europe, only to meet with certain death when the Nazis occupied the Netherlands and Belgium.²⁹ When the St. Louis sailed from Germany with 906 passengers on board and was denied refuge in Cuba and in the United States, an eleven year old girl sent the following letter to the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. She wrote,

Mother of our Country. I am so sad the Jewish people have to suffer so...

Please let them land in America . . . It hurts me so that I would give them my little bed if it was the last thing I had because I am an American. Let us Americans not send them back to that slater [sic] house. We have three rooms we do not use. [My] mother would be glad to let someone have them. (The Tragedy of the St. Louis, 2011)

According to Hannah Arendt, the rest of the world cannot divest itself of its culpability in the deaths of so many human beings. As Arendt brings her account of Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem to a close, she describes how proudly he died. He shouted "long live Germany, long live Argentina, long live Austria." In these final moments he summed up "the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us – the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*." (p. 252).

Though she has received much criticism for her exposing the "banality of evil," Hannah Arendt presents a much more complete picture of the situation in Germany. Her critique of the time is accurate and by exposing the various factions and various players that contributed to the systematic annihilation of the Jewish people, she adds to people's understanding of those times.

6.2 Cultural

The reaction to Nazi oppression was varied to say the least. For the sake of argument, I would like to divide Germans into three groups – those who supported Nazism, those who adopted the well-known German "Vogel Strauss" metaphor (hiding their heads in the sand), and those who resisted the floodtide of evil that was intended on eliminating all "undesirable" life

²⁹ On June 10th, Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy approached the British government to take some of the refugees, and two days later it agreed. The Netherlands, France and Belgium immediately followed suit. Due to the Cuban and American governments' refusal to provide asylum, the ship returned to Europe. Sadly many of the passengers died between 1939 and 1945 when the Nazis overran Western Europe. These were lives that could have been saved.

within Germany, as will become apparent later on in the discussion surrounding the life of Marga Meusel. For this research project, I simply want to focus on the first and the third groups. The complexity of the impetus of those who kept silent, which arguably was the vast majority of Germans, is too broad to analyze in this paper.

Much of the support for Nazi ideology came from the ranks of the younger generation. When one understands more fully the reasons why the Weimar Republic failed so miserably, one can appreciate why the youth was so susceptible to Hitler's overtures. To support this argument, I would like to highlight two prominent figures who lived through that time, and who have taken an honest look at their involvement. One is Ursula Mahlendorf and the other is Klemens von Klemperer.

Ursula Mahlendorf (2009) describes in her book *The Shame of Survival: Working Through A Nazi Childhood* that many young Germans bought into the Nazi ideology, because they lacked maturity and understanding to recognize its evils. I argue that the trickle-down effect of the disillusionment with the Weimar Republic cannot be underestimated, and that in some cases they were mere children when Hitler came to power. Children naturally are easily led and influenced. In the aftermath of the war, Mahlendorf struggled greatly with her participation in the Hitler Youth. As she was racially pure and devoid of any mental illness or other physical defects, she was able to enter the future leadership group of the *BdM* (*Bund deutscher Mädchen* - the female counterpart of the Hitler Youth). Dr. Mahlendorf writes about her fascination with German fables that glorified the German farmer and vilified the Jewish landowner. She writes, "I am still mortified that I felt edified rather than nausea by such trash" (Mahlendorf, 2009, p. 120). During her years in the *BdM*, she was indoctrinated by her teachers to remain racially pure and prepare for the role of wife and mother in order to have children for the *Führer*. Being part of the leadership group and being considered a *Jungmädels* gave her the identity for which she so desperately longed (Mahlendorf, 2009).

Another person who confronted his personal acceptance of Nazi indoctrination was Klemens von Klemperer (2001). The late Dr. Klemperer was a leading German historian who taught at Smith College for many years. In his speech delivered at the 57th anniversary of July 20, 1944 titled "Deutscher Widerstand gegen Hitler. Gedanken eines Historikers und Zeitzeugen" (TRANSLATION: German Resistance to Hitler. Thoughts of a Historian and Contemporary Witness) at the St. Matthäus Kirche in Berlin, Professor Klemperer explains (not

excuses) his view of his participation in Nazi indoctrination. Below is an excerpt from his speech.

Es war viel Unmündiges, viel Leichtsinn in unserer jugendlichen Ablehnung aller überlieferten Werte, ob nun von Elternhaus oder Schule, oder auch von den Kirchen. Doch lag unserer Schwärmerei ein tieferes Unbehagen zugrunde, eine Auflehnung gegen die „zerbrochene Welt“, „le monde cassé“, wie der französische Existenzphilosoph Gabriel Marcel sie nannte. Die Grunderfahrung in der „zerbrochenen Welt“ ist von der Entfremdung des Menschen in der Großstadt, von Technik und kalter Rationalität gezeichnet. Die Kehrseite dieser Grunderfahrung ist die Sehnsucht nach der Wiederherstellung einer Teilhabe am Sein und eines Ich-Du-Verhältnisses. Die „Entzauberung“ der modernen Welt, von der Max Weber so überzeugend schrieb, war uns Klage und Herausforderung zugleich.

So war es vorwiegend ein mit dieser Erkenntnis verbundenes Generationsbewusstsein. Demokratie, schrieb Karl Dietrich Bracher, ist die Staatsform der „Selbstbeschränkung“, während Ideologie die Denkform der „Selbstüberhebung“ ist. Bracher fuhr fort, dass die Spannung zwischen diesen beiden Polen die Geschichte des politischen Denkens im 20. Jahrhundert geprägt habe. Diese Spannung fand dann in der Tat im Zusammenstoß zwischen politischer Religion und Widerstand in Deutschland einen besonderen Ausdruck. Im Laufe der Machtergreifung und der fortschreitenden Machterweiterung totalitärer Herrschaft wurden all diese widerständischen Regungen in eine verzweifelte Defensive gedrängt, die alle ganzheitlichen Träume zu Alpträumen machte.

Die Weisheit des Wiener Satirikers Karl Kraus, der einmal schrieb, dass, vor die Wahl zwischen zwei Übel gestellt, man keines von beiden wählen solle, hatten wir junge Studenten nicht, und den nötigen Spielraum dafür hatten wir damals bestimmt nicht. (Klemperer, *Deutscher Widerstand gegen Hitler. Gedanken eines Historikers und Zeitzeugen*, 2001) [MY TRANSLATION: Appendix F)

Dr. Klemperer does not excuse his involvement with Nazi ideology in this speech, he simply explains it. Several years prior to this speech he describes the resistance in Germany in his book *German Resistance to Hitler. The Search for Allies Abroad 1938 - 1945*. In it he skillfully delineates the dilemma of the resistance participants. The resistance groups were not well-

organized and coordinated as had been the *Résistance* in France, yet Klemperer argues that it is incorrect to speak of the “marginality of German overtures” (Klemperer, 1992). His insights help to underscore why the resistance was not able to overthrow Hitler. While I appreciate Professor Klemperer's scholarship and illumination on the resistance, I want to reiterate what I have stated earlier, namely that historic accounts of Germans as resisters are incomplete. The fact that women participated in the resistance is not stated anywhere in his book. On several occasions, Professor Klemperer mentions Freya von Moltke, but only in terms of her correspondence with her husband or as a hostess at the *Kreisau Kreis* meetings. He does state that Freya von Moltke attended these meetings, and I would argue that as a trained attorney she contributed more to the meetings than making sure “that those who had traveled from far away were rewarded with good food, drink, and laughter” (Klemperer, 1992, p. 49). In 2010, I corresponded with Dr. Klemperer about my research project, and he responded by saying that he had always felt that the women's contribution in the resistance against Hitler had been highly underrepresented.

Ursula Mahlendorf and Klemens von Klemperer provide an honest account of their personal involvement with Nazi ideology. Neither excuses her or his participation in and with Nazism. Rather they explain that they lacked the maturity to recognize its dangers and were drawn into the euphoria that prevailed in Germany, as a number of others had been.

The other group that is relevant to this discussion is those who resisted Nazi oppression. While the opposition of the German Protestant Church is the focus of a later section, I want to honor the memory of two other young people who were killed by the Nazis for their resistance. Hans and Sophie Scholl, a brother and sister, belonged to a students' resistance group centered at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. The group named itself *die weiße Rose* – the White Rose, a metaphor for purity.

Hans and Sophie Scholl were active members of this group. Their father, Robert Scholl, had raised his children to be independent thinkers and demonstrated a non-conformist lifestyle to his children. His favorite saying, which became the central theme of his life, was a quotation by the famous writer and *Universalgenie* Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: “Allen Gewalten zum Trutz sich erhalten” (Defy all oppressive powers) (Dumbach, 1994, p. 39). Their father had spent four months in a Gestapo prison, for accusing the Nazis of being wolves in sheep's clothing.

Beate Dumbach (1994) explains that even though the father did not approve of his children's joining the Hitler Youth as teenagers, he could not keep them from it. Hans was an active leader in the *HJ* (*Hitler Jugend* or Youth,) and Sophie belonged to the *BdM* (*Bund deutscher Mädchen* – Federation of German girls). Within three to four years the *Geschwister Scholl* (The Scholl Siblings as they are generally called in Germany) were disillusioned with Nazi ideology. For Hans this disillusionment began during a Nazi party rally held in Nuremberg in 1936. This mass meeting presented a new Germanic god, namely Adolf Hitler. Hans could not accept this kind of veneration. As a result of his disillusionment, he decided that he could no longer follow this ideology; instead he would actively fight against it. Sophie's decision followed a short time later. During her last year in high school, her teachers observed that she no longer participated actively in the class. She could not embrace the Nazi glorification. After completing her *Abitur* she fulfilled her work service requirement as a preschool teacher. She felt the storm in Germany intensifying each year. When she arrived in Munich in May 1942, her brother was already actively involved with the resistance movement.

When the first pamphlet of the White Rose appeared in the middle of June 1942, it was not difficult for Sophie to make the connection to her brother. As Sophie's maxim was "Be doers of the word and not hearers only", she decided to join the White Rose movement. In a letter to her close friend Fritz Hartnagel she expressed her desire to experience the sufferings of others. She wrote,

Perhaps I will be called up next year for the work service. I am not unhappy about that, because I want to suffer also (that is putting it too extremely, but I want to be touched by their sufferings). Do you understand that empathy becomes often an empty phrase when one's body does not hurt? (Dumbach, 1994, p. 116 - TRANSLATION)

In the beginning the goal of the White Rose was to cause the German people to rise up against their government. The pamphlets were distributed all around the university, placed in mailboxes in Munich during the night, and disseminated in other German towns; thus the membership of the White Rose movement increased substantially.

The year 1943 began full of hope for the White Rose. Its members believed that the invasion by the allied forces was imminent. They became more daring and careless and began to distribute their pamphlets during the day. At night they wrote anti-Nazi slogans on walls in Munich. Many in the White Rose group, including Hans and Sophie Scholl, were convinced that they should develop into an active resistance group. They attempted to contact other resistance

groups in Germany and wanted to arm themselves. Quite a few of them volunteered to participate in the assassination of Hitler (Dumbach, 1994).

As they were distributing their sixth and final pamphlet, they were discovered by Jakob Schmid, a janitor at the University of Munich. All the members of the White Rose were eventually arrested, and most of them were executed. On February 22, 1943 at 5:00 PM Hans and Sophie Scholl, as well as their close friend, Christoph Probst, were beheaded. Shortly before their execution the three were allowed to meet together and Christoph said to them, "I did not think that dying would be this easy". Hans Scholl's final words were "Long live freedom!" (Dumbach, 1994, p. 228). Their sixth and final pamphlet was smuggled out of Germany and came into the hands of the allied forces. During the final attempt to destroy Hitler, millions of copies of the sixth pamphlet were dropped over Germany.

This synopsis of the students' movement in Munich underscores what Klemens von Klemperer (1992) argues in his book, that the resistance in Germany was indeed multi-faceted and rose from the ranks of academe, the church, and the military. The women of the resistance were not the only ones who identified the evil that spread across Germany, and many suffered greatly for their resistance. As already noted, the majority of German people kept silent during those dark years, and many had a dim view of the resistance group immediately following the war. In recent years, however, Germans, and the world for that matter, have taken another look at German involvement with and against Nazi ideology which has also inspired me to highlight the work of the resistance women through this research project.

In order to apprehend fully the tensions that existed within German society between Jews and Aryans, one needs to understand the development of anti-Semitism within German culture. Additionally, it is important to note that Germany was by no means alone in its anti-Semitic sentiments. This systemic problem existed in other European countries as well, but contrary to Nazi Germany, they did not set out to annihilate Jews systematically.

"Cruelty has a human heart" writes the poet William Blake in his nineteenth century poem "A Divine Image." The abuse of human beings is as old as the history of mankind, and the saying that the only thing we learn from history is that we do not learn from history, is as relevant in this present age as it was in early twentieth century Germany. In January 1933 Hitler rose to power in Weimar Germany and unleashed an unprecedented wave of destruction upon the world. Ordinary men and women were willfully drawn into an abyss of violence toward their

fellow citizens. Much has been written in analysis of that time, and undoubtedly many more volumes will be added to the canonical writing of those days.

The seminal works of Daniel Goldhagen, Hannah Arendt, and Christopher Browning demonstrate the ability of ordinary and perhaps not so ordinary people to follow a fanatical leader and to commit unspeakable acts of violence toward others. A great number of Germans believed that the Jews sought to destroy their way of life and culture.

Hatred for Jews is not unique to modernity. The persecution of Jewish people predates the Middle Ages, but the vilification of the Jews as a religious group moved into the foreground during the High Middle Ages. Goldhagen (1997) claims in his book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* that the hatred for the Jewish people dates back as far as the Crusades, and although these anti-Semitic feelings remained latent at times, they were always present within the German people. Jews were blamed for various ills that befell German societies. For example, during the great wave of the "Black Death" (1348-1351) in Europe, Jews were accused of poisoning the wells and food stores. As a result many thousands of Jews were tortured and killed.

As commerce began to flourish in Europe and societies evolved into a monetary based economy during the Late Middle Ages, Jews were the only ones who were allowed to charge interest on loans (Muller, 2002). The church forbade Christians to engage in usury. Jews were forced out of guilds and farming communities and were stripped of their right to own private property (Muller, 2002). Instead they took up the trade of precious metals and stones and sought to enrich themselves through the lending of money for interest. This manner of conducting business caused the Jews to be despised by their neighbors and Germans thought of them as greedy and dishonest³⁰.

Hatred for Jews had its foundation in religious zealotry. There existed a clear divide within the Church's world view. People were either "Christian" or "not Christian." Since most Jews did not accept the doctrine of the Church, they were placed squarely into the camp of the "not Christian." This kind of narrow-minded approach and religious intolerance became the foundation for the wholesale persecution and the attempt to convert Jews by force. Leading this persecution was the founder of the Reformation, Martin Luther. Even though he himself had been subjected to the dominance of a state sanctioned religious intolerance, it did not dissuade

³⁰ Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice* is but one of the many classical literary works that demonstrates the European view of the Jew.

him from advocating the killing of Jews and burning their synagogues in retribution for their rejecting Jesus as the Messiah.

Hatred for Jews, whether conscious or unconscious, was deeply ingrained in German society. I argue that for a large segment of society this anti-Semitism can be traced back to what the psychoanalyst Carl Jung calls the “Shadow.” Jung asserts that this shadow exists in every person and represents the dark side of one’s personality. When a whole group of people projects its shadow onto another group, it turns into nothing short of visceral evil, as could be observed within the German culture (*The Shadow*, 1940). Carl Jung claims that the shadow resides in our subconscious. Only the conscious mind can recognize the shadow, and only the conscious mind is able to combat the evil within. If we fail to recognize the shadow, we project it onto others, and they come to embody the very thing we despise about ourselves (Sanford, 1990, p. 53). John Sanford (1990) extends this argument further in his book *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality* in that he writes, when a person represses the shadow, s/he may be hindered in his “relatedness to people and the capacity for human feelings,” and can develop “criminal and sociopathic personalities” (p. 56). Sanford further argues that a person who ignores his or her own shadow or goes so far as to deny its existence will project this dark side onto other people. This projection can often be observed in abusive relationships, as I will address later on in one of Marga Meusel’s clients. Through this projection, “the Other” will come to embody everything s/he hates about him- or herself. When this phenomenon is multiplied by millions of people, as was the case with many Germans who accepted Nazi ideology, it develops into the evil that has been documented by Goldhagen and Browning in their books about Nazi atrocities.

Hatred for Jews led to a systematic, state-sanctioned campaign of annihilation and abuse. Ordinary citizens were complicit with the Nazi ideology. There was a large contingent of people, whom I call “the silent majority,” who sanctioned by their silence the deeds of those who sought to annihilate an entire group of people. Through their complicity, they bear the guilt of their silence. The famous statement Martin Niemöller made after having been released from the concentration camp after eight long years sums up the consequences of this silence. He found the guilt in himself first when he said,

When they came to arrest the Communists, I did not speak out since I was not a Communist. When they arrested the union members, I did not go into the streets to protest, since I was not a union member. When they finally arrested me, there was no one

left who could speak on my behalf. (Memorial Plaque found in Niemöller's study in his house in Berlin-Dahlem – TRANSLATION)

As a parenthetical note, I would like to add that the above statement has been misstated in numerous references, including on the Jewish history website. Often the term “When they came for the Jews, I did not protest...” is added. My research has proven, that Niemöller never included the Jewish people in this famous statement. Niemöller’s advocacy on behalf of the abused did not include Jews who were outside of the Church. In fact, Niemöller admitted to anti-Semitism after the war. This attitude, of course changed, after he was released from the Concentration Camp, when he realized the grave mistakes the Church had made. Germans accepted the mistreatment of and discrimination against Jews in Germany, because of the cultural stereotyping that was so prevalent in their society. Some failed to act out of cowardice while others simply ignored the dire situation. They feared for their own and their families’ safety, because they had witnessed what happened to those who did not embrace Nazi ideology. They had seen what happened to *Judenhelfer* (those who aided Jews) and were simply afraid, which makes the work of the resistance women stand out all the more.

6.3 The Confessing Church

In order to appreciate the work of the resistance women fully, it is imperative that one understand for what these women were fighting and what they tried to preserve. In this lengthy discussion of the development of the Confessing Church and its theological foundation, I will demonstrate how this new ecclesiastical movement evolved in Germany and the important role it played in the work of the women. As Klemens von Klemperer (1992) articulates in his book the resistance existed in Germany, but it was just not very well organized and coordinated and therefore its efforts to resist Nazi tyranny was not very effective. Many of the resisters were associated with the Confessing Church (*Bekennende Kirche* or *BK*). This church grew out of the Evangelical Church in Germany. The members of the *BK* identified themselves by the “red card” as indicated earlier in Beate Schröder's (1992) book *Die Schwestern mit der roten Karte*.

Although already mentioned, and it bears reiteration at this point, many of the conservatives and nationalists in Germany welcomed Hitler’s rise to power. Protestant Church leaders who later became card carrying members³¹ of the *BK* longed for strong leadership within the government and desired to see a moral renewal within the German people (Hockenos, 2004).

³¹ *Die rote Karte*

The Church's support quickly waned, however, when it became clear that Hitler's intentions toward the Church were not as benevolent as had been assumed. During the early years of Hitler's seizure of power, the two major churches in Germany reacted very differently. The Catholic Church removed itself from the political arena through a concordat between the Pope Pius XI and Adolf Hitler. In this, they agreed that they would stay out of each other's affairs. The Protestant Church fared very differently. This denomination became the battleground of wills. Hitler viewed himself as the head of the Church, which had renamed itself *Die Deutschen Christen* (the German Christians). At the Sports Arena Proclamation in Nuremberg on November 13, 1933, the main speaker of the conference labeled the Old Testament as *Viehtreiber- und Zuhältergeschichten*³² (Wallmann, 2012, p. 269). The Lutheran Church also accepted the *Arierparagraph* (Aryan Law) which expelled any Jewish member who had converted to Christianity from Judaism or was of Jewish descent. This brought about a severe split within the Protestant denomination and out of this split grew the *Bekennende Kirche* (BK) known as the *Confessing Church*.

As a result of the Lutheran Church's implementing the Aryan Law, accepting Hitler as the head of the Church, and rejecting the writings of the Old Testament, the Pastors' Emergency League (*Pfarrernotbund* or PEL) was founded in the spring of 1934. Bentley (1984) describes the initial discussions surrounding the PEL, by crediting Else Niemöller for her contribution in the creation of the document. He writes, "On September 24, in a boat on the Wannsee³³, he [Martin Niemöller], Else Niemöller, and Pastor Fritz Müller drew up the initial statement protesting against the Aryan paragraph³⁴ and the ruthless suppression of minority opinion in the church's council" (Bentley, 1984, p. 71). Then on the following day, Niemöller, Müller, Jacobi, Bonheoffer, and Hildebrandt finalized the document (Bentley, 1984). The theological basis for the Confessing Church became the Barmen Declaration, which was drafted in part by Karl Barth and Hans Asmussen. The Barmen Declaration laid out six fundamental tenets for the newly formed body of believers (Hockenos, 2004). The Barmen Declaration rejected the idea that any source of truth could be found anywhere but in the Word of God, that the State had authority over the Church regarding its teaching, organization, and ministry, and that the Church was an organ of the State. There was much disagreement in the Confessing Church about the role of the

³² stories of cattle drover and ponces

³³ It is somewhat ironic to note that "The Final Solution," enacted in 1942, is also associated with the Wannsee.

³⁴ Although a commonly used term, Aryan paragraph should be translated as Aryan law, since the term paragraph indicate the number of the law in the German constitution.

Church and State, which caused the group to split into two camps, even after the pastors, present at the conference, had signed the declaration. This decision notwithstanding, the Confessing Church split into the conservative wing and the reformed wing. Karl Barth, Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Bishop Wurm, and several others followed the Barmen Declaration and rejected the authority of Hitler and the Protestant Church (Hockenos, 2004). Hockenos tells of the struggle for leadership within the church trying to survive Nazi oppression and the battle for the authority over scripture. A number of members of the reformed wing of the Confessing Church were either placed in concentration camps, left Germany, or were forbidden to speak in public. After these events the women took over the leadership of the Church began to fill the pulpits and carried messages from the imprisoned pastors to their congregations. At first the women simply read the letters to the congregations, but eventually they composed their own sermons (Hockenos, 2004).

Else Niemöller had been part of the Confessing Church's doctrinal conversations since its inception. After the family discovered that they were being surveilled by Nazi officials, the meetings of the Confessing Church were held in a small alcove in Else Niemöller's kitchen. Her home was searched on several occasions by the Nazis, and she continually lived with the awareness that she was a co-conspirator with all the other church leaders. Although the Confessing Church had many struggles within its church body as Hokenos (2004) and Gerlach (1987) assert, but it was beginning to move away from the totalitarian *Gleichschaltung* under the Nazi regime.

6.3.1 Development of the Confessing Church.

Much of the literature that discusses the development of the Confessing Church ascribes the initial split within the Protestant denomination to Nazi oppression and interference. One is led to believe from the writings of Hokenos, Gerlach, et al. that the Nazi government directly brought about the division in the church. The German theologian Walter Rominger (n.d.) points out in his article “Bekennende Kirche während des Dritten Reiches” that initially it was not the Nazi regime that caused the rift within the church. Instead the struggle was within the Church itself, namely the German Christians that attempted to force Nazi ideology onto the churches in the various states. After the German Protestant Churches accepted Nazi ideology as part of its foundation, the church leaders of the Confessing Church attempted to wrest control from the hands of the German Christians by electing Friedrich von Bodelschwingh as the *Reichsbischof* (Bishop over the Lutheran Church in Germany). Bodelschwingh's time in office was short-lived

due to Nazi pressure, and he was forced out of office within just a few months. Ludwig Müller, a staunch Nazi supporter, was elected as Bishop over all the Evangelical Churches. The earliest attempts to protest the institution of the *Aryan Law* started in the fall of 1933. The intent of the Pastors' Emergency League was first to express outrage over the Nazi's usurping of power over the church (Rominger, n.d.). (NB: the struggle over power always centered on the state's dominance over the affairs of the church and not over the general human rights abuses that were taking place in Germany.

Marga Meusel, however, was one who recognized the fallacy of this decision. Her advocacy not only extended to the State's dominance over the affairs of the Church, but included speaking out on behalf of those who had been subjected to human rights abuses.) In order to register the Church's protest over state interference, Martin Niemöller, pastor of the St. Anna Church in Berlin-Dahlem, and Pastor Gerhard Jacobi of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, located also in Berlin, became the leading force behind the *Pfarrernotbund*. In a matter of weeks 2,300 pastors had signed the pledge to defend the Church against "any encroachment of the German Christians" and to block the institution of the Aryan Law in the churches (Hockenos, 2004). By January the following year, 6,000 pastors (about one third of the Protestant clergy) had committed themselves to stop Nazi ideology within the Protestant Church. The PEL became "heart and soul" of the Confessing Church and remained so until the end of the war (Hockenos, 2004). Karl Barth, Swiss born and a prominent theologian in Germany, felt that the Church needed to draft a document that would make clear where it stood on National Socialist matters and that such a document would achieve unity within the Confessing Church. The creation of the *Barmen Declaration* was considered quite a feat, as the Protestant Church had not drafted a document of such magnitude for four hundred years (Hockenos, 2004).

The prominent leaders of the PEL, Barth, Breit, and Asmussen, drafted the document jointly, with Karl Barth taking the lead³⁵. The Barmen Declaration had six major points: (1) the Church's only authority is the Word of God; (2) the Church has but one Lord, namely Jesus Christ; (3) the Christian Church is the community of the believers placed into the world as a

³⁵ An amusing anecdote is told about the meeting of these three men. They met in a Frankfurt hotel with the purpose of drafting the declaration. Each day they had a heavy meal with wine for lunch, followed by coffee and liqueur. Then they retired to their hotel rooms to do their writing and planned to meet again at 5 PM to share with the others what they had written. The two Germans naturally took their customary naps and often overslept. Karl Barth, however, ordered more coffee and went about his work. At 5 PM when they reconvened, Barth showed up with his notes while the others came with blank notepads. As a result Barth has often been credited with writing the entire Barmen Declaration. – You just have to admire the Swiss work ethic! <http://derevth.blogspot.com/2007/08/barth-and-writing-of-barmen-declaration.html>.

witness of God's grace; (4) the Church is one body and one member of the body is not more important than another; (5) the Church is not an organ of the State; (6) the Church's commission is to preach the free grace of God.

During the early years of Nazi Germany, one of the major arguments within the church concerned the issue of "natural theology." Karl Barth, a staunch opponent of natural theology, argued that the revelation of God can only be experienced through the scriptures, while those who supported natural theology argued that God reveals himself through human reason. If this argument were examined from a Thomist's perspective, it might have some merit, but the problem in 1933 Germany was, of course, that natural theology was expanded to include Nazi ideology, as many Lutheran pastors saw Hitler's rise to power as "salvation" for the *Volk*. Bishop Meisner of Bavaria offered the following statement on Easter Sunday, 1933,

A state which brings into being again government according to God's Law should... be assured not only of the applause, but also of the glad and active cooperation of the Church. With gratitude and joy the Church takes note that the new state bans blasphemy, assails immorality, establishes discipline and order, with a strong hand, while at the same time calling upon man to fear God, espousing sanctity of marriage and Christian training for the young, bringing into honor again the deeds of the fathers and kindling in thousands of hearts, in place of disparagement, an ardent love for *Volk* and Fatherland.
(Hockenos, 2004, p. 17)

In retrospect, these sentiments seem sacrilegious, and Bishop Meisner should certainly be condemned for his support of the National Socialists. In 1933, however, the German people were grateful for the change Hitler effected within German culture.

The Confessing Church continued to struggle throughout its ephemeral existence. Disagreements over how much allegiance was due the government caused the Confessing Church to split into two camps as noted earlier. There were those who opposed any form of state influence within the church, and this group came to be known as the radical wing of the Confessing Church. They were not radical because of their vehement political stance, explains Hockenos (2004), but because of their firm stand against the German Christians. This group, led by Martin Niemöller of Berlin-Dahlem, is often identified as the northern part of the Confessing Church. The other group, which was located predominantly in the southern parts of Germany, was called the conservative wing of the Confessing Church. This group, lead by Bishop Wurm of Württemberg and Bishop Meisner of Bavaria, chose not to break with the Lutheran Church

completely and thereby did not divorce itself from Nazi ideology (Hockenos, 2004). Rejecting the German Christians altogether would have meant breaking with the sacraments of the Lutheran Church for the southern conservatives. Ostensibly the conservative wing of the *BK* was not willing to do that. During the years leading up to the war and during the war, each wing struggled for dominance within Germany. The split also prevented the Confessing Church from raising a monolithic voice against Nazi atrocities. Three different factions of the Protestant denomination were vying for the hearts of the German people: the German Christians, the radical wing of the Confessing Church, and the conservative wing of the Confessing Church.³⁶

Notwithstanding the fact that the Confessing Church spoke out against the excommunication of baptized Jews and the dismissal of twenty-seven ordained Jewish Christian pastors, the *BK* never seems to address the issue of cruelty against all Jews in Germany and Eastern Europe. Voices of reason were being raised among the laity to include the condemnation of all human abuses. One such voice could be heard from the ranks of the resistance women. “The palpable acrimony attempt by Marga Meusel to extend the condemnation of the state to include mistreatment of all non-Aryan, not just those within the confines of the church” was not a welcomed admonition (Hockenos, 2004).

In 1935 Hitler’s Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, had 700 pastors arrested to intimidate the members of the Confessing Church and to keep the pastors from reading an anti-Nazi declaration from the pulpit. These arrests served temporarily to present a united front within the two factions of the Confessing Church, but it was more ephemeral than real (Hockenos, 2004, p. 30).

6.3.2 Theological Foundation

6.3.2.1 Karl Barth

Karl Barth is considered by some as the most influential theologian of the twentieth century. Barth was born in Basel, Switzerland in 1886. His father, Fritz Barth, taught theology at the University in Basel. Casalis (1963) claims that Barth was a “Baseler” and exemplified the stereotypical characteristics of his background: “seriousness of mind and depth of intelligence” (Casalis, 1963). Casalis further claims that Barth had inherited from his native city with its “long humanists culture,” a very profound respect for truth and “Gründlichkeit, as the Germans call it,

³⁶ This type of division was typical of the entire German resistance. Some have claimed that the resistance as a whole failed because their efforts against Nazi tyranny were not well organized and coordinated. Had they focused their efforts in a more concerted way, history may have had a different story to tell.

which is unwilling to leave anything obscure” (Casalis, 1963, p. 39). Barth was a purist in the sense that he sought to separate theology from philosophy. He writes in his book *Dogmatics*, “I have cut out ... everything that... might give the slightest appearance of giving to theology a basis, support or even a mere justification in the way of existential philosophy” (as cited in Casalis, 1963). For Barth, every theory whether theological or philosophical, had to be evaluated in light of the Holy Scriptures. Barth also rejected “natural theology.” This theology, so explains Casalis (1963), is the “assumption that valid knowledge of God can be found apart from the revelation he has given of himself in Jesus Christ” (p. 11). For Barth, the idea of natural theology could easily become the means by which Nazi ideology and anti-Semitism was made palatable to the German Christians. The teachings of the Bible are very clear, so argues Barth, and it is not a matter of man’s interpretation of who God is, but it is God’s revelation of himself to man. Jesus Christ has become the interlocutor between God and man, and he has made the invisible God visible. Barth believed that we should not look at man and “derive conclusions about God. But we can look at God (since he has revealed himself) and derive conclusions about man” (Casalis, 1963, p. 15). Karl Barth also believed that God’s grace is not based on man’s merit, but it is simply the character of God to extend grace to undeserving man. This unmerited grace is always followed by gratitude. “*Charis*³⁷ always demands the answer of *eucharistia*³⁸. Grace and gratitude belong together. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder lightning” (Casalis, 1963, p. 20).

6.3.2.2. Martin Niemöller

“Niemöller was the quintessential example of a churchman who struggled simultaneously to remain true to his nationalistic and to his religious convictions” claims Hockenos (2004, p. 33). Niemöller believed that the Church had been entrusted by God to watch over the soul of the German nation, yet it had failed. He confessed that even he had voted for the National Socialists’ Party as early as 1924 and had supported Hitler in 1933. His perception of what had been happening in Weimar Germany was in stark contrast to his values. He wished the old order of *Kaiser* and *Volk* back and saw in Hitler a means for achieving that.

At the end of the war, when Hitler's attempt to annihilate the Jewish people became fully known to the German people and to the world, Niemöller first looked to himself as a cause for this maelstrom. An anecdotal account of his first visit to Dachau in 1945 demonstrates this. He

³⁷ One of the graces

³⁸ Giving of thanks

wanted to show his wife the cell where he had been kept, and as they walked through the former Concentration Camp, he noticed a memorial plaque. On it was written, “In this place 238,756 people were burned between the years of 1933 and 1945.” He continued, “My wife began to tremble and shake, and I had to hold her to keep her from falling. She was startled at the number of deaths that took place here” (Schreiber, 1977, p. 97). For Niemöller, the blame started and ended with the Church which he had led. He blamed himself for many of the things that he had left undone during that time. In this self-reflective moment, he thought of the Old Testament’s account of God’s seeking out Adam in the Garden of Eden. “Where are you?” God called to Adam. So also in the Concentration Camp in Dachau, as Niemöller and his wife read the memorial plaque, he felt that God was calling once again, “Where are you?” or rather “Where were you from 1933 until 1937?” (Locke H. a., 1996). Why did it take until 1938 before he was placed in a concentration camp? [As a point of clarification, Niemöller was arrested on July 1, 1937 and kept in prison in Moabit for 8 months. After the trial he was transferred to the Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen and then to Dachau]. Niemöller firmly believed that the only way Germany could “come to terms with its past” was first to confess its collective guilt for the atrocities committed by the Nazis, and this had to start with the Church. As Niemöller attempted to convince the Church of its complicity, beginning with the famous *Stuttgarter Schuldbekennntnis* in October 1945, his message fell mostly on deaf ears. Not surprisingly a national amnesia and outright denial had set in after the war, as many claimed that they knew nothing of the goings on during the twelve years when Hitler terrorized the Jewish people, the German people, and the world.

Niemöller was a *U-Boot* Captain during the First World War and a highly decorated officer, and he could not embrace the cultural, political, social, and religious changes during the Weimar Republic. At the end of World War I, Niemöller initially decided to become a cattle rancher in Argentina, but after the economic crisis of early Weimar Germany, financial constraints hindered him from this pursuit. He decided to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a theologian. After completing his theology studies, he was ordained in 1924. His first assignment was working for the *Innere Mission* (Inner or Home Missions), and later he accepted the pastorate in the prestigious Berlin-Dahlem St. Anna Kirche. Although an ardent supporter of Hitler initially, he quickly changed after Hitler's real intentions became obvious. His antipathy for and outspokenness against National Socialistic ideology led to his arrest on five occasions. His sixth and final arrest, which took place on July 1, 1937 led to an imprisonment that would

last nearly eight years. The first eight months of his imprisonment were spent in the Moabit prison in Berlin and culminated in a trial, in which he was found “not guilty” of high treason. He was sentenced to seven months in jail (as time served) and to a fine of 2000 *Reichsmark*, of which 500 *RM* were forgiven. The anxieties of his family in attendance at the trial were seemingly abated. His son, Dr. Hermann Niemöller, told me during my interview with him in January 2009, that his mother and sister – the only ones permitted to attend the trial – noticed a Gestapo car parked outside the courthouse where the trial was held. Hitler had anticipated the verdict and was furious. Since the judge had not decided in favor of Nazi policy, Hitler made Martin Niemöller his personal prisoner. He was transferred to the Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen north of Berlin and was kept in solitary confinement until his transfer to Dachau Concentration Camp in 1941. Niemöller described his time in Sachsenhausen as “being buried alive” (Niemöller H. , 2009). The Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp had been built primarily for political prisoners. Niemöller was not permitted to have any contact with the other prisoners but was kept in solitary confinement. He was allowed out of his cell on some days to walk around the prison yard for about an hour. Niemöller took this opportunity to hide Bible verses and sections of hymns for the other prison inmates in crevices of the building in order to encourage them. After his transfer to Dachau, he was kept in the building for political prisoners where he was able to interact with other inmates³⁹. During the final days of the war when it became clear that Munich was going to fall into the hands of the American forces, Hitler ordered all of the political prisoners to be executed. The guards fled with the prisoners across the Alps to Italy, where they intended to kill their prisoners. They were overtaken by the Americans in Southern Tyrol. Martin Niemöller was kept by the American forces until July 1945, when he was finally permitted to return to his family (Niemöller H. , 2009).

Niemöller’s theological orientation mirrored Karl Barth’s. While an ardent conservative and nationalist he held passionately to the Word of God. This is evident in the book *Exile in the Fatherland*, which was originally published by his brother Wilhelm and contains a collection of letters Martin Niemöller wrote predominantly to his wife but also to others. The letters reflect his steadfastness in holding to Christian doctrine and his unwavering commitment to the struggle against National Socialism. His letters also reflect his undying hope that the true Church of Jesus Christ would survive the evil that had overtaken his beloved Germany. Niemöller did not recognize the grave mistakes the Church had made in not speaking out against anti-Semitism

³⁹ His prison cell can still be visited today in the Dachau Concentration Camp.

until after the war. In his mind, the Church bore the greatest responsibility for allowing this horror to happen in Germany.

6.3.2.3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer was born into a well-respected Prussian family on February 4, 1906. He lived a sheltered life. When the Great War broke out Bonhoeffer was eight years old and in his later writings, he recalls the euphoric mood of the German people. Against his father's will, Bonhoeffer studied theology. He spent one year of his studies at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City, where he attended the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. His faith changed during this time. Bonhoeffer described this time of transformation thus,

I came to the Bible for the first time ... I had preached much, I had seen much of the Church, talked about it and wrote about it – and yet I had not become a Christian. Instead I was my own master; wild and not subdued ... I was in spite of all my loneliness quite content with myself. From that the Bible has freed me and especially the Sermon on the Mount. (Wind, 1990, p. 50) [MY TRANSLATION]

This new faith strengthened his belief and forced him to reject the Nazi ideology three years later. As an ardent pacifist, Bonhoeffer was convinced that Christians should only offer non-violent resistance and follow the Sermon on the Mount. He believed that a Christian was not allowed to participate in any war, because love for mankind made it impossible to resort to violence. What brought about his transformation from passivism to activism?

The change occurred gradually. As mentioned earlier, most Germans embraced the changes Hitler brought about. Renate Wind (1990) writes in her book *Dem Rad in die Speichen fallen* that the church received National Socialism with the slogan, “better brown than red⁴⁰,” but Bonhoeffer rejected the actions of the Church fathers and saw it as a betrayal against God. In one of his sermons from the early days of rising up against the Nazi regime, he said, “We are called to take a stand ... Come all you who have been abandoned, you who have lost your church, we want to return to the Holy Scriptures, we want to search for the church together ... Church remain faithful! Confess, confess, confess!” (Wind, 1990) [MY TRANSLATION]. The Berlin church historian Karl Kupisch asserts, “Had Hitler left the church alone and had he occasionally sent some good will their way, the Confessing Church would never have come into being” (Wind, 1990, p. 77) [MY TRANSLATION].

⁴⁰ “brown” referred to the Nazi’s uniforms; “red” to the Communists’ uniforms

After returning from abroad, Bonhoeffer founded his seminary in Finkenwalde near the Baltic Sea on April 26, 1935. The seminary did not stay open very long. In December of the same year the school was declared illegal, and its student body as well as its faculty became enemies of the state. When Bonhoeffer offered the seminarians the opportunity to leave, they all stayed. Bonhoeffer continued to teach, even though he had been forbidden to do so. In 1937 the seminary was closed by the Gestapo.

Bonhoeffer received an invitation to move to the Union Theological Seminary in the United States in 1939, and he took advantage of that opportunity. Rather than cherishing his new freedom, he said, he felt that those weeks were the most difficult time of his life. Bonhoeffer along with Else and Martin Niemöller and Freya and Helmuth von Moltke felt a deep sense of responsibility to their own country. That is not to say that those who chose to leave Germany did not possess that same commitment to their country. Niemöller, Bonhoeffer, and Moltke, however, were determined to see the struggle through to the end. His friends in the United States had difficulty understanding why Bonhoeffer would leave the security afforded him and return to Germany. On June 20, 1939 Bonhoeffer made his decision and started his voyage on July 7. He was a changed man. His non-violent opposition had been transformed into active cooperation with underground organizations. He became a courier and even offered to assassinate Hitler himself. From his writing in those days, one can observe that he constantly struggled with lack of involvement in conflicts. He wrote in his book *Ethik*, that one who remains uninvolved bears greater guilt than the one who stays involved in political affairs. He concluded “following Jesus can cause one to become guilty out of love for his fellow man” (Wind, 1990, p. 122) [MY TRANSLATION]. One can certainly see this principle paralleled in the life of Marga Meusel.

During the years of involvement with the resistance, Bonhoeffer traveled to Switzerland frequently and maintained contact with various resistance groups. He was keenly aware that he could be arrested at any moment, but that realization did not curtail his activities. During Christmas 1944 he wrote these moving words, “It may be that the last day will dawn tomorrow, and then we will gladly lay down our work for a better future – but not before.” His dedication to seeing the work through to the end mirrors that of the women of the resistance. On April 5, 1943, the Gestapo arrested Bonhoeffer and after a short interrogation and jail stay, he was sent to the concentration camp in Flossenbürg. He wrote much during his time there. His thoughts, letters and poems have been collected in his book *Widerstand und Ergebung*. One of his famous

poems, which he wrote to his mother and fiancée during his last Christmas on earth, is as comforting today as it was then. The last stanza is perhaps the most beautiful:

Von guten Mächten wunderbar geborgen,
erwarten wir getrost was kommen mag.
Gott ist bei uns am Abend und am Morgen
und ganz gewiß an jedem neuen Tag.⁴¹

On April 9, 1945 less than one month before the allied forces freed the concentration camps, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged in Flossenbürg. A doctor who witnessed the execution reported that Bonhoeffer prayed before his execution and that he was calm and confident. The life and death of Bonhoeffer are a testament to the perseverance of the human spirit and an encouragement to all not give up on the struggle against evil. He wrote from his jail cell in 1944, “Freedom is found only by acting and not by escaping into thought” (Wind, 1990) [MY TRANSLATION]. As a parenthetical note, I would like to add that the Bonhoeffer Society in Germany requested of the *Yad Vashem* that Bonhoeffer be named as the “Righteous Among The Nations” but this request was flatly denied (Wise, 2006).

⁴¹ TRANSLATION: Surrounded and protected by forces for good, we await whatever may come our way. God is with us in the evening and in the morning, and surely each new day. Incidentally, I noticed during my visit to Munich in January 2014, that the entire poem was posted outside a Catholic Church opposite the Universität München.

In 2014, as I was preparing to participate in a seminar “Moral Dilemma and Moral Choices: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Pope Pius XII” at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., I read the book *Interpreting Bonhoeffer* (2013) and Wolfgang Huber arrived at similar conclusions as I did concerning Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

*“When you’ve locked away all of our pastors,
we women will take their places,
and then you can lock us up!”*
MECHTHILD KEHR (DIARY ENTRY 1937)⁴²

7. Women of the Resistance

Understanding the historical and cultural aspects of the aftermath of World War I, the Weimar Republic, the Nazi rise to power, and the founding of the Confessing Church are important in connecting the historic developments. Unfortunately a study of these time periods also demonstrates again that the contributions of women in all of these developments remain mostly undervalued and under recognized. Two writers who help to underscore this statement are the feminist scholar Joyce Mushaben and the former President of West Germany, Richard von Weizäcker. Joyce Mushaben (2004) argues in her article “Memory and the Holocaust: processing the past through a gendered lens,” that the “memories... acquire a dynamic and a salience that differ substantially from one group to the next” (p. 147). She further claims that the women who lived through the twelve years of Nazi tyranny were not “a subordinate, uniformed mass, easily exploited by a megalomaniacal patriarchal establishment,” nonetheless their contributions are considered as insignificant in the configuration of the “master narrative” (Mushaben, 2004, p. 147). The German President, Richard von Weizäcker also elaborates on women's roles in his well-known speech at the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of Germany's liberation in that he said,

Perhaps the greatest burden was borne by the women of all nations. Their suffering, renunciation and silent strength are all too easily forgotten by history. Yet it is first and foremost thanks to the women that nations did not disintegrate spiritually on account of the destruction, devastation, atrocities and inhumanity and that they gradually regained their foothold after the war. (as cited in Mushaben, 2004, p. 152)

Mushaben (2004) argues that women are still not taken seriously “as historical actors” as demonstrated by a conference hosted by the Research Institute of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993. According to Mushaben, not a single lecture dealt with women or gender. When the organizers were questioned about this omission, the only answer they could offer was that they simply forgot, in spite of the fact, that various proposals on women and gender issues had been offered to the planning committee (Mushaben, 2004, p. 155).

⁴² (Thomas, 1995)

German women fared somewhat different during Nazi Germany than did men. Perhaps with all their vileness, Nazis still had a certain respect for women. While men were mostly imprisoned or killed, women were often placed in work camps. Some were imprisoned for a time and then were allowed to return to their families as demonstrated in Verhoeven's film *The Nasty Girl* (Verhoeven, 1990). Even those women who were kept in the camps demonstrated a different ability to deal with the conditions than did men, as a great number of them outlived the men. "According to Marion Kaplan, women proved 'more accommodating and adaptable', evincing 'fewer inhibitions than men, willing to enter re/training programs at older ages to keep families going'" (as cited in Mushaben, 2004, p. 156). Women also seemed more inclined to share their rations with children and were able to live with less once placed in the concentration camps, argues Kaplan. Furthermore, women were often forced to accompany their children into death, something men generally did not have to face. Women were also subjected to a different abuse in the camps, which included sexual abuse, forced abortions, and sterilizations. In one particular women's camp, *Ravensbrück*, women quickly formed alternative families. They shared their rations, wrote poetry, paid attention to personal hygiene, and focused on their survival (Mushaben, 2004). Additionally they "adopted" other children and protected the "hopelessly ill from discovery and nursed others subjected to medical experimentation" (Mushaben, 2004, p. 166). Mushaben claims that history teaches us several important lessons, and I want to highlight a few:

- (1) women are not only remembered in limited ways, but they are often forgotten again by history's meta narratives. She writes that "[i]t is striking that the 'second Historians Controversy' instigated by Daniel Goldhagen as late as 1995, fifty years after the war, was still a male-dominated event" (p. 170);
- (2) women's memories take place "first and foremost in the private rather than the public sphere. Their memories are sooner rooted in the social minutiae of everyday life than in historical 'grand designs.'" (p. 170). Often in this private sphere the Certeauian theories of everyday life and practices become their identity;
- (3) "women's memories – and their conclusions regarding historical morality – are often articulated 'in a different voice', that seeks connections rather than outright implication or self-exoneration" (p. 171).

These lessons can be gleaned from the writings of feminist scholars as well as from the writings of religious women scholars. In the conclusion I will address this topic in greater detail,

at this point, however, I want to point out that the objectives of feminist scholars and religious women scholars are more similar than dissimilar. What appears at first glance as a vast chasm separating the two groups is, upon closer examination, not so far apart. Mushaben's observations apply to the women of the resistance. Their personal stories bear out that not only were they overlooked by historians, but they also did not seek to be included in historical accounts.

What distinguishes the women of the resistance was their undying hope for a better Germany, and their persistence in opposing evil. Their leadership abilities were a result of the feminists' revolution during the years leading up to Nazi takeover. Women felt empowered to do “men's” work and were not afraid to stare down as it were the mighty Nazi power machine. The women of *Rosenstrasse*, for example, waited for a number of days for the release of their Jewish husbands and used all of their available connections to effect their release. What is striking about their example is that in spite of Nazi insistence that these men must be detained under the law, the women kept their vigilance and continued to demand their freedom. One cannot help but admire their courage to oppose the power of Nazi dictatorship. Ultimately their persistence achieved their goals, and their husbands were set free to return to their families.

“The fact that there was a significant German resistance to Hitler’s regime has only recently gained wider notice in the English speaking world,” argues Julie Winter in her introduction to the autobiography of Freya von Moltke’s book *Memories of Kreisau and the German Resistance* and even less is attributed to the women of the resistance (Moltke F. v., 2003). This reality is very much in agreement with what Mushaben (2004) argues, that women's work, and resistance for that matter, centered on the private sphere, but that certainly does not diminish the contributions. Women also did not seek to create metanarratives of history. Much of their recollections are centered in relationships and personal memories. Doris Bergen (1995) articulates in her review of Theodore Thomas’ (1995) book *Women against Hitler: Christian Resistance in the Third Reich* that most of the historic accounts are based on interviews of those who participated. Consequently it is difficult to construct a historic argument. She further claims that recollections are often mutable, and therefore they must be corroborated with historical facts (Bergen, 1995). In my pursuit to discover more about the lives of Else Niemöller, Marga Meusel, and Freya von Moltke, I have examined many documents in archives and have studied a number of monographs to create a harmonious picture of these women in order to let their voices speak to this present generation from their graves. Their contributions often occurred in the private sphere but that certainly does not make them marginal.

7.1. Else Niemöller - Wife of Prisoner 26679

How can one pay homage to a woman who was content to live in the shadow of a great man? How can one tell the story of a woman who never sought her own recognition? Even during her numerous speaking engagements in the United States following World War II, she never drew attention to herself or anything she did during the years following her husband's arrest and his eight-year long imprisonment. Yet in spite of refusing to be in the center of the conversation, her influence on his life cannot be disputed. She provided him with guidance, encouragement, assistance, and support during her life. As the wife of a renowned man, Else Niemöller withstood with him and stood by him as they resisted the floodtide of evil that swept across their beloved Germany. Life does not necessarily demand of everyone to accomplish one great deed. Life does demand, however, that the sum of one's life amount to greatness. This we owe to our fellow human beings. These were also the dearly held beliefs of Goethe, Kant, Schiller, among many others. Goethe writes, “Edel sei der Mensch, hilfreich und gut, denn das allein unterscheidet ihn von allen Wesen, die wir kennen,”⁴³ and Else Niemöller so aptly fits this description. She was noble, rich in help, and good and has distinguished herself as an extraordinary woman of history. Through my research a picture of who this woman was is emerging ever more clearly. As I have looked at her life and have compared it to the lives of the women in Weimar literature, I have discovered a great dissimilarity. She, too, lived in Berlin beginning in the early nineteen hundreds, yet somehow her life was different from the women Alfred Döblin, Irmard Keun, and Bertold Brecht portray.

Born in 1890, Else Niemöller, née Bremer, belonged to the “Lost Generation” of the early nineteen hundreds, the generation whose lives were truncated by the beginning of the First World War. She was born into a bourgeois family. Her father was a family physician whose practice of medicine focused on the working class and artisans in Elberfeld’s neighborhood. He was, according to one of Else Niemöller’s sons, “well respected and much loved” (Niemöller H. , 2009). As a woman she was not permitted to attend the *Gymnasium* and complete the *Abitur* – a prerequisite to be accepted at a German university. Instead she attended a teachers' college and received her teaching degree. Before her marriage, she would often prefer much to her mother's dismay to attend the *Stammtisch* in the evenings with her father rather than engage in stereotypical female activities. She enjoyed the political discussions around the table. After her

⁴³ TRANSLATION: Man should be noble, helpful – the better translation might be “rich in help” – and good, because that alone distinguishes him from all creatures we know. From Goethe's poem “Das Göttliche”

year of teaching English abroad, she decided that she would further her education. Society had changed somewhat by that time in Germany, and women were allowed to matriculate in increasing numbers at German universities. As a result of the feminist movement, which had begun before the war and continued after the war, women were finally allowed access to higher education in small numbers. For example, in 1908 only 3,436 women attended German universities, and this number grew to nearly 20,000 by 1930 (Thomas, 1995, p. 88). Else Niemöller enrolled at the University in Bonn – which accepted her completed teacher's training in lieu of the required *Abitur* – where she graduated with a degree in English, German, and history. She had a passion for learning and decided to continue her studies in Berlin where she completed her *Staatsexamen* (the equivalent of a Master's degree).

There is no doubt that Else Niemöller was influenced by the women's liberation movement of post-World War I time period or possibly even before that time. In her diary entry in the summer of 1916 she writes about her brother Herman, “if only he had a different view of women” (*Die Frau eines bedeutenden Mannes. Else Niemöller geb. Bremer. 1890-1990, 1990*). Arguably, it is not clear what her brother's attitude toward women may have been or how she wished his attitude were different. Given the cultural upheaval during that time period, the emerging *neue Frau*, and the career she had chosen for herself, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that Niemöller even at that time concerned herself with women's changing roles in society. Else Niemöller was clearly ahead of her time. When she married Martin Niemöller in 1919, she gave up her professional career in order to devote her life to her husband's career and to the care of her family.

The young married couple experienced the economic hardships during the early years of Weimar Germany as much as anyone. While Martin Niemöller prepared for a career as cattle rancher in Argentina, his wife and child lived with a family about seven kilometers away, and they saw each other only on Sundays. She learned how to take care of a farm and studied Spanish during her stay with the family. When his plans changed due to the financial losses the family suffered, Martin Niemöller decided to study theology and his wife supported him in his decision. While engaged in his theological studies he took whatever job was offered to him in order to support his ever growing family.

When life became difficult and there was not enough money to feed the family, Else Niemöller did not turn to prostitution or other self-abasing and self-destructive behavior, as had the women in Irmgard Keun's *Artificial Silk Girl* or in Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

As stated earlier, the religious women who are the focus of this research project, clearly manifested some of the typical characteristics of the women's liberation movement, while rejecting some of the other aspects. They began to view their loyalties as more than *Kinder, Kirche, Küche*. Else Niemöller demonstrated through her life some of the characteristics of the new woman, while still holding to her religious convictions. So when the couple was in need of money, she carefully removed the ribbon from her husband's well-preserved World War I uniform and took it to a jeweler, who melted it down and extracted the gold. They also sold their family treasures – a 1545 Luther Bible, and a chronometer which was a keepsake from his time as a U-Boot captain – to feed their children. By 1935 Else had borne eight children, seven of whom lived and was a devoted wife, mother, and *Pfarrfrau* (Pastor's wife). The Protestant Church required of all pastors' wives that they give up their careers and devote themselves to furthering their husbands' careers.⁴⁴ Pastors' wives were expected to volunteer their time without limits. The pastor's family had to be a model family to the community and to the church family. Women were expected to teach children's classes, lead prayer meetings, and work as counselors to the great number of visitors who came to the parsonage⁴⁵. She had to be a member of the Protestant Ladies' Auxiliary and fulfill the role of a *Seelsorger* (spiritual counselor) if necessary.

Many testimonials confirm the fact that she fulfilled all these responsibilities voluntarily. She also served as the sounding board of her husband's sermons and would often counsel him in the delivery of his messages. In all of her husband's work her influence is evident. She was his encourager, supporter and travel companion. Her son told me that after the war when Else Niemöller traveled extensively with her husband, he was mildly jealous because he would say that the people prefer to hear her speak (Niemöller H. , 2009). Of course he did not mean that seriously, but the point was well taken. Else Niemöller was not in the business of self promotion. When he was arrested for the sixth time on July 1, 1937 – and this time his arrest would last for nearly eight years instead of just a day as the other five had – she continued to support him. On the day of his arrest, the Gestapo searched the house all day and took 30,000 Reichsmark from a wall safe that had been set aside for funding the pastors of the Confessing Church (Thomas, 1995). She never asked him to deny what he had said about Hitler. She faithfully carried on the duties as *Pfarrfrau* while he was away and continued to care for her

⁴⁴ NB: This decree by the Lutheran Church was officially rescinded in 1959 (Benad, Matthias, et al., 1992).

⁴⁵ Now the duties of a pastor's wife are shared by a number of church staffers who are also remunerated for their work. This was not the case in Germany during the 1930's.

family. When Martin Niemöller was transferred to Dachau in 1941, she made the long arduous trips from Berlin to Dachau in the middle of the raging war. She felt that her husband needed her and the Church needed to hear from him.

Prior to Niemöller's last arrest the family became keenly aware that their house was surveilled and their phone was tapped. They lived under the constant awareness they were being watched. They were equally aware that if Pastor Niemöller were to be arrested, they, too, could be detained in *Sippenhaft*⁴⁶. Yet that did not dissuade Else Niemöller from becoming a co-conspirator. There was only one place, a little nook in the kitchen by the window, where conversations could not be heard by the authorities. There her husband and many of his fellow resisters met and discussed the plans for the Confessing Church. She encouraged and supported his work with the PEL and was part of the conversation when he and Karl Barth initially discussed the issue of the Barmen Declaration.

Pastor Niemöller wanted her to stay in the room with him as he prepared his sermons, he would read them to her, and she would offer her critique. Often she would counsel him to tone down some of his rhetoric. She was his partner in every aspect while simultaneously taking care of the ever expanding household (Niemöller H. , 2009).

One of the remarkable aspects about this woman is her unwavering support and commitment to the resistance. She never asked her husband to deny what he stood for even though it would have meant his early release. During my interview with Dr. Hermann Niemöller, I shared with him, that nowhere in all the archival materials I read through, was there ever a mention of her asking her husband to recant what he had said about Hitler. Her son replied mildly astonished and said emphatically, “My mother never considered that.” I explained to him that this is precisely what I admire so much about her (Niemöller H. , 2009). Had her husband recanted and decided to conduct his church under the Nazi auspice, he would have been a welcomed actor in the Third Reich, but that was never an option for the couple. Her support for him was unchanged; however she did not necessarily support him in all his decisions. She was an independent thinker. At one point during his imprisonment in Sachsenhausen, Martin Niemöller considered giving up his church membership in the Evangelical Church and converting to Catholicism. He had come across a Catholic prayer book during his incarceration, and he read in it regularly. After being moved to Dachau, he received much care and counsel from some Catholic priests who were also kept in the Concentration Camp. On this occasion she squarely

⁴⁶ Nazi authorities often arrested the entire families when one member was found to oppose the regime.

opposed him and did not follow his directive to resign from the church. His wife recognized that he was despondent and felt a lack of support from the Church. This despondency and the loneliness he experienced in the Concentration Camp made him question his own allegiance to the Confessing Church. His wife recognized the underlying causes for this decision and realized that the ramifications for the Confessing Church would be insurmountable (Niemöller H. , 2009). Since the family still received its financial support, albeit it had been reduced drastically, from the Confessing Church, Else Niemöller realized that that would end even their meager support. She along with a priest, who was imprisoned with him, dissuaded him from following through on his plans. The priest counseled him to wait until after his release when he could make that decision more objectively. Else Niemöller also reminded him of how the Confessing Church would be affected by his decision. The ripple effect would have been devastating for the *Bekennende Kirche*. Needless to say, Martin Niemöller never converted to the Catholic religion (Niemöller H. , 2009).

Else Niemöller was committed to seeing the struggle against Nazi Germany through to the end. In the early years, when it became apparent that Hitler's rage was directed toward her husband, several English Protestant pastors in collaboration with some high ranking Nazi officers offered to smuggle the family out of Germany. Even then the couple refused to leave Germany. Instead she endured having two of her sons fight for her husband's jailor and suffered the loss of one of her daughters to diphtheria – all this, while her husband was Hitler's personal prisoner. Her oldest son, Jochen, lost his life in Pomerania and her other son, Hermann, was believed to be in Russian captivity in 1945. Hermann Niemöller fortunately returned home in October 1946 (*Die Frau eines bedeutenden Mannes. Else Niemöller geb. Bremer. 1890-1990*, 1990). Else Niemöller describes the heartbreak she and her husband felt over the loss of their son in a speech delivered in Toronto, Canada on March 10, 1947. She writes,

Nine weeks later I got word that my oldest boy had been killed. Now I had to go to my husband again and tell him that another of his children had died. I went to the concentration camp with my two children. I hoped that the Gestapo would let me take the children in. They did not. He could only wave to them. This time, for the first and last, my husband lost his nerves. He said, "Must this boy die for these criminals?" I was afraid that the Gestapo would punish him for that, but they did not do anything. (*Die Frau eines bedeutenden Mannes. Else Niemöller geb. Bremer. 1890-1990.*, 1990)

At the end of the war the need and devastation defied description not just in Germany but all over Europe. Having suffered the loss of two children, Else and Martin Niemöller decided to become foster parents to two orphaned children. As President Weizäcker so aptly explained, the suffering of the war had mostly been felt by the women and Else Niemöller confirmed that (Mushaben, 2004). At the occasion of one of the conferences she held in the United States after the war, she talked about the role of women and in particular mothers during the war. She explained that it was up to the women to continue the work of the Church, a claim President Richard von Weizäcker echoed. Without the women, the Confessing Church would have died a forgotten death in Germany. Else Niemöller also talked about the importance of motherhood. She claimed that women understand the mystery of life, and it was their responsibility to prepare the next generation for their lives (Niemöller E. , *We Women and Peace*). Sociologist and feminist theorist, Nancy Chodrow (1978), articulates in her essay “The Reproduction of Mothering” that the relationship between an infant and his or her mother is indelibly linked together. The bond the infant experiences with his or her mother is the determining factor as to how s/he will relate to others later on in life. While Chodrow, who is associated with the *Frankfurt School* theorists, argues that the traditional form of mothering reproduces after its kind, i.e. girls grow up to be mothers, and men also often follow traditional gender roles, both Else Niemöller and Nancy Chodrow agree that a nurturing environment allows a child to develop good relationships later on in life (as cited in Appelrouth et al., 2007, pp. 355-369). Moreover, Louise Tilly and Joan W. Scott (1987) underscore the importance of a nurturing person in a child's life when they claim that most human beings have been nurtured by someone in their life time and that person was most likely a woman (Tilly, 1987). Ban Wang, Professor at Stanford University, said to me one time that “motherhood is the ultimate fallback in society” and the life of Else Niemöller confirms this statement. Professor Wang suggested that motherhood is the *one* constant in the maelstrom of society’s upheaval. Mothers shield and protect their little ones, and in the absence of this protection or nurturing, people become alienated not only from their society but also from themselves. Else Niemöller recognized the importance of providing a stable home for her seven children, especially during her husband’s time in the concentration camps.

The years during her husband’s imprisonment were difficult years for Else Niemöller. Some of her struggles can be inferred from the letters Martin Niemöller wrote to his wife from his prison cell. In his letter dated November 1, 1937, he states, “if only you would look better! I am under the impression, that each time I see you, you become smaller. Don’t you want to go to

Rose's for a few days of rest and recuperation?" (Niemöller M. , 1975) [MY TRANSLATION]. The constant stream of visitors and the endless letter writing in the parsonage took its toll on Else Niemöller. In twenty-first century America with all of its available electronic media, it may seem rather banal to speak of the burden of communicating with others, but in 1937 Germany, Else Niemöller was careful to reply to all correspondence and she kept careful records of the communications. It was important to her and her husband that people of the Church stay informed of their situation. She also wrote to Nazi officials, demanding better living conditions for her husband and was able to effect some betterment for him. She was fearless in her sense of duty (NB: These facts about Else Niemöller's life are the result of my archival searches at the Zentralarchiv der Evangelischen Kirche in Hessen und Nassau in Darmstadt, Germany).

After the war Else Niemöller became an outspoken advocate for the Church in East Germany. She had visited some of the churches on several occasions and had observed the contradiction between the perfunctory overtures toward the established Protestant Church and the regulations against young people's involvement in organized religion. She stated in a speech given to an American group, that if a person wanted to gain access to higher education s/he was not allowed to be a member of the *Junge Gemeinde* (a Protestant youth group) and had to be subjected to Bolshevik indoctrination. Else Niemöller spoke about the difficulty many women had with this kind of influence in the schools. She stated, that the mothers suffered a great deal because of this practice, but she also recognized that it was up to the mothers to teach their children about the love of Christ (Niemöller E. , n.d.). This underscores what some feminist scholars have asserted, namely that women struggle between their productive and reproductive responsibilities, as was the case in many women in East Germany (Tilly, 1987). They are faced with the dichotomy between their allegiance to their belief systems and state dominance. Most parents want the best education and career choices for their children, but under a dictatorial regime these decisions encompass serious ramifications.

Else and Martin Niemöller had been the first Germans to come visit the American Churches after the war and advocated for peace and understanding between the two continents. She and her husband realized that the greatest need the Church in Germany had was that of Christian friendship from overseas and the assurance that life would continue for them in the community of believers ((Turner, Ewart E., 1952). A number of the Confessing Church members had felt alienated from the international community during Nazi Germany. Not only did they feel disconnected from believers outside of Germany during their time of suffering

under the Nazi regime, the Niemöllers also spoke about the Church's lack of support to non-baptized Jews. Else Niemöller encouraged her audiences to extend forgiveness to the Church in Germany. During their first fourteen-day visit to the US in 1946/47, they held a total of fifty-two meetings at churches. Else Niemöller was a much sought after public speaker. In all her speeches she told about the suffering of the resisting Church during Nazi Germany and the continued hardships many of the congregations were experiencing. When she was asked what the church in America could do to help their Christian brothers and sisters in Germany, she responded by saying, "Schickt ihnen Liebespakete mit Nahrungsmittel und Kleidung und schreibt Briefe christlicher Verbundenheit" (Send them care packages with food and clothing and write them letters that express a Christian bond.) (Turner, Ewart E., 1952). Out of this admonition grew the "Overseas Friendship Center" in Utica, NY and 4,500 German resistance families were adopted by their Christian counterparts in the US. Additionally 54 schools developed a relationship with eight European schools, where administrators, faculty members, and school children wrote to each other regularly and some of the most severely affected schools from the war received clothing, food, and school supplies from their US partners (Turner, Ewart E., 1952). The Center, so writes Turner (1952), was a typical sign of the ever increasing good will between the nations, which was awakened by the initial visit of the Niemöllers in 1946/47 (p. 305).

Else Niemöller's influence can also be observed in her husband's embracing pacifism after the war. Dr. Hermann Niemöller told me that his mother advocated for pacifism long before her husband became an ardent spokesperson for non-violence. Martin Niemöller had mostly been severely chastised by the West German population for his advocacy for pacifism. In fact, upon their return from Moscow, a banner about 20 meters long was hung across their street on which some of their opponents had written "Zurück nach Moskau Niemöller" (Go back to Moscow, Niemöller) (Karnick, 1992). Martin Niemöller also wrote a number of letters to the West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer expressing his opposition to Germany's rearmament. In light of Carl Schmitt's assertion that a state has to decide between loving one's enemies in the private sphere and defending one's country against foreign encroachment, the difference becomes obvious in the life of the Niemöllers (Schmitt, 2007). Else and Martin Niemöller did not distinguish between the two. Pacifism applied to the private as well as the public sphere, and they objected loudly to the division of Germany.

Everywhere Else Niemöller spoke, she gave credit to the women who were part of the resistance. “The women went into the pulpit and did the preaching, especially in the intercession services which began two days after my husband was imprisoned and are still going on” (Niemöller E. , German Women During The War Struggle And After The End Of The War, n.d.). The speech below was delivered at a women’s meeting in the United States after World War II. She writes,

When the Confessing Church opposed Hitler during the years following 1933, women played a great part in the struggle. Quite a number of pastors owed their endurance to the encouragement they received from their wives [her own husband included – my comment], and these women often did not hesitate to step in the orphaned pulpits of their arrested husbands and also to take over the rest of their clerical duties. They did well enough, and we sometimes doubt whether the whole resistance could have carried through without their contribution. – There were not a few of them who most really had to suffer for their faith and Christian attitude: one girl of my acquaintance, working in a Government Office provided there falsified passports for numbers of endangered Jews, whom she in this way safely brought out of the country. When found out at last, she was brought to a Concentration camp, ~~where she went through the most horrible treatment and experience, yet she came back from Inner Russia with an unbroken spirit, if even severely damaged as to her health,~~ (Niemöller E. , n.d.)

In quoting her, I have included her underlining and the portion that she had intended to omit in her speech. One can only speculate why she decided to omit this sentence. The omitted sections certainly are a testament to the human spirit and also underscore Mushaben's description of women's experiences in the concentration camps. Else Niemöller may have omitted these sentences because she was addressing a group of women that was too closely linked to these events and would have had difficulty dealing with these facts, or perhaps it was for other reasons. Nonetheless this record of her speech highlights what many argue that the influence and work of the women was paramount in completing the task the Confessing Church had set for itself.

After the war, Else Niemöller traveled extensively to the US, Australia, and New Zealand with her husband and spoke at many women's meetings. She also participated in radio broadcasts. Everywhere she went, she was a celebrity, and she used these occasions to speak about the sufferings of the German people in the aftermath of the war. She encouraged believers everywhere to come to the aid of the hurting churches in Germany.

Although Pastor and Else Niemöller were much revered after the war by the outside world, something happened along the way that made them fall from grace in the American church. I suspect it was after Pastor Niemöller became such an outspoken advocate for world peace and pacifism in the midst of the Cold War that caused them to lose favor with the American church's leadership. His travels to Moscow and his suggestion to keep Germany a united country did not do much to help the matter. Nonetheless Else Niemöller supported him in his initiatives.

Else Niemöller describes one of the practical things women did during and after the war. She told her audiences that the women went to various homes every morning to collect a slice of bread for the refugees in spite of the fact that many families were starving themselves. Some of the mothers of the home had "dedicated" the first slice of bread from each loaf to the needy around them (Niemöller E. , *German Women During The War Struggle And After The End Of The War*, n.d.). Else Niemöller's concern for the struggling Church did not end with the war. She also had an open heart for the many refugees who fled from the Soviet invasion into Eastern Germany.

Else Niemöller never lost sight of her responsibilities to her God, to her fellow human beings and to the Church she loved. Whether she was fully aware of the extent of the Nazi atrocities is not clear. One can only speculate based on a number of post-war recollections. That people were being abused and mistreated by the regime had to have been obvious to most Germans, but the extent to which they occurred was more than likely not common knowledge as Martin Niemöller's recollection of visiting the Dachau Concentration Camp with his wife demonstrates. Many *Zeitzeugen* will confirm that they saw Jews being deported, but where they were taken or the abuse they suffered once they arrived in the concentration camps were only rumors. Else Niemöller, more than likely, had no more an idea of the atrocities that were being committed in the camps than did the average German. Despite these grim realities, she kept her focus on the God who would lead them out of this abyss. During the darkest days when her husband was in the Concentration Camp in Dachau, Else Niemöller wrote these encouraging words to him at the event of their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, "My beloved Martin,...we will continue to bear our burdens together and rejoice over the flowers that grow along our path. It is the Lord who guides us." (Sterik, 1990). Else Niemöller learned that even in difficult times there can be happiness and contentment, and life consists of more than the sum of its circumstances. Her life exemplifies that of the virtuous woman about whom King Lemuel's

mother instructed him in the Old Testament book of Proverbs, “honor her for all that her hands have done and let her works bring her praise at the city gate” (Prov. 31:31, NIV).

7.2. Marga Meusel - The Righteous Among the Nations

Another woman whom I would like to highlight in this discussion of the women of the resistance is Marga Meusel. Lothar Beckmann (n.d.) describes her in the following terms,

Marga Meusel hat 21 Jahre im Gemeindehaus Teltower Damm gearbeitet. Aber warum ist sie in der Paulusgemeinde so wenig bekannt? Weil sie im Nationalsozialismus todesmutig gegen den Strom schwamm? Weil sie eine Frau war? Oder sie 1953 einsam, enttäuscht und krank mit 56 Jahren starb?⁴⁷ (Beckmann, p. 4, n.d.)

Beckmann raises the question about that the lack of recognition of Marga Meusel and argues among other things that this was perhaps due to the fact that she was a woman. He clearly bemoans the fact that she has not been given the proper honor in the Church or in history. This can be explained in part by Frauke Geyken’s (2011) claim that the resistance was not viewed positively during the years following the war.

A memorial plaque, which is found at the house where Marga Meusel lived and worked in Berlin, reveals the following,

In this house Marga Meusel worked from 1932 until 1953 as the leader of the Evangelical Charitable organization of the Inner Mission. She recognized early the particular dangers for Christians who were persecuted for racial reasons and urged the Protestant Church to support them publicly in their time of need [MY TRANSLATION-See Appendix A)

Marga Meusel exemplified what St. James in the New Testament calls, “be doers of the word and not hearers only,” and what had been Sophie Scholl's mantra as well (James 1:22, NKJV). Very early on in the Nazi's rise to power, Marga Meusel perceived the scandalous dereliction of the Church's advocacy on behalf of the Jews as a form of denying Christ. Dr. Walter Strauss (1946) a member of the Direktorium des Länderkreis of the US occupied territory, wrote on July 10, 1946 of her willingness to risk her own life in order to save countless lives of others. He also claimed that her impulse to perform such acts of heroism stem from her deep commitment to her Christian belief (Strauss, 1946). I want to take this argument a step further and claim that Meusel's sense of obligation stemmed from more than her Christian belief system. She became a

⁴⁷ TRANSLATION: Marga Meusel worked for 21 years in the community center at the Teltower Damm. Why is she so little known in the Paulus congregation? Was it because she swam against the tide in her never-ending struggle against National socialism? Was it because she was a woman? Was it because she died lonely, disillusioned and sick in 1953 at the age of 56?

church leader after having come of age during the time of women's liberation and changing role of women in society. Her opposition to the leadership of the Confessing Church centered around its decision to assist only the baptized Jews. She viewed all human beings as equal, Aryan or non-Aryan, and attempted to convince the leadership of the Confessing Church to embrace the same point of view. Dr. Hartmut Ludwig (1997), Professor of Religion at the Humboldt University in Berlin, is perhaps the most renowned authority on the life of Marga Meusel. His research into her life spans decades, and he has published numerous articles about her life and work. His biographical snap-shot on the life of Marga Meusel reads as follows,

Marga Meusel was born in Falkenberg (Upper Silesia) on May 26, 1897 as the first child into a good and virtuous middle class family. The unusually talented girl had to help in the household, while her brothers were allowed to study law. In order to find a profession that would fulfill her, she was forced to take the arduous path that was so typical for many women during that time period. At first she was a secretary, and then – perhaps after her meeting with Eva von Tiele-Winckler⁴⁸ – became a teacher and social worker. During the semester of 1927/28 she studied at the German Academy for Social and Pedagogical Work for Women in Berlin. The German Academy had been founded by Alice Salomon with the intent of qualifying women for leading governmental positions. (Ludwig, *Den Entrechteten beistehen. Marga Meusel (1897-1997)*, 1997) [MY TRANSLATION]

Through her studies at the academy, Marga Meusel came in contact with the bourgeois women's movement in Germany and learned to appreciate women such as Alice Salomon, Hilde Lion, Marie Baum, and Charlotte Friedenthal – all Jewish women (Ludwig, 1997). Undoubtedly these women had an enormous impact on her life, not only in the way she sacrificed her life to help the destitute in society but also in the transformation of her view of a woman's standing in society. This underscores my thesis that women were empowered by the changing role of *die neue Frau*. During Meusel's study at Alice Salomon's academy, she developed a close friendship with Charlotte Friedenthal who was the business manager of the academy. In Wieler's (n.d.) article he inserted a footnote in which he expressed his opinion that through Marga Meusel's friendship with Friedenthal, a clear connection can be inferred to Alice Salomon. Together the three

⁴⁸ Eva von Tiele-Winckler also known as "Mutter Eva" was one of the first religious social welfare workers (Diakonissin) who founded a home for the poor and displaced as well as homeless children. Her family was one of the wealthiest families in Upper Silesia and through the influence of her parents became a committed Christian. Her belief in God was best realized in her work for the poor and needy of her homeland (Eva von Tiele-Winckler, 2013). She founded the first corporation in the area of social welfare in 1913 and named it "The Home for the Homeless."

women were socially engaged with women's issues. Undoubtedly the resistance women were influenced by the feminist ideology that moved into the foreground of social conversations during Weimar Germany. Incidentally, Alice Salomon left Germany in 1937 and immigrated to the United States, where she continued her stellar writing career in New York. The school Alice Salomon had founded in Berlin survived Nazi bombardment⁴⁹ (Wieler, n.d.).

Society's perception of women had changed and extended to women's view of themselves. Hamm (1992/93) writes, that Marga Meusel's first publication appeared in 1933 in which she researched the lives of unwed mothers in rural regions. Her findings were published in Alice Salomon's thirteen volume seminal work *Bestand und Erschütterung der Familie in der Gegenwart*. Marga Meusel visited and evaluated single mothers in rural areas and collected empirical data from her encounters (Deutsche Akademie für soziale und pädagogische Frauenarbeit: Forschung über Bestand und Erschütterung in der Gegenwart, 2013). She also had an eye for secondary or what some may consider non-essential details such as the kind of pictures that decorated the walls, whether the grandmother “ruled the roost” and how well-nourished the children were and drew inferences about the family life (Hamm, 1992/93). (NB: This aligns with Michel de Certeau's argument that often the socially mundane reveal more about a person than grand narratives.) Hamm also points to the fact that Meusel did not judge the unwed mothers as some, and especially the Church, were accustomed to doing. The topic of single mothers, i.e. having children born out of wedlock, was mostly taboo within the established Church. Meusel explained that social workers in Germany used a different set of measures to evaluate and to aid those in need (Meusel, 1927).

During her lifetime Marga Meusel produced a number of publications between the years 1927 and 1936 which dealt predominantly with her work as the leader of the Inner Mission of the Confessing Church.⁵⁰ In all of Marga Meusel's publications and unpublished archival materials, a clear picture emerges of a woman who had compassion for others, courageously stood up for the downtrodden in society, and possessed a strong Christian basis for her beliefs. Her article, published in 1936, demonstrates her strong commitment to Christian values. The article is titled, “Was bedeutet dir das Kreuz?” (“What does the cross mean to you?”). She leads into her discussion on the meaning and symbolisms of the cross of Christ by stating, “the stronger the

⁴⁹ An interesting anecdotal account tells of the bombing at Alice Salomon's academy. When she had the school built in 1925, she insisted on having a roof top garden included. The bomb that was intended for her academy lodged in the garden and did not destroy the building (Wieler, n.d.).

⁵⁰ The complete list of these publications can found in appendix E .

heathen storm rages over Golgotha's hill, in order to uproot the cross, and the louder the voices are raised for the extirpation of all Christian crosses, the stronger the crucifix will stand and will not be overcome. It will reveal its strength” (Meusel, *Was bedeutet dir das Kreuz?*, 1936, p. 65) [MY TRANSLATION]. Anyone who read this article knew whom she meant by “the heathens.” This kind of bold statement made three years after the Nazis had brought almost everything under their control speaks of a courageous woman who was not afraid to say what she thought. Her article continues to address the question raised in the title, “What does the cross mean to you?” To some, Meusel argues, the cross is merely a decoration or an expression of their vanity. Not so for Marga Meusel – it has become a symbol of death, of belief, of salvation, of resurrection, and of suffering. She writes that to embrace the cross is not simply giving up one's pet sins as well-meaning sermons have encouraged followers of Christ to do. Rather it is loving one's neighbor, giving up one's rights for retaliation even when it would be justified, and following God's path no matter if it makes sense or how dark the path may seem (Meusel, *Was bedeutet dir das Kreuz?*, 1936, p. 66). Meusel communicates to her readers that she is not afraid to suffer for doing what she felt was the right thing to do. She calls all believers to recognize that all men and women are their brothers and sisters – Jews and Aryans alike. For those who view the cross in this manner, it can no longer simply be a piece of jewelry, but a sign of complete allegiance to the will of God, argues Meusel (Meusel, *Was bedeutet dir das Kreuz?*, 1936). Meusel unequivocally aligned herself with the Barthian doctrine for the Confessing Church.

In another publication printed in 1935, Marga Meusel describes the role of the Inner Mission. Incidentally, the *Innere Mission* was founded by Johann Wichern in 1840 as a result of the religious awakening Germany experienced during the 1830's. The *Innere Mission* was a federation of voluntary charitable organizations, which were intended to be a “stabilizing force for both church and state” (Barnes, 1991, p. 25). Marga Meusel, as the leader of the Inner Mission in Berlin, compares the role of the state and the church in her publication “Um die Arbeit der Inneren Mission” in that she writes that the goal of National Socialist State is to abolish eventually these kind of charitable organizations once the *Volk* has achieved a certain degree of “health.” For the time being, the Nazi government tolerated the Inner Mission as they perceived it to serve the purpose of aiding the National Socialists in reaching the goal of racial purity and the connection to blood and ground (*Verbundenheit durch Blut und Boden*). Meusel apprehended what it meant to cleanse Germany of any unworthy life. Those were non-Aryans, those afflicted with physical and mental illnesses, alcoholics, chronically unemployed, and other

“social misfits” and unworthy lives. She protested emphatically against those categorizations, and during her entire time at the *Innere Mission*, she demonstrated that to her all life had value. She realized at the same time that not all people can be helped or want to be helped, but that did not mean that one should not employ all efforts to help the person in need. She writes about the end of one such life: Is it not preferable that when the metaphorical books are opened on the life of an alcoholic, for example, that one should find even a few “pages” on which a measure of normalcy is described for that individual, in spite of his or her relapses into the old way of life? (Meusel, *Um die Arbeit der Inneren Mission*, 1935). This statement bespeaks the deep compassion she felt for all people and her acceptance of all whether they are considered to be successes in life or not. In this publication Marga Meusel (1935) also reminded the church of its responsibility to non-Aryan Christians and explained her motivation behind her admonition to the churches. She states,

If I am concerned about publishing this paper, it is not for reasons of personal gain, but it is because I feel responsible to engage my fellow human beings. What I have to watch in these situations shakes me to the core: on the one hand I see the dire circumstances of others, while in the Evangelical Church, and particularly within the realm of the Confessing Church, there exists an immense lack of comprehension of the circumstances. (Meusel, *Um die Arbeit der Inneren Mission*, 1935, p. 65) [MY TRANSLATION]

Additionally, her tireless efforts to help non-Aryans are documented in a number of unpublished papers. She sought places of employment for young non-Aryan men, advocated on behalf of single non-Aryan mothers, and requested that a home be established for them. Unfortunately, for the most part, her appeals were denied *de facto*. One of the institutions she petitioned wrote that they would accept non-Aryans as long as they subscribed to national socialistic ideology (Hamm, 1992/93, p. 6). Strauss explains that through her publication and the dissemination of her reports to her circle of friends, she kept the church members informed even though church publications had been forbidden by the Nazis (Strauss, 1946).

Other examples that demonstrate her deep love for humanity stem from the yearly report she sent to the leaders of the church. Here are but a few:

Frieda H. comes to my office. Her employer had fired her because she stole from them. Frieda, a beautiful, likeable girl, is an orphan, and will have to live in the streets now. Her employer sent her to us and Frieda who wants to be a good person came to us. We found her a home. After a few days she found a job on her own. From time to time she calls us

and tells us how things are going with her. She has broken up with her boyfriend. Today she called and made an appointment for her friend. She asks if her friend may come see us. "She is not like me. She has not gotten into trouble."

Mr. K. comes to see us. He seems terribly upset. His wife has left him and has taken their daughter with her. We find out that she could no longer endure the hardships of life – the unemployment, living in a garden shed, and the general miseries. "Please help me find my wife," the man pleads. We did find her. She returned to her husband and the letters she writes to us now sound as though they were newlyweds again. (Meusel, *Aus der Sprechstunde eines Evangelischen Bezirkswohlfahrtsamts*, n.d.) [MY TRANSLATION]

Marga Meusel viewed the daily encounters with non-Aryans in her office grimly: "namenloses Elend, arbeitslos, wirtschaftliche Bedrängnis, Dunkel" (NB: It is difficult to translate some of these terminologies as the English language lacks the profundity to express these terms.

Namenloses Elend speaks of hardship, misery, squalor, and affliction that cannot be put in words. The word *Bedrängnis*, translated as hardship, is much stronger in German; it speaks of forces pressing in around a person. The term *Dunkel* or darkness expresses Marga Meusel's foreboding sense of the darkness that was beginning to engulf Germany and would cause the sufferings of untold millions around the world.)

In Marga Meusel's annual report between April 1937 and March 1938 she revealed the complexity of her work by offering the following statistics,

Regarding the care of those who are endangered, we are working with 121 women among those are thirty-seven single mothers. Of those women, we know that fifteen have broken the law, six have been mentally ill, and seven have been forcibly sterilized. We also know that several have attempted suicide, four are alcoholics, eight have sexually transmitted diseases, one suffers from a lung disease, and one is a diabetic – all in all a picture of self-inflicted and non-self-inflicted suffering and sin. Especially in this area we discover that Jesus Christ can heal the person from within and without... We also have 211 teenagers under our care. Our help to these young people predominantly focuses on finding them places of job training in Germany and outside of its borders. We were able to place six children from three different families in a children's home. In one of the cases the father was sent to prison, in the other to a concentration camp, and in the third case the father has disappeared. Three of the children are foster children, three children are deaf, and one had been previously arrested. We do what we can to help these children

and find homes or god-parents for them. (Meusel, Bericht des Evangelischen Bezirkswohlfahrtsamtes (Liebesdienst) Berlin Zehlendorf, für die Zeit vom 1. April 1937 bis 31. März 1938., 1938) [MY TRANSLATION]

Not only did Marga Meusel's care extend to those lives considered unworthy by the Nazi, she also recognized the dangers of city life as Irmgard Keun (1992) so aptly describes in her book *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*. Her goal was to prevent these young women from falling prey to the vices of the city.

During Christmas of 1942, Marga Meusel wrote a letter to her assistants and friends. She used this occasion to transmit greeting from their former pastor who was serving on the Eastern front. She also shared with them an anecdote of a man, she had observed, who was waiting for the streetcar in Berlin. The man, she surmised, had a heavy heart and while he stood there and waited, he began to whistle an old German Christmas carol. Before too long a female voice joined him and then a male voice. They kept singing one carol after the other while waiting in the cold, and according to Marga Meusel, the singing evolved into a beautiful Christmas choir. This may seem like an insignificant occurrence, but to Meusel it was the manifestation of the difference just one single, lonely person can make to lift the spirits in a world that is downtrodden with heavy hearts (Meusel, 1942). This anecdote serves as a metaphor of Marga Meusel's life and influence.

Another example from her annual reports tells the story of Frau B. who visited the office regularly. The mother of seven children and wife of an abusive husband poured her heart out to Frau Meusel, who counseled Frau B. to leave her husband. After a brief time of separation, Frau B. returned to her husband because she felt guilty for leaving the man to whom she had promised faithfulness for better or worse. Since the abuse continued, Marga Meusel suggested an extended time of *Erholung* (recuperation and relaxation). The mission organization found a place in Upper Silesia where the abused woman could go for rest and recuperation for a few weeks. Marga Meusel also found homes for the younger children to stay during their mother's absence. Upon Frau B.'s return the abuse of her husband was more intense than before she left. She tells Marga Meusel, "Vorgestern hat er mich wieder so gewürgt" (TRANSLATION: The day before yesterday he choked me again so brutally). This man typifies what Jung calls the projecting of "the Shadow" onto others. He transferred his own self-loathing onto his wife and blamed her for the misfortune that had befallen him. Instead of leaving her husband, Frau B. excused his behavior. More than that, she believed, as do so many abused women, that it was really her fault.

Her absence for four weeks provided an enormous amount of stress for him (Meusel, *Aus der Sprechstunde eines Evangelischen Bezirkswohlfahrtsamts*, n.d.). This is one more example of the constant flow of clients who sought Marga Meusel's help. There were unwed mothers, unemployed men and women, women who had been arrested who came to seek her help. She never turned any of them away and did not judge them based on their *Stand*, race, or what they had done. When asked, "Whom do you help?" she replied, "of course all who need help – Aryans and non-Aryans" (Meusel, *Aus der Sprechstunde eines Evangelischen Bezirkswohlfahrtsamts*, n.d.) [MY TRANSLATION].

Her years of leading the *Innere Mission* in Berlin Zehlendorf, demonstrate a number of occurrences that bespeak her courage and unselfishness, all of which, I argue, came about through her own view of herself as a fully emancipated woman and as a woman of God. Moreover, she had a profound sense of Kantian duty.

Marga Meusel also criticized the Confessing Church for its lack of advocacy on behalf of non-Aryans. Initially, and through most of its existence, the Confessing Church stood by converted Jews and refused to expel them from its congregation. While she applauded the church's support on behalf of the Christianized Jews, she severely criticized the church's leaders for their lack of involvement with non-baptized Jews. In the book *The Witnesses Were Silent* Wolfgang Gerlach (1987) describes how Meusel composed a memorandum which was sent to the Westphalia Confessing Church leader Koch. In this memorandum, which was also read at the convening of the Confessing Church in the Berlin suburb of Steglitz in 1935, she addressed the issue of the non-Aryan Christians. Initially she had written about the plight of non-Aryan Christians in May 1935, but four months later she rewrote it referring no longer to "non-Aryan Christians" but to all Jews and denounced the church's silence on the matter. She particularly condemned those who saw the Nazi persecution of the Jews as God's will. "Since when has the evildoer the right to portray his evil deeds as the will of God?" she wrote to the leaders of the church ("Dietrich Bonhoeffer", 2004). It was imperative, she continued, that the church publicly oppose these measures and help everyone — Christian or not — affected by them.

The church had, under the leadership of the theological faculty of the University of Marburg, compiled a memorandum on September 20, 1933 which defined Jews not as a race but as a religion. Therefore a baptized Jewish convert was no longer considered a Jew, but a member of the Christian community. Baptism and belief are the only two determining criteria, the paper states (Hamm, 1992/93, p. 14). Marga Meusel used this memorandum to remind the

leaders of the Confessing Church of the responsibility they have for their brothers and sisters in the faith (Hamm, 1992/93, p. 15). This also led her to make more practical demands of the Confessing Church. First she demanded that the Confessing Church rescind assistance to baptized Jews only. She based her argument on first Corinthians in which she reminded the leaders of the church that the strong should not oppress the weak. Meusel unequivocally identified this practice as a violation against the law of loving one's neighbor. This biblical love for her fellow human beings became the driving force behind Marga Meusel's acts of heroism, argues Hamm (1992, p. 16).

It took more than five decades before Marga Meusel was recognized for her acts of heroism and before her gravesite was finally declared an honor grave and had a gravestone placed in her honor. Dr. Hartmut Ludwig offered the following eulogy in 2007,

Marga Meusel would not want to be remembered as a heroine during one of the darkest times in German history. She considered her noteworthy aid to the down-trodden, the disenfranchised, and the persecuted without any regard to her own person and as nothing out of the ordinary. Those few remarkable individuals who swam against the current of National Socialistic idealism and false preaching of the established church, allow us to look into the faces of today's generation and remind them that nothing of this sort should ever be repeated. On this day, Israel Sunday, we remember again our guilt that caused millions of human beings to lose their lives. We must remind the Church again of the victims and their small numbers of helpers in order to give them a face and a voice.

(Ludwig, Marga Meusel. *Eine Gerechte unter den Völkern*, 2007) [MY TRANSLATION]

Harald Tischer proposed that the following caveat be added to her gravestone: "Marga Meusel, born on May 5, 1897 in Falkenberg, died on May 16, 1953 in Berlin, found none who would listen to her timely call to avert injustice and misdeeds. But what she was able to give, she did: she helped. In her memory and our blessing." Pastor Eckart Wragge expounds further on the work of Marga Meusel in his comments in "Votum am Israel-Sonntag, dem 15. August 2004, zu Marga Meusel im Gottesdienst um 10.00 Uhr in der Pauluskirche" in that he states, that attempts had been under way to stem the tide of racial fanaticism in Germany by Niemöller and Bonhoeffer. When Marga Meusel arrived in Berlin with her Jewish friend Charlotte Friedenthal she advocated for an aid office for non-Aryans. She was 37 years old, single, and a Christian with all her dread and fears, but she was ready to resist (Wragge, 2004)).

Dr. Hamm further explains that foremost in Marga Meusel's concern were not only women and children but also the plight of non-Aryans. She urged the Confessing Church leaders to open a central office to aid those affected by the racial cleansing that was taking place in Germany. She had experienced firsthand the dire situations of those who were excluded from German society through her friendship with Charlotte Friedenthal, who worked in Meusel's office without remuneration. As early as August 1934, both women had presented the Church Superintendent, Martin Albertz, with a detailed cost analysis for such an endeavor. Their plan was well received by Albertz who passed this project on to Bodelschwingh, but Bodelschwingh rejected the plan stating that he was overburdened with the affairs of the church.

As already mentioned, Marga Meusel severely criticized the Confessing Church, and justifiably so, for its lack of advocacy for non-Christians and its apathetic attitude towards the Jewish population. As the leader of the Confessing Church, Martin Niemöller has often been identified with this accusation. In a sermon preached by Pastor Niemöller in 1932, he stated that the Jews were “unsympatisch” (not likeable) to him (personal correspondence between Wolfgang Kästner and Pfarrer Wragge dated September 27, 2008 – used by permission). Surely his anti-Semitism can be traced back to the general attitude displayed towards Jews addressed in an earlier chapter. While dislike for the Jew was commonplace in Germany, it was Marga Meusel who opposed this attitude among the church leadership very early on. Pastor Wragge, an ardent advocate of Marga Meusel, tells the story of the family of Max Bindel. After Max Bindel had died in the *Plötzensee* prison, Marga Meusel saved his wife Andrea and their daughter Irene from being sent to the concentration camp⁵¹. This was not an isolated incident. Marga Meusel assisted a great number of Jews in Berlin by securing false papers and ration cards for them. Some of the Jewish social workers who were no longer allowed to work in governmental offices were taken in by Marga Meusel into the *Innere Mission* where she was able to help them in their desperate situations. After the large scale deportations began in 1941, Marga Meusel took many of the women into her home and office under false identity, all at great risk to herself and her co-workers. Her own safety never seemed to influence her decisions and actions (Ludwig, 2007).

Marga Meusel never lost sight of her responsibility to her fellow human beings and completely rejected the National socialistic view of Jews as worthless creatures. On one occasion she wrote, “Gibt es vor Gott ‘unwertes Leben’? Wie manches unwerte Leben mag vor

⁵¹ At the celebration of naming a square in Berlin for Marga Meusel in the summer of 2012, Irene Bindel was one of the featured speakers at the event. See appendix B.

Gott einen viel höheren Wert haben als unser hochwertiges, weil Gott einen ganz anderen Maßstab anlegt als wir kurzsichtige Menschen.” (TRANSLATION: Is there any unworthy life before God? Many an unworthy life may have a much higher value before God than our highly esteemed lives, because God applies a different set of measures than we short-sighted people do.) (Ludwig, 1997). Marga Meusel was determined not to abandon the call to Christian duty in spite of the opposition. She believed that in the example of Jesus Christ, all believers are called upon to surrender their lives completely to His calling. For her, the Church, the Confessing Church included, had forsaken its duty to its fellow men. In one of her memoranda, she reminded the Church of its responsibility to speak out on behalf of those who no longer had a voice in Nazi Germany. She wrote, “It is not an exaggeration to speak of the cleansing of the German state of its Jewishness. How shall we respond when we are asked 'Where is your brother, Abel?' The only thing that will be left for us is to respond as did Cain” (Ludwig, 1997) [TRANSLATION]. The question, “Am I my brother's keeper?” had to be answered with a resounding “yes” for Marga Meusel, and she exemplified that through word and deed. She recognized the evils of National Socialism and considered it to be – as Dr. Ludwig calls it – theological anti-Judaism of the church. Furthermore, she never viewed non-Aryans as non-Germans. For her they were one and the same and her responsibility extended to all human beings, not just the racially pure. She also identified the *Gesamtschuld* (collective guilt) of the German people much earlier than Martin Niemöller. His recognition of the failed church did not occur until after the war was over.

Marga Meusel was indeed a courageous woman, yet not without her faults and weaknesses. In a letter to Martin Niemöller on June 3, 1937, she addressed the issue of her courage, “Should we have a run-in with the authorities, I do not expect you to come to our rescue. I take full responsibility for my actions” (Ludwig, Marga Meusel. *Eine Gerechte unter den Völkern*, 2007). On the occasion, however, when she was denounced for anti-Nazi statements in March 1943, the Superintendent Max Diestel persuaded her to retract her denunciation, and he was able to save her perhaps from certain imprisonment and death (Ludwig, Marga Meusel. *Eine Gerechte unter den Völkern*, 2007). One might argue that in this instance she compromised her deeply held convictions or that she behaved in a cowardly manner, but it is always easier to form an opinion when one evaluates decisions retrospectively. The argument others have raised was that in this instance it was more important to lie to the authorities so that she could continue her work with the resistance. We do not know all of the circumstances that

surrounded this decision. Her life as a whole bears out her courage. She saw what was happening to the Jews in Germany and was determined to do all she could to save them from certain death. She did not shrink from employing illegal means. This attitude is in stark contrast to the Kantian principle. Kant believes that lying under any circumstances is never acceptable. For Marga Meusel, however, the state had lost its legitimacy, and she felt that it was no longer necessary to obey its rules. Her own safety never seemed to be a major concern to her. Because of those heroic deeds, the *Yad Vashem* honored her in 2007, fifty-four years after her death, as *The Righteous Among The Nations* (Ludwig, Marga Meusel. *Eine Gerechte unter den Völkern*, 2007).

Marga Meusel lived in relative obscurity after the war, never being recognized for the heroic deeds she performed during the difficult years of Nazi oppression. She died a lonely death in 1953.

7.3 Freya von Moltke - The Courageous Heart

The cover picture of Freya von Moltke's biography written by Frauke Geyken and published in 2011 shows the picture of the archetype of the new woman. This photograph, taken in 1945 when Freya von Moltke had to leave Kreisau shows the young woman wearing slacks, her hair pulled back, and smoking a cigarette. Immediately the image of Marlene Dietrich (minus the Fedora) comes to mind and one cannot help but draw a parallel between these two women. The cultural image she represents in this picture is that of *die neue Frau*. These women were not threatened by the patriarchal society. They knew what they wanted from life and were not about to return to nineteenth century male dominance.

A number of books have been written about the life of Freya von Moltke, and I have chosen three of them as the nexus for this discussion. The first book is a collection of letters Helmuth von Moltke wrote during his time away from his family in Berlin and from his prison cell. This book is titled *Letters to Freya 1939-1945* and was published in 1995. The second book, written by Freya von Moltke, is titled *Memories of Kreisau and the German Resistance* published in the English language in 2003. The third book is a biography of Freya von Moltke written by Frauke Geyken in 2011 titled *Freya von Moltke. Ein Jahrhundertleben 1911-2010*.

Helmuth von Moltke (1995) describes his wife's contribution to the resistance best in a letter he wrote to his sons just a few short months before his execution. He writes,

Ever since National Socialism came to power, I have done my best to mitigate the consequences for its victims and to prepare for a change. I was driven by my conscience, and after all, it is a task for a man. From 1933 on, I have therefore had to make material sacrifices and to run personal risks. In all these years, Freya, who was the one who suffered most from these sacrifices and who always had to be concerned that I would be arrested, imprisoned, or killed, never hindered me in what I considered necessary, or made it harder in any way. She was always ready to accept everything; she was always ready to make sacrifices if it was necessary. And I tell you: this is much more than I did. For running risks oneself, which one knows, is nothing compared with the readiness to let the person, with whom one's life is joined run risks one cannot gauge. And it is much more, too, than the wife of a warrior accepts, for she has no choice; one word from Freya might have held me back from many an undertaking. (p. 4)

This acknowledgement of Freya von Moltke's influence and support of her husband parallels the life of Else Niemöller. Helmuth von Moltke was conscious of the sacrifices his wife had made in support of his struggle against National Socialism. This letter also articulates that she knowingly and willingly assisted him in his fight against Nazi ideology, and that she had the power to dissuade him from his actions – yet she never wavered.

Freya von Molke, née Deichman, was born into a well-to-do upper middle class family in 1911. Her mother encouraged her to pursue a career that was considered appropriate for women of that time. As a young teenager, Freya had no desire to study or pursue an education, and by her own admission, she drifted aimlessly through life (Geyken, 2011). In pedagogical terms she would be classified today as a “late bloomer.” It was not until her late teens that she decided to complete the *Abitur*, so that she would be accepted at a university. She met Helmuth von Moltke on a visit to Vienna, Austria and fell in love with him. Describing her first meeting with him she said, “I saw him and my heart stopped” (Geyken, 2011, p. 35). The feeling was mutual as the later letters he wrote to her from prison bear out. It was not until after meeting her future husband that she decided to start her university studies and matriculated in the University in Cologne to pursue a doctorate in jurisprudence. After her marriage to Helmuth von Moltke, she continued her education at the University in Breslau, where she defended her dissertation in January 1936⁵². Her *Doktorvater* was a very popular Jewish professor⁵³ but was removed from

⁵² Due to her doctoral chair being removed from his position, she finished her defense in January 1936, even though she had completed her doctoral thesis in June 1935.

the field of academe after 1935. When Helmuth von Moltke's father passed, he inherited the Kreisau Estate. The estate had fallen into disrepair and Helmuth von Moltke relied heavily on his wife to restore the estate. Moltke worked in a law firm in Berlin and spent much of his time away from Kreisau. His area of specialization was centered on human rights issues. He recognized the evils of the Nazi regime early on and sought to contact the allied powers during the war in order to negotiate a peace accord. He was sorely disappointed after his secret meetings with the "enemies" of the Third Reich. He attempted to negotiate an agreement with the outside world in Istanbul, Turkey in the summer of 1943 in which Germany would have been able to keep some semblance of dignity, but those terms were not acceptable. The allied powers would only agree to a complete surrender. They made it clear that they wanted to see Hitler and Germany utterly defeated. When Moltke left Istanbul his assessment of the situation was "Now all is lost" (Klemperer, 1992, p. 331). Freya von Moltke's comment about the years of establishing contact with the outside world was that they (the resisters) felt connected to the international community and thought that they were their friends. That was a grave error in judgment though, she realized later on. "Die waren nicht unsere Freunde! Die waren Feinde der Deutschen, und da gehörten wir dazu" (TRANSLATION: They were not our friends. They were enemies of Germans, and we were part of them) (Geyken, 2011, p. 100). Helmuth von Moltke labored to see the Hitler's dictatorship come to an end. This desire led him and several other men and women to form the *Kreisau Kreis* (Kreisau Group or Circle). The objectives of this group of military, ecumenical, academic, and political leaders were to prepare a contingency plan to govern the country once Hitler had been removed from power. Although I value Professor Klemens von Klemperer's scholarship and appreciate his candor as a *Zeitzeuge*, I initially disagreed with his assessment of Freya von Molke's involvement with the group, when he writes, "Helmuth von Moltke's wife Freya and likewise the Countess Marion von Yorck, was [sic] also present at these meetings, made sure that those who travelled from far away were rewarded by good food, drink, and laughter" (Klemperer, 1992, p. 48). I resented that Klemperer portrayed the women in attendance as having a less important role than they actually played. It was not until I read Freya von Moltke's own account of the meetings that I understood his statement. None would deny that hospitality was an important part of the *Kreisau Kreis* and is still part of German culture today, for that matter. It was also quite an undertaking to provide the guests

⁵³ In those days, professors received a base salary of about 15,000 Reichsmark and students would pay the difference in salary, thus because of his popularity Professor Wolff received an annual income of about 50,000 Reichsmark (Geyken, 2011, p. 61).

with food in the middle of a war. My disagreement with Dr. Klemperer was that of the five references he makes of Freya von Moltke in his book *German Resistance Against Hitler. The Search for Allies Abroad 1938 - 1945*, four of them reference letters Helmuth von Moltke wrote to his wife and the other one is the quotation above. One would think that as an educated woman, Freya von Moltke would have contributed more than making sure everyone had plenty to eat and drink, and indeed she did. What is sometimes overlooked is that by being a well-informed participant of the discussions, she was according to the Nazis a co-conspirator, and it was Nazi practice to detain the entire family (*Sippenhaft*) once one family member was arrested. Freya von Moltke stated in an interview, “I carried Helmuth’s commitment with him from the beginning, and therefore, I wanted him to continue... I never advised him to stop, but rather encouraged him, because I was convinced that that was the right for him to fulfill his life” (Moltke F. v., *Memories of Kreisau and the German Resistance*, 2003, p. xi). This statement reflects again the sentiments of so many women who fought actively alongside their husbands in that they viewed their own roles as secondary when their work was anything but secondary. When questioned about her involvement with the German resistance she said that it was the duty of women to look after the household affairs of the family and to make certain that outsiders viewed the family as a nationalistically intact family. Only in this way were their husbands free to continue their work in the resistance, and when many of the members of the *Kreisau Kreis* were arrested and killed, it was up to the women to care for the families that were left behind. Freya von Moltke was careful to admonish the reader not to fall prey to look at this time through the lens of twentieth century liberated women or to evaluate the situation from the point of view of democracy. Times were different then, yet the women embraced as much of the freedom feminism had afforded them (Geyken, 2011).

As already mentioned, the women were part of the discussions at the various meetings, and according to Freya von Moltke, no one would have prevented them from speaking, but they were content to allow the men to have the leadership (Geyken, 2011). This confirms Joyce Mushaben's theory on women's experiences being centered predominantly on the private rather than the public sphere. For women, the resistance was first and foremost a part of their relationships with their husbands (Geyken, 2011, p. 106). The burden the men carried as resisters to the terror regime was shared with and by their wives and thus their burdens were cut in half as they shared them with their spouses. As already noted the resistance against the regime and in particular the role of women within the resistance has only in recent years gained a wider

audience. Geyken, who confirms this, believes that this surge in interest has started with the generation that came of age after the German reunification in 1990. About her own seeking attention for her involvement with the resistance, Freya von Moltke stated in 1992, that she viewed it as beneath her dignity to be very concerned about being recognized (Geyken, 2011, p. 107). Society is changing ever so slowly though. After Sophie Scholl had been accepted into the Walhalla in Regensburg, now all references made to Freya von Moltke after 2010 align her with the resistance and call her a resistance fighter. In a memorandum composed by her on October 15, 1945, she readily admits that women played a central role in the resistance against Nazi oppression. Her admonition not to fall prey to evaluating past events through the lens of democratic thinking and liberated women should be heeded. One must keep the times in which they lived in their proper historical framework.

Freya von Moltke was an independent woman, who came from a long line of women who had modeled independence for her. According to Frauke Geyken (2011), Moltke never really thought about the women in her life who had impacted her. This underscores my earlier claim, that women of that time simply were not aware of the cultural influences that were so typical of Weimar Germany. When Freya von Moltke came face-to-face with a direct question about the normative influence of women in her life, she responded that she had never thought about it. After some contemplation though, she said that it must have been her mother. Her mother-in-law also supported that claim. Her mother had been an independent woman herself. Frau Deichmann, Freya von Moltke's mother, was a *Republikaner* (anti-monarchial and pro-democratic party) and represented the antithesis to her husband's monarchistic political leanings. The mother raised her children to think democratically, while the father longed for the return of the old order (Geyken, 2011). Although the mother fulfilled her role as wife and mother according to the expectations of the Cologne society, she was determined to forge her own paths. The two other women who influenced Freya von Moltke, according to Frauke Geyken, were her musical patron Lilla, and the archeologically interested *Rheingräfin* (Rhine Countess) Sibylle (Geyken, 2011, p. 23).

Freya von Moltke had a similar experience as did Else Niemöller. When Hitler's murderous intentions became apparent to Freya and Helmuth von Moltke, their friends and family in South Africa encouraged the couple to stay with them until the political situation in Germany improved. Just as the Niemöller's had refused to leave Germany, so the Moltke's

refused the kind offer of their relatives. She writes, “We were both tied much too strongly to Germany” (Moltke F. v., *Memories of Kreisau and the German Resistance*, 2003, p. 14).

Helmuth von Moltke spent much of his time in Berlin, where he practiced law. He wrote to his wife every day, and Freya von Moltke hid his letters in a bee hive on their Kreisau estate (Moltke F. v., 2003). She thought that that would be the last place the Nazis would look if and when they searched the estate. These letters written between 1939 and 1945 give the reader an insight into the tender relationship the two of them enjoyed. In 1990, she reluctantly permitted those letters to be published in a book *Letters to Freya 1939 – 1945*. According to Freya von Moltke’s description, Kreisau was a peaceful place, even during the time of war. She felt that this was most conducive to the work her husband was doing. Supporting him in his tireless efforts of struggling against the Third Reich afforded her also a “certain inner freedom” (Moltke F. v., 2003, p. 28).

Freya von Moltke also assisted her husband in his research. She writes,

I had already studied law for a few semesters in Bonn, and now I was participating in some seminars in Breslau. Helmuth also employed me right away. During the first winter I worked out endless statistics for him about the unemployed in Waldenburg coal-mining area. The miserable conditions under which the miners in Waldenburg were still forced to labor had bothered Helmuth for years. Again and again he tried to get the word out about the inhumane conditions. He even brought famous American journalists, who were his friends, to Waldenburg so that they could write about it. (Moltke F. v., 2003, p. 10)

This demonstrates that Freya von Moltke was his equal partner in every way. She not only concerned herself with the home, but she also assisted him in his research as well. After the death of Helmuth von Moltke’s father, the family moved to Kreisau and it was up to Freya von Moltke to restore the old family estate. This meant a time of separation for the couple, since his work was still very much centered at the law office in Berlin. She describes it as a peaceful place, but “life threatening danger was ever present” (Moltke F. v., 2003, p. 19). Anyone who opposed the regime could count on at least a few months in a concentration camp. In spite of this, Freya von Moltke (2003) claims that their family never lived with fear because they were convinced that what they were doing was necessary for Germany (p. 19). This contributed to their hope that there would be an “afterward” and motivated them all the more to work for a better future (Moltke F. v., 2003, p. 21). She struggled nonetheless with what she saw around her. At one point she expressed those sentiments to her husband, and he suggested that she not

look around but focus on her work. This was the only way she could get through some of those difficult times. As I have mentioned earlier in the connection with Else Niemöller, Germans were certainly aware to some extent of the abuse the Nazis were meting out, but as many who lived through that time confirm, the entirety of their heinous actions did not come to light until after the war.

Helmuth von Moltke spent much of his free time reading Kant as indicated in his book *Letters to Freya. 1939-1945* and one may safely assume that Kantian principal guided his life (Moltke H. J., 1990). For Kant duty and intentions were inseparable. Human beings act in accordance with duty but intentions behind those actions defines these as moral or immoral. For Kant, intentions and duty reflect a perfectly reasonable manner of behaving. Kant also believes that human beings are most fulfilled when they act according to duty. The consequence of an action does not necessarily judge the goodness of an action; rather it is our intentions behind our actions that reflect our goodness (Kant, 1963). These Kantian ideas of *Pflicht* (duty) and *Vernunft* (reason) were undoubtedly operative in Freya von Moltke's life as her numerous references to her duty as the wife of a resistance fighter indicate.

Just as Else Niemöller had demonstrated, Freya von Moltke was also a woman who recognized what was important in life. During the last few months of her husband's life, she moved to Berlin where her husband was detained. He had recently been moved from *Ravensbrück* Concentration Camp to a prison in Berlin Tegel. With the help of the Protestant prison chaplain she was able to smuggle a great number of letters into her husband's prison cell. Both knew that Moltke's execution was imminent and she wrote to him that the most wonderful gift had been that they had been able to prepare for his death together. That is not to say that she had given up hope of his being released, but both were realistic about the darkness that was closing in around them. She continued to express to her husband that her most ardent wish was to keep him here on earth with her (Geyken, 2011).

At the end of the war, Freya von Moltke left her beloved Kreisau. An American friend smuggled her out of the Russian zone under the disguise of arresting her (Geyken, 2011). Living with oppression had not ended with the toppling of the Nazi regime. Now the Bolshevik threat loomed large on the horizon. After spending two years with family in the Western sector, she decided to move to South Africa, where she arrived in January 1947. Initially she did not know just how long she would stay, but South Africa provided a stark contrast to the war-torn Europe. Her life according to her own report was uneventful. She was growing increasingly tired of

South African politics. Everyone in the Moltke family was against the apartheid politics in South Africa, but no one did anything about it. She decided to move back to Germany, which she did after her son completed his schooling in 1955 (Geyken, 2011).

Moltke was indeed a woman who possessed a courageous heart, and people felt drawn to her because of the inner strength that she emanated. She was not afraid to stand up to Russian soldiers after the war. Once when she caught Russian soldiers stealing food, she confronted them without fear. Freya von Moltke had learned that fear made them wild, and she was able to stop them simply by being friendly (Moltke F. v., 2003).

Freya von Moltke was quite visible in the public space in the years following the war – so different from Marga Meusel. She viewed it as her responsibility to educate the younger generation about the resistance in Germany. She coauthored a book with Annedore Leber titled *Für und Wider*, a history book, which was published in 1963 (Geyken, 2011, p. 166). As already mentioned, Freya von Moltke contemplated her decision to publish her husband's letters he had written to her while in prison for a considerable amount of time. By her own admission, she never quite “trusted” historians to compile the letters and documents she had hidden in the beehive. She believed that historians did not understand “non-facts” and feared that they would simply focus on the political events of that time (Geyken, 2011, p. 191). For Freya von Moltke it was important to portray Helmuth von Moltke as a great man, and not simply someone who was part of the resistance. Many other surviving wives whose husbands were part of the resistance shared those sentiments. They wanted their husbands to be remembered as the men they were and not simply have political or historic facts known about them (Geyken, 2011).

In 1956 Freya von Moltke met her husband's former professor Eugen Rosenstock Huessy and fell in love with him. They spent some time together and after Eugen Rosenstock Huessy's wife passed away from cancer, she decided to join him in Norwich, Vermont. After Professor Rosenstock's death, Freya von Moltke founded the Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund and the Norwich Center for Rosentstock's works. Her travels would take her to Germany frequently for various events honoring her first husband. Two of the memorable events she attended were the presentation of the *Geschwister Scholl Preis* in Munich in 1989, and the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Helmuth James Graf von Moltke's birthday in 2007 which was also attended by Chancellor Angela Merkel. Freya von Moltke firmly believed that the future and the past cannot be viewed separately – they belonged together (Geyken, 2011).

*When God gives you hard bread,
He also gives you sharp teeth.*
PERSIAN PROVERB⁵⁴

8. Analysis of Research

In this analysis, I want to address several points of discussions I raised in the introduction. First, my contention has been that *die neue Frau* enabled the women of the resistance to perform heroic deeds during Nazi oppression and become leaders of the Confessing Church. This is first and foremost evident in the educational paths these women chose. Each of these resistance women pursued education levels that had been reserved for men in the past. In spite of the expectations their families and local societies had been passed on to them, they forged ahead in their pursuits. The resistance women, whose lives I have described in the earlier chapters, were encouraged by their parents and particularly by their mothers to pursue careers of wives and mothers, but they rejected these admonitions and decided on different paths. They also stepped into roles that had been designated for men by the Church's leadership. In doing so, they not only became the resistance women *qua* resistance fighter, but they also became the trail blazers for post-war German churches as the German Church adopted new regulations to ordain women after the war.

Else Niemöller was a prime example of someone who assumed the leadership role of the church. She continued the work of the church after her husband's imprisonment. She also interceded for her husband through the continued barrage of letters she wrote to government offices, requesting her husband's release or the amelioration of his conditions. She did not fear the Nazi officials. Additionally, she continued the work of the church by holding intercessory prayer meetings which had a threefold purpose: (1) to pray for the imprisoned pastors; (2) to encourage those who were held captive by the Nazi regime so that they might know that they had not been forgotten; (3) to distribute messages from the pastors to the congregations so that they might not relinquish their struggle against the evil that had overtaken their country.

Marga Meusel fearlessly opposed the regime that had lost its legitimacy in lying to the authorities, distributing false identity cards, and hiding Jews at the risk of losing her own life. Not only did she commit “illegal” acts, she was also empowered to stand up to the Church leadership. She recognized the tragic position the Church had taken and did all she could to turn

⁵⁴ (Mehrpour, F., 2013)

it from the error of its way. Many of the letters that she wrote to various church leaders bear out that fact.

Freya von Moltke was also not beyond resorting to illegal behavior. She became a co-conspirator with her husband in their effort to overthrow the government and to set up a provisional government until new elections could be held. There can be no doubt that the feminist liberation movement of the early nineteenth hundreds affected them whether they were conscious of it or not, as proven in Beate Schröder's book (1992) *Die Schwestern mit der roten Karte*.

Secondly, I argue that philosophers like Immanuel Kant and sociologists such as Max Weber had an enormous impact on the normative values displayed in the lives of the women. Weber's call for strong leadership undoubtedly led the vast majority of German people to vote for Hitler initially. Moreover, the resistance women perceived life from the view point of the *Categorical Imperative*, and this is particularly visible from the stance Marga Meusel took in defending all people – Aryans or not. Her advocacy on behalf of those maltreated by the governing powers speaks for itself, and her blatant disregard for her own safety makes her a heroine in anyone's view. The challenge for someone who evaluates the lives of these women is to determine which philosophy had the greatest influence on them. Were they guided by Kantian principles or their dearly held Christian beliefs? The epistemological implications are challenging. One's ethics are generally the sum of all of one's teachings, whether they originated with the home, the church, or society. Since none of their writings ever addressed the issue of Kantian ethics, yet they were clearly operative in their lives, one may safely assume that it was the combining of both: the influence of Enlightenment thinkers and Biblical principles of loving one's neighbor.

These heroic women were also affected by the cultural stereotypes the Weimar Republic produced, and they reacted to the cultural maelstrom. Since these women belonged to the middle class, it is not beyond the realm of possibilities that they, too, voted for Hitler to come to power as did approximately sixty percent of the middle class. In spite of Hitler's virulence toward non-Aryans and Jews in particular, they saw in him a means of escaping the influence of Weimar Germany. Books such as *Lustmord* demonstrate the cultural upheaval that was typical for the Weimar Republic. German society was profoundly affected by what went on in their nation during the interwar years, and they wanted to change the country's direction – something Hitler promised to do. As a twenty-first century observer, I have difficulties comprehending the

blindness of that generation, but if I situate myself in the position of a person who lived in the nineteen-thirties, their decisions take on a different dimension. As Foucault advocates, perspective is everything. Once Hitler's hatred of Jews became evident, and by that I mean that he was intended on destroying them, things changed for the women. Ostensibly Hitler's view of Jews was known as early as 1925 at the first publishing of his book *Mein Kampf*, but most people did not take it very seriously. Most believed that the Jews had too much influence in German society. They felt that after society had been stabilized, they could remove Hitler from power with subsequent elections.

Thirdly, the marginalization of women's contributions still continues. Joyce Mushaben's assessment that women's work is often centered in the private sphere and that historians view this predominantly female occupied space as being secondary in the canons of history certainly rings true. Their contributions, however, are as relevant as the ones performed in the public sphere. The difficulty is in how to measure the contribution, since it is difficult to assign an abstract value to it. What one should consider, nonetheless, is how societies could function in the absence of those often perceived as socially mundane contributions. These apparent minutiae of everyday life truly become, in the Certeauian sense, the identity of the culture.

My fourth argument is that feminist scholars and religious women scholars are not as different as they may appear at first glance. While some feminist scholars have argued that the teachings of the Bible are intended to continue the patriarchal *status quo* (Frankenberg, 2011), the women of the resistance have proven the opposite. They were not willing to accept the *status quo* and resorted to whatever means necessary to accomplish their objectives. Other scholars have also addressed this seemingly great divide between secular feminists and religious women. For example, Krishna Mallick (n.d.) articulates this divide in her paper "Common Ground of Feminism and Cultural Relativism in Human Rights Discourse: The Case of Sex-Determination Test in India." She opines that feminists share more in common with cultural relativists than they realize, and it is imperative in the twenty-first century with its reappearance of religiosity that those commonalities be highlighted (Mallick, n.d.). As a religious woman myself, I argue that there is more we share in common than what divides us. Religious women these days are often stuck in the second wave of feminism of the sixties, mostly associated with Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem (Friedan, 1997), and evaluate all feminist scholars with a certain degree of suspicion. Their fear is that feminists will affect an unwanted cultural upheaval. The third wave of feminism, which began in the nineties, broadened the scope of its advocacy and balanced the

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roles of women with their responsibilities in a male dominated public sphere. Third wave feminists recognize the responsibilities associated with the private sphere and the public sphere. This is the area where, in my opinion, the points of intersection lie. This is also the more prudent approach to take as it permits the two groups to work toward a common solution to a problem that persists in our day namely the marginalization of women's work.

9. Synthesis of Research

Looking at history from an interdisciplinary vantage point is always the most prudent approach. If one falls prey to evaluating historic events in isolation, the results are a skewed and incomplete picture. This has been the case in much of the writings about Nazi Germany, and I have been equally guilty of this in the past. Scholars like Goldhagen and Browning tend to overlook the normative influences of Weimar Germany and the anti-Semitism that was all too prevalent in European societies. The Foucaultian admonition to look at an event from every aspect possible certainly rings true. No matter how one looks at history, a different perspective always yields a different view.

Moreover, this research project has focused on the German resistance. As Geyken (2011) articulates in her book, the resistance in Germany was not a welcomed discussion in the years following the Second World War. As I have considered this fact, I have come to the conclusion that the reason for this antipathy toward those who opposed the regime was due to their own lack of involvement. Had the German public embraced the women of the resistance, or the resistance within academe, the military, or the working class, the natural question to ask would have been, “Then why were they not part of these groups?” They would have been faced with the question Marga Meusel raised, “Am I my brother's keeper?” Only those who did not fear to be identified as *Querläufer* (one who moves across the cultural current) possessed the courage to oppose a hellish dictator.

Germany has dealt with its sins of the past in a different way than many other cultures have. German people for the most part have accepted the atrocities that were committed by the generations of the past and have tried to make restitution for the evils that occurred in their society. In most large and not so large cities in Germany one can find memorials that commemorate the sufferings of those who were oppressed by an evil regime. In the process of gathering the information for my research project, I was introduced to the *Stolpersteine* (stumbling stones) in Berlin. These pavers have been inserted in some of the sidewalks in front of houses in Berlin where people lived who were killed by the Nazis (See Appendix D). These stumbling stones serve as a reminder not to repeat the sins of the fathers. The interesting aspect

⁵⁵ (Kaufmann, W., 1961)

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of the German language is that it has two different words for memorials. One is called a *Denkmal* which intends to bring to memory particular events. The other is called a *Mahnmal* which intends to warn generations to come not to repeat the mistakes of the past. So the *Mahnmale* that have been erected in many parts of Germany serve to warn the German public to be mindful of dictatorial leaders who through their cunning and vice sway public opinion to oppress the weak and the voiceless (See Appendix G).

How can anyone know these things and walk around free?

HELMUTH GRAF VON MOLTKE (1907-1945)
(FOUNDER OF THE KREISAU CIRCLE)⁵⁶

10. Conclusion

The most severe criticism the Confessing Church received during and after the war was for not addressing abuses outside of its congregation. That is not to say that they were completely silent on the matter, but as a matter of principle they decided to focus on the Church. Wolfgang (1987) argues in his book *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews* that the Confessing Church cannot divest itself of its culpability. This salient argument is one that has often been raised in the accusation of the church during Nazi Germany, namely that of keeping silent about Nazi persecution of the Jewish population. The reaction to this indictment after the war was as divided as the Church had been during the war. After Martin Niemöller's release from the Dachau Concentration Camp he realized the horrific mistakes that had been made in Germany. In his famous *Gesamtschuld* sermon which he delivered in Stuttgart in October 1945, he called on the leaders of the remaining Church to confess their sins along with him and to accept the guilt for what had transpired in Germany between 1933 and 1945. The reaction to his call for collective repentance was varied. While many were willing to accept the responsibilities, others rejected Niemöller's call to repentance. One gentleman, whom Hockenos (2004) calls Herr D. wrote these words,

Have the authors of this confession of guilt completely forgotten the endless suffering which the enemy brought on the German people, beginning with the hunger blockade of the [First] World War and the persecution of Germans all over the world, to the phosphorous bombing raids (Dresden!!) and the millions of refugees from... the east who are crammed together in the remaining [western] territory and are unable to sustain themselves...? (p. 84)

The gentleman continues to say that had it not been for the "crimes" at Versailles "National Socialism and 'its sins' would never have happened" (Hockenos, 2004, p. 85). Another woman, Frau E. wrote, "How could you issue a declaration of guilt to a group of foreign clergymen, ... when you are standing in a pile of rubble? Do you not see the mutilated bodies of German men, women, and children as a result of the air raids?" (Hockenos, 2004, p. 89). The sentiments expressed by these two people certainly reflected the viewpoints of many Germans. The German

⁵⁶ (Moltke, H.J., 1941)

people had suffered alongside with all those who had been made to suffer at the hands of the Nazis.

Many historians have observed that advocacy for the Jewish population in Germany and in Europe within the Confessing Church was sorely lacking. Their defense of Jews extended primarily to those who had been baptized into the church. Hockenos (2004) points to two *BK* leaders and their reactions at the end of the war and sets the stage for this argument with the following two declarations. One was by Karl Jasper, the other by Martin Niemöller. Karl Jaspers states,

One simply does not want to suffer any more. One wants to escape the misery [and] to live, but does not wish to ponder. The mood is as if one expects to be compensated after the terrible suffering or at least to be comforted; but one does not want to be burdened with guilt. (p. 90)

and Martin Niemöller's quote at the beginning of Hockenos's book,

The guilt exists, there is no doubt about it. Even if there were no other guilt than that of the six million clay urns, containing the ashes of burnt Jews from all over Europe.

(Hockenos, 2004)

These two quotes provide the dichotomy of the question of guilt within the German Church's struggle to deal with its own *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with one's past) (Mushaben, 2004). Many of the pastors after the war were mindful not to repeat the mistakes that were made at the end of World War I and resisted the pressure to accept all responsibility for the war. These were predominantly the pastors within the conservative wing of the Confessing Church, while those who identified with the reformed wing of the Confessing Church felt that the only way Germany could experience healing was to confront its sin, confess it, and repent. The sentiments of the German public in general reflected more the stance of the conservative group of pastors. Many German citizens were outraged by Martin Niemöller's famous "Schuldbekentnis" (confession of guilt) sermon in October 1945. Some perceived him as a traitor to the German fatherland and a mouthpiece for the conquering Allies and criticized him severely for it (Hockenos, 2004).

That the church as a whole bore a large if not the largest burden of the guilt cannot be disputed. They kept silent in the face of atrocities that were committed and preferred the German mantra "Was ich nicht weiß, macht mich nicht heiß" (What I do not know, does not bother me). While I do not believe that the members of the church, and the German public for

that matter, were fully aware of the extent of these evils, there was enough public knowledge about these things so that they are without excuse. Other historians have written that a certain national amnesia set in after the war. Many Germans felt that they, too, were the victims of this terrible war.

At the end of World War II, Germany was destroyed, not only politically and geographically, but also psychologically. They had lost a war for the second time in twenty-seven years, and were at the mercy of the conquering powers. Their country lay in waste, and the revelations of the Nazi atrocities committed against the people of the world was shocking to many.

While Hockenos's analyses and contributions are of great value, and his book is an excellent narrative of the history of the German Church, I disagree with him on three points. The first point is Hockenos's interpretation of Bonhoeffer's view on evangelizing Jews. Secondly, I believe that Hockenos trivializes the effect Weimar Germany had on the church. Thirdly, he fails to address the culpability of the outside world in their feeble attempt to rescue Jews from the monstrous grip of Nazi Germany. For this discussion, I will only address his faulty view on Bonhoeffer's belief as it contributes to a misinterpretation of the mission of the Church. While I agree that the Confessing Church was derelict in its duty to defend the defenseless, the responsibility of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ remained. This is demonstrated in much of Marga Meusel's writings.

Hockenos (2004) is mistaken in regard to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, just falling short of calling him an anti-Semite (p. 21). His interpretation of Bonhoeffer's goal to evangelize Jews has nothing to do with devaluing them as people. Bonhoeffer simply sought to be obedient to the scriptures in that he desired to follow the *Great Commission* of the book of Matthew, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, NKJV). This certainly included the Jewish nation. Bonhoeffer took very seriously the Apostle Paul's declaration in the book of Romans – "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16, NKJV). Karl Barth adds to this in his book *The Epistle to the Romans*, that the "gospel is the victory by which the world is overcome" (Barth, 1977, p. 35).

The life and actions of Bonhoeffer do not indicate anti-Semitic sentiments. A pamphlet to which I referred earlier disseminated by the Bonhoeffer Society in Germany addresses this

accusation. In this article, the author calls the accusation of calling Bonhoeffer an anti-Semite downright ridiculous if not stupid (Wise, 2006, p. 6). Bonhoeffer had assisted a number of Jews to escape from Germany. One such incident is documented in Wise's article "Wie man einen großen Menschen klein zu machen sucht" in which he describes the rescue called "Operation 7." Bonhoeffer not only attempted to assassinate Hitler, he also aided 15 Jews to escape by way of Switzerland in 1942. Interestingly, Charlotte Friedenthal, Marga Meusel's close friend, was one of the Jews rescued. This operation led to his arrest and the arrest of several of his family members (Wise, 2006). Bonhoeffer's sister was also married to a Jewish man and the nexus of Bonhoeffer's opposition to the Nazi regime was found in its maltreatment of the Jews (Wise, 2006). The Confessing Church, on the other hand, must bear the responsibility of its dereliction on behalf of those outside of its congregation.

Finally, as I have reflected on this research project, I have come to the conclusion that scholarship should be relevant and should effect a change in one's society. If scholarship lacks relevance it simply becomes a futile exercise in intellectual pursuits. I have asked myself the questions raised by C. Wright Mills, "for whom am I trying to write?" This question can be answered as follows. My research has had three distinct objectives. First and foremost, I have written for this present generation. The memory of those who suffered in their struggle against oppression must not be glossed over by history, and their suffering must not be forgotten. Secondly, I have written for the women who actively fought against this great floodtide of evil that threatened their beloved Germany. This struggle is as relevant in this present age as it was during the time of Nazi dictatorship. Thirdly, I have written for myself and for all those who feel the shame over the events that took place in Germany between the years 1933 and 1945. I have indeed found the *belated cure* through my work, but if my scholarship ends there it would simply be striving after vanity. As I approach the twilight years of my life, I have come to realize that my desire has been to inspire this present generation not to give up the struggle against evil that prevails in our present day. The media remind us daily that the oppression of the weak, the exploitation of women, and the mistreatment of people groups still persists in our day, and the example of the women of the resistance is a reminder not to relinquish the struggle.

Resistance is not a unique German phenomenon and neither is the desire for freedom. The landscape of world history is scattered with bodies of those who resisted dictatorships even to the point of death. Recent examples in Tunisia, Libya, Syria, and Egypt prove that the desire for freedom and self-determination still lives on in the souls of men, and men and women will

risk everything to gain freedom for themselves and their children. So it is also for these individuals that I have undertaken this project.

So why write about this dark period in German history and add to the millions of pages that have been written about Nazi Germany? Or why write about the resistance in Germany, since during my years of growing up in Germany it was mostly ignored? An exception was perhaps July 20th, when German politicians remember the sacrifice of Graf von Stauffenberg who, along with scores of others, lost his life after the failed assassination attempt on Hitler. What new thing could I possibly offer to the discussion surrounding those times? Why study about the life of Else Niemöller, Marga Meusel, and Freya von Moltke? I have come to the conclusion that these are the heroes of the twentieth century. These women fought against the floodtide of evil that threatened the very fiber of reason and humanitarian ideals, and each of these women fulfilled a different role. Else Niemöller's task during the war was to maintain the integrity of the Confessing Church as it resisted the encroachment of the Nazi dominance over its affairs, albeit that the Church failed in its irenic duty to advocate and protect all who were subjected to oppression. During the post-war years she was instrumental to raise awareness of those who resisted the Nazi terror. Through her prolific speaking engagements she was able to motivate her audiences to come to the aid of those in need in the aftermath of World War II. Of the three women, Marga Meusel was the most active resister. She defied Nazi and church authority, for that matter, and helped all she could who were oppressed by an evil regime. She was fearless in her determination and courageous in her actions. Freya von Moltke took on a similar role as did Else Niemöller. Moltke saw her role in the resistance as the partner of Helmut von Moltke. She supported him in his decisions to overthrow the government with no regard to her own safety. She was his equal in every way and could have persuaded him to abandon his striving for a more just and democratic Germany – yet she did not. These women never sought recognition for help themselves through their works, so it is up to those who live in the twenty-first century to make sure they are not forgotten.

My hope is that the thousands of students I have had the privilege of teaching over the years will never view German history in the same light again. They know now that there were Germans who resisted the regime while the majority chose to be silent. However, there were more than just a few Germans, as some historians would like us to believe, who opposed the regime. They came to the defense of those who did not have a voice, even at the risk of losing their own lives.

Finally I want to return to Else Niemöller's prayer for the children of the world, with which I began this research project. She writes, "Lover of humanity, Who cares for even one sparrow's fall, we thank You that Your infinite eye is upon all the children of the world. Whatever the circumstances, we pray that we may help to release them from the forces that scar: hunger, homelessness, hatred, and lies. Give to each of us some sense of responsibility that all children everywhere may come into their full human heritage" (Else Niemöller, 2008). Else Niemöller expresses what is at the heart of this project, namely that each of us discovers our responsibility for the next generation and does all s/he can to make sure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated in the present. We cannot undo what has happened in years gone by, but we must also not forget those who fought against the floodtide of evil and allow their courage to become the inspiration for our future. Children everywhere, whether in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia or the Americas have the right to a full and happy life. They must be protected from harm. Only in this way were the sacrifices of those who came before us not in vain.

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12. Appendices

Appendix A:

Figure 3 - Memorial Plaque Commemorating Marga Meusel. Personal Picture Collection



Appendix B:

Figure 4 – Dedication of the Marga Meusel Platz in Berlin Zehlendorf – Invited Guest Irene Bindel. Used by Permission.



Appendix C:

Figure 5 - Dedication of the Marga Meusel Platz in Berlin Zehlendorf Used by Permission.



Appendix D:

Figure 6 – Stolpersteine in the Berlin-Zehlendorf Neighborhood. Personal Picture Collection.



Appendix E – Publications by Marga Meusel between 1927 and 1936

1. *Unter welchen Voraussetzungen ist ein Arbeiterinnenheim lebensfähig?* Ergebnisse einer Untersuchung an 22 bestehenden und eingegangenen Anstalten des Evangelischen Hauptwohlfahrtsamts Berlin 6(1929/30), Nr. 7/8, S.80-84
2. *Die Wahrung der Familiengemeinschaft von Mutter und Kind als Aufgabe der Unehelichenfürsorge II*, in: Die Innere Mission im Evangelischen Deutschland 25 (1930) Die Rundschau, Mitteilungsblatt der Inneren Mission 1) Heft 6, S. 173-180.
3. *Die Beratungsstelle für Vormünder, eine Aufgabe der konfessionellen Wohlfahrtsplege* in: Evangelische Jugendfürsorge 7 (1931), Heft 7/9, S. 84-88.
4. *Der Landkindergarten*, in: Christliche Kinderpflege 40 (1932), Nr. 3, S. 65-75.
5. *Die offene Tür*, ebda, Nr. 9, S. 248-253.
6. *Lebensverhältnisse lediger Mütter auf dem Lande*. Deutsche Akademie für soziale und pädagogische Frauenarbeit, Forschung über „Bestand und Erschütterung der Familie der Gegenwart“, hg. von Alice Salomon, Bd. 13, Eberswalde o.J.,nach 1927.
7. *Karlchen Müller kommt nach Hause*, in: Christliche Kinderpflege 10 (1934), S. 297-299.
8. *Menschen, mit denen wir leben*, in: Die Innere Mission 30, Die Rundschau 6 (1935), Nr. 12, S. 177-178.
9. *Um die Arbeit der Inneren Mission*, in: Neue Saat 10 (1935), Heft 5, S. 65-67.
10. *Was bedeutet dir das Kreuz?*, in: Neue Saat 11 (1936), Heft 5, S. 65-67.
11. *Georg Müller, ein Vater der Waisen*, in: Christliche Kinderpflege 44 (1936), Nr.9, S. 252-258

Appendix F – Speech delivered by Professor Klemens von Klemperer

There was much immaturity and recklessness in our youthful rejection of the values we were taught in the homes, in the schools, and in the churches. Yet there was a deep discomfort at the basis of our enthusiasm – a resistance to the “broken world,” as the French existentialist Gabriel Marcel called it. The basis of our experience with this broken world was characterized by the alienation of people in the metropolitan areas through technology and rationality. The other side of this fundamentality was the longing for a resurgence of a sense of being and the I-You relationship. The demystification of the modern world about which Max Weber wrote so convincingly was our complaint and challenge at the same time.

So it was mostly tied to this recognition of a generational self-awareness. Democracy, so wrote Karl Dietrich Bracher, is a political form of setting limits to self, while ideology is a way of elevating the self. Bracher continued that the tension between these two endpoints in the history of political thinking typified the twentieth century. This tension found its expression in the collision between politically motivated religion and resistance in Germany. In the course of the power seizure and the advancement of totalitarian rule, all resistance efforts were forced into a defensive position, which turned dreams into nightmares.

We young college students did not comprehend the wisdom of the Viennese satirist, Karl Kraus, who once wrote that if one is forced to choose the lesser of two evils, one should vote for neither. We certainly did not have the space to pursue these ideas. (Klemperer, *Deutscher Widerstand gegen Hitler. Gedanken eines Historikers und Zeitzeugen*, 2001)

Appendix G:

Figure 7 – Mahnmal at the Dachau Concentration Camp. Personal Picture Collection



The inscription reads: “To honor the dead and warn the living.”

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Einverständniserklärung des/der Teilnehmer(s)(in) zu einem Forschungsprojekt an menschlichen Proband(en)(-innen).

Titel des Projektes : Die sozial-religiösen Rollen der Frauen im Widerstand gegen das dritte Reich.

Ermittler:

I. Zweck dieses Forschungsprojektes:

Der Zweck dieser Studie ist Informationen zu sammeln in Bezug auf die Rolle, die manche Frauen der Bekennenden Kirche spielten, um gegen Nazi-Tyrannie Widerstand zu leisten. Diese Studie beinhaltet zum Teil auch Menschen, die der Naziideologie begeistert folgten.

II. Durchführung des Projektes:

Diese Forschungsarbeit besteht zum Teil aus der Sammlung mündlicher Überlieferungen und archivalischen Materialien und Dokumenten. Die persönlichen Gespräche werden zwischen 30 bis 60 Minuten dauern.

III. Gefahren:

A priori bestehen keine körperlichen Gefahren gegenüber der Forschungsteilnehmer. Allerdings kann diese Studie emotionalen Stress durch traumatische Erinnerungen verursachen. Ich werde diesen möglichen Situationen mit großer Sensibilität begegnen und das Interview/Gespräch beenden, sobald emotionaler Stress erkennbar wird.

IV. Nutzen:

Die weitläufigen sozialen Vorteile, die aus dieser Studie entstehen sind folgende:

1. Die heroischen Taten der Widerstandsfrauen werden hervorgehoben.
2. Diese Frauen werden in den geschichtlichen Mittelpunkt gestellt.

Den Forschungsteilnehmern werden keinerlei Versprechen einer Entschädigung gemacht. Forschungsteilnehmern steht das Recht zu, mich jederzeit zu kontaktieren, um sich über die Forschungsergebnisse zu informieren.

V. Anonymität und Diskretion:

Sollte ein(e) Forschungsteilnehmer(in) darauf bestehen, dass seine bzw. ihre Aussagen vertraulich behandelt werden sollten, werde ich diesem Wunsch entsprechen. In den meisten Fällen allerdings, werde ich die Beiträge der verschiedenen Teilnehmern in meiner Arbeit anerkennen. Vor der Veröffentlichung meiner Studie werde ich jeden Forschungsteilnehmer um schriftliche Genehmigung bitten.

In manchen Fällen werde ich diese Interviews aufnehmen und den /die Teilnehmer(in) darüber informieren. Die Aufnahmen werden in meinem Besitz bleiben und ich werde auch meine eigenen Niederschriften anfertigen.

„Es ist möglich, dass das *Institutional Review Board* (IRB) diese Studie und die gesammelten Daten zwecks der Überwachung prüft. Das IRB ist für die Aufsicht und den Schutz der Probanden verantwortlich.“

VI. Ausmaß der Anonymität und der Diskretion:

Sollte ein(e) Forschungsteilnehmer(in) Anonymität wünschen, bin ich natürlich bereit diesen Wunsch zu respektieren. In den meisten Fällen will ich allerdings ihre Beiträge in meiner Arbeit anerkennen. Diese Veröffentlichung bedingt die ausdrückliche Erlaubnis der Probanden.

VII. Abfindung:

Forschungsteilnehmer erhalten keine finanzielle Abfindung.

VIII. Freiheit sich zurückzuziehen:

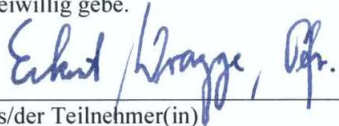
Forschungsteilnehmer haben jederzeit das Recht sich von der Studie ohne irgendwelche Folgen zurückzuziehen und der/die Teilnehmer(in) ist nicht verpflichtet Fragen zu beantworten, die ihm/ihr unangenehm sind.

IX. Pflichten des/der Forschungsteilnehmer(in)

Ich nehme an dieser Studie freiwillig teil und werde die Fragen nach bestem Wissen und Gewissen beantworten.

X. Erlaubnis des/der Proband(en)(in):

Ich habe diese Erlaubniserklärung und die Bedingungen dieses Projektes gelesen. Meine Fragen wurden zu meiner Zufriedenheit beantwortet und ich bestätige hiermit, dass ich meine Zustimmung freiwillig gebe.

 Datum: 4. 10. 2011
Unterschrift des/der Teilnehmer(in)

Sollte ich irgendwelche Fragen in Bezug auf dieses Projekt, der Durchführung dieser Forschungsarbeit, die Rechte des Forschungsteilnehmers oder Verletzungen bzw. Verstöße haben, kann ich mit folgenden Personen in Kontakt treten:

Forschungsbetreiberin:

Barbara Hassell. Tel.: 540-966-3639; Email: bhassell@vt.edu

Fakultätsbetreuer:

Dr. Brian Britt. Tel.: 540-231-5118; Email: bbritt@vt.edu

Vorstand des Institutional Review Boards:

David M. Moore 540-231-4991; Email: moored@vt.edu
Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review
Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research Compliance
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
Blacksburg, VA 24060