

AGENTS OF SEE CHANGE: CATHOLIC WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN WEST
GERMANY, 1945-1968

By

Heather Brothers

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

History—Doctor of Philosophy

2022

ABSTRACT

AGENTS OF SEE CHANGE: CATHOLIC WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN WEST GERMANY, 1945-1968

By

Heather Brothers

This dissertation examines Catholic women's organizations in West Germany from 1945 to 1968. Women in organizations like the Central Association of Catholic Women and Mothers' Organizations (ZKFM) were important agents of change within both West German society and the Catholic Church. Despite being largely left out of scholarly discussions about the postwar period, West German Catholic women and the knowledge they created fundamentally shaped the intellectual culture of the Catholic milieu during this era. The ZKFM, and other organizations like it, gave Catholic women a platform within the Church that both limited the scope of their ideas and actions, but also provided these women with networks and connections that empowered them to effectively challenge Catholic dogma and tradition and to intervene in West German debates about women's role in family, society, and state.

By studying the intellectual work of Catholic women and their organizational labor, I argue that we can better understand the relationship between women, the Church, and West German society. This dissertation explores how interactions between conceptions of gender and Catholic faith are integral to understanding both women's place within the structures of Church and state and also how women worked to shape these structures to their own ends. Women in the ZKFM expressed a wide diversity of opinions, and the organization allowed and encouraged new interpretations on both faith and gender that helped to set the association's agenda moving forward. While influenced by conservative Catholic tradition and a conservative West German state, the diversity within the ZKFM also emboldened members to explore feminist ideas and

other progressive pursuits. When we look closely at ZKFM conferences, publications, benevolent activities, and public interventions, we can see that these women and their intellectual work played a significant role in shaping the landscape of postwar West Germany.

Copyright by
HEATHER BROTHERS
2022

To all of the loud girls that never
resigned themselves to silence

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While the work that goes into projects like this can make one feel isolated and alone, dissertations are never possible without the support of others. My sincere gratitude is owed to many.

Thank you to the faculty and staff of the Oakland University History Department for providing me an environment to grow as a scholar throughout my undergraduate and master's education. I am thankful, too, to the Michigan State University History Department, my home for the last decade. I could never have completed the program without the support of faculty, staff, and colleagues. In particular, I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee for their endless patience and constructive criticism. To Mindy Smith, for always making me feel like I belonged in the academy. To Ronen Steinberg, for his valuable and forthright feedback that made me feel comfortable expressing my own opinions. To Sean Forner, for pushing me to be a better and more insightful historian than I thought was possible. And, finally, to my Chair Karrin Hanshew: thank you for showing me what an advisor should look like. Your confidence in me is the reason I was able to complete this dissertation and I am infinitely grateful for your support.

Along with faculty support, I was lucky to have received assistance from my colleagues at MSU as well. Thank you to the European colloquium for all of the hours spent providing thoughtful feedback on this project. I also need to thank the Muelder family for their financial support that allowed me to complete my research in Germany. This research was done with help from the dedicated women that ran the KFD and KDFB archives. Thank you for readily allowing me into your organizations and for providing me with all of the assistance I could have asked for.

And, of course, none of this would have been possible without my friends and family. Thank you to my Lansing cohort for all of the fun we were able to have together in between teaching, writing, and other responsibilities. To Rich Mares, Marlo Buser, Ali Kolodzy, Liz Timbs, Eddie Bonilla, Tara Reyelts, Katie Greene, Ramya Swayamprakash, James and Chantal Blackwell, Gabie Ruiz, Sara Bijani, Xenofon Konstantinou, Ben Greyerbiehl, and Liao Zhang: I could not have made it through without your friendship. I also need to thank my friends Heather Watson, Kyle Beltz, Kevin Kalinowski, Jaimee Livingston, and Bill Servial for years of laughter when I needed it most. To Kathryn Lankford and Emily Elliott, my closest compatriots during my time at MSU, I owe much. Thank you both for being by my side daily and always willing to listen. Your support has meant more than I could possibly say here.

My time at MSU brought me away from my family, but they were a constant presence that buoyed my every move. Thank you to Joe, Lorraine, Anthony, and Nicole Danna for never failing to brighten my mood with your warm and welcoming home. I extend this gratitude to the Lark family as well: my nieces Kylee, Taylor, and Ally have reminded me that no one is ever too old to put aside their work and play pretend. Thanks to my mom, who never once doubted what I could accomplish, and to my dad, who will always be proud of me no matter what I do. I am grateful to my siblings, Brittany and Jesse, for their gallows humor and their unwavering faith in their older sister. You both are amazing people.

Finally, my deepest and most sincere thanks go to Mike. Thank you for always being the hero to my villain, for bringing the sun to my life when I could not find it on my own. You're still my favorite person, and if I'm still yours, I hold the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Literature Review.....	24
Chapter Outline.....	35
 CHAPTER ONE ENTANGLED AFFILIATIONS: ZKFM NETWORKS AND INTRA- AND INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC INITIATIVES	38
The ZKFM	46
The ZKFM and Other West German Women’s Organizations	54
The ZKFM and WUCWO	64
 CHAPTER TWO EQUALITY, MOTHERHOOD, AND THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL ORDER: CATHOLIC WOMEN’S JOURNALS AND THE REFORMATION OF WEST GERMAN LAW	71
The Basic Law: Debates on Gender Equality and Difference	78
Reshaping the German Civil Code: Marriage, Motherhood, and Labor.....	92
 CHAPTER THREE “GUARDIANS OF PRAYER AND PEACE”: CATHOLIC WOMEN’S BENEVOLENT ACTION AT HOME AND ABROAD	109
“The Crown of All Women”: Local Efforts to Help Those in Need	114
“One Body Under One Head”: International Catholic Benevolence.....	130
“Africa and Asia”.....	140
 CHAPTER FOUR THE ZKFM AND VATICAN II: 1959-1965	153
Preparations and Presentations: ZKFM Mobilization on the Eve of Vatican II.....	160
The Council and Its Aftermath	182
 CONCLUSION	188
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	192

INTRODUCTION

In 1968, the Central Association of Catholic Women and Mothers' Organizations (ZKFM) became the Catholic Women's Association of Germany (KFD). The organization, which was the largest Catholic women's association in West Germany with over 800,000 members, was no stranger to shifts in titular nomenclature: a previous title change, from the Central Association of Catholic Mothers' Organizations (ZKM) to the ZKFM, had occurred in 1951.¹ This initial change, which broadened the definition of membership to include women who were not mothers, addressed a specific demographic change born out of WWII that left many women single, either by chance or by choice. To retain these women in their organizational ranks, the ZKFM, and the Catholic Church that oversaw it, adapted to accommodate the lived experience of West Germans in the aftermath of war. Similarly, the titular change in 1968 reflected shifts in West German society, culture, and politics. Student protests that rallied against perceived government ties to the Third Reich, second-wave feminists, and other activist movements gained popular attention and signaled requests for change and increased equality.² By dropping the word "mother" from the title, KFD leaders were acknowledging the potentially limiting nature of the word in attracting and retaining members in West Germany. While leaders like Marianne Dirks, ZKFM/KFD President from 1951-1972, had been vocal about how the word "mother" could have deterred women from joining in the 1950s, the name change in 1968

¹ Based on the number of members in 1956. Gabrielle Breme, *Die politische Rolle der Frau in Deutschland: eine Untersuchung über den Einfluss der Frauen bei Wahlen und ihre Teilnahme in Partei und Parlament* (Göttigen: Vandenhoeck, 1956), 93.

² For more on these movements, see Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of 68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Anna von der Goltz, *The Other '68ers: Student Protest and Christian Democracy in West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), Quinn Slobodian, "Germany's 1968 and Its Enemies," *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 3 (June 2018): 749-752, and Belinda Davis, Wilfried Mausbach, Martin Klimke, and Carla MacDougall, eds, *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

was a public affirmation that the organization was changing with the times.³ The singular use of the word “women” to encompass all facets of female life, including motherhood, was an acknowledgement by the KFD that the organization was broadening its horizons and moving into a new era for the association. Indeed, through the rest of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the KFD claimed itself to be an explicitly feminist organization, one that stood for equality between men and women globally and championed the advancement of women in politics, labor, education, and society.

This dissertation focuses on the ZKFM from 1945 to 1968. It delves into how ZKFM leaders grappled with changing external circumstances within the Catholic Church and Germany in a post WWII world and how the organization attempted to influence these circumstances from the inside out. More specifically, I explore the contributions Dirks and her colleagues in the ZKFM and other Catholic women’s organizations made to religious, intellectual, and social life from 1945 to 1968 in West Germany. This project looks closely at how a group of lay Catholics debated and shaped Catholicism and gender norms in West Germany and beyond. In some ways, the changes to the organization’s title illuminate important facets of this project. For one, the ZKFM as an organization was conscious of, and adapted to, the changing social, cultural, and political contexts of West Germany. ZKFM leaders were attuned to broader trends that were reflected in the ideas they debated, the agendas they set, and in the very structure of the organization itself. The ZKFM was situated at the intersection of the Catholic Church, the end of the Third Reich and WWII, the beginnings of a newly divided Germany, and the prosperous and conservative 1950s that were rife with concerns about women’s roles in each facet of society. As

³ Kimba Allie Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation: How Conflicts over Gender and Sexuality Changed the West German Catholic Church* (Lebanon: Brandeis University Press, 2016), 69.

the Church was forced to deal with Germany's past and adapt for its future, so was the ZKFM. ZKFM leaders had to navigate this and it is clear from their writings, speeches, publications, and personal correspondence that these contexts were always a consideration in the organization's work.

However, if one merely looks at the changes in the organization's title, important aspects of how the organization worked and what its members and leaders did can be obfuscated. While external forces like the ones mentioned above pushed ZKFM's agendas, it is also the case that the organization was integral in pushing outward, shaping and defining itself from internal debates and ideas. Moreover, the ZKFM was an active participant at that intersection, acting publicly to influence and transform debates about West German women's place in the family, society, politics, the Church, and the globe. ZKFM members pushed against the boundaries of the Church itself, pressing for shifts in Catholic dogma and in how the Catholic hierarchy related to its lay members. Due to the ZKFM's positionality, operating both under the umbrella of the Catholic Church and not part of the clerical hierarchy, the organization was limited by Church strictures, but also able to use that same organization to gain power to facilitate their own goals.

While leaders in the ZKFM, in concert with the oversight of Catholic clergy, changed the organization's title first to partially decenter motherhood in 1951, then to deemphasize it by dropping the word completely in 1968, the concept itself was and remained entangled with most issues ZKFM members valued and placed at the fore. If we just look at the title of the organization, one cannot see the diversity of opinion housed under its umbrella nor the complicated relationships ZKFM members could and did have with ideas about motherhood, women working outside of the home, women's place in the Catholic hierarchy, and women's importance to overall West German morality. The title changes suggest a purely linear path, one

that moved from strict conservative Catholic mores toward progressive feminist ideals, but this characterization obscures the diversity of opinion that always coexisted among ZKFM members during this period and afterward. The KFD's later feminist claims did not only sprout from the progressive trends of the 1960s, but were instead building upon internal debates and agendas rooted in the early postwar period. Moreover, these internal debates bled into the public sphere through conferences, publications, and activist campaigns that established ZKFM leaders as public intellectuals, intellectuals that influenced and shaped the world they inhabited through interpreting and sharing their own ideas and engaging with broader discussions about Catholicism, marriage, family life, labor, and law. I argue that the organization's internal debates, the liminal positioning of the ZKFM in relation to the Church, and the intellectual public engagement of the association broadens and deepens our understanding of the landscape of West Germany during the period from 1945 to 1968. While, broadly speaking, trends in the ZKFM mirrored West Germany at large, by looking closely, we can see a more complicated picture of women's roles in society, within the Catholic intellectual milieu, the Church, and as agents of change that shaped both Catholic dogma and the trajectory of Catholic and West German culture.

In 1945, that trajectory appeared to be very much undecided for many. The end of WWII marked a period of stark change in the minds of many West Germans.⁴ With the fall of the Third Reich and occupation by the Allied powers, the future of nation and state was unclear. While some West Germans looked ahead with uncertainty and apprehension, others looked backward in the hope of claiming an imagined past "Germanness" that could root West Germany in stability

⁴ For literature about 1945 and debates around the conception of a "zero hour" see Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009) and Hans Braun, Uta Gerhardt, and Everhard Holtmann, eds., *Die lange Stunde Null: Gelenkter sozialer Wandel in Westdeutschland nach 1945* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2007).

and a sense of continued tradition. Few familiar institutions survived the war's end and many other long-established ones had been shuttered or altered by the Nazis during their reign. The ZKFM, which was closed by the Nazis in 1939, also struggled with what a post-fascist Germany meant for the organization and its members. Leaders expressed hopeful wishes for the future based on a return of Christian morality to the new West Germany, but there were also prevalent anxieties about how to move forward. For one, the Nazi past continued to loom large. As West Germans sought to reclaim traditions and institutions from Germany's past in a quest for stability, they were also careful to differentiate between exactly *which* aspects of their past were worthy of reclamation and which they should distance themselves from. In this sense, the Third Reich and Nazism cast a pall over the formation of the West German state as well as the Church's attempts to reinvigorate Catholic practice and participation. For example, pronatalist sentiments harbored by both institutions needed to be couched in very specific terms to avoid replicating Nazi policies that pushed for similar ends. The ZKFM and other Catholic women's organizations like it also grappled with how to redefine themselves in opposition to the Nazi past. As the organization had historically glorified the place of mothers within family and German society, ZKFM leaders were invested in overtly linking the reverence for motherhood back to long-standing Catholic traditions that predated the Third Reich.

It made sense, then, for the ZKFM to draw upon Catholic traditions and the Church hierarchy as they navigated the postwar. The Church itself had been one of the only institutions to survive the war relatively unscathed as an institution and thus played an integral role in the reconstruction process. Many clerics and lay Catholics were concerned with reconstructing a traditional, conservative Germany that built upon individual, Christian family units as the

foundation.⁵ Some Catholic leaders at the time painted a dire picture of a Germany without strong Christian values. One priest believed that Christianity, if strongly re-established in Germany, could “save a sinking world.”⁶ As the immediate postwar bled into the “long” 1950s, West Germany was established as a stable political and economic entity. Across western Europe, Christian Democratic political parties succeeded in winning a majority of elections between 1945 and 1950, giving Christians, and Catholics in particular, plenty of power in how Europe was to be reshaped following the devastation of WWII.⁷ Catholic power was particularly pervasive in the new West German state, as the creation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) “severed” 15 million mostly Protestant voters from the West, creating a new “parity” between Protestant and Catholic voters in the German Federal Republic (FRG).⁸ The Catholic Center Party, dissolved in 1933, was re-founded following the war, but many voters migrated to the newly formed Christian Democratic Union (CDU) or its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU). Together, the parties exercised a large amount of control over West Germany’s political sphere, remaining West Germany’s governing parties until 1969.⁹ The CDU was meant to realign Christians in West Germany and to overcome past divisions between

⁵ On rechristianization efforts, see Maria D. Mitchell, “Materialism and Secularism: CDU Politicians and National Socialism, 1945-1949,” *The Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 2 (June 1995): 278-308 and Joachim Köhler and Damian van Melis, eds., *Siegerin in Trümmern: Die Rolle der katholischen Kirche in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998).

⁶ As quoted in Christel Beilmann, *Eine Katholische Jugend in Gottes und Dem Dritten Reich: Briefe, Berichte, Gedrucktes 1930-1945* (Wuppertal: Hammer, 1989), 342.

⁷ James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 16-17. Scholars like Chappel have argued that the “long” 1950s span 1949-1965.

⁸ Mark Ruff, “Catholic Elites, Gender, and Unintended Consequences in the 1950s: Toward a Reinterpretation of the Role of Conservatives in the Federal Republic,” in *Conflict, Catastrophe, and Continuity: Essays on Modern German History*, edited by Frank Biess, Mark Roseman, and Hanna Schissler (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 253. For more on Protestants during the postwar, see James C. Enns, *Saving Germany: North American Protestants and Christian Mission to West Germany, 1945-1974* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017) and Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

⁹ Maria D. Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 1. See also Frank Biess, *German Angst? Fear and Democracy in Postwar West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) and Michael Gehler and Wolfram Kaiser, eds., *Christian Democracy in Europe Since 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Catholics and the majority Protestant nation. In 1949, West Germany elected its first chancellor, Catholic Konrad Adenauer, who remained in office until 1963. In the 1957 election, the CDU won over 50 percent of the vote, almost 20 percent more than the next party, the Social Democratic Party (SPD).¹⁰ The formation of the CDU/CSU is arguably one of the most important political developments in German history, as the party's often conservative and traditional worldviews fundamentally shaped West German culture, politics, law, and society during the postwar and beyond.¹¹ With Catholics wielding substantial political power throughout West Germany during this period, the Church gained even more significance, as did the work the ZKFM carried out under its purview.

While the creation of two new German states provided some sense of stability, it also emboldened new anxieties, particularly around the axes of gender and religion. The GDR, like the Nazi past, shaped how many West Germans defined themselves, which was often in opposition to their East German counterparts. For these West Germans, the perception of the dechristianization of the East, despite the 1949 GDR constitution that guaranteed the right of freedom in religious practice, proved that East Germans had no access to civil liberties.¹² There was a perceived opposition between the values taught under Catholicism (and capitalism) and those of the socialist state. While Catholic values privileged the sanctity of the nuclear family unit, preferably with a father that worked outside of the home and a mother that oversaw the

¹⁰ Chappel, *Catholic Modern*, 182.

¹¹ Ronald J. Granieri, *Ambivalent Alliance: Konrad Adenauer, The CDU/CSU, and The West, 1949-1970* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2003), 13. Also see Till van Rahden's article "Clumsy Democrats: Moral Passions in the Federal Republic," *German History* 29, no. 3 (2011): 485-504 and his monograph *Demokratie: Eine gefährdete Lebensform* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2019) for an in-depth look at the essential "fragility" of democratic government in West Germany following WWII.

¹² Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 51. See also Karl Cordell, "Changing Fortunes: Church and Society in Eastern Germany Before and After the Wende," in *Voices in Times of Change: The Role of Writers, Opposition Movements, and the Churches in the Transformation of East Germany*, David Rock, ed. (New York: Berghahn, 2000).

moral and religious education of their children in the home, socialist values “forced” women into working jobs that would endanger their families.¹³ For the ZKFM, East Germany operated both as a foil and a cautionary tale about what could befall women and their families with the loss of Christian religious values. The organization worried about their East German sisters, but were also concerned with what they saw as the immorality of the east leeching over into their own state.

Along with the anxieties about the effects of the war, the shadow of the Nazi past, and the “other” Germany next door, another crucial component of the reconstruction process in West Germany focused on women’s place within society. While gender never became an unimportant category of differentiation during the Third Reich or war years, many West Germans believed that gender roles needed to be firmly reestablished following 1945 in order to properly rebuild institutions, from the family to the state.¹⁴ There was heightened anxiety surrounding gender and many state and Church officials propagated the idea that reaffirming traditional gender roles that cast men as citizens and breadwinners and women as mothers and caregivers would create the stability that many sought. Like the other contexts discussed here, gender loomed over much of the reconstruction process, from the creation the West German state, to revitalizing a torn economy, and reinvigorating German culture and society.¹⁵ Specifically, women were essential

¹³ For more on gender in East Germany during the postwar, see Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) and Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁴ On the reconstruction of German identity and gender norms, see Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), Elizabeth Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), and Robert G. Moeller, ed. *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

¹⁵ For postwar discussions about men and masculinity, see Frank Biess, “Survivors of Totalitarianism: Returning POWs and the Reconstruction of Masculine Citizenship in West Germany, 1945-1955,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, Hanna Schissler, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Till van Rahden, “Fatherhood, Rechristianization, and the Quest for Democracy in Postwar West Germany,” in

to all of these processes, and not just due to a demographic imbalance of seven million more women than men in the immediate postwar period.¹⁶ During the war, and as a result of the destruction it left, most West German women were left to care and provide for their families as millions of men never returned home, were held as POWs, or were physically or mentally unable to work when they returned to their families.¹⁷ Women were essential to these pragmatic tasks, but the image of womanhood was also mobilized as West Germans rethought what it meant to be German and how to restore order to families, society, and the state. Gender was a key tool that West Germans utilized during reconstruction, as an important category that could distinguish West Germany from its Nazi past and its East German neighbor, and help it to define its future.¹⁸

Women in the ZKFM and other Catholic organizations were active participants in these discussions as important agents of reconstruction in West Germany, offering their own ideas and interpretations of where women should function within the newly built state.¹⁹ They absorbed broader debates about the appropriate place of women in home, state, and Church, and intervened in these debates where they disagreed, in turn shaping and perpetuating their own ideas about women and femininity.²⁰ For the most part, the women of the ZKFM argued for the

Raising Citizens in the "Century of the Child": The United States and German Central Europe in Comparative Perspective, Dirk Schumann, ed. (New York: Berghahn, 2010), and Till van Rahden, "Families beyond Patriarchy: Visions of Gender Equality and Childrearing among German Catholics in an Age of Revolution," in *The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianization in North America and Western Europe, 1945-2000*, Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

¹⁶ Eva Kolinsky, *Women in West Germany: Life, Work, and Politics* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1989), 13.

¹⁷ Robert G. Moeller, "Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany: Women and Social Policy in the Federal Republic, 1949-1955," in *West Germany Under Construction*, 111.

¹⁸ The definition of gender I will be using here is "a historically specific, context-dependent, and relational category of analysis" that is "an amalgam of ideals and practices that give meaning to and socially differentiate male and female." Found in Karen Hagemann, Donna Harsch, and Friederike Brühöfener, eds., *Gendering Post-1945 German History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019), 2.

¹⁹ On reconstruction see Moeller, *West Germany Under Construction*, Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and Schissler, *The Miracle Years*.

²⁰ For two longer looks at gender in German history, see Annette F. Timm and Joshua A. Sanborn, *Gender, Sex and the Shaping of Modern Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) and Karen Hagemann and Sonya Michel, eds., *Gender and the Long Postwar: The United States and the Two Germanys, 1945-1989* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

essentialness of their gender to their tasks, as West Germans and Catholics. They may have worked against Church and state on certain issues concerning women, but these women did not seek to be ungendered. Instead, they used gender as a tool to advocate for their wants and needs within both structures, as women, wives, mothers, citizens, and sisters. By studying the ZKFM closely, we can see the progressive change in this organization over time. While this was influenced from the outside by the burgeoning second-wave feminist movement, the ZKFM was also pushed to change by its own internal debates, its own members' understandings and interpretations of their world through a Catholic lens.

An examination of the ZKFM, in fact, forces a reconsideration of the history of West German second-wave feminism itself. First, by extending this history backward in time to see how debates over equality between the sexes in the family, the workplace, and in Catholicism, were already happening in the early postwar, we can better see the nascent beginnings of the second wave beyond its typical periodization.²¹ Secondly, by including women of the ZKFM in the history of West German feminism, we can broaden our conception of where the second wave was constructed and by whom. While I will not make the claim that the ZKFM was itself a feminist organization, some members within its ranks espoused views and ideas that laid the groundwork for later, larger feminist interventions by and through the organization.

To understand how the ZKFM evolved and changed over time, and to better understand the impacts of the postwar contexts laid out here, we must understand the history of the

²¹ For the purposes of this dissertation, second-wave feminism will be classified as a movement that scholars recognize as broadly beginning in the 1960s, with a focus on recognizing the shared humanity between sexes rather than sexual difference. It was a movement that critiqued patriarchal structures that had shaped states, economies, religions, societies, and families and focused on women's liberation within these structures. For how this movement operated in West Germany, see Kristina Schulz, *Der lange Atem der Provokation: Die Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik und in Frankreich 1968-1976* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2002) and Myra Marx Ferree, *Varieties of Feminism: German Gender Politics in Global Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

organization itself and its relationship to the Church and German state. The ZKFM had roots that stretched back into the nineteenth century, building on a tradition of Catholic women's laic participation and increased visibility within the Church. Since the Revolution of 1848 that failed to unify the German states, Germany experienced a revival of popular Catholicism, mainly through the missionary efforts of Catholic religious orders. By the time of German unification in 1871, around one-third of the population under the German empire was Catholic.²² This revival spurred the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s, often translated as a "clash of civilizations," which saw Catholics and the Church pitted against the new German state. German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, a Protestant, was concerned with the power wielded by the Catholic Church and its potential for disloyalty to the German nation and sought to subject the institution to state control. Germanness itself was strongly associated with Protestantism, and the tight links between religion, nation, and the state severely limited the recognition of Catholics as legitimate German subjects. Liberals and Protestants worked together in order to limit Catholic power and "backwardness" in Germany, even jailing nearly 2,000 Catholic priests in the process. The Center Party, a Catholic political party, was founded in 1870 due to the rising interfaith conflicts.²³ Enmity between Protestants and Catholics was rife, and some scholars argue that it had far-reaching effects for both German and world history.²⁴

²² Michael B. Gross, "Kulturkampf and Geschlechterkampf: Anti-Catholicism, Catholic Women, and Public Space," in *Conflict, Catastrophe, and Continuity*, 40.

²³ Mark Edward Ruff, *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945- 1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3. Other "sister" Catholic parties formed across Germany, most prominently the Bavarian People's Party (BVP). For more on the political ruptures of this era, see Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Election and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Richard J. Evans, *Proletarians and Politics: Socialism, Protest, and the Working Class in Germany Before the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), and Till van Rahden, *Jews and Other Germans: Civil Society, Religious Diversity, and Urban Politics in Breslau, 1860-1925* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).

²⁴ Gross, "Kulturkampf," 28. See also David M. Luebke, *Hometown Religion: Regimes of Coexistence in Early Modern Westphalia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016). For more on Catholics and national identity, see Rebecca Ayako Bennette, *Fighting for the Soul of Germany: The Catholic Struggle for Inclusion After Unification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism*

Women were an important part of the Catholic revival that stemmed from the *Kulturkampf*, so much so that there was a perception among contemporary German Catholics that the Church was becoming associated mainly with women, a phenomenon not unique to Germany. However, before unification, German Catholic women's associations were scattered, unconnected small groups of women mainly housed under local "virgin" or "mother" organizations. Under the Bishop of Mainz in the latter half of the century, and with philanthropic support from noblewomen, these organizations grew. In 1871, Regensburg became the hub of these associations, and 7,000 organizations from 72 diocese banded together and instigated the spread of associations focused on young women and girls ("virgins") and mothers through the early twentieth century. Catholic leaders struggled with how to handle women's issues in their relatively new role as the "mainstay" of support for the Church. Some appreciated women's participation in services and philanthropic Church endeavors, but others did not believe that women's issues deserved much attention.²⁵

Concerns regarding the potential "feminization" of the Church dovetailed with changes linked to the country's industrialization, as both men and women entered factories and plants to work. Some Catholics saw this mixture of the sexes in the work-place as detrimental to the natural order of humanity.²⁶ These fears did not lessen in the new century, when, among other things, suffrage movements made claims to women's right to gender equality. As WWI raged, the Church worked to widen its range of Catholic women's associations, in large part to

and *National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), and Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²⁵ Mark Edward Ruff, *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Postwar West Germany, 1945- 1965*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 94. Many Catholic leaders during this period did not believe that working with women was a worthy cause.

²⁶ Ruff, *Wayward Flock*, 90. See also Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850-1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

counteract these developments, creating more diocesan mother's associations in Münster and Cologne in 1916 and 1918.²⁷ Aligned with the association in Paderborn, these three diocese began work in 1918 which culminated in 1928 with the formal founding of the ZKM, the organization that would eventually become the ZKFM.²⁸ The ZKM was a body that oversaw all associated Catholic women's organizations throughout western Germany, though soon included organizations from central and eastern Germany as well.²⁹ In charge of this association was Father Hermann Klens. Born in 1880 in Westphalia, Klens took his vows in 1905 and that same year began his work with Catholic women. The Church charged him with organizing 400 displaced Catholic women from Paderborn in order to protect them from the perceived loss of traditional Christian values due to industrialization as they moved from the countryside to urban areas.³⁰ Klens' influence on lay women's organizational activities grew until he was placed in charge of the ZKFM, overseeing and promoting Catholic women's organizations across Germany.

The work of building Catholic women's networks throughout Germany was put on hold when the Nazis formally shuttered the ZKM in 1939. It resumed in 1945, with Klens now in charge of the The Church Headquarters for Women's Organizations in the German Dioceses (KHF) and, as of 1951, a re-founded ZKM, now the Central Association of Catholic Women and Mothers' Organizations (ZKFM) in 1951. From the Church perspective, heavy work needed to

²⁷ For a look at a gendered WWI in Germany, see Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), Lisa M. Todd, *Sexual Treason in Germany during the First World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2017), and Elizabeth Domansky, "Militarization and Reproduction in WWI Germany" in *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870-1930*, Geoff Eley, ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), and Jason Crouthamel, "Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 1 (January 2008): 60-84.

²⁸ Breime, *Die politische Rolle der Frau in Deutschland*.

²⁹ Originally, this included the diocese of Cologne, Paderborn, Münster, Limburg, Trier, Hildesheim, and Osnabrück.

³⁰ Ruff, *Wayward Flock*, 94.

be done in order to restore fractures wrought by the war. However, from the vantage point of many lay Catholic women, practical, existential concerns continued to coexist with religious adherence. Catholic women continued beyond the war to entwine religious practice with their daily lives, increasingly personalizing it to meet their needs. Women of the ZKFM and the public they engaged with did not abandon Catholic tradition; they instead sought to adapt it to fit their postwar context. And the Church, wanting to retain what members of the laity it could, adapted to some degree to meet these women where they stood.

The story of the ZKFM in the postwar brings the “adaptability” of the Church into sharp relief. In the immediate postwar, some German Catholics, from more conservative clerics like Klens to Catholic socialist intellectuals like Marianne Dirks’ husband Walter Dirks, critiqued the Church’s inability to reform while espousing hopes for how it could and should do so. These Catholic figures often mediated between polarizing positions, entering into cultural and social negotiations with the wider German public about the place of Catholics in West Germany. They achieved success as a force of moderation: leaders that tempered the strict views of some Catholic clergy. Their voices joined national debates about the nature of femininity, morality, and the role women were to play in the newly divided Germany.³¹ This speaks to the incredibly varied opinions housed under German Catholicism, and how they were expressed by clergy and laity alike. Women in the ZKFM were exemplary of the pluralism of Catholics during this period, even as the Church hierarchy at large urged them back to what it saw as traditional views and roles for women. While some members pushed for total equality between the sexes by allowing women into the Catholic hierarchy, others argued that women should never hold jobs outside of their work as wives and mothers.

³¹ Heather Brothers, “Between Tradition and Modernity: West German Catholicism and the Reconstruction of Women’s Identity, 1945-1960,” MA Thesis, (Oakland University, 2013).

Despite the dominant push for traditional roles by the Church and the conservative government, in 1951 when the ZKFM was re-founded, the organization underwent vast changes in leadership. For the first time, the organization had a president, and from within their own ranks: Marianne Dirks. Her presidency was affirmed in a document signed by Klens and Father Georg Alfes, as representatives of the KHF, and by Dirks herself.³² In 1951, Dirks was thirty-eight years old and had previously worked extensively as an arts and cultures reporter in Freiburg.³³ As a wife and mother, Dirks was in a prime position to fulfill the mission of the ZKFM, newly drafted in 1951 in concert with West German Cardinal Joseph Frings.³⁴ ZKFM women were required to be married, and “to the best of their ability” represent Christianity to the wider world as women, using the Virgin Mary as their model. Some of their duties included being faithful wives, domestic caregivers, and responsible mothers. The statutes emphasized activist elements, including participation in benevolent activities run by the organization.³⁵ The ZKFM was to “recognize and promote” women’s work in Church and society and to “promote the participation of women in social, economic, political, and cultural life.”³⁶ As will be seen, the ZKFM’s work in the 1950s and 1960s both exemplified and redefined these statutes to suit their own purposes. The structure of the organization placed the ZKFM firmly under the Catholic Church, but did not prevent members from defying it. Though the executive board included one or two clerics appointed by the West German episcopate, Dirks as president and other female board members were able to exercise considerable control over how the organization functioned

³² Agreement between the KHF and the ZKFM, KFD Folder 372.2.

³³ Writing under her maiden name Marianne Ostertag, Dirks’ reporting focused mainly on music: reviewing operas, reporting on Church music nights, and new music venues for the *Freiburger Stadtzeiger*.

³⁴ Marianne married Walter Dirks in 1941 and between 1941 and 1957 they had four daughters together.

³⁵ “Satzungen der katholischen Frauen und Müttervereine in der Erzdiözese Köln,” 1954, KFD Archive Folder 452.

³⁶ “Aufgabenstellung für das Bildungshaus des Zentralverbandes der katholischen Frauen und Muttergemeinschaften Deutschlands,” KFD Archive Folder 394.

by overseeing long-term decisions and daily operations.³⁷ This power gave Dirks and the women of the ZKFM agency, as Catholic intellectuals and citizens of West Germany, to engage in public life and steer the course of West German Catholicism during the postwar. With Dirks at the helm, and partnered with other Catholic women's organizations throughout West Germany and around the world, the ZKFM became an integral participant and constructor of West German society beyond their Catholic milieu.

To do this work, Dirks and the ZKFM had to operate under and within the Catholic Church structure. As an institution, the Church is well known across the globe, though its structure and function can seem opaque. In the beginning of his monograph *Catholic Modern*, historian James Chappel asserts a deceptively simple question: What is the Catholic Church? Chappel calls the Church “an archipelago of institutions, from hospitals to shelters to schools, all of which are laboring to theorize and confront the endless challenges offered by a fallen world.”³⁸ The Catholic Church spans the globe as a powerful religious organization with a strict clerical hierarchy that spreads outward and downward from the pope in Vatican City. The Church can be defined, then, both by the physical spaces it occupies and holds influence over and by those that officially administer the Church's power, from cardinals to parish priests. The Church is also a vast network between these people and places, too, connecting Catholics from disparate places through shared faith and doctrine, and a shared religious past. And, most certainly, the Church is not separate from its flock: the laic Catholics that are not a part of the official hierarchy.

Scholarship and popular understandings of how the Church functions in relation to the laity have often been skewed to favor a solely “top-down” understanding of Catholicism, one in

³⁷ KFD Archive Folder 372.2.

³⁸ Chappel, *Catholic Modern*, 1-5.

which the pope issues an edict that trickles down through the various levels of clergy to the average Catholic's ears, and that this is how Catholicism is and has been shaped throughout the centuries. What scholars of Catholicism have increasingly uncovered, though, is a more negotiated process between that average Catholic and the clergy, particularly in the modern era. As Chappel puts it, "to a surprising degree, and one that increased over the course of the twentieth century, lay Catholics in different national and regional contexts defined for themselves what it would mean to be Catholic, and specifically, how the faith would translate into social and political life."³⁹ Following the lead of historians like Chappel, this dissertation uses the ZKFM as an example of how laic Catholic women affected change from the "bottom-up," challenging long-held Catholic doctrine and practice and fully participating in negotiations about their liminality in relation to the Church, positioned outside the hierarchy, though under its purview.

Because of the ZKFM entanglement with the Catholic Church, as both an insider and outsider, it was in an interesting position. The Church provided the ZKFM with long-established networks of Catholics, both within West Germany and across the globe. The ZKFM shared Catholic culture, symbols, and familiar practice with millions of women because of their shared faith. The Church hierarchy was a network that the ZKFM could call upon, one that allowed them to run ideas up the ladder to the highest offices; it gave them access that many other lay women did not have. However, the Church was also limiting. Women were not (and still are not) permitted to hold actual ranks among the hierarchy. The traditions of Catholicism could sometimes become suffocating, long standing norms that much harder to overturn if the ZKFM wanted them changed. Utilizing the established networks meant this was harder to get around as

³⁹ Ibid., 6.

well. This dissertation examines how the ZKFM operated in a liminal space within the Church and how often the organization could use this to its advantage despite these many hindrances. Women were both limited by, and able to use to their advantage, the strictures of the Catholic Church hierarchy, dogma, and experience. Women in the ZKFM exercised a certain kind of power within this system and they used it to enact changes at the highest level any Catholic could hope to: changes to Catholic law through the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s.

Thinking of the ZKFM and other Catholic women's organizations as operating in this liminal space is an important framework for this project and allows us to see both the means by which they operated as Catholic intellectuals and the outcomes of that work. Literature on liminality covers a variety of time periods, geographic spaces, and both individuals and groups of women, but, in essence, the majority of historical scholarship demonstrates the ways in which women could and did gain power in the liminal space of a structure, be it a national empire or the Catholic Church.⁴⁰ Even when the prescriptions of the dominant power explicitly barred them from wielding power at the "center" of the structure, by moving to the outskirts, either geographically or metaphorically, women could have unique experiences of agency. Women often harnessed the strictures and worked around them for their own ends. This literature as a whole shows how women could utilize power structures for their own gain, while simultaneously benefiting from the reach of the structure and straining from its limits. The women of the ZKFM

⁴⁰ For Catholic examples, see Phyllis M. Martin, *Catholic Women of Congo Brazzaville: Mothers and Sisters in Troubled Times* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009) and Sarah A. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits: Women Missionaries and the Revival of French Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For empire in Germany, see Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). For how women operated in liminal spaces in intellectual cultures, see Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), and Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

operated in this way, and we can see this by looking at the organization from the minutiae of associational statutes that established the parameters of the organization, to intra-organizational and international conferences, to publications that reached into the West German public, to benevolent activities that spanned the world, and to Vatican II, where women from the ZKFM submitted demands for change. By utilizing this framework, I elucidate the entangled circles the ZKFM was involved in, the messy and often overlapping communities that shaped and were shaped by this organization's work.

The entangled circles included the Church hierarchy, but also other women's organizations that the ZKFM was either a part of or associated with. Most importantly was the Catholic German Women's League (KDFB). The KDFB was founded in 1903 with the purpose of facilitating women's educational programs, social work, and community benevolent projects from a Catholic perspective. While associated with the Church, though not directly under its purview, the KDFB functioned more independently and was explicitly led by lay women from its beginning. Typically, during the period covered in this dissertation, the KDFB was more representative of working class West German women while the ZKFM tended to attract women from the middle class. Both organizations worked toward the goals of offering Catholic women a voice in West German society, but the KDFB tended to be more explicitly political in their advocacy. While not losing the nuance of both organizations, and the diversity they housed within their membership, we can look at organizations like the ZKFM and KDFB as collective actors operating within networks to get a clearer picture of their work as organizations in the public sphere. The network of Catholic women's organizations in West Germany, made up of women with various associational ties and personal relationships with each other along with a shared religious background, could amplify each association's power and messaging when

working together. As this dissertation demonstrates, the ZKFM called upon these networks often in order to cultivate ideas through conferences, to advocate for benevolent action, and even to make joint forays into Vatican II. An exploration of the entanglements between these women's networks and Catholic cleric networks also further elucidates both the limits and the importance of cooperation between groups.

Along with overlapping networks under the liminal space of the Church, and the influence of other external factors that shaped the ZKFM and Catholic women's organizations as a whole, this dissertation delves into the most internal aspects of the organization: the religious faith and ideas expressed by its members. While the external stakes enumerated above were certainly high, so too were the most inherently internal ones. As many in West German society, including Church and state officials, proffered messages about the importance of women's morality in substantiating both Catholicism and the West German family and social structure, women in the ZKFM grappled personally with this messaging. While some outright rejected the responsibility, many other ZKFM members agreed that women were and should be bulwarks of morality. Regardless of where women fell on this spectrum, they took Catholic dogma and belief very seriously. This dissertation shows that the women of the ZKFM imbued every aspect of their organizational work with religious thought, from the benevolent work they did at home and abroad, to each article that was written for publication, and to every event put on by the group. While religious practice in and of itself was often used as proof of piety, from attending Church services to adhering to daily prayer schedules, this project focuses explicitly on how religious ideas and thought were mobilized by and through the ZKFM. While the women in the organization were adherents to Catholic tradition and long-held beliefs, they were also instrumental in shaping their own interpretations of their religion, personalizing it to fit their

specific lived experiences and needs in postwar West Germany. In a sense, this adapted Catholicism could work to the women's own ends, outside the bounds of long-established religious guidelines. By looking at ideas and thoughts over religious practice, we are able to better understand the plethora of diversity within the ZKFM membership and the actions that leaders took on the organization's behalf.

Like the women of the ZKFM, this dissertation takes Catholic beliefs seriously. While religious belief and the external stakes outlined above were pertinent to how the women lived their daily lives in West Germany, the nature of operating as a believing Catholic also meant that religion had the power to shape what happened to someone *beyond* their natural life on earth. I do not assume that every member of the ZKFM believed in an afterlife, nor will I attempt to define the nature of that afterlife, but I do consider the heightened ramifications some practicing Catholics faced when making daily decisions that they believed affected them for eternity. For those adherents to Catholicism, there could be no higher stakes. Throughout the dissertation, this is something that I keep in mind when examining what changes to Church structure and Catholic dogma the women of the ZKFM debated and fought for. This study looks at the collision of the personalized faith of ZKFM members and the external contexts they were embedded in.

By doing so, we can see the impact that all of these factors had on the organization and its members, and in turn, the impacts the women of the ZKFM could have beyond themselves and their organization. Leaders like Dirks were integral figures in the evolution of the ZKFM and in broader West German Catholic history. Though almost completely left out of historical discussions about Catholic intellectual culture, Dirks intervened in and shaped this culture, often using the ZKFM's associational magazine *Frau und Mutter* as a platform for her to address popular debates about Catholic life in West Germany. As part of the Catholic intellectual milieu,

which famously included Walter Dirks who co-founded the reform-oriented Catholic journal *Frankfurter Hefte* in 1946, Dirks contributed to West German debates about the modern Church, especially as it concerned the lives of women.⁴¹ Along with other ZKFM leaders, Dirks acted as a public intellectual, participating in and shaping these debates in West Germany and, more broadly, epistemologic debates about Catholic faith that permeated beyond national borders. Because of this, Dirks and her colleagues should be included as influential members of the Catholic intellectual milieu, and as important public West German intellectuals.

Dirks was not an expert in theology, nor a trained academic, but it is still useful to think of her as an intellectual. Though these conventional parameters of how intellectuals are defined may have prevented some from including Dirks in this category, she has also been left out through oversight, in part due to her gender. Historian Tiffany Florvil, in her history of Black German activism in the 1980s and 1990s, coined the term “quotidian intellectuals” which is a framework that can apply to Dirks and her colleagues. Quotidian intellectuals were ordinary people that “thought, theorized, wrote, performed, and circulated their ideas and knowledge textually, visually, or orally through publications, workshops, conferences, presentations, and other artistic forms in the public sphere.”⁴² Though Florvil centers the Black German experience, her framework also applies to Catholic women like Dirks in 1950s West Germany, particularly when quotidian intellectuals’ work is classified as “epistemic interventions that recovered

⁴¹ For more on the West German intellectuals, see Axel Schildt, *Medien-Intellektuelle in der Bundesrepublik* (Hamburg: Wallstein, 2020), Alexander Gallus, Sebastian Liebold, and Frank Schale, eds., *Vermessungen einer Intellectual History der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Hamburg: Wallstein, 2020), Benedikt Brunner, Thomas Großbölting, Klaus Große Kracht, and Meik Woyke, eds., *Sagen was ist: Walter Dirks in den intellektuellen und politischen Konstellationen Deutschlands und Europas* (Bonn: Dietz, 2019), and Sean A. Forner, *German Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democratic Renewal: Culture and Politics after 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁴² Tiffany N. Florvil, *Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of a Transnational Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 6.

silenced narratives.”⁴³ Narratives *about* women abounded in postwar West Germany, but this dissertation centers narratives *from* Catholic women, narratives that have been absent in much of the scholarship about the Catholic milieu and intellectual culture during this period.⁴⁴ When we add these narratives to the broader picture of West German history, we not only recover the absent voices of these women, but also the importance of their intellectual interventions.

Catholic women’s organizations like the ZKFM sat in a kind of mediating position, situated somewhere between the pope and the average West German Catholic woman. Though under the purview of the Catholic hierarchy, the ZKFM and its members were active participants in shaping the Catholic worldview during the period of 1945 to 1968, agitating for changes to everyday Catholic practice and Catholic dogma based on their own interpretations of the context they were currently living in. Like the Church, though perhaps in a less resigned way, these women engaged with modernity while also fondly upholding Catholic traditions. Because of their positionality within the Church, and the networks they cultivated, women in the ZKFM were able to operate as Catholic intellectuals that both interpreted and shaped Catholicism and broader West German ideas about gender, marriage, family, law, politics, and society.

⁴³ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁴ For work on West German intellectuals during the postwar, see Frank Biess, "Thinking after Hitler: The New Intellectual History of the Federal Republic of Germany," *History & Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 221-45, Dirk A. Moses, "Forum: Intellectual History in and of the Federal Republic of Germany," *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 3 (2012): 625-39, Alexander Gallus, "Vier Möglichkeiten, die Intellectual History der Bundesrepublik zu ergründen: Überlegungen zur Erschließung eines Forschungsfelds," in *Mehr als eine Erzählung: Zeitgeschichtliche Perspektiven auf die Bundesrepublik*, Frank Bajohr, Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, Claudia Kemper, and Detlef Siegfried, eds. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016), Alexander Gallus and Axel Schildt, eds. *Rückblickend in die Zukunft: Politische Öffentlichkeit und intellektuelle Positionen in Deutschland um 1950 und um 1930* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), Thomas Kroll and Tilman Reitz, eds., *Intellektuelle in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Verschiebungen im politischen Feld der 1960er und 1970er Jahre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), Gangolf Hübinger and Thomas Hertfelder, eds., *Kritik und Mandat: Intellektuelle in der deutschen Politik* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2000) and Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, ed. *Eingreifende Denkerinnen: Weibliche Intellektuelle im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

Literature Review

The Catholic Church's place in Germany has been fraught during the modern era, in part due to the Protestant Reformation and subsequently Protestantism's close ties to German national identity. Historical scholarship on German Catholicism reflects this, tending to focus on cultural and political flash-points, from the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s to contemporary debates over reproductive rights. Due to this, much of the literature on Catholicism in Germany has focused on how the Church and the faithful combatted, or adapted to, changing contexts: where Catholicism persevered institutionally and where it fractured. Some scholars observe this through micro-histories of individual people or places, some focus on the Church hierarchy itself, and others study the Catholic milieu. This dissertation examines West German Catholicism through the eyes of laic West German Catholic women and their entanglements with the Church as an institution, from the local to the global. Postwar Catholicism in West Germany is not an understudied field, but it has lacked significant engagement with gender as a category of analysis, and engagement with women as important historical actors. This has changed in recent years, but the literature on Catholicism in Germany that most utilizes a gendered lens of analysis often centers on the nineteenth century and the perceived "feminization" of the Catholic Church across Europe.

Fears about this "feminization" grew out of the visibility of female members of the Church across much of western Europe, as women increasingly participated in services and Catholic outreach and philanthropy. Though scholars debate to what degree the Church truly elevated its female members as paragons of participatory Catholicism, the *idea* that the Church

was increasingly associated with women had long-lasting implications.⁴⁵ Along with more women participating in the Church, more lay women's organizations were created under the Church's umbrella. Scholars of nineteenth century Germany have pointed to the particular gendered relationship between the Church and women during this period. David Blackbourn's exploration of nineteenth century apparitions of the Virgin Mary demonstrates how the phenomenon was linked to social and political change within Germany and the gendered nature of believable sightings. Blackbourn's history also shows the extent to which Catholicism was adaptable to local circumstance, tolerating and melding with local beliefs and practices often looked down on by the upper Catholic hierarchy.⁴⁶ Michael B. Gross also looks at nineteenth century Germany with a focus on the debates surrounding *Kulturkampf* and Catholic women in the public sphere. Where Blackbourn hones in on a specific cultural phenomenon, Gross describes women's changing relationship with the Church more broadly, including the backlash to their increased visibility in public life. The Catholic revival of the mid-nineteenth century "repitietized" many but also invigorated a liberal backlash against the perceived increase in political Catholicism and women's prominent role in the Church.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ For more on women and nineteenth century Catholicism, see Patrick Pasture, "Beyond the Feminization Thesis: Gendering the History of Christianity in the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries," in *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe: Beyond the Feminization Thesis*, Patrick Pasture, Jan Art, and Thomas Buerman, eds. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), Relinde Meiwes, *Arbeiterinnen des Herrn": Katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000), Irmtraud Götz von Olenhusen, "Die Feminisierung von Religion und Kirche im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Forschungsstand und Forschungsperspektiven (Einleitung)," in *Frauen unter dem Patriarchat der Kirchen: Katholikinnen und Protestantinnen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Irmtraud Götz von Olenhusen, ed. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1995). For a French example, see Caroline C. Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁴⁶ David Blackbourn, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Bismarckian Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For a look at Catholicism's adaptability in other regions, see Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (London: Penguin, 2008), Richard D.E. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), and John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood in Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (New York: Norton, 2001), 63-65.

⁴⁷ Gross, "Kulturkampf," 27. For a broader discussion of gender and German society, see Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

Though my time period is decades and two world wars after *Kulturkampf* and the reinvigoration of German Catholicism, the works of Blackbourn, Gross, and others have informed my work in key ways. The ramifications of this century were long-lasting, and the associations between women and the Church, both real and imagined, that were forged during the nineteenth century continued to greatly influence West Germany into the postwar era. Women continued to be viewed as key pillars of Church support, and many women in the ZKFM also saw themselves in this way. Church officials throughout the twentieth century attempted to retain female Catholics to keep ahold of German families to ensure stability of both Church and state institutions. Some Catholic women in the ZKFM agreed with Church prescriptions about women's traditional roles in family and Church, while others pushed for a greater increase of women's positions and influence in the Church structure, or even diminished Church oversight in their private lives. As the postwar Church was pushed to adapt to these demands from women, so was the nineteenth century Church, as demonstrated by historical scholarship. How the Church adapted, or failed to adapt, to women's participation in the Church and their role in shaping Catholic ideology and practice had long roots that manifest throughout the twentieth century, and ultimately contributed to a decrease in active German Catholicism during the 1950s and beyond.

The West German Church during the postwar was not only shaped by its nineteenth century past, but also by the more recent Third Reich. There is significant literature about the Church during the Third Reich, including its culpability, actual and perceived, and how greatly the period of 1933 to 1945 shaped the Church and Catholicism in the years following. Earlier scholarship looked at the Catholic Church and Protestantism's collaboration with the Third

Reich, debating which religion was more adaptable to the Nazi worldview.⁴⁸ More recent scholarship explores how Catholicism and the average German Catholic functioned during the Third Reich and WWII. Thomas Brodie looks at how Catholics in western Germany, from both the clergy and laity, responded to the conflicts between Church and state during WWII and how they reconciled competing ideas of nationalism and religious doctrine.⁴⁹ Brodie's examination of "average" German Catholics demonstrates the variation in religious practice and how it was often coupled with the practical concerns of daily life. The Church feared this meant a lack of devotional commitment among the flock and spurred worries in the immediate postwar of how to "repair a range of institutional and spiritual dislocations inflicted upon the dioceses."⁵⁰ Brodie's examination here is illuminating as much of the history of the Church in postwar West Germany is tied up with the Nazi past. Both clergy and lay people struggled with how to account for the Third Reich and the Holocaust. As the Church needed to reinvigorate its institution and keep Catholics' participation, it was forced to reckon with its role in this past. As West Germans tried to redefine their own identities, the Church entered into a similar process. This manifested in a

⁴⁸ Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1964). Another early monograph on German Catholicism is Wilhelm Spaels, *Das katholische Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert: Seine Pionier und Krisenzeiten, 1890-1945* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1964). See also Kevin Spicer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), John Connelly, "Nazi Racism and the Church: How Converts Showed the Way to Resist," *Commonweal* 24 (February 2012): 12-16. Richard Steigmann-Gall's *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) focuses more broadly on how Christianity as a whole interacted with Nazism and offers insights into Protestant Christianity during the Third Reich. See also Doris L. Bergen, "Nazism and Christianity: Partners and Rivals? A Response to Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*," in *The Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007), Bergen's monograph *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), and David Cymet, *History vs. Apologetics: The Holocaust, The Third Reich, and the Catholic Church* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010) for more considerations about the positionality of the Church in relation to the Third Reich.

⁴⁹ Thomas Brodie, *German Catholicism and War, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4. See also Martin Röw, *Militärseelsorge unter dem Hakenkreuz: Die katholische Feldpostal* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014), Lauren Faulker Rossi, *Wehrmacht Priests and the Nazi War of Annihilation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), and Olaf Blaschke and Thomaas Großbölting, eds., *Was glaubten die Deutschen zwischen 1933 und 1945? Religion und Politik im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2020) for more explorations of Christianity during WWII.

⁵⁰ Brodie, *German Catholicism and War*, 169.

few different ways in the Church; some leaders attempted to ignore the Nazi past while others hurriedly scrambled to explain it. Suzanne Brown-Fleming argues that some German Catholic leaders outright refused to take public responsibility for the Holocaust because they saw it as detrimental to the facilitation of reconstruction.⁵¹ Mark Ruff's monograph *Battle for the Catholic Past* demonstrates that though the Church was publicly silent on the Holocaust, Church leadership worked frantically to distance themselves from blame for Nazi collaboration, even employing historians to help them research the Third Reich.⁵² The Nazi past loomed large in West Germany and within the Catholic Church and both institutions took it into careful account during reconstruction. West German Holocaust guilt and Church culpability discourse lurked behind more overt rhetoric about the family, gender roles, religion, and legislation during the postwar.⁵³ The ZKFM was integrally caught up in this process as the Church shifted its focus to reinvigorating women's organizations as a way to distance itself from its potential culpability in the Nazi past and to prevent another Third Reich from rising.

Catholic women's organizations like the ZKFM during the postwar were embedded in a social and political world where the Church and Catholicism had gained more significance as they reckoned with the recent past and attempted to build West Germany's future. Politically,

⁵¹ Suzanne Brown-Fleming, *The Holocaust and Catholic Conscience: Cardinal Aloisius Muench and the Guilt Question in Germany* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 14. See also Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust: 1930-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2000).

⁵² Ruff, *Battle for the Catholic Past*. See Albrecht Langner's anthology *Katholizismus im politischen System der Bundesrepublik, 1949-1963* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1978) and Thomas Grossman, *Zwischen Kirche und Gesellschaft: Das Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken, 1949-1970* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1991) for a closer look at the relationship between the Catholic Church and German politics and society.

⁵³ For more about the memory and legacy of WWII, see Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller eds., *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2010), Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003), Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), and Tony Judt, "The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," in *Daedalus* 121, no. 4 (1992). For more on FRG policies, see Peter C. Caldwell, *Democracy, Capitalism, and the Welfare State: Debating Social Order in Postwar West Germany, 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Christian Democratic politics were largely influential in establishing the FRG and throughout the 1950s. In her monograph, *The Origins of Christian Democracy*, Maria Mitchell argues that through the 1950s and 60s, Christian Democratic policies shaped European economies and international engagement, and “socially and culturally, the CDU set the tone for, among other issues, engagement with the Nazi past; the place of the family, children, and women in West German society; and the role of churches, particularly the Catholic Church, in a postwar German democracy.”⁵⁴ The CDU greatly emphasized the importance of the German family, traditional Christian lifestyles, and a return to German cultural roots. As scholars of Christian Democratic politics in West Germany have shown, religion was not a separate sphere from politics, economics, society, and culture. Rather, Christianity was entwined with all of these arenas, influencing and being influenced by these fields.

This then begs the question about the Catholic milieu. If Christianity was entangled with all other areas of society in West German, where did they fit in? There have been debates in recent scholarship about the place of the Catholic milieu in West Germany and how separate it was from wider German society. In the nineteenth century, Catholics were observed as isolated, inhabiting areas of western Germany where they could potentially never encounter an institution outside of the Church.⁵⁵ However, scholars of the twentieth century have been increasingly refuting the idea that the Catholic milieu remained a separate entity by the 1950s and if using the lens of a milieu was still useful. Mitchell notes that in more recent scholarship, “milieu analyses have been criticized as too static, ahistorical, and hierarchical to capture the diversity of German

⁵⁴ Mitchell, *Origins of Christian Democracy*, 1-2. See also Sarah Elise Wiliarty, *The CDU and the Politics of Gender in Germany: Bringing Women to the Party* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Frank Bösch, *Die Adenauer-CDU: Gründung, Aufstieg und Krise einer Erfolgspartei 1945-1969* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001), and Granieri, *Ambivalent Alliance*.

⁵⁵ Ruff, *Wayward Flock*, 16.

society.”⁵⁶ Despite this, scholars like Ruff and Benjamin Ziemann have noted that, ironically, scholarship on Catholicism in Germany has often isolated itself like those nineteenth century German Catholics, disconnecting Catholic history from the rest of German history.⁵⁷ Some scholars on Catholicism, like Michael O’Sullivan and Regina Illemann, still find the milieu a useful category of analysis, while others like Mitchell illustrate how such a loaded concept can be limiting in historical scholarship.⁵⁸ For the purposes of this dissertation, Lukas Rölli-Alkemper provides a useful definition of the Catholic milieu for the postwar years, as a group that was defined by a Catholic worldview, perpetuated through social organizations, a shared system of values and norms, and networks that reinforced these things. Moreover, everyday life and culture was organized and interpreted through this worldview.⁵⁹ As will be seen, the women of the ZKFM often operated under Rölli-Alkemper’s definition, utilizing the shared traditions and networks provided by Catholicism while also interpreting their lives through a Catholic lens. These women were also engaging with a public, Catholic intellectual milieu that was contained enough for this conception of the milieu to retain relevance, though this dissertation also explores the limits of this definition in describing the nuance of opinion among German Catholics in the postwar period, particularly when one considers questions of women and gender.

⁵⁶ Mitchell, *Origins of Christian Democracy*, 3.

⁵⁷ Benjamin Ziemann, *Encounters with Modernity: The Catholic Church in West Germany, 1945-1975* (New York: Berghahn, 2014), 2. Ruff called Catholic scholarship a “ghetto,” denoting its separate nature from the rest of scholarship on West Germany. Ruff, “Catholic Elites, Gender, and Unintended Consequences in the 1950s,” in *Conflict, Catastrophe, and Continuity*, 254.

⁵⁸ Michael E. O’Sullivan, *Disruptive Power: Catholic Women, Miracles, and Politics in Modern Germany, 1918-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018). For other related discussions, see Gerard Emmanuel and Gerd-Rainer Horn, eds., *Left Catholicism, 1943-1955: Catholics and Society in Western Europe at the Point of Liberation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001). For more broad, theoretical discussions, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

⁵⁹ Lukas Rölli-Alkemper, *Familie in Wiederaufbau: Katholizismus und bürgerliches Familienideal in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945-1965* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000), 27.

The ZKFM as an organization consistently grappled with questions about women's status and role in West German society and the Church.⁶⁰ Because women held such a central place in the eyes of both institutions, they did attain new opportunities as they participated fully in the negotiation process about gender roles that was occurring across the public. This dissertation interrogates gender throughout, and more specifically, how Catholics and the Church interpreted, pushed against, and transformed gender during this period. This intersection has yet to be fully explored by historians of German Catholicism. As Chappel puts it, “the extant literature on twentieth-century Catholicism has paid surprisingly little attention to gender, despite the fact that Catholic writers were transparently obsessed with the theme.”⁶¹ By looking at the ZKFM and other Catholic organizations, we can better understand how gender and Catholicism were entangled through an examination of lay women’s experiences and how they themselves viewed the confluence of their gender identities and faith.

Studies that evaluate both gender and on-the-ground Catholic experience have been rare, but not completely absent from studies of postwar West Germany. Rölli-Alkemper’s extensive work at the turn of the millennium has operated as a “bible” of sorts in this field, cited in nearly every work that has followed it. Rölli-Alkemper offers an in-depth look into marriage and the family in West Germany, noting what Chappel did nearly two decades later: that it is strange that these topics are so under explored when they were absolutely central to the Church during the postwar period.⁶² Rölli-Alkemper considers “popular and everyday Catholicism,” building on

⁶⁰ To see more on the status of West German women, find Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make?*, Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), Elizabeth Heineman, “The Economic Miracle in the Bedroom: Big Business and Sexual Consumption in Reconstruction West Germany,” *Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006): 846-877, and Erica Carter, *How German Is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

⁶¹ Chappel, *Catholic Modern*, 7.

⁶² Rölli-Alkemper, *Familie in Wiederaufbau*, 17.

sociological and historical studies that used quantitative collection techniques but lacked broader analysis that embedded the data into the cultural and social Catholic milieu.⁶³ He looks at how ideals like privacy and the bourgeois family unit influenced the time period, but does not take for granted the complex ways Catholics felt about marriage and family.⁶⁴ Rölli-Alkemper also takes seriously the way gender colored these complexities, from parenting, distributions of labor in and outside the home, sexuality, and to larger processes like secularization and modernization.⁶⁵ He also looks at how Catholic values influenced social, legal, economic, and political conditions in the Federal Republic, from the perspectives of the clergy, politicians, and Catholic milieu elites.

Projects like Rölli-Alkemper's bring together the tensions between "ideal" models of women's role in West German society and the social realities of women's lived experiences. Ruff's work on postwar Catholicism and gender does this as well, though with less focus on female actors. *The Wayward Flock*, a key text in this field, demonstrates how essential gender was to the Catholic Church institutionally during this period as clerics frantically navigated a less-engaged flock and a glut of single German women. Ruff outlines the models put forth by the Church hierarchy and the West German state, and how the Church was forced to adapt when the ideals and reality didn't quite match up.⁶⁶ Using the lens of Catholic youth organizations and their cleric overseers, Ruff manages to tell readers much about how the Church conceived of gender in this period, but he tells us little about the lived experiences of individual women. Building on both Rölli-Alkemper and Ruff's work, this dissertation brings together their broader

⁶³ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 24. For more on sexuality during the postwar, see Elizabeth Heineman, *Before Porn Was Legal: The Erotica Empire of Beate Uhse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), Michael Thomas Taylor, Annette F. Timm, and Rainer Herrn, eds. *Not Straight From Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship since Magnus Hirschfeld* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

⁶⁶ Ruff, *Wayward Flock*.

analyses of gender through state and Church institutions with how Catholic women experienced and shaped these gender norms and power relationships.

A recent monograph that has looked at the relationship between the Church, gender, and power thoroughly is *Disruptive Power*. O'Sullivan's monograph is part of recent literature on the German Catholic Church that complicates notions about waning Catholic power in the twentieth century. O'Sullivan asserts that sites of miracles in the twentieth century were key places where adherents to the Catholic faith clashed and changed the course of secularization, gender politics, and Catholic political power in Germany.⁶⁷ O'Sullivan's work mirrors mine in a myriad of ways, from his discussion of the nuanced ways Catholics interpreted and shaped their faith during a time "where other indicators showed a decline in religiosity." By looking to the grass-roots as well as the Catholic hierarchy, O'Sullivan is able to show how power and influence moved multi-directionally, and also how both conservative and progressive actors played roles as active agents in the trajectory of German Catholicism.⁶⁸ This dissertation likewise examines the relationship between the Church and lay Catholics, though through a thematic lens that focuses on Catholic women's organizations rather than female miracle makers and their relationships to the clergy that oversaw them.

O'Sullivan's focus on these gendered relationships, and how power functions between lay women and clergy, is illuminating and he offers a nuanced view that I, too, champion in this project. O'Sullivan focuses on a few key women in that experienced the miraculous, like Therese Neumann, to "illustrate how pious women negotiated spheres of power while embracing strict moral codes and paternal hierarchy."⁶⁹ O'Sullivan shows various, nuanced strategies women

⁶⁷ O'Sullivan, *Disruptive Power*, 4. Also see Monica Black, *A Demon-Haunted Land: Witches, Wonder Doctors, and the Ghosts of the Past in Post-WWII Germany* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020).

⁶⁸ O'Sullivan, *Disruptive Power*, 6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

took to both submit to and overcome male authority, “a balancing act” that visionaries enacted to retain their own power and autonomy.⁷⁰ Like *Disruptive Power*, this dissertation will show these nuanced negotiations in practice. Women in Catholic organizations like the ZKFM both undermined and reaffirmed the gender norms of the Church, through various means and to various ends. While some scholars reject the idea that women truly gained power in these relationships, like O’Sullivan I argue that Catholic women could and did utilize their place on the edge of the Catholic hierarchy for their own agendas.

When discussing postwar Catholic women’s organizations in Germany, two recent works by historians are the most closely related to my dissertation. Kimba Tichenor’s monograph *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation* and Regina Illemaann’s monograph *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland 1945-1965* specifically examine the lay Catholic women’s organizations of the ZKFM and KDFFB and their relationships to the Church hierarchy and broader West German society.⁷¹ Illemaann studies the same time period I do, though this dissertation emphasizes the ZKFM most prominently and she focuses on the KDFFB. Tichenor provides an in-depth analysis of the ZKFM, but her focus is from 1965 through the 1980s. My project builds upon both of these instrumental texts in key ways, while also providing new insights into the intellectual labor of both organizations and, most significantly, gives credence to why it is worth studying the ZKFM before 1965.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁷¹ Regina Illemaann, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland 1945-1965: Politik, Geschlecht und Religiosität im Katholischen Deutschen Frauenbund* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016) and Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation begins by examining the ZKFM as an organization then works outward, imperfectly moving from organizational agenda setting at Catholic women's conferences, to public intellectual engagement through publications and benevolent actions, and finally to the ZKFM's interventions at Vatican II. In Chapter One, I examine how group collaboration through Catholic networks and conferences brought Catholic women from around West Germany and the world together, mingling different perspectives on Catholicism and how it related to and defined the scope of female labor. Conferences were essential bridges between past and future, ideas and actions, and between different groups of Catholic women. They were a literal and discursive space made possible through extensive Catholic networks that allowed women from the ZKFM and other Catholic organizations to interpret and shape Catholic ideas, set agendas for action across the globe, and hear varied perspectives and experiences from fellow Catholic women. The conferences show how the Catholic hierarchy both gave women access to broad networks through shared faith and papal endorsement, and how they were also still limited by the bounds of Catholicism. However, conferences were a space of change, one where women in the ZKFM engaged with contemporary thought from feminists, social scientists, psychologists, and other professionals. It is a space where we can see how religious ideas collided with these new understandings in the postwar, and how they shaped the ZKFM moving forward.

Chapter Two looks at West German debates surrounding the Basic Law and Civil Code through the lens of the associational publications of both the ZKFM and the KDFB. *Frau und Mutter* and *Die christliche Frau* served as important communicative organs of the respective associations. Members could easily reach out to organizational leaders to discuss important issues or express desires for change. In this way, they had a direct line to the leaders of the

largest Catholic women's associations in West Germany and, through them, to the Church hierarchy. This also worked in the reverse, to allow the Church to reach the average German Catholic as mediated through the organizational publications. Here again, Catholic women's organizations were important mediators that could amplify and promote messages in either direction. Both organizations used their publications to directly address wider discussions about gender equality within society and family, allowing leaders and members to interrogate Church and state positions on women's role in society. Women from the ZKFM and KDFB used their own understandings of the Catholic social order to engage in public debates about laws that would shape their daily lives and access to political, social, and economic power. This chapter shows how the work of Catholic women's conferences infiltrated into the associational publications and through them, to the broader Catholic public milieu. The following two chapters will show how the publications were also useful tools for the organizations to organize benevolent campaigns and Catholic action at Vatican II.

Chapter Three concerns the benevolent activities of Catholic women's associations, both within Germany and abroad. Benevolent activity was often prescribed by the Church, and by the women themselves, as the true place women could excel using their "natural" maternal skills. The ZKFM and the KDFB organized many campaigns following WWII to assist bereft neighbors and local communities. As a direct result of the war many people, including single women, widows, and orphans, needed Catholic benevolent action. West German Catholic women also looked beyond the local, organizing regional efforts for assistance and national calls for change within the West German government to support its citizens. This chapter shows how Catholic women's associations engaged more broadly with international Catholic networks to enact benevolence that spanned the globe. The ZKFM and KDFB's conceptions of Catholic

benevolence are made clear in this chapter, as is how they viewed the differences between benevolence at home in West Germany and abroad.

The concluding chapter focuses on Vatican II: how the ZKFM prepared for the Council, how they influenced the proceedings, and its aftermath. Popular understandings of Vatican II mark this series of conferences as a progressive turning point for the Catholic Church. While this is true — from the legitimization of vernacular worship, to the loosening of long-held doctrine and social mores — what is also true is that Catholic women's organizations had a longer history of progressive activism that extended backward: for these associations, Vatican II was a culmination of a sort, not just a new beginning. The ZKFM surveyed its members to understand what women wanted out of Vatican II. Leadership consistently communicated with these women and the Catholic clergy in order to make clear how suggestions would be presented to the Council. They used every tool in their kit to make their voices heard in Catholicism's highest offices.

CHAPTER ONE

ENTANGLED AFFILIATIONS: ZKFM NETWORKS AND INTRA- AND INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC INITIATIVES

In 1952, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO) elected Marie du Rostu as the new General President of the international organization. In a break with four decades of established practice, the office of president was fulfilled not by a nominee of the pope, but by one of three candidates suggested by the women of WUCWO. Du Rostu, a French nun, would serve in her position for nearly a decade, hailing the beginning of what WUCWO considered its period of "maturity."⁷² Since its inception in 1910, WUCWO had been an international beacon for Catholic women and their organizations around the world. Starting with Catholic groups from ten countries from Europe and South America, WUCWO consistently had an activist agenda. At the founding meeting for WUCWO, the first president Viscountess de Vélard made this clear in her address to members: "Let us not dream! We have no time to do so...Let us prepare for the future; to do so let us share serious and well-organized action."⁷³ De Vélard and other delegates elaborated and crystallized the original aims of WUCWO, asserting the importance of Catholic women's networks across national lines and in what they saw as increasingly changing circumstances.⁷⁴

Catholic women's networks remained significant following WWII. The ZKFM, as a newly reinvigorated postwar organization, remembered a legacy of German women's voluntary associational labor. ZKFM leaders saw themselves as born out of, and building upon, an intricate

⁷² "Our History," World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, accessed April 14, 2022. <https://www.wucwo.org/index.php/en/home-4/historia/our-history>.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ The organization was originally called the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues (IUCWL) until officially adopting WUCWO in 1952. For the sake of clarity, I will be utilizing only WUCWO throughout this dissertation.

history of German women's associational activities that began in earnest in the nineteenth century. Since the 1880s, the Catholic milieu had been bolstered by networks of associations like the ZKFM.⁷⁵ These Catholic networks were descendants of female associational activities that spread back to the early nineteenth century when urban women gained entry into civic and public life in society. As historian Rita Huber-Sperl contends, "Women's associations became an important and multifaceted instrument that exerted influence on society, culture, morality, and politics; collaborated on solutions to social problems; championed issues, ideals, and values that seemed important to the associations; and represented women's interests beyond the structures, spaces, institutions, and possibilities for action reserved for men."⁷⁶ Huber-Sperl adds that early women's associations in Germany were modeled on those of their male counterparts, but though these organizations mirrored each other administratively, the women formulated their own goals and activities. They primarily focused on charity, the welfare of indigent women and children, and any group that was burdened by disability or catastrophe.⁷⁷

Like the ZKFM that came after them, these women utilized their social capital as mothers and caregivers to more actively participate in the public sphere in practical ways. Though, as women, their lack of access to state power limited the ways in which they could organize themselves, they utilized their particular "feminine" resources to their own ends. Bourgeois women in particular had the wealth, connections, and time to devote to associational tasks. But,

⁷⁵ Ziemann, *Encounters with Modernity*, 1. For more insight into this time period, see Doris Kaufmann, *Katholisches Milieu in Münster 1928-1933. Politische Aktionsformen und geschlechtsspezifische Verhaltensräume* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1984) and Ute Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich. Diskurs, soziale Formation und politische Mentalität* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998). For an international view, see Joan Marie Johnson, *Funding Feminism: Monied Women, Philanthropy, and the Women's Movement, 1870-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) and Elayne Clift, ed. *Women, Philanthropy, and Social Change: Visions for a Just Society* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005).

⁷⁶ Rita Huber-Sperl, "Organized Women and the Strong State: The Beginnings of Female Associational Activity in Germany, 1810- 1840." *Journal of Women's History* 13, no 4. (Winter 2002): 8.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

women in general were thought to encompass particular qualities of empathy and maternal care, and by arguing that their communities were in fact extensions of their own families, they were able to convince the male-dominated state of the necessity of their work and talent.⁷⁸ Historian Jean H. Quatert demonstrates how the dynastic state was bolstered by female associational activity. While the state utilized women's voluntary civic action and benevolent work to seem "caring," it also benefited from the patriotism and nationalism fostered through the work of women.⁷⁹ In the 1920s, the goals of many of these associations overlapped with global Catholic Action movements. Catholic Action was focused on the concept of Christian responsibility to intervene in the world for the benefit of others. As the bourgeois women of the nineteenth century, proponents of Catholic Action mobilized their own particular resources in order to achieve what they saw as the "benevolent" goal of rechristianizing societies worldwide. Through Catholic Action, as through women's associations, lay Catholics could become active participants in this mission outside of the boundaries of the traditional Church hierarchy.⁸⁰ As women's associations in Germany expanded beyond the bounds of classist interpretations of benevolence, Catholic Action activists expanded beyond "formal" Catholic networks to create a more inclusive social movement.

The groundwork laid by both Catholic Action and previous iterations of German women's benevolent associations influenced how the goals of these organizations were built upon during the postwar period. Their successes and failures were as well, though discussions of both were often mediated through the disruption of the Third Reich and WWII. Some scholars

⁷⁸ Ibid, 60.

⁷⁹ Jean H. Quatert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

⁸⁰ Patrick Pasture, "Multi-Faceted Relations Between Christian Trade Unions and Left Catholicism in Europe" in *Left Catholicism*, 231.

maintain that the seeds of the conservative Christian German state following the war were sown in these voluntary organizations: it was a long established civic identity that Germans could call upon after nationalism failed them.⁸¹ Due to this, much of women's associational work in West Germany was still mediated through and administered by men, particularly in religious organizations. These threads came into sharp focus in the 1950s and 1960s as organizations like the ZKFM struggled with how "female" characteristics were again being mobilized by the patriarchal structures of the Church and state, often to the detriment of women.

This chapter explores how the ZKFM utilized the networks of Catholic women's associations, both inside and outside of West Germany. The ZKFM, along with several other Catholic women's organizations in West Germany, were a part of WUCWO, incorporated into a network of lay associations that spanned the globe. The organizational affiliations between various Catholic women's groups were constructed, and perpetuated, through connections between colleagues, co-authors, and friends. There were strict hierarchical organizational ties among certain organizations, while others operated under loose affiliation. With the overlap of membership, leadership, and the absorption of certain organizations into others, it is difficult to strictly separate out each associational relationship by the levels of intra-organization, inter-organization, national, and international. Acknowledging the messiness of these networks, this chapter examines the ZKFM and its ties to other West German women's organizations and its international links to WUCWO.

Each organization in this narrative essentially operates as a "collective actor."⁸² These collective actors were bound together by associational ties and overlapping interests, and they

⁸¹ Quatert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 304. Quatert argues that the "female ritual of care" was an essential need.

⁸² John Scott defines collective actors as "a subset of actors from a strong (directed) component who share a set of preferences on particular issues" and "the basic units of social conflict, their overlapping memberships constituting

also divided along these same lines. But, their shared Catholicism remained firm. Not only were these organizations under the umbrella of the Catholic Church, they were also inextricably tied through the central role faith played in their ideas and actions. Thus, despite differences in programmatic agendas or national contexts, contexts that informed members' very understanding of Catholic tradition, they came together out of a shared mission dictated by their faith. The global Catholic network and the values that held it together both allowed, and limited, the ideas and actions of Catholic women's organizations. John Scott argues that "the structure of a social network constrains the possibilities for communication, and, therefore, shapes the speed and direction of any diffusion through the network."⁸³ This was, and remains true of the Catholic hierarchy, but the inverse was as well; the entrenched, transnational network of Catholic clergy and the organizations they oversaw allowed more avenues for connection and communication among Catholic women worldwide.

In terms of hierarchies, networks, and identity, intellectual historian Dena Goodman offers critical frameworks and questions this chapter utilizes. In *Republic of Letters*, Goodman argues that women played an essential role in shaping discourse in pre-revolutionary France salon culture precisely because of how they were gendered. They operated under an absolute monarchy, but were able to push the boundaries of the regime because, as women they were not perceived as a threat to its power. The "republic of letters" was allowed to develop as an institution alongside, and entangled with, the monarchy: a discourse constrained by an institution, but allowed to flower because of women's central role. Goodman makes the case

the structural cleavages that characterize different systems." Scott demarcates "loose social networks" and "tightly organized associations," but I think it is useful for my purposes here to consider these things in concert. John Scott, ed. *Social Networks: Critical Concepts in Sociology* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2002).

⁸³ Ibid.

that, in general, ideas, practices, and institutions shape and are shaped by each other.⁸⁴ Catholic women's organizations globally operated similarly in the postwar period. Women were limited by the Church due to their gender, and barred from gaining clerical office, but they utilized the Church's gendered conceptions of their role against it, too.

The women of the ZKFM and the broader Catholic networks, as part of the liminal structure of the Church, were reinterpreting Catholic traditions and values during the postwar as their own interests collided with other ideologies, including feminism. These tensions within the faith had been present before the postwar period, but the combination of the tensions within Catholicism and the postwar context "catalyzed" forces of change from both inside and outside the faith.⁸⁵ Women in the ZKFM were greatly influenced by their Catholic faiths, both in terms of doctrine and practice, and by interactions with Church clerics, but they were also influenced by their positionality as West German women facing both the nation's recent war-torn past, the legacy of the Third Reich, and new challenges to their roles as wives, mothers, and workers as the FRG was established. We can see the collision of these influences in the intellectual labor individual women performed for the ZKFM. This chapter examines how that labor manifested in intra- and inter-organizational conferences in which leading ZKFM members participated and how, within these settings, Catholic women could weave together conceptions of their Catholic worldviews and where they saw themselves fitting in as women in the new West Germany, making their own claims to knowledge in the process.

⁸⁴ Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, 1-5. Also see Hesse's *The Other Enlightenment* as a demonstration of how women utilized gendered, cultural authority that subordinated them to their advantage in order to gain a voice in political and social debates. See also Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes*, 373. Also relevant here is Shore's chapter "Can We See Ideas?" in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁸⁵ Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, 18.

Conferences, in a sense, were the sites where the interactions between Catholic networks became manifest. This chapter will consider conferences as both physical events where individuals, organizations, and networks with shared interests overlap, as well as discursive spaces in which these parties can share and discuss concepts and goals. Conferences can be key spaces for the crystallization and dissemination of concepts and meaning. They bring together various individuals and groups with one or more common interest, affiliation, or motivation. Conferences call upon established networks and are events at which new connections are forged, both between ideas and between groups and individuals. They can be places where pragmatic, worldly concerns are articulated, discussed, and resolved, spaces for philosophical and spiritual debate, and sites that demonstrate the entanglement between the two.⁸⁶

In the realm of the discursive, conferences have, and still do, function as formal venues to share new interpretations of old ideas or innovative and unique ideas. Conferences can be places where ideas become coherent or crystallized, but they are also in-between spaces that can shatter widely-held conceptions. In this sense, they are also forward-looking when individual interpretations come into contact with the collective to deconstruct and reconstruct new meanings. Conferences are often spaces built for immediate feedback, or at the very least, discussions of themes and arguments presented. This process of challenge and debate can be a catalyst to further reinterpretations and theories to explore. Conferences can also be forward-

⁸⁶ Peter Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 2. In developing the framework for this chapter, Reinhart Koselleck, Dominick LaCapra, and Karl Mannheim have been particularly helpful as well. Koselleck's discussion of the tensions between the social world and ideas, as both related to and independent of one another, applies particularly well to the realm of conferencing. Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). Mannheim urges intellectual historians to consider the relationship between "concrete interests" and ideas; pragmatic existential concerns that grow from shared experience do not always engender the same interpretations of ideas. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, 1951). Lastly, LaCapra's framework for contextual analysis considers not only the societal and structural context, but also focuses on motivations and intentions as particular contexts through which to study ideas. Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

looking in another way; how these ideas are set in motion to affect change beyond the discursive. They can be spaces in which attendees express agendas for action, make calls for social, political, theological, or economic changes. This can be done through the proposal of open-ended questions about perceived problems, through suggestions of solutions, or through specific, polished programs ready to be enacted by participants the minute they head home.

When examined with this in mind, ZKFM conferences give us a better understanding of how information and ideas were spread amongst the networks in attendance. Who organized the conference, which individuals presented their ideas, and who was in attendance can speak to broader questions of authority and influence. How ideas were presented is also important; did personal experience count as evidence? Or were academically researched presentations required? Who could speak, about what, and where are important questions this chapter will explore by trying to disentangle the knot of Catholic women's organizations and the conferences they sponsored and attended. As nearly all of these organizations were ostensibly under the authority of the Holy See, the gendered dynamics of the relationship between the Catholic hierarchy and lay women can be seen in stark relief, though they did not always function equivalently in every conference space. Conferences are a key space to examine how the ZKFM overlapped and entangled with other women's groups in West Germany. The network is messy and complicated, but by understanding how these networks were entangled in format and function, through connections of association, shared interest, and friendship, we can gain an understanding of how knowledge was created, shared, and put into action.

One issue that ignited these forces of change was women's labor. The Catholic women's conferences themselves, from the intra-organizational to the international, had focused on women's labor often and with great nuance before the postwar period, but global realities of the

1950s brought this issue back to the forefront of many discussions. Female labor was understood in a myriad of ways; outside of the home in the forms of waged work or professional careers; inside of the home in the forms of housework and the moral education of children; and for the Church in the forms of progressing Catholic initiatives and taking action to ameliorate the hardships in one's community. Women in Catholic organizations, and the ZKFM in particular, understood their work organizing and attending conferences as falling into the third category, though for some members, the first was also applicable. Female labor, in all of its forms, was a staple thematic category in most Catholic women's conferences. Conceptions of appropriate forms of women's labor, the purpose of it, and its effects on West Germany and the world became entangled and changed as women with differing backgrounds met. While these issues almost always retained their particular Catholic "tinge" at Catholic women's conferences, one can see how other ideas influenced both the format and content of these spaces. The ZKFM's engagement with Catholic women's organizations nationally and internationally was important to how the organization shaped its commitments to Catholicism, its goals for benevolent intervention, and how they perceived and sought to assist working women.

The ZKFM

In February of 1948, the ZKFM hosted a six-day conference at Albertus Magnus Academy in Walberberg. It was spoken of with great fervor by the men in charge of organizing it: Hermann Klens and Father Heinrich Schneider.⁸⁷ It was designed to be a small conference, with around thirty individuals invited and out of those, twenty attended. Out of these twenty, fourteen were clerics and six were women. The speakers also skewed male: two clerics, three

⁸⁷ Hermann Klens to Heinrich Schneider, January 22, 1948. KFD Folder 570.

male professors, and one female professor.⁸⁸ Klens and Schneider spoke, to an audience that included a few ZKFM female leaders of the soon-to-be-created executive board. The conference was focused on what it meant to be a Marian organization and the speakers at the event explored different facets of the history of Marian organizations in Germany and where these organizations stood after the destruction of WWII. Marian organizations had a long history across the globe and, in general, elevated Mary as an ideal of womanhood, a paragon for the faithful to glorify and emulate. Marian organizations had been an integral part of how the Catholic Church conceived of women's organizations in the twentieth century. As women were often thought of as the conduits through which Catholic teachings and values flow to their children, the education of these women through Marian groups was seen as essential. The conference at Albertus Magnus in 1948 was focused on Marian education with an emphasis on women's role in the Church, the image of women in West German society, and the symbolic and virtuous nature of Marian organizations at large as they scouted their paths forward.⁸⁹

This first intra-organizational conference following the rupture of WWII is the starting point of an evolution in both how the ZKFM organized conferences, what themes they focused on, and how they evaluated the purpose and goals of Catholic women's organizations. The Marian Study-Week was exemplary of the concerns of the state of Catholic organizations in West Germany following the war. Pastoral education was in focus, even as the associations that oversaw the education of young women and mothers were in disarray. Pastoral education and care can be generally defined as spiritual, social, and emotional support from dedicated clerics within the Catholic Church. This type of care for women often included "training" to prepare women for marriage, motherhood, and housewifery, guidance that came from Catholic teachings

⁸⁸ "Marianischen Studienwoche" Program, 1948. KFD Folder 570.

⁸⁹ "Themen der Marianischen Studienwoche," February 23-28, 1948. KFD Archive Folder 570.

rather than the personal experience of any of the clerics. West German clerics tied postwar recovery of Catholic associational networks directly to women's pastoral care: the recovery of one could bolster the other. Where some degree of organizational stability existed for a few parishes, nearly half of the organizations that existed before 1933 were no longer functional. Clerics reported a decrease in membership overall as well. One report on the status of women and girl's organizations stated that though much of the chaos following the war could be attributed to the Third Reich's ban on associational activity, it was clear that a lack of proper pastoral care and oversight was also to blame.⁹⁰ Kimba Tichenor argues that a "gendered ideology provided the conservative core" that shaped the Church's debates surrounding Christian teachings and pastoral care, both inside women's associations and out. Tichenor claims that this ideology gained a sharp edge in the postwar, as both German politicians and Church clerics struggled to bridge the gap between the religious and secular arenas.⁹¹

This gendered ideology is clear, particularly in the late 1940s, in ZKFM activities: both in content and form. The Marian Study-Week was organized from the ground-up by clerics, and though it was centered around women — their place in Catholic history and within the contemporary Church — only one woman spoke at the conference, and only a handful attended. It is clear that though women were the subjects of the conference itself, they were not the intended audience. The form of this conference, who spoke, and the intended audience give a sense of where the Church and ZKFM stood before the organization's official re-founding in 1951. With the clerical oversight over the organization made overt in the conference's form, women were less free to contribute fully to the collaborative space. This tension between speaking authoritatively on issues concerning women and the participation of actual women on

⁹⁰"Jungfrauenkongregation in der Erzdiözese," February 1946. KFD Archive Folder 570.

⁹¹ Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, 11.

these issues existed throughout the 1950s and 1960s in West German Catholic women's organizations. Pastoral education itself was a contested category, one that was perceived differently by women and clerics alike. The ideas presented at the Marian conference, and how it was organized, put forth the idea that "women's issues" within the Church were primarily under the purview of male authority and interpretation. However, the women of the ZKFM saw things differently.

For one, the concept of pastoral education was consistently seen by the women of the ZKFM as work: labor that both priests and women participated in equally. The work was based on a partnership, with women's active participation and management. There were few arguments against clergy continuing to play an advising role, but there were plenty of points made about the important role women should play in shaping their own work and education within the Church and their own organizations. Marianne Dirks, in particular, was invested in shaping women's education with the active participation of ZKFM members on the ground, something she spoke about often throughout the 1950s. Dirks discussed the concerns of many lay women over the state of catechism and educational working groups. She cited a woman writing from Berlin, who told her, "We are so hungry for spiritual help, for religious literature." Dirks believed that it was a call that the ZKFM could answer, and that many women accessed their spirituality through the collaborative efforts of educational programs. Dirks called for women to be active, not "passive assistants" in their education, and used the metaphor of concentric circles to describe how lay women, ZKFM board members, and the clergy should work together. Dirks asserted that the women had the power and responsibility to act, and that the absence of a "womanly influence" over pastoral education was lacking in its present state, calling upon Catholic ideas about the

importance of complementary gender roles. She stressed that why many may see her vehemence on this topic as pushing too far, she was in the position to see the dire need for this change.⁹²

Dirks made these remarks at the annual ZKFM conference in Rhöndorf in November of 1953, two years after being officially instated as ZKFM president. By looking at the program and format of this conference, we can see Dirks' influence as an organizer. Though she referred to the contemporary time period as a "Marian age," the thematic topics of the conference — and the speakers — had expanded to include more perspectives. While Klens and other clerics like Father Hubert Thienel still spoke in general about the goals of Marian organizations, four of the seven speakers were women. Women like Dr. Laarmann spoke about the work of youth welfare and the family, the specific tasks required by women in the ZKFM to fulfill the mission of their organization, and how women could and should contribute to pastoral education moving forward.⁹³ As Dirks herself made clear, women had a "shared responsibility" beyond the Church in both the political and economic realms, and consciously spoke of how the work of the ZKFM was shaped by, and shaped, both.⁹⁴ Both Laarmann and Dirks marshaled arguments that utilized Catholic frameworks about women's particular nurturing and maternal roles in the service of giving women a more active role in their work within the Church. While not seeking to overturn the patriarchal authority of the clerics that oversaw women's pastoral education, they did argue for a more balanced share of this authority that would utilize women's natural, God-given talents to the benefit of all.

⁹² Marianne Dirks, "Tagung des Zentralverbandes der Frauen und Müttergemeinschaften in Rhöndorf," 1953. KFD Archive Folder 730.1.

⁹³ Programm "der Tagung des Zentralverbandes der Frauen und Müttergemeinschaften Deutschlands," November 23-27, 1953, KFD Archive Folder 730.1. A similar pattern in terms of format can be seen at the annual conference in 1955 in Fulda.

⁹⁴ Dirks, "Tagung des Zentralverbandes," KFD Archive Folder 730.1.

These talents, and conceptions about the “essential nature” of women was entangled with broader West German conversations in the early 1950s about women’s role in society. Catholic doctrine taught the faithful that gendered differences between men and women were inherent, imbued by divine influence and largely unchangeable throughout time and place. These ideas were brought into sharp relief in discussions around whether or not women should work outside of their homes as West German debates about the Basic Law of 1949 and reforms to the German Civil Code became widespread in the postwar years. Chapter Two explores these debates more thoroughly and how the ZKFM participated in them publicly through their magazine *Frau und Mutter*, but women’s labor, both inside and outside of the home, was a topic that drove discussion at ZKFM conferences throughout the 1950s. The intellectual labor that ZKFM members put into their conference presentations and arguments contoured some of the nuances of the debate. Clerics, lay people, and active ZKFM members marshaled ammunition from Catholic dogma, personal experience, statistical analyses, and the writings of feminist scholars in order to prove their points, demonstrating a wide variety of perspectives that the ZKFM, in turn, used to hone the organization’s broader position on women’s work.

In a joint program series in 1954, the ZKFM described their organization as one that welcomed and promoted professional working women. They cited the labor of ZKFM members, in organizing working-groups, lectures, and specific programs for working women within the Church. Women working outside of the home was a pragmatic reality of postwar West Germany, but in the 1950s, while some women “retreated” to the home, others continued on in careers both out of necessity and for personal fulfillment. The ZKFM recognized these differences and claimed to provide a place for all of these women in their community.⁹⁵ However, this support

⁹⁵ Festschrift zur Wiehe des Hauses der Katholischer Frauen,” October 26, 1954. KFD Archive Folder 558.

was couched in several caveats that reminded women of particularly Catholic reasons why they might want to avoid waged labor outside of their homes. If women with families worked, that meant they had less time to spend with their children, which meant less time to religiously educate their children. In the ZKFM's view, this was not just detrimental to individual families; if it became a widespread phenomenon, then West Germany faced secularization and a greater loss of Catholic influence.⁹⁶ However, even the most conservative voices within the ZKFM often emphasized the importance of women's individual choice and identity. Dr. Maria Krauss-Flatten of the ZKFM argued that whether or not a woman worked outside of the home should be wholly determined by if it affected the well-being of her family, echoing Parliamentary Council debates about the Basic Law. As the "moral heart" of the family, a woman had a responsibility to not place profession above child. However, that did not mean, Krauss-Flatten stressed, that women and professional work did not mix: women could and did flourish in professional life. When women were personally fulfilled in their working lives, this could benefit their families. In the end, it was up to individual families to decide what was best for them, not the Church or the state.⁹⁷

In order to accommodate the nuances in this debate, and the reality of working Catholic women, the ZKFM worked to reconfigure the structure of their conferences. During the annual conference in 1959, Dirks spoke of the purpose and nature of their yearly meetings. She articulated the purpose of the conference as a "conversation," and a way to suss out what the most commonly held perspectives were. Dirks stated that it was "absolutely necessary to take up suggestions for our own work, again and again, that open up new perspectives, questions, and the problems of Christians today." It was the only way, as Dirks understood it, to provide the

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Maria Krauss-Flatten, "Nochmals: Zur Berufstätigkeit der verheirateten Frau," KFD Archive Folder 730.3.

“content and meaning” their work required.⁹⁸ This demonstrates how ZKFM leaders understood the utility and aims of the conference; as a crucial time for feedback from their members and as future-looking pursuits with activist aims. Conferences were not only platforms for ZKFM leaders to shape discussions about women’s labor, but also a time for membership to participate and shape these debates as well.

To accomplish this continuing mission, new methods needed to be applied. Dirks called for a broader commitment by the ZKFM to include speakers and attendees from beyond the organization, and beyond the Church: “The need for external speakers who are in a position to actually broaden our horizons and present original opinions in a convincing matter.”⁹⁹ The implementation of this call for plurality became clear at the ZKFM annual conference in 1961 at Maria Rosenberg. Not only were more women invited to present than ever before, but more heterogenous perspectives were presented. Two clerics did speak, but even this represented variety, as one of the speakers was a military chaplain unaffiliated with the ZKFM. As an organization, the ZKFM was no stranger to academic and professional women among its ranks, but for the first time these women were front and center on the conference stage. Dr. Helga Rusche, a theologian with a doctorate from Heidelberg and a Protestant convert, was a pioneer in biblical studies.¹⁰⁰ Rusche spoke about the bible’s relationship to women’s current position among the faithful. Dr. Elisabeth Gössmann also presented on the topic of women’s service in the reshaping of the Catholic Church in Germany moving forward. Gössmann, a feminist, was also a pioneer in her own right as one of the first women to earn a theological doctorate in

⁹⁸ Dirks, “Referat bei der Jahresversammlung des Zentralverbandes des Kath. Frauen und Müttergemeinschaften,” June 19, 1959. KFD Archive Folder 743.1.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Luise Schottrof, Silvia Schroer, and Marie-Theres Wacker, *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women’s Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 32. Rusche was also a contributor to *Frau und Beruf*, a journal under both the purview of the ZKFM and the GKBF.

Germany.¹⁰¹ By highlighting new perspectives from female theological experts, the ZKFM was acting on Dirks' call for more plurality in perspective, opening the door for overt engagement with explicitly feminist conceptions of gender equality while still allowing more conservative views about gendered relationships in the home and at work to be present.

The inclusion of new perspectives from a wider population continued on throughout the 1960s, as did the overlap between the ZKFM and other organizations. As will be demonstrated as this chapter broadens into its imperfect circles, the ZKFM's entanglement with other women's networks (along with the lessons they themselves claimed to learn through conference organizing) allowed them to engage with increasingly heterogeneous topics and viewpoints. Although the ZKFM, as an organization, was perhaps more conservative than these other groups, their willingness to confront and discuss differing, broader ideas becomes clear. Though the ZKFM did not adopt all of these ideas, it is possible to see how becoming participants in the broader Catholic networks within West Germany influenced the format and content of their own intra-organizational work. Though their agenda throughout the 1950s was future-looking and activist, it continued to evolve through their affiliations and associations with other women's organizations.

The ZKFM and Other West German Women's Organizations

In 1952, the ZKFM was a founding member organization of the National German Women's Council (*Deutschen Frauenrat*). The Council was an umbrella organization that encompassed all types of women's organizations in West Germany, including trade unions, religious groups, and professional associations. The ZKFM joined the Council under the smaller

¹⁰¹ "Programm zur Jahrestagung des Zentralverbands der Katholischen Frauen und Müttergemeinschaften Deutschlands," Conference in Maria Rosenberg, June 5-9, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 595.

umbrella of the Working Community of Women's Associations (AGKF), of which it was a member. The KDFB, too, had ties to the Council. KDFB President from 1952 to 1970, psychologist Dr. Gertrud Ehrle, was first a delegate representing the Catholic coalition in the Council before she became president of the Council in 1960. The Council was built on the foundation of collective legislative and civic action and delegates from respective organizations drafted proposals and initiatives on a variety of issues concerning women to be presented to the federal government.

Through their ties to the Council, and other connections through religious affiliation, the ZKFM had close relationships with other Catholic organizations: some close enough to be housed under the same roof on Prinz-Georg Street. The Community of Working Catholic Women (GKBF) was an auxiliary arm of the ZKFM, though not officially incorporated under it until 1980. Both organizations shared the same diocesan leadership and the GKBF's managing director, Elisabeth Richstätter, was also a board member of the ZKFM. The GKBF, with the help of the publishing apparatus already established by the ZKFM, distributed the journal *Frau und Beruf* beginning in 1952. By the mid 1950s, the GKBF had over 18,000 members and worked closely with the ZKFM on their initiatives concerning Catholic women's labor and by the 1960s, they held their own annual conferences.¹⁰² The GKBF's mission statement shows how entangled the goals of their association were with the ZKFM, though with a particular focus on working women:

"The community is an association of women from the most varied of professions, who, as individuals and as a community, are ready to take on their responsibility and task in Church and society. The community understands its purpose is in service to all women and to working women in Church and society...It is primarily through the testimony of their lives that working women make the Church effective in the world of work and professional life. At the same time, the community wants to help

¹⁰² KFD Archive Folder 30.1. Ernst Gutting was the overseeing cleric, listed as the "Spiritual Advisor" for both the ZKFM and the GKBF. Klens was also listed as an editor for *Frau und Beruf* from 1952-1959.

build and shape society, empower its members to form opinions and judgments, and activate them to participate.”¹⁰³

This statement espoused activist goals, though through a specifically Catholic lens. Women’s main goal, even through their work outside of the home, was to bring their faith and the tenets of Catholicism into public life. In turn, the members of the GKBF should expect their faith and the organization to work for them. Women in the GKBF, the ZKFM, and the Church could benefit each other through organizational ties.

The ZKFM also had ties to the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB). Both organizations were founding members of the National German Women’s Council in 1952. By 1956, the DGB had over one million women members.¹⁰⁴ Though “party-politically and ideologically neutral,” the DGB absorbed a large number of members from the Catholic worker’s movement following WWII. When the DGB was founded in 1949, it incorporated nearly twenty independent trade unions into the association. The DGB was an organization that housed both Christians and socialists, and their ideological differences, allowing adherents to either or both to find unity under one association.¹⁰⁵ This was particularly significant because, as the West German federal elections of 1953 and 1957 proved, Christian voters did not necessarily need to share political power with socialists.¹⁰⁶ By 1960, millions of German workers were members of the DGB, which at this point, was fully unified with the SPD.¹⁰⁷ Scholarship on leftist Catholics can be useful here to understand broader relationships between left-leaning Catholics, socialists, and Catholic organizations in Germany. In 1945, these relationships gained new relevance

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 101.

¹⁰⁵ Andreas Lienkamp, “Socialism out of Christian Responsibility: The German Experiment of Left Catholicism, 1945-1949,” in *Left Catholicism*, 201.

¹⁰⁶ Mark Ruff, “Building Bridges between Catholicism and Socialism: Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde and the Social Democratic Party of Germany,” *Journal of Contemporary European History* 29, no. 2 (April 2020):155-170

¹⁰⁷ Patrick Pasture, “Multi-Faceted Relations,” in *Left Catholicism*, 244.

among the Catholic milieu, with many western European Catholics engaged with leftist ideologies in both pragmatic and theoretical ways. Historian Gerd-Rainer Horn discusses the tensions between the left Catholic movement, trade unions like the DGB, and pre-existing Catholic associations during the immediate postwar era. All of these organizations also encountered, and sometimes became entangled with, socialist ideas and organizations. Horn argues that “parish activists” encountered poor and working class people and thus understood the inequitable ways European economic systems functioned and how working class Catholics and socialists found common ground.¹⁰⁸ While the German case in particular did not produce the same tight bonds between socialism and Catholicism that France and Italy did, there was still a tangible relationship between the two.¹⁰⁹

The ZKFM’s West German affiliations speak to ways the organization was shaped by these broader social movements. Walter Dirks and other left Catholics had dreams of fostering a coalition between disparate groups that would bridge the boundaries of class, religion, and party affiliation, despite the majority of CDU adherents’ dislike for socialism. Catholics like Dirks embraced socialism for both ideological and pragmatic reasons, ranging from a desire for social justice to creating a coalition against the flawed German past.¹¹⁰ As demonstrated by the ZKFM and similar Catholic organizations, ideas of “Christian responsibility” to one’s family, neighbors, and society permeated the Catholic imagination during the postwar period. It is crucial to look at the role of Catholic women’s organizations in relation to Catholic socialist movements because,

¹⁰⁸ Gerd-Rainer Horn, *Left Catholicism*, 35. See also Ruff, “Building Bridges between Catholicism and Socialism,” 155-170. Ruff uses the case study of Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, a West German legal scholar, to demonstrate both the affinities between the Catholics and socialists during the postwar period, and also the challenges in creating unity between the two groups.

¹⁰⁹ Yvon Tranvouez argues for the “exceptionalism” of the French case as apostolic missions and progressive goals became intertwined. Yvon Tranvouez, “Left Catholicism and Christian Progressivism in France,” in *Left Catholicism*, 95.

¹¹⁰ Lienkamp, “Socialism out of Christian Responsibility,” in *Left Catholicism*, 205-221.

in doing so, we can see that when many predominantly male organizations involved in these movements appeared to lose cohesion throughout the 1950s, associations like the ZKFM preserved at least some of the spirit embodied in the movement by creating alliances with working class women's groups and forming their own.

In terms of Catholic associational activity in the 1960s, Benjamin Ziemann argues that “by the mid-1960s at the latest, many of these associations had either lost the bulk of their membership or much of their momentum, or both.”¹¹¹ By looking mainly at men's involvement in Catholic social movements, it is easy to overlook how the ZKFM and the GKBF defy this characterization. In fact, the ZKFM expanded to form more sub-committees and sister organizations throughout the 1960s. The Community of Housewives, a subsidiary of the ZKFM, was reinvigorated in 1964 and along with the ZKFM, formed a “collective agreement” with the Professional Association of Domestic workers the same year. Female delegates from over six German diocese attended a meeting at which the agreement between all three groups was signed. The ZKFM was represented by Dr. Elisabeth Lünenbürger, who elucidated the ZKFM's position on this new coalition. The goals of the alliance were to ensure protections for domestic workers in the form of fair wages and working conditions.¹¹²

The ZKFM were also involved with the Catholic Rural Association of Germany (KLBD) and met at a conference in 1963 to discuss the specific needs of rural women. Rural women were a specific focus of the ZKFM and WUCWO in the 1950s and 1960s. Though women in West Germany had been leaving agricultural work in substantial numbers throughout the twentieth century, the interests of the women that remained working in the agricultural sector were often

¹¹¹ Ziemann, *Encounters with Modernity*, 1.

¹¹² Elisabeth Lünenbürger, “Protokoll zur Sitzung Gemeinschaft Hausfrauen,” September 18, 1964. KFD Archive Folder 123.1.

overlooked. Bundestag debates in the 1950s about protective legislation for working women did not really focus on rural women, and they were ultimately excluded from the Law for Protection of Mothers in 1952 that regulated the labor of pregnant women under the banner of safety precautions.¹¹³ Due to the lack of protections for rural women, the ZKFM was concerned about the devaluation of rural women's status as well as an over-emphasis on "elite" led educational opportunities that further excluded them from the Catholic community.¹¹⁴ Thus, rural women were discussed at nearly every ZKFM conference throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1952, the year of rural women's exclusion from protective legislation, the ZKFM brought this discussion to the WUCWO international women's conference in Rome. At this conference, the plights of rural women were discussed, as were their possible contributions to broader Catholic women's conversations about world peace.¹¹⁵ By forming coalitions with the GKBF, the DGB, and the aforementioned housewife, domestic, and rural organizations, and by amplifying the importance of these issues to their broader international network, the ZKFM demonstrated their willingness to lobby on behalf of working women in urban, rural, and domestic settings. While many male-led organizations were losing momentum, the ZKFM was expanding its reach.

This expansion and overlap in affiliation was demonstrated not only through shared physical spaces, objectives and personnel, but also through conferences. As will be demonstrated fully in the next chapter, the ZKFM had not always had such strong commitments to working class women, or to women working outside of the home in general. Often, leaders like Marianne Dirks championed women working in more maternal roles, and many others believed that

¹¹³ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 151.

¹¹⁴ "Jahrestagung des Zentralverbandes des katholischen Frauen und Müttergemeinschaften Deutschlands," June 1959, KFD Archive Folder 335. The ZKFM also assisted domestic workers in Munich into forming their own organization in 1964 and helped them lobby for fair wages and working conditions. Lünenbürger, "Protokoll zur Sitzung Gemeinschaft Hausfrauen," KFD Archive Folder 123.1.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

married mothers working was detrimental to West German family life. However, we can see how more progressive views about women's labor were presented through conferences the ZKFM was a part of, views that became more prominent in the organization during the 1960s. Conferences were a place for the organization to engage with ideas they were not ready to mainstream, but it is clear that the presence of these ideas encouraged the organization's expansion, which led to forging affiliations with other groups and the inclusion of broader conceptions of women's labor and further support for women that did not adhere to their prescribed maternal roles. We can see pieces of this evolution by looking at how ZKFM members interpreted and echoed ideas, born out of their interactions with other women's groups in West Germany.

This is particularly clear in their affiliation with the GKBF. In 1961, the GKBF held an annual conference from September 29th to October 1st in Königstein. Elisabeth Gössmann spoke about her perspective on women's labor outside of the home, gender inequality in West Germany, and how she viewed both through the lens of her Catholic faith. She opened her conference presentation by referring to the increase of women working outside of the home, by stating, "Perhaps these practices themselves are not as problematic as they are still perceived by the general public or rather, by the world of men, especially that of the priest."¹¹⁶ Gössmann not only interrogated the positions taken by many members of the Church hierarchy that discouraged West German women from working outside of the home, but she also questioned the Catholic basis for this way of thinking. She argued that many differences between women and men had been historically constructed, and that history itself had placed men foremost. However, "modern

¹¹⁶ Elisabeth Gössmann, "Ethos und Spiritualität der unverheirateten Frau im Berufsleben," Referat bei der Studentagung der Gemeinschaft Katholischer Berufstätiger Frauen, September 29-October 1, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 119.

woman understands how to plan very rationally, she adheres to her concepts, lives in clarity and order, follows logical laws, is business-minded.” These abilities, long thought to be inherent in men, were now apparent in women, regardless of age or marital status.¹¹⁷ The idea of historically constructed gender difference was inherently at odds with how many Catholics, and the Church, viewed the world. Catholic doctrine taught that gender differences between the sexes were God-given and specifically ahistorical. To Gössmann, women had proven themselves in the modern era to be just as capable of men, and thus the divisions between jobs suited for men and jobs suited for women outside of the home was out of date.¹¹⁸

What was most interesting about her presentation was how closely it echoed a previous presentation made by Professor Käthe Feuerstack in 1952, nine years prior. Feuerstack was a member of the DGB and, along with Gössmann and other ZKFM members, had attended the National Women’s Conference of the DGB in May of 1952. Both women cited first-wave feminism, and the nascent second wave, as inspirations for their claims and presented meticulously researched arguments that put women’s work outside of the home in historical context. Moreover, both Gössmann and Feuerstack further justified their historical arguments with explicitly Christian ones. Feuerstack and Gössmann both saw a new age dawning for women, one where they could harness the power of the changing modern times to shape their worlds. Feuerstack explained that this as an awakening social consciousness, one that could best be fostered by a strong community of Catholic women.¹¹⁹ Gössmann saw women’s employment as something that introduced and connected women to world processes and networks, through

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Gössmann, *Ethos und Spiritualität*, KFD Archive Folder 119.

¹¹⁹ Käthe Feuerstack, “Bundes-Frauenkonferenz des DGB,” May 1952. KFD Archive Folder 730.3.

which they“ may be able to contribute to a completely new understanding of Christianity.”¹²⁰

Neither woman saw their faith as a detriment to their ideas about women working in general, and neither qualified what type of work outside of the home they saw as acceptable for women, offering instead generalized takes on “employment” that appeared to encompass all jobs and careers. To both Feuerstack and Gössmann, women working was an overall positive, one that could open up new avenues for women in West German society and within their faiths. Beyond contributing to their communities, Feuerstack and Gössman insisted on the personal fulfillment and joy women could receive from working professionally. As religious people, Catholic women carried their faith with them to their jobs and each imbued the other in return with each gain made. New experiences through work, especially in a job particularly suited to one’s individual personality and abilities, created self-confident women, women that in turn strengthened their neighborhoods and religious communities.¹²¹ Feuerstack argued that this community created by confident, professional, fulfilled women awakened new ideas, new avenues for Christian thought, and the successes of a common agenda.¹²²

These progressive conceptions of women’s gender equality in the labor force were perhaps remarkable in broader ZKFM thought in the early 1950s, but became increasingly more incorporated into the organization’s overarching presentation of itself over the years. However, what was not remarkable early on were views on the flexibility of Christian and Catholic worldviews. ZKFM leaders and members consistently questioned the boundaries of their faith on nearly every topic, prodding the limits of it and shaping it to fit other aspects of their life. This is ever present even as the perspectives of individual members, and the organization as a whole,

¹²⁰ Gössmann, “Ethos und Spiritualität,” KFD Archive Folder 119.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Feuerstack, “Bundes-Frauenkonferenz,” May 1952. KFD Archive Folder 730.3.

evolved. Representative of this was a presentation made at the annual GKBF conference in Münster in 1966 by Dr. Hildegard Harmsen, an executive board member of the ZKFM. As one of the ZKFM's top leaders, Harmsen's presentation carried more weight than those made by regular members because she had direct influence over ZKFM agendas. We can see, that by 1966, top officials within the ZKFM were echoing ideas perpetuated by Gössmann and Feuerstack about gender equality. In her presentation, Harmsen used linguistics to break down the concept of patriarchy. She parsed the linguistic history of the word *Partnerschaft* to prove partnership between the sexes under patriarchy was a fallacy, despite the equality provided on paper by West German law and re-interpretations of Catholic scripture. Harmsen argued that despite these "theoretical" changes, Church, state, and dogmatic hierarchies still placed women in a subordinate position. True partnership between men and women meant acknowledging that often "natural" gender differences were socially determined, not God-given. In terms of women's labor, Harmsen pushed for total access to all areas of political and professional life for women. Then, she argued, the Church and West German state could call their "theoretical" equality an actuality.¹²³ By looking at presentations like Harmsen's, and how the ZKFM interacted and participated in conferences, we get a better idea of where broader organizational interests were. The ZKFM's close ties with the GKBF and the DGB was in part born out of these organizations coming together in the collaborative space of the conference. In the 1960s, the ZKFM as an organization became increasingly involved in advocating for the women represented by the GKBF and DGB. Through the networks they were entangled in, both Catholic and lay, the

¹²³ Hildegard Harmsen, "Partnerschaft als neue Lebensordnung," Jahrestagung der Gemeinschaft Katholischer Berufstätiger Frauen, Münster 1966, KFD Archive Folder 243.1. The ZKFM women also looked to American and to past western bourgeois feminist movements as the progenitors of this type of consciousness. See also, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, "Weibliche Kulturrevolution: Die amerikanische Frauenbefreiungsbewegung und die Kirchen," KFD Archive Folder 243.1.

ZKFM was able to both engage with different conceptions of thought and also to expand its own activism.

The ZKFM and WUCWO

The ZKFM was adopted into WUCWO in 1948 after the West German clergy involved in overseeing women's groups expressed concern for the lack of an overarching Catholic structure during this period. As the ZKFM and many other related organizations had not yet been officially reincorporated, German clerics sought to rebuild networks quickly. Father Heinrich Schneider reached out to WUCWO's head office in Brussels, Belgium, in order to ask for ZKFM inclusion. To be considered for membership, WUCWO reviewed the organizational guiding principles and statutes of the ZKFM and required permission by the ranking ecclesiastical authority in a given region.¹²⁴ After written approval from Cardinal Frings, the ZKFM was welcomed into WUCWO in April of 1948.¹²⁵ By 1951, WUCWO had expanded to include ten million members in 91 countries and was comprised of 71 affiliated Catholic organizations. Keeping with the spirit of their first meeting in 1910, WUCWO continued to facilitate connectivity between women globally, overseeing and participating in roughly bi-monthly conferences, ranging from Montevideo to Paris and covering topics from female-oriented sporting activities, to women's labor, to discussions of human rights abuses. Hundreds of women from organizations under WUCWO's umbrella were in attendance at these conferences.¹²⁶ WUCWO, like the ZKFM, existed both in conversation with, and underneath, the larger

¹²⁴ Christine de Hemptine to Heinrich Schneider, March 10, 1948. KFD Archive Folder 570.

¹²⁵ Joseph Frings to Heinrich Schneider, March 31, 1948. KFD Archive Folder 570. The KDFB was also a member of WUCWO, and Ehrle also became an executive board member of WUCWO in 1971. Letter from WUCWO President Maria del Pilar Bellosillo 1971, KFD Archive Folder 28.1.

¹²⁶ Rapport de l'année from Federation Mondiale des Jeunesses Feminines Catholiques, 1951. KFD Archive Folder 570. Since WUCWO's foundation in 1910, women's labor, from wage work, caregiving, faith-based work, and professional career training has been discussed at annual conferences.

hierarchy of the Catholic Church. The Holy See approved their missions and facilitated their meetings, but WUCWO was largely a female-led organization with little direct clerical oversight in how their conferences were organized.¹²⁷ The clergy also had limited influence in the aims of WUCWO beyond conferencing. It is clear that the WUCWO executive board often sought an audience with the Holy See and collaborated with the office on numerous issues. However, the women also were clear when they did not agree with the Vatican, and organizational activities during the latter half of the twentieth century were proposed, disseminated, and voted upon largely without the involvement of the hierarchy.¹²⁸

However, though the hierarchy's involvement varied over the years, one constant was WUCWO's utilization of the connections they gained from affiliation with, and support from, the pope.¹²⁹ Through WUCWO's connection to Catholic Action movements of the 1920s, which helped push membership into the millions, and their support by dozens of national Catholic organizations, small and large, they were able to enact many of their activist aims because of the Catholic hierarchy, not in spite of it. WUCWO's involvement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an organization that promoted peace through international cooperation and cultural exchange, the United Nations, and the International Association of Charities (IAC) during the postwar period could not have happened without these important connections. WUCWO, and the millions of Catholic women they represented, could express their concerns directly to international bodies with extensive power and influence.

¹²⁷ Letter from Marie du Rostu, December 31, 1959. The Holy See did approve the dates and location for the annual conferences, but had little oversight in the thematic organization of the conference and the content presented.

¹²⁸ Ehrle, "Antrag des katholischen DGB und die Weltunion der katholischen Frauen Organisationen," January 29, 1970. KFD Archive 22.1. In this case, the European members of WUCWO from 14 countries approved a proposal that outright rejected a Vatican Protocol that barred them from sitting on the Vatican Embassy.

¹²⁹ WUCWO leadership often had in-person conferences with the pope.

WUCWO was explicitly activist and the women involved consistently focused on “concrete goals.”¹³⁰ Like the ZKFM, WUCWO’s themes reflected broader trends in global Catholicism and though they argued for the focus on concrete aims, they were also concerned with what it meant to be a Catholic woman: as an adherent to faith, as a mother, and as a worker in both society and the Church. Some of WUCWO’s earliest international conferences post WWII reflected this duality between pragmatic, worldly concerns and spiritual ones. This is further exemplified through their efforts for peace worldwide.¹³¹ ZKFM delegates participated in the International Congress of the World Mother’s Movement in Paris in June of 1950. The movement, in its final assembly, called upon the United Nations for general disarmament and world peace in the face of the Cold War. They pled to be heard as mothers; as the people responsible for overseeing the living conditions and education of men and children alike, and as the people who “worked” for the good of all humans. A threat to humanity anywhere was a threat to mothers everywhere.¹³² The women of the ZKFM also joined Catholic women around the globe in a call for the destruction of nuclear weapons. They explicitly argued that “governments must listen to women and mothers, the keepers of life” and cease the military use of atomic weapons, as it was a morally bankrupt pursuit that contradicted God’s will for the lives and livelihood of humanity as a whole.¹³³

In 1952, the ZKFM and KDFB participated for the first time in WUCWO’s international women’s conference in Rome. Marianne Dirks attended as a delegate from ZKFM and gave an address on peace — that year’s overarching theme — and was also granted an audience, along

¹³⁰ Reunion du Conseil Statuaire de L UMOFC,” October 16, 1959. KFD Archive Folder 590.

¹³¹ Peace movements will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

¹³² “Aufruf zum Frieden” Verlesung auf der Schlußversammlung des Internationalen Kongresses der Weltbewegung der Mütter, June 9, 1950. KFD Archive Folder 741.2.

¹³³ “Aufruf der Frauen und Mütter zum Atomfrieden,” KFD Archive Folder 741.2.

with Gertrud Ehrle and KDFB founder and vice president and CDU Bundestag member Helene Weber, with the pope. While making arguments about the morality of peace, Dirks also claimed that a "healthy economic existence" for women was born from a peaceful world, and helped contribute to a "healthy religious life." Despite the changing times, according to Dirks, one thing remained the same for women: "It is the strength of our mothers, those quiet roots of power, of nursing and tending, or persistent patience and peacemaking, that can still transform our time."¹³⁴ Dirks was calling upon specific Catholic tenets that placed women, and their nurturing presences, at the center of social construction, first as the moral educators of their individual children, then as the pillars stable societies were built upon. In terms of peace movements, Catholic women often invoked this gendered understanding of the world: both to condemn the violence of war and to offer solutions that would lead to peace. In 1950, ZKFM member Johanna Wopperer spoke out on this topic as the ZKFM was considering how to present their position to WUCWO, arguing that "the right decision about war and peace cannot be expected from parliaments and governments. It must be made in the Christian home by responsible women...so we will participate in the redemption of man." In this view, it was as both women and Catholics that the ZKFM could most effectively influence peace efforts. Wopperer also made the issue of peace a particularly West German concern. She stressed that West German women ought to have a particular say on whether or not the third world war was on the horizon, as they were the ones that cleaned up the rubble from the last world war.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Marianne Dirks, "Internationaler Frauenkongress in Rom," 1952. KFD Archive Folder 730.3. Dirks also extended the mothering metaphor to the German political scene. When Helene Weber, fellow associate and member of the Bundestag died in 1962, Dirks extolled her virtues by writing that Weber put her "motherliness into her political work and thus showed the public how women can change the world." Marianne Dirks, "Liebe und Politik," *Frau und Mutter*, 1962.

¹³⁵ Johanna Wopperer, "Gelöbnis der Mütter," September 2, 1950. KFD Archive Folder 741.2.

The women of WUCWO also joined forces against the Vietnam War, endorsing a scathing letter to American President Lyndon Johnson denouncing the U.S. involvement in the region. They decried the violence against women and children wrought by the bombings in Vietnam, drawing vivid comparisons between their experience of similar bombings in Germany.¹³⁶ Dirks also wrote to Yvonne de Gaulle, wife of French President Charles de Gaulle, personally to ask for her help, woman to woman, in influencing her husband on behalf of “more than a million mothers and women” of the ZKFM in a plea for world peace.¹³⁷ The women of the ZKFM, as well as their network of organized Catholic women, explicitly connected their faith, their understanding of womanhood, and their practical experience with the call for worldwide peace. They worked towards this goal through these networks but also reached out to government officials and international bodies like the UN as collective actors in order to make change.

WUCWO’s concern with peace is indicative of the perceived instability of Cold War tensions, and also of Catholic women’s concern across national boundaries. During the first half of the 1950s, WUCWO’s international agendas closely mirrored that of the ZKFM. They declared 1953 a “Marian” year, and along with peace, were concerned with international hunger and how Christian women could benevolently intervene. However, like the ZKFM, their conceptions of women’s labor, as Catholics on the global landscape and also as waged and professional women, soon became mainstays in conferences. In 1954, WUCWO’s annual theme focused on labor through social and civic apostolic work, but in 1956, WUCWO expanded this focus to include all kinds of labor with their theme of “Catholic Women in the Working World.”

¹³⁶ Klara-Marie Faßbinder, Olge Prinzessin zur Lippe, and Maria Füretein zu Teenburg to President Lyndon Johnson. KFD Archive Folder 741.2

¹³⁷ Marianne Dirks to Yvonne de Gaulle, December 19, 1962. KFD Archive Folder 283.

By 1963, WUCWO formed a new sub-committee called the “Commission on Women and Work” to specifically address these concerns.¹³⁸ Since the 1970s, both WUCWO and the ZKFM have expanded further, both in membership and in topics of debate and benevolent activity. In 1975, WUCWO declared the “Decade of the Woman,” a global initiative that supported racial and class diversity and gender equality.¹³⁹ Both WUCWO and the ZKFM also bolstered their support of ecumenical cooperation. Marianne Dirks created a Women’s Ecumenical Liaison Group (WELG) and published literature on the mission and benefits of working across religious lines. Dirks was in communication with WUCWO on this topic as early as 1967, wanting to unite with Protestant German women for prayers and joint meetings.¹⁴⁰

WUCWO’s and ZKFM’s focus on women’s labor can be viewed in a few different ways. Certainly, members of both groups were working Catholic women that strove for recognition of their labor outside of the home. Other members supported their endeavors and believed there was no reason, Catholic or otherwise, to bar women from careers and jobs outside of the realm of the family. Many others, though, offered more cautious support for these working women, recognizing that more women working as the years progressed was simply a reality they had to face, regardless of if their personal views supported this. Wherever members of these organizations stood, they always justified their views through Catholicism, framing their ideas as either born out of their faith or beneficial to Catholic women in general. By participating in WUCWO and in other inter-organizational efforts, the ZKFM was able to shape conversations about women’s labor and exercise control over how their organization publicly presented their position on the topic. The next chapter will delve more deeply into how debates over the Basic

¹³⁸ “Our History,” World Union of Catholic Women’s Organizations, accessed April 14, 2022. <https://www.wucwo.org/index.php/en/home-4/historia/our-history>.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Maria del Pilar Bellosillo to Marianne Dirks, December 19, 1967. KFD Archive Folder 617.

Law and the Civil Code further shaped the organization's view on gender equality and women working outside of the home, but by looking at conferences and network affiliations, we can see how the ZKFM shaped, and was shaped by, interactions with Catholic women outside of their association.

These interactions and collaborative work molded the ZKFM as an organization and gave the group new initiatives and pursuits to explore, as well as new ideas about how Catholicism could work through and for women. Conferences were important arenas for engaging members that were often passive participants. The women of the ZKFM and other related organizations harnessed their collective labor into political lobbies and ecclesiastical changes, but conferences were the grounds on which these ideas were honed and discussed. Though there were marked changes in the ZKFM conferences and affiliations over time, what is more apparent is that a multitude of voices and views were present from even the earliest days of reincorporation as demonstrated by conference themes and presentations. Ideas were shared and reconstructed at conferences and then spread beyond them. They were an in-between space in many senses; a place where organizational networks met; a site of confrontation between Catholicism and other ideologies; a venue where activist aims could be broached though not yet enacted. And the women of the ZKFM and other Catholic women's organizations engaged these ideas as intellectuals and activists, not merely as a passive audience. The ZKFM was not yet as interventionist in the Church before Vatican II, but it was at conferences and through networks where they shaped and honed their toolkits and ideas that would later influence their greater strides in this aspect. Over time, their engagement with the issues at hand remained the same, and their participation and organization of international and domestic conferences makes it apparent that their dedication to intellectual labor was reflected in all arenas of their work.

CHAPTER TWO

EQUALITY, MOTHERHOOD, AND THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL ORDER: CATHOLIC WOMEN'S JOURNALS AND THE REFORMATION OF WEST GERMAN LAW

In the spring of 1951, the editors of the ZKFM's organizational magazine *Frau und Mutter* published a letter written to Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. The anonymous author wrote that she felt oppressed by Mary's perfection and pointed out the discrepancies between Mary's experience of marriage and motherhood and her own.

“We are told that you are the best role model for women and mothers, but I think your life is so beyond the order and needs of our lives. You became a mother without having to sacrifice your virginity. You gave birth to your child in a wonderful way, without fear or pain like us... Your life together with your husband knew only gentle respect and love, neither caprice nor friction, as they occur in even the best of our marriages.”¹⁴¹

The author wrote that she was attempting to be honest about how she felt oppressed by Mary's perfection and envious that Mary never had to experience a tense marriage or unruly children. To the writer, it seemed unfair to be compared to someone who never had to deal with the suffering of every day familial relationship struggles.¹⁴² For many Catholics across the world, Mary was believed to be a paragon of womanly virtue as the author described here. Mary was both virgin and mother, a woman called from a simple life by God to do something extraordinary by giving birth to his son. Mary's sacrifice of her child is glorified in Catholicism, along with her ability to remain humble and keep her faith in the face of such hardship. For Catholic women in postwar West Germany, like the *Frau und Mutter* contributor, the importance of Mary's virtues within the Church was a familiar part of their religious lives. Marian organizations, like the ones the ZKFM was built upon, were specifically designed to both revere Mary and teach women how to

¹⁴¹ “Die Mutter meines Herrn,” *Frau und Mutter*, May 1951.

¹⁴² Ibid.

follow in her footsteps. Clerics like Hermann Klens also consistently invoked Mary to explain how women, both in the ZKFM and in West German society at large, should behave.

This familiarity with Mary, however, did not exempt some Catholic women from expressing frustrations over how they were compared to her. While many women found strength in Mary's image, others worried about the implications if they could not live up to her example. Writing for the KDFB's organizational journal *Die christliche Frau* (The Christian Woman), Dr. Maria Schlüter-Hermkes, a prolific lay Catholic organizer, stated that it seemed inarguable that Mary held "the incomparably high position of the Blessed Mother as the most perfect of creatures" for Catholics.¹⁴³ It is clear, though, that while some women were daunted by continual comparisons to Mary, they did not charge Mary herself as the problem. The anonymous author from *Frau und Mutter* was clear to differentiate between the personhood of Mary and the way Mary was being utilized as a symbol by the West German Catholic Church. It was not Mary she was criticizing; she instead was critiquing the notion that real women should be expected to actually live up to her standard. More specifically, she was not challenging long-held Catholic conceptions of Mary as an image, but rather trying to elucidate how these conceptions were applied to contemporary West German women. The author acknowledged Mary's importance and prominence while also pointing out her "otherness" from women like herself that were still recovering from the hardships of a war that had disrupted family life for many West Germans.¹⁴⁴

These disruptions were perceived by West Germans in two key ways. First, their lived experiences during the Third Reich, WWII, and occupation made many anxious about the recovery of West Germany and its people. These anxieties extended beyond rebuilding cities,

¹⁴³ Maria Schlüter-Hermkes, "Die Polarität von Mann und Frau im geistigen Leben," *Die christliche Frau*, 1949.

¹⁴⁴ "Die Mutter meines Herrn," *Frau und Mutter*, May 1951.

infrastructure, and economy and also encompassed worries about the fragility of West German families, upon which, many believed, the stability of the rest of society rested.¹⁴⁵ Entwined with how West Germans experienced the recent past was the process of remembering and reshaping perceptions of this past, a process already well under way by the time the editorial teams of *Frau und Mutter* and *Die christliche Frau* reestablished their publications in 1948 and 1949, respectively. Experience and perception overlapped, blending together to create powerful narratives of the past that became widespread cultural memories that greatly shaped the course of West German policy during the 1950s, particularly around gender equality, patriarchal authority in marriage and family, and women working outside of the home. Along with narratives of the past, and equally as powerful, were perceptions of the GDR and how that state was handling questions surrounding women's roles both inside and outside the home. In West Germany, always with an eye to both the past and to the east, women's roles in society were greatly debated: by political figures on both the Parliamentary Council and the Bundestag, within the West German court systems, by Church officials, academics, and women's organizations like the ZKFM and the KDFB.

This chapter explores how members of the ZKFM and the KDFB contributed to these discussions from the 1948 until 1957, the year of a crucial reform to West German marriage and family law within the Civil Code. West German women were central figures in these debates, both as participants and as subjects. Though underrepresented in the Bundestag, holding only seven percent of the total seats in 1949 and nine percent in both 1953 and 1957, the voices of West German women were not absent from discussions about women's role in public society and

¹⁴⁵ See Frank Biess, *German Angst?* for a discussion about how West German anxieties shaped how they conceived of the future during this period.

within the family.¹⁴⁶ Historian Robert Moeller chronicles some of these important figures, including Elisabeth Selbert, an SPD representative on the Parliamentary Council, and Dr. Helene Weber, Bundestag member and KDFB vice president, in his monograph *Protecting Motherhood*. Moeller demonstrates that these women and their perspectives were integral to the formation of the West German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) of 1949 and subsequent legislation that continued to define women's role in West Germany. Though it was true that men "dominated" these discussions over legislation about women, as Moeller points out, it was also true that women, both inside and outside of the government, were invested in the outcomes of these policies and publicly spoke about them.¹⁴⁷ It was particularly true about the Catholic women under investigation in this project. The ZKFM and KDFB paid close attention to the discussions around gender difference and equality and hierarchical family relationships, as demonstrated by the frequency these topics came up in each organization's publication.¹⁴⁸

As was shown by the letter to Mary, Catholic women in West Germany were conscious of how they were perceived by the standards of their faith. The tenets of this faith, too, became more relevant on the national stage during the postwar with the power the CDU/CSU held in the Bundestag and government. In August of 1949, the Christian Democrats won 31 percent of the popular vote, giving them 131 seats in the Bundestag.¹⁴⁹ In the national elections of 1953, the coalition gained over one hundred more seats and nearly 46 percent of the total popular vote.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Kolinsky, *Women in West Germany*, 222.

¹⁴⁷ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ For other discussions about women claiming cultural, religious, political, and economic space for themselves, see Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment*, Suzanne Desan, *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, and Laurel A. Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991). Though these authors focus on a wide range of time periods and places, they all discuss how women negotiated male space in order to make their own meanings and claims to power.

¹⁴⁹ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 81.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

These electoral gains ensured that Konrad Adenauer and the CDU dominated West German legislation and the debates surrounding it. Both Adenauer and the CDU also had support from many West German Catholic clerics, including Cardinal Joseph Frings, further establishing the influence and weight of Catholicism in West German politics during this period.¹⁵¹ Debates about what women's role should be in West Germany and legislative decisions from 1948 to 1957 make it clear that Catholic conceptions of hierarchical social orders that privileged patriarchal authority were key to how many West Germans understood the structures of family and society. And because women were essential to these structures, both in the eyes of Church and state, Catholic women found themselves and their faith central to the reconstruction of West Germany.

Women in the ZKFM and the KDFB, however, were not passive vessels around which debates took place and upon which laws were made; they participated in discussions surrounding motherhood, marriage, waged and unpaid labor, and gender equality. They engaged with long-standing Catholic ideas about the social order of the world, and how that order delegated gender roles inside and outside of the family and offered a diverse variety of arguments that both upheld this order and questioned its rationale. By only looking at these debates from the perspectives of politicians or Church leaders, it is easy to miss the nuances of the intellectual work lay Catholic women put into formulating their own, personalized perspectives on their faith and where they saw themselves in West German society and in turn, the influence theses women had on Church and state policy. West German women were decisive voters for the CDU and its Catholic-inflected vision of society: 47.2 percent of all women voted for the party in 1953, a number that

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 104-105.

grew to 53.5 percent in 1957.¹⁵² While it is clear that many women supported the CDU and its platform, what these numbers obscure is the work lay Catholic women put in to reconciling their own positions on their individual faith with their roles as mothers, wives, waged laborers, and members of the Church. Unlike Church leaders, male politicians, and male Catholic intellectuals, these women could use the personal experience of being women to help them define their ideas about women's place in West Germany.

Both organizations represented women with varied experiences and encompassed women from different classes, marital statuses, academic backgrounds, careers, and regions of West Germany. However, all members had two things in common: they were Catholic, and they were women. It was from these two identities, and the entanglement of the two, that both organizations focused most of their intellectual labor. Almost all issues circled back to Catholic doctrine and how it was relevant to the current issue or how it should be shaped to fit the needs of Catholic women. In this way, women in the ZKFM and KDFB could use a space constructed under Catholicism (their organizations and journals) in order to push against the boundaries of Catholicism itself, or to reaffirm those limits. Authors of journal articles could offer reflections on Catholic teachings and argue for unorthodox ideas, interpreting Catholicism in ways that were beneficial to them. The strategies and interpretations utilized both relied on and defied appropriate gender performance of this period, as defined by how Catholics had long understood gender relations in the Church and in society. Women from these organizations maneuvered to simultaneously reaffirm the boundaries of their position in the Catholic Church and push against those boundaries to meet their own needs.

¹⁵² The next closest party favored by women was the SPD, getting 27.6 of the female vote in 1953 and 28.9 percent in 1957. Kolinsky, *Women in West Germany*, 201.

As was demonstrated in the first chapter, the Catholic networks these women participated in and helped to maintain were critical to the success of the organizations' ability for outreach and interaction with others. The organizations used publications as apparatuses of their associations to speak directly to members and the Catholic public at large and as a way for these members and the public to speak back to them.¹⁵³ The publications were a way for both organizations to engage in the Catholic intellectual milieu and to share their intellectual contributions and interpretations, as Catholics and as women. Women in the ZKFM and KFDB exercised power through their ability to appeal to and encourage other women to create their own knowledge about Catholic faith and practice. Their aims and discussions demonstrate that they were engaging with ideas about equality, labor, and independence before the emergence of the second-wave feminist movement in the 1960s. They laid important groundwork by publicly disputing Church and political rhetoric where they disagreed and contributed to discussions of Catholic intellectuals and broader West German debates that were focused on defining women's place in society.

When we look closely at the arguments set forth by these women, we get a better understanding of both the landscape of Catholic thought in postwar West Germany as well as a clearer picture of the fraught debates that played out surrounding issues of gender equality in the Basic Law and the German Civil Code. This chapter examines how, through their publications, women in the ZKFM and KDFB contributed their perspectives on the gendered relationships between men and women, the West German construction of the family, women's work inside

¹⁵³ On different kinds of publics, see Axel Schildt, "Das Jahrhundert der Massenmedien: Ansichten zu einer künftigen Geschichte der Öffentlichkeit," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27, no. 2 (2001): 177-206, Jörg Requate, "Öffentlichkeit und Medien als Gegenstände historischer Analyse," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 25, no. 1 (1999): 5-32, Ute Daniel and Axel Schildt, eds., *Massenmedien im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2010), and Richard Faber and Christine Holste, eds., *Kreise - Gruppen - Bünde: Zur Soziologie moderner Intellektuellenassoziation* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000).

and outside of the home, and questions of equality and difference more generally. To many West Germans, these concepts were inherently linked as they sought a stable and productive society following WWII. By understanding the specific perspectives of Catholic women on these issues, we broaden our understanding of how these facets were connected and the diversity of opinion that went into the formulation of laws governing women during this period. Though the primary readership of both publications were Catholic women, both *Frau und Mutter* and *Die christliche Frau* reflected wider discussions about women in West Germany and make clearer the intersections between Catholic public opinion, lay organizations, the Church, and the state.

The Basic Law: Debates on Gender Equality and Difference

In 1949, West Germans adopted the first constitution of their new state and, in Article 3, codified equality between the sexes. Also known as the Basic Law, the constitution was formulated by the West German Parliamentary Council, a group of 65 representatives chosen by the West German states under the British, American, and French occupation zones.¹⁵⁴ There was intense debate, both among Parliamentary Council members and within the broader West German public, in the months leading up to the establishment of the Basic Law, on two key issues: gender equality and women's roles as wives and mothers. In part, these debates about women's place in the new republic reflected German anxieties about the current state of gender norms and the perceptions of disruption to the "traditional" family model that saw father, mother, and children as the fundamental building block on which the rest of society was built. Many West Germans blamed these disruptions on Third Reich policies and WWII. In their estimation, Nazi family policies had put the family unit to work explicitly for the state and nation, intending racially acceptable Aryan families to perpetuate the German nation through reproduction.

¹⁵⁴ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 38.

Furthermore, the war exacerbated the discrepancies between the traditional family unit and the reality for many West Germans. Plenty of families were headed solely by women during the war years and many women entered into waged work to support the war effort. When millions of husbands and fathers never returned home, some women had to continue in the roles of sole familial authority figure and breadwinner. During the postwar, questions abounded of how to reconcile the realities many West German families faced with the reestablishment of stability in home, society, and state. As seen by discussions surrounding the Basic law, many West Germans believed that rehabilitating gender roles should be a priority, an important first step in recovering an imagined past German identity that could form the foundation for the family, and thus all of West Germany.

Catholics in particular were invested in interrogating why reliable, traditional models of the gendered social order had failed and how they could be reclaimed. First, though, the precise crises of gender roles needed to be identified. There was widespread agreement among Catholics that the reclamation of paternal authority within the family unit could do much to promote the stability of society at large, but some vocal Catholics disagreed on precisely how West Germany found itself in a world where women had taken on “masculine” tasks and men had become “feminized” by Germany’s loss of the war.¹⁵⁵ Male leaders in the Catholic milieu, including public intellectuals like Walter Dirks and clerics like Hermann Klens, opined on these perceptions as they offered their own visions of how a new West German identity could reestablish both masculinity and femininity based on Catholic tradition and values. This Catholic model emphasized both patriarchal authority and complementary relationships between the sexes

¹⁵⁵ Heineman, “Hour of the Woman,” in *Miracle Years*, 28. For a more recent example, see also Leonie Treber, *Mythos Trümmerfrauen: Von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes* (Essen: Klartext, 2014).

in all facets of life. Catholics believed in a hierarchy of relationships that placed God at the very top, whose authority was made manifest on earth through a rigid structure of clerics that extended downward from the pope, through the cardinals and bishops, to local parish priests, and finally, to the laity, by imbuing each individual father with authority over his individual family. This hierarchy privileged male authority at every level and barred women from holding any clerical office. Women's role, according to Catholic belief, was a supportive one, both in the Church and in the family. Though below men in the hierarchy, a woman's nature was complementary to that of man's, offering a nurturing presence that balanced man's more authoritative role.

This view of the social order was a justification that many Catholics utilized in their interpretations of West Germany's initial steps towards social stability. Though this social order was viewed as a timeless basis for a strong society, Catholic views on strains to this order during the postwar and early FRG years was also rooted in the specificity of West Germany's recent past when discussing the crisis of gender roles. Some clerics saw this crisis as originating before the Third Reich, back to when German women gained the right to vote in 1919, which in turn, threatened both paternal authority and maternal nurturing within family units. This disruption in the gendered order of the family led to further disarray as women were unable to temper their husbands from masculine barbarism, which gave rise to the Third Reich and war.¹⁵⁶ The Church was worried that this downward spiral of immorality would continue to impact the efforts of all aspects of postwar reconstruction, a reconstruction that depended on the recreation of the "correct" sort of family unit as its basis. Though a return to this conception depended on the restoration of both masculine and feminine ideals and roles, the Church was particularly focused

¹⁵⁶ Ottilie Mosshammer, *Werkbuch der katholischen Mädchenbildung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1951), 147.

on women. To the Church, women were the moral centers of Catholic families; they were the integral piece of each unit that was responsible for the religious education and upbringing of children and the person that, through appropriate nurturing, created a stable marriage and home. According to Klens, a woman's main role in life was a supportive one. She was meant to serve her husband and children, educate her family on morality and Christian values, and emulate Mary.¹⁵⁷ In doing so, a woman could prevent men from turning to those barbarous activities that destroyed society and nation. By teaching her children, and controlling her husband's impulses toward destruction, Catholic women could keep order.

Father Georg Alfes, another of the clerics directly in charge of the ZKFM, wrote to other clergy about his concerns about women's place in West Germany and the Church in 1945, fearing that the imagined family unit prescribed in the Church was unattainable during the postwar. Alfes stressed the damage caused by women assuming "masculine" roles during wartime, as workers and breadwinners when men were absent, echoing other cleric's fears about women's increasing presence in public as problematic.¹⁵⁸ War time production efforts, the dearth of correct paternal authority, and the violent nature of men were not the only dangers that clerics identified in West Germany's past: threats of secularization were also a source of anxiety that both Alfes and many other Catholics saw as potentially damning West Germany's efforts of reconstruction. Though fears of secularization were not particularly Catholic, they were a particularly Christian concern in postwar West Germany. These views also had a platform in the Parliamentary Council as they formulated the Basic Law, perpetuated by CDU representatives

¹⁵⁷ Gerta Krabbel, "Um Frauenart und Frauenleben," *Die Frau in Kirche und Volk* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1950), 15.

¹⁵⁸ Georg Alfes, "Denkschrift Alfes zur Frauenseelsorge", 1945: 150-163. In *Akten Deutscher Bischöfe seit 1945: Westliche Besatzungszonen 1945-1947*, Ulrich Helbach, ed. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012). Klens espoused similar views about the dangers of the "masculinization" of women from working outside of the home, industrialization, and the public sphere.

like Helene Weber and Adolf Süsterhenn. Weber and Süsterhenn represented a platform that stressed the negativity of secularization that stretched backward to the Enlightenment and called for a return of an older, God-given social order that was untainted by social and political machinations.¹⁵⁹ And, according to adherents of this view, Germany had already experienced the consequences of godless society in the Third Reich. Alfes, too, explained how the Nazis had acted as the ultimate secularizing force, targeting women in particular as they discouraged religious practice and closed women's lay organizations.¹⁶⁰ For Alfes, Klens, Weber, and other Catholics, pointing out what they identified as the flaws of Germany's past was in service of planning for West Germany's future. They foresaw disaster if the new state was not built upon Christian traditions and values, ones that depended upon a gendered social order.

While Klens, Alfes, and the Church more broadly focused their attention on women and their roles in society and the family, other Catholics raised questions about men and masculinity. Writing for the Catholic journal the *Frankfurter Hefte*, Walter Dirks implicated both femininity and masculinity in his discussion of the gendered crisis in West German families. While Dirks hit familiar points about the dangers of secularization, he also stressed that both men and women were culpable for the loss of what he called "the virtues of the sexes" during the Third Reich and war years. For Dirks, both men and women had become removed from these Catholic virtues that prescribed a masculinity that was based on gentle authority and a femininity based on Christian morality.¹⁶¹ Neither sex was more to blame than the other, and neither was more or less in crisis: the only way for gender roles to stabilize in West Germany was for masculinity and femininity to balance each other in the way God had intended. While Dirks' opinion balanced the

¹⁵⁹ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 64.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Walter Dirks, "Was die Ehe bedroht," *Frankfurter Hefte* 6:1 (January 1951): 18-28.

less forgiving views on women and femininity espoused by some clerics, others tipped the scale in the opposite direction. Also contributing to the *Frankfurter Hefte*, sociologist Hans von Eckart focused on the “forgotten” fathers of the postwar period. Eckart noted that much of the public discussion of gender roles had thus focused on the evolving role of women and mothers, but argued that men must be included in this discourse. Like the other Catholics mentioned here, Eckart believed the Catholic social order had been perverted, leading men to misinterpret their role within it. Natural law, according to Eckart, led men to assume strong authority in family and society, an authority based on morality, not barbarity.¹⁶² Eckart’s perspective was at odds with other Catholics that placed the family’s morality mainly in the hands of women. He saw the Third Reich and war instead as a violation of men’s moral responsibility to the family and to German Christian traditions more broadly.

Eckart, Dirks, Alfes, and Klens tied the stability of gender norms in West Germany explicitly to religious doctrine and lifestyle as manifested in the Catholic social order. Though these men were all very different Catholics, on this, at least, they agreed. Their views infiltrated the Catholic milieu, either through their intellectual work within Catholic publications like the *Frankfurter Hefte* or through their ties to the Church hierarchy and lay organizations. Dirks, Alfes, and Klens had close ties to the ZKFM; Alfes and Klens were clerical leaders of the organization and Dirks was married to the organization’s president, Marianne. Along with Eckart, all four published work in *Frau und Mutter*, Dirks the most consistently. Though the ZKFM and the KDFOB’s reading audiences were primarily women, it would be a leap to suggest that the public intellectual presence of the Dirks, Eckart, and other contributors to the *Frankfurter Hefte* was totally separate from that of *Frau und Mutter* and *Die christliche Frau*.

¹⁶² Hans von Eckart, “Wir sind Väter,” *Frankfurter Hefte* 5:5 (May 1950): 477-483.

This shared intellectual space was one where both Catholic men and women could engage with West German national debates and the Church's interventions in these debates. While male voices were the most widely represented in total, women in lay organizations were also grappling with navigating the rhetoric on gender roles and gender equality. They contributed to discussions on the topic in the public sphere through publishing articles and editorials that demonstrated their own perspectives on the Catholic social order, and where it differed from those of male Catholic actors. *Frau und Mutter* and *Die christliche Frau* were essential methods of communication that both organizations utilized to publicize their contributions.

Frau und Mutter resumed publication in 1948, three years before the ZKFM was officially re-founded. For the first time, a woman, ZKFM member Maria Vielhaber, held the highest editorial position, though Klens retained clerical oversight over the publication. In his introduction of Vielhaber as the new editor, Klens referred to her as a "leading woman" in Catholic women's organizational work, one adept and handling the "great and difficult" task of leading the ZKFM out of the dark days of the Third Reich and WWII and into a new era.¹⁶³ In 1952, Cardinal Frings wrote to members of his archdiocese to also endorse *Frau und Mutter*. Frings urged clerics to encourage women to subscribe to the magazine, calling the publication a "useful and effective resource in the renewal of women, Christianity, and families" that was "in line with the aspirations" of the Church.¹⁶⁴ Frings' endorsement did a lot of important work in a few short sentences. For one, he was explicitly linking the content of the magazine to Church teachings and Catholic concerns about secularization and West German family life. Frings clearly thought that the material published in *Frau in Mutter* would not undermine the Church's mission on this front. Frings also tacitly assured clergy that the magazine remained under cleric

¹⁶³ Hermann Klens, *Frau und Mutter*, November 1948.

¹⁶⁴ Joseph Frings to the Archdiocese of Cologne, February 7, 1952. KFD Archive Folder 588.

oversight, despite Vielhaber's appointment, further establishing the publication as an apparatus of the Church. Due to this, Frings felt comfortable urging clerics to get the women in their diocese to subscribe, and, with this recommendation, he could ensure that the magazine reached a wide variety of women across West Germany. By the mid-1950s, this proved true as *Frau und Mutter*'s readership had bounced back to pre-Nazi numbers, with between 500,000 and 600,000 subscribers.¹⁶⁵

The first issues of the monthly-magazine that would become *Frau und Mutter* were published in 1909. Under the title of *Die Mutter*, these early editions focused almost solely on issues related to religious practice, family life, and most importantly, the education of children by their mothers. *Die Mutter* experienced a marked change in content following the end of WWI. Rather than a strict focus on religion and education, articles about budget making, absent fathers, and broken families were prominently featured. Contributors to the magazine, a mix of Catholic clergy and lay organizational women, realized that these issues were at the center of women's lives during this period following the hardships of the war. Readers clearly appreciated the change in content that focused not only on Catholic teachings, but also on pragmatic advice that spoke to women's immediate concerns. By 1928, *Die Mutter* had 500,000 subscribers and in 1931, the publication officially changed its title to what it currently remains in order to broaden its appeal and indicate to all women that the publication could speak to their concerns beyond motherhood. Though the content had shifted over the course of the first two decades of publication, contributors to *Frau und Mutter* still saw their over-arching goal of guiding individual Catholic families as paramount. Despite the magazine's popularity, the publication of *Frau und Mutter* ceased when the Nazis disbanded the ZKFM in 1939.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, 107.

¹⁶⁶ Ruff, *Wayward Flock*, 15.

Resuming publication in November of 1948, Vielhaber wrote the introductory note that opened the first postwar issue of *Frau und Mutter*. The note outlined not only Vielhaber's personal vision for the magazine, but also the broader goals of the ZKFM as an organization. The new *Frau und Mutter* was built directly on the previous model, centering religious themes but also attempting to engage West German Catholic women in the other areas of their lives as well. As a woman, and not a cleric, Vielhaber was perhaps better able to identify topics that would be of interest to lay Catholic women during the postwar, broadening the magazine to include articles and discussions about wage work, home-making, art, nutrition, fashion, and literature. She was also clear that her, and ZKFM's, understanding of women's organizational work was inclusive and collaborative, reiterating long-held ZKFM goals of expanding their reach to Catholic women regardless of where they lived, how old they were, or how they lived their daily lives.¹⁶⁷

“We, dear reader, can only solve these tasks together. *Frau und Mutter* is your magazine! Therefore, please tell us your experiences, concerns, and wishes. Let us work together to build families and community.”¹⁶⁸

This collaborative nature of the magazine was something the ZKFM relied upon heavily during the postwar. It operated as Vielhaber suggested here, soliciting feedback and responses from readers, but collaboration also went in the opposite direction, allowing the ZKFM to speak directly to readers about organizational agendas and to ask for support for their initiatives. Vielhaber's vision was also cognizant of the struggles women were facing in West Germany at the end of 1948 in a way that many male Catholics did not directly acknowledge. She called *Frau und Mutter* a “companion” that women could carry with them to “bring joy” to their

¹⁶⁷ Maria Vielhaber, *Frau und Mutter*, November 1948.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

“painful everyday lives.”¹⁶⁹ For many, this included grappling with how to clothe, feed, and house their families. This did not mean that Vielhaber and other *Frau und Mutter* contributors disregarded broader, generalized discussions about women’s femininity and role in society, but that they recognized that women’s lives were much more nuanced and complicated than they sometimes appeared when categorized by male Catholics or state actors.

Even discussions that directly addressed the broader debates about gender roles outlined earlier took more seriously how real women were dealing with conceptions of the Catholic social order and where women should now fit into West Germany. One woman, writing in 1952 for *Frau und Mutter*, questioned ideas espoused by Weber and other Catholics about the unchanging nature of this social order and the gendered hierarchy it ensconced. Where Weber and Eckart insisted that the idea of the family and its structure were “natural” facets of human life that had existed since God created the earth, this contributor argued that a post-fascist and postwar Germany needed to rethink how men held power and authority. “The disappearance of paternal authority is a fact,” she wrote, but she argued that perhaps it was no longer under the purview of scripture to renew this God-given authority to fathers. In her view, men should not simply receive paternal authority because God once deemed it so, but because they had re-earned their positions in the West German family through leadership based on paternal love.¹⁷⁰ This contributor was directly addressing broader conversations, both inside and outside the Catholic milieu, about just how men were to resume roles within families as providers, fathers, husbands, and citizens in the new state.¹⁷¹ She was also poking holes in arguments that assumed paternal

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ “Um die Rechte Ordnung in der Familie,” *Frau und Mutter*, January 1952.

¹⁷¹ Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). See also Hagemann, *Gendering Post-1945 German History* and Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels* on the centrality of gender to new West German identities. References to the crisis in male leadership, and by extension masculinity, were implicitly focused on how Nazi leaderships twisted and misconstrued these ideals for their own aims.

authority in the family was unquestionable. Like most Catholics, the contributor did not doubt that this right stemmed from God's authority, but she did question whether or not West Germans should continue to simply accept that truth as it stood. Though less explicitly than Vielhaber, this contributor was also giving the female perspective on these issues more weight. What would lived experience look like for women that had to accept the authority of a husband no matter what type of man he was? By arguing against blind acceptance of the Catholic social order, this author was directly addressing how this order could be damaging to women.

The KDFB, too, used its organizational publication to speak to debates about gender roles in West Germany and to speak to the lived, everyday experiences of Christian women. *Die christliche Frau* began circulating again in 1949 in its ten-issue-per year format. In print since 1902, the journal became affiliated with the KDFB in 1905, stopping production only when forced closed by the Nazis in 1941. In 1949, Editor Gerta Krabbel opened the first postwar issued of *Die christliche Frau* with a more obviously pointed message than Vielhaber had written. Where Vielhaber had implied what she believed was happening in women's lives and their importance to the Church and West Germany, Krabbel made these implications explicit. She used her platform to construct a narrative about the devastation of WWII and how women would be *the* group that would help West Germany recover, not because they were integral subjects in the construction of families, but because they could be active agents in shaping the new, Christian character of the state.

“As Christian women, we earnestly seek to strengthen and regain the Christian character of our people. We feel the great responsibility for the Christian reorganization of our social life, the inner renewal of our education, and in concern for the recovery of humanity and German culture.”¹⁷²

¹⁷² Gerta Krabbel, *Die christliche Frau*, 1949.

For Krabbel, women would accomplish this goal through active participation in Catholic organizational work, like that of the KDFB. Krabbel's introduction was followed by an article that urged readers to take more interventionist action. Dr. Maria Offenberg, who replaced Krabbel as editor in 1951 and sat on the KDFB's executive board, argued that the organization's main goal should be a dedication to West Germany's social welfare, placing religion and spirituality as secondary goals for the group.¹⁷³ Offenberg argued that the KDFB should build upon earlier women's movements, including the KDFB's own efforts to assist veterans, orphans, and older Germans in the early decades of the twentieth century. She claimed there were "undeniable connections" between women's work in these realms and their ability to shape the "surrounding world."¹⁷⁴ While Catholic faith was important to the missions of both Krabbel and Offenberg, they both advocated for more activist agendas that expanded beyond the bounds of debate.

Further *Die christliche Frau* articles expounded upon this mission, explaining how other women viewed their circumstances on the eve of the 1950s. Dr. Maria Schlüter-Hermkes, a prolific Catholic organizer who acted as a West German liaison to UNESCO, was a founding member of the German Federation of University Women, and an active member of the KDFB, wrote a detailed and critical evaluation of the imbalance between how West Germans valued gender roles for *Die christliche Frau* in 1949. Her article is a particularly illuminating representation of broader debates in West Germany for a few reasons. On the surface, Schlüter-Hermkes made arguments that seemed to fall nicely in line with what other Catholics were saying publicly in debates about the Basic Law and gender equality: that there was a natural state of gender relations between human beings that was divinely bestowed by God. Like other

¹⁷³ Maria Offenberg, "Soziale Aufbaukräfte der Frau," *Die christliche Frau*, 1949.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Catholics discussed in this chapter, including Weber and Walter Dirks, Schlüter-Hermkes believed that this natural state had been subverted by a misinterpretation of this divine law by human civilization, also citing the “barbarism” of the Third Reich as an example.¹⁷⁵ However, where Schlüter-Hermkes’ argument differed from those of Weber, Dirks, and others is where this gender imbalance stemmed from and the ramifications of her proposed solution. While other West Germans sifted through imagined German pasts in order to find a model on which to build the new, appropriately gendered society and West German identity, Schlüter-Hermkes insisted that, in terms of a balance between the genders, no such past had ever existed in all of human civilization. She theorized the historical devaluation of women across the world, pointing out that it was essentially false to blame women for history as they had been purposefully left outside of civilization. She argued that man was “the human being par excellence” and “his view of the world, his way of thinking, his values are valid and true and therefore binding to all.”¹⁷⁶ The problem for Schlüter-Hermkes was not so simply solved as looking backward to the democratic promise of Weimar or to pre-industrialized German culture; instead, West Germans needed to build equality between the genders that was stated in scripture, but “rarely realized” in the world.

This equality, as Schlüter-Hermkes saw it, was based on the Catholic view of a complementary relationships between the sexes. Because men had thus controlled human civilization, an overabundance of masculine ideals had led to “male supremacy and monopoly” where female labor of all sorts, and feminine aspects of humanity, were undervalued and overlooked.¹⁷⁷ Schlüter-Hermkes did not seek to deconstruct the “natural” differences between the genders, but rather to demonstrate how those differences had created a false, unnatural

¹⁷⁵ Schlüter-Hermkes, “Die Polarität von Mann und Frau im geistigen Leben,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1949.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

relationship that privileged men over women. Conceptions of an equality between men and women that acknowledged gender difference was not a revolutionary view in Catholic circles and was not out of step with arguments made by representatives of the Parliamentary Council more broadly, but how Schlüter-Hermkes defined that equality was. To her, equality meant that men and women had equal opportunities to participate in culture, economic life, the family, and in government.¹⁷⁸ Though there were advocates among the Parliamentary Council, primarily among the SPD, that called for women's individual equality in all of these realms, ultimately, the final version Basic Law left women's role within private life, as wives and mothers, to be determined by future revisions to the 1900 German Civil Code.¹⁷⁹ The definition of gender equality was purposefully vague within the Basic Law precisely because of the myriad of opinions on what equality meant, or could be interpreted to mean, and in what areas of life it would apply to. Schlüter-Hermkes' definition utilized the trappings of typical arguments about natural law and the Catholic social worldview, but her solution was couched in terms of equality much more closely linked to yet-to-be-articulated second-wave feminism.

By looking closely at arguments like the ones made by Schlüter-Hermkes, Offenberg, Vielhaber, and other women from Catholic lay organizations, we can see a diversity of opinion among Catholic actors that has yet to be incorporated into broader scholarly discussions about the Basic Law and gender equality. When we take the intellectual work of these women seriously, we can uncover nuanced views about gendered relationships, the Catholic milieu, and Catholic women that give more depth to our understanding of all three topics. We can also get a better, more fleshed-out picture of the specific concerns of these women and how they interpreted their own places in the family, in society, and in the Catholic faith. In general, women

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 46

from the ZKFM and KDFB cast these debates about gender and equality in more personal terms than men did, seeming to intuitively understand that since they were the central subjects of these debates, they would potentially bear the weight of the consequences more fully than their male counterparts. Arguments about gender and equality did not cease when the Basic Law went into effect, and through their publications, each organization continued to create a dialogue with the Catholic public on these issues.

Reshaping the German Civil Code: Marriage, Motherhood, and Labor

West German discussions of the perceived imbalances in gendered relationships more broadly bled into specific discussions about marriage, motherhood, and women's labor, both inside and outside of the home. The Basic Law had left the provisions of the Civil Code, which governed relations between the sexes within families, in place. While discussions of equality had certainly broached the issue of the Civil Code and how to reform it, the Parliamentary Council ultimately decided to leave revisions to the Code to be decided at a later date. The Civil Code, which had been in place since 1900, defined women's role within marriage and within the family, specifically codifying male authority over wives and children. The Code gave husbands control over all marital assets, including the wages earned by a woman during the marriage and any property she may have brought to the union. Women could not enter waged work without the consent of their husbands, and fathers had the final say over any decisions that concerned their children's welfare. The arguments for the patriarchal authority ensconced in the Code were based on conceptions of natural law that gave men authority over women and subsumed individual rights into the rights of individual families.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 47.

From the very beginning of its institution, the Code was contested, often by feminists and socialists that critiqued the law for limiting women's equality in both public and family life.¹⁸¹ Debates over reforming the Code continued through the Weimar era, with Catholics in the Center Party vehemently against revisions to the Code that would change the paternalist justifications for men's authority within the family, an authority they believed came from God and was thus "pre-political" and beyond the bounds of any possible reform. Despite the debates, the Civil Code remained intact through Weimar and the Third Reich. The Nazi reforms to marriage and family law did not invalidate the Code, but instead reaffirmed the patriarchal family's role in substantiating the state and the Nazi racist vision of the nation.¹⁸² Following the end of WWII, discourse about the Code was reinvigorated, particularly during the formulation of the Basic Law. Discussions about the Basic Law and the Civil Code were inherently intertwined, as the former's declaration of equality between the sexes necessarily invoked questions about whether that equality extended to marriage and family life. While there was broad consensus that the Basic Law's form of equality granted women equality in public life, which itself was vaguely defined and not uncontested, there was disagreement about whether or not this equality should extend to their roles as wives and mothers. These disagreements were debated publicly, and heatedly, in the Bundestag, in West German courts, and in the Catholic intellectual milieu until the Civil Code finally underwent reform in 1957.

Catholics had a vested interest in these debates as their gendered world view privileged the sanctity of both marriage and motherhood. Motherhood in particular was central in debates about the Civil Code because it was implicated in more than one way. It was key in debates about paternal power within families that privileged the father's decisions over the mother's in

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 48.

¹⁸² Ibid., 49-50.

matters concerning their children. Motherhood was also an important point of contention in definitions of public equality. Did a recognition of full equality between the sexes mean an erasure of protections for mothers in West Germany? Should mothers be allowed to enter into waged work? Discussions surrounding the Basic Law and the nuances of an equality that acknowledged gender difference gained even more relevance as representatives in the Bundestag began preparing arguments for Civil Code reform and as judges in West German courts became confronted with a glut of cases that tested the vague definition of equality codified in 1949. The Church and the Catholic public milieu were vocal participants in discussions of marriage, motherhood, and women's labor, adding their voices to the broader discussions of Civil Code reform. Despite a general agreement among Catholics of the central place of the family, and the gendered relationships therein, there was not consensus on the specifics of what the new Civil Code should look like.

The Catholic Church's official position on Civil Code reform was especially conservative. The Church had previously had success, under the leadership of Cardinal Frings, garnering public Catholic support for its position on family protections when lobbying for the Basic Law to include such provisions as a caveat to equality between the sexes.¹⁸³ When the Basic Law left any changes to the Civil Code to be determined, the Church once again made its views on family law clear. At the Fulda Conference of Catholic Bishops in January of 1953, the clerics in attendance drafted a letter to the federal government asking that any changes to the Civil Code continue to protect marriage and family by proxy of protecting women's domestic roles.¹⁸⁴ The Church's justification for this was based on both Catholic doctrine and fears of socialist influences from the east. For Catholics, marriage was a sacrament, a ritual imbued

¹⁸³ Ibid., 62.

¹⁸⁴ Kolinsky, *Women in West Germany*, 46.

directly with God's grace, and in the Church's view, something that was thus untouchable by the laws of man. As God had divined natural gendered differences between men and women, so had he divined marriage as the appropriate way for these differences to function in family life. The Church was also worried that letting the state upset this balance in marriages by reforming the Civil Code would be tantamount to allowing West Germany to fall prey to materialist and collectivist influences from East Germany, a state Church officials claimed intervened heavily in the private affairs of the family.¹⁸⁵

In order to prevent this from happening, the Church submitted its recommendations to the Bundestag on the Civil Code. In a meeting with the Justice Ministry, Church clerics argued for continued patriarchal and paternal authority in West Germany families. Once again invoking natural law and the Catholic social order, these clerics argued that men needed to have rights over family finances and their wives' right to waged work in service of providing adequate oversight over the state of the family home and the welfare of children.¹⁸⁶ The Church was fearful that if men did not have direct control over their households then women could enter waged work on a whim, a practice many clerics believed was detrimental to the moral fabric of individual families. In essence, the Church's official position on Civil Code reform was not to reform it at all. This position, too, gained further support from non-clerics, including Konrad Adenauer. Adenauer publicly voiced his agreement with the retention of patriarchal authority in West German families and lambasted arguments that would see this authority limited.¹⁸⁷

Having the Chancellor's support bolstered the Church's public position on the Code, but that did not mean that it represented the views of all Catholics. Some disagreements with the

¹⁸⁵ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 89.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 95.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 96.

Church's stance were subtle. Karl Borgmann, editor of the Catholic journal *Caritas* and active lay organizer, wrote an article in *Frau und Mutter* in 1952 urging Catholics to carefully consider if the Civil Code adhered to the principles of their faith. Utilizing arguments that came up in discussion on the Basic Law, Borgmann agreed with the Church that men should retain their status as the heads of households, but insisted that strong marriages were ones with "balance" based on cooperation and appreciation between the spouses.¹⁸⁸ Borgmann did little to distance himself from the official Church position, except in one key way: presentation. Church officials typically spoke of the dangers that would befall West Germany if their version of the Civil Code did not come to fruition, taking a pessimistic, if often dire, tone. In contrast, Borgmann pointed to the virtues of his position first and foremost, arguing that paternal and patriarchal authority would benefit both spouses and create happier marriages between men and women.

Borgmann, like the clerics and Adenauer, also represented a specifically male perspective on Catholic arguments for the Civil Code. Many women in the Bundestag, including most women CDU representatives, agreed with the broader SPD and KPD positions on Civil Code reform that sought an end to such strict male authority in family life.¹⁸⁹ This held true for most women in the ZKFM, too, as they published their own opinions about the reforms. Many of their female contributors expressed their desires for broader changes to the Code, navigating their own understandings of the Catholic social order and natural law that was often at odds with the seemingly harsh position of the Church hierarchy. Because the debates were proving to be fairly divisive in the Bundestag and among the Catholic milieu at large, the editorial staff of *Frau und Mutter* requested that readers write in with concrete questions and concerns to assist the organization in parsing out which issues the publication could effectively cover. Along with the

¹⁸⁸ Karl Borgmann, "Recht und Liebe in Ehe und Familie," *Frau und Mutter*, April 1952.

¹⁸⁹ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 92.

request, Editor Maria Vielhaber framed the broader debates for readers, highlighting some of the major points of contention playing out on the national stage. Vielhaber argued that most women sought equality, not an “egalitarianism” that flattened natural differences between the genders. In her words, equality was “based on equivalence, which recognizes difference.” Vielhaber also marshaled arguments from Basic Law discussions about the relationship between equal responsibilities and equal rights. During those discussions, some women like activist Dorothea Groener-Geyer argued that due to women’s experience with the destruction of WWII, and the responsibilities they were forced to carry due to it, women had earned equal rights.¹⁹⁰ Four years later, Vielhaber emphasized the importance of this line of thinking in terms of family law, pointing out that if Catholic women did not carefully consider the importance of finances and authority in their own families, West German women could soon carry “equal obligations, but not equal rights.”¹⁹¹

To Catholics, this conversation about rights and responsibilities was now even more relevant in debates over the Civil Code because of their views on the sanctity of the family unit as not only the basic unit of society, but also as the basic unit of God’s design for the world. Catholic women writing for *Frau und Mutter* were conscious of this distinction and had to make arguments as to why reforms to the Code, often in opposition to those proposed by the Church, still left this sanctity intact. Walking this often fine-line, ZKFM member Dr. Maria Liepelt asserted that her vision for reform would both empower wives while keeping families protected. Writing for *Frau und Mutter* in April of 1952, Liepelt laid out her historical justifications for why West German women deserved equality in their marriages and families. She stated that “women had outgrown” earlier laws that gave husbands complete control in all familial matters

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 55.

¹⁹¹ Maria Vielhaber, “Wie steht es mit der Familienrechtsreform?” *Frau und Mutter*, March 1953.

due to the exponential ways women had been incorporated into German public life since attaining suffrage rights in 1919. For Liepelt, women had proven themselves worthy of public equality by their participation in Germany as political actors and by their efforts during the war years and had thus earned complete equality in the family. While still acknowledging the importance of gender differences, Liepelt argued that giving women power and authority in the family did not negate this, nor did it endanger the family unit.¹⁹² Liepelt's version of Civil Code reform did not cast aside the Catholic social order, but argued that perhaps its natural basis had been too thoroughly shaped by historical circumstances to be relevant to contemporary West Germans. On this aspect, she broke from Church position on family law sharply in a way that was becoming more common among her colleagues in lay organizations.

Exemplary of these sharp diversions from Catholic traditional thinking were discussions about women's labor that encompassed another facet of debates surrounding the Civil Code. Women's labor was discussed as both productive and reproductive, as waged work outside of the home and unpaid work within the home. Since all of these forms of labor were implicated in the Basic Law's definition of public equality and the Civil Code's control of women's work within the family, women's labor was discussed at length. At the start of the 1950s, 8.5 million West German women were working outside of the home, the lowest rate of female employment since before WWI.¹⁹³ Beginning in 1950, many women left employment outside of the home and went back to the domestic sphere, in part encouraged by Church and state rhetoric that argued against married women, particularly mothers, joining the labor force. Working outside of the home was made more difficult for women when the Labor Ministry limited policies that were meant to

¹⁹² Maria Liepelt, "Zwischen den Extremen: Gedanken zur Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau," *Frau und Mutter*, April 1952.

¹⁹³ Kolinsky, *Women in West Germany*, 37.

provide payments to workers to male wage earners in 1954, which was detrimental to unmarried women.¹⁹⁴ Jobless women also had an extremely difficult time collecting unemployment benefits, which was especially dire for single women with families to care for.¹⁹⁵

The Church's position on women working outside of the home was not surprising given the vehemence for which the institution fought to preserve the original tenets of the Civil Code. Younger women in particular found the Church's position alienating during this period, often expressing their opinions to Catholic publications in the hope that their voices could persuade clerics to rethink their strict views. Youth leader Heidi Carl characterized how many West German youth viewed Catholicism in this period. She called Catholic practice "prudish, traditional, unpleasant, old fashioned, and narrow."¹⁹⁶ Some clerics, like Hermann Klens, were more open to women working outside of the home, albeit with caveats. Klens thought that if women did have to gain employment, then they should do so within a "motherly" or maternal profession. Klens did not believe that mothers should work, but he supported unmarried, single women entering various jobs in nursing and babysitting.¹⁹⁷ This support for traditionally female caregiving forms of employment was not revolutionary, but other Catholics had more expansive views of what types of women could work, and what types of work they could engage in.

The debates on the national stage, were not separate from, but entangled with, the debates within the Catholic milieu. Women in the ZKFM and the KDFB were questioning both state and Church positions about women's labor and interrogating the bases for these positions. While there was no consensus among either organization's membership whether or not women should

¹⁹⁴ Moeller, "Reconstructing the Family," *West Germany Under Construction*, 123.

¹⁹⁵ Monthly Report of the Military Government- U.S. Zone no. 38 (August 1948), 75, 77, cited in Heineman, "Hour of the Woman," in *Miracle Years*.

¹⁹⁶ "Jahresthema: Das christliche Menschenbild," *Christlicher Beobachter*, January 1955.

¹⁹⁷ Ingebourg Rocholl-Gärtner, ed., *Anwalt der Frauen: Hermann Klens, Leben und Werk* (Düsseldorf: Klens-Verlag, 1978), 80.

work outside of the home, there was consistent recognition of the value of the labor that women did within the home. Some even pushed for women's unpaid labor as housewives and mothers to be classified as work. Theodora Meyer-Köring, KDFB board member and founder of the KDFB Association of Housewives, insisted that public opinion had warped the image of the West German housewife and that this image had served to both deny women the equality of working outside of their homes and denigrated the work they performed for their families. Using a Christian frame, Meyer-Köring argued that housework was a "service to both God and man" and that denying the labor that went into being a housewife made it seem like employment outside of the home was actual work, while motherhood and home-making was a natural state of non-work.¹⁹⁸ Meyer-Köring was not questioning the natural state of the gendered division of labor within the home, but she was questioning why women's labor within this construction was not considered work. SPD representative Elisabeth Selbert and other prominent Social Democrats had also been having similar discussions in the Parliamentary Council and Bundestag. In 1949, Selbert had argued that the "work of the housewife is sociologically of the same worth as the work of the woman employed [outside the home]."¹⁹⁹ Like Selbert, Catholic women were making the implicit explicit: if women's labor within the home was so essential to all of West German society, why was it not considered work by the society that relied upon it? If housewifery was so crucial that performing it incorrectly could compromise the family, then why devalue it? This discussion is reminiscent of the one about living up to the image of Mary. Women were aware that certain aspects of their lives were being used as fodder for broader, theoretical debates about their roles in West Germany and they recognized the potential threat this could have to real women's lives.

¹⁹⁸ Theodora Meyer-Köring, "Hausfrauen in Bewegung," *Die christliche Frau*, 1953.

¹⁹⁹ As cited in Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 57.

While some fought for the recognition of the labor of housewives, others focused on a group of women that were often overlooked in debates about labor: working class women. In his contribution to the *Frankfurter Hefte*, journalist and trade unionist Rüdiger Proske noted this discrepancy. He argued that West German leaders were unfairly judgmental towards “working families.” These families necessarily needed both parents to work in order to support the family unit. Importantly for Catholics and other West Germans concerned with how child welfare was effected by working mothers, Proske argued that children within these families suffered no negative consequences due to their upbringing.²⁰⁰ Though Proske gave a platform to concerns that had been long-argued by working class women, there were few Bundestag representatives that approached debates about women working in waged labor with consideration to this class. Helene Weber, who had a background in Catholic social work that focused on assisting working class families, argued for gender parity in waged labor during the Basic Law formulations, despite her views that most married women should not work outside of the home. Despite her efforts, and the support of the SPD more broadly for her provision, equal pay for equal work was not specifically codified in the Basic Law.²⁰¹

Other Catholic women were also concerned about the lack of discussion of working class women when it came to debates about women as waged workers. *Frau und Mutter* published a letter from a reader that dealt with this issue. An unnamed housemaid wrote about the stigma surrounding her job and how it had caused her to devalue her own work. The response, penned by author Klara Neundörfer, reframed the problem of devaluing working class women’s waged

²⁰⁰ Rüdiger Proske, “Die Familie,” *Frankfurter Hefte* 6:3 (March 1951):179-190. Other Catholics debated women’s employment. Karl Wilhelm Böttcher, an editor of the *Frankfurter Hefte*, wrote an article about an exhibition that advocated for women’s rights. He relayed the information from the exhibit, stating, “Many occupations are still sealed off from women without any apparent reason.” Karl Wilhelm Böttcher, “Im Zeichen der Frau,” in *Frankfurter Hefte* 5:9 (September 1950): 1010-1012.

²⁰¹ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 53

labor in a way it was unlikely the reader intended. To Neundörfer, the “service” labor of domestic work should be appreciated since it was the best “school” for women to learn how to run a household as future wives and mothers. Neundörfer added that work was an important experience for the young, as it could provide them with independence and self-reliance and hoped more readers would write in with positive things to say about this arena of women’s employment.²⁰² Neundörfer believed that working class domestic labor had value, not in and of itself, but as a stepping stone for young, unmarried women on the road to a fulfilling married life. Like the Bundestag, even though there was a Catholic female audience interested in such matters, the ZKFM often did not engage directly with the concerns of working class women that were often required to work to support their families during the early 1950s. While differentiations with class, though implicit, did continue to inform the debates about the Civil Code in other ways, particularly around certain jobs that might endanger women’s bodies, what was more at stake for Bundestag members and Catholic intellectuals during the 1950s were threats, both real and imagined, to women, their families, and society if women worked outside the home.

This manifested strongly in wider discussions about East Germany. Always looming over debates about women, family, motherhood, and labor was the GDR. The FRG viewed GDR policies that utilized women for productive rather than reproductive labor as a dark mirror of what West Germany could become if they did not protect women’s role in the family.²⁰³ West German leaders were also concerned with how the Third Reich “weakened” German families by putting focus less on individual families and more on how families could collectively served the

²⁰² Klara Neundörfer, “Frauenberufe: Die Hausgehilfin,” *Die Frau und Mutter*, 1950.

²⁰³ Moeller, “Reconstructing the Family,” *West Germany Under Construction*, 122.

state, something they perceived the GDR as perpetuating.²⁰⁴ Weber invoked the comparison often in Bundestag debates and other prominent Catholic voices, including clerics, utilized East Germany as an easily accessible model that they believed proved their fears justified. In their minds, the lack of a Christian-led state forced women from their homes and into waged labor, emasculating East German men and harming the welfare of East German children. Thus, West Germany's focus on women's roles in family and society was further emboldened so they could prevent the same culture from taking root. Despite Weber's views, other KDFB members found the issue to be more complex and worked to placate readers that might have similar concerns. In 1952, the KDFB published an article in *Die christliche Frau* that claimed to present "sober facts" rather than "sensationalist" ideas being expressed by other media. The article stated that family laws had not been repealed in the GDR; protections for children and mothers, already institutionalized in the Civil Code before the divide, were being upheld.²⁰⁵ In this way, the Civil Code was being mobilized as a positive; it was operating as it had since 1900 in "protecting" women and children from the over-reach of state policy. However, by implying reforms to the Code would remove these protections for West German women, the contributor only made other KDFB conversations about reforms more complicated.

At the crux of the debate on women's labor was the most complicated issue: whether or not married women or mothers should engage in waged labor. Many groups, including Bundestag members, clerics, trade unions, labor ministry officials, and employers believed they were vested in these debates that could determine Civil Code reforms and other legislation that would allow women to work, but limit the scope of this work based on sex and gender differences. Arguments about the physical and psychological make-up of women were

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 131.

²⁰⁵ "GDR Frauen und Gleichberechtigung," *Die christliche Frau*, 1952.

marshaled, as were women's unquestioned obligations as wives and mothers. The working opportunities of all women were implicated in arguments that focused on the physical characteristics of women's bodies, but married women and mothers were particularly focused on because they had the added burden of their home lives that had to be considered. Women's "constitutions" and abilities were questioned, particularly in fields of employment that required physical exertion and potentially hazardous working environments.²⁰⁶ Beyond perceived physical limitations, women's ability to remain focused on their jobs if they had families at home to worry about was also an issue brought up in the debates. In these debates, women's work within the home and outside of it were always connected.²⁰⁷

The 1952 Law for Protection of Mothers (*Mutterschutzgesetz*) did not stop debates about women's labor, but did represent a culmination of many of the issues discussed here. Under the new law, most women working outside of the home were guaranteed the right to retain their jobs if they became pregnant and allowed compensation during maternity leave. There were, however, several caveats embedded within the law: women working as domestics were not included, there were limitations about shift lengths and times of day women could work, and some places of employment were deemed too dangerous for pregnant women.²⁰⁸ Despite these restrictions, the Law for Protection of Mothers received widespread support in both the Bundestag and in the Catholic milieu. As demonstrated, most were in support of the acknowledgement of specific gender differences that allowed for the preservation of the West German family. However, debates about reforming the Civil Code persisted, as men's power over women's ability to work outside of the home was still in place, and still contested.

²⁰⁶ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 145.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

Many of the discussions surrounding women's labor obscured the lived experience of actual women in favor of focusing on hypothetical scenarios that *could* happen if women left their homes to seek employment. The Bundestag and many men of the Catholic intellectual milieu kept their contributions to the debates in the realm of the theoretical: what danger could befall a pregnant woman that worked in a canning factory? Contributors to *Frau und Mutter* and *Die christliche Frau* often established their perspectives on the debates in a similar vein, but what is also clear is that, based on reader responses and the material each organization published, lay Catholic women had concrete, pragmatic concerns about women's labor and women's social roles more generally. When the contributions did fall into the realm of the theoretical, many writers focused not on what the dangers to working women could be, but rather the dangers that stemmed from *not* allowing women to participate in work outside of the home. In 1953, the editorial board of the *Die christliche Frau* addressed readers specifically about married women's employment. According to the staff, debates about "over-active" married women were common in West German society at this time, but the KDFB wanted to state their position clearly on the matter. While still reaffirming motherhood and marriage as integral parts of women's lives, the staff wrote that it was their paramount duty to stand up for the rights of women, not to make arguments about the morality of women's waged work of any form. They emphasized the "fundamental importance" of this right and warned any man who prevented his wife from working of going against this law and added that any husband that prohibited his wife the right to work gave her legitimate grounds for divorce.²⁰⁹ Their reasoning was pragmatic: many women could benefit from the peace of mind and security provided through employment, as the experience of WWII taught these women that both could easily vanish with the death of a

²⁰⁹ Josephine Doerner, "Aus einem Brief an die Schriftleitung: Die berufstätige verheiratete Frau," *Die christliche Frau*, 1953.

husband or the turbulence of war.²¹⁰ The KDFB was acknowledging that many of their readers had experienced such a loss and due to this fact of life, it was not the organization's place to espouse strict Christian views that preferred women to remain within their homes. The statement, however, took for granted that women's primary role was still within this home, as a wife and mother. This was apparently not up for debate. To the editorial staff of *Die christliche Frau*, if married women perceived the need to work outside of the home, then the Catholic view of the social order and broader West German denouncements against this type of work should not prevent them from doing so.

While the ZKFM did not issue such an explicit statement about the organization's support for working women, the organization did have both members and leaders that shared their perspectives on the topic. By looking at these perspectives, we can get a better understanding of how, in general, each organization viewed the boundaries of appropriate women's labor. Both agreed that married women and mothers should have the right to work outside of the home, but differed in how they justified this view and which jobs or professions they viewed as more or less acceptable. While the KDFB did not limit their definition of waged work, the ZKFM was more comfortable supporting women that worked in traditionally maternal positions, as made clear by the retreats they held for working women in the 1950s. These retreats were focused on working mothers, and teachers, nurses, artisans, and secretaries were some of the professionals that participated in the events. It is also clear from Elisabeth Richstätter's account of the retreats that the ZKFM's conceptions of women working outside of the home was fairly limited to women that could afford to choose whether or not to work. Richstätter argued that it was heartwarming to hear about how women valued their work, despite the difficulty and

²¹⁰ Ibid.

emotional labor required for some of their careers. She asserted that working people, women especially, need both community and freedom, happiness and solitude: “What is it that working people seek? The right balance between freedom and community, between silence and entertainment, seriousness and joy.”²¹¹ In Richstätter’s estimation, working women’s struggles to balance their jobs and the rest of their lives were more related to questions about inner fulfillment rather than hard-worn struggles to keep their families fed. While the ZKFM broadly supported working wives and mothers, the organization’s more middle-class focus was apparent.

Though the ZKFM and KDFB were not particularly radical in how they viewed women’s main purpose in life, they did value the labor of women, both inside and outside of the home, and not just for single, un-wed women. Unlike the Church, there was no widespread opinion from either organization that sought to deny women access to employment, despite their status within the family. Ideas perpetuated in *Frau und Mutter* and *Die christliche Frau* often focused on the complicated ways that women perceived the facets of their lives, from motherhood, to marriage, to employment, to their faith, interacting and informing each other. While their Catholic faith remained the central axis of these discussions, women pushed against the boundaries of this faith to make arguments for reforms that suited their lives. There was no outright rejection of the Catholic social order, but there was broad rejection of the Church hierarchy’s strict position on continued patriarchal and paternal authority within West German families. Where the Church sought to keep women’s roles limited under the Civil Code, most women sought an expansion to these roles, and thus reform to what had been West German law since 1900.

In 1957, the Civil Code was officially reformulated. In one sense, women received the expanded authority within the family that many of them had argued for; under the 1957 version,

²¹¹ Elisabeth Richstätter, “Freizeiten berufstätiger Frauen,” *Frau und Mutter*, October 1951.

men and women gained equality within marriage. However, while patriarchal authority of husbands over wives had been abandoned, paternal authority had not. On issues concerning children, fathers still retained primary authority under the Code.²¹² Based on the arguments they made through their publications, some women of the ZKFM and KDFB would have lauded this decision, while others would have been disappointed that it did not affirm full equality for West German women within family life. When examined closely, there was a wide variety of opinions within both organizations on both Catholic values and practices and how these tenets of faith fit in with each woman's individual life. Debates about equality, gender difference, and women's roles in society were what formulated both the Basic Law and the Civil Code and women in the ZKFM and KDFB participated in these discussions through their publications, inserting their ideas into the Catholic milieu as intellectuals.

This chapter elucidated what women from the ZKFM and KDFB, as leaders, members, and readers, thought about these debates and their own personal interventions into the discussions. Like state officials, clerics, and male Catholic intellectuals, these women were participants in a broader public discussion about their own place in West German society, acting as agents within this discourse and not merely as the subjects of it. While the debates surrounding the Basic Law and Civil Code in some ways reaffirmed traditional conceptions of the gendered hierarchy within the family and society, the work of lay women shows that what was happening in the minds of individual Catholics could be more complex and have significance beyond their milieu. By understanding these complexities, we have a fuller picture of the Catholic milieu during 1950s West Germany, as well as a better understanding of how women were an active part of this group.

²¹² Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 203.

CHAPTER THREE

“GUARDIANS OF PRAYER AND PEACE”: CATHOLIC WOMEN’S BENEVOLENT ACTION AT HOME AND ABROAD

In August of 1953, Marianne Dirks penned an article for the *Basler Volksblatt*, a long-running Catholic publication out of Switzerland, in which she spoke of the legacy of Saint Clara on the 700th anniversary of her death. Clara, known for her vow of poverty and prayer campaigns that saved the city of Assisi from destruction by Emperor Frederick and his allies by allegedly conjuring a storm with her piety in the thirteenth century, was an inspiration to many women, even inspiring the foundation of the order of “Poor Clares” after her death. This legacy, Dirks wrote, was one that allowed women living in the twentieth century to claim the role of “guardians of prayer and peace.”²¹³ As Saint Clara saved Assisi through her dedication to prayer and community, so could West Germans in the postwar period save Germany and those beyond with Catholic action and benevolent giving. Indeed, the ZKFM called Catholic women both “independent partners” and “auxiliary troops” that priests relied on for lay Catholic action and to strengthen both the global Catholic community and their own local communities. As they wrote to their members, “the active woman should fulfill her service to life, her service to people.”²¹⁴ In 1954, the KDFB called upon their members for similar service, asking them to “care for their neighbors” regardless of differing beliefs and social statuses. The service the KDFB requested was personal and asked women to think of community as extended family, that caring for one’s neighbors could never be substituted by “a payment to a charity fund.”²¹⁵ The ZKFM was on the exact same page at the exact same time. In an October circular to members, the organization

²¹³ Marianne Dirks, “Besuch bei der heiligen Clara,” *Basler Volksblatt*, August 12, 1953. Saint Clara is now the patron saint of television, declared such by Pope Pius XII in 1958.

²¹⁴ “Festschrift zur Wiehe des Hauses der katholischer Frauen,” October 26, 1954.

²¹⁵ Maria Offenberger, “Soziale Impulse der katholischen Frauenbewegung gestern und heute,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1954.

outlined their benevolent mission for women to “see their tasks within the family ‘holistically,’ as part of the broader social mission in their communities, to think together and participate in public life, to identify weaknesses and rectify them out of love, to work together for small and large community tasks.”²¹⁶

Both organizations called attention to a long history of Catholic lay action, especially benevolent works enacted by women. Specifically, fighting for fair labor conditions for domestic workers in 1904, public hygiene campaigns in the early twentieth century, and temperance movements were referenced as examples postwar women should follow. In honor of this history, and in conjunction with the specific context of the postwar period, the ZKFM and KDFB prescribed acts of benevolence quite broadly. To these women, benevolence was anything from helping a next-door neighbor by giving them extra food, to ending human trafficking in the far-reaches of Asia, to protesting nuclear war globally. From the period between 1948 and 1962, the organizations consistently mobilized membership, board members, the Church hierarchy, and other sister organizations to tackle the task of helping others, both at home and abroad.

Many within the Catholic Church, and in these Catholic organizations, saw benevolence as a particular task of women. As discussed in previous chapters, discussions about the inherent values of femininity often shaped perceptions about “appropriate” female behavior during the postwar period. Benevolence was a realm seen under the purview of women, as a perfect match with women’s need and ability to care for their families, their communities, and people across the globe. On why women had particular skills to participate in benevolent acts, the KDFB wrote in 1954, “woman’s inherent powers, warmth and helpfulness, the power of understanding and balancing, the power of reconciliation are certainly necessary during a time of materialism and

²¹⁶ “Festschrift zur Wiehe des Hauses der katholischer Frauen,” October 26, 1954.

egoism.”²¹⁷ Cardinal Frings pointed out the “greatness” of the tasks of women in the modern world and their ability to achieve these demands for the Catholic community due to their “deep humility” and strength.²¹⁸ The pope echoed Frings, saying that the Church “trusted” women to bring about Christian renewal and civilization throughout the world, to help other women that still “suffer from misery and uncertainty.” He told Catholic women, as he addressed them specifically in 1957, that less fortunate women were emitting a “solemn call for rescue.”²¹⁹

These prescriptions of femininity were sometimes used to limit women’s agency, penning them into specific roles in the family, the state, and the Church. Narrow boundaries of appropriate behavior were also restrictive, especially in the face of the large tasks the Church asked of women in order to save large swaths of humanity. As seen in Chapter Two, these prescriptions were tough for women to navigate when their daily realities did not match the goals set for them by the Church and the West German state, or when pressed upon them by broader social and cultural norms. However, in the realm of Catholic benevolence, both the ZKFM and KDFB also argued for the specificity of their gender in doing this type of work. Because they saw women’s close connection to the family, as mothers and moral centers, women logically would be strong community caregivers as well. They used their ideas about the nature of womanhood and women’s purpose within Christianity and the Church in order to argue for why women in particular should step-up and help others in need. The evolution of this idea can be seen throughout the first two chapters as well, and it is made manifest here in the actions organizational leaders and members partook in.

²¹⁷ Offenberg, “Soziale Impulse der katholischen Frauenbewegung,” 1954.

²¹⁸ Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, “Die Weltunion katholischer Frauenverbände,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1955.

²¹⁹ Helene Weber, “Die Sendung die katholischen Frau in der modernen Welt,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1957.

However the women also made arguments for why they should do the work as citizens of West Germany, as members of a society that went beyond the boundaries of gender and religion. The women that helmed these organizations worked beyond the bounds of what they and others often described as women's appropriate place. From the Bundestag to the editorial board of widely read periodicals, many of the board members of these organizations were women with powerful positions and connections. The main reason women should do this work was *as women*, but also because they were European Catholics and thus (as they saw it) better positioned than others to provide aid abroad. This was in part due to the economic recovery of Europe following the war; West German Catholic women's organizations had more resources, including time, economic security, and access to the upper echelons of the Church hierarchy that they could utilize to help women in other places. Also, West German Catholic women drew on longer histories of Christian missionary work, empire, colonization, and race when they conceived of the global populations that needed their assistance, often couching non-western, non-white people as unfortunately "behind" in terms of European civilization's modernity.

This chapter focuses primarily on benevolent action: which groups were thought to need assistance, what type of assistance was prescribed, which individuals/organizations should be the ones to provide it, and why. From the end of WWII to the early 1960s, the ZKFM and KDFB championed a myriad of causes by advertising the efforts of other aid organizations or by designing their own assistance programs. Causes ranged from the hyper-local to the global, shaped both by timely plights and national context and by timeless problems that had plagued the globe for centuries. While there was a growing consciousness about the interconnectedness of the world and the urgency of global problems, Catholic women through organizations like WUCWO had been concerned about international issues for decades prior. This stemmed from

Catholic beliefs and traditions of charitable giving that saw the network of the religion unbound by national borders. Following WWII, these issues took on a heightened urgency due to both the destruction of the war and worries over tentative peace, and women in the ZKFM and KDFB took up causes that spanned the globe right along side ones that plagued their individual communities.

The question of the state's involvement and utility, and when it should be called on to intervene, was also an open one. How far could individual action go? What about international organizations? East Germany, also, served as a mirror to conceptions of philanthropic giving, imperialism, and who exactly needed benevolent help. These questions permeate this chapter and demonstrate the murkiness that often sat at the collision of these overlapping but distinct power structures, particularly when the causes were international in nature. Catholic benevolent action in West Germany during this period became increasingly focused on the global as time passed. Domestic concerns did not vanish, and global concerns were not invisible in the late 1940s, but there is a general trend of focusing more on the international problems that could do with some Catholic benevolence as the 1940s gave way to the prosperous 50s and the tumultuous 60s. I argue that this was, in part, due to how the women in these organizations classified issues that needed to be dealt with. As more "timely" concerns that were seen as a direct result of the war were handled in West Germany, Catholic women's organizations expanded their scope to focus on the more "timeless" problems the Third World faced, like hunger and poverty.

The questions of which people should spearhead benevolent action, what methods they should use, and who should be the benefactors of this assistance were clear, if sometimes contradictory. Much of the benevolence enacted was led by lay action, if under the purview of the Church and facilitated by networks and connections under its umbrella. However, while a

few broad directives extended from the very top of the Catholic hierarchy, most action was dictated by the women that led Catholic organizations as well as initiatives put forth by average members. The ZKFM summed this up nicely in 1954: “The community needs sustained work ‘from below’ and guidance ‘from above.’”²²⁰

“The Crown of All Women”: Local Efforts to Help Those in Need

In the 1949 issue of *Der christliche Frau*, Maria Offenberg urged readers to remember the roots of Catholic women’s activism in modern Germany. Since the early 1900s, Catholic women like Hedwig Dransfeld, Agnes Neuhaus, and Helene Weber laid the groundwork for the political and social commitments of Catholic women throughout Germany, organizing around rights for workers, community welfare, and women’s education. All three women were members of the KDFOB, with Dransfeld acting as president of the organization from 1912-1924 and Weber as vice president during the 1950s. Together, they acted as architects of the KDFOB, shaping its Catholic activist goals from the outset. Moreover, all three were members of the Reichstag during the Weimar Republic, and Weber was a CDU representative in the Bundestag from 1949 until her death in 1962. Dransfeld, Neuhaus, and Weber fought explicitly for women’s suffrage, education, and gender equality from a Catholic perspective, and all were involved in drafting social and political legislation for the German state throughout the twentieth century.²²¹

Referencing the legacies of these women and others like them, Offenberg wrote, “The remembrance of the social orientation of Catholic women at the beginning of the century shows the receptivity of women to social hardships and their determination to meet them.”²²²

Identifying these hardships, or “social emergencies” as Offenberg classified them, led Catholic

²²⁰ “Festschrift zur Wiehe des Hauses der katholischer Frauen,” October 26, 1954.

²²¹ For more in-depth biographies of women in the KDFOB, see Illemann, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*.

²²² Maria Offenberg, “Soziale Aufbaukräfte der Frau,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1949.

women like Dransfeld, Neuhaus, and Weber, into factories, prisons, nursing homes, and war, ready to sacrifice their free time and safety in order to help others with “liveliness and enthusiasm.” In 1949, Offenberg expressed her concern that perhaps, Catholic women in the contemporary age were not adhering to the examples set by these earlier women. She saw a “paralysis” in Christian women broadly in relation to this type of benevolent action and urged women to look beyond their own hardships born from WWII and to take up the task of “the social rebuilding of the national and international community.”²²³

These hardships in the aftermath of war that Offenberg was referring to, however, could be insurmountable for some West Germans. German life had been shattered by WWII, leaving rubble strewn streets and women left alone to care and provide for their families. With the demography discrepancy between men and women, by 1950, of the 15 million German households, almost one-third were headed by women alone.²²⁴ Destroyed homes and struggles for food were a daily problem for many West Germans. Historian Elizabeth Heineman refers to the period between 1943 and 1948 as the “crisis years,” bookended by the beginning of the Third Reich’s military collapse and the currency reform that signaled the recovery of what would become West Germany a year later. Heineman argues that “during this prolonged crisis, Germans experienced death, dislocation, hunger, and uncertainty about the future.”²²⁵ For many women, it was difficult for them to look beyond their own households during this time as Offenberg suggested. In order to revitalize the national and international community, Offenberg emphasized that women needed to start with their families and close social circles and work outward. This allowed women to “act directly as a constructive force in the life of the nation.”

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Moeller, “Reconstructing the Family,” in *West Germany Under Construction*, 112.

²²⁵ Heineman, “Hour of the Woman,” in *Miracle Years*, 22.

By acting on behalf of those exploited by injury, poor working conditions, or the devastation of war, Catholic women could bring peace and unity to a healing country. Women should work to redesign social welfare based on the needs of the age in both the public and private spheres, according to Offenberg. And they should do so not only because the path had been laid by Christian women activists before them, but because they, as women, have a particular worldview and decisive influence over such matters. As representatives in city council's, as mothers, and as Christians, Offenberg cited German women as on the precipice of revitalizing and redesigning life through their voluntary and benevolent actions.²²⁶ Offenberg was drawing on a wider discourse here, present in both in public debate and rhetoric from Church and state leaders, that saw women as essential to West German reconstruction. While the Church and state often saw women's role as primarily within the family, Offenberg was taking the discourse and making it apply more broadly; Catholic women should rebuild the West German community by helping their neighbors and identifying local problems that they could solve.

Despite Offenberg's claims in 1949 about the stagnation of Catholic lay action, women from the ZKFM and KDFB were already engaged in a variety of important benevolent campaigns by that year. In 1948, the ZKFM helped to organize assistance for workers, particularly single men, that allowed them to bring clothing that needed washing or mending in to their Frankfurt office. During the same year, ZKFM member Beckmann organized a widow's community in Bonn that was equally about providing material aid, childcare and legal services, and companionship for the lonely. In September 1948, Father Alfes praised the efforts of these women to a crowd of over 70,000 at the Cologne Dom, citing the iconic cathedral as symbolic of the power and faith of the women's community, "the crown of all women."²²⁷ Like the ZKFM,

²²⁶ Offenberg, "Sozial Aufbaukräfte der Frau," *Die christliche Frau*, 1949.

²²⁷ A., "Aus der Frauenwelt," *Frau und Mutter*, November 1948.

the KDFB had also began organizing efforts around problems related to reconstruction and war, like the lack of material supplies of food and clothing, while also keeping their eyes toward the future of West Germany. Food drives and sandwich campaigns were organized to feed the hungry and children's clothing was collected. Those made homeless or disabled from the war were of pressing concern, but the KDFB called on members to consider causes beyond the immediate needs of survival. Volunteers were needed to guide at-risk youth through the tumultuous times, as were ideas for how to provide entertainment and recreation to older and disabled Germans.²²⁸

One benevolent action was particularly indicative of how Catholic women envisioned benevolent activities, who was responsible for carrying them out, and the methods they used. In 1948, small circles of women in Paderborn, Cologne, and Limburg created and collected diapers and clothing to distribute to families that required them in their communities.²²⁹ In 1951, a Catholic youth group amassed similar supplies to send to diasporic Catholic communities abroad. Two years later, Dirks wrote to readers of *Frau und Mutter* to appeal to them to sew diapers for young mothers in need. Supplies for babies and young children were often a cause taken up by Catholic organizations and enacted by local women. Dirks called upon readers and members once more to "help our brave sisters in need," specifically looking for "practical and expedient" women. Dirks emphasized the need for resourcefulness and sacrifice; if one could not afford to purchase the materials needed to sew diapers, she advised them to go door-to-door in their neighborhoods to ask for donations.²³⁰ Raffles were also being organized on behalf of the families in need and Dirks hoped that readers would expand efforts beyond their local

²²⁸ Offenberg, "Sozial Aufbaukräfte der Frau," 1949.

²²⁹ A., "Aus der Frauenwelt," 1948.

²³⁰ Marianne Dirks, "Unsere Windelaktion," 1953. KFD Archive Folder 730.1

communities with the help of the German Caritas Association. Caritas, around since 1897 and closely associated with the German Catholic Church since WWI, was a Catholic welfare association that had been integral in collecting the addresses of families requiring diapers and other products for young children.²³¹ The campaigns for diapers is a good example of how West German Catholic women's organizations mobilized to help their immediate communities. Though these efforts extended nationally through Caritas and internationally as well to diasporic Catholic communities abroad, the goals of relief to immediate neighbors were evident. Women in the ZKFM utilized their networks, leveraging their access to broader Church-connected organizations like Caritas, but they also emphasized the importance of the individual actions and how much women could do for those in closest proximity to them and their families.

And it was *as women* that the membership was mobilized. Dirks called for action from readers, both in the organization and outside of it, to offer what help they could at hospitals, nursing homes, and orphanages. She made suggestions on what this help could look like, such as making one's daughters available on Sundays to attend to the sick. She also urged readers to look beyond Catholic-affiliated hospitals and homes to make sure all of the "sick and lonely" found more joy in life. Dirks claimed that Catholic women should consider these benevolent acts as guidance from God, calling on women to be prepared and willing to help others as Catholic teachings insisted.²³² And these teachings often emphasized the caring nature of women in particular. According to Dirks, because women lived more from the heart," they were natural nurturers. The modern Christian woman must know that she is jointly responsible for the peace of the world, the hunger of underdeveloped peoples, for the salvation and misfortune of her own

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Marianne Dirks, "Wer hilft ihr?" *Frau und Mutter*, 1961.

people.” To do this, Dirks said, a woman keeps her heart and her house open to strangers’ needs.”²³³ Here, Dirks connected an individual West German woman’s responsibility for her family to caring for her neighbors and her fellow humans across the globe by extolling specific images of femininity.

Some fought back against the notion that Catholic women were the ideal benevolent actors. In a 1957 article written by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn in the *Frankfurter Hefte*, Kuehnelt-Leddihn argued that it was detrimental to the Church to have so many women involved as they required men for social and economic support and were less “reasonable” than men.²³⁴ Kuehnelt-Leddihn’s point here was to deny Catholic women’s agency as actors in two ways, painting them as unable to act independently of their husbands or the Church patriarchy. Certainly, many women that enacted benevolence as agents of the Church did utilize Catholic networks and financial support provided by the Church, but that did not undermine their ability to shape the agenda and goals of what that benevolence would look like. In response to Kuehnelt-Leddihn’s article, the KDFB published a rebuttal that asked him to be more concerned about the lack of men in attendance at Church services and activities rather than the presence of women. The author added that it was women that asked the Church “what can I do?” and not “what can others do for me?”²³⁵ In this response, the KDFB was directly addressing how many Catholic women saw themselves in the nurturing roles Dirks had described while also recognizing the irony of Kuehnelt-Leddihn’s complaint about women: women were the ones who were active in the Church — and the ones cast by Catholic leaders as caregivers — so why wouldn’t they be the ones to carry out Catholic benevolence?

²³³ Marianne Dirks, “Die Frau und die Frömmigkeit,” 1960. KFD Archive Folder 733.1.

²³⁴ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, “Kirche der Frauen?” *Frankfurter Hefte* 12:8 (August 1957): 611-621.

²³⁵ Rose Jaeger, “Kirche der Frauen?,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1958.

Particularly active in the Church during this period were single women. The glut of this demographic during the immediate postwar and early 1950s in West Germany was a fact of life. The war left many women widowed and many others without marriage prospects. By 1948, there were still only 1,000 men for every 1,250 women.²³⁶ The Church worried about the number of single women and clerics like Hermann Klens worked on this issue specifically. Klens realized that it was the Church's obligation to adapt to meet the new demographic needs of a changing German society. He told his peers: "It has to be the Christian obligation to highlight the importance of single women in the life and work of the church."²³⁷ Organizations like the ZKFM restructured themselves in order to accommodate these women, changing long-standing statutes about membership to make allowances for single women's participation. On top of this, single women, especially those with young children, were particular targets for benevolent action. They were often characterized as people deserving a special kind of pity due to the "sad fate" of their situations, from the loss of their husband's income or due to the emotional strain of raising children alone. In fact, in an article published in *Frau und Mutter*, Beckmann described how she felt compelled into "compassionate action" when she could no longer turn a blind eye to the timely problem of the overabundance of single women. Beckmann wrote of her experience:

"That's what happened to me. Again and again, I found young, single women of the fallen and missing in my office hours who were looking for a discussion one-on-one and were looking for a way to remarry. How can I help? That was my big question...Many [single women] would not have been throw off-track so fast and so far if all women had recognized their responsibility to the lonely sisters. The conviction and confidence of what appropriate cooperation could do gave me the courage to create a relief organization for single women of our fallen and missing soldiers."²³⁸

²³⁶ Elizabeth Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make?*, 4.

²³⁷ Klens's words found in Maria Offenberger, "Die berufstätige alleinstehende Frau," in *Die Frau in Kirche und Volk*, 43.

²³⁸ A. Beckmann, "Hilfswerk für Alleinstehend Frauen," *Frau und Mutter*, May 1949.

While there was compassion for single women, regardless of the circumstances of their marital status, discussions about them generally did distinguish those that *chose* to be single from those that were single due to the war and the dearth of men that followed. Beckmann's comments demonstrated this division in the minds of many West German Catholics, notably how singleness was seen as a disruption to the normal course of a woman's life. Concerns for these women were myriad and often conflicting as a group that needed benevolent assistance, reflecting the West German preoccupation with the unprecedented amount of unmarried or widowed women. Single women were perhaps viewed with such dread because they seemed to be an anomaly right at the German doorstep. The abjection they were treated with was related to the intimacy of the connection between them and other West German women, those that they presumably shared many other experiences with. There was much philosophizing on their plight and how it impacted their families, and in turn, the very structure of German society. Single women were often required to work outside of the home, a task made more difficult if they had children. On top of this, single women could be grieving widows or women unable to find a partner to share their lives with: single not by choice, but through circumstance. Catholic women's organizations struggled to precisely define exactly what was to be done about the "problem" of unmarried women, but all agreed that these West Germans needed assistance.

East Germany also experienced a demography that skewed in favor of women, many of them single, during the late 1940s and early 1950s. As in West Germany, nearly one-third of all East German households were headed by women in 1950. And, like in the west, marriage status remained an important social signifier during this period. GDR state policies further demarcated the status of single women. Historian Donna Harsch argues that the elimination of alimony and war pensions "embittered" many divorced and older women who were thus pushed into the work

force, while other state policies, like anti-discrimination legislation in the workplace and changes to inheritance laws, benefitted single mothers with children.²³⁹ However, despite it being more socially acceptable for women in the GDR to work outside of the home, similar social stigmas followed single women through the 1950s, urging women out of single-motherhood and into marriage. And though over half of all women in the GDR, married or single, worked from 1950 to 1960, most industries and employers still privileged men over women when hiring.²⁴⁰ The ambivalence shown by East Germans and the GDR over what to do with single women is comparable to what was happening in West Germany. One big difference, however, was the mechanism by which these women and their families could receive assistance. Where East German women could receive benefits from the state, welfare laws in West Germany still privileged male breadwinners and made it difficult for women to receive assistance as the heads of family units.²⁴¹ Thus, organizations like the ZKFM and KDFB sought to use Church networks to provide the assistance to West German women that was lacking from elsewhere.

In the early 1950s, the ZKFM wrote to their married members and asked for their assistance in helping single women. They approached the issue almost like a math problem, one that had a solution when one could properly quantify the components that made up the equation. One should consider why women were single: war? professional ambition? a vow of celibacy? Women that were single due to forces beyond their control seemed to be implicitly understood, while women that were single by choice remained a bit of a mystery. They were the equations that needed to be solved. The ZKFM urged readers to understand why some women might choose to remain unwed, citing professions as potential sites of personal development and

²³⁹ Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, 201.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 90-91.

²⁴¹ Moeller, "Reconstructing the Family," in *West Germany Under Construction*, 123.

education. Historical processes like industrialization that encouraged more women to work outside of the home were possible factors as well. The ZKFM distinguished between these two groups of single women, those single by choice and the “involuntarily unmarried” in order to point out different dangers facing each group and the nuanced ways in which assistance needed to be applied. Single women as a whole were being “left behind by society,” according to the ZKFM and they all needed to feel “at home” within the Church, free from negative perceptions of their status.²⁴² They needed community. However, the ZKFM argued that this need was more pressing for those involuntarily single, as they were more “severely” affected by their status, as it was undesired on their part.²⁴³

The KDFB also understood that single women as a group faced “traditional arrogance” due to public social norms and prejudice. Like the ZKFM, they wished their members to overcome these perceptions so that married and single women could provide support to each other. In 1954, the KDFB argued that, “The female mission in the world cannot be fulfilled by the married or the unmarried woman, by the mother or by the worker, but only by the people together...for the good of all.”²⁴⁴ Women in both organizations were advised to get over past prejudices in order to help themselves, their fellow members, and their communities.

By the early 1950s, various organizational measures were already in place to help single women. Some were primarily focused on providing assistance for women that lacked childcare and income. Kindergartens and daycare centers were opened to help watch children while women worked, and opportunities for part-time work were advertised through the both the

²⁴² Die unverheiratete Frau,” KFD Archive Folder 744.1.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Gertraud Kempken, “Die Frau in der Ordnung des Lebens,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1954. Despite their urge for a nuanced understanding of this issue, the KFDB often referred to women as either “married” or “employed,” perpetuating norms they worked to move beyond.

ZKFM and KDFB. Some of these job opportunities were directly through local parishes of the Church, while others involved sewing or washing work that could be done in one's own home.²⁴⁵ Aid organizations were also set up specifically for the widows and families of fallen soldiers to provide both necessities and legal help regarding collecting and negotiating pensions.²⁴⁶ Other aid for single women came in the form of social and emotional well-being. ZKFM members were asked to consider inviting single friends over for dinner or evening entertainment. The organization itself offered excursions and prayer groups targeted toward single women as it attempted to foster a sense of community within as well.²⁴⁷ The KDFB, in conjunction with the Bavarian Red Cross and the German-American Women's Club, helped found a program to aid single people and families with necessities and connections.²⁴⁸ While some programs were enacted specifically with single women in mind, this one and others also considered single men a specific demographic to receive aid. After a conference in Rhöndorf in November of 1949, where the ZKFM and other Catholic organizations worked in tandem with the Federation of Evangelical Women to decided pressing matters related to social welfare, German women set up stations with sewing machines where men could bring in clothing to have it mended. At these stations, people could also bring jewelry and other luxury goods to sell or trade, with the occupying powers being the most avid customers. West German Catholics bemoaned the visible markers of reconstruction, noting that it seemed the focus was on rebuilding movie theaters and cafes as opposed to long-term economic security in the form of jobs or housing for those that needed it, like single women.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Die unverheiratete Frau," KFD Archive Folder 744.1.

²⁴⁶ Beckmann, "Hilfswerk für Alleinstehend Frauen," 1949.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ "Aus unser Frauengemeinschaft," *Frau und Mutter*, January 1950.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

Visible, physical reconstruction of West Germany led leaders in the ZKFM and KDFB to consider the role of the West German state in benevolent activities during the 1950s and the state was often critiqued for its perceived inadequacies in providing welfare for the most vulnerable West Germans. Through the organized campaigns for benevolent action, from multi-organization cooperatives to initiatives led by individual women, the question of who was responsible for providing care and assistance was ever present. Was it down to a woman to look after her family and immediate neighbors? For the Church at large to take care of nation and country? Or, most fraught, should benevolent actors seek change from politicians and lawmakers? Both the ZKFM and the KDFB agreed that each and every member should do her part to make her corner of West Germany better in any way possible: to sacrifice for the sake of family, community, and nation. However, the KDFB was much more explicit in insisting for broader reform through political lobbying, legislative change, and encouraging women to participate in benevolence not only as Christians, but as citizens. The ZKFM was not as explicit in encouraging political lobbying, but as a subsidiary of the Working Community of Women's Associations (AGKF), submitted "demands" from Catholic women for new German legislation. These suggestions concerned laws pertaining to marriage and family and protections for orphans and youth. After discussion at the conference in Rhöndorf, the ZKFM along with other Catholic women's organizations passed along documents of their wishes to the Bundestag in 1950.²⁵⁰ The KDFB, however, was more vocal in urging members to take action on their own. When speaking to readers about the federal elections of 1952, the organization was crystal clear on this, writing: "The Christian woman decides the fate of Germany with her right to vote." Questions of European security and peace,

²⁵⁰ "Aus unser Frauengemeinschaft," *Frau und Mutter*, January 1950.

social and economic safety nets, refugees and returnees, and developing foreign policy were all issues the KDFB advised women to exercise their political power to influence.²⁵¹

Not only did the KDFB encourage their membership to vote to make the voices of Catholic women heard, they also saw benevolent action and social welfare as not under the purview of individual women or Catholic organizations, but rather, a partnership between the federal government and these organizations and their members. The Basic Law had established public equality between men and women in 1949, but many questions related to family law remained open. The Ministry for Family Questions was instrumental in upholding views of the patriarchal family that left many women and children out of welfare benefits as the 1950s progressed, as families with male breadwinners were privileged.²⁵² The KDFB thus saw the partnership between Catholic organizations and the West German state as particularly fraught, an alliance that operated as a tug of war between individual women's initiatives, specialist organizations tasked with benevolent action, and the German federal government. In an article in *Die christliche Frau* in 1954, Maria Offenberg chronicled the complicated relationship between Catholic benevolent networks and the West German state, arguing that the federal government needed to keep tighter control over broad social welfare initiatives and to not let them fall under the sole purview of benevolent organizations. This was a direct response to legislation in 1954 that had limited unmarried women's access to welfare in favor of supporting male wage earners. Offenberg further explained that state control should not exclude Catholic foundations, such as Caritas, which provided the "warmth" lacking in "professionally and objectively" oriented welfare efforts.²⁵³ Offenberg was utilizing Catholic narratives about the specific type of

²⁵¹ Helene Weber, "Die Frau im Schicksal Deutschlands!" *Die christliche Frau*, 1953.

²⁵² Moeller, "Reconstructing the Family," in *West Germany Under Construction*, 112.

²⁵³ Maria Offenberg, "Soziale Impulse der katholischen Frauenbewegung gestern und heute," *Die christliche Frau*, 1954.

nurturing care and love that came from God and trickled down the paternalistic structure of the Church and imbued the Church with the image of familial connectivity among all Catholics. Citing the postwar period specifically, Offenberg argued that work from smaller associations like the KDFFB had been particularly influential in the creation of social institutions, like kindergartens and homes for the disabled or displaced, and that both state and Church would be wise to recognize this work. With this recognition, the KDFFB hoped, would come a better partnership between Catholic and social welfare organizations and the state. As significant transformations were taking place in regard to the legislation of family law in the Civil Code, the KDFFB encouraged their membership to “maintain constant contact with the decisive authorities of the federal government and the politicians of the Bundestag.”²⁵⁴ Through political lobbying and voting efforts, KDFFB leaders thought Catholic women could make decisive change that would promote the wellbeing of women and families throughout West Germany.

ZKFM leaders were in agreement that a partnership between all potential benevolent actors and organizations was beneficial to West Germany, but the organization was more selective in how it advised members to agitate for federal legislative change. Where the KDFFB called on members to lobby and vote broadly, Dirks and other ZKFM leaders encouraged members to speak out on specific political and legislative issues they thought needed to be amplified. For example, Dirks and several others wrote an article in *Frau und Mutter* apprising readers about the struggles of children with limb deformities. The authors were appreciative of current legislation that provided aid to families in need, but called upon the members of the ZKFM and other Catholic organizations to take up this issue in particular because they thought more could be done to help. They asked readers, as mothers, to empathize with the mothers of

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

these children and, in doing so, to offer their assistance by volunteering their time to the ZKFM and other benevolent associations. Then, these associations, both Catholic and otherwise, could utilize their connections with the medical professionals that treated these children to grab the attention of law makers in order to facilitate federal changes that would offer this cause more support.²⁵⁵ Dirks and the other leaders that put out this call for mobilization asked for members to utilize a direct, personal approach to an issue of benevolence. Rather than the KDFB's more indirect mobilization that emphasized women's voting power in shaping West Germany, the ZKFM asked women to first empathize as mothers with those struggling in their nation. Then, after making a personal connection, together as collective actors, they could affect political change. The differences between the two approaches get at how both organizations envisioned women's abilities and their power to act. More so than the KDFB, the ZKFM leaned into Catholic conceptions about the maternal, nurturing power inherent in all women, and it was from this perspective that the ZKFM encouraged women to participate in their benevolent actions.

However, regardless of where they placed ultimate responsibility or how they approached benevolent change, both the ZKFM and the KDFB believed that benevolent work began with motivated individuals. Local groups and individual women would decide the importance of issues, ones that directly impacted their small corners of West Germany. These people were best able to identify problems in their families, neighborhoods, and cities. Organizations like the ZKFM and KDFB could build upon the work of these women by amplifying their voices and providing them with networks through which to expand their initiatives. Women's associations also functioned as communicative facilitators, sharing the work of these women with their members and readers in order to garner more support for them, creating a loop of information.

²⁵⁵ Marianne Dirks, Rosel Lücke, Marianne Pünder, Lotte Schiffler, Hilde Westrick, Elisabeth Zillken, "Ein Wort katholischer Frauen zu einer Gegenwartsnot," 1960. KFD Archive Folder 733.1.

The ZKFM and KDFB both operated as mechanisms to pass along information, whether from the top-down or the reverse by also informing and encouraging individual women to participate in benevolent action, from helping their neighbors to sending letters to parliamentary representatives.

This way of operating was viewed by both organizations as the traditional model for benevolent intervention, both in how each association had historically functioned and how Catholic action generally worked. Action began from the ground and filtered upward through organizations to the state. Larger organs were necessary for facilitating wide-spread action as “alleviating hardships goes far beyond the strengths of individuals and associations and...the basic tasks of supplying and safeguarding millions of people in the Federal Republic are in the hands of the state and local authorities.”²⁵⁶ However, as has been demonstrated through the ZKFM and KDFB’s benevolent work during the postwar period, this did not absolve individual women of the decisive and integral role they were to play in the social welfare of the nation. As the KDFB argued in 1954 about the strength of state welfare initiatives: “But shouldn’t a strong movement go from the bottom up? Doesn’t all social work focus on helping the individual, the needy in our immediate environment? Shouldn’t the lively action of the individual Catholic woman in the smallest of spaces rise again?”²⁵⁷ This philosophy of cooperation with an emphasis on working from the ground-up encompassed the benevolent work of the ZKFM and KDFB from 1948 to 1962. However, this seemingly hyper-local focus did not hinder either organization’s interventions in international benevolent action, as will be demonstrated in the next section. Instead, both organizations adopted a similar approach in how they approached issues abroad.

²⁵⁶ Offenberger, “Soziale Impulse der katholischen Frauenbewegung,” 1954.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

“One Body Under One Head”: International Catholic Benevolence

In a circular to members, the ZKFM thanked people for participating in “giving” during the year of 1961, whether publicly, or done in smaller, private ways. The ZKFM called for “unity” among Catholics, as a body under the leadership of the pope, a relationship strengthened on both sides through this connection. Because of this interconnectivity, Catholics were advised to be buoyed, not deterred, by the sometimes vast distances between members across the globe. The circular insisted: “The further the distance and the narrower the border, the more we should live in unity and our shared bond.”²⁵⁸ The idea of a shared bond between Catholics worldwide was not new during this period, but both the ZKFM and KDFB took this message to heart in the years following the close of WWII. The concept may not have been novel, but women in these organizations adopted it with renewed purpose and action. While much of the benevolence of ZKFM and KDFB members was shaped by urgent domestic needs, both organizations were also driven to intervene in broader, international concerns. These ranged from specific problems in individual countries to more amorphous calls for world peace. To combat these issues, both organizations informed members and journal subscribers about them, suggested potential solutions and ways to get involved, and asked their communities for their help. WWII had highlighted the potential for mass upheaval and devastation, while Cold War divisions illuminated new global problems that had stark local impacts. As Offenberger wrote of German Catholic women’s responsibility to readers in 1949:

“Social responsibility essentially includes looking beyond national borders...especially the common concerns of Christians all over the world. In the past, we have followed our own path far too much, as both Germans and Christians, and did not get involved in the common tasks of Christianity broadly.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ ZKFM Letter to Members, January 8, 1962. KFD Archive Folder 740.1.

²⁵⁹ Maria Offenberger, “Soziale Aufbaukräfte der Frau,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1949.

Offenberg alluded to other important, intertwining postwar contexts here, which are also essential for understanding West German Catholic benevolence abroad during the postwar. This benevolence, from how it was conceived to how it was carried out, was inextricable from Germany's Nazi past, the Cold War that both divided Germany physically and ideologically from the east, and the decolonization of the Third World. These three contexts overlapped and influenced each other in a variety of ways and they all shaped how the ZKFM and KDFB saw themselves as benevolent actors, which people they could and should assist, and the ideological mindsets that shaped West German geopolitics during this era.

Firstly, contending with the Third Reich, or avoiding doing so, shaped much of West German life during the postwar, in implicit and explicit ways. For one, the stigma surrounding German nationalism encouraged internationalist agendas like the benevolent Catholic goals of the ZKFM and KDFB. Another of these issues was the legacy of Nazi racial policies and the Holocaust. Conceptions of race and ethnicity in West Germany were undergoing transformations during this period. The Nazis had weaponized conceptions of racial difference that culminated in the Holocaust and ideas about race remained important in West Germany during the postwar period. The authors of *After the Nazi Racial State* argue that race and difference were at the “very center of social policy and collective imagination” at this time, from the immediate postwar through the entire existence of the FRG.²⁶⁰ Though race was central to the reconstruction of the West German state and the identities of West Germans, it was also in a period of flux. The social construction of race became slippery once again, influenced by a variety of factors. For one, West Germans attempted to distance themselves from the overtly racist policies of the Nazis that resulted in the mass murder and dehumanization of Jews, Roma

²⁶⁰ Rita Chin, Heide Fehrenbach, Geoff Eley, and Atina Grossmann, *After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 6.

and Sinti people, and many others. In part, this manifested in the silencing of overtly anti-Semitic racism. Both the ZKFM and KDFB did not explicitly include Jewish people as a population that was considered for benevolent action, their absence conspicuous, if not historically inconsistent with broader West German Catholic avoidance of overtly discussing culpability for the Third Reich and the Holocaust.

The presence of the Allies, Americans in particular, also shaped West German conceptions of race, hardening ideas about the importance of the binary between “black” and “white” to the point that this binary in some ways replaced, or at least overshadowed, the hard lines the Nazis had drawn surrounding Jewishness.²⁶¹ The black/white binary was not absent in the minds of Germans prior to WWII, but interactions with American soldiers brought it to the forefront of racial thinking during the war and its aftermath. Relationships between West German women and Black soldiers, and the biracial children that sometimes resulted, brought the binary into sharp relief.²⁶² The influx of American culture in the 1950s also played a role, introducing West Germans broadly to American conceptions of race in cinema and more music from Black creators. Anxieties about the Americanization of West German youth were often inflected with fears about the youths’ exposure to, and enjoyment of, styles of clothing, dance, and music associated with African American culture.

Transnational relationships more broadly also molded how West Germans redefined racial hierarchies during the postwar. Along with the Allies, the immediate postwar brought refugees and survivors from other nations. The 1950s brought the thickening of Cold War

²⁶¹ Heide Fehrenbach’s work is particularly illuminating on this issue. See “Rehabilitating the Fatherland: Race and German Remasculinization,” in *Conflict, Catastrophe, and Continuity, Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), and *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity After Hitler* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

²⁶² Fehrenbach, “Rehabilitating the Fatherland,” and Maria Höhn, *GIs and Frauleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

boundaries, pitting anti-imperialist and anti-American rhetoric from the eastern bloc against the increasing Americanization of West Germany. Increased economic security in West Germany in the 1950s, after the immediate insecurity following the currency reform of 1948, only amplified Cold War divides as the entwining of democratization and economics allowed West Germans to both distance themselves from the Nazis of their past and the Communists to their east, while also encouraging thinking about how this western, democratic model could be spread to developing nations.²⁶³ Discourses and rhetoric on “modernization” and “development”, propelled by the seeming democratic and economic successes of West Germany, assisted in shifting conceptions of race away from being biologically determined to rhetoric about the developing Third World: countries that were seen as behind Europe civilizationally.²⁶⁴ As formal colonies vanished, replaced often by informal networks of continued imperial influence, these discourses shaped ideas on both sides of the Cold War divide that those in the Third World were developmentally behind, though not incapable of “catching up” due to intractable notions of racial difference.

Both sides of the Iron Curtain had stakes in the Third World: economic, political, and ideological. These stakes were clear in attempts at benevolence during the 1950s and 1960s by both East and West Germany. East Germany participated in exchange programs to train healthcare workers from the Third World, in part to legitimate the state and broader bloc under the gaze of an international audience. The goals of this exchange were benevolent on the surface, but also served to perpetuate the anti-imperialist messaging of East Germany as the state courted diplomatic relationships with nations after West Germany’s Hallstein Doctrine encouraged most

²⁶³ Chin, *After the Nazi Racial State*, 21.

²⁶⁴ Uta G. Poiger, “Imperialism as a Paradigm for Modern German History,” in *Conflict, Catastrophe, and Continuity*, 192.

countries to recognize West Germany as the true successive German state in 1955.²⁶⁵ Through exchanges like this, East Germany had a backdoor through benevolence into other goals.²⁶⁶ West German benevolence programs operated similarly, utilizing benevolent missions to further other goals and to assert not only West Germany supremacy, but the supremacy of the west in general. For the west, the Catholic Church still played a large role in benevolence and mission work abroad. As the east attempted to reshape the global arena around socialism and anti-imperialist aims, the Church “led the charge” in encouraging Christianity, Christian democracy, and western identity, partly in an attempt to reclaim its own importance.²⁶⁷ As historian Paul Betts argues, “postwar Europe played host to competing custody battles over what civilization was and could be after Nazism, the war, and empire.”²⁶⁸ As such, West German benevolence took part in this battle to define civilization as Christian and western.

The Church had long played a role in benevolence, but it was pursued with renewed vigor during the first decades of the Cold War. In part, the Church was drawing on established narratives of mission work from Germany’s past. Catholic and Protestant missionaries had been integral agents of German imperialism, spreading Christian teachings as they assisted the state in its empire building abroad. These missionaries, in turn, also helped to educate people in the metropole on the processes of imperialism and the goals of modern civilizing missions, helping to normalize colonial mindsets.²⁶⁹ While the goals of Christian missionaries did not always map directly onto the nationalist goals of the state, they helped to perpetuate and redefine what they

²⁶⁵ In 1955, East Germany’s diplomatic relationships were limited to China, Vietnam, North Korea, Mongolia, and Egypt, Indonesia, and India, who were unaligned.

²⁶⁶ Young-Sun Hong, “‘The Benefits of Health Must Spread Among All’: International Solidarity, Health, and Race in the East German Encounter with the Third World,” in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

²⁶⁷ Paul Betts, *Ruin and Renewal: Civilizing Europe After World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2020), 23.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁶⁹ Jeremy Best, *Heavenly Fatherland: German Missionary Culture and Globalization in the Age of Empire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 8.

saw as “superior” identities based on Germanness, Europeaness, and westernness broadly.²⁷⁰

These colonial mindsets, along with the context laid out here, were both direct and indirect influences on Catholic benevolence during the Cold War. These mindsets, based on past national and global experiences, shaped how the ZKFM and KDFB envisioned their benevolent interventions abroad.

One of the places Catholic women looked as they organized benevolent actions was to their sisters right next door. There was some ambivalence about the GDR and how women and families were treated in the “other” Germany: worries about dechristianization, women being forced into the workplace, and the perception of the devaluing of marriage and motherhood abounded. In 1953, the KDFB wrote a piece about this issue, outlining the existed legal protections for women and children as well as the author’s interpretation of a general culture of broader acceptance for working women.²⁷¹ In general, the article attempted to quell West German worries that women had been forced into waged work and from their children, leaving East German families unstable and unhappy. Other concerns about East Germany become apparent a mere twenty-four pages later in the same issue of the KFDB’s periodical. Helene Weber argued that “the reunification with the East is an urgent problem for women,” because “political, economic, social, and cultural construction could not be achieved without the commitment of women.” As the KDFB often did in their work in West Germany, Weber emphasized the important power women had in shaping the world around them, specifically on their power to affect political change and how KDFB benevolent action in East Germany could ensure that the women there had protections and freedoms from the control of the state. Weber argued that people in the East deserved to “regain human dignity,” and that this would be done

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 15.

²⁷¹ “GDR Frauen und Gleichberechtigung,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1952.

by allowing them to have “the right to a Christian upbringing for their children and to a Christian influence in the shaping of the public.”²⁷² Weber referenced the perceived lack of religious freedom in the east as the state moved to curtail the power of the churches under their purview. Weber also spoke out against Bolshevism, calling it “fanatical” and “dangerous” as it ignored individual desires and destiny. Cold War ideological differences between East and West Germany were clearly at the forefront of KDFB leadership’s discussion of helping their sisters to the east.

When discussing the issue of married women working outside of the home, Josefine Doerner of the KDFB also harkened to German women in the GDR. She juxtaposed it with the FRG, arguing that while the women in the West were free to “transform consciousness” on the issue of female labor, the women in the East were “under painful compulsion” to do as the state mandated on the issue and without “moral bonds.”²⁷³ The moral bonds Doerner referred to were those of Christianity, which was perceived as being nearly non-existent in East Germany. Doerner was championing West Germany’s close links to the Church and the strong Christian influences that permeated discussions about women’s role in society. There was clear concern for women in the GDR and their potential loss of their Christian culture and how this could be detrimental to all facets of their lives. As they did with single women in West Germany, KDFB anxieties about women’s employment outside of the home were couched in discussions about individual choice, or lack thereof, in joining the labor force. For East German women, this was perceived as an even more unlikely choice, as was the idea that women would not have access to religious institutions. Despite the situation of dechristianization not being as dire as the KDFB

²⁷² Helene Weber, “Die Frau im Schicksal Deutschlands!”, *Die christliche Frau*, 1953.

²⁷³ Josephine Doerner, “Aus einem Brief an die Schriftleitung: Die berufstätige verheiratete Frau,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1953.

feared, the perception persisted.²⁷⁴ Discussions about East Germany were certainly timely. These women were discussed as if they were both German and foreign, the divisions in 1949 made manifest in ways that made West German Catholic women fret about their closest sisters and worry that they were moving beyond their reach.²⁷⁵

These concerns about the perceived lack of religion in East Germany and the Soviet bloc persisted beyond West German borders. During an address in May of 1955 at the first meeting of WUCWO in Germany, President Marie du Rostu expressed similar anxieties to the ZKFM and KDFB, the Catholic hierarchy, and to the world. In her opening remarks, du Rostu extended greetings to the “admirable Christian women in East Germany who continue to live in the darkness of the catacombs...They wait patiently for the hour when it will please God to open the gate of the tomb.”²⁷⁶ WUCWO was also concerned about reaching out to Catholic women “behind the Iron Curtain” that were being “ignored” based on religious reasons. As Catholics were a small minority in East Germany due to the prevalence of the Lutheran church, WUCWO worried these women suffered even more than Protestant East German women. The organization also referenced how a subcommittee of the United Nations was assisting on this matter and WUCWO averred that they stood for religious freedom in all of its forms.²⁷⁷ Due to both WUCWO’s public statements and the actions taken by the UN, the “problem” of East Germany could be classified by the KDFB as an international concern. This validated the KDFB’s concerns for their Catholic compatriots across the Cold War divide, and invigorated Catholic action abroad.

²⁷⁴ Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, 81- 82.

²⁷⁵ See Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) for a discussion about how Germans constructed differences between both states during this period.

²⁷⁶ Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, “Die Weltunion katholischer Frauenverbände,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1955.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

While West German women grappled with how to “save” their sisters in the East, they also fretted over threats to peace at home and abroad that were more overtly dangerous: war and nuclear weaponry. In 1948, women from the ZKFM and KDFB made their annual pilgrimage to the *Frauenfriedenskirche* in Frankfurt in order to pray for worldwide peace and honor the memory of the lives lost in WWII. The ZKFM categorized those lost as “all the sons of mothers from all nations,” broadening the event to include not just German men that were lost but connecting national pain and grief to the global level.²⁷⁸ As was discussed in Chapter One, Catholic women often called upon shared womanly grief over the loss of children in order to both remember the war and protest future threats to peace, including the potential for nuclear war with the advent of the atomic bomb. The KDFB called on women to be “tools of peace,” something that “must first grow, mature, and take shape within ourselves so that it can flow into the world until it becomes a power that unites people and fills the earth.”²⁷⁹

In 1955, on the tenth anniversary of the end of WWII, the ZKFM and KDFB once again made the journey to the *Frauenfriedenskirche* with thousands of other women.²⁸⁰ Weber called this church a “symbol of the will of Catholic women to work and pray for peace” and the KDFB made clear to members the goal of West Germany’s role in UNESCO, since its joining in 1953: “A peace based exclusively on economic and political agreements between governments cannot find the unanimous, lasting, and sincere approval of the peoples; consequently, if peace is to exist, it must be built on the basis of the spiritual and moral solidarity of humanity.”²⁸¹ Weber saw the partnership with UNESCO as a way for the KDFB and other West German Catholic women’s organizations to proliferate the Catholic message of peace across the world through

²⁷⁸ A., “Aus der Frauenwelt,” 1948.

²⁷⁹ Offenberg, “Soziale Impulse der katholischen Frauenbewegung,” 1954.

²⁸⁰ Marianne Dirks, “Aus der Frauenarbeit Friedenswallfahrt,” 1955. KFD Archive Folder 730.2.

²⁸¹ Schwarzhaupt, “Die Weltunion katholischer Frauenverbände,” 1955.

networks like the ones they had cultivated, rather than strictly through economic and diplomatic relationships at the federal level. These Catholic women saw peace as something that was under their purview, as faithful, benevolent parishioners. Their work, both domestically and abroad, was essential in cultivating worldwide peace.

Peace was a timeless issue, something Catholics had a long history of working toward. To Catholics, peace was prescribed through the teachings of Christ in scripture and emblematic of his sacrifice on earth. Nuclear war, however, was novel. The ZKFM and KDFOB often spoke about dreams of global peace and an end to all war, but this issue gained sudden urgency in the wake of WWII with the creation and use of nuclear weaponry.²⁸² This concern affected everyone on earth and was one Catholic women felt particularly important to advocate for on both the national and international stage. A petition written by women from the ZKFM, KDFOB, and WUCWO to protest the atomic bomb called upon governments, the U.S. in particular, for peace, as both mothers and as voting citizens. “In all countries, women and mothers must be aware of their responsibility, raise their voices against atomic war and atomic bomb tests. Every organization, every association for itself and for all associations in their country must ceaselessly protest against the military use of atomic energy,” Catholic women wrote in their collective statement.²⁸³ These women argued that nations across the globe would listen to their pleas to stop this “greater evil” that was “contrary to reason and justice”, both as mothers and citizens. They wrote, “Governments will have to listen to women and mothers, guardians of life, and half of all

²⁸² On the global anti-nuclear war movement, see Lawrence S. Wittner, *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) and M. Grant and Benjamin Ziemann, eds., *Understanding the Imaginary War: Culture, Thought, and Nuclear Conflict, 1945-1990* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016). On peace movements, see Holger Nehring and Helge Pharo, Introduction: A Peaceful Europe? Negotiating Peace in the Twentieth Century.” *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 3 (August 2008): 277-299 and Benjamin Ziemann, ed. *Peace Movements in Western Europe, Japan and the USA during the Cold War* (Berlin: Alle Rechte, 2018).

²⁸³ “Aufruf der Frauen und Mütter Zumatomfreiden,” KFD Archive Folder 741.2.

those entitled to vote.” And they stressed that they were not alone in their endeavor: both Nobel Prize winners and nuclear physicists agreed with them that scientific and technological advancements should not be used for “violence” and should instead support only international peace.²⁸⁴ The new threats posed by nuclear weaponry were a direct result of WWII, but also a continuing concern during the tensions of the Cold War. West German Catholic women’s organizations pled to the world as mothers in an attempt to preserve some form of peace, but they also directed campaigns toward governments and international bodies like the UN to make this peace permanent. From their platforms and through their networks, these women could both represent their members and reach out publicly, and loudly, to those that truly held the power over the weapons of war.

“Africa and Asia”

In 1955, WUCWO expressed the need to bring in Catholic women and Catholic women’s organizations from Asia and Africa, noting that out of the 70 affiliated organizations (which comprised 36 million women), 80 percent of them were based in Europe and the Americas.²⁸⁵ “We are faced with a global task here in our efforts to bring out sisters from the Asian and African continents to WUCWO,” the organization wrote to members. “We Catholic women must go to our brethren and serve them through our activities in the diocese, in our countries, and in the international arena. Our international tasks are growing ever larger and more urgent because humanity wants to be more and more ‘one.’”²⁸⁶ When discussing providing aid to women further abroad, from Africa to Asia, organizations like the ZKFM and KDFB utilized the same language they had employed when calling upon members to help their immediate neighbors. Women

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Schwarzhaupt, “Die Weltunion katholischer Frauenverbände,” 1955. In North and South America, WUCWO had 16 affiliated associations at the time and 39 in Europe.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

abroad were “sisters who have different experiences but similar needs,” partners against the global blights of war, hunger, and disease.²⁸⁷ With these statements of a shared sisterhood, the organizations were calling upon Catholic views of gender essentialism based on the idea that all women shared an unchanging, inherent nature designed by God. However, when discussing non-western and, most importantly, non-white, women, the organizations also utilized other coded language that amplified the differences between the sisterhood. Women from Africa and Asia were discussed as nascent partners, ones that were only just beginning to understand these global issues. Tinges of patronization underlaid the writings about these foreign women, who may have been seen as “sisters,” but were also characterized by long-held tropes of benevolent racism, otherness, and colonialism.²⁸⁸ “Africa and Asia” were often grouped together as a monolith, from internal memos shared within the ZKFM to international circulars published by WUCWO. Specific countries, regions, or cities were almost never mentioned, and this treatment is indicative of just who Catholic women’s organizations thought needed help, and what issues they needed help with.

By bringing in more women from Asia and Africa, WUCWO would be simultaneously intervening in the Third World to enact benevolence and also bringing in more women that could participate in peace-making and humanitarian efforts under the Catholic Church’s umbrella. Two reasons WUCWO specifically cited that necessitated expansion into the two continents were prostitution and slavery, something they believed was rampant in both Africa and Asia. A 1953 survey conducted by the Committee on Living Conditions for Women that covered 15 nations found these horrors as ones that women suffered from in particular. WUCWO cited their own

²⁸⁷ “Frauen helfen Frauen,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1962.

²⁸⁸ For a timeless classic on how difference is constructed and upheld, see Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

“expert on African issues” Sister Marie André as the person that compiled one of the reports that informed the survey. The nations surveyed were not specified, but WUCWO did say that the organization was particularly investigating the living conditions of Black women.²⁸⁹ These surveys helped inform the thinking of West German Catholic women’s organizations on why their benevolence was needed in other parts of the world. While Europeans were dealing with a need for increased benevolent action at home because of the rare occurrence of global war, women on other continents *always* required benevolent intervention. Part of the mission of West German Catholic women, then, was to take up arms and help the poor and ravaged others from across the world because, as the KDFB put it, “European culture grew out of Christianity, which gives it a unique position” for Catholic women to spread the word and benevolence abroad.²⁹⁰ This specifically references the KDFB’s belief in the superiority of Europeaness, harkening back to imperial mindsets that elevated western identities above others and touted European civilization as the apex of what humanity could attain. Christianity was often seen as key marker of the uniqueness of European identity, and here, it is being mobilized both as a motivating force for benevolence and as an end goal: to spread Christianity further across the globe.

To perpetuate these goals, WUCWO was involved, and by proxy so were the ZKFM and KDFB, in United Nations meetings and with the Council of Europe in the 1950s. They were also affiliated with the benevolent efforts of UNESCO, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) that provided humanitarian care to children worldwide, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a branch of the UN that offered humanitarian aid through agricultural means. In 1955, the organization put out a worldwide call to end global hunger. In 1957, the KDFB published on the status of this fight against hunger after a meeting with the pope in Rome,

²⁸⁹ Schwarzhaupt, “Die Weltunion katholischer Frauenverbände,” 1955.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

writing, “What can people do to fight hunger, because half of the human race is still hungry?” The report from FAO in Rome spoke about the struggles against hunger, epidemics, and disease that still ravaged the world. The KDFB was pleased to hear the “passionate concern” with which women from Africa and Asia participated in the discussion.²⁹¹ The pope also met with the delegations of women, telling them to care for the poor, and the “underdeveloped peoples.” He did have specific messages for the women from Africa and Asia, as well as those hailing from Latin America. According to the KDFB, the pope told representatives from the “younger” associations from Africa and Asia to “show solidarity with those from Europe and America.” To the Latin American representatives, the pope advised them to “fight against the indifference and superficiality in the religious life of their peoples.”²⁹² It is clear in the writing, and the tone used, that the perceptions of women from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, were different from those of America and Europe. These women were spoken of in contradictory ways, both as potential partners with European Catholic organizations and as people that needed guidance from these organizations. This was not dissimilar to discussions about West German Catholic women and how, through their roles as strong, moral mothers they could perpetuate a stable society, but, because they were women, they needed guidance from the Church hierarchy and the patriarchal structures of the family and the state at the same time.

However, as the pope’s comments demonstrate, there was also a perceived difference between European and other western Catholic women and those from the Third World. As the authors of *After the Nazi Racial State* argue; discussions of race may have gotten quieter in the aftermath of the Third Reich, but they did not vanish.²⁹³ Combined with conceptions of the

²⁹¹ Helene Weber, “Die Sendung der katholischen Frau in der modernen Welt,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1957.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Chin, *After the Nazi Racial State*, 6.

postwar Christian civilizing missions that the ZKFM and KDFOB and other Catholics sought during this period, “making over” Catholic women from the Third World was rife with benevolently racist rhetoric and harkened to past German Christian missions abroad that operated both as avenues of asserting European and German identity while also finding “blank” spaces on world maps that needed to be civilized.²⁹⁴ Even as formal European empires were coming to an end in the postwar, these ideas persisted through Catholic women’s benevolence. Between 1945 and 1960, several countries in Africa and Asia gained independence from European states through the fraught process of decolonization. The process was spurred by African and Asian nationalist movements for autonomy, the inability of many former imperial powers to formally run colonies after the devastation of Europe during WWII, and struggles for ideological influence during the Cold War.

Despite many of these countries gaining official independence from their former colonizers, many new states struggled due to the long-term damage wrought by colonization, and the continued influence of imperial powers. Neocolonialism continued the exploitation of Africa in particular following decolonization, a system in which former empires benefitted from their earlier efforts to intentionally under-develop African countries and the economic, political, and social instability that ensued. Several African countries were forced into economic relationships with the former empires during the process of decolonization, many of which allowed neocolonialist powers rights to the construction of military bases, administrative access to governments, and natural resources in exchange for providing aid.²⁹⁵ Cold War tensions

²⁹⁴ Best, *Heavenly Fatherland*, 11.

²⁹⁵ On decolonization and its effects, see Martin Welz, *Africa Since Decolonization: The History and Politics of a Diverse Continent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), Ahonaa Roy, ed., *Gender, Sexuality, Decolonization: South Asia in the World Perspective* (New York: Abingdon, 2021), Kenneth Omeje, ed., *The Crises of Postcoloniality in Africa* (Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2015).

heightened these processes, as the U.S. and western European countries fretted about the potential spread of communism in the newly liberated African nations while the eastern bloc countries worried about continued western imperial domination of the continent. This is a simplification of the ideological goals of the Cold War, as well as how they obscured the other economic and political goals of both blocs, but this characterization of the conflict was influential in how East and West Germans responded to decolonization. As the Congo was undergoing the rough transition to independence, the GDR declared its support for popular nationalist Patrice Lumumba while West Germany, along with other western allies, supported Moïse Tshombe.²⁹⁶ Leaders in the ZKFM and KDFB were not immune to this type of ideological thinking, but centered their interventions abroad on helping average women gain better qualities of life rather than on public support for political leaders. By focusing on the problems they thought women in Africa and Asia faced, West German Catholic women's organizations still participated in the Cold War project of exerting western, Christian, and European influence on these parts of the world.

In 1958, the KDFB issued an "urgent call to help" Africa and told members that missionary work has helped the region "100 fold" in the past. They used testimonies from former workers affiliated with the Aachen Social Woman's School or the Benedictine women from Tutzing that were sent in to Maria Offenberger, describing their fruitful work on the continent. "It is now essential that priests and lay workers are ready to work in Africa," they wrote.²⁹⁷ In the same year, one of the international causes the KDFB focused on was prostitution in New Delhi, India. The organization saw human trafficking and prostitution as increasing problems and that the current international protections that were in place were, in their perception, "inadequate."

²⁹⁶ Poiger, "Imperialism as a Paradigm for Modern German History," in *Conflict, Catastrophe, and Continuity*, 185.

²⁹⁷ Gerta Krabbel, "Mission in Afrika," *Die christliche Frau*, 1958.

This was an issue WUCWO also focused on in earlier years, implementing a study committee on the issue in the early 1950s to look into both refugee and human-trafficking concerns worldwide. They couched these concerns under worries for the protection of mothers and children, particularly in “underdeveloped” nations.²⁹⁸ The KDFB saw both problems as “incompatible with human dignity” and that, whether at home or abroad, “there should be no difference in the value of a human person.” The KDFB specifically called upon private organizations to protect these women and to “reintegrate prostitutes into human society.” They called upon sex workers and welfare institutions abroad to “fight” against these problems. Also, the KDFB urged the German federal government and the Council of Europe to get involved as well, both to provide economic and political pressure to change the situation for these women.²⁹⁹ The KDFB wrote to members about what increased globalization meant for them, arguing that, “the world has gotten smaller” and has thus made both the Church and Catholic organizations “closer to the people.” Consequently, people from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and worldviews became more “familiar” to Catholic women in West Germany. Speaking specifically about women from Africa and Asia, the KDFB referred to them as “sisters,” that act in similar ways to German women: as wives, mothers, and workers.

However, there were also key differences between them. African and Asian women were “behind” Europeans in technical know-how, skilled work, “morals and habits,” and experience with the Catholic faith. Another key difference was in economic means, and another reason Germany needed Africa and Asia to continue to excel economically. Europe could offer “precision work and technical knowledge” while Africa and Asia could provide raw materials. Or, as the KDFB put it: “We are looking for raw materials, land that bears fruit for our bread,

²⁹⁸ Schwarzhaupt, “Die Weltunion katholischer Frauenverbände,” 1955.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

hands that manufacture what we think up.” This is perhaps aptly summed up by an account published in *Frau und Mutter* referring to missionary work in an unnamed African country. Children in a village were attacked by ants and were “saved” from the blights of nature when they prayed to Jesus for salvation, demonstrating their faith as good Christians. The article was accompanied with cartoonish drawings of ants and depictions of Africans as racist caricatures. The author also informed readers that, in the face of such disaster, many African mothers did not wish to, or know how, to care for their own children so they brought them to the “white sisters” for help.³⁰⁰ This story extolled the virtues of missions and missionary workers while painting Africans as ignorant children that really relied upon these assistances to handle their lives. Both the ZKFM and KDFB used these familiar tropes in their descriptions of African and Asian women and in how they beseeched members and German Catholics for their assistance. In this way, they could distance themselves from these women, marking the racial, class, and national differences between them while also attempting to bring these women into the Catholic fold.

African and Asian women also needed to be taught how to be benevolent to their own communities, according to the KDFB. “We know that we are rich, richly gifted. We know the lack of others. Let us give them what we have, but let us also give what they need. Giving has to be learned.” And to learn it, according to the KDFB, the women on these continents would need it modeled for them by Catholic missionary women trained and up to the task. To volunteer, women could take courses through the KDFB in either Cologne or Aachen for five months. The courses included lectures, study groups, practical exercises, and specifics relating to the region/ethnic group the women would be working with. The topics covered in these courses were fairly extensive, including the cultural and religious traditions of a region, how the economy

³⁰⁰ A. Heinen, “Sulug! Sulug!” *Frau und Mutter*, January 1949.

functioned, the reception and spread of the Church in that area, cooking and first aid classes, and art, dance, and language courses. The KDFB emphasized that only women with strong, personal religious conviction and maturity should consider applying. To sell the courses to volunteers, the KDFB spoke of the opportunity to find out what areas they excelled in for potential careers and to provide benevolent care to those that needed it. Women could “broaden their perspectives, gain new experience and enrich their lives through encounters with foreign landscapes, cultures, and people” while also combatting world hunger and impoverishment. “Strength and peace from goodwill, that is the task of women above all....Because we are gifted as we are, we can give.”³⁰¹

Through these efforts, the KDFB were encouraging West German Catholic women to act as their agents under the guidance of the organization. The KDFB set up the networks and provided the materials for volunteers, and through the volunteers, could guide the education of other women abroad. And assistance for women everywhere was not only about protecting them from the dangers of human trafficking, poverty, and other pragmatic dangers; it was also about giving them a voice in public life and access to education. When asking for volunteers, WUCWO touted the crucial nature of women having access to public office and libraries. The dissemination of ideas through libraries was important to WUCWO, and they argued that the “civic education of women” was integral so these women could exercise their political rights.³⁰² The KDFB agreed, arguing that women were in all cultures, professional fields, and international organizations and thus responsible in all of those arenas, “in the family as wife and mother, in social life, in legislative bodies, in administration, in legal life, and in international connections.”³⁰³ Providing benevolent aid to Africa was not just about solving pragmatic

³⁰¹ “Frauen helfen Frauen,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1962.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Weber, “Die Sendung der katholischen Frau in der modernen Welt,” 1957.

problems, though. For Catholic women, it was also about providing community connections to faith and spirituality. As a Professor of Sociology at the University of Lille put it during the address in Rome, “It’s not just about hunger of the body, but also the hunger of the spirit and the soul.”³⁰⁴

In December of 1961, an international study week was held in Nyasaland (present-day Malawi) with 120 representatives from seven African countries and other women from across the globe. The event was organized by UNESCO and WUCWO, and some Catholic youth groups.³⁰⁵ Many Catholic leaders spoke, including Christine de Hemptine, the current president of WUCWO. De Hemptine implored African women to reach out from Africa to participate in building the modern world and to assist in the development of their own nations. Archbishop J. B. Theunissen, who oversaw the diocese in Nyasaland, called on African women, as the “heart” of the people, to spread their devotion across the continent.³⁰⁶ Monsignor Guido del Mestri, the Apostolic Legate for East Africa, told the women that the purpose of the seminar was to encourage “activity” that was not “revolutionary” but “thoughtful and unifying.” Other speakers called on these women to “build-up” their homes and families, to help establish the Church in Africa, and to look at traditional African customs through the lens of God’s will. There was a definite emphasis on getting African women to closely examine “traditional” African culture and morality and how these practices could be holding women back.³⁰⁷ It was the hopes of Catholic benevolent actors, that these examinations would lead these women to Christianity.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Maria Offenberg, “Die afrikanische Frau und ihre Berufung: Eine Internationale Studienwoche katholischer Frau im Herzen Afrikas,” *Die christliche Frau*, 1962.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid

Programs like WUCWO's and the KDFB's were ultimately designed to Christianize and Europeanize women abroad. While African women were called upon by European-led Catholic organizations to bolster their families and communities through Christian teachings and feminine virtues, as West German women were, these women were consistently othered. From the pope's remarks on non-Christian religious practices, to the ZKFM and KDFB's characterizations of African women as "behind" in modern methods of mothering and education, European Catholics emphasized the differences between themselves and these women even while playing up the similarities. At the international study week, messaging to African women played up their inherent feminine virtues in strengthening their family and communities. And other speakers, including the pope, spoke of the potential for Catholic renewal that lay in Africa and how, specifically, African women could play a great role in the development and Christianization of their nations.³⁰⁸ These goals once again demonstrate the Catholic view of the Third World, and of women: that there were partners to be found there, but ones that were not yet ready to lead on their own.

On the 28th of March, 1962, the Information and Action Group of German Women's Associations and Mixed Organizations held their tenth-anniversary. The group represented 81 federal organizations of around six million women. Chair of the group Gertrud Ehrle, who was also the current President of the KDFB, welcomed the women and spoke of how this group was founded to help rebuild after WWII and to trust women as responsible citizens to be the "co-shapers" of German society.³⁰⁹ Ehrle spoke of the benefits of hearing the points-of-view and experiences of other German women's organizations and stressed how this cooperation benefited

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ "10 Jahre 'Informationsdienst und Aktionskreis Frauenverbände und Frauengruppen gemischter Verbände,'" *Die christliche Frau*, 1962.

each individual organization in turn. Ehrle also pointed to some of the roadblocks in German society that barred women from having a greater voice and say in “social life.” A predominantly male-led hierarchy, in government, in hospitals, in business, had relegated women to lower and middle levels of power and position. However, that did not mean that organizations like the KDFB, the ZKFM, and WUCWO should stop pushing for the change they wanted to see. Ehrle called back to the work of the past ten years, and the work still to be done, providing aid and safety to refugees, on world peace, and on hunger.³¹⁰ This work was under the purview of these organizations as both women and Catholics.

The benevolent activities of the ZKFM, KDFB, and WUCWO show a Catholic commitment to improving communities across the globe while spreading a Christian and European message. Their concerns at home, in West Germany, focused on the timely problems caused by war, from hungry children, to disabled veterans, to the number of single women in their parishes. These were specific issues brought about by wartime, ones that had pragmatic solutions that could be solved by women and would not necessarily reshape West German society in the long term. Catholic women’s benevolence abroad, however, focused on what they saw as problems that had plagued certain parts of the world forever: hunger, poverty, and a lack of Christian guidance. Though West German Catholic women’s organizations could provide direct, immediate aid to their West German neighbors that were struggling, benevolence abroad required a more indirect approach with more support from state actors, the Church, and international bodies like the UN. However, despite the necessity for different approaches, Catholic women’s organizations retained mindsets shaped by the importance of motherhood and

³¹⁰ Ibid.

maternal care and the supremacy of European Christian identity regardless of where they carried out their benevolent work.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ZKFM AND VATICAN II: 1959-1965

On January 25, 1959, Pope John XXIII announced his plan to call an ecumenical council during a meeting with 17 cardinals at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome. Pope John surprised many clerics and laypeople alike, especially since he had only attained his office three months prior.³¹¹ He expressed reservations about holding a council that would simply be a rehash of councils that had come before and decided to call Vatican II because “he feared the Church’s penchant for clinging to its eternal truths risked ignoring pressing challenges in both the Church and the world.”³¹² Through the Council, the pope hoped to reinvigorate and renew the Catholic faith through some form of adaptation to the pragmatic realities of twentieth century life. His announcement sparked discussion among Catholics across the globe about how the Council would unfold and fomented wide-reaching interpretations of what Catholic renewal could and would look like. Did renewal and adaptation include sweeping dogmatic change? Or was the newly elected pope eager to establish his legacy with spectacle?

To some Catholics in the 1950s, it was difficult to imagine drastic changes occurring in an institution as old as the Church. Priest and theological scholar Mark Francis argues that, “In the eyes of most Catholics at the time, God had directly established the organization of the Church. That organization was strictly hierarchical. The pope, bishops, and priests were clearly ordained by God to teach, sanctify, and rule.”³¹³ Since Vatican I nearly one hundred years before had established the infallibility of the pope, imbuing the office with the absolute authority over

³¹¹ Pope Pius XII died on October 9, 1958. The Patriarch of Venice, Angelo Roncalli, then became Pope John XXIII on October 28, 1958.

³¹² Richard R. Gaillardetz, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), xvi.

³¹³ Mark R. Francis, “Church Life in the First Half of the Twentieth Century”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*, 4.

Catholic dogma, it seemed unlikely that Vatican II would change much, if anything, about the hierarchical structure and power dynamics within the Church. But Catholicism was also more than this hierarchy; it was also a faith with tenets that shaped daily life for practicing believers, defining habits and rituals for millions. To some Catholics, it seemed equally unlikely that Vatican II could shift their practice of Catholicism and the cultural and social mores that accompanied it. As theological scholar Brian Daley puts it, “Friday abstinence, tight restrictions on marriage with non-Catholics, religious habits for sisters, official discouragement of theological and spiritual contact with other Christians, and a host of other familiar features of daily life for Catholics seemed, in the 1950s, to be engraved in the stone face of Peter’s rock.”³¹⁴

Both Francis and Daley’s generalized comments about Catholics could also be applied to West German Catholics in specific: in the late 1950s, many of them also had doubts about the possibility of sweeping reform from Vatican II. So much so that Kimba Tichenor argues that West German Catholics en masse largely ignored the Council until 1962, “preoccupied” instead with German-centric Catholic conferences in Munich and Hanover and the construction of the Berlin Wall.³¹⁵ What did finally gain the attention of West German Catholics, according to Tichenor, was a singular moment in October of 1962 that seemed to indicate that Catholic reform at Vatican II was not only a possibility, but could potentially be spearheaded by one of their own: Cardinal Joseph Frings. At a meeting of the Central Commission of the Council, Frings seconded a motion put forth by Cardinal Achille Liénart of France that postponed proceedings and the elections of clergy to other Vatican II commissions until the bishops present could truly get to

³¹⁴ Brian E. Daley, S.J. “Sign and Source of the Church: Mary in the Ressourcement and at Vatican II,” in John C. Cavadini and Danielle M. Peters, eds. *Mary on the Eve of the Second Vatican Council* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 31-32.

³¹⁵ Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, 5. See also Erwin Gatz, *Die katholische Kirche in Deutschland in 20. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg: Herder, 2009).

know each other better. Tichenor points to this one procedural moment as a signal to West German Catholics that clergy outside of the curial cardinals wanted a say in Vatican II and would not simply “rubber stamp” the reforms put forth by the most elite clerics.³¹⁶ Catholic newspapers across West Germany reported on the event, cultivating excitement about what was to come next at the Council.³¹⁷

Though West German Catholics broadly were spurred into enthusiasm by the startling developments in 1962, the ZKFM had already been working for years on how to make sure the concerns of Catholic women were heard at Vatican II. These concerns were broad, from the use of artificial birth control to the ordination of women within the Church, but these controversial issues were hardly the only important ones that concerned lay Catholics in West Germany. As demonstrated by data collected by the ZKFM, West German lay women expressed a myriad of issues that they believed were relevant to their lives as Catholics. While many West Germans were ambivalent about early Council proceedings, the ZKFM had already mobilized members into preparations for the organization’s petition to the Council and actively worked to ensure they had the ears of Germany’s highest clerics. While other West German Catholics may have ignored the Council until 1962, women of the ZKFM were deeply invested in its design, purpose, and outcome and eagerly awaited any new information released by the pope or the Central Commission of the Council. Pope John set up ten preparatory commissions on June 5, 1960. Nine of the commissions were focused on a particular theme each, and the chairmen of each of these nine sat on the Central Commission, the most influential and powerful of the commissions.

³¹⁶ Ibid. The Roman Curia is made up of cardinals at the very top of the Catholic hierarchical administration.

³¹⁷ Gatz, *Die katholische Kirche in Deutschland*, 177. Cardinal Frings’ importance to the Council is noted by many scholars. Lienart and Frings’ intervention in commission elections also allowed for the commissions to be more ideologically diverse and representative of more countries than they likely would have been. Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 53 and Melissa J. Wilde, *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

While other West German Catholics recognized the importance of Cardinal Frings to the Council in October of 1962, ZKFM leadership had already capitalized on his seat on the Central Commission in the years prior.

This chapter focuses on the ZKFM's role in Vatican II. From the announcement of the Council in 1959 to its conclusion in 1965, ZKFM leadership utilized their resources and established networks in order to make their voices, and the voices of those they represented, heard by the highest officers of the Church. The ZKFM was an essential intermediary between lay Catholic women in Germany and influential participants of the Council. ZKFM leaders mobilized all of the hard-won pieces of their arsenal: collaborative conferences, publications, and personal relationships with theological experts and clergy. They claimed to do so in the service of women everywhere, but were particularly invested in advocating for their members and their families. The international event of Vatican II is a look into the ways the ZKFM functioned and the type of power and influence they wielded, as Vatican II was the biggest stage for potential change within the Church in their lifetimes.

The ZKFM, as the largest Catholic women's organization in West Germany, used well-articulated arguments and research in order to build their proposals. They utilized biblical examples, modern scientific research, established Catholic doctrine, and personal experiences to argue for what they thought should be changed. And most importantly, they advocated for themselves *as women*, as they had done many times in the past. Dirks and other ZKFM leaders were guided by Catholic clergy to focus on issues that directly pertained to Catholic women. While this could be interpreted as condescending, Dirks and the others decided that, in fact, most Catholic issues were important to women, down to the finest details. Women were disallowed from participating directly in the Council, but through the ZKFM's connections to German

clerics like Frings, their personal concerns were presented at the Council. As the ZKFM worked in preparation of the Council, they capitalized on the relationships they had built through decades of labor, communicating with and connecting members, theologians, and clerics. By using their organization's space on the edge of the Church, as both under its umbrella but not a part of the official hierarchy, the ZKFM was able to advocate for change in a venue that barred their active participation. The changes they advocated for varied in range, from the minutiae of Catholic practice to more representation for women in the Church. While they were not necessarily attempting to move heaven and earth within the Church, the ZKFM encouraged Church leaders to acknowledge the importance of women's position within the Church and encouraged changes to Church doctrine that they believed would improve their daily practice of Catholicism. The last part of this chapter will examine what Vatican II did change for these women, and how many of the issues they fought for did indeed come out of the Council.

Historical analyses of Vatican II are rare, and those that focus on the Council from a West German perspective are almost non-existent. Many accounts of Vatican II are written from a theological perspective, often penned by religious institutions or members of the Catholic clergy.³¹⁸ Other accounts tend toward explaining the minutiae and chronology of the actual events of the Council without offering explicit context or in-depth analysis.³¹⁹ More popularly, scholarship on Vatican II tends to focus on the Council as a starting point to elucidate the changes it brought to the Catholic world. Historians of German history do this as well, either

³¹⁸ Cavadini, *Mary on the Eve of the Second Vatican Council*, Oliver P. Rafferty, "Vatican II: A Retrospective," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 99, no. 394 (2010), and Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering's edited volume *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³¹⁹ For deep dives into the documents of Vatican II, see Annemarie C. Mayer, ed., *The Letter and the Spirit: On the Forgotten Documents of Vatican II* (Paris: Leuven, 2018), Norman Tanner ed., *Vatican II Essential Texts* (New York: Image Books, 2012), Knut Wenzel, *Kleine Geschichtes des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils* (Freiburg: Herder, 2005). For a document analysis that focuses on the mentions of women, see Ivy A. Helman, *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents* (Ossining: Orbis Books, 2012).

gesturing toward Vatican II briefly or using it as a point of rupture to begin their discussion of what came after.³²⁰ This makes all kinds of sense; Vatican II was a very important event that has had great effects on Catholicism in the present, an event that some mark as the most significant event in the religion since the Protestant Reformation.³²¹ The scholarly works on Vatican II that do offer some historical analysis often do so on Catholicism broadly, rarely focusing the event in one specific national context.³²² Women's role in the Council is even more under explored. The lack of examination, even among scholars that primarily study Catholic women, only serves to perpetuate that women had little to no role in the Council. One exception to this is Carmel Elizabeth McEnroy's book that looks at female auditors during the Council. McEnroy, a theological scholar, interviewed many of these women later in their lives about their experiences participating in Council proceedings. Though McEnroy does not deeply interrogate what these women had to say from an analytic perspective, she does highlight their importance to the Council and how they perceived this importance.³²³

McEnroy elevates the female auditors of Vatican II, but Catholic women more broadly were important architects to the Council. However, many scholars do not see Vatican II as particularly revolutionary for women or for the laity. Sociologist Melissa Wilde writes, "Vatican II is also not a story of a religious institution responding to pressure from below. Many of the reforms that came from the Council were almost entirely irrelevant to lay concerns, and the

³²⁰ See Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of Vatican II: Western European Progressive Catholicism in the Long Sixties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Michale J. Lacey and Francis Oakley eds., *The Crisis of Authority in Catholic Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, and M. Lamberigts and L. Kenis, eds., *Vatican II and its Legacy* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002).

³²¹ Gaillardetz, *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*, xv.

³²² See in particular, Kathleen Sprows Cummings, Timothy Matovina, and Robert A. Orsi, eds., *Catholics in the Vatican II Era: Local Histories of a Global Event* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) for a book that explores Vatican II in the microhistories of local Catholic diocese around the world.

³²³ Carmel Elizabeth McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House: The Women of Vatican II* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996).

reform that was the most central to the laity, birth control, was tabled.”³²⁴ Wilde’s assessment is not incorrect; Vatican II was orchestrated by elite Catholic clerics and plenty of lay Catholics were unhappy with the lack of discussion on birth control. However, when one looks at the ZKFM, it is clear that lay people “from below” could and did apply pressure to the Catholic hierarchy and that other reforms were of central concern to the laity.

Though some theologians and scholars argue that Vatican II failed women, ZKFM leadership did not see it in those terms. The Council recognized the importance of the laity and women, codified in the sixteen documents that came out of the event. Issues like women’s ordination and birth control were not discussed, but the Church recognized equality between the sexes in political, social, and religious life at the basic level, making this explicit in the same way the Basic Law had for West Germans in 1949. This issue was central to the ZKFM and their interventions in Vatican II should be reframed as a discussion of the goals of the ZKFM and what they wanted from the Church, its leaders, and their faith, and the organization’s methodology in accomplishing those goals. Furthermore, the ZKFM’s work on the Council laid the groundwork for further, and deeper, interventions in subsequent years. Vatican II was a turning point for both the Catholic Church as an institution and for the ZKFM as an organization. The ZKFM’s willingness to mobilize to intervene was amplified with Vatican II, and what issues they felt were under their purview as Catholic women only expanded afterward. If Vatican II was a turning point in the Church’s adaptation to the modern world, it was also such an event for the ZKFM.

³²⁴ Wilde, *Vatican II*, 5.

Preparations and Presentations: ZKFM Mobilization on the Eve of Vatican II

Vatican II was designed to be a forum in which Catholic leaders could enumerate their concerns about modern issues and attempt to unify the official positions of the Church and was framed by both elite clerics and lay Catholics as the Church recognizing and stepping into the modern world. Though the announcement of Vatican II was surprising, the adaptation of the Catholic Church to contemporary context had been in the Catholic ether for some time. Since at least the nineteenth century, the Church had been increasingly engaging with the modern world as it attempted to preserve its flock and influence across the globe. According to Regina Illeemann, to understand the changes in the Church wrought by Vatican II we must look beyond the four actual sessions of the Council. She argues that since the early twentieth century, there had been movements in Catholicism to alter Catholic liturgy fomented by lay people, including the KDFB. These lay people contributed to “developing an independent Christian-Catholic self and sense of mission,” which was spurred further by Catholic Action in the 1920s. Vatican II, in essence, merely built upon these trends and enshrined them in official Church doctrine.³²⁵ It was the twenty-first ecumenical council, the first in nearly one hundred years. Ecumenical councils were exceedingly rare during the modern period. The Council of Trent was held from 1545 to 1563 and was the only Council convened until Vatican I. Convened by Pope Pius the IX on December 8, 1869, clerics began preparing for the Council as early as 1864. That year, topics and proposals were considered and five separate commissions were assigned. Topics like modernization, socialism, and rationalism were all on the table for Church officials to discuss before Vatican I was interrupted by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. The Council was halted by Pius indefinitely on July 18, 1870 before all decrees could be considered and signed.

³²⁵ Illeemann, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 348.

Significantly, Vatican I codified papal infallibility, signifying that the pope could not err on morality or faith-based teachings. Some scholars argue that even the relatively “modest” changes to the Church that came out of Vatican I were revolutionary in nature as they proved “too much for the rigid structures of nineteenth-century Catholicism to absorb.”³²⁶ To contemporary audiences, the very fact that the Church *could* change meant that it could continue to do so.

Ideas of change were in the air again for Catholics as the 1960s dawned. West German clergy met at a conference in Fulda in 1960 to prepare and refine proposals for the Council and to mull over questions of Catholic doctrine. There was trepidation and excitement among the West German clergy as to what issues would be discussed and what the outcome of the Council would be. Similar clerical conferences were held across the West, in both North and South America, and in several European nations.³²⁷ As clergy across the globe were deep in preparations, so too were lay organizations and theological experts. Several organizations were invited by the Central Commission to create their own proposals that would elucidate their own hopes for Catholic renewal and change. Between the summer of 1959 and the spring of 1960, the Central Commission received 9,438 such proposals.³²⁸ The ZKFM was one of the organizations specifically invited personally by Frings to make suggestions in an overt endorsement of the association, something that took ZKFM leadership by surprise. According to Dirks and fellow executive member Anneliese Lissner, a philologist and journalist, when preparations for Vatican II were in the very early stages, the ZKFM did not think of entering their own petitions to the Council on the behalf of West German Catholics. They were, in fact, reluctant to do so.³²⁹

³²⁶ Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution*, 1-2. For more on Vatican I, see John W. O'Malley, *Vatican I: The Council and the Making of the Ultramontane Church* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

³²⁷ Ferdinand Piontek, “Wir und das bevorstehende Konzil.” *Tag des Herrn*, January 21, 1961.

³²⁸ Massimo Faggioli, “The Council as Ecclesial Process,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*, 64

³²⁹ Marianne Dirks and Anneliese Lissner, “Wünsche katholischer Frauen, Mütter und Ehepaare an das Ökumenische Konzil,” KFD Archive Folder 631. The ZKFM leadership were encouraged by both theological experts and high-ranking clergy members, like Cardinal Döpfner.

However, after the Central Commission made it clear that lay contributions from organizations like the ZKFM were welcome, ZKFM leadership got to work on their own proposal.

By the beginning of 1961, Dirks and other leaders had already drafted part of their proposal. Dirks, along with the editorial staff of *Frau und Mutter*, discussed strategies on how to inform their readership of the Central Commission's proposal request, and how to invite readers to submit their own suggestions. Dirks also wrote to theologian Bernard Häring to ask for clarification on her understanding of the scope and nature of the upcoming Council, including how the objectives of the Council should be interpreted by an organization of lay women like the ZKFM. Along with her questions, Dirks submitted a draft proposal to Häring, one that mentioned a few issues ZKFM leadership had already identified as important. These issues included ecumenism, mixed-marriages between Catholics and other Christians, and vernacular worship services.³³⁰ Dirks, in seeking the advice of a theological expert, was engaging in a practice that was quite typical for high-ranking clerics and others that were also preparing proposals. These experts, called by the Latin *periti*, were considered central figures during the course of the Council and many served clergy personally, drafting materials and even speaking on their behalf, though unable to be voting members on the commissions of the Council. Frings, for example, utilized the expertise of Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI in 2005.³³¹ Dirks reached out to Häring with similar logic, capitalizing on his religious expertise on scripture and Catholic morality to color the ZKFM's interpretations on the pope's announcement and trying to gain some inside information. Even after the official submission of the ZKFM's

³³⁰ Marianne Dirks to Bernard Häring, January 16, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607. Prior to Vatican II, Catholic masses were mainly conducted in Latin. Proponents of mother-tongue worship advocated for entire services to be conducted in the vernacular language of any given area.

³³¹ Gaillardetz, *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*.

proposal, Dirks and other leaders continued to consult lay and cleric experts on technical questions and in an attempt to glean the goings-on of Council proceedings.³³²

While some clergy were eager to correspond with Dirks on Council matters, others like Häring were more cautious when advising the ZKFM. When replying to Dirks in 1961, Häring informed Dirks that petitions from a large association of Catholic women like the ZKFM could be useful to the Council, and complimented the draft proposal she sent on its inclusion of issues he thought the ZKFM could particularly speak to, like vernacular worship.³³³ However, two months later, after seeing a more polished version of the ZKFM proposal, Häring cautioned Dirks against overstepping the boundaries set between lay Catholics and Council clerics, and more importantly, the boundaries between clerics and lay *women*. “See what is possible in your place,” Häring wrote to Dirks, advising her to be modest in the ZKFM’s requests of the Council while remarking that the earlier, less-complete draft of the proposal had been “excellent.”³³⁴ Though Häring was not a cleric, his response to Dirks emphasized the tensions that existed in Catholicism regarding women’s roles in Church proceedings. This interaction helps to illuminate these tensions. The ZKFM was invited by the most important Council commission to submit a proposal, but women’s presence at the Council was still contested, both literally and thematically. While issues like birth control were tabled before the Council even began, women were also not allowed to attend the Council until the third session where they were permitted to sit in the audience. At this session women were also allowed for the first time in Church history to act as official auditors, a suggestion made by Häring himself to Council leaders.³³⁵ This demonstrates the complicated nature of the role gender played at the Council, regardless of

³³² Oratorium of Heiligen Phillip Neri to Marianne Dirks, April 28, 1962. KFD Archive Folder 607.

³³³ Bernard Häring to Marianne Dirks, January 25, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

³³⁴ Bernard Häring to Marianne Dirks, March 8, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

³³⁵ Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, 43.

distinctions between lay and cleric. Women were invited to send proposals to offer their specific perspectives on Catholicism, but were only allowed some form of participation in the Council itself in the latter half. Häring and Dirks were both lay Catholics, and despite his support for women's literal attendance at the Council, his comments to Dirks about the ZKFM's second draft suggest his hesitation at women's participation, particularly if they were petitioning the Council on issues beyond his gendered view of their purview.

Dirks, for her part, clearly agreed with Häring that the ZKFM and its members could and should speak to the Council as women and on issues pertaining to women's Catholic life. By March of 1961, ZKFM leadership was ready to reach out to general members to gather broader suggestions for their Council proposal. Dirks wrote to ZKFM membership to announce the ZKFM's participation in Vatican II preparations and encouraged members to write in with their own personal requests on what they wanted to see in the ZKFM proposal. She explained that the ZKFM's proposal would be incomplete if she did not allow all members the opportunity to express what Christian renewal meant to them, personally. Dirks did, though, ask that submissions be limited to suggestions that could be "expressed meaningfully" by women and mothers.³³⁶ Fitting with Dirks' and the ZKFM's broader views, this was both an acknowledgement that women had particular perspectives on Catholicism due to their gender, and the fact that these perspectives had often been left out of Church conversations. Dirks also encouraged women to consider what the Council's theme of Catholic renewal meant to them in a philosophical sense as well, aside from the practicalities of daily life. She argued that renewal must come from both inside and outside of the Church and that both traditional doctrine and attitudes should change to reflect the realities of the present. It was the job of the laity, in Dirks's

³³⁶ Newsletter to ZKFM General Membership from Marianne Dirks, March 7, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

view, that they worked to make sure their “spirits” were properly prepared to receive the potentially great changes decided on by the Council.³³⁷ For this, Dirks meant that Catholics must strike a balance between their lives within the Church and without, only seeking changes that would allow the two to properly balance and coalesce. In order to assist members in making themselves ready, the ZKFM’s annual theme was “Renew the Right Spirit in Us!”

ZKFM leadership also reached out more broadly to West German Catholic women through *Frau und Mutter* in April of 1961. In an article titled, “Great Things Await Us From This Council,” the ZKFM provided readers with some of their thoughts on the issues they believed most relevant and important and urged all of the women to consider their proposal a serious responsibility given to them by theologians and clerics preparing for the Council.³³⁸ They appealed to the women not on the potential of altering ecclesiastical doctrine, but on their personal relationships with their faith and their everyday practice of their inner Christian lives. The warnings from Häring and other men, meant to limit Dirks and the women from overstepping Church boundaries, were not really viewed as limits by ZKFM leaders. They, as women, *should* speak about issues that they feel most important to their lives. They viewed this as an opportunity to speak about their own experiences and to potentially present them to the highest leaders of the Church. As how they practiced their faith was an essential part of this experience, the ZKFM did not consider many issues, or the inner-workings of Church doctrine off-limits. And clearly, neither did their readers.

ZKFM leaders were pleased with the quick and numerous responses they received from the readership. Women from across West Germany wrote in to the ZKFM, writing as housewives, as mothers, as academic scholars. According to Dirks, responses came in from

³³⁷ Dirks, “Das Anliegen des Konzils,” KFD Archive Folder 627.

³³⁸ Marianne Dirks, “Große Dinge erwarten wir von diesem Konzil,” *Frau und Mutter*, April 1961.

Flensburg to Allgäu, though the Rhineland, the ZKFM's home base and a traditional stronghold of German Catholicism, sent in the highest number of responses. The women that wrote in expressed their thoughts on the proposal draft the ZKFM had presented to them in *Frau und Mutter* and also added their own ideas on what to include in the final submission. One reader captured her excitement at the opportunity in her reply: "Oh, if only I could write a wish list!"³³⁹ Readers wrote in with individual requests and some submitted proposals in conjunction with their husbands and families. This suggests that not only were women considering what mattered to them individually, but some were clearly considering how Catholic renewal would affect them relationally, as the parent or partner to others. This method of response reflects Dirks' request that women speak as women, and many women during this period were seen by Church and state institutions as essential pillars of the family and saw themselves in this way as well.

However, the women that answered the ZKFM's call represented diverse social, political, and regional perspectives. ZKFM leadership pored over the hundreds of responses and even rejected some that they deemed too contentious. Dirks and Lissner publicly responded in *Frau und Mutter* that they decided not to include suggestions that called for a change to the age at which Catholics received the sacrament of Confirmation, as this issue was vehemently disagreed upon by those that wrote in.³⁴⁰ In the fall of 1961, the ZKFM published the responses they received in a special volume, noting each respondent by their initials. These included a variety of thought, from ideas about how to broadly shape Catholicism for the latter half of the twentieth century, to minute changes to daily Catholic practice. One popular topic included hopes for ecumenism between the Catholic Church and Protestants, some women broadening this to include the Church's relationship to Jews as well. Another was about the sacrament of baptism,

³³⁹ Dirks and Lissner, "Wir alle durften Vorschläge," *Frau und Mutter*, May 1961.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

as many women wanted the Church to allow for a delayed schedule that would permit mothers to recover from giving birth before their child was blessed. There were even a few complaints about obstinate parish priests included. Overwhelmingly, respondents requested vernacular worship during Catholic mass.³⁴¹

Of utmost importance to ZKFM members, leaders, and many theologians was clarification on Catholic doctrine and practice, especially as it related to marriage. The two biggest issues were mixed religious marriages with other Christian sects and marital procreation. Dirks corresponded with Father Ernst Gutting to discuss both on behalf of the ZKFM. Gutting suggested that the ZKFM's proposal, as it referred to the topics of marriage and the family, ask the Council for clarification on the Church's concept on the sacrament of marriage. For example, Gutting suggested the Church was alienating childless married couples by preaching that procreation was the main goal of marriage.³⁴² New contemporary challenges, including newly available contraception in the form of birth control pills, seemed to married couples to be at odds with Christian morality. The Church's acknowledgment of the appropriateness of the rhythm method as a way for married couples to "naturally" control the amount of children they produced seemed to some Catholics in the early 1960s to be insufficient. In a 1961 *Frau und Mutter* article, the author wrote that the Church seemed to be of dual minds about marriage: is love or procreation paramount? She also asked for clarification on birth control: how could the Church expect women to go against medical expertise if a doctor declared a pregnancy a danger to the mother? Like Gutting, the author also raised the issues of childless couples. She pled to the Council for help on these matters.³⁴³ On the subject of mixed-marriages, the waters were even

³⁴¹ Dirks and Lissner, "Wünsche katholischer Frauen, Mütter und Ehepaare an das Ökumenische Konzil," KFD Archive Folder 631.

³⁴² Ernst Gutting to Marianne Dirks, February 1, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

³⁴³ "Was erwarten die katholischen Mütter vom kommenden Konzil?" KFD Archive Folder 607.

muddier. As ecumenism was a large theme of the Council, one that was expected to be discussed at length, the door was opened for hopeful discussion (and condemnation) of Catholic/Protestant marriages and whether or not this topic should be included in the ZKFM's proposal. Some argued that there was a difference between "reckless" unions between Christians and well-thought out marriages and that the Church should distinguish between these in order to foster the spirit of cooperation in the Christian world. Specifically, the ZKFM thought that marriages between Protestants and Catholics should be allowed when both parties had duly considered if their different faiths would strengthen a couple's religious life or be a cause of contention in their marriage.³⁴⁴ According to Häring, the ZKFM's stance on mixed-marriages was something he thought the organization could decide on their own, as was whether or not they included it in their final proposal.³⁴⁵ In the end, the ZKFM endorsed allowances for mixed-religious marriages despite the ambivalence from some of their respondents.

The correspondence between Dirks, Häring, and Gutting demonstrates a few important things about the ZKFM's relationship to clergy. As in the ZKFM, there were nuanced views on issues pertaining to women within the clergy and on what issues it was viewed as appropriate for women to intervene in. And while theologians like Häring and clerics like Gutting attempted to guide the ZKFM in their Council preparations, either by emphasizing points they should include or topics they should avoid, the ZKFM both accepted and rejected this guidance as it suited the organization and the women they represented. More specifically, ZKFM leadership sought guidance from men like Häring and Gutting for their own purposes, and while it was sometimes not fully accepted, it was rarely outright ignored. Gutting's correspondence with Dirks demonstrates that this relationship, while uneven, was not unidirectional; he was seeking change

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Bernard Häring to Marianne Dirks, February 8, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

within the Church as pursued and pushed for by women in the ZKFM and asked them to address something he saw as an issue in Catholic doctrine. And the issues that both Häring and Gutting saw as important, and under the purview of the ZKFM and Catholic women, were large ones. Marriage under Catholic law is one of the seven sacraments, theological rites Catholics believed were entrusted to the Church by Jesus Christ. Both the women of the ZKFM and other Catholic experts saw sacramental change as possible during the course of Vatican II, and both groups saw the ZKFM as possibly able to play an instrumental role in making that happen.

After looking over the letters from ZKFM members and corresponding with theologians and clerics, Dirks and Lissner published a response to readers and members. They wrote that *Frau und Mutter* was a journal that they all shared and that they did not consider the women that subscribed as merely readers: they were the “foot soldiers” that would carry out the suggestions of the proposal and “make them fruitful.” Dirks and Lissner also lamented that they could not personally answer each letter that had come in.³⁴⁶ This type of response was typical of the ZKFM editorial staff and Dirks herself. While they did not reply to everyone that wrote in to the magazine, they often published questions and concerns from readers with responses from Dirks. This helped to cultivate the idea that the ZKFM were invested in their members and readers and it is clear from the responses about the Vatican II proposal that these women had confidence in the ZKFM’s concern for them and their lives.

Like the ZKFM, the KDFB was also invited to submit a proposal to the Central Commission, though they did so without the input of their membership. The KDFB as an organization discussed Vatican II minimally, writing only two short articles in *Die christliche Frau* in the first half of 1959 that mentioned the announcement. In late 1959, *Frauenland*, a

³⁴⁶ Dirks and Lissner, “Wir alle durften Vorschläge,” *Frau und Mutter*, May 1961.

KDFB journal with the broadest readership, argued that Catholic women should think of themselves as “co-responsible” for the Council as they would be just as affected as anyone else by the outcome.³⁴⁷ However, the KDFB as an institution did not facilitate this responsibility, submitting a petition that was only signed by Helene Weber and Gertrud Ehrle without the input of their broader membership. Regina Illemaann offers potential reasons on why the KDFB took this course of action, from time constraints to leaders’ beliefs that they themselves could “authentically” represent the wishes of the broader membership, but in the end, Illemaann explains that the ZKFM and KDFB demands for the Council, though very different, ended up presenting a “complementary” picture of what German Catholic women expected from the Council. Both organizations submitted their proposals directly to Frings, who packaged them together, and, with a letter of support, sent them on to the Council.³⁴⁸ Illemaann asserts that members of the KDFB most likely shared the exact concerns that the ZKFM did, and agreed with the issues that organization proposed, but the KDFB’s submission to the Council referenced hopes for broader, societal changes. These included discussions of women’s “double burden” in the family and work life, and women’s position within the Catholic hierarchy. Despite these submissions, Illemaann’s research into the KDFB, along with my own, uncovered no internal documents related to leadership discussions about the Council. Illemaann speculates that the lack of KDFB engagement with Council preparations, both internally and in public, is due to the fact that leadership did not consider the Council a “gender-specific” topic, but rather a Catholic one.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Illemaann, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 349.

³⁴⁸ Illemaann, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 350. An Austrian journal, *Wort und Wahrheit*, also surveyed readers about requests for Vatican II and received 81 responses, with only five coming from women. Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, 66.

³⁴⁹ Illemaann, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 351.

Illemaan's speculations, however, are belied by the participation of Ehrle as an auditor during Vatican II. According to Helga Sourek, who was Ehrle's long-time friend and who translated for her during the Council, Ehrle was deeply invested in the course of the Council and how Church issues directly affected women. Ehrle's most important focus, Sourek stated, was her dedication to international Catholic women's networks and how these networks could secure women political rights across the globe.³⁵⁰ Ehrle's leadership roles in WUCWO, the KDFB, and the National German Women's Council certainly speak to how she connected her goals in both the religious and secular spheres. And, as a board member of WUCWO, Ehrle participated in preparations for the Council twice over, also acting as an architect for the international organization's own submission to the Central Commission.³⁵¹ WUCWO's proposal was crafted like the ZKFM's, in consultation with clerics and membership. Maria del Pilar Bellosillo, president of WUCWO from 1961 to 1974, recalled that her main concern was to act as an intermediary between the Council and WUCWO members, passing along all information between the two groups that she could. WUCWO's proposal focused on similar themes to the ZKFM and KDFB's, like women's role in family life and within the Church as laity, issues that Bellosillo argued were important to the 36 million Catholic women she represented. Bellosillo herself was also selected as one of the few female auditors for the Council, and argued that she and the other women were selected as auditors because the pope told them they were "experts in life."³⁵²

The approaches of Dirks, Ehrle, and Bellosillo, as the presidents of their respective organizations, show that even if not every Catholic woman was engaged with the process of

³⁵⁰ McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*, 86.

³⁵¹ Ehrle was also well connected with the Catholic hierarchy during the era of Vatican II. Her uncle, Curial Cardinal Franz Ehrle, served as the Vatican's librarian.

³⁵² McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*, 114-115.

Vatican II, many were. Both Dirks and Bellosillo, along with the leadership of their respective organizations, reached out to average Catholic women to see what they wanted from the Council and packaged these concerns as goals of the organizations at large. Implicitly, Ehrle did the same; the KDFB proposal may not have asked for the input of the members, but it did represent the organization's overarching goals. These women and their associations sought to represent the needs of women specifically, and in many ways these needs overlapped with how the Church hierarchy perceived women's needs as well. The phrase "experts in life," as Pope Paul called Catholic women, pointed to an understanding of women's responsibility for the daily sustainability of the world: from the individual family, to the Church, and to the broader world. It is clear that organizational leaders agreed with this to an extent, but they also saw themselves as capable of intervening on issues beyond the realms of what the pope's words implied. The KDFB's commitment to equal political rights for women globally and both the ZKFM and WUCWO's commitments to shaping Catholic dogma on every level speak to this. Even though not every suggestion from every member made it in their final organizational proposals, each operated as essential intermediaries between lay women and the Central Commission of the Council. Each did what was possible to make sure that the laity, and women in particular, played a role in the Council and benefited from its outcome.

While organizations like the ZKFM opened their ears to lay women, there were limits to what they were willing to submit in their Council proposals. The lay response to the call for proposals, and letter exchanges between leadership and theological experts, was supplemented by ZKFM intra-organizational discussions at conferences which often featured more radical voices. Just as in the lay responses, the issues debated were numerous and many women presented different viewpoints on the issues championed by ZKFM leadership, as well as issues

that were too inflammatory for the ZKFM to include in their proposal. Beyond this, Catholic women also debated the best way for their ideas to be presented to the Council: how best to argue for women's issues as women when they were not allowed to speak at the Council? At the ZKFM annual conference in Maria Rosenberg in June of 1961, Gössmann, gave the closing presentation. For Gössmann, the importance of Vatican II was rooted in the Church finally acknowledging women and their essential role in keeping the Church alive. Gössmann argued that the Church has long lived upon the labors of its female flock without asking for the same service of men. She noted that understanding how the Church has devalued the feminine and women's service was essential to the questions of Christian renewal proposed by the pope and Council.³⁵³ Gössmann's comments were particularly apt at the time of her presentation, considering the Central Commission's request for lay organizations like the ZKFM to author proposals for the Council. The invalidation of female labor that was performed in service of the Church and in its name was something that had been implicit in ZKFM thought during the 1950s, if not explicitly stated publicly. Dirks and others often spoke about the important work women had done in the Church, and continued to do, but ZKFM leaders had never specifically called out the Church's subordination of women as pointedly as Gössmann. Gössmann criticized the patriarchal structure of the Church for ignoring the work women already did to renew the Church and argued that the Church was an historic institution not immune to fallibility.³⁵⁴ Unlike the ZKFM proposal that called for changes to Catholicism that were more personalized and individually tailored to daily religious practice, Gössmann called out the overarching structures of the Church and long-standing behavior that she wanted changed. While both Gössmann and

³⁵³ Elisabeth Gössmann "Der Dienst der Frau an der Erneuerung der Kirche," Presentation at the ZKFM annual conference in Maria Rosenberg, June 5-9, 1961, KFD Archive Folder 565.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

the ZKFM leadership wanted women's place in the Church acknowledged by clerics at the highest level, for Gössmann, this acknowledgement meant systemic change to how the entire Church operated, not merely changing relationships between clergy and laity on the ground or subtle shifts in Catholic doctrine. Since, in many ways, the ZKFM operated in a liminal space within the Church hierarchy, proposals of systemic change could potentially upset the delicate balance and space the ZKFM had carved for itself in the existing system.

For similar reasons, ZKFM leadership also rejected a more inflammatory call for change that came from a proposal put forth to the Council by Dr. Gertud Heinzelmänn. The ZKFM received a copy of Heinzelmänn's proposal while they were preparing their own, but never directly addressed its contents. Heinzelmänn, a Swiss lawyer and suffrage leader, argued on behalf of the women's movement in Switzerland and cited the Catholic Church as a body that religiously discriminated against women globally. Sections of Heinzelmänn's manifesto were circulated to many Catholic women's organizations, and eventually published in *Die Staatsbürgerin* in the summer of 1962. *Die Staatsbürgerin* was a Swiss publication under the umbrella of The Zürich Association for Voting Rights for Women. This particular section was titled, "Women and Council: Hope and Expectation" and was translated into various languages for international consumption and submitted to the Central Commission of Vatican II on May 23, 1962. A broader manifesto that was eventually published contained various submissions, ranging from May 1962 to late 1964. Theologians, lawyers, and scholars from across the world were represented in the final publication, titled "We Won't Keep Silent Any Longer!"³⁵⁵ Heinzelmänn's proposal offered a skewering critique of what she saw as out-dated Catholic doctrine and practice that subordinated women. She took on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas

³⁵⁵ "Frau und Konzil-Hoffnung und Erwartung," 1962-1964.

and argued that the Church's reliance on ancient and medieval thinking of gender painted women as imperfect and passive beings, ideas that the Church was still perpetuating in the twentieth century. In Heinzelmann's view, the Church needed to "formally" correct this thinking in its official teachings. One way this could occur, she asserted, was through the formal ordination of women and their acceptance into the Catholic hierarchy, an exclusion she called "a human tragedy of enormous dimensions." Heinzelmann threatened the very institution of the Church itself, reminding clerics that if women were not religiously fulfilled within its confines, they may well leave. Heinzelmann wrote, "By their fidelity, their profound religious aspirations, and their service in the education of children, women are an essential support to the Church. Whether they could continue to show such devotion if the official teaching of the Church on women were known to them is a question."³⁵⁶

Women's ordination was never seriously discussed by ZKFM leadership as something they were willing to add to their Council proposal and no lay women they surveyed suggested it be added to the document. However, three West German women did submit personal proposals to the Council on their own: Ida Raming, Iris Müller, and Josefa Theresia Münch. Münch learned personally the likelihood of women's ordination being heard at Vatican II when she asked German Bishop Walther Kampe at a conciliar press conference if women would be invited to the Council. Kampe responded, as the crowd laughed, "Perhaps to the Third Vatican Council."³⁵⁷ More radical voices like these West German women, along with Gössmann and Heinzelmann, stretched the limits of the ZKFM's willingness to engage with more progressive ideas, and that of the Church's as well. The Church may have invited lay women's organizations, and individual Catholics, to submit proposals to the Council, but certain issues were immediately tabled. Canon

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, 66.

law of the Church prior to Vatican II marked women as inferior to men, requiring women to veil in Church and not allow them full membership into religious orders or participation as altar servers, readers, or into the official hierarchy.³⁵⁸ From the reception of suggestions of women's ordination, it did not seem likely that this would change as the Council approached.

The ZKFM was ready to submit their final proposal in June of 1961. The proposal, according to the ZKFM, was a document that represented the over one million Catholic women they represented, as well as their families and communities. Personal letters were included as well as an appendix to their 11 page proposal.³⁵⁹ The proposal concerned both practical changes to Catholic practice and suggestions for theological updates. Vernacular worship, a modified order of Sunday readings, an allowance for women to act as Eucharistic ministers, exemptions from Church donations, and mothers' presence at baptisms were all issues that were included. On the more theological side, the ZKFM wanted the inclusion of widows and virgins in the liturgy, an allowance of mixed marriages, and priests to be educated on the latest information in psychology and pedagogy on how to handle mentally ill parishioners and laity in crisis. They also wanted more acceptance and less alienation: for married couples practicing birth control, widows and single women, of unbaptized children, and people in mixed-marriages.³⁶⁰

The proposal as a document represented things that were deeply personal to the women of the ZKFM and also items that portrayed how the ZKFM saw themselves as an organization. Interpretations of modern medicine and science, academic advancements, and religious doctrine collided and influenced and reshaped each other, both in the minds of individual women and in the ZKFM as an organization. Though many ZKFM members saw themselves as women of God,

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 64. Canon 702 barred women from religious orders and Canon 1262 required veils and modest dress.

³⁵⁹ Marianne Dirks, "Vorschläge des Zentralverbandes der Frauen und Müttergemeinschaften," May 30, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 617.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

they also were very much in support of using contemporary psychology, sociology, and biology to supplement their worldviews. As demonstrated by the discussions around procreation in marriage, the ZKFM wrestled with how to square all of these different ideas from both secular and religious perspectives. It is clear ZKFM leaders were conscious of how to make arguments that the Church would respond to and how to utilize the rhetoric that would persuade clerics to take their concerns seriously, but they were also willing to push beyond these boundaries in order to make sure they got the best possible outcome. This is evident in the rather contentious way Dirks interacted with Frings when the ZKFM submitted the final document. Dirks presented the ZKFM's proposal to Frings on June 3, 1961. She discussed with him the most important highlights of the proposal and recalled that he seemed "open" to the ZKFM's arguments. However, Dirks worried that Frings' reservations might impede his ability to argue their case to the Council and that he seemed "evasive" when directly questioned about his intentions.³⁶¹ In a letter to Cardinal Julius Döpfner, another central Vatican II figure, Dirks outlined that Frings seemed uneasy concerning some of the specific wording in the proposal and her inclusion of personal letters from members. To Dirks, it made sense to include these voices in the proposal as the letters showed how important each issue in the proposal was to actual West German Catholic women and that each included issue was chosen with careful purpose. Dirks asked Döpfner if he would present the proposal on behalf of the ZKFM at Council if Frings ended up refusing to do so.³⁶² Throughout June of 1961, Dirks submitted copies of the ZKFM proposal to many German clerics, perhaps further concerned about Frings' reluctance. It is clear that this was an attempt to garner as much support from clerics as possible in the hopes that one or more might present the ZKFM's proposal if Frings would not. These clerics included Bishop Hensbach of Essen,

³⁶¹ Marianne Dirks to Julius Döpfner, June 4, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 741.1.

³⁶² Ibid.

Archbishop Jäger of Paderborn, and Bishop Wittler of Osnabrück. Bishop Wittler replied to Dirks in a letter, and said that while he was generally “pleased” with their proposal, there were a few issues that “went beyond the scope of what seemed appropriate” to ask of the Council.³⁶³

In July, Dirks sent another missive to Frings, urging him to add a few new concerns to the ZKFM’s proposal.³⁶⁴ Frings replied in August, and in his short response, informed Dirks that he would not be able to make further inquiries to Rome on behalf of the ZKFM. Frings also commented that he saw it as inappropriate behavior for Dirks and the women of the ZKFM to make these suggestions to him “on their own initiative.”³⁶⁵ Despite the harsh rebuke from Frings, and guidance from other clerics that suggested Dirks should stop pushing the ZKFM’s agenda onto the upcoming Council, Dirks once again wrote to Frings in October of 1961. She asserted the she felt “compelled” to pass on further insights and information provided to her by ZKFM members and *Frau und Mutter* readers. Dirks argued that this was exactly what the Church, and Frings, had asked for: if the Council was to revitalize Catholic life and Catholic families, then it needed continued insights from Catholic women.³⁶⁶ This interaction between Dirks and Frings is key to understanding the ZKFM’s position in relationship to the Church and how this relationship operated in a nuanced way. The clergy welcomed the ZKFM’s input, until they did not; though the boundaries of what was appropriate for the ZKFM to do in the eyes of the Church were not always clear, there were often hard limits that became visible once they were pushed against. Dirks and the ZKFM were not always willing to push these limits, but here, Dirks was even willing to circumvent Frings if he was not game to present their proposal as it stood, hedging her bets by reaching out to Döpfner and other clerics. This was a tricky path for

³⁶³ Bishop of Osnabrück to Marianne Dirks, June 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

³⁶⁴ Marianne Dirks to Joseph Frings, July 19, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

³⁶⁵ Joseph Frings to Marianne Dirks, August 21, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

³⁶⁶ Marianne Dirks to Joseph Frings, October 12, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

the ZKFM navigate. As intermediaries with personal relationships with members of the Catholic hierarchy, they were in a better position than most West German Catholic women to communicate with high-ranking members of the Council. However, these relationships were inherently unequal and fragile, and a reliance on these personal relationships could backfire without recompense: if Frings and Döpfner rejected the ZKFM's proposal, what could the organization do to get it into the Central Commission's hands?

In many ways, Dirks' role in the ZKFM was that of a diplomat. She, more than any other member, had to know when and how to push the Church to get the ZKFM's goals fulfilled. Dirks understood that some boundaries between the organization and the hierarchy were malleable, and her position from the margins of the Church gave her both leeway to push these boundaries and limited her reach in doing so. The story of Vatican II was one of networks of negotiation that entangled every Catholic participant from the pope downward. Cardinals like Liénart and Frings negotiated with the pope and other elite clerics within the Central Commission. Frings went further later in the Council and wrote an opinion that took a negative view about papal interventions in Catholic life and was personally chastised by the pope himself for overstepping his boundaries.³⁶⁷ And as Dirks negotiated similarly with Frings, she also negotiated with the regular members of the ZKFM, diplomatically deciding the boundaries of what the ZKFM would stand for on the stage of the Council and how she would explain that stance to the organization. In August of 1961, Dirks reported to membership that their preparations for Vatican II had been a success. To Dirks, this success was due to the hard work of ZKFM leadership in drafting the proposal and the work of members that acted as respondents to add their own issues to the document. Dirks reported that the final proposal had been submitted to the Council and that the

³⁶⁷ John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 279.

women's contribution had been "essential" and that German clerics had informed her that the ZKFM's proposal was a "valuable" addition.³⁶⁸ Many members wrote to Dirks personally to thank her, in turn, for all of her work organizing the proposal. One wrote, "thank you for all of your effort and honest interest in women, their families, and communities."³⁶⁹

While Dirks' communication with clerics show her as a diplomat speaking to those with greater power than herself, her communications with ZKFM members portray her as a diplomat in a different power dynamic. Dirks and other ZKFM leaders ultimately had final say over what went into their proposal for the Council. Dirks made sure that ZKFM members knew that their contributions were important, and it was clear from responses that many members viewed Dirks' individual work as integral to the entire process. This perception of cooperation and collaboration was essential to the ZKFM as an organization that managed to retain wide lay support during a time of declining religious participation in the Catholic Church. This perception gave the ZKFM power in its relationship with the Catholic hierarchy as well, since clerics understood that the ZKFM was an important part of the Catholic network, able to communicate closely and relate personally to West German lay women. While the ZKFM certainly benefitted from these perceptions, and actively cultivated them, I do not mean to argue that Dirks and other ZKFM leaders operated from a place of insincerity. Dirks and the ZKFM did not always adhere to advice from the clergy or requests from lay women, but the ZKFM consistently attempted to do what they thought was best for Catholic women, at home and abroad. This is clear in the time and labor they dedicated to Vatican II and in how Dirks spoke to members about their contributions. Right before the beginning of the Council's first session in the fall of 1962, Dirks published another article in *Frau und Mutter* that reminded readers that the ZKFM's proposal

³⁶⁸ Marianne Dirks, "Familienwünsche an das Konzil," August 11, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

³⁶⁹ A. to Marianne Dirks, June 24, 1961. KFD Archive Folder 607.

provided the leaders of the Council with “clues” as to where the starting points may be for Christian renewal. Dirks told readers to “rejoice” as they were actively involved in the Council. She reminded women that they were important to the Church as laity, and though they should have mediated expectations on the Council’s outcome, they should know that change was coming and that ZKFM women would play a role in how that change manifested.³⁷⁰

The ZKFM’s proposal to the Council outlined that what they wanted out of Catholicism as a whole was not necessarily separate from what they wanted as women. Despite being lay women, they saw many issues, from minute details about Catholic practice to broad dogmatic change, as under their purview. Even how they asked for things and what they wanted reflected their faith, it did not belie it. Where they utilized their publications to argue for unorthodox ideas, for Vatican II, their interventions seem less revolutionary. It can seem that way, as the ZKFM presented a comparatively tame proposal to Vatican II. While Dirks and other ZKFM leaders were willing to push the boundaries of Catholicism, both in terms of doctrine and in their relationships with clerics, their proposal also demonstrates where the organization’s limits were. However, I would also argue that they did not see their proposal as tame, but rather, as an accurate reflection of the female intellectual and spiritual labor that it took to craft it. The ZKFM used the stage of Vatican II to argue for their particular version of Catholicism, a perspective that often still upheld traditional conservative Catholic values. These values were central to their proposal and included items related to family and marriage most prominently. However, the ZKFM also asked for changes to these issues, including alterations to long-standing sacramental laws around marriage and baptism. As seen by the proposal they submitted in a time where the organization could foment the most change in their faith, the ZKFM did not want to change

³⁷⁰ Marianne Dirks, “Vor dem Beginn des Konzils,” KFD Archive Folder 632.

women's roles in the family and marriage so much as they wanted the recognition they thought women deserved for upholding these institutions, and through them, the Church, state, and fabric of society at large.

The Council and Its Aftermath

Vatican II took place between 1962 and 1965 and consisted of four ten-week sessions every autumn. However, important work was also conducted between sessions and some argue that this "in-between" labor steered the course of the Council.³⁷¹ This Council, and the ones that preceded it, assembled all high-ranking Catholic clergy and those with particular jurisdiction over other Catholic sects. This included cardinals, bishops, abbots, and the prelates of the Jesuits and other sects as duty-bound voting members. For Vatican II, voting clerics numbered around 2,750. Voting in Vatican II was influenced by democratic, parliamentary systems of government that had grown since Vatican I, attempting to capture consensus among the voting members.³⁷² Theologians and other religious experts could only advise, but were welcome to attend, depending on their gender, and depending on the session. An audience was permitted to observe the proceedings, beginning during the second session in 1963, and women were permitted into this audience during the third and fourth sessions.³⁷³

The question of women's attendance and participation came up consistently during the Council. At the first session in 1962, a Protestant observer commented on the fact that no women were present, stating "it is an abstracted body, incomplete, a torso of true Catholicity, speaking more of an outmoded past than a living present."³⁷⁴ Pope John also recognized this living present

³⁷¹ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 2.

³⁷² Faggioli, "The Council as Ecclesial Process," *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*, 75.

³⁷³ See Otto Hermann Pesch, *The Second Vatican Council: Prehistory, Event, Results, Posthistory* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2014) for extremely detailed descriptions of the rules and regulations regarding Vatican II.

³⁷⁴ Douglas Horton, *Vatican Diary 1962: A Protestant Observes the First Session of Vatican Council II* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1964), 63.

in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* released in April of 1963, shortly before his death.³⁷⁵ In the encyclical, the pope acknowledged the increasing ways women were intervening in public and political life in many nations across the globe. He wrote that women, “far from being content with a purely passive role...they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons.”³⁷⁶ This was a significant statement from the papal office that signaled further changing Church attitudes toward the role of women in society, if not in the Church itself. However, the Council began adapting as well. Debates erupted among clerics during the second session about the absence of female participation in Council proceedings. Lay auditors were appointed by Pope Paul during the second session after they were called for by clerics including Cardinal Suenens of Belgium, and by the third, these auditors included fifteen lay women and nine nuns as well. Lay auditors played a “significant” role in the Council, and the inclusion of women was something that had never been allowed at any previous Council.³⁷⁷ These women assisted in preparations between sessions as well, working together with individual commissions to create documents that would be presented. According to Tichenor, these women’s participation “contributed to a new understanding of women’s place in Church and society.”³⁷⁸ Tichenor’s claim of the effect of female lay auditors, along with earlier conversations about women’s inclusion, on the Church can be seen immediately in Council proceedings. Bishop Gérard Coderre of Québec, Canada and Bishop Augustin Frotz of Cologne spoke on behalf of forty other bishops during the third session in

³⁷⁵ Pope John died on June 3, 1963. Pope Paul VI was elected on June 21, 1963 and gave his permission for the continuation of the Council.

³⁷⁶ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*: Encyclical of Pope John XXIII On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty, April 11, 1963.

³⁷⁷ Faggioli, “The Council as Ecclesial Process,” 72. See also Michael Fellner, *Katholische Kirche in Bayern: Religion, Gesellschaft und Modernisierung in der Erzdiözese München und Freising* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008), and Christian Schmidtman, *Katholische Studierende, 1945–1973: Ein Beitrag zur Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006).

³⁷⁸ Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, 43.

1964 in order to speak on the Church's responsibility to elevate the position of women in societies worldwide.³⁷⁹

Vatican II closed on December 8, 1965. Over the course of the Council, four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations were passed. These three legal forms are listed in descending order of importance: constitutions are considered to be the most important documents and thus contain the main statements of the Council.³⁸⁰ These documents covered the topics of divine revelation, liturgy, ecumenism, missionary activity, and laic religious practice and are considered the “most authoritative and accessible legacy” of Vatican II.³⁸¹ Though authoritative, the sixteen documents were born from often bitter debates over the language and content of each, and even issues that were exceedingly popular among the laity, like vernacular worship, were argued over for weeks before clerics reached consensus.³⁸² Vatican scholar John O'Malley refers to discussions about the place of the laity in Catholicism as one of the most important issues of Vatican II. In fact, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the decree concerning the laity, was one of the only documents that was agreed upon by clerics easily and without much argument.³⁸³ This decree, along with the constitution *Lumen Gentium*, “offers a positive and enabling interpretation of the place and role of the laity.”³⁸⁴ The *Lumen Gentium* in particular recognized that the Church understood and acknowledged the importance of the laity to the Catholic mission, and that the world could not achieve salvation through the work of the hierarchy alone.³⁸⁵

³⁷⁹ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 235.

³⁸⁰ Pesch, *The Second Vatican Council*, 73.

³⁸¹ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 2.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁸⁴ Gerard Mannion, “The Pilgrim Church: An Ongoing Journey of Ecclesial Renewal and Reform,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*, 125.

³⁸⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964.

In terms of equality and recognition for women, the constitution *Gaudium et spes* focused on defining the Church's view of the modern world and the basic human rights and dignity of all people. The document stated, "with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent." *Gaudium et spes* also specifically referenced women several times, adding to the above statement that women should be free to "to embrace a state of life or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men." The domestic roles of women were acknowledged and upheld as essential, but the document also made clear that the "legitimate social progress of women should not be underrated on that account."³⁸⁶ This acknowledgment of the importance of women, as a gender and as lay people was a positive outcome for many Catholic women. Vatican II, as Tichenor succinctly argues:

"highlighted the Church's obligation to engage in dialogue with the modern world. The specific theological innovations that the Council introduced — for example, a more positive valuation of the laity, a new emphasis on the missionary function of priests, tolerance for other systems of belief and collegiality — led secular and religious commentators to describe Vatican II as a watershed in Catholic history."³⁸⁷

This watershed, however, took time to realize. After the Council produced sixteen new documents that would guide the Church moving forward, Catholic clergy continued to battle about the true meanings in each document, particularly about women's role in the Church.

Though Vatican II had declared women essentially equal with men in the eyes of the Church, as late as the 1980s few women held powerful positions within the Church, still mainly relegated to

³⁸⁶ *Gaudium et spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, December 7, 1965.

³⁸⁷ Tichenor, *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation*, 5-6.

the work of caretakers.³⁸⁸ In the immediate aftermath, however, things in the Church seemed ripe for change. Women were officially no longer prohibited for handing out communion at Church services or from presenting a reading from the bible. In the decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Pope Paul further asserted women's changing place in the daily life of the Church. He stated, "Since in our times women have an ever more active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they also participate more widely in the various fields of the Church's apostolate." He reflected on the sanctity and cooperative nature of the marriage bond and the family unit, citing these institutions as the "domestic sanctuary of the Church." He also pushed both men and women to intervene in their governments to pursue family-friendly policies on housing, taxes, and education, to preserve the family as the "first and vital cell of society."³⁸⁹

This rhetoric was not foreign to West German Catholic women, as it evoked the importance of the family, motherhood, and marriage. ZKFM leaders, though, saw Vatican II as quite revolutionary in the changes that it did bring. Not only did the upper echelons of the Church hierarchy engage in dialogue with lay Catholics, but the Council also codified an emphasis on unity between Protestants and Catholics, an acknowledgment of the importance of the laity, and recognition of the essential roles women played in the Church.³⁹⁰ Due to their participation in Vatican II, ZKFM leaders understood their organization as a transforming force, equal and complementary to the clergy.³⁹¹ Dirks and other ZKFM leaders understood this elevation of the laity as recognition of centuries of lay labor and a new appreciation for that work.³⁹²

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 59.

³⁸⁹ Pope Paul VI, "*Apostolicam Actuositatem*: Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" November 18, 1965. Pope Paul believed the most important fields of action for the apostolate to be Church communities, family, youth, national and international affairs.

³⁹⁰ Marianne Dirks, "Das neue Verhältnis von Laien und Priestern nach dem Vatican II," 1968, KFD Folder 695.

³⁹¹ "Die Frauen und Müttergemeinschaften nach dem Konzil," KFD Archive Folder 372.2.

³⁹² Marianne Dirks, "Das neue Verhältnis von Laien und Priestern nach dem Vatican II," 1968, KFD Folder 695.

In a sense, the ZKFM proposal to the Council was a culmination of decades of effort. ZKFM mobilization of their long-cultivated relationships and networks allowed them to put their fingers on the pulse of German Catholic women in order to find out what average lay women wanted out of their Church. Their proposal reflected what the organization valued most: representing its membership, negotiating tensions between personal faith and other ways of knowing, and above all, their commitment to the appreciation of women and the intellectual, social, and domestic labor that required. Because of the work of ZKFM leadership, their struggles and hopes were heard by the top officials of the Church. While some Catholic women were disappointed the women's ordination and birth control were not discussed by the Council, ZKFM leaders were overjoyed at the recognition of women's and lay equality within the Church. On their terms, their intervention into the Council was a success.

CONCLUSION

Vatican II greatly impacted the ZKFM. In 2012, ZKFM President Maria Theresia Opladen spoke in celebration of the Council's 50th anniversary. Opladen, like ZKFM presidents before her, saw the influence the ZKFM had on the Church over the fifty years since the Council convened. In her words, the ZKFM's contributions included a continued commitment to divorced and re-married women, ecumenism between Catholics and other religions, and women's participation in Church decisions.³⁹³ The ZKFM had come a long way from the statutes of 1951 that denied non-married women entry into the organization. Opladen's message, though effusive of ZKFM's virtues, was not simply ZKFM propaganda; the ZKFM did commit to all of these goals as an organization. Where Opladen is incorrect, though, is about the beginnings of those commitments. The ZKFM's work on all three issues mentioned here began long before the Council first met in 1962. Establishing a fruitful dialogue with Catholic clergy, influencing Church policy, and the organization's willingness to intervene were all things that were established organizational practices in the 1950s, as this dissertation has shown.

Chapter One demonstrated that the ZKFM produced and shaped knowledge about Catholicism as it intertwined with the lives of women, both inside and outside of West Germany. Women of the ZKFM were overseen and guided by Catholic clergy and principles, but they used this structure to facilitate national and international conferences, run by and for Catholic women, conferences at which they could publicly debate their own place within the world. These conferences were sites of knowledge production and reproduction, as women from the ZKFM and other Catholic organizations could hear disparate viewpoints that influenced their

³⁹³ "Viele Chancen blieben bisher ungenutzt: Katholische Frauengemeinschaft zum Beginn des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils vor 50 Jahren," October 8, 2012. Accessed April 15, 2022. <https://www.kfd-bundesverband.de/pressemitteilung/viele-chancen-blieben-bisher-ungenutzt-katholische-frauengemeinschaft-zum-beginn-des-zweiten-vatika/>.

organizational agendas, as they influenced the agendas of others. Conferences were a key site of the ZKFM's intellectual labor and engagement.

Chapter Two moved beyond the organizations to look at how the publications of the ZKFM and KDFB were used as apparatuses to engage members and the average West German Catholic. Through their journals, the ZKFM and KDFB funneled information to the public and intervened in public debates about gender, family and marriage, women's labor, and discussions about the Basic Law and the Civil Code. Hundreds of thousands of West Germans subscribed to *Frau und Mutter* and *Die christliche Frau*, cementing the publications as staples of Catholic women's lives and as legitimate pieces of West German Catholic intellectual culture. The journals helped the ZKFM and KDFB build bridges outward to the public to encourage lay Catholic action on issues the organizations deemed important. Through the journals, the organizations amplified the voices of membership and noted what issues these members thought were important to their lives. The Catholic Church recognized the importance of this organizational power to reach women as many West Germans began to lead more secular lives.

Chapter Three looked at the benevolent work of West German Catholic women's associations, from the local to the international. Women of the ZKFM and KDFB viewed benevolence as a key component of their associational work as women and Catholics and created initiatives to help both families down the street and women across the globe. The destruction of WWII made the organizations reshape how they conceived of benevolence at home, mobilizing to help West Germans struggling with the after effects of the world war. As time passed, the ZKFM and KDFB turned outward once again to help women beyond the borders of their nation, from East Germans to women in Asia and Africa. Their benevolent activities at home and abroad

show the resources and abilities Catholic women's organizations had at their disposal as part of the Catholic network and how ambitious their reach could be.

Ambition also drove the ZKFM, KDFB, and WUCWO to submit proposals for Vatican II, a watershed moment in Catholic history. Chapter Four examined Vatican II as a culmination of the previous decades of Catholic women's organizational work as the organizations prepared for the Council by submitting proposals of things about Catholic dogma and practice that they wanted changed. They took their religion seriously and discussed Catholicism down to the minutiae before deciding how best to present their aims to the clerics at the Council. While some believed that Vatican II failed women, ZKFM leaders saw it as a victory for lay women everywhere as their work in the family, the state, and the Church was finally recognized on the largest Catholic stage possible.

However, that is not to say that in the decades following Vatican II the ZKFM didn't change as an organization. In 1972, there was a shift in ZKFM leadership. Dirks stepped down as ZKFM President and Anneliese Lissner, who had operated both as Secretary General and Editor of *Frau und Mutter*, hand the editorial reins to Ruth Ahl. With this new change in leadership, the ZKFM began to broaden the issues it discussed in its magazine, including divorce counseling, sexual education, and sexual harassment. In June of 1974, members of the ZKFM attended a conference in Berlin titled "Sexism in the 1970's" put on by the World Council of Churches. Hundreds of women from around the world participated, many of them from religious organizations. Topics of the conference included sexism in the workplace, in the Church, and in society.³⁹⁴ While an ever-timely topic, it may be difficult for people to believe that a Catholic women's organization like the ZKFM would be eager to attend such a conference if one

³⁹⁴ KFD Archive Folder 543.

remembers the organization's guiding principles during the first half of the twentieth century. However, as this project has shown, the ZKFM and its compatriot organizations could and did exhibit nuanced perspectives that suggest historians should view postwar Catholic history as something broader than patriarchal and conservative. Women in the ZKFM espoused a variety of opinions, but as an organization, the ZKFM was run by motivated Catholic intellectuals that engaged with and intervened in West German society.

Indeed, the work of West German Catholic women's organizations during the postwar was myriad. This involved the literal work of conference organizing, journal printing, and providing benevolent aid, but also other kinds of labor. For one, Dirks and other Catholic women's leaders worked as diplomats, learning how to successfully navigate the ZKFM's liminality as an organization that was perhaps as close to being part of the Catholic Church hierarchy as one could get without actually being in it. Knowing where the boundaries were, and when to push against them, was an important part of leading a Catholic women's organization during the postwar. Beyond the literal and the diplomatic, the core of the work of the ZKFM and other associations like it was intellectual. Women in organizations like the ZKFM and KDFB should rightly find their place in historical scholarship on postwar intellectuals, as they produced and shaped knowledge centered around their Catholic faith and experiences as women in West Germany. These women were active agents in postwar West Germany and by studying them and their intellectual work, we can gain a better understanding of how the history of religion and religious thought, intellectual history, the social history of female Catholic associational life, and studies of postwar West Germany intersect and shape each other.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL PAPERS

Archbishop's Diocesan and Cathedral Library, Cologne, Germany

Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund Archive, Cologne, Germany

Katholische Frauengemeinschaft Deutschlands Archive, Düsseldorf, Germany

NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS

Basler Volksblatt

Christlicher Beobachter

Die christliche Frau

Die Staatsbürgerin

Frankfurter Hefte

Frau und Beruf

Frau und Mutter

Frauenland

Tag des Herrn

Wort und Wahrheit

OTHER PUBLISHED MATERIALS

Breme, Gabrielle. *Die politische Rolle der Frau in Deutschland: Eine Untersuchung über den Einfluss der Frauen bei Wahlen und ihre Teilnahme in Partei und Parlament*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1956.

Die Frau in Kirche und Volk. Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1950.

Helbach, Uriel, editor. *Akten Deutscher Bischöfe seit 1945: Westliche Besatzungszonen 1945-1947*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012.

Horton, Douglas. *Vatican Diary 1962: A Protestant Observes the First Session of Vatican Council II*. Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1964.

Mosshammer, Otilie. *Werkbuch der katholischen Mädchenbildung*. Freiburg: Herder, 1951.

Pope John XXIII. *Pacem in Terris: Encyclical of Pope John XXIII On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty*. April 11, 1963.

Pope Paul VI. *Apostolicam Actuositatem: Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*. November 18, 1965.

Pope Paul VI. *Gaudium et spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*.

December 7, 1965.

Pope Paul VI. *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*. November 21, 1964.

Rocholl- Gärtner, Ingebourg, editor. *Anwalt der Frauen: Hermann Klens, Leben und Werk*. Düsseldorf: Klens-Verlag, 1978.

ARTICLES

Bergen, Doris L. "Nazism and Christianity: Partners and Rivals? A Response to Richard Stiegmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 1 (2007).

Biess, Frank. "Thinking after Hitler: The New Intellectual History of the Federal Republic of Germany." *History & Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 221-45.

Connelly, John. "Nazi Racism and the Church: How Converts Showed the Way to Resist." *Commonweal* 24 (February 2012): 12-16.

Crouthamel, Jason. "Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 1 (January 2008): 60-84.

Heineman, Elizabeth. "The Economic Miracle in the Bedroom: Big Business and Sexual Consumption in Reconstruction West Germany" *Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006): 846-877.

Hollmann, Nikola. "100 Jahrgänge Frau und Mutter: Die Geschichte der größten deutschsprachigen katholischen Zeitschrift." March 22, 2018. <https://www.kfdbundesverband.de/frau-und-mutter/geschichte/100-jahrgaenge-frau-und-mutter/>.

Huber-Sperl, Rita. "Organized Women and the Strong State: The Beginnings of Female Associational Activity in Germany, 1810-1840." *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 81-105.

Judt, Tony. "The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe." *Daedalus* 121, no. 4 (1992).

Mitchell, Maria D. "Materialism and Secularism: CDU Politicians and National Socialism, 1945-1949." *The Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 2 (June 1995).

Moses, Dirk A. "Forum: Intellectual History in and of the Federal Republic of Germany," *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 3 (2012): 625-39.

Nehring, Holger and Helge Pharö. "Introduction: A Peaceful Europe? Negotiating Peace in the Twentieth Century." *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 3 (August 2008): 277-299.

Rafferty, Oliver P. "Vatican II: A Retrospective." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 99, no. 394 (2010): 154-5.

Requate, Jörg. "Öffentlichkeit und Medien als Gegenstände historischer Analyse." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 25, no. 1 (1999): 5-32.

Ruff, Mark Edward. "Building Bridges between Catholicism and Socialism: Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde and the Social Democratic Party." *Journal of Contemporary European History* 29, no. 2 (April 2020): 155-170.

Schildt, Axel. "Das Jahrhundert der Massenmedien: Ansichten zu einer künftigen Geschichte der Öffentlichkeit." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27, no. 2 (2001): 177-206.

Slobodian, Quinn. "Germany's 1968 and Its Enemies." *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 3 (June 2018): 749-752.

van Rahden, Till. "Clumsy Democrats: Moral Passions in the Federal Republic." *German History* 29, no. 3 (2011): 485-504.

DISSERTATIONS

Brothers, Heather. "Between Tradition and Modernity: West German Catholicism and the Reconstruction of Women's Identity, 1945-1960." MA Thesis. Oakland University, 2013.

BOOKS

Allen, Ann Taylor. *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.

Anderson, Margaret Lavinia. *Practicing Democracy: Election and Political Culture in Imperial Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Bajohr, Frank, Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, Claudia Kemper, and Detlef Siegfried, editors. *Mehr als eine Erzählung: Zeitgeschichtliche Perspektiven auf die Bundesrepublik*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016.

Beilmann, Christel. *Eine Katholische Jugend in Gottes und Dem Dritten Reich: Briefe, Berichte, Gedrucktes 1930-1945*. Wuppertal: Hammer, 1989.

Bennette, Rebecca Ayako. *Fighting for the Soul of Germany: The Catholic Struggle for Inclusion After Unification*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

- Bergen, Doris L. *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Bessel, Richard. *Germany 1945: From War to Peace*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009.
- Best, Jeremy. *Heavenly Fatherland: German Missionary Culture and Globalization in the Age of Empire*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021.
- Betts, Paul. *Ruin and Renewal: Civilizing Europe After World War II*. New York: Basic Books, 2020.
- Betts, Paul. *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Biess, Frank. *German Angst? Fear and Democracy in Postwar West Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Biess, Frank. *Homecomings. Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Biess, Frank and Robert G. Moeller, editors. *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe*. New York: Berghahn, 2010.
- Biess, Frank, Mark Roseman, and Hanna Schissler, editors. *Conflict, Catastrophe, and Continuity: Essays on Modern German History*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2007.
- Bjork, James E. *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Black, Monica. *A Demon-Haunted Land: Witches, Wonder Doctors, and the Ghosts of the Past in Post-WWII Germany*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020.
- Blackbourn, David. *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Bismarckian Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Blaschke, Olaf and Thomoas Großbölting, editors. *Was glaubten die Deutschen zwischen 1933 und 1945? Religion und Politik im Nationalsozialismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2020.
- Bösch, Frank. *Die Adenauer-CDU: Gründung, Aufstieg und Krise einer Erfolgspartei 1945-1969*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001.
- Braun, Hans, Uta Gerhardt, and Everhard Holtmann, eds. *Die lange Stunde Null: Gelenkter sozialer Wandel in Westdeutschland nach 1945*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2007.

- Brodie, Thomas. *German Catholicism and War, 1939-1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Brown-Fleming, Suzanne. *The Holocaust and Catholic Conscience: Cardinal Aloisius Muench and the Guilt Question in Germany*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.
- Brunner, Benedikt, Thomas Großbölting, Klaus Große Kracht, and Meik Woyke, editors. *Sagen was ist: Walter Dirks in den intellektuellen und politischen Konstellationen Deutschlands und Europas*. Bonn: Dietz, 2019.
- Burton, Richard D.E. *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1970*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Caldwell, Peter C. *Democracy, Capitalism, and the Welfare State: Debating Social Order in Postwar West Germany, 1949-1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Canning, Kathleen. *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850-1914*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- Carter, Erica. *How German is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Cavadini, John C. and Danielle M. Peters, editors. *Mary on the Eve of the Second Vatican Council*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017.
- Chappel, James. *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018.
- Chasteen, John Charles. *Born in Blood in Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*. New York: Norton, 2001.
- Chin, Rita, Heide Fehrenbach, Geoff Eley, and Atina Grossmann. *After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009.
- Christie, Nancy and Michael Gauvreau, editors. *The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianization in North America and Western Europe, 1945-2000*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013.
- Clift, Elayne, editor. *Women, Philanthropy, and Social Change: Visions for a Just Society*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005.
- Cummings, Kathleen Sprows, Timothy Matovina, and Robert A. Orsi, editors. *Catholics in the Vatican II Era: Local Histories of a Global Event*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

- Curtis, Sarah. *Civilizing Habits: Women Missionaries and the Revival of the French Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Cymet, David. *History vs. Apologetics: The Holocaust, The Third Reich, and the Catholic Church*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.
- Daniel, Ute and Axel Schildt, editors. *Massenmedien im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Cologne: Böhlau, 2010.
- Davis, Belinda. *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- Davis, Belinda, Wilfried Mausbach, Martin Klimke, and Carla MacDougall, editors. *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2010.
- Desan, Suzanne. *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Eley, Geoff, editor. *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870-1930*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Enns, James C. *Saving Germany: North American Protestants and Christian Mission to West Germany, 1945-1974*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017.
- Evans, Richard J. *Proletarians and Politics: Socialism, Protest, and the Working Class in Germany Before the First World War*. New York: St. Martin's, 1990.
- Faber, Richard and Christine Holste, editors. *Kreise - Gruppen - Bünde: Zur Soziologie moderner Intellektuellenassoziation*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000.
- Fehrenbach, Heide. *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity After Hitler*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Fehrenbach, Heide. *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Fellner, Michael. *Katholische Kirche in Bayern: Religion, Gesellschaft und Modernisierung in der Erzdiözese München und Freising*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008.
- Ferree, Myra Marx. *Varieties of Feminism: German Gender Politics in Global Perspective*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Florvil, Tiffany N. *Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of A Transnational Movement*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020.

- Ford, Caroline C. *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Forner, Sean A. *German Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democratic Renewal: Culture and Politics after 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Gaillardetz, Richard R. editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Gallus, Alexander and Axel Schildt, editors. *Rückblickend in die Zukunft: Politische Öffentlichkeit und intellektuelle Positionen in Deutschland um 1950 und um 1930*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011.
- Gallus, Alexander, Sebastian Liebold, and Frank Schale, editors. *Vermessungen einer Intellectual History der frühen Bundesrepublik*. Hamburg: Wallstein, 2020.
- Gatz, Erwin. *Die katholische Kirche in Deutschland in 20. Jahrhundert*. Freiburg: Herder, 2009.
- Gehler, Michael and Wolfram Kaiser, editors. *Christian Democracy in Europe Since 1945*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Gerard, Emmanuel and Gerd-Rainer Horn, editors. *Left Catholicism, 1943-1955: Catholics and Society in Western Europe at the Point of Liberation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Gilcher-Holtey, Ingrid, editor. *Eingreifende Denkerinnen: Weibliche Intellektuelle im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015.
- Goodman, Dena. *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Gordon, Peter E. *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Granieri, Ronald J. *Ambivalent Alliance: Konrad Adenauer, The CDU/CSU, and The West, 1949-1970*. Oxford: Berghahn, 2003.
- Grant, M. and Benjamin Ziemann, editors. *Understanding the Imaginary War: Culture, Thought, and Nuclear Conflict, 1945-1990*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.
- Greeley, Andrew. *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Grossman, Thomas. *Zwischen Kirche und Gesellschaft: Das Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken, 1949-1970*. Mainz: Grünewald, 1991.

- Hagemann, Karen, Donna Harsch, and Friederike Brühöfener, editors. *Gendering Post-1945 German History*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2019.
- Hagemann, Karen and Sonya Michel, editors. *Gender and the Long Postwar: The United States and the Two Germanys, 1945-1989*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.
- Harris, Ruth. *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age*. London: Penguin, 2008.
- Harsch, Donna. *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Harvey, Elizabeth. *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Heineman, Elizabeth. *Before Porn Was Legal: The Erotica Empire of Beate Uhse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Heineman, Elizabeth. *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Helman, Ivy A. *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents*. Ossining: Orbis Books, 2012.
- Herf, Jeffrey. *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Herzog, Dagmar. *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Hesse, Carla. *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Hockenos, Matthew D. *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Höhn, Maria. *GIs and Frauleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Horn, Gerd-Rainer. *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Horn, Gerd-Rainer. *The Spirit of Vatican II: Western European Progressive Catholicism in the Long Sixties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Hübinger, Gangolf and Thomas Hertfelder, editors. *Kritik und Mandat: Intellektuelle in der deutschen Politik*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2000.

- Illemann, Regina. *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland 1945-1965: Politik, Geschlecht und Religiosität im Katholischen Deutschen Frauenbund*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016.
- Johnson, Joan Marie. *Funding Feminism: Monied Women, Philanthropy, and the Women's Movement, 1870-1967*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
- Kaufmann, Doris. *Katholisches Milieu in Münster, 1928-1933: Politische Aktionsformen und geschlechterspezifische Verhaltensräume*. Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1984.
- Köhler, Joachim and Damian van Melis, eds. *Siegerin in Trümmern. Die Rolle der katholischen Kirche in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998.
- Kolinsky, Eva. *Women in West Germany: Life, Work, and Politics*. Oxford: Berg, 1989.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Translated by Keith Tribe. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Kroll, Thomas and Tilman Reitz, editors. *Intellektuelle in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Verschiebungen im politischen Feld der 1960er und 1970er Jahre*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.
- LaCapra, Dominick. *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.
- Lacey, Michael J. and Francis Oakley editors. *The Crisis of Authority in Catholic Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Lamb, Matthew L. and Matthew Levering, editors. *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Lamberigts M. and L. Kenis, editors. *Vatican II and its Legacy*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002.
- Landes, Joan B. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Langner, Albrecht. *Katholizismus im politischen System der Bundesrepublik, 1949-1963*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1978.
- Lewy, Guenter. *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*. Boston: Da Capo Press, 1964.

- Luebke, David. M. *Hometown Religion: Regimes of Coexistence in Early Modern Westphalia*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016.
- Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Harcourt, 1951.
- Martin, Phyllis M. *Catholic Women of Congo Brazzaville: Mothers and Sisters in Troubled Times*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.
- Mayer, Annemarie C., editor. *The Letter and the Spirit: On the Forgotten Documents of Vatican II*. Paris: Leuven, 2018.
- McClellan, Josie. *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- McEnroy, Carmel Elizabeth. *Guests in Their Own House: The Women of Vatican II*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996.
- McMahon Darrin M. and Samuel Moyn, editors. *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Meiwes, Relinde. *“Arbeiterinnen des Herrn”: Katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt: Campus, 2000.
- Mitchell, Maria D. *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012.
- Moeller, Robert G. *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Moeller, Robert G. *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2003.
- Moeller, Robert. G, editor. *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Moses, Dirk. *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- O’Malley, John W. *Vatican I: The Council and the Making of the Ultramontane Church*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018.
- O’Malley, John W. *What Happened at Vatican II*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Omeje, Kenneth, editor. *The Crises of Postcoloniality in Africa*. Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2015.

- O'Sullivan, Michael E. *Disruptive Power: Catholic Women, Miracles, and Politics in Modern Germany, 1918-1965*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.
- Pasture, Patrick, Jan Art, and Thomas Buerman, editors. *Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe: Beyond the Feminization Thesis*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012
- Pence, Katherine and Paul Betts, editors. *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Pesch, Otto Hermann. *The Second Vatican Council: Prehistory, Event, Results, Posthistory*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2014.
- Phayer, Michael. *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust: 1930-1965*. Bloomington: Indiana University, 2000.
- Planert, Ute. *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich: Diskurs, soziale Formation und und politische Mentalität*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998.
- Poiger, Uta. *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Quatert, Jean H. *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.
- Rock, David, editor. *Voices in Times of Change: The Role of Writers, Opposition Movements, and the Churches in the Transformation of East Germany*. New York: Berghahn, 2000.
- Rölly-Alkemper, Lukas. *Familie in Wiederaufbau: Katholizismus und bürgerliches Familienideal in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945-1965*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000.
- Rossi, Lauren Faulker. *Wehrmacht Priests and the Nazi War of Annihilation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Röw, Martin. *Militärseelsorge unter dem Hakenkreuz: Die katholische Feldpostal*. Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2014.
- Roy, Ahonaa, editor. *Gender, Sexuality, Decolonization: South Asia in the World Perspective*. New York: Abingdon, 2021.
- Ruff, Mark Edward. *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945- 1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Ruff, Mark Edward. *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Postwar West Germany, 1945-1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

- Schildt, Axel. *Medien-Intellektuelle in der Bundesrepublik*. Hamburg: Wallstein, 2020.
- Schissler, Hanna, editor. *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany 1949-1968*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Schmidtman, Christian. *Katholische Studierende, 1945–1973: Ein Beitrag zur Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006.
- Schottroff, Luise, Silvia Schroer, and Marie-Theres Wacker. *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women's Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- Schulz, Kristina. *Der lange Atem der Provokation: Die Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik und in Frankreich 1968-1976*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2002.
- Schumann, Dirk, editor. *Raising Citizens in the "Century of the Child": The United States and German Central Europe in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Berghahn, 2010.
- Scott, John, editor. *Social Networks: Critical Concepts in Sociology*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2002.
- Sheffer, Edith. *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Shore, Marci. *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Smith, Helmut Walser. *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Spael, Wilhelm. *Das katholische Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert: Seine Pionier und Krisenzeiten, 1890-1945*. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1964.
- Spicer, Kevin. *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008.
- Steigmann-Gall, Richard. *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity 1919-1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Tanner, Norman, editor. *Vatican II Essential Texts*. New York: Image Books, 2012.
- Taylor, Michael Thomas, Annette F. Timm, and Rainer Herrn, editors. *Not Straight From Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship since Magnus Hirschfeld*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017.
- Thomas, Nick. *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and*

- Democracy*. New York: Berg, 2003.
- Tichenor, Kimba Allie. *Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation: How Conflicts Over Gender and Sexuality Changed the West German Catholic Church*. Lebanon: Brandeis University Press, 2016.
- Timm, Annette F. and Joshua A. Sanborn. *Gender, Sex and the Shaping of Modern Europe*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Todd, Lisa M. *Sexual Treason in Germany during the First World War*. New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2017.
- Treber, Leonie. *Mythos Trümmerfrauen: Von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes*. Essen: Klartext, 2014.
- Ulrich, Laurel. *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.
- Van Rahden, Till. *Demokratie: Eine gefährdete Lebensform*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2019.
- Van Rahden, Till. *Jews and Other Germans: Civil Society, Religious Diversity, and Urban Politics in Breslau, 1860-1925*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.
- Von der Goltz, Anna. *The Other '68ers: Student Protest and Christian Democracy in West Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Von Olenhusen, Irmtraud Götz, editor. *Frauen unter dem Patriarchat der Kirchen: Katholikinnen und Protestantinnen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1995.
- Welz, Martin. *Africa Since Decolonization: The History and Politics of a Diverse Continent*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Wenzel, Knut. *Kleine Geschichte des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*. Freiburg: Herder, 2005.
- Wilde, Melissa. J. *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Wiliarty, Sarah Elise. *The CDU and the Politics of Gender in Germany: Bringing Women to the Party*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Wittner, Lawrence S. *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Ziemann, Benjamin. *Encounters with Modernity: The Catholic Church in West Germany, 1945-1975*. New York: Berghahn Press, 2014.

Ziemann, Benjamin, editor. *Peace Movements in Western Europe, Japan and the USA during the Cold War*. Berlin: Alle Rechte, 2018.