

Chapter 8

SPIRITUAL SALVATION

Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne



In June 1995, the Third Ecumenical Congress of Christian Women of Germany celebrated the life of Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne (1850–1917). Afterward, the leadership of both the *Deutsch-Evangelischer Frauenbund* (DEF; German Protestant Women’s Association) and the *Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund* (KDF; Catholic German Women’s Association) called for scholars to elevate Gnauck-Kühne “to her deserved place in German historiography.”¹ Gnauck-Kühne has been called the “Catholic Zetkin,”² and Clara Zetkin herself asserted that “I have read her [work] with greater pleasure than any other writing by a bourgeois advocate of women’s rights.”³ No other individual played a greater role in the discussion of the *Frauenüberschuß* (female surplus). One of the first women given permission to study economics at a German university, Gnauck-Kühne used her quantitative training to provide a statistical background to the woman question. Her 1895 speech to the *Evangelisch-Soziale Kongress* (ESK; Evangelical Social Congress) in Erfurt was a landmark event in female activism, marking the Congress’ first treatment of the *Frauenfrage* (woman question) and garnering national attention.⁴ In 1899, Gnauck-Kühne helped to establish the DEF; after converting to Catholicism, in 1903 she founded the KDF. Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne’s reformist agenda explored the arenas of worker’s rights, female education, vocational training, spiritual motherhood, and—foremost—religious faith.

This key figure has escaped the attention of most historians. The predominant approach to the history of the Imperial German women’s movement has focused on the moderate and radical wings of German female activism.⁵ Indeed, at the turn of the century, leading advocates of women’s rights on both sides of the

divide were quite aware of such a split and consciously played off of one another in order to craft independent identities and platforms. But the moderate/radical division has come to signify more than ideological separation; it has also become the dominant paradigm for research in the field.⁶ As historians have focused on a dichotomous movement, the religious sphere of German female activism has been marginalized. Yet the main Christian associations of women enjoyed memberships far greater than organized radical groups and on a par with the umbrella organization of the moderate movement, the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF).⁷ While numbers alone do not demonstrate the vitality of the religious women's movement, they do indicate female willingness to identify and organize on the basis of confession.⁸

While German women's religious history remains incomplete, the history of Catholicism in the *Kaiserreich* (Imperial Germany) has enjoyed a boom in recent years. These works offer an increasingly rich sense of how Catholic political behavior evolved during the course of the *Kaiserreich* and also provide some important insights into the nature of Catholic society and religious expression.⁹ Gender history and modern German Catholic history rarely have been integrated,¹⁰ though Michael B. Gross's *War Against Catholicism* (2004) examines the ways in which the period of the *Kulturkampf*¹¹ brought together "the liberal-bourgeois ideology of public and private, the revival of the women's movement, and the increasingly prominent and conspicuous role of women in the Catholic Church and Catholic life."¹² Gross identifies a misogynistic strain in early *Kaiserreich* liberalism through its criticism of the prominence and engagement of women in Catholicism: "For liberal men, [Catholic women] were women who did not know their place."¹³ Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne was just the sort of uppity woman who found in Catholicism a faith that valorized the female vocation and thus blurred the lines between public and private spheres.

In both her statistical and organizational work, Gnauck-Kühne provided a framework for consideration of the single woman question that would be utilized by all branches of the women's movement: moderate, radical, *and* religious. This chapter examines career of Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne by describing the key tenets of her reformist platform and assessing how her religious beliefs led to a unique understanding of the female surplus.¹⁴

Suffering and Social Change

Like so many leaders of the German women's movement, Elisabeth Kühne began her career as a teacher. Born in 1850, she lived most of her life in Blankenburg am Harz, a small town outside of Braunschweig. She was the third and youngest child of Protestant, middle-class parents. Since the education of the oldest son had absorbed much of the family resources, money for a dowry was scarce and Elisabeth's parents decided she ought to pursue teacher training. Elisabeth later thanked her parents for their foresight in preparing her for a life of work; she

maintained that such a choice in the 1860s was “highly unusual and judged by many not to be completely respectable.”¹⁵ After passing her exams in 1867, Elisabeth took a position as a private tutor to children of a wealthy German-American family, a job that took her to Paris and London for several years.

Kühne returned to Blankenburg in 1875 and opened an “Educational Institution for Daughters of the Higher Classes.” The school’s curriculum emphasized nature walks and swimming lessons along with a more traditional program of language, literature, history, religion, music, handicrafts, science, and mathematics. Kühne believed that education should include an institutional commitment to the student’s personal development: “The limited number [25] of pupils makes it possible for the director to come to know the disposition and character of each individual pupil and to take care to instill [a sense of] community and good conduct, to pay strict attention to orderliness and cleanliness, and to preserve in the school the beneficial character of family life.”¹⁶ Populated by pupils from prestigious families,¹⁷ the institute prospered and provided Kühne with a secure income that, along with a small inheritance, would support her until her 1917 death. Kühne announced in August 1888 that she planned to leave the school in order to marry. Her departing speech asked her students to “look around with me at this point that we have reached today, a point which marks for you only a change, for me a summit, for all of us a crossroads.”¹⁸ The summit Kühne enjoyed that August soon would be followed by a descent that brought her to despair.

The 1888 farewell speech reveals a conception of education that cultivated diligence and guarded against dilettantism: “[Education] is a protection against petty gossip, disruptive nonsense, and the lure of boredom ... Allow work to become a habit ... Idleness is cursed; it lowers the human being to the level of animal ... Be active! Use your time in devoted discharge of your duties, and if you have a house with few duties to discharge, then learn, enrich your knowledge with worthy books, broaden your abilities.”¹⁹ Too much book-learning could be problematic, for “shortsighted people will then say: such is the result when girls learn more than adding and knitting, they become spoiled for the home.”²⁰ Character was more important than cleverness: “As highly as I value intellectual accomplishment, so have I ... endeavored to encourage you toward an achievement I place ahead of it: the peace of a reconciled conscience.”²¹ Kühne’s school was neither a vocational training ground nor a stopping place for young women to tarry while waiting to marry. In its idealized form, the school sought to awaken curious minds, connect intellectual awakening to the value of work, and instill female natures with the psychic contentment that would enable them to serve their families well.²²

Elisabeth undoubtedly believed that she would bring these characteristics to her own marriage. She had proven herself to be competent, industrious, and learned. With her own nuptials only one month away, one cannot help but read a veiled self-assessment in her parting words about the value of a “reconciled conscience” and the gentle influence of love. But no measure of calm disposition could have prepared her for the abuse and contempt that followed her September

1888 marriage. Gnauck-Kühne's biographer, Helene Simon, interviewed many friends of the couple after Elisabeth's death in 1917. Simon's notes portray a sad tale of greed, deceit, and savage cruelty. A marriage that would have been catastrophic under any circumstances is rendered more tragic when one considers the public nature of Gnauck-Kühne's humiliation (Elisabeth was the town's most prominent businesswoman), her fairly advanced age at the time of first marriage (38), and her departure from the beloved school in which she enjoyed affection and respect.

Elisabeth's groom was Dr. Rudolf Gnauck, a specialist of the nervous system who ran a sanatorium in Pankow. The announcement of the engagement shocked those who knew them. When friends questioned the wisdom of the decision, Elisabeth responded simply, "But we love each other."²³ She made arrangements to sell the school and prepared for a new life. One friend of Elisabeth's, Agnes Hänichen, recalled that Dr. Gnauck had futilely tried to woo her years earlier. Gnauck had even asked Hänichen to marry him.²⁴ Gnauck confided to Agnes that he had a lien on his sanatorium due in 1888, the hardly coincidental year of his marriage to Kühne. Elisabeth did not know of Rudolf's deep indebtedness. It seems that Gnauck craved Elisabeth's money more than her love. On the *Polterabend* (a wedding-eve celebration), Gnauck told Hänichen that he was "deeply unhappy about the imminent step. But because he had to have the money, he could not withdraw. Fräulein Hänichen could only with great effort get him to attend the *Polterabend*."²⁵ The marriage nonetheless took place on 17 September; witnesses recalled it as a gloomy affair. Simon's notes continue: "Instead of taking it to the bank as his wife had desired, Dr. Gnauck used the down payment of 40,000M from the [sale of the] institute for payment of his most urgent debts. Six weeks after the wedding, Frau Gnauck spent a few weeks with her sister in Blankenburg ... hoping through the temporary separation to possibly bring about an improvement."²⁶

The divorce decree details the next episode. As grounds, Elisabeth cited a violent encounter occurring on 26 December. When she returned to the marital home on that date in hopes of initiating a reunion, "the defendant ordered her to leave ... otherwise he would take his life."²⁷ Simon's notes reveal a moment of operatic despair: Gnauck "went up to [his wife] with a loaded pistol and demanded that she leave the house immediately or else he would put a bullet through his head before her eyes. She departed at once."²⁸ The marriage had been a wretched failure. Hänichen offered Simon her own assessment of why the marriage failed so quickly: "Dr. Gnauck was a man for whom there was no sixth commandment. He engaged in dalliances whenever the opportunity offered itself." Hänichen recounted that years later, "Frau Gnauck showed me one Sunday in the pews [of church] an old female who had had a child out of wedlock from Dr. Gnauck. She said that several of his extramarital children were running around Blankenburg. She had not known of his drives. No one had enlightened her."²⁹

Gnauck-Kühne's papers contain corroborating assessments of Rudolf Gnauck's character. The record of the union might best be summarized as follows: Rudolf

married for money; Elisabeth married out of some mix of romantic affection, the desire to begin a new phase of life, and the hope for children; the weeks they lived together were tumultuous; and the attempt at reconciliation was dramatic and violent. The failed marriage forever altered Elisabeth's view of the world and the place of women within it. Women spurned by marriage, either never married or divorced, became the special object of her feminist vision.

Elisabeth traveled for almost a year after the marital debacle. She moved to Berlin in 1891 and by 1893, she had begun to study economics and statistics privately with Gustav Schmoller.³⁰ Her pathbreaking speech at the ESK occurred in the spring of 1895, by which time her life had begun the reformist path it would follow until her death. The first forty years of Gnauck-Kühne's life indelibly framed the agenda that distinguished her activism. Three guiding principles had bolstered her prenuptial worldview: the transformative power of education, the importance of the family, and the beneficence of a gentle disposition. Yet these beliefs had failed her during the brief and tragic marriage. As Elisabeth moved into the next phase of her life, she amended the first two tenets and discarded the third.

Her commitment to education never wavered, though she continued to reform the content and intent of her educational program. Gnauck-Kühne also would maintain the importance of female commitment to the family sphere, though her definition of "family" became increasingly broad. But her calamitous personal failure forced her to renounce her advocacy of the tranquil disposition that she had held forth as a beacon to her students in 1888. After her own ordeal, Gnauck-Kühne came to believe that women needed to forego feminine gentility in favor of the stark virtues of resilience and tenacity that emerged from suffering—and suffering most likely befell the unwed. Yet, while pain might be the inevitable initial lot of unmarried women, it need not make them victims. Properly channeled suffering could be transformative.

Perhaps the best demonstration of Gnauck-Kühne's view of the ennobling quality of pain is found in her fairy tale "The Nightingale."³¹ In a letter to her friend and spiritual advisor, Father Augustin Rösler, Elisabeth wrote in 1900:

The nightingale suffers under the loneliness of a rich nature; as she sees it, loneliness is her lot, it will severely break her heart, 'it would be broken if she did not sing. And she sang.' Her pain is the source of her song; she sings as long as she suffers. When she finds what she yearns for, it fills her up. The desire is quieted, the pain healed, the song silenced. Then she recognizes for the first time that her pain was her greatest gift, because it was the source of her song, and then she flees her fulfillment and searches for her pain and—her song. For a fulfilled nightingale is no longer a nightingale, only a gluttonous bird. Is this celibacy glorified? Yes, certainly indirectly. A nightingale's nature must be lonely.³²

Loneliness created her song; the nightingale's mistake had been made in trying to quench that loneliness. Personal pain could lead to exaltation and delivered the moment of greatest achievement. In one stroke, pain becomes glory, *Leid wird Lied* (Suffering becomes song).³³ Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne's song sang forth in the first 38 years of her life, but she had not listened to its melody. The silence

that ensued after the disastrous marriage was deafening. From her divorce until the end of her life, Elisabeth sought to recapture her song. The pain of single women was the source of her *Lied* and also formed her intended audience.

In a series of works published between 1891 and 1917, Gnauck-Kühne shared the approach of moderate, radical, and socialist advocates of women's rights by exploring the impact of the onset of industrialization upon women.³⁴ Gnauck-Kühne was particularly interested in the experience of women in the marriage market. Her body of work linked the *Frauenüberschuß* to social class, demonstrated the impact of female displacement from the family, and offered solutions to the crisis of the surplus woman.

In the introduction to 1891's *The University Study of Women*, Gnauck-Kühne summarized the origins of the woman question: "In slow but steadfast development, the social and economic relations of the present have brought about a shift in the relative numerical proportions of the sexes and moreover have made marriages more difficult to attain, an occurrence which does not correspond to the conditions desired by nature." Though Gnauck-Kühne did not spell out just how she knew nature's desires, she did offer a basic demographic analysis: "While for every 100 female births, there are 106 male births, the statistics count 104 women for every 100 men. This difference results in a substantial surplus of female population and in so doing brings forth a crisis that has created a reforming movement in the world of women." Gnauck-Kühne directly tied these facts of population to the question of women's rights: "The woman demands . . . new work and professional arenas, so that she will be able to maintain herself as economically independent, a condition which was necessitated by her involuntary unmarried state. These facts are united in the slogan, 'The Woman Question.'"³⁵ Gnauck-Kühne earned the moniker the "Catholic Zetkin" through the quasi-Marxist perspective she employed in linking the current social crisis to the conditions wrought by the mode of production. Like Clara Zetkin, Gnauck-Kühne believed that the *Frauenüberschuß* created the *Frauenfrage*.³⁶

Gnauck-Kühne elucidated this simple line of causality in a response to opponents of female education, who charged that "the woman is not meant for academic study, but for marriage, child development, and managing the home."³⁷ Her reply combined humor with earnest distress about the plight of unmarried women: "In its naiveté, this challenge reminds one of the story of the princess who, upon hearing reports that starving people were crying for bread, responded, 'Then why do they not eat cake?'" Like Marie Antoinette's apocryphal tumbril remark, critics of the female unwed expected the impossible: "Not until the friends of this suggestion of marriage balance the numerical ratios of the sexes to one another by producing a million marriage-able and marriage-willing men out of thin air—not until then will their opposition be taken seriously, because only then will every woman be given the possibility to eat the cake of marital protection instead of the bread of her own work." Gnauck-Kühne demanded social reform in order to answer the question, "What will become of the surplus of women? How pleasant it would be if the wise man who wants to compensate the single

woman with the recommendation of home and marriage could make possible for each the attainment of a happy marriage ... The woman question, as a question of maintenance at least, would be with one stroke eliminated from the world and with that the main nerve of the [women's] movement would be severed."³⁸ Given her own life experience, Gnauck-Kühne harbored no illusions that each marriage could be happy, but before her religious conversion, she still held the family sphere to be the designated female realm.

Marriage both provided women with purpose and ideally led them to motherhood. Gnauck-Kühne herself had longed to be a mother. She wrote in 1902 in a letter, "It must be quite unparalleled to have children. I believe it makes the entire difference between living and living out [one's days]."³⁹ Motherhood became an increasingly important theme in Gnauck-Kühne's post-religious conversion writings as she came to believe that "the maternal instinct is the originating point of the female psyche."⁴⁰ Marriage then had to privilege the parental relationship over the spousal. Gnauck-Kühne adopted a position similar to that of Ruth Bré: "The man wants the woman, but the woman wants the child."⁴¹ Unlike Bré, Gnauck-Kühne refrained from advocating motherhood outside of marriage, for a true communal experience could only be experienced within the family.

Gnauck-Kühne's celebration of motherhood contributed to the ideology of spiritual motherhood permeating the women's movement of the *Kaiserreich*.⁴² She told her audience at Erfurt: "We are without question of the same opinion as to the natural work of the female: it is motherhood ... motherliness calls forth the essential element of all that is female. The division of labor between the sexes must be tied to motherhood."⁴³ Female vocational education thus needed to focus on maternal arenas, such as teaching, domestic education, child care, and nursing.⁴⁴ Gnauck-Kühne condemned the fact that unmarried women in many cases were prevented from pursuing their own living: "Only regarding the single woman is the right separated from the responsibility for care! Provide for the woman—or set her free! ... Five million women must maintain themselves, just like men ... If five million women must fight in the struggle for their existence, it is then cruel and unjust to keep the weapons from them."⁴⁵ What began as a demographic consequence of economic development was transformed into an issue of self-maintenance, raising the question of social and legal rights in the changing world.

Gnauck-Kühne included the working-class among her claim of "five million" female unwed. But those single women nonetheless remained outside of her conception of the woman question: "The women of the daily-wage working class do not come into consideration here; they already have the same right to work and education as the man; they learn the same as the man, they dig, hoe, weave, push coal carts, work in the factory just like the man ... Only when we go up the stepladder of society do we see struggle for equal rights begin, a struggle in which all women should come together."⁴⁶ Elitism colored her view of male and female equity among the working-class. But Gnauck-Kühne's approach to the woman question also validated Clara Zetkin's critique of the bourgeois women's

movement. Because of the working-class female's willingness to work for lower wages and her suitability for unskilled labor, Gnauck-Kühne maintained that the industrial era had delivered a paradox: working-class women became ever more burdened while middle-class women increasingly shed their responsibilities. Non-elite women continued to marry and work in the home, while many labored in factories and domestic service as well. Their lives took on too many demands, while those of their privileged sisters became increasingly aimless.

Though never a socialist, Gnauck-Kühne nonetheless employed Marxist understandings of history and wage labor in order to explain the transformative nature of suffering. Gnauck-Kühne argued that women had been economically essential in early modern Europe: "Every family economy was a small world ... The woman created this world and maintained it and impressed upon it the stamp of her personality ... The woman was the indispensable producer ... and there was rich nourishment for the head and the heart."⁴⁷ Gnauck-Kühne shared Lily Braun's view that the capitalist epoch had issued a double blow by replacing women's work in the home and weakening them through a newfound ease of life:⁴⁸ "We disinherited women are only too inclined to abstract from the machine and accept handicrafts as pure mechanical accomplishments, we can only imagine appreciating the work and the meaning of crafts for the mind and spirit of the woman before the machine era. We do not know what we have lost."⁴⁹ The purpose of the women's movement was to transform such loss into a renewed contribution to society. Gnauck-Kühne set about doing just that by becoming an advocate on behalf of those unwed elite and bourgeois women most familiar with loss.

Paternalism and maternalism merged in Gnauck-Kühne's claim that middle-class single women could seek to ameliorate some of the most damaging effects of modernity by helping the working-class at the same time: "Before the machine era, the social situation of the female sex of the propertied class was healthy ... At present, under changing relations of production, the economic significance of the educated woman has been lessened, her social situation detrimentally affected. But what the work contribution has lost in breadth shall gain in refinement and depth by means of intensive education." Like Alice Salomon, Gnauck-Kühne believed that the work of social welfare could nourish: "Through devotion to this goal, the single woman can also become economically and ethically worthy, and be bound to the whole through love."⁵⁰ Social work literally and figuratively might compensate bourgeois single women for their losses while refining the natures of working-class women.

Regarding affluent women, Gnauck-Kühne echoed Mary Wollstonecraft's belief that the wealthy were too far gone to be helped by a social movement. Wollstonecraft had written in the late eighteenth century that the very rich were impervious to reform: "Weak, artificial beings, raised above the common wants and affections of their race, in a premature unnatural manner, undermine the very foundation of virtue, and spread corruption through the whole mass of society!"⁵¹ Gnauck-Kühne concurred: "The wealthy woman is distant from the material urgency and

the principles of the women's movement, any intellectual or spiritual needs she can satisfy more easily than the woman of the middle class. Quenched herself, she thinks little of the hunger of others."⁵² Only middle-class women could not sate their hunger, for alternative vocations had been closed to them. Idleness was the key: aristocratic women did not care about their lack of utility, while working-class women had too much to do. Only middle-class women had been forced to become idle. The solution? Occupy middle-class women and in so doing, attempt to ease the burdens of working women.

Capitalizing on women's innate maternal instinct would prevent the unmarried from becoming dilettantes or vicious old maids: "Motherhood and motherliness are not necessarily reciprocal ... Being female means to be like a mother, or more concisely: Being female means to be maternal. This formulation encompasses those who combine motherhood and motherliness as well as those who without motherhood *in natura* still possess the characteristic elements of motherliness (at times in abundant measure)."⁵³ Any solution to the *Frauenüberschuß* had to emerge from the presence of motherliness among the childless. Single women ought to occupy themselves in the professional areas that suited them and promoted use of the maternal instinct. Like moderates Helene Lange and Alice Salomon, Gnauck-Kühne warned against training bourgeois daughters for a marriage that might not happen.⁵⁴ Enhancing maternal characteristics would protect single women from the perils of inertia.

The type of education advocated by Gnauck-Kühne in her later years expanded upon the curriculum of her Blankenburg school by emphasizing vocational training. She favored the "pure and natural girl with pride over ... the daughter who through inactivity is morally broken and has no pride ... because she has never had to stand on her feet."⁵⁵ Gnauck-Kühne advocated requiring bourgeois girls to work. Home economics also played an important role in Gnauck-Kühne's program of study, which sought to establish vocational training that would blur the lines between the private and public spheres.

The curriculum she proposed sought to rid Germany of useless women. Gnauck-Kühne rivaled any enemy of the *alte Jungfer* (old maid) in her disdain for the lazy. Her 1895 Erfurt speech condemned the indolence of purposeless girls who pursued "various dilettantish artistic exercises or even more detrimental substitutes such as flirtation, finery, and mainly the hunt for distraction."⁵⁶ The mostly male ESK may well have been moved by the contrast between such vain lazabouts and industrious female pupils. Those unfortunate girls who did not know the value of hard work, who did not "know what they had lost," were vessels ready and waiting to be destroyed by sloth—or possibly by more dire evils. Gnauck-Kühne offered a clear remedy to the specter of directionless women turning to depravity or, more benignly, perhaps simply toward *Altjungfertum*: "Who does not know this aging *Fräulein* out of a good family, who spends her life without any responsible work in consuming idleness? A truly cruel social order has condemned her to inactivity, to a doll's life; she has no satisfying, self-chosen occupation ... and so as the years go by her existence lacks any measure of depth."⁵⁷ This

pitiful creature had not emerged not out of her own deficient nature, but instead had been formed by a culture that offered her no alternatives. Given the choice of a bourgeois world occupied by dolls and madams, or one populated with diligent, educated, purposeful women seeking to infuse the world with motherliness—how difficult could the choice be?

Like other *Kaiserreich*-era advocates of women's rights, Gnauck-Kühne used the old maid as an ideal foil. She could claim with obvious justification that women left unchosen did not deserve to be fated as ridiculed, despised figures: "Hundreds of thousands of girls ... are raised for marriage, believe that marriage is their calling, their happiness. Without marriage they will become emotionally crippled, miserable *alte Jungfern*, second-class people who invite ridicule due to coarse dispositions and clumsy intellects, who despite fine natures are nonetheless inferior individuals who do not count as whole people."⁵⁸ Gnauck-Kühne called instead for the surplus woman to learn about her inherent worth, a worth that emanated from maternal instinct.

Gnauck-Kühne was unique among *Kaiserreich* female activists in her attempt to provide a demographic description of the *Frauenüberschuß*.⁵⁹ While her analysis included consideration of population increases and birth and mortality rates, her argument focused on marriage rates: "In Germany on average only 75% of the population marries. Being supported through marriage thus remains questionable, for many impossible."⁶⁰ Because of the increasing dispensability of the middle-class female in the home, a projected 25 percent of unmarried women was especially problematic. Gnauck-Kühne's figures did not indicate that girls of premarital age formed a sizable proportion of that 25 percent. Instead, she emphasized that the rising population only exacerbated the deterioration of the bourgeois female state by multiplying "the supply of female hands without correspondingly enlarging the amount of work ... the number of those without means grows steadily with the population increase and with the technical advance of the division of labor, which encroaches upon individual production."⁶¹ She maintained that while the labor produced by unwed bourgeois females became ever superfluous, the number of women continued to increase.

Gnauck-Kühne also emphasized a decrease in the willingness to marry: "The mode of production quickly increases the wealth; with it the demands of the educated classes grow; the heightened standard of life makes marriage more difficult."⁶² Bourgeois disinclination marked a sharp divergence from the working-class nuptial experience: "From 1875 to 1882 the number of male industrial workers increased by 6.4%, that of female workers by 35%." The income of laboring women made them more advantageous marital prospects, creating "a new contrast to the situation of the socially higher standing women. The female proletariat can become co-providers, a circumstance which makes marriage more likely, while the economic superfluity of the cultivated woman in her circle makes marriage a question of the man's income."⁶³

Gnauck-Kühne's account of the female surplus rested upon three key factors: a high proportion of unmarried women, exacerbated by increasing population,

and further intensified by bourgeois unwillingness to marry. These circumstances weighed most heavily upon those middle-class women whose family circle less frequently could offer them a sphere of engagement and whose prospective economic contributions had become outmoded (while working-class women took on additional responsibilities).

As chapter 3 has demonstrated, demographic study does not support the case of an increasing *Frauenüberschuß* in Imperial Germany. Gnauck-Kühne's demography relied as much upon class-based generalizations as it did upon numbers, but her work nonetheless often was cited by contemporaries noting the plight of surplus women.⁶⁴ Gnauck-Kühne's statistical analysis emphasized the increasing *absolute* numbers of single women, suggesting that her argument of a surplus was based upon the increasing visibility and sheer abundance of unmarried women in the urban context. As much as any other individual, Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne was responsible for imagining the demography that created the surplus woman.

The Religious Haven

Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne primarily has been recognized by history as a religious activist.⁶⁵ This view undoubtedly is due to the fact that she served as a founder of both the Protestant and Catholic national German women's associations, each the first organization of their kind. Her stunning 1900 conversion to Catholicism sealed her legacy as a religious figure. The conversion of any prominent figure assuredly would have shocked contemporaries, given the long-held demarcations between Protestant and Catholic society in Imperial Germany. The state-initiated *Kulturkampf* had ended and the mid-century Catholic piety revival had faded by 1900, yet the distinctive cultural spheres of the major Christian denominations in Germany continued into the twentieth century.⁶⁶ Gnauck-Kühne's conversion, noteworthy for any public figure, astounded because she had gained national recognition as the most important female leader of the Protestant ESK. Many leading Protestants viewed her religious turn as a betrayal and it led to the dissolution of the women's organization of the ESK.⁶⁷

The conversion emerged out of years of emotional and spiritual turmoil after her 1888 marriage. She later wrote to a friend, "In the last years much has been agitating at the deepest level of my soul. It was as if I were paralyzed internally, you know. I could not go forwards, not backwards, neither right nor left. Alive, I was dead—dead in a living body."⁶⁸ Elisabeth's spiritual malaise was deeply affected by an 1899 visit to the Austrian convent in Mautern. There, she met with Augustin Rösler, a Catholic priest who had written about the role of women in the Church.⁶⁹ After further correspondence with Rösler and instruction by a priest in Berlin, Gnauck-Kühne converted to Catholicism in April 1900. Rösler's notes on the event report that things progressed "unexpectedly quickly ... The conversion gained great notice in Germany; almost all newspapers reported it; even the Protestant [papers] spoke of it almost exclusively with attention given to

the one converting ... The main motivations for the conversion were the Catholic instructions on virginity and on authority.”⁷⁰

Another priest present at the Gnauck-Kühne’s confirmation recalled that “this act was unforgettable for me due to the spiritual uncertainty that the supplicant had to fight through ... In my 48 years as a priest I have experienced and observed many spiritual conflicts, but such a struggle I had never seen.”⁷¹ Gnauck-Kühne anguished especially over use of the word *verflucht* (to curse or damn) in reference to her former faith: “This word, this word I cannot bring over my lips. My mother ... was so pious—how can I curse her? How can I curse and damn her?” Father [Rösler] reassured her that the word did not correspond to the person, but to the false teachings.” But faith overcame sentiment: “With a strong firm voice she stated the confession of faith; as she came to [that] sentence, she was taken over by an internal agitation; her head and hands sank, a stream of tears poured from her eyes ... finally she straightened up, the strong soul emerged victorious, and she prayed the named word with all decisiveness. This struggle moved me like hardly anything else in life.”⁷² The drama of the conversion conformed to Gnauck-Kühne’s passionate nature.⁷³ While impulse might have played a role in her decision, Elisabeth’s papers reveal no regrets about the conversion. They reflect instead the emergence of a Catholic partisanship that would change the direction of her life’s work.

Religion had played a relatively minor role in Gnauck-Kühne’s activism prior to her conversion.⁷⁴ As the years progressed, Gnauck-Kühne’s religious faith would join with her feminist engagement in a committed focus on the plight of single women. The 1895 Erfurt speech had grappled with the *Frauenüberschuss* and had prompted her to explore the connection between female suffering and faith. Single women might experience torment, but such anguish could bring spiritual freedom. Gnauck-Kühne found herself in a spiritual quandary after Erfurt, wondering whether immersion in the public sphere truly could ease the pain of the unwed. Or would that simply channel female distress in another direction? She reflected in 1900, “The day in Erfurt, which was such a thoroughgoing success in entirely different ways than one could expect, was a turning point for me. Everyone was pleased—only I was not ... I had not felt any sort of satisfaction for a single moment. Just the opposite.” Her own life story may have informed what happened next: “A question suddenly struck me that, so it seemed to me, led me into an abyss, the question regarding the idea of what lies at the basis of the female creature, the question of the real calling of the female ... Marriage is *the* true calling of the female; if she does not marry, she does not meet her calling—I had endlessly heard that from everyone, spoke it, believed it.”⁷⁵ So began the process by which Gnauck-Kühne would come to envision female vocation as embodied in the maternal spirit rather than in the marital contract.⁷⁶

Given her own tumultuous marriage, it is not surprising that Gnauck-Kühne would have had a confusing mix of feelings on the subject. Before her religious change, she shared the view of the BDF moderates that “the family is undoubtedly the world of the woman” and that “as spouse, mother, and housewife, the

married woman has a field of activity that could not be richer.”⁷⁷ Yet an apologia written at the time of her conversion described how concerns about marriage and anxiety about the plight of *alte Jungfern* drove Gnauck-Kühne away from Lutheranism. Of her half-century spent in the Protestant milieu, she asked: “How could it be that I never, neither in writing nor in conversation, heard of another view than that of the woman being destined for marriage? This was Luther’s view, as is evident from his writings. But one only now realizes what bitterness must accumulate in the female nature that is indiscriminately pushed down the path which is supposed to lead to marriage—but does not reach its destination.” Protestantism was complicit in the woman’s resulting anguish: “What can she do then? Her life becomes worthless; her best years are passed by in waiting and hoping ... She was kind and industrious, loyal and domestic—but she had not pleased any man, and thus she withered into a lonely age, a burden to herself and others, without love, without joy.” The contrast between domestic industry and desolate grief led the unwed bourgeois woman to “justifiably ask: What have I done to deserve such a failed life? If marriage is the exclusive calling of the female, as Luther taught and demonstrated when he dissolved the convents, then it is unjust of God that He does not provide all girls the possibility of establishing a family but instead imposes on these fine, completely guiltless stepchildren the bitterness of a failed life.”⁷⁸

Martin Luther’s 1523 marriage to Katharina von Bora symbolized the Lutheran view of marriage as the ultimate female vocation. Von Bora had been one of nine nuns who had fled their convent to the sanctuary of the protesting theologian.⁷⁹ She chose marriage to Luther over her bond with the Church, inaugurating the Protestant sanctification of marriage over the single life. But Gnauck-Kühne read that sanctification as an inescapable conundrum, for the reality of temporal life did not permit all women to marry: “One would from the beginning have to establish the following: The marriage is not *the* calling of the female, but instead only *one* calling among others. But Lutherans cannot make this claim, because according to the Lutheran view, the female is made for the man, created for marriage.” She came to view the Protestant faith as phallogentric: “Everything depends on the pleasure of the man ... The female is absolutely surrendered to the man. If you please no man—poor you—then you have missed your calling—what purpose do you serve in the world?”⁸⁰ At this intellectual juncture, Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne’s life took its most unusual turn. Instead of distancing herself from religion in apathy (as had many activists in the women’s movement) or abandoning the notion of God in atheism (as had scores of radical and socialist contemporaries), Gnauck-Kühne embraced the age-old institution of Catholicism as her harbor against the tides of modernity.

Augustin Rösler had identified two Catholic principles as momentous in Gnauck-Kühne’s religious transformation: the celebration of virginity and the doctrine of spiritual authority. Informed by her experiences as teacher, scholar, and divorced wife, these tenets increasingly influenced her views on the woman question. The merit of virginity clearly contributed to her understanding of the

female surplus and the Catholic doctrinal emphasis on Church authority supplied a theological basis to her support of religious communities

Catholicism offered an alternative response to the plight of single women by elevating the status of virginity. Austrian women's rights activist Rosa Mayreder observed that virginity and motherhood were "fused into a single mystery" in "the world of Christianity," and that the Church offered myriad examples in which "a vast number of most excellent women devoted to the spiritual Christian life have preferred virginity to motherhood."⁸¹ Gnauck-Kühne similarly believed that the veneration of Mary and the sanctity of the convent demonstrated the single woman's special status. A tale from Gnauck-Kühne's childhood offered a romanticized version of her first acquaintance with Catholicism. Coming across a small rural Catholic chapel while on a walk "made a strong impression on childish fantasies, because I remember the exact words and circumstances today . . . I sat on a large stone and watched the closed shutters and wished that they would open so that I could one time see inside. I thought it would be wonderful to kneel, hold a rosary in the hand and sing: Hail to you Maria!"⁸² Even when the zeal of a recent convert is taken into account, the potency of Marian devotion for Gnauck-Kühne is clear.

Historian David Blackbourn has written about the vibrant strain of religious fervor surrounding the Virgin Mary in nineteenth-century Germany. Blackbourn described the Saar village of Marpingen in the 1870s as "an atmosphere suffused with piety."⁸³ While Blankenburg and Berlin did not offer quite such an ambience, Gnauck-Kühne certainly was informed by the infusion of Marian iconography and doctrine in the Catholicism of her time. In an early work, Gnauck-Kühne responded to an argument posed by opponents of the women's movement, who cited the biblical Eve as proof that women inherently did not have the skills of critical reasoning. She rejoined, "Eve's guilt stands opposite Mary's purity. If the female sex fell in Eve, it elevated itself with Mary. *Without Mary there would be no human-born Savior*. The entire male sex owes to the *female* the realization of the God's ways and the possibility of salvation. 'The eternal female moves us heavenward!'"⁸⁴ Gnauck-Kühne emphasized that the female sex elevated itself and merited its high status rather than having received it arbitrarily.⁸⁵

The Catholic convent also inspired Gnauck-Kühne. Luther's abolition of cloister life formed a central component of her critique of Protestantism. Gnauck-Kühne wrote prior to her conversion about the historical importance of religious institutions in absorbing the female surplus: "Many single women found acceptance in convents, cloisters, and Beguine houses."⁸⁶ The convent had provided an important arena of activity as well as a place of refuge for unmarried women. But the modern, industrial, and (by implication) Protestant world offered no such alternative.⁸⁷ For single women seeking refuge from the uncertainties of life without marriage, religious sisterhoods provided shelter and a form of feminist activism that did not exist in the Protestant milieu.

Protestant subjugation of single women was made explicit by Gnauck-Kühne in an article written just before her conversion: "On voluntary virginal status

(that which is consecrated by God), Lutheran instruction places virtually no value, much less a promise, and for compulsory virginal status no comfort or advice other than that of resignation.” But Rome offered a different vision: “On the other hand, the subjugation of ‘godly virginity to love’ is foreign to the Catholic Church [where] the married state is a holy state, but lifelong virginity consecrated by God has dignity and worth equal to marriage.” In a version of incipient feminist liberation theology, Gnauck-Kühne saw Catholicism as emancipatory: “In this way the Catholic woman in fact possesses an active choice that frees her from the man and his proposal of marriage and places her life formation under her own resolution.”⁸⁸ The shrewish fusspot, the hopeless romantic, and the suffocating aunt—all could be released and redeemed by marriage to Christ.⁸⁹

In 1888, on the occasion of her own marriage, Gnauck-Kühne bid students goodbye with the following words: “God bless you! I have reaped much love, and that is my most beautiful payment, but may I also say that I have sown love. Dear students, in work and rest you have been the heart of my thoughts and emotions; I have loved you dearly.”⁹⁰ Yet leaving the ‘heart of her thoughts and emotions’ had brought her only private pain and public disgrace. During her travels after the marital denouement, Gnauck-Kühne searched for religious comfort and spiritual support, but found none: “In Cannes I went to the evangelical services regularly. I visited the pastor, but was only met by his sister. I attended Communion and took it with such hot tears that a stone would have taken pity on me.” When a friend of Gnauck-Kühne’s went to the minister to ask if he would offer comfort to the jilted woman, the minister refused: “Do you think he came to me or said to me: Come to me? *Oh, that is asking too much.* He gave the sermon and—that’s that. This is ten years ago, but I have not forgotten it. Quite the opposite, the older I become, the more irresponsible I find this lovelessness of the clergy.”⁹¹ Fueled by bitterness, the pain conveyed in this letter also informed subsequent writings addressing the anguish of ridiculed old maids. The suffering is palpable of a woman whose life had collided with a humiliating tragedy that she could not have foreseen and for which she was ill-equipped.

Gnauck-Kühne believed that, had she had better spiritual defenses, she might have been able to conquer the stigma and pain that were the remnants of her marriage: “As a result of a marriage that was a frivolous exploitation of my ignorance of life and inexperience, when unhappiness forced me to fight, I had no weapons. I was driven to despair ... The end of the first chapter of my life was complete religious bankruptcy [and] upon stepping out into the world, a total breakdown at the first gust of wind.”⁹² Gnauck-Kühne’s later reflections about those surplus “female treasures who wither through a lonely life [that] is for me one of the saddest accompaniments of the modern time” sounded a very autobiographical note.⁹³

In converting to Roman Catholicism, Gnauck-Kühne sought shelter for herself and all solitary women. A letter announcing her resignation from the ESK summarized the reasons for her religious conversion: “As a woman’s advocate, the Catholic view of virginity has become a revelation that for me removes a tor-

menting epistemological conundrum. A further meaningful discovery has been my acquaintance with the Catholic principal of authority, the Catholic response to the question: Do we approach the chaos with subjective opinions ... or is there a firmly established objective power?" Doctrinal traditions influenced her distinctive feminist voice. At the same time, religious faith satisfied her personal longings: "Finally, I happily confess, that as a single woman I find new courage to confront life and an unknown joy for living in belonging to a secure, dependable community, one which admittedly demands, but in exchange also holds, elevates, carries, and cares."⁹⁴

The ideal of religious community became the main Catholic banner under which she directed her discussion of the *Frauenüberschuß* after 1900: "The attraction in Catholicism for the internally lonesome was above all the great, tightly organized community that offered protection and support ... How I envied the Catholics when I saw how the people who stepped into the confessional entered an atmosphere of comfort. There one could pour out one's heart and was certain that silence would be preserved."⁹⁵ Absorbed by communal reconciliation, shame disappeared. Even if one did not become a nun (though Gnauck-Kühne long considered it, finally giving up the idea when Rösler advised her against it),⁹⁶ the comforting arms of the Church could provide the family that single women had been missing. The convent as rhetorical rather than practical entity forged the link between the *Frauenüberschuß* and Catholicism. Knowing that most surplus women would not become nuns, Gnauck-Kühne raised "a theoretical question, whether the unmarried *can* find a fulfilling substitute or not, and for this principal decision, the *number* that comes into question is irrelevant. If marriage is the only purpose of temporal existence ... then every other life form is a stopgap."⁹⁷ By privileging the convent as a female pursuit, Catholicism provided women with an empowering vision of the female calling. Gnauck-Kühne argued that because the Church called women to vocations outside of marriage, other fields of engagement also could and should be opened to them.

The convent provided a superlative model of community for single women in four ways: first, it provided an ontological expansion of the female purpose beyond the confines of marriage. Second, cloister life demonstrated a fine example of childless maternalism: "Marriage and motherhood become *a* path to the goal. The other path is to place one's eye *directly* on the goal of eternity and move directly toward that goal, not weighed down by earthly burdens ... This last path is the more difficult of the two. The mother cares for her own, the women of the cloister serve strangers."⁹⁸ Third, in the guise of spiritual motherhood, the women of the convent provided a historical prototype for the type of social service that Gnauck-Kühne believed formed the most important vocation for single women. Finally, sisterhoods offered a demonstration of communal relations that would replace the lost families of the unwed: "Transmitted via many centuries, [we] can look back upon a form of association which has protected Christendom under the most varied conditions: the association of *religious-democratic* principles, the convent."⁹⁹

Gnauck-Kühne maintained that spiritual solace for single women would be secured if unwed women either entered convents or joined institutions based upon similar religious-democratic principals. The importance of the Catholic doctrine of authority played a key role here. Community could not thrive if it was merely an association of separate units bound only by the need for company: “A community without individuality is weak, but a community without cooperation is barren ... The women’s movement must find its way between both paths. Between blind subordination and unquenched self-fulfillment lies the way to order ... and through order can be found the way toward fulfillment. Such a goal calls for authority.”¹⁰⁰ Gnauck-Kühne simultaneously argued for the viability of nonreligious communities while legitimizing her own activity in forming women’s associations. The Catholic convent provided a fully formed model for female communities and ratified the importance of establishing an ersatz family for her single women.

Gnauck-Kühne’s support for communal life extended beyond the Church. A number of new forms of association marked the importance of cooperative living in the industrial age: apartment houses designed for small families or single women, clubs, homes, and hospices for both middle-class and working women, worker’s associations, and a variety of special interest associations.¹⁰¹ The KDF had a very special role to play in this era of communal societies because it was the organization that most closely emulated the convent model. Gnauck-Kühne recognized that not all women could be or wanted to be nuns. But if an unmarried woman forced outside of her family sought a shared life beyond the convent, where could she go? Secular professional and voluntary associations lacked the clear authoritarian justification and organizing principles that Gnauck-Kühne deemed as essential. And unlike the Protestant women’s association she had helped to establish in 1899, the KDF was elevated by the Catholic view of virginity. Catholicism offered unique status to unmarried women and provided them with the mission of protecting their own. Gnauck-Kühne exhorted the KDF: “Think of the solitary! ... Each unhappy one who, seeking employment, moves from home to the large city. ... How many unfortunate [women] in this situation fall into the quagmire and stay there! ... If we could help one single individual keep the head above water or grace a single soul by shining in a ray of light, we will be richly repaid.”¹⁰² Glowing words indeed, if a bit simplistic in their hope for change. The KDF acted as a harbor where maternal instincts would serve as the emotional and psychological deliverance of those surplus women who risked falling into a quagmire more spiritual than material—women much like Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne herself.

Gnauck-Kühne believed that through her conversion to Catholicism and the foundation of the KDF, she had united the three areas most formative to her life’s work: education, family, and the experience of suffering. Her views on the nature of education gained a more vocational and maternalist bent over time. Catholicism changed her view of the family toward that of a communal entity modeled by the convent and the KDF. And her very personal acquaintance with suffer-

ing was given fresh purpose through the Catholic faith. Gnauck-Kühne saw the spiritual pain and rarefied status of the Virgin Mary reflected in contemporary lives of single women. The Church offered a haven in which the surplus woman could receive the blessings of the Virgin while emulating Mary through the work of spiritual maternalism. Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne identified in Catholicism a sanctuary where virginity was sanctified rather than scorned.

* * *

Recent scholarship has encouraged historians to confront the question: “*Why* could confessional affiliation function as a powerful social category in [imperial] Germany?”¹⁰³ Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne’s intellectual and organizational work provides important historical evidence with which to explore that question.¹⁰⁴ Confessional affiliation formed the lens through which she offered an influential reading of the *Frauenfrage*. Gnauck-Kühne’s legacy rests in the success of the two organizations she established in an attempt to create a more multifaceted and spiritual women’s movement. The DEF and KDF still exist and, throughout their history, have had sizeable memberships. The religious organizations at least nominally touched many more women’s lives than did the more studied radical movement.¹⁰⁵ Ranks of membership disclose neither the meaning of these organizations in women’s lives nor Gnauck-Kühne’s significance in relation to them. But a 1910 letter to Gnauck-Kühne from Paula Müller, the leader of the DEF from 1900 until 1933, suggests the impact of Gnauck-Kühne’s early leadership.¹⁰⁶ The formative connection of Gnauck-Kühne’s work and ideas to the KDF is indisputable.¹⁰⁷ She remained committed to a purposeful direction of the organization throughout her life.

Yet recognition of Gnauck-Kühne’s legacy ought not to mask the chaotic aspects of her career. As Dagmar Herzog has argued regarding the religious dissent movement of the 1840s, calls for female emancipation emerging out of a religious framework “mobilized many different, indeed contradictory, images of womanhood, thereby complicating and undermining their own feminist demands in subtle, but unmistakable ways.”¹⁰⁸ Gnauck-Kühne frequently portrayed women as lazy, vain, and aimless when left without the guidance of a greater authority (be it husband or Church). Moreover, the passion of her religious convictions and the tempestuous nature of her activism made her a figure with whom many contemporaries found it difficult to work. She was clearly headstrong and her prolific writings frequently reveal ardor for a momentary cause.

The conspicuous nature of her spirituality in the context of the largely secular movement for women’s rights makes Gnauck-Kühne a difficult figure to categorize. Few leaders of Western women’s movements find their *raison d’être* in Christianity, let alone Catholicism. And Gnauck-Kühne’s confessional fluctuation raises questions. Did she convert to Catholicism, or to Augustin Rösler, or to Mary? Did Catholicism create her very special vision of religious maternalism, or did feminism lead her to Catholicism? The evidence suggests it was the latter. If so, Gnauck-Kühne’s career as a female activist followed an exceptional path. Her

Catholicism originated predominantly from a faith in redemption from pain. The Virgin Mary offered that redemption and at the same time provided a model of solace for single women. Gnauck-Kühne attached to the haven of the Church an agenda of social reform in the guise of religious maternalism.

After her death in 1917, Hedwig Dransfeld, president of the KDF, marked Elisabeth's passing with the following words: "Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne's spirit will live on, especially in the KDF ... Through the KDF, Catholicism should make itself felt as a cultural factor in the woman's movement. Advising and leading ... she provided a motto of the Catholic women's movement ... Being female means to be like a mother."¹⁰⁹ In that motto, the woman, the vision, and the association merge. This phrase, taken from Gnauck-Kühne's masterwork, *The German Woman*,¹¹⁰ was her most important legacy: the essence of womanhood lay in the maternal capacity as embodied in the Virgin Mary. Modern day virgins would find vocation in the KDF, the convent, or maternal occupations such as teaching, childcare, nursing, and social work. Gnauck-Kühne believed that Catholic female fellowship offered to all women a welcoming godly realm where marital status was irrelevant: "The decisive factor is that we come to the goal of our life's voyage, not whether we travel first or fourth class or sit alone in the woman's compartment."¹¹¹

Notes

1. Brunnhilde Fabricius and Ursula Hansen, "Wir stehen auf ihren Schultern," in *Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne (1850–1917): Zur sozialen Lage der Frau um die Jahrhundertwende*, eds. Elisabeth Prégardier and Irmingard Böhm (Annweiler, 1997), 14.
2. Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutsche Frauenbewegung* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1992), 203; on Zetkin, see chapter 7.
3. Clara Zetkin, "Nach der Drucklegung des Vortrages 'Die soziale Lage der Frau'" (1895), in *Sozialen Lage*, eds. Prégardier and Böhm, 121.
4. On the ESK, see Manfred Schick, *Kulturprotestantismus und soziale Frage* (Tübingen, 1970).
5. See Introduction.
6. See Gerhard, *Unerhört*, which is structured under the organizing framework of moderate versus radical. Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800–1914* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1991), asserts the essential importance of the moderate/radical split while also advocating spiritual motherhood as a new category of analysis. Historical accounts of local women's movements such as Elisabeth Meyer-Renschhausen, *Weibliche Kultur und soziale Arbeit; Eine Geschichte der Frauenbewegung am Beispiel Bremens, 1810–1927* (Cologne, 1989), and Nancy Reagan, *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hanover, 1880–1933* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995), have demonstrated ideological variance by region, tempering the dominance of the moderate/radical archetype.
7. The DEF had a membership of 200,000 by 1926; the KDF grew to the size of 250,000 by 1928. At that time, the BDF numbered about 500,000. See Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. Stuart McKinnon-Evans (New York, 1989), 173.

8. Three authors who have studied female religious activism and who have challenged the moderate/radical paradigm are: Douglas J. Cremer, in "The Limits of Maternalism: Gender Ideology and the South German Catholic Workingwomen's Associations," *Catholic Historical Review* 87 (3) (2001): 428–452; Ursula Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation in Deutschland, 1850–1920* (Frankfurt, 1992); and Marion Kaplan, whose work has uncovered the importance of religious identity and organizations for German Jewish women; see especially Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class. Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York, 1991).
9. See Margaret L. Anderson, "The Limits of Secularization: On the Problem of the Catholic Revival in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Historical Journal* 38(3) (1995): 647–670, and "Piety and Politics: Recent Work on German Catholicism," *Journal of Modern History* 63(4) (1991): 681–716; David Blackburn, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Nineteenth-Century German Village* (New York, 1995); Raymond Chien-Sun, *Before the Enemy is within our Walls: Catholic Workers in Cologne, 1885–1912* (Boston, 1999); Margaret Stieg Dalton, *Catholicism, Popular Culture, and the Arts in Germany, 1880–1933* (Notre Dame, IN, 2005); Wilfried Loth, ed., *Deutscher Katholizismus im Umbruch zur Moderne* (Stuttgart, 1991); and Jonathan Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 1984). Helmut Walser Smith, ed., *Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in Germany, 1800–1914* (New York, 2001), offers significant insight into the Catholic experience, including Lucian Hölscher, "The Religious Divide: Piety in Nineteenth-Century Germany," 33–48; Anthony J. Steinhoff, "Building Religious Community: Worship Space and Experience in Strasbourg after the Franco-Prussian War," 267–296; and Jeffrey Zalar, "The Process of Confessional Inculturation: Catholic Reading in the 'Long Nineteenth Century,'" 121–152.
10. Work on gender and Catholicism has been more extensive in the history of pre-unification Germany. See Joel F. Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (New York, 1995); Dagmar Herzog, *Intimacy and Exclusion: Religious Politics in Pre-Revolutionary Baden* (Princeton, NJ, 1996); Sylvia Paetschek, *Frauen und Dissens: Frauen im Deutsch-katholizismus und in den freien Gemeinden, 1842–1852* (Göttingen, 1990); Catherine M. Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change: Religious Dimensions of the Mid-Nineteenth Century Women's Movement in Germany* (New York, 1987); and Ulrike Strasser, *State of Virginity: Gender, Religion, and Politics in an Early Modern Catholic State* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2004).
11. *Kulturkampf* translates as "a conflict of cultures or civilizations," and refers specifically to the clash between the Prussian Ministry of Culture and the Catholic Church from 1872–1878. During the *Kulturkampf*, Jesuit institutions were closed, clerical education was taken over by the state, and civil marriage became mandatory.
12. Michael B. Gross, *The War against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2004), 206.
13. *Ibid.*, 225.
14. Primary sources for this chapter include unpublished material from Gnauck-Kühne's papers held at Cologne's Archiv des Katholischen Frauenbundes (ADKF, Nachlass EGK); Gnauck-Kühne's writings; and Helene Simon, *Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne* vol. 1, *Pilgerfahrt* (M. Gladbach, 1928), and vol. 2, *Heimat* (M. Gladbach, 1929). Simon's exhaustive biography includes transcriptions of a substantial amount of Gnauck-Kühne's correspondence and unpublished writings.
15. Gnauck-Kühne in Simon, *Pilgerfahrt*, 12.
16. Elisabeth Kühne, *Prospekt der Lehr und Erziehungs-Anstalt für Töchter höherer Stände* (Blankenburg a.H.: W. Kircher, undated [1875]), 5. ADKF, Nachlass EGK, Familienpapiere.
17. The daughters of eminent historian Theodor Mommsen were among her students.
18. Elisabeth Kühne, "Abschiedswort an meine Zöglinge," 15 August 1888, 1, in ADKF, Nachlass EGK, Familienpapiere.
19. *Ibid.*, 2.
20. *Ibid.*, 3.

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 4.
23. ADKF, Nachlass EGK, Familienpapiere, Simon's notes from interview with Frl. Martini.
24. ADKF, Nachlass EGK, Familienpapiere, Simon's notes from interview with Hänichen.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. ADKF, Nachlass EGK, Familienpapiere.
28. Ibid., Simon's notes from interview with Frl. Hänichen.
29. Ibid.
30. On Schmoller, see Erik Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany, 1864–1894* (New York, 2003). Schmoller (1838–1917) was the leader of the “new historicists” who challenged neoclassical economic theory.
31. Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne, *Goldene Früchte aus Märchenland. Märchen für jung und alt* (Bremen, 1904); see Introduction.
32. Gnauck-Kühne to Augustin Rösler, 16 September 1900, in Simon, *Heimat*, 196–197.
33. Gnauck-Kühne, *Goldene Früchte*, 107.
34. The most influential works include: Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne, *Das Universitätsstudium der Frauen: Ein Beitrag zur Frauenfrage*, 3rd ed., (Oldenburg, 1892); the pamphlet containing her 1895 ESK speech, *Die Soziale Lage der Frau* (Berlin, 1895); and Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne, *Die Deutsche Frau um die Jahrhundertwende: Statistische Studie zur Frauenfrage* (Berlin, 1904).
35. Gnauck-Kühne, *Universitätsstudium*, 2.
36. See chapter 7.
37. Gnauck-Kühne, *Universitätsstudium*, 17.
38. Ibid., 17–18.
39. Gnauck-Kühne to Minna Bachem-Singer, 22 May 1902, in Simon, *Pilgerfahrt*, 220.
40. Gnauck-Kühne, *Frau*, 9.
41. Ibid., 142; see chapter 6 on Bré.
42. See chapter 3; on Gnauck-Kühne and maternalism, see Baumann, *Protestantismus*, 91, and Cremer, “Limits of Maternalism,” 437–443.
43. Gnauck-Kühne, *Lage*, 14.
44. Ibid., 15–16.
45. Gnauck-Kühne, *Universitätsstudium*, 13.
46. Ibid., 4.
47. Gnauck-Kühne, *Lage*, 3.
48. See chapter 6.
49. Ibid., 4.
50. Gnauck-Kühne, *Lage*, 24–25; on the tension between maternalist ideals and paternalist views of the working-class in Gnauck-Kühne's social agenda, see Cremer, “Limits of Maternalism,” 433; 443–452.
51. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [1792] (New York, 1992), 81.
52. Gnauck-Kühne, *Universitätsstudium*, 4–5.
53. Gnauck-Kühne, *Frau*, 123–124.
54. Gnauck-Kühne, *Lage*, 20; see chapter 5 for a discussion of Lange and Salomon.
55. Gnauck-Kühne, *Frau*, 139–140; on individually focused education, George Bernstein and Lottelore Bernstein, “Attitudes toward Women's Education in Germany,” *International Journal of Women's Studies* 2 (1979): 482.
56. Gnauck-Kühne, *Lage*, 9.
57. Gnauck-Kühne, *Universitätsstudium*, 11–12.
58. Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne, “Abkehr vom Protestantismus” (1900), in *Frau und Religion: Gotteserfahrungen im Patriarchat*, ed. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel (Frankfurt, 1985), 171–172.
59. See chapter 3 on the demography of the *Frauenüberschuß*.
60. Gnauck-Kühne, *Universitätsstudium*, 6.

61. Gnauck-Kühne, *Lage*, 8.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*, 26.
64. See, for example, Gertrud Bäumer, "Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne," in *Die Frau*, May 1917; Ludwig Langemann, *Der Deutsche Bund zur Bekämpfung der Frauenemanzipation* (Berlin, 1913), 5–9.
65. See Gerhard, *Unerhört*, 203; Alfred Kall, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland: eine Untersuchung zur Gründung katholischer Frauenvereine im 19. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn, 1983), 211–306; Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, "A Woman between Churches: Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne, Sociopolitical Scientist," *American Benedictine Review*, 43(2) (1992): 207–219; and Prégardier and Böhm, *Sozialen Lage*. Baumann, *Protestantismus*, and Cremer, "Limits of Maternalism," stand as exceptions in their treatment of Gnauck-Kühne as an important figure of social and women's history.
66. On the distinctiveness of Catholic and Protestant cultural identity, see David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century. A History of Germany, 1780–1918* (New York, 1997), 283–302, and Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1800–1866* (Munich, 1984), 529ff.; Hölscher's "Religious Divide" describes the piety movement of the nineteenth century.
67. Baumann, *Protestantismus*, 97–98.
68. Gnauck-Kühne to Dyhrenfurth, October 1899, in Simon, *Pilgerfahrt*, 163.
69. See Augustin Rösler, *Die Frauenfrage vom Standpunkte der Natur, der Geschichte und der Offenbarung* (Vienna, 1893).
70. Augustin Rösler, "Aus der Hauschronik Mautern," 1900, 50, in Simon, *Heimat*, 209.
71. Personal recollection of Franz Mair, in Simon, *Heimat*, 210.
72. Mair cited in Simon, *Heimat*, 210.
73. In a letter to Gertrud Dyhrenfurth, 13 December 1904, in Simon, *Heimat*, 219, Gnauck-Kühne describes her passion as a character flaw that she struggled against her entire life.
74. One exception can be found in Gnauck-Kühne, *Universitätsstudium*, which was for the most part devoid of religious commentary until an extraordinary declaration in the conclusion: "If the doors toward knowledge were open, she [woman] would discover: 'Everything is yours. But you are Christ. Christ is God'" (1892, 60). This use of faith to justify expanded female rights suggests a direction of things to come.
75. Gnauck-Kühne, "Abkehr," 170–171.
76. Gnauck-Kühne, *Frau*, 9.
77. Gnauck-Kühne, *Lage*, 2, 9.
78. Gnauck-Kühne, "Abkehr," 172–173.
79. On historical interpretations of the life of Katharina von Bora, see Jeanette C. Smith, "Katharina von Bora through Five Centuries: A Historiography," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30(3) (1999): 745–774.
80. Gnauck-Kühne, "Abkehr," 173.
81. Rosa Mayreder, *A Survey of the Woman Problem*, trans. Herman Scheffauer (New York, 1913; reprint, Westport, CT, 1994), 54; Mayreder (1858–1938) was a leader of the Austrian women's movement.
82. Gnauck-Kühne, "Abkehr," 164–165.
83. Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, 106.
84. Gnauck-Kühne, *Universitätsstudium*, 46–47; emphasis in text.
85. Gnauck-Kühne's interpretation echoes that of Johannes Ronge, the leader of the mid-century German Catholic movement. Prelinger, *Charity*, shows how Ronge linked Marian imagery "not only [to] women's philanthropic obligation but also [to] their right to higher and secular education" (1987, 121).
86. Gnauck-Kühne, *Universitätsstudium*, 8.
87. Michael Gross has described how some liberals of the early *Kaiserreich* were dismayed by the growing number of female religious orders and congregations that emerged in German states

- between the Revolution of 1848 and the *Kulturkampf*, enhancing the difference between Catholic and Protestant Germany in terms of their views of women. One opponent of female cloistered life linked the rise in religious orders to the perception of an early female surplus, believing that “it was becoming increasingly difficult for women, especially in the midsized cities, to find a partner for marriage” (2004, 212).
88. Gnauck-Kühne, “Über den Mangel an Diakonissen,” *Unterhaltungsbeilage der “Tägliche Rundschau”* 228 (28 September 1899).
 89. See chapter 1 on the iconography of the old maid.
 90. Gnauck-Kühne, “Abschiedswort,” 4.
 91. Gnauck-Kühne to Rösler, 26 August 1899, in Simon, *Heimat*, 166–167; emphasis in text.
 92. Gnauck-Kühne, “Abkehr,” 166–168.
 93. Gnauck-Kühne to Dyhrenfurth, 2. Festtag 1903, in Simon, *Heimat*, 218–219.
 94. Gnauck-Kühne in *Mitteilungen des ESK*, (May/June 1900) 2, quoted in Baumann, *Protestantismus*, 97.
 95. Gnauck-Kühne to Helene Simon, in Simon, *Pilgerfahrt*, 185.
 96. Gnauck-Kühne to Rösler, undated, in Simon, *Heimat*, 189.
 97. Gnauck-Kühne, *Frau*, 154; emphasis in text.
 98. *Ibid.*, 153; emphasis in text.
 99. *Ibid.*, 146; emphasis in text.
 100. *Ibid.*, 144.
 101. *Ibid.*, 146.
 102. Gnauck-Kühne, cited in Simon, *Heimat*, 88.
 103. Steinhoff, “Building Religious Community,” 267; emphasis in text.
 104. Gnauck-Kühne’s place in German women’s history ought to be redressed, not only because of her prolific presence on the scene, but also because of the unique religious and social scientific perspectives she brought to bear. Gnauck-Kühne’s position on the periphery is best demonstrated by Gerhard, *Unerhört*, 203, which briefly cites her in a sidebar as the “Catholic Zetkin.” Ute Frevert’s *Women in German History* mentions Catholic female activism only once, during a discussion of voting patterns in the Weimar era. Ann Taylor Allen’s *Feminism* (1991) also does not address the particularities of Catholic maternalism. Local studies have challenged this trend; Reagin’s *A German Women’s Movement* offers an integrated consideration of Catholic women. But to date, no history of female activism has explored the Catholic women’s movement of the *Kaiserreich* in the way that parallels Ursula Baumann’s work on *Protestantismus*.
 105. The DEF had a membership of 200,000 by 1926; the KDF grew to the size of 250,000 by 1928. See Frevert, *Women*, 173; Helene Stöcker’s *Bund für Mutterschutz* had a membership of approximately 3800 in 1907. Allen, *Feminism*, 175.
 106. ADKF, Nachlass EGK, Correspondence, Ordnen 17.
 107. On Gnauck-Kühne’s Catholic legacy, see Prégardier and Böhm, *Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne*.
 108. Herzog, *Intimacy*, 86.
 109. Cited in Simon, *Heimat*, 70.
 110. Gnauck-Kühne, *Frau*, 124.
 111. *Ibid.*, 153.