

Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford

Vowed to Community or Ordained to Mission?

Aspects of separation and integration in the Lutheran Deaconess Institute Neuendettelsau, Bavaria

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Theology

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Michaelmas Term 2014

Short Abstract

This study offers an overdue exploration of the early years of the deaconess community in Neuendettelsau from a gender perspective. Drawing on rich archival material, it focuses on the process of the formation of a distinctive collective identity. Central to this study is the assumption, drawn from the social sciences, that collective identity is a social construction which requires the participation of the whole group through identification and which is consolidated by developing specific rituals, symbols, codes and normative texts, which facilitate integration, and by constructing external boundaries, which separate from the world and wider church. The centrifugal forces which came into play when deaconesses were sent out in isolation were counterbalanced by a communal life which offered forms of participation and identification for the individual members and which consolidated their sense of belonging.

The first chapter introduces the methodology. Chapter Two explores the social, cultural and theological context of the foundation of the Deaconess Institute, and offers a brief outline of the institution's historical development. The third chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the initiation ceremony as a rite which both admitted into the community and conferred an ecclesiastical office. Chapter Four analyses formative and normative texts that shed light on the community's norms, values, and expectations. In the fifth chapter, non-literary means of consolidating and affirming the deaconesses' collective identity are explored. This study concludes that the process of the emergence of a specific deaconess culture was pervaded by bourgeois norms, values, patterns of behaviour and notions about gender roles which measured out the women's radius of action and were at times difficult to reconcile with the deaconess profession.

Long Abstract

This thesis focuses on the deaconess community in Neuendettelsau during the nineteenth century, a significant sisterhood which so far has been largely ignored by scholars undertaking historical-theological research from a gender perspective. Drawing on rich archival material, it analyses the process of the formation of the community's distinctive collective identity, which was consolidated by differentiation from the broader church. It argues that through certain forms of ritualized action, through the institution's characteristic – and sometimes idiosyncratic – symbolism, and through normative texts, general principles, norms and interpretative structures were created and transmitted which shaped a distinct deaconess culture. This thesis thus builds on the insight of the social sciences that collective identity is a social construction which requires continuous and conscious confirmation. Although it was primarily the Institute's male directors, and particularly its founder, Wilhelm Löhe, who introduced and purported this culture, it was only through the deaconesses' active participation and identification that it could be sustained and passed on. This required a certain level of negotiation. Accordingly, this study does not regard the sisters as passive recipients, but rather – and deliberately – seeks out their creative potential.

The thesis begins with an introductory chapter which offers a literary survey, presents the sources and introduces the methodology. The research is inspired not only by theological concerns, but also by approaches developed in cultural history and thus draws on insights from the social sciences, namely

from the fields of social psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology, for its understanding of collective identity.

The second chapter explores the context of the foundation of the Deaconess Institute in Neuendettelsau, with a particular focus on the contemporary bourgeois view of women. The emergence of distinct notions about femininity and masculinity and the allocation of separate spheres, the private to women and the public to men, is sketched. The various diaconal initiatives which were either founded by women or closely involved women can to some extent be understood as means of exploring and partially transgressing the newly allocated spheres. An important role model also for German Protestant women was the work and form of life of the members of Roman Catholic active women's congregations. They influenced initiatives from the circles of the *Erweckungsbewegung*, notably Amalie Sieveking's plan to found a sisterhood, and, to a different extent, Theodor and Friederike Fliedner's deaconess house in Kaiserswerth. It was the Fliedners' model of female diakonia as a full-time profession for single women within the patriarchal structures of a mother house which gained lasting impact within German Protestantism. Towards the end of the century, however, this was increasingly called into question by proponents of the emerging women's movement. Against this backdrop, Löhe's theological development from the *Erweckungsbewegung* to Lutheran Neo-confessionalism is expounded, focusing on his perception of women. It is argued that both his congregational ideal which he set out in his "Proposal for the union of Lutheran Christians for apostolic life" (1848) and which pleaded for an exclusive form of church-membership, and his view on the female vocation as reflected in his booklet "On female simplicity" (1853) were constitutive to the later deaconess community. "On female simplicity" reaffirmed bourgeois notions of gender patterns but also provided a slight opening to revise them on the grounds of religion. At the time that he was writing "On female simplicity", Löhe and a circle of like-minded friends also drafted the conceptual outline for the Deaconess Institute. The Institute was founded in 1854, initially as a purely educational institution, but was soon restructured into a mother house with a communal life. This thesis reveals the considerable contribution of the deaconesses to this development. The women articulated concerns and interests which illuminate their deep embeddedness in bourgeois culture as well as their commitment to their profession, and took active steps to create for themselves an environment in which their needs were considered. Against the backdrop of Löhe's warnings about the "debauched" conditions of congregations in the broader church, the women found ways of strengthening their internal cohesion such as the in-house bulletin and their shared liturgical life. At the same time, repressive measures were also developed to ensure conformity.

The third chapter focuses on the institutional construction of a threshold, the initiation ceremony. Its interpretation by the male *Rektoren* reflects their understanding of the deaconess vocation. Löhe's high esteem of the initiation ceremony, expressed both in publications and unpublished addresses to the community, was primarily motivated by his wish to establish the deaconess profession as a life-long – indeed, eternal – vocation. The rite was performed by the deaconesses themselves, including prayers, readings, and the laying-on of hands. In his sermons and addresses, Löhe gave it a theological interpretation which approximated the ceremony to the Roman Catholic rite of profession. This was underlined by the explicit pledge, which, from 1861, all deaconesses had to make, to live voluntarily in poverty, chastity, and obedience, and by the bridal metaphors and symbolism which were integrated into the ceremony. The day of the initiation ceremony was thus celebrated as a day of betrothal to Christ. Alongside this, initially relatively unconnected, was Löhe's interpretation of the ceremony as the conferral of an ecclesiastical office, similarly to an ordination. This interpretation was enhanced when, in

1867, Löhe added a second part to the ceremony in which he himself solemnly conveyed the ecclesiastical office of deaconess through his use of the ordination – prayer for deaconesses drawn from the Apostolic Constitutions, again combined with the laying-on of hands, this time by Löhe himself. According to his own criteria, this constituted an ordination. The dual rite remained constitutive for the initiation ceremony in Neuendettelsau, marking the deaconesses' change of status both within the community and in the eyes of the wider church. Through it, the deaconesses' self-esteem was enhanced. This was also noted externally, as the correspondence between Löhe and the church authorities from the initial years of the Deaconess Institute reveals. Here, theological concerns about establishing an ecclesiastically distinct community with a clear demarcation of external boundaries, comparable to a Roman Catholic religious order, were voiced. However, theological concerns merged with issues of gender roles. There was uneasiness amongst the male theologians about the emergence of an exclusive community of women whose self-perception was shaped by their high calling and a sense of being set apart or ordained. Later, under Löhe's successors, the initiation ceremony was devalued which also implied devaluation of the deaconess community. The sociological implications of the community's "liminal rite" or "transition rite" (to use van Gennep's terminology) as the collective action of the sisterhood are explored at length. In particular, the role of symbols, gestures, and a specific culture of memory are analysed. Based on a series of unpublished addresses given by Löhe in the context of these ceremonies, and on the letters of the deaconesses themselves, it is possible to reconstruct its significance for the sisterhood and the way in which the members of the community affirmed the validity of the ritual.

The fourth chapter considers the formative and normative texts of the Deaconess Institute. These conveyed the "cultural meaning" of the community, that is, its values, norms, interpretational patterns and expectations, and introduced a distinct terminology and rhetorical conventions. Most of the texts were written by Löhe and thus present ideal constructions. This is particularly true of the pedagogical "dictations" which played an important part in the deaconesses' education and training but which remained constitutive and were reread even under Löhe's successors. Many of these expounded the "four deaconess virtues" of chastity, obedience, poverty and gentleness. While Löhe emphasised that these were the hallmarks of a deaconess, distinguishing her from other professional women, a closer analysis reveals their deep embeddedness in bourgeois notions of femininity. The obituaries which Löhe wrote for deceased deaconesses urge the living to continue their personal development and sanctification, envisioning the eschatological scenario of a perfected deaconess choir in which the individual merges with the whole in perfect harmony. Gentleness and pliability within the fellowship, and the subordination of the self to the expectations of the Institute despite all individual character traits are therefore norms preached to those who as yet only prefigure the perfected deaconess who will take her place. The *curricula vitae*, in contrast, were composed by the deaconesses themselves, often at the point at which they completed their training. The offering of a "biography generator" and an approved terminology enabled the women to reflect on their individual life stories in the light of the present and to make sense of their life in ways which strengthened and affirmed their new religious identity. Finally, Löhe's writings about female saints emphasised norms not normally associated with bourgeois notions of femininity, such as hardness, courage, physical resilience, and assertiveness. "Löhe's soldiers" who were to venture out into the world and broader church, could find in the ancient martyrs models for the heroism their profession required.

The final chapter analyses the non-literary means by which the deaconesses' collective identity was consolidated. Polarization raises the awareness of distinctiveness and, in turn, furthers internal cohesion; boundary markers were therefore important to the deaconesses' cultural enhancement. The uniform deaconess dress [or *Tracht*] is considered as a means of symbolic definition and communication. It signified that for a deaconess work, life and faith merged. In Löhe's interpretation, which he offered to the community, every item of the deaconess dress was charged with religious meaning. The uniform expressed professionalism and affirmed members' shared identity, despite their geographical separation, thus enabling bonding. A further boundary marker for the community was its specific conception of cleanliness and dirt, purity and impurity. The Institute's notions of physical dirt and cleanliness were in keeping with bourgeois mores. In Neuendettelsau, this played out as a devaluation of the surrounding peasant culture, in particular that of the village population. The "impurity" of women who had in some way deviated from bourgeois norms of sexuality and who were accommodated by the community to find assistance in the process of "reclamation", was also argued on the grounds of morality. Their intermingling with the deaconesses, it was believed, would "infect" them with purity. An idiosyncratic understanding of purity and impurity can be found in the Institute's abhorrence of the "impurity of the altar". Only those Lutherans who abstained from receiving Communion from the hands of a Reformed or United clergyman and who shunned "mixed celebrations" were admitted to Holy Communion in Neuendettelsau. Löhe encouraged the deaconesses to spread this principle to other congregations. This could result in a display of theological assertiveness on the part of the deaconesses which ran counter to the conventional allocation of gender roles. While all this served to enhance a sense of distinction and elitism, collective action within the mother house also furthered internal cohesion. An important aspect of the deaconesses' collective identity was their conception of the community as a family which was enacted and evoked through cultural means. The emphasis of the warmth and intimacy of the initial months of the community's existence, reiterated by a foundational myth transmitted both by Löhe and by the deaconesses themselves, was evoked by the creating and furnishing of a "family room" and was ritually commemorated through the community's Christmas celebrations. An important "sacred space" was the community's chapel. The keeping of "sacred times", the daily devotions and offices, drew the individual deaconesses into the institutional time structure and simultaneously offered the experience of an idiosyncratic spiritual timelessness. Finally, the emergence of a culture commemorating the community's dead is explored. The case of Löhe's death in particular reveals the deaconesses' need for direct participation and to become involved in the continual process of re-membering and of preserving emotional ties.

This study concludes that the lengthy process of restructuring the Institute into a mother house and of consolidating a deaconess identity [*Diakonissensinn*] was actively promoted not only by Löhe but also by the deaconesses. Löhe esteemed the participation of the women highly, and especially for the educated daughters from bourgeois families, the community offered considerable creative leeway. The emergence of a specific deaconess culture was deeply pervaded by bourgeois norms, values, patterns of behaviour and notions about gender roles. The new option for single women to pursue a professional career and to develop religious self-confidence came at the price of a reinforcing of the norms of female submission and self-sacrifice.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I owe the greatest gratitude to my supervisors, Dr Charlotte Methuen and Dr Mark Chapman. It was a shock when, just after I had arrived in Oxford, Charlotte revealed to me that she would be leaving Oxford for Glasgow in six months. In the end, however, we emailed and met so often at Brown's in Oxford, at St. Pancras and Victoria Stations in London, in Cologne, in Glasgow and at Birmingham Airport that I am convinced that I saw far more of my supervisor than many others who have their supervisor just next door. Mark, who stepped in as internal supervisor in my second year, perfectly complemented this hands-on approach with his long experience and his enormous expertise. I am greatly indebted to both of them for their continuous encouragement, their many kind words, their meticulous comments, their generosity with their time, their patience despite all my meanderings, their ready offering of their (language) skills and experience, and their thought-provoking questions. Charlotte and Mark have been true "doctoral parents" [*Doktoreltern*] to me. Thank you.

I would also like to thank my two examiners, Professor Angela Berlis of the University of Bern, and Dr Andrew Atherstone of Oxford University. I am all too aware that to examine a thesis involves considerable commitment of time and thought on the part of the examiners, and I am deeply grateful to them for their constructive criticism, their intelligent and searching questions, their willingness to engage fully with my research and not least for their kindness and reassurance in moments of great stress and tension.

I am also indebted to the staff members of Harris Manchester College and the Bodleian Library, particularly of the Upper Reading Room. Oxford University has a wonderful support system in place for doctoral students, but it's the individual people who fill this with life. Their smiles and ready helpfulness cheered up many of my days.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the support which I have received in Neuendettelsau: from Professor Gury Schneider-Ludorff of the *Augustana Hochschule*, Dr. Roland Liebenberg of the *Löhe-Forschungsstelle*, Dr. Dietrich Blaufuß of the *Löhe-Archiv*, Matthias Honold, archivist of the *Zentralarchiv der Diakonie Neuendettelsau*, and Sr. Erna Biewald, *Oberin* of the deaconess community. My research has taken unusually many twists and turns. Therefore, though largely unmentioned in the final version of this thesis, I would also like to thank the Community of St John Baptist (CSJB), formerly at Clewer now at Cuddesdon, and the Community of St Mary the Virgin (CSMV) at Wantage for overcoming their initial hesitations and for opening their private archives to me. I am extremely grateful to the All Saints Sisters of the Poor (ASSP) who have not only graciously granted me hospitality in a beautiful flat on their compound in Oxford for two years but have also allowed me to take part in their offices and services and who regularly invited me to lunch. From time to time they have kindly and intelligently enquired after the progress of my research and readily accepted my assurances that I would not make them the object of my study.

For most students, particularly mature ones, finances are an important issue. I would therefore especially like to thank my home church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, for granting me the *Promotionsstipendium* for three years and for paying for various insurances. I would also like to thank the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, Berlin, and the Peter Cruddas foundation at Harris Manchester College for granting me generous scholarships. In addition I was awarded the Gosdon-Water-Newton scholarship by Keble College and the Squire and Marriott Bursary

of the Faculty of Theology and Religion, Oxford. I am sincerely grateful to all those who deemed my research worthy of financial support.

Completing a thesis requires a supportive network of friends and family. It would be impossible to list all those who have been close to me during the four years of my stay at Oxford. However, I feel that some deserve to have their names mentioned: amongst them Alison Gott, Jonas-Sébastien Beaudry, Junemary and Michael Moyle, Mark Callaghan, Juan Guan, Linxin Li, Fulya Japan, Qian Liu, Atsuko Sato, Isabella Image, and Katrina Malone. Finally, there is my family. Without love, all would be meaningless. I would like to especially mention the women of my family: my grandmother Katharina, my mother Ingrid, my sister Andrea, and my niece Linda. Four generations of strong women who have shaped me and shape me still.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis offers an exploration of the Lutheran deaconess community in Neuendettelsau, Bavaria. Its focus is on the period from 1854, when the Deaconess Institute was founded as the first of its kind in Bavaria by the local pastor Wilhelm Löhe, to 1872, the year of the founder's death. Though Löhe repeatedly emphasised its independence, the Institute in Neuendettelsau was part of the nineteenth-century deaconess movement which sought to re-establish the ecclesiastical office of deaconess with reference to the scriptural Phoebe, mentioned in Romans 16:1. This found its first concrete and visible expression when a deaconess institution was established by Theodor and Friederike Fliedner in Kaiserswerth in the Rhineland in 1836. They created something novel within the Protestant churches by combining the option for women to receive a thorough training, and thereafter to pursue a professional career, with a communal form of life for single women as an alternative to marriage and family -life. Concerns that this might possibly further the emancipatory aspirations of women were alleviated by Fliedner's markedly conservative stance and by the patriarchal structures adopted within the mother house. Not least, the deaconesses' social and ecclesiastical acceptance rested on the acknowledged necessity of their work: The "female ministry of love" as it was called in contemporary terminology was regarded as an adequate response on the part of the Protestant churches to the social grievances that accompanied the first signs of industrialization. All in all, the Kaiserswerth prototype proved highly successful and sparked the founding of many daughter-houses.¹

Neuendettelsau, founded almost twenty years later, was not strictly one of them. Here, the rhetoric of demarcation from Kaiserswerth was strong, especially in the early years. Two arguments were used to differentiate the institution in Bavaria from the one located in the Rhineland. The first was the theological direction of the Neuendettelsau Institute. During the course of his career, Löhe had undergone a theological development from the *Erweckungsbewegung* to Lutheran Neo-confessionalism. Toying with the thought of separation from the Bavarian *Landeskirche* in 1848/49, Löhe retained an outside position

¹ Ute Gause rates the Kaiserswerth mother house as a "victory model" [*Siegesmodell*], Gause, *Dienst und Demut*, 77.

within the broader church throughout the rest of his life. Löhe's difficult relationship with the church authorities, which culminated in his temporary suspension from his office as pastor of Neuendettelsau in 1860, left its mark on the community by its occasional sense of alienation from the broader church and by its wariness of any projects which might swerve from pure Lutheran doctrine. This included Kaiserswerth.

The second argument for demarcation was based on the organisational structure of the Neuendettelsau Institute. It was initially designed to be a purely educational establishment and consciously rejected the conception of a mother house with a communal life as developed in Kaiserswerth. Single women from the local rural countryside were invited to be educated and trained in Neuendettelsau. They could either enrol as deaconess students, if they aspired to become deaconesses, or had the option of attending the courses and returning to their former spheres of life in home and family. Once they had graduated, the ties to the Institute even for the deaconesses were deliberately kept loose. Quickly, however, it transpired that this was not a feasible concept. From 1857, the Institute was restructured, and the changes were officially announced:

As our friends know, at the beginning of the deaconess institution here we were wholly averse to the notion that our pupils should form some kind of enclosed sisterhood or order. However, we have now to confess that in the course of time we have come to hold a different opinion.²

In this official statement, it was argued that the directorate needed to retain a tighter control on the deaconesses:

The pupil who gives up the closer tie to the mother house and her equals always encounters the same affliction; she forgets the mother house, the thoughts which have been instilled into her here, she loses the high view-point of her profession which, as you know, finds so little root in the contemporary congregations, and, in time, she sinks to become a salaried servant and a child of the world.³

This thesis explores the dynamic process of the emergence of a community, in Löhe's terms "a kind of enclosed sisterhood or order", which was made up of deaconesses who had a "high view-point of her profession" and a sense of distinction from the "child[ren] of the world." The mother house both offered

² 4. Jahresbericht 1857, 26-27.

³ *Ibid.*, 27.

emotional support and a home for those deaconesses working in unfamiliar and potentially threatening situations, and exerted control. It is argued that the process of defining this identity lasted far beyond the year 1857 and that it was double-sided: The institutionally prescribed structures, norms, instructions, and interpretational patterns were adopted and applied, but also partly modified by the sisterhood. Key to the argument is the fact that the women were not merely passive recipients but participated and contributed to the formation of a distinct Neuendettelsau deaconess community. This developed its own dynamics. Löhe himself had to acknowledge at the end of his life:

[...] from the beginning, we had not intended to establish a deaconess house where in a modern imitation of the old monastic times a crowd of female workers was to be educated who would then emerge to far-away places to teach how one should conduct works of mercy. [...] We wished to raise our own people for our own immediate needs [...]. It is, of course, now very different according to God's special providence, and what has become we had actually not intended, but something far simpler and more popular [*volksmäßigeres*] [...]. One could say that our own path was not wholly clear to us from the beginning. – We sought for the truth, as I said before, and we would have much preferred to have been able to remain more faithful and closer to our own thought.⁴

This invites closer exploration.

1.1. Literature Survey

The explicit discrepancy between Löhe's original intention and the resulting Deaconess Institute at Neuendettelsau has been pointed out and interpreted by several scholars. Until recently, however, the deaconess community itself has not received much attention. Instead, the Deaconess Institute has been mentioned in the context of an evaluation of Löhe's ecclesiological and diaconal thought. Depending on the theological views of the author, the Institute has been regarded either as an outflow of Löhe's "high church", catholicizing tendencies and proof of his "theology of reprimatation", thus his critics, or as the realization of Löhe's ideal of a church which was, his admirers hastened to add, only intended as a provisional structure and meant to be dissolved once Löhe's vision of a parochially based *diakonia* had been reinstated in the Lutheran church.

⁴ Löhe, *Etwas aus der Geschichte* (1870), GW4, 171-172.

The former view was brought into play by Löhe's first biographer, Johannes Deinzer who, as his *Vikar* [curate] had closely collaborated with Löhe. In the third volume of his biography, published in 1882, Deinzer drew on many original sources to describe in detail the founding of the Deaconess Institute during the last third of Löhe's life, and pointed out that Löhe's conception of the office of deaconess had undergone a development. Although the parochial deaconess remained Löhe's ideal, "one let go of the original dread of an orientation towards the antique form of the communal life [*Genossenschaftsleben*] and came to regard the deaconess of the 19th century 'as a protestant imitation of the Roman Catholic sister of mercy'."⁵ This interpretation was taken up by critics, for example by Martin Kähler in 1898 in his lecture "History of the Protestant dogmatics in the nineteenth century".⁶ In the context of a critical evaluation of Neo-Lutheran confessionalism, Kähler counted Löhe amongst the "confessional separatists." According to Kähler, his stance was also reflected in the Deaconess Institute. It "was more oriented towards monasticism, in contrast to the original Kaiserswerth movement."⁷ This was reiterated by Felix Flückiger in 1975: "The father of the institutions in Neuendettelsau gave rise to a type of diakonia which was strongly influenced by the model of the monastery. All in all, Löhe had a strong leaning towards Catholicism, especially towards the early Catholicism of the early church (which he, however, romanticized)."⁸

Deinzer also began a trend in interpreting the deaconess community as the realization of Löhe's ideal of the true church.⁹ Following him, Siegfried Hebart, in his hagiographic study "Wilhelm Löhe's doctrine of the church, its office and government" (1939), argued that Löhe founded the deaconess community as a model for the link Löhe postulated between the visible and the invisible church.¹⁰ Briefly he also remarked that this implicitly resulted in a devaluation of the priesthood of all believers.¹¹ This critique

⁵ Deinzer, Johannes: *Wilhelm Löhe's Leben. Aus seinem schriftlichen Nachlaß zusammengestellt*, Vol. 3, Gütersloh 1882, 210-211.

⁶ Kähler, Martin: *Geschichte der protestantischen Dogmatik im 19. Jahrhundert* (1898), ed. by Ernst Kähler, Wuppertal/Zürich 1989. The lecture was published posthumously by his grandson.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁸ Flückiger, Felix: *Protestantische Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 1975, 69-70.

⁹ Deinzer, *Löhe's Leben* (3), 326-328.

¹⁰ Hebart, Siegfried: *Wilhelm Löhes Lehre von der Kirche, ihrem Amt und Regiment*, Erlangen (diss) 1939, 195 and 280-281.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 261; also 68, 71, 163, 173, 232, 276.

was enhanced by Gerhard Müller, who was the first to explore Löhe's roots in the *Erweckungsbewegung* and, in a number of essays published between 1971 and 1975, focused on Löhe's theological development.¹² Löhe's original intentions to revitalize the congregations through missionary and diaconal initiatives were, according to Müller, redirected in the course of the year 1848/49. From then on Löhe wished to gather an ideal congregation, with the sacramental life as its centre, in retreat from sinful society. In the course of his attempts to revive the diaconal ministry, Löhe, according to Müller, furthered the "professionalization" of diaconia, culminating in what Müller regarded as the ordination of deaconesses.¹³ This, in turn, meant the devaluation or even prevention of voluntary diaconal initiatives in local congregations. With this, a line of critique was taken up that goes back to Bezzel, Löhe's second successor as *Rektor* of the Institute. Repeatedly emphasising the provisional nature of the deaconess community, Bezzel returned to Löhe's original vision, emphasising that the primary function of the mother house was to serve as an educational institution which should, in the long run, make itself superfluous by spurring the congregations to diaconal work.¹⁴ The vision was taken up by Heinz Miederer, who was *Rektor* of the Institute from 1975 to 1990.¹⁵

The theological critique of mother house diaconia was enhanced by the *Diakoniewissenschaftler* Paul Philippi. In his doctoral dissertation, he developed the thesis of a "Christocentric diaconia" which was to find expression in the diaconal responsibility of the congregations.¹⁶ Philippi took this as his norm in evaluating all nineteenth-century diaconal undertakings. In a later publication, Philippi therefore interpreted Löhe positively, placing him on a par with Wichern. In the nineteenth century, both had initially attempted to (re-)integrate the diaconal dimension into the church. However, Löhe did not

¹² Müller, Gerhard: "Das neulutherische Amtsverständnis in reformatorischer Sicht", in: *KuD* (1971), 46-74; Müller, Gerhard: "Wilhelm Löhes missionarisch-diakonisches Denken und Wirken", in: *Sichtbare Kirche*. FS für H. Laag zum 80. Geburtstag, Gütersloh 1973, 44-53; Müller, Gerhard: "Wilhelm Löhes Theologie zwischen Erweckungsbewegung und Konfessionalismus", in: *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 1973, 1-37; Müller, Gerhard: "Zeitgemäß im Widerspruch. Erinnerung an Wilhelm Löhe", in: *LM 11* (1972), 38-39.

¹³ Müller, *Amtsverständnis*, 50-51.

¹⁴ For example the articles "Diakonisse und geistliches Amt", *CorDiac* 1897, No. 1, 2 and 3; "Alte Diakonissenhäuser", *CorDiac* 1907, No. 9 and 10.

¹⁵ Miederer, Miederer: *Diakonie der Versöhnung. Stand und Auftrag der Gemeinde Jesu Christi, Neuendettelsau* 1979, 11, 27.

¹⁶ Philippi, Paul: *Christozentrische Diakonie. Ein theologischer Entwurf*, Stuttgart 1963.

achieve this and therefore established the deaconess office in the form of mother house *diakonia* as a substitute.¹⁷ Philippi differentiated between the “preceding conception” which the founders of the deaconess houses had developed and “the adapted reality”.¹⁸ For Philippi, therefore, the development in Neuendettelsau was one of decline: Although Löhe had wished to reinstate the “deaconess office of the congregation”,

the deaconesses themselves soon expressed the wish to become organized along the lines of the Kaiserswerth model. In the course of the change, those houses more consciously developed the communal element as communities of women [*entwickelten diese Häuser bewußter das frauengenossenschaftliche Element*] (...), that is, the specific form of a sisterhood as a comprehensive ‘pro-existence [*Proexistenz*]’ for the whole church.¹⁹

Philippi explicitly recommended further research on Neuendettelsau.²⁰ He himself focused his detailed studies on Kaiserswerth. The contemporary agenda of Philippi’s research becomes obvious especially in a work intended for a broader readership, “The so-called office of deacon” (1968).²¹ At a time when “dying mother houses”²² had been detected, Philippi wished to differentiate between *diakonia* as “an element of the right way to build congregations” [*ein Element des rechten Gemeindeaufbaus*]²³ and the form of life which had become intrinsically associated with the deaconess office and which many regarded as obsolete. However, by applying his strictly normative criteria to historical developments, Philippi was blinkered when it came to the contributions of the women who lived and worked within religious communities and who experienced the communal form of life as empowering. For example, Amalie Sieveking’s intention to found a Protestant sisterhood, as an initiative of and for women with only

¹⁷ Philippi, Paul: *Diaconica. Über die soziale Dimension kirchlicher Verantwortung*, second edition edited by Jürgen Albert, Neukirchen Vluyn 1989 (originally published 1984), 146; also Philippi, *Christozentrische Diakonie*, 242-247.

¹⁸ Cf. Philippi, Paul: *Vorstufen des modernen Diakonissenamtes (1789-1848) als Elemente für dessen Verständnis und Kritik. Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Wesen der Mutterhausdiakonie*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1966, 5.

¹⁹ Philippi, *Diaconica*, 107.

²⁰ Philippi, *Vorstufen*, 5.

²¹ Philippi, Paul: *Das sogenannte Diakonenamt. Zweieinhalb Beiträge zu einem Gespräch*, Gladbeck 1986.

²² For example Leich, Heinrich: *Sterbende Mutterhaus-Diakonie. Zur gegenwärtigen Lage der Mutterhausdiakonie in Deutschland*, Bielefeld 1955. Leich was at that time director of the Kaiserswerth institutions and pastor in Kaiserswerth. Only a few years later, Thiele called for an adaption of the mother houses to modern times and criticized the continuous reiteration of the ideal of female submission, cf. Thiele, Friedrich: *Diakonissenhäuser im Umbruch der Zeit. Strukturprobleme im Kaiserswerther Verband deutscher Mutterhäuser als Beitrag zur institutionellen Diakonie*, Stuttgart 1963.

²³ Philippi, *Das sogenannte Diakonenamt*, 54-56.

minimal male interference, received a very critical evaluation for what Philippi viewed as its lack of integration into the broader church.²⁴

Anne Stempel-de Fallois, in her research into the development of Löhe's social thought and diaconal initiatives before the founding of the Deaconess Institute, largely followed Philippi's line.²⁵ Taking into account a wealth of unpublished sources, Stempel-de Fallois shed new light on the formation of the theological underpinning of Löhe's diaconal projects from the *Erweckungsbewegung* to Lutheran Neo-confessionalism. She placed a special focus on tracing the influence of women on Löhe's development and identified Löhe's image and model of women before he coined his ideal of a deaconess. At the end of her chronological survey, she interprets the founding of the Deaconess Institute in 1854 much in line with previous research: "It was his [Löhe's] aim to educate [*erziehen*] women to form a unified communion of saints and to construct the pure Lutheran church through diakonia, and to make use of them as multipliers for pure Lutheran doctrine in their different places of work, in the congregation, family, institutions etc."²⁶ In her subtle and insightful evaluation, Stempel-de Fallois observes that even in those first years of the Institute, before its re-construction into a mother house, there was a discrepancy between the ideal Löhe had reiterated in various publications of parochial *diakonia* and what was actually realized. By placing the emphasis "on the construction of an ecclesiastically and confessionally formed community", the spurring of the congregations to diaconal action was secondary: "Therefore, it would be wrong to speak of parochial diakonia, that is diakonia which originates within the congregations, as Bezzel, Meister, Schober, Schoenauer and others have claimed."²⁷ Although

²⁴ Cf. Philippi, *Vorstufen*, 94. To be fair, Philippi did realize that this had to do with Sieveking's limited options within the hierarchical, male-oriented established church, cf. *ibid.*, 98: "It was not possible for a single woman to revert to the model of the Moravians for the renewal of a female *vocatio* within the congregation [...]. Otherwise, she would have had to reshape the church as such and to give shape to the shapeless congregations – as Oberlin was just able to do, thanks to his charisma, his office and his independence in his small congregation. Amalie Sieveking did not only lack the legitimation through an office. She even lacked the natural precondition to attain such an office: she was not a man." Writing in 1966, Philippi left it at that and did not reflect further on the necessity of transforming a socially constructed church which, based on a "natural" and therefore, by convention, seemingly unchangeable criterion, prevented half of all church-members from attaining such an office.

²⁵ Stempel-de Fallois, Anne: *Das diakonische Wirken Wilhelm Löhes: von den Anfängen bis zur Gründung des Diakonissenmutterhauses in Neuendettelsau (1826-1854)*, Stuttgart 2001.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 329.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 332.

underlining throughout the value Löhle attributed to the education of women, Stempel-de Fallois modified the praise of Löhle's educational programme by recent scholars: "Löhle did not wish to contribute to a general education which could have contributed to an independent position or to the emancipation of women."²⁸ She explicitly pointed out the desirability of more thorough research into the transition from a purely educational institution to a deaconess mother house.²⁹ Stempel-de Fallois concluded her survey by highlighting some of the initiatives to retain the original intention of "founding better congregations"³⁰ which were taken after the reconstruction of the Institute into a mother house from 1857. Generally, Stempel-de Fallois viewed the Institute from Löhle's perspective. Research on the period after Stempel-de Fallois' timeframe and which takes into account sources that shed light on the perception of the women of the community still remains to be undertaken.

From the literary survey so far we can conclude that scholars who have located the Deaconess Institute and the emergence of the deaconess community within their research on Löhle's ecclesiological and social thought have come to a critical assessment of the later historical developments. Taking a strictly theological line, the community is either interpreted as an expression of Löhle's Romanizing tendencies (Kähler, Flückiger) or as a theologically illegitimate professionalization of *diakonia* which devalued and prevented voluntary diaconal initiatives in the congregations (Bezzel, Miederer, Philippi, Stempel-de Fallois). In both cases, a perspective is presented which takes little account either of the deaconesses' self-perception, or of women's limited options within the patriarchal, hierarchically structured nineteenth-century established church.³¹ Within this line of research, hardly any significance is attributed to the community as a form of life for women which provided at least limited space for agency and self-esteem.

In-house publications written with the aim of presenting research on the institutional history of the Deaconess Institute have also all taken the view-point of the male *Rektoren*. This is true even for very recent publications. In 1954, Hermann Dietzfelbinger, *Rektor* from 1953 to 1955, took the occasion of

²⁸ Ibid, 329.

²⁹ Ibid, 332.

³⁰ Ibid, 336. She quotes Löhle, *Von der Barmherzigkeit*, GW 4, 522.

³¹ For an overview of specific research in this area cf. Götz v. Olenhusen, *Feminisierung von Religion und Kirche*.

the Institute's centenary as an opportunity to present an updated account of its history.³² With the pious wish "that He [God] may revive the sense of serving anew"³³ he dedicated a whole chapter to the "helpmates" [*Gehilfen*] of his predecessor Löhe. This chapter portrays individual deaconesses "who, in addition to natural talents, possessed the greater gift of discipline [*Zucht*] through God's Spirit."³⁴ Most of the publication is taken up by a detailed account of the expansion of the deaconesses' areas of work. More recently, Hermann Schoenauer, *Rektor* since 1990, commissioned two publications which abandoned the theological view-point of his predecessors. Instead, an even more explicitly institutional focus is taken. Harald Jenner, in his "From Neuendettelsau into the whole world" (2004), explores the various fields of work undertaken by the deaconesses, with a special emphasis on their schools, within the contemporary, local social context.³⁵ Guided by this social-historical line of research, Jenner pays tribute to the differentiated, ever-expanding, contextually adapted work which the deaconesses carried out, sustained by their religious motivation. In the most recent publication, from 2009, Hans Walter Schmuhl and Ulrike Winkler's "On the way into the 20th century,"³⁶ also commissioned by the current *Rektor* Herrmann Schoenauer as a chronological sequel to Jenner's exploration of the Institute under Löhe and his successor Friedrich Meyer, institutional structures and organization again feature prominently: "from the comprehensive context of the social developments in Germany in the era of the emperor Wilhelm," the authors wish to portray the history of the "institutional complex which is situated under the umbrella Neuendettelsau" and "the development of its various spheres of work" from 1891 to 1918.³⁷ In keeping with this programme, the relation of Löhe's second successor Bezzel to the deaconess community is presented in language drawn from modern management:

³² Hermann Dietzfelbinger became well-known in later years when he was bishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria for his decided rejection of women's ordination. However, he was unable to prevent its introduction in 1974 and, in consequence, resigned as bishop in 1975.

³³ From the foreword of Dietzfelbinger, *Diakonissenanstalt Neuendettelsau. Ein Gang durch ihre Geschichte und ihre Häuser*, Neuendettelsau 1954.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁵ Jenner, Harald: *Von Neuendettelsau in alle Welt. Entwicklung und Bedeutung der Diakonissenanstalt Neuendettelsau/ Diakonie Neuendettelsau 1854-1891/1900*, Neuendettelsau 2004.

³⁶ Schmuhl, Hans-Walter/ Winkler, Ulrike: *Auf dem Weg ins 20. Jahrhundert. Die Diakonissenanstalt Neuendettelsau unter den Direktoren Hermann Bezzel (1891-1909) und Wilhelm Eichhorn (1909-1918)*, Neuendettelsau 2009.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

He principally accepted [...] that his directional competence was channelled through rules and operating schedules, he left formal structures untouched, his relation to his subordinates was more factual than personal, and he was able to delegate tasks and decisions, relocate responsibility downwards, and utilise his co-workers', also the deaconesses', resources of creativity, imagination and initiative for the institution.³⁸

The perspective is decidedly "from the top downwards" and the deaconesses' "resources of creativity, imagination and initiative", although they are named, are left unexplored even in those passages which are explicitly dedicated to the community. This is hardly surprising, given that the authors relied almost entirely on the Institute's annual reports and Bezzel's articles published in the deaconesses' newsletter for their sources.³⁹

From the internal perspective of the deaconesses but largely in hagiographical style, two publications sketch a portrait of Therese Stählin, superior from 1883 to 1921.⁴⁰ Stählin is also one of the few deaconesses to feature prominently in a recently published popular biography of Löhe.⁴¹ This style of writing can perhaps loosely be categorized as the "great women approach", intended to offer to contemporary women figures for identification.⁴² In the end, however, it serves to strengthen the complementary portrayal of gender-roles: the claim that men and women have "naturally" differing roles which are, however, of equal value. In this case, Stählin's role is described as "intelligently helping and cooperating" with Löhe who, "naturally" "led and directed." This, in turn, can function to render latent or even justify the socially postulated submission of women.⁴³ The fact that gender roles are always culturally and socially constructed and strengthened by discursive ascriptions is not considered by this genre of writing.

More recently, the deaconess community has attracted attention from scholars from different fields who deliberately sought to illumine the self-perception of the women. In 2000, the ethnologist Angela Treiber

³⁸ Ibid, 24.

³⁹ Cf. for example the short chapter "Between encapsulation and secularization [*Verweltlichung*]. The spiritual orientation of the deaconess community under Hermann Bezzel", 128-132.

⁴⁰ Cf. Ruckdäschel, Erika: "Therese Stählin 1839–1928. Oberin in Neuendettelsau", in: K. Leipziger (ed.): *Helfen in Gottes Namen. Lebensbilder aus der Geschichte der bayerischen Diakonie*, München 1986, 107-129; Trautwein, Selma: *Therese Stählin. Zur Erinnerung an unsere Frau Oberin*, Neuendettelsau 1931.

⁴¹ Cf. Geiger, Erika: *Wilhelm Löhe. 1808-1872. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, Neuendettelsau 2003, esp. 255-257.

⁴² Cf. Habermas, *Geschlechtergeschichte und anthropology of gender*, 489.

⁴³ Cf. Gause, *Kirchengeschichte und Genderforschung*, 44-45.

published the results of an oral history project which she had conducted amongst retired deaconesses of Neuendettelsau.⁴⁴ By conducting interviews with the deaconesses themselves, this study shed light on their individual piety and their identification with their profession. This served as a model for similar research in Kaiserswerth.⁴⁵ In addition, three scholars who had worked on other religious communities of women before offered brief explorations of the Neuendettelsau community under Löhe from a historical-theological gender perspective. In 2004, the Roman Catholic theologian Relinde Meiwes published an essay “On the ‘Self-perception of the deaconesses’”. Historical aspects of a current question.⁴⁶ She reflected on the possible methodology of exploring the self-perception of long-dead deaconesses and pointed out the importance of carefully analyzing the fusion of the external normative perception as developed by the male founders and the perception of the women themselves which was influenced by their contemporary options and space for agency. She closed her essay by pointing out that this was a line of research which for the deaconess community in Neuendettelsau had not yet been attempted: “For this a reconstruction of history is necessary which distils the contribution of women to the history of the ‘Neuendettelsau Diakonie’, which allows space for agency, and which documents achievements.”⁴⁷ A beginning was made when, in 2008, Silke Köser and Ute Gause published articles in a volume marking Löhe’s 200th birthday. Köser explored the construction of gender roles in nineteenth-century society and Löhe’s views on women in general while Gause focused on Löhe’s perception of deaconesses.⁴⁸ Both relied on published sources and therefore remained on the level of the founder’s normative prescription, as Gause explicitly acknowledged: “Of course, these ideal-typical constructions do not correspond to the self-image of the deaconesses at that time.”⁴⁹ At the same time,

⁴⁴ Treiber, Angela: “‘Diakonie ist kein Handwerk, sondern Dienewerk.’ – Weiblichkeitsideale und gelebte Frömmigkeit. Zur Identitätsbildung evangelischer Feierabendschwwestern in Lebensgeschichten“, in: *Bayerisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, München 2000, 111-128.

⁴⁵ Cf. Gause/ Lissner (eds), *Kosmos Diakonissenmutterhaus*.

⁴⁶ Meiwes, Relinde: “‘Vom Selbstverständnis der Diakonissen.’ Historische Aspekte einer aktuellen Frage“, in: H. Schoenauer (ed.): *Tradition und Innovation. Diakonische Entwicklung am Beispiel der Diakonie Neuendettelsau*, Stuttgart 2004, 298-304.

⁴⁷ Meiwes, *Vom Selbstverständnis der Diakonissen*, 304. Cf. also Meiwes, *Arbeiterinnen des Herrn*.

⁴⁸ Köser, Silke: “‘Weibliche Einfalt’ und ‘innere Herrlichkeit eines männlich vollendeten Charakters’ - Geschlechterrollen und Frauenbild bei Wilhelm Löhe“, 391-409; Gause, Ute: “‘Die Diaconessin, ein Beispiel für Nacheiferung für alle’. *Das Diakonissenbild Wilhelm Löhes*, 355-371, both in: H. Schoenauer (ed.): *Wilhelm Löhe (1808-1872). Seine Bedeutung für Kirche und Diakonie*, Stuttgart 2008.

⁴⁹ Gause, *Diakonissenbild Löhes*, 357.

both Köser and Gause emphasised the thorough intellectual training and education which the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau received and both regarded this as running counter to Löhe's otherwise pronounced patriarchal attitude.⁵⁰

In this dissertation, this last line of research from a historical-theological gender perspective is taken further, and applied specifically to the formation and development of the deaconess community in Neuendettelsau. In the course of this, Meiwes' claim that the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau „did not contribute to the foundational process of founding” the community “in [any] noteworthy form” needs to be qualified.⁵¹ The emphasis of this thesis is on the emergence of a distinct culture within the deaconess community, and the ways in which this found expression in (boundary) codes, symbols, rites, practices, and formative and normative texts, which were both institutionally prescribed and creatively received, and which gave rise to a “we-identity” that motivated and sustained the women. This approach includes a careful analysis of the way in which Löhe's normative, prescriptive perspective, which was largely informed by contemporary bourgeois gender constructions but partly diverged from them, interrelated with the deaconesses' self-perception. The ensuing process of negotiation demonstrates that the deaconesses did not emancipate themselves from their deeply conservative backgrounds. Neither, however, can the normative, prescriptive side simply be reduced to an ideological safeguarding of patriarchal domination.⁵²

1.2. Sources

Until now, scholars who have undertaken research on the deaconess community have mostly relied on published sources, especially on the Institute's annual reports and articles from the *Correspondenzblatt*

⁵⁰ Similarly Gause, *Aufbruch der Frauen*, 63-66.

⁵¹ Meiwes: *Vom Selbstverständnis der Diakonissen*, 301.

⁵² Habermas, *Weibliche Religiosität*, analyses the long process of the „negotiation” [*Verhandlung*] (p. 139) of female and male bourgeois identities in the course of the nineteenth century. She interprets the founding of the deaconess institutions as one important element in the emergence of female options for a professional life apart from home and family. The widespread acceptance of this newly developed option for women, however, was bought at the price of committing them to adhere closely to the likewise newly developed bourgeois ideal of femininity as self-sacrifice (p. 138). This gives it a “hybrid-form” as it combines emancipatory aspects with aspects of a prolongation of male dominance. In her conclusion, Habermas explicitly differentiates her position from Karin Hausen's, who claims that the emergence of distinct, polarizing “gender-characteristics” in the nineteenth century was primarily instigated and sustained by the interest to stabilize patterns of male dominance (cf. Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtercharaktere*).

der Diaconissen in Neuendettelsau [CorDiac], which appeared in handwritten form in 1857 and from 1858 was published in ten to twelve annual issues. Many have also cited at length from the publication “Aspects of the history of the deaconess house in Neuendettelsau” which Löhe wrote retrospectively in 1870.⁵³ Another source which has been consulted frequently are two volumes, published by the sisterhood in 1954 and 1958, containing an extensive selection of the letters written by Therese Stählin to family-members and fellow sisters from the years 1854 to 1925.⁵⁴ However, no one has yet attempted to look beyond the published material to Stählin’s unpublished correspondence which in fact reveals some interesting nuances. A collection of letters written by deaconesses who emigrated to the United States between 1857 and 1859, reflecting on their experiences and self-perceptions, originally published in the CorDiac, is now available with scholarly comments and an introduction in both German and English.⁵⁵ Recently, Gause and Köser have attempted to broaden the scope of sources used: Gause by evaluating the published obituaries which Löhe wrote for the deaconesses, and Köser by analysing Löhe’s construction of gender roles in his publications “The Evangelical clergyman” (1852)⁵⁶ and “Of female simplicity” (1853).⁵⁷

The focus of almost all previous work, then, has been on published sources, and, in consequence, a wealth of unpublished sources still remains to be analysed. Some of the sources, relating to the earliest years of the community have been evaluated by Stempel-de Fallois. However, the holdings of the “Central Archive of the Diakonia Neuendettelsau”⁵⁸ [ZADN] are much more extensive, and include both published and unpublished sources. Of the former, in addition to the annual reports and the CorDiac,

⁵³ Löhe, *Etwas aus der Geschichte*. Originally published separately in the publishing house of his son, Gottfried Löhe, in Nuremberg in 1870 and listed as the 16th annual report (cf. preliminary remark in the 18th annual report 1871). Nowadays cited from the reprint in GW4. We follow this convention here.

⁵⁴ *Meine Seele erhebet den Herrn* [ThStI], and *Auf daß sie alle eins seien* [ThStII].

⁵⁵ Liebenberg/ Raschzok/ Schneider-Ludorff/ Honold, *Diakonissen für Amerika*.

⁵⁶ Löhe, *Der evangelische Geistliche* (GW3/2, 7-317) is a compilation of essays by Löhe which were published between 1847 and 1848 in the *Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche*, edited by the theology faculty in Erlangen.

⁵⁷ Löhe, *Von der weiblichen Einfalt*. Stempel-de Fallois called this Löhe’s “fundamental writing on the essence of female diakonia” [Programmschrift zu weiblichen Diakonie],” Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonisches Wirken*, 292.

⁵⁸ *Zentralarchiv der Diakonie Neuendettelsau*. The archive in its current form exists since 2002 when the holdings of several separate archives were amalgamated, amongst them that of the mother house [Mutterhausarchiv].

the newsletter of the “Association for Inner Mission in the Sense of the Lutheran Church”⁵⁹ [CorIM], especially the editions between 1854 and 1857, and the community’s liturgical and devotional books are of special relevance to this study. In addition, the archive contains a rich collection of unpublished sources: these include letters written by deaconesses; minutes of chapter meetings; the annals of the community; various versions of the house-rules, personal rules of life, and the “pledge of honesty”; a book containing curricula vitae composed by the deaconesses themselves; Löhe’s diaries for the years 1861, 1863, and 1864; and a number of addresses given by Löhe during the deaconesses’ initiation ceremonies. Additional addresses given by Löhe to the deaconesses are held in the “Archive of the Association for Inner and Outer Mission in the Sense of the Lutheran Church,” generally known as the “*Löhe-Archiv*” [LA], also located in Neuendettelsau, as is the outline of a prayer composed for an initiation ceremony. Finally, the official “Archive of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria”⁶⁰ [LAELKB] in Nuremberg holds the correspondence between Löhe and the church authorities, including the deanery in Windsbach, the consistory in Ansbach, and the upper consistory in Munich.

Due to its rural location, the archival material stored in Neuendettelsau did not suffer any noteworthy damage during the Second World War.⁶¹ In consequence, the abundant sources could only be evaluated selectively in this study. This selection was guided, on the one hand, by the wish to trace developments. In this respect, unpublished versions of rules were found of especial value as they often turned out to be drafts of the later published versions and thereby indicated historical developments. On the other hand, a focus was placed on evaluating the “ego documents” of community members. Werner Schulze provides a helpful definition which we largely wish to adopt:

As ego-documents we can define those texts which jointly adhere to the criterion that in them we find statements or particles of statements which illumine – if only in rudimentary or concealed form – the voluntary or enforced self-perception of a person in his or her family, community, country or social class, or reflect his or her relation to these systems and their transformations. They should justify individual human behaviour, disclose anxieties, reveal

⁵⁹ *Gesellschaft für Innere Mission im Sinne der lutherischen Kirche.*

⁶⁰ *Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern.*

⁶¹ Compare, for instance, the state of the archives of the deaconess house in Dresden as described in Renger-Berka, *Weibliche Diakonie im Königreich Sachsen*, 25-27.

stores of knowledge, illumine notions of values, and reflect experiences and expectations of life.⁶²

In the field of church history, special attention should furthermore be given to statements that shed light on the faith of individuals. However, the problem that any historian encounters who works with archival material must be borne in mind: Even a synoptic reading of those sources which can be classified as “ego-documents” does not necessarily offer a representation of all voices within a community. Documents stored for archival purposes are *per se* a selection, and it must be assumed that those which did not conform to the overall “regime” simply did not find their way into the archives.⁶³ Critical reading and interpretation are therefore always necessary.⁶⁴

1.3. Cultural History

The methodological approach taken in this thesis lies broadly within a recent line of research which has proved particularly fruitful for church history, generally termed “new cultural history”⁶⁵ or “anthropological history.”⁶⁶ The focus in this approach is on “popular culture,”⁶⁷ implying that there is always a multiplicity of cultures and a “contemporaneity of the non-contemporary,” with particular attention to “ordinary life” and to the uncovering of the “webs of significance”⁶⁸ spun within distinct social groups, usually

⁶² Schulze, *Ego-Dokumente, Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte?* 28.

⁶³ For this problem cf. also Mohrmann, *Zwischen den Zeilen und gegen den Strich*.

⁶⁴ This insight somewhat relativizes the optimistic new turn to ego-documents as a possible “approach of the human in history”, at least where sources from (official) archives are concerned (cf. the subtitle of the publication edited by Winfried Schulze, *Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte* (Italics JB)). It must be noted that Schulze, of course, was aware of the problem as is attested by the question mark which he added to his introduction to the publication. He cited Vovelle in agreement (24): a historian attempts “with craftiness and cunning” to “wrest from his archives if not the equivalent, at least the substitute for the authentic, immediate testimony” (Schulze cited from Vovelle, *Serielle Geschichte oder “case studies”*, 121).

⁶⁵ Cf. Hunt, *New Cultural History*. The adjective “new” distinguishes this line of research from the “old” or “classic” cultural history [*Kulturgeschichte*] which had its roots in German scholarship at the end of the eighteenth century and is associated with names such as Jacob Burckhardt and Johan Huizinga. For a critique of their assumptions and how “new” is distinguished from “classic” cultural history cf. Burke, *Unity and Variety in Cultural History*.

⁶⁶ Burke prefers the term “anthropological history” to “new cultural history” since “novelty is a rapidly diminishing asset” (Burke, *Unity and Variety in Cultural History*, 192). The German equivalent is “Historische Anthropologie” (cf. for example Dülmen, *Historische Anthropologie*). In Britain and the US, however, “historical anthropology” is also in use.

⁶⁷ Cf. for example Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*.

⁶⁸ This is part of a famous quotation taken from Clifford Geertz who is often portrayed as one of the founding figures of cultural history (cf. Bonnell/Hunt, *Introduction*, 2-3). Geertz’ much quoted definition of culture is found in his essay *Thick description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture*, 5: “The concept of culture I espouse, and whose utility below attempt to demonstrate, is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.”

composed of the non-elite.⁶⁹ This shift of perspective, with its focus on every-day life⁷⁰ and the experiences of marginalised groups, its predilection for research conducted as “micro-history”⁷¹ and its turn to the individual has spurred much creativity, not least in the field of gender studies.⁷² The emphasis on differentiating between normative conceptions, the social praxis, and the subjective perception and experience⁷³ is linked to an involvement also of the new cultural historians in the “rise of constructivism.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, in recent years warnings have increasingly been issued about losing sight of the limitations of constructionism, especially if constraints with regard to cultural, social, and/or material factors are ignored.⁷⁵

As early as 1988 Peter Burke suggested that

cultural historians might usefully define themselves not in terms of a particular area or field such as art, literature and music, but rather of a distinctive concern for values and symbols, wherever these are to be found, in the everyday life of ordinary people as well as in special performances for elites.⁷⁶

Such a definition leaves space for dialogue with church historians who seek to explore the beliefs, practices and faith of subjects of the past.⁷⁷ Taking as a point of departure the thesis that ecclesiastical

⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Burke repeatedly argued for retaining an appreciative space for studying the history of high culture within the “new cultural history,” not least in the face of its conspicuous absence in the “cultural studies” which flourish in many educational institutions, cf. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* 101-102.

⁷⁰ Burke suggests that the “history of the everyday” is a line of research which has gained popularity especially in Germany and the Netherlands, cf. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* 32.

⁷¹ The origins of this approach lie in Italy, where, in the 1970s, a small group of scholars, Carlo Ginzburg, Giovanni Levi, and Edoardo Grendi, began to explore the distinctness of local cultures in small communities. The most famous result is Carlo Ginzburg’s “Cheese and Worms” (1976), which encouraged later scholars to take a new angle in their research and to write “history from below.” Another good example of this approach is Hans Medick’s “Weben und Überleben in Laichingen. Lokalgeschichte als Allgemeine Geschichte” (1996). For an overview cf. Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces*, esp. Chapter 14: “Microhistory: Two or three things that I know about it”, 103-214. For a general reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of working with case-studies, cf. Vovelle, *Serielle Geschichte oder “case-studies”*.

⁷² For an overview cf. Dülmen, *Historische Anthropologie*. More specifically on gender-studies, cf. for example Bynum, *Why all the Fuss about the Body?* 243.

⁷³ Cf. Dülmen, *Historische Anthropologie*, 92.

⁷⁴ Cf. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* 75.

⁷⁵ Cf. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* 98. Margaret C. Jacob, *Science Studies after Social Construction*, has highlighted the limitations of this approach with regard to historical studies of science. She warns that adopting micro-historical research methods and the concept that “context gives meaning” can open the door for the “Trojan horse of relativism” (100). In women’s and gender studies, the question of whether gender is (merely) a social construction has long been debated. For an overview of the discussion cf. Gause, *Kirchengeschichte und Genderforschung*, 86-95.

⁷⁶ Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. XXIV. The introduction was based on a paper delivered in 1988 (cf. footnote 1). Cf. also Calaresu/ Vivol/ Rubiés, *Introduction: Peter Burke and the History of Cultural History*.

⁷⁷ However, it must be pointed out that although research in line with the “new cultural history” has now been conducted by a whole generation of cultural historians, there is still a lack of semantic precision about the terms used so that William Sewell’s dictum of the “cacophony of contemporary discourses about culture” from 1999 still holds true today (Sewell, *The Concept(s)*

history “methodologically belongs wholly to the historical sciences”,⁷⁸ the fruitful interdisciplinary stimulus has shown results, for example in the area of historic-theological gender research. In 2006, Gause offered a survey of the developments.⁷⁹ While inevitably more detailed when covering German research, she widens the focus to include Anglo-American debates, giving an overview of the different angles that have been adopted to analyse the construction of gender over the centuries and of the options for agency in both men and women in their specific contexts.⁸⁰ As a conclusion, Gause calls for a clarification of the scope and purpose of church history. She herself advocates an end to “an a priori definition of the essence of church history”⁸¹ and argues for taking a pragmatic approach by confining church history to a specific area of study, namely the church, comprising both men and women, both within the established and the free churches, both in the centres of power and at the margins, with a whole-hearted embracing of the methods and conceptions developed in the cultural sciences, social anthropology, and the historical sciences.⁸² Such an approach takes into account the construction of gender concepts through socio-cultural and discursive ascriptions throughout the ages and overcomes the dichotomic schema of offenders and victims by exploring the options for action for both men and women.

In line with this, in 1999, Gause and Lissner, in cooperation with deaconesses from Kaiserswerth, initiated an oral history project entitled “reconstruction of the collective identity of Kaiserswerth deaconesses in the 20th century” which sought to create new sources to explore the relation between every-day life and profession, and every-day life and religion as experienced and expressed by

of Culture, 35). This does not necessarily facilitate dialogue with other disciplines. There is also the problem of methodology. The conflicting voices about methodology in cultural history becomes apparent when, for example, reading Oexles’s essay “Geschichte als historische Kulturwissenschaft” alongside an article by Mandler, *The Problem with Cultural History*. While the former advocates a rediscovery of the cultural theories of E. Durkheim, M. Mauss, G. Simmel, A. Warburg and M. Weber (21), the latter calls for a “re-infusion of discipline” (95) by resuming communication with current debates in the social sciences (116-117). At the same time, this can be interpreted as a sign of the continual vibrancy of this area of study.

⁷⁸ Leppin, *Einleitung. Kurt Nowak und die Fragestellung „Historiographie und Theologie“*, 12.

⁷⁹ Gause, *Kirchengeschichte und Genderforschung*.

⁸⁰ To name only a few, cf. Sherry Ortner/ Harriet Whitehead (ed.): *Sexual meanings. The cultural construction of Gender and Sexuality*, New York 1981; Carola Lipp: “Überlegungen zur Methodendiskussion. Kulturanthropologische, sozialwissenschaftliche und historische Ansätze zur Erforschung der Geschlechterbeziehung”, in: *Frauenalltag – Frauenforschung. Beiträge zur 2. Tagung der Kommission Frauenforschung in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde*, Frankfurt/ Main 1988.

⁸¹ Gause, *Kirchengeschichte und Genderforschung*, 109.

⁸² Gause, *Kirchengeschichte und Genderforschung*, 110-111.

contemporary deaconesses. Emphasis was placed on individual self-interpretations and their different modes of expression.⁸³ Further research into the “official” construction of prevalent norms, interpretational patterns and on their symbolic expression within the deaconess community of Kaiserswerth in the nineteenth century and on the adaptation and, at times, transformation of those in individual self-appropriation by the deaconesses, was conducted by Silke Köser in her thesis “For a deaconess must not be an everyday person. Collective identities of Kaiserswerth deaconesses 1836-1914,” submitted in 2002 and published in 2006.⁸⁴ Köser’s work has been a source of immense inspiration for this thesis.

Köser demonstrated the fruitfulness of adopting the concept of “collective identity” from cultural anthropology, which, in turn, is influenced by sociological conceptions, and applying it to the internal processes and dynamics of a deaconess community. This analytical tool makes it possible to explore in detail how the distinct “deaconess culture” emerged. Borrowing methodology from the social sciences can be regarded as a necessary addition to a purely theological perspective, which, as has been seen from the review of the literature on Neuendettelsau, tends to take into account solely the male perspective of the Institute’s *Rektor*, thus leading to a devaluation, or even complete neglect, of the community and its members. However, it must be emphasised at this point that circumstances in Neuendettelsau were different from Kaiserswerth. Differentiation from the broader context of the church played a greater role in Neuendettelsau than it seems to have done in Kaiserswerth. Also, from the beginning, deaconesses in Neuendettelsau were more involved in developing forms for the communal life than they were in Kaiserswerth, due in part to the smaller numbers and in part to the fact that the process of re-structuring the educational institution into a mother house arose from Löhe’s desire to retain a tighter control, but was also wished for by the deaconesses themselves. These complex and

⁸³ Results were published in Gause/ Lissner (eds.), *Kosmos Diakonissenmutterhaus*. This was the first volume of a series, edited by A. Berlis, U. Gause, J.-Chr. Kaiser, G. Muschiol, and G. Schneider-Ludorff, termed “Historico-theological Gender Research.” At the time of writing, seven volumes have appeared. For a detailed description of the project cf. Gause/ Lissner, *Einleitung*.

⁸⁴ Köser, *Kollektive Identitäten Kaiserswerther Diakonissen*.

interlocking motives make the concept of the construction of a “collective identity” even more applicable to the Neuendettelsau community.

1.4. Insights from the Social Sciences

In order to become a useful, workable analytical tool for this thesis, the term “collective identity” must be specified and narrowed, as the abundance of research in different disciplines has led to a “prevailing confusion in current discussions,”⁸⁵ even to the point that the question arises of whether it is a feasible concept to maintain at all.⁸⁶ Generally speaking, within the social sciences “self-identity” or “personal identity” is distinguished from “social” or “collective identity.” The former relates to the consciousness which a human being has of “coherence and boundedness of one’s person.”⁸⁷ In this sense, it was introduced by Erik H. Erikson into psychology from the 1950s.⁸⁸ In contrast, “social” or “collective identity”⁸⁹ signifies at least one aspect of “sameness” or similarity with some which, conversely, includes a notion of “different-ness” from others. Collective identity can then loosely be defined as a “form of connection between human beings that is in principle capable of holding together a social order.”⁹⁰ When now presenting some insights from the field of social psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology we must state clearly at the outset that we do not seek to contribute to these debates or to develop an original conception within the field of identity-research. Instead, the selection which we present is guided by the question of what they can offer as analytic tools to illuminate the findings of our sources.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Wagner, *Identity and Selfhood as Problématique*, 34.

⁸⁶ An especially outspoken critic of the concept of collective identity as a helpful analytic tool is Lutz Niethammer. First expressed in “Kollektive Identität. Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur” (2000), he recently repeated his critique of the “formula” collective identity as a “magical incantation” in a publication of which there is now also an English translation: *Memory and history: essays in contemporary history*. Of special relevance here is chapter 3: Varieties of Identity and Memory, 191-242. The quotations cited here are taken from p. 196.

⁸⁷ Frieze, *Introduction*, 1.

⁸⁸ Esp. *Childhood and Society* (1950), *Identity and the Life Cycle* (1959), *Dimensions of a New Identity* (1974), and *Life History and the Historical Moment* (1975).

⁸⁹ The terms differ in different fields.

⁹⁰ Wagner, *Identity and Selfhood as Problématique*, 37.

⁹¹ This roughly corresponds to the second possible type of relationship between (practical) theology and the social sciences as depicted in Schweitzer, *Practical theology, contemporary culture, and the social sciences*, 312. This approach is criticized in Hermans, *Social Constructionism and Practical Theology*, X, footnote 4. As practical theology has had a long tradition of

Social psychology, which relies almost exclusively on quantitative research methods, provides the framework for analysing group development in small groups in which members typically interact face-to-face.⁹² In this setting, the social identity theory was developed which focuses on the individual's relation to a group. It was Henri Tajfel who first introduced the term "social identity" in the 1970s to refer to the irreducibly social nature of the individual mind,⁹³ in other words: to the fundamental "need to belong."⁹⁴ Tajfel postulated that individuals strive to belong to a larger group and that this, positively or negatively, influences a person's self-esteem.⁹⁵ Subsequent research also dealt with the phenomenon of social comparison and revealed that individuals are driven by the desire to positively distinguish their own group from other comparable groups which in turn enhances self-esteem.⁹⁶ This gives rise to the "distinctiveness threat",⁹⁷ experienced by groups which can no longer easily be distinguished from other groups. Distinctiveness is best achieved in numerically small groups, which provide members with a sense of uniqueness which will result in higher commitment of group members.⁹⁸ Therefore, members of a group or community are likely to be exceptionally highly committed during the initial period of formation. In a religious community, for example, distinctiveness can be achieved by external marks of distinction such as wearing a specific type of dress, by keeping specific hours of devotion, by adhering to specific codes of behaviour, by refraining from marrying or by professing a certain doctrine. Individual members will react differently to the "distinctiveness threat", depending on their personal self-esteem and on their group commitment: low identifiers are likely to reduce their commitment further while high identifiers will strive to increase the group's sense of distinction.⁹⁹ Conversely, a group can also

interdisciplinary research relations with the social sciences, it is perhaps hardly surprising that here we find the most profound reflections on possible cooperation. As yet, we find much less in the field of church history.

⁹² This generally holds true even though an attempt was made to introduce a distinction between common bond groups, who rely on face-to-face contact, and social and collective identities, who do not (cf. Prentice/ Miller/ Lightdale, *Asymmetries in Attachments to Groups and to their Members*; and similarly: Brewer/ Gardner, *Who is this "We"? Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations*).

⁹³ The term "social identity" was coined and became standard in Europe. American terminology tends to favour "collective identity" (cf. Luhtanen/ Crocker, *A Collective Self-Esteem Scale*, 302).

⁹⁴ Cf. Baumeister/ Leary: *The need to belong*.

⁹⁵ Cf. Tajfel, *Social identity and intergroup behaviour*, 69.

⁹⁶ Cf. Tajfel/ Turner, *An integrative theory of intergroup conflict*.

⁹⁷ Cf. Branscombe/ Ellemers/ Spears/ Doosje, *The Context and Content of Social Identity Threat*, 43.

⁹⁸ This is termed the "optimal distinctiveness theory", cf. Brewer, *The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time*, 475-482.

⁹⁹ Cf. Branscombe et al, *The Context and Content of Social Identity Threat*, 45.

experience the “categorization threat,” that is, being externally classed into an involuntary category, which affects the self-esteem of the individual members. For example, deaconesses can be classed as (socially ridiculed) “old maids” who have failed to attract a partner. The ensuing possibility that the self-esteem of an individual member is lowered is explained by the theory of self-categorization, i.e. the tendency of an individual to relate externally assigned stereotypical group characteristics to him or herself (also termed self-stereotyping).¹⁰⁰ An external categorization deemed irrelevant, inappropriate or derogatory will be rejected especially by low identifiers, that is, those with a low sense of commitment to the group, or by those with a high personal self-esteem.¹⁰¹ When a group member's self-esteem is not enhanced by the group, the individual is likely to leave the group, unless this is made impossible by an “objective” criterion (i.e. gender) or if, by leaving, the individual would violate a value which is part of his or her acceptable social identity (i.e. a vow made for life-long commitment within a group).¹⁰² The permeability of group boundaries is therefore a decisive factor in a group member's attitude and reaction, not only to specific group threats but also to general external social ostracism of a group.

Threats to a group's values need not necessarily arise from (direct) assaults by outsiders, but can also originate from within the group.¹⁰³ “Black sheep” typically, but not necessarily, arise from the periphery of a group and are likely to receive much harsher treatment by fellow group members than outsiders who display the same behaviour or attitude.¹⁰⁴ A group's coercive power consists of the threat to exclude a group member, meaning either complete expulsion from the group or assignation to a lower place in the ingroup status ranking. In such situations, the reaction of those in threat will vary according to their level of group identification, and could lead to either disidentification and voluntary departure (low identifiers) or to attempts to conform more closely to the group's prototypicality (high identifiers).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Turner/ Hogg/ Oakes/ Reicher/ Whetherell, *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*; also: Turner/ Oakes, *The significance of the social identity concept*, esp. 241.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Branscombe et al, *Context and Content of Social Identity Threat*, 39.

¹⁰² Cf. Tajfel, *Social identity and intergroup behaviour*, 78.

¹⁰³ Cf. Branscombe et al, *Context and Content of Social Identity Threat*, 49-50.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Marques/ Yzerbyt/ Leyens, *The “black sheep effect”*, 1-16.

The “acceptance threat” is typically felt by applicants, that is by those in the process of entering a new group. Often, they have to pass certain tests, acquire skills in a probationary period or pass through specific initiation rites which are regarded necessary to demonstrate group loyalty. Research has shown that members who have an as yet insecure status within the group are especially likely to show ingroup bias, outgroup derogation and self-stereotyping to conform to the perceived group’s norms or accepted behaviour, a process termed “depersonalization”.¹⁰⁵ This is enhanced when the applicant is (seemingly) monitored by high-status group members. Crucial to this is a person’s ability to actively shape his or her appearance (“impression management”)¹⁰⁶ which is an important element of the self-categorization theory.¹⁰⁷ Discriminating against an outgroup is especially likely to occur in cases in which an applicant to a new group must renounce his or her membership in another group in order to become accepted. An applicant to a religious community, for example, may cancel his or her membership in a dance club and disclaim any further allegiance. Thus outgroup derogation is employed as a means to gain intragroup ingratiation.

The social identity theory thus emphasises that social context must always be considered, not least because every individual is a member of different groups and engages in different social networks. All societies are in constant motion, necessitating a permanent re-categorization. Thereby, a dynamic process is perpetuated because once this status is achieved, it requires constant efforts to sustain it, along with the relevant symbols and signs of distinctive status.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, a fairly recent line of research into social identity has focused on power-relations between minority/majority and low-status/high-status groups and into mechanisms of social change. Turner challenged the assumption that group cohesion is created by the equal dependence of individuals on a (resourceful and therefore powerful) agent with influence over the group. This view, according to Turner, does not do justice to the

¹⁰⁵ Turner describes “depersonalization” as “a shift towards the perception of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category and away from the perception of self as a unique person defined by individual differences from others” (Turner, *A Self-Categorization Theory*, 50-51).

¹⁰⁶ At this point, there is a link to the sociological concept of Goffman’s dramaturgical theorizing, cf. Giesen: *Performing the sacred*, 326 and rational choice theory, cf. Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity*.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Turner: *A self-categorization theory*, 42-67.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Tajfel, *Social identity and intergroup behaviour*, 77.

importance and necessity of persuasion and finding consensus within a group: "Persuasion is not a process of submitting to people with superior resources, but one of negotiating and validating reality collectively within one's reference group."¹⁰⁹ This accounts for the dynamics in authoritative structures as authority is reliant on identity, organization and ideology which are in constant motion and need perpetual stabilization. With this expansion of its view point, social psychology seems to seek to recapture something of its lost "sociological imagination."¹¹⁰

From the social identity theory we adopt the insight that for the development of group cohesion its size ("numeric distinctiveness"), the permeability or impermeability of group boundaries, and the existence or absence of (external) threats are important factors. Social psychology with its quantitative research methods focuses on small groups and has the advantage of not losing sight of the individual within a group, of her individual status in the in-group hierarchy, her level of commitment and self-esteem. However, the social identity theory does not distinguish between different types of groups. In fact, within the laboratory setting, the "neutrality" of groups and the randomness of the criteria for group formation is seen as a necessary precondition for collecting well-founded data. This, however, deliberately blends out the social and cultural factors that outside the laboratory are omnipresent. This problem is addressed in the field of sociology.¹¹¹

Grounded mostly on qualitative research methods, sociology explores the formation of large collectivities. As such, the term "collective identity" holds an important place in the context of debates on nation-building. Eisenstadt and Giesen, for example, developed a "macro constructivist" theoretical approach, in conscious rejection of theories that view ethnicity as in some way naturally given.¹¹² They argue that any collective identity is always a social construction and therefore fragile, even those types

¹⁰⁹ Turner, *Explaining the nature of power*, 5.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Shigehiro/ Kesebir/ Snyder, *Sociology: A Lost Connection in Social Psychology*, 334-353.

¹¹¹ A noteworthy concept in this context is developed by Laurence Iannacone: "Why strict churches are strong" (1994), the slightly revised presentation of the argument he had published two years earlier in: "Sacrifice and Stigma." Based on Hechter's theory of group solidarity in the tradition of rational choice (cf. Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity*), Iannacone concludes that individual believers join strict churches because the high costs demanded reduce free-riding. Here, the principle of methodological individualism combined with the dismissal of social and cultural factors results in a theory which is anything but socially or culturally neutral and is applicable only within an individualized, highly mobile modern society.

¹¹² Cf. Eisenstadt/Giesen, *Construction of collective identity*. Much of their thought is based on Shils, *Periphery and Center*.

of social order that at first glance appear as “given” or “natural.” The fact that they are socially constructed, however, requires latency in order to ensure stability. Eisenstadt and Giesen emphasize that these constructions are never purely symbolic but have very real causes and effects. Depending on which goods are to be distributed amongst members, certain types of codes are likely to be developed which, in consequence, reflect on the underlying power structures and, as symbolic codes of distinction, mark and perpetuate the boundaries between inside and outside, making them more or less permeable. In the concept of Eisenstadt and Giesen these codes are presented, in the tradition of Max Weber, as “ideal types”. Eisenstadt and Giesen distinguish between three types of codes: primordial, civic and, in the narrower sense, cultural types of codes. They emphasise that, in practice, these types cannot be distilled in their pure form but will always overlap.

Primordial codes, according to Eisenstadt and Giesen, are based on seemingly “objective”, “natural” criteria which by social convention are regarded as unchangeable, for example race, gender, ethnicity and kinship. Here, crossing the boundaries is extremely difficult. The relationship of “insiders” to “outsiders” is not a missionary one; a cautious reserve is kept which in some cases is intensified to outright hostility. In the rare case that boundaries are crossed, the properties of “outsiders” are eliminated as far as possible by elaborate rituals of “purification.” Within the collectivity, there is a tendency to equality and an egalitarian distribution of resources. Civic or civil codes, in contrast, arise from familiarity with certain traditions and modes of social conduct, for example with bourgeois assumptions, perceptions and patterns of behaviour. There are no sharp boundaries between outside and inside; no specific attributes are assigned to outsiders except their strangeness and differentness. On an everyday level civic codes are not expressed explicitly; the insider is simply familiar with them. Those who call in question expose themselves as outsiders. Commemorative rituals and representations of continuity play a pivotal role in the public arena. Social groups who mark their identities by employing civic codes have a tendency to develop hierarchies: there is a slow progression from the fringes to the core of the social group. “Outsiders” who wish to cross the boundary can only do

so by following closely the routine and implicit traditions, that is, the tacit norms of behaviour and institutional arrangements of the community into which they wish to integrate themselves. Finally, the cultural codes in the narrower sense are based on the relation to the sacred. The mode of crossing the boundaries is communication, education and/or conversion. Communities which employ cultural codes in the narrower sense have a fundamentally universalistic and missionary attitude: in principal, everyone is invited to join. "Outsiders" are deemed inferior and are devalued. Within the group, however, there is a clear tendency to hierarchical structures which manifest themselves in stratification. There are different circles or classes; advancement is achieved by passing through elaborate initiation rituals which allow a slow progression to the centre, from profane to the sacred. The centre is constituted of the "religious virtuosi." Stabilization is achieved by referring to the transcendental as the ultimate authority. It is not tradition or links to the past which are propagated as decisive, but rather the outlook of a utopian future. Although, according to Eisenstadt and Giesen, symbols and rituals form the basis of distinction between inside and outside in all types of collectivities, they have a specific function as cultural codes in collectivities which are defined by their relation to the sacred. They refer to the distinction between sacred and profane time, sacred and profane space, and to the reflexive dimension of human beings who strive to structure the vertical order of the cosmos.¹¹³

Eisenstadt and Giesen's presentation of "ideal types" heightens the awareness of the contemporary coexistence of various collective identities. Thus, the primordial category gender will be supplemented but by no means replaced in a collectivity which marks its identity through cultural codes in the narrower sense. Cultural codes, in turn, can develop into civic codes. Furthermore, we adopt from Eisenstadt and Giesen's concept the insight that collective identities do not exist "as such" but are socially constructed and that their stability relies on reaffirmation.¹¹⁴ Calling this to mind can have a liberating effect. Within

¹¹³ Eisenstadt/ Giesen, *Construction of collective identity*, 75

¹¹⁴ The general idea of the "social construction of reality" or "social constructionism" was first expressed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in 1966, cf. Berger/ Luckmann, *The social construction of reality*. For an overview on the impact of this on different debates cf. Gergen, *An invitation to social construction*. Of special relevance in the context of identity-theory is Chapter 2 ("The Communal Construction of the Real and the Good", 33-61). As a general statement, Wagner put it very

discussions in the field of cultural sciences, the concept of collective identity has been acknowledged as a means of examining more closely the often concealed ideological foundations of social identity politics. As Friese pointed out: “Both postcolonial and feminist theorising have revived the interest in collective identities, which in general seems often carried by groups that were marginalised or condemned to invisibility in the dominant structure of political hierarchies.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, Wagner underlines the potential of critique that such an analysis can hold: “Identity becomes relevant under conditions of boundary-setting and exclusion, and is accordingly thematised by the marginalised or excluded groups.”¹¹⁶

Straub therefore warns of externally unifying groups, especially numerically large ones, and emphasises that one should bear in mind the question: “Which persons are ‘brought nearer’ and ‘bound together’ by whom and in what way, conceived in particular circumstances as a unit, when certain common characteristics and affiliations are ascribed to them?”¹¹⁷ He cautions that the concept of a “collective identity” can lose its “ideological critique” if the conception of a personal identity is simply transported onto the collective.¹¹⁸ In consequence, Straub observes: “Stereotypical and normativising constructions of collective identity can especially be found when collectives become larger and inaccessible. Anonymous groups such as ‘genders,’ ‘classes,’ or ‘nations’ are notorious examples. Such a group inevitably runs the danger of functioning as an ‘inauthentic We’ [...]. Ideological constructs of this kind often propagate pseudo-identities for pseudocollectives.”¹¹⁹ Straub rejects the notion of “hypostasising” a “collective identity” from the outside, thus making normative claims. Rather, Straub proposes the

concisely: “Empirical postmodernism is accompanied by a critique of social ontology” (Wagner, *Identity and Selfhood as Problématique*, 50).

¹¹⁵ Friese, *Introduction*, 2.

¹¹⁶ Wagner, *Identity and Selfhood as Problématique*, 38.

¹¹⁷ Straub, *Personal and Collective Identity*, 68.

¹¹⁸ This can be regarded as a reaction to critique such as articulated by Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität. Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur*.

¹¹⁹ Straub, *Personal and Collective Identity*, 70. In this quote, Straub refers to Reinhard Kreckel, “Soziale Integration und nationale Identität”, in: *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, No. 4, 1994, 13-20.

“reconstructive” type of analysis with regard to collective identities, which must always take into view “the subjects’ praxis as well as the self-understanding and world-understanding.”¹²⁰

Bearing this in mind, we adopt the definition of collective identity offered by Jan Assmann, an Egyptologist and cultural anthropologist:

The collective or “we” identity is the image that a group has of itself and with which its members associate themselves. It therefore has no existence of its own, but comes into being through recognition by its participating individuals. It is as strong or as weak as its presence in the consciousness of its members and its motivating influence on their thoughts and actions.¹²¹

Assmann’s definition invites a closer exploration of the means employed by a group to consolidate and affirm its collective identity, in his own words, the structure of signs and symbols by which a “we” consciousness is “produced.”¹²² In this process, memory and the mode of remembering play a pivotal role. Assmann draws on the concept of “collective memory” developed by Maurice Halbwachs¹²³ and adopts his “socio-constructivist” concept of the past.¹²⁴ According to Assmann, memory, evoked and expressed in a structure of signs and symbols, affirms the collective identity of a specific group. Assmann calls this “cultural formation”, and it includes not only a common language and texts but also rites, dances, monuments, scenery, dress and body markers, images, and ornaments.¹²⁵ Through social interaction, a “cultural meaning” is circulated which stores common norms and values, experiences, expectations and interpretations. Together, this constitutes the “symbolic world picture view of a society.”¹²⁶ When a minority group must find codes of differentiation from the surrounding culture (“distinction”) or when numbers rise, it will typically develop a “limitic structure.” A “We-consciousness” will gain intensity through polarization and “limitic symbolism”.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Straub, *Personal and Collective Identity*, 69.

¹²¹ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 113-114.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 115.

¹²³ At about the same time, Burke in his essay *History as Social Memory* also referred to Maurice Halbwachs and came to similar conclusions as Assmann. In this essay, Burke does not mention Assmann, and Assmann, also seems only later to have encountered Burke’s work.

¹²⁴ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 33.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 136.

Assmann's concept clearly underlines the relation between the individual and the group: An individual identity is formed "from the outside to the inside", through interaction and communication with the group, and conversely, a collective identity needs the participation of individuals through conscious identification.¹²⁸ In this sense, the sociologist Wagner, too, claims a reciprocity: "Self-identity will usually be 'social' in the sense that a relation to particular other human beings is seen as giving a significant orientation to one's own life. Collective identity, on the other hand, will, it seems, only emerge if and when a multiplicity of singular human beings draw a sense of significance for their self-identities from the same collectivity."¹²⁹ This allows us to take into view both the individual deaconess and the community in its "We-Identity". Moreover, Assmann's concept with its focus on shared meaning and values, beliefs and forms of behaviour, takes a cultural perspective and makes it a close neighbour to theology.¹³⁰

The theologian Delwin Brown reminds us that "all receptivity has a preunderstanding or, in its reflective form, a theoretical background for which the investigator is responsible, and that the investigator must therefore be self-critical in the employment of that theoretical framework, being clear about it, being vigorous in assessing it, and being willing to revise it as needed."¹³¹ We therefore need to be explicit about where we see the limitations of our theoretical framework from which we draw the analytical tool of "collective identity." Referring to the field of church history, Sarah Foot has recently impressed upon scholars to be aware "that to write about any religion it is essential to take that religion seriously, to engage directly with the intrinsic nature of the belief systems which adherents espoused and thus to explore what those beliefs meant to their practitioners."¹³² Taking this seriously means that when

¹²⁸ Ibid., 112-113.

¹²⁹ Wagner, *Identity and Selfhood as Problématique*, 35.

¹³⁰ Cf. Schweitzer, *Social Constructionism and Religious Education*, 171-185, here: 172-173. Cf. also Leppin's definition of Church History in adaptation of semiotic conceptions: "The object of church history is to analyse a socially formed system of symbols which offers orientation in the world with regard to the socially constituted reality through theology, ritual, and praxis of life, and which endows meaning that transcends the individual as well as society." (Leppin, *Kirchengeschichte zwischen historiographischem und theologischem Anspruch*, 229).

¹³¹ Brown, *Refashioning Self and Other*, 48.

¹³² Foot, *Has ecclesiastical history lost the plot?*, 19. Foot deplores the "Durkheimian reductionism and functionalism" (19) of much research conducted in the field of church history which implies that "religion has merely social or cultural meaning," (22) and rejects the assumption that unbelief is a scholarly virtue (19). With reference to Alister Chapman and John Coffey

adopting concepts of collective identity such as that developed by Giesen, we cannot follow him in his definition of “the sacred” which regards “the imagination of transcendence as a personal God” as outdated.¹³³ Referring to Durkheim, Giesen defines “the sacred” as “an indirect or ‘translated’ phrasing of collective identity”, in other words, “the general mode by which a community refers to itself in distinction to the sum of its individual members.”¹³⁴ This explicitly does not take into account the possibility of God as an “extra linguistic reality,”¹³⁵ who is in a position of “outsidedness.”¹³⁶ Here, the church historian must draw a clear line and be sensitive to how members of religious communities themselves expressed their faith.

1.5. The structure of the thesis

In an initial chapter, the Deaconess Institute is set in its wider context. The emergence of bourgeois culture at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth with the “making” of certain notions about femininity and masculinity are explored. A selection of diaconal initiatives, taken especially by proponents of the *Erweckungsbewegung*, is outlined which served to enhance the scope of action for bourgeois women. We then turn to Löhe’s theological formation with a focus on his perception of women, especially of their role in the field of philanthropy. The beginnings and first years of the development of the Deaconess Institute are outlined and the restructuring of the Institute into a mother house is explored in greater detail. The active participation of the deaconesses is highlighted, and their rootedness in bourgeois culture presented. The next chapter focuses on the initiation ceremony as a means of creating a threshold to the community. The interpretation of the deaconess vocation and the initiation ceremony by the nineteenth-century *Rektoren* of the Institute are analysed, complemented by the perception of the ecclesiastical authorities. Here, theological aspects were merged with concerns

[cf. *Seeing Things Their Way*], Foot calls for a “religious turn” in (church) history which could result in scholars paying more attention to the deeply pervasive influence of religious ideas, beliefs and practices when studying texts of the past (20). It must be pointed out, however, that this is by no means a new claim, cf. for example Berndt Hamm, *Frömmigkeit als Gegenstand theologiegeschichtlicher Forschung* (1977). For a recent contribution within German scholarship cf. Sommer, *Frömmigkeitsgeschichte im Spiegel von Theologie und Geschichtswissenschaften*.

¹³³ Giesen, *Performing the Sacred*, 328.

¹³⁴ Giesen, *Performing the Sacred*, 329.

¹³⁵ Ven, *Social Constructionism and Theology: A dance to be postponed?* 304.

¹³⁶ Hermans, *Ultimate Meaning as Silence*, 130.

about an elevation of the status of women in the church. The initiation ceremony itself as a rite for effecting and displaying this status-elevation is next analysed by drawing on insights from the social sciences, with a focus on the experience and participation of the deaconesses. In the next chapter, the literary means of communicating and circulating the community's values, norms, expectations, and interpretations are analysed. The ambiguity about the emphasis of, on the one hand, (theological) distinction and, on the other hand, of adherence to bourgeois norms for femininity emerges. In the final chapter, non-literary means of communicating and circulating the deaconess community's "cultural meaning" are explored. These consisted of boundary-codes and of rites and collective action: while the former served to enhance the deaconess culture by polarization, the latter consolidated the deaconess culture of the mother house. The thesis is rounded off by a conclusion which argues that the deaconesses were active participators in the "making" and negotiation of a specific deaconess culture. They themselves, however, were drawn into the ambiguity presented by the Deaconess Institute: should they prioritise an affirmation of conventional gender patterns or were they called to transgress the conventional allocation of gender characteristics as they ventured forth into the public sphere, motivated by their new religious identity?

Chapter 2: The Deaconess Institute and its context

2.1. Nineteenth-century contexts

It has been frequently argued that one of the main reasons why Fliedner's model of female diakonia in Kaiserswerth became a "victorious model" was that it resonated well both with contemporary needs and with contemporary gender assumptions.¹³⁷ The new deaconess profession as developed in Kaiserswerth quickly became socially acceptable as it "required no change in societal attitudes."¹³⁸ This, generally speaking, is also true for Neuendettelsau. In Löhe's case, bourgeois and Christian ideals

¹³⁷ Cf. Gause, *Dienst und Demut*, 77; similarly: Prelinger, *Deaconessate*, 216, 220-221; Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 160-161; 246.

¹³⁸ Prelinger, *Deaconessate*, 221.

merged. This was facilitated by the fact that bourgeois culture itself, which Wolfgang Kaschuba has characterized by its “claim for universal social validity”,¹³⁹ drew on Christian imagery in its consolidation of gender patterns.¹⁴⁰ In a first step, therefore, this chapter sketches the development or “making”¹⁴¹ of nineteenth-century bourgeois femininity and outlines initiatives in the field of philanthropy developed by and for women, which served to explore and enhance their radius of action and which functioned as models or counter-models for the Neuendettelsau Deaconess Institute. In a second step, it offers a short outline of Löhe’s theological development, focusing on his perception of women, especially in the field of diakonia, and of the founding of the Deaconess Institute and its structural consolidation as a mother house. The first part of the chapter serves to set up for the second part: it will become apparent not only that Löhe was profoundly influenced by bourgeois gender assumptions but so too were the women themselves. The deaconesses, who are explored in this thesis as active forces in the dynamic process of giving organizational and structural shape to the Institute, articulated needs, interests and perceptions which reflect bourgeois notions of femininity, and, not least, highlight the practical restrictions imposed upon women in such a setting.

2.2. The making of bourgeois femininity in the nineteenth century

Wolfgang Kaschuba has pointed out the „semantic trickiness“ [*semantische Tücke*] of the German term *Bürgerlichkeit*.¹⁴² At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the term lost its narrower judicial and political meaning, indicating a certain legal status, and, instead, became a term denoting “cultural practice”. It therefore became difficult to apply the term in a strictly sociological sense to categorize a clearly defined social group from the outside. Rather, *Bürgerlichkeit* is to be understood as

¹³⁹ Kaschuba, *Deutsche Bürgerlichkeit*, 17.

¹⁴⁰ Gause, for example, quotes a passage from Ludwig Richter’s (secular) family manual “For the house” [Für’s Haus] (1858) which recommends to the daughters of bourgeois households “Martha’s industry, Mary’s fervor, beauty like Rahel’s, prudence like Ruth’s” as “a maid’s best dowry”, cf. Gause, *Dienst und Demut*, 72.

¹⁴¹ The term „making“ here refers to the famous study by Edward Thompson: *The Making of the English Working Class*, London 1983, which has been described as a “milestone in the history of British cultural history” (Burke, *What is Cultural History*, 24)

¹⁴² Cf. Kaschuba, *Deutsche Bürgerlichkeit*, 10.

a socially defined and culturally formed *habitus*: a cultural model which, though internally layered and varied, is nevertheless binding in its principles. It [the cultural model] holds decisive elements of a social identity. It communicates bourgeois self-perception and self-assurance, defines the usage of material goods by referring to ideal values, by applying cultural patterns of behaviour, which, when all elements are taken together, forms a life-world.¹⁴³

Kaschuba, drawing heavily on Bourdieu, emphasizes the function of bourgeois culture in enabling its carriers to establish identity and communicate distinction.¹⁴⁴ Although this, in the first instance, was realized through self-representation and self-stylisation, the bourgeois discourse on norms, values and beliefs nevertheless claimed a universal validity. The same claim was made of the bourgeois discourse on femininity and masculinity, which was increasingly shaped by the ascription of polarizing “gender characteristics”.¹⁴⁵

This was not initially so. Even to the end of the eighteenth century, the definition of man and woman was based not on their “nature”, but on their social positions within the traditional order of the estate-based society.¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, the authors of manuals delineating virtues and normative patterns of behaviour, rights and duties of women gave specific instructions for married and single women, for the superintendents of households and maids, for the wives of artisans and tradesmen.¹⁴⁷ New views emerged during and after the Enlightenment, in the period bridging the old and the new order which saw the launch of universalistic discourses on personal freedom and formal equality, to which all individuals were said to be entitled on the grounds of their being endowed with reason. It was within this setting that Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel anonymously published “On the Civic Improvement of Women” [*Von der bürgerlichen Verbesserung der Weiber*] (1792) in which he contemplated the necessity and expediency of granting to women the same educational opportunities and political rights as to men.¹⁴⁸ This,

¹⁴³ Kaschuba, *Deutsche Bürgerlichkeit*, 18.

¹⁴⁴ Kaschuba, *Deutsche Bürgerlichkeit*, 18. Kaschuba refers to Pièrre Bourdieu: *Der feine Unterschied. Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilstkraft*, Frankfurt 1982 [the title in its English translation: *Distinction. A social critique of the judgement of taste*].

¹⁴⁵ This thesis was first developed and argued by Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere*.

¹⁴⁶ Hausen compared entries from the dictionaries *Brockhaus* from 1815, *Meyer's Conversations-Lexikon* from 1848, and *Meyer's Konversationslexikon* from 1904, and analysed excerpts from the work of a physician: K.F. v. Burdach: *Der Mensch nach den verschiedenen Seiten seiner Natur. Anthropologie für das gebildete Publicum*, Stuttgart 1837, cf. Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtercharaktere*, 365-369.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtercharaktere*, 370.

¹⁴⁸ It seems that Hippel developed his ideas independently from Mary Wollstonecraft who expressed the same opinion at the same time in England in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), cf. Frevert, *Bürgerliche Meisterdenker*, 37.

however, was a lone voice which fell on deaf ears. His contemporary philosophical “bourgeois master thinkers”,¹⁴⁹ Immanuel Kant for example, referred to a mixture of biological and traditional- functional arguments which denied “civic [*bürgerliche*] independence” to women on principle.¹⁵⁰ Increasingly, women came to be defined by their biological sex, to which was attributed general characteristics which made their exclusion from the public sphere seemingly self-evident. Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s philosophical distinction between male activity and female passivity in his examination of natural law [*Grundlagen des Naturrechts nach den Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*] (1796) flowed into the popular scientific discourse. The predilection of finding universal laws in nature extended to the analysis of “female” and “male” nature with its seemingly obvious deductions about the male and female being *per se*.

In addition, at just around this time, the concept of the traditional patriarchal household with its characteristic domestic economy comprising servants and extended family-members, was restructured into the bourgeois family. This fundamentally altered the social role of women.¹⁵¹ While before, women had been an integral part of the microcosmic unity of production and reproduction, paid work and unpaid work, they were now increasingly excluded from the sphere of productive labour. In the nineteenth-century public discourse, marriage as the “perfect union of two people”¹⁵² was instead based on the idealistic concept of romantic love. Therefore, the unabated male domination within marriage and family required further legitimation. In this context, the “invention” of distinct “gender characteristics” can be interpreted as an important means of stabilizing the *status quo* of female submission in the face of a dramatically changed social order.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ This refers to Frevert’s title: *Bürgerliche Meisterdenker und das Geschlechterverhältnis*.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Frevert, *Bürgerliche Meisterdenker*, 21-23.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere*, 370-371.

¹⁵² Johann Gottlieb Fichte: *Grundlagen des Naturrechts nach den Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre* (1796), cited here from Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere*, 373.

¹⁵³ Hausen explains that through her approach of revealing the dialectic interplay between norms and reality she wishes to merge aspects of social history and the history of ideas (cf. 365). Hausen’s thesis that the attribution of distinct gender-characteristics served as an “ideological safeguard to patriarchal domination” (p. 375) has been criticized by Habermas as being too one-sided and therefore reductionist (cf. Habermas, *Weibliche Religiosität*, 138-139, and: Habermas, *Geschlechtergeschichte und anthropology of gender*, 500). Fundamental to this dispute seems to be Hausen’s recurring to a

These "gender characteristics" were grounded on the principle of complementarity.¹⁵⁴ Proponents of the (early) Romantic period, such as Friedrich Schlegel, offered ideological consolidation by arguing that female nature embodied the uncorrupt, undiluted human sentiments and imagination which could only flourish unsullied by the mechanical, rational coercions of the modern world in sheltered seclusion.¹⁵⁵ Such idealizations were clearly the result of wistful projections which were cultivated within the enthusiastic environment of poetic circles. In the long run, they contributed to implement the notion of distinct gender characteristics in popular discourse as is reflected in the rich stream of light fiction. Authors such as Ottilie Wildermuth helped to establish the assumption that the ideal society relied on the perfection of "femininity" in women and "masculinity" in men and its fusion and harmonization in marriage.¹⁵⁶ They explicitly emphasized the equal value of men and women despite their "natural" differences.¹⁵⁷ Women were expected to be gentle, modest, committed, self-denying. Ideal women showed a concern for conservation and receptivity, while they were, at the same time, urged to industry and diligence. With a taste for beauty and grace they were expected to adorn the home and make charming hosts. Men, in contrast, were bound to display traits of forcefulness and energetic courage. Their assertiveness and independence was considered to be governed by rationality and their ability of abstraction.¹⁵⁸

structuralist understanding of roles as "socially prescribed behavioural patterns from which the carrier of a position cannot deviate in his/her actual behaviour" (*Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere*, 364). Habermas, in contrast, emphasizes the "making" and permanent "negotiation" of roles and of both female and male identities which eludes the attempts to distinguish neatly between oppressors and victims. For a principal distinction between the two approaches cf. Henke, *Zwei Möglichkeiten des sozialen Handelns*. Hausen herself revised her position in a later publication, cf. Hausen, *Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit*, esp. 86). Nevertheless, independently of this discussion, the results of Hausen's analysis of the dichotomizing "gender characteristics" have found general acclaim.

¹⁵⁴ Analysing entries from dictionaries and medical, pedagogical, psychological and literary publications, Hausen gives a list of gender characteristics in the form of a two columns (cf. Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere*, 368).

¹⁵⁵ Frevert, *Bürgerliche Meisterdenker*, 36-37. Schlegel spread his views both in private letters to friends and in published works such as "Über die Philosophie. An Dorothea" (1799).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Ottilie Wildermuth: *Aus dem Frauenleben* (1855), cited and analysed in Hausen, *Ehepaare*, 85-87. Johann Heinrich Campe (1746-1818), a theologian and pedagogue, published a widely read manual for bourgeois young women, *Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter*, first published in Braunschweig in 1789, in which he gave comprehensive advice and direction. Throughout, he insists that a woman's vocation is and must be marriage. The book was reprinted ten times in the course of the nineteenth century, cf. Gerhard, *Verhältnisse und Verhinderungen*, 369-381.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere*, 373.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere*, 368.

The simultaneous idealization and subjugation of femininity became an abiding element in the formulation of gender relations in the nineteenth century and beyond.¹⁵⁹ The result of this theoretical discourse on dichotomic gender characteristics, which was never devoid of practical considerations, was a rigid, seemingly unalterable allocation of separate spheres to men and women – the public to men, the private to women. It is important to note that this was a normative construction and did not necessarily represent the whole of reality. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have noted: “Public was not really public and private not really private despite the potent imagery of ‘separate spheres’. Both were ideological constructs with specific meaning, which must be understood as products of a particular historical time.”¹⁶⁰ How this normative construction played out with regard to gender roles can be observed in Friedrich Schiller’s “Song of the Bell” (1798):

The man must go out
Into hostile life,
Must work and strive
And plant and produce,
Calculate, gather,
Must wager and risk,
To hunt for fortune.
(...)
And inside rules
The modest housewife,
The children’s mother,
And reigns wisely
In the domestic circle,
And teaches the girls,
And guides the boys,
And stirs without end
The industrious hands,
And multiplies the gains
With an orderly mind.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Frevert, *Bürgerliche Meisterdenker*, 36. Prelinger, for example (with reference to Ann Taylor Allen), has pointed out the longevity and universality of the assumption of a specific “women’s nature”, by drawing attention to the fact that even in the time of the (later) phase of the German women’s movement at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century proponents of the German suffrage campaign still invoked the concept of female self-sacrifice and service to the state to substantiate their claims (Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, XIV).

¹⁶⁰ Davidoff/Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 33.

¹⁶¹ Friedrich Schiller: *Lied von der Glocke* (1798), cited here from Hausen, *Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit*, 84-85.

Increasingly in the nineteenth century, the bourgeois family was styled as a refuge from the hostile world, an idealized paradise where men could enjoy rest and comfort from their labours.¹⁶² It became the stage for the performance of bourgeois culture and gender relations. As such, it was fraught with ambiguities for both men and women. The seemingly private family -life had a public side. This was most obviously the case when the intimacy of the family -life was exposed to public scrutiny at the occasion of the private receptions which were a necessary requirement for furthering a man's professional career.¹⁶³ At all costs, any shortage of money, especially in the households of young couples, needed to be concealed. The main burden to keep up the appearance of luxurious ease and leisure while simultaneously working busily behind the scenes fell to women. Moreover, this example demonstrates the way in which the dichotomizing 'gender characteristics' brought relationships of dependence for both men and women: while they served largely to exclude women from the public sphere and to require them to look out for husbands from an early age in order to avoid the socially scorned and ridiculed status of an "old maid", which clearly ran counter to the ideology of marriage based on romantic love, men, too, were now defined in the bourgeois ranking by their married state.¹⁶⁴ An "old bachelor" could experience difficulties in his professional career on account of his lack of a family -life which was regarded as a haven of civilization and culture, which, in bourgeois thinking, were the very hallmarks that distinguished the bourgeoisie both from the nobility and from the emerging proletariat.¹⁶⁵ Women were believed to provide the "head-start in civilisation".¹⁶⁶ This has to do with what has often been seen as the "intimization" of religion.

In the aftermath of the Enlightenment, religion increasingly lost importance in public life.¹⁶⁷ For example, newly introduced or restructured secular authorities such as an enlarged police-force and medical

¹⁶² Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere*, 379; Hausen, *Ehepaare*, 113.

¹⁶³ Cf. Hausen, *Ehepaare*, 108.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. also Lipp, *Das Private im Öffentlichen*, 103.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Habermas, *Weibliche Religiosität*, 131.

¹⁶⁶ Habermas uses the term „Zivilisationsvorsprung“, cf. Habermas, *Weibliche Religiosität*, 131.

¹⁶⁷ For Bavaria cf. Blessing, *Staat und Kirche in der Gesellschaft*. Strangely, however, though Blessing professes that his approach is inspired by anthropological history and though Blessing focuses on the everyday -experiences of the "humble people" [*Alltagswelt der kleine Leute*] (cf. esp. 13-16), he fails to recognize and take into account the category gender, which, as Ute Frevert has claimed, is a "central structural principle of societies" (Frevert, *Geschlechter-Differenzen*, preface).

advisors replaced pastors and theologians as guardians of public morals and “decency”.¹⁶⁸ Instead, religion was cultivated in the private circle of the family -life, and the celebration of ecclesiastical “rites de passages” became an occasion for emotionally consolidating domesticity. In the course of the process of the development of the dichotomizing gender characteristics and, alongside, the allocation of separate spheres to men and women, sketched above, religion increasingly became the domain of women. This was enhanced by the fact that men were more exposed to secular influences because of their generally better education, more independent life-styles and professional careers.¹⁶⁹ One result was that statistics show that the church services were attended far more frequently by women than by men, a phenomenon which was clearly registered by contemporary clergymen and, in turn, served to confirm their views on the “natural” affinity of women to the religious sphere.¹⁷⁰ In a sermon from 1843, a clergyman reflected on his observations:

For all that has to do with the church, for all that is sacred, the woman's heart is more receptive. Who is most willing to treasure the religious comforts which are so often proclaimed from our pulpits? It's the women and widows! Who gathers round our confessionals most often throughout the year and wholly voluntarily? The women and maidens! Who kneels most devotedly in front of our altars? Again, it's the female sex.¹⁷¹

The churches reacted to this development by specifically addressing women on whom they increasingly became dependent. They were expected to exert their influence within their family-circles to preserve traditional customs and ties.¹⁷² In the allocation of responsibilities within the bourgeois family, it was, after all, the mothers of the family to whom the task of religiously instructing the children now fell.¹⁷³ Men, in turn, were generally not averse to their daughters' and wives' allegiance to religion and the church. A sound religious education, it was hoped, would stabilize the traditional patriarchal order and

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Habermas, *Weibliche Religiosität*, 128.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Götz v. Olenhusen, *Feminisierung von Religion und Kirche*, 10.

¹⁷⁰ McLeod has shown that similar phenomena can be observed in contemporary France, England, and the United States, cf. McLeod, *Weibliche Frömmigkeit – männlicher Unglaube*, 135-137.

¹⁷¹ From a sermon given in 1843, cited from Schlögl, *Sünderin, Heilige oder Hausfrau?* 14.

¹⁷² Cf. for example Johann Hinrich Wichern, the “founder” of the German Protestant Inner Mission, in his essay “Der Dienst der Frauen in der Kirche” (1856/58), taken here from Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 52-53; cf. also Götz v. Olenhusen, *Feminisierung von Religion und Kirche*, 10-11.

¹⁷³ Cf. Schlögl, *Sünderin, Heilige oder Hausfrau*, 34.

lay the “moral ground” for the bourgeois family -life.¹⁷⁴ At the same time, however, religion offered to women a means of partially disrupting the dichotomy of the public and private sphere which had just developed. Though it is doubtful whether the full implications of the thesis of the “Feminisation of Religion”, which was developed in US-American gender research,¹⁷⁵ can be applied to the nineteenth-century German context,¹⁷⁶ the finding that conservative women, inspired by the German *Erweckungsbewegung*, found “admission to the public sphere as philanthropists and educators”,¹⁷⁷ that is, in roles which were largely reconcilable with the schema of the “gender characteristics”, has found wide acclaim.

2.3. The entrance of women into the philanthropic arena

In the crisis of the Napoleonic invasion and in the ensuing Wars of Liberation [*Befreiungskriege*] at the beginning of the nineteenth century, women in the German lands first organized themselves to step into the public arena, fuelled by patriotic and religious motives, and seeking justification for their actions in the newly developed attributes of femininity. In 1813, the Prussian princesses drafted an “Appeal to the Women in the Prussian State” in which, in emotionally charged language, they called upon women to support their heroic male warriors in battle by uniting in the Women’s Society. The purpose of this society was to appeal amongst women to make “sacrifices”, to collect donations and other offerings for the “fatherland” and to supervise the nursing of soldiers.¹⁷⁸ This led to the founding of countless local societies which were clearly class-conscious: Members were mostly recruited from the nobility and (upper) bourgeoisie, and the actual work of nursing was delegated to lower-class personnel. All in all, the founding of the Patriotic Women’s Societies [*Vaterländische Frauenvereine*] offered to (socially

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Habermas, *Weibliche Religiosität*, 131.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Welter, *Feminisation of American Religion*.

¹⁷⁶ This was attempted for example by McLeod, *Weibliche Frömmigkeit – männlicher Unglaube*. A critique of the extension of the thesis to the German context was developed by Jane Rendall: *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780-1860*, Chicago 1985, cf. Götz v. Olenhusen, *Feminisierung von Religion und Kirche*, 12-13, also Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 35-36.

¹⁷⁷ Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, XIII.

¹⁷⁸ “Aufruf an die Frauen im Preußischen Staate“ (1813), cited according to Philippi, *Vorstufen*, 48-49.

privileged) women the opportunity to unite and to become involved in questions of public welfare.¹⁷⁹

Some of the societies were continued beyond the time of crisis and were transformed into societies for general works of charity, now recruiting from broader social circles.¹⁸⁰ This left a legacy which later generations of women could and did invoke.¹⁸¹

Moreover, through the reports brought back by soldiers who had been injured in France during the Wars of Liberation, the work of the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy became widely known in the German states, providing another model for women wishing to enter the field of philanthropy.¹⁸² In contrast to other European countries, the active Roman Catholic women's orders which had been founded in the post-Reformation era such as the Daughters of Charity and the Ursulines, were little known in the German-speaking countries until the nineteenth century.¹⁸³ Moreover, traditional contemplative orders had become considerably diminished by the end of the eighteenth century¹⁸⁴ and those that remained were almost all dissolved in the course of the Napoleonic secularization at the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁵ From 1803 to 1875, however, one can observe a tremendous increase of active women's orders, in Prussia but also in other German states.¹⁸⁶ Both branches of older congregations with mother houses in France, Italy, or Belgium, and wholly new orders were founded, especially in predominantly Roman Catholic regions. Thus in Bavaria, Munich became a centre for the Society of St.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 28.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 27.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 8.

¹⁸² The Protestant officer Johann D.F. Neigebaur, for example, enthusiastic about what he had seen and experienced in France, published "Proposals for the Establishment of a General Foundation for Maidens in Prussia" [*Vorschläge zur Errichtung eines Allgemeinen Jungfrauenstifts in Preußen*] in 1814, cf. Philippi: *Vorstufen*, 63-73. This was meant to be an ecumenical society of financially independent, single women from the upper classes who were to dedicate themselves to works of charity with minimal male interference but with a strict internal hierarchy. A communal life was not envisaged. Though the Foundation was never realized in this form, Amalie Sieveking's concept of a Protestant sisterhood showed some resemblance to it. There is, however, no evidence of a direct link.

¹⁸³ Cf. Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, 4. In German, the term "Sisters of Mercy" [*Barmherzige Schwestern*] became generic for all active religious communities of women, especially those involved in nursing, cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 28.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Schlögl, *Sündige, Heilige oder Hausfrau*, 19-21.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 70.

¹⁸⁶ Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 70. Meiwes points out the distinction between "orders" [*Orden*] and "congregations" [*Kongregationen*] in Roman Catholic canonical law. Different proceedings for recognition and rules for seclusion apply. In addition, orders and congregations (or 'societies') vary in their organizational forms and objects. What is more, the vows taken in orders and congregations differ in their legal and canonical effect.

Vincent de Paul.¹⁸⁷ This can be interpreted as an expression of a movement of renewal in the Roman Catholic church, and was initially not strictly regulated by the church hierarchy, although individual bishops, such as Clemens August Droste zu Vischering in Trier, actively encouraged the founding of new congregations. Fixed regulations for the process of recognition were not promulgated by the pope until 1900 so that, until then, women were left with some room to manoeuvre.¹⁸⁸ In most cases, it was the women founders, together with clergymen and at times lay friends, who drafted the constitutions of the new congregations.¹⁸⁹ Most of them were dedicated to nursing and education, mostly of girls. Their reputation was enhanced by their commitment in times of epidemics and by the support of well-known public figures such as the poet Clemens Brentano who had converted to Roman Catholicism. He wrote a glowing report on the Sisters of Mercy of St Charles Borromeus in France and Koblenz which was very positively received not only in Catholic but also in Protestant circles.¹⁹⁰

The Roman Catholic model of single women who united within a fellowship to conduct meaningful work and to pursue a professional career outside the family -circle in the public sphere on the basis of a religious motivation inspired Protestant women too. However, within Protestantism, there was no customary positive role model for single women, since marriage and family held a central place in the Protestant, especially the Lutheran, tradition, and charity had been largely regarded as a male preserve. Practicable forms therefore first needed to be developed.¹⁹¹ The *Erweckungsbewegung* was pivotal to the “energetic and very effective entrance of conservative women into the philanthropic arena.”¹⁹² It readily embraced the new organizational form of societies, laid strong emphasis on showing forth the

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 30.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 76. For a subtle analysis of the simultaneous subjection of the women's congregations to the hierarchical ecclesiastical structures and a certain degree of self-determination, cf. Meiwes, *Arbeiterinnen des Herrn*, esp. 65-67.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 77.

¹⁹⁰ Long extracts from Clemens Brentano's: “Die barmherzigen Schwestern in Bezug auf Armen- und Krankenpflege. Nebst einem Bericht über das Bürgerhospital zu Coblenz” (1831) were, for example, published in the *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung* in 1833 (cf. Philippi, *Vorstufen*, 104). This journal had been edited by Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg since its foundation in 1827; it waged a “battle” against the “enemies of the Gospel”, i.e. proponents of *Rationalismus*, in language verging on demagoguery. The journal had a decisive influence on the development of Neo-confessionalism (cf. Graf, *Restorationstheologie oder neulutherische Modernisierung*, 80-84).

¹⁹¹ The role of the Lutheran tradition as a deterrent for the entrance of women into the philanthropic arena has been pointed out especially by Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, esp. 2-7.

¹⁹² Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, X. A “classic” work on the (German) *Erweckung* is Beyreuther, *Erweckungsbewegung*.

fruits of an individually experienced conversion in a *praxis pietatis* that was marked by social concern, and decisively encouraged lay commitment.

The life and work of Amalie Sieveking (1794-1859) is a good example.¹⁹³ Growing up as a poor relation in the urban bourgeois milieu of Hamburg with excellent connections to the city's patrician elite, she became a member of the Women's Society during the Wars of Liberation and, from an early age, taught a group of girls in the form of private home-schooling. Her life took on a new direction when she came under the influence of the *Erweckungsbewegung* which gave her the motivation and courage to publish her writings¹⁹⁴ and to commit herself whole-heartedly to the field of philanthropy. She discussed theology with her brothers Eduard and Gustav and pastors who were part of the network of the *Erweckungsbewegung* such as Johann Wilhelm Rautenberg, Henri Merle d'Aubigné, and Johannes Evangelista Goßner, and read Thomas à Kempis and August Hermann Francke. Although she had not at first felt a calling to the celibate life, in the early 1820s, she drafted a rule for a Protestant "Sisterhood of Mercy" [*Barmherzige Schwesterschaft*].¹⁹⁵ This was to be a "society of love" consisting of unmarried or widowed women, governed by a superior but otherwise made up of women of equal standing. They were to meet for daily devotions [*Andachten*], inhabit a communal house and wear a uniform dress. The rules did not envisage the taking of vows, and liberal provisions were made for times of solace and recreation. Male interference was to be kept to a minimum. Sieveking wished the sisterhood to find unity and focus in their joint dedication to their work of alleviating the plight of the poor, nursing the sick and educating women and girls. Although Sieveking was given much encouragement when she showed the draft of the rules to friends, she herself felt she needed to wait for a "sign from above."¹⁹⁶ She was, however, not inactive during this period. She continued to teach girls, many of whom later became her

¹⁹³ Cf. Grolle, *Amalie Sieveking*. Amalie Sieveking's first biographer was Emma Poel who anonymously published *Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Leben von Amalie Sieveking, in deren Auftrage von einer Freundin verfaßt. Mit einem Vorwort von Dr. Wichern*, Hamburg, 1860. A later biographer was Elisabeth Haupt: *Amalie Sieveking als Gründerin des weiblichen Vereins für Armen- und Krankenpflege in Hamburg*, Berlin 1933.

¹⁹⁴ Sieveking's publications were harshly criticized, for example by Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg in *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung*, Nr. 19, 5. September 1827, 143f.. Hengstenberg claimed that the Gospel (and particularly St Paul) prohibited theological writings by women, cf. Grolle, *Amalie Sieveking*, 124, footnote 9; Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 40, footnote 12.

¹⁹⁵ *Entwurf einer Regel für eine barmherzige Schwesterschaft*, reprinted in extracts in Philippi, *Vorstufen*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁹⁶ Cited from Grolle, *Amalie Sieveking*, p. 125.

collaborators, and, in 1827, spoke of wishing to contact Elizabeth Fry in England. When cholera broke out in Hamburg in 1831, she felt this to be the sign for which she had been waiting. However, no volunteers stepped forward when she appealed to women to join her in nursing the cholera patients. In consequence, she decided to act on her own and, after experiencing some initial difficulties, gained wide recognition for her work. Although she never renounced her plans to found a Protestant sisterhood, she modified her immediate goals to establish a “Female Association for the Care of the Poor and Sick” [*Weiblicher Verein für Armen- und Krankenpflege*] in 1832, a society for benevolent visiting which was influenced by English practice.¹⁹⁷ Praying and Bible-reading were an important part of the routine when visiting. Members comprised both married and single women. Although originally Sieveking had envisioned recruiting women from across the whole social stratum in Hamburg in order to contribute to a “fusion of the classes”,¹⁹⁸ her insistence that members should dedicate a good portion of their time to the visits seems to have deterred poorer women and instead attracted wealthy bourgeois women who were frustrated by their enforced idleness and keen to help stem the rise of poverty and the erosion of social harmony. Sieveking’s stance was deeply conservative. Prelinger commented: “Socially, as well as spiritually and morally, Sieveking conceived of the charitable function as one of amelioration and integration, not one of change.”¹⁹⁹ The object of the society was to ameliorate the conditions of the “deserving poor” who were elicited by applying bourgeois criteria of virtues. Like the vast majority of proponents of the *Erweckungsbewegung*, Sieveking did not question the structures which led to the confined, impoverished dwelling-conditions of the poor and in turn resulted in a significant rise of unmarried cohabitation, illegitimate children and alcoholism. Instead, she attributed those phenomena to individual sin which must be countered by spiritual means. When Charlotte Paulsen, whose application for membership in Sieveking’s Association had been rejected, founded a rival “Women’s Association for the Support of Poor Relief” [*Frauenverein zur Unterstützung der Armenpflege*] in Hamburg in 1849,

¹⁹⁷ Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, 33, remarks: “The Hamburg-Altona Bible Society (1814), the Evangelical Missionary Society (1822), and the Lower Saxon Tractarian Society (1820) suggest the accuracy of one commentator who observed that English ideas, like English waters, flooded the city after the war.”

¹⁹⁸ Cited from Grolle, *Amalie Sieveking*, 125.

¹⁹⁹ Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, 37.

which was unaffiliated with any specific denomination and embraced very liberal religious views, Sieveking was aghast. She need not have worried: Paulsen's society, including the Women's College [*Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht*] which had been founded within this circle, soon became a victim of reactionary political forces.²⁰⁰ In contrast, Sieveking's Association thrived, numerous branches were founded in locations as far away from Hamburg as Paris and Reval, and Sieveking gained a reputation as a "Christian heroine" amongst proponents of the *Erweckungsbewegung*.²⁰¹

One immediate result of this was that Theodor Fliedner twice, in 1837 and 1842, earnestly requested Sieveking to accept the role of Superintendent [*Vorsteherin*] in his newly established deaconess institution in Kaiserswerth.²⁰² After considering the offers carefully, Sieveking refused. To her brother Eduard she confided: "Actually, I am too used to a certain independent development in my religious life and I would feel myself too easily restricted by the forms imposed on me by others."²⁰³ Fliedner implemented a novelty within German Protestantism, which Sieveking had originally envisaged but, hampered by the fact that she was a woman, had not been able to institutionalize: a full-time professional occupation for single women in the field of diakonia. However, unlike Sieveking, who had a strong interest in providing opportunities for women to employ their intelligence and active forces and to establish a communal life on fairly egalitarian principles,²⁰⁴ Fliedner's primary concern was to train reliable and effective workers to reduce the social problems. From the beginning, he implemented profoundly patriarchal and authoritarian structures in his institution, and this is often held to be the main reason for the wide acceptance of the Kaiserswerth model.²⁰⁵ At a time of political turmoil during the revolution of 1848/49, the fact that Fliedner claimed to revive an apostolic tradition served to legitimate the Kaiserswerth experiment and soothed the conservative forces which were in power during the

²⁰⁰ Prelinger traced these developments at length in *Charity, Challenge, Change*, esp. Chapters 4 to 6.

²⁰¹ Cf. Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, 22.

²⁰² Cf. Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, 42; Grolle, *Amalie Sieveking*, 128.

²⁰³ Amalie Sieveking to her brother Eduard (02/12/1836). Cited according to the English translation in Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, 22.

²⁰⁴ In 1841, Sieveking expressed this explicitly: "I had two things in mind with the idea that I was trying to implement. For one I hoped that it would provide benefits for the poor and suffering. But that alone was not my intention. To me at least as important were the benefits which it seemed to promise my sisters who would join me in such work of charity. The highest interests of my sex were close to my heart" (cited from Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, 29).

²⁰⁵ Cf. for example Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, esp. p. 111; Prelinger, *Deaconessate*, e.g. 216, 221.

ensuing period.²⁰⁶ Fliedner did not fundamentally question existing conceptions of gender relations, which he, like many others, considered ordained by God, and incorporated the ideal of the patriarchal family into the structures of the community at Kaiserswerth.²⁰⁷ For women, the new opportunity for a professional career therefore came at the price of submission to the newly “invented” bourgeois norm of female self-sacrifice.²⁰⁸ The women at Kaiserswerth were never intended to participate in the process of decision-making and did not receive a salary though they were granted life-long provision in the mother house. Schmidt has argued that the prevalent in-house norms of “service”, “self-denial”, “obedience”, and “quiet submission” failed to attract any significant numbers of the desired kind of women from the bourgeois middle-class.²⁰⁹ Instead, the Kaiserswerth deaconess institution and other mother houses organized along the same lines offered an opportunity for women from the lower classes to climb the social ladder whilst securing their livelihood.²¹⁰ Nonetheless, the progressive aspects of the Kaiserswerth model should not be ignored:²¹¹ The deaconesses received a broad training for various social professions, were able to pursue a professional career and meaningful, widely respected work and found emotional peer-support in a religiously oriented community.²¹²

In the last third of the nineteenth century, the form of female diakonia practiced by the deaconess mother houses became an object of debate. There was, on the one side of the spectrum, the critique of conservative-orthodox ecclesiastical dignitaries who, even in the early 1870s, still doubted whether the unmarried state for women was commendable and worthy of the church’s support.²¹³ More vociferous, however, was the critique from the opposite end of the spectrum, articulated by proponents of the emerging women’s movement in the course of debates on the “women’s question” [*Frauenfrage*] within Protestantism. Many seized on the mother houses’ universal complaint about the lack of deaconess

²⁰⁶ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 160.

²⁰⁷ Cf. especially Prelinger, *Deaconessate*, esp. 215-220, also Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, esp. 247-250.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Habermas, *Weibliche Religiosität*, 138. This is a lasting legacy: Even now, many caring professions are considered “typically female” and are underpaid.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 247.

²¹⁰ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 244.

²¹¹ Cf. Prelinger’s comments on the term “progressive” in: Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, Change*, XV.

²¹² Cf. also Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 50.

²¹³ Cf. for example Philipp von Nathusius: *Zur ‘Frauenfrage’* (Halle 1871), taken here from Baumann: *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 63-64. Nathusius held an important position in the *Centrallausschuß für Innere Mission*.

candidates and the fact that deaconesses were always at a considerable numerical disadvantage in comparison to the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy.²¹⁴ Some critics had the detailed knowledge of insiders: The liberal journal *Die christliche Welt* became the platform for former deaconesses or women intimately connected to mother houses, such as Marie Trommershausen and Anna Bernau, to voice their concerns.²¹⁵ They did not fundamentally question the important function of the mother houses but deplored the fact that the mother houses had failed to adapt to altered circumstances including the changed needs and interests of women. The most radical critique was expressed by Elisabeth Malo, theologically trained autodidact, daughter and wife of clergymen and sister to a former Kaiserswerth deaconess. In various articles which were initially – albeit reluctantly – published in *Die christliche Welt*,²¹⁶ Malo claimed that the deaconess houses were not compatible with the Evangelical principle of individual freedom which she found confirmed in her reading of the Gospels. Deeply suspicious of the conventional allocation of distinct “gender characteristics” to men and women, she expressed her incomprehension at the circumstance that women were expected to render physically taxing labour without financial remuneration which no one thought to demand of clergymen. Malo interpreted the lack of deaconess candidates as an indication of “the small inclination [of women] to be harnessed into such a slavish yoke”, which, she concluded, was a “sign of a healthy Protestant spiritual life.”²¹⁷ Her radicalism found little resonance. Nevertheless, though no direct links are traceable, some of the grievances which she had pointed out were taken into account when the “Protestant Society for Diakonia” [*Evangelischer Diakonieverein*] which included an “Association of Sisters”

²¹⁴ Baumann states that in 1876, there were 1,760 deaconesses working as nurses compared to 5,763 Sisters of Mercy. By 1900, there were 12,700 deaconesses compared to 24,000 Sisters of Mercy, cf. Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 47, footnote 72.

²¹⁵ Cf. M[arie] T[rommershausen]: “Der Diakonissenberuf. Ein Beruf für die gebildete evangelische Frauenwelt. Von einer, die in der Arbeit stand”, in: *Die christliche Welt* 7 (1893) 29, p. 688-698; A[nn]a B[ernau]: “Zwei Stimmen zu unseren Diakonissenartikeln”, in: *Die christliche Welt* 7 (1893) 35, 841-844, taken here from Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 230. Further criticism was voiced by individual former deaconesses in the form of novels and (fictional) autobiographies such as Adine Gemberg: *Aufzeichnungen einer Diakonissin*, Berlin 1896; Luise Algenstaedt: *Frei zum Dienst*, Leipzig 1903 (cf. Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 73, footnote 30). None of the authors had been deaconesses in Neuendettelsau.

²¹⁶ The editor of *Die christliche Welt*, Martin Rade, explicitly disassociated himself from the last of Malo’s articles published in the journal in June 1893. He seems to have refused to consider publishing any further articles by Malo. In response, she turned to the *Protestantische Kirchenzeitung*, where she found success, and also funded further publications privately, cf. Baumann, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 72-75.

²¹⁷ E[lisabeth] M[alo]: “Die Weibliche Diakonie und die Frauenfrage”, in: *Die Christliche Welt*, Nr. 26, 22. Juni 1893, p. 628, cited here from Baumann: *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 73.

[*Schwesternverband*] was founded in Zehlendorf in 1894 by the theologian Friedrich Zimmer.²¹⁸ Within this form of organisation, an adequate salary and maximum independence were guaranteed to prospective candidates. Though Zimmer emphasised that he did not wish to challenge the established mother houses but rather to offer a necessary alternative, the Zehlendorf “Association of Sisters” was regarded as a threat by the mother houses in Kaiserswerth, Neuendettelsau and elsewhere.²¹⁹ Through it, within the church itself, competition for adequate candidates had arisen, in addition to the associations and societies which already offered training and employment to single women on secular principles, for example, the Alice society initiated by Luise Büchner in 1859, which even envisaged that women should have the option to become physicians after having completed their training as nurses.²²⁰

It was not Löhe himself but his successors in Neuendettelsau who had to grapple with these challenges, especially Hermann Bezzel, *Rektor* from 1891 to 1909. In several articles which he published in the in-house bulletin, he parried the questions posed by the Zehlendorf “Association of Sisters” and representatives of the women’s movement.²²¹ With the slogan “maintain the system [*Ordnung*], and the system [*Ordnung*] will maintain you”,²²² Bezzel cemented the *status quo*. By the end of the century, however, the presumably Christian ideal of female submission was no longer as readily compatible with societal attitudes and with the requirements, needs and interests of women. It has been argued, for instance by Ute Gause, that the dramatic demise of the mother house diakonia in the twentieth century can be traced back to the failure to adapt at precisely this period at the end of the nineteenth century.²²³

At the time when the Neuendettelsau Deaconess Institute was founded at the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Löhe was able to draw on models of diaconal initiatives which had been successfully tested both for their practicability and social relevance as for their attractiveness to candidates. As we

²¹⁸ Baumann mentions a brief correspondence between Malo and Zimmer, though not on the subject of deaconess houses, cf. *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation*, 74, footnote 32.

²¹⁹ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 237-239.

²²⁰ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 223-224.

²²¹ Cf. for example “Über Anspruchslosigkeit”, *CorDiac* 1897, No. 7, p. 25-26; “Die Bedeutung des Mutterhauses”, *CorDiac* 1908, No. 9, p. 33-35; “Über die Gefahr großer Diakonissenhäuser”, *CorDiac* 1898, No. 5, p. 17-19; “Zur Diakonissenfrage”, *CorDiac* 1900, No. 9/ 10, p. 37-38; „Betrachtung“, *CorDiac* 1899, No. 12, p. 45-48.

²²² „Gegner der Diakonissensache“, *CorDiac* 1898, No. 9, p. 36.

²²³ Cf. Gause, *Dienst und Demut*, 79.

have seen, there were various models. For Löhe and the women who joined him, it was a process to find the most appropriate form for their specific context.

2.4. Löhe's theological development and congregational ideal

Löhe, born in 1808 in a small bourgeois household in Fürth, was deeply steeped in the Franconian *Erweckungsbewegung* in his early years, especially as a schoolboy in Nuremberg and as a student of theology at Erlangen.²²⁴ He took part in the denominationally mixed (Lutheran and Reformed) local charitable circles of the “Awakened” [*Erweckten*] in which, though they were officially chaired by men, women played an important role. Thanks to his participation in mission and bible societies, Löhe learnt of the work of Oberlin²²⁵ and Goßner.²²⁶ Through the latter he may also have heard of Sieveking.²²⁷ As the Curate [*Vikar*] of the impoverished parish of Kirchenlamitz from 1831, Löhe sought to put into practice much of what he had seen and experienced in Nuremberg and Erlangen. Here, he strongly counted on the support of Emma Reinsch who, prior to his arrival, had founded a society for poor

²²⁴ Cf. Stempel-de Fallois, *Anfänge*; and Stempel-de Fallois, *Das diakonische Wirken Löhes*. The roots, circumstances and later developments of the *Erweckungsbewegung*, which showed very distinct regional characteristics, are a highly contested field of research which cannot be discussed in detail here. Fairly recently, the *Erweckungsbewegung* has been termed a “guiding concept [*Leitbegriff*] for the movements of piety which influenced the European and North American Protestantism as well as individual Catholic milieus with various levels of intensity” (cf. Graf, *Art. Erweckung/ Erweckungsbewegung*, column 1490). The most prolific scholar of the Franconian *Erweckungsbewegung* is Kantzenbach whose numerous publications include *Evangelischer Geist und Glaube im neuzeitlichen Bayern*.

²²⁵ Friedrich Oberlin (1740-1826) was pastor in a parish in a remote and barren region on the boarder to Alsace and Lorraine (Ban de la Roche). He initiated many charitable projects to improve both the material and spiritual condition of his parishioners. Education was the foundation for his reforms. Oberlin was very keen to motivate women to participate in his projects, and gave them the title “deaconesses” with reference to Rom 16:1 (cf. Philippi, *Vorstufen*, 10-42). Since Löhe learnt of Oberlin’s work through the biography by G.H. Schubert, which did not mention Oberlin’s introduction of the office of deaconess (cf. Stempel-de Fallois, *Anfänge*, 63-64), it is unlikely that, when he later applied the term “deaconess”, Löhe drew directly on Oberlin’s model.

²²⁶ Johannes Evangelista Goßner (1773-1858) joined the ecumenical *Erweckungsbewegung* in southern Germany (Allgäu) as a Roman Catholic priest. The “Allgäu circle” which included other “Awakened” Roman Catholic members such as M. Boos, K.M. Feneberg, and Ignaz Lindl, was in close contact with the Franconian *Erweckungsbewegung*. In 1826, Goßner converted to Protestantism and worked as a pastor in Berlin, where he initiated a hospital and a successful mission society. Through his German translations of devotional literature such as Thomas à Kempis *Imitation of Christ*, he had a great influence on the spirituality of many proponents of the *Erweckungsbewegung*, amongst them Löhe who first read *Imitation of Christ* in 1827, and was, as entries in his diaries attest, fascinated by it (cf. Kantzenbach, *Evangelischer Geist und Glaube*, 185-187). The chance to hear Goßner preach was one of the main factors which drew Löhe to Berlin for one semester in 1827 (cf. Stempel-de Fallois, *Das diakonische Wirken Löhes*, 65).

²²⁷ Goßner and Sieveking were personally acquainted, and the former Roman Catholic was consulted when Sieveking drafted the rules for her sisterhood. Löhe learnt of Elizabeth Fry, Hannah More and Amalie Sieveking in 1850, at the very latest, and greatly approved of their work without engaging further with their wish to “emancipate women in a Christian sense”, as Sieveking described her own programme. Cf. Löhe to Friedrich Bauer (15/07/1850), GW2, 102.

women and who stimulated Löhe to engage with the social thought and practice of English Methodism.²²⁸ In 1831, Löhe's attention was caught by the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy when, in the *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung*, he read an article on the life of Vincent de Paul and commented in his diary for that day: „Often, one finds much zeal and faithfulness [*Treue*] amongst the Catholics though little light. With us, there is some comprehension, but also much tepidity and lassitude.”²²⁹ From around 1834, Löhe read authors from Lutheran Orthodoxy and studied closely the works of Lutheran Pietists such as Philipp Jacob Spener and August Hermann Francke. In Löhe's reception of Francke's "Foundations" [*Stiftungen*] in Halle, we find his first explicit reference to "deaconesses". He applied the term to women whom Francke himself had called the "mothers of the orphaned girls."²³⁰ It is likely that Löhe, when later founding his deaconess institution, was inspired by Francke's concept of an institutional form of diakonia; by his educational programme which, consciously in the tradition of Luther, focused on religious education, especially on Bible study, the catechism and Lutheran hymns; and by Francke's ready acceptance of girls in his schools.²³¹ Unlike Francke, though, Löhe envisaged that the "deaconesses" would assist the clergymen in the parishes by focusing on the (pastoral) care of women, rather than being employed in a subordinate function within the institution. This view he first propagated in an essay on church discipline which was published in 1837, a year after he first used the term "deaconess".²³² If one additionally takes into account Löhe's interest in Roman Catholic forms of diakonia since the Reformation,²³³ Stempel-de Fallois' conclusion, which she derives after a careful

²²⁸ Cf. Stempel-de Fallois, *Das diakonische Wirken Löhés*, 100-102.

²²⁹ Cited from Löhe's diary (25/10/1832), according to Stempel-de Fallois, *Anfänge*, 47, footnote 36.

²³⁰ Cf. Löhe's diary (06/07/1836): „A.H. Francke – Devotional hour. School. Instruction for deaconesses employ me until evening" (cited according to Stempel-de Fallois, *Das diakonische Wirken Löhés*, 117). Stempel-de Fallois argues that the "instructions" refer to the *Instruction für die Mutter der Waeysen-Mägdchen* which is to be found within Francke's *Die Fußstapfen Des noch lebenden und waltenden liebeichen und getreuen GOTTES* (Halle 1701), in which Francke describes the development and conception of the Foundations.

²³¹ Stempel-de Fallois agrees with the judgement of Gerta Scharffenorth and Erika Reichle that Francke's educational programme constituted a first break-through in women's education, though gender differentiations were maintained: the girls were taught to knit, sew and do other works of handicraft, and great emphasis was put on spiritual-moral instructions, while boys were taught languages, literature, history, and natural sciences (cf. Stempel-de Fallois, *Das diakonische Wirken Löhés*, 117, footnote 397).

²³² Cf. Löhe: *Zur Kirchenzucht. Versuch einer Beantwortung der den protestantischen Geistlichen im Konsistorialbezirke Ansbach pro 1836/37 vorgeschriebenen Synodalaufgabe 1837*, GW 3/2, 368.

²³³ Löhe's private library included a book which attests to this interest: Ferdinand Freiherr v. Biedenfeld: *Ursprung, Aufleben, Größe, Herrschaft, Verfall und jetzige Zustände sämtlicher Mönchs- und Klosterfrauen-Orden im Orient und Occident*, Weimar 1836 (cf. Stempel-de Fallois, *Anfänge*, 49, footnote 49).

analysis of primary sources, seems plausible. She argues that Löhe stood fairly aloof from the conceptual debates on forms of diakonia which were being waged amongst prominent proponents of the *Erweckungsbewegung*. Instead, Löhe “became acquainted selectively with various directions, retained individual impulses which he had received by the Awakened [*Erweckte*], and turned to the charitable initiatives of the 17th century. These he wished to make fruitful for the Lutheran church.”²³⁴

Linked to this is the discussion about the exact date of Löhe’s turn to Lutheran Neo-confessionalism.²³⁵ His personal development must be seen in a broader context. Within the Franconian *Erweckungsbewegung*, to which Löhe was still closely linked in the early 1830s, there was a general shift to Lutheran Neo-confessionalism in this period. In 1832, Johann Wilhelm Friedrich Höfling, a theology professor at the faculty of Erlangen, wrote “Mysticismus” which, as Hein has argued, was not only an apologia for the *Erweckungsbewegung* but also a defense of Confessionalism, thus marking the transition between the two theological periods.²³⁶ Nevertheless, the precise mode of transition and the links between the two movements remain an object of scholarly debate.²³⁷ Depending on how Lutheran Neo-confessionalism is understood as a whole and whether the focus is on the theological or the ecclesiastical (church-state) dimension, different strands of continuity can be identified and emphasized.²³⁸ Certainly, however, one moment of discontinuity is the devaluation of the role of women in Lutheran Neo-confessionalism. The new doctrinal and ministerial emphasis resulted in a subjection of women to the ordained ministry and thus their exclusion from roles of leadership in charitable initiatives. This is also true in Löhe’s case.

²³⁴ Stempel-de Fallois, *Anfänge*, 51.

²³⁵ Various attempts have been made to date the “turn” in Löhe’s theological thinking, with different results, cf. Reller, *Bekehrung und geistlicher Durchbruch*, and Vogel, *Erweckung zur Wiederentdeckung*. Both focus entirely on Löhe’s theology and are perhaps somewhat influenced by scholarly debates amongst Reformation historians about the date of Luther’s theological “break-through.”

²³⁶ The full title is “Mysticismus, der wahrhafte historische und heutzutage fälschlich so genannte, in ihrem Verhältnisse zum Christenthume dargestellt”, cf. Hein, *Lutherisches Bekenntnis*, 45.

²³⁷ Cf. Jacobs, *Entstehung und Wirkung*, 33, Keller, *Von der Spätaufklärung*.

²³⁸ Compare for example the interpretation of Kantzenbach, *Evangelischer Geist und Glaube*, who has a clear focus on the theological trajectory, and that of Grane, *Kirche im 19. Jahrhundert*, who takes a much wider, pan-European view and includes the analysis of political motives. Graf, *Restorationstheologie oder neulutherische Modernisierung*, takes a similar position. Schindler-Joppin, *Neuluthertum und Macht*, 17-49, gives an outline of the different conceptions and their lines of argument.

By the time Löhé arrived in the rural parish of Neuendettelsau in 1837, he had fully embraced Lutheran Neo-confessionalism. A decisive influence on this development may have been his correspondence with separatist Lutherans in Silesia.²³⁹ At the beginning of his ministry in Neuendettelsau, Löhé attempted to organize diaconal initiatives not in the form of societies, but in institutions, such as schools, institutions for the blind, for “fallen girls”, and a hospital, all of which were to be strictly subject to the ecclesiastical office. Some of these projects were short-lived, others were never realized at all. The reason for this seems to have been a lack of funds as the projects did not have the support of the more wealthy parishioners.²⁴⁰ Moreover, Löhé rejected any cooperation with the secular authorities, and his strict criteria of “confessional loyalty” reduced the pool of potential donors.²⁴¹ *Diakonia* was to be undertaken by the church for the benefit of church members. The first object of Löhé’s charitable initiatives was not to diminish social problems but to induct the recipients into the Lutheran tenets of faith, the doctrine and liturgy of the Lutheran church. For this reason, parish visits, the celebration of Holy Communion with the sick, domestic devotions, the writing and distribution of tracts and sermons, which were almost all, in Löhé’s understanding, the prerogative of the ordained office of the clergyman, were for him the primary forms of diakonia.²⁴² In this context, women could be the objects but hardly the subjects of charity. The “lack of comprehensive education”²⁴³ which he detected amongst his female parishioners he sought to ameliorate by offering devotional hours, confirmation classes, Sunday school and evening classes for biblical and liturgical instructions. He occasionally permitted his young wife Helene, for whose introduction to her role as a clergyman’s wife he had composed a short manual in 1837,²⁴⁴ to assist him

²³⁹ In Silesia, fierce protests against the *Agende*, a uniform liturgical formula for all Protestant congregations within the Prussian state which was introduced by the Prussian monarch Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1822 on the model of the English Book of Common Prayer, led to the separation of Lutherans from the Prussian established church with the founding of an independent Lutheran congregation in Breslau in 1830. From 1834, Löhé corresponded with these Silesian Lutherans. In 1835, he carefully read Gottfried Scheibel’s account “History of the Lutheran congregation in Breslau” (1832) and made notes on the church constitution in Sweden, cf. Kantzenbach, *Evangelischer Geist und Glaube*, 161-164.

²⁴⁰ Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonisches Wirken*, 150-170.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, e.g. 189.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁴³ Löhé’s diary (02/03/1839), according to Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonisches Wirken*, 192.

²⁴⁴ This manual was entitled “Erinnerungen an Pfarrersfrauen”. It was initially published in Frankfurt in 1838, and later published again as an appendix to Löhé’s “Der evangelische Geistliche”, Vol 1 (GW3/2, 140-143). In this booklet, “humility” and “femininity”, defined as “the glad acceptance of governance”, are commended as the most important virtues to the (future) clergyman’s wife. She should never strive to interfere with her husband’s profession. However, next to her “main profession” [*Hauptberuf*], her housework, she was permitted, “in exceptional cases”, to be a “helpmate” to the office of her

in teaching the girls and women, but in a clearly subordinate role. In 1843, Helene died at the age of twenty-four, after only six years of marriage, during the birth of her fourth child. Löhe never remarried.

The revolution of 1848/49 caused Löhe to reflect again on the relation of the state and the church. While in nearby Nuremberg there were hunger revolts,²⁴⁵ Löhe noted with satisfaction that “in our immediate vicinity everything is fairly quiet. My peasants have been praying the prayer for peace at the chiming of the noon-bell for 14 days at my suggestion [...]”²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Löhe detected a sign of God in the insurrection of the people:

For years I have been saying: the godless will destroy the [political] circumstances [*Verhältnisse*] and will tear the fetters with which the dukes [*Fürsten*] have bound the church. Prior to that, there can be no reconstruction [*Neubau*] of the outer form of the church which is so necessary for the godly pedagogy of the church [*für die göttliche Pädagogik der Kirche*]. Now the former is happening, may God grant the latter.²⁴⁷

Like many other churchmen, Löhe was not blind to the fact that the “double revolution”, outwardly directed against economic and political grievances,²⁴⁸ also challenged the churches to grant the tackling of the massive social problems a new priority. In Prussia, the conservative Johann Hinrich Wichern called for a re-Christianisation of society and for this purpose founded and very successfully advocated his programme of Inner Mission. Though Löhe agreed with Wichern’s social analysis and shared Wichern’s conviction that the ultimate cause of the social problems was spiritual degradation, Löhe

husband, especially in offering pastoral care to girls and women and in charitable tasks. Helene Löhe, née Andreae, seems to have strictly adhered to this. Löhe also made it clear to his betrothed in numerous letters that their marriage and family -life were to serve as an example for all parishioners to emulate (Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonisches Wirken*, 205-208). At least in part, this corresponded to the expectations of bourgeois society. Clergy novels which invoked the image of domestic bliss in clergy households were very popular and widely read in the nineteenth century (cf. Habermas, *Weibliche Religiosität*, 128; cf. also Hausen, *Ehepaare*, 112). In her diary, Helene Andreae expressed her anxieties: “The people marvel at my youth. One shall not disdain your youth. Rather, be a model for the faithful in work, conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in chastity. Oh, dear Saviour, richly bestow these gifts on me, so that I may become an example.... Oh, make me capable [*tüchtig*]. Lord, have mercy on me! Help me with your strength in the name of Jesus” (written on 29 April 1837, shortly before their marriage, according to Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonisches Wirken*, 208, footnote 513). Hausen has observed that a significant disparity in age (in the Löhes’ case: eleven years) and a wife’s acceptance of the husband’s choice of residence to further his career (Helene Andreae had grown up in the urban social milieu of Frankfurt), were typical features of the bourgeois conception of matrimony, cf. Hausen, *Ehepaare*, 96-97, 110).

²⁴⁵ Cf. Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Vol. 2, 704-711.

²⁴⁶ Löhe to Karl von Maltzan (22/03/1848), GW2, 20-21.

²⁴⁷ Löhe to Karl von Maltzan (22/03/1848), GW2, 20-21.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Vol. 2, 585-589.

deeply objected to the suggestion that Inner Mission should become a mass movement driven by independent organizational forms.²⁴⁹ In retrospect, he explained:

We could not agree with the non-confessional status of the Inner Mission. We did not want to have the flood of good works flow into the church with this stream. Instead, we wanted to take up a position at the gates and direct it into a confessional channel wherever possible (...) [so] that true love and true faith must forever be united, and never must one be separated from the other.²⁵⁰

In opposition to Wichern's successful campaign for his programme in Bavaria,²⁵¹ Löhe was one of the main initiators of the "Association for Inner Mission in the Sense of the Lutheran Church" [*Gesellschaft für Innere Mission im Sinne der Lutherischen Kirche*].²⁵² At the same time, Löhe also drafted a "Proposal for the union of Lutheran Christians for apostolic life including the draft of a catechism for apostolic life" [*Vorschlag zur Vereinigung lutherischer Christen für apostolisches Leben samt Entwurf eines Katechismus des apostolischen Lebens*].²⁵³ In the face of a *Landeskirche* which had, in Löhe's view, become a "pub", in which, "under Lutheran arms [*Aushängeschild*]", the church had "offered hospitality to various people and distributed food and lodging for free at the expense of the Lutheran church and her treasures,"²⁵⁴ Löhe wished to bring together an exclusive circle of like-minded friends. These "developed parishioners" would find unity and focus in Holy Communion and become the "core, light and salt"²⁵⁵ of the church and the "conscience" of the "lax and dead members".²⁵⁶ Since the existence of the "poor and rich, healthy and sick" and the unequal distribution of temporal goods were due to God's "unfathomable wisdom", the social problems could at best be diminished through "love and mercy,"²⁵⁷ but they could not be eradicated. This, Löhe emphasized, differentiated diakonia from "contemporary communism" which "aims to give power to the poor to take what they like and thus violently to reverse

²⁴⁹ Jenner points out that had Löhe taken greater care to study Wichern's (original) intentions in the *Denkschrift* (1849) more closely, he would perhaps have been less hostile and found more common ground, cf. Jenner, *Von Neuendettelsau in alle Welt*, 56-57.

²⁵⁰ Löhe, *Über die Geschichte der Gesellschaft für Innere Mission* (1856), GW4, 218-219.

²⁵¹ In Bavaria, the church synod discussed Wichern's programme of Inner Mission and published an affirming resolution in 1849, cf. Jenner, *Von Neuendettelsau in alle Welt*, 71.

²⁵² Cf. Löhe, *Innere Mission im allgemeinen* (1850), GW4, 178-188; and Löhe, *Über die Geschichte der Gesellschaft für Innere Mission* (1856), GW4, 218-220.

²⁵³ Löhe, *Vorschlag*, GW5/1, 213-252.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 220. Notice the terminology of the *Erweckungsbewegung*.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 245.

the diversity in the possession of earthly goods which is intended by God.”²⁵⁸ The bearers of Christian “brotherly love” were primarily to be the (male) deacons, but Löhe also mentioned women, the “deaconesses”, who, Löhe stated without explaining further, had been quite different in apostolic times from the “deaconesses arising nowadays.”²⁵⁹ Shortly afterwards, Löhe published a booklet on the offices of the New Testament, which, on the surface, appeared to be a purely historic treatise. In the preface, however, Löhe claimed that in the light of “contemporary occurrences”, he wished to draw attention to the “truth” of the findings even though people might deem them “inexpedient.”²⁶⁰ Here, Löhe explained that the presbyters, ordained to the one holy ecclesiastical office which had been founded by Christ himself,²⁶¹ appointed the deacons, though they sought approval from their congregations, who benevolently consented.²⁶² Löhe claimed that if the office of deacon were revived, it would merit an ordination as a sign of the deacons’ dignity. This would be “similar in form” to the ordination of presbyters but, because a different ordination prayer would be used, would be “different in the purpose and the effect of the laying-on of hands and of the whole act.”²⁶³ The different ordinations reflected the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Here too, Löhe briefly mentioned that in apostolic times there had been “female deacons, or, as they were later called, deaconesses” who must by no means be confused with the wives of either deacons or presbyters and who were widows, or, later, virgins.²⁶⁴ Their rank must be “estimated highly”, for the “duties of their office” were the same as those of the male deacons, namely the “care for the poor” [*Armenpflege*], especially towards members of the female sex, but also towards “male poor or sick, where it required female hands.” Löhe hastened to add that, though they might have assisted with external matters in worship, they certainly had not preached or taught in public.²⁶⁵ At this point, Löhe did not elaborate further on the office of the deaconess; nor did he suggest that it be revived.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 246.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 248.

²⁶⁰ Löhe, *Aphorismen über die neutestamentlichen Ämter und ihr Verhältnis zur Gemeinde*, GW5/1, 255-256.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 264.

²⁶² Ibid., 302, 309, 328.

²⁶³ Ibid., 314.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 305.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 305-306.

All in all, the “Proposal” found few enthusiasts. Even Löhe’s “dearest friends” could not be persuaded to attempt to put into practice what Löhe later called “a very well-intentioned experiment.”²⁶⁶ The expectations of “discipline”, “community”, and “sacrifice”, the “basic pillars” of this exclusive congregation, were deemed too rigorous.²⁶⁷ Löhe’s first attempt to find a “very small minority”²⁶⁸ who wished to lead a sanctified life and could form the nucleus for Löhe’s idea of “building independent church societies” [*freie Kirchbildung*] which was to result in a “re-birth of the *Landeskirchen*”,²⁶⁹ had failed. Nevertheless, in the course of his reflections of drafting the “Proposal”, women as active participants in works of diakonia had once again come into Löhe’s focus, now as the carriers of the diaconal office. This was to influence the further developments.

During the next few years, Löhe intently read publications about forms of diakonia conducted by women, amongst them Elizabeth Fry, Hannah More, and Amalie Sieveking, and expressed his admiration for them.²⁷⁰ He also considered how a Protestant version of the Roman Catholic “Congregation of Our Lady of the love of the Good Shepherd” for the care of “penitents” could be established.²⁷¹ Though Löhe later emphasized his independence from Kaiserswerth, he was surely also aware of the deaconess institution there. Indeed, in 1837, the *Homiletisch-Liturgisches Korrespondenzblatt*, published a laudatory report on Kaiserswerth. Although there is no indication that Löhe was the author, he would certainly have read the article, as he was one of the journal’s editors at the time.²⁷² A few years later, Löhe wrote to his mother-

²⁶⁶ Löhe, *Unsere Kirchliche Lage im protestantischen Bayern* (1849/50), GW5/1, 408; cf. also Löhe to Theodor Liesching (08/01/1849), GW2, 54; Löhe to Theodor Liesching (15/02/1849), GW2, 61; Löhe to Friedrich Hommel (04/12/1848), GW2, 51 (extracts).

²⁶⁷ Löhe, *Vorschlag*, GW5/1, e.g. 221, 228, 247, 249. The question whether or not Löhe understood „orthopraxis“ or ethos as a further *nota ecclesiae* and whether or not Löhe thus transgressed the Lutheran consensus by altering the definition of the church as articulated in CA VII, has been much discussed in Löhe-scholarship, cf. Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonisches Wirken*, 225, n. 603.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Löhe to Karl von Raumer (21/08/1848), GW2, 38-39, here: 38.

²⁶⁹ Löhe, *Über die Geschichte der Gesellschaft für Innere Mission* (1856), GW4, 220.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Löhe to Friedrich Bauer (15/07/1850), GW2, 102; cf. also Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonische Wirken*, 262-267.

²⁷¹ CorIM 1850, No. 1, p. 21, cf. also Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonisches Wirken*, 271-272. This congregation had been (re-)founded in 1829 in Angers, France, by Maria Euphrasia Pelletier. In Munich, a branch with its own centre was founded in 1840. Perhaps Löhe learnt of the order through the writings of Karl Fuchs, who in 1843 described its development and work in Bavaria in his “Annalen” and campaigned for “Protestant deaconesses” (47). Löhe later repeatedly set the Roman Catholic “Order of the Good Shepherd” before the deaconesses as a model to emulate, eg. “Rede vom 17. September 1867” [ZADN BI 64].

²⁷² *Homiletisch-liturgisches Korrespondenzblatt*, No. 35, August 1837, p. 548ff, cf. Ganzert, *Erläuterungen*, GW4, 664.

in-law in Frankfurt to glean some information on Kaiserswerth, especially on their nursing methods.²⁷³

From 1850, Löhe was envisioning a “Lutheran girls’ institute” in Nuremberg for the training of voluntary diaconal helpers and initiated various local women’s societies for the support of mission in North America.²⁷⁴

In 1853, Löhe published the booklet “On Female Simplicity” [*Von der weiblichen Einfalt*]. It was not intended to be in any way scholarly but, thanks to its compact format, was to serve as a “sort of toiletry” for women.²⁷⁵ Löhe dedicated the book to his daughter Marianne, who had just reached the age of confirmation.²⁷⁶ This publication is often held to have defined the programme for Löhe’s understanding of female diakonia.²⁷⁷ It has a clear anti-pluralistic, anti-modernist, anti-intellectual stance.²⁷⁸ In the first three chapters, in almost meditative language, simplicity, a “holy form and virtue”,²⁷⁹ is recommended for both men and women. The ultimate ideal of harmony is invoked, a “straight, pure, simple striving” [*gerades, lauterer, schlichtes Streben*], a “complete dedication” in “truth” and “honour”²⁸⁰ to God, in whom is “highest simplicity”.²⁸¹ God has founded in the midst of “the deserts of the world” a “blessed flock” comprising those who are “called, enlightened, sanctified, perfected and assembled”, in short, “a holy church”, gathered by God’s Word and sacrament, a “communion of saints.”²⁸² The “children of God” need to maintain their simplicity in the midst of the “battle” against those who wish to cause “discord” and “variety”,²⁸³ which necessitates separation.²⁸⁴ This separation, however, does not imply the suspension of conventional gender patterns: in the following chapters simplicity is unfolded specifically with regard to women. Abiding by the principle of simplicity, Löhe explained, means not to “confuse”, but to “order, to subordinate and superordinate.” Löhe emphasized that though both men and women had

²⁷³ Löhe to Lisette Andreae (10/09/1840) GW1, 570 (extracts), cf. also Ganzert, *Erläuterungen*, GW4, 664.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonisches Wirken*, 262 and 267.

²⁷⁵ Löhe to Theodor Liesching (01/01/1853), GW3/1, 707.

²⁷⁶ Löhe to Theodor Liesching (12/03/1853), GW3/1, 707.

²⁷⁷ Cf. for example Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonisches Wirken*, 292.

²⁷⁸ Cf. also Gause, *Diakonissenbild Löhes*, 365, footnote 45.

²⁷⁹ Löhe, *Von der Weiblichen Einfalt*, 5.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 15-16.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 18-23.

the same “spiritual calling” [*himmlischer Beruf*], they differed in their “calling for this world.”²⁸⁵ Löhe combined the principle of dichotomous “gender characteristics” with the Lutheran doctrine of the orders of creation, thus rendering the conventional, socially allocated gender patterns which prescribed the subordination of women unassailable: The “greatest difference which can exist between human beings, which penetrates, until it sunders bone and marrow, is [the difference] between the two sexes; a difference, which does not have its ultimate cause in sin but derives from the hands of the Creator,”²⁸⁶ he declared. A woman, therefore, must “discern her difference from man, from male life and action [*männliches Leben und Treiben*]” and “grasp this difference, [...] seize it willingly and [...] offer it to God, so that He may sanctify it; to consecrate herself as a sacrifice and to make herself subservient.”²⁸⁷ For Löhe, it followed that: “self-reliance and a male being in a woman are degeneracy; her greatest honour is simple femininity, to subordinate herself gladly, untroubled, to be humble, not to be different from what she should be.” A woman’s vocation, Löhe postulated, was to be “a helpmate of the lord, her husband” [*Gehilfin des Herrn, ihres Mannes*]. This linguistic ambiguity implies, at the very least, a deeply patriarchal conception of matrimony. However, Löhe also offered a high praise for celibacy:

In the same way as a man can reach perfection [*Vollendung*] without a wife, a woman must be able to tread the path of perfection without a husband, though it might be more difficult. But because it might be more difficult, it can be called more glorious [*herrlicher*] and a triumph of female simplicity to walk towards perfection solely by being drawn by God and by being betrothed to Christ.²⁸⁸

According to Löhe, an unmarried woman, far from having failed her vocation, was able to serve Christ unfettered by caring for the poor and sick in her congregation.²⁸⁹ Radical asceticism was rejected because it would make a woman incapable of physical labour. Nevertheless, Löhe emphasized that for a woman, her spiritual vocation had priority over any temporal occupation: “Her reading, meditating, praying – her life in and with the church, - her learning, her skills and what she practises and does: it

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 25.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 25.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 26.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 29.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 32. This, Löhe emphasized, was also the vocation of daughters from the “higher classes”, who “idle about over their embroidery” (33, footnote).

must all be infused by the thought and the intention of reaching her eternal aim.”²⁹⁰ Löhe took this as the basis for his argument that women required no secular higher education, for, he argued, it “signifies the world to her, the world from which she has fled, from which she does not wish to be contaminated [*angehaucht*] or stimulated.”²⁹¹ Instead, Löhe considered religious education a valuable, in fact, indispensable asset for women.²⁹² In a concluding chapter, Mary, the mother of God, was presented as the fundamental model and example of female simplicity.

This book undoubtedly reveals Löhe’s deeply patriarchal attitude towards women and his profoundly androcentric conception of gender patterns. Nevertheless, in it an opening was made for unmarried woman to legitimize their vocation outside the circle of family -life. With the superordination of the (supposedly) gender-neutral “spiritual” over the clearly gendered “temporal” vocation, women were strengthened in their religious identity. This observation raises the question of whether, in the long term, this fundamental understanding did not undermine precisely the gender assumptions it was intended to support. This question will be addressed below, especially in chapters 4 and 5.

2.5. The founding and early development of the Deaconess Institute Neuendettelsau

In 1853, the same year that “On Female Simplicity” was published, Löhe and some of his friends drafted the “considerations” and statutes of the “Lutheran Society for Female Diakonia”.²⁹³ This society had very broad objectives, namely “to awaken and to train a sense for serving the suffering human kind amongst the Lutheran population in Bavaria, especially amongst the female part of the population.”²⁹⁴ Both the society’s “targets” and its members were to be chosen exclusively from amongst Lutheran church members. A “mother association” was constituted almost at once and further “helping societies” were

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 34.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 34-35.

²⁹² In his rejection of a truly comprehensive education for women which could have been the foundation of equal civic participation, and which Hippel, for example, had postulated in his *On the Civic Improvement of Women* (1792), Löhe was part of an overwhelmingly large majority which allotted separate programmes of education to girls and boys in keeping with their different “natural characteristics”. Well-known and widely respected proponents of gendered programmes of education included Adolph Freiherr von Knigge and Heinrich Campe (cf. Hausen, *Ehepaare*, 91-92).

²⁹³ Löhe, *Bedenken über weibliche Diakonie innerhalb der protestantischen Kirche Bayerns, insonderheit über zu errichtende Diakonissenanstalten*, CorIM 1853, No. 12, pp. 121-124 (GW4, 272-276); the statutes were draft soon afterwards as part of the process of gaining the necessary authorization by the secular authorities, cf. *Statuten*, GW4, 262-267.

²⁹⁴ §1, *Statuten*, GW4, 262.

envisioned across Bavaria, but this was realized only very gradually in a few areas, and, all in all, was unsuccessful. The society had a sophisticated organizational structure, consisting of several boards. It was officially chaired by women, while the men, mostly clergymen and simultaneously the husbands of the chair-women, were relegated to a committee of “helpers”. A close reading of the statutes, however, reveals that all important competences were assigned to the “committee of male helpers”, including the right to veto all the decisions the women had made, and the representation of the society “in all cases where it is better for men to do so than women.”²⁹⁵ Though the society was to draw its support from local congregations and to work on a regional basis, the “mother association” envisioned the “founding of Lutheran hospitals associated with deaconess institutions of the same confession” from the beginning.²⁹⁶ This was elaborated further in the “Considerations” which dealt almost exclusively with the proposed deaconess institutions, conceptualized as educational institutes for women, who had by now been detected as having an “inherent gift” and a “natural urge” to care for the sick and destitute.²⁹⁷ The educational aspect was very much emphasized: The deaconesses “would be set on a wholesome [heilsame] path, would find status, a holy and blessed status, in the church, and would become the most convenient agents of the church to further Christian education amongst the rural population.”²⁹⁸ In short, the pure, true church was to be realized with the help of diakonia, and the bearers of diakonia were to be women, albeit clearly subordinated to the ordained male clergymen. Löhe rejected both Kaiserswerth’s doctrinal stance – on the basis of its lack of confessional identity, “because [it] is united [uniert]”²⁹⁹ – and its organizational form as an independent society.³⁰⁰ In contrast, in Bavaria those who

²⁹⁵ §7, 2),c and d, *Statuten*, GW4, 264.

²⁹⁶ §2, *Statuten*, GW4, 263.

²⁹⁷ *Bedenken*, GW4, 272.

²⁹⁸ *Bedenken*, GW4, 273.

²⁹⁹ *Bedenken*, GW4, 273. Kaiserswerth was located within the Prussian province of Rhineland-Westphalia, which, in 1835, was granted a special status to continue the region’s tradition of presbyterial-synodical self-administration in the congregations (cf. Hauschild, *Lehrbuch*, 762). Fliedner, as many others, rejected the Agende but was willing to accept a compromise (cf. Köser, *Kollektive Identitäten*, 92-93, n. 154). Later, Fliedner was held in high esteem by the Prussian monarch Friedrich Wilhelm IV (cf. Köser, *Kollektive Identitäten*, 115-116).

³⁰⁰ Cf. *Von den Diakonissen*, CorDiac 1858, No. 2 (March), p. 7. The statutes of the Kaiserswerth “Evangelischer Verein für christliche Krankenpflege in Rheinland und Westfalen”, which preceded the founding of the deaconess house (an interesting parallel to developments in Neuendettelsau), stated explicitly: “it is the object of the society to administer help to the needy and suffering part of the bourgeois society [bürgerlichen Gesellschaft]” (cited from Köser, *Kollektive Identitäten*, 93). However, Löhe’s blanket rejection of Fliedner, like his blanket rejection of Wichern, was based neither on thorough research nor on informed knowledge. Indeed, Löhe boasted that “we have not undertaken a journey to see Fliedner’s great and justly

wished to render a “deaconess service” [*Diakonissendienst*] were to unite in “associations of voluntary love” [*Vereinigung der freiwilligen Liebe*] within the Lutheran church.³⁰¹ The village of Neuendettelsau was intended to offer only a temporary, provisional location for a deaconess institution.³⁰² Nevertheless, Löhe’s status as the initiator of the society and as *Rektor* of the first (and only) deaconess institution was uncontested. Over the years, the influence of the society on the Deaconess Institute diminished, until, in 1860, the right to inspect, to visit and examine had almost entirely shifted from the society to the ecclesiastical authorities of the *Landeskirche*, at least nominally and with much reluctance on the part of Neuendettelsau.³⁰³ Internally, however, Löhe retained a type of domination which can be described using Max Weber’s typology as something between “charismatic” and “traditional”.³⁰⁴

In contrast to Kaiserswerth, at Neuendettelsau the uppermost level of the institutional hierarchy was not represented by husband and wife. Instead, in a letter written on 14 March 1854, after the statutes of the deaconess institution had been given official approval by the state authorities, Löhe requested three women, Caroline Rheineck, Amalie Rehm and Helene von Meyer, whom he addressed as “honoured friends” [*verehrte Freundinnen*] to become superintendents [*Vorsteherinnen*] of the institution. The requirements for this position were that they were prepared “to dedicate themselves wholly [*sich aufopfern*] to the Lord Jesus Christ and to his members”, to “trust the Lord that He will give us [the society] all that you will need” and to devote themselves “in childlike simplicity to Him.” Faithfully and piously the women were to trust that their material needs would be met by the as yet non-existent institution. Löhe wrote that “the mother association [...] had been pleased not to be required to first

highly praised works; we have hardly read any report, we have considered things according to our own circumstances and well knew that we were not the people to follow others” (*Etwas aus der Geschichte*, GW4, 276).

³⁰¹ *Von den Diakonissen*, CorDiac 1858, No. 2 (March), p. 6-7.

³⁰² Löhe reiterated this in *Etwas aus der Geschichte* (1870), GW4, 271.

³⁰³ This becomes apparent when one compares the original statutes of the Deaconess Institute, drafted in 1854, published as an appendix to the first annual report of 1854/55 and reprinted in CorDiac 1858, No. 7/8, and the revised statutes of the Deaconess Institute of 1860, published in 1861, reprinted GW4, 689-693, esp. §7 and 8. The revision is mentioned in 8. *Jahresbericht* 1861, 3 and had been required by both the ecclesiastical and secular authorities after an extensive correspondence between Löhe, the deanery in Windsbach, the consistory in Ansbach, the upper consistory in Munich [LAELKB BKA 2884 I], the royal government in Ansbach and the royal court or *Landgericht* in Heilsbronn [ZADN Alle 15,8 (typewritten copy)]. Cf. also Chapter 3.3.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 220-227. As the charismatic founder of the Institute, Löhe was almost venerated. Nevertheless, his authoritarian personal influence was undoubtedly supported by his supposedly divinely instituted office which he held as an ordained clergyman.

choose and search, but already to know you, the honoured above mentioned friends, as the fitting [rechte] superintendents.”³⁰⁵ This was somewhat exaggerated. It is true that Helene v. Meyer and her mother had long supported Löhe’s work financially and had spent some time in Neuendettelsau.³⁰⁶ Rheineck and Rehm, however, were almost unknown to Löhe or the other board -members of the society. Rheineck, intrigued by the reports on Neuendettelsau which had circulated in her local congregation in Memmingen, came to Neuendettelsau for the first time around Easter 1853. When Löhe suggested that she should come to Neuendettelsau permanently as soon as the deaconess institution had been founded, she mentioned her friend Rehm as a suitable companion.³⁰⁷ Though Löhe later claimed that they had been entrusted with the position of superintendents because of their “serious behaviour” in confessional disputes,³⁰⁸ it is highly likely that it was their professional qualifications which recommended them: having been given reluctant permission by her father, a civil servant, Rheineck had been trained in Kaiserswerth and had worked as a deaconess for some time until she was prevented by an inflammation of the eye from continuing. She left Kaiserswerth but, as soon as she had recovered, found a full-time post as a superintendent of a school for small children in her home-town of Memmingen for six years. On her departure to Neuendettelsau, she received excellent credentials.³⁰⁹ On her visit to Neuendettelsau, she had told Löhe much about Kaiserswerth and the training methods there.³¹⁰ Her friend Rehm was the daughter of the dean [Dekan] of Memmingen. After her mother’s early death, she had founded the “Society for Christian female education in heathen lands”, which was inspired by the Basel Mission.³¹¹ All three women replied in the affirmative, accepting Löhe’s offer. Rheineck assured Löhe that she was “modest” and “frugal” in her needs, and that “her soul discerns” that “Jesus leads His own”. She was willing to trust Löhe’s “fatherly care.” Her concern was “that she

³⁰⁵ Löhe to Meyer, Rehm and Rheineck (14/03/1854), ZADN Ble, (typewritten copy).

³⁰⁶ Cf. “Zum Gedächtnis unserer am 26.2.1888 entschlafenen Schwester Helene v. Meyer“, CorDiac 1888, No. 3, p.12.

³⁰⁷ Cf. *Lebenserinnerungen von Katharina Hommel* [ZADN El d].

³⁰⁸ Löhe, *Etwas aus der Geschichte*, GW4, 276.

³⁰⁹ Cf. “Lebenslauf der Jungfrau Karoline Rheineck“, CorIM 1855, No. 9, p. 39-41.

³¹⁰ Cf. *Lebenserinnerungen von Katharina Hommel* [ZADN El d].

³¹¹ Cf. Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 193-207, here: 196.

might be faithful.”³¹² Rehm, thirty-eight years old, rejoiced that her father had “finally said that, in God’s name, I should try whether I am capable in this calling [*Beruf*]” and that she prayed that “the Lord Jesus may grant me strength and the gift [*Gabe*] to become a useful deaconess”.³¹³ Helene v. Meyer wrote that she “considered it a [sign of] great love and profound mercy of my heavenly Father” that he had called her, a “weak, unworthy creature into His service” and that she prayed “His strength may perfect my weakness.” She asked of Löhe: “chastise me, lead and direct my soul [...] so that I may not be lost, so that my greatest enemy, pride, may not lead me into ruin [*Verderben*] in the deceitful clothing of humility.” She closed her letter by stating that she accepted the offer joyfully and was prepared to begin work at once.³¹⁴

The Deaconess Institute opened its doors on 9 May 1854 in the temporary location of a local inn. The fledgling institution could boast of no rich patron and was granted no financial support by the ecclesiastical authorities.³¹⁵ Instead, it was financed by private donors drawn from amongst Löhe’s large circle of like-minded friends and by the students’ fees.³¹⁶ Nevertheless, only a few months after the opening of the institution, a large building had been erected and was inaugurated in a festive service on 12 October 1854.³¹⁷ The curriculum heavily emphasised religious education but also included courses, given by a physician, to offer the women training, both theoretically and practically, to hone their

³¹² Rheineck to Löhe (17/03/1854) [ZADN BI].

³¹³ Rehm to Löhe (10/11/1853) [ZADN AI t3]. It seems that Rehm wrote this letter after a visit to Neuendettelsau. Although Löhe had not yet officially offered her the position of superintendent, he had obviously already asked her and Rheineck to become deaconesses in Neuendettelsau.

³¹⁴ Meyer to Löhe (18/03/1854) [ZADN AI t3].

³¹⁵ For example, in 1862 Löhe wrote: “We wished we could find greater sympathy and support in broader circles, especially in the Bavarian *Landeskirche* which profits most by the Deaconess Institution. [...] Until now, the whole deaconess work [*Diakonissenwerk*] here represents the success of the work of a very small number of people” (9. *Jahresbericht* 1862, 24). The first Sunday collection [*Kirchencollecte*] in all of Bavaria’s Protestant churches for the work of the Neuendettelsau deaconesses was only granted by the church authorities in 1868, cf. 15. *Jahresbericht* 1867-68, 26. Support from the secular authorities was scarce and was given only as sporadic “gifts”, cf. MChMh (17/12/1856), Cor1857, No. 2, p. 7.

³¹⁶ In the institution’s own terminology, all women enrolled for the courses at Neuendettelsau were called „pupils“ [*Schülerinnen*]. As the aspiring deaconesses could be anything between fifteen and forty years of age (cf. 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55, 13), it would prolong the derogatory nineteenth-century view of women to retain the term “pupil”, and I have chosen not to use it. Those students who could afford it paid 150 gulden, others were admitted free of charge (*Statuten* (1855), §9, reprinted GW4, 344). The fee remained constant over the years and the number of students accepted without charge increased, cf. 11. *Jahresbericht* 1863/64, 20.

³¹⁷ Cf. the long report on the inauguration service in *Etwas aus der Geschichte*, GW4, 279-302. Löhe included a minute listing of the costs of the building and concluded that it had been “pure risk to decide on such a building in such poverty” (301).

“inherent ability to a female Christian service of love”.³¹⁸ For this purpose, some mentally disabled and sick patients were accommodated in the building.³¹⁹ Courses were also offered to those wishing to become teachers. The curriculum was designed around a stay of one year in the Institute though this could vary.³²⁰ The number of students quickly increased: While the institution began with fifteen students in 1854, by the end of 1857, eighty-four had attended the courses.³²¹ However, not all were deaconesses as the institution followed a dual training-scheme. Besides those who wanted to become deaconesses, women were also accepted who wished to attend the courses but afterwards return to their homes and families.³²² Löhe intended to win over as many agents as possible to his ideas of a true church, in his own words: to raise “very gifted and influential carriers and representatives of divine thoughts.”³²³ The deaconesses, having completed their training, were to work in local congregations or small institutions, and “the closer tie of dependence” between the deaconesses and the institution was to be “loosened”, so that “she could be granted a more independent status” if she did well.³²⁴ The institution would then recommend the deaconess to congregations, schools, families or hospitals.³²⁵

Only a little over a year after the institution had been founded, a first change in the organizational structure needed to be made. Rheineck died and, shortly afterwards, Meyer resigned her position as superintendent,³²⁶ leaving Rehm as the only superior, a position she held until her death in 1883.

³¹⁸ *Bedenken*, GW4, 273. The curriculum is described in detail with a list of all courses in 1. Jahresbericht 1854/55, Appendix III: *Unterrichtspläne*.

³¹⁹ Although as early as 1853 the Statutes of the “Lutheran Society for Female Diakonia in Bavaria” had envisioned the founding of “Lutheran hospitals” (*Statuten*, §2, GW4, 263), it was only in 1862 that a small separate hospital [*Siechenhaus*], largely funded by the deaconess Cäcilie Pöschel, was built in Neuendettelsau. Nevertheless, the practical training of nurses remained a difficult project as, due to the deaconess house’s rural location, patients with an acute illness were rare (Löhe, *Wohltätigkeitsanstalten von Dettelsau* (1864), GW4, 411). The lack of a suitable hospital was repeatedly and critically remarked on in the brief reports on Neuendettelsau which appeared in the Kaiserswerth deaconess bulletin, cf. *Die bayerischen Diakonissen-Anstalten*, AuKF, Juli und August 1856, p. 5-6; similarly: *Fortschritte des Diakonissen-Werkes*, AuKF, November und Dezember 1856, p. 19.

³²⁰ Cf. 1. Jahresbericht 1854/55, 9-10. Löhe emphasized that there was enough to learn to easily prolong the stay for two years, especially for those wishing to become teachers.

³²¹ Cf. 5. Jahresbericht 1857/58, 13.

³²² This was already envisioned in the *Bedenken*, cf. GW4, 272-276. The dual training scheme is described at length in 1. Jahresbericht 1854/55, 8.

³²³ Löhe, *Bedenken*, GW4, 272.

³²⁴ 1. Jahresbericht 1854/55, 13.

³²⁵ *Statuten* (1854/55), §14, GW4, 345.

³²⁶ 4. Jahresbericht 1857, 10-11 indicates that Helene v. Meyer „had for some time wished that she might be given work as a deaconess which does not entirely consist of dealing with external matters as her current work does which she has hitherto undertaken with great faithfulness. As the occasion now arose to confer to her a very promising calling in Nuremberg, she

Despite her long tenure, little is known about Rehm's personality. On 2 February 1858, on her initiation day, she was given the title "venerable superior" [*würdige Frau Oberin*]³²⁷ and Löhe attested of her that "with great intelligence [*Verstand*] and dignity she governs the whole [institution] as the house-mother."³²⁸ Friedrich Meyer too occasionally called her "mother" in his obituary upon her death.³²⁹ But hers was hardly an impressive, charismatic personality. Meyer said of her that "she was never one to use many words," that she "detested all intricate and subtle questions", that she was "a child of the catechism", not one to "easily vent her inner thoughts", that she "preferred to hide behind others", was "universally friendly", "faithful", "sober" and "had a deep sense of her duty and responsibility."³³⁰ This description coincides with the impression she gives in letters to her fellow sisters, which are almost all factual, to the point and with hardly a reference to herself.³³¹ In the mother house Rehm seems often to have taken a back seat.³³² Twenty-nine years after her death, a deaconess remembered Rehm in a letter to a fellow sister as having been "lonely" and commented: "Like many of us, she did not have the gift of attracting and affiliating others and was more shy than we should think in light of her rank and age."³³³ Nevertheless, her authority was based on the fact that she had superintended the institution

gave up her position here and was initiated on 1 June with her like-minded sister, Marie von Meyer, for her new calling." This remark insinuates that she disliked the many administrative tasks she had to undertake at Neuendettelsau. Another important reason may have been that she longed to return to Nuremberg where she had spent many years, where her mother and siblings lived and where she had many contacts and friends. Tensions with Rehm may have been another motivation for her renunciation of her position as superintendent.

³²⁷ Cf. MChMh, (2 February), CorDiac 1858, No. 1 (February), p. 1. In contrast, the title "superior" [*Oberin*] was "frowned upon" in Kaiserswerth for its Roman Catholic associations, cf. Gerhard, *Friedner*, 770, footnote.

³²⁸ Löhe, *Etwas aus der Geschichte*, GW4, 277.

³²⁹ Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 194, 205.

³³⁰ Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 201-203.

³³¹ When signing these letters, she usually emphasised her function rather than her person. Her usual closing words were: "May God bless you. Yours, A. Rehm, Superior", cf. for example Rehm to Marie Preller (01/01/1870) [ZADN BIII c2]; Rehm to Marie Hedwig (20/06/1872) [ZADN BIII d], Rehm to Therese Stählin (23/07/1881) [ZADN BIII d]. When she travelled to Kaiserswerth with Therese Stählin in 1865 to participate in the Kaiserswerth General Assembly, representing the Neuendettelsau deaconess mother house for the first time there, she wrote a short note to the "highly revered Herr Pfarrer" giving a minute schedule of their itinerary and announced that her travelling companion would give all the details about the conference, which Therese Stählin, the future Superior, did, with enthusiasm and in colourful language, cf. Rehm and Stählin to Löhe (23-24/09/1865) [ZADN AI m].

³³² For example, in the minutes of the Neuendettelsau chapter meetings her name is hardly mentioned, cf. minutes March 1859-June 1860 [ZADN DIII a]. She wrote no article for the CorDiac, and even left it to Therese Stählin to write an obituary for a deceased sister in the interim after Löhe's death and before his successor Meyer's installation, cf. Schw. Th[erese Stählin]: "Schwester Auguste Magdalene [Sander]", CorDiac 1872, No. 5, p. 20-22. Meyer later included this article in his publication of obituaries, cf. Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 85-91.

³³³ Berta Wieland to Sister Marie (13/03/1912) [ZADN BIII f].

from the very beginning and had cooperated with two *Rektoren*.³³⁴ Moreover, her function of inspecting and presiding heightened her status.³³⁵

More structural changes followed within the first few years. The conception of the Deaconess Institute as a purely educational institution was given up. Instead, the deaconesses were now drawn into a “sisterhood” [*Schwesterschaft*].³³⁶ During a meeting of all the initiated deaconesses, the superintendent and the *Rektor* on 22 June 1857, it was unanimously decided that the deaconesses should come to regard the Institute as a “mother house” and a “home” to which they assumed a “childlike relationship.”³³⁷ In an open letter to the deaconesses, Löhe explained that the original conception had been found to be “impracticable”, because deaconesses were in danger of losing their deaconess identity [*Diakonissensinn*] when the “power of conditions” [*Macht der Verhältnisse*] forced them to reorient themselves once they had left the institution. For example, Löhe pointed out that graduates were forced to save for their old age “according to the wisdom of the children of this world” so that they were in danger of resembling “hirelings”. Parents demanded of their deaconess daughters that they resume their old roles. Employers were likely to take advantage of their vulnerable position. This could be prevented if the deaconesses were to maintain “a closer connection and lasting affiliation” to Neuendettelsau and be offered an “asylum” there. Löhe earnestly entreated the deaconesses to come up with suggestions and ideas as to how to achieve this.³³⁸

One deaconess who seems to have taken an influential role in this development was Rosette Wibel from Nuremberg, a merchant’s daughter, who, like Rheineck, had trained in Kaiserswerth from 1844.³³⁹ As a deaconess, she became a teacher, was later entrusted with administrative tasks and served as a

³³⁴ Cf. Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 194-195.

³³⁵ For example, she had a special role in every initiation ceremony, cf. chapter 3.

³³⁶ 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 27.

³³⁷ „Protocoll über die Conferenz der Vorstände des Diaconissenhauses mit den ausgesegneten Diaconissen, am 22. Juni 1857”, *CorDiac* 1857, No. 2 (August), mss [ZADN PV a1].

³³⁸ Letter from Löhe to all initiated deaconesses (03/09/1857), *CorDiac* 1857, No. 3 (September) (mss) [ZADN PV a1].

³³⁹ There is no direct evidence that Rheineck and Wibel had been acquainted in Kaiserswerth though this is highly likely. Schmidt states that thirteen initiated deaconesses worked in Kaiserswerth in the year 1846 (cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 118). Though it is to be assumed that the figure for students was significantly higher, the numbers were, in all probability, still fairly small.

secretary to Caroline Fliedner, and for some time took on the role of “probationary mistress” [*Probemeisterin*] at Kaiserswerth.³⁴⁰ In 1854, during an unhappy spell as a parochial deaconess in Duisburg where “because of the difficult circumstances [...] my wings were clipped,” Wibel became acquainted with Löhe whilst on holiday in her home-town Nuremberg, and, much to the regret of the Fliedners, decided to leave the Kaiserswerth institution because, she said, of her conviction that “in the United Church I do not receive the Holy Communion with the full blessing.” For a few months, from December 1855 to March 1856, she attended courses in Neuendettelsau with the firm intention that she “would not become a deaconess again” and afterwards worked in an orphanage [*Rettungsanstalt*] in Nuremberg. However, she changed her mind, arguing: “I was never a true deaconess. However, I want to become one and have made a plan how this may happen yet.” She asked to be sent to North America as a Neuendettelsau deaconess, to which Löhe consented.³⁴¹ Accordingly, she became a parochial deaconess in Dubuque, Iowa, where she founded a flourishing girls’ school.³⁴² She communicated frequently with Neuendettelsau but increasingly hinted at difficulties.³⁴³ On 13 January 1860, Wibel announced to Löhe her engagement to a physician in St. Sebald. Her letter was published in the deaconess newsletter with the preliminary remark that “this [also] serves as a notification that the author resigns from the deaconess association.”³⁴⁴ Nothing more is known of her.³⁴⁵

Wibel emphasised retrospectively that she had been very happy in Kaiserswerth: “The longer I stayed in Kaiserswerth, the more I liked it. In the institution, I felt like a child in her parents’ home and was treated as such.” After her departure from Kaiserswerth and while working independently in Nuremberg, she recalled: “I so much lacked support. How I fought with longing, not for the Union, but for the community

³⁴⁰ The following summary is based on Lebenslauf No. 47: Rosette Wibel, pp. 134-154 [1857] [ZADN EI d, ms].

³⁴¹ In 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 24, Löhe called for deaconesses to volunteer to go to America where he had long been involved in setting up the provision of pastoral care for (Franconian) Lutheran immigrants. Wibel was joined by Katharina Schied, and both were sent off with a ceremony of blessing on 18 February 1857 (MChMh (18/02/1857), CorIM 1857, No. 3, p. 11). The deaconess house received a first letter from them on 29 April 1857 (MChMh (29/04/1847), CorIM 1857, No. 6, p. 23).

³⁴² Cf. the short report on the deaconesses in America, “Berichte über auswärtige Diakonissenstationen (Mittheilungen aus Briefen)”, CorDiac 1859, No. 3/4 pp. 9-10). Wibel and Schied had by then been joined by three more deaconesses, Sophie List, Elise Köberle and Regine Schied.

³⁴³ Cf. “Etwas aus Amerika”, CorDiac 1857, No. 3 (September), mss [ZADN PV a1]; “Aus einem Briefe der Schwester Rosette W.”, CorDiac 1857, No. 5 (November), mss [ZADN PV a1].

³⁴⁴ “Auswärtige Diakonissenstationen”, CorDiac 1860, No. 4/5, p. 14.

³⁴⁵ By 1860, all deaconesses who had been sent to America were married, cf. 7. *Jahresbericht* 1860, 13.

in Kaisersw[erth], for the mother house. How bitterly I felt that I lacked a home!”³⁴⁶ It seems that Wibel took active steps to help reorganize the Neuendettelsau Institute to resemble Kaiserswerth. Gerhardt records that on 29 December 1856, Rosette Wibel wrote a letter to Fliedner, commissioned by Löhe, to ask for the draft of a contract between the mother house and external employers [*Vertragsentwurf für die Besetzung auswärtiger Arbeitsfelder*]: “I have told *Herr Pfarrer* about it, and he would much appreciate it if he could learn from your long experiences. [...] Also, *Fräulein Rehm*, our superintendent, would much appreciate it if she could obtain a copy of the house- and hospital rules, in fact, to obtain a copy of all that concerns the deaconess house.”³⁴⁷ According to Gerhardt, Caroline Fliedner complied, sending a draft of a contract and a report on the Kaiserswerth institution to Neuendettelsau. On 6 February 1857, Wibel wrote once more, to request a copy of the house rules for Rehm “with many expressions of thanks by Löhe.” Gerhardt concludes with obvious relish: “All in all, Löhe expressed his willingness to learn.”³⁴⁸

More striking than Löhe’s attitude, however, is the fact that it was the deaconesses themselves who actively initiated the changes and shaped the new structure of the house according to their own needs and concerns, overruling Löhe’s initial intentions.³⁴⁹ Prelinger’s thesis, developed in her research on Kaiserswerth, also rings true for Neuendettelsau, albeit with some qualifications. Prelinger argued “that the family model was not necessarily imposed on these women but rather that it satisfied reciprocal if very different needs. The images and controls of the patriarchal family also made it possible for these women to enter unfamiliar and potentially threatening situations.”³⁵⁰ The Neuendettelsau deaconesses

³⁴⁶ Lebenslauf No. 47: Rosette Wibel, p. 134-145.

³⁴⁷ Cited from Gerhardt, *Fliedner*, 747.

³⁴⁸ Gerhardt, *Fliedner*, 747.

³⁴⁹ I refer again to Löhe’s lamentation in *Etwas aus der Geschichte* (1870), GW4, 272: „What has become, we had actually not intended, but something far more simple and popular [*volksmäßigeres*], as it is recorded in the [...] Considerations. One could say that our own path was not wholly clear to us from the beginning.”

³⁵⁰ Prelinger, *Deaconessate*, 216.

perceived that they needed a “sheltered space” [*Schutzraum*], a surrogate semi-private sphere, not least to make their new existence compatible with their families’ expectations.³⁵¹

This has much to do with the social background of the Neuendettelsau deaconesses. Schmidt’s finding that the Kaiserswerth deaconesses were mostly from families of the lower middle and lower classes [*klein- und unterbürgerlichen Schichten*]³⁵² does not corroborate with statistical data in Neuendettelsau. From the beginning, many Neuendettelsau deaconesses were from educated families. Of the initial fifteen students, six were from academic families (four of them daughters of clergymen), the others were the daughters of artisans and small businessmen.³⁵³ Löhe’s (initial) target group, “the female youth from the flat countryside”³⁵⁴, never formed the majority of deaconesses. Few of the candidates were from the direct vicinity. Most of them were from towns where Löhe’s friends – particularly clergy – lived: these contacts were pivotal in advertising the Institute and helping potential candidates to gain admittance.³⁵⁵ Some of the students were recruited from the minor nobility.³⁵⁶ Jenner provides figures for the years 1865 to 1874, indicating that 32.5% of the deaconesses were the daughters of artisans, 16.2% of clergymen, 13.2% of farmers, and the remaining third were the daughters of civil servants, farmhands, businessmen and estate owners. Because industrialization reached Bavaria only late, the daughters from the emerging working class are almost nonexistent in the statistics.³⁵⁷ In 1880, Neuendettelsau had the highest percentage of clergymen’s daughters amongst all the mother houses in German-speaking countries.³⁵⁸ Löhe himself was well aware of this. In 1860, he claimed: “One could almost call the

³⁵¹ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 52: “The sisterhood [as envisioned by Amalie Sieveking] appears as a sheltered space for women, whose radius of action may well have transgressed the limits of this space.”

³⁵² Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 247.

³⁵³ Cf. Appendix to 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55.

³⁵⁴ Löhe, *Etwas aus der Geschichte* (1870), GW4, 271.

³⁵⁵ The first three annual reports give detailed lists of the deaconess students, their fathers’ occupations and their places of birth. Cf. also Chapter 4.3: *Curricula Vitae* and the construction of biography.

³⁵⁶ In 1855, Löhe corresponded with an important benefactress of the Institute, Princess Elise von Hohenlohe, about the possibility of a member of her own class being admitted into the Institute as a student, Löhe to Elise von Hohenlohe (08/06/1855) (GW2, 240). Löhe saw no objection and pointed out that already two daughters of the nobility (from the Nuremberg family von Tucher) had been admitted. The duchess also considered spending some time in the Institute herself, cf. Löhe to Elise von Hohenlohe (31/07/1855) (GW2, 245-246). Once Löhe even contemplated introducing a “second order” of deaconesses from the lower social classes for the “rougher works” along the lines of Roman Catholic or Anglican sisterhoods (cf. 6. *Jahresbericht* 1858/59, 26).

³⁵⁷ Jenner, *Von Neuendettelsau in alle Welt*, 100.

³⁵⁸ Jenner, *Von Neuendettelsau in alle Welt*, 101-103.

deaconess house here an institution for clergymen's daughters as there are so many clergymen's daughters who make up the ranks of the deaconesses and the pupils in the different schools."³⁵⁹ This, however, changed under Bezzel, who repeatedly lamented that so few of the students were from clergy-families. From about 1900, the majority of deaconesses were from rural farmers' households.³⁶⁰

The daughters of educated families were likely to be given influential positions within the mother house in Neuendettelsau. For example in 1862, there were 53 initiated deaconesses in total. Thirteen of them worked and lived within the mother house, and two more worked in Neuendettelsau as the superintendents of the institutions for the mentally disabled and for "neglected girls".³⁶¹ Of these fifteen initiated deaconesses who worked and lived in Neuendettelsau, eleven were the daughters of academics, one was the daughter of a squire and one was the daughter of a master gardener.³⁶² This statistical evidence suggests that there was a clear tendency to make social distinctions in the allocation of working-spheres. Indeed, Löhe himself openly acknowledged this policy. In the annual report of 1863, he stated: "We ourselves have to insist that in the mother house the most competent workers [*Kräfte*] gather and remain for as long as possible."³⁶³ Given that in the nineteenth century, the clergy household was considered a "bourgeois idyll" in which the "bourgeois housewife" held sway,³⁶⁴ it is not surprising that, alongside with the emphasis on education and a high esteem of the intellectual faculties of the deaconesses,³⁶⁵ came the tendency to make the bourgeois culture the "guiding culture" of the Institute

³⁵⁹ 6. *Jahresbericht* 1859/60, 28.

³⁶⁰ Cf. for example *Jahresbericht* 1900, 8; *Jahresbericht* 1901, 56. Cf. also Schmuhl/ Winkler, *Auf dem Weg ins 20. Jahrhundert*, 137-138.

³⁶¹ Cf. 9. *Jahresbericht* 1862, 4-6.

³⁶² All data is taken from *Album der abgehenden Schülerinnen. Lebensläufe 1855-1862* [ZADN El d]. The exact figures are: Five daughters of clergymen: Amalie Rehm (superior), Therese Stählin (teaching-deaconess), Barbara Dietrich (nursing-deaconess), Elise Steinlein (household-deaconess), Caroline Hofmann (porter-deaconess; she was a widow, her late husband had been an officer in the army); four daughters of teachers: Sarah Hahn (teaching-deaconess), Gertrud Hahn (teaching-deaconess and cantor), Amalie Müller (kitchen-deaconess), Doris Braun (superintendent of the Institute for "neglected girls"); two daughters of civil servants: Katharina Hommel (teaching-deaconess), Cäcilie Pöschel (nursing-deaconess; she was the widow of a clergyman and was, by birth, from the lower nobility); one daughter of a landowner: Marie Vosseler (nursing-deaconess); one daughter of a master gardener [*Gärtnermeister*]: Margarethe Schied (superintendent of the Institute for mentally disabled). It is unclear who at that time held the role of "ironing-deaconess" [*Bügeldiakonis*] and "auxiliary sister" [*Aushülsschwester*] (cf. 9. *Jahresbericht* 1862, 4).

³⁶³ 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862/63, 14.

³⁶⁴ Hausen, *Ehepaare*, 105.

³⁶⁵ Cf. for example Löhe's remarks in *Etwas aus der Geschichte*, GW4, 316, which reveal evident pride in the intellectual faculties of the deaconesses.

which was cultivated first and foremost within the mother house. Nevertheless, Löhe also appreciated the daughters of peasants and the “so-called humbler classes” [*sogenannten geringeren Stände*] for their “efficiency in every kind of work, [their] familiarity with incessant diligence, in a word: the[ir] serviceableness”, if only they were willing to put aside their “old nature” and overcome their “lack of birth and education” by willingly adapting to the ways of the “in the best sense noble persons” without becoming “demanding” [*anspruchsvoll*].³⁶⁶ But they were more likely to be sent to work “outside” of Neuendettelsau.³⁶⁷ In contrast, the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau were privileged in that they were given the chance to participate in some of the processes of decision-making. This came at a price, as members whose behaviour deviated from the Institute’s conservative Christian and bourgeois world-view were marginalized and stigmatized as black sheep. The body of rules which gave the mother house its outer structure was to ensure conformity and to invigilate the “daughters”. Although the rules and instructions were implemented by the directorate, they were clearly supported by a large majority of deaconesses.

2.6. The process of restructuring the Institute into a mother house

2.6.1. The house rules

The development of the house-rules most obviously reflects the consolidation of the Institute as a mother house. Within the Neuendettelsau Institute, a fairly enclosed cosmos emerged to which strangers were admitted less and less. Unlike the newly developed bourgeois nuclear family, the household in the mother house also included students and, in the earlier years, patients. It was an almost exclusively female world. Obedience to the superintendent was expected but most of all to the *Herr Pfarrer* who, as the head of the household, ruled supreme.

The Institute in Neuendettelsau began without any fixed institutionalized rules. Shortly after the Institute was officially inaugurated, the CorIM reported: “The house rules are developed in view of daily

³⁶⁶ “Schwester Regine Elser”, CorDiac 1866, No. 10, p. 38.

³⁶⁷ In the Institute, the deaconesses who held posts outside of Neuendettelsau were called the „external deaconesses“ [auswärtige Diakonissen], who worked „outside“ [draußen].

experience through the practiced hands of the superintendents.”³⁶⁸ In 1855, the first annual report mentions the existence of house rules, which at that stage were provisional.³⁶⁹ An appendix laid out the “principles of the house rules of the Deaconess Institute”, explaining in a footnote: “As the Institute is still in its initial stages, the principles published above can only be regarded as the result of the considerations and experiences we have made so far.”³⁷⁰ In the daily life of the Institute, the rules were developed and refined.³⁷¹ Further handwritten drafts of the rules were composed. In a letter from Stählin to her mother, written on 24 February 1856, Stählin mentioned that she was introduced by Löhe to visitors as his “secretary” because “recently I have written out the whole house rule.”³⁷² Unfortunately, none of these drafts survives in the archives. The annual report of 1856 mentioned that “we are about to publish the house rules.”³⁷³ Soon afterwards, in the CorIM, an “extract” [*Auszug*] was published, specifically the section which concerned the students, comprising 68 paragraphs.³⁷⁴ The same excerpt appeared as an appendix to the annual report in 1857,³⁷⁵ and in the same year, a “notice” appeared in the CorDiac, informing readers that the house rules were on sale in the bookshop of the Deaconess Institute.³⁷⁶ It was probably deemed important for the parents of prospective students to know about the institution to which they were about to send their daughters. The rules were read and, if necessary, explained to the students at the beginning of each semester by the *Konrektor*.³⁷⁷ A prominent aspect of the rules was the subdivision of students into “squads” [*Riegen*], under the authority of “squad mistresses” [*Riegenmeisterinnen*], who were elected from the ranks of those students who had “acquired the trust of the directive personnel.”³⁷⁸ The deaconesses, too, were formed into “squads”,³⁷⁹

³⁶⁸ “Das [sic] erste Monat der Diakonissenanstalt zu Neuendettelsau“, CorIM 1854, No. 7, p. 30.

³⁶⁹ 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55, 12.

³⁷⁰ 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55, Anhang II: Grundzüge einer Hausordnung der Diakonissenanstalt, 27.

³⁷¹ The house rules are mentioned in several of Stählin’s early letters, for example to her mother (06/11/1855), ThStI, 22; to her sister Ida (29/12/1855), ThStI, 33.

³⁷² Stählin to her mother (24/02/1856), ThStI, 39.

³⁷³ 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 29.

³⁷⁴ “Auszug aus der Hausordnung des Diakonissenhauses Neuendettelsau“, CorIM 1857, No. 9, p. 33-36; No. 10, p. 37-39.

³⁷⁵ 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, Anhang: “Auszug aus der Hausordnung des Diakonissenhauses Neuendettelsau (Für die Schülerinnen des Hauses)“.

³⁷⁶ “Anzeige“, CorDiac 1857, No. 5 (November) (ms).

³⁷⁷ Cf., for example, in MChMh (02/11/[1857]), CorDiac 1858, No. 7 (January) [ZADN PV a1, mss]; also MChMh (03/05/1858), CorDiac 1858, No. 4/5, p. 13; MChMh (01/11/1859), CorDiac 1859, No. 12, p. 45.

³⁷⁸ “Auszug aus der Hausordnung (1857), A. Von den Riegenmeisterinnen“, §6.

³⁷⁹ “Auszug aus der Hausordnung, A. Von den Riegenmeisterinnen (1857)“, §§1-3.

and these groups can be regarded as the precursors to the deaconess chapters. The “squad mistresses” had an important role in supervising and monitoring the conduct of students, but were also intended to assume pastoral responsibility.³⁸⁰

In a letter written in December 1855, Stählin lamented that “the house rules are extraordinarily strict with regard to visitors.”³⁸¹ In the version from 1857, this is indeed the case. All visitors, including even close relatives, had to be announced to and authorized in advance by the superintendent.³⁸² Students were permitted to receive visitors only during the hours of leisure, and then only in a room which the superintendent considered appropriate; this had to be “one of the most public and most decent of the house.”³⁸³ Thus a semi-public “spatial threshold” was created.³⁸⁴ Casual visitors were unwelcome: “Visits merely for the sake of conversation are not permitted but only such which have an explicitly praiseworthy object. They must not exceed the time which is necessary to achieve this object.”³⁸⁵ The same regulations explicitly applied also to the superintendent and deaconesses.³⁸⁶ If visitors wanted to be given a tour through the Institute, they needed an admission ticket [*Einlaßkarte*], which only the *Rektor* could sign. Once permission was granted, visiting relatives were not permitted to exercise their rights of parental surveillance by inspecting the cupboards and drawers of their daughters as “the necessary provision of inspection is already provided.”³⁸⁷ The implication is that parents were to accept the fact that, while in the Institute, their daughters owed filial obedience to the Institute, and not to their family of origin. Perhaps in some cases at least, this was regarded as liberation by the deaconess students.

³⁸⁰ Cf. “Auszug aus der Hausordnung, A. Von den Riegenmeisterinnen (1857)”, §9.

³⁸¹ Stählin to her sister Ida (29/12/1855), ThStI, 33.

³⁸² “Auszug aus der Hausordnung” (1857), §54.

³⁸³ “Auszug aus der Hausordnung” (1857), §§ 55 and 56.

³⁸⁴ Konrad, *Habit oder Kostüm*, 36, applies the term “threshold-room” [*Schwellenraum*] to the chamber where visitors were permitted in Roman Catholic monasteries.

³⁸⁵ “Auszug aus der Hausordnung” (1857), §55.

³⁸⁶ “Auszug aus der Hausordnung” (1857), §58.

³⁸⁷ “Auszug aus der Hausordnung” (1857), §57 and §59.

In 1865, another version of the house-rules was printed in the CorDiac; this consisted of 45 paragraphs.³⁸⁸ In addition, an undated published version can be found in the archives which closely resembles that of 1865 but probably dates to the period 1860 to 1861.³⁸⁹ Clearly, by now the restructuring of the educational institute into a mother house had progressed considerably. Though we still find many regulations that apply only to the students, the common life of the deaconesses features prominently. An institutionally structured time-table had also emerged. Members were to rise at 5am in summer and at 6am in winter. An hour later, a morning prayer [*Morgengottesdienst*] took place in the family room,³⁹⁰ followed by breakfast. Lunch was eaten at noon, “unless services [*Gottesdienste*] prevent this.”³⁹¹ After vespers, the deaconesses assembled in the family room for supper.³⁹² At 9 pm, the deaconesses retired to their rooms and at 10pm, all lights were to be extinguished.³⁹³

There is a slight difference in tone between the undated and the 1865 versions. The undated rules allow more exceptions and express regulations more cautiously. For example, §3 in the undated version reads: “The prayers [*Gottesdienste*] of the deaconess house should be attended by all residents as regularly and punctually as possible.” In 1865, the same paragraph simply states: “The prayers of the deaconess house are attended regularly by all residents.” The 1865 version also transferred significant authority from the superior to the *Konrektor*,³⁹⁴ who, having been appointed as chaplain to the community in 1864, was at the height of his power.³⁹⁵ Finally, the undated version seems to imply

³⁸⁸ “Hausordnung der Diakonissenanstalt Neuendettelsau” (1865), CorDiac 1865, No. 5, p. 17-20.

³⁸⁹ “Hausordnung der Diakonissenanstalt Neuendettelsau” (undated) [ZADN Alle, 15,5]. The year 1859 can be stipulated as the *terminus post quem* by the mention of the “family room” (§§1 and 2). Therefore, the pencilled annotation “1857?” is certainly incorrect. The year 1861 makes a highly likely *terminus ante quem*, since in contrast to the 1865 version, there is no mention of “Raphael guests” in §7 of the undated version. “Raphael guests”, single women who were self-supporting and lived alongside the community without becoming deaconesses, were introduced in 1861 (cf. MChMh (27/06/1861), CorDiac 1861, No. 6/7, p. 23; also 9. *Jahresbericht* 1862, 36). In the 1865 rules, §7 includes the provision that Raphael guests ‘may entertain visitors in their own rooms.

³⁹⁰ The 1865 version, §1, specifies that morning prayer “lasts a quarter of an hour.” This is not defined in the undated version.

³⁹¹ Both versions, §2.

³⁹² Both versions, §3.

³⁹³ Both versions, §4.

³⁹⁴ For example, §40, in the undated version specifically states that when the *Rektor* was absent, the superior was his substitute. This paragraph was deleted in the 1865 version, which, instead lays down (§6) that in the *Rektor*’s absence, the *Konrektor* was his substitute if permission needed to be obtained for a journey.

³⁹⁵ Löhe had long reflected on the desirability of installing a house chaplain for the pastoral provision of the Deaconess Institute, cf. Löhe to the deanery in Windsbach (02/10/1859) [LAELKB BKA 2884 I]. This was realized only in 1864, when Ernst Lotze, who had been appointed as *Konrektor* in 1857 (cf. MChMh (23/02/1857), CorIM 1857, No. 3, p. 11-12, and 4.

smaller numbers. For example, §5 in the undated version requires all deaconesses to gain the superior's permission, should they need to leave the house and visit the village. In the version from 1865, §5 prescribes a procedure that is less personal. The superior signed a "ticket of exit" [*Auslaßmarke*] which the deaconess showed to the porter-deaconess who, then and only then, would open the door for her.³⁹⁶ The undated version prescribes that the deaconesses should not accept invitations from the village population. Exceptions were only granted by the *Rektor* himself.³⁹⁷ By 1865, accepting invitations to the villagers' homes was wholly prohibited.³⁹⁸ Journeys which the deaconesses wished to undertake during their holidays always needed the explicit permission by the *Rektor*.³⁹⁹ On the other hand, by 1865 visitors to the deaconesses no longer needed prior authorization. Instead, they were to wait in the reception area until the superior had been notified. Male guests had to remain in the reception area or in a designated room, were admitted no later than 6pm and never on a Saturday morning.⁴⁰⁰ The superior also supervised all correspondence, seeing all letters written by deaconesses, and distributing those that they received.⁴⁰¹

Jahresbericht 1857, 9), became chaplain [*Hausgeistliche*] (cf. "Mittheilungen aus dem Mutterhause", *CorDiac* 1864, No. 6, p. 21-22; Schw. D[oris Braun]: "Mittheilungen aus dem Mutterhause", *CorDiac* 1864, No. 9, p. 33-35, here: 33). Because of the deaconesses' opposition and conflicts with Löhe, he left the Institute in 1866 (cf. Stählin to her mother (late May 1864), *ThStl*, 140; Stählin to her mother (20/12/1864), *ThStl*, 144-145; Stählin to her mother (30/04/1866), *ThStl*, 156-157). Deinzer noted in his biography of Löhe without elaborating further: "From the beginning, the newly created position of chaplain [*Hausgeistliche*] bore within it a seed of difficulties, which sprouted only too quickly and found no other resolution than the resignation of the chaplain; an outcome, which cost both parts some suffering and pain" (Deinzer, *Löhe's Leben*, Vol. 3, 316). The vacancy was never again filled.

³⁹⁶ The office of porter to guard the main entrance was introduced in 1859 along with the regulation "that from now on, all other entrances are to be kept locked" (*MChMh* (15/06/1859), *CorDiac* 1859, No. 7 and 8, p. 26). The first porter was Johanna Büttner. In February 1860, this responsibility was transferred to the widow Caroline Hoffmann (*Lebenslauf* No. 57: Caroline Christiane Hoffmann, p. 158-159, and "Rede vom 1 Oktober 1860"). A few years later, this was transferred to another widow, Cäcilie Pöschel, of whom Löhe said in her funeral address: "She [...] assumed the profession of porter in the deaconess house, for which she seemed especially appropriate because of her great agility and benevolence and courteousness. [...] In the course of time, however, it became apparent that the profession of porter, on the long run, was not right for her. A porter must not only be agile, kind, courteous, and indefatigable, but also stern and forceful, and for this Cäcilie did not possess the inner strength and forcefulness. In consequence, she herself felt dissatisfied" ("Schwester Cäcilie", *CorDiac* 1867, No. 11, p. 42).

³⁹⁷ "Hausordnung" (undated), §6.

³⁹⁸ "Hausordnung" (1865), §6.

³⁹⁹ "Hausordnung" (1865), §35. In the undated version, both the *Rektor* and the superior had to agree.

⁴⁰⁰ §7 in both versions. The apparently somewhat arbitrary qualification that no male visitors were admitted on a Saturday morning may have related to the Institute's timetable. Saturday was the day of cleaning, and perhaps it was feared that deaconesses might avoid work by entertaining visitors.

⁴⁰¹ §8 in both versions.

The successive versions of the house rules testify to the consolidation of institutional structures and norms, which meant that the deaconess house developed into a separate cosmos. Its internal arrangements were marked by a fixed daily time table. Outside contacts were minimized or at least considerably reduced. In this way, separation in a comprehensive sense was achieved.⁴⁰² This cosmos, however, still needed to be filled with “cultural meaning”, that is shared values and norms, expectations and outlooks.⁴⁰³ This process will be examined in later chapters. In a next step, the measures taken to retain the link between “outside” and “inside”, between the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau and those who were sent to work “outside”, will be examined.

2.6.2. The system of rotation

The decision that the Institute would become “an abiding sanctuary and [...] a parental home”,⁴⁰⁴ brought with it the promise of support by the mother-house in the case of illness, redundancy or old age. However, this came at a price: On 30 March 1858, a notice in the *CorDiac* declared that “[t]he Institute signs the contract of the deaconess which arranges her work and, in time, cancels it. The agreed salary is paid to the Institute from which the deaconess receives pocket money and clothes.” Further, “the directorate of the Institute decides on the placement of every deaconess. As long as a deaconess belongs to the closer affiliation with the mother house, she does not have the right to dispose of herself.”⁴⁰⁵

This policy was retained even in the face of growing opposition. The Institute operated a “system of rotation” which implied that a deaconess was permitted to remain in a specific placement only for a short period of time, usually about two years, before a new sphere of work was assigned to her. There is

⁴⁰² In many ways, the mother house came to resemble a “total institution” as defined by the sociologist Erving Goffman: “A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (Goffman, *Asylums*, 11). Due to their “encompassing tendency”, Goffman explicitly counted monasteries and convents amongst the “total institutions” (16), which he one-sidedly described as repressive, de-personalizing, and compulsive, in short: as “batch-living” (22). However, Goffman ignored the fact that the members of a religious community both entered and remained within the institution voluntarily. For a critique of his concept, cf. Davies, *Criticisms and revisions*.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 121.

⁴⁰⁴ 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 13.

⁴⁰⁵ “Anzeige”, *CorDiac* 1858, No. 2, p. 8, §§ 1 and 2.

evidence that this was thoroughly unpopular. The Institute did not always choose wisely, as even Löhe acknowledged.⁴⁰⁶ It proved repeatedly necessary to defend the autocratic decisions made by the Institute by arguing that the rotation system was an indispensable part of the thorough training for all deaconesses.⁴⁰⁷ By 1863, opposition seems to have become so vociferous that the Institute felt compelled to declare categorically: “Geographical stability [*Ansässigkeit*] and the deaconess vocation [*Diakonissenthum*] are irreconcilable if a deaconess fellowship is to exist at all. Serving in the same circumstances for extended periods of time results in a carnal acclimatization [*fleischliche Eingewöhnung*] from which originates many a deaconess sin.”⁴⁰⁸ The “pains of weaning” [*Entwöhnung*] had to be borne not only with full obedience but also with a positive attitude. This was argued on religious grounds: “Whoever wishes to serve the Lord best in the best location requires an unfettered soul, must not be tied to a particular location or creature, and must find it agreeable to bring the sacrifice of service to the same Lord in various places with the same, constant joy.”⁴⁰⁹ The directorate left the deaconesses in no doubt about the consequences of resistance: “Any sister who opposes her mother house faces expulsion.”⁴¹⁰ This did not deter everyone. A small number of deaconesses preferred to leave the Institute rather than to be torn from their familiar places of work.⁴¹¹ In effect, the “system of rotation” heightened the deaconesses’ emotional dependency on the community by lessening their chance of gaining esteem from employers and other “outsiders” or of making local friends.

This isolation from potentially rival ties was enhanced by the Institute’s rhetoric of danger and threat.

Early on, Löhe stressed that “in many places” outside the mother house, deaconesses had to “struggle

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 25-26.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. for example 6. *Jahresbericht* 1859/60, 21-22.

⁴⁰⁸ 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862/63, 14.

⁴⁰⁹ 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862/63, 14.

⁴¹⁰ 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862/63, 14. A passage in the 14. *Jahresbericht* 1866/67, 18-19 reveals that the “system of rotation” was not only unpopular with the deaconesses but also with the local institutions which employed deaconesses. Because of its dissatisfaction with the ever-changing personnel sent by Neuendettelsau, the magistrate of Wunsiedel withdrew from its contract with the mother house which had hitherto sent deaconesses to teach in the local school.

⁴¹¹ We know particular details only in those cases when a deaconess asked to be discharged because of the Institute’s “system of rotation”, but was later re-admitted. The fact that this was possible indicates the Institute’s desperation to staff all its “stations”. For example, we know of Marie Böttinger who chose to continue her work in the Odenwald without the backing of the mother house from 1865 (Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 157) and was re-admitted ten years later, and of Auguste Sander who made an attempt at earning an independent living, presumably as a governess (cf. Schw. Th[erese Stählin]: “Schwester Auguste Magdalene“, *CorDiac* 1872, No. 5, p. 20-22).

with great prejudice, with defamation, and with lies.”⁴¹² Löhe later blamed himself for this: “the direction of those who rule the deaconess house is not understood amongst our Lutheran fellow believers, and is therefore often misjudged and slandered. As a result, the efforts of the deaconess house [...] are also regarded with suspicion and only slowly gain respect.”⁴¹³ This was placed in a larger context: The “serious confessional direction” of the mother house stirred up “the antipathy of the world in the church” [*den Widerwillen der Welt in der Kirche*] so that “one would rather dispense with the physical benefits [*leibliche Wohlthat*] than accept them from such hands.”⁴¹⁴ An example for this is offered by the fate of Lisette Hermann, who was sent to work in a school for small children in Schwabach, near Nuremberg in 1857. Because of the opposition of large segments of the local congregation against “the direction” of the deaconess house, “a campaign against the deaconess Lisette, whose accomplishments were nevertheless acknowledged even by the adversaries, was launched, in consequence of which she had to be called back to the mother house.” Her return strengthened the community’s sense of alienation from the broader church, and she was hailed as a martyr for her faith: “The directorate of the Institute praised the Lord that again one of its daughters had been found worthy to endure taunts and disfavour on the right path.”⁴¹⁵ She was soon sent out again, this time to Schwarzenberg, where she became engaged to be married; however, she died shortly before her wedding. Lisette Hermann is also an example of a deaconess who was sent out to work before she had fully completed the courses in Neuendettelsau, in her case at the age of nineteen.⁴¹⁶ Though the Institute generally only sent out deaconesses at least in pairs, occasionally they were placed in complete solitude, which was not necessarily conducive to a deaconess’s happiness, as Löhe acknowledged.⁴¹⁷ From the Institute’s point of view, the difficulties were enhanced by the deaconess’s “exposure to the seductions and temptations of the world” while working “amongst the miserable conditions of our debauched congregations.” Instead

⁴¹² 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 25.

⁴¹³ 6. *Jahresbericht* 1858/59, 23.

⁴¹⁴ 9. *Jahresbericht* 1861/62, 11-12.

⁴¹⁵ “Todes-Anzeige”, *CorDiac* 1859, No. 9, p. 34.

⁴¹⁶ From the beginning, the Institute had felt it necessary to abbreviate the education of deaconesses in specific cases. The 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 22, report notes that some pupils were sent out after merely six months of (theoretical) training.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. “Schwester Regine Elser”, *CorDiac* 1866, No. 10, p. 38: “She was too lonely, and it would have been far more beneficial for her had she worked together, and had been compelled to work together, with a second sister. Her experiences, too, justify the principle of sending out deaconesses only in pairs, as the Lord himself sent out his disciples in pairs.”

of supporting the deaconess in her endeavours, “one abandons her and laughs derisively when the deserted deaconess is perhaps once too weak to carry into execution what she has pledged herself to do with strength and constancy, with a good conscience and sacred hands.”⁴¹⁸ While there can be no doubt that deaconesses did occasionally experience difficulties, contempt and opposition, especially from clergymen who were wary of the deaconesses’ influence on their parishes,⁴¹⁹ it also served the Institute’s interests to portray the world outside Neuendettelsau, its structures and norms, as alien and hostile.

Unsurprisingly, such language and imagery did not serve to heighten the popularity of work on the “periphery”, especially for those who had no personal experience of this. Moreover, the directorate freely admitted that it made distinctions in its policy of rotation: “We do not claim that there should be no exceptions. For example, we ourselves have to insist that in the mother house the most competent workers [*Kräfte*] congregate and remain for as long as possible; but the general rule must be rotation.”⁴²⁰ Even the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau were not spared the fear of having to work “outside.” In March 1862, Stählin noted in a letter that from now on all deaconesses, beginning with those in Neuendettelsau, required a passport. She commented: “I hope it’s not an ominous sign for me.”⁴²¹ Obviously even she, an extraordinarily high identifier with the Institute and its aims, did not relish the prospect of submitting to the “system of rotation.”

In the spring of 1864, Löhe ceremoniously proclaimed a new policy. In the annual report, he stated that “the most sensible and most practical” amongst the deaconesses “employed here in the centre of all” were temporarily to be sent outside to establish new “stations.” In the meantime, their substitutes could

⁴¹⁸ 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862/63, 15.

⁴¹⁹ A detailed account of such a situation can be found in the correspondence between Löhe and Cäcilie Pöschel and Helene von Meyer, who worked in Hoffnungsthal, Odessa. The fourteen surviving letters were written between 13 January 1857 and 20 February 1860 [ZADN RII I].

⁴²⁰ 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862/63, 14.

⁴²¹ Stählin to her mother (09/03/1862), ThStI, 125. The regulation that all deaconesses needed “passport cards” [*Paßkarten*] to enable them to be placed away from the “mother house” had already been mentioned in an earlier letter from Stählin to her mother (16/02/1857), ThStI, 55. Here, the term “mother house” appears for the first time: “The sphere of operation [*Wirkungskreis*] of our deaconesses becomes ever broader. And all these [the deaconesses sent to America, to Odessa, and to regions nearer to Bavaria], no matter how dispersed, nevertheless regard our dear Institute as their mother house, as their home on earth, to which they return joyfully as soon as the chairman and the superintendent wish it.”

“mature” in the mother house which would enable them to “assume similar commissions and more difficult tasks.”⁴²² From one of Stählin’s letters, we gain some insight into how this was received by the deaconesses. According to Stählin, Löhe “solemnly, [and] at an unusual hour” called together all the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau from their various places of work to give them a “penitential sermon” [*Bußpredigt*] and to reprimand them for not contributing enough to attract new deaconess candidates. He then explained to them his plan. Stählin commented: “He presented the idea beautifully, as I am unable to in this haste, and it was, of course, accepted by us, although there were some protests [*Remonstrationen*], and Sister Elise [Steinlein], our dearest sister, was soon selected as the first victim, who is to go outside and set things right. Perhaps Doris [Braun] will soon need to take the same path.”⁴²³ In the same letter, Stählin hinted that the deaconesses’ “remonstrations” concerned the continuous expansion of the Institute’s “stations”. After Steinlein had left Neuendettelsau as the first “victim” [*Opfer*]⁴²⁴ to work in the hospital in Fürth, deaconess Katharina Hommel wrote to her: “Ida Adelberg will already have related to you all the news from our midst. What do you say about Doris? I felt sorry for her. It’s strange, isn’t it, that she and Pauline [Haag] also have to go far afield [*in die Ferne*].”⁴²⁵ Tragically, Steinlein’s placement “outside” proved fatal. Sent out with the firm promise that it would only be a matter of weeks before she could return to Neuendettelsau, she caught typhoid fever while nursing and died, aged thirty, in December 1864.⁴²⁶ In his funeral address, Löhe was at great pains to emphasize that Steinlein had volunteered to go to Fürth.⁴²⁷ Though in an official statement, Löhe claimed that Steinlein’s death had “sanctified and inaugurated” the policy of systematically

⁴²² 11. *Jahresbericht* 1863, 18.

⁴²³ Stählin to her sister Ida, undated (spring 1864), ThStI, 139.

⁴²⁴ “Opfer” can mean “victim”, “sacrifice” and “offering”.

⁴²⁵ Katharina Hommel to Elise Steinlein (21/10/1864) [ZADN E II, st1 (ms)]. This letter is phrased in a very personal, at times ironic tone, addressed to “Liebs guts Eliserl” and signed “Dein armseliges Schwesterlein Käthe.” Hommel had just received news that she was to work in the home for the mentally ill [*Gemüths- und Geisteskranken*] in Neuendettelsau: “For my sake, you can clap your hands. That’s quite appropriate, isn’t it, that one puts the mad to the mad. All right, they probably thought that from personal experience I would better be able to handle such people. I will be given men right from the start. I have so far only heard of polygamy [*Vielweiberei*], never of polyandry [*Vielmännerei*]. Well, here some things are possible which are not possible elsewhere. O what misery.”

⁴²⁶ For many years, the hospital in Fürth was notorious for the death rate amongst its nursing staff due to typhoid fever. In the curriculum vitae of Johanna Steinmeyer who died in 1882, Meyer called typhoid “the toll of Fürth” [*Fürther Tribut*], Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 182.

⁴²⁷ This is the phrasing in the unpublished version of the parentation [ZADN EII st1, ms]. The published version (“Schwester Elisabeth”, CorDiac 1865, No. 1, p. 1-4) is less emotional.

relocating deaconesses from the centre to the periphery,⁴²⁸ the practice was, in fact, discontinued. A year later, Löhe retracted: “We have made certain trials of this, and in some sense we say to the sisters: ‘The [experience of] alienation forms people [*die Fremde macht Leute*].’ But it is impossible to execute this as a rule and system.”⁴²⁹ He maintained that certain deaconesses were best left in the centre: “As anywhere, there are the more talented and the less talented, the multi-sided and the restricted, [there is] superordination and subordination; this is also the case in the profession of the deaconess. And here as little as in other professions the proud and peevish demand of equality is permitted. Here as everywhere the humble resignation into the God-given diversity and distinction is called for.”⁴³⁰

Thus, internal social stratification was an important aspect of the deaconess community, officially argued on the basis of the “God-given diversity” of its members. The ensuing elitism, however, required measures to retain the link between the centre and the periphery.

2.6.3. Retaining the link between “inside” and “outside”

For Löhe, the deaconesses who lived and worked within the mother house in Neuendettelsau had a specific function for the whole deaconess fellowship: “You are to nourish the hearth from which others fetch the fire.”⁴³¹ Löhe sought the “wise, understanding daughters”⁴³² in the mother house as allies and encouraged them to develop ideas how to further the internal cohesion of the community. The minutes of the chapter meetings of the Neuendettelsau deaconesses reveal that they discussed which of the probationary deaconesses was suitable to be fully initiated;⁴³³ they had a say in who was to be sent where; and they counselled individual deaconesses at the periphery who experienced difficulties.⁴³⁴

⁴²⁸ Cf. 11. *Jahresbericht* 1864, 18.

⁴²⁹ 12. *Jahresbericht* 1865/66, 25-26.

⁴³⁰ 12. *Jahresbericht* 1865/66, 26.

⁴³¹ Löhe to the deaconess chapter in Neuendettelsau (06/07/1859) from Karlsbad, CorDiac 1891, No. 12 and 1892, No. 1 (GW4, 714).

⁴³² Ibid., GW4, 713).

⁴³³ For example “Protokolle des Kapitels Neuendettelsau“ (23/03/1863) [ZADN DIII a].

⁴³⁴ For example “Protokolle des Kapitels Neuendettelsau“ (05/01/1863) [ZADN DIII a]: „Mit Schw. Marg[arethe] Schied, welche zum letzten Mal dem Kapitel [in Neuendettelsau während ihres Besuches] beiwohnt, redeten wir einiges über ihre

They were aware of their privileges and realized that identification on the part of the individual deaconess rested not least on physical closeness to the “centre.” In one chapter meeting, this was stated plainly:

We talked much about the deaconess matter [*Diakonissensache*], especially about the fact that the external deaconesses find it so difficult to adhere to the stricter deaconess rules. They often regard them as exaggerated and therefore as unfeasible. It would and will be a great benefit if the institutions here continue to expand, and more and more sisters will be stationed here. Only here one can truly grow into the deaconess matter. The best friends often don't understand what is conducive to a deaconess in her profession, and they do not know how to strengthen her therein.⁴³⁵

In this passage we find the clear indication of the existence of what Assmann has termed the “representative culture of the elite.”⁴³⁶ The culture of the centre, the “deaconess matter”, was upheld by a small elite which, however, stood for the collective identity of the whole community. The challenge was to exercise “vertical solidarity”⁴³⁷ and to develop means of drawing in deaconesses from the periphery into the centre, both physically and symbolically.

One obvious solution was to require all deaconesses to spend their annual holiday in Neuendettelsau. Such regulations were introduced when the Institute was restructured into a mother house. In 1857, the board of the Institute and the initiated deaconesses agreed to furnish a room which was to be reserved for deaconesses who spent their fortnight of holiday in the motherhouse.⁴³⁸ In the summer of 1858, this was accomplished, and from then on, five visiting deaconesses were accommodated in a room “in which they might find quiet, homely comfort.”⁴³⁹ The image of recreational luxury is somewhat spoilt by comments made elsewhere on the purpose of the time spent in Neuendettelsau.⁴⁴⁰ The deaconess who

Stellung in Altdorf und ermahnten sie zu fleißiger Correspondenz mit dem Mutterhaus, damit das Gefühl der Gemeinschaft und Zusammengehörigkeit erhalten und gemehret werde.“

⁴³⁵ “Protokolle des Kapitels Neuendettelsau“ (08/06/1863) [ZADN DIII a].

⁴³⁶ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 130.

⁴³⁷ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 130.

⁴³⁸ §2, “Protocoll über die Conferenz der Vorstände des Diaconissenhaus mit den ausgesegneten Diaconissen am 22. Juni 1857”, CorDiac 1857, No. 2 (August) [ZADN PV a1, ms].

⁴³⁹ Cf. MChMh (19/08/1858), CorDiac 1858, No. 9, p. 33.

⁴⁴⁰ Löhe here did not only think of the deaconesses on holiday but also those in between placements, cf. 6. *Jahresbericht* 1859/60, 21.

might have gained respect, recognition and esteem during her assignment elsewhere, should be reminded of “a truth” which is: “that she is a ‘servant’.”⁴⁴¹ While in Neuendettelsau,

she comes face-to-face with the governing body and a large number of her sisters, and there she must not present herself in a manner which the external service often almost obliges her to assume; she learns to renounce herself, and she meets the serious, admonishing eye of the governing body which requires her to consider what she is and what she should be.⁴⁴²

The ideal of a deaconess serving in the periphery was thus Janus-faced. She was clearly expected to be capable of switching between the skills required outside - the ability to assert herself and to “direct and govern her business,”⁴⁴³ to live in isolation, to face challenges, setbacks and perhaps opposition, to carve a pioneering path which inspired admiration, imitation, and donations, to show a “will which was steeled by the love to Jesus,”⁴⁴⁴ – and those required inside, including submission and full integration into the fellowship. Some sisters found high levels of job-satisfaction when outside the mother house, despite the Institute’s dire language of hostility and threat. The ensuing tendencies to autonomy clearly posed a threat to the directorate:

The deaconess in her profession easily loses interest in the mother house. Their work and the immediate relations thrust the thought into the background that they are members of a fellowship which has united for charitable objects. When they are drawn into the local life, they become accustomed to the pleasures, marks of respect and advantages of their respective occupations and become too much at home, thereby lose their standing [*Haltung*] and their striving, become useless for other fields of employment and increasingly lack the development for perfection [...]. If their passion is roused by a measure of the mother house which is not understood or misunderstood, if the deaconess who works and lives outside gains the impression that she is less respected and honoured in her mother house than in her profession, if taunts are added to this, as so easily happens, if, in a word, her selfishness is roused and her own person and interests emerge into the foreground: then, ‘good night’ to order and governance, nothing threatens more than that the deaconess becomes what she has never been meant to become, a salaried servant [*Lohndienerin*], common in mind, working little and nevertheless full of claims.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴¹ 6. *Jahresbericht* 1859/60, 20.

⁴⁴² 6. *Jahresbericht* 1859/60, 20.

⁴⁴³ 6. *Jahresbericht* 1859/60, 19.

⁴⁴⁴ Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, IX.

⁴⁴⁵ 6. *Jahresbericht* 1858/59, 19.

It is highly likely that such behaviour and attitudes were regarded as offensive precisely because they ran counter to bourgeois notions of femininity. The bid for (financial) independence⁴⁴⁶ and autonomy, prioritization of work, participation in public life, and the demonstration of strength of purpose were all considered characteristics of masculinity.⁴⁴⁷ In women, they showed “selfishness”. Perhaps for Löhe, such traits also revealed a relapse into the deaconesses’ “old nature”,⁴⁴⁸ when, as the orphaned daughters of peasants or small craftsmen, the women had had no choice but to attempt to make a living as a maid or domestic servant. In their new profession as deaconesses, however, the women were expected to adhere to bourgeois notions of femininity. This needed practice and had to be cultivated. Here, according to Löhe, the deaconesses of Neuendettelsau came into play. They, to whom the bourgeois (gender) characteristics were “innate” [*naturwüchsig*] and “spread across the whole being [...] both unassumingly and harmoniously”,⁴⁴⁹ were to teach “loyalty towards their motherhouse”, displayed “in obedience, in faith, in love” and emphasize that to be a deaconess meant to become “a humble maid of the Lord.”⁴⁵⁰ The “two parts of the whole community” consisting of “those serving outside and those who are in Neuendettelsau” were to seek to overcome any sense of estrangement.⁴⁵¹ Otherwise, according to Löhe, a vicious circle threatened: the visitors “do not feel enough acknowledgement and esteem. They find the people who, from year to year, work and pray for them cold, distanced, and drifting into ever further distance. They become sensitive, irritable, thoughts come, judgments arise.”

⁴⁴⁶ At this point, reference must be made to Löhe’s “deaconess verse”: “What do I want? I want to serve. Whom do I want to serve? The Lord in His miserable and poor. And what is my salary/ reward [*Lohn*]? I do not serve with either a salary/ reward or gratitude in mind [*weder um Lohn noch um Dank*], but for thanks and love [*aus Dank und Liebe*]. My salary/ reward is that I may. And what if I die in the course of it? If I die, I die, spoke Esther, who, however, did not even know JESUS, for whom I would die and who does not allow me to die. And what if I become old in the course of it? In this case, my heart will flourish like a palm-tree and the Lord will feed me with grace and mercy. I go in peace and do not worry about anything.” The verse was first published after Löhe’s death [CorDiac 1873, No. 5, p. 20], obviously at Meyer’s request, and is listed amongst others subsumed under the heading “[Entries] from our blessed *Herr Pfarrer Löhe* in sisters’ memorial books [*Aus Gedenkbüchern der Schwestern von dem sel. Herrn Pfarrer Löhe*].” This indicates that the “verse” was not written with programmatic intent but was rather addressed to an unknown individual sister. The autograph has never been found [cf. also Ganzert, *Erläuterungen*, GW4, 718]. The „deaconess verse” gained huge popularity in later years, amongst Löhe’s successors, especially Bezzel, and amongst other mother houses. In Kaiserswerth, Löhe’s “deaconess verse” was included in the 1901 house rules (cf. Köser, *Kollektive Identitäten*, 243). Though surely not contrary to Löhe’s own conception of the deaconess profession, its wide circulation in later years reflected the fact that it served as a useful slogan, which sharply differentiated the concept of the deaconess mother houses from rival concepts which emerged in the late nineteenth century and demanded (for instance) adequate remuneration.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. the list of “gender characteristics” in Hausen, *Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere*, 368.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. “Schwester Regine Elser”, CorDiac 1866, No 10, p. 38.

⁴⁴⁹ “Schwester Regine Elser”, CorDiac 1866, No. 10, p. 38.

⁴⁵⁰ Löhe to the deaconess chapter in Neuendettelsau (06/07/1859) GW4, 712-713.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., GW4, 712.

There was danger that deaconesses in this state sought the company of low-identifiers who would strengthen their suspicions and sense of estrangement: "They join members who, though they belong to the Institute, are not positioned in the centre of comprehension." It was the task of the Neuendettelsau deaconesses to ensure "the continuing spiritual, intellectual and mental education of the visiting deaconesses" and to stimulate the "renewed comprehension, clarification, strengthening and refreshment of all the occurrences in the large, developing Institute."⁴⁵²

However, as quickly became apparent, two weeks per year was little time to achieve this. The consolidation of collective identity could not be achieved by sporadic face-to-face contact and occasional participation in collective rites, when physical presence allowed. Other means of drawing deaconesses from the periphery into the centre, to the "hearth", needed to be found.

2.6.3.1. The Correspondenzblatt

The political scientist Benedict Anderson has argued for the importance of the "ceremony" of simultaneous newspaper-reading for the emergence of "imagined communities."⁴⁵³ Similar considerations can be observed in Neuendettelsau where, in 1857, the question was asked: "What could be done to stimulate the desirable communication between the deaconesses stationed outside and the mother house, and between themselves?"⁴⁵⁴ The answer was found in the launching of an in-house newsletter, the *Correspondenzblatt*.⁴⁵⁵ Initially, seven trial editions were copied manually, but all later editions were printed. The *CorDiac* was read not only by the deaconesses but also in circles

⁴⁵² Ibid., GW4, 713-714.

⁴⁵³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, for example 39.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. "Protocoll über die Conferenz der Vorstände des Diaconissenhauses mit den ausgesegneten Diaconissen am 22. Juni 1857", *CorDiac* 1857, No. 2 (August) [ZADN PV a1, mss].

⁴⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the deaconesses were not wholly discouraged from continuing to correspond privately as was emphasised in the conference of 1857 (cf. "Protocoll über die Conferenz der Vorstände des Diaconissenhauses mit den ausgesegneten Diaconissen am 22. Juni 1857", *CorDiac* 1857, No. 2 (August) [ZADN PV a1, mss]). Friedrich Meyer later reiterated this but gave explicit norms on the correspondence between deaconesses. In a section entitled "Watch your correspondence", he declared that letters amongst members of the fellowship were a "valuable means of keeping alive community." However, he gave certain warnings: not to write too many letters and not to expect too many and to "soak the pen in the spirit of truth, simplicity, modesty, and love." He objected to letters that fished for news. He emphasized that letters must not become "a bridge through which you carry the weaknesses and sins of your fellowship outside into the world." He recommended deaconesses to keep a small crucifix on their desks "to remind you of the discipline of truth and love in which you should conduct your correspondence" ("Von den Diaconissen und ihrem Beruf", *CorDiac* 1877, No. 5, p. 20).

beyond the immediate community. Both “friends of the cause”⁴⁵⁶ and deaconesses themselves were encouraged to attract further readers.⁴⁵⁷ In 1866, “Schw. D[oris Braun]” suggested that each deaconess should aim to sell at least six editions monthly. Craftily, she hinted that this would be in their own interest as the price of subscription could be reduced if the number of readers were raised.⁴⁵⁸

Löhe described the *Correspondenzblatt* as a “consultation room” [*Sprechsaal*] which had now been opened for all deaconesses, an idea that he said originated in similar institutions in America.⁴⁵⁹ All deaconesses were encouraged to contribute by submitting publishable material to the mother house.⁴⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the content of the newsletter was heavily dominated from Neuendettelsau. Indeed Löhe explained, “other than from the Neuendettelsau deaconess chapter, we have received no contributions [*Elaborate*] which would have been usable.”⁴⁶¹ This clearly indicates the existence of censorship in the “consultation room”. From March 1863, the editorship, hitherto exercised by *Konrektor* Lotze, was placed into the hands of the Neuendettelsau deaconesses.⁴⁶² Doris Braun somewhat reluctantly assumed the main responsibility.⁴⁶³ At regular intervals, the resident sisters in the mother house reported on developments in Neuendettelsau to prevent those working externally from “appear[ing] foreign in their own home [*erschieden [...] als fremd in ihrer Heimat*]” and to give them a sense of “their

⁴⁵⁶ For example “Berichte über auswärtige Diaconissenstationen, Mittheilungen aus Briefen, 3. Die Diaconissenblätter in einer Gemeinde”, *CorDiac* 1859, No. 3/ 4, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁷ For example “Der Kalender der Diaconissen-Anstalt Neuendettelsau auf das Jahr des Heils 1864”, *CorDiac* 1864, No. 2, p. 7.

⁴⁵⁸ D[oris Braun]: “An die Schwestern und Freunde”, *CorDiac* 1866, No. 3, p. 12. Deaconesses automatically received the *CorDiac*, and, initially, the subscription-fee of 30 kr. per annum, was taken from their salary (cf. “Anzeige”, *CorDiac* 1858, No. 2, p. 8, §7). This seems to have changed later as there were occasional problems with over-due payments. For example, a long letter from Sarah Hahn to Marie [Stählin?] (01/01/1865), includes the request: “Do pay the fee for the *Correspondenzblätter* to me” [ZADN EII st 1]. At the end of 1874, it was categorically declared that any overdue payments would exclude the debtor from receiving further editions (“Anzeige”, *CorDiac* 1874, No. 12, 48).

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 26.

⁴⁶⁰ Over the years, the deaconesses’ enthusiasm to contribute considerably waned, perhaps indicating that they felt increasingly marginalized in their “consultation room.” Meyer sought unsuccessfully to counter this with a strict guideline: “Every individual [deaconess] should regard it as her duty to at least once a year send a contribution to the news-let-ter so that it may become what it can be in the service of our noble cause” (“An unsere Schwestern”, *CorDiac* 1874, No. 5, p. 20). From 1879, Meyer himself assumed the editorship. This did nothing to increase the deaconesses’ commitment. Under Bezzel’s tenure, contributions by deaconesses ceased almost altogether.

⁴⁶¹ 9. *Jahresbericht* 1861, 10-11.

⁴⁶² Cf. 9. *Jahresbericht* 1861/ 62, 11 and “Protokolle des Neuendettelsauer Kapitel” (10/11/1862) [ZADN DIII a].

⁴⁶³ Cf. “Protokolle des Neuendettelsauer Kapitel” (10/11/1862) [ZADN DIII a].

belonging here [*ihre Hierhergehörigkeit*].”⁴⁶⁴ Another purpose was to enable them to explain the developments to “true foreigners [*wirklich Fremden*],” and thus to represent the Institute “outside.”⁴⁶⁵

Occasionally, external deaconesses openly criticized the Neuendettelsau sisters for being ignorant of the true challenges. For example, while she was stationed in Schleitz, Johanna Prey remarked in a letter to Therese Stählin: “How much temptation approaches those who stand outside! This, the noble ones ‘who possess’ in the dear mother house can hardly suspect!”⁴⁶⁶ To dispel such notions, Doris Braun dedicated a whole article to the challenges of serving “in the world”, obviously drawing on her personal experiences.⁴⁶⁷ Braun began by pointing out that the deaconess “is not a common, Christian girl,” who pursues her good works in her small sphere. Instead, as an “ambassador” [*Abgesandte*] of Christ, she stands as a public “way-marker” for all to see, as a “child of God” in opposition to the “children of the world.” Braun acknowledged that the spiritual nourishment of a deaconess “in the world” was meagre: Although she will attend church services regularly, “for the sake of giving an example,” she “will not find there what she seeks,” and will therefore be thrown back on her own devotional practices. The deaconess outside the mother house “comes into contact with the world, indeed, she must live amongst it and with it.” She finds herself in “a surrounding that is internally alien to her, distanced, her highest interests find no connection, a communion of saints on earth is, for her, only an article of faith; where she wants to become active, she is impeded by the most difficult prejudices against her whole order.” In contrast, observed Braun, the deaconess in the motherhouse “lives and works amongst her equals and [...] from morning to night feels supported and raised by the community and by the striving for one aim.” She can “dedicate herself to her profession without facing opposition or prejudices that

⁴⁶⁴ D[oris] Br[au]: “Das Rettungshaus in Neuendettelsau”, CorDiac 1861, No. 9, p. 33. Similar articles written by Neuendettelsau deaconesses are for example S[arah] H[ahn]: “Dettelsauer Weihnachtsfeier 1861”, CorDiac 1862, No. 1, p. 1-3, and Schw. G[ertrud Hahn]: “An die auswärtigen Schwestern von einer im Mutterhause angestellten Schwester”, CorDiac 1866, No. 6, p. 23-24.

⁴⁶⁵ D[oris] Br[au]: “Das Rettungshaus in Neuendettelsau”, CorDiac 1861, No. 9, p. 33.

⁴⁶⁶ Johanna Prenz to Therese Stählin (27/08/1859) from Schleitz [ZADN All m22].

⁴⁶⁷ D[oris] B[rau] included no direct reference to her place of work in her article “Die Diakonissin in der Welt. Von einer im Auslande dienenden Schwester”, in CorDiac 1862, No. 2, p. 7 and No. 3, p. 10-12. From October 1861, she worked as a teacher in an industrial school in Eisenach (MChMh, CorDiac 1861, No. 10 and 11, p. 37). Politically, Thuringia was a foreign country until the emergence of the German Reich in 1871. Braun returned to Neuendettelsau less than a year later, in July 1862, and never left again (MChMh (01/07/1862), CorDiac 1862, No. 9, p. 33).

need to be fought.” Furthermore, in Neuendettelsau she “receives daily nourishment through a multitude of spiritual and intellectual treats [*Genüssen*].” Braun conceded that the task of external deaconesses was much more difficult than that of the deaconesses in the mother house: “[T]here is no need to tell you, o deaconess in the world.” And yet, their exertions were necessary for the sake of mission: “If you only live quietly and in separation in the house or in the institution into which you have been called, you will only live for this, and for the rest of the population a deaconess will remain a mystery.” Braun admonished the deaconess “in the world” to “let her light shine before the people, so that they see her good works and praise the father in heaven and also the office of diakonia.” In hostile surroundings, deaconesses were called upon to show the heroism of martyrs: “Therefore, suffer, carry yourself as a sacred servant of the Lord in constant prayer, and live in God. Plunge daily into the floods of the passion of Jesus [...]” Braun concluded:

Your earthly home is your mother house, you only feel at home in the fellowship. Save the closer, more intimate relationships until you return to your sisters, with whom you share inner harmony, and for as long as you are separated, seek to remain with your home in as close contact as possible; beware of becoming alienated from your mother house and the fellowship, not externally, much less internally. You will drown in the currents of the conditions in the world if you separate from the whole. Bear in mind that you are a member of the large, sacred whole, and try to strengthen the sense of belonging through prayer and intercession.⁴⁶⁸

Clearly, Braun’s admonitions were exactly in line with the Institute’s norms. While assignments at the periphery and social interaction with outsiders were necessary for the sake of mission due to the community’s “universalist orientation”,⁴⁶⁹ the world outside Neuendettelsau was presented in ambiguous terms. The deaconess, like a man, must venture out, must even make herself conspicuous, become a “public way-marker” amongst the “children of the world” in order to serve as an “ambassador of Christ.” Yet for all her transgression into the public sphere, she was not to lose her femininity. For Braun, the deaconesses’ collective identity was consolidated by their piety, their distinct devotional practices, and the keeping of sacred times. These set the individual deaconess apart in alien surroundings and served to affirm her bond with her fellow-sisters in times of physical separation. Articles such as this were

⁴⁶⁸ D[oris] B[raun]: “Die Diakonissin in der Welt. Von einer im Auslande dienenden Schwester“, in *CorDiac* 1862, No. 3, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. Eisenstadt/ Giesen, *The construction of collective identity*, 83.

published in the CorDiac to strengthen the “imagined community” which comprised both the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau and those “in the world”.

2.6.3.2. Chapter Meetings

In addition to such articles in the CorDiac, the appointment of all deaconesses into chapters was similarly intended to minimize the centrifugal and maximize the centripetal forces. As early as 2 December 1856, the annals of the mother house recorded the formation of chapters:

In every town or region in which several deaconesses work, the deaconesses were amalgamated [*zusammengeschlossen*] into a chapter, that is a spiritual association, in order to strengthen the connection between the external [*auswärtigen*] deaconesses and the mother house, and for the purpose of communal edification and of exercising sisterly discipline amongst each other concerning behaviour and professional conduct.⁴⁷⁰

For the deaconesses, attendance at chapter meetings was to have priority over work. The mother house, in turn, promised to oblige employers to grant enough time for this.⁴⁷¹ When possible, the chapter-meetings took place on Sundays. Intercessions for the mother house and the other chapters were mandatory,⁴⁷² as was the circulation of a box for alms. Accounts had to be kept minutely and regularly disclosed for inspection by the directorate.⁴⁷³ The deaconesses were encouraged to pray the litany developed for the mother house and to read together one of the fifty-two lessons which the directorate had selected for this purpose.⁴⁷⁴ These were taken exclusively from the New Testament and seem to have been chosen for their parenetical tone or for their reference to the doctrine of Holy Communion.

⁴⁷⁰ MChMh (02/12/1856), CorIM 1857, No. 1, p. 4. However, the first chapter meeting in Neuendettelsau is only recorded more than a year later, MChMh (02/02/1858), CorDiac 1858, No. 1, p. 1-2.

⁴⁷¹ §9, “Anzeige”, CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 8.

⁴⁷² §6, “Ordnung der Diaconissen-Capitel”, CorDiac 1858, No. 7 (January) [ZADN PV a1].

⁴⁷³ §8, “Ordnung der Diaconissen-Capitel”, CorDiac 1858, No. 7 (January) [ZADN PV a1].

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. “Litanei für Diaconissen”, CorDiac 1858, No. 4 (October) [ZADN PV a1] and “Lectionen zur Auswahl bei Versammlungen der Diaconissenkapitel”, CorDiac 1857, No. 4 (October) [ZADN PV a1]. The readings were reprinted without substantial alteration in CorDiac 1871, No. 9, p. 36.

This reflects the disciplinary function of the chapters. Löhe repeatedly referred to Matthew 18 to underline the importance of exercising mutual discipline. However, equality was not intended. Instead, every deaconess chapter, no matter how small, was organized along strictly hierarchical lines. Each chapter was governed by a “superior” [*Oberin*] and a substitute, who were elected by the members but needed the approval of the mother house. The superior was responsible for sending a report on the deaconesses of the chapter to the mother house at least every three months. She could also be commissioned to enquire into the conduct of any deaconess at her place of work and check the satisfaction of employers. The institutional “panopticon”⁴⁷⁵ was further refined by the regulation that the substitute should report on the superior and by the provision that any deaconess could write a report on another deaconess of her chapter “if her conscience urges her.” She did, however, have to reveal her intentions to her superior.⁴⁷⁶ Minutes were kept on each meeting and were sent to the mother house for regular inspection.⁴⁷⁷

There is evidence that the deaconesses did, indeed, report deviating behaviour of fellow sisters to the mother house. In a letter from Bauer, provisional *Rektor* in the interim after Löhe’s death and before Meyer’s installment, to the probationary sister Anna Döbernitz, we read:

The fault of vanity and world-conformity which have already previously been detected in you and censored, and the resulting scandal [*Anstoß*] in conduct (I refer to Nördlingen) and various complaints of the same kind in Nuremberg have unfortunately not deserted you as I had wished and hoped. After a thorough inquiry and examination of the matter, the accusation of offensive

⁴⁷⁵ Cf. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 196-209. Foucault’s reflections are based on Bentham’s design of a “panopticon”, an architectural construction which, according to Foucault “induce[s] in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (201). Most important to this construction is the inmate’s ignorance of whether he or she is under surveillance or not. The degree of control is extreme: “An inspector arriving unexpectedly at the centre of the Panopticon will be able to judge at a glance, without anything being concealed from him, how the entire establishment is functioning” (204). The desired effect is to influence people’s actions: “Thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men’s [and women’s] behaviour” (204). Moreover, “[i]t is polyvalent in its applications; [...] It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons. Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used” (205). In the end, “it gives ‘power of mind over mind.’ The panoptic schema makes any apparatus of power more intense” (206).

⁴⁷⁶ §5, “Ordnung der Diaconissen-Capitel”, *CorDiac* 1858, No. 7 (January) [ZADN PV a1, mss].

⁴⁷⁷ For the disciplinary function of the chapter cf. “Protokolle des Neuendettelsauer Kapitels” (23/02/1863): “Schw. Ursula hardly every attends the chapter; she avoids any opportunity when we could talk together about her so offensive behaviour. It will be difficult to develop a right relation to Schw. Ursula [*mit Schw. Ursula ins rechte Verhältniß zu kommen*].” Unfortunately, no indication is given of the form of her “so offensive behaviour”.

[*anständig*] acts remains in your disfavour, which is irreconcilable with the seriousness [*Ernst*] of the deaconess profession, as for example the exchange of the deaconess dress with worldly [*weltlich*] dress and adornments [*Putz*] to have your photograph taken, [or] the accommodation of a strange man in your house with the intention of keeping it a secret; and you will not be able to deny those facts when face to face with creditable witnesses, some of them eye-witnesses.⁴⁷⁸

Pre-empting the outcome of any a tribunal, Döbernitz was immediately dismissed with no chance to give a personal statement: "To save you unnecessary expenses, we notify you that you need not come again and that your things will be dispatched to you." Bauer closed his letter by expressing the pious wish that "your soul may not take harm." The charge of having accommodated a "strange man" was clearly considered serious enough to justify an immediate dismissal. A virtuous woman, after all, had not only to be mindful of "inner morality" but also of the question: "What will people say?"⁴⁷⁹ Fellow deaconesses, fearful of "pulling down [the honour of chastity] with their white veils"⁴⁸⁰ accordingly denounced the black sheep, with the help of mechanisms provided by the Institute.

In a later version of the "Rules for Chapter-meetings", prompted by concerns expressed by both ecclesiastical and state authorities, the chapters were nominally placed under the authority of the local clergyman but "only in so far as concerns [their] religious edification". Clearly, no external interference in the mother house's exercise of control over the deaconesses was desired. Deaconesses were deemed to be members of the parish in which they worked but this stipulation was immediately qualified: it „only states the generally existing legal norms of the Protestant established church [*Landeskirche*]“ and "by no means implies a personal obligation for a deaconess to attend the celebrations of Holy Communion in a specific location."⁴⁸¹ The chapter-meetings were now also attended by the probationary deaconesses who, however, had no vote. Certain regulations were slightly adapted to the busy schedule of the deaconesses. Meetings were still preferably to be held weekly but, when this was not

⁴⁷⁸ Friedrich Bauer to Anna Döbernitz (16/09/1872) [ZADN Elc 17]. Döbernitz had entered the institution in 1868 ["Personalveränderungen", CorDiac 1868, No. 2, p. 8] and worked first in Nördlingen and then Nuremberg [last entry on her professional career in "Personalveränderungen", CorDiac 1870, No. 10, p. 50].

⁴⁷⁹ Campe, *Väterlicher Rath*, 20.

⁴⁸⁰ "Rede vom 16. Oktober 1866."

⁴⁸¹ § 1 and 2, "Ordnung der Diakonissenkapitel" (1860), published together with the revised statutes of 1868.

feasible, at least every two months. Although the liturgical formulas of the mother house still served as a model, “changes and abbreviations” were permitted as “required by location and time.”⁴⁸²

The chapters served a double purpose. The integration of deaconesses into chapters provided them with opportunities for socializing with each other and strengthening the bond with the “centre.” At the same time, the chapters helped to isolate the deaconesses from potentially centrifugal forces, or, in the language of the Institute, “protected [them] from influences through which they might cease to be carriers of those principles which were planted in them in the mother house.”⁴⁸³ To mitigate against this danger, the deaconesses were kept under strict surveillance.

2.6.3.3. Personal rule of life

The tendency to insulate the external deaconesses as much as possible from competing norms and values and from alternative models of living is especially obvious in the “personal rule of life especially for those employed in external stations” which mostly consisted of strict guidelines for behaviour towards non-members, especially men. A draft, entitled *Versuch einer Aufstellung von Regeln für Diakonissen*, in Löhe’s handwriting and with his signature,⁴⁸⁴ preceded the published version in 1866.⁴⁸⁵ This “attempt”, though undated, seems to have been circulated before 1863, and the deaconesses were involved in the process of the testing of its suitability for daily use. In the minutes of the Neuendettelsau chapter we read:

We also came to speak of the deaconess rules. Some sisters, who had already served outside, spoke of the great difficulties which sometimes mitigate against [the keeping of] some of the rules. It would be best if the external deaconesses were to report the real obstacles which emerge [to us] here so that the “attempt” could be turned into fixed rules.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸² §7, “Ordnung der Diaconissencapitel” (1860).

⁴⁸³ 5. *Jahresbericht* 1859, 18.

⁴⁸⁴ *Versuch einer Aufstellung von Regeln für Diakonissen* [ZADN Alle 15,4, mss].

⁴⁸⁵ *Regeln für das persönliche Leben der Diakonissen, insonderheit der auf auswärtigen Stationen angestellten*, published separately and CorDiac 1866, No. 4, p. 13-16.

⁴⁸⁶ *Protokolle des Neuendettelsauer Kapitels* (09/03/1863) [ZADN DIII a]. Quotation marks in the original source.

The published rules were indeed far less categorical in tone. For example, rule 3 in the “attempt” instructed that when a deaconess is travelling, she should not converse with men at all. In the published version, this rule is modified. The deaconess was instructed always to bear in mind the purpose of her journey:

Therefore she cultivates devotion and silence while travelling, does not make herself conspicuous, least of all by chattering or demonstrating her will or knowledge [*Wille oder Können*], but equally avoids demonstrative silence. Modest, un-affected quietness befits her best. In the unavoidable case of meeting men, she will keep to the line of decorum in such a manner that, when in doubt, she will rather appear too quiet and introverted than too liberal.⁴⁸⁷

Both the published and the unpublished rules referred explicitly to the “vow of honesty” [*Aufrichtigkeitsgelübde*].⁴⁸⁸ The unpublished version cited it in the context of warning against “young, unmarried clergymen”, while the published version broadened this circle to include “dignified” and “significant” men who could easily impress and even seduce a deaconess. The deaconesses were advised to avoid the vicinity of such men by declining invitations, whether of a private or a semi-public nature, and to make use of private confession and the sacrament “to escape the many temptations with a safe soul [*mit heiler Seele*].”⁴⁸⁹ In addition, the deaconesses were to monitor each other, for example by engaging a fellow sister as a companion for recreational walks, so that the other may “bear the necessary testimony and exercise control.” For these walks, solitary surroundings were presented as preferable to the “gathering places and playgrounds [*Sammel- und Tummelplätze*] of the world.”⁴⁹⁰ All this was clearly intended not least to keep the deaconesses away from potential candidates for marriage. In addition, the deaconesses were to be discouraged from forming alliances outside the range of the mother house, and any disputes or conflicts amongst them were to be kept carefully hidden from outsiders. In case of conflict, they should appeal to the directorate of the mother house. The published version also admonished deaconesses to keep a “quiet hour” or at least a “quiet half hour” as a means of retaining the necessary distinction from the world, from the “common maids and women.” They

⁴⁸⁷ No. 2, “Regeln für das persönliche Leben”, CorDiac 1866, No. 4, p. 13.

⁴⁸⁸ This will be discussed in Chapter 3.1.

⁴⁸⁹ No. 14, “Regeln für das persönliche Leben”, CorDiac 1866, No. 4, p. 15.

⁴⁹⁰ No. 13, “Regeln für das persönliche Leben”, CorDiac 1866, No. 4, p. 15.

should also abate in their intercessions for each other and for the mother house.⁴⁹¹ When possible, the external deaconesses' were to keep the "sacred times" simultaneously with the deaconesses in the mother house in order to establish a bond which could not be sundered by "worldly" influences.

2.6.3.4. Inspections

Finally, the institutional "panopticon" was perfected by the directorate's regular "inspections" [*Visitationen*], conducted by the *Rektor* and the superior. On the one hand, they were intended to supervise the work of the deaconesses, to ensure that the "instructions" [*Instruktionen*] which existed for every work-place were fulfilled and that the reports on their work which the deaconesses had to send to Neuendettelsau every four months were accurate. On the other hand, the "inspections" probed the personal life of deaconesses. This is starkly apparent in the open letter which Löhe wrote "to the sisters and probationary sisters" in 1863, which was subsequently published in the *CorDiac*. This was addressed to those deaconesses working outside of Neuendettelsau. Löhe stated that, generally, the authorities under whom the sisters worked were happy with their moral conduct. Löhe, in contrast, was less pleased: "Alas, the surroundings are prone to apply other standards than the ones the visitor brings with him from the mother house, and I must confess [...] that [...] I was often quite painfully surprised."⁴⁹² In Löhe's view, the training of a deaconess had the purpose of "raising her to a [certain] standpoint". In his opinion: "This standpoint, not the works of her profession, marks the difference between a deaconess and any other serving women. [...] What other servants do with the honest purpose of earning a living, a deaconess in the narrower sense does to please Jesus, out of love for him and for those whom he loves."⁴⁹³ The internalization of the mother house's standards was of vital importance to the "invention of a deaconess tradition"⁴⁹⁴ on which the survival of the mother house

⁴⁹¹ Instructions concerning the spiritual life of the deaconesses do not appear in the unpublished version.

⁴⁹² "An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern", *CorDiac* 1863, No. 7, p. 26.

⁴⁹³ "An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern", *CorDiac* 1863, No. 7, p. 26.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. Hobsbawm/ Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*.

depended: "The continual existence of a mother house depends most of all on the deaconesses themselves glowing for their task and profession, and on them being infused with a spirit which empowers them to raise worthy successors."⁴⁹⁵ The mother house would continue to abide by its norms and trust that the Lord would cause the "worm-eaten apples to fall from the deaconess tree" and to let the true deaconesses ripen and mature "in sunshine and rain."⁴⁹⁶

2.7. Conclusion

Within the deaconess profession, there was an inherent ambiguity. Deaconesses were required to venture out into the public sphere, both because their work took them into public hospitals, other institutions and congregations, and because they were intended to be carriers and representatives of certain ecclesiastical principles. The deaconess institution had a "universalist orientation", implying that the deaconesses were to be multiplying agents for Löhle's ideals of the true church. This was Löhle's fundamental motivation when founding the Deaconess Institute in 1854. The deaconesses, however, mostly had a bourgeois background, and the "societal attitude" of the bourgeoisie allotted to women the private sphere. As a result, the women greatly promoted the restructuring of the Institute into a mother house which gave them a sphere in which they had some influence and creative leeway within the limitations of a deeply patriarchal household. This, however, was only true for the well-educated, middle-class deaconesses resident in the mother house. The deaconesses working in the periphery tended to be less well-educated and were often the daughters of non-academic parents. In the eyes of the Institute, they were in danger of placing their work above their allegiance to the fellowship. Greatly encouraged by the directorate, therefore, the deaconesses resident in Neuendettelsau attempted to strengthen the ties between the centre and the periphery, applying both repressive measures and offering means of identification. The bourgeois virtues of filial obedience and female submission were

⁴⁹⁵ "An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern", CorDiac 1863, No. 8, p. 32.

⁴⁹⁶ "An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern", CorDiac 1863, No. 8, p. 32.

valued as primary norms. Additionally, the deaconesses' religious identity served as an important means of consolidating internal cohesion. This aspect will now be explored further.

Chapter 3: Constructing a threshold. The initiation ceremony

In the social sciences and especially in ritual theory, initiation rites are understood as a means to establish group cohesion, consolidate collective identity, and effect and display status elevation.⁴⁹⁷ Accordingly, the initiation ceremony in Neuendettelsau can be interpreted as an important institutional mechanism which clearly marked the threshold, protected the community from a too profuse penetration of its core, and provided an opportunity for explicating in a more or less encoded form the norms, values, and orientations which were prevalent in the community and regarded as constitutive for the existence of a deaconess. In turn, the ceremony's interpretation by the male *Rektoren* reflects their understanding of the deaconess vocation. Therefore, the first part of this chapter offers a short outline of the order of the ceremony and analyses the various *Rektors'* perceptions of the deaconess profession. These were explicated in publications intended for a wider readership such as the annual reports and the CorDiac, and also in sermons given to the deaconess community. It emerges that Löhe's conception of the deaconess profession differed considerably from that of the next *Rektor* but one, Bezzel, which tended to reflect the claims, fears, and reservations voiced by the ecclesiastical authorities. These different conceptions of the deaconess profession reflected specific (theological) understandings of the initiation ceremony. The initiation ceremony itself will be analysed in detail in the second part of the chapter.

⁴⁹⁷ This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.5.1. and 3.5.2.

3.1. The order of the ceremony

3.1.1. The published liturgical formulas

3.1.1.1. The Aussegnung

The first published liturgical order for the *Einsegnung* of deaconesses appeared in December 1855, with the introductory remark that this formula had already been used several times.⁴⁹⁸ By the time the unaltered liturgical order was reprinted as an appendix to the institution's *Ordnung des täglichen Hausgottesdienstes* [Order for daily prayer] in 1857, the term "*Aussegnung*" had become established for this rite.⁴⁹⁹ This, as Löhe explicitly pointed out, was to distinguish the ceremony in Neuendettelsau from the rite in Kaiserswerth, where it was called "*Einsegnung*".⁵⁰⁰ In the very first years, the *Aussegnung* was performed immediately after the training-courses had been completed and just before the departure of the deaconesses from the institution. It was therefore regarded as a ceremony of blessing at the moment of saying farewell and of sending out. That this underlying meaning was understood less and less is evidenced by the fact that the term *Einsegnung* was always used alongside the term *Aussegnung*, especially in unofficial documents.⁵⁰¹

The ceremony began with a hymn, usually the hymn *Herzlich lieb hab' ich dich, o Herr* [Lord, thee I love with all my heart]. Written by Martin Schalling in Strasbourg in 1567, the three verses follow a common theological pattern of gospel (first verse), law (second verse), and eschatological anticipation (third verse). The reading of four lessons followed, each ending with the response "Praise to you, O King of Eternal Mercy": Matthew 20: 20-28, John 13: 1-17, Matthew 25: 31-46 and Romans 16: 1-16. The first three passages underline the Christological orientation of *diakonia*, whilst the last lesson was chosen because in it, Paul sends a message to Phoebe, "the deacon", who, according to tradition, was the first

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. "Die Einsegnung der in ihren Wirkungskreis abgehenden Diakonissen in Neuendettelsau," CorIM 1855, No. 2; also in GW 4, 347-350. By the end of the year 1855, thirteen deaconesses had been dismissed from the deaconess house with a blessing, cf. "Verzeichnis der ausgesegneten Diaconissen", CorDiac 1857, No 1 (July) and No. 2 (August) [ZADN PV a1]

⁴⁹⁹ "Ordnung der Aussegnung der zu entlassenden Diaconissen" (1857), 45-51.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. "Rede vom 4. April 1857".

⁵⁰¹ Stählin to her sister Ida (16/02/1858) ThStl, 75-76; Stählin to her mother (21/06/1864) ThStl, 141.

bearer of the Apostolic office of deaconess. There followed a sermon which could be of substantial length. The ceremony continued with Psalms, 20 and 67, both expressing blessing and encouragement, spoken responsorially, followed by three collects. The first was a prayer for grace and mercy to convey the strength to accomplish “what is right”; the second was a prayer for protection so that “the humble” may be safe from the “weapons of enmity”; and the final collect was a prayer for peace for the “maiden” [Magd], so that “our hearts may obey your commandments and we may live quietly and safely from enemies under thy protection in our times.” Then words of blessing were spoken, followed by the Lord’s Prayer during which the superior and other chosen deaconesses laid their hands in blessing on the candidate(s). Löhe explained that he refrained from the laying-on of hands himself to prevent the ceremony from being mistaken for an ordination. Nevertheless, the clergyman spoke the final blessing, thereby “giving to the whole ceremony the seal of ecclesiastical approval and testifying that in the church all action emerges from the holy office and is subject to the specific direction and superintendence [of that office].”⁵⁰²

3.1.1.2. The Einsegnung

From 1867, the rite of *Aussegnung* was complemented with the rite of *Einsegnung*.⁵⁰³ The order of service for this dual structure was first published in 1870.⁵⁰⁴ The first part as the *Aussegnung* was left unaltered but after the Lord’s Prayer, an ancient ordination prayer [*das alte Weihegebet*] for deaconesses was spoken by the *Rektor* during which he himself laid his hands in blessing on the candidate(s).⁵⁰⁵ This prayer, taken from the Apostolic Constitutions, places the deaconess in the tradition of scriptural women who were filled with God’s spirit. Additionally, it asks for “purity from the defilement of the flesh and the spirit” for “thy maiden who is set apart for service [*deine Magd, die zum*

⁵⁰² “Die Einsegnung der in ihren Wirkungskreis abgehenden Diakonissen” (1855), GW4, 348.

⁵⁰³ “Chronik des Mutterhauses 1867-1882” (08/05/1867). The generic term for the initiation ceremony in Neuendettelsau from 1867 became “*Einsegnung*” to signify the joint ceremony of “*Aussegnung*” (the first part of the service) and “*Einsegnung*” (the second part of the service). This term, however, was not used consistently and even in later years, the term “*Aussegnung*” can be found to signify the initiation ceremony. To avoid confusion, I will consistently speak of “initiation ceremony” and only use the terms “*Aussegnung*” and “*Einsegnung*” to distinguish between the first and the second part.

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. “Ordnung der Aus- und Einsegnung der Diakonissen” (1870), 90-99.

⁵⁰⁵ “Ordnung der Aus- und Einsegnung der Diakonissen” (1870), 96.

Dienste verordnet wird].” After a hymn of praise, a final prayer follows, which thanks God for uniting the elect into one congregation [*Gemeinde*] and fellowship [*Genossenschaft*] and asks for “grace, that we may follow the blessed saints through faith in all virtues and in divine life, so that at the end it may be given to us to enter to the unspeakable joys which thou hast prepared for all who love thee without falsehood.” There followed the celebration of Holy Communion. In his *Aphorisms of the New Testament*, Löhe explained that this constituted an ordination, conveyed in an act which was “formally the same” as the ordination of the presbyter but “different in content” because a different consecration prayer was used.⁵⁰⁶ The reason for this addition and its timing is not clear. In an address given in 1868, Löhe mentioned that previously, only the *Aussegnung* had been performed in Neuendettelsau but added: “now that the deaconess house [in] Neuendettelsau has gained firmer ground, one has had the courage also to grant the *Einsegnung* to the candidates, so that they also receive the blessing of the church.”⁵⁰⁷ This suggests that Löhe had come to regard the office of deaconess as firmly re-established in the church. Perhaps this conviction had been strengthened by the closer approximation to Kaiserswerth.⁵⁰⁸

3.1.2. The unpublished additions

From 1857, the deaconesses were required to make a “vow of honesty” [*Aufrichtigkeitsgelübde*] which followed the address and was confirmed by a hand-shake between the deaconess and the pastor.⁵⁰⁹ The vow demanded of the deaconesses to be “honest in all sexual matters and to regard every approach by a man as a matter of confession to the pastor of the mother-house.”⁵¹⁰ When this vow came to be known, it caused consternation amongst the church authorities, as will be discussed later.

⁵⁰⁶ *Aphorismen über die neutestamentlichen Ämter*, GW 5/1, 314.

⁵⁰⁷ “Rede vom 16. Oktober 1868.”

⁵⁰⁸ In 1865, Neuendettelsau was represented at the “general conference” of mother houses in Kaiserswerth for the first time. Rehm and Stählin were sent as delegates (cf. Rehm and Stählin to Löhe (23-24/09/1865) [ZADN AI m]). The closer contacts with other mother houses may have renewed questions about the particularities of the Neuendettelsau initiation (cf. AuKF 1856, July and August, pp. 5-6). The minutes of the chapter-meeting of probationary deaconesses reveal that Stählin reported on the Kaiserswerth conference (03/10/1865) and that the differences between the Neuendettelsau *Aussegnung* and the ceremony of *Einsegnung* in other mother houses were discussed, “so that when someone asks us outside [*draußen*] we may give explanations [*Rede und Antwort geben*]” (“Protokolle des Probeschwestern-Kapitels” (12/10/1865) [ZADN DIII a]).

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. “Rede vom 4. April 1857”. Hardly surprising, when this address was published in the *Correspondenzblatt* much later (CorDiac No. 5, 1917), the end of the address was left out.

⁵¹⁰ Cited from 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 29. Cf. also “Rede vom 4. April 1857”.

Löhe defended himself by claiming that the vow also applied to the students and probationary deaconesses – hardly a reassuring observation – and that he did not wish to discourage anyone from marrying.⁵¹¹ Yet clearly it was to allow the Institute to take some influence. In internal communication, Löhe sometimes spoke less subtly. In an initiation ceremony, he preached to the deaconesses: “Your sacred vow of honesty is a vow of chastity and that should be sacred to you at all times. Your open gaze of fidelity and innocence should remain with you up to the grave.”⁵¹²

His ambiguous stance to vows came to a climax when, in 1861, the deaconesses were required for the first time to make an explicit pledge [*Verpflichtung*] at the end of the address. Löhe explained in his sermon that, as a sign of loyalty to God, the “fellowship [*Genossenschaft*]” demanded of the deaconesses the sacred promises of moral integrity [*Unbescholtenheit*], which was already explicated in the “vow of honesty”, but also of poverty and obedience, on all of which concepts Löhe had dwelt in his sermon. Interestingly, Löhe seems not to have prepared the deaconesses for this first use of the pledge. At the end of the address, Löhe conceded: “You will be surprised by what I present to you here, but you will give the ‘Yes’ and ‘Amen’ which I require of you joyfully.” Hardly surprising, the notes of the address testify universal compliance.⁵¹³ Löhe referred to this addition in an entry into his diary on that day: “For the first time pledge [*Verpflichtung*]” to a “service in chastity (honesty), poverty (nobility), obedience (striving for well-roundedness [*Allseitigkeit*] and perfection), and coherence [*Zusammenhalt*] with those whom one joins.” This was intended to strengthen “the covenant with the mother house and the fellowship” and to emphasize that a deaconess could “not merely receive” without “giving.”⁵¹⁴

Principally, Löhe refuted the Roman Catholic theological underpinning of vows. He pointed out that the deaconesses were free to leave any time; unlike Kaiserswerth deaconesses, they were not even

⁵¹¹ In later times, the vow was often taken earlier, often during the period of probation, cf. “Protokolle des Probeschwestern-Kapitels” (16/07/1864) [ZADN DIII a].

⁵¹² “Rede vom 21. Dezember 1867”.

⁵¹³ Cited from “Rede vom 12. April 1861”.

⁵¹⁴ Löhe’s diary (12/04/1861), GW4, 694.

pledged to remain for a certain period.⁵¹⁵ Nevertheless, Löhe regarded the deaconess profession ideally as a life-long vocation.⁵¹⁶ In 1865, disturbed by the fact that about 40 per cent of the initiated deaconesses left the Institute permanently, mostly to marry,⁵¹⁷ Löhe articulated his incomprehension at the assumption “that wholly voluntary vows of chastity contradict God’s Word and God’s way of salvation.” He thought that it did not attest to “confessional faithfulness” if, “in hyper-Protestant [fashion], one represses desired vows.”⁵¹⁸ Nevertheless, he cautioned that “a solitary deaconess -leader” could not simply accept and thus encourage the taking of vows “though it may conform to his insight and his conscience,” for this would throw those who took vows “into an ocean of contradictions” and possibly tribulations. Instead, Löhe maintained:

The cognizance must be with the church, and the power of unanimous consent must act on the soul of the person who took vows; then, they will become a mighty, strong support for the weak. Therefore, as long as 1 Cor 7 has not become an ecclesiastical conviction and [as long as] the acceptance of a well-considered vow cannot constitute a public and ecclesiastically sanctioned act, neither an individual nor an individual fellowship must accept vows.”⁵¹⁹

Consequently, deaconesses had to be “heroines of their own right convictions.”⁵²⁰ They voluntarily pledged themselves, in a truly “Evangelical” sense, to a life in poverty, chastity, obedience, though “as yet” not by vows.⁵²¹ The beginning of this commitment was celebrated in the initiation ceremony: “Because you have decided to join the sisterhood here, from now on your life belongs to here, and you will break to pieces [*zerbrechen*] if you separate yourself from it, a tie which you have voluntarily entered.”⁵²²

In almost every initiation ceremony Löhe grappled with the difference between, on the one hand, the “vow of honesty” and the deaconesses’ voluntary adherence to the “four deaconess virtues” [*vier*

⁵¹⁵ Cf. for example 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 28; 11. *Jahresbericht* 1863/64, 20. The Kaiserswerth deaconesses committed themselves for five years at a time, cf. §5, “Grundsätze des evangelischen Vereins für christliche Krankenpflege in der Rheinprovinz und Westfalen”, in: Philippi, *Vorstufen*, 205-207, here: 206.

⁵¹⁶ 9. *Jahresbericht* 1861/62, 13-14.

⁵¹⁷ The data is based on a roll-book evidently composed within the community in 1984 [ZADN EI b, type-written]. Similarly, Kantzenbach, *Evangelischer Geist und Glaube*, 196, states that 45% left the community, without, however, revealing his sources.

⁵¹⁸ 12. *Jahresbericht* 1864/65, 17.

⁵¹⁹ 12. *Jahresbericht* 1864/65, 18.

⁵²⁰ 12. *Jahresbericht* 1864/65, 18.

⁵²¹ 9. *Jahresbericht* 1861/62, 13.

⁵²² “Rede vom 26. September 1858.”

Diakonissentugenden] chastity, obedience, poverty, and “gentleness” [*Friedfertigkeit*],⁵²³ and, on the other hand, monastic vows. This attests that he, though in principle refuting the Roman Catholic theological understanding of vows, in practice wished the deaconesses to consider themselves pledged in much the same way as Roman Catholic nuns.

3.2. Löhe’s conception of the deaconess office

In Chapter 2, we have established that the Deaconess Institute’s development deviated from Löhe’s original intention. Löhe’s theological underpinning of the deaconess office shifted accordingly. Initially, he maintained his view, first articulated in the *Aphorisms of the New Testament* (1848), that deacons and deaconesses in ancient times had held an ecclesiastical office. Therefore, (male) deacons and deaconesses were ordained.⁵²⁴ Löhe emphasised that if the office of (male) deacons or deaconesses were revived, they merited an ordination.⁵²⁵ However, in 1855 Löhe regarded this as not yet having been achieved. He wished to postpone ordaining deaconesses until the office had truly been re-established as integral to the church.

When the Institute was restructured into a mother house, this rationale changed. While the ancient deaconesses such as Phoebe and Olympias were still set before the deaconesses as models,⁵²⁶ and while Löhe still emphasised that the deaconesses’ calling was, “in female fashion” to assist the ordained clergymen, to build up “right-minded congregations” [*rechte Gemeinden*] on virgin ground or to improve the existing congregations, “igniting them for the love of Christ,”⁵²⁷ Löhe now argued that not only did the ecclesiastical office of deaconesses needed to be revived but that the whole church must be reformed before this could happen:

⁵²³ In 1863, “gentleness” was added to the “cloverleaf” of deaconess virtues to make it “four-leaved”, 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862/63, 15.

⁵²⁴ Cf. “Die Einsegnung der in ihren Wirkungskreis abgehenden Diakonissen in Neuendettelsau” (1855), GW4, 357.

⁵²⁵ Löhe, *Aphorismen über die neutestamentlichen Ämter*, GW 5/1, p. 314; *Die Einsegnung* (1855), GW4, 347-348.

⁵²⁶ “Von den Diakonissen”, *CorDiac* 1858, No. 2, p. 3; No. 3, p. 6.

⁵²⁷ “Von der Barmherzigkeit”, GW4, 522.

But although we must be thankful to the Reformation and although we have to admit that in modern times, the Protestant churches have in their own way put into practice what the ancient times contrived, we must nevertheless admit that the deaconess of the nineteenth century differs from the deaconess of the ancient church. She is not the parochial deaconess who originates from the congregation, but rather a Protestant copy [*Nachbild*] of a Roman Catholic Sister of Mercy and, under current conditions, cannot be anything else. Because there are no congregations such as those of primitive times, there can be no deaconesses such as those of primitive times. [...] All in all, brother- and sisterhoods are not the sign of a dead church, but rather [a sign] of the persistent existence of a strong good will. Because of the debauchery in the churches of the masses, they are the bearers of light. It is in no one's power to change this.⁵²⁸

In the mean-time, the contemporary deaconesses needed to take refuge in separate communities. From about 1857, Löhe therefore had tended to take Roman Catholic post-Reformation sisterhoods as a model. By refuting the notion that the nineteenth-century deaconess was a revival of the ancient deaconess, Löhe wished to differentiate his own from similar projects, especially Kaiserswerth.⁵²⁹ The Neuendettelsau "fellowship" [*Genossenschaft*]⁵³⁰ as a "community of love" was to represent the "church of God on earth" and "the congregation [*Gemeinde*] of saints".⁵³¹ The finding that Flidner developed his conception of a deaconess in a spirit of rivalry and demarcation from the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy,⁵³² which, over time, increased,⁵³³ does not corroborate with findings in Neuendettelsau. The CorDiac included several articles presenting the organization and work of Roman Catholic congregations,⁵³⁴ deaconesses were encouraged to read the (auto)biographies of Sisters of Mercy,⁵³⁵ and their principles were discussed in the deaconess chapters. For example at a meeting on 20 April 1863:

⁵²⁸ "Von der Barmherzigkeit", GW4, 519.

⁵²⁹ Von der Recke had been considering introducing deaconesses as collaborators in his Rettungshaus since 1835. Theodor Flidner also evoked the ancient office of deaconess to legitimate his undertaking, cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 94-95, 106-107; and Philippi, *Vorstufen*, 208-209.

⁵³⁰ In Neuendettelsau, the equivalent term for "sisterhood" (signifying the community of sisters) was „*Genossenschaft*“. This term was taken from Roman Catholic terminology: *Genossenschaft* was the generic term for both the traditional contemplative "orders" and the active "congregations" [*Kongregationen*], cf. Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 69, footnote 3. I will consistently translate "*Genossenschaft*" with "fellowship".

⁵³¹ "Von der züchtigenden Liebe", CorDiac 1858, No. 4/5, 19.

⁵³² Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 95 and 110.

⁵³³ Köser, *Kollektive Identitäten*, 90.

⁵³⁴ Cf. "Die kleinen Schwestern der Armen", CorDiac 1864, No. 5, 17-20; No. 6, 22-24; "Die barmherzige Schwester. Darstellung eines römischen Katholiken, die Schwestern zur Prüfung und zum Eifer zu reizen", CorDiac 1865, No. 12, 47-48. Cf. also Löhe's open letter to the sisters and probationary sisters, printed CorDiac 1863, No. 8, p. 31.

⁵³⁵ In an initiation address, Löhe mentioned that the deaconesses had jointly read the correspondence between a member of the "Order of the Good Shepherd" and her mother, cf. "Rede vom 17. September 1867". In "On Mercy", Löhe recommended reading the reports on Sisters of Mercy by F.J. Buß, Clemens Brentano, Clemens August Droste v. Vischering, Johann Hermann Schmidt and Wulf, cf. Von der Barmherzigkeit, GW4, 516.

From Sailer's *Homilies*, an address was read given at the clothing of a nun. The address is very beautiful and quite appropriate [*passend*] for us. The excerpt which we read is about the right spirit of a monastery and explains the three great words of poverty, chastity and obedience.⁵³⁶

Löhe did not shy away from using vocabulary which resonated with Roman Catholic conceptions when admonishing the deaconesses:

Unite into a fellowship [*Genossenschaft*], discern the beauty that you may come together to live a communal life under a rule, safe from the temptations of the world. [...] It must be your sacred intention to strive for unity. Do not take heed if the world says differently. You will not become happy for this world, and for this world you will be nothing at all, if you do not achieve unity and renew yourselves daily for this sacred business of the inner, moral life. The blessing of your spiritual life, the bond of your withdrawal [*Abgeschiedenheit*] from the world will have its effect on others and will stir up the wish to become what you are.⁵³⁷

In line with Roman Catholic teaching, Löhe, unlike Fliedner,⁵³⁸ preached that the two “estates” [*Stände*] of female life, that of spouse and “virgin”, were equally valid,⁵³⁹ thus subverting the traditional Protestant and bourgeois notion that allowed only matrimony for women. Instead, Löhe wished the deaconesses to “pay tribute to the equal dignity of both states in their practice and in their lives,”⁵⁴⁰ and explicitly sought to rehabilitate the social standing of “old maids”, not by exposing the injustice of structures which led to their social exclusion but by arguing that, as deaconesses, single women chose a path which prevented them from “showing hardness in their older age” and enabled them to “follow their path of life youthfully gently, joyfully, in female obedience.”⁵⁴¹ Thus, the bourgeois concept was not relinquished but rather reshaped by a religious conception: the women were not to remain autonomous and independent but should regard themselves as “betrothed to Christ”. In this way, they could develop “femininity” without an earthly husband. In consequence, the initiation ceremony was celebrated as a rite of betrothal. This is reflected, for example, in a description of an initiation ceremony in 1857:

Mrs Paul[ine] Meyer from Nördlingen, Maria Berger from Löwenberg in Silesia and Amalia Müller from Nördlingen were solemnly initiated [*eingesegnet*] into their deaconess profession [*Beruf*]. Because the first of the candidates celebrated the anniversary of her engagement to her

⁵³⁶ “Protokolle des Neuendettelsauer Kapitels” (20/04/1863) [ZADN DIII a]. Johann Michael Sailer (1751-1832) was a member of the *Erweckungsbewegung* in the Allgäu and later became bishop of Regensburg.

⁵³⁷ “Rede vom 2. Februar 1866.”

⁵³⁸ Cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 110.

⁵³⁹ Cf. Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 74.

⁵⁴⁰ 12. *Jahresbericht* 1864/65, 18.

⁵⁴¹ “Rede vom 17. September 1867.”

late husband today, *Pfarrer* Löhe compared the day of initiation with a day of engagement and demonstrated why the celebration of the day on which one gives oneself away to an earthly bridegroom is inferior to the celebration of the day on which one becomes engaged to the eternal bridegroom of souls, when one offers all one's powers of body and soul to Him, who knows how to recompense before the world even the most humble services and judges them worthy to be rewarded by grace [*eines Gnadenlohns würdig erachtet*].⁵⁴²

It is evident that Löhe was trying to convince the women that their interests would be better catered for through their deaconess vocation than in the state of bourgeois matrimony: while they were expected to render "all the powers of body and soul" in both states, as a "bride of Christ" [*eine Gottverlobte*]⁵⁴³ they could at least expect some kind of compensation: their names would be "written in the books of life" and they would never be forgotten.⁵⁴⁴ In the course of strengthening the deaconesses' religious motivation and boosting their self-esteem, Löhe did not shrink from overriding (or at least relativizing) Reformatory insights.⁵⁴⁵

Even after 1857, however, the notion that the deaconesses held an ecclesiastical office as a mandate received from the church and directed towards church-members, albeit one subordinated to the presbyteral office held by the clergymen, was never relinquished. The deaconesses were to regard the practice of charity as the "holy, incessant duty of [their] office."⁵⁴⁶ To become a parochial deaconess was declared the "most beautiful aim", the pinnacle of the deaconess profession.⁵⁴⁷ In this sense, the initiation ceremony was likened to an ordination:

On this day, they received a grace, a sacred asset [*ein heil. Gut*] for their office, through the prayers of so many, which were spoken in a certain, solemn way for them [*die in einer bestimmten feierlichen Beziehung für sie geschähen*] and which will be answered as they

⁵⁴² MChMh (06/05/1857), CorIM 1857, No. 6, p. 23.

⁵⁴³ This was the Neuendettelsau terminology for the deaconess state in all genres of texts, cf. for example "Rede vom 29. Juni 1857", "Zur Selbstprüfung der Probeschwestern", CorDiac 1865, No. 8, p. 30; "On Mercy", CorDiac 1860, No. 4/5, p. 19.

⁵⁴⁴ "Rede vom 6. Mai 1857".

⁵⁴⁵ This became associated with the Neuendettelsau deaconess house to such an extent that Löhe's successors were obliged to clarify the doctrinal stance of the Neuendettelsau community and to distance themselves from Roman Catholic doctrine even up to the second half of the twentieth century, cf. for example [Theodor Schober]: "Berufung und Gelübde", CorDiac 1960, No. 5/6, p. 21-31.

⁵⁴⁶ "Von der seligen Übung der Barmherzigkeit", CorDiac 1858, No. 4/5, p. 17.

⁵⁴⁷ "Von den Diakonissen", CorDiac 1858, No. 2 (March), p. 7.

advance, like the gushing of the wind at Pentecost. With the ceremony of the *Aussegnung* was linked the celebration of Holy Communion.⁵⁴⁸

In the address which Löhe gave at this *Aussegnung* in 1857, he explained that the ceremony was “of equal dignity to an ordination.”⁵⁴⁹ This high esteem was not lost upon the deaconesses. Therese Stählin, one of the deaconesses initiated that day, later enthused in a letter to her mother:

My dear mother, I have now already been blessed [*eingesegnet*] for more than eight days and I still haven't written to you about the wonderful day, nearly the most wonderful of my life. Now, a new period of life begins for me, a period of joyful service and work in the Lord. And what a blessing it is to be able to work here, where one gives the little one has to offer to others and, in return, receives so much more! Dearest mother, how have I earned all this grace! I am not worthy of all mercy and loyalty which the Lord has shown me. I have now placed myself into His service, with all I am and possess. All my work is now an offering to Him. As a priest I stand before my God and in all I do, I do priestly works. My feet are now placed on the narrow path, from which I will never diverge, for as long as I live. I have already engaged my soul and it shall be His for ever.⁵⁵⁰

The self-confidence which a deaconess derived from the ceremony and the consciousness of having been entrusted with a valuable office is unmistakable in this passage, even if one takes into account that the priestly works of which Stählin wrote were, in Löhe's address, interpreted in the Lutheran sense of the priesthood of all believers: that all works Christians do are priestly works when offered to God. However, Löhe also introduced the notion of a succession in the deaconess office through the laying-on of hands. This becomes apparent in the initiation of Amalie Rehm on 2 February 1858. Löhe explained to the community that “it has long been felt to be erroneous that she, who has already so often held her hands in blessing above the heads of deaconesses had not yet been blessed herself.”⁵⁵¹ In this case, the laying-on of hands was performed by Löhe, *Konrektor* Lotze and *Inspektor* Bauer, that is three male, ordained clergymen. Simultaneously, Rehm received the new title of “honourable superior [*würdige Frau Oberin*].”⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁸ MChMh (04/04/1857), CorIM 1857, No. 6, 22. It is telling that the editor omitted some words from the original mss entry in the annals which reads: “With the ceremony of the *Aussegnung* was linked the vow of honesty in all sexual matters and the celebration of Holy Communion” [Chronik des Mutterhauses (04/04/1857)].

⁵⁴⁹ “Rede vom 4. April 1857.”

⁵⁵⁰ Stählin to her mother (13/04/1857) ThStI, 64.

⁵⁵¹ Stählin to her sister Ida (16/02/1858) ThSt I, 75; cf. also MChMh (02/02/1858), CorDiac 1858, No. 1 (February), 1.

⁵⁵² Cf. MChMh (02/02/1858), CorDiac 1858, No. 1 (February), 1.

Löhe clearly esteemed the initiation ceremony highly. To convey a sense of this to the deaconesses and to establish the deaconess profession as a life-long vocation, Löhe used a range of imagery, likening it to marriage rites, the rite of ordination and the profession of Roman Catholic nuns. All these connotations made the ecclesiastical authorities highly suspicious.

3.3. The initiation ceremony and the ecclesiastical authorities

Once the Deaconess Institute had been officially sanctioned and granted corporate status by the state - authorities on 7 August 1855, the ecclesiastical upper consistory [*Oberkonsistorium*] in Munich was commissioned to report regularly on the Institute to the (secular) Ministry of the Interior [*Staatsministerium des Inneren für Kirchen- und Schulangelegenheiten*].⁵⁵³ Accordingly, the upper consistory regularly received the annual reports of the Deaconess Institute, the *Correspondenzblatt für Innere Mission*, and, from 1858, the *CorDiac*,⁵⁵⁴ and Löhe's comparisons of the initiation ceremony to an ordination and a betrothal to Christ thus came to the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities.⁵⁵⁵ Alarmed, the president of the upper consistory, Adolf von Harleß, wrote on 5 March 1858 to Löhe objecting that his remarks on the significance of the deaconess ministry [*Diakonissendienst*] were hardly reconcilable with the Lutheran tenets of faith and requested him to explain himself.⁵⁵⁶

Löhe replied that in the passages in question he had not said anything about the significance of the deaconess ministry [*Diakonissendienst*], nor had he preached anything that contradicted Lutheran doctrine. Rather, any reference to a betrothal to Christ originated from the deaconesses themselves "without external prompting" [*ohne jemandes Zureden*]. He had no intention of founding an order but

⁵⁵³ The first statutes of the Institute (1854) make no mention of this provision or of the upper consistory. §22 states that changes to the statutes needed to be indicated to the state authorities. This was altered in the revised statutes of 1860. The revision was initiated by the state authorities to reflect the development of the Institute from educational institution to mother house (cf. letter of the royal provincial court of justice [*königliches Landgericht*] in Heilsbronn (07/02/1859) [ZADN Alle 15,8 (typewritten copy)]). The revised statutes (1860) explicitly assigned the rights of supervision, inspection, visitation, and of veto when clergymen were appointed to an official function in the Institute, to the upper consistory (§7). Changes to the statutes now required permission by the state-authorities, and, regarding religious questions, the consent of the upper consistory (§25). In 1868, the statutes were revised once more without any substantial alteration to these paragraphs.

⁵⁵⁴ Rescript from the upper consistory (05/03/1858) [LAELKB BKA 2884 I]. The *Correspondenzblatt für Innere Mission* was used as a platform to publicise developments within the Deaconess Institute until the deaconess house launched the *CorDiac* in 1858.

⁵⁵⁵ The lines which gave offense were obviously found in MChMh (04/04/1857 and 06/05/1857), CorIM 1857, No. 6, 22-23.

⁵⁵⁶ Rescript from the upper consistory (05/03/1858) [LAELKB BKA 2884 I].

rather wished for a closer control and governance of the deaconesses and for an occasion to impress on the women that they “must acquiesce to being used wherever it may be”. Löhe told von Harleß that when Countess Anna Stollberg, superior of the deaconess house in Bethanien, Berlin, had visited Neuendettelsau, he had explained to her the internal understanding of the initiation ceremony:

[F]undamentally, our *Aussegnung* of deaconesses is nothing but a blessing at the departure from the deaconess house, no *Einsegnung*, no ordination, and [...] it is performed, to avoid all slander, only [!] by women while the Institute’s *Pfarrer* who is present merely adds the peace and a few words of blessing. These explanations of our *Aussegnung*, taken on their own, will surely clarify that here, more than anywhere else, we avoid all similarities to Rome.⁵⁵⁷

In effect, Löhe named the women as the cause of potential theological errors and misunderstandings. For himself, he claimed the male right of leadership and governance. This, in itself, would guarantee orthodoxy.

However, Friedrich Ranke, head of the consistory in Ansbach, who commented on Löhe’s explanations before passing the letter on to the upper consistory, was not convinced. The statements that a deaconess renounced the world and became a bride of Christ could not be defended, as the deanery in Windsbach had attempted, “with the over-enthusiastic form of expression characteristic of *Pfarrer* Löhe.”⁵⁵⁸ Ranke feared that Löhe’s ideas would dangerously boost the self-esteem of women for this terminology could not but lure the deaconesses into thinking too highly of their profession, which, in reality, was to be nothing more than “a serving carer of a few sick or children.” It would also deceive them about the Reformers’ true teachings: Protestantism, in Ranke’s view, had never valued the lowly carer of the sick and children higher than she who found her vocation in being a mother. He conceded that the training of “girls” for a useful profession along the model of Pastor Fliedner was a blessing both to the deaconesses themselves and to the recipients of their ministrations. However, this could not counter-balance the grave danger that the “old sourdough” of justification through works and nunneries [*Nonnenthum*] would seep back into the cleansed church. Ranke closed his long letter by

⁵⁵⁷ Letter by Löhe (20/03/1858), GW 5/2, 726-729.

⁵⁵⁸ Kirchenrat Ranke, consistory in Ansbach, to Adolf von Harleß, upper consistory in Munich (15/04/1858) [LAELKB BKA 2884 I]

recommending disciplinary measures for Löhe's unauthorized practices. Ranke's position was clear: while he could accept women workers in the church for their usefulness, he abhorred the notion that Löhe had founded an exclusive community of women which felt itself superior to the broader church.

The upper consistory did not respond directly to Ranke's letter. Instead, it decided to conduct an enquiry into the status of other deaconess mother houses within the ecclesiastical structures of their respective churches and to clarify "its position with regard to the activities of independent societies within the church."⁵⁵⁹ The focus later shifted from theological to legal questions,⁵⁶⁰ resulting in a revision of the statutes.⁵⁶¹ The reaction of the upper consistory reveals the great disparity between self-perception and external perception: the Neuendettelsau community, founded with the object that "talented and influential carriers and representatives of divine thoughts" would "find a sacred and blessed position in the church" and become "the most convenient agents of the church for the Christian education of the rural population",⁵⁶² was in the eyes of the ecclesiastical authorities simply an "independent society". At the same time, the correspondence reveals that Löhe, despite his belligerency in other matters, was not willing or perhaps not able to win recognition and a sanctioned status for the Neuendettelsau deaconesses within the established church.

3.4. The later devaluation of the initiation ceremony

Löhe's successors were less inclined to enhance the deaconesses' self-esteem by showing a high appreciation of the initiation ceremony. Friedrich Meyer, who succeeded him as *Rektor* in 1872, shared much the same understanding of the deaconess vocation: "Our deaconess houses and fellowships of sisters are copies of the Roman orders of Sisters of Mercy and do not claim to be a revival of the apostolic deaconess office."⁵⁶³ Like Löhe, Meyer regarded this as a necessary interim solution because of the contemporary condition of the churches: "For the deaconess of apostolic times, communal life

⁵⁵⁹ Cited from GW 5/2, 1049.

⁵⁶⁰ Löhe to the Königliches Landgericht (16/02/1859) [ZADN Alle 15,8; typewritten copy]. Cf. also MChMh (22/02/1859), CorDiac 1859, No. 3/4, 9.

⁵⁶¹ Cf. the preliminary remarks in "Satzungen der Diaconissen-Anstalt".

⁵⁶² Löhe, *Bedenken*, GW4, 272.

⁵⁶³ Cf. Meyer, "Von den Diaconissen und ihrem Beruf", CorDiac 1876, No. 9, 34.

coincided with congregational life. The deaconess of our times has, and must have, a special communal life within her fellowship.”⁵⁶⁴ He refrained, however, from using Löhe’s derisive terminology and did not speak of the “churches of the masses.” Regarding the initiation ceremony, this largely meant a continuation of Löhe’s interpretation under Meyer:

The transition from the probationary period into the definite vocation of a deaconess [*definitive Diakonissenleben*] is conveyed through the *Einsegnung*. Its significance cannot be explained in unambiguous, precise terms because the profession of a deaconess, as things stand, is not yet integrated into the ecclesiastical structures. This cannot be different in the current established [*landeskirchliche*] form of our church.⁵⁶⁵

Meyer, however, unlike Löhe, did not use the term “office” [*Amf*] to describe the ministry into which a deaconess was ordained. Instead, he described it as the “deaconess work which is based on private-voluntary actions [*die auf privat-freiwilliger Thätigkeit beruhende Diakonissenarbeit*].”⁵⁶⁶ In consequence, when explaining the difference between the first and the second part of the initiation ceremony, he only partly quoted Löhe:

The first [part] is a matter for the superior and the sisters, who solemnly dismiss the candidate from the probationary period through the laying-on of hands and thereby testify to her journey to the entrance into the choir of sisters. The *Einsegnung* is a matter for the pastor and is performed with the consecration prayer and the laying-on of hands. This is a prayer in the name of Jesus and therefore a prayer that will surely be answered. It conveys strength and blessing to those who cling to the faith with integrity, and for the service [*Dienst*] which they solemnly accept.⁵⁶⁷

Meyer here presents a double weakening of the significance of the initiation ceremony: the first part no longer marks the admission into the fellowship but is rather a “testimony.” The second part no longer transmits an office but grants a solemn blessing to deaconess service. This represents a clear devaluation of the ecclesiastical role which Löhe had assigned to the deaconesses. In contrast, Meyer enhanced their communal life, introducing new forms to strengthen its contemplative aspect.

⁵⁶⁴ Meyer, “Von den Diakonissen und ihrem Beruf”, CorDiac No. 12, 1876, 47.

⁵⁶⁵ Meyer, “Von den Diakonissen und ihrem Beruf”, CorDiac No. 6, 1877, 21.

⁵⁶⁶ Meyer, “Von den Diakonissen und ihrem Beruf”, CorDiac No. 6, 1877, 21.

⁵⁶⁷ Meyer, “Von den Diakonissen und ihrem Beruf”, CorDiac No. 6, 1877, 21.

In 1891, Hermann Bezzel, aged just thirty-one, succeeded Meyer as *Rektor*. Soon after his arrival, he commented on the “unmistakable signs” that the community needed thorough reforms.⁵⁶⁸ The main problem consisted in an isolation of like-minded women into a community “where normally justifiable idiosyncrasies and established characteristics too often come to the surface, when they should actually retreat into the background.”⁵⁶⁹ The deaconesses’ increasingly critical attitude towards the autocratic decisions of the Institute and their growing urge for more participation in decision-making incensed Bezzel, who saw them as “contradicting the most basic rules of Christian decency.”⁵⁷⁰ So too did their understanding of their vocation:

Deaconess houses should have the courage to make themselves superfluous by getting rid of the special ethics [*Sonderethik*] and the teaching of a special status [*Sonderstand*]. They should point out the *common* duty of all Christians to serve. The general priesthood of all believers [...] should be preached more in deaconess houses. Then, their future would be great and secure, the more they numerically decline.⁵⁷¹

This had consequences for the interpretation of the initiation ceremony. In a pamphlet from 1897, Bezzel commented that the addresses given at these occasions should be based on a scriptural verse and “emphasise the right evangelical way of serving and demonstrate that there is no merit in such service. ‘My reward/ salary [*Lohn*] is that I may.’” The preacher should “counter all overestimation of the *Einsegnung* and teach that the deaconess service is only one specific form of service.” Nevertheless, since the deaconesses took upon themselves serious and significant work, the addresses should admonish the deaconess “to reflect well whether she does it in response to a higher calling.” Regarding the significance of the ceremony as a whole, Bezzel wrote:

The *Aussegnung*, according to the views held here, is the formal declaration [*Erklärung*] of the sisterhood, represented by their superior and some sisters, that the probationary sister in question has earned the confidence of the mother house, and may also appear as a request to

⁵⁶⁸ Cf. *Jahresbericht* 1893, 3.

⁵⁶⁹ *Jahresbericht* 1893, 4.

⁵⁷⁰ *Jahresbericht* 1901, 4.

⁵⁷¹ *Jahresbericht* 1901, 7. Bezzel was very concerned that the deaconesses, especially those who taught in Neuendettelsau, might regard themselves as a spiritual elite. In his course “What can church history teach us about the perils that threaten and are inherent to the deaconess cause?” given in the week of instruction preceding the initiation [*Einsegnungsunterricht*] in 1905, Bezzel warned of deaconesses whose “pride of education” wished to “enclose us” by a “spiritual ring” (p. 28, manuscript in typewritten copy, [ZADN PV d9]).

the servant of the church that he may confirm this declaration ecclesiastically in the *Einsegnung*.⁵⁷²

In conclusion, Bezzel commented: “One can only hope that all the dangers of an un-evangelical overestimation of the ceremony and any eccentric terminology may be kept from the deaconess houses and that maidens may be raised who in Psalm 25:21 [“May integrity and uprightness preserve me”] find their rule and direction for life.”⁵⁷³ Bezzel’s primary concern was that “those circles [of deaconess communities] in their separation never cease to serve the great cause, His holy church, even in her current, not always comely shape.”⁵⁷⁴ For Bezzel, it was the deaconesses’ usefulness for the church which justified their existence. In face of his fear of the women’s movement and well-educated, self-assured women, he desired to integrate the deaconess community fully into the ecclesiastical structures and therefore reduced the significance of the initiation ceremony which had been enhanced by Löhe.

In the first part of this chapter, we have argued that because Löhe wished to establish the deaconess profession as a life-long vocation and to reduce the number of those leaving the Institute, he attempted to make the group-boundaries less permeable by raising the threshold. He esteemed the initiation ceremony highly and conveyed this to the deaconesses, using terminology, imagery and expressions which were hardly reconcilable with Lutheran doctrine, as the ecclesiastical authorities were quick to point out. A particular problem was that it was women whose self-esteem was thus enhanced, a point which Löhe’s successors, especially Bezzel, sought to address by devaluing the deaconess vocation and with it the initiation ceremony. For the deaconesses themselves, the initiation ceremony served to consolidate a “we-identity” and to strengthen group cohesion. In the following second part of the chapter, we focus on the rite of the initiation as a means of displaying status-elevation and consolidating the deaconesses’ collective identity, drawing on insights from the social sciences and in particular the study of ritual.

⁵⁷² *Flugblatt*. Juli bis September 1897 [ZADN DI h].

⁵⁷³ *Flugblatt*. Juli bis September 1897 [ZADN DI h].

⁵⁷⁴ *Jahresbericht* 1893, 4.

3.5. The initiation ceremony in practice

3.5.1. Ritual in anthropology and sociology

In the long scholarly tradition following Durkheim, rituals have been interpreted as playing a crucial role in establishing and stabilizing community, in that they make possible the bundling of different individual perspectives into a shared social reality.⁵⁷⁵ Especially in times of conflict and change, rituals have an important social function in harmonizing diversity and relieving tensions by providing an opportunity simultaneously to generate, enact and affirm collective beliefs and ideals.⁵⁷⁶ Symbols form the smallest units in ritual. They work directly on the emotions and are an especially potent means of communicating between participants. In a very condensed form, they raise culturally established associations, though these can vary along a certain spectrum without threatening the effect of ritual.⁵⁷⁷ In consequence, ritual has itself been termed “symbolic action”.⁵⁷⁸

A useful definition is provided by Kertzer:

I define ritual as symbolic behaviour that is socially standardized and repetitive. [...] Ritual action has a formal quality to it. It follows highly structured, standardized sequences and is often enacted at certain places and times that are themselves endowed with special symbolic meaning. Ritual action is repetitive and, therefore, often redundant, but these very factors serve as important means of channeling emotions, guiding cognition, and organizing social groups.⁵⁷⁹

In an important contribution to ritual studies, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz pointed out that rituals not only express and affirm collective beliefs and ideals but also influence behaviour. Rituals symbolically “fuse” for the participant what Geertz termed “worldview”, the comprehensive idea of the general order of reality, and “ethos”, the disposition for action.⁵⁸⁰ As such, rituals, according to Geertz,

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Durkheim, *The elementary forms of religious life*, esp. 36, 42-43, and 46; Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 20; Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 339. I follow the definition of most scholars – who almost all point out that this is a “notoriously problematic task” (Snoek, *Defining ‘Rituals’*, 3) - in distinguishing between rite as a sub-unit of ritual, signifying visible action, and ritual as the prescribed order of rites, cf. Schilderman, *Introduction. A discourse in ritual studies*, XI.

⁵⁷⁶ The “cathartic” effect of ritual in conflict was pointed out especially by Gluckmann, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Societies*, 252.

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. Rao, *Ritual in Society*, 145; Riis/ Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, esp. 96-97.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Platvoet, *Ritual: Religious and Secular*, 204-205. Platvoet describes rituals as “symbolic actions” which communicate through symbols that can be anything from “precise” to “pregnant.”

⁵⁷⁹ Kertzer, *Ritual, politics and power*, 9.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 113 and 127; cf. also Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 26-27.

provide an incomparable analytical insight into what is meaningful for the participants within a certain culture; that is, rituals offer “a veritable window on the most important processes of cultural life.”⁵⁸¹

In general, rituals contain both a synchronic dimension, in the sense that they have an effect on the group that enacts them, and a diachronic dimension, in the sense that they refer to the past. These two dimensions can be distinguished but not separated. Bell summarizes: “Whether it [ritual] is defined in terms of features of ‘enthusiasm’ (fostering groupism) or ‘formalism’ (fostering the repetition of the traditional), ritual is consistently depicted as a mechanistically discrete and paradigmatic means of sociocultural integration, appropriation, or transformation.”⁵⁸² Giesen termed the diachronic and the synchronic dimension of rituals “iteration and sharedness.”⁵⁸³ On the one hand, this refers to the formalized, the standardized and repetitive aspect of ritual, and on the other to the generation of a shared understanding of self and world into which the individual participant is integrated. In a certain line of scholarship, the effect of rituals on a group has been regarded as a relatively straightforward linear process in the sense that a prevalent ideology is imposed on the individual along with the underlying power-structures.⁵⁸⁴ However, because ritual requires the bodily presence of participants,⁵⁸⁵ who represent and reaffirm what is happening,⁵⁸⁶ most rituals also rely on legitimation and provide at least some limited space for the negotiation of form and meaning.

When we now turn to ritual in the Deaconess Institute in Neuendettelsau, more specifically, to the initiation ceremony, our focus is on the function of ritual for the formation of social cohesion within the clearly defined collectivity with which the individual deaconesses identified. In this context, the term “collective identity” signifies the construction of a “we-identity” which is achieved by the individual’s

⁵⁸¹ Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual Practice*, 28.

⁵⁸² Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 16.

⁵⁸³ Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 338.

⁵⁸⁴ This is especially held by scholars in the Marxist tradition, in a more sophisticated form also by Bourdieu and Bloch, cf. Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 187, 211.

⁵⁸⁵ This is also true of the everyday rites described in detail by the sociologist Goffman, *Interaction Ritual. Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*. These will not be considered further here.

⁵⁸⁶ Cf. Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 98-117. Bell introduced the term “ritual body” to describe the interaction of corporeality with a structured and structuring environment.

agreeing to certain expectations, values, rules, and orientations.⁵⁸⁷ As Assmann has pointed out, collective identity does not exist “in itself”, but is “strong or weak to the extent that it lives in the thoughts and action of the group members and can motivate their thoughts and action.”⁵⁸⁸ An important process for strengthening collective identity is the social construction of boundaries which demarcate between inside and outside, between “we” and “others”. Such a distinction necessarily poses the question of how these boundaries are crossed.⁵⁸⁹

3.5.2. Initiation rites: Separation, liminality, and incorporation

The term “initiation rites” was introduced by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep. He described these as rites whose purpose is to produce a radical modification, generally an elevation, of the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. He distinguishes between three phases within these rites, that of separation, threshold or limen, and incorporation.⁵⁹⁰ Using van Gennep’s terms, the initiation ceremony in Neuendettelsau can be understood as a classic initiation rite.

In the Deaconess Institute in Neuendettelsau, a period of probation and testing had been introduced for aspiring deaconesses in 1857.⁵⁹¹ Within the community, the probationary deaconesses [*Probeschwestern*] had a lower standing than the initiated deaconesses, regardless of their family or educational background, their age or their prior working-experience. The probationary deaconesses had to perform the same work as the initiated deaconesses but had fewer rights. For example, though they contributed financially to the communal fund through their salary, they were not entitled to make any claims on it, for instance if they were diagnosed with a chronic illness. A probationary deaconess could ask to be released from the Institute at any time, but equally, she could be dismissed at short notice, though she would normally be granted a further three months of salary “if in work and if not guilty of a

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. Straub, *Personal and collective identity*, 71.

⁵⁸⁸ Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 132.

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Eisenstadt/ Giesen, *The construction of collective identity*, 74.

⁵⁹⁰ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11.

⁵⁹¹ Cf. 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 25. Before, most deaconesses had been blessed immediately after completing the courses of training, especially those who left Neuendettelsau to work elsewhere.

breach of decorum.”⁵⁹² The length of the probationary period was not firmly fixed.⁵⁹³ The decision to admit a probationary deaconess to full membership of the institution was made by the *Rektor* in conjunction with the *Oberin*, who together formed the *Direktorium*, and a committee of senior deaconesses [*Diakonissengremium*]. The probationary deaconesses had no say in this process but were expected to acquiesce to the official decision. A deaconess described this moment in a letter: “The new ones were called into the board-meeting last Tuesday to accept its judgement after their probationary period, which had now been completed. For only one of them, the probationary period was extended by four to six weeks because they were not quite sure.”⁵⁹⁴

A phase of separation from the normal institutional routine began as soon as the date for the initiation ceremony was set. Especially in the early years, deaconesses were mostly initiated singly or in very small groups.⁵⁹⁵ Löhe thought that it would be fitting for the new deaconesses to spend the day before the ceremony in praying and fasting, although there was initially no official provision for this.⁵⁹⁶ Only in 1873, under Löhe’s successor Meyer, was it made a rule that, beginning a week before their initiation ceremony, the new deaconesses should spend an hour each day in reflection, praying and self-examination and in meditating on suggested Bible - passages, taken almost exclusively from the Gospel of Matthew. On the day preceding the ceremony, the new deaconesses were exempt from work in order to be able to spend time in seclusion.⁵⁹⁷ Under Löhe’s leadership, the deaconesses who were about to be initiated were given specific questions for self-examination:⁵⁹⁸ these were later considerably altered

⁵⁹² “Zur Verständigung der Probeschwestern“ (3 February 1863).

⁵⁹³ Initially, this was fairly short. By 1861, the normal period was two years but this could be extended. An extraordinary case is Elise Lindmann who worked as a probationary deaconess for eight years, from 1860 to 1868, because the directorate had “forgotten” to initiate her (cf. Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 93).

⁵⁹⁴ Stählin to her mother (18/06/1861), ThStI, 119-120.

⁵⁹⁵ There is an interesting parallel in anthropologists’ observations that women’s initiation rites in tribal societies, in contrast to men’s, are often performed separately rather than in a group (cf. Lincoln, Art. “Initiation. Women’s Initiation”, 4484).

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. “Rede vom 4. April 1857“.

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. “Prüfungsfragen der Probeschwestern, welche der Einsegnung entgegengehen. Fortsetzung der vom seligen Herrn Pfarrer Löhe begonnenen Prüfungsfragen“, CorDiac 1873, No. 4, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁹⁸ The oldest surviving version in the archives is handwritten and is dated 5 April 1861: “Fragen zur Selbstprüfung für eine Probeschwestern vor ihrer Aussegnung”.

and extended.⁵⁹⁹ Immediately before the initiation, the candidates made their confession.⁶⁰⁰ Under Löhe, therefore, the separation phase was not so much spatial or physical but rather an emotional retreat, in the sense of a conscious experience of “emotional dissonance” in the face of an otherwise highly regulated “emotional regime”.⁶⁰¹ Religious practices such as confession and meditation “serve as a back stage where people can withdraw from the role plays of the public front stage”. Thereafter, any dissonances having been overcome, the way is clear for a full (re-) integration.⁶⁰² In this time of emotional retreat, the new deaconesses were expected consciously to confront any existing inner divisions and any conflicts, not only between themselves and other deaconesses, but also between themselves and God.⁶⁰³ Only after an “internal cleansing”, were they regarded fit to move on.

The initiation ceremony itself can be regarded as the phase of liminality, as the stage “betwixt and between.”⁶⁰⁴ In what can be understood as the phase of incorporation after the ceremony, the whole community celebrated Holy Communion. The newly initiated deaconesses now wore their veils, an external indication of their newly elevated status within the community. Löhe always gave the communal aspect of Holy Communion great prominence.⁶⁰⁵ In addition, if one follows Bynums’s interpretation of

⁵⁹⁹ Cf. “Zur Selbstprüfung für die Probeschwestern”, *CorDiac* 1865, No. 8, pp. 29-30; and finally “Prüfungsfragen für Probeschwestern, welche der Einsegnung entgegengehen. Fortsetzung der vom seligen Pfarrer Löhe begonnenen Prüfungsfragen”, *CorDiac* 1873, No. 4, pp. 15-16.

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. “Rede vom 4. April 1857”. The notes of the address include some remarks on the order of service.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. Riis/Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 69.

⁶⁰² Riis/Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 101-102.

⁶⁰³ This double turn is evident in all the editions of questions for self-examination though the emphasis shifted. While the oldest version is factual and almost brusque in style, in parts seemingly a cognitive revision of instruction on the office of deaconesses given by Löhe, the later versions “theologize” the aspect of community-life, thus merging human sinfulness and interpersonal conflicts. This is, of course, a problematic tendency as it makes harmony, submission and obedience to superiors an absolute, unassailable value, and ultimately equates human with divine authority. However, the questions for self-examination can also be regarded in the light of their pastoral function. They obviously aim to prepare the new deaconesses for the continuous difficulties of community-life.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Turner, *Betwixt and Between*, 93-111.

⁶⁰⁵ Löhe, *Predigt über 1. Korinther 10, 16 und 17*, pp. 76-77: “[...] the Apostles sing in their heavenly communion [*Gemeinschaft*] ‘The bread that we share, the cup that we share’. And you take the element into your mouth and you have the witness of the Apostles, yeah, even the witness of Jesus who ascended to heaven, that you now partake the body and blood of Jesus – and you lack in unity [*Einigkeit*]! You are of one body with them – and it irks you that the others live differently from you; you can worry about things that separate you from your brother? Be ashamed of your lamentations, discern the existing unity [*erkenne die Einigkeit, die da ist!*] In this way, you can overcome the barricades of love; and the price of the sacrament will be more appropriate than anything else to establish peace between the brethren on earth und to constitute the communion of saints on earth.”

the Eucharist as a “dense symbol”,⁶⁰⁶ indicating a ritual banquet,⁶⁰⁷ we have here an interesting parallel to van Gennep’s observation that feasts often constitute the phase of incorporation in tribal societies.⁶⁰⁸

Having ascertained that the social function of the initiation ceremony was to effect and display an elevation of status within the institution, we now turn to the “performance” of the ceremony.

3.5.3. The performance of the ceremony

3.5.3.1. Space, symbols and gestures

When analysing ritual as a “performance”,⁶⁰⁹ which stages texts, involves actors in a particular location, and makes concrete and visible an underlying order, attention must be given to the spatial, temporal and aesthetic dimensions, through which rituals produce an “embodied reality.”⁶¹⁰

Initially, the initiation ceremony seems occasionally to have been celebrated in the parish church,⁶¹¹ but the normal location was the Institute’s *Betsaal* [prayer hall], that is, the community’s chapel.⁶¹² In the earliest years, this was a designated room located within the main building of the institution which was permanently furnished with a large cross hanging from the ceiling from which a crown of thorns extended and served as a candelabra. A detached altar dominated the space, which for the initiation ceremony was decked with a seven-armed candlestick. The first chapel was spacious enough to accommodate the assembled resident congregation.⁶¹³ However, in December 1859, necessitated by

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. Bynum, *Women’s Stories, Women’s Symbols*, 115. Bynum refers to Turner’s notion of “dominant symbols” which are polysemic and multivocal and include in some real sense the physiological and natural processes to which they refer as well as to normative and social structural abstractions (cf. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*).

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, 116-117.

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. van Gennep, *The rites of passage*, 84, 101 and often.

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. eg. Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, esp. 338-340; Tambiah, *A performative approach to ritual*; Turner, *From Ritual to Theater*; Turner, *Are there any Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual and Drama?*, 8-18. For an overview cf. Grimes, *Performance*, 379-394.

⁶¹⁰ Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 343.

⁶¹¹ Cf. *Tagebuch von Schw. Emma Linß* (30/10/1855).

⁶¹² Cf. the preliminary remarks in “Die Einsegnung der in ihren Wirkungskreis abgehenden Diakonissen”, CorIM 1855, No. 2.

⁶¹³ Cf. Löhe, *Etwas aus der Geschichte*, GW4, 289. Löhe recounts that after the inauguration of the chapel in 1854, one hundred people were seated in the *Betsaal* for a simple meal.

the growing numbers, a new, separate chapel or *Betsaal* was inaugurated next to the main building of the Institute.

Löhe explicitly referred to the symbolic dimension of the room's furnishings in his preliminary remarks to the first published formula.⁶¹⁴ The candidate who stood under the cross and crown of thorns in the middle of the room signalled her willingness to take upon her the burdens of Christian discipleship. She faced the altar which symbolized the presence of God, and the candlestick which represented the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The readers of the four lessons stood at the four corners of the altar.⁶¹⁵ When Holy Communion was celebrated, the chalice and paten would additionally be placed on the altar. The whole space was thus charged with theological symbolism: the potential burden of the weighty vocation was alleviated by the prospect of refreshment through the sacrament and by the promise of God's abiding presence manifested in the spiritual gifts. The fundamental tension of Christian life between "already" and "not yet" was symbolically condensed in the phase of liminality during the initiation ceremony, marking it spiritually as a time which was indeed "betwixt and between".⁶¹⁶

This was also represented by a physical progression: the candidate left the rows of probationary deaconesses and already initiated deaconesses who sat in the pews, took her place in the middle of the room during the actual initiation ceremony, and then moved forward to the altar to receive Holy Communion on her knees, where she was reintegrated into the community of deaconesses who joined her there. The importance of physical movement in ritual was pointed out by Bell, who introduced the term "ritual body". She observed that in ritual there is always interaction between the body and the environment, a "critical circularity": through physical movement and bodily gestures an environment is created which in turn moulds the body.⁶¹⁷ Thus, when the deaconesses knelt at the altar or for the

⁶¹⁴ Cf. "Die Einsegnung der in ihren Wirkungskreis abgehenden Diakonissen" (1855).

⁶¹⁵ Cf. preliminary remarks in "Die Einsegnung der in ihren Wirkungskreis abgehenden Diakonissen" (1855).

⁶¹⁶ Turner summarized this phase: "Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to and anticipating postliminal existence." (from: *Are there universals of performance in myth, ritual, and drama*, 12).

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 98-101.

blessing, their bodies not only signified subordination to a higher power, to God, but also created an environment, an atmosphere, in which this behaviour was highly appropriate.

Certain items were given to the deaconess at her initiation which also had symbolic significance. She was presented with a highly ornamented folder which contained scriptural verses together with an outline of her individual formation as a deaconess, for which her family had generally paid. In addition, she received the deaconess bonnet and veil.⁶¹⁸ These gifts symbolically conveyed a sense of separation and farewell from the deaconess's biological family and an entry into a new state of life. The family of origin contributed financially to her "certification" as a deaconess, thus acknowledging the choice of their daughter or sister and "relinquishing" her to the Deaconess Institute. This was made quite explicit: on the occasion of the initiation ceremony, the deaconess's parents or guardian were required to write a statement in which they confirmed their permission and agreed to assign all authority to the mother house.⁶¹⁹ The headdress and veil were clearly associated with the notion of marriage, as was emphasised by both the deaconesses themselves and, as seen above, by Löhe. These were the external marks of the deaconesses' "day of betrothal" to Christ.

3.5.3.2. Participants and Spectators

The question of who participates in a ritual, whether actively or passively, and who has the role of spectator is of the utmost importance. Bell suggests that those who participate have power, in that they "physically effect the construction of set relationships".⁶²⁰ Although the orchestration, the role of "ritual mastery"⁶²¹ may be in other hands, the participants are nevertheless crucial in "objectifying" patterns of dominance and subordination. Thus, "the power relations constituted by ritualization also empower those who may at first appear to be controlled by them."⁶²² This is a highly interesting observation when applied to the initiation ceremony in Neuendettelsau. The older form, the *Aussegnung*, which later

⁶¹⁸ Cf. MChMh (03/06/1860), CorDiac 1860, No. 7, 25; cf. also Stählin to her mother (21/06/1864), ThStl, 141-142.

⁶¹⁹ Cf. Stählin to her mother (21/06/1864), ThStl, 141-142.

⁶²⁰ Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 207.

⁶²¹ Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 215.

⁶²² Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 207.

became the first part of the expanded ceremony, was performed by the deaconesses themselves, and the active participants were all women. Löhe himself, although he functioned as “ritual master”, retained the role of spectator for much of the ceremony – except that he gave the sermon in the middle and the general blessing at the end of the rite. Nonetheless, as will be seen below (3.5.4.) the deaconesses experienced it as “our ceremony”. The lessons were read by four deaconesses, and the three collects by the superior, the assistant superior and a senior deaconess; the blessing of the candidate was again performed by the superior, her assistant and, in the early years, by any of the deaconesses who stood in a close relationship to the candidate, or in later years by the “mistress of the probationary deaconesses [*Probemeisterin*]”.⁶²³

For the deaconesses, the ceremony was a memorable experience and participation was considered a privilege. As a sixteen-year-old deaconess, three months after her arrival in the Institute, Therese Stählin wrote to her mother enthusiastically: “The end of the day was best. A deaconess, a teacher at the primary school here, was solemnly blessed [*ausgesegnet*]. I, too, was allowed to perform a small office [*ein kleines Amt verrichten*].”⁶²⁴ She regarded the initiation as the deaconesses’ own rite: “Marie will be blessed [*eingesegnet*] by the choir of sisters before our altar.”⁶²⁵ In this way, the ceremony served to construct collective identity which united the community and could potentially appease existing conflicts.⁶²⁶ Yet, this did not necessarily convey a sense of equality. Structural in-house hierarchies were also carefully observed in the ceremony in what Bell describes as “objectifications of power relations.”⁶²⁷

As discussed above, Löhe initially explained that, should he take a more active role in the ceremony, it might be misunderstood as constituting an ordination,⁶²⁸ although he revoked his caution, when, in 1867, he added to the *Aussegnung* the rite of *Einsegnung*. Those deaconesses who were not actively involved in the ceremony were addressed as witnesses by Löhe, especially at the crucial moment when

⁶²³ This office was created in 1860, cf. Stählin to her sister Ida (September 1859), ThStl, 98.

⁶²⁴ Stählin to her mother (24/02/1856), ThStl, 39.

⁶²⁵ Stählin to her mother (21/06/1864), ThStl, 141.

⁶²⁶ Cf. Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 339.

⁶²⁷ Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 207.

⁶²⁸ Cf. the preliminary remarks in „Die Einsegnung der in ihren Wirkungskreis abgehenden Diakonissen“ (1855).

the candidates made the pledge: "You are all earthly witnesses that I ask your sisters, and the Lord in heaven is witness, that I do so."⁶²⁹ There seem to have been few external spectators except for the residents of the Institute, including the students, and occasionally some relatives.⁶³⁰ It is highly likely that the same rule applied to the initiation ceremony as to all other services in the institution's chapel, and that external visitors required explicit permission to attend.⁶³¹ The congregation that assembled in the institution's chapel was thus exclusive, and the drawing of a distinct boundary between inside and outside served to preserve the sense of a *disciplina arcana*. This is also reflected in the fact that the published orders of initiation services only conveyed the bare bones of the service, so that the more sensitive and controversial phrases and actions can only be reconstructed from the notes of the unpublished addresses.

Nonetheless, there was some ambiguity about the lack of public attendance. During the later form of the ceremony, the chapel bell was rung immediately before and while the *Rektor* laid his hands on the candidate(s) and prayed the ordination prayer from the Apostolic Constitutions. That is, it was rung at the transition from the first to the second part, which, as has been seen, was added later.⁶³² For Löhe, this presumably signified the transition from what he regarded as the rite of the community to the ecclesiastical rite, which was necessarily of a public nature, hence the bell. Symbolically, the bisection of the ceremony was underlined. However, although the bell might be heard in the village, the parishioners were neither expected nor invited to attend. In Neuendettelsau, the initiation ceremony was performed as a "solemn ceremonial ritual" which Giesen characterized as especially sensitive to disruption. Therefore, group-members "try to exclude these profane outsiders physically or socially from the scene. The performance of the ritual is shielded from the eyes and ears of outsiders or their presence is bound to strict rules of respect that allow the ritual actors to ignore it."⁶³³ The boundaries

⁶²⁹ Cited from the "Rede vom 22 April 1861".

⁶³⁰ Stählin to her mother (21/06/1864), ThStI, 141.

⁶³¹ "Grundzüge einer Hausordnung der Diakonissenanstalt" (1854/55), §28. This was true of visitors generally to the institution, "Hausordnung der Diaconissenanstalt Neuendettelsau" (1857), §7.

⁶³² Ordnung der Aus- und Einsegnung der Diakonissen (1870), 96.

⁶³³ Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 344.

marking the distinction between “inside” and “outside” which ultimately increase the effectiveness of constructing collective identity⁶³⁴ need not necessarily be social or cultural constructions. They can simply consist in closed doors.

3.5.4. Evoking and constructing shared memory

Rituals, as “acts of repetition or quotation”,⁶³⁵ refer to the past. They repeat themselves, and it is this which standardises and formalises them.⁶³⁶ Thus, in Neuendettelsau, the publication of the liturgical formulas signified the official “canonisation”⁶³⁷ of certain texts that were used over and over again, making the initiation ceremony reliable and part of the particular tradition of the institution. Probationary deaconesses experienced the initiation of others before it was their turn, and parts of the liturgy, such as the ordination prayer from the Apostolic Constitutions, were studied beforehand as part of the curriculum for deaconess pupils.⁶³⁸ For deaconesses who were already initiated, the ceremony functioned as a reminder of their own initiation and thus evoked the emotions they had experienced and the expectations and resolutions they had formed on this occasion.

However, the ceremonies did not only quote themselves. Assmann has pointed out that rites can become “formative texts”, answering to the question “Who are we?” by relaying myths and legends: “They help us to define ourselves and establish our identity. They transmit identity-confirming knowledge by narrating stories that are shared.”⁶³⁹ As such, they have an important role in sorting,

⁶³⁴ Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 343.

⁶³⁵ Bloch, *Deference*, 497.

⁶³⁶ Cf. Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 339.

⁶³⁷ “Canonization means an intervention that subjects the constant flow of traditions that are being handed down to a strict process of selection. This intervention consolidates the selection and sanctifies it, that is to say, it exalts it to the status of an ultimate authority and in this way calls a halt to the stream of tradition once and for all. From now on, nothing can be added or taken away” (Assmann, *What is “Cultural Memory”?* 19).

⁶³⁸ Cf. the dictation “Von den Diakonissen”, *CorDiac* 1858, No. 1, p. 4, which Löhe gave to all pupils since 1855.

⁶³⁹ Assmann, *Invisible Religion and Cultural Memory*, 38.

reactivating, and circulating “cultural memory”:⁶⁴⁰ “[r]itual ensures that a communication will be recalled.”⁶⁴¹ In Neuendettelsau, the initiation ceremonies were deliberately placed within a wider tradition. They were often celebrated on the feast days of female saints or apostles.⁶⁴² Löhe’s addresses very often referred to this by narrating the stories or legends associated with these women and relating their traits to the situation of the individual deaconess who was being initiated. By this, the particular event, the initiation of a certain deaconess, was merged with a ritual pattern which, in turn, was enacted at a time that was endowed with special symbolic meaning.

We find a highly significant illustration of the way in which the initiation ceremonies functioned as formative texts in a letter from Therese Stählin to her sister in 1866, on the second anniversary of the latter’s initiation:

Dear Marie, here I am, wanting to write poetry, and I began; but I did not succeed. Poetically I had meant to describe to you the day of your *Aussegnung*, the wonderful day when one read the sacred story of the feast [*heilige Festgeschichte*] and, in spirit, we accompanied Mary to the heights of Judea; when you, too, ascended to a height in your life as deaconess, which you should never exchange for deep valleys. I had meant to describe to you how we adorned you with the bridal veil and led you to the altar as a first offering on the morning of 2 July [the Feast of the Visitation of Mary based on Luke 1: 39-45]. It was made explicit that not only the choir of sisters but the whole flock [*Schar*] of pupils were to pray and sacrifice, so that the offering might be graciously regarded by Him, so that the sacrifice might be purified and sanctified and – accepted by Him. I wanted to remind you of our confessor’s earnest words, which he spoke to you then, which, after all, didn’t only flit around our ears, which, however, we afterwards didn’t preserve [*festgehalten*] in the way we had intended, neither in memory nor – in acts and life. [...] I also wanted to remind you how one hand lay in blessing on your head which now we cannot grasp anymore. But the blessed one to whom the hand belonged has surely become an intercessor for you and for us all. Look, all this I had meant to say to you, and didn’t succeed. Will you take the intention for the act? Yours, Therese.⁶⁴³

We find in this excerpt different tiers of memory which are interwoven in a highly complex manner. The outer frame is a deaconess’s memory of her sister’s initiation day, which she deliberately puts into

⁶⁴⁰ For Assmann, “cultural memory” has an important function for social cohesion: “Along with a particular worldview, cultural memory disseminates and reproduces a consciousness of unity, particularity, and a sense of belonging among the members of a group” (Assmann, *Invisible Religion and Cultural Memory*, 38).

⁶⁴¹ Assmann, *Text and Ritual*, 124.

⁶⁴² For example, on the feast-day of St Olympia (“Rede vom 15. April 1856” and “Rede vom 15. April 1859”), of St Peter and Paul (“Rede vom 29. Juni 1859”), references are made for example to St Radegunde (“Rede vom 15. April 1859”), to St Christiana (“Rede vom 26. September 1858”), and to St Gregory of Nazianzus (“Rede vom 17. September 1867”).

⁶⁴³ Stählin to her sister Marie (July 1866), ThStI, p. 166.

writing, to store the memory for a communicative purpose.⁶⁴⁴ She wrote that she had originally wished to produce a non-mundane, poetic text but that this hope had been in vain, perhaps because the matter was too multi-layered. She thereby acknowledged the significance she attached to the memory. By referring again at the very end of the letter to her original intention to write poetry, she gives the whole text a literary frame. Through the opposition of the words “intention” and “act” she links the literary frame to the content of the letter in a highly skilful but also playful way. The tone of the letter, which is full of sisterly admonishment, is thus lightened by the self-irony of the outer frame.

Of the initiation ceremony she remembered, most prominently, the narration of a legend based on a sacred text – the reading from the New Testament of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1: 39-45) – which within the context of the initiation ceremony became a collective experience. The story was not simply read and heard, but was – “in spirit” –, ritually enacted: “we accompanied Mary to the heights of Judea”. Assmann suggests that when a sacred text is read in the context of ritual, such an experience is typical:

With the sacred text the ritual is the essential part, and the discourse during the sacred ceremony is only a part of the whole. [...] With the sacred text it has the function of a performative speech act. When the right words are spoken at the right time and in the right place by the right speaker in accordance with the rules, these words do not refer to a meaning, they create it.⁶⁴⁵

Stählin’s reference to the “ritual body’s” collective ascension “to the heights of Judea” connects the legend of Mary with another biblical theme that runs through this memory: that of sacrifice, which in the Old Testament is almost always performed in a geographically elevated location. In this memory, the sacrifice was again collectively ritually performed, constituting an abrupt break with the normality and ordinariness of life, which is also typical of ritual.⁶⁴⁶ The sacrifice here has the connotation of setting someone apart for a sacred purpose, accompanied by a withdrawal and separation from the profane sphere.⁶⁴⁷ Again, the verbal prompt, probably provoked by Löhe (“it was made explicit that not only the

⁶⁴⁴ Aleida and Jan Assmann introduced the term “communicative memory” to describe the social aspect of individual memory in which intercourse between people, and the emotions play a crucial role (cf. Assmann, *What is “Cultural Memory?”*, 3). A loving sister’s letter to another is a good example of the workings of communicative memory.

⁶⁴⁵ Assmann, *Cultural texts suspended between writing and speech*, 109-110.

⁶⁴⁶ Cf. Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 337.

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. Borokwski, Art. „Erstlinge. 1. Religionswissenschaftlich”, col. 1472.

choir of sisters but the whole flock of pupils were to pray and sacrifice”), is transformed into action and physical movement of the “ritual body”: “we led you to the altar.”

The emotional force of the ritual has been enhanced by the aesthetic and symbolic dimension. Riis and Woodhead suggest that every religious group uses specific symbols as codes that have a certain meaning within the group. They channel emotions, serve to distinguish group-members from outsiders, and thus construct identity. These symbols need to have been “consecrated”. They explain: “By consecration we mean the process by which a religious community, and/or its elite, legitimates an object as a religious sign that binds the community and helps to define its identity.”⁶⁴⁸ Stählin, remembering the initiation ceremony, mentioned some of the consecrated symbols of the community, thus herself contributing to the ongoing process of consecration. The altar refers to both the chapel’s table, decked with the chalice and paten to be used for the celebration of Holy Communion, which in Löhe’s understanding had the theological underpinning of a sacrificial meal,⁶⁴⁹ and for the ritual laying of the offering before the Lord with prayers for acceptance. However, while the celebration of Communion with its reference to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was the prerogative of the ordained clergyman, the ritual offering was performed by the women of the community.

The candidate who was about to be offered was “adorned with the bridal veil” by the other community-members. This veil, which was given to all deaconesses in their initiation ceremony, here clearly has connotations which resonate with wedding rites. As in a wedding, the veil signifies the bride’s purity and innocence. Thus, in a double sense, as a “bride of Christ” and as an offering to the Lord, the finality of the candidate’s separation from the profane sphere is symbolically performed and enacted. As these symbols were part of the every-day aesthetic culture of the community, they could in themselves become anchors for memory. In remembering the initiation ceremony, Stählin emphasised that the

⁶⁴⁸ Riis/Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 102-103.

⁶⁴⁹ E.g. Löhe, *Predigt über Johannes 6,54-57*, p. 122: “If now Holy Supper [*das Abendmahl*] refers to the sacrificial meal [*die Opfermahlzeit*] and whoever partakes in Holy Communion has a share in the sacrifice and its effect, it is true and unalterable: Whoever partakes in Holy Communion also receives the promise for the remission of sins, just as those who made a sacrifice in the Old Testament were assured of the sacrifice and its effect.”

active agents who handled the symbols in the ceremony were all women: “We” adorned the candidate with the bridal veil and “we” led her to the altar as an offering. Through coming together and through bodily participation in ritual, a bond is established that secures the coherence of the group in place and time.⁶⁵⁰

Assmann has compared cultural memory to an archive which comprises “the age-old, out-of-the-way, and discarded”⁶⁵¹ and is “complex, pluralistic, and labyrinthine”.⁶⁵² Texts and rites serve to revive and reactivate cultural memory, at least partially. In Neuendettelsau, the initiation ceremony was remembered in a particular manner because formative and normative dimensions came together and then applied to an individual case. The normative interpretation of the ritual action was probably originally Löhe’s but is repeated here by Stählin: the collective ascension to the heights of Judea served to emphasise that the candidate was ascending to a new phase of life which was to be characterized not only by an elevated status but also by a “raised” conduct and spiritual state. By evoking this particular memory, the deaconess who took down the words reveals her intention to revive this interpretation and to render it normative for the present. In this sense, she wished to put into execution a part of the ceremony which two years ago had remained deficient: to reactivate Löhe’s “earnest words” so that they are “preserved” – not only in memory but also “in acts and life”.

The initiation ceremony, as can be seen in this example, powerfully established and defined collective identity in a double sense: on the one hand, the ritual itself narrated stories that were shared and enabled collective participation. On the other hand, through the revitalised memory of this ceremony it took on the form of a narrative that could be retold and invoked to confirm this identity. The community’s identity is not even bound by earthly finitude: the dead join the living in their intercessions as joint

⁶⁵⁰ Cf. Assmann, *Invisible Religion and Cultural Memory*, 40.

⁶⁵¹ Assmann, *What is ‘Cultural Memory’*, 27.

⁶⁵² Assmann, *What is ‘Cultural Memory’*, 29.

members of the *communio sanctorum*.⁶⁵³ A collective identity is established that transgresses the boundaries of human mortality.

This particular form of a deaconess's "re-membering"⁶⁵⁴ her sister's initiation ceremony is also significant in that it forms an external interpretation. We do not know how Marie herself experienced her initiation and how she remembered it. What we have, instead, is a normative construction, albeit by a participant who herself was obviously much involved. We can presume, however, that Marie would not have disagreed entirely. While it would be wrong to "hypostasise" a collective identity and homogenise a large number of individuals from an external perspective, collective identity is nevertheless constructed by *identification* on the part of the participating individuals.⁶⁵⁵ This also held true when a member of the community narrated her own (life-) story.⁶⁵⁶

3.5.5. The possibility of failure

The initiation ceremony as a rite for effecting status elevation, for conveying collective norms, and strengthening group cohesion, could, at worst, fail. Löhe knew this: indeed, he displayed an ambiguous attitude to ritual. For him, ritual had to be accompanied by sound instruction,⁶⁵⁷ and he also applied this principle to the initiation ceremonies. Therefore, in many of his sermons he commented and reflected upon the meaning and significance of the ritual performance, providing moments of "reflexive

⁶⁵³ It must also be pointed out that evoking the dead in memory, especially if they are regarded as in some sense still present, can be an ambiguous means of exerting pressure on the living which Assmann, in the context of political cult, called "the dark side of bonding memory" (Assmann, *What is 'Cultural Memory?'*, 21).

⁶⁵⁴ Assmann, *What is 'Cultural Memory?'*. 11: "When collectives 'remember', they thereby secure a unifying, 'connective' semantics that 'holds them inwardly together' and reintegrates their individual 'members' so that they possess a common point of view."

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. Straub, *Personal and collective identity*, 71.

⁶⁵⁶ We will discuss this in more detail in a later chapter (4.3.). At this point, a reference to Rusch, *Erkenntnis, Wissenschaft, Geschichte*, 374 shall suffice. Rusch emphasizes the social side of the process of story-telling: "The schema of narration requires the consistent draft of a story. However, as the story gains consistency, conclusiveness, probability and clarity, and finally the interest and acceptance of others, it will increasingly lose its categorization as a draft, because increasingly it becomes difficult to think against the persuasive power of a complex, consistent system, and because it would require an increasing effort and finally become an impossibility to relinquish the consonance, the security and the pleasure, once achieved through such a system, without need."

⁶⁵⁷ Cf. his lengthy instructions and explanations in the forewords to the two editions of his controversial "Agende [liturgies and orders of service]", published in 1844 and in 1853, GW 7/1, 9-22.

communication”.⁶⁵⁸ As Bell has pointed out, ritual is naturally “a patchwork of compliance, resistance, misunderstanding, and a redemptive personal appropriation of the hegemonic order.”⁶⁵⁹ By explicitly pointing out critical issues, Löhe as “ritual master” attempted to prolong his interpretative authority and to avoid dissonances which could hamper the construction of cohesive social reality.

Emotions amongst participants in ritual are an especially sensitive issue as they are difficult to control externally: indeed, Riis and Woodhead argue that “human lives are characterized by emotional indeterminacy.”⁶⁶⁰ They introduce the term “emotional regime” to denote an ordered pattern of emotional life within a group.⁶⁶¹ Establishing a stable emotional regime in which deviant emotional expressions are minimized is, not least, a measure of precaution against the undermining of leadership.⁶⁶² In this context, rites and symbols have an especially important function.⁶⁶³ Here too, the Neuendettelsau initiation ceremony offers an example.

In Neuendettelsau, shortly after the addition of the *Einsegnung* to the *Aussegnung*, Löhe seems to have sensed some disappointment amongst deaconesses concerning their initiation ceremony. In an address on 17 September 1867, he elaborated on the difference between Roman Catholic rites of profession and the “austerity” [*Kargheit*] of Protestant ceremonies.⁶⁶⁴ Admitting that the latter lacked the beauty and aesthetic style which only tradition could provide, Löhe also conceded that the emotions which the Roman Catholic profession rite awakened in the newly professed nun, the joy and elation, were not necessarily sensed to the same extent by the newly initiated deaconess. Rather, he summarized: “It is all different.” And he asked rhetorically: “What can one do? Should it be one’s intention to sadden those who are blessed and to convey to them a sense of deficiency?” Löhe concluded that though the ceremony might be deficient, the deaconesses were expected to make an effort of will to overcome any sense of anti-climax by being alert to the fact that all their offerings and their vows were a voluntary

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. Stausberg, *Reflexivity*, 638.

⁶⁵⁹ Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 208.

⁶⁶⁰ Riis/Woodhead, *Sociology of Emotion*, 46.

⁶⁶¹ Riis/Woodhead, *Sociology of Emotion*, 53 and 76.

⁶⁶² Cf. Riis/Woodhead, *Sociology of Emotion*, 111 and 147.

⁶⁶³ Cf. Riis/Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 116.

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. “Rede vom 17. Sept. 1867.”

sacrifice. Initiation into the community was a process rather than an event: "It is an apprehensive, hesitant path on which a virgin amongst us is set who wishes to be regarded as a bride of Christ [*eine Gottverlobte*]. What one wishes to provide for the virgins, for example for you, who are about to be blessed, cannot be produced all at once."

The background for Löhe's remarks seems to have been a disturbance in the "emotional regime" of the community, possibly a sense of deflating enthusiasm. As Löhe was in the habit of hearing the deaconesses' private confessions, his reflection may have been based on explicitly articulated concerns. But if the initiation ceremony as a rite of "objectification"⁶⁶⁵ failed to evoke the appropriate emotions, the group was threatened by disintegration. Löhe forestalled this by, on the one hand, making the emotional norms more explicit and appealing to them ("making voluntary sacrifices with feelings of joy and elation"), and, on the other hand, slightly redefining and revising them ("apprehensive, hesitant path").

Another field of emotion was even more dangerous: that of frivolity, or lack of seriousness. What Austin and Searle have pointed out with regard to performative speech acts⁶⁶⁶ is also true of solemn, ceremonial rites: their validity depends on the group collectively defining them as serious. There must be no doubt amongst actors that the rite constitutes social reality:

the ritual performance results neither from the inner attitude of the individual actor nor from the bodily behaviour alone. Instead it is generated by the collective definition of the performance as serious and this seriousness is related to the sacred basis of their social bond: the ritual actors would put their collective identity and the core of their social order at stake if they would, afterwards, invalidate a serious ritual performance.⁶⁶⁷

There is some evidence that a certain lack of seriousness occasionally threatened the initiation ceremonies in Neuendettelsau. Löhe began an address from 4 April 1857 by expressing his satisfaction with the emotional state of the current candidates:

⁶⁶⁵ Riis/Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 96.

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*; Searle, *Speech Acts*. A classic example for a performative speech act is the solemn declaration of a couple as husband and wife by the officiant during a wedding ceremony, cf. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 5.

⁶⁶⁷ Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 340.

Today, I experience a great joy which I have had at few prior *Aussegnungen* because I know for sure from a conversation with some of the candidates that, for them, the day of the *Aussegnung* is something glorious and wonderful, a new stage in life. I rejoice all the more because I have been sorrowful at times that some have embarked on their *Aussegnung* as if it were a minor thing. [...] You have all cause to esteem your *Aussegnung* highly, to make preparations; indeed, it would be fitting to spend the day before in fasting, praying and preparing. What is bestowed lightly on people they often regard as commonplace. This attitude, however, you shall discharge, as flippancy, as arrogance of the soul. This day is a feast day to you, a wedding day – a high point in your life [*ein Festtag, ein Hochzeitstag – eine hohe Zeit des Lebens*].⁶⁶⁸

And after having expounded on the importance and significance of the ceremony, Löhe concluded his address: “If hitherto you have lacked seriousness, [from now on] esteem your *Aussegnung* as what it is and should be.”

We find here an illustration of the ultimate inability of a “ritual master” to orchestrate the emotional lives of individuals and to suppress subjective deviance. Bell points to the importance of negotiation between all the actors in a ritual.⁶⁶⁹ By this she means that “ritual is not merely a mask for power, it is itself a form of power.”⁶⁷⁰ Ritual thus understood empowers all participants, as all are required to engage in the process of creating hierarchies and integration, of defining and obscuring power relations. Löhe resorted to a declaration (“this day is a feast day to you, a wedding day, a high point in your life”) which can be interpreted as an attempt to conceal his own helplessness: such utterances, unless given validity by collective appropriation, are meaningless. However, in a relatively closed and hierarchical community, a transfer of power to the actors needed to be controlled, for it could seriously undermine authoritative leadership.

We have an example of how Löhe dealt with this set of issues. In an address given on 16 October 1868, he expressed his joy that the fellowship [*Genossenschaft*] had the opportunity to dedicate ten young women as an “offering to the Lord” [*dem Herrn zum Opfer darzubringen*].⁶⁷¹ The church consecrated those who were resolved to act in the Lord’s name and according to the Lord’s commandment. He continued:

⁶⁶⁸ “Rede vom 4. April 1857”.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 182.

⁶⁷⁰ Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 194.

⁶⁷¹ The term „Opfer“ can be translated as “sacrifice”, “offering” or “victim”.

If this is not only a conception [*Vorstellung*], an assumption [*Annahme*], a teaching [*Lehre*] which the one accepts, the other denies, but rather a reality, all playing with the Lord's act [*Handlung*] must have an end; all playing at the performance [*Ausübung*] of the sacred ceremony, all playing at the reception of those who are blessed. [...] this is a sacred matter to you, sisters. It must be sacred to you with great earnestness. Whoever despises and disrespects the *Aussegnung* deserves an angry mien [*dem gebührt ein zorniges Angesicht*]. I do not even wish to speak of those, who despise the *Einsegnung*, because they despise the servants of the Lord who on earth were given power [*Vollmacht*] to bless in His name, to ceremoniously bestow His holy name on creatures, to promise [*verheißen*] fortune and salvation and sanctification. But even those who do not go so far as to disrespect the servants of the Lord who bestow the blessing but (merely) disrespect your *Aussegnung*: you must not tolerate them in your vicinity, least of all in your midst.⁶⁷²

In a later passage of the same sermon, Löhe admonished:

Do you think you could become a deaconess and merely play with obedience? If you have a *Rektor* who knows who he is and who knows that in governing he does not play a children's game, who becomes ever surer that this is an institution [*Werk*] for which he will have to account for on that day – you will not dare to approach the man who is to govern you with the play of obedience. It is a highly dangerous game to play with him who stands in the Lord's stead to lead the virgin.⁶⁷³

In this long extract from Löhe's sermon, we find a number of highly interesting aspects of ritualized power. The immediate background of his detailed exposition seems to be Löhe's sense of a massive threat to his authority within the community. Löhe used this occasion when ten new deaconesses were to be initiated – a large group that could seriously unbalance social relations within the community if norms, established structures and patterns of authority were not quickly internalized – to make a fundamental statement not only about the initiation ceremony itself but also about the ensuing power relations. Given that the sermon had its place in the middle of a ceremony which in its liturgical form was predominantly an act of blessing and encouragement, mostly performed by the deaconesses themselves, Löhe's exercising of his right to speak at length to the assembled community in a completely contrasting manner must have caused a deep emotional disruption to the ceremony, and was in itself a demonstration of power.

Again we find the admonishment not to "play" with the initiation ceremony, that is, not to question the binding force and validity of the ritual. While other verbal forms of instruction may be internalized wholly

⁶⁷² "Rede vom 16. Oktober 1868."

⁶⁷³ "Rede vom 16. Oktober 1868".

or in part, this ceremony, Löhe explicitly stressed, left no room for negotiation: it constituted a reality that lay beyond the subjective appropriation of individual actors or witnesses. It follows that those who questioned this were branded as outsiders: solemn, ceremonial rituals cannot be criticized from within, and critics, as outsiders, must be socially or physically excluded to avoid disturbance.⁶⁷⁴ Yet there remains some irony in Löhe's explanations, as either the ritual constructs this reality, and then it is simply real, or it does not and then the reality cannot be evoked by words. Here, however, Löhe's authority comes to full force. Bourdieu pointed out that words can also become "symbolic power" and, in the same way as ritual, become instruments of domination within a certain constellation: "What makes the power of words, the power of words to command and to order the world, is belief in the legitimacy of the words and of him [sic] who utters them, a belief which words themselves cannot produce."⁶⁷⁵ It was the community's recognition of his legitimate authority that enabled Löhe to take a stand beyond the actual performance of the ritual.

This legitimate authority, as Löhe made abundantly clear, was vested in his office which he claimed had been transferred to him by God. Max Weber classified this form of legitimising authority as the traditional type: powers are vested in traditional prerogatives, privileges and rights bound to an office which, in turn, confer almost unlimited authority to the holder of the office.⁶⁷⁶ This is especially true when the office is regarded as being directly constituted by God. Domination is thereby legitimised by relating it to an unchanging, external and unassailable realm. Ritual performs this "objectified office" by employing techniques of formalisation which distract from the individual office-holder. Ritual thus "depersonalises" authority by making it appear a fact.⁶⁷⁷ This can even lead to the bearer of the office being transformed into the higher source of authority, almost merging the two.⁶⁷⁸ In Löhe's own words to the deaconesses: in playing with the *Rektor*, you play with "him who stands in the Lord's stead." This is a truly remarkable statement for a Lutheran clergyman.

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Giesen, *Performing the sacred*, 344.

⁶⁷⁵ Bourdieu, *Symbolic Power*, 117.

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. Weber, *Economy and Society*, 227; cf. also Morrison, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber*, 288-289.

⁶⁷⁷ Bloch, *Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation*, 77-79.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. Bloch, *Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation*, 78.

As Löhe testified in this sermon, his office as an ordained clergyman, as a “servant of the Lord”, was for him intrinsically linked to his office as the *Rektor* of the Institute. Thus not only was he entrusted with power “to bless in His name, to ceremoniously bestow His holy name on creatures, to promise fortune and salvation and sanctification”, that is, to participate in God’s authority through the merit of *gratia ordinationis* but, what is more, the whole institution, a seemingly fragile, fluid, earthly construction, is described as a work of God for which Löhe will have to account. This makes the internal arrangements almost unassailable.

In analysing the performance of the initiation ceremony in Neuendettelsau, we have demonstrated that the deaconesses were indispensable active participants. Through their physical movements, their gestures and prayers especially in the first part of the ceremony, through generally refraining from openly expressing any existing personal emotional deviancy and through narrating memories that were appropriate to the overall emotional regime, they collectively affirmed the validity and significance of the ceremony. The process of integration into the community was thus a process of increasing identification with the values, expectations, norms and overall conceptions of the community. It was not, as some have claimed of ritual, an entirely one-sided ideological conditioning of the collectivity.⁶⁷⁹ Some power lay in the hands of the deaconesses, as Löhe’s appeals reveal, which at times seem almost helpless. However, the space for negotiation, of which Bell speaks, was hardly existent. Löhe as “ritual master” maintained the ultimate interpretative authority which he demonstrated in his addresses.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the initiation ceremony as an important institutional mechanism to construct a threshold which served the purpose both to symbolically demarcate a boundary between “inside” and “outside”, between “we” and “them”, between “sacred” and “profane”, which, in turn, strengthened group cohesion and consolidated the deaconesses’ collective identity, and to effect and display an elevation of status. We have taken a double perspective: In the first part of the chapter, we

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 187.

have traced the theoretical discourse on the initiation ceremony which evolved around theological issues. We have argued that the theological discussion was heavily influenced by questions of gender-roles and “gender characteristics”. There was clearly great uneasiness amongst the male theologians at the sociological implications of a pronounced initiation ceremony as the threshold to an exclusive community of single women. These sociological implications were explored in great detail in the second part of the chapter. The focus was on the experience and participation of the women during the rite. It emerged that though the women were active participants, it was Löhe as a man and ordained clergyman who ultimately controlled, interpreted and authorized the ceremony. In the addresses he gave at these occasions, he repeatedly referred to the norms regarded as constitutive for the deaconess profession. To these norms we will now turn. They were explained, rehearsed and confirmed by both literary and non-literary means.

Chapter 4: Constructing and consolidating collective identity through literary means: Normative and formative texts

Every community has a store of common values, norms, expectations, and outlooks. They define the group’s “cultural meaning” and enhance collective identity.⁶⁸⁰ This needs to be communicated and circulated to facilitate integration and identification and thereby participation. One important means of communicating “cultural meaning” is literary texts. These can be formative texts, answering the question “who are we?”, or normative texts, answering the question “what shall we do?”, though in practice these aspects will often merge.⁶⁸¹ Thus such texts offer valuable insights into the “webs of significance”⁶⁸² spun within a distinct social group as they make conscious and accessible what is otherwise predominantly tacit and latent. Within the Neuendettelsau deaconess community a specific genre of such texts emerged, mostly composed by Löhe. These presented ideal-typical constructions which were

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 120-122.

⁶⁸¹ Cf. Assmann, *Invisible Religion and Cultural Memory*, 38.

⁶⁸² Geertz, *Thick description*, 5.

more prescriptive than descriptive, and least of all reconstructive.⁶⁸³ The approach taken here is to evaluate the extent to which the values and norms communicated in these texts coincided with values and norms held by the wider bourgeois society and the extent to which the norms and values articulated in these texts confirmed the women in a specific (religiously connoted) identity as deaconesses. In the terminology of Eisenstadt and Giesen, the focus is on the differentiation between the values and norms as specific cultural codes which constructed, consolidated and enhanced the deaconesses' collective identity, and the values and norms serving as codes to stabilize the tacitly assumed primordial category gender.⁶⁸⁴

4.1. The "dictations"

When the Institute was founded in 1854, the statutes defined it as an "institution partly for [theoretical] instruction and education, partly for practical training" [*teils Lehr- und Erziehungs-, teils Übungsanstalt*].⁶⁸⁵ Löhe claimed that he wished to offer to "women from the flat countryside" an education to prevent them from becoming "deformed in mind and spirit."⁶⁸⁶ This emphasis has supported the conviction that education in the deaconess house was a "factor which cannot be underestimated", and that Löhe's intention was "to educate and train the deaconesses as thoroughly and comprehensively as possible."⁶⁸⁷ However, this conclusion needs to be qualified. A rigorous intellectual training was not Löhe's primary concern, and Stempel-de Fallois is certainly right that "a thorough, intellectual understanding [*Durchdringung*] of the courses was not intended."⁶⁸⁸ Reading the statutes closely indicates that the offering of (intellectual) training [*Ausbildung*] was viewed on a par with the "education" [*erziehen*] of those women whom Löhe considered "capable persons of the female sex" to "obedience to the directions of the pastors and physicians", "humility", "self-denial", and "diligence and

⁶⁸³ For this distinction cf. Straub, *Personal and Collective Identity*, 69.

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. Eisenstadt/ Giesen, *Construction of collective identity*, esp. 92.

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. "Die bisherigen Satzungen der Diaconissenanstalt Neuendettelsau" (1855), *CorDiac* 1858, No. 7/ 8, pp. 26-29.

⁶⁸⁶ Löhe, *Bedenken*, 272.

⁶⁸⁷ Meister, *Beispiel kirchlicher Gemeinschaft*, 124.

⁶⁸⁸ Stempel-de Fallois, *Diakonische Wirken Löhes*, 321.

self-sacrificing devotion” to the deaconess house and its objectives.⁶⁸⁹ It is apparent, therefore, that the women’s education was primarily intended to confirm bourgeois notions of femininity. Accordingly, the educational system in Neuendettelsau was heavily oriented towards providing a specifically gendered education.

This was by no means unique to Löhe and coincided with widely held bourgeois pedagogic theories.⁶⁹⁰ If education intended to support the development of a harmonious personality, then a formal higher education for women could be rejected by arguing that the female gender characteristics and female educational goals such as “innocence, chastity of the body and the soul; modesty and respectability; faithfulness towards the chosen one” were best developed within the private circle of the family -life.⁶⁹¹ For Löhe, however, the Institute as an educational institution had the important function of offering a thorough religious education to girls and women. This, again, was a conception influenced by the assumption of distinct “gender-characteristics”. By emphasizing specifically “feminine” expressions of spirituality, Löhe can be categorized as one of the conservative nineteenth-century ecclesiastical pedagogues who wished to counterbalance the increasing exodus of male members from the churches by addressing the women who, it was believed, would in turn exert their influence within their families.⁶⁹² This was an explicit aim for those students who left the Institute without becoming deaconesses. In the case of the Neuendettelsau deaconesses, Löhe intended them to pass on their education to girls and women, to “transfer the spirit of the mother house into their spheres of work [*Wirkungskreise*],”⁶⁹³ and thus to stabilize eroding structures.⁶⁹⁴ Deaconesses were to ensure that young single women subjected

⁶⁸⁹ §4, “Die bisherigen Satzungen” (1855).

⁶⁹⁰ Even Wilhelm von Humboldt, for example, who, as educational minister in Prussia, advocated the classics as a means of furthering a general comprehensive humanistic education which was meant to level distinctions of class and social background, took it for granted that such an education would be enjoyed only by members of the male sex, cf. Kraul, *Bildung und Bürgerlichkeit*, 49-50; also: Frevert, *Bürgerliche Meisterdenker*, 28-29.

⁶⁹¹ Kraul, *Bildung und Bürgerlichkeit*, 50-51.

⁶⁹² Cf. Götz v. Olenhusen, *Feminisierung von Religion und Kirche*, 10.

⁶⁹³ 5. *Jahresbericht* 1859, 18.

⁶⁹⁴ Löhe delineated the deaconess profession by employing the metaphor of a ladder in his dictation “Von den Diakonissen”, CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 7. The lowest rung is to learn and practice the chores of a maid. Ideally climbing the rungs one by one in the course of her career, the deaconess teaches increasingly older girls. At the stage of the final rung, the deaconess has gained the status of a parochial deaconess, which includes the teaching of adult women.

their sexuality to bourgeois conventions, that they regularly attended church services and that they filled their leisure time with charitable duties.⁶⁹⁵

Moreover, Löhe was keen to form and affirm the future deaconesses' confessional outlook. In the courses he gave at the Institute, he taught the students numerous historical details which add up coherently to substantiate his own view of historical developments and, accordingly, contemporary circumstances without allowing for diverging opinions.⁶⁹⁶ Explicitly, Löhe differentiated the Neuendettelsau Institute from other educational institutions for women, as well as from Kaiserswerth.⁶⁹⁷ What he meant becomes obvious in the appendix to the first annual report, in which the curriculum of the deaconess school was published. Alongside classes on reading, improvement of handwriting, German and arithmetic, religious instruction was given, differentiated into many courses such as biblical history in connection with biblical geography, introduction to the Lutheran tenets of faith, liturgy, church ornamentation and the liturgical calendar. In addition, courses were taught with topics such as "On educational and disciplining love (Matthew 18)," "On a cursory [*cursorisch*] and detailed [*statarisch*] reading of the Bible," "On the prayer of the heart and its blessed practice," "On the blessed practice of mercy," and "On the virginal life." All this was subsumed under the heading "general education."⁶⁹⁸ In Neuendettelsau, the courses which instructed the future deaconesses in confessional theology were part of their vocational training, preparing them for their future professions. For instance, Löhe taught some especially eager students Greek. This was not part of a humanistically oriented curriculum

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. NN: "Etwas für die Schwestern, die im Falle sind, Jungfrauenvereine gründen zu sollen", CorDiac 1866, No. 2, p. 3-7.

⁶⁹⁶ A good example for this is Löhe's dictation "On Mercy", which offers a survey of works of mercy throughout the ages in seven chapters and concludes and culminates with an outline of the "modern" deaconess profession, cf. GW4, 466-523.

⁶⁹⁷ 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55, 9. In a first direct communication with Fliedner, Löhe differentiated the educational system in Neuendettelsau from the one in Kaiserswerth by claiming that his curriculum placed more emphasis on the "intellectual and spiritual preparation, theoretical training" (Löhe to Fliedner (27/09/1861), GW2, 399-400). Conversely, Fliedner feared that Löhe neglected the deaconesses' practical training (cf. Gerhardt, *Fliedner*, 771).

⁶⁹⁸ Cf. Unterrichtspläne, Appendix III, 1. *Jahresbericht*, 31-32. On the bourgeois conception of "general education", cf. Kraul, *Bildung und Bürgerlichkeit*, 51-53; and Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 83 who refers to Pia Schmidt: „Das Allgemeine, die Bildung und das Weib“, in: Heinz-Elmar Tenorth (ed.): *Allgemeine Bildung*, Weinheim 1986, 202-214.

intended to allow access to an academic career, but an asset for those who would later become teachers.⁶⁹⁹

Löhe intended the deaconesses to spread the Institute's theological principles in the parishes where they would later be employed. This transgressed the conventional limits of a "female education". Nevertheless, a direct confrontation with bourgeois norms was avoided. In the "principles for the hours of edification which the deaconesses are to give" the maneuvering between the norm of female submission and theological assertiveness is evident. The deaconesses were admonished to teach exclusively within closed female circles. Moreover: "If the number of attendees became too large so that the assembly would take the shape of a parish service or if by other criteria it were to resemble a service, the deaconess should step back."⁷⁰⁰ At the same time, Löhe obviously credited the deaconesses with a thorough theological judgement which he advised them to employ discretely:

One has to analyse the requirements in each region. In regions where the Moravian direction is predominant, one will have to teach the value of the pure and full doctrine (and not only individual articles), the nature of the doctrine of justification (not to be mistaken for the the feeling of justification), the value and non-value of spiritual pleasures. Where rationalism is predominant, one will have to choose as a central theme submission to the Word of God. Where one teaches morality, one will have to insist on penitence and the real discernment of original sin.⁷⁰¹

The deaconesses were cautioned to seek the consent of the parish pastor. This was, however, qualified: "It is quite different where there are wolves. Then the pigs have to scream, even when the wolves howl against it, yeah, then most of all."⁷⁰² Löhe evidently took the Pauline instruction *mulier taceat in ecclesia* in combination with the Lutheran tradition which only allowed the ordained clergyman to preach in public, as a safe guideline to maintain the bourgeois expectation of female modesty and

⁶⁹⁹ Cf. Stählin to her sister Ida (17/02/1857), ThStI, 59; Stählin to her mother (17/07/1857), ThStI, 68-69: "A fortnight ago, our lessons in Greek were resumed, after they had been interrupted since Easter. Of course, it is only one hour which we are being given each week. Nevertheless, *Herr Pfarrer* thinks that we will be able to master it and thus give proof that the female sex is by no means so stupid and incapable as one generally thinks. [...] The glorious prospect of once being able to read the New Testament in Greek sustains my courage." Apparently, the deaconesses enjoyed their Greek lessons so much that they later decided to study Latin themselves, cf. Stählin to her mother (12/09/1861), ThStI, 122.

⁷⁰⁰ "Grundsätze für die von den Diakonissen zu haltenden Erbauungsstunden" [ZADN Alle 15,10].

⁷⁰¹ §8, "Grundsätze für die von den Diakonissen zu haltenden Erbauungsstunden" [ZADN Alle 15,10].

⁷⁰² §2, "Grundsätze" [ZADN Alle 15,10].

submission. Nevertheless, when in doubt and when theological principles were at stake, bourgeois norms of femininity had to be sacrificed.

In the third annual report, published in 1856, Löhe gave details of how these courses were taught. He explained that the normal method of presentation was oral speech [*akromatische Weise*].⁷⁰³ The students were expected to take down his “dictations” word for word, in notes which were then reviewed by the deaconess teachers. However, the teaching methods soon changed. A year later, Löhe announced that because of a general lack of time, teaching material would be developed to avoid the time-consuming dictations.⁷⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Therese Stählin, one of the deaconess teachers, still attested in a letter written at the end of 1858: “The whole house, beginning with the superior and ending with our little Sophie von Vitzhum, writes ‘On Mercy.’ *Herr Pfarrer* instructed us to put our exercise books on his desk each day.”⁷⁰⁵ Thirteen dictations which intended to convey the fundamental deaconess norms were published consecutively in the *CorDiac* in the years 1858 to 1860. Some of them, such as the very lengthy “On Mercy”, were also published separately.⁷⁰⁶ These were frequently re-used in the deaconess school, even after Löhe’s death, until almost the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁰⁷ Even afterwards, deaconesses sometimes still met amongst themselves to read the dictations.⁷⁰⁸ The 1856 annual report explained that the dictations were meant to “bring the pupil to the right notion [*Auffassung*] about her position in the deaconess house, in a Christian congregation, and in the church of God.”⁷⁰⁹ Amongst the dictations, there was a certain hierarchy: “The pinnacle of all papers [*Vorträge*] is the one on the office and profession of the deaconess according to the Word of God and

⁷⁰³ Cf. 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 22.

⁷⁰⁴ Cf. 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 16. Promptly after this announcement, the upper consistory insisted on inspecting the teaching material (cf. upper consistory to deanery in Windsbach (09/03/1858) [LAELKB BKA I]). The deanery in Windsbach affirmed that there was nothing to find fault with in Löhe’s lectures and declined to undertake “secret investigations” amongst the students. If necessary, *Pfarrer Kündiger* was willing to present “the fairly well written” exercise books of his daughter (cf. deanery to upper consistory (15/03/1858) [LAELKB BKA I]).

⁷⁰⁵ Stählin to her sister Ida (30/12/1858), ThStI, 92.

⁷⁰⁶ *Von der Barmherzigkeit*, Nördlingen 1860. After Löhe’s death, further editions were published in 1877, in 1905, and in 1927.

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. Deinzer, *Löhe’s Leben*, Vol. 3, 200.

⁷⁰⁸ As mentioned in Bezzel, “Zum 21. Februar 1908” [Löhe’s 100th birthday], *CorDiac* 1908, No. 2, p. 11.

⁷⁰⁹ 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 21.

history.”⁷¹⁰ This was also the first one to be published in the CorDiac.⁷¹¹ It gave a historic narrative on the development of the deaconess office from scriptural to contemporary times.

Other dictations explicated the “four deaconess virtues” of chastity, poverty, obedience, and gentleness [*Friedfertigkeit*].⁷¹² Because of a “lack of unity” within the sisterhood, Löhe claimed that “the mother house was pressed to raise the flag of peace and gentleness.”⁷¹³ In the same year, the “four virtues” [*Tugenden* or *Schlagwörter*] were explained at length in an open letter addressed “to the sisters and probationary sisters,” with the insistence that the norms which distinguished the deaconesses from other professional women were instilled in them as students: “The sisters and probationary sisters have all attended the courses in the mother house in Neuendettelsau, and they will not be able to deny that both this and the whole direction and education of the sisters in Neuendettelsau is apt to raise a daughter to the standpoint which a deaconess has to assume.”⁷¹⁴ Of the “four deaconess virtues” chastity, poverty, obedience, and gentleness, the first was the one Löhe expounded most. Apart from the dictations he also seized other opportunities to do this, such as when he gave addresses at initiation ceremonies and deaconess funerals.⁷¹⁵

The dictation „Summary of the seventh chapter of the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians” was also one of the first to be published in the CorDiac. In it, while refraining from explicitly devaluing marriage, Löhe explained that the apostle had favoured the celibate state: “Evidently, S. Paul terms the single

⁷¹⁰ 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 21.

⁷¹¹ “Von den Diakonissen”, CorDiac 1858, No. 1, p. 2-4; No. 2, p. 6-7.

⁷¹² Cf. “Summarie zum siebenten Kapitel des ersten Briefes St. Pauli an die Corinther”, CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 7; “Von der Armut und Bedürfnislosigkeit der Christen”, CorDiac 1858, No. 3, p. 12 and No. 4/ 5, p. 14; “Von der Aufgabe des eigenen Willens und dem freudigen Gehorsam gegen den Willen Gottes oder der Gelaßenheit”, CorDiac 1858, No. 4 and 5, p. 18-19.

⁷¹³ 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862/63, 16.

⁷¹⁴ “An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern”, CorDiac 1863, No. 7, p. 26-28; No. 8, p. 29-32, here: 26.

⁷¹⁵ In his eulogy for Elise Steinlein, for example, Löhe substantiated his claim that Steinlein had been “a true deaconess” by showing how each of the four “deaconess virtues” played out in her life, cf. the unpublished version [ZADN EII st1]. Löhe’s instructions were affirmed by different authors of articles in the CorDiac who underlined the importance of the norms, for example Schw D[oris Braun], “Vom jungfräulichen Leben der Diakonissin”, CorDiac 1864, No. 7, p. 27-28, and No. 8, p. 29-30.

state the better, more useful and serviceable [state] compared to the married state.”⁷¹⁶ Löhe coined this into an unambiguous instruction:

Deaconess-pupils, what has been written has also been written to instruct you. If hitherto you have not yet had the same thoughts on matrimony and celibacy as St. Paul, then submit yourself in this hour to the obedience of faith, and pray for the spiritual gift of a simple and pure heart, a soul dedicated only to God especially for this your present time, in which without doubt you are to remain inwardly single to serve the Lord.⁷¹⁷

In his explanations to the deaconesses, Löhe endeavoured to link chastity to freedom, in the form of “freedom from sexual ties”.⁷¹⁸ This implied, first and foremost, the freedom from the ties of a family -life, since sexuality was for Löhe only conceivable in the context of matrimony (though he regarded “physical abstinence” within matrimony, if by mutual consent, a possible option.)⁷¹⁹ Löhe warned the deaconesses in dire language of the married state, in which, he thought “people seek to find paradise,” but which in reality “brings one deception after another.”⁷²⁰ He regarded this deplorable state as resulting from a Lutheran social ethics which scorned celibacy. According to Löhe, the Lutheran church had falsely lured women into assuming that marriage was the only vocation for them: “Our church educates [*erziehen*] daughter[s] only for marriage, and it is very rare that a praise of virginity issues forth from the mouth of some individual Protestant pastor. [...] Here, the Reformation has taken something from us which she [the church] has now to return.”⁷²¹ A Protestant woman was thus one-sidedly pressed into marriage where her place was to help and serve her husband. In one case, Löhe used starkly negative language to describe this state:

The church cannot flourish if it does not honour virginity, when it pulls down [*hinunterzieht*] the female under the male sex by assigning to it [the female sex] only the place of a domestic servant [*Hausmagd*]. A husband will feel like a servant if he is told that he belongs to his wife [...]. You, however, of the female sex, are glad to be bound in servitude; [...] As a reward for not having grasped the higher things, the women in the Orient became a servant of all servants.

⁷¹⁶ “Summarie zum siebenten Kapitel”, CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 7.

⁷¹⁷ “Summarie zum siebenten Kapitel”, CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 7-8, here: 8.

⁷¹⁸ Cf. “Summarie zum siebenten Kapitel”, CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 8. This theme was also drawn out in most addresses Löhe gave at initiation ceremonies, for example “Rede vom 1. Juni 1857”, “Rede vom 22. April 1861”.

⁷¹⁹ Cf. “Summarie zum siebenten Kapitel”, CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 7. Cf. also Löhe’s inclusion of Kunigunde (+ 1040), the virginal wife of King Heinrich II of Bavaria, into his “canon” of holy women (Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, 56-61).

⁷²⁰ “Rede vom 1. Oktober 1860”.

⁷²¹ “Rede vom 17. September 1867.”

Thus you will all degenerate [so *werdet ihr alle heruntersinken*], if you throw yourselves away on the bad men of these times!”⁷²²

Here, Löhe compared the institution of marriage to the enslavement of women and explicitly denounced the androcentric structures of the church which upheld and sanctified this, along with the women who submitted meekly to the arrangements. However, this radical renunciation of bourgeois marriage was made only orally and not repeated in print. Löhe’s primary intention here seems to deter rather than to question the institution of marriage in principle.⁷²³ Generally, he depicted the married state and celibacy as being on a par, though for the deaconesses, the latter state was the one to which they were undoubtedly called. Celibacy in this sense served as a boundary marker, as Sarah Apetrei has argued:

It [the term ‘celibacy’] carries the connotation of abstinence from sex, but its primary meaning is exclusion (voluntary or otherwise) from a particular unit of society. (...) This separation, in early Christian thought, signified a foretaste of spiritual liberation from the burdens of this world, and an altogether alternative and dissenting vision of society.⁷²⁴

In the Neuendettelsau rhetoric, celibacy served to draw boundaries and emphasise distinction not only from bourgeois society but also from the contemporary broader (Lutheran) church.⁷²⁵ Accordingly, in Löhe’s logic, the community had no difficulty in retaining its “numeric distinctiveness”, for the emphasising on the norms of chastity, poverty and obedience, albeit without explicit vows, meant that

⁷²² “Rede vom 16. Oktober 1868.”

⁷²³ Löhe was also careful never to simply prohibit deaconesses to marry and thus to leave the mother house. However, letters to deaconesses who had expressed an inclination to marry indicate that those who showed even a slight uncertainty were strongly advised to stay. An example is the letter from Löhe to Sophie Dürr (04/09/1860, GW 2, 368). Dürr was persuaded to stay for the time being but left four years later [“Anzeige”, CorDiac 1864, No. 10, p. 40]. Another example is Löhe’s letter to Johanna Wild’s father (21/10/1868) [ZADN EI c2]. Löhe explained that he had talked to Johanna and sensed her doubts about accepting the proposal of marriage. Löhe closed the letter to her father with the words: “All is now in your hands as her father. You will advise her with a view to the Lord, and I think you will release her and write to the suitor a friendly word of adieu with an expression of respect for your pious daughter. To your daughter, however, you should joyfully send a myrtle and a beautiful rose as a mark of approval of her loyalty to the blessed bridegroom of souls.” Obviously, Löhe and Wild’s father were well-acquainted, as the familiar address [“Du”] signifies. Perhaps it was for this reason that Löhe assumed “Brother Wild” would comply with his own opinion. Generally, the interference of parents was unwelcome, and they were advised to “regard the deaconesses, to whom they are related, while they remain members of the fellowship, in such a way as they would if they were married, and as if they [parents and family] had ceded all rights and claims to the mother house as they would to a husband to whom their child is married” (7. *Jahrebericht* 1859/60, 17).

⁷²⁴ Apetrei, *Masculine Virgins*, 51.

⁷²⁵ Cf. the dictations “Vom Verhältnis der Christen zur Welt”, CorDiac 1858, No. 6 (July), p. 23-24 and No. 7/8, p. 29-30, esp. p. 24; “Von den Diakonissen”, CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 6; “Von der Barmherzigkeit”, chapter 7, §72, GW4, 519.

“we do not attract the masses [...]”.⁷²⁶ This was not wholly unwelcome and contributed to a certain sense of elitism.⁷²⁷

“Celibacy” in Neuendettelsau also had other connotations. In his explanations to the deaconesses, Löhe complemented the connotation of celibacy as freedom from the ties of family-life and earthly marriage with the “idea of betrothal to God” [*die Idee der Gottverlobtheit*].⁷²⁸ Apparently, in Löhe’s view of women, the loosening of one tie required the strengthening of another. However, with regard to the paradoxical metaphor of Christ as the “celibate Bridegroom” and its ensuing “conceptual murkiness”,⁷²⁹ Löhe was treading a fine line. The deaconesses were encouraged to read Chrysostomos’ *De Virginitate*, excerpts of which were published in the CorDiac, including a passage which described Christ as the virgin’s lover.⁷³⁰ Occasional references were made to the Song of Songs,⁷³¹ and the scriptural image of the wise virgins who lived in constant expectation of their bridegroom [Mt 25: 1-13] was prominent in the Institute’s rhetoric.⁷³² With the focus on celibacy, the erotic overtones of the betrothal metaphor were repressed.⁷³³ Instead, it was explored as an appeal to the deaconesses’ work-ethos. For Löhe, a woman’s “natural” place was to serve men, in accordance with the orders of creation.⁷³⁴ This was also true of deaconesses. The grasping of the “better, more useful and serviceable state”⁷³⁵ – a celibate life

⁷²⁶ “Rede vom 2. Februar 1866”.

⁷²⁷ Occasionally, considerations were made to cap the numbers of community-members to ensure the training of “true deaconesses”. The annual reports, for example, repeatedly remark on the desirability of preserving the group’s “numeric distinctiveness” and of avoiding “an indefinite increase of the number of its members”, e.g. 5. *Jahresbericht* 1858, 21; also 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862-63, 17.

⁷²⁸ Cf. “Von den Diakonissen” [CorDiac 1858, here: No. 2, p. 6]; “Von der Kleidung der Frauen” [CorDiac 1858, here: No. 3, p. 12]; “Von der Barmherzigkeit” §39 [CorDiac 1860, No. 5/4, p. 19] and §49 [GW4, p. 498]; Letter “to the sisters and probationary sisters” [CorDiac 1863, No. 7, p. 27]; “Zur Selbstprüfung der Probeschwestern” [CorDiac 1865, No. 8, p. 29]. Almost all initiation addresses refer to this also. A good example is “Rede vom 12. Oktober 1861”: “May the Lord grant you chastity and an unfettered soul. May he take you and place you on a path at the end of which you can gaze on His holy face, the face of the bridegroom, who woos your soul. May the acquaintance with His most holy person raise you above all miserable addictiveness [*Süchtelei*] and grant you a chaste heart.”

⁷²⁹ Cf. Clark, *Celibate Bridegroom*, 4.

⁷³⁰ “Aus den Sonntagsstunden”, CorDiac 1864, No. 11, p. 44.

⁷³¹ For example in the poem “Maidenship” [Magdtum] in CorDiac 1862, No. 4/5, p. 14.

⁷³² Cf. for example Löhe’s dictation “On Mercy”, Chapter 7, §77, GW4, 523: “A beginning has been made [with the revival of the deaconess profession]. The lamp of the wise virgin is alight.” Cf. also the Neuendettelsau deaconess crest which depicted the lamp of the wise virgin and which formed part of the graphics adorning every edition of the CorDiac.

⁷³³ We only find occasional hints of how this repressed eroticism found expression within the community, for example by the deaconesses’ fabrication of a wreath of roses which they affixed on Löhe’s bedroom door to greet his return from a journey (cf. Stählin to her mother (May 1867), ThStI, 163).

⁷³⁴ Cf. for example Löhe’s dictation “On Mercy”, §39, CorDiac 1860, No. 4/5, p. 19 and often.

⁷³⁵ “Summarie vom siebenten Kapitel”, CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 8.

in renunciation of earthly marriage – and the ensuing exemption from servitude to an earthly husband meant, according to the Institute, that the deaconesses were free to dedicate themselves unconditionally to their work which was to serve Christ in works of *diakonia*. This was, for example, expressed in a poem which was published in the CorDiac:

It certainly does not require a man
to complement your life richly and beautifully.
You are a woman, and your profession is to serve!
And if you serve the Lord piously and joyfully
In all locations of the blessed kingdom of His love,
and [if] agreeableness never lacks in your mien
and the sacred dedication from your words:
Then you will flourish for Him, like the Rose of Sharon [Song of Songs 2:1].⁷³⁶

Thus, the deaconess who served her heavenly (male) spouse, Christ, willingly and joyfully, did not disrupt the social schema, which, according to Löhe, reflected the orders of creation and which assigned to all women the place of helpmates to men. Rather, in her unconditional dedication, industry and incessant toil, the deaconess was to become a model for married women. Löhe expressed this in his dictation “On Mercy”:

She [the deaconess] is not the first and greatest in God’s Kingdom, but she leads the choir of widows and maidens and is to show to the whole female sex which paths all its members should tread. [...] The business of all women is to render help to men [Manneshilfe]. For this purpose, they have been created by God. After the fall, this means [to render] pure [works of] mercy to the man and his sphere of work [*Wirkungskreis*]. Thus all women pursue one and the same goal; ahead of all, however, runs the deaconess, as an example to be emulated by all. She (....) who is unmarried, unfettered by her own cares [...] is to show to all how, with sacred freedom from all earthly things, one can render works of mercy as priestly works with a soul which is betrothed to God.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁶ The poem “Maidenship” consists of two parts, the first concerning the wife [*Frau*], and the second the maiden [*Jungfrau*]. The first part begins: “When once God, the Lord, gave to the man the royal sceptre here on earth, he called the woman to life through his Word, and assigned to her the place of a helpmate to the man” [J.St., “Magdtum”, CorDiac 1862, No. 4/5, p. 13]. The poem was signed with the initials “J.St.” which are not associated with any known deaconess. Perhaps it was written by Julie Stählin, Therese’s blind (and unmarried) sister, who spent much time in Neuendettelsau. The poem comes with a variation in the last verse, which emphasises the equal status of married and unmarried women, and a noteworthy correction: The line “it does not require a man to complement your life” [*denn nicht des Mannes erst bedarf’s, fürwahr*] was initially falsely printed as “it does not require man’s seriousness” [*denn nicht des Mannes Ernst bedarf’s, fürwahr*]. The correction was made in the next edition and the mistake explained as “an annoying typographical error” (CorDiac 1862, No. 6, p.24).

⁷³⁷ “Von der Barmherzigkeit”, §39, CorDiac 1860, No. 4/5, p. 19.

The fact that it was the (male) clergyman who profited most by the deaconesses' "betrothal to Christ" was not reflected explicitly. The emphasis on the deaconesses' "freedom to serve man/ Christ" indicates that the Neuendettelsau norm of a celibate life-style was only a partial breach with the conventions of contemporary society and the Lutheran church, which regarded marriage as "the basic unit of Protestant and enlightened sociability as far as women were concerned: a microcosm of social harmony, a bulwark against rampant individualism, and a secure outlet for their feminine virtues: modesty, sensibility, discretion and industry."⁷³⁸ The life-style of independent single women was evoked as a negative foil for the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau. They were depicted as "old maids" who were prone to develop "all sorts of peculiarities, one-sidednesses [*Einseitigkeiten*], indelible habits and customs" and were in danger of becoming "a caricature [*Karikatur*] of the female character" by restricting "their [...] circles of interests [to] three letters which in their composition read: I [*ich*]."⁷³⁹ In contrast, the community with its patriarchal structures and internal hierarchies was praised as offering the necessary frame-work for the development of true "femininity": submission, obedience, dedication to charitable works, piety, gentleness, and modesty. Communal life was thus intrinsic to Löhe's depiction of the deaconess profession: "A deaconess without community and fellowship [*Verbindung*] is actually not a deaconess."⁷⁴⁰ This coincides with Löhe's repeated recommendation of the structures of the active Roman Catholic women's congregations to the deaconesses.⁷⁴¹ Somewhat paradoxically, the deaconesses were to assume the roles both of submissive, virginal, thus "unfettered" daughters of the Institute who were willing to go wherever they were sent, and of gentle, industrious wives who dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to their spouse, Christ, in this case through works of *diakonia*. The

⁷³⁸ Apetrei, *Masculine Virgins*, 42-43. Roper, *Holy Household*, has argued that the basis for this was laid in the early years of the sixteenth-century Reformation when the Reformatory movement was successfully "domesticated". By eradicating revolutionary forms of evangelicalism with their claims of spiritual equality for men and women and by raising the chaste, married craftsman and his subordinate wife who was largely excluded from public action as the model and norm for gender relations, both ecclesiastical and secular authorities worked hand in hand to establish an urban culture of moralism which favoured a consoling, socially conservative stance. According to Roper, only prostitutes and nuns deviated from the prescribed roles and thereby revealed the fragility of the patriarchal order. In consequence, they became one of the main targets of the Reformers.

⁷³⁹ Th[erese] St[ählin], "Über Frauenvereine zu leiblicher und geistlicher Versorgung armer, verlässener und berufsloser Jungfrauen und Witwen von Josenhans" [CorDiac 1862, No. 4/5, p. 14-15, here: 14].

⁷⁴⁰ "Von der Barmherzigkeit", Chapter 7, §77, GW4, 422.

⁷⁴¹ Cf. NN, "Eine Mittheilung aus den sogen. akademischen Stunden des Diakonissenhauses", CorDiac 1863, No. 5, p. 17-19.

prolongation of the norm of female submission within the structures of the fellowship was enhanced by the emphasis of the “virtues” of poverty and obedience.

For deaconesses, the norm of poverty largely meant the relinquishment of any financial independence. Löhe regarded charity as a common, sacred Christian duty for all those whom God had favoured with material means.⁷⁴² Some deaconesses came from wealthy families and, generally, the fathers retained the stewardship over their property when daughters became deaconesses. Löhe advised them not to spend more than the usual deaconess-salary and to hand over any extra interest to the mother house. If a deaconess inherited money, she should consider carefully what to do with it. If she was truly dedicated to her profession, she should relinquish all to the mother house, for: “whosoever has faith gives all without reserve.”⁷⁴³ It seems, however, that there were deaconesses who preferred to donate money for certain causes rather than to relinquish all their property entirely, and, apparently, Löhe did not object. Indeed, he occasionally drew on the resources of deaconesses with private means.⁷⁴⁴ A disregard for material things, however, was preached to all the deaconesses, and this could result in a breach with bourgeois tastes and predilections.⁷⁴⁵

Obedience was also preached as a common duty, primarily to be directed to God, as Löhe was careful to explain to the deaconesses.⁷⁴⁶ Nevertheless, in their vocation as deaconesses, there were special relationships of obedience, namely to the “organism” of the mother house, to the directorate, and in

⁷⁴² Cf. “Von der Armut und Bedürfnislosigkeit des Christen”, *CorDiac* 1858, No. 3, p. 12

⁷⁴³ “An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern”, *CorDiac* 1863, No. 8, p. 31.

⁷⁴⁴ For example, Löhe’s correspondence with Cäcilie Pöschel and Helen von Meyer, who were stationed in Hoffnungsthal, Odessa, from 1857 to 1860, reveals that he appealed to Pöschel to fund the new hospital in Neuendettelsau [ZADN RII I].

⁷⁴⁵ In 1893, some deaconesses founded an “Anti-Luxury-Society” [*Antiluxusverein*]. Its “statutes” renounced the possession of elegant candlesticks, embroidered cushions, carpets, spectacles, ornamented kneelers for prayer, knickknacks of any sort. Fragrant soaps and perfume were forbidden to members. No member was to give any article defined as “luxurious” to a fellow sister as a birthday present. Handicrafts should always serve a useful purpose. The norm of “frugality” [*Anspruchslosigkeit*] was not to be relinquished in times of illness: “It goes without saying that [seeking the advice of] many physicians, many treatments in health resorts, costly ‘recreations’ are barred” (“Statuten des Antiluxusvereins” [ZADN Alle 15,4]). The statutes reveal that the “normal” daily life in the deaconess house was not particularly frugal, despite repeated sermons on the beauty of poverty.

⁷⁴⁶ Cf. especially “Von der Aufgabe des eigenen Willens und dem freudigen Gehorsam gegen den Willen Gottes oder der Gelaßenheit” (*CorDiac* 1858, No. 4/5, p. 18-19).

particular to its decisions when allocating places of work to the individual deaconesses.⁷⁴⁷ In contrast, obedience to the women's families of origin was secondary. Löhe emphasized, however, that even towards superiors, no blind obedience was required.⁷⁴⁸ In the case of intelligent, bright deaconesses, Löhe seems to have allowed a considerable leeway for independent decisions. We have an indication of this in Löhe's funeral address for Elise Steinlein:

The degree of obedience which one could ask of her in the light of her high gifts and practical wisdom, she rendered in exemplary manner. She grasped the will of her superiors and fully understood the spirit of the house. Next to this exemplary obedience in great matters, she preserved a noble liberty in small matters. In inferior matters, she did not fearfully ask for the opinion of her superiors but went her own way, in an almost teasing manner, but in such a manner that, in the end, one owed her thanks even for her transgressions from the will of her superiors.⁷⁴⁹

This may have been an exceptional case, but it indicates that Löhe fully appreciated the intelligent cooperation of women, as long as they adhered to what he considered the fundamental principles.

It is apparent that Löhe's dictations emphasized the norms of "obedience to the directions of the pastors and physicians", of "humility", "self-denial", and "diligence and self-sacrificing devotion" to the cause of the deaconess house.⁷⁵⁰ While these norms largely coincided with bourgeois notions of femininity, the deaconesses' celibate life-style meant a partial distinction from the bourgeois and ecclesiastical expectation that women should marry. However, the presentation of chastity in terms of a betrothal to Christ allowed it to be used to support the norms of diligence, dedication, and industry. Another important genre of literature, which also allows insight into the "cultural meaning" of the deaconess community, is to be found in Löhe's obituaries of deaconesses.

⁷⁴⁷ Cf. "An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern", *CorDiac* 1863, No. 7, p. 28. Gause, too, has pointed out the importance of the "sending principle" for the reinforcement of the patriarchal structures within the mother house (Gause, *Kirchengeschichte und Genderforschung*, 185).

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. "Von der Aufgabe des eigenen Willens und dem freudigen Gehorsam gegen den Willen Gottes oder der Gelaßenheit", *CorDiac* 1858, No. 4/5, p. 19.

⁷⁴⁹ "Gedanken aus der Partentationsrede von Elise Steinlein", mss [ZADN EII st1].

⁷⁵⁰ §4, "Die bisherigen Satzungen" (1855).

4.2. Obituaries

For every society, death is a dramatic problem, which it needs to come to terms with, which it cannot circumvent, neither individually nor collectively. Death, after all, does not only threaten the existence of the individual, but also of groups. In consequence, it demands of societies to consider it in its orders and to meet its potentially destructive effect on its members and structure. (...) Not only the fact of death as such is universal, but also the compulsion to interpret it and to cope with it.⁷⁵¹

Hahn argues that “communication about death” reveals much about any group.⁷⁵² Death as the ever-present, ultimate boundary of the social order requires interpretation in order that it might be integrated into existing values and norms and given purpose and meaning, and thus orientation for life. In the Neuendettelsau deaconess community, Löhe’s obituaries played a pivotal role in this process. The community encountered death at a very early stage. Only a little over a year into its existence, on 22 August 1855, Karoline Rheineck, the forty-three year old chair-woman, became the first Neuendettelsau deaconess to die. Löhe gave the funeral address, which was later published in the *Correspondenzblatt für Innere Mission*.⁷⁵³ At the end of his respectful and appreciative address, Löhe sought to give meaning to Rheineck’s death: “I know what the deaconess house has lost. But I also know that she, my dear friend, leaving our order of mortality and sin, entered – just at the right time – that place where we have need of those who will intercede for us [*Fürbitter und Fürbitterinnen*].” Here, the foundation for a core belief of the community was laid down: that the deaconesses, after completing their round of toil and service on earth, would, as members of the *communio sanctorum*, enter a place of rest where “perpetual light shines upon them”, where they would finally be “at home” and where they would intercede for the remaining sisters on earth. Their identity as Neuendettelsau deaconesses was not bound by earthly finitude. In accordance with this position, Löhe’s obituaries were intended not so much to offer consolation in grief but rather as “literature for edification” and to direct the living.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵¹ Hahn, *Einstellungen zum Tod*, 2.

⁷⁵² Hahn, *Tod und Sterben*, 60.

⁷⁵³ “Lebenslauf der Jungfrau Caroline Rheineck”, CorIM 1855, No. 9, p. 39-41.

⁷⁵⁴ In his introduction to “Sermon von der Bereytung zum Sterben” (1519), Luther recommended that funeral addresses should console, edify, and instruct. Taken here from Lenz, *De mortuis nil nisi bene*, 9-12.

Löhe was quite explicit about this vision when he addressed the as yet frail community in Rheineck's funeral address:

How glorious her life was here. Here she stands as the first of a large flock [*Schar*] of deaconesses, who are now all to walk as she did, become like her, so simple, upright, unadulterated, honest, God-fearing and godly [*gottselig*], hard-working [*mühselig*], victorious, martyrs of love! Truly, the Lord made her what she was so that the Society for Female Diakonia in Bavaria, and all who sympathize with it, would have an example. You had to get to know her, to see her acting, working, sacrificing of herself [*aufopfern*] – so that you would find it easy to become yourselves what you should be, so that only you would be permitted to follow her! Follow your chairwoman, that is enough. If you become like her, God will bless you and his church and the many thousands who will thereby receive aid.

In order that those, too, who had only come to the Institute recently as students or prospective candidates would “get to know her”, as a model for both the spiritual and the temporal dimension of her profession, Löhe presented events from Rheineck's life and portrayed her character at length. He seems to have had no scruples in following a general trend and overriding Luther's objection to presenting biographies of the dead in funeral addresses in general and especially as “speeches of praise with catalogues of virtues.”⁷⁵⁵ As his main source, Löhe drew from the curriculum vitae which Rheineck had composed upon her entry in Kaiserswerth in 1844. In this case, it was especially important to convey the impression of authenticity since Löhe, as he himself admitted in his speech, had known Rheineck only for two years. Expressing his respect and even admiration for her, he also summarized the reports and references she had received at Kaiserswerth. In later obituaries, too, Löhe would cite from the curricula vitae of deaconesses.

Rheineck was the “first of a great flock of deaconesses,” who had found her “shining culmination point,” her “Bethel, her gate to heaven” in Neuendettelsau. Löhe especially praised her willingness to serve, which made her a true follower of Christ, the “greatest servant of the human race.”⁷⁵⁶ Yet, according to Löhe, it was not meakness or humility that characterized her most of all. He appreciatively acknowledged: “She had a strong character.” In true apostolic tradition, she was self-reliant, but, again,

⁷⁵⁵ Cf. Lenz, *Funktion des Lebenslaufes*, 94. Lenz concludes that from 1750, the funeral address firmly belonged to the genre of German “educational literature” (98).

⁷⁵⁶ CorIM 1855, No. 9, p. 41.

this was not criticized: “to distress herself with human considerations, to confer with flesh and blood where she had discerned God’s clear word was not her way.” According to Löhe, the same applied to her decision to remain single and to live a celibate life, thereby providing an example for both men and women: “There will not be many men or women who have not often or at least once in life, be it with the heart or sentiments, be it externally with words or actions, committed some sexual error [*auf irgend einen geschlechtlichen Irrweg kamen*].” With the passing of years, women, according to Löhe, are increasingly plagued by the thought that they had failed to achieve their object in life if they had not married. In contrast, Rheineck was portrayed as a “maid who had happily aged,” robustly free from all “sexual flirtatiousness and addiction” [*geschlechtliche Tändelei und Süchtelei*]. In fact, one of her most admirable characteristics had been her “chaste aloofness” [*jungfräuliche Unnahbarkeit*]. Nevertheless, Löhe hastened to add, “no one would do her the dishonour of saying that she had a male trait about her. – Wholly feminine, she was at the same time wholly a virgin.” Clearly, Löhe was here grappling with the bourgeois normative ascription of womanhood as being solely oriented towards marriage and family - life. Although he wished to sketch an alternative course of life, he could not do so without explicitly referring to bourgeois conventions and trying to resolve the seeming contradictions. This was all the more important as Rheineck, in her capacity as the first Neuendettelsau deaconess, had carved out a new path which Löhe needed to advocate for the following generation of students and prospective candidates.

As in Rheineck’s case, in the beginning Löhe gave short addresses at the grave-sides of deaconesses.⁷⁵⁷ In later years, the act of interment became a purely liturgical act. Instead, Löhe composed “eulogies” [*Parentationen*] which were read after the funeral, at the evening service.⁷⁵⁸ It is probable that this change occurred with the introduction of the “Order for Daily Prayer” and, in consequence, of a daily evening service, in 1857. Ten of Löhe’s eulogies appeared in the *CorDiac*

⁷⁵⁷ Apart from Karoline Rheineck, this was certainly also true for Emma Linß’ funeral in 1856, cf. Stählin to her mother (25/03/1856), ThStI, 42. The address for Emma Linß was only published in 1883 in Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 11-12.

⁷⁵⁸ To clarify our use of terms: The term “eulogy” is applied to the orally delivered addresses to the deaconess community, and the word “obituary” is used for the published versions.

though there must have been more which were not published. It is difficult to tell whether the reason for these omissions was simple oversight, or whether the course of life of these deaconesses was not regarded as exemplary.⁷⁵⁹ In 1883, Löhe's successor, Meyer, published the obituaries composed by Löhe, Stählin⁷⁶⁰ and himself, which before had appeared dispersed in the *CorDiac*, in a separate booklet "Curricula vitae of blessed sisters of the deaconess house Neuendettelsau who have passed away. Presented to their sisters who are still on pilgrimage, for the sake of comfort and emulation."⁷⁶¹ This attests to the importance accorded to this genre of literature and the desire that the circle of readers should be extended beyond that of the subscribers of the *CorDiac*.⁷⁶² Nevertheless, as the title suggests, the internal readership was still regarded as the most significant addressees.⁷⁶³

The last deaconess for whom Löhe composed an address was Magdalene Wunner, and when it was published in January 1870, Löhe wrote a few words of introduction.⁷⁶⁴ In this case, the eulogy had been composed jointly by Löhe, who wrote the first part, and his *Vikar*, Deinzer, who added the second part. The two parts were published together. Löhe stated in his introductory words that he did not only publish the address in response to a "commission", but also to inform those deaconesses who had been particularly close to the deceased about her last period of illness and death. However, he also found it

⁷⁵⁹ For example, the eulogies of Johanna Zwanziger who died on 17 August 1862 or Marie Wegmann, who died 8 March 1868 were not published. We know with certainty that one was written for Zwanziger and read out during the evening service on the day of her burial, because this is mentioned in MChMh (17/08/1862), *CorDiac* 1862, No. 9, p. 34. Nothing suggests that Zwanziger had found disfavour with her superiors. Therefore, Meyer's statement that if no eulogies were published, none had been given (Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, VII), needs to be qualified. Katharina Herbst's obituary was published although no eulogy had been given because she was buried in Dessau, cf. "Nekrolog" in *CorDiac* 1863, No. 3, p. 11-12. However, it seems that at least occasionally the eulogies which were presented in the deaconess house's chapel differed from the published obituaries, for example Elise Steinlein's, compare the unpublished version [ZADN Ell st1] and *CorDiac* 1865, No. 1, p. 1-4.

⁷⁶⁰ Stählin wrote an article on Auguste Sander (*CorDiac* 1872, No. 5, p. 20-22) after she had died on 26 March 1872, in the interim after Löhe's death and before Meyer had been installed. It was Stählin's article that was published in Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 85-91.

⁷⁶¹ *Lebensläufe selig heimgegangener Schwestern des Diakonissenhauses Neuendettelsau. Ihren noch pilgernden Genossinnen zu Trost und Nacheiferung dargereicht.*

⁷⁶² Even more than Löhe, Meyer appealed to potential candidates in his obituaries. For example, he closed the address for Marie Rau by exclaiming: "A gap has appeared in our flock [*Schar*]. Who will step into this gap? I search amongst the flock of maidens – who will grasp the gem? Is such a death not an admonishing call to those, who still stand idle in the market place; and will not tomorrow's preaching be on the gospel of the workers in the vineyard? Who will let herself be employed by Christ? Wherever a sister dies, there ten shall fill the ranks" (Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 135).

⁷⁶³ Meyer opened the foreword to his booklet with the words: "These curriculae vitae are released with no claims [*Ansprüche*] whatsoever." Yet on the same page, he wrote of their function as "a mirror, a comfort, a memento" to the living (Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, V). Deliberately, "the admonishments have not been omitted" (Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, VI).

⁷⁶⁴ Cf. "Schwester Magdalene", *CorDiac* 1871, No. 1, p. 1-4.

important to present to the whole fellowship an exemplary deaconess career so that, by evoking Wunner's "sacred memory," before all her sisters "a fragrance may gush like outpoured nard, and love and enthusiasm for the profession may once more ignite, in which she had become a benefactress and blessing for many."⁷⁶⁵

In this address, as in all others, Löhe portrayed the deaconess as an individual and drew out distinct character traits. He did not necessarily adhere to the convention *De mortuis nil nisi bene*.⁷⁶⁶ Löhe obviously knew the deaconesses very well, not only through long collaboration but also through his capacity as their confessor. Indeed, though he generally wrote respectfully, he sometimes breached the pledge of confidentiality, as in the case of Elise Steinlein who, he said, had been of a "Pelagian nature," but who nevertheless "had a deep discernment of her sin." Löhe stated: "As her confessor, I know this best." He also remarked that, had she not come to Neuendettelsau, she would never have gone to confession. Nevertheless, "she overcame her nature and confessed in private, not very often, but sufficiently often." Löhe concluded: "Had she been allowed to remain amongst us for longer, she would have gained that direction as an inheritance which one calls, in differentiation from the Pelagian, the Augustinian."⁷⁶⁷ Another interesting case is Emma Merz, whose "liberation" from "the impressions of the world" was only successful after a "decisive battle" [*Entscheidungskampf*]. Löhe quoted her comment during her first private confession that, having confessed all, she might not know what to confess next time. Löhe added: "I also remember the often very peculiar questions which she articulated during the deaconess classes and which often did not seem worthy of such a mind. But precisely the relationship built through confession and pastoral care [*das Beicht- und seelsorgerliche Verhältnis*], and the courses

⁷⁶⁵ "Schwester Magdalene", CorDiac 1871, No. 1, p. 1.

⁷⁶⁶ Here, Löhe differed from Meyer who had a much more normative conception of what a deaconess should be. This can be summed up in the words Meyer applied to Elise Lindemann: "cheerful childlike simplicity, quiet obedience, modest reclusiveness" (*Lebensläufe*, 92-93). If a deaconess had not shown these character-traits in life, Meyer seems to have taken great pains to find them in her death-bed.

⁷⁶⁷ These words were recorded by a deaconess [ZADN Ell st1]. This is a long passage which includes many references to the confessional habits of Thomas Aquinas. In the published version, this part of the address was considerably shortened and referred to only in a half-sentence (CorDiac 1865, No. 1, p. 3). Nevertheless, even the published comment that Steinlein had been respected "in spite of a natural Pelagian disposition," for "her diligence and seriousness in the discernment of sin and in confession through which she supplemented the deficit of [her] nature and gave seriousness and depth to her cheerful amiableness," sparked criticism from *Korrektor* Lotze, then the deaconesses' chaplain, though, apparently, not confessor. Lotze's remonstrance at his phrasing is mentioned in Löhe's diary (14/01/1865), GW4, 699.

gained such power over this soul – that she burnt like an ever brighter flame for the truth of the divine Word and for God’s marvellous guidance in history.”⁷⁶⁸ Löhe clearly considered the practice of private confession to serve a didactic function and to introduce individual deaconesses to an approved form of communication. He openly acknowledged the deep influence he gained as a confessor over his “penitents”, which was precisely what made the practice so suspect to its critics.⁷⁶⁹

However, not all “peculiarities” and individual character traits were erased so easily, nor was this, it seems, necessarily a precondition for gaining Löhe’s respect. For example, his description of Pauline Haag, whose personality was “feminine and soft, and yet intermingled with a good measure of power of will and strength” was quite appreciative.⁷⁷⁰ Nevertheless, a certain pattern in Löhe’s portrayal of the deaconesses’ inner development is fairly consistent. Though, according to Löhe, many had displayed the existence of promising “seeds” in their youth and might already have acquired valuable skills, it was only when they entered the deaconess institution that these seeds sprouted, grew roots and flourished.⁷⁷¹ The different talents which the deaconesses brought with them were shaped perfect in Neuendettelsau. Those who had come from a lower class were educated;⁷⁷² those who had brought with them “a mixture of powers and traits of mind” willingly integrated themselves into the spirit of the house in such a way that what remained was “conscientiousness, love of truth, a brisk appreciation of all that is noble and uncommon, tender, careful, a true feminine, amiable being”;⁷⁷³ those who had been “agitated”, who had had a “trembling, one wishes to say almost fidgety manner,” found calmness and

⁷⁶⁸ “Lebenslauf der Diakonissin Emma Pauline Merz”, CorDiac 1858, No. 9., p. 34-36, here: 35.

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. Sauer, *Frauen und Priester*. Sauer analysed the standardized conversations found in Roman Catholic confessional manuals to reveal specifically gendered understandings of sin and guilt. She noted that nineteenth-century critics feared that the frequent attendance of women in the confessionals might threaten the male dominance which husbands exerted over their wives within the bourgeois family by allowing their wives to enter a potentially rival relation of dependence and trust (p. 145). A very similar controversy arose in the nineteenth-century Church of England when Anglican ritualists openly advocated private confession, cf. Kollar, *Power and Control over Women*, and Yates, *Jesuits in Disguise*.

⁷⁷⁰ “Schwester Pauline Christine Friederike Haag”, CorDiac 1864, No. 4, p. 11-12.

⁷⁷¹ Löhe had an obvious predilection for images taken from nature. This is especially evident in the eulogy for Katharina Herbst (CorDiac 1863, No. 3, p.11-12). Cf. also on Linß: “As one of the first pupils she arrived here on 9 May 1854 in the newly founded deaconess institution. Then it was as if a lily or rose blossomed and spread its fragrance” (“Jungfrau Amalie Therese Emma Linß”, in: Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 12).

⁷⁷² Cf. “Katharina Herbst”, CorDiac 1863, No. 3, p. 11.

⁷⁷³ “Emma Merz”, CorDiac 1858, No. 9, p. 35.

peace;⁷⁷⁴ and those who had brought with them intelligence, education and a lovable nature developed “the four deaconess virtues,” which were “chastity, poverty, obedience, gentleness” to near perfection and thus revealed the marks of a “true deaconess”.⁷⁷⁵ Of one deaconess Löhe pronounced explicitly: “What would she have become without the deaconess house! She herself felt it. It was for this reason that she showed so much devotedness and loyalty to the mother house and the sisters.”⁷⁷⁶ Löhe went on to generalize this:

When one reviews this whole life, we observe the goodness and loyalty of the Lord, of the Good Shepherd towards his poor sheep, and we are given glorious proof that within this community of the mother house there lies a power [*Kraft*] which is not of this world. How often since 1854 it has become obvious that life within and the attachment to the mother house does not only generate capable workers for the different fields of mercy but also disciples of Jesus who are fit for heaven.⁷⁷⁷

In this way, the obituaries served as an important literary means of confirming the deaconesses in their course of life and in strengthening their collective identity, evoking a sense of distinctiveness, in both a secular (“capable workers”) and, more importantly, a spiritual sense (“disciples of Jesus who are fit for heaven”). However, it was not so much a single “deaconess proto-type” that was coined by the obituaries; rather, the emphasis was on the individual deaconess’s development. The norms of the Institute provided the parameter for perfection.⁷⁷⁸

This educational aspect is also apparent in the depiction of the deaconesses’ death-bed scenes. Through the published “reports,” dying became a public event which served to teach the Christian *ars moriendi*. Both the dying person and those present at the death bed had important roles in proclaiming faith and displaying true piety. In accordance with the emphasis of the Neuendettelsau community, the occasion of the last reception of Holy Communion often featured prominently. The fellow sisters as spiritual counsellors were especially important. In (one assumes) blatantly idealized descriptions of

⁷⁷⁴ “Cäcilie Pöschel”, CorDiac 1867, No. 11, p. 42.

⁷⁷⁵ Cf. “Gedanken aus der Parentationsrede von Elise Steinlein” [mss ZADN Ell st1]. The “four deaconess virtues” are not mentioned in the published version where this passage differs significantly, cf. CorDiac 1865, No. 1, p. 1-4.

⁷⁷⁶ “Nekrolog”, CorDiac 1863, No. 3, p.11.

⁷⁷⁷ “Nekrolog”, CorDiac 1863, No. 3, p. 11.

⁷⁷⁸ This makes the Neuendettelsau obituaries under Löhe significantly different from those found in Kaiserswerth, cf. Köser, *Kollektive Identitäten*, 342-371. Apart from Löhe’s much-remarked predilection for a role as pedagogue, a reason for this may have been the fact that numbers in Bavaria were considerably smaller.

these death-bed scenes, every word that was uttered, every hymn that was sung, every scriptural verse that was read, and their effect, was minutely recorded for the benefit of the fellow sisters and other readers.⁷⁷⁹ At least on a normative level, in Neuendettelsau the prevailing attitude to death corresponded to the type which the historian Philippe Ariès identified as the “tamed death”.⁷⁸⁰

Death is experienced within the group. One dies surrounded by one’s family, relatives, friends, and neighbours. Death is experienced as a collective rite, which both assures the dying person of continuous life [*Weiterleben*] and guarantees for the group the symbolic reconstruction of stability, which is unsettled by the loss of a member.⁷⁸¹

Here, the fear of death is “tamed” and controlled by the conviction, nourished by the group’s collective faith, that death is not a final end but only a passing stage into a better place. Accordingly, the worst kind of death is the sudden death which leaves no time for preparation.⁷⁸² Nevertheless, for deaconesses on their death-beds, these normative descriptions, often containing intimate details, could be intimidating, especially since Meyer gave these scenes ever greater prominence. For instance, a deaconess who had been given alcohol to drink to ease the pain during her last hours was fearful that in her obituary she might be characterized as a drunkard.⁷⁸³ In some cases, the dying deaconesses explicitly asked for fewer visitors. Perhaps this served, not least, to preserve some privacy. One deaconess had a sign posted on her door, forbidding all visitors to enter.⁷⁸⁴

When a deaconess died young, Löhe felt pressed to give explanations and deflect blame, especially if she had been a nurse and contracted a contagious disease. At a time when the profession of nursing for middle-class women had not yet been firmly established, such deaths could give weight to the

⁷⁷⁹ This is especially true of the later addresses, cf. “Schwester Cäcilie”, CorDiac 1867, No. 11, p. 44, No. 12, p. 45; “Schwester Magdalene”, CorDiac 1870, No. 1, p. 3.

⁷⁸⁰ Ariès, *Western Attitudes towards Death*. The other types of attitudes identified by Ariès terms are “One’s own death”, “Thy death”, and the “Forbidden death”.

⁷⁸¹ Hahn, *Tod und Sterben*, 71, with reference to Ariès.

⁷⁸² In claiming this to have been the normative interpretation of death we explicitly do not wish to exclude the possibility or even likelihood that it coincided with the deaconesses’ personal attitudes. For example, when Cäcilie Pöschel died, she asked the deaconesses to stop singing sad, solemn hymns. Löhe quoted her: “I do not profit by them - they do not give me strength, but they smell of unbelief. I only have use for hymns of faith and hope. [...] and when my end approaches and everything is accomplished [*vollendet*], intone hymns of praise and thanks” (CorDiac 1867, No. 12, p. 45). There is no reason to discredit Pöschel’s strong personal faith, or that of other deaconesses. Nevertheless, we must also assume that the words of desperate deaconesses who, in death, lost all faith, would not have been reported.

⁷⁸³ Cf. “Schwester Christine Osiander”, in: Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 73.

⁷⁸⁴ “Schwester Karoline Immler”, in: Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 178.

arguments of the critics, deterring potential candidates.⁷⁸⁵ In the case of the probationary deaconess Katharina Herbst, who died aged twenty-seven, Löhe asserted the Institute's innocence: "She was seized by a deadly illness, by typhoid, without having been infected, for there was no case of typhoid in the hospital, and without having been overworked. The illness was sent by the Lord, who wanted to call her home into his father house at a time of his convenience."⁷⁸⁶ Löhe made similar claims in other cases.⁷⁸⁷

In the words of the grateful parents of deceased deaconesses, the *Rektoren* found an especially welcome means of deflecting blame from the Institute. For example, the letter of Marie Berger's mother to Löhe is quoted at length in his eulogy, and given the honour of forming the closing words:

My dear precious child only had a short course on earth and could be of very little service. However, it has always made me happy that she esteemed her profession so very highly and walked in it with childlike humility. Her literary remains testify that she has always praised God for his loyalty and kindness and especially that she clung to the deaconess house as to the place where she had received the greatest spiritual benefits.⁷⁸⁸

More examples can be found in Meyer's obituaries. The father who, at the deathbed of his daughter, expressed only satisfaction that she had died piously and in God's service, was presented as exemplary.⁷⁸⁹ Concerning a mother who seems to have failed to express her gratitude to the Institute, Meyer expressed the wish that she might come to see things differently in time: "Happy the mother who may offer such a beautiful sacrifice which has been adorned by the Holy Spirit himself. May Jesus comfort her with the gladness of sacrifice."⁷⁹⁰ We also find a rather extreme example of parental

⁷⁸⁵ Cf. Sticker, *Entstehung der neuzeitlichen Krankenpflege*. Elisabeth Malo (cf. Chapter 2.3), too, criticized the demanding physical work of the deaconess profession and its lack of adequate remuneration. For the organization of nursing and conditions in the hospitals in the first half of the nineteenth century, cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 21-23.

⁷⁸⁶ "Nekrolog", *CorDiac* 1863, No. 3, p. 11-12, here: 11. Similarly, Löhe remarked in 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 22, when publishing the statistics: "In the deaconess house itself, only three cases of death occurred. We must generally praise the good health which the members of this house enjoy. Every mother who only has four or five children usually has one amongst them who is plagued by affliction or illness. It is therefore no surprise if the cases of illness in a house of our size add up to 103 in the course of a year".

⁷⁸⁷ Cf. for example "Lebenslauf der Diakonissin Emma Pauline Merz", *CorDiac* 1858, No. 9, p. 36. One of the causes of Merz' death, according to Löhe, was her vegetarian diet; cf. also "Gedanken aus der Parentation von Elise Steinlein" [ZADN EII st1], who, according to Löhe, herself volunteered to nurse.

⁷⁸⁸ Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 28; also: "Zur Erinnerung an Schwester Marie Berger", *CorDiac* 1860, No. 11, p. 42-43.

⁷⁸⁹ Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 184.

⁷⁹⁰ Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 192.

gratitude. As the obituary was published both in the CorDiac and the separate booklet, it must be assumed that it was close to the truth, as otherwise the mother might have protested:

The pious mother, who clung to this daughter with extraordinary love, was deeply bowed down by grief, but nevertheless wonderfully strengthened, and the joy at the victory of her child who had been permitted to sacrifice her life to God in the service of a deaconess, stimulated the mother to make the beautiful promise: She still had more daughters and wished to send a replacement for her Kunigunde.⁷⁹¹

Here, the deaconesses are stylized as “martyrs of love”, willing to undergo any sacrifice. The obituary of Karoline Rheineck had set the tone for those who followed, and a certain “toughness” was expected of deaconesses. Often it is mentioned that, although a deaconess had already been plagued by illness, she nevertheless refused to rest or to reduce her workload, even to the point of a complete breakdown.⁷⁹² Nevertheless, once bedridden, she was expected to endure her enforced idleness with patience and meekness. Any pain was to be made light of. This could result in considerable pressure.⁷⁹³

Death was interpreted as the deserved rest from all toils, as the final home-coming and as a completion of all that had been attempted and undertaken in life. This spiritual outlook was present in all the obituaries. In the afterlife, the community would be perfected as the *communio sanctorum* and all members would find their assigned places. This is well expressed in the address for Katharina Herbst: “Now there is one probationary deaconess less within the choir of deaconesses who work here on earth. Instead, however, there is one proven and tested sister more in the choir of the deaconesses who sing their hymn of praise to the lamb of God in the eternal home.”⁷⁹⁴ This imagined scene reflects the institutional ideal of perfect harmony in which the Self has become an integral part of the whole without being dissolved. Paul von Moos has explored this in depth:

⁷⁹¹ Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 116, also: “Zum Gedächtnis der seligen Schwester Kunigunde Fischer”, CorDiac 1876, No. 10, p. 39-40.

⁷⁹² Cf. “Lebenslauf der Diakonissin Emma Pauline Merz”, CorDiac 1858, No. 9, p. 34-36; “Schwester Magdalene”, CorDiac 1871, No. 1, p. 1-4; under Meyer cf. “Karoline Förster”, in: Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 98; “Schwester Kunigunde Fischer”, in: Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 113-114; “Anna Wildt”, in: Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 120; “Doris Braun”, in: Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 166.

⁷⁹³ Karoline Immler, for example, was allegedly very careful of her health which she repeatedly sought to improve by visiting her family. For this she seems to have earned much criticism in her life-time, cf. “Karoline Immler”, in: Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 174 and 178. Cf. also Stählin’s somewhat ironic comment about Zwanziger in a letter to her mother (06/11/1858), ThStl 88/89: “My dear Johanna Zwanziger is not yet quite settled in here. She had become too attached to her profession in Hohenleuben. I fear for her health. She has exhausted herself. The female sex of the 19th century is terribly delicate.” Zwanziger died in the summer of 1862.

⁷⁹⁴ “Nekrolog”, CorDiac 1863, No. 3, p. 12.

At the end of times, both the individual and the collective beatitudes culminate in perfection: the individual, the 'Self' will again become complete, receives back its most individual [core], the body, in transfigured and immaculate condition, in order to be able to discern and love God with all senses; and the communion of saints of all times is united simultaneously and completely in the harmony of diverse voices. In a paradoxical way, the faith in resurrection unites the highest possible form of community with the highest possible form of individuation.⁷⁹⁵

Referring again to Hahn's thesis that the interpretation of and communication about death reflects a social group's understanding of life, we conclude that the envisioned scenario of the afterlife, in which all deaconesses would find their assigned places in the choir of saints in perfect harmony and "gentleness", underlined and gave urgency to the emphasis on the deaconesses's life-long learning and personal development. The eschatological realization of the communion of saints was to be prefigured, indeed, almost realized, in present times. Löhe's heavily pedagogically oriented obituaries were meant to affirm the deaconesses in their course of life and to set before the deaconesses examples of successful individual formation, not necessarily with the aim of erasing all traits of individuality but rather with the aim of invoking pliability, or, in the Institute's rhetoric, "gentleness", to facilitate an ordered regime.

4.3. Curricula vitae and the construction of biography

When we now turn to the curricula vitae of the Neuendettelsau deaconesses, we encounter a different genre of texts from those analysed so far. The curricula vitae are in one sense classic ego-documents. Nevertheless, they are categorized here amongst the formative and normative texts, that is as texts that reveal common values, experiences, expectations and interpretations. Schulze's definition⁷⁹⁶ underlines the need for a subtle reading and a rejection of the notion that we might here find testimonies of individual women who intended to illuminate their unique, autonomous Self, in demarcation from others and from the contemporary context. Rather, Peter von Moos reminds us that placing the emphasis on extracting the individual from her embeddedness in the social, reveals our own preconceptions and

⁷⁹⁵ Moos, *Persönliche Identität*, 19.

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Schulze, *Ego-Dokumente*, 28. The full quotation of Schulze's definition is given in Chapter 1.2.

boundedness to a specific time and place.⁷⁹⁷ In the case of the nineteenth-century deaconesses, we must not postulate a “deadly dualism”⁷⁹⁸ between individual and community, identity and alterity, self-perception and external perception, but rather assume a fundamentally dialogical relation. The very fact that an individual woman reflected on her life and her (religious) identity, and communicated this by composing a curriculum vitae was induced by the community and was reliant on certain preconditions offered by the community’s culture, particularly in terms of language and terminology, images and formulae, interpretational patterns and rhetorical conventions.⁷⁹⁹ This demanded a high level of self-observation.⁸⁰⁰ Alois Hahn, who refers to the classic theory of identity as developed by Mead,⁸⁰¹ points out that the Self is not self-reflexive *per se*, and introduces the distinction between an implicit and an explicit Self. He defines the latter as “an I which thematizes its Self explicitly, and makes it an object of presentation and communication.”⁸⁰² It is the social environment and its norms of truth, importance, and values that define what forms the “presentation and communication” take. Hahn assumes that there must be triggers for an individual to become “explicitly self-reflexive,” that is: to render an account of her life, and terms these triggers “biography-generators.”⁸⁰³

In Neuendettelsau, an important institutional “biography -generator” was a book, begun in 1855, into which the students, having attended the courses for one or two years, personally wrote their curricula vitae: that is, when they graduated and left the Institute.⁸⁰⁴ This book was used until 1862, though the great majority of entries are from the Institute’s earliest years (1855-1858). The reason why there were no more entries is unclear as there are many pages at the end of the book which remained blank. It

⁷⁹⁷ Moos, *Persönliche Identität*, 3.

⁷⁹⁸ Moos, *Persönliche Identität*, 2, footnote 2.

⁷⁹⁹ Cf. Spam, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, 11.

⁸⁰⁰ Meiwes interpreted this as an asset offered to members of the nineteenth-century Roman Catholic women’s congregations, cf. Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 79. The question of whether this was truly a liberating practice needs to be discussed in more detail.

⁸⁰¹ George Herbert Mead believed that the development of personal identity is shaped by interaction with the social environment: “The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience” (Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, 140). By encountering social expectations, according to Mead, the Me is formed, which thereby comes to represent the mechanisms of control and evaluation. Mead differentiates this Me from the I which is a shortform for desires, spontaneity, and creativity. Personal identity (the Self), according to Mead, develops through the interplay between the Me and the I (cf. also Engelhardt, *Biographie und Identität*, 201-202).

⁸⁰² Hahn, *Identität und Biographie*, 130-131.

⁸⁰³ Cf. Hahn, *Biography-Generators*.

⁸⁰⁴ “Album der abgehenden Schülerinnen. Lebensläufe 1855-1862” (mss) [ZADN EI d].

seems that in September 1862, many of the deaconesses who had been working in Neuendettelsau for a long time but had not yet entered their *curricula vitae* because they had never been sent out from the mother house, were asked to do so, and that, afterwards, the “Album” was considered closed.⁸⁰⁵ The book contains sixty-one *curricula vitae* of varying length. Here, only those entries are considered which were written by (future) deaconesses, who made up about one third of all students. It is not clear who had access to this book and where it was kept. Certainly when inserting their own curriculum vitae the deaconess students would have been able to browse in it freely. Perhaps the idea of asking the graduates to enter their curriculum vitae was inspired in the first place by practice in Kaiserswerth, where candidates had to hand in a curriculum vitae when they applied to the institution.⁸⁰⁶ Löhle was obviously in possession of the one Rheineck had composed upon her own entry in Kaiserswerth in 1844, for he cited long sections in his funeral address for her in 1855.⁸⁰⁷ Later, he frequently used the Neuendettelsau *curricula vitae* for the same purpose, which gave his funeral addresses a certain ring of authenticity.

It must be emphasized that the fact that deaconesses became self-reflexive was institutionally induced, making these autobiographical documents which were rendered “involuntarily.”⁸⁰⁸ Therefore, it is no surprise that in them almost all deaconesses expressed their gratitude to the Institute. Thus Johanna Pausch’s curriculum vitae, written in 1856, before the Institute was restructured into a mother house, included the following encomium:

I will never forget the time of my stay here. I will always praise and thank God for all the spiritual and bodily benefits which I have received in this house. I especially feel within me the duty to render my most cordial thanks to my faithful teachers and pastors, all who have worked on me, for all their love and sacrifice, for all the loving and admonishing words, which I have heard from

⁸⁰⁵ According to Matthias Honold, archivist in the ZADN, there was no sequel to this book. The minutes of the Neuendettelsau chapter (16/03/1863) mention the plan to begin an “album” for the *curricula vitae* of the probationary deaconesses [ZADN DIII a]. This, however, seems not to have been implemented.

⁸⁰⁶ This was (initially) not the case in Neuendettelsau. Candidates who wished to attend the courses as deaconess-students were asked to send in a report from their local pastor giving their age, confession and commenting on their moral conduct, a report from a physician on their health and a report on their financial means from the local authorities, cf. NN, “Anzeige. Aufnahme in die Diakonissenanstalt”, CorIM 1854, No. 9, p. 42.

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. “Lebenslauf der Jungfrau Karoline Rheineck”, CorIM 1855, No. 9.

⁸⁰⁸ Winfried Schulze distinguishes between ego-documents which were „voluntarily“ and „involuntarily“ produced, cf. Schulze, *Ego-Dokumente*, 23.

their mouths. May the LORD repay them for all they have done for me. May He bless this house further and all who live within it. Amen.⁸⁰⁹

Most of the analysed *curricula vitae* end in a similar style. The single exception is that of Katharina Schied, probably from 1857.⁸¹⁰ She, too, ended her entry on a very positive note: "I cannot leave the house without remembering our precious teacher and the chairwomen with thanks. They will always be shining models for me. May the LORD bless them and all in this house. May He let his Spirit dwell within it." However, she also voiced outspoken critique and explicitly mentioned names, writing that upon entering the Institute, she was unable to overcome her "disgraceful vices" by becoming "wholly humble" [*ganz anspruchslos*] and by "withdrawing from the world" [*die Welt verlassen*] as she would have liked and that she was hampered by the lack of an "honest soul" to support her. The deaconess responsible for the deaconess-pupils was, according to Schied, unhelpful: "My form mistress [*Riegenmeisterin*] then was Miss Marie von Meyer, for whom I had no love because I thought that she was not in the least honest with me. I was unable to turn to her and to ask her openly to attend to the salvation of my soul. Instead, I increasingly shunned her because, to be frank, I feared her."⁸¹¹ Here, the affirmation of institutional norms is linked to unconventional critique. Perhaps it helped that Schied knew that she would soon be leaving to work in America.

The *curricula vitae* reveal that a high percentage of deaconesses had lost one or both parents.⁸¹² Many described their childhood as not altogether happy. For example, Johanna Büttner, daughter of a school-teacher, wrote with some reserve:

After a while, my father, with a heavy heart, decided to marry for the second time because of the difficult household. The Lord our God blessed his choice and we received a second mother

⁸⁰⁹ Nr. 29: Emilie Johanna Friederike Pausch, pp. 74-75.

⁸¹⁰ During the period when the deaconess house was still a purely educational institution, it is easy to date the entries as there were clear references at the beginning: "admitted [date]", and "left [date]". Later however, after the Institute became a mother house, the second date was omitted so that one can date the *curricula vitae* only by deduction from the text itself or, as is the case of almost all *curricula vitae* entered in 1862, by the date at the end of the text. Katharina Schied's entry can be dated because she wrote that she was about to leave for America which happened in 1857.

⁸¹¹ No. 48: Katharina Schied, p. 138-141. Katharina Schied, born in 1826, was thirty-one when she entered the Institute. This may have contributed to her difficulties with Marie von Meyer, who was only two years older. On average, the deaconess students were admitted to the Institute in their early twenties.

⁸¹² The finding that the majority of deaconesses were from "incomplete families" is true also of Kaiserswerth, where 75% had lost one or both parents (cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 186) and Dresden, where almost 50% had lost one or both parents (cf. Renger-Berka, *Weibliche Diakonie*, 53).

who brought us up strictly, and taught us to be good. She had much on her mind, and we owe her many thanks. From the age of six, I was diligently sent to school, and our father himself tried to offer us a somewhat more advanced education by giving us music lessons. Our step-mother, however, had more interest in encouraging us girls to help in the house. Because I was by nature more inclined to this, [as] I was blessed with lesser gifts than my siblings and because, as the youngest, I yielded more to her commands, I had the privilege of being called her favourite. Nevertheless, I had to feel the birch a few times, though surely never without cause.⁸¹³

Others were less reticent. Rosette Wiebel stated frankly: "It is not with joy that I look back on my childhood [...]. I didn't like it at home. I very much desired to go out and, in my blindness, vowed to our dear God to become pious if He fulfilled my desire."⁸¹⁴ Here, both sides seem to have kept their part of the bargain. In some cases, the new values and norms learnt at the Institute made deaconesses surprisingly critical of their parents. Johanna Zwanziger, for example, described her father as having had a "serious, stern character, very active and accurate. Honour and truthfulness ruled supreme for him. This, he also demanded of his family." In the next sentence, she added a theological critique: "Nevertheless, I have never heard him say that we were unable to achieve anything on our own."⁸¹⁵ Similarly, Johanna Büttner wrote of her father: "He was greatly honoured; this showed when he died. But he lacked one thing: he did not yet have pure doctrine and faith, although he confessed such [doctrine]."⁸¹⁶ These are truly remarkable expressions of filial emancipation and attest that at least for some deaconesses, the norms and values, learnt at the Institute, relativized those acquired in their childhood. These deaconesses clearly felt they had progressed. Some deaconesses, especially if they had lost one or both parents, had had to endure hardship before coming to Neuendettelsau, though this varied significantly and was closely connected to their social background.⁸¹⁷ The daughters of artisans seem to have been especially likely to be sent out to earn their living as domestic servants after the death of a parent, an experience which was almost uniformly described as laborious, overburdening, or even causing complete breakdown in health. A strikingly large number of deaconesses, however, were the daughters of clergymen who were more likely to be sent to stay with relatives if their own parents

⁸¹³ No. 46: Johanna Büttner, p. 127-133.

⁸¹⁴ No. 47: Rosette Wiebel, p. 134-137.

⁸¹⁵ No. 33: Johanna Zwanziger, p. 85-87.

⁸¹⁶ No. 46: Johanna Büttner, p. 127-133; No. 54: Gertrud Hahn, p. 149-151; No. 58: Sarah Hahn, p. 160.

⁸¹⁷ Cf. Chapter 2.5.

were unable to provide for them. Sometimes, they would take over the household of an unmarried brother.

In the analysed *curricula vitae*, no deaconess claimed to have received a direct call from God to enter her profession. Although a religious motivation was always prominent, this was often complemented by fairly pragmatic reasons, which were obviously acceptable.⁸¹⁸ For example, Regine Schied stated simply: "In the year 1853, I came into the great work house [*Armenhaus*] in Augsburg, where much was demanded of me. And the Lord was so kind and helped me, so that I was able to fulfill the demands. Here, I heard of the Deaconess Institute in Neuendettelsau and I felt a desire within me to go there."⁸¹⁹ Almost all deaconesses wrote that they themselves had been active in seeking admission. Many claimed to have longed for more opportunities from a very early age. For example Sarah Hahn wrote: "Already as a child I had often wished longingly only 'to be adult [*groß zu sein*]' and to earn my bread far from my parental home."⁸²⁰ In this case, her own wish coincided with her father's desire to find an opportunity for her and her sister to be trained as teachers. Sarah and Gertrud Hahn came to Neuendettelsau in 1855 and became deaconesses.

As the *curricula vitae* were written by deaconesses from the earliest years, many had not from the first intended to become deaconesses but had rather sought educational opportunity and the chance to experience some variety. For example, Johanna Hörner wrote: "I increasingly longed to leave my parents' home for a while."⁸²¹ Johanna Zwanziger, too, wished to escape her restricted life:

Later I came to my uncle on my father's side. In this house I learnt to see much with greater clarity. I thought much about myself, but especially I felt that I could achieve more than was

⁸¹⁸ There is other evidence that the Institute did not regard the desire of women to be provided for as an inappropriate motivation for becoming a deaconess, cf. e.g. the considerations in the article by Stählin "Über Frauenvereine zu leiblicher und geistlicher Versorgung armer, verlassener und berufsloser Jungfrauen und Witwen von Josenhans", *CorDiac* 1862, No. 4/5, p. 14-15. This attitude seems later to have changed. Thus, in 1954, the editors of Stählin's letters omitted from the published version (ThStI, 60) her joyful remark to her mother (02/04/1857), shortly before she was fully initiated, that soon she would no longer need to ask for financial assistance as "I am about to enter my actual profession and will therefore be provided for by the Institute" [ZADN BIV k1]. Perhaps this was to quash even the faintest suspicion that the future superior entered her profession for profane financial reasons.

⁸¹⁹ No. 38: Regine Schied, p. 103-104.

⁸²⁰ No. 58: Sarah Hahn, p. 160.

⁸²¹ No. 44: Johanna Hörner, p. 120-122.

required here. During this time, I heard of the Deaconess Institute in Neuendettelsau. At once, I was stirred by the wish to gain admission there, which, through God's mercy, was granted.⁸²²

This attests that the Deaconess Institute did indeed offer women a means of expanding their education, securing their livelihood, entering a professional career, and escaping from the tight restrictions of family-life. In many cases, a clergyman to whom a potential candidate was related or with whom she was acquainted brought the Deaconess Institute to her attention or lent her a "helping hand" in gaining admittance, indicating that personal contacts were greatly important for the actual step of entering the institution. However, personal acquaintance with deaconesses before entering the Institute was very rare in these accounts.⁸²³ This is possibly a result of their origins in the early period, when deaconesses were still fairly much pioneers. For later periods, we do have evidence that personal contact to deaconesses were important in a woman's decision to apply to the Institute.⁸²⁴

As is to be expected, the deaconesses almost all described their religious upbringing and theological formation in detail. Generally, a first religious socialization was experienced at home. Johanna Höllerer made a typical statement: "From a very early age, I was directed by my parents to God and Jesus Christ, the loyal Saviour, who so kindly accepts the children."⁸²⁵ Typically, this infant theology would then be deepened by a severe (usually personal) illness. A successful recovery was interpreted as a sign of God's merciful deliverance. This seems to have become an almost stereotypical motif and was narrated even when any distinct memory had receded. For example, Johanna Pausch recorded: "I very faintly remember that in my childhood, I was twice rescued from near death through the mercy of God in

⁸²² No. 33: Johanna Zwanziger, p. 85-87.

⁸²³ An exception is Magdalena Wunner who recounted that she was impressed by a deaconess from Strasbourg, travelling through her hometown, Augsburg, so much so that she wished to enter this profession herself (cf. No. 30: Magdalena Wunner, p. 76-77).

⁸²⁴ For example Barbara Goppelt, who entered the Institute in 1874, became acquainted with Neuendettelsau deaconesses during her youth (cf. Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 185); Marie Rau became a deaconess because she worked in a spinning mill which was under the direction of deaconesses from Stuttgart. She was admitted to the Institute in 1877 (cf. Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 128). In addition to these individual cases, the fact that personal contacts were important for the recruitment of candidates can also be deduced from the fact that the Institute pointed to the responsibility of deaconesses, especially those "outside", to promote their profession (cf. e.g. "An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern", *CorDiac* 1862, No. 3, p. 9-10).

⁸²⁵ No. 34: Johanna Höllerer, p. 88.

a miraculous way.”⁸²⁶ In some cases, piety was strengthened by the recovery of a near relation.

Magdalena Wunner recounted:

In the winter of [18]51, my mother became dangerously ill and was close to death. In this affliction into which my Redeemer brought me for pure love and mercy, I learnt to cling tight to the feet of the Crucified, to withdraw from the world and to submit myself to Him alone. The Lord gave me back my precious mother and she endeavoured to increase and strengthen my love for the Lord Jesus.⁸²⁷

Almost all the *curricula vitae* attest an early deep personal piety which centred around Jesus as Lord and Saviour. However, we find almost no witness of a sudden experience of conversion in the tradition of pietism: “discernment of sin – fear – doubts – yearning for redemption – agonizing prayer – sudden illumination and certainty in faith – or, in the language of the pietists: a short, intense battle in penitence [*Bußkampf*] [which] was followed by a surprising break-through.”⁸²⁸ Walter Sparn has argued that the new surge of autobiographical material in pietism was motivated not least by a critique of the doctrine and the institutionalized shape of the church, which found expression in the writing of one’s *own* narrative of personal faith, which thus constituted an act of emancipation from the church’s traditional expectations.⁸²⁹ In the Lutheran Neo-confessional institution in Neuendettelsau, we find the opposite. A deaconess’s narration of her life and faith was typically structured according to the ecclesiastical rites of baptism and confirmation. The date and place of baptism, the names of godparents and often the name of the officiating clergyman were listed by almost all deaconesses. Often, baptism was given an interpretation, mostly as the admission into the church. Occasionally, this formula varied, for example when a deaconess stated that in baptism, “through the exuberant mercy of the Lord”, she was “born of water and of the Spirit [John 3:5].”⁸³⁰ Another wrote that she, “a child of corruption”, was “re-born as a child of God” in baptism.⁸³¹ Deaconesses also typically described their confirmation classes as decisive on their theological formation. This was enhanced by their first confession, which always took place

⁸²⁶ No. 29: Johanna Pausch, p. 74-75.

⁸²⁷ No. 30: Magdalena Wunner, p. 76-77.

⁸²⁸ Modrow, *Religiöse Erweckung und Selbstreflexion*, 122. There is one exception to this: Johanna Büttner described just such an experience during her unhappy, lonely stay in Vienna where she seems to have suffered a complete mental breakdown and ended up in a hospital, cf. No. 46: Johanna Büttner, p. 127-135.

⁸²⁹ Sparn, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, 17-18.

⁸³⁰ Cf. No. 57: Caroline Hoffmann, p. 158.

⁸³¹ No. 17: Regine Elser, p. 42-45; similarly e.g. No. 46: Johanna Büttner, p. 127-133.

before the first participation in Holy Communion. For example, Magdalena Wunner recounted: “In the course of the lessons which preceded confirmation, I became more serious, and painfully discerned my sinful being. I made the decision to wrench myself away from the power of evil, but I forgot to ask the Lord for His support and my intentions therefore soon wavered.”⁸³² Johanna Höllerer described this period of her life in more detail:

Everything now appeared to my mind in a wholly different light than before in my familiar childishness. Everything became more serious, because the youthful observations and sins occupied the mind more and more. But God’s grace and mercy, too, I came to feel daily. In prayer and preparation, the day of confession approached. O, how contrite the penitent heart was before the altar of the Omniscient, it could only entreat for mercy and grace. In return, the broken and contrite heart [Psalm 51: 17] was soon comforted and delighted by absolution.⁸³³

One deaconess, who characterized the clergyman who had given the preparatory classes for confirmation as a “rationalist” [*Rationalist*], recalled her feelings at confirmation: “The confession did not go deeply, all the more, however, did the words of consecration leave a deep impression on my mind. I received the body and blood of the Lord with great desire and faith although the classes had not covered the word ‘this is’.”⁸³⁴ Others remembered that they received the elements for the first time with the conviction that it was the partaking of “the delicious asset, the food of the soul to eternal life”,⁸³⁵ or “the food of immortality, the precious body and the precious blood of my Saviour.”⁸³⁶

In the deaconesses’ narratives, the doctrine taught in Neuendettelsau served to deepen and confirm the impressions they had gained in their youth. Often, specific aspects were cited as having become especially important. For Johanna Zwanziger, for example, it was “the in-house teaching [*Hauslehre*] of justification through faith alone, of the doctrine of Holy Communion and of disciplining love.”⁸³⁷ In 1855, Johanna Prey recorded that she had experienced the doctrinal teachings as comforting and strengthening:

⁸³² No. 30: Magdalena Wunner, p. 76-77.

⁸³³ No. 34: Johanna Höllerer, p. 88.

⁸³⁴ No. 45: Johanna Büttner, p. 128.

⁸³⁵ No. 34: Johanna Höllerer, p. 88.

⁸³⁶ No. 44: Johanna Hörner, p. 120.

⁸³⁷ No. 33: Johanna Zwanziger, p. 85-87.

This was my most blessed and happiest year which the LORD my God has granted to me in my poor life. – But I often lost courage – thought that I am not suited for this profession, until, through the wholesome Word of God and pure doctrine which I richly received, I came to the conviction that a human being cannot achieve any good by himself [*aus sich heraus*], and [until] I was able to believe the Word of our Lord Jesus: My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness [1 Cor 12:9]. I was also, through our precious house-father and pastor [*Seelsorger*] whom God our Lord has himself elected, directed to the One, Holy, Evangelical Lutheran church and in holy absolution and [in the] pure sacrament of the Holy Communion found true peace.⁸³⁸

Any attempt to evaluate how much of this was genuinely felt and how much was a reflection of the “conceptions of values, perceptions of reality, and criteria of truth and importance”⁸³⁹ held by the Institute, is probably futile.⁸⁴⁰ However, as observed above, the deaconesses’ narratives suggest that it would be wise to refrain from postulating a “deadly dualism”, but rather that a dialogic relation should be assumed. This would suggest that Prey, for instance, may well have used these apparently stereotypical phrases to express something deeply personal, namely about the way in which she came to feel capable of working in her chosen profession.

There is no example of a deaconess who openly expressed pride in her achievements. Some of the deaconesses who entered their *curricula vitae* towards the end of the book indicated a certain satisfaction in their careers by listing in detail their successive places of work. Indeed, Dorothea Braun’s short entry consisted of practically nothing else, suggesting that she completely identified with her work as a deaconess.⁸⁴¹ However, the deaconesses were careful to deflect any notion of that their work could be deemed meritorious. For example, Getrud Hahn, the community’s cantrice, ended her curriculum vitae by pointing away from herself, in the tradition of Lutheran cantors: “My last wish at the end of this curriculum vitae is that all that I may do in this imperfect life, may be done to the glory of God and may become to me ever sweeter and more precious; and that I might dwell in the House of God all my life to

⁸³⁸ No. 7: Johanna Prey, p. 15-16.

⁸³⁹ Hahn, *Identität und Biographie*, 131.

⁸⁴⁰ It must be born in mind, however, that Lutheran Neo-confessionalism and an awareness of a distinctive identity may well have shaped some of the deaconesses’ religious identities even before coming to Neuendettelsau, namely the daughters from families who had encountered difficulties because of their Neo-confessional views, cf. e.g. No. 34: Johanna Höllerer, p. 88, or No. 54 and 58: Getrud and Sarah Hahn.

⁸⁴¹ Cf. No. 50: Dorothea [Braun], p. 143.

behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple [Psalm 27:4].”⁸⁴² There seems to have been a strong sense that any attempt at “self-sanctification”⁸⁴³ was inappropriate. Instead, the deaconesses adhered to the principle expressed by Augustine in his *Confessions*: “*Bona mea instituta tua et dona tua, mala mea delicta mea sunt et iudicia tua*” [the good in me is Your work and Your gift; the bad in me is my delinquency and Your punishment].⁸⁴⁴ Indeed, personal experiences were typically expressed in the form of penitential self-accusation.

Alois Hahn has identified the practice of confession as a powerful “institutional biography generator,” because it is “a social institution which allows a retrospective reflection of one’s own existence,”⁸⁴⁵ and thus induces self-examination of feelings, moods, sentiments and motives.⁸⁴⁶ The practice of private confession in Neuendettelsau seems to have influenced the deaconesses profoundly. Almost all curricula vitae contain passages which confess and lament past sins. For example, the imbibing of “poison from bad books” and the attendance at “worldly amusements” is deeply deplored in almost standardized form.⁸⁴⁷ In one case, the imminent departure for a ball, a “sinful undertaking”, is presented in close causal connection to the death of the writer’s mother.⁸⁴⁸ In addition, we find many standardized formulas, probably used in the context of confession. Many entries contain the verse: “(I am a sinful person and) I am not worthy of all mercy and steadfastness which the Lord grants me [Gen 32: 10].”⁸⁴⁹ Another deaconess, after presenting a fairly “secular” curriculum vitae, closed with the comment: “As a conclusion to my curriculum vitae up to this point I must add: Ps. 51. Neuendettelsau, 18 September

⁸⁴² No. 54: Gertrud Hahn, p. 149-151.

⁸⁴³ Relinde Meiwes stated that for members of the Society of St Vincent, the ultimate object was “self-sanctification” [*Selbstheiligung*], which meant that “service to humanity was of compelling necessity for the aim of individual salvation but did not constitute a value as such” (Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 79-80). In Neuendettelsau the logic was reversed, in accordance with Lutheran doctrine: works do not lead to salvation, but are rather the fruits of God’s preceding salvation. Therefore, a deaconess’s works had the merit of witnessing to God’s grace and mercy but were of no value for her individual salvation (cf. for example “Von der Barmherzigkeit”, *CorDiac* 1859, No. 3/ 4 - *CorDiac* 1860, No. 6; and “Von der seligen Übung der Barmherzigkeit”, *CorDiac* 1858, No 5.

⁸⁴⁴ Augustinus, *Confessiones* X4,5 (ed. J. Bernhardt, p. 492), cited according to Moos, *Persönliche Identität und Identifikation*, 17.

⁸⁴⁵ Hahn, *Identität und Biographie*, 137.

⁸⁴⁶ Hahn, *Identität und Biographie*, 138-139.

⁸⁴⁷ No. 33: Johanna Zwanziger, p. 85-87; No. 46: Johanna Büttner, p. 127-133; No. 47: Rosette Wibel, p. 134 and often.

⁸⁴⁸ No. 48: Katharina Schied, p. 138-141.

⁸⁴⁹ Cf. e.g. No. 57: Caroline Hoffmann, p. 158; No. 48: Katharina Schied, p. 138-141; No. 38: Regine Schied, p. 103-104; No. 34: Johanna Höllerer, p. 88.

1862.”⁸⁵⁰ Throughout the *curricula vitae*, scriptural language and imagery play a pivotal role, especially verses from psalms. An especially striking example is Johanna Büttner’s entry, which is so steeped in biblical and ecclesiastical language and imagery that her own voice is almost lost, for instance in this passage:

My heart became proud through the many signs of the Lord’s mercy and could easily have been lost again, for the devil prowls round like a roaring lion, seeking for someone to devour [1 Peter 5:8]. To you, o Jesu, be eternal praise [hymn by Johannes Olearius], for you have clothed me with righteousness [Psalm 132:9] and have given me grace to live in penitence. Let me become ever more perfect, and let me be and remain yours [hymn by Nicolaus Selnecker]. Amen!⁸⁵¹

Other deaconesses, too, moved seamlessly from narration to prayer. All the *curricula vitae* end with “Amen.” Thus they drew on elements of composing religious biography as an inner dialogue with God in the tradition of Augustine’s *Confessions*.⁸⁵²

We conclude that the deaconesses in their *curricula vitae*, which were institutionally induced and rendered “involuntarily”, adhered closely to the Institute’s norms and values, language and imagery, interpretational patterns and rhetorical conventions. As any form of self-glorification was unacceptable, deaconesses wrote of themselves in the form of *Confessions*, made to a triple forum – God, the directorate, and each other – making the *curricula vitae* semi-public religious autobiography. The composing of their *curricula vitae* provided the deaconesses with an occasion for self-reflexion, thus constituting a “biography generator”. However, it is obvious that the texts do not capture the totality of past occurrences, experiences, or incidents but rather present institutionally induced selected moments which are interpreted retrospectively in the light of the present.⁸⁵³ Thus, for example, former pleasure in “worldly amusements” was always deplored. However, this does not exclude a certain variety in length,

⁸⁵⁰ No. 58: Sarah Hahn, p. 160. Psalm 51 is one of the penitential psalms.

⁸⁵¹ No. 46: Johanna Büttner, p. 127-133.

⁸⁵² Cf. also Sparr, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, 14. A famous English example of religious autobiography drawing on this tradition is John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666). It is highly likely that the deaconesses knew Augustine’s *Confessions*. Meyer explicitly recommended Augustine’s book to the deaconesses for it “offer[ed] real nourishment, [and was] full of ardency, wisdom, and strength.” He went on: “However, never read too much at once but only a little with inner labour, and offer up your will to practise submission” (“Von den Diakonissen und ihrem Beruf”, *CorDiac* 1877, No. 4, p. 16).

⁸⁵³ Hahn uses the term “selektive Vergegenwärtigung”, cf. Hahn, *Biographie und Identität*, 140. Cf. also Cavalli, *Memory and Identity*, 170: “The construction of identity requires that we keep track of the chain of major events that made us what we think we are. In doing this, we select only a limited number out of the almost infinite number of experiences we have had up to the present and apply criteria of relevance in order to make the selection. Memory is the product of the operation of these selective criteria; without oblivion there is also no memory.”

style, and, naturally, in content, and the diversity of the deaconesses' backgrounds and personal histories is not concealed. Yet the greater weight was given to the fact that the separate, unique life-stories had merged and found their culmination point in the present. This could lead to a devaluation of the past and a cautiously critical examination on the part of the women of the norms and patterns of their families of origin. For example, the norms of uprightness, honourableness, and virtuousness were regarded as secondary to a deep personal faith in being justified through God's work of salvation. The women themselves seem to have found comfort and support in this conviction. This is slightly at variance with Löhe's urge to sanctification and perfection which is especially evident in his compositions of hagiography.

4.4. Female hagiography: The Rosenmonate, and the Neuendettelsau calendar

Peter Burke has pointed out that the saints make an interesting object of study "not only because many of them are interesting as individuals, but also because, like other heroes, they reflect the values of the culture in which they are perceived in a heroic light."⁸⁵⁴ It is striking that references to the lives of (female) saints infused the emerging deaconess community from the very beginning. They provided a normative backdrop for the fledgling community and offered a specific image of womanhood. During the inauguration ceremony of the Institute's first building in October 1854, the assembled guests were prompted to remember the missionary activities of the "heroes of mercy" from the British Isles, Kilian, Winfried, Willibald, Wunnibald, Sebald and others, who had converted the Franconian people to Christianity in the eighth century and transformed the region, along with the souls of its inhabitants, "from a wild, sad desert" into "God's garden". A reading was dedicated to the evangelizing women saints "who followed the famous heroes in their works of mercy and added to the strong wine of male mercy

⁸⁵⁴ Burke, *How to be a Counter-Reformation Saint*, 48.

the mild oil of female mercy.”⁸⁵⁵ This reflects the close link Löhe postulated between mission and diakonia.⁸⁵⁶ Explicit mention was made of Saint Walburgis, who combined “the oil and wine of the Good Samaritan and the lamp of the wise virgin.”⁸⁵⁷ She was described as a “noble servant of Christ”: “diligent was the work of her hands, even more diligent [was she] in reading and contemplating the Holy Scriptures, but most [diligent] in prayer.”⁸⁵⁸ In an article published shortly afterwards, in December 1854, Löhe summarized the legacy of Saint Walburgis as having “educated the ignorant, comforted the sorrowful, directed the mistaken, protected the hard-pressed, attended to the poor, and cared for the sick.”⁸⁵⁹ In short, we find the outline of the work of a Neuendettelsau deaconess. And indeed, Walburgis was repeatedly referred to as the “great Franconian deaconess” in the community’s literature.⁸⁶⁰

Additionally, in the earliest years of the Institute, Löhe developed the habit of narrating the lives of saints when he ate with the deaconesses each day.⁸⁶¹ He also recounted their lives in the addresses he gave at the initiation ceremonies, applying traits to individual deaconesses. For Löhe, the saints were “holy examples whom we may and can follow,”⁸⁶² and he clearly considered some knowledge of the saints to serve an educational purpose. He therefore wished to re-introduce the calendar of saints into the

⁸⁵⁵ Cf. “Die Einweihungsfeier des Diakonissenhauses in Neuendettelsau”, CorIM 1854, No. 11, p. 49-51, and “Etwas aus der Geschichte”, GW4, 288.

⁸⁵⁶ Cf. for example Löhe, “Innere Mission im Allgemeinen” (1850), GW4, 178-188; with regard to the Deaconess Institute cf. his essay “Das zehnte Jahr der Diakonissenanstalt Neuendettelsau” (1865), reprinted GW 4, 417-421, esp. 419. Löhe by no means allocated mission solely to men and diakonia solely to women but thought both genders important for both functions of the church though, “naturally”, in different roles. Even before the Deaconess Institute was founded, Löhe wished to motivate women, especially “of the educated classes”, to contribute to Lutheran mission work in North America. Late in 1852, he wrote a paper to stimulate women to missionary activities, referring to the history of mission in Franconia, where in early Medieval times, both men and women had felt called to missionary work (cf. “Frage an die Söhne und Töchter der gebildeten Stände”, GW4, 638-639). The inauguration service for the Deaconess Institute clearly drew on this.

⁸⁵⁷ According to the Art.: “Walburga (Walpurga)”, in: *Reklams Lexikon der Heiligen und der Biblischen Gestalten*, 506-507, she was indeed at times depicted with a bottle of oil (for the first time in 1460 in the dome in Eichstätt). There is no source indicating that she was ever associated with a lamp. It seems that the lamp of the virgin [Mt 25: 1-13], which Löhe also mentioned in his narration of Walburga’s life in the “Rosenmonate” (133-134), was Löhe’s own addition. Instead, according to Reklam, Walburga was occasionally depicted with a crown and sceptre (for example in a portrait in Munich from 1492) but these regal attributes are not mentioned by Löhe.

⁸⁵⁸ Cf. “Die Einweihungsfeier des Diakonissenhauses in Neuendettelsau”, CorIM 1854, No. 11, p. 49-51, and “Etwas aus der Geschichte”, GW4, 288.

⁸⁵⁹ Cf. “Die heilige Walburgis. Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Geschichte”, CorIM 1854, No. 12, p. 55-56. Although the article was written anonymously, there can be no doubt that Löhe was the author.

⁸⁶⁰ Cf. for example the essay “Neuendettelsau”, first printed in the Neuendettelsau Calendar of 1864, GW4, 407, and “Etwas aus der Geschichte” (1870), GW4, 288; similarly in “Auswärtige Zweiganstalten des Diakonissenhauses Neuendettelsau” (1866), GW 4, 434.

⁸⁶¹ Cf. Stählin to her mother (09/11/1856), ThStI, 52.

⁸⁶² Cf. “Von Benützung des Heiligenkalenders für das eigene Leben” (1865), GW4, 425.

Lutheran church as a whole.⁸⁶³ Realizing that it was not enough to simply list the saints' feast-days as their lives had mostly been forgotten, in 1860, he published *Rosen-Monate heiliger Frauen*. For the benefit of the readership, which he expected to be female, Löhe, as he put it in his foreword, presented the lives of sixty female saints with whom women could identify. These vita, Löhe asserted, "are fragrant like roses and even now still spread the fragrance of holy and heavenly lives."⁸⁶⁴ The "months of the rose" was not intended as a scholarly publication but rather as a lectionary for women to be read "by women and maidens [*Jungfrauen*] on quiet mornings, for example before or after breakfast, before they begin their daily work."⁸⁶⁵ His "male gaze", which, as Teresa Berger puts it, "controls the textualization of women's lives of holiness," is apparent.⁸⁶⁶ Repeatedly, the reader is directly addressed, giving a paternal tone to the whole work. Löhe presented a number of copies of the *Rosenmonate* to members of the Institute; these were diligently read.⁸⁶⁷

In his foreword to the *Rosenmonate*, Löhe freely admitted that he had consulted many Roman Catholic books, including the *Martyriologium Romanum*, and the works of Butler⁸⁶⁸ and Ruinart,⁸⁶⁹ finding them useful and edifying.⁸⁷⁰ He also pointed out that there had been attempts within Protestantism by theologians such as Luther, Hieronymus Weller,⁸⁷¹ Porta,⁸⁷² Hondorff,⁸⁷³ Rabus,⁸⁷⁴ and August

⁸⁶³ For example, in his educational "Book for the house, school, and church for Lutheran Christians" [*Haus-, Schul- und Kirchenbuch für Christen des lutherischen Bekenntnisses*], written for German emigrants to North America, he included a "Calendarium Sanctorum" in the second (of three) parts.

⁸⁶⁴ Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, VII-VIII.

⁸⁶⁵ Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, VII. Löhe later suggested reading the Moravian Daily Watchwords and the respective lives of the saints as a "double breakfast" (*Martyriologium*, 8).

⁸⁶⁶ Berger, *Femininity and Sanctity*, 66.

⁸⁶⁷ Stählin to her mother (30/12/1858), ThStI, 92. The annals of the mother house reveal that a number of copies were also bought by benefactors and donated to the deaconess house. As Löhe dedicated all proceeds of the *Rosenmonate* to the chapel-fund, the benefactors thereby both made available the publication to the deaconesses, and simultaneously sponsored the building work.

⁸⁶⁸ Alban Butler (1709-1773), *Lives of the fathers*. By the third edition, printed in Edinburgh 1798 to 1800, the work had been extended to twelve volumes, one volume for every month of the calendarium sanctorum, and had been translated into French and Italian.

⁸⁶⁹ Thierry Ruinart (1657-1709), *Acta primorum Martyrum sincera*.

⁸⁷⁰ Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, XII. Similarly, Löhe claimed in his essay "Von Benützung des Heiligenkalenders für das eigene Leben" (1865), GW4, 427, that he had found the *Martyrologium romanum* and the *Breviarium romanum* "admirable" and wished that the Protestant churches had something similar.

⁸⁷¹ Hieronymus Weller of Molsdorf (1499-1572) was employed as a tutor to Luther's children. Allegedly with Luther's encouragement, he published the "Marterbuch".

⁸⁷² Conrad Porta (1541-1581) published the "Jungfrauenspiegel" in 1580.

⁸⁷³ Friedrich Hondorff (1628-1694). It is unclear to which work Löhe was referring.

Hermann Francke,⁸⁷⁵ to honour the saints of all ages by composing calendars and narrating their stories.⁸⁷⁶ However, Löhe did not mention Fliedner's martyrology, published shortly before in Kaiserswerth, though he surely must have known it.⁸⁷⁷ Both Löhe's mixed selection of sources and his ambiguous statements about sainthood resulted in a public controversy about the doctrinal leanings of his book.⁸⁷⁸

The *Rosenmonate* make interesting reading if a "deconstructionalist" approach is taken, implying a focus not on "the search for the 'historical' face of the saint and her deeds in the transmitted texts, but rather on the analysis of literary and rhetorical structures by which the saint is represented in written documents."⁸⁷⁹ Therefore, the focus here is on Löhe's *interpretation* of the martyrs' lives and deaths, especially where gender-constructions emerge.⁸⁸⁰ For the *Rosenmonate*, Löhe mostly chose women from the first three centuries of the Church but also included some medieval women, particularly well-known figures such as Elisabeth of Thuringia, Clara of Assisi, Hedwig of Silesia, along with more obscure, arguably local women such as Kunigunde, the virginal wife of King Heinrich of Bavaria, and Radegunde, a servant at the Wellenburg near Augsburg.⁸⁸¹ Löhe did not shy away from describing the martyrs' gruesome deaths. Indeed, the front cover of the first edition is decorated with fine graphics depicting not only two branches of thorny roses which entwine the whole page but also the instruments of torture through which the saints found their deaths: a rack, a cauldron, tongs, a scourge, sword, lance, and others. Löhe had a preference for the early Christian martyrs since, he thought, "whoever

⁸⁷⁴ Ludwig Rabus (1524 – 1592) published the eight volumes of "Historien der heiligen auserwählten Gottes-Zeugen" in Strasbourg (1554-1558) and the "Historien der Märtyrer" (1571).

⁸⁷⁵ August Herrmann Francke (1663-1727) wrote an introduction for a new edition of Hieronymus Weller's "Marterbuch" which was published in 1700.

⁸⁷⁶ Cf. *Rosenmonate*, XI -XII.

⁸⁷⁷ Fliedner, *Buch der Märtyrer*.

⁸⁷⁸ This controversy seems to have been nurtured by Georg Güttler, who was dismissed from his position as teacher and cantor in the Institute after disagreements with Löhe in 1859 (cf. 7. *Jahresbericht* 1859/60, 13-14; Löhe to his daughter Marianne (29/01/1860, 21/02/1860), GW2, 374, 377). It will not be outlined in detail here. For Löhe's views on sainthood, cf. Löhe to his daughter Marianne (16/11/1859, 14/02/1860), GW2, 363, 375; Löhe to Elise von Hohenlohe (18/01/1860), GW2, 373; "Konferenzvortrag in Betreff der 'Rosenmonate heiliger Frauen'" [given before the Association for Inner Mission], GW 5/2, 769.

⁸⁷⁹ Barnard, Post, and Rose, *Introduction*, 16.

⁸⁸⁰ Cf. also Berlis, *Zeichenhaftes Sterben*, 56.

⁸⁸¹ An article on the life of Radegunde was also printed in *CorDiac* 1866, No. 2, p. 7-8.

suffers and dies for Christ, cannot be misunderstood [*ist unmisverständlich*].”⁸⁸² A large number of virgins can be found in the collection. Although by no means idiosyncratic to Löhe,⁸⁸³ he presumably readily seized on this traditional bias as he considered virgins to make especially appropriate figures for identification for deaconesses. This is underlined by the fact that most of the women he featured had also pursued charitable causes.⁸⁸⁴ The paedagogical intention is repeatedly made explicit. For example, Saint Theodosia’s narrative is preceded with the wish “that the cloud of witnesses of Jesus may appear as an invitation to the generation of virgins now in the beautiful dawn of eternity, and may awaken the meaning of discipleship.”⁸⁸⁵ Like most of the narratives in the *Rosenmonate*, this one, too, ends with an exhortative conclusion:

You, o maid [*Jüngerin*], who read this and consider: would you not withdraw your foot if you knew that the crown of martyrdom awaits you at the end of a journey on which you embark? In case you think that it is not necessary to seek death as ardently as Theodosia: Would you have enough energy [*Fahrtwind*] if, without your contribution and despite all caution [*ohne dein Zuthun und bei aller Vorsicht*], you were called upon to die for the Lord? Do you judge Theodosia in the same way as those people to whom one has to say: ‘It is easier to admonish than to do better’?”⁸⁸⁶

Löhe explicitly admired the women of ancient times for their “power and might” and for their “will which was steeled through their love to Jesus.”⁸⁸⁷ Adhering closely to his presumed source, Löhe narrated that one of the first measures of torture which Theodosia endured was the cutting-off of her breasts,

⁸⁸² Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, XIV.

⁸⁸³ Cf. Berlis, *Zeichenhaftes Sterben*, 60: „Der ideale christliche Märtyrer ist jungfräulich.“

⁸⁸⁴ According to L.L. Coon, there were three dominant models of female sanctity in the early centuries: the desert hermit, the wealthy widow, and the cloistered nun (cf. L.L. Coon: *Sacred fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity*, Philadelphia 1997, cited according to Berger, *Femininity and Sanctity*, 71). With regard to Löhe’s hagiography, this must be extended by the model of the charitable virgin.

⁸⁸⁵ Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, 96.

⁸⁸⁶ Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, 98. For his narrative of Theodosia, Löhe probably drew on Butler, *Lives of the Fathers*, Vol. 2, 17-18. Butler himself explicitly referred to Eusebius, *History of the Martyrs of Palestine*, book 8, chapter 14 [sic. It should be chapter 7]. Löhe cited the short dialogue between Theodosia and her tormentor Urbanus almost verbatim from Butler. There is no way to tell whether Löhe had a copy of Butler’s work in English, French or Italian. The dialogue is an indication that Butler drew on the Syriac version of Eusebius’ *History of the Church*, also used, for example, by William Cureton in *Eusebius of Caesarea: The History of the Martyrs in Palestine* (London/ Edinburgh 1861, 24). No such exchange of words is recounted by Ruinart, whom Löhe also mentioned amongst his sources and who only portrayed a very sketchy account of Theodosia’s martyrdom: Ruinart, *Acta*, 284. This seems closely based on the Greek version also used by Arthur McGiffert in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Volume I, New York 1890 [online version: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.toc.html>], accessed September 2014].

⁸⁸⁷ Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, IX.

rendering her a-sexual.⁸⁸⁸ This physical mutilation was complemented by Löhe's granting her what Berger has termed "honorary maleness."⁸⁸⁹

For Löhe, one of the great weaknesses of women was their "predisposition to sexual addiction [*geschlechtliche Süchte*],"⁸⁹⁰ their "yearning to be married" and their conviction that "there is no greater unhappiness [...] than to become old without marriage."⁸⁹¹ As such, they were "by nature" weaker, more sensual, and less rational than men.⁸⁹² In consequence, it seems that for Löhe, a woman who transcended her "natural weakness" showed an especially praiseworthy, holy trait, and raised her (almost) to male status. Hence the great number of saints in his collection who were not only virgins but even showed a certain gender-fluidity.⁸⁹³ As Riches and Salih have pointed out: "Sainthood often works by breaking with normal social values, and gendered identity may be amongst these: constructing one's gender identity differently may be a marker of holiness."⁸⁹⁴ This tradition in hagiographical writing played into Löhe's hands as he grappled with the contemporary bourgeois notion that women needed male protection and safekeeping. By offering the deaconesses a figure like Theodosia to emulate, Löhe was

⁸⁸⁸ Eusebius [in William Cureton's translation, printed in London and Edinburgh in 1861, 24], Butler's source, recounted that Urbanus "inflict[ed] tortures on her sides and on her breast with cruel combs; and she was torn on the ribs until her bowels were seen." Butler gave to this a more sexual turn: Urbanus "caused her to be stretched on the rack in the most cruel manner; and her sides and breasts to be torn with iron-hooks and pincers, and at length her breasts to be cut off with the utmost barbarity" (Butler, *Lives of the Fathers*, Vol. 2, 18).

⁸⁸⁹ Berger, *Femininity and Sanctity*, 70. Berger analyzed that because in most periods of church history, "woman" was seen as the weaker sex, male hagiographs regarded it as a very high level of distinction if they portrayed a woman's holiness on terms of "maleness."

⁸⁹⁰ Cf. "Lebenslauf der Jungfrau Karoline Rheineck", CorIM 1855, No. 9, p. 40.

⁸⁹¹ Cf. Löhe, "An die Schwester und Probeschwestern", CorDiac 1863, No. 7, p. 27.

⁸⁹² Löhe also valued celibacy highly in men, especially in clergymen, cf. his explanations in "Der evangelische Geistliche" (1848), GW3/2, 240. He also emphasized the celibacy of (some of) the male apostles in his addresses which he gave at initiation ceremonies. Though he obviously considered celibacy in men a special charisma, it was, according to Löhe, mostly women's fault if men failed, for example if they dressed immodestly. Therefore, according to Löhe, the apostles decreed that women should dress discretely (cf. "Von der Kleidung der Frauen", CorDiac 1858, No. 3, p. 10-14). For women, in contrast, striving to find a husband was a "natural" instinct.

⁸⁹³ Gender-fluidity can be found in many of Löhe's narrations. Saint Agnes, for example, was thrown into a brothel as a punishment for her disinterestedness in men, but there all men who "sought to approach her" were struck dead. A more drastic version of a-sexuality can perhaps hardly be conceived (*Rosenmonate*, 1-9). Löhe's model for his account of Agnes' martyrdom is probably taken from Ruinart, *Acta*, 403; cf. also Butler, *Lives of the Fathers*, Vol. 1, 227). Saint Euphrosyne escaped marriage by cutting off her hair and wearing men's clothes, thus altering her identity so much so that even her father did not recognize her. She lived as a man for the rest of her life (*Rosenmonate*, 44-47). In weaving into his narrations the motif of gender-fluidity, Löhe drew on a long tradition of hagiography. Caroline Bynum, for example, has pointed out a certain gender-fluidity in the depictions of Christ and the saints in medieval times. According to Bynum, gender was associated with specific attributes rather than constituting a biological fact: "Medieval interpreters of the Bible regularly taught that 'spirit is to flesh as male is to female' – that is, that the dichotomy male/female can serve as a symbol for the dichotomies strong/weak, rational/irrational, soul/body" (Bynum, *Female Body and Religious Practice*, 206).

⁸⁹⁴ Riches/Salih, *Gender and Holiness*, 5.

able to substantiate his expectation that they would show a certain toughness and resilience to bodily illness and taunts. In this, the first chairwoman Karoline Rheineck, whose prominent character -trait had been her “chaste aloofness”, served as a model: “She has become a martyr of love; but I am convinced that she would have also become a martyr of faith with serene calmness and joy and would have stepped into the flames for Christ, her Jesus. She possessed such a noble seriousness of faith, such a watchful eye for all that could have clouded her faith and hindered her inner progression!”⁸⁹⁵ Heroism seems to have been regarded as an essential trait especially for deaconesses who worked as isolated pioneers in alien and, at least in the Institute’s depiction, hostile surroundings. This is indicated by Löhe’s editorial tendencies in the *Rosenmonate*. In his account of Theodosia, for example, he made much of the fact that she was not a native of Caesarea but had travelled there, a circumstance which is only briefly mentioned in his sources. According to Löhe, however, this merits a deeper interpretation:

The virgin had not travelled from Tyrus to Caesarea in vain, but the Lord had taken her journey to heart and brought her on the path of the Lamb of God through subjection to victory [*durch Unterliegen zum Sieg*]. Thus she had found a gate to heaven in an alien place and on the thunderous waves of a hostile sea a blessed and praiseworthy death as many thousands do not experience in their safe and quiet death-beds.⁸⁹⁶

The motif of “journey” in the exhortative conclusion to Theodosia’s narrative, as cited above, can be understood in a double sense. It can be interpreted, on the one hand, as the reader’s journey from birth to death in accordance with the traditional metaphor of a Christian life as a pilgrimage, while, on the other hand, it can signify the literal journey on which the Institute sent the deaconesses to reach their assigned places of work.

On a daily basis, a direct link between the saints with their respective feast-days and the individual deaconesses was established by the Neuendettelsau Calendar, which was published annually from 1863 to 1867. Each had a similar design. On the inside cover, the consecration prayer for deaconesses from the Apostolic Constitutions was printed. The calendars also contained the commemoration days of

⁸⁹⁵ “Lebenslauf der Jungfrau Karoline Rheineck”, CorIM 1855, No. 9, p. 41.

⁸⁹⁶ Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, 98.

the Deaconess Institute,⁸⁹⁷ one or two topical essay(s) by Löhe,⁸⁹⁸ and statistics from the Institute. Most pages were taken up by the actual calendar. On the left-hand side, the days of the month were listed with the respective feast-days of the saints; on the right-hand side, the correspondent birthdays of the deaconesses appeared, together with the date of death of those who had died. Finally, the calendar offered “commemoration cards” for deceased deaconesses, all of which adhered to a set pattern: “May NN rest in peace and may perpetual light shine upon her. Amen.” After the date of death, birth and the age of the deceased, a sentence or two summarized the eulogy or described the death-scene. In a concluding sentence, the living are addressed, for example: “May the Lord grant us a blessed succession! Amen!”⁸⁹⁹ Or more explicitly: “Loyalty unto death, to her Lord, her family, the sisters! Sister, are you like her?”⁹⁰⁰ The calendars were printed with the intention that wherever the sisters might live and work they would be strengthened in their feeling that “a flock of brothers or sisters accompanies [them], who approach at the right hour with comfort, help, encouragement, and support,” and thus feel themselves an integral part of “a community of the right sort,”⁹⁰¹ made up of the sisters, whether living or dead, as well as the saints and martyrs of times long past.⁹⁰² Thus, on a daily basis, through the process of collective remembering, the bond of the community was forged despite spatial and temporal separation.

In his hagiographic literature, Löhe invoked norms not normally associated with bourgeois notions of femininity, such as assertiveness, hardiness, physical resilience, fearlessness, independence, and

⁸⁹⁷ The “commemoration days” included events such as the inauguration of buildings but also dates that concerned the development of the communal life such as the day when the decision was made to introduce the deaconess fund or chapter-meetings.

⁸⁹⁸ Topics included “Life in Dettelsau” (1863), an exhortatory address encouraging former students to hold to the ideals instilled to them in the Institute; “Neuendettelsau” (1864), an almost meditative reflection on the (in-) significance of the village; “The charitable institutions of Neuendettelsau” (1864); “The tenth anniversary of the Deaconess Institute Neuendettelsau” (1865); “The Visitation of Mary in Neuendettelsau” (1865), an encouragement for former students to attend the annual reunions; “On the usage of the calendar of the saints for personal life” (1865); “Branch institutions of the Deaconess Institute Neuendettelsau” (1866); “The hospitals of the Deaconess Institute” (1866); and “Death in Dettelsau” (1866).

⁸⁹⁹ “Gedenktafel for Pauline Merz”, *Kalender* 1863, p. 32.

⁹⁰⁰ “Gedenktafel von Schwester Pauline Haag”, *Kalender* 1865, p. 28.

⁹⁰¹ “Anzeige”, *CorDiac* 1863, No. 4, p. 16.

⁹⁰² Cf. Schmidt, *Kalender und Gedächtnis*, also Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 45-46: Through a retrospective memory of the dead “a group goes on living with its dead, keep[s] them present, and thereby build[s] up an image of its own unity and wholeness, of which the dead naturally form a part.”

courage. In 1860, at a time when Löhe's long conflicts with the church authorities had come to a head,⁹⁰³ he obviously believed the deaconesses who were sent out to work in the wider church to require the heroic traits of martyrs. The virgins of antiquity and medieval times who willingly sacrificed their lives for their faith and their "confession of the true doctrine"⁹⁰⁴ offered welcome figures of identification who could invoke those qualities and encourage the deaconesses through the knowledge that they were part of a community of saints which extended over time and space. In addition, the charitable causes pursued by the ancient saints were to remind the deaconesses of the "holy, incessant duty of [their] office."⁹⁰⁵ Thus the deaconesses were to find orientation and examples of holy lives which they could and should emulate. This required wholehearted dedication and commitment.

4.5. Conclusion

The analysis of these texts has again revealed that Löhe's view of women was deeply entwined with bourgeois gender assumptions. The Neuendettelsau deaconess community was not an emancipatory project. Nevertheless, Löhe evidently came to discern the value of the deaconesses' intelligence and their willingness for cooperation. He esteemed their eagerness to learn highly and offered them a theological training which far exceeded the limits of an education conventionally deemed sufficient for the female sex. At the same time, he realized that the deaconesses' theological assertiveness could potentially be a means of causing offence to outsiders. For Löhe, this offered occasions for the deaconesses to demonstrate their unconditional commitment and dedication. Within the fellowship, he affirmed the norms and values attributed to "femininity" according to the socially prescribed gender characteristics. He intended to harmonize internal differences and potential points of contention, to stabilize in-house hierarchies and to effect a thorough integration of the individual deaconesses into the cosmos of the mother house. This, for Löhe, required of the deaconesses a willingness to undertake

⁹⁰³ In 1860, Löhe was suspended from his office as the parish pastor of Neuendettelsau for several weeks by the ecclesiastical authorities for his refusal to remarry a divorced parishioner. He styled himself as a martyr and narrated his own account of events in *Meine Suspension im Jahre 1860*.

⁹⁰⁴ Löhe, *Rosenmonate*, XV.

⁹⁰⁵ "Von der seligen Übung der Barmherzigkeit", *CorDiac* 1858, No. 4/5, p. 17.

life-long self-reflection and to submit to (self-) surveillance. In their relation to the directorate, the deaconesses were to assume largely the role of submissive, obedient daughters. For the women, this meant a relinquishment of former ties and a conscious integration into the structures of the mother house. This was facilitated by their participation in collective action, in rites, in celebrations, in sacred times and sacred spaces.

Chapter 5: Constructing and consolidating collective identity through non-literary means

In this chapter, non-literary means of circulating and communicating the community's shared "cultural meaning", that is values, experiences, expectations and beliefs, are explored to continue the exploration of the way in which the deaconesses' collective identity was established and consolidated.⁹⁰⁶ We adopt from Assmann the insight that a "we-identity" requires consciousness and reflexivity. It is by definition "explicit, non-self-evident."⁹⁰⁷ A sense of distinctiveness is enhanced when borders are accentuated through "polarization."⁹⁰⁸ In consequence, boundary-markers have an important function in creating and affirming collective identity.

5.1. Boundary-markers

5.1.1. Distinctive dress

Increasingly in recent years, fashion, clothes and (civilian) uniforms have become a subject of research⁹⁰⁹ in social psychology,⁹¹⁰ sociology,⁹¹¹ and cultural history,⁹¹² following an older discourse

⁹⁰⁶ Cf. Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 120-121.

⁹⁰⁷ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 119.

⁹⁰⁸ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 105.

⁹⁰⁹ For an overview of different approaches and sources, cf. Taylor, *Study of Dress History*.

⁹¹⁰ Cf. Salomon, *Psychology of fashion*; Kaiser, *Social Psychology of clothing*; Sommer, *Sozialpsychologie der Kleidermode*.

⁹¹¹ Cf. Crane, *Fashion and its social agendas*; Joseph, *Uniforms and Nonuniforms*.

⁹¹² Cf. Roche, *Culture of clothing*; Myerly, *British Military Spectacle*; McDowell, *Dressed to kill*; Brändli, *Herrlich biedere Mann*; Köhle-Hezinger/ Mentges, *Neuen Welt ein neuer Rock*.

which interpreted the emergence of uniformity, also in fashion, as a symbol of modernity.⁹¹³ In this context, civilian uniforms are defined as follows:

They signal membership in a community, be it a civil service [*staatlichen Behörde*], a class or religious group, a bourgeois organization [*Verein*], or a private company. However, uniforms can also exclude, mark lines of demarcation, and visualize or even intensify social conflicts. They signal the place of the individual within the social order. Whoever is able to read the signs, can deduce from them information about rank, position, sphere of duty, competences, and jurisdiction of the uniformed person. Civilian uniforms are like a second skin of signifiers, which place the individual into a complex texture of ascriptions of sense and contexts of references. They express competences and duties, and give meaning to the actions which are performed by the carriers by referring to the cultural frame in which they are embedded.⁹¹⁴

Civilian uniforms were at the height of fashion in the period ranging from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century.⁹¹⁵ They are to be distinguished from “robes of office [*Amtstracht*],” which are worn by clergymen, judges or university chancellors only when they officiate at certain, distinct ceremonies.⁹¹⁶ Following such a definition, the deaconess dress worn by community members in Neuendettelsau can be described as a “civilian uniform.” It not only had an external function, as the definition cited above seems to suggest, but was also an important “element of group construction and of the internal symbolic communication.”⁹¹⁷ Haas and Hackspiel-Mikosch observe, “the meaning and the purpose of civilian uniforms are not the products of chance, but the result of dynamic processes, in which context is formed in many varieties. [...] Culture is understood as a [...] contingent, what is more, historically variable system of procedures in which sense is generated and in which the meaning of a phenomenon is developed in a process.”⁹¹⁸ An important aspect in our case is the construction of gender through clothing.

The emergence of the distinct deaconess dress in Neuendettelsau was indeed a dynamic process. The first version of the Institute’s rule [*Hausordnung*], published as an appendix to the first annual report in

⁹¹³ Cf. Sombart, *Wirtschaft und Mode*; Simmel, *Philosophy of Fashion*; fashion as a mode of distinction between classes is a major topic in Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*.

⁹¹⁴ Haas/ Hackspiel-Mikosch, *Vorwort*, 8.

⁹¹⁵ Haas/ Hackspiel-Mikosch, *Vorwort*, 8.

⁹¹⁶ Haas/ Hackspiel-Mikosch, *Ziviluniformen als Medium symbolischer Kommunikation*, 16.

⁹¹⁷ Haas/ Hackspiel-Mikosch, *Ziviluniformen als Medium symbolischer Kommunikation*, 21. Disappointingly, the international, interdisciplinary research project „civilian uniforms as symbolic communication“ offers no contribution dedicated specifically to members of religious groups though they explicitly list this group amongst the wearers of civilian uniforms.

⁹¹⁸ Haas/ Hackspiel-Mikosch, *Ziviluniformen als Medium symbolischer Kommunikation*, 39.

1854/55, made no reference to a specific dress for either the students or the deaconesses who were employed as their teachers, who worked as nurses, or in the household of the Institute. The third annual report of 1856, however, observed that a uniform dress [*Tracht*] had been introduced. This had been designed “with the help of and in consultation with the first pupils themselves,” and was “both inexpensive and pretty, neither grand nor stately, but maidenly [*magdlich*].”⁹¹⁹ The reasons given for this development were eminently practical: there was too little space for the storage of individual dresses and accessories, and a uniform dress would simplify matters in the laundry.⁹²⁰ Originally, Löhe had considered a brown dress for both deaconess students and deaconesses,⁹²¹ perhaps because many Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy wore a brown habit.⁹²² The women themselves, however, opted for black, in part because they all already possessed black dresses, thus saving expense.⁹²³ In the end it was decided that the *Tracht* for deaconesses would consist of a black dress, a blue apron for week-days and a white one for Sundays, a head-dress for weekdays, and a veil for Sundays and for travelling. To begin with, no distinction was made between deaconess students and deaconesses.⁹²⁴

As in Kaiserswerth, the cut of the Neuendettelsau dress was designed to blend in with that worn by women of the surrounding society. While in Kaiserswerth the dress was chosen to resemble that of the married bourgeois woman of the Rhineland,⁹²⁵ the Neuendettelsau dress was modelled on that of the Franconian farmer’s wife.⁹²⁶ It thus externally signaled the equal status of married women and the celibate deaconesses. The success of this “cultural fit” was, however, limited. It was reported that the Neuendettelsau deaconesses were given the not necessarily friendly nick-name “Löhe’s soldiers”

⁹¹⁹ 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 15.

⁹²⁰ 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 15.

⁹²¹ Cf. Löhe to his daughter Marianne (05/06/ 1855), GW4, 706/ GW2, 239 (excerpts). At this stage, the decision for brown seemed so certain that Löhe asked his daughter to keep her eyes open for appropriate cloth patterns in Greiz, where she was on holiday.

⁹²² A conjecture expressed by Ganzert, GW4, 706.

⁹²³ Cf. “Wie die Tracht entstanden ist” (1920/21) [ZADN BIV c7]. Stählin was then eighty-one or eighty-two years old. It is remarkable that even then she remembered the successful intervention of the deaconesses and considered it important to retell the story for the community’s “collective memory”.

⁹²⁴ A period of probation for deaconesses was only introduced at the end of 1857 (4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 25 and CorDiac 1858 No. 2, p. 8, §3), so that it is only possible to speak of “probationary deaconesses” from then on.

⁹²⁵ Cf. Köser, *Kollektive Identitäten*, 252.

⁹²⁶ Cf. Geiger, *Löhe*, 225.

[*Löhes Soldaten*] by the local population because of their crossed apron-strings.⁹²⁷ A uniform dress was quickly associated with a military uniform. This impression was enhanced by the way in which the deaconesses appeared to the villagers: they would purposefully walk in pairs or larger groups, and moved “in formation” when taking the pupils and students for a walk or on their way to the village church.⁹²⁸ If one accepts the thesis that the increased wearing of uniforms was linked to the emerging modern state and modern industrialized society,⁹²⁹ then the civilian uniform of the deaconesses can be interpreted as one aspect of the “visual modernization” of Neuendettelsau village life which collided with rural conventions.⁹³⁰

Conversely, the villagers’ perception of the deaconesses must have had an impact on the deaconesses’ self-understanding and their behaviour. Diana Crane has argued that “[c]lothes as artifacts ‘create’ behavior through their capacity to impose social identities and empower people to assert latent social identities.”⁹³¹ In other words, clothes offer “occasions for transformation”.⁹³² This is especially the case when certain items of clothing have a certain connotation such as uniforms, which have often been interpreted as an important means of constructing masculinity.⁹³³ Not only did the deaconesses’ crossed apron strings resemble the sashes of (masculine) uniforms but the high-cut dresses and aprons also served to conceal female bodily contours.⁹³⁴ This was explicitly intended to disguise the contours of the (female) body so that, in Löhe’s terminology, men could live “unmolested by temptations.”⁹³⁵ Following

⁹²⁷ “Wie die Tracht entstanden ist“.

⁹²⁸ In the “Personal rule of life”, §13, the deaconesses were admonished not to amble about [*pflastertreten*] and chat with acquaintances, and, if possible, only to go out in pairs. Deaconesses walking in group formation became a “typical” aspect of the village life, so much so that when an official photograph was taken of the village of Neuendettelsau in 1866, the photographer positioned the deaconesses with their pupils as a central motif. Cf. Stählin to her sister Ida (05/01/ 1866), ThStI 154-155.

⁹²⁹ Cf. Haas/ Hackspiel-Mikosch, *Ziviluniformen als Medium symbolischer Kommunikation*, 22.

⁹³⁰ In this respect, some lines of comparison can be drawn to the perception of local policemen in rural communities in the nineteenth-century, cf. Großkraumbach, *Doppelt beschriebene Körper*.

⁹³¹ Crane, *Fashion and social agendas*, 2.

⁹³² Hartlieb/ Koslowski/ Wagner-Rau, *Einleitung*, 8.

⁹³³ Cf. for example Craik, *Cultural politics of the uniform*, 138; Frevert, *Militär als ‘Schule der Männlichkeit’*; Brändli, *Aspekte symbolischer Männlichkeit*.

⁹³⁴ Cf. Konrad, *Habit oder Kostüm*, 44, for parallels in nunneries before the Second Vatican Council. Nevertheless, there were differences. Konrad claims that the nuns’ habits were specifically cut to emphasise the female body, for example by the belt which drew attention to the waist. No such tendencies can be found in Neuendettelsau.

⁹³⁵ “Von der Kleidung der Frauen“, *CorDiac* 1858, No. 3, p. 11. The whole passage reads: “The dress of women appears as a cover [*Hülle*], and because the Apostles decreed the concealment [*Verhüllung*] of the female body, one can conclude that

the argument that clothes empower the wearer to assume latent social identities, the deaconesses' civilian uniforms can be regarded as a means by which cultural codes affirming the socially constructed female gender-characteristics could be partially subverted, thus enabling the deaconesses to assume character traits such as assertiveness and firmness, which were conventionally associated with masculinity. As Löhe intended the deaconesses to "improve" the local population, especially the girls and women, these character traits were perhaps not unwelcome to the Institute.⁹³⁶

Löhe seems to have accepted the deaconesses' choice of a black dress with good grace. In retrospect, he found a deep symbolism in every detail of the dress: the colour black stood for a "retreat from the world" [*Weltentsagung*], the white apron, worn on Sundays and feast-days, was to remind the deaconesses to follow Christ, the great deacon, who washed his disciples' feet, the blue apron, worn on week-days, stood for loyalty, and the veil, which was donned on Sundays and at special occasions, stood for the "symbol of authority on her head" [1 Cor 11: 10] and for the deaconesses' betrothal to Christ, "for as long as it pleases Him, and He does not lead them differently."⁹³⁷ The shawl [*Tuch*] which protected the deaconesses from rain stood for frugality: "If you have food and clothing, be content" [1 Tim 6:8].⁹³⁸ In Neuendettelsau, the term "pluvial" was occasionally applied to this garment (which was actually part of the liturgical vestments of a priest). A renunciation of the world and a differentiation from current fashions was obviously a prime concern, and it is surely no coincidence that this was expressed emphatically at just the time when the Institute was re-structured into a mother house. Moreover, in the development of the deaconesses' *Tracht*, we can observe a fairly typical procedure in the Neuendettelsau community: decisions taken according to practical considerations and reached through discussion were retrospectively legitimated and explained theologically. This served to create a symbolic "counter-world" where even seemingly trivial details had a deeper significance which

here [regarding women] it is more important to cover than in the case of the other sex. Man is to be unmolested by temptations, which otherwise [if women were not to cover their bodies] he would find all the more readily. One can observe the sacred protection of the male sex. The temptation of man is stirred by the beauty of the female body; woman is much more attracted by the strength and excellency of man."

⁹³⁶ Cf. 11. *Jahresbericht* 1863/64, 15.

⁹³⁷ 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 16.

⁹³⁸ Cf. "Von der Kleidung der Frauen", *CorDiac* 1858, No. 3, p. 12.

differentiated them from “outside” meaning or usage.⁹³⁹ In the long run, this process served to conceal the real contingency which underlay the developments of these stabilising factors.⁹⁴⁰

As the institution’s rules became more formalized, details were increasingly regulated. In 1858, all exceptions from the rule of wearing a uniform dress were banned: “No deaconess has the right, while travelling or working, to wear any other dress than the one prescribed.”⁹⁴¹ By 1863, the published regulations for the dress of deaconesses and probationary deaconesses contained eighteen long paragraphs defining every detail.⁹⁴² A few years later, an even longer regulation on dress was published, which included instructions for all apparel, even the deaconesses’ underwear, thus manifesting the Institute’s claim of total control.⁹⁴³ All ornaments, jewellery, or decorative elements were explicitly prohibited. Questions also seem to have arisen about the deaconesses’ hair-style. While the regulations of 1863 had already instructed that hair should be styled plainly and with a middle-parting, some deaconesses seem thereafter to have cut their hair short, perhaps for practical reasons, perhaps because they wished to take the norm of renouncing the world even further. This was explicitly forbidden in the revised instructions, perhaps because it violated Löhe’s definition of “simple but beautiful,”⁹⁴⁴ or because it was regarded as a breach of Paul’s instructions in 1 Cor 11.

From 1857, the “clothing” of the (deaconess) students constituted part of their initiation to the Institute. During the initial six weeks of probation, they wore their own clothes which had to be “modest and appropriate to the object of the deaconess house.” After this period, they sent all their own clothes home and received the institutional dress.⁹⁴⁵ The process of undressing, of discarding the old and donning the new dress symbolically signalled the students’ willingness to change allegiance, to accept new

⁹³⁹ It is interesting that in Kaiserswerth, the individual items of the deaconess dress were never given any symbolic significance. This difference has already been noted by Gause, *Diakonissenbild Löhes*, 363.

⁹⁴⁰ Cf. Müller, *Symbolizität als Differenzmerkmal*, 190-191.

⁹⁴¹ “Anzeige”, *CorDiac* 1858, No. 2, p. 8, §4.

⁹⁴² Cf. “Festgestellte Kleidertracht der Diakonissen und Probeschwestern Neuendettelsau’s nach Konferenzbeschluss vom 26. Mai 1863”, *CorDiac* 1863, No. 6, p. 21-22.

⁹⁴³ “Kleidertracht der Diakonissen und Probeschwestern von Neuendettelsau.” This is not dated, but the year „1868“ with question-mark is pencilled on the margins. It is certainly later than the 1863 version but probably not much.

⁹⁴⁴ Cf. 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 15. Löhe claimed that the “simple but beautiful” deaconess dress differed from the Roman Catholic nuns’ habit by taking aesthetical considerations into account (cf. “Von der Kleidung der Frauen”, *CorDiac* 1858, No. 3, p. 11).

⁹⁴⁵ Cf. “Auszug aus der Hausordnung des Diakonissenhauses Neuendettelsau”, *CorIM* 1857, No. 9, p. 35, §§ 4 and 5.

influences and assume a new identity: it thus had parallels to the rite of baptism.⁹⁴⁶ The students wore differently coloured ribbons sewn to their sleeves, depending on their course. Thus the deaconess students had a blue ribbon, the other more advanced students (after confirmation) a green ribbon, and the newer pupils (before confirmation) a red ribbon.⁹⁴⁷ Later, probationary deaconesses were also distinguished from the initiated deaconesses by their different head-dresses.⁹⁴⁸ Here clothes thus made it possible for the knowledgeable to discern the wearer's position within the in-house hierarchy, a typical feature of "civilian uniforms".⁹⁴⁹

Within the groups, however, all wore the same so that previous differences in status and rank were concealed, at least externally. The *Tracht* thus symbolised the norm of equality and unity within the sisterhood, in adherence to the old monastic principle "unity through uniformity."⁹⁵⁰ When first introduced, the dresses were made within the house,⁹⁵¹ paid for by the deaconesses' obligatory contributions from their salary into the deaconess-fund.⁹⁵² Later, this came to be considered too laborious and costly, and the deaconesses paid less into the deaconess fund but made their own dresses in strict adherence to the patterns and guidelines issued by the mother house.⁹⁵³ Their hats and bonnets were bought directly from the mother house.⁹⁵⁴ Though the words "simple", "plain", and "unadorned" are repeated in the regulations in almost every sentence, an emphasis was nevertheless placed on good quality. For example, the black dresses, which were required to fall in rich folds, had to be of smooth, thick wool.⁹⁵⁵ It is therefore likely that women from poorer families were better dressed than before, and the *Tracht* thus represented an external expression of their social advancement.

⁹⁴⁶ Cf. Hartlieb/Kosłowski/Wagner-Rau, *Einleitung*, 8.

⁹⁴⁷ Cf. "Nachricht über den gegenwärtigen Stand der mit dem Diakonissenhaus verbundenen Schulen zu Neuendettelsau", *CorDiac* 1865, No. 4, p. 15. Cf. also 9. *Jahresbericht* 1862, 14.

⁹⁴⁸ Cf. "Festgestellte Kleidertracht" (1863), §3, and "Kleidertracht der Diaconissen und Probeschwestern", §8.

⁹⁴⁹ Cf. Haas/ Hackspiel-Mikosch, *Ziviluniformen als Medium symbolischer Kommunikation*, 15.

⁹⁵⁰ Cited from Müller, *Symbolizität als Differenzmerkmal*, 209.

⁹⁵¹ Cf. MChMh (19/04/1857), *CorIM* 1857, No. 6, 22. The entry mentions that a taylor came to live in the house in order to sew the dresses.

⁹⁵² Cf. "Anzeige", *CorDiac* 1858, No. 2, p. 8.

⁹⁵³ Cf. "Anzeige", *CorDiac* 1858, No. 4/5, 20; 5. *Jahresbericht* 1857/58, 16.

⁹⁵⁴ Cf. "Kleidertracht der Diaconissen und Probeschwestern".

⁹⁵⁵ Cf. "Kleidertracht der Diaconissen und Probeschwestern", §1.

Outside the community, the deaconess's dress was a badge of her professionalism which she wore at all times.⁹⁵⁶ This also illustrated the way in which a deaconess was expected to identify with her profession, eliding any distinction between hours of work and times of leisure.⁹⁵⁷ The deaconess dress was also worn during holidays. Deaconesses who infringed these regulations were threatened with expulsion.⁹⁵⁸ However, their adherence to the institutional regulations could not always be monitored, and the norms therefore needed to be internalized. That this was not always successful is suggested by repeated appeals.⁹⁵⁹ Deaconesses who worked as nurses in private homes seemed especially prone to aberrations and were therefore explicitly admonished not to swerve from the official regulations, even when working at night.⁹⁶⁰ This instruction was later withdrawn in part, for a new piece of institutional clothing was introduced, the "dressing gown" [*Schlafrock*], in "consideration of the health of the sisters on night-shifts."⁹⁶¹ To preempt any tendencies towards laxity, this new garment was to be worn only in exceptional circumstances, and explicitly not when deaconesses gathered informally in the evenings when they were expected to wear the full deaconess dress.

One consequence of these rules was that many deaconesses did not possess any items of personal clothing. This was a problem when a deaconess left the institution, whether of her own choosing or because she was dismissed, as she immediately had to return her entire *Tracht*, consisting of dress, veil, blue ribbon, blue shawl, blue and white aprons, and deaconess bonnet to the superior of her

⁹⁵⁶ Cf. Hahn, *Identität und Biographie*, 143. Hahn observes that dress is related to self-identification: a uniform typically "identifies" [*ausweisen*] the wearer as a member of a certain profession, making further explanations superfluous.

⁹⁵⁷ The term "civilian uniform" for the deaconess dress therefore needs to be qualified as for example the local policeman would still wear a different set of clothing when off duty.

⁹⁵⁸ Cf. Bauer to Julie Seufferheld (01/03/1872): "With indignation we have learnt that during your holiday you laid aside your deaconess dress, contrary to the regulations and the obedience, which you owe to your mother house. We cannot but interpret this as a thinly veiled intention on your part to relinquish the tie through which you are bound to your mother house. Therefore, we have decided, and you will understand the justification for this decision, to dismiss you from the deaconess fellowship. We hereby inform you of this, and at the same time notify you that with the rights of a deaconess you have also lost, from now on, the right to wear the badges [*Abzeichen*] of a deaconess" [ZADN EI c]. Friedrich Bauer was interim *Rektor* after Löhe's death.

⁹⁵⁹ Cf. for example circular letter written by Amalie Rehm and Friedrich Meyer to all the deaconesses (08/10/1881): "Because a deviation in some particulars from our dress regulations has been observed, we herewith once more earnestly impress upon all sisters to show unconditional, complete obedience to the rules which concern our dress." [ZADN BIV c7].

⁹⁶⁰ Cf. "Kleidertracht der Diaconissen und Probeschwestern", §19.

⁹⁶¹ From a circular letter to all sisters written by Amalie Rehm and Friedrich Meyer (08/10/1881) [ZADN BIV c7].

chapter.⁹⁶² To prevent undue hardship, she was given a set of private clothes.⁹⁶³ This measure prevented former deaconesses from collecting alms, ostensibly for the deaconess house, as had been attempted by “Evil Christine” who, having left the community after a brief membership, wandered through the country wearing her deaconess uniform.⁹⁶⁴ This episode demonstrates the powerful identification of the uniform with the Institute and the way in which the individual person retreated behind the uniform dress.

A contested item of deaconess clothing was the veil. Though Löhe considered the veil important for its symbolic significance, the women themselves seemed to have taken a dislike to it almost from the beginning, both for practical reasons and for the stares it provoked from outsiders. The veil was associated with Roman Catholic nuns who were regarded by the Protestant bourgeoisie with great wariness and even hostility.⁹⁶⁵ Even in a generally favourable report on the Neuendettelsau deaconess institution circulated in Kaiserswerth, the “white, billowing veil” was described as “grotesque, garish” [*phantastisch, auffallend*]: it “offends against female and Christian simplicity and simpleness.”⁹⁶⁶ Amongst the members of the deaconess community, an older, widowed woman, Cäcilie Pöschel, who was sent out to work in Odessa, had the courage to express her reserve openly, and gently to threaten the Institute: “Finally, I dare to ask whether it might be permitted for me not to wear the veil every Sunday and at every occasion from the beginning but only at rarer, special occasions such as Holy Communion. The other simple dress and the apron and shawl [*Tuch*] I will willingly wear at every occasion. Because of the veil I could not give a firm promise without prior clarification.”⁹⁶⁷ The Institute

⁹⁶² Cf. “Anzeigen”, CorDiac 1858, No. 1, p. 4.

⁹⁶³ Cf. “An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern”, CorDiac 1869, No. 6, p. 21-22.

⁹⁶⁴ Cf. “Die böse Christine”, CorDiac 1868, No. 11, p. 43-44. After this episode, the names of all deaconesses who were no longer members of the community and therefore no longer entitled to wear the deaconess dress were published in the CorDiac (“An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern”, CorDiac 1869, No. 6, p. 21-22). This was, however, not done consistently, perhaps to prevent the circulation of the true, significant numbers of leaving deaconesses.

⁹⁶⁵ Cf. Meiwes, *Religiosität und Arbeit*, 75.

⁹⁶⁶ “Nachricht über den erfreulichen Fortgang des Diakonissen-Werkes in verschiedenen Ländern. II.III. Die bairischen Diakonissen-Anstalten, 1. Die Anstalt zu Neuendettelsau,” AuKF 1856, Juli und August 1856, p. 6. Gerhardt mentioned that this article was based on “oral narratives of visitors of this institution” and on an article written by Heinrich Gelzer, a member of the Central Committee for Inner Mission, cf. Gerhardt, *Friedner*, Vol. 2, 746. The criticism that the veil “offends against female [...] simplicity” was surely directed at Löhe for having betrayed his own principles and, at the same time, attests to the popularity of Löhe’s *On female simplicity* only three years after it had first been published.

⁹⁶⁷ Pöschel to Löhe (1858?) [ZADN RII I].

seems to have relented because Pöschel remained an esteemed member of the community until her death in 1867. Even Lotze, *Konrektor* from 1856 to 1866, had to admit in retrospect:

Initially, they [the deaconesses] wore veil-like flowing white scarves as a head-dress. At work and while travelling, they turned out to be very impractical and soon became sullied. I myself once had to escort some sisters, who were dressed in this way, to Greiz and will never forget the unwelcome attraction it caused amongst friends and enemies alike and the ensuing great discomfort at railway-stations and other places. Later, the bonnet was introduced as a head-dress.⁹⁶⁸

This disturbing experience was recorded only by an outside witness, but the annual report of 1856 also mentions the experiences of two deaconesses who travelled by train in their new institutional dresses and had to endure the stares and derision of strangers.⁹⁶⁹

The women seemed to have made their point fairly quickly. By 1858, an alteration had been made to the rules: "While travelling, the deaconesses should from now on not wear the white but the blue apron, and as a head-dress not wear the veil but in winter the shawl to protect them from rain [*Regentuch*] and in summer the round hat."⁹⁷⁰ This was a momentous concession, given that the veil, for Löhe in accordance with 1 Cor 11, stood for the deaconess's "authority on her head." However, this was not the end of the women's rebellion. In a quarterly report on their work, two deaconesses, the biological sisters Helene and Marie von Meyer, wrote: "Sister Helene and the undersigned dare to ask the question and wish to plead whether it might not be forbidden for sisters travelling through Nuremberg to wear the ridiculous, ugly head-dress consisting of a long, trailing bonnet with a round hat. The undersigned and her sister refuse to wear this head-dress."⁹⁷¹ The other deaconesses were clearly not impressed. The Meyers' black-sheep attitude was discussed in a Neuendettelsau chapter meeting:

The unattractive [*unschöne*], disobedient behaviour of the sisters Marie and Helene v. Meyer gave us cause to speak about the deaconess matter in general. We again saw clearly that it is

⁹⁶⁸ Ernst Lotze: *Erinnerungen an Wilhelm Löhe. Aus dem Nachlaß von D. Ernst Lotze, Geh. Oberkirchenrat in Gera*, edited by the Neuendettelsau Deaconess Institute in 1956. These "memories" were based on notes which Lotze made during and after his stay in Neuendettelsau and which were kept by his family until their publication.

⁹⁶⁹ Cf. 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 16.

⁹⁷⁰ *CorDiac* 1858, No.1, p. 4.

⁹⁷¹ From the quarterly report on her work by Marie von Meyer (02/05/1863), cited from an excerpt found in the folder "Mutterhausregistratur Diakonissentracht" [ZADN BIV c7].

impossible to be a deaconess in such a divided manner as these two sisters. By such behaviour, the deaconess matter is not promoted but weakened.⁹⁷²

Helene von Meyer left the Institute very soon afterwards,⁹⁷³ suggesting that the less a deaconess identified with the community, the less she was willing to put up with ostracism by “out-groups” on account of the “party badge.”⁹⁷⁴ Though the two sisters had themselves chosen not to wear the “ridiculous, ugly head-dress”, they were embarrassed even to be associated with the deaconesses who wore them, and saw their self-esteem affected. By contrast, a deaconess who highly identified with the community, Therese Stählin, compared the hat to a pilgrim’s hat and found that it was “nicely appropriate.”⁹⁷⁵ Perhaps for her, elegance equated with uniformity.⁹⁷⁶

The fact that the dress served as a “party badge” which caused some hostility was, however, not wholly unwelcome to the Institute’s directorate. Löhe appreciated the fact that the deaconesses’ dress served to enhance discipline by offering a permanent reminder “to keep oneself unsullied from the world, from which one is separated” and “to remain inwardly and outwardly in the discipleship” of Christ.⁹⁷⁷ Put in terminology from social psychology, Löhe realized that outgroup derogation furthered a sense of distinctiveness and thereby group commitment.⁹⁷⁸ Moreover, being externally recognizable in the public sphere encouraged deaconesses to adhere to the institutionally expected forms of behaviour. Thus the deaconess Doris Braun began her article “Deaconess in a foreign country” by quoting remarks she had overheard on the streets: “‘Who is that girl that hurries humbly through the streets, always dressed in black and blue?’ ‘They say she is a deaconess.’ ‘What is a deaconess?’ So asks the world.”⁹⁷⁹ She then came straight to the point in a somewhat hectoring tone: “Have you, O deaconess, ever asked yourself the question what you are, or rather, what you should be? A simple question, you say; a difficult, grave, censuring and judging [*richterliche und richtende*] question, I say [...]” Clearly, the sensation of having

⁹⁷² “Protokolle des Neuendettelsauer Kapitels” (04/05/1863) [ZADN DIII a].

⁹⁷³ Cf. “Personalveränderungen”, MChrMh, CorDiac 1863, No. 7, p. 26. She returned, though, a few years later.

⁹⁷⁴ This coincides with findings in the field of social psychology, cf. chapter 1. 4.

⁹⁷⁵ “Wie die Tracht entstanden ist.”

⁹⁷⁶ This is a finding that Konrad made in interviews with contemporary Roman Catholic nuns, cf. Konrad, *Habit oder Kostüm*, 42-44.

⁹⁷⁷ 3. *Jahresbericht* 1856, 17.

⁹⁷⁸ Cf. Branscombe/ Ellemers/ Spears/ Doosje, *The Context and Content of Social Identity Threat*, 43.

⁹⁷⁹ Braun, “Die Diakonissin in der Welt. Von einer im Auslande dienenden Schwester”, CorDiac 1862, No. 2, p. 7.

to represent the mother house before strangers who might be curious or even hostile was experienced especially by those deaconesses who worked and lived outside of Neuendettelsau, which, in turn, affirmed their collective identity.⁹⁸⁰

This point can be illustrated by the experience of two deaconesses travelling to Sarata, in Bessarabia, who were taken for Roman Catholic nuns and had to dispel the ensuing “hatred and derision” by explaining their profession. In their account of this encounter, the *Tracht* perhaps also served as a symbol for their emotional state: “In the storm and rain, our head-dresses looked quite desperate”.⁹⁸¹ Another example of how dress served to strengthen collective identity can be found in a report from Marie de Dobbeler, a deaconess working in Reval, Estonia, who confessed that the sisters stationed there had made some changes to the dress to achieve better protection from the freezing temperatures in winter. They had considered wearing a fur like everyone else but chose instead to don thick jackets underneath the prescribed blue shawl. She commented: “Laying aside a piece of our dress would feel to me like discarding a piece of our home [*Heimat*], and how could we do that!”⁹⁸² Here the deaconesses themselves chose to retain the *Tracht* as a boundary-marker, resisting adaptation. The Institute, however, prioritized practicality and in the next revision of the dress-regulations explicitly permitted deaconesses stationed in inclement climes to wear furs, thus allowing cultural adaptation.⁹⁸³

A sign of the close link between the *Tracht* and the deaconesses’ identity is the fact that they were buried in it.⁹⁸⁴ This seems to have been of some importance to many of the deaconesses. Cäcilie Pöschel, who had been so opposed to wearing the veil in the early years of her deaconess career, later came to regard it as constitutive for her identity as a deaconess. In his funeral address for her, Löhe recounted how, days before she died, Pöschel had already arranged her deaconess veil and the apron in which she wished to be buried. However, maintaining some self-determination up to her death, she

⁹⁸⁰ Cf. Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 115: “Membership is only enhanced by reflection into the articulate form of a ‘we’ identity when it is deliberately brought to the surface [...] or when it rises spontaneously, for instance through a confrontation with different societies and other ways of life.”

⁹⁸¹ Lippold, “Nachrichten aus Sarata”, *CorDiac* 1865, No. 11, p. 43.

⁹⁸² Dobbeler, “Bericht über die Station in Reval in Esthland”, *CorDiac* 1867, No. 12, p. 47.

⁹⁸³ Cf. “Kleidertracht für Diaconissen und Probeschwestern” [ZADN BIV c7].

⁹⁸⁴ Cf. §8, “Entwurf einer Leichenordnung für das Diakonissenhaus”, *CorDiac* 1867, No. 8, p. 31-33.

had chosen to be buried in a dress from her personal wardrobe, a fact which Löhe mentioned but upon which he did not comment further.⁹⁸⁵

One symbol which seems to have been of considerable value to the deaconesses was the small cross which they wore with their dress. As early as 1855, Löhe had written to his daughter that he was trying to have some small crosses sent from Jerusalem or Bethlehem to fulfil the wishes of the deaconesses.⁹⁸⁶ In 1858, in a dictation “On the dress of women”, which also contained a paragraph on the deaconess dress, Löhe explicitly mentioned a white cross on a red ribbon which served to remind the deaconesses of their true home in the New Jerusalem and which the deaconesses were right to “cradle and kiss”, even though it was of no value “for this world”.⁹⁸⁷ In later years we find the regulation that the cross was only to be attached with a slim, black ribbon without any decoration.⁹⁸⁸ By the end of the century, the small cross was presented to a new deaconess with her veil at her initiation ceremony.⁹⁸⁹

Even more than Löhe, his successor Meyer emphasized the symbolism of the deaconesses’ dress. Perhaps inspired by the practices of Roman Catholic clergymen and religious, he taught the deaconesses certain prayers to accompany the profane act of dressing, assigning to every feature of their dress a scriptural verse and a collect.⁹⁹⁰ Thus the outward code of the deaconesses’ collective identity was complemented with a communal daily ritual which, though performed individually, elevated an essentially intimate act to a collective experience.

The *Tracht* emphasised symbolically that, for a deaconess, faith, life, and work – and even death – merged. Thus it became one of the most important codes for the deaconesses’ collective identity. The deaconesses’ “second skin” served as a boundary-marker, expressed professionalism, strengthened a sense of belonging, overcame former social distinctions of rank and class, furthered cohesion, and

⁹⁸⁵ “Schwester Cäcilie”, CorDiac 1867, No. 11 and 12, here: No. 12, p. 46.

⁹⁸⁶ Cf. Löhe to his daughter Marianne (30/06/ 1855), GW2, 242; and MChMh (12/12/1856), CorIM 1857, No. 2, p. 7.

⁹⁸⁷ “Von der Kleidung der Frauen”, CorDiac 1858, No. 3, p. 10- 12, here: 12.

⁹⁸⁸ Cf. §15, “Festgestellte Kleidertracht”, (1863) and §17, Kleidertracht der Diaconissen und Probeschwestern.

⁹⁸⁹ Cf. [Hermann Bezzel:] *Flugblatt*. Juli bis September 1897.

⁹⁹⁰ Cf. Meyer, “Von den Diaconissen und ihrem Beruf”, CorDiac 1877, No. 6, p. 22.

allowed transformation. Another important boundary-marker for the deaconess community was the code of cleanliness and dirt, purity and impurity.

5.1.2. The dichotomy of cleanliness and dirt, purity and impurity

As one of its chief assets, according to Löhe, the Institute offered the village of Neuendettelsau a model of cleanliness which was intended to be emulated by the local population. Löhe here had the hospital in mind; he was therefore at a loss to understand why the villagers tended to keep their sick at home rather than bringing them to the institution, and put this down to prejudice: no matter how “dirty and unclean” the houses, the rural population “loves what it calls home”. To his astonishment, the peasants felt “home-sickness for their hovels, for their hot, unclean and unhealthy parlours, for their cold chambers, in which, besides them, all sorts of supplies are kept, [...], for their miserable, unclean beds and for all, which they should long to and be glad to get rid of.”⁹⁹¹ This was by no means only an aesthetic issue for Löhe; his parishioners’ seeming unconsciousness to dirt raised serious doubts about their spiritual state. Löhe even confessed to the deaconesses that “the question of whether Jesus also died for such dung beetles [*Mistkäfer*], as he called the dirty people, had almost given rise to a spiritual crisis.”⁹⁹²

Löhe’s attitude can be interpreted in the wider context of a new social code of distinction, rooted in a new concept of cleanliness, which emerged in the nineteenth century. Revulsion against the dirt, stench, and filth found amongst the agricultural population served to enhance the increasing class consciousness of the urban bourgeoisie.⁹⁹³ As Stallybrass and White observe: “Disgust was inseparable from refinement: while it designated the ‘depraved’ domain of the poor, it simultaneously established the

⁹⁹¹ 12. *Jahresbericht* 1864-65, 30.

⁹⁹² Stählin to her sister Ida (20/02/1856) [ZADN BIV k1]. Hardly surprisingly, this remark was omitted when the letter was published and printed ThStI, 37-39.

⁹⁹³ This has been explored in different regions, cf. Frykman/Löfgren, *Culture Builders*, 157-263, for Sweden; Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 165-226, for France; Frey, *Reinliche Bürger*, for Germany.

purified domain of the bourgeoisie.”⁹⁹⁴ The cultural collision between conventional rural outlooks on issues such as the body, the function of water and baths, and emerging urban attitudes seems to have been especially pronounced in nineteenth-century Bavaria,⁹⁹⁵ so that it is hardly surprising that this region served as an ideal ground for bourgeois self-affirmation.⁹⁹⁶ Religion and the churches also played a role in this process, not least because traditional religious views on purity were used to argue for an intrinsic link between the purity of the soul and the cleanliness of the body.⁹⁹⁷ One consequence was that a rigorous implementation of norms and practices relating to cleanliness often served as a disciplinary measure in “institutions of correction”.⁹⁹⁸

In this sense, the Deaconess Institute was part of a wider trend. Part of its mission was the instilling of principles of cleanliness into patients, inmates, pupils and wards wherever the deaconesses worked.⁹⁹⁹ Thus the article “Ideal of an orphan [*Rettungshauskind*] before confirmation”, which prescribed a curriculum for work with young neglected children, opens:

The constitutive element of the ideal of an orphan is that the child is an example of order and cleanliness. Clean in body, clean in dress, clean in bed, clean at work, clean at table, clean at school, clean in book, clean in notebook. Order which is intrinsically linked to cleanliness, indeed cannot even be separated from it in thought, should be found everywhere.¹⁰⁰⁰

However, the Institute’s principles of cleanliness are also found in perhaps more unexpected contexts. In an article on the Institute’s agricultural facilities, the deaconesses are taken on a virtual tour through the cowsheds:

⁹⁹⁴ Stallybrass/White, *The City*, 277.

⁹⁹⁵ This reflects differences in the agricultural sector between northern and southern Germany. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Vol. 2, 33-53, esp. 33-34, examines the unequal distribution of land which was especially pronounced in southern Germany due to the principle that every son must inherit land. This caused great poverty amongst the small-scale farmers who constituted the majority of Bavaria’s agricultural population, and who were often unable to make a living from farming alone (cf. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Vol. 3, 179-189, esp. 182-182).

⁹⁹⁶ Frey, *Reinliche Bürger*, 310-326.

⁹⁹⁷ Cf. Frey, *Reinliche Bürger*, 156. Similarly, Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 192, observes for nineteenth-century France: “There was a widespread acceptance of a new connection; the cleanliness of the poor was a token of their morality, and a guarantee of order.”

⁹⁹⁸ Cf. Frey, *Reinliche Bürger*, 248-252. See for more detail Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25, 140, 198, 216.

⁹⁹⁹ The general rise in awareness of cleanliness and hygiene in nineteenth-century nursing, initiated by Florence Nightingale, has often been pointed out, cf. Sticker, *Entstehung der neuzeitlichen Krankenpflege*.

¹⁰⁰⁰ M[arie] H[edwig] [Stählin], “Ideal eines Rettungshauskindes vor der Confirmation“, *CorDiac* 1864, No. 10, p. 37.

The byre itself is spacious and light and our dear cows are accommodated there in best order. [...] It is permissible to remark that these noble beasts are the joy and pride of their carer, our dear cow-maid. Every day she devotes several hours to cleaning her dear cows, and until they are clean, indeed beautiful, until the byre is put in the best order, visitors are thoroughly unwelcome.¹⁰⁰¹

In the face of sparkling cowsheds and shiny cows, it is no surprise that rigorous norms were applied to the deaconess house itself.

The Institute's timetable assigned specific household chores to each day: Tuesday was the day for laundering, Thursday for ironing, Saturday for general cleaning.¹⁰⁰² This routine was so internalized by the deaconesses that they kept to this even when at a great geographical distance from the mother house. It too served to strengthen their sense of connection.¹⁰⁰³ In the Institute, rigorous norms of cleanliness were an important part of the deaconess curriculum. Early in 1857, Johanna Zwanziger was recalled to Neuendettelsau from her place of work in Hannover because she had been designated as "mistress of cleanliness" [*Putzmeisterin*], charged with ensuring the pristine state of the deaconess house.¹⁰⁰⁴ Apart from one maid,¹⁰⁰⁵ no servants were employed in the house, and on principle all members shared in the household chores,¹⁰⁰⁶ as directed by the superior.¹⁰⁰⁷ The students were responsible for their own clothes, including polishing their shoes and darning and mending their clothes.¹⁰⁰⁸ However, this stipulation was later partly revised to allow those students who did not intend

¹⁰⁰¹ A[malie] M[üller], "Aus der Oekonomie des Diakonissenhauses", CorDiac 1863, No. 5, p. 20.

¹⁰⁰² Cf. Stählin to her brother Adolf (11/12/1855), ThStI, 29.

¹⁰⁰³ See for instance "Aus einem Brief der Schwester Rosette W[jibel]", CorDiac 1857, No. 5 (November) [mss].

¹⁰⁰⁴ Stählin to her mother (16/02/1857), ThStI, 56. This office seems to have become necessary to ensure the realization of the minute details of the "house rules" which state, for example § 40: "It must be ensured that the floor is cleaned not only around but also underneath the beds with all diligence" ("Auszug aus der Hausordnung (für die Schülerinnen des Hauses)", CorIM 1857, No. 10, p. 37).

¹⁰⁰⁵ The maid, described as "a hysterical girl from the Altmühl-region", was employed for charitable reasons, cf. "Der erste Monat der Diakonissenanstalt zu Neuendettelsau", CorIM 1854, No. 7, p. 30. Interestingly, the Institute felt it necessary to justify the employment of domestic staff.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Cf. 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55, 10; "Auszug aus der Hausordnung des Diakonissenhauses Neuendettelsau (Für die Schülerinnen des Hauses)", CorIM 1857, No. 9, p. 33-36, esp. §22. This principle was even included in the statutes of the deaconess house, cf. "Satzungen der Anstalt" (1855), CorDiac 1858, No. 7 and 8, p. 29, § 18. MChMh (02/05/1859) reveals that a practical exam was held for all new students to assess their talents in cooking and washing, and that remedial classes were offered to those who had failed (CorDiac 1859, No. 7 and 8, p. 25). Cf. also Elise Steinlein to her family (14/05/1861?) [ZADN EII st1].

¹⁰⁰⁷ §5, "Grundzüge einer Hausordnung der Diakonissenanstalt", Appendix II, 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55 (at that time, there were still three superintendents, so, more specifically, it was the responsibility of the first superintendent, Rheineck).

¹⁰⁰⁸ Cf. §43 and 47, "Auszug aus der Hausordnung" (1857).

to become deaconesses to be dispensed from household chores in return for a higher fee.¹⁰⁰⁹ The regulation that every student emptied her own chamber pot probably sat uneasily with Löhe's wish to attract more candidates from the upper classes.¹⁰¹⁰ The initial principle of the equality of all members was thus sacrificed to the norms of social conventions.

Since its norms of cleanliness formed part of the community's mode of distinction, it was indispensable for the preservation of the deaconesses' collective identity that all students, regardless of their former social backgrounds, became acquainted with the norms and internalized them. This required different students to adapt in different ways. Upper class girls might have to empty their own chamber pots, but lower class girls also had to acquire new skills. Elise Steinlein, the "household-deaconess", wrote to her family, probably in May 1861:

You cannot imagine how blundering two new deaconess pupils are, two peasant girls. They have never swept, never held a fine broom in their hands. And throughout they are so embarrassed, shy and awkward that I feel for them when I have to say: 'Here, you haven't mopped or swept nicely,' for they visibly become alarmed and say 'I thank you'. Therefore, I am quite friendly, even almost polite to them.¹⁰¹¹

These two deaconesses whose upbringing had taught them peasant culture were now being inducted into the "habitus" of another social class, the bourgeoisie.¹⁰¹² Steinlein, the well brought-up daughter of a clergyman,¹⁰¹³ recognized that one of the duties of the household-deaconess was the instruction of the uninitiated. Her sense of seniority is apparent in her patronizing attitude, which gave her "cultural capital" for which she expected deference.¹⁰¹⁴ The two new deaconesses, in turn, show an uncertainty in behaviour. It is to be assumed that they never acquired the "self-certainty which accompanies the certainty of possessing cultural legitimacy" in the way Steinlein had through her "[t]otal, early, imperceptible learning, performed within the family from the earliest days of life" conveying "casualness

¹⁰⁰⁹ Cf. §32, "Auszug aus der Hausordnung des Diakonissenhauses Neuendettelsau (Für die Schülerinnen des Hauses)", CorDiac 1857, No.9, p. 36.

¹⁰¹⁰ Cf. chapter 2.

¹⁰¹¹ Elise Steinlein to her family (14/05 [1861?]) [ZADN EII st1, typewritten copy].

¹⁰¹² This concept is taken from Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

¹⁰¹³ Cf. the obituary "Schwester Elisabeth", CorDiac 1865, No. 1, p. 1-4.

¹⁰¹⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 61.

amid familiarity, which bourgeois families hand down to their offspring as if it were an heirloom.”¹⁰¹⁵ This may later have metamorphosed into what Bourdieu calls an “exalted, misplaced piety” to what they had learnt laboriously, “inevitably perceived by the possessors of legitimate culture as a sort of grotesque homage;”¹⁰¹⁶ we do not know. What does seem likely is that the norms of cleanliness in the deaconess community were emphasized so strongly precisely because, for many deaconesses, they represented the relinquishing of their former social and cultural spheres against which they now defined themselves: “social identity lies in difference, and difference is asserted against what is closest, which represents the greatest threat.”¹⁰¹⁷

Additionally, in the Deaconess Institute the norms of cleanliness were placed within an external frame of reference, making them, as we have already seen with regard to the deaconess *Tracht*, part of the symbolic structuring of a counter-world. The seemingly mundane and trivial gained significance as a symbol of the infinite and absolute.¹⁰¹⁸ When the household-deaconess Elise Steinlein was initiated, Löhe addressed her:

Daughter Elise, you have undertaken a matter which seems so very humble that one could think, it is nothing at all (...). If you provide for comfortable calmness in the mother house, full of farsightedness and insight [*umsichtig und einsichtig*], with motherly and sisterly care, with cleanliness and tidiness – how common this is, and yet so uncommon. – God is a God of order: he has ordered the stars according to His divine thoughts, and this God, who creates such great things, who has founded an order of salvation, regards the small things, and when you do what you should, he rejoices and the heaven smiles.¹⁰¹⁹

¹⁰¹⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 59.

¹⁰¹⁶ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 77.

¹⁰¹⁷ Burke, *What is cultural history*, 57, with reference to Bourdieu. Löhe commented on the transgression of class boundaries in Regine Elser’s obituary: “She belonged to the by no means small flock of sisters, who demonstrate the significance of the educational role of the deaconess matter which can overcome powerful obstacles. She, who had been a domestic servant, has been brought into the vicinity of – in the best sense – noble persons through her profession, and was not only tolerated by them, but was esteemed, well liked and loved like a friend. In those cases in which the deaconess matter succeeds in such a way, the sisters only profits from her course of life. Her efficiency in every kind of work, her familiarity with incessant diligence, in a word: her serviceableness make her especially apt. Repetitious experiences of such kind have increasingly confirmed the directorate of the Deaconess Institute in Neuendettelsau in its willingness to admit rustic girls and unsophisticated bourgeois daughters amongst the number of deaconess pupils; though it would be a shame if the daughters of the more educated classes would retreat from the deaconess-service, as precisely the mixture of the different classes is a precondition without which there can be no proper deaconess school. [...] if the Lord grants to the different elements a love for each other, a nice mixture results which is far from being either noble or common, and which reveals before the whole world the right deaconess existence” [“Schwester Regine Elser”, *CorDiac* 1866, No. 19, p. 37-39, here: 38].

¹⁰¹⁸ Cf. Müller, *Symbolizität als Differenzmerkmal*, esp. 198-200.

¹⁰¹⁹ “Rede vom 15. April 1859.”

Apart from raising the morale of the household deaconess, this address also repeated one of Löhe's recurrent themes: the divine macrocosm is reflected in the institutional microcosm.¹⁰²⁰ This reinforces behaviour in conformity with the norms: "He [*sic*] is no child of God, who does not want and honour order, and no child of peace is he, who does not preserve the order; untidiness shows reluctance [*widerstreben*] towards God our Lord and the peaceful happiness of men."¹⁰²¹ The lesson to be learned was that all deaconesses must submit to the Institute's structures of authority. It was, in effect, a measure to conceal the fragility of the young deaconess community and to bolster its cohesiveness.

For Löhe, moreover, outer cleanliness should reveal what lay beneath: "Most significant is the interior order, all else only mirrors that. Wherever external order is lacking, one may dare to conclude that the soul refuses order in its part, or is detained by random objections, to execute the existing will and love for order."¹⁰²² In consequence, the norms of cleanliness which were applied to the body again had a symbolic dimension: "Every pupil is obliged to keep her body, internally and externally, as pure and clean as behoves those who have cause to consider their body a temple for the Holy Spirit."¹⁰²³ This attitude surely also had a disciplinary function, demanding self-control and the internalization of a constant sense of surveillance.¹⁰²⁴ It was not only the "second skin" of the deaconesses' *Tracht* but their skin itself which carried "cultural meaning", storing common values, expectations, and interpretations which served to enhance the deaconesses' collective identity.¹⁰²⁵

In the Institute's view, one group with whom the deaconesses worked was especially in need of a reintegration into order and cleanliness, both inwardly and outwardly. Almost from the beginning, the deaconesses, who were to strive for a "pure heart" by evading sexual temptations which are "the impure

¹⁰²⁰ There is a noteworthy parallel between Löhe's statements and Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 2: "[d]irt is essentially disorder. [...] Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment." However, while Löhe referred to the divine, and therefore unassailable and eternal order, Douglas was interested how the concepts of dirt and pollution create social order, and, vice versa, how social order generates certain views on dirt and pollution. It would have been utterly impossible for Löhe to concede: "Our idea of dirt is compounded of two things, care for hygiene and respect for conventions" (Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 8).

¹⁰²¹ "Von der Ordnung", *CorDiac* 1858, No. 4 and 5, p. 17.

¹⁰²² "Von der Ordnung", *CorDiac* 1858, No. 4 and 5, p. 17-18.

¹⁰²³ §41, "Auszug aus der Hausordnung", Anhang zum 4. *Jahresbericht*, p. 12.

¹⁰²⁴ Cf. Gossmann, *Ratschläge zur Körper- und Schönheitspflege*; Frey, *Reinlicher Bürger*, 181-183.

¹⁰²⁵ Cf. Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 121.

and dirty stones of the earth”,¹⁰²⁶ had begun work with a number of “fallen girls”.¹⁰²⁷ This was increasingly expanded.¹⁰²⁸ 1860 saw the launch of a campaign to publicise work with women who, “infected with the blight [*Pesthauch*] of the world and sin”, had been “diverted from the path of sanctification”.¹⁰²⁹ Sources of inspiration included the Reformed asylum in Steenbeck, in the Netherlands, and the Roman Catholic order of the Good Shepherd, and their work with “penitents”.¹⁰³⁰ Additionally, throughout 1861, reports were published in the *CorDiac* on “penitentiaries” within the Church of England. Two asylums featured especially prominently: The work of “Mrs. Sheppard” in Frome¹⁰³¹ and of the Anglican sisterhood of St John Baptist under Harriet Monsell in Clewer.¹⁰³² Certain aspects of their work were adopted: As in Clewer, the “Magdalens”¹⁰³³ in Neuendettelsau wore a

¹⁰²⁶ “Rede vom 1. Juni 1857”, also “Rede vom 29. Juni 1857” where Löhe set before the deaconesses the Apostle Peter as a model who, literally, at the Last Supper, and metaphorically “strove for lavation [*Waschung*], sanctification, purification, for a greater completeness of his soul.”

¹⁰²⁷ In 1851, Wichern published an essay “On the Sodom and Gomorrah of today” [*Ein Votum über das heutige Sodom und Gomorrha*], in which he denounced the phenomena he considered to result from the loose morals of his times. All aspects of sexuality which deviated from nineteenth-century bourgeois norms were condemned, including prostitution, the trade of women and girls, unmarried cohabitation, childbirth out of wedlock, child abuse, and abortion. Although towards the end of the century, the double standards for men and women were sometimes cautiously deplored (for example, in an article which appeared in the “*Fliegende Blätter*” in 1883), this view did not gain general recognition amongst the proponents of Inner Mission in the nineteenth century (cf. Jenner, *Von Neuendettelsau in alle Welt*, 162-165). In Neuendettelsau, the Magdalens were simply considered as sinners, though after confession, absolution, and participation in Holy Communion they were regarded as redeemed. Nevertheless, admission into the deaconess community was not possible. Except for the fact that they included women from various social classes (*Etwas aus der Geschichte*, GW4, 326-327), nothing is known of their former lives, for Löhe wished the “Magdalenium” to resemble “the cells of the hidden in the temple of Jerusalem [...]. There cannot be and must not be a detailed, public report on it [the Magdalenium], of its toils and work, its difficulties and success. This is caused by the nature of the issue, and by the character of those poor, miserable sheep of Jesus who are cared for here” (10. *Jahresbericht* 1862/63, 21). For further perspectives on nineteenth-century female sexuality and prostitution, cf. Kienitz, *Sexualität, Macht und Moral*.

¹⁰²⁸ Cf. MChMh (30/10/1860), *CorDiac* 1860, No. 11, p. 42. The board meeting [*Hauskonferenz*] decided to expand the “Magdalenenstift” and, if possible, to establish it as an asylum for the whole Lutheran church in Germany.

¹⁰²⁹ 8. *Jahresbericht* 1860-61, 17.

¹⁰³⁰ Cf. NN, “Die Bemühungen des Diakonissenhauses Neuendettelsau um Rettung der Verlorenen vom weiblichen Geschlecht”, *CorDiac* 1860, No. 11, p. 44.

¹⁰³¹ Cf. NN, “Kleine Magdaleneninstitute in großen Städten. Eine Gewißenserweckung für fromme und wohlhabende Frauen und Jungfrauen. Von Mrs. [Emma] Sheppard” [from Fromefield House, Frome], *CorDiac* 1861, No. 3 and No. 5; NN, “Aus einem Briefe der Mrs. Sheppard, den Fortgang ihrer Magdalenenanstalt betreffend”, *CorDiac* 1862, No. 10. Sheppard founded and funded her asylum purely privately in an evangelical spirit. Confessing that she had “no sympathies for the high-church direction” (*CorDiac* 1862, No. 10, p. 38) she seems to have been at odds with the incumbent of her local parish who at that time was W.J.E. Bennett, a well-known ritualist, who had put his stamp on the parish since (involuntarily) becoming incumbent there in 1852 (Yates, *Anglican Ritualism*, 108-109).

¹⁰³² Cf. NN, “Die Entstehung des Hauses der Barmherzigkeit Clewer in England”, *CorDiac* 1861, No. 6 and 7, 8, and 9; NN, “Weiterer Bericht über das Haus der Barmherzigkeit in Clewer in England”, *CorDiac* 1862, No. 4 and 5. Clewer was one of the earliest of the Anglican sisterhoods, founded in the diocese of Oxford in 1849 by Thomas Thelluson Carter (cf. Bonham, *Place in Life*). Carter became a prominent spokesman for the highly controversial sisterhoods in the Church of England.

¹⁰³³ Löhe disliked the term “Magdalens” because he considered it exegetically problematic to identify Mary Magdalen, (Luke 8:2) with the “great sinner” (Luke 7: 36-50). He would have preferred the Roman Catholic term “House of the Good Shepherd” to “Magdalenium” but, in the end, decided to adopt the term which was already in use for other Protestant asylums such as that run by Kaiserswerth (cf. “Die Wohltätigkeitsanstalten von Dettelsau” (1864), GW4, 415) and Deinzer, *Löhe’s Leben*, Vol. 3, 268). Unlike the women in Kaiserswerth, the Magdalens in Neuendettelsau were occasionally

uniform brown dress and were encouraged to come to private confession as a precondition for the admittance to Holy Communion.¹⁰³⁴ In the community's reports on the *Magdalenium*, "contamination" plays an important role:¹⁰³⁵ the women who had erred had been "infected with the blight of the world and sin", but living alongside the deaconesses and participation in religious instructions, worship and prayers would "infect" them with purity: "As much as it is certain that sin is ignited [*entzündet*] by sin, so experience teaches that the strength of evil is broken in an environment which is civilized, educated, aspires to good." However, some balance was needed: "Of course, care must be taken that the evil element proportionally remains in a minority to the good, so as not to induce a dangerous overpowering."¹⁰³⁶

The process of "inner purification" was externally expressed in tasks of cleaning: The Magdalens staffed the Institute's laundry and once a week were taken to the mission institute and the village church to help with cleaning.¹⁰³⁷ Mumm notes with regard to Anglican "penitentiaries" that work in the laundry offered "a powerful symbolic image of the goal of the penitential process. The whitening of soiled garments was seen as an external sign of an inner transformation: the cleansing of the tainted soul."¹⁰³⁸ This needs to be qualified with regard to the Lutheran institution: the cleansing of the tainted soul was regarded as God's gift in absolution and Holy Communion. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the Magdalens' doing the laundry and cleaning the church was surely not lost upon the community.

One of the tasks the deaconesses retained for themselves, however, was that of cleaning the altars, sanctuaries and sacred vessels. Adopting instructions from the Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy of St.

employed within the Institute after they had been discharged (cf. 13. *Jahresbericht* 1865/66, 47). However, this branch of work never flourished. Despite all the efforts to publicise it, by 1 December 1863 only three Magdalens had been admitted (cf. MChMh (01/12/1863), CorDiac 1863, No. 3, p. 9). By the year 1870, 22 Magdalens had been admitted ("Etwas aus der Geschichte", GW4, 338). The original expectations had been quite different. Stählin to Kathrine (12/02/1862) ThStl, 125, reveals that an annual number of seventy to eighty had been expected. This was probably caused by Neuendettelsau's reliance on "Magdalen Societies", of which there were only two in Bavaria, to send women to Neuendettelsau (cf. Jenner, *Von Neuendettelsau in alle Welt*, 176).

¹⁰³⁴ Cf. "Etwas aus der Geschichte", GW4, 326.

¹⁰³⁵ Cf. also Stallybrass/ White, *The City*, 275-276.

¹⁰³⁶ B[raun]: "Ein Besuch im Diakonissenhause am Ende des Jahres 1862, 1. Das Magdaleneninstitut", CorDiac 1862, No. 11 and 12, p. 41-42. Braun was then in charge of the Magdalenium.

¹⁰³⁷ Cf. 12. *Jahresbericht* 1864-65, 44-47.

¹⁰³⁸ Mumm, *Convent-based rehabilitation*, 537; cf. also. Kollar, *Magdalenes and Nuns*.

Borromeo, the deaconesses were taught how to handle, care and clean the sacred vessels, the church fittings and equipment. In the preliminary remarks, this type of work was described as especially appropriate for a deaconess: "With thousandfold gladness she grasps the chance to serve in the sanctuary, and prepares the table from which the eternal assets are offered, and externally makes the spaces lovely and beautiful in which the congregation is visited in word and sacrament."¹⁰³⁹

However, the deaconesses were also concerned about the purity of the altar in another sense. Löhe taught them to regard the "intermingling" of Holy Communion [*Abendmahlsmengerei*], by which he meant the admittance of Reformed or United church members to Lutheran celebrations, as opposing God's will for salvation.¹⁰⁴⁰ Instead, only strictly Lutheran, doctrinally "pure" services of Holy Communion were to be attended by the deaconesses. It is in this sense that the slogan must be understood: "No unity without purity."¹⁰⁴¹ This was a recurrent topic in the deaconess house and it encouraged deaconesses to attempt to influence clergymen of other parishes. The young Therese Stählin wrote to her sister Ida in 1856 that Löhe had enlightened the deaconesses on the scriptural reasons why Lutherans could not join Reformed church members in Holy Communion and concluded: "when one additionally hears Luther 'thundering' about it, one has to agree totally with *Pfarrer* Löhe and others who say: Rather abstain from attending for years than mingling with the Reformed." She had discussed the issue with another deaconess, Luise von Unold, who, like Stählin, had grown up in Augsburg, and they had "vowed to unite in prayer. The Lord will hear us in his grace. This evening, Luise wrote to *Pfarrer* Kirchwarth [in Augsburg]. Oh, how I will rejoice and praise God if at least in one church in Augsburg there is pure Holy Communion [*reine Abendmahlsgemeinschaft*]. Only then will it be possible for deaconesses from here to be sent to Augsburg."¹⁰⁴² Although this seems not to have been the official policy from the beginning, Stählin's assumption is confirmed by comments in the annual report of

¹⁰³⁹ Cf. NN: "Reinhaltung und Reinigung der heiligen Gefäße und Geräte", *CorDiac* 1863, No. 11, p. 41-44.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Instructions on the doctrine of Holy Communion are mentioned for example in Stählin to her mother (17/06/1856), *ThStl*, 44.

¹⁰⁴¹ Cf. the article F[?]: "Keine Einheit ohne Reinheit", *CorIM* 1863, No. 2, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴² Stählin to her sister Ida (20/02/1856) [ZADN BIV k1]. Interestingly, this part of the letter was deleted from the published version (*ThStl*, 37-39).

1862/63 that the Institute would withdraw deaconesses from places of work where “the inviolable freedom of the deaconesses to live out their confession [*Confession*]” was being breached.¹⁰⁴³

In at least one case, a deaconess’s refusal to receive Holy Communion from a clergyman who had made concessions to “United” church members caused serious ill feeling. Pauline Haag had been sent to work as a parochial deaconess to Büdingen, in Hessen. She was scandalized when the local clergyman, *Pfarrer* Schmidt, did not prevent a former member of his flock, who had asked him for advice, from receiving at an “impure” altar in another congregation. Haag asked *Pfarrer* Schmidt whether he had no scruples about encouraging people to stay “in such a Babylon”, when the Lutherans “through God’s grace have come to a right understanding on this highly important matter.” If he was serious in his convictions that attending mingled celebrations “is no disloyalty to our highly praised Lord and Saviour” and did not “constitute a grave sin with regard to the body of the Lord” then she would in future refuse to take Holy Communion from his hands: “Although I have been exceedingly blessed in G. [illegible], and although I have become much attached to everything: my relation to my Lord and Saviour rules supreme for me. Therefore, I do not wish it to be tarnished with the least blemish in confessional matters.” Haag wrote to Löhe on *Pfarrer* Schmidt’s request but made it clear to the *Rektor*: “I have no doubts about this matter and instead consider it as a matter of course to act in this way and in no other, if I want to be wholly Lutheran.” She added that it “disgusts” her to hear decisive preaching from the pulpit but then to see how truth is being hidden by acts: “Surely the Lord will push away the lamp [*Leuchter*] from its place [on the altar] unless penitence is done.” Haag closed her letter by distinguishing charitably between sin and sinner. Nevertheless, in a gently patronizing tone, she expressed her surprise at the intellectual inferiority of the clergyman: “I cannot understand why he keeps asking me about scriptural reasons for a matter which is so very clear in itself. I feel sorry about this. I

¹⁰⁴³ 10. *Jahresbericht* 1862-63, 13.

personally quite like him [*ich habe ihn persönlich ganz lieb*] and do not like to sever a bond once it is tied.”¹⁰⁴⁴

Here, indeed, we find a deaconess who is conscious of belonging to a spiritual elite. Haag died only a few months after writing this letter. In his funeral address, Löhe's commented:

What she had discerned and grasped internally, to this she clung, and did not let go. [...] She did not discern clearly that a one-sidedly intellectual talent is a great difficulty for the development of the female life, and that a true deaconess should not only be comforted but be thankful to have been spared such a natural talent. [...] One knows of examples of women with little intellectual talent [but] with an intuitive disposition [*gemütliche Anlage*] who not only became overwhelming, but also dearly beloved centres of larger and smaller circles. Such characters [*Naturen*] grasp and learn everything by intuition [*mit dem Gemüte*] and thereby with a certain totality of understanding, so that they become more useful and capable than the highly intellectually gifted. [...] Sister Pauline, through the circumstances of her youth, had taken sides for our Lord, for His kingdom, for His truth and for the Lutheran church, and therefore had already quite early [in her life] finished with the world in a certain sense. The focus of her inner life and experience was the central Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith. Her knowledge of this doctrine and her linking it to sanctification was what was best about her. But where her strength was, there also was her fault and her sin. Her own inner knowledge of her being a child of God occasionally made her insolent and dismissive.¹⁰⁴⁵

The address reveals Löhe's dilemma: Pride in the deaconesses' intellectual capacities and their excellent grasp of the teachings he himself had taught them struggled against dismay at finding that this gave the women the courage to put ordained clergymen in their places. The dilemma can be interpreted as an internal institutional conflict: should the deaconesses behave in a manner which was in conformity with contemporary bourgeois gender assumptions, or was the emphasis on their role as carriers of the principles of the Institute? The deaconesses could not fulfill both expectations at once: if they were to show female submission and silence in the (ecclesiastical) public sphere they could not also insist on the adherence to the Neo-confessional Lutheran codes of distinction, in this case “Eucharistic purity”, which marked and perpetuated the boundaries between the community and the wider church.

Haag represents those deaconesses whose self-esteem was raised by their membership in an exclusive community, by their education, theological training and their new religious identity, who

¹⁰⁴⁴ Pauline Haag to Löhe (22/03/1863) [ZADN AI m].

¹⁰⁴⁵ “Schwester Pauline Christine Friederike Haag“, CorDiac 1864, No. 4, p. 11-12.

emancipated themselves from the conventional allocation of gender roles and who ventured out into the public sphere to assert themselves. Other deaconesses preferred to adhere to conventional gender roles and to remain within the sheltered semi-private sphere of the mother house. Löhe seems to have valued both attitudes and did not resolve the dilemma. Strikingly, however, he seems to have realized that the socially and culturally constructed allocation of gender characteristics did not necessarily coincide with a woman's talents and gifts and that, in the case of great discrepancy, a woman was bound to experience difficulties. Within the fellowship, however, Löhe clearly favoured a demonstration of female pliability or "gentleness". This undoubtedly became the priority when Bezzel became *Rektor*. It is highly likely that it was incidents such as these in Büdingen that caused Bezzel to state to the deaconesses over forty years later: "One should not talk so much in deaconess houses about general questions and should rather remain and do what one ought to be and do."¹⁰⁴⁶ Specifically, Bezzel mused:

Those new rigorisms about the doctrine of Holy Communion, for example, appear to me to be perilous also for the deaconess houses. I firmly stand on the basis of the ecclesiastical order. [...] Much more than I fear that someone participates in our celebrations who interprets our Holy Communion in the Reformed way, I fear something else: that someone in unbroken naturalness [i.e. a sinful state] takes comfort in the meal of his Saviour and the mercy of his Lord. It is women's great fault that they put symptoms above principles. [...] It is not a matter of importance that the congregation should be convinced about the correctness [of doctrine] in details but rather that it gains an inkling that he who labours to improve the congregation seeks to pursue sanctification [...].¹⁰⁴⁷

For women, the only permissible form of participation in theological debates was "to raise their praying hands" and to wait: "The silent testimony of women, not the verbose enthusiasm of the Christian emancipated woman [*christlich Emanzipierte*] is agreeable to the Lord."¹⁰⁴⁸ Clearly, for Bezzel it was time to remind the women of their proper place.

We conclude that in the Neuendettelsau community, the dichotomy between cleanliness and dirt, between purity and impurity had an important function as a boundary-marker between inside and

¹⁰⁴⁶ Bezzel, *Einsegnungsunterricht* 1905, p. 29.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Bezzel, *Einsegnungsunterricht* 1905, p. 39.

¹⁰⁴⁸ [Hermann Bezzel:] "Offener Brief", *CorDiac* 1908, No. 10, p. 39.

outside, between “we” and “them”. The distinction between specific concepts of physical dirt and cleanliness was also found in the wider society where it reflected class divisions. In the Deaconess Institute, a bourgeois establishment, this played out as a devaluation of the rural villagers and their predominantly peasant culture. However, cleanliness and “order” were also interpreted theologically, as an integration into the divinely ordered structures of authority, perhaps an attempt to conceal the contingency of social conventions and to ensure acceptance. The distinction between deaconesses and those women who in contemporary terminology were known as “Magdalens” was propagated by the Institute on the grounds of morality: the women’s “defilement” needed purification in Holy Communion, in their daily intermingling with the cleanliness and purity of the deaconesses, and in (symbolic) acts of atonement. Again, social conventions were made unassailable by reference to an eternal realm: any deviancy from bourgeois norms for sexuality was defined as sin. Finally, the cultic purity of the altar presented a specific cultural code in the narrower sense: For the deaconesses, it marked the boundary between sacred and profane within the church. This distinction was so fundamental for the deaconess community that it could even level the distinction between genders.

We have argued that the polarization examined here and the consequent enhancement of boundaries served to strengthen social cohesion and consolidated the deaconesses’ collective identity. A further important means is found in the community’s rites which enabled and required (physical) participation and which expressed and affirmed collective beliefs. As we have established in chapter 3.4., these often work by evoking and thus reactivating shared stories and experiences, and thus by constructing a shared experience and memory.

5.2. Rites and collective action

In Neuendettelsau, the narration of the Institute’s origins, the celebration of institutional feasts, the collective experience of certain spaces and times, and a specific memorial culture which evolved around

the community's dead all evoked a sense of continuity and cohesion. However, as Assmann has observed, "[t]he past does not just emerge of its own accord; it is the result of a cultural process of construction and representation."¹⁰⁴⁹ In analyzing the forms which this took, we gain deeper insight into the community's "cultural meaning".

5.2.1. The foundational myth of the origins of the deaconess community

The deaconess community in Neuendettelsau stored the memory of the initial months of its existence in the form of myth. This term is not used to demarcate sharply between fictional and factual. Rather, "myth" is understood here as a "foundational history that is narrated in order to illuminate the present from the standpoint of its origins."¹⁰⁵⁰ The circulation of a (foundational) myth offers orientation in the present by outlining "a reality of a higher order, which not only rings true but also sets normative standards and possesses a formative power."¹⁰⁵¹ Exploring the foundational myth of a community, therefore, reveals underlying norms and expectations.

During the initial months of the Institute's existence, from May to October 1854, the fledgling community, consisting of eleven members, lived and worked in the local village inn, The Sun [*Die Sonne*]. The three superintendents governed this private institution.¹⁰⁵² As the rooms had only been rented and were afterwards again used by the inn, there was no "spatial anchor" by which to remember this period. Almost fifty years later, the deaconess Katharina Hommel mentioned in her memoirs that the Institute, at the time she was writing, tried to purchase The Sun so that the "cradle" of the institution might be preserved as a "relic" for all times.¹⁰⁵³ However, this was never achieved, and the history of the initial period was stored in the community's memory solely in oral form. Since oral transmission relies on

¹⁰⁴⁹ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 71.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 38.

¹⁰⁵¹ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 59-60.

¹⁰⁵² 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55, 8.

¹⁰⁵³ Cf. *Lebenserinnerungen von Katharina Hommel* [1901], [p. 3-4]: "In der Sonne hat die kleine beginnende Anstalt ihre Wiege gefunden; gerne sähen die Vorstände diese Wiege der Nachwelt als Reliquie erhalten; ob sie als Jubiläumsgabe beschert werden kann, steht dahin" [ZADN EI d].

personal communication, the death of the last contemporary witnesses potentially means that memories of this kind are lost.¹⁰⁵⁴ Stählin, who had not been one of the founding members of the community, commented on Rehm's death in 1883: "The other day, I imagined it thus: that from a numerous family, in the end only a few, finally, only one single member remains."¹⁰⁵⁵ Meyer, too, perceived this, and commented in his obituary for Rehm:

Our hearts were moved extraordinarily as we stood in our cemetery. We laid to rest the precious superior of our house and along with her a significant part of our Dettelsau history; a personality with whom all our hearts had been intimately connected, one whose own life story had been one and the same as the story of our deaconess house for twenty-eight years.¹⁰⁵⁶

Meyer mentioned specifically that Rehm had been one of the three superintendents with whom Löhe had founded the Deaconess Institute in The Sun on 9 May 1854. And he exclaimed:

And how much she had always enjoyed remembering this sunny, blessed beginning [*sonniger, wonniger Anfang*], and how vividly and with what fine humour she could narrate the joys and sorrows of those initial conditions [*Anfangszustände*]! She had possessed an extraordinary talent for narrating, by which she had refreshed [*erquickte*] many.¹⁰⁵⁷

Rehm was not only an authority on the Institute's early history, but clearly derived much of her status from the fact that she harboured the tradition. It is apparent that even after the small deaconess community had moved into its new buildings, the story of its informal beginnings continued to be told and transmitted to deaconesses who had only joined the Institute later. Assmann terms this the "contrapresent" function of myth:

This proceeds from deficiencies experienced in the present and conjures up memories of a past that generally takes the form of an heroic age. Such tales shed a very different light on the present by emphasizing what has gone wrong, what has disappeared, or become lost or marginalized, and thus there is a deliberate break between then and now.¹⁰⁵⁸

In the case of the deaconess community, the story of its beginnings evoked a time when the various individual members had (at least apparently) merged seamlessly into a harmonious whole, a community devoid of conflict, which provided a normative backdrop for the present.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Assmann, *What is 'Cultural Memory'*, 18. Cf. also Meyer, "Zum Gedächtnis unserer Schwester Helene von Meyer" (CorDiac 1888, No. 3, p. 11-14).

¹⁰⁵⁵ Stählin to her sister Mina (08/12/1884), ThStII, 21.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 194-195.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 197.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 62.

In later years, the foundational myth lost its fluidity as an oral tradition and came to be preserved in the form of what Assmann calls a “fixed objectification [*feste Objektivation*].”¹⁰⁵⁹ In 1870, shortly before his death, Löhe published “Aspects of the [Institute’s] history [*Etwas aus der Geschichte*].” As this was one of his final publications, it could be regarded as his “testament.” Both his successors recommended the booklet to the deaconesses, thus granting it an unchallenged and abiding interpretative authority, and effectively shaping the community’s “collective memory” for generations.¹⁰⁶⁰ It became, in Assmann’s categorization, a “classic text”: “certain texts acquire central status; they are copied and cited more frequently than others, and finally come to be seen as classics, embodying normative and formative values.”¹⁰⁶¹ This was indeed Löhe’s intention, as he explained quite explicitly in a kind of “prooemium”:

Human memory, especially when care is taken, is a potent power, through which some matters, which are otherwise in danger of being quickly forgotten, can be preserved for a long time. However, there is no doubt that, if no care is taken, matters very quickly vanish which would have been worth remembering. This is also true of the beginnings of the Deaconess Institute here, about which even the most intimate friends of the cause have become so uncertain and ignorant, that they can hardly say how it all came about.¹⁰⁶²

On the strength of his acknowledged authority in the community, Löhe’s written account came to determine what was “worth remembering.”¹⁰⁶³ In “Aspects of the [Institute’s] history,” Löhe recounted the beginnings thus:

At that time, there was an extraordinarily brisk and cheerful life in the Deaconess Institute. The teachers taught, the three superintendents repeated the lectures and governed the house, and all pupils very cheerfully integrated themselves into the confined conditions of The Sun. Those who are still amongst us even now sometimes exhaust themselves in their praises of the beauty of this initial period. One could say jokingly, and yet fully seriously, that the Deaconess Institute has never felt so happy as in The Sun.¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁵⁹ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 37.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Cf. for example Bezzel’s recommendation of this booklet to the deaconesses in his article written at the occasion of the centenary of Löhe’s birthday, *CorDiac* 1908, No. 2, p. 8. Meyer, too, often quoted from it, for example in H. v. Meyer’s obituary, “Zum Gedächtnis unserer Schwester Helene v. Meyer”, *CorDiac* 1888, No. 3, 11. In fact, Meyer’s usage of the pun “sunny, happy beginnings” in Rehm’s obituary reveals that he, and, it must be assumed, Rehm, too, was influenced by the description of this period in Löhe’s text which had by now become the normative account of the Institute’s beginnings (Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 197).

¹⁰⁶¹ Assmann, *Invisible Religion and Cultural Memory*, 40.

¹⁰⁶² Löhe, “Etwas aus der Geschichte”, GW4, 259.

¹⁰⁶³ Assmann has spoken of the “alliance between power and memory,” which goes hand in hand with the “alliance between power and forgetting,” Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 53-55.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Löhe, “Etwas aus der Geschichte”, GW4, 278.

In the light of the narration of such warm and intimate beginnings, the consolidation and expansion of the institution could be experienced as ambiguous. Over time, additional cultural means were introduced to retrieve this oral tradition and reconcile it with the Institute's subsequent history. Space and feasts were important, not only to ensure that the oral tradition continued to be circulated and thus communicated, but also to give a positive experience of the expanded community.

5.2.2. Sacred spaces: The "Family room" and the "Betsaal"

Stählin expressed regrets about the Institute's development in a letter written in November 1857: "The whole establishment [*Einrichtung*] is becoming ever more institutionalized. Increasingly, the family-atmosphere [*das Familiäre*] recedes."¹⁰⁶⁵ Somewhat ironically, she was writing just at the time when the Institute was being restructured, and the title "sister" introduced for the deaconesses as members of the "mother house."¹⁰⁶⁶ In addition to the important structural changes of this period, the building works continued. Plans were made to expand the space of the Institute by building a separate chapel.¹⁰⁶⁷ Because Löhe wished to "commit [the chapel] to the Lord as a voluntary gift," that is without incurring new debts, various methods of fund-raising were devised.¹⁰⁶⁸ Löhe himself donated the profit he made by the publication of the *Rosenmonate*, which raised 600 gulden by February 1860.¹⁰⁶⁹ The deaconesses also contributed.¹⁰⁷⁰ A collection box was placed near the stairs in the deaconess house,

¹⁰⁶⁵ Stählin to her mother (18/11/1857), ThStI, 71.

¹⁰⁶⁶ The introduction of the title "sister" [*Schwester*] is first mentioned MChMh (01/05/1857), CorIM 1857, No. 6, p. 23, introduced "at the request of those deaconesses working outside." However, it seems to have become official only in March 1858, cf. "Anzeige", CorDiac 1858, No. 2, p. 8, §12. Initially, the term "father house" was occasionally used in a non-technical sense alongside "mother house" (cf. 3. *Jahresbericht* 1855-56, 13). From 1857, only the term "mother house" was used.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Th[erese] St[ählin]: "Geschichte des Betsaals zu Neuendettelsau", CorDiac 1861, No. 12, p. 45. It took a while to gain permission by the state authorities and money was scarce, so the actual building works only began in August 1858. Those were repeatedly delayed so that the new building could only be used in December 1859.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Löhe, "Bitte an die Freunde des Diaconissenwesens", CorDiac 1858, No. 6, p. 22.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Löhe to Marianne (21/02/1860) GW2, 377. Löhe stated that the initial capital had been 1200 gulden ("Bitte an die Freunde", CorDiac 1858, No. 6, p. 22). The total cost of the chapel was just over 10 000 gulden (cf. Löhe, "Etwas aus der Geschichte", GW4, 309).

¹⁰⁷⁰ The minute recordings of all donations throughout the CorDiac 1859 and 1860 reveal that deaconesses were amongst the donors.

and every week the deaconesses were informed what progress had been made in raising funds.¹⁰⁷¹ When the foundation stone was laid, a list with the names of all the deaconesses and students was enclosed in a capsule and buried under the stone.¹⁰⁷² In this way, the building of the new chapel became the deaconesses' own project. In internal communication the chapel was termed the "most precious gem [*kostbarstes Kleinod*]"¹⁰⁷³ and "our little sanctuary [*unser kleines Heiligtum*]."¹⁰⁷⁴

The building works were completed in December 1859. In consequence, Christmas 1859 brought major changes for the community: The new chapel, still termed the "Betsaal", was used for the first time and the former chapel, located within the main building, was transformed into the "family room". In Stählin's words, "a family room [...] was born amongst us on Christmas Eve."¹⁰⁷⁵ It was intended as a room for informal meetings of the community [*Reunionszimmer*].¹⁰⁷⁶ The annals recorded that Löhe gave a short sermon, making an explicit connection between Christmas, the holy family, and the deaconess community,

in which he directed our thoughts to Bethlehem, to the holy, wonderful family, in which an aged man, a virgin and a new-born child are united, that is a child who is the father and creator of his parents. The primary intention, however, with which *Herr Pfarrer* directed the audience's thoughts to the holy family, was to advise them to now live together in their Family room and to overcome the contradictions which exist between an institution and a family, by allowing themselves to be united into a holy family through the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁷⁷

The text, taken from Luke 2, was thus interpreted in a refreshingly new light: Christmas was the day on which "the unnatural was transfigured into the supernatural [*das Unnatürliche zum Übernatürlichen*]

¹⁰⁷¹ MChMh (25/06/1858), CorDiac 1858, No. 6, p. 21, attests the collection box. Stählin, "Geschichte des Betsaals", CorDiac 1861, No. 12, p. 46 mentions the weekly reports.

¹⁰⁷² Cf. Löhe, "Etwas aus der Geschichte", GW4, 304.

¹⁰⁷³ St[ählin], "Geschichte des Betsaals", CorDiac 1861, No. 12, p. 45. The deaconesses continued to make donations for their chapel. An appeal was again launched in 1866 which drew on the image of a half-opened rose which needed to be watered and fed in order to flourish fully, cf. Schw. Th[erese Stählin], "Betsaal des Diakonissenhauses", CorDiac 1866, No. 11, p. 41-42. In 1869, the wooden altar was replaced with one made of stone, for which the deaconess Cäcilie Pöschel had specifically left a legacy at her death, cf. Schw. Th[erese Stählin]: "Aus dem Mutterhause. Der neue Altar," CorDiac 1869, No. 11, p. 41-43. Further funds for the Betsaal were requested in 1870 after a storm had torn off part of the roof, cf. Stählin, "Ein kleiner Anhang", CorDiac 1870, No. 11, p. 53.

¹⁰⁷⁴ NN, "Nachrichten aus dem Mutterhause", CorDiac 1875, No. 12, p. 48. A new window was then installed. A year earlier, an organ had been installed in the chapel, NN, "Unsere neue Orgel," CorDiac 1874, No. 5, p. 17-20.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Stählin to her sister Ida (27/12/1859), ThSt 100.

¹⁰⁷⁶ The reunions in the "Family room" on Sunday afternoons became a fixture in the Institute's weekly routine (MChMh (26/12/1859) CorDiac 1860, No. 2/3, p. 6). Not only the deaconesses, but also "friends from the village" gathered (Löhe to his daughter Marianne (26/12/1859), GW2, 369, and Löhe to his son Gottfried (21/03/1860) GW2, 382).

¹⁰⁷⁷ MChMh (24/12/1859), CorDiac 1860, No 2/3, p. 5.

verklären],”¹⁰⁷⁸ that is, as the genesis of a harmonious family made up of incongruous members. The family metaphor for the community is somewhat unexpected as, unlike Kaiserswerth, in Neuendettelsau the surrogate family did not serve as a primary institutional model:¹⁰⁷⁹ Löhe’s title was *Herr Pfarrer*, not *Vater*,¹⁰⁸⁰ and (at least at this stage) there was no charismatic or authoritative *Mutter*.¹⁰⁸¹ However, the metaphor appears not to have been evoked in order to affirm gender roles.¹⁰⁸² Instead, the point of comparison is the informal, spontaneous, face-to-face communication of a family in contrast to the rigid structures of an institution. Linked to this was the notion that because of the “natural” affiliation of a family, the incongruous members coexisted in harmony and peace, in “joyful yielding, forgiveness and dedication” [*freudigen Nachgebens, Vergebens und Hingebens*].¹⁰⁸³ Recognizing that the family metaphor could potentially evoke ambiguous associations for some of the deaconesses, Löhe emphasized that the community should strive to become a “spiritual” or “supernatural” family, not the copy of the deaconesses’ own natural families. The “family” room offered the community a space to consolidate its identity as a group and to become symbolically again what it remembered once having been: an informal, spontaneous, communicative fellowship of like-minded, in a word, a family. In effect, the family room had become a substitute for the lost Sun. Assmann has argued that

[a]ny group that wants to consolidate itself will make an effort to find a base for itself, not only to provide a setting for its interactions but also to symbolize its identity and to provide points of reference for its memories. Memory needs places and tends towards spatialization.¹⁰⁸⁴

¹⁰⁷⁸ Those were Stählin’s words when she described Löhe’s sermon in a letter to her sister Ida (27/12/1859), ThStI, 100.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Prelinger, *Nineteenth-century deaconessate*, 216.

¹⁰⁸⁰ It was only after Löhe’s death that he became the “blessed father” or the “spiritual father”, mainly when Meyer referred to him, cf. for example E[lisabeth?] St[oll?], “Heimsuchungsfest 1873”, CorDiac 1873, No. 7, p. 26; Meyer, “Ansprache”, CorDiac 1875, No. 9, p. 34; Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 95; Meyer, “Ansprache”, CorDiac 1879, No. 1/ 2, p. 6. During this period, a portrait of the “blessed father” was hung in the “family room” and decorated with flowers at certain occasions, E[lisabeth?] St[oll?], “Heimsuchungsfest 1873”, CorDiac 1873, No. 7, p. 26; also: Bezzel: “20. und 21. Februar 1908”, CorDiac 1908, No. 4 and 5, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸¹ Differing from Rehm, Stählin assumed the title “mother” herself. Fairly soon after she had been elected to office in 1883, Stählin began to sign letters to other deaconesses with “your mother”, cf. Stählin to Selma Trautwein (17/10/1887), ThStII, 37; Stählin to Babette Gößwein (“Thursday before Pentecost 1888”) ThStII, 41; Stählin to Frieda von Soden (“7th Sunday after Trinity” 1888) ThStII, 42 and often. In later years, she was also officially granted the title “Mother Superior” [*Frau Oberin-Mutter*], cf. Hans Lauerer, “Der Heimgang unserer Frau Oberin-Mutter”, CorDiac 1928, No. 4/5, p. 13-18 and p. 22.

¹⁰⁸² This is a very different interpretation from Wichern’s, who evoked the Holy Family as a role model for gender relations in the bourgeois nucleus family, especially for a normative prescription of the role of motherhood, cf. Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 127.

¹⁰⁸³ Löhe, “An die Schwestern und Probeschwestern”, CorDiac 1863, No. 8, p.30.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 25.

With regard to the Neuendettelsau deaconess community, however, this must be qualified. Here it was not the community itself which chose to create and furnish the room: rather the family room was a symbolic space introduced by the “elite,” which came with a normative request.¹⁰⁸⁵ The gatherings in the family room thus became an outward token of the deaconesses’ identification with the institutional norm of “gentleness” [*Friedfertigkeit*] and harmony. It appears that in later years the deaconesses sometimes needed prompting to attend. An entry in the minutes of the Neuendettelsau chapter in 1863 reads: “*Frau Oberin* reminded us that the sisters hardly used the family room in the evenings and encouraged us to gather there more frequently. The sisters are resolved to do this as much as their profession allows.”¹⁰⁸⁶ This response reveals that, in everyday-life, work often took priority over the affirmation of communal life.

When the new chapel was inaugurated, it, too, was integrated into the metaphor of family and Christmas. It was to be “a manger, in which the Lord may take his abode.”¹⁰⁸⁷ The bell which was hoisted up onto the *Betsaal*’s roof in 1865 contained Christmas symbolism. It was engraved not only with the crest of the deaconess-order,¹⁰⁸⁸ but also with a sketch of Mary with the Christchild and the inscription: “Et verbum caro factum est.”¹⁰⁸⁹ Christmas was celebrated as the dedication day of the Institute’s chapel, although this was not initially an obvious date, and Stählin recorded: “Often, the deaconesses have discussed amongst themselves when they should actually celebrate the dedication day.”¹⁰⁹⁰ Though the first service had taken place in the *Betsaal* on Christmas, this was only a temporal occupancy, since more work needed to be done to complete the building. In addition, permission to

¹⁰⁸⁵ This is underlined by Löhe’s remarks in 7. *Jahresbericht* 1859/60, 16: “We experience daily that it is much simpler to found institutions and to educate pupils than to maintain institutions and to unite those work-forces, who have graduated from school, into one body and to govern them so that they attain one spirit and purpose. We confess that in this matter we have not yet achieved our aim. It is exceedingly difficult to maintain a large number of women, who are dispersed across a wide country, in a vivid sense of unity and community”.

¹⁰⁸⁶ “Protokolle des Neuendettelsauer Kapitels” (06/10/1863) [ZADN DIII].

¹⁰⁸⁷ MChMh (25/12/1859), CorDiac 1860, No. 2/3, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸⁸ This consisted of a cross, the lamp of the ten virgins, a crown of thorns, and a dove with rays. It was introduced in 1857, MChMh (14/01/1857), CorIM 1857, No. 3, p. 11; cf. also Löhe to Theodor Liesching (08/12/1856), GW2, 259 (excerpts). The initiated deaconesses were permitted to use this as a seal. The crest was also printed on the front cover of every edition of the CorDiac.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Löhe, “Etwas aus der Geschichte”, GW4, 309.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Th[erese] St[ählin], “Geschichte des Betsaals zu Neuendettelsau”, CorDiac 1861, No. 12, p. 47.

celebrate Holy Communion in the new chapel was not granted until just before Pentecost 1860.¹⁰⁹¹ Given that doctrinally, the “sacrament of the altar” was of such importance to the Institute’s self-perception, it is not surprising that Pentecost Monday was originally intended to be celebrated as the dedication day.¹⁰⁹² In the end, however, Christmas was preferred.¹⁰⁹³

5.2.3. Christmas as the Institute’s “family feast”

Christmas became the annual occasion for the deaconesses to collectively and creatively celebrate themselves as a large family. Every year, the deaconesses transformed their physical space by loving ornamentation, especially the chapel and the family room, where on Christmas Eve the community gathered to exchange presents.¹⁰⁹⁴ For days in advance, the sisters went out into the forest to gather greenery and the Christmas tree which was exuberantly decorated.¹⁰⁹⁵ In addition, a crib scene was set up every year. Christmas thus became an occasion, on which, as Assmann puts it, the community gathered to commemorate ritually “[in] the present something distant and alien for which there is no room in everyday life, and which therefore has to be ritually imagined at regular intervals in order to maintain a context that is threatened by disintegration and oblivion.”¹⁰⁹⁶ Early in 1862, the deaconess Sarah Hahn gave a detailed account of the “sacred Christmas in our dear mother house” in the *CorDiac* for the benefit of those deaconesses who had been unable to attend because they were employed

¹⁰⁹¹ Cf. MChMh (05/05/1860) *CorDiac* 1860, No. 6, p. 21-22: “finally, the long-awaited permission came from the Upper Consistory for the deaconess house to celebrate the special complete service including the sacrament.” (27/05/1869): “after waiting for a long time, we could celebrate the complete service for the first time in our new Betsaal, and on 28 May we received Holy Communion for the first time therein. [...] today, salvation has come to this house [Luke 19: 9], because the Lord himself came to enter it and offered His Holy Meal. Praise be to him eternally!”

¹⁰⁹² Stählin to her mother (1706/1860), ThStl, 109.

¹⁰⁹³ The official explanation for this was that on Christmas 1861, the last debts for the building had been liquidated, St[ählin], “Geschichte des Betsaals”, *CorDiac* 1861, No. 12, p. 47.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Cf. MChMh (24/12/1860), *CorDiac* 1861, No. 2, p. 5: „In every family, this [Christmas] is a feast of joy; weeks of preparation precede it, and the children try to read from the mysterious looks of father and mother what the Christ Child might bring as presents. In our great family, too, one had considered for a very long time in advance how to glorify the Christmas celebration through external ornaments, and both the old and young children looked forward to the celebration of Christmas Eve.”

¹⁰⁹⁵ Sarah Hahn to Marie [Stählin?] (0101/1865) [ZADN EII st1]; Stählin to her mother (30/12/1860), ThStl, 115. The latter letter mentions that Löhe gave a lecture on the symbolism of the Christmas tree.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Assmann, *What is ‘Cultural Memory’*, 16.

elsewhere, and who, Hahn surmised “especially in these days remembered, perhaps with wistful happiness, the blessed time [they had spent] in the mother house.”¹⁰⁹⁷ She recounted that during Christmas dinner, Löhe had admonished the deaconesses to remember “you, my dear Sisters, who stand outside in the service of the Lord, in which we all are employed,” commenting: “Don’t you believe that we would have done so without being told? O surely, for we are one family, and as one remembers dear absent members in the parental home, so do we.”¹⁰⁹⁸ The lavish decorations were the deaconesses’ own contribution to this family feast.¹⁰⁹⁹ Löhe’s successor Meyer therefore missed the point when he instructed the deaconesses to tone down the traditional elaborate Christmas ornaments which he dismissively called “knick-knacks” [*Schnickschnack*], “so that one could have silence to prepare for the feast and to worship silently the child in the manger.”¹¹⁰⁰ Under Meyer, Christmas as a community feast-day was replaced by the “Sisters’ Day” [*Schwesterntag*], which took place for the first time on 10 and 11 September 1874. Described as a “taking of the waters in the mother house, at the sources of the Word, Sacrament, and Prayer”, it was, in effect, a two day contemplative retreat on Roman Catholic or Anglican lines.¹¹⁰¹ Penitence, confession, and meditation were the prominent themes.¹¹⁰² For Meyer, it seems, fostering a certain kind of spirituality amongst the deaconesses took priority over encouraging exuberant family or community celebrations.

¹⁰⁹⁷ S[arah] H[ahn], “Dettelsauer Weihnachtsfeier 1861“, CorDiac 1862, No. 1, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹⁸ S[arah] H[ahn], “Dettelsauer Weihnachtsfeier 1861“, CorDiac 1862, No. 1, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹⁹ The planning of the Christmas decorations was done in the chapter-meetings, “Protokolle des Neuendettelsauer Kapitels” (15/12/ 1862) [ZADN DIIIa].

¹¹⁰⁰ Stählin to her sister Mina (08/12/1884), ThStII, 21. Meyer introduced a Christmas service at midnight in the first year of his term of office. This service was marked by its meditative, reflective mood with no reference to the assembled community, cf. Meyer, “Betrachtung bei der mitternächtlichen Feier im Betsaal zu Neuendettelsau”, CorDiac 1873, No. 12, p. 45-46.

¹¹⁰¹ Cf. Schw. A[?], “Der erste Schwesterntag am 10. und 11. September 1874“, CorDiac 1874, No. 10, p. 37-38. Meyer had a special predilection for the German mystic Tauler, but also for Frances de Sales and Thomas à Kempis. In the first years after he had become Rektor, frequent articles were published in the CorDiac with titles such as “Blessed Silence” (CorDiac 1873, No. 2, p. 8), “Instruction on the contemplation of the divine Word or: on Meditation” (CorDiac 1874, No. 2, p. 5-7), “Pronouncements of Saint Frances de Sales (CorDiac 1874, No. 6, p. 24), “Something for the inner life” (CorDiac 1874, No. 6, p. 24), or “Your Solitude” (CorDiac 1874, No. 11, p. 43-44).

¹¹⁰² All in all, the introduction of the “Sisters’ Day” did not go entirely smoothly. Stählin wrote in her report on its second recurrence that “now, the *Schwesterntag* belongs wholly to us and to our life, and we could not imagine to do without” (Stählin, “Der Schwesterntag”, CorDiac 1875, No. 10, p. 37-38). The *Schwesterntag* was postponed that year to 16 to 17 September because of the *Generalkonferenz* in Kaiserswerth (cf. “Nachricht”, CorDiac 1875, No. 8, p. 32). Yet, no *Schwesterntag* was mentioned for the year 1876. In 1877, it was held on another date. And already in 1879, it was cancelled altogether (cf. CorDiac 1879, No. 9, p. 40.) Instead, the 25th anniversary of the Institute was boisterously celebrated. It seems that the sisters took some time adjusting to the subdued spirit.

Nevertheless, the “Sisters’ Day” did not fulfil the community’s need for intimacy and warmth which, under Meyer, came to be regarded as a problem. As in every large family, certain members felt particularly drawn to each other. Löhe saw nothing harmful in this. Meyer, however, thought he needed to intervene. Perhaps he suspected that some of these relationships were based on more than sisterly love. Certainly he warned them of “particular friendships”, a “dangerous track” [*gefährliche Bahn*] anywhere but especially in a deaconess community, which could lead to the exclusion of others. He added: “Great suffering of soul can originate in such friendships, often much that is carnal intermingles, and the noble freedom is lost which alone provides the strength for fruitful service. You shall also not be too tender with each other!”¹¹⁰³ An interesting incident in this context is Helene von Meyer’s request that she might bring a female friend with her from Nuremberg when she moved into the Institute’s “retirement home” [*Feierabendhaus*]. In obvious consternation, Stählin wrote to another deaconess: “We cannot admit the little Luise [*das Luisle*] with Sister Helene von Meyer into the retirement home. *Herr Rektor* decidedly opposed it. And I don’t think we should do it only because of the consequences. Otherwise, we would soon have other sisters coming with some appendage, and we have the principles of our rules which we cannot simply set aside.”¹¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Stählin recognized her own need of love or affection. Just around the time when Helene von Meyer wanted to bring her “Luisle” with her to Neuendettelsau, Stählin wrote to a deaconess: “My dear Sister, you will keep liking me in Nuremberg, won’t you? You know, occasionally, I have such an ‘institutionalized’ feeling in my heart. The world is only a nice place when one can love warmly and intimately, and also harmlessly.”¹¹⁰⁵

We conclude that “family” was an important metaphor in the community evoked to conjure up emotions of warmth and intimacy which were regarded as a necessary complement to the structural changes to establish a mother house as a “home” for the deaconesses. Set within a society which allocated to women the newly emotionally charged roles of spouse and mother, the deaconesses required the

¹¹⁰³ Meyer, “Von den Diakonissen und ihrem Beruf”, *CorDiac* 1877, No. 3, p. 12.

¹¹⁰⁴ Stählin to Elisabeth von Oldershausen (08/03/1886), *ThStII* 30. However, from Helene v. Meyer’s obituary we know that the “small Dorle” [sic] was allowed stay with her during her last days in Neuendettelsau, cf. Meyer, “Zum Gedächtnis unserer am 26. Februar 1888 entschlafenen Schwester Helene v. Meyer”, *CorDiac* 1888, No. 3, p. 13.

¹¹⁰⁵ Stählin to Elisabeth von Oldershausen (13/11/1885) *ThStII*, 29.

narration of a family history, the symbolic space of the family room and the celebration of Christmas as a family feast as alternative offers. These made it possible to emotionally consolidate domesticity in their pioneering course of life and to experience for themselves – and to affirm externally – the community as an equally valid substitute. The various rites served to support this “cultural formation”:¹¹⁰⁶ Through symbolic communication, identity-securing knowledge¹¹⁰⁷ and the social reconstruction of a shared past, their collective identity was consolidated.¹¹⁰⁸ However, as participation relied on physical presence, only the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau profited directly from these measures. The same can be said of the celebration of “sacred times” in the daily liturgy.

5.2.4. Sacred times: The daily liturgy

The daily repetition of the cycle of offices, which placed the community within a centuries-old tradition of the church, was a means of evoking communal unity, uniformity, and harmony. The liturgical life of the Neuendettelsau Institute was elaborate and an important focal point for the community. For Löhe, it was the “focus of light” [*Lichtpunkt*] in the deaconess house,¹¹⁰⁹ which “increasingly flourishes in all the ornaments and glory which can be awarded to it out of the treasure of ancient times.”¹¹¹⁰ At first, the Institute’s members, teachers and students, attended a daily morning service in the village church and had additional morning and evening prayers together.¹¹¹¹ Löhe ate lunch at the Institute daily and afterwards sat in the Betsaal until 3pm, a period when anyone could come to speak to him in private.¹¹¹² In 1856, a specific order for daily prayers was introduced, marking the beginning of communal life. The annals recorded for 11 November 1856:

¹¹⁰⁶ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 120.

¹¹⁰⁷ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 122.

¹¹⁰⁸ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 33.

¹¹⁰⁹ 4. *Jahresbericht* 1857, 23.

¹¹¹⁰ 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55, 11.

¹¹¹¹ Stählin to her brother Adolf (11/12/1855) ThStI, 28; cf. also 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55, 12.

¹¹¹² Stählin to her mother (20/12/1855) ThStI, 29-31.

A new order for daily services [*Gottesdienstordnung*] for the deaconess house was introduced. It is closely modelled on the liturgical life of the church and consists of devotional practices [*Andachtsübungen*] for all significant times of the day and especially of a liturgical formula for the morning and evening service [*Morgen- und Abendgottesdienst*]. This contains the main parts of the ancient church liturgy: psalmody, lesson, hymn and litany (service of prayer).¹¹¹³

In 1857, the liturgical formulas of the deaconess house were published. As was Löhe's custom, the publication was accompanied by a series of instructive sermons. In July 1857, he gave addresses in the village church on Sundays on the importance of keeping private hours of devotion at home [*Hausgottesdienst*].¹¹¹⁴ Löhe seems to have considered the prayers in the deaconess house in this light.¹¹¹⁵ Into them, he incorporated many prayers from an earlier collection of prayers, "Seed-grains of Prayer",¹¹¹⁶ which provided prayers for specific times of the day. The community mostly said them communally, for which work was briefly interrupted. Perhaps not coincidentally, a large clock was given to the Institute early in 1857 and hung above the chapel door.¹¹¹⁷ Just before rising and after the lights had been extinguished, the whole dormitory prayed together. The deaconesses were also encouraged occasionally to say free intercessions in the dormitory.¹¹¹⁸ Every day at noon, a "silent half hour" was kept by all members of the community for private meditation. Different themes for reflection were suggested for the different week-days, and a special form was kept during Lent.¹¹¹⁹ Evening prayer ("Vespers or Compline [*Vesper oder Completorium*]") was said by the community daily at 5.30 pm, morning prayer ("Matins [*Matutin*]") only occasionally, though always on Sundays.¹¹²⁰ Some of the liturgical traditions could also be kept by deaconesses who did not live and work in Neuendettelsau,

¹¹¹³ MChMh (11/11/1857), CorIM 1857, No. 1, p. 3. In German, the terms are obsolete: "Psalmodie, Lection, Hymnus und Oration (Gebetsdienst)."

¹¹¹⁴ Stählin to her sister Auguste (17/07/1857) ThStI, 66.

¹¹¹⁵ In the end, Konsistorialrat Ranke from Ansbach came to the same conclusion. He had been concerned about the legitimacy of the liturgy as potentially competitive to the newly introduced Lutheran "Agende" which was intended to unify the liturgy within the whole Bavarian state. It appeared him that there was no provision for a Sunday morning service, cf. Chapter 3.2.

¹¹¹⁶ Löhe's *Samenkörner des Gebets. Ein Taschenbüchlein für evangelische Christen*, originally published in 1840, was one of the most popular of Löhe's many devotional books. By 1872, it had reached 33 editions. It contained prayers for the whole course of the day, special prayers for each day of the week and for the main feast-days of the church calendar. The majority of suggested prayers consisted of psalm-verses, prayers by Luther and from proponents of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

¹¹¹⁷ MChMh (28/05/1857), CorIM 1857, No. 6, p. 23.

¹¹¹⁸ *Ordnung des täglichen Hausgottesdienstes* (1857), 6-7.

¹¹¹⁹ *Charfreitagslieder*, and *Texte für die Gesänge*. Löhe showed a clear predilection for the old Lutheran church hymns, recommending hymns from Bach's St Matthew's Passion, mottets by Heinrich Schütz, but also music by Palestrina and a "corrected" version of Bernard of Clairvaux' Salve Regina ["Das berichtigte Salve regina"]: "Hail, King of Mercy! Life, joy and hope of our souls, hail! [...]."

¹¹²⁰ *Ordnung des täglichen Hausgottesdienstes* (1857), 7-8.

such as the keeping of the silent half hour¹¹²¹ and the use of evening prayer according to the liturgy of the mother house when the deaconesses gathered for their chapter-meetings.¹¹²² Others were a prerogative of the deaconesses in Neuendettelsau such as the singing of psalms in two choirs, accompanied by a harp.¹¹²³ Löhe went to great lengths in his liturgical research, even requesting music samples of the Russian Orthodox Church from a deaconess stationed in Odessa.¹¹²⁴

With this round-the-clock schedule of devotional times, the individual deaconess was integrated into an institutional pattern which emphasized uniformity and conformity. The rules stated explicitly: "For every business in the house, a specific time is appointed. Therefore, every pupil has to observe the clock of the house and the bell of the superior."¹¹²⁵ The times of prayers and worship had priority in the Institute's life: visitors were never to distract or hinder a deaconess from participating, and meals were scheduled around any extra services or prayers.¹¹²⁶ The symbolic significance of this must not be underestimated. Referring to medieval monasticism, Anne Müller has pointed out that the uniform "circular time of the everyday-life of the monastery" served to withdraw the community symbolically from the mundane passing of time and conveyed the impression of a "prefiguration of eternity."¹¹²⁷ In practice, this masked changes and stabilized the institution.¹¹²⁸ We have an example of how this played out in Neuendettelsau. Emma Linß died in 1856, on the Saturday before Easter Sunday. The hour of her death coincided with the community's celebration of Vespers which was focused on "the happiness of Christ's ascension to paradise."¹¹²⁹ From an external perspective, this might be understood as a piercing of temporal circularity with a singular event; however, it was not experienced as such by the community. In Löhe's funeral address, the annual cycle of the church celebrating Easter, the

¹¹²¹ "Regeln für das persönliche Leben" [1866], CorDiac 1866, No. 4, p. 16.

¹¹²² "Ordnung der Diakonissen-Kapitel", CorDiac 1858, No. 7 (January), mss.

¹¹²³ Stählin to her mother (24/07/1857), ThStI, 67. Löhe considered the harp as the quintessential instrument for accompanying psalms so eventually, thanks to the support of Stählin's mother, a harp was acquired for the deaconess house in 1858. Lotze took it upon himself personally to learn to play the instrument, cf. Stählin to her mother (08/08/1858) ThStI, 87.

¹¹²⁴ Löhe to Cäcilie Pöschel (27/06/1859) [ZADN RII I].

¹¹²⁵ §38, NN, "Hausordnung der Diakonissenanstalt Neuendettelsau" (1865), CorDiac 1865, No. 5, p. 19.

¹¹²⁶ § 2 and 3, NN, "Hausordnung der Diakonissenanstalt Neuendettelsau" (1865), CorDiac 1865, No. 5, p. 17.

¹¹²⁷ Müller, *Symbolizität als Differenzmerkmal*, 191.

¹¹²⁸ Müller, *Symbolizität als Differenzmerkmal*, 196.

¹¹²⁹ Gedenktafel "Jungfrau Amalie Therese Emma Linß", in: Neuendettelsauer Kalender (1863).

community's commemoration of Christ's ascension to paradise, and Linß' death at this time in her room were all linked. According to Löhe, who could not have witnessed it as he was in chapel, Linß died "with a long, intense gaze upwards" and so entered what had always been her "everlasting, immaculate, and imperishable hope."¹¹³⁰ Thus while the deaconesses in chapel were drawn upwards with Christ in spirit, Linß, according to the belief of the community, entered paradise as Christ's disciple in reality. In this way, Linß' death on 22 March 1856 at 3.30 pm could be – and was – seamlessly integrated into the community's "eternal" spiritual marking of time. A similar fusion of mundane time and place, and spiritual, symbolic "prefiguration of eternity" was experienced by the community in the celebration of Holy Communion.¹¹³¹ The collective commemoration of Christ's salvific sacrifice on the cross was fused with the deaconesses' re-integration into the *communio sanctorum* by being cleansed through confession and absolution and their partaking Christ's body and blood. Thus the individuals were "re-collected" and the lost unity was restored.¹¹³² Deaconess-chapters, therefore, would from time to time "re-member" their cohesion by consciously participating in Holy Communion as a group.¹¹³³

While this shared pattern of worship served to strengthen internal cohesion, a differentiation from the broader church was achieved by the aesthetics of the community's worship. Löhe had initially requested the ecclesiastical authorities to grant him some freedom for the development of specific liturgical formulas for the deaconess house. He argued with some pride that

hardly any church or congregation in the state would be as suitable to produce liturgical prototypes of forms for worship [*Herstellung liturgischer Mustergottesdienste*] as the deaconess church in Neuendettelsau with its crowds of well-disposed singers and youthful voices, and therefore, within the existing order, there should be a certain freedom of movement for the deaconess house.¹¹³⁴

¹¹³⁰ Meyer, *Lebensläufe*, 12.

¹¹³¹ From 1860, Holy Communion was celebrated weekly in the Deaconess Institute's *Betsaal*, cf. MChMh (14/09/1860), CorDiac 1860, No. 10, p. 37.

¹¹³² Assmann, *What is 'Cultural Memory'*, 11: "When collectives 'remember', they thereby secure a unifying, 'connective' semantics that 'holds them inwardly together' and reintegrates their individual 'members' so that they possess a common point of view."

¹¹³³ "Protokolle des Neuendettelsauer Kapitels" (13/05/1858) [ZADN DIII a (mss)].

¹¹³⁴ Löhe to the deanery in Windsbach (02/10/1859) [LAELKB BKA 2884 I].

This request was rejected,¹¹³⁵ and Löhe was consequentially thwarted in his wish to embellish the liturgy with “all the ornaments and glory [...] of the treasure of ancient times.”¹¹³⁶ However, he found an alternative outlet for his leanings towards antique forms in the creative arrangement and decoration of the chapel.¹¹³⁷ Löhe encouraged the deaconesses to design and undertake embroidery for the church and instructed them in the symbolism of church fittings, freely drawing on Roman Catholic models.¹¹³⁸ This alarmed the consistory, which was already scandalized by the fact that in his order of worship, “in a text which is intended for persons of the female sex”, Löhe drew “almost consistently not on the German, but on Latin terms taken from Roman Catholic ritual such as Matins, Vespers, Oratio, Preces, Laudes etc.”¹¹³⁹ Now, the consistory noted that Löhe’s dictation on church ornaments “review[ed] the arrangements of the Roman Catholic church over thirty-three pages” and showed a “predilection for the Roman church and its rites” whereby “once more a spirit has crept in which propagates Roman doctrine.”¹¹⁴⁰ However, as neither the deanery in Windsbach nor the upper consistory saw any reason to intervene,¹¹⁴¹ the deaconess community became well-known for its church embroidery, accepting commissions from parishes whose incumbents were sympathetic to Löhe’s views, in Bavaria and beyond.¹¹⁴² This served to open up new areas in which the deaconesses could contribute to worship. Within the community, deaconesses could also assume roles not normally open to women in local parishes, and these were additionally enhanced in status by the specific emphasis on liturgy. Gertrud

¹¹³⁵ Consistory to the upper consistory (10/11/1859) [LAELKB BKA 2884 I].

¹¹³⁶ 1. *Jahresbericht* 1854/55, 11.

¹¹³⁷ It has been pointed out repeatedly that Löhe’s theology was not simply a matter of “repristination.” This will not be discussed further here, but cf. for example Albrecht, *Ganz antik und ganz modern*; Graf, *Restorationstheologie*; Jacobs, *Entstehung und Wirkung*.

¹¹³⁸ Cf. Löhe, “On the ornaments of sacred spaces [Vom Schmuck der heiligen Orte]”, *CorDiac* 1859, No. 1 and 2, p. 7; No. 3 and 4, p. 11-14; No. 5, p. 18-19; No. 6, p. 22-23; No. 7 and 8, p. 27-29; No. 10, p. 39-40; No. 12, p. 48; *CorDiac* 1860, No. 7, p. 25-26. This offered to the deaconesses a virtual tour through an ideal church; cf. also Raschzok, *Einführung*.

¹¹³⁹ Consistory (Ranke) to the upper consistory (15/04/1858) [LAELKB BKA 2884 I]. The quoted passage refers to *Ordnung des täglichen Hausgottesdienstes* (1857).

¹¹⁴⁰ Consistory (signed Ranke) to the upper consistory (11/12/1860) [LAELKB BKA 2884 I].

¹¹⁴¹ The upper consistory stated mildly that “the editions of the *CorDiac* 1859 [where the dictation was published] do not give cause for further complaint” except for one passage in the 6. *Jahresbericht* 1859, p. 24, where Löhe voiced his opinion that he had adhered to correct doctrine in the dictation “On the ornaments of sacred spaces” (upper consistory (03/01/1861) [LAELKB BKA 2884 I].

¹¹⁴² On 2 February 1858, a “society for church ornaments” [*Paramentenverein*] was founded in the deaconess house, after the conclusion of the dictation (cf. Stählin to her sister Ida (16/02/1858) ThStI, 74-75). In the following years, branch societies were founded, and annual meetings were held in Neuendettelsau. Statutes for the society were introduced in 1866, cf. NN, “Statuten für den Paramentenverein”, *CorDiac* 1866, No. 5, p. 17-19. For a list of the fabricated items and places of destination, cf. [Hahn], “Listen der Paramentenarbeiten”, *CorDiac* 1867, No. 2, p. 5-8.

Hahn, for example, served as the community's cantrice from 1860, and another deaconess functioned as sacristan.¹¹⁴³ Perhaps most importantly, the specific terminology used in the community's liturgical life and the material culture of the Neuendettelsau chapel functioned as "party badges," thus providing cultural codes which demarcated between "inside" and "outside". John Shelton Reed has argued with regard to Victorian Anglo-Catholicism: "[W]hatever pious motives prompted these newly revived signs of reverence, they also had significance and value as symbols of comradeship and markers of identity."¹¹⁴⁴ This also holds true for Neuendettelsau.

5.2.5. Commemorating the dead

In chapter 4.2., we explored Löhe's obituaries and their communication about death and conceptions about the life of a deaconess. Here, the focus is on the funeral rites themselves and the formation of a specific memorial culture in which the deaconesses were closely involved.

We have established in chapter 4.2. that death was considered as the passage to eternal life, and earthly life as a transitory stage which found its fulfillment only in afterlife. Therefore, excessive mourning was discouraged. One indication of this can be found in the deaconesses' dress regulations which explicitly forbade any alterations because of mourning.¹¹⁴⁵ The deaconesses were encouraged to say a prayer in preparation for their own death every day at 3 pm, at the hour of Christ's death,¹¹⁴⁶ and every case of death in the Neuendettelsau institutions further served to refresh the *memento mori*.¹¹⁴⁷ In consequence, the deaconesses regarded their position as privileged compared to those having to endure the pain of death "outside." In a letter, the deaconess Steinlein wrote to her family after the death of a relative:

¹¹⁴³ Stählin to her mother (09/06/1869) ThStI, 178. Cf. also § 8, NN, "Entwurf einer Leichenordnung für das Diakonissenhaus", CorDiac 1867, No. 8, p. 31.

¹¹⁴⁴ Reed, *Glorious Battle*, 83.

¹¹⁴⁵ §17, NN, "Festgestellte Kleidertracht", CorDiac 1863, No. 6, p. 22.

¹¹⁴⁶ *Ordnung des täglichen Hausgottesdienstes* (1857), 5.

¹¹⁴⁷ §5, NN, "Entwurf einer Leichenordnung", CorDiac 1867, No. 8, p. 31. Whenever someone died, the bell would solemnly toll, whereupon all work was interrupted for collective or silent prayers for the departing soul and for one's own death.

I well know how much more difficult it is for you to feel comfort and courage, because you don't live within a community which can comfort and strengthen you with the Word [of God]; however, this is well known by our dear God and He will therefore not burden you with more than you can carry. Of course, in contrast, I am well-off [*habe es gut*]. I live together with more developed [*geförderte*] Christians, who also develop me and help me to look with heartfelt joy at the glory of the future life. How silly one is to immerse oneself so little in these matters. [...]. I often have to laugh when Therese Stählin rubs her hands gleefully and thinks that then she may see all the high Apostles and the holy women, and Luther, etc. But of course I know that when one sits in distress, it is difficult to feel such happiness. May God grant it to you.¹¹⁴⁸

Apparently, both the “*mutuum colloquium et consolatio sororum*” and a vivid imagination helped Steinlein to deal with her own grief.¹¹⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that the deaconesses took it for granted that the holy women sat on equal terms with the holy men and that gender roles would lose their significance in afterlife.

Despite a general discouragement of excessive mourning, the graves of individual sisters were important monuments. The first deaconesses were buried in the village cemetery where their grave-stones were inscribed with symbolic imagery, for example the lamp of the wise virgin [Matthew 25: 1-13].¹¹⁵⁰ Occasionally, the community gathered at the graveside of a deceased sister on the anniversary of her death, and “words of remembrance” were spoken by Löhe.¹¹⁵¹ On 2 November 1865, the community's new cemetery was solemnly inaugurated and blessed. This was not uncontroversial. The deaconess “Schw. M.R.” who wrote an article on “The new graveyard in Dettelsau” in order to present it to those who were working elsewhere, expressed the ambiguity felt by some sisters:

¹¹⁴⁸ Elise Steinlein to her mother, brother and sister (April 1859) [ZADN EII st1].

¹¹⁴⁹ Luther used the formula “*per mutuum colloquium et consolatio fratrum*” in the Articles of Schmalkalden (1537) to describe the pastoral duties of all Christians towards each other. Bezzel later obviously considered this to exclude women and was most skeptical of the deaconesses' wish to “care for souls” [*Seelenpflege*]: “When [...] women care for souls, this happens in a certain schematic way which kills or stimulates; both will finally fail. [...] God has given to female nature many opportunities for [...] a true care of souls, but never does He give inner benefits apart from outer means [i.e. the sacraments]. The deaconess truly cares for souls when she fulfills and performs her earthly part and work with a view to eternity” (Bezzel, “Was fehlt uns?”, *CorDiac* 1908, No. 12, p. 48).

¹¹⁵⁰ Stählin to her mother (01/01/1866) *ThStl*, 154. For Löhe's predilection for symbols on grave-stones and their interpretation cf. §31 “Vom Schmuck der heiligen Orte”, *CorDiac* 1859, No. 7/8, p. 29.

¹¹⁵¹ In the case of Linß, we know that a short celebration at her grave-side took place to commemorate the first anniversary of her death, cf. *MChMh* (22/03/1858), *CorIM* 1857, No. 6, p. 21. The annals give a short summary of Löhe's address there. The same is true of Rheineck, cf. *MChMh* (22/08/1857), *CorDiac* 1857, No. 5 (November) [mss], and Steinlein, cf. Stählin to her mother (01/01/1866), *ThStl*, 154. Cf. also §9, NN, “Entwurf einer Leichenordnung für das Diakonissenhaus”, *CorDiac* 1867, No. 8, p. 32, which states that “words of remembrance” might be spoken in the evening service on the day of an anniversary.

Since when do we have a new graveyard? Is our old one not outside, east of the village, situated beautifully on an elevation on which a number of our most noble deaconesses already slumber as golden ears, awaiting the resurrection, and do not we, too, wish to be buried where a Caroline Rheineck, an Emma Linß and Emma Merz, - where our Elise rests?¹¹⁵²

Obviously, physical closeness even in death and the chance to have one's grave visited by members of the community were important aspects. This is highlighted by the fact that in accordance with her dying wish, immense efforts were made to bring Elise Steinlein's body to Neuendettelsau from Fürth. Finally "at home", her coffin was received in a moving ceremony.¹¹⁵³ Löhe gave a short speech, and the deaconesses stayed up all night to complete the decorations. As it was just after Christmas, a part of the ornaments from the family-room and Betsaal were transferred to the mortuary.¹¹⁵⁴ Steinlein's grave and those of others were visited both by individual deaconesses¹¹⁵⁵ and jointly by the community.¹¹⁵⁶ For the community, the graveyard was an important part of what Assmann describes as a "system of memory sites, a system of markers that enables the individual who lives in this tradition to belong, that is, to realize his [or her] potential as the member of a [...] community where it is possible to learn, remember, and to share in a culture."¹¹⁵⁷

A special case was the death of the community's founder. When Löhe died on 2 January 1872, an era ended in Neuendettelsau. During his life-time, he had made occasional attempts to "detach from his

¹¹⁵² M[argarete?] R[uttmann?], "Der neue Kirchhof in Dettelsau", CorDiac 1866, No. 1, p. 3-4. Strangely, neither the graves of Pauline Haag (+ 20 December 1863), nor of Johanna Zwanziger (+ 17 August 1862) are mentioned. Other deaconesses who had died in the meantime (Lisette Hermann, + 2 September 1859; Eleonore Reichold, + 9 September 1859; Maria Berger, + 16 October 1860) were buried elsewhere. Johanna Büttner who certainly died in Neuendettelsau (10 May 1860), may also have been buried elsewhere.

¹¹⁵³ Cf. "Gedanken aus der Rede beim Empfang des Leichnams der sel. Schwester Elise im Leichenhause der Diaconissenanstalt, gehalten am 29. Dezbr. 1864" (ms), and "Gedanken aus der Parentationsrede" (ms) [both ZADN EII st1].

¹¹⁵⁴ Sarah Hahn to Marie [Stählin?] (01/01/1865) [ZADN EII st1].

¹¹⁵⁵ Stählin to her mother (01/01/1866) ThStI, 154.

¹¹⁵⁶ This was especially the case when former pupils celebrated their annual reunion on 2 July, for example in 1868: „This [the visit to the graveyard] has by now become such a tradition amongst us that one cannot omit it even if the evening is as cold as the one on 1 July. It always seems to me a sweet duty of the older sisters to introduce our precious deceased [sisters] to their successors and pupils as much as possible. Of course, with every year that passes this becomes more difficult as the number of those increases who know the blessed sisters only by description while the number of those who have known them personally remains constant" (Th[erese Stählin], "An die Töchter von Dettelsau", CorDiac 1868, No. 9, p. 33).

¹¹⁵⁷ Assmann, *What is 'Cultural Memory'*, 9. The community itself was aware that any graveyard gains significance with age. Thus the deaconess "M.R." wrote explicitly in her article on the new cemetery: "And once when in later years the tops of high trees sway above the graves and the crosses and inscriptions speak of a history and past, then our *coemeterium*, too, will be beautiful; it is already holy" (M[argarete?] R[uttmann?], "Der neue Kirchhof", CorDiac 1866, No. 1, p. 3). Even ten years later, when it was extended, Schw. Th[erese Stählin] admitted that it could "not claim [to have] a long past" ("Einweihung des neuen Teils unseres Gottesackers", CorDiac 1875, No. 9, p. 36).

person and to assign the great task to other hands.”¹¹⁵⁸ However, he retained a charismatic domination. For the deaconesses, therefore, Löhe’s death constituted a fundamental rupture. In the aftermath of Löhe’s death, we find an interesting debate in Neuendettelsau as to the best form of commemoration.

One faction, termed anonymously “some friends of our blessed *Herr Pfarrer*,” wished to commemorate Löhe with a large statue in front of the mother house.¹¹⁵⁹ This brought forth opposition from the community which obviously felt that this was inappropriate. However, as the sculptor had already been commissioned, the plan of the statue was realised.¹¹⁶⁰ It was erected and inaugurated on 13 August 1873 with a speech given by a member of the theology faculty at Erlangen, Gerhard von Zezschwitz.¹¹⁶¹ The deaconesses were later even asked to help finance the statue. There is a somewhat mysterious “notice” [*Mittheilung*] in the *CorDiac*, informing the deaconesses that there were some enthusiasts who wished to have a small copy of the statue made of plaster. The sculptor had agreed to fulfil the request but only if a commission was given for fifty copies. The new *Rektor*, Friedrich Meyer, therefore appealed to “friends” who might enjoy “to see this statuette erected in their room,” to notify him.¹¹⁶² Unfortunately, we do not know how successful the appeal was. Zezschwitz’ address revealed that the opposition had not been caused primarily by any reticence to glorify mortal humans, though this might have been a valid argument, given that Löhe had requested a “deaconess funeral” [*Diakonissenleiche*], at which there were no addresses or speeches, either at the grave or afterwards in the village church.¹¹⁶³ Rather, the opposing faction was concerned that a stone memorial might in turn “petrify” the community and Löhe’s legacy. Clearly, there was uneasiness at the thought that “memorials generate immutability,”¹¹⁶⁴ perhaps felt especially by the new *Rektor* who had yet to establish himself. For the deaconesses, an additional concern might have been that such a form of commemoration left them in a purely passive role.

¹¹⁵⁹ Cf. “Nachricht und Bitte”, *CorDiac* 1873, No. 1, p. 4.

¹¹⁶⁰ *CorDiac* 1873, No. 1, p. 4.

¹¹⁶¹ Zezschwitz, “Rede am Standbild des sel. Herrn Pfarrer Wilhelm Löhe”, *CorDiac* 1873, No. 9, p. 33-36.

¹¹⁶² Meyer, “Mittheilung”, *CorDiac* 1873, No. 3, p. 12.

¹¹⁶³ J[ohannes] D[einzer], “Letzte Stunden, Tod und Leiche des hochwürdigen Herrn Pfarrers Wilhelm Löhe”, *CorDiac* 1872, No. 1/2, p. 4. The whole issue appeared with a black frame, expressing the community’s state of mourning.

¹¹⁶⁴ Assmann, *Tod als Thema der Kulturtheorie*, 76.

Assmann has pointed out that “[d]ead people and memories of dead people cannot be handed down. Remembrance is a matter of emotional ties, cultural shaping, and a conscious reference to the past that overcomes the rupture between life and death.”¹¹⁶⁵ In this respect, Deinzer, who served as interim-chaplain to the community, seems to have picked up the community’s mood. In an address given in the *Betsaal* on the evening of Löhe’s funeral, he reminded the sisters that Löhe had wished for “the realization of his ideals [...] in a small circle, a congregation of willing souls” to put into practice “apostolic life” as “the seeds for the church of the future.”¹¹⁶⁶ Very pastorally, Deinzer suggested to the deaconesses that they represented this legacy: “If we take these thoughts to heart, then Löhe is not dead for us, then his bones flourish [...]; then I am not afraid about the future. We must [...] plant his seeds in us and bring them to life. In order that we may be enabled to do this, we must, most importantly, intimately affiliate, renew the covenant amongst us and the covenant with God.”¹¹⁶⁷

The deaconesses found their own creative form of commemoration. When former students and deaconesses gathered on 2 July 1872 in the interim period before Meyer was installed, they covered Löhe’s grave in flowers and wreaths and went for a walk into the woods. The author of the article in the *CorDiac*, a former student, narrated:

At a quiet spot we sat down. Here, we were pleasantly surprised. Sister Therese opened a basket, which had attracted our attention for a while, and poured out a large number of tightly inscribed pages. Deep, serious, highly meaningful words of our blessed *Herr Pfarrer* were written on these, which numerous sisters had collected from sermons, addresses, letters, and diaries. Every guest who was present received one of the pages, each was read aloud, and the words penetrated our hearts. It seemed to us as if our precious *Herr Pfarrer* himself were amongst us, such was the effect of his words full of faith, love, and godliness on us.¹¹⁶⁸

In this way, a selection of the community’s formative and normative texts was transformed by being ritually enacted. Both the collecting of the various quotations and the final performance in which all present were involved constituted an act of bonding. In this gathering in the woods, a resurrection of the

¹¹⁶⁵ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 20.

¹¹⁶⁶ J[ohannes] D[einzer], “Letzte Stunden”, *CorDiac* 1872, No. 1/2, p. 7.

¹¹⁶⁷ J[ohannes] D[einzer], “Letzte Stunden”, *CorDiac* 1872, No. 1/2, p. 7.

¹¹⁶⁸ E. St., “Bericht über die Feier des 2. Juli 1872”, *CorDiac* 1872, No. 8, p. 33.

dead was staged which transformed all present. It thus constituted a ritual of remembrance which truly re-collected the dispersed members, bringing comfort and healing.¹¹⁶⁹

When Meyer was installed as *Rektor* later in the year, the role of “ritual master”¹¹⁷⁰ was again taken out of the hands of the deaconesses. For the first anniversary of Löhe’s death, on 2 January 1873, he composed a solemn “liturgy”. After his sermon in the *Betsaal* on the Sunday before the anniversary, Meyer ceremoniously declared: “We fulfil a blessed duty of our thankful love by solemnly celebrating the first anniversary of our blessed shepherd’s death on 2 January, and by declaring this day for all times to be a feast-day of our Institute. The ceremony of the day shall proceed in the following order [...].”¹¹⁷¹ In all the major rooms of the mother house and the attached institutions, altars were erected, covered in black cloth and decked with lit candles. At 12 o’clock, the members gathered for half an hour of silent commemoration in the chapel. In the afternoon, the deaconesses assembled again “to process together” [*gemeinsam (...) zu wallen*] in solemn silence from the *Betsaal* to Löhe’s grave. Finally, an evening service of Holy Communion was celebrated in the Institute.¹¹⁷² Through the annual performance of the canonized script of this ritual, the culture of commemoration became institutionalized.¹¹⁷³ A time and place were designated for the deaconesses’ personal grief which avoided a disturbance of the overall “emotional regime” by individual outbursts of emotion: “By externalizing emotions in a harmonious and coordinated way, emotional standards are established that confirm personal sentiments, and help create an emotional regime that transcends them.”¹¹⁷⁴ Finally, Meyer asserted his authority in the community through his assumption of the role of “ritual master”, and in doing so defined his predecessor’s legacy. Here, as Assmann has pointed out, there is an intrinsic “alliance between power and memory.”¹¹⁷⁵

¹¹⁶⁹ Assmann, *Tod als Thema der Kulturtheorie*, 80-81.

¹¹⁷⁰ Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice*, 215.

¹¹⁷¹ NN, “Der 2. Januar 1873 in Neuendettelsau”, *CorDiac* 1873, No. 1, p. 1-3.

¹¹⁷² NN, “Der 2. Januar 1873 in Neuendettelsau”, *CorDiac* 1873, No. 1, p. 2.

¹¹⁷³ We have evidence that the specific “liturgy” for the day was left unaltered, at least for a few years, Schw. Th[erese Stählin], “Weihnachten 1878”, *CorDiac* 1879, No. 1/2, p. 4.

¹¹⁷⁴ Riis/ Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 109.

¹¹⁷⁵ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 54.

We conclude that the gravesites of the deaconesses were an important physical location at which the community remembered its cohesion - which, it was assumed, extended into afterlife -, and which evoked a sense of continuity. However, the mere graves were not all. The emotional ties were strengthened through the community's remembrance of its dead on a daily basis through the Neuendettelsau calendar (cf. chapter 4.4.), and by actions such as placing flowers on the graves and decorating the mortuary and coffins when a funeral took place. This was especially evident at Löhe's death, after which the deaconesses struggled to find means of participating in the establishment of a memorial culture.

5.2.6. Conclusion

In the deaconess community, the communal rites and collective action were important for establishing emotional bonds within the limitations of an institutional setting. As these non-literary means required physical presence, the Neuendettelsau deaconesses were generally privileged through them. These rites allowed them to develop and consolidate their sense that the community offered the warmth and intimacy of a supernatural family home. Nevertheless, they could also communicate this to visiting deaconesses and thus, in an emotional sense, too, fulfill Löhe's request to "nourish the hearth from which others fetch the fire."¹¹⁷⁶ In this way, the mother house was to become a home in which the deaconesses could find emotional security which enabled them to venture out into the public sphere and strengthened them to face the unfamiliar and potentially threatening situations which would confront them there.

¹¹⁷⁶ Löhe to the deaconess chapter in Neuendettelsau (06/07/1859) GW4, 714.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the process of restructuring the Deaconess Institute, of developing means of consolidating and affirming a specific deaconess identity [*Diakonissensinn*], and of drawing all members into “some kind of enclosed sisterhood or order”¹¹⁷⁷ was lengthy and complex. Taking an approach inspired by cultural history with a focus on everyday -life, on ego-documents and on the emergence of pervasive cultural codes, this research has revealed the crucial contribution of the deaconesses themselves to this process and has illuminated their scope of action. One striking finding was the existence of a clear internal social stratification within the fellowship. At the periphery, deaconesses lived and worked who often found self-fulfilment in their work and for whom the communal life ranged secondary. In the centre, however, was a core of deaconesses, clearly favoured by Löhe, who were not only deeply steeped in bourgeois culture and, in consequence, found cultural means to enhance the associations of “home” in Neuendettelsau, but were also consulted about important changes and participated in very real processes of decision-making. It is hardly surprising that here the degree of identification was highest. As the fellowship consolidated itself as a community in which work, life, and faith merged, the deaconesses’ faith and spirituality contributed to bridging the differences and to strengthening cohesion. The intercessory prayers, the specific devotional practices and the occasional attendance of whole deaconess chapters in celebrations of Holy Communion were an important aspect of their Neuendettelsau deaconess identity in which personal piety and an external affirmation of belonging seem to have merged. This sense of community was enhanced by Löhe’s ambiguous relationship to the broader church and by his interpretation of the deaconess community as a “developed congregation” [*geförderte Gemeinschaft*] and a prefiguration of the eschatological communion of saints. One result of this was that Löhe portrayed – and often himself experienced – the outside world and the broader church as alien and hostile; however, this did not always represent the actual experiences of the deaconesses working “outside”. It is also apparent that individual

¹¹⁷⁷ 4. Jahresbericht 1857, 26.

deaconesses, inspired by Löhe's teachings, by their theological training and by their semi-ordained status, occasionally transgressed the role which was conventionally allotted to women, for instance in their dealings with clergymen. However, this was not univocally encouraged, and the deaconesses themselves generally encouraged their sisters to adhere to the community's normative behavioural patterns.

The conclusion to this thesis must consequently end on an ambiguous note. The Neuendettelsau deaconess fellowship differed from other deaconess communities in that Löhe intended to build, together with the women, an "independent church society" as the spark for the rebirth of the *Landeskirche*. He thus placed the project in a much wider context, and consciously sought to further the community spirit. In turn, he esteemed the deaconesses highly. Some aspects in the community thus ran counter to conventional stereotypical norms for women allotted according to bourgeois gender characteristics. The deaconesses received a reasonably thorough theological training, they were consulted about and, at least to some extent, they participated in decision-making. Especially for the educated daughters of the bourgeoisie, there were considerable possibilities for creativity. Away from Neuendettelsau, many of the deaconesses took on professional roles. Nevertheless, within the community their new roles in some ways did not differ much from their old roles: they were still daughters in a deeply patriarchal household, albeit with many sisters. Löhe's emphasis on his *gratia ordinationis* served to enhance the in-house hierarchy and made him more than simply a father. For those women who sought to find self-fulfilment in their profession, the system of rotation thwarted the establishment of long-term relationships and served to re-affirm their status as dependent daughters. The Neuendettelsau mother house, like other deaconess communities, played an ambiguous role: it offered to single women a better than average education, a professional career and a secure livelihood, an alternative to marriage and family -life, a religious fellowship of like-minded, and an enhancement of self-esteem. However, this came largely at the price of a prolongation of the norms of female submission and self-sacrifice.

This study has sought significantly to widen the scope of historical research on the Neuendettelsau Deaconess Institute which so far has tended to take into account solely the male perspective of the Institute's *Rektoren*. This has led to a devaluation, or even complete neglect, of the community and its members. Moreover, this study has shed light on the construction of gender concepts through socio-cultural and discursive ascriptions in a very specific context. By carefully illuminating the fusion of an external normative perception and the self-perception of women, their contemporary options and space for agency, this study has contributed to raise the awareness of the ongoing process of the negotiation of female and male identities in different times and places. Scholars from the field of church history are called to explore the role of religion and faith in this process. Such a focus invites an approach that works with case-studies. This thesis offers one of them.

Bibliography

I: Abbreviations

Archives:

ZADN: Zentralarchiv der Diakonie Neuendettelsau

LA: Löhe-Archiv

LAELKB: Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern

Further abbreviations:

AuKF: Der Armen- und Krankenfreund. Eine Zeitschrift für die Diakonie der evangelischen Kirche [*Bulletin of the Kaiserswerth deaconess house*]

CorDiac: Correspondenzblatt der Diaconissen von Neuendettelsau, Nördlingen/ Gunzenhausen [*Bulletin of the Neuendettelsau deaconess house*]

CorIM: Correspondenzblatt der Gesellschaft für innere Mission nach dem Sinne der lutherischen Kirche, Nördlingen [*Bulletin of the Association for inner mission in the sense of the Lutheran church*]

GW: Wilhelm Löhe: Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 1 – 7/2, ed. by K. Ganzert, Neuendettelsau 1951-1986. [*Collected works of W. Löhe*]

MChMh: Mittheilungen aus der Chronik des Mutterhauses [*Notices from the annals of the mother house*]

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Rede vom 15. April 1856: Sophie Renner, Johanna Zwanziger, Barbara Klein, Sophie List, Johanna Pausch, Regina Schied, Konstantine Linke, Magdalena Wunner, Anna Böhm, Katharina Hommel, Sybilla Rheinck [ZADN BI 64] [*Address given on 15 April 1856*]

Rede vom 28. September 1856: Christine Osiander und Magdalena Rolf [ZADN BI 64] [*Address given on 28 September 1856*]

Rede vom 4. April 1857: Therese Stählin, Julie Kündiger, Elisabeth Westermeyer, Anna Distler und Johanna Höllerer [ZADN BI 64 and CorDiac Nr. 5, 1917] [*Address given on 4 April 1857*]

Rede vom 6. Mai 1857: Maria Berger (Pauline Meier und Amalie Müller?) [LA 2780/ 2769] [*Address given on 6 May 1857*]

Rede vom 1. Juni 1857: Marie v. Meyer, Babette Höggel und Caroline Feldmeier [ZADN BI 64 and CorDiac Nr. 11, 1882] [*Address given on 1 June 1857*]

Rede vom 29. Juni 1857: Barbara Laible [ZADN BI 64] [*Address given on 29 June 1857*]

Rede vom 26. September 1858: Cäcilie Pöschel [ZADN B I 64 and CorDiac Nr. 11, 1867] [*Address given on 26 September 1858*]

Rede vom 15. April 1859: Elise Steinlein und Luise Kahnis [ZADN BI 64, CorDiac Nr. 6, 1872, GW4, 524-527] [*Address given on 15 April 1859*]

Rede vom 1. Oktober 1860: Caroline und Bernhardine Hofmann [LA 2605] [*Address given on 1 October 1860*]

Rede vom 12. April 1861: Clara Alt, Barbara Dietrich und Marie Morneburg [LA 2605] [*Address given on 12 April 1861*]

Rede vom 12. Oktober 1861: Emilie Lippold [ZADN BI 64] [*Address given on 12 October 1861*]

Rede [vom 2. Februar] 1866: Einsegnung von 8 Diakonissen [CorDiac Nr. 6, 1876] [*Address given [on 2 February] 1866. Blessing of 8 Deaconesses*]

Rede vom 17. September 1867: Adelheid Liesching, E. Willenbücher und Anna Wildt [ZADN BI 64] [*Address given on 17 September 1867*]

Rede vom 21. Dezember 1867: Johanna Ortleb [ZADN AI b 12] [*Address given on 21 December 1867*]

Rede vom 16. Oktober 1868: Aussegnung von 10 Schwestern [ZADN AI b 12] [*Address given on 16 October 1868. Blessing of 10 Sisters*]

III: Published Primary Sources relating directly to the Neuendettelsau Deaconess Institute

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“Von der Aufgabe des eigenen Willens und dem freudigen Gehorsam gegen den Willen Gottes oder der Gelaßenheit“, CorDiac 1858, No. 4/5, pp. 18-19 [*On the relinquishment of self-will and the joyful obedience to God’s will or on serenity*]

“Von der Barmherzigkeit“, CorDiac 1859, No. 3/4, pp. 15-16; No. 5, pp. 19-20; No. 6, pp. 23-24; No. 7, pp. 29-31; No. 9, pp. 35-36; No. 11, pp. 42-44; No. 12, p. 47; CorDiac 1860, No. 4/5, pp. 18-19; No. 6, pp. 22-23; the full dictation, including chapters 6 and 7 (§§43-77), was published separately (Nördlingen 1860) and reprinted in GW4, 466-523 [*On Mercy*]

“Vom Bibellesen“, CorDiac 1858, No. 6, p. 32; CorDiac 1859, No. 1/2, p. 7 [*On reading the Bible*]

“Von den Diakonissen“, CorDiac 1858, No. 1, pp. 2-4; No. 2, p. 6-7 [*On deaconesses*]

“Vom Gebet“, CorDiac 1858, No. 6, p. 30 [*On prayer*]

“Von der Kleidung der Frauen“, CorDiac 1858, No. 3, pp. 10-12 [*On the dress of women*]

“Von der Ordnung“, CorDiac 1858, No. 4/5, pp. 17-18 [*On order*]

“Vom Schmuck der heiligen Orte“, CorDiac 1859, No. 1/2, p. 7; No. 3/4, pp. 11-14; No. 5, pp. 18-19; No. 6, pp. 22-23; No. 7/8, pp. 27-29; No. 10, pp. 39-40; No. 12, p. 48; CorDiac 1860, No. 7, pp. 25-26 [*On the ornaments of sacred spaces*]

“Von der seligen Übung der Barmherzigkeit“, CorDiac 1858, No. 4/5, pp. 15-17 [*On the blessed practice of mercy*]

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[Löhe, Wilhelm]: "Lebenslauf der Diakonissin Emma Pauline Merz", CorDiac 1858, No. 9, pp. 34-36.

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[Löhe, Wilhelm]: "Schwester Magdalene" [Wunner], CorDiac 1871, No. 1, pp. 1-4.

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[Bezzel, Hermann]: "Die Bedeutung des Mutterhauses", CorDiac 1908, No. 9, p. 33-35 [*The significance of the mother house*]

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[Bezzel, Hermann]: "Der 20. und 21. Februar 1908", CorDiac 1908, No. 4/5, pp. 13-15.

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[CorIM] Published by E.H. Beck'sche Buchhandlung in Nördlingen

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