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Religious Crisis and Civic Transformation

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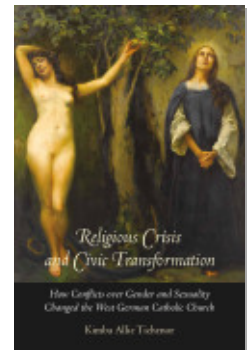
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Introduction

On September 22, 1968, *Stern* proclaimed, “Grandpa’s Church Is Dead.”¹ The week before at the biennial Catholic Congress in Essen, three thousand ordinary West German Catholics voted in favor of a statement calling upon the pope to rescind *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical upholding the Church’s ban on artificial contraception. The era in which German Catholics publicly acquiesced to the Vatican’s moral authority, while perhaps privately rebelling, had ended; and as the motto of the 1968 Essen Catholic Congress proclaimed, West German Catholics now lived “in the midst of this world” (*Mitten in dieser Welt*).² The insulated subculture that had organized Catholic life from cradle to grave since Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s had collapsed, and the so-called golden age of political Catholicism had ended. But what would replace the Catholic milieu remained unclear in 1968. What was certain was that West German Catholics had stepped out into a rapidly changing world—one in which issues of gender and sexuality often took center stage.

This book focuses on the West German Catholic Church’s engagement in post-1950s religious and secular debates on gender and sexuality. It argues that the Church’s engagement in these debates led to a theological and political transformation within Catholicism. In Germany, this transformation facilitated the Church’s ability to exercise significant influence on national debates concerning women’s reproductive rights and the defense of life long after the collapse of the Catholic milieu. As Vatican pronouncements on sexuality became more stringent, moderate and progressive West German Catholics distanced themselves from the Church, leaving a unified conservative core to promote the Church’s sexual mores in the religious and public spheres. By the 1980s, this conservative core had embraced new arguments and new issue-specific alliances with political parties other than the two self-identified Christian parties—the Christian Democratic Union (Christlich Demokratische Union, CDU) and the Christian Socialist Union (Christlich-Soziale Union, CSU)—that proved remarkably successful. As the historian Dagmar Herzog has noted, the Catholic Church in Germany remains to this day a “formidable” political force on questions concerning the defense of life and women’s reproductive rights.³ This influence persists de-

spite a dramatic decline in traditional indices of faith, such as membership in the Church. Yet this seeming paradox—continued political influence, on the one hand, and declining membership, on the other—has received little scholarly or media attention. Instead, most historians and pundits assume that after a brief Christian cultural and political resurgence in the 1950s, a secularized Germany emerged and the Christian churches lost their political influence. Consequently, recent victories by moral conservatives in a reunified Germany, such as the 2009 revision of Paragraph 218 mandating a three-day waiting period for late-term abortions when a fetal disability has been diagnosed, seemed for many scholars a surprising development in a nation known for its liberal attitudes on sexuality.

Yet as this book shows, these victories are inextricably linked to the moral crisis of authority of the 1960s and 1970s; from this crisis, a new Catholic theological and political identity emerged for a postsecular age. In the religious sphere, this meant a move away from the feminized piety of the nineteenth century aimed at filling the pews with women toward a gendered theology aimed at preserving the Church's teachings on the male celibate priesthood and on marriage. It also aimed at rallying the Church's conservative core. In the secular sphere, it meant promoting an interventionist and theologically informed agenda, particularly concerning reproductive politics. At first glance, this political strategy appears to be a return to *Kulturkampf* politics; it is in fact fundamentally different. Neither the German hierarchy nor the faithful harbored any delusions that they could turn back the hands of time. They understood that the German political climate had changed and that new arguments and strategies would be required if they were to succeed in promoting the Church's message in the secular or religious sphere.

From Triumph to Crisis

During the Allied occupation and in the early years of the Federal Republic, the CDU and CSU emerged as the dominant political force in West Germany. Although both parties identified themselves as Christian rather than Catholic, they had their origins in political Catholicism. The CDU had its roots in the prewar Catholic Center Party. The CSU, a regional Christian party, traced its origins to the Bavarian Catholic People's Party. Consequently, in the immediate postwar era, Catholics held the vast majority of leadership positions in both parties. In 1949, the CDU-CSU candidate, Konrad Adenauer (Catholic), became the first chancellor, thanks in large part to Allied sup-

port and the widespread belief among the populace that a return to Christian values represented the only viable path forward.

For Adenauer, Germany's economic and political recovery required the restoration of the hierarchical and moral discursive order. As Elizabeth D. Heineman noted in *What Difference Does a Husband Make?*, Adenauer feared that the gender and age imbalance in West Germany, along with the disequilibrium in class relations, made the new state vulnerable to the triple threat of fascism, communism, and Americanism. As part of his campaign to safeguard the country against these threats, Adenauer prioritized the restoration of Christian values and the reconstruction of the bourgeois family, instituting programs designed to remove women from the workplace and promote domesticity.⁴ The Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, EKD) supported this agenda. In particular, the West German Catholic Church, "through its many informal contacts with Catholic legislators," lobbied extensively to defend the Church's legal status and to incorporate Christian values into the Basic Law (Grundgesetz).⁵ Although the Catholic Church did not succeed in having all its proposals inserted into the Basic Law, it did succeed in many spheres. The Basic Law included an invocation to God in the preamble; affirmed a right to life; ensured religious instruction in the schools; guaranteed the protection of marriage and family; and acknowledged the validity of past concordats between the Catholic Church and the German state.⁶ In fact, the Catholic Church proved so successful in its efforts that the Protestant theologian Martin Niemöller remarked in 1949 that the Federal Republic had been "sired by the Vatican and born in Washington."⁷

Yet despite the successes of political Catholicism and its policies of restoration, signs of discontent with the status quo already existed in the 1950s; *Halbstarke* and rock 'n' roll girls, influenced by American cultural imports, challenged the gender, racial, and sexual norms of their parents. Between 1955 and 1957, *Halbstarke*—made up mostly of young working-class males donning "tight blue jeans" and "ducktail haircuts"—engaged the police in street battles, sparking widespread fear among German officialdom of Americanization and moral degeneration, which in turn prompted a rash of youth protection laws. However, as Uta Poiger detailed in *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, by the late 1950s West German authorities had largely succeeded in confronting this challenge by pushing "the issues of popular culture and sexuality into arenas defined as nonpolitical."⁸ Still, depoliticization was incomplete. The youth culture of the 1950s opened new avenues of individual

expression and sexual openness, which in the 1960s young people politicized anew.⁹

But the challenges posed by a relatively small number of rebellious West German youth were perhaps not the most disturbing sign of changing values in 1950s West Germany. As early as 1951, in letters to the editor of the Catholic women's journal *Frau und Mutter*, mainstream Catholic women voiced dissatisfaction with patriarchal marriage, demanding more autonomy and authority for women within marriage. One Catholic woman declared that she should be free to make decisions about household purchases without having to get her husband's approval. Another woman complained that her husband treated her like a "servant," because he provided her with no "pocket money." To the delight of many female readers, the *Frau und Mutter* editorial staff supported demands for a more collaborative partnership between husband and wife.¹⁰ However, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, the editorial staff did not support the concomitant desire of some Catholic women to limit family size. Ordinary German Catholics—male and female—were already voicing their discontent with Church teachings on marriage and family in the 1950s.

Between 1955 and 1965, statistics indicated a slow decline in Church attendance and participation in Easter Communion. For example, in the Diocese of Cologne in 1954, 39.7 percent of Catholics attended mass; by 1960, this number had fallen to 38.7 percent. Easter Communion figures for the Diocese of Trier revealed a similar trend. In 1954, fully 65 percent of Catholics participated, but in 1960 the number had dropped to 64 percent (see Appendixes B and C).¹¹ These figures certainly did not suggest a steep decline in religiosity; however, Church leaders worried that the temptations of modern life were leading Catholics, particularly young Catholics, astray.

As Mark Ruff documented in *The Wayward Flock*, in the mid-1950s Catholic youth leaders of the League of German Catholic Youth (Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend, BDKJ) complained that many Catholic youth no longer paid their organizational dues and could not name their local youth group leader; some BDKJ leaders responded to this threat by integrating leisure activities associated with the secular sphere into the religious sphere, creating, for example, film, book, and music clubs. But the overt religious tone in which many Church leaders framed discussions of leisure activities increasingly alienated many West German Catholic youth.¹² Like their secular counterparts, these youth began experimenting with new forms of community—ones that centered on generational inter-

ests rather than confessional or class ones. On the eve of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) and the sexual revolution, genuine fears existed in the secular and religious spheres about the moral and spiritual degeneration of German youth. In the case of the Catholic Church, a worsening shortage of priests exacerbated these fears—who would lead the Catholic youth of tomorrow?

Vatican II, called by Pope John XXIII on January 25, 1959, for the stated aim of modernizing the Church, generated genuine enthusiasm among West German Catholics, who believed that renewal in the Church depended on reform. However, this positive response did not develop immediately. Curial cardinals dominated the preparatory commissions; consequently, West German Catholics doubted that any real reform would result. Instead of the Vatican Council, West German Catholics were preoccupied with the 1961 World Eucharist Conference in Munich, the construction of the Berlin Wall, and the 1962 Catholic Congress in Hanover.¹³

Following conciliar developments on October 13, 1962, West German Catholics took notice of the council. On this date, Achille Cardinal Liénart of France rose from the president's table (the panel of ten cardinals chairing the session) to request a postponement of elections for the council commissions in order for the bishops to get acquainted with each other and for the episcopal conferences to submit lists of candidates. Josef Cardinal Frings of West Germany seconded the motion. The assembled Church fathers greeted the motion with prolonged applause, and the president's table affirmed the postponement. For Catholics around the world, the intervention signaled that the bishops did not plan to rubberstamp the documents prepared by the curial cardinals. For conservative Italian cardinals, such as Giuseppe Cardinal Siri of Genoa, the actions of the Northern European delegates represented something more sinister: "The devil has had his hand in this."¹⁴ In either case, the postponement sparked an unprecedented upsurge in the circulation of Catholic newspapers in West Germany, as the faithful eagerly awaited the latest news on council developments.¹⁵

The sixteen documents approved by the council had, in the words of John XXIII, opened "the windows of the Church . . . so that we can see out and the people can see in."¹⁶ Unlike past councils, Vatican II did not reject modernity, offering no condemnation of errors. Instead, it highlighted the Church's obligation to engage in dialogue with the modern world. The specific theological innovations that the council introduced—for example, a more positive valuation of the laity, a new emphasis on the missionary func-

tion of priests, tolerance for other systems of belief, and collegiality—led secular and religious commentators to describe Vatican II as a watershed in Catholic history.

But the euphoria surrounding council achievements soon disappeared, as a struggle developed within the Church over the meaning of the documents and the future direction of the Church. This battle encompassed many of the Church's fundamental teachings, including the interrelated subjects of marital morality and women's place in the Church. Although these two entangled subjects were by no means the only sites of confrontation in the post-Vatican II Church, they played a leading role in the transformation of Roman Catholicism.

Contextualizing the Crisis of Authority

Without doubt, the West German Catholic Church was not alone in experiencing a moral crisis of authority beginning in the mid-1960s. Throughout Western Europe and the United States, Catholics began questioning the Church's teachings on women's place in church and society, the relationship between the sexes, and women's reproductive rights. The Second Vatican Council's more positive assessment of the laity and its message of religious tolerance led many ordinary Catholics to ask if in an increasingly pluralistic society their Church had the right to impose its moral vision on the general public. Some Catholics even publicly challenged the Church's right to dictate the sexual morality of its congregants. This challenge did not go unnoticed by the Catholic hierarchy or the secular media. On March 19, 1965, an article in *Time*, "Roman Catholics: Authority under Fire," quoted Father Joseph Gallagher, an editor of Baltimore's archdiocesan weekly, as saying that a "crisis of obedience" existed in the Church.¹⁷ Three years later the French archbishop, Marcel Lefebvre, attributed this crisis to Vatican II reforms: "How well I understand the desire on the part of many Catholics who are left stunned, indignant, or dismayed as they see spreading within the Church—through the voice of its ministers—doctrines casting doubt on truths heretofore regarded as the immutable foundations of the Catholic Faith."¹⁸ Even those who supported Vatican II reforms, such as the French theologian Yves Congar, recognized that a "deep-seated malaise in large areas of the faithful" had developed since the council.¹⁹

It was not just the Catholic Church that experienced a crisis of authority in the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout Europe and the United States, social and political movements emerged that challenged established social hierar-

chies and secular institutions. As with the crisis in Catholicism, gender and sexuality took center stage in this secular crisis.

The two crises' shared focus on gender and sexuality was no coincidence. As the historian Sybille Steinbacher noted in *Wie der Sex nach Deutschland kam*, in the late nineteenth century, nation-states and the Christian churches in the West developed an increased interest in controlling sexuality and the relationship between the sexes as a means of maintaining the established order. In June 1900, the German Reich passed a law banning obscene literature in an attempt to protect German youth from its deleterious effect (*Lex Heinze*). In 1926, the Weimar Republic passed the *Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften* (Law to Protect Youth from Trashy and Filthy Writings);²⁰ and Paragraph 175, which had been in effect since the establishment of a unified German state in 1871, criminalized homosexual relations.²¹ In 1920, the French government outlawed the sale and use of contraceptive devices and in 1923 imposed stiff prison terms on anyone who underwent, helped procure, or performed an abortion. Similarly, in 1923, the Belgian legislature prescribed prison terms for anyone who displayed, distributed, or advertised contraceptive devices, and Italy followed suit in 1926.²² On the eve of the turbulent 1960s, this governmental practice of regulating obscenity, sexual relations, and reproductive practices remained intact, despite multiple challenges advanced in earlier decades.²³ Moreover, the Christian churches remained powerful allies in this endeavor.

But by the late 1960s, the pendulum in most Western European nations had swung in the direction of reform, as "the gap between what people were doing in private and what they were willing to declare in public narrowed dramatically."²⁴ Although the exact causes of the transformation of the European sexual landscape in the mid-1960s and early 1970s remain a topic of scholarly debate, an undeniable shift toward the liberalization of the legal sexual order had begun.²⁵ In 1967, the French legislature approved the so-called *Loi Neuwirth*, which made contraception available with a doctor's prescription.²⁶ That same year, Denmark decriminalized pornography, and the tiny nation became the world's largest exporter of pornography. In 1967, Britain passed a bill that legalized abortion in the first two trimesters.²⁷ Across Europe, the sexual legal order, championed by the educated bourgeoisie and church leaders since the nineteenth century, became subject to revision.

But for many young Western Europeans, reforming the sexual order within the existing liberal democratic, capitalist framework did not suffice.

They wanted a social revolution, and sexual politics became one of the primary focal points for theorizing and giving voice to all that was wrong with the existing order. During the 1968 student revolt in Paris, a popular protest sign read, “The more I make love, the more I make revolution.” A 1968 German poem put it more bluntly: “If the state wants to spoil your / dancing and fucking, / then smash the state!”²⁸ Secular and religious authorities throughout Europe faced a crisis of authority as the younger generations increasingly rejected the moral values and social order that had been code-termined by church and state.

In Germany, this religious and secular crisis of authority had “a distinctive force and fury” that, as Dagmar Herzog noted in *Sex after Fascism*, imparted “a heightened drama to the resulting social transformations.”²⁹ This “heightened drama” resulted in part from the ever-present subtext of the West German debate, namely the need to redefine what it meant to be German in the wake of the recent National Socialist past. Germans anxiously debated questions such as: Had the sexual conservatism of the bourgeoisie contributed to Nazism’s success in Germany? Did the liberalization of sexuality represent a path toward democratization? Or was the opposite the case? For example, did proposed changes to West Germany’s abortion law lead the way back to Auschwitz? Had “free love” in fact liberated women? Or had it introduced new forms of female oppression, as the Catholic Church and many feminists claimed, albeit for different reasons?

Creating a distinct, non-Nazi German identity also required distinguishing West Germany from its past American occupiers and from Communist East Germany. As Uta Poiger detailed in *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, West German authorities wanted to find a “fourth way, between the threat of Bolshevism, the self-destructive sexualizing, and emasculating powers emanating from American-style consumer culture, and finally the dangerous secularism and materialism that according to many contemporary commentators had led to National Socialism.”³⁰ In the immediate postwar period, with the support of the two largest religious communities, the Catholic Church and the EKD, the CDU-CSU championed the creation of a Christian occident as a distinctly German path forward. In 1951 and 1953, the West German parliament passed two youth defense laws. The first law regulated adolescent access to dances, movies, and alcohol. The second law regulated printed matter, such as pulp fiction and pornography. In addition to protecting youth, these 1950s laws aimed at preserving the existing gender hierarchy: “Measures against violent gangster and western stories, in films or fiction,

were geared toward curtailing male overaggression, and the restrictions on dancing were supposed to prevent the oversexualizing of women.”³¹

By the late 1960s, the CDU-CSU coalition had lost its power, and a new government led by the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) set out to give the West German Criminal Code a modern orientation. By 1973, the category “Offenses against Morality” had been replaced by “Offenses against Sexual Autonomy.” The new code decriminalized consensual homosexual acts, adultery, and the distribution of pornography among adults.³² In 1976, West German women gained legal access to abortion under certain conditions.

Not all Germans welcomed these changes. Abortion, in particular, had been a topic of heated debate throughout the history of the Federal Republic, and all sides invoked the tropes of Americanization, the Communist menace, and the specter of National Socialism. Such hyperbolic and emotionally charged language ensured that for both secular and religious actors the interrelated topics of sexual ethics, women’s reproductive rights, and gender equality remained inextricably linked to questions of German identity, democratization, and social justice long after the secular crisis of authority reached a peaceful resolution in the Federal Republic in the late 1970s.

In the case of German Catholic actors, the lack of resolution of the religious crisis of authority in the universal Church gave these debates an even greater urgency, as the future of Catholicism seemed tied to their successful negotiation at the national and transnational levels: What roles should women fill in church and society? Should the Church protest the liberalization of the sexual order? Should Catholic couples be free to make decisions of conscience about using artificial contraception? Did the maintenance of a male celibate priesthood constitute a form of discrimination against Catholic women? If not, how could the Church justify women’s exclusion from clerical office? Did greater democratization of the Church represent the path to renewal, or alternatively did renewal depend on the centralization of authority in the office of the papacy? Should Church authorities take steps to preserve Church teachings on gender and sexuality, even at the expense of losing its most loyal constituency—women? These questions polarized the Catholic Church and led to a contraction and intensification of faith in Germany.

From Feminized Piety to Gendered Church

For centuries the Catholic Church had taken for granted the loyalty of its female congregants. In Germany, Catholic women could be counted on to fill the pews every Sunday and to vote as male Catholic leaders directed. As late as 1965, when some CDU officials expressed concern about the upcoming election, Konrad Adenauer reassured them: “But you have forgotten the most important thing. The good Catholic housewives will never forget us when the chips are down.”³³ Yet seven years later the CDU’s “women’s bonus” (i.e., the greater number of votes cast by women than men) dropped from 10 percent to 3 percent (see Appendix M), and by the early 1980s West German bishops, such as Wilhelm Kempf of Limburg, expressed alarm at the growing number of young women leaving the Church.

In an effort to stanch women’s exodus from the Catholic Church, in 1972 West German Catholic hierarchs supported the creation of a female diaconate and in 1981 issued the “Declaration on the Position of Women in the Church and Society”—a document that even SPD women praised. But time passed, and no real changes materialized. Instead, Paul VI and John Paul II replaced moderate bishops with more conservative ones who had little or no patience with the demands of reform-oriented women.

Moreover, with his ascension to the papacy in 1978, John Paul II promoted a gendered theology with the dual aim of preserving the male celibate priesthood and the Church’s embattled marital morality. Increasingly, the symbolic representation of the Church as the Bride of Christ eclipsed other representations of the Church (e.g., the Church as the people of God and the sheepfold) in papal pronouncements.³⁴ As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, it also served to justify a male celibate priesthood and to support the papal call for a new Catholic feminism—one that emphasized sexual difference, glorified women’s essential role as mothers, and championed papal loyalty. Although this new feminism found few adherents among the disenchant-ed, it rallied members of the conservative core, such as the German theologian Simone Twents. In her 2002 book, *Frau sein ist mehr: Die Würde der Frau nach Johannes Paul II* (To be woman is more: The dignity of woman according to John Paul II), she called on women to employ their “own particular genius and orientation to love” in order to help heal humankind and “not adopt male characteristics.”³⁵ Archbishop Joachim Meisner of Cologne wrote the foreword to the book, offering effusive praise for Twents’s appreciation of the “fundamental anthropological dimensions of femininity”

and for her delineation of a “feminine theology” that rested on the “Catholic image of woman.”³⁶ The feminized Catholic Church of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, documented by numerous historians,³⁷ had given way to a Church in which a gendered ideology provided the conservative core with a rallying cry against attacks from within and without. The ideology itself was not new, but in the late twentieth century it acquired a new emphasis and function, as the battle over the future direction of the Church reached feverish heights and neoconservatives worked out new political strategies for promoting official Church teachings in the secular sphere.

Historiography

The Catholic Church in Secular Histories

As already noted, the dominant narrative of postwar West Germany assumes a dramatic decline in the political influence of the West German Catholic Church after 1965. As proof of this declining influence, many studies have highlighted either the CDU’s increasing corporatist orientation beginning in the 1970s or the diminishing influence of the CSU within the CDU-CSU coalition. For example, in *The CDU and the Politics of Gender in Germany*, Sara Elise Wiliarty traced the CDU’s transformation from a Catholic-controlled party to a “corporatist catch-all” party in response to new demands from women. By the 1970s, female voters were increasingly dissatisfied with the CDU’s view of the proper role of women, summed up by the three Ks—*Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (children, kitchen, church)—and no longer voted overwhelmingly for the CDU. This development did not go unnoticed by CDU party strategists; in an effort to bring women back into the party, the CDU distanced itself from the Catholic Church and developed a “corporatist catch-all” model in which “important societal interest groups [were] represented within a party” and party policy was determined by balancing diverse interests after allowing all constituencies a voice.³⁸ Increasingly those who promoted Catholic interests within the party lost power to other internal interest groups. Wiliarty’s study provides valuable insights into the evolution of a political party and its gender policies; however, because of its focus on the CDU, the political strategies of Catholics disenchanted with the CDU’s more moderate stance lie beyond its scope.

The uniqueness of Wiliarty’s study—its focus on gender politics within the conservative Christian Democratic Union—highlights another feature of German gender studies. Overwhelmingly, they concentrate on leftist

groups, such as the Weimar sexual reform movement, the 1960s student movement, and the feminist movement; consequently, little attention has been paid to the political projects of Catholic women.³⁹ The historiography reflects the feminist origins of gender studies and the dominant narrative of a secularized Europe. As Ann Taylor Allen noted in a historiographical essay on gender and religion, most German gender histories ignore religion, writing off those women “who did not follow men in their flight from the churches.”⁴⁰

This tendency to ignore Catholic women as important political actors is reinforced by the tradition of equating Catholic political interests with those of the CDU-CSU coalition. Yet by the late 1970s, many Catholics recognized that the CDU no longer always prioritized traditional Catholic interests. This realization led some Catholic organizations to pursue issue-specific alliances with political parties other than the Christian parties. As we shall see in Chapter 5, the largest Catholic women’s organization in West Germany allied with Green Party women and radical feminists in the battle against new reproductive technologies (NRTs) and stem cell research. This alliance contributed to the Bundestag’s adoption of stricter regulations than those initially proposed by the CDU government. At the time, supporters of biotechnology, such as the Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP) legal expert, Detlef Kleinert, bristled at this “unholy alliance.”⁴¹ Yet historians of gender have taken little notice of new Catholic political strategies.

Even scholars interested in gender and religion in Germany have rarely ventured past 1950. Allen did not cite a single work on the post-1965 period in her historiographical essay. Moreover, in outlining future research directions, she limited her discussion to the period between 1830 and 1950.⁴² Although Allen acknowledged that the Christian churches “have not disappeared” from contemporary Germany, she largely dismissed them: “Their chief role is now to dispense various forms of social assistance and to champion weak and vulnerable members of society.”⁴³

Only recently, with the resurgence of religious issues in European headlines—for example, the headscarf debate in France, the Danish cartoon controversy, and the question of Christian heritage and European integration—have scholars begun rethinking religion’s place in European history of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. However, the new attention accorded religion has concentrated primarily on the challenges to European multiculturalism posed by Islamic fundamentalism or in

some cases the rise of Pentecostalism. Developments within mainstream Christian churches remain largely unincorporated into the history of late-twentieth-century Europe, and those works that do reference the Catholic Church typically depict it as a monolithic actor.

Dagmar Herzog's pathbreaking work, *Sex after Fascism*, constitutes a notable exception. In this study of postwar German sexuality, she details how the Christian churches, particularly the Catholic Church, shaped immediate postwar debates on gender equality and reproductive rights by exercising significant control over the way in which the Nazi past was narrated. Rather than depicting a monolithic Church, she highlights the diverse opinions on sexuality held by lay Catholics, theologians, and even Church hierarchs in the late 1950s and early 1960s. She rightly identifies how this diversity contributed to a Catholic crisis of moral authority, which made it vulnerable to attacks by the student movement in the 1960s and the feminist movement in the 1970s. Not only did these two groups attack the Church's narrative of the past, they equated Christian views on sexuality with fascism.⁴⁴

However, in focusing exclusively on changing narratives of the National Socialist past and who controlled this narration, Herzog lost sight of internal developments within West German Catholicism in the late 1970s and early 1980s—specifically the upsurge in the political power of Catholic moral conservatives and their cultivation of new arguments and political alliances in an effort to protect unborn life. Consequently, in a 2010 article, "Post coitum triste est . . . ? Sexual Politics and Culture in Postunification Germany," on post-unification debates on abortion law, Herzog had difficulty accounting for Germany's recent conservative turn.⁴⁵

Another exception was Eva-Maria Silies's monograph, *Liebe, Lust und Last*, a nuanced study of German political debates on artificial contraception in the 1960s and on women's experience with the pill.⁴⁶ In one chapter Silies highlighted the diversity of views Catholic theologians held on artificial contraception and their interventions in the secular debate. However, because the chapter was dedicated to Catholicism, it seemed divorced from the main narrative. Moreover, the author's analysis did not extend far past *Humanae Vitae's* release in 1968. Thus, her narrative did not address how this debate redefined the West German Catholic community, influenced Catholic women's perception of mandatory clerical celibacy, and generated a small women's ordination movement.

Gender and Sexuality in Histories of German Catholicism

Until very recently, histories of German Catholicism also seldom ventured past 1965. In part, the absence of post-1965 studies reflected the difficulty of gaining access to Catholic archival materials on the recent past. As noted later in this introduction, in the section on sources, few diocesan archives have been willing to grant critical scholars access to materials that involve ongoing controversies.

The absence of such studies also derived from the tremendous influence exercised by the Commission for Contemporary History (Kommission für Zeitgeschichte) in shaping postwar histories of the Catholic Church. Founded in 1962, the commission served as a “nexus for historical research” on German Catholicism.⁴⁷ Scholars affiliated with the commission pursued individual and collaborative projects addressing the Church’s role under Nazism, the formation of the Catholic milieu in the nineteenth century, and the milieu’s collapse with the encroachment of modernity on its sphere of influence. To date, the commission has published more than 175 monographs in its “Blue Series,” exploring institutional, political, and social developments in the Catholic Church. In doing so, it has provided a rich history of German Catholic political and associational life. However, until recently, this scholarship has had two significant shortcomings: a tendency to equate modernization with religious decline and a resistance to new approaches and methodologies, including gender studies.

For most of its history, the commission advanced the milieu model as the master narrative of German Catholicism. In 1966, M. Rainier Lepsius first used the term “socio-moral milieu” to describe political and social divisions within Germany between 1871 and 1933. Lepsius argued that Socialists, bourgeois Protestants, Catholics, and aristocrats developed their own subcultures. Each subculture or milieu promoted distinct cultural values and provided a carefully coordinated set of organizations and associations in which members participated.⁴⁸

Within the framework of Catholic scholarship, the milieu described the Catholic subculture that emerged in response to Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s. Otto von Bismarck, chancellor of the German Empire, wanted to curtail the influence of the Catholic Church in the newly formed German Imperial Reich, enacting a series of laws that placed the state in control of religious and educational affairs. The German Catholic community responded by circling the wagons, creating an insulated cultural-religious

sphere that organized Catholic life from cradle to grave. The elements of this milieu included (1) political Catholicism—its primary representatives being the Catholic Center Party and the Catholic Bavarian People's Party; (2) the Church's institutional framework—bishops, priests, diocese, and parish; (3) social and religious associations; (4) youth groups and Catholic schools; (5) workers' and professional associations; and (6) popular piety—Marian devotion and pilgrimages. A few historians, such as Wilfried Loth, pointed to diversity and fragmentation within this subculture, positing the existence of multiple milieus within German Catholicism.⁴⁹ However, most historians emphasized that shared religious belief gave the Catholic milieu social, cultural, and political cohesiveness in Imperial and Weimar Germany. Within the milieu, the antimodern message of traditional Catholicism flourished.

The dominance of the milieu model had two consequences for Catholic scholarship. First, it resulted in a plethora of studies that sought to pinpoint the exact moment of the milieu's collapse. Although some historians dated the collapse to as early as the Weimar era, no historian suggested that the milieu survived past 1965.⁵⁰ In focusing on an insulated Catholic milieu, historians of Catholicism isolated Catholic history from mainstream German history. Second, in positing religion's inevitable decline as a consequence of modernization and secularization, Catholic historians validated profane historians' assumption that, in a secularized Germany, religion did not matter.

Challenges to the milieu model have recently gained momentum. In 2000, Benjamin Ziemann argued that the model could not account for what came after the milieu, because it emphasized religious decline at the expense of religious transformation. A new paradigm was needed for German Catholic history.⁵¹ In 2007, Ziemann utilized the paradigm of "functional differentiation" to describe the postwar Church's transformation in his pioneering work, *Katholische Kirche und Sozialwissenschaften, 1945–1975*. He detailed how West German Church officials embraced techniques of polling, statistics, sociology, and even psychotherapy in an effort to mitigate the exodus from the Catholic Church.⁵² In focusing on Church leaders' active engagement with scientific techniques, Ziemann pointed to the immense mental and cultural transformations taking place within the German Catholic Church.

Ziemann's rejection of the milieu model initially encountered resistance. In a review of his book, Mark Ruff noted that Ziemann's focus on the sci-

entification (*Verwissenschaftlichung*) of religion did not have “the weight to replace the erosion of the Catholic milieu as an alternative master narrative.”⁵³ While recognizing the pioneering character of Ziemann’s work, Ruff rightly pointed out that engagement with the social sciences proved a double-edged sword for the Catholic Church. Although it allowed Church officials to identify accurately the attitudes and needs of congregants, its reliance on empiricism also threatened to desecralize Church institutions and “render the transcendent immanent.”⁵⁴ Ruff concluded that Ziemann’s study had left “open the possibility that there might be some validity to traditional narratives of secularization and milieu erosion.”⁵⁵

Ziemann was not alone in challenging the milieu model; a new generation of historians affiliated with the Commission for Contemporary History also criticized the model.⁵⁶ Slowly, a paradigm shift in describing post-1965 Catholicism began to emerge in scholarship on German Catholicism. In 2011, *Soziale Strukturen und Semantiken des Religiösen im Wandel*, edited by Wilhelm Damberg, co-chair of the commission, and Frank Bösch, was published. Instead of religious decline, the contributors employed the frame of religious transformation to detail the efforts of Catholic and Protestant actors to adapt to a postconfessional rather than post-Christian world. For example, Thomas Mitmann’s essay described the new strategies that Church leaders developed for marketing the Church to a public that demanded increased participation and interaction in worship. Andreas Henkelmann and Katherine Kunter’s essay analyzed the transformation of women’s religious charitable work, paying attention to the complex interaction between changes in societal structures and changes in ideological beliefs. Rosel Oehmen-Vieregge investigated the formation of women’s synods from the 1970s to the first decade of the twenty-first century. In emphasizing religious transformation, the authors did not downplay secularization. Instead, as Lucian Hölscher’s explained in the concluding essay, secularization and transformation constituted interrelated processes.⁵⁷ The commission’s new focus on religious transformation was underscored at a conference in September 2012 celebrating the commission’s fiftieth anniversary. The conference also acknowledged the need for more studies on gender.⁵⁸

As Mark Ruff respectfully noted in 2005, the commission has shown a reluctance to adopt “new approaches that have gained favor in the secular historical world.”⁵⁹ This reluctance has meant that until very recently few postwar histories of German Catholicism have addressed gender or sexuality. This failure has resulted in a significant thematic gap between

scholarship on late-twentieth-century German Catholicism and that on nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century German Catholicism. There are numerous histories, particularly from the Anglophone world, that emphasize Catholic concerns about the feminization of religion during the Imperial and Weimar eras. For example, Derek Hastings described Catholic efforts on the eve of World War I to create a “more manly” Church. Members of the Munich-based Catholic cultural association, Krausgesellschaft, feared that the Catholic Church was “becoming a Church for women and children only” and consequently an irrelevant institution.⁶⁰ David Blackbourn, in his study of nineteenth-century Marian apparitions in Germany, emphasized the class and gender dimensions of internal Catholic debates on the authenticity of these sightings. Typically women and children of the lower classes reported these sightings; once reported, the sightings generated spontaneous expressions of popular devotion that male Church authorities frequently had difficulty controlling. As a result, Church leaders perceived these sightings as potential threats to authority and supported only those sightings whose interpretation they could control.⁶¹ Yet women have been curiously absent from most studies of late-twentieth-century Catholicism, leaving one to wonder what happened to all those Catholic women who filled the pews every Sunday.

Ignoring gender and sexuality is also problematic because the Catholic Church, in conjunction with the state, had a vested interest in regulating sexuality. As already noted, discursive battles on sexual morality were commonplace in the religious and secular spheres, and the churches were active participants in these debates. Yet Catholic historians have largely ignored the role of late-twentieth-century debates on gender and sexuality in transforming the German Catholic community. For example, Damberg’s 1997 comparative study of German and Dutch Catholicism between 1945 and 1980 included no mention of the 1968 “pill encyclical,” despite the massive protests it prompted among Catholics and non-Catholics. Similarly, the study did not cover the West German celibacy debate that unfolded at the Würzburg Synod (1972–1975), although it did cover the celibacy debate at the Dutch Pastoral Council (1967–1970).⁶²

Lukas Rölli-Alkemper’s *Familie im Wiederaufbau* (2000), Petra von der Osten’s *Jugend- und Gefährdendenfürsorge* (2003), and Mark Ruff’s *The Wayward Flock* (2005) represented the first efforts to incorporate gender into Catholic histories of the postwar era. Lukas Rölli-Alkemper explored the growing chasm between Catholic ideology concerning marriage and the re-

alities of West German Catholic family life in the immediate postwar era. Petra von der Osten detailed the transformation of the Catholic women's charitable organization Katholischer Fürsorgeverein für Mädchen, Frauen und Kinder from a volunteer confessional organization concerned with its clientele's salvation to a professional organization renamed Sozialdienst katholischer Frauen that focused on serving its clientele. In *The Wayward Flock*, Mark Ruff discussed how questions of gender influenced the decision of many young girls to leave Catholic organizations.⁶³

All three studies suggested the valuable insights to be gained from incorporating gender into the study of German Catholicism. However, these early studies emphasized decline and attributed changing attitudes toward gender and sexuality to forces outside the Church. This characterization oversimplified the dynamics of institutional change, which involve more than a reactionary response to exogenous forces. While reform-oriented Catholics certainly borrowed from non-Catholic ideologies and were influenced by external events, this borrowing was "as much a result as a cause of political and ideological processes internal to the Church."⁶⁴ Multiple traditions have always existed within Catholicism. When Catholic conservatives, progressives, and feminists in the postwar era chose to emphasize different aspects of these traditions, they exposed latent tensions in values, beliefs, and ideas, catalyzing internal forces of change that interacted with external ones.⁶⁵

These early studies also assumed a unidirectional flow of influence from the secular to the religious sphere. In fact, as we shall see, changes in Catholic gender ideology reshaped profane discourses on gender and sexuality. This study examines the dynamic interplay between processes of transformation in the Catholic community and in postwar German society. It does not deny the validity of secularization, but rather focuses on the dynamics that allowed an admittedly much smaller German Catholic Church to exercise significant influence on profane debates concerning gender and sexuality.

Methodology

Analyzing the evolution of Catholic discourses on gender and sexuality (popular, theological, and political) that are in dialogue with secular discourses and are situated within the broader cultural, social, and political context has multiple advantages over writing the history of a particular Catholic organization or interest group. First, focusing on the entangle-

ment of Catholic and secular discourses provides a means of reintegrating Catholic history into the historical mainstream. Second, it underscores the diversity of views that Catholic bishops, theologians, and lay Catholics held on gender and sexuality. Mapping this multifaceted theological landscape reveals the latent contradictions in ideas, values, and beliefs that led to ideological and political clashes within the Catholic Church. Thus, my study highlights the dynamic interplay between endogenous and exogenous forces in transforming Catholic identity, organizational structures, and power dynamics in the late twentieth century. Finally, this approach allows me to bridge the gap between histories of nineteenth- and late-twentieth-century Catholicism by demonstrating the centrality of the *Frauenfrage* (the woman question) for both.

Incorporating theological discourse into one's investigation constitutes a risky enterprise for a historian. However, without an analysis of theological discourse, we cannot understand the ideological changes taking place within Catholicism. As already noted, Catholic actors who challenged Vatican authority on issues such as celibacy, birth control, and abortion did so within the framework of a multifaceted Catholic legacy. They did not simply import ideas from outside the Church, that is, from the student movement, feminism, socialism, and Protestantism. Moreover, Catholic actors—the pope, the Roman Curia, bishops, theologians, priests, and committed lay Catholics—understood the secular and religious worlds from a perspective learned and developed within the Church. Without an understanding of this perspective, it is impossible to accurately assess the motivations and actions of religious actors. For example, the Vatican's refusal to compromise on artificial contraception, given the crisis it provoked, makes sense only if we take into account the debate's theological stakes. As Norbert Lüdecke's thought-provoking essay on *Humanae Vitae* as a Catholic *lieu de mémoire* demonstrated, the encyclical represented for the Church hierarchy a critical reassertion of power and of the Church's mission:

The encyclical is also more than the transcultural determination of the correct configuration of the sexual act willed by God. In this address, the correct notion of marriage is safeguarded as well as the identity of the sexes and their prescribed roles; in fact, the hierarchical structure of the Church becomes visible and affirmed—how the pope conveys God's holy plan and in doing so pre-empted and forestalls the insight of the people; the corporate structure of the Church and its teaching office clearly and authoritatively shape and nurture the conscience in all human affairs.⁶⁶

In upholding the Church's ban, Paul VI and his successors believed that the Church "is and remains as Christ wanted it."⁶⁷ From this perspective, "the defection of individuals is not critical because the Church has won the struggle for truth."⁶⁸

Detailing the changing ideological, institutional, and political contours of the German Catholic Church also cannot be divorced from developments in the universal Catholic Church. The Church's hierarchical structure limited the responses available to the West German episcopate in dealing with disgruntled congregants and clergy. For example, the German episcopate supported the creation of a female diaconate in 1975 and received praise for its 1981 declaration on women in church and society. However, papal pronouncements and Church doctrine constrained the German episcopate's ability to implement these measures. Still, German bishops were not helpless vis-à-vis the Vatican. The 1968 Königstein Declaration affirmed the German episcopate's loyalty to the pope, while at the same creating an autonomous space in which Catholic couples could reach their own decision about contraception. Even fringe Catholic groups, such as the Society of Saint Pius X and the women's ordination movement, could exercise power in a negative sense, forcing through their actions a response from the official Church.

In addition to universal Church structures, one must also factor in the West German legal, social, cultural, historical, and even geographic frames. Church-state relations, the role of media, the history of feminism, and West Germany's geographic position on the front lines of the Cold War all differed dramatically from what existed in the United States and elsewhere; these German frames both created opportunities and placed constraints on the German Catholic Church that differed from those in the United States and other national contexts. For example, although West Germany, like the United States, recognized no state religion, the Basic Law accorded "the established churches an important role in the nation's public life, investing them with various institutional guarantees, including privileges flowing from their constitutional status as 'religious bodies under public law.'"⁶⁹ This status conferred on the churches powers normally reserved for the state, such as the power to employ officials and levy a church tax. As Don P. Kommers and Russell A. Miller concluded in *The Constitutional Jurisprudence of the Federal Republic of Germany*, Articles 4 and 140 of the Basic Law emphasized "a cooperative" rather than a strict "separationist model" of church-state relations that anticipated "a limited partnership between church and

state.”⁷⁰ Under this system, the West German Catholic Church came to administer a substantial share of the German welfare system, meaning that the impact of Catholic doctrine, for example on abortion, extended far beyond its congregation.

Sources

In detailing the sources for this book, I must acknowledge certain limitations. Because of the time period under investigation and the topics covered, gaining access to archival sources proved challenging. Four diocesan archives, on learning the subject of the study, denied access—Fulda, Mainz, Münster, and Paderborn. Only the diocesan archive of Cologne allowed access to materials prior to 1972, as well as to the archival records for the Würzburg Synod (1972–1975). However, three Catholic lay organizations—the Central Committee of German Catholics (Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken, ZdK), the National Office for Catholic Youth Work (Jugendhaus Düsseldorf-Bundeszentrale für katholische Jugendarbeit, JHD), and the Catholic Women’s Association in Germany (Katholische Frauengemeinschaft Deutschlands, kfd)—granted access to their collections. The ZdK, the highest-ranking lay organization in Germany, allowed access through 1981. Jugendhaus Düsseldorf did likewise. The central office of the kfd, the largest Catholic women’s organization in Germany, granted access to its archives for the entire time period under investigation. In referring to this organization by its acronym, I have chosen to use lowercase letters (kfd), in keeping with the way it appears on member publications, rather than the uppercase letters (KFD) often used in scholarly monographs. Given that an orthographic change in the title of the organization’s magazine in January 1988 precipitated a heated debate on the organization’s attitude toward abortion (see Chapter 4), I believed it important to duplicate the organization’s use of the lowercase. As tensions escalated between Catholic hierarchs and Catholic women leaders, such mundane choices became sites of contention.

In addition to Catholic archives, I drew on the archival collections of the German Federal Republic (Bundesarchiv) and the Christian Democratic Union (Archiv für Christliche-Demokratische Politik). Unlike the debates on celibacy and women’s ordination, discussions of birth control regulation, abortion, and assisted reproduction entailed substantial interactions between state actors and religious actors.

Beyond these archival sources, I made extensive use of official Church

statistics on attendance at mass, frequency of Communion, the number of Catholics who officially separated from the church, and the number of priests in Germany. I also utilized the results of three surveys commissioned by the German Bishops' Conference (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, DBK) and conducted by the Allensbach Institute of Public Opinion Research. The first two surveys were conducted in preparation for the General Synod of Dioceses in the Federal Republic of Germany (1972–1975), commonly referred to as the Würzburg Synod. The DBK sent questionnaires to all lay Catholics over the age of sixteen; another questionnaire was sent to all priests. Roughly 25 percent of German Catholics returned the surveys inquiring about how they perceived their relationship to the Church, as well as their stances on various Church doctrines, including celibacy, birth control, and Marian devotion. Seventy-five percent of priests returned the survey asking about their experience of office and their views on mandatory celibacy. The third survey, conducted in 1993, focused on Catholic women's attitudes toward the Church. It asked a thousand Catholic women how they felt about Church teachings, including those on birth control, celibacy, and abortion. In addition to official Church statistics and surveys, I utilized surveys conducted by Emnid and by Infratest on German voting patterns, attitudes toward abortion, clerical celibacy, and women's ordination. The quantitative data pointed to the key role played by gender politics in redefining West German Catholics' relationship to the official Church, which I explored through an in-depth qualitative analysis of secular and religious discourses on celibacy, women's ordination, birth control, abortion, and NRTs.

Vatican II proclaimed the Catholic Church's openness to modernity, and West German Catholics took this message seriously. Consequently, public discourse took on new meaning for West German Catholics in the post-Vatican II era. In open letters published in the religious and secular press, as well as in monographs and public declarations, dissenting theologians, priests, and laypersons took their message of reform to the court of public opinion. The institutional Church responded in kind, issuing public condemnations of dissenting views and launching its own public morality campaign. For example, the DBK issued declarations appealing to Catholics and non-Catholics to defend unborn life. Given the public nature of these appeals and the widespread media attention they received, analyzing public discourse was a key component of my investigation. To do so, I made extensive use of published primary sources, such as Vatican documents, declarations issued by the DBK and various German Catholic organizations, articles

and letters to the editor that appeared in the secular and religious press, as well as essays and books published by members of the institutional Church and concerned lay Catholics.

With reference to Vatican documents (e.g., encyclicals, apostolic constitutions, *motu proprio*, declarations by the various congregations, and papal speeches), all citations were taken from the official Vatican website, with the exception of four documents: the 1917 Code of Canon Law, *Lamentabili Sane*, and two documents issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (CDWDS)—*Inaestimabile Donum* and “Vatican Communication on Female Altar Servers” of March 15, 1994. At the time of the writing of this book, these documents were not available on the Vatican website, and other sources were consulted.⁷¹ However, the Vatican website provides an official English version of most documents, which I utilized for citations. For a few texts, no official English version existed, and, depending on availability, citations were taken from the official German, Spanish, or Italian versions of the texts; in these cases, all translations are my own.⁷²

Organization

This book is divided into two parts. Part I, “The Male Celibate Priesthood and Woman’s Place in the Church,” focuses on German debates concerning mandatory clerical celibacy. The priestly coalition—pope, bishops, priests, ordained theologians—dominate the institutional Church. Since most Church offices with decision-making power are open only to priests, lay Catholics, particularly female Catholics, are effectively excluded from positions of power. This exclusion increasingly became a source of contention among German Catholics in the post-Vatican II era. Because in Catholic theology the celibate priest is understood to be both bride and bridegroom in a nuptial relationship between Christ and Church, any challenge to celibacy also constituted a challenge to Catholic marital and sexual morality. Thus, Chapter 1, “Celibacy for the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth,” focuses on the changing meanings assigned to the celibacy debate between 1959 and 1989. It highlights how Church efforts to preserve the discipline of celibacy informed its gender politics in the religious and secular spheres.

The second chapter in Part I, “Women’s Ordination: Sacramental and Gendered Bodies,” continues the discussion introduced in the first chapter concerning the symbolic and sacramental marriage between the Church and Christ. This chapter fulfills two functions. First, it traces the growing

interest of mainstream Catholic women's organizations in women's ordination, as well as the emergence of subaltern communities within the Catholic Church in response to the women's ordination debate. Second, through an analysis of the theological discourses that underpinned this debate, it underscores the interpenetration of the Church's rationales concerning celibacy, artificial contraception, abortion, and women's ordination and thus why the Church found itself trapped in a cascading series of crises that cannot be explained by exogenous forces alone. These internal crises, in turn, shaped Catholic responses to profane discourses on women's reproductive rights. Thus, without an understanding of these "internal" debates, which in fact witnessed significant engagement by non-Catholics, one cannot understand Catholic actions in the secular sphere.

In Part II, "The Catholic Church and Reproductive Politics," the focus shifts from "internal" Catholic debates on sexual morality and women's place in the Church to secular debates on women's reproductive rights. Chapter 3, "Artificial Contraception: German Angst and Catholic Rebellion," expands on several themes introduced in Part I, specifically the changing theological landscape and its relationship to Catholic interventions in secular debates on reproductive rights. The controversy concerning birth control in late 1950s West Germany began as a debate among experts on the new oral form of contraception. The "pill" became the prism through which politicians, doctors, university professors, and members of the clergy outlined and dictated what constituted acceptable public sexual mores. However, by the mid-1960s, most West Germans had rejected the public discourse of sexual conservatism from the 1950s. Experts (overwhelmingly male) lost control of the debate, and the Catholic Church became marginalized in the public discussion. The Vatican's intransigence on artificial contraception fueled widespread disillusionment with the official Church in West Germany, and the concept of loyal disobedience took hold. A plethora of newly formed protest communities—liberal and conservative—struggled with each other and with the institutional Church over the future direction of the Church and of German society.

Chapter 4, "The Abortion Debate: Hidden Tensions and New Directions," focuses on Catholic engagement in West German abortion debates. In 1960, the recently elected SPD-FDP coalition government announced plans to reform Paragraph 218, the law regulating women's access to abortion. This announcement prompted a public debate in West Germany on the state's obligation to protect unborn life—a debate that continues to this

day. Analyzing key events in that debate between 1969 and 1989, the chapter argues that despite West Germany's growing secular orientation, the Catholic Church exercised significant political influence with respect to abortion policy throughout the history of the Federal Republic. In addition, it argues that the West German Church's participation in these debates exposed deep rifts in the Catholic community, which in turn contributed to the formation of a smaller, more activist and conservative Church.

The final chapter, "Assisted Reproduction: Changing Bedfellows," compares and contrasts three debates on reproductive technologies—the first began in 1905, the second in 1958, and the third in the early 1980s. It highlights the confluence of events that shaped these debates—changing perceptions of gender relations, technology, National Socialism, and Germany's relationship to the United States. In doing so, the chapter points to continuities and discontinuities in the arguments for and against reproductive technologies, as well as shifts in the actors involved. It details how the German Catholic Church first gained and then maintained political influence over questions concerning reproductive technologies. It demonstrates that as German society became more secular, the Church's influence did not dwindle but in fact increased, as Catholic theological arguments and political strategies evolved in dialogue with secular discourse and changing public sentiment.

The epilogue looks ahead to the post-1989 era; it pays particular attention to the rise and fall of Benedict XVI's papacy, the new pastoral approach of Francis I, and the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the topic of the family. It shows how conflicts concerning gender and sexuality continue to shape the battle between conservative and progressive Catholics over the future direction of both the German Church and the universal Church.

