



THE ORDER OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL,
MOTHERHOUSE FREIBURG, IN THE ARCHDIOCESE FREIBURG IM
BREISGAU (GERMANY), 1846–1945

by

ANGELIKA AGNES HANSERT

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, MAYNOOTH

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: PROFESSOR FILIPE RIBEIRO DE MENESES

SUPERVISOR OF RESEARCH: DR JACINTA PRUNTY

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List of Abbreviations

CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i>
DCV	German Caritas Association (<i>Deutscher Caritasverband</i>)
DiCV	Diocesan Caritas Association (<i>Diözesaner Caritasverband</i>)
EAF	Archdiocesan Archive Freiburg (Erzbischöfliches Archiv Freiburg/Freiburger Diözesanarchiv)
Fr	Father
GLA	Baden State Archive Karlsruhe (<i>Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe</i>)
MHA Freiburg	Motherhouse Archive Freiburg
MHA Strasbourg	Motherhouse Archive Strasbourg
NS	National Socialist(s)
NSV	National Socialist Welfare Organisation (<i>National-sozialistische Volkswohlfahrt</i>)
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party (National-sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei)
RJWG	State Youth Care Act (Reichsjugendwohlfahrtsgesetz)
StadtA FR	Municipal Archive Freiburg (Stadtarchiv Freiburg)
ZSKG	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte

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Introduction

Inspired by Claude Langlois' ground-breaking 1984 work *Le Catholicisme au féminin*¹, this thesis explores a Roman Catholic female religious order during its first one hundred years, starting in 1846. Although Langlois set the example with French congregations in the nineteenth century and many scholars all over the world followed in his footsteps, the echo in Germany was by far shorter. This study fills the gap for a specific German region by taking a specific order as a model. The Order of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul was historically and geographically not only the oldest and biggest of that part of Germany but it was also attributed the label 'conservative' as a characteristic feature.² On the background of the great political and social upheavals of the turbulent and eventful German history of the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth history, this thesis will focus on the role of the Order in the world, and it will explore its sisters as being agents or instruments in their respective fields of work. It will also show if and what the archival material reveals as a possible tension between conservative order and female agency. This study argues that although the Order grew over time into a major player in the social field, and the sisters became indispensable helpers in the parishes, so much so that the people saw them as female representatives of the Catholic Church, the sisters never acted on their own behalf but for the greater good of their motherhouse in Freiburg, for the Church and for the souls of the believers. The present thesis set out to find the Order and its sisters in action in the files of archives in Freiburg, Strasbourg and Karlsruhe.

¹ Claude Langlois, *Le catholicisme au féminin. Les congrégations françaises à supérieure générale au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1984).

² Alfons Beil, 'Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom heiligen Vinzenz von Paul in der Erzdiözese Freiburg', in *300 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern vom Heiligen Vinzenz von Paul, 1633-1933, 100 Jahre Welt-Vinzenz-Verein, 1833-1933* (Munich, 1933), pp 54-58, here at p. 58.

*Crushed but not destroyed*³ was the title of the report on the near-total destruction of the motherhouse complex of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in Freiburg (Germany) in late November 1944. With the end of the Second World War in May 1945, the world as it was known to Germans had ended. Country and Order faced an uncertain future. One hundred years earlier, just after Christmas 1846, six Sisters of Charity had taken over the nursing and household management of a hospital in Baden, the *Klinik* in Freiburg. This first foundation would be the forerunner of a new motherhouse. It was the first-ever Roman Catholic religious institution of its kind in the land between the river Rhine and the Black Forest. The Order reached its peak during the Third Reich with 1,707 professed members and 66 novices in 209 branch houses all over the Archdiocese of Freiburg.⁴ Its original mission had been the care of the sick and poor in institutions such as hospitals and orphanages. Over time it had branched out into almost every field of social work, becoming the largest female apostolic order in the German south-west.

Given its geographical spread, sheer range of activities and that it had become such an integral part of everyday life, one would expect the institution to have been well researched. Yet the opposite is the case. As Joachim Schmiedl noted as early as 2004, by comparison with the Prussian north the German south-west has remained a virtual 'blind spot' in terms of modern academic study of active female religious orders.⁵ Apart from work by the present author, little has changed since then.⁶ The present thesis is the first-ever historical survey of

³ Maximilian Bertrud, *Niedergeworfen, aber nicht vernichtet! Die Kongregation der barmherzigen Schwestern vom Heiligen Vinzenz von Paul in Freiburg im Breisgau im Wiederaufbau* (Freiburg, 1958).

⁴ Six years-report of 1932 to 1938 for general chapter of 1938, numbers of 31 Dec. 1937 (EAF, B5/89). This was the last report of its kind during the period of this study; the general chapter of 1944 was delayed until after the war.

⁵ Joachim Schmiedl, 'An assessment of the histories of religious communities in Germany', in Jan de Maeyer, Sofie Leplae, Joachim Schmiedl (eds), *Religious institutes in Western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Historiography, research and legal position* (Leuven, 2004), pp 71–81, here at p. 74ff. With 'south-west' is meant the *Bundesland* Baden-Württemberg, formed by the former Grand Duchy of Baden and the Kingdom of Württemberg.

⁶ Angelika Hansert, *Liebe handelt: Aus der Geschichte des Ordens der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul, Freiburg, 1846–1996/97* (Festschrift zum 150jährigen Ordensjubiläum) (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997); Angelika Hansert, 'Professionalisierung der

the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and aims to give the Motherhouse Freiburg its due place in the modern historiography of female religious orders in Germany.

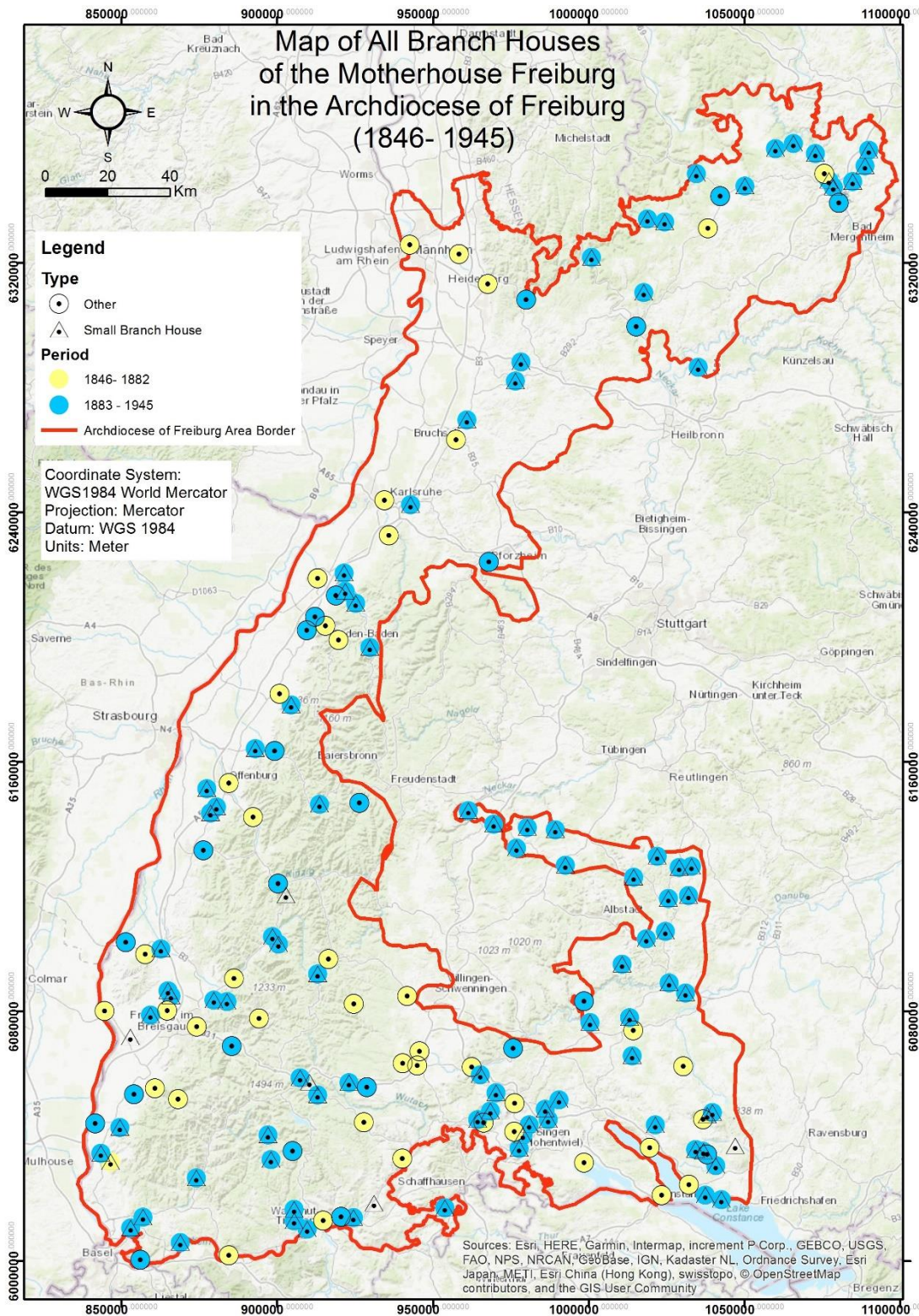
Napoleon's agency had created the new state of Baden in 1806.⁷ Its ruler, the Protestant grand duke of Baden would extend his territory to stretch from Mannheim and Heidelberg in the north to Lake Constance in the south, from the river Rhine in the west to the mountainous region of the Black Forest in the east. [See Figure 0.1 on the following page]. Coinciding with the political upheavals, secularisation had swept away the ancient ecclesiastical organisation of the Holy Roman Empire (800–1804), destroying a system that had been in place since the early medieval time. The Catholic Church lost not only its authority as effectively a secular power, but also a large part of its possessions. Most contemplative monasteries were suppressed or left to die out slowly as no longer fit for purpose. The new Archdiocese of Freiburg was created in 1821 and its first archbishop installed in 1827. It was an amalgam of parts of six former dioceses, incorporating the new state of Baden and the two Hohenzollern principalities in Swabia, the Catholic homeland of the now Lutheran monarchs of Prussia.⁸ The second Archbishop of Freiburg, Ignaz Demeter (1836–42), bequeathed two thirds of his fortune in 1841 for a new motherhouse of Sisters of Charity, to serve the revitalisation of Catholic life in the region and help merge different regions,

Krankenpflege im 19. Jahrhundert: Die Vinzentinerinnen', in Henze, Barbara u. a. (ed.), *Eine Stadt braucht Klöster □ Freiburg im Breisgau: Katalog zur Ausstellung im Augustinermuseum Freiburg* (Lindenberg im Allgäu, 2006), pp 182□92; Angelika Hansert, 'Helfen, wo Not ist' – Die Barmherzigen Schwestern vom heiligen Vinzenz von Paul, Mutterhaus Freiburg', in Henze, Barbara u. a. (ed.), *Eine Stadt braucht Klöster □ Freiburg im Breisgau: Katalog zur Ausstellung im Augustinermuseum Freiburg* (Lindenberg im Allgäu, 2006), pp 182□92; Hansert, 'Die Maschinen müssen laufen' □ Aus der Geschichte der Station 'Maria Hilf' der Vinzentinerinnen von 1871 bis 1919', in Henze, Barbara u. a. (ed.), *Eine Stadt braucht Klöster □ Freiburg im Breisgau: Katalog zur Ausstellung im Augustinermuseum Freiburg* (Lindenberg im Allgäu, 2006), pp 182□92; Angelika Hansert, 'Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.) *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg, 2008), pp 303□29, here at pp 303□7.

⁷ Joachim Whaley, 'The German lands before 1815', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 15□37, here at p. 22ff.

⁸ Wolfgang Hug, 'Auf dem Weg zur Bistumsgründung: Die Zeit der Säkularisation', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg, 2008), pp 15□76.

Figure 0.1: All branch houses of the Motherhouse Freiburg in the Archdiocese of Freiburg, 1846 to 1945



Source: Compiled by Angelika Hansert 2018; for full list of place names see Appendices 2 and 3.

mentalities and religious heritages. His successor, Hermann von Vicari (1842–68), made this his priority. And after three years of exhaustive negotiations, he succeeded in winning state government approval, the consent of the administrative board of the university hospital of Freiburg and, critically, the agreement of the founding motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg.⁹

The establishment of this new Order was no mere revival but a new departure. Its members, the sisters, took simple vows rather than the solemn vows of cloistered religious. They were not confined to one location (*stabilitas loci*) but could be transferred at any time to one of the branch houses. The Order was strongly centralised. The motherhouse was the place where the training of new postulants and novices took place, where vows were professed, and where the two heads of the institution, the mother general and the father superior (a priest appointed by the archbishop as his deputy), were stationed.

The motherhouse-branch house structure dates back to the *Filles de la Charité* of St. Vincent de Paul (†1660) and St. Louise de Marillac (†1660) in seventeenth-century France.¹⁰ A new religious community, in the Vincentian spirit, had been founded in 1696 in a village near Chartres (France), with the patronym St Paul. When the bishop of Strasbourg found himself unable to get German-speaking *Filles de la Charité* for his diocese, he sent Alsatian girls to be trained with the *Sœurs de St Paul* in Chartres, in order to establish his own motherhouse 1734 in Zabern (Saverne, Alsace). During the near-destruction of the congregation in the persecutions of the French Revolution, the sisters were dispersed. Some survived on the German side of the Rhine valley and in Freiburg itself. In 1804 they began to regroup in Alsace and were able to move into their new motherhouse in Strasbourg in 1823.¹¹ The Alsace superiors agreed to the request of Archbishop von Vicari to train young women from Baden as

⁹ Hansert, 'Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern', pp 303–29, here at pp 303–7.

¹⁰ Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire des Filles de la Charité: xvii^e–xviii^e siècle. La rue pour cloître* (Paris, 2011), pp 231–70.

¹¹ Emil Clemens Scherer, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von Straßburg: ein Bild ihres Werdens und Wirkens von 1734 bis zur Gegenwart* (Kevelaer, 1930). Alsace had been part of the Holy Roman Empire.

nursing sisters. In the course of the next decade they would send Alsatian sisters to establish the motherhouse of the new Order and all the branch houses until such time as their Baden fellow sisters could replace them.¹²

The arrival of the first six sisters at the first branch house in Baden in late 1846 has been chosen as the starting point of the present study, with the complete destruction of the Freiburg motherhouse complex and the collapse of the Third Reich in May 1945 as its endpoint. The year 1945 was a turning point in the history of the Order, signalling the end of its long period of expansion. The subtitle of the thesis: 'The female face of the church' was chosen to mark the fact that over the course of the century, beside the priests, the sisters of the Motherhouse Freiburg increasingly came to represent the Catholic Church in Baden to the people. The term 'female face' (in German: *das weibliche Gesicht*) was first used by Bernhard Schneider,¹³ when he argued that though the term might be inappropriate as applied to the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German Catholic church in general, it did apply to certain sectors. One such sector, as will be argued here, was the congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in Baden.

¹² Minutes of the meeting of Archbishop Hermann von Vicari of Freiburg, the superiors of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, Sœur Vincent Sulzer and Father François Charles Spitz, Privy Councillor Mors as deputy of the state, and the six members of the provisional council for the introduction of the Order at the seat of Archbishop von Vicari in Freiburg, 9 September 1845 (MHA Strasbourg, transcription in *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. ii, pp 357–60).

¹³ Bernhard Schneider holds the chair of church history at the University of Trier (Germany). The term was first used in his essay 'Feminisierung der Religion im 19. Jahrhundert. Perspektiven einer These im Kontext des deutschen Katholizismus', in *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 111 (2002) pp 123–47, here at p. 129f.; also in Bernhard Schneider, 'Konfessionen in den west- und mitteleuropäischen Sozialsystemen im langen 19. Jahrhundert. Ein edler Wettkampf der Barmherzigkeit? Einleitung und Zwischenbilanz', in Michaela Maurer, Bernhard Schneider (eds), *Konfessionen in den west- und mitteleuropäischen Sozialsystemen im langen 19. Jahrhundert. Ein 'edler Wettkampf der Barmherzigkeit?'* (Münster, 2013), pp 13–37, here at p. 36f., and Bernhard Schneider, 'Feminisierung und (Re-)Maskulinisierung der Religion im 19. Jahrhundert. Tendenzen der Forschung aus der Perspektive des deutschen Katholizismus', in Michaela Sohn-Kronthaler (ed.), *Feminisierung oder (Re-) Maskulinisierung der Religion im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert? Forschungsbeiträge aus Christentum, Judentum und Islam* (Vienna, 2016), pp 11–41, here at p. 13.

As it had been founded by a French motherhouse on German grounds and had been named after Saint Vincent de Paul¹⁴, what self-image had the Order, what kind of spirituality did the Freiburg sisters think was the basis?

In their eyes, they were the rightful daughters of St Vincent de Paul.¹⁵ After all, apart from carrying his name the sisters had always celebrated his feast day in the most solemn way.¹⁶ Only after the Second Vatican Council with its 'back to the roots' request the sisters discovered the real history and the role which had been played by the sisters of St Paul of Chartres and by their rule.¹⁷

Yet according to the archival material, this was never a question or even a problem for the Motherhouse Freiburg, much unlike for the Strasbourg Motherhouse. The latter was made aware of the fact of not being founded by Vincent de Paul himself when it started to expand in France, first in 1827/28, then in 1848, and finally in 1854 when it clashed with the *Filles de la Charité* of Paris and was forced to drop the 'Saint Vincent de Paul' part of its name.¹⁸

In the Austrian motherhouses of Vienna, Graz and Salzburg, which had been founded directly or indirectly by Strasbourg, the sisters discovered the truth quite soon. This resulted in their return to the original Vincentian rule and in the

¹⁴ He was appointed for patron of all associations of merciful love by Vatican decree of 12 May 1885, see *300 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern*, p. 4f.

¹⁵ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 192.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139–41. In 1812 Father Superior Johann Philipp Sauthier got the approval to celebrate the feast day solemnly from the bishop of Strasbourg; Alfons Beil, 'Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom Heiligen Vinzenz von Paul in der Erzdiözese Freiburg', in *300 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern*, pp 54–58, here at p. 58.

¹⁷ Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom heiligen Vinzenz von Paul, Innsbruck (ed.), *150 Jahre Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von heiligen Vinzenz von Paul in Innsbruck* (Innsbruck, 1989), p. 73.

¹⁸ Catherine Maurer, 'Capital symbolique et concurrences congréganistes Filles de la Charité et Sœurs de la Charité de Strasbourg au XIXe siècle', in Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée (ed.), *Des Filles de la Charité aux Sœurs de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. Quatre siècles de cornettes (XVII^e–XX^e siècle)* (Paris, 2016), pp 173–91; Emil Clemens Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 50. Scherer points out that the Strasbourg motherhouse never called himself *Filles de la Charité de St Vincent de Paul* before the French Revolution but only *Sœurs de la Charité*. On p 162f. Scherer mentions that in the 1827 petition to the French government Father Superior Lorenz Thomas called the Strasbourg sisters for the first time 'daughters of St Vincent de Paul, named sisters of charity'.

subsequent union with the motherhouse in Paris (1835, 1850 and 1882).¹⁹ This was never the case of the German foundations initiated by Strasbourg.

In Freiburg, professor of law Franz Joseph Buss who was the lay part in writing the new Freiburg constitutions, never mentioned Chartres once during the whole foundation process. According to him, the Strasbourg Motherhouse originated from Paris, but he avoided to call the Alsatians 'Sisters of St Vincent de Paul'.²⁰ In a statistics form sheet of the late 1920s, the sisters of the Motherhouse Freiburg named Saint Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac as founders but Father Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer corrected by hand 'founders' into 'patrons'.²¹ In Germany the reserve between 'real' French and 'fake' German Vincentian sisters seem to have been much smaller than in France where the arm of the Parisians went far. In a German *festschrift* on the occasion of 300 years of the foundation of the Paris motherhouse, all Vincentian foundations in Germany were united in one volume, no matter if male or female, true Vincentian origin or not.²² New historical studies in the 1970s and 1980s undertaken by the sisters themselves led to the formal affiliation of the 'Vincentian Confederation of Strasbourg' with Paris on 7 October 1994.²³ So finally, Strasbourg succeeded to achieve at the end of the twentieth century what Paris had fought against in the preceding century.

¹⁹ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 193 (Vienna), p. 222 (Graz); *300 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern*, p. 38 (Graz), p. 42 (Salzburg).

²⁰ Franz Joseph Buss, *Der Orden der barmherzigen Schwestern. Uebersicht seiner Entstehung, Verbreitung, Gliederung, Leistung, Nothwendigkeit und Zweckmässigkeit in der Gegenwart* (reprint, Schaffhausen, 1847), pp 169f. (Vincent de Paul), pp 543, 562 (Strasbourg sisters).

²¹ Questionnaire about official data of the Order, without date [after 1928], redacted by hand by Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer (MHA Freiburg, Akte Ordinariat). It is therefore obvious that only the highest ranks in the Order, probably only the father superior himself knew of this fact.

²² *300 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern vom Heiligen Vinzenz von Paul, 1633–1933, 100 Jahre Welt-Vinzenz-Verein, 1833–1933* (Munich, 1933).

²³ Written confirmation of Mother General of Freiburg, Sister Birgitta Stritt, 17 Jan. 2019. This fact was not mentioned in Betty Ann McNeil D.C., *The Vincentian Family Tree: A Genealogical Study* (1996). *Vincentian Digital Books*, 6. https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/6 (accessed 24 April 2019). The Föderation der Vinzentinischen Gemeinschaften was founded in 1971, and members are motherhouses founded by Strasbourg, currently nine motherhouses in Germany, one in Austria and Strasbourg itself, see *Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom heiligen Vinzenz von Paul, Innsbruck* (ed.), *150 Jahre*, p. 73.

Research review

Even leading historians appear unfamiliar with the role of the Order in the Baden landscape, exemplified by the case of Dagmar Herzog in her much-acclaimed thesis on religious politics in Baden prior to 1848. Although she studied the Catholic revival in detail, identifying the main players, drawing *inter alia* on a representative selection of contemporary print media and the secondary literature, she failed even to mention the introduction of the Order which would play such a central role in Baden's religious and social history.²⁴ At the other end of the period discussed here, Roger Chickering's study 'The Great War and urban life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918' (2007)²⁵ contained in its 500 pages but a single mention of the Order and that in the context of the soup kitchens.²⁶ Yet the Sisters of Charity had their headquarters in Freiburg, throughout the war they staffed the university hospital with nearly 150 nurses and many other houses in the city, as well as providing most of the nurses in town for the military hospitals, including their own newly-extended St Joseph hospital for the care of the wounded. Chickering named all the other nursing associations but overlooked the central role of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul.²⁷ One would have to add that Chickering's principal source for the orders was the municipal archive of Freiburg and its substantial newspaper collection,²⁸ and that the Motherhouse Freiburg always took care to work outside of the public eye and therefore rarely attracted the attention of the press. Yet even the Swabian *Rottenburg Journal of Church History*, in devoting its 2008 edition to female religious congregations in the diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart across the centuries, omitted discussion of the seminal period 1850–1950, and failed to include a single essay on the Swabian motherhouse of the Sisters of St Vincent

²⁴ Dagmar Herzog, *Intimacy and exclusion: religious politics in pre-revolutionary Baden* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), p. 45f.

²⁵ Roger Chickering, *The Great War and urban life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2007). Herzog and Chickering are secular historians.

²⁶ Chickering, *Freiburg im Ersten Weltkrieg*, (Paderborn, 2009), p. 420.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 316–31, p. 448.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 11–13.

de Paul (founded 1852 by Strasbourg) or indeed on any other female apostolic congregation.²⁹

Apart from a number of non-scholarly in-house publications marking various jubilees of the Motherhouse Freiburg, and Scherer's archive-based study of the *Sœurs de la Charité de Strasbourg* (1930) which mentions the Freiburg sisters, and apart from the present author's publications,³⁰ nothing has yet been published on the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg.

Other areas of Germany and more especially other European countries have been far better served in this regard. For France there had been undertaken the above mentioned pioneering study by Claude Langlois, *Le Catholicisme au féminin*, with its extensive statistical analysis of female religious orders in nineteenth-century France. This study illustrates the extraordinary growth of female congregations in France in the decades 1830 to 1860 and also highlights the differences between the French models and their German offshoots.³¹ Langlois included in his analysis recruitment methods, geographical spread and the social background of the sisters. More recently (2011) Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, the first historian — and layman — to be granted access to the central archives of the *Filles de la Charité* of Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, has given us an important history of this first religious institution of its kind. It offers interesting points of comparison with its offshoot, the Motherhouse Freiburg.³²

²⁹ *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte*, xxvii (2008): 'Religiöse Frauengemeinschaften in Südwestdeutschland'. The last time the Swabian motherhouse in Gmünd (later Untermarchtal) was in focus happened exactly twenty years earlier; the mother general Sister Marie-Luise Metzger published an essay in the very same journal, see Marie-Luise Metzger, 'Die Gemeinschaft der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom heiligen Vinzenz von Paul in Untermarchtal', in *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte*, vi (1987), pp 99–114.

³⁰ Emil Clemens Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, and footnote 4 of this chapter.

³¹ Claude Langlois, *Le catholicisme au féminin*, (Paris, 1984). For the effect Langlois had for the research of religious orders and congregations see Rogers, Rebecca, 'Le catholicisme au féminin: thirty years of women's history', in *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, xxxix, no. 1, special issue: Claude Langlois's vision of France: regional identity, royal imaginary, and holy women (Spring 2013), pp 82–100, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42703751> (accessed 30 Apr. 2018).

³² Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire des Filles de la Charité*.

Closer to home, several important studies of religious congregations have appeared in recent years for the (Hiberno-) Anglo-Saxon world. Barbara Walsh's *Catholic nuns in England and Wales* (1988) is nearly congruent with the timeframe of this thesis.³³ Susan O'Brien's 'Terra incognita: the nun in nineteenth-century England' (1988), is of particular interest for identifying and comparing the French influence on women religious outside France.³⁴ By asking what shaped the identity of women religious, Carmen Mangion's *Contested identities: Catholic women religious in nineteenth-century England and Wales* (2008) identifies the importance of visibility for the 'success' of an order or a congregation. Of particular relevance as models for the present thesis are seminal studies on French religious orders which had houses in Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century: Susan O'Brien, *Leaving God for God: the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in Britain 1847–2017*, a collection of essays edited by Jacinta Prunty and Louise Sullivan on the same order in Ireland, and Prunty's 2017 volume, *The monasteries, magdalen asylums and reformatory schools of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland 1853–1973*.³⁵

O'Brien contextualised her institutional history in terms of the kind of longitudinal approach exemplified in the work of Fernand Braudel. Her very wide-ranging study examines the relationship between Catholic *caritas* and Vincentian theology and that of the sisters and their Protestant environment, as also the development of a working relationship between church and British state to help realise a Catholic welfare system, of which the sisters became an integral part. Her study included the Vincentian vision of care and how it was lived out at different times, as also the sisters' ministry and concern with the salvation of

³³ Barbara Walsh, *Roman Catholic nuns in England and Wales, 1800–1937: a social history* (Dublin, 2002).

³⁴ Susan O'Brien, 'Terra incognita: the nun in nineteenth-century England', in *Past and Present*, cxxi (Nov. 1988), pp 110–40.

³⁵ Susan O'Brien, *Leaving God for God: the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in Britain 1847–2017* (London, 2017); Jacinta Prunty, *The monasteries, magdalen asylums and reformatory schools of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland 1853–1973* (Dublin, 2017). The authors stress the 'Frenchness' of the two orders and explore how the English and Irish sisters coped with foreign influence.

souls. O'Brien uses prosopographical methods to throw light on the kind of the women who joined the order and the character of their everyday life.

The history of the Irish branch of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul is structured in a different way.³⁶ To reflect the sisters' pioneering work over time in virtually every field of social work, education and health care, each chapter is a stand-alone essay devoted to a particular field or branch house. The role of sponsors and benefactors, the active cooperation of the authorities, both church and state, the support of individual bishops and clergy and the welcome of the people was addressed throughout. Prunty's institutional history of the congregation of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland differs from the histories of the Daughters of Charity in the size of the Irish order and its distinctive structure. Similar to the Vincentian motherhouse in Paris, it was well-documented, but as the sources for the history of the convent and of the care facilities were so interlinked, they had to be examined together. The Magdalen refuge was not incidental but central to their mission; over the years the sisters were pressured into taking on reformatories and industrial schools. Prunty was able to track shifts to new models of care, while internal workings could be illuminated via the conflicts which invariably arose. The refuges are the most relevant aspect of her study for the present thesis given the identical character of the branch house Bethania in Heitersheim; it is thus possible to compare the two institutions with regard to their mission, their innovative type of care –in the context of time and place – and any constraints on the sisters' work.

In the recent past scholars have pointed to the active female agency of women religious 'in manipulating their world and shaping their individual future as well as the future of their congregations' (Mangion);³⁷ some have claimed sole

³⁶ Jacinta Prunty and Louise Sullivan (eds), *The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in Ireland: the early years* (Blackrock, 2014).

³⁷ Carmen Mangion, *Contested identities: Catholic women religious in nineteenth-century England and Wales* (Manchester, 2008), p. 235.

female agency in the founding process (Meiwes).³⁸ The issue of female agency is used as a focal point in the present study; the leading question being whether the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg were agents or instruments throughout the first century of their history. This thesis challenges Meiwes' claim that the founding of new Prussian congregations in the second half of the nineteenth century was due solely to female agency, without initiative or support from the local bishop(s). Equally, it challenges Martina Cucchiera's claims on female agency in her doctoral study of the Bavarian congregation of the Poor School of Notre Dame, which itself draws on Meiwes.³⁹ Given the very considerable variations both between regions and even between congregations in a particular region, it is simply misleading to make generalised statements about 'German' female orders and congregations, especially when speaking about agency and patronage. The present work will therefore look at the founding processes of the Motherhouse Freiburg, as also of Strasbourg itself and the various motherhouses which came from that source. In all these cases, the initiative came from the local bishops as agents for new congregations and for suitable women to be trained to staff them.

Among further relevant studies illustrating the richness and variety of the religious orders and of lay associations caring for the vulnerable is the doctoral thesis of Andreas Henkelmann (2008).⁴⁰ Of particular interest is his analysis of then-contemporary discussion on the compatibility of Catholic identity with the expectations of the welfare state. Much, Henkelmann argues, remains to be done on the Catholic milieu, notably on the role played by the religious orders in establishing, strengthening and shielding their specifically Catholic culture against the outside world of industrialisation and against the hostile forces in the

³⁸ Relinde Meiwes, *'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn': katholische Frauenorganisationen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000). This seminal work is the only existing analysis on this topic and therefore often cited. It is essential for the present thesis.

³⁹ Jonathan Sperber, 'Kirchengeschichte or the Social and Cultural History of Religion?', in *Neue Politische Literatur*, xliii (1998), pp 13–35, here at p. 18, cited after Martina Cucchiera, *'Bitter times': the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame in Hitler's Germany, 1933 to 1945* (University of Notre Dame, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2011) (3496523), p. 42. Sperber goes as far as to call Meiwes here 'naïve'.

⁴⁰ Andreas Henkelmann, *Caritasgeschichte zwischen katholischem Milieu und Wohlfahrtsstaat: Das Seraphische Liebeswerk (1889–1971)* (Paderborn, 2008).

Second German Empire and beyond. In a further essay on the organisation known as *Caritas*⁴¹ Henkelmann tracks via the development of this influential charitable institution, the evolution of the German Catholic church from a society-orientated pastoral theology to a clerical church around 1848, and subsequently after 1900 to one in which the church and institutions such as *Caritas* consented to collaborate with the state. This marked the beginning of the German 'dual welfare system' as we know it today, characterised by the interlocking of private and public institutions. An unforeseen consequence of this decision was increased state interference in church matters and active competition from other non-religious associations and apostolic orders.⁴²

Schröder's important thesis of 2014 on poor relief and Catholic identity in southern Baden and the Sarre region was the product of a University of Trier research project on poverty and poor relief, headed by Bernhard Schneider.⁴³ In seven case studies each for Baden and Sarre, Schröder analyses towns of different types and their specific poor relief systems up to 1870. His work is essential reading in that from 1850 forward, sisters of the Motherhouse Freiburg were called to staff the still very traditional local hospitals in most of Baden's towns and cities. It will be interesting to see how the archival material of those towns complements the sources used in this thesis.

Catholic orders and congregations did not exist in a world of their own, especially not in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. They were part of a subculture which has been termed the 'Catholic milieu', where Catholics could live according to the rules of their church seeing this as the best possible way to preserve faith. It often consisted of several different kinds of 'milieu'. In an attempt to find an innovative means of analysing this special

⁴¹ *Caritas* is an organised Roman Catholic association to support people in need. It is sponsored and supervised by the Roman Catholic Church of Germany.

⁴² Andreas Henkelmann, 'Der Weg in den Wohlfahrtsstaat. Die Entwicklung der Caritas im langen 19. Jahrhundert', in Christoph Stiegemann (ed.), *Caritas: Nächstenliebe von den frühen Christen bis zur Gegenwart; Katalog zur Ausstellung im Erzbischöflichen Diözesanmuseum Paderborn, [23. Juli bis 13. Dezember 2015]* (Petersberg, 2015), pp 306–15.

⁴³ Christian Schröder, *Armenfürsorge und katholische Identität: Südbaden und die Saarregion im historischen Vergleich (1803–70)* (Berlin, 2014).

subculture, Urs Altermatt and Franziska Metzger introduced a new view of the Catholic milieu as a 'community of communication'. Characteristic of this new model is 'the interrelationship of social communication and social bonds and the central role of translation from the cultural into the organisational and structural level and vice versa', while emphasising the socio-economic dimension.⁴⁴ Based on this new model it becomes clear why visibility was paramount for religious orders and congregations. The present study argues that visibility was central to the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg because as long as they were confined to hospitals only they were not part of 'the community of communication'. Furthermore, as they were not supposed to indulge in idle talk – and certainly any engagement with the media would be out of the question – the sisters depended on their appearance in their habits and on their activity inside the milieu to be taken up by the communication system.

Analysis of these works makes the research deficit on the female orders and congregations over large areas of southern Germany all too evident.⁴⁵ Inasmuch as general surveys would be desirable, the sheer mass of documents and the difficulties of access make it impossible to deal with them appropriately in a single thesis. The present thesis therefore presents a longitudinal study of one religious institution in a specific region, set in its political, economic and religious context, and compares it with similar congregations of the same archdiocese and of several other German or European dioceses. The hope is that this work will prompt further studies in the wider region of the German south-west, and contribute to comparative studies internationally as well as nationally.

⁴⁴ Urs Altermatt and Franziska Metzger, 'Religious institutes as a factor of Catholic communities of communication', in Urs Altermatt, Jan de Maeyer and Franziska Metzger (eds), *Religious institutes and Catholic culture in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe* (Leuven, 2014), pp 11–20, here at p. 12f.

⁴⁵ Schmiedl, 'An assessment of the histories of religious communities in Germany', p. 74f.: 'The effects of this comprehensive contribution, both quantitatively and qualitatively, on the Catholic church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are still largely unstudied and would need to be considered in separate studies of the individual communities.'

Focus of thesis and research methodology

This thesis is an institutional and analytical history of a religious order using perspectives from cultural and social history.⁴⁶ As in all accounts of female religious orders, women's history and the history of religion intersect. Indeed, as Brejon de Lavergnée has observed, there are many "histories" at play here. The political context is critical, notably the *Kulturkampf* or 'culture war' under Bismarck (1872–87) and the Third Reich (1933–45), as are medical history (advances in medicine, nursing and hospitals), economic history (financing of welfare and payment of sisters) and the history of education (kindergartens, orphanages, houses of correction, and the accreditation of teacher training).⁴⁷ The thesis will further seek evidence of Vincentian spirituality in Strasbourg's German daughter houses. How much is to be attributed simply to the French heritage? How typical was it for the time? For example, the motherhouse Strasbourg and with it the Freiburg offshoot put great stress in the nineteenth century constitutions on "the sanctification of self", a concept little understood by modern historians in its original meaning. For Meiwes the prominent place afforded to 'self-sanctification' in the constitutions showed that Strasbourg placed a higher value on the sisters' spiritual lives than on their charitable work, a survival from the old contemplative monastic orders, with the care for the poor as an element only in that process.⁴⁸ Wilfried Süß called self-sanctification through works of charity a traditional form of Catholic lay charity,⁴⁹ drawing on studies by Ewald Frie on the lay associations of St Vincent de Paul in Germany, and Michaela Sohn-Kronthaler on their female counterpart, the women's charitable associations of Austria.⁵⁰ Yet it was central to these congregations' self-

⁴⁶ Jürgen Kocka, 'The difficult rise of a civil society: societal history of modern Germany', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 493–511, here at pp 493–9.

⁴⁷ Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire des Filles de la Charité*, pp 22–4.

⁴⁸ Relinde Meiwes, *'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn'*, p. 233f. Barbara Henze is of the same opinion.

⁴⁹ Winfried Süß, 'Barmherzigkeit oder Gerechtigkeit? Die Modernisierung der Hilfe und die Vergesellschaftung des Helfens als katholische Antworten auf die Soziale Frage im langem 19. Jahrhundert', in *Theologische Quartalschrift* 195 (2015), pp 151–66, here at p. 163f.

⁵⁰ Ewald Frie, 'Was ist katholisch an der Armenfürsorge? Die Vinzenzvereine in Deutschland vor 1914', in Bernhard Schneider (ed.), *Konfessionelle Armutsdiskurse und Armenfürsorgepraktiken im langen 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2009), pp 283–96, and Michaela Sohn-Kronthaler

understanding that in order to administer Christian charity, a person must start from an awareness of being loved by Christ. Only then would they be in a position to love their neighbours as they should.⁵¹

In chapter three of the present thesis, on the period of expansion 1883 to 1918, the opportunity arose to use the so-called principal-agent-theory in the analysis. This is a method applied by Roman Smolorz to his recently-published study of the renowned Regensburg boys' cathedral choir in the Third Reich. The term derives from economic sciences where it is understood as two parties in negotiations, with the seller (agent) having the great advantage of background knowledge over the client (principal). Since it happens often that an agent has a hidden agenda, motivation and control of the agent is important for the principal.⁵²

The quality and uniqueness of the archival material available to this researcher, and the fact that the order has not previously been the subject of a thorough, longitudinal scholarly study, led to the decision to give prominence to the documentary record without, it is hoped, neglecting the key secondary literature. Thus to get a picture of the Order itself as a body embedded in its political, socio-economic and religious context, extensive archival holdings will be closely analysed, certain events and facts from different perspectives 'triangulated', and the findings combined with quantitative analysis which includes compiling statistics for matters such as the number of clothings (reception of the religious habit) each year and the foundation of branch houses in general and of associated works such as nursery schools.

A number of maps will illustrate the geography of the branch houses and their distribution across Baden relative to state and ecclesiastical boundaries. Is

and Christian Blinzer, "... und ohne Unterschied der Religion und des Geschlechtes.' Armenfürsorge am Beispiel katholischer Frauenvereine in Österreich', in Bernhard Schneider, *Konfessionelle Armutsdiskurse*, pp 247–82.

⁵¹ Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The reformation of feeling. Shaping the religious emotions in Early Modern Germany* (New York, 2010), p. 28.

⁵² Roman Smolorz, *Die Regensburger Domspatzen im Nationalsozialismus: Singen zwischen Katholischer Kirche und NS-Staat* (Regensburg, 2017), p. 16f.

there a discernible pattern to the spread of branch houses? Were particular parts of the country favoured, and if so why? Did the location of a house influence the recruitment of new members, and if yes, how? The importance of geography throughout the history of the Order is highlighted by the care given to the selection of Freiburg for the new motherhouse. It was to prove farsighted. The choice of site also turned out to be fortuitous: the extensive acreage allowed later expansions and a building complex for the sisters' different fields of activity as well as permitting the young sisters and postulants to be trained in their particular field on site. Furthermore, the motherhouse was within walking distance of the ordinariate of the archbishop and in the immediate vicinity of the *Klinik*. When after the First World War Freiburg also became the seat of the Catholic welfare organisation *Caritas*, the Sisters of Charity profited once more from their close proximity. For the historian, the disadvantage of the motherhouse's central location as the oldest and largest order is the scarcity of written documents at this local level: their scarcity suggests that matters were often dealt with personally and orally.

Primary sources and archives

This thesis draws heavily on the contents of the motherhouse archive Freiburg (MHA Freiburg), which were created by the administrative body of the Badenese Order of the sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. The archive consists mainly of the documents of the Order in its entirety, of its heads, the mother general and the father superior in their official roles, and of the sisters' council. Record types include the rules, the constitutions, the order of the day, minutes, chronicles, books of the clothings, personal files of the sisters, maps of buildings, plans and the files of all the branch houses with the correspondence between motherhouse and the sisters and officials of the different parishes. This correspondence, which consists of thousands of originally handwritten, later typed letters, proved to be a goldmine. Although they are not always informative on the normal daily routines, the fact that the letters usually report some problem or complaint makes it possible to establish how the sisters lived, worked, prayed,

suffered, what their relationship was to the people they served, and how they were treated by their secular and religious superiors and by 'ordinary' lay people. As the sisters were required to stay out of the limelight, the letters are usually business correspondence with very little personal content. On the other hand, as the letters were only for the eyes of the mother general and the superior, on occasion a sister might have been more outspoken than she would have been in public. In general, however, it is not easy to discover the personal voice of the sisters. Unlike sisters and nuns from teaching orders and congregations and Protestant deaconesses, the Sisters of Charity did not produce any kind of ego-documents so that an essential factor for in-depth-research into life inside the walls is missing. Whereas some small details of the sisters' daily life shines through in the thousands of business letters it is a common difficulty in the writing of institutional history that an important source is missing, the voice of the people the sisters cared for, the children, girls and adults.⁵³ The documents that can still be found in the archives of religious institutions are predominantly those produced by church and secular (mainly male) authorities. The attempt to recover at least some of these rare voices was one of the reasons for choosing the reformatory Bethania as a case study to represent the Order's history in the Third Reich (chapter 8). In this case, some very personal experiences, expressed in the girls' own words, could actually be unearthed from Bethania's files.

Similar to Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée for his study of the *Filles de la Charité* in Paris, the present author was the first lay person ever to receive the right to unhindered research and have virtually unlimited access to historic files and other material. However, the state of the archive proved to be quite a challenge. Not only was the material kept in different and not always suitable locations, the files themselves had never been catalogued and were in various stages of disorder. No database of any kind pre-existed this research; one was painstakingly established with regard to the 3,300 sisters and the 209 branch

⁵³ Prunty, *Our Lady of Charity in Ireland*, p. 34.

houses, since different and chronologically overlapping lists and registers existed with partly contradicting data. Being as it were documents of faith and thus never designed for external use, the collection of the material followed no obvious plan, and sometimes it was pure luck if something was documented or was kept at all. Some material was unfortunately destroyed, notably the private archive of Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer (1922–54), a serious loss, as his tenure covered key years for the Order.⁵⁴

To complement the material from the Motherhouse Freiburg, documents were analysed from the archive of the motherhouse of the *Sœurs de la Charité* in Strasbourg (MHA Strasbourg) as the founding motherhouse, more particularly the correspondence between the superiors of the two orders. The most valuable sources for this study were the *Chronique de la Congrégation* and the *Biographies des Sœurs* of Father François Charles Spitz who was superior in Strasbourg at the time when Freiburg was founded. Although written during the bombardment of Strasbourg in 1870 (as incidental remarks make evident) and therefore a combination of document use and quoting from memory, Spitz sheds interesting light on certain events, even when he was not quite accurate with data. They were also of immense value since, in the first twenty-five years of the Freiburg offshoot, Spitz acted as superior for Freiburg as well, not least because the archbishop insisted on it.

To throw light on the role of the archbishop of Freiburg and his ordinariate in relation to the Motherhouse Freiburg, a mass of files of the archiepiscopal archive of the archdiocese of Freiburg (EAF) have been analysed. These significant documents consist mainly of correspondence and reports of the archbishop and the different offices of his ordinariate to the motherhouse, the Baden state government in Karlsruhe, and the Vatican in Rome.

⁵⁴ Oral information of 1995 by Sister Maria Deodata Doehmen, deceased 21 Mar. 2000 (born 1911, clothed 1934), who worked in the motherhouse management in Freiburg from 1939, as bursar from 1952 to 1976 and in management again until 1996.

As the grand-ducal government of Baden had the Catholic Church under close supervision, the documents of the different departments of state at the state archives of Baden in Karlsruhe (*Generallandesarchiv*, GLA) were of importance for this study. These include reports of the Motherhouse Freiburg to the government, state regulations which were transmitted to the Order and other official correspondence, especially those concerning the introduction of the Order and the time of the *Kulturkampf*.

Terminology

In this thesis, certain terms were used in a particular way to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

According to canon law, during the whole period of this thesis the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg was seen as a religious congregation, not as a religious order. With the apostolic constitution *Condita a Christo* (1900), members of such congregations were counted as 'religious'. In the *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1917) the difference between monastic orders and religious congregations had been abolished.⁵⁵ However, in the case of the Motherhouse Strasbourg and its German affiliates, the term 'congregation' was very often replaced in the documents by 'order', especially across the German border. The French model of Strasbourg always called itself *congrégation*, although in § 1 of the constitutions of 1828 the terms *Ordenstracht* (religious habit of an order) and *Ordensschwwestern* (sisters of an order) were used.⁵⁶ In the constitutions of 1835 of the Motherhouse Munich (the first German branch of Strasbourg), which were the model for the constitutions of Freiburg, the

⁵⁵ Bruno Primetshofer, Article 'Kongregationen', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vi (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997), cols 246–8, here col. 247f.

⁵⁶ Statuten der barmherzigen Schwestern zu Straßburg (approved 1828 by the French government and the bishop of Strasbourg), in Michael Sintzel, *Geschichte der Entstehung und Verbreitung und Wirksamkeit des Ordens der barmherzigen Schwestern* (Regensburg, 1847), p. 337ff., §§ 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11. The original rule did not once mention congregation in any of its twenty-four paragraphs, however *Ordensregeln* (rules of the order) appeared in the title and *Orden* (order) in the very last sentence, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, pp 329–36.

word 'order' appeared in nearly every single one of its fifty paragraphs.⁵⁷ When Freiburg together with Strasbourg received papal approval in 1885, the official internal usage was always 'congregation', as the correct term in canon law. In public however, both 'order' and 'congregation' were used, until Freiburg requested and was granted papal approval on its own in 1970, when it took back the term *Orden* under which it had been introduced into Baden. In this thesis, 'order' and 'congregation' are therefore used interchangeably and as synonyms. The members of female apostolic orders and congregations have always been called sisters; a nun is a contemplative religious with solemn vows. The German vernacular does not really distinguish between the two words, although the term *Ordensschwester* (sister of an order) is mostly used colloquially.⁵⁸ In this thesis the word 'nun' will never be used unless specifically employed in a source.

As the official name of the Order is very long, and to provide variety, the name will alternate in the text with different synonyms such as motherhouse, Motherhouse Freiburg,⁵⁹ Freiburg, Order, Vincentian Sisters, White Sisters, Sisters of Charity, all starting with a capital letter. Whenever lower case is used as with 'the sisters of charity', it refers to 'all congregations of that kind'. The titles of the governing body of the Order differ from the German original. As the German terms are misleading in English and so could not be translated literally, the German title *Generaloberin* for the female and *Superior* for the male superior have been rendered as 'mother general' and 'father superior'.

On entering the noviciate, the postulants or candidates received the black habit with the characteristic white veil and a new religious name, which was chosen for them. The sister's birth name was now no longer used. Unlike other orders and congregations, not all Sisters of Charity of Freiburg received the

⁵⁷ Sintzel, *Geschichte*, pp 345–60.

⁵⁸ The Freiburg sisters never called themselves 'nuns' unlike the Irish Our Lady of Charity who used this term interchangeably, see Prunty, *Our Lady of Charity in Ireland*, p. 50, where she also cited Margaret MacCurtain, 'Godly burden: Catholic sisterhoods in twentieth century Ireland and the new religious history', reprinted in MacCurtain, *Ariadne's thread, writing*, pp 309–24, here at p. 310.

⁵⁹ 'Motherhouse Freiburg' and not 'Freiburg Motherhouse' in reverence to the German nationality of the Order.

name *Maria* as part of their new name. Family names or surnames were internally never used for the sisters and appeared usually on official or legal documents only. Hence in this thesis, the family names of sisters are stated only once, when they are first employed in a paragraph. If the sister is referred to again in the same paragraph, only her religious name in the Order is used. The danger of a mix-up of sisters never occurred, because every sister-name was given only once, but became 'free' again after the death of that sister.

The term 'ultramontanism' which appears in the context of the present thesis is associated with the Catholic revival of the post-Napoleonic era. After a phase of inner spiritual renewal up to about 1830, German Catholics turned their activity outwards and towards Rome to strengthen their ties with the pope. This orientation towards the Vatican, from Latin *ultra montes* (beyond the mountains = the Alps) caused increasing tension between church and state in Germany for decades to follow.⁶⁰

In order to distinguish the German Caritas Association (DCV) from the Latin term '*caritas*', the original word for Christian charity, *Caritas* will be used for the DCV and *caritas* for the latter. National Socialist-terms and associated or contemporary terminology proved to be a greater challenge throughout this research and are difficult to translate. This is not just because of the language divide but is probably due even more to changes in meaning over time, hence in many cases the German original follows in brackets after the English term. 'Girls' and 'children', for example, were used for female inmates regardless of their actual age.⁶¹ In the Third Reich the unfortunate 'girls' who also happened to have learning disabilities were labelled 'mentally retarded', among other terms; in the present thesis it was tried to avoid such language as deeply offensive today.

The verb 'to visitate' in this thesis is a special term used by orders and congregations to describe the visitation of superiors to their branch houses.

⁶⁰ Christopher Clark, 'Germany 1815–1848: Restoration or pre-March?', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German history since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 38–60, here at p. 57f.

⁶¹ The same can be said of the Our Lady of Charity institutions in Ireland, see Prunty, *Our Lady of Charity in Ireland*, p. 47.

Currency was left in the original format as the relative increase and decrease is what matters. To accommodate non-German readers the letter 'ß' was changed to 'ss' throughout the thesis and left only in a German citation, whereas the word order of 'Motherhouse Freiburg' and the other motherhouses was kept out of reverence for the German topic.

Thesis structure

This thesis opens with the first negotiations leading up to the introduction of the Order in 1846 and ends with the destruction of the motherhouse complex in Freiburg and the defeat of the Third Reich in 1945. The period of one hundred years between the arrival of the first sisters of the new congregation in 1846 and the end of the Second World War in 1945 is structured by using a combination of political and order-specific turning points.⁶²

Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the introduction of the Order and its relatively slow growth until the eve of the first big test in the 'culture war'. Why was it so important to the archbishop and his followers to get the sisters for his diocese? To answer this question, the thesis will review the social, political and religious situation of the people in Baden in the five years leading up to 1846, putting the archbishop and his position in the centre, as he was the driving force. Why did Archbishop von Vicari insist on the unusually close relationship between the Motherhouses Strasbourg and Freiburg? And why did the Badenese Order grow much more slowly than other motherhouses coming from France and Switzerland and quickly gain ground in Baden? The year 1871 is a turning-point with the emancipation from the Motherhouse Strasbourg and the beginning of the *Kulturkampf*.

The focus then shifts to the period of the nationwide *Kulturkampf* and the expansion years of the Order (chapter 3). It illustrates how powerful the grip of

⁶² For the periodisation see Andreas Henkelmann, Review of *Kolloquium vergleichende Ordensgeschichte: Periodisierungen von Provinz- und Kongregationsgeschichten im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews, July 2010, URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=30882> [accessed 23 Oct. 2018].

the state was on the religious congregations through its effects on the White Sisters. It analyses the importance of an addition to the sisters' constitutions and traces the growth and dissemination of the Order across Baden during the tenure of the second mother general Sister Alban Jörger (1884–98). How far did the Sisters of Charity form part of the Catholic milieu and in what ways did they contribute to its formation?

Discussion of the introduction of a national nursing exam in the years after 1900 is used as a springboard to analyse the main task of the Order, nursing, over the period 1846 to 1918. This is carried out in two separate chapters, first, the development and diversification of medicine and its implications for nurse training (chapter 4) and secondly, on the day-to-day care by the sisters in the specialised field of nursing at times of war and epidemics (chapter 5).

The political turning points of 1918/19 and 1933 mark the next shift in the thesis (chapters 6 and 7). The interwar years of the Weimar Republic which, after a challenging start, provided the religious orders with a freedom they had never experienced previously, are examined in the context of the Order's earlier history. The third mother general sought a closer bond with Strasbourg that was taken to a completely new level in 1917 with the new collection of canon law, the *Codex Iuris Canonici* and in 1918 with the lost war for Germany, as the older founding house suddenly became once again foreign territory. How did the political situation impact on the relationship between the motherhouses and the sisters? The number of clothings reached its peak with some ninety-six new members received in 1929. These numbers were much needed in face of greatly-increased state-imposed training regulations and competition from secular nurses. The Order also had to confront severe criticism of Catholic education philosophy and an amplification of problems which further led, in certain places, to a child abuse crisis. In the dire economic situation of the Weimar years the German Caritas Association became a lifeline for the religious orders.

The final chapter covers the years of the Third Reich from 1933 to 1945 during which the National Socialist regime brought a whole array of challenges (chapter 8). The new regime tried to prevent young women from entering religious orders and aimed to impoverish the latter. While some motherhouses suffered severely, Freiburg was not affected to the same degree. Though embattled from all sides, the ruthlessness of the new regime and the helplessness of the sisters and the people in their care is best demonstrated in a case study of the Order's one and only reformatory, Bethania in Heitersheim. *In nuce*, the inhuman philosophy of Hitler's National Socialists can be revealed by the fates of girls and young women with learning difficulties facing sterilisation forced upon them. How did the Order and the sisters deal with this situation? Did they try to protect their wards from the ordeal? And what happened after the gruesome deed was done?

The war with its bombing campaign compounded all the other hardships until the final destruction of the motherhouse in the last months of the Third Reich was followed in May 1945 by the collapse of the entire edifice of the regime itself.

Chapter 1

The introduction of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg, into Baden, 1841 to 1846 □ setting the scene

On December 27, the last Sunday of the year 1846, as the Catholic Church celebrated the thanksgiving Mass for the close of the year, the archdiocese of Freiburg had a very special reason for gratitude. On this day, six Sisters of Charity started the first branch house of a new religious order, before even the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg was erected.⁶³ It was not only the first religious house founded in the nineteenth century in the Grand Duchy of Baden, in the south-west of Germany, but also the very first of its kind ever as a congregation of active Catholic female religious in that part of the world.⁶⁴ This chapter will explore how this astonishing event – as contemporaries saw it – came about. It will identify the agents who were behind all this, the circumstances in which they were able to act, and the ways in which they were prevented from acting differently.

With these sisters, the Catholic Church in Baden acquired a completely new type of personnel. In this chapter the reasons they were wanted by the archbishop and other people will be analysed, and the functions they were assigned to. Were the new order and its female members seen “only” as instruments in the hands of the priests and other males, or did they act anywhere themselves as agents?

⁶³ *Süddeutsche Zeitung für Kirche und Staat* no. 6, 6 Jan. 1847. François Charles Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation* (unpublished manuscript, c. 1870), vol. ii, p. 373 (MHA Strasbourg).

⁶⁴ During the French Revolution, the Alsatian Sisters of Charity who were based in Zabern (Saverne) were dispersed. Some of them fled to their bishop in Ettenheim in the Badenese part of the diocese of Strasbourg. From there a group was demanded and sent to the old hospital in Freiburg, the *Sapienz*, see Emil Clemens Scherer, 'Die ersten Barmherzigen Schwestern in Baden', in *Caritas* 35 (1930), pp 145–56. In this thesis, this fact is not counted as a branch house of a new congregation or even the founding of such.

From 1806 on, the newly-created state of Baden tried to create social, political and religious cohesion among its very different regions and mentalities. To achieve that a new constitution was introduced in 1818, the first ever and most liberal in the German lands, and which made Baden a model liberal state.⁶⁵ To support and propagate this constitution, a strict, centralised bureaucracy and a church-state system were established, where the priests acted as the government's own agents.⁶⁶ To achieve this goal, the government relied on a small, for the most part Protestant and a well-educated middle class who served as civil servants.⁶⁷ This was despite the fact that two-thirds of the population consisted of Catholics,⁶⁸ in the main small farmers and craftsmen who lived predominantly in the southern half of the state. Apart from Freiburg, which had around 15,000 inhabitants in the middle of the nineteenth century, the few other large cities were situated in the northern half of the country. The overall population grew from one million in 1815 to 1.4 million in 1850, but Baden remained an agrarian state until 1850.⁶⁹ When Alsace was finally incorporated into the French economic system with the French Revolution, the century-old common market area between Alsace, Baden and Switzerland had been broken up, and Baden became border territory not only politically but also economically and hence quite isolated.⁷⁰ Only in the region of Mannheim and Heidelberg in the very north-west of Baden, and in and around the capital Karlsruhe, had

⁶⁵ Wolfgang Hug, *Die Geschichte Badens* (2nd ed., Darmstadt, 2016), p. 105f.; Lothar Gall, 'Gründung und politische Entwicklung des Großherzogtums bis 1848', in Josef Becker, Lothar Gall, Gerd Hepp, Hugo Ott, Bernd Otnad, Paul Sauer, Hermann Schäfer, Franz. X. Vollmer, Paul-Ludwig Weinacht and Hans Georg Zier, *Badische Geschichte: vom Großherzogtum bis zur Gegenwart* (2nd ed., Stuttgart, 1979), p. 23f, hereafter, Josef Becker et al., *Badische Geschichte*.

⁶⁶ Christian Schröder, *Armenfürsorge und katholische Identität. Südbaden und die Saarregion im historischen Vergleich (1803–1870)*, (Berlin, 2014), pp 41, 45.

⁶⁷ Robert Lee, 'Relative backwardness' and long-run development. Economic, demographic and social changes' in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 61–87, here at p. 79.

⁶⁸ Wolfgang Hug, 'Auf dem Weg zur Bistumsgründung: Die Zeit der Säkularisation', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg, 2008), pp 15–76, here at p. 44 and map p. 623.

⁶⁹ Schröder, *Armenfürsorge*, p. 35.

⁷⁰ The 1871 reunited economic region was again torn apart in the aftermath of 1918, see Robert Neisen, 'Mehr Segen als Fluch: Die Auswirkungen der Grenzlage auf die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Südbadens vor 1945', in Markus Eisen (ed.), *Region und Grenze: die Bedeutung der Grenze für die Geschichte Südbadens in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2013), pp 264–90, here at pp 266, 277–82.

industrialisation taken hold, especially with the building of the railway system from 1840 onwards.⁷¹ Sixty years (1817–76) were required however to construct a new river bed in order to make the river Rhine navigable. This major infrastructural investment would underpin an expanding industrialised economy.⁷²

Baden was not only a new state politically; in the wake of Napoleon Bonaparte's final defeat in 1815 it acquired a new ecclesiastical structure. In 1821, the archdiocese of Freiburg was formed of parts of six dioceses which in part had ceased to exist. From the outset the government had the archdiocese in its grip. On the installation of the first archbishop of Freiburg in 1827, he and his successors found themselves in a very weak position. In practice, he could only ordain the priests and confer the sacrament of confirmation.⁷³ He was neither able to influence nor to oversee the education of the candidates for the priesthood, he could not install the priests in the parishes, nor did he have the right to administer the church's income or property.⁷⁴ The largest part of the archdiocese of Freiburg consisted of the former diocese of Constance which had a distinctly liberal and enlightened tradition. Many generations of priests had been educated in that spirit in the seminary on the banks of Lake Constance.⁷⁵ Therefore, the new leader of the recently-founded archdiocese of Freiburg could not rely on the support of most of his priests if he was not liberal and 'enlightened' himself.

In 1842, Hermann von Vicari (1843–68) on reaching seventy years of age was elected archbishop. He was well versed in church law and had served as councillor and official of the episcopal curia of Constance until the diocese had

⁷¹ Lee, 'Relative backwardness', p. 83.

⁷² Georg Patzer, *Die Geschichte des Südwestens. Wie wir wurden, was wir sind* (Stuttgart, 2015), pp 144–68.

⁷³ Geraldine F. Grogan, *The noblest agitator: Daniel O'Connell and the German Catholic movement, 1830–50* (Dublin, 1991), p. 67, citing Adam Franz Lennig's speech to the first assembly of the *Katholische Verein* in Mainz in 1848, in *Der Katholik*, 20 Sept. 1848.

⁷⁴ Wolfgang Hug, 'Auf dem Weg zur Bistumsgründung', p. 61f.; Schröder, *Armenfürsorge*, p. 41.

⁷⁵ Hug, 'Auf dem Weg zur Bistumsgründung', pp 48–50; Rudolf Lange, *Franz Joseph Ritter von Buß und die soziale Frage seiner Zeit* (Freiburg, 1955), p. 16f.

been abolished in 1821.⁷⁶ He was well known as a conciliatory, good-natured character, and because of his delicate frame and weak health expected to hold office for only a short time. But he surprised all his critics, not only in reaching ninety-four years of age and becoming the world's oldest active bishop, but above all, exposing a steely will, resolute nature and noteworthy proficiency. Von Vicari became the central figure in the struggle between church and state in Baden at this crucial juncture.⁷⁷ On his installation, von Vicari began the first of many battles. He asked Grand Duke Leopold for permission to invite sisters of charity into the archdiocese. The introduction of a new female Catholic religious order into Baden was therefore his top priority.⁷⁸ Even before he became archbishop, Vicari knew of a fund that had been left in the will of August von Limburg-Stirum, prince-bishop of Speyer in 1770–97 during the former 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation', whose diocese had been partly incorporated into the archdiocese of Freiburg.⁷⁹ As the fund was not sufficient to support a convent for female religious who would care for poor sick women, the money had been used for the poor of Bruchsal⁸⁰ and administered by the state government since Baden came into being.⁸¹

When in March 1841, Hermann von Vicari, who was vicar general of the archdiocese at the time, learned of the details of that fund in Bruchsal, he made

⁷⁶ Heinrich Maas, *Geschichte der Katholischen Kirche im Großherzogthum Baden: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Regierungszeit des Erzbischofs Hermann v. Vicari* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1891), p. 126.

⁷⁷ Von Vicari was born 13 May 1773, elected archbishop 15 June 1842, papal approval 30 January 1843, enthroned 26 March 1843, died 14 April 1868. See Christoph Schmider, *Die Freiburger Bischöfe. 175 Jahre Erzbischof Freiburg: Eine Geschichte in Lebensbildern*, (Freiburg, 2002), pp 63–82, here at 69–72. See also the website of the ordinariate of Freiburg, URL: http://www.ordinariat-freiburg.de/html/hermann_von_vicari.html [accessed 23 Oct. 2018].

⁷⁸ 'We have noticed the foundation of this enterprise as one of our first and upmost duties of our pastoral office.', see *Hirtenbrief des Hochwürdigsten Herrn Hermann von Vicari, Erzbischofs von Freiburg und Metropolitens der oberrheinischen Kirchenprovinz, an die Geistlichkeit und die Gläubigen seiner Erzdiözese als Aufforderung zu Gaben christlicher Liebe für den in dem Großherzogthum Baden eingeführten Orden der barmherzigen Schwestern*, (Freiburg, 1845), hereafter, *Pastoral letter*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ Limburg-Stirum's will dated 26 Feb. 1783, see report of Fr Welzer, the dean of Bruchsal, to Ordinariate, 19 Mar. 1841 (EAF, B5/37).

⁸⁰ Bruchsal, 20 km north-east of Karlsruhe, used to be the residence of the prince-bishops of Speyer.

⁸¹ Report of Fr Welzer, the dean of Bruchsal, to Ordinariate, 19 Mar. 1841 (EAF, B5/37).

the decision to deliver Fr Welzer's report on the content of Limburg-Stirum's will to his predecessor Archbishop Ignaz Demeter (1837–42). Vicari respectfully requested Demeter to take this report into consideration and that at the next parliamentary meeting he might propose the establishment of this most Christian charitable institution.⁸²

Vicari thus seemed to have been the driving force behind the plan to bring religious sisters to the archdiocese, as it is not clear if the archbishop was at the meeting of the Ordinariate when this matter had first been discussed.⁸³ Vicari's proposal was not introduced to parliament by the archbishop, but on 5 April 1841, Demeter added in his will⁸⁴ a considerable sum to the fund of Limburg-Stirum⁸⁵ towards establishing a new Catholic female order of sisters of charity.⁸⁶ Archbishop Demeter supported this directive by setting a deadline of ten years after his will for it to be put into force. Grand Duke Leopold promised to honour his father Karl Friedrich's will by allowing the introduction of the Sisters of Charity.⁸⁷ From the time of this princely confirmation in May 1843 to the actual arrival of the sisters, the new archbishop von Vicari needed all the help he could

⁸² Handwritten note of Hermann von Vicari, below minutes of discussion of Fr Welzer's report, 26 Mar. 1841 (EAF, B5/37). As archbishop, Ignaz Demeter was also member of the first chamber of the parliament of Baden, see Maas, *Geschichte der Katholischen Kirche*, p. 96.

⁸³ Von Vicari had signed the request for a report to the dean of Bruchsal, not Demeter who as a former state ministry official might have known of this legacy, see minutes of meeting of 5 Mar. 1841 (EAF, B5/37). Even if Demeter knew of it, it was Vicari who undertook the investigation into the fund and then recommended it to the archbishop.

⁸⁴ In § 22 of his will dated 5 Apr. 1841, Demeter bequeathed two-thirds of his fortune towards the founding of the order, see vicar general of the Archdiocese of Freiburg to Wilhelm Müller, member of the district office at Rastatt, 27 Jan. 1843 (EAF, B5/37).

⁸⁵ Last will of 26 February 1783. Report of Dean Welzer of Bruchsal to the Ordinariate of Freiburg on 19 March 1841 (EAF, B 5/37 [1841–43]). Limburg-Stirum bequeathed one-fifth of his fortune for the founding of a new female religious order. In article xii of the fourth organisation command of 14 Feb. 1803, Grand Duke Karl Friedrich had promised to fulfil this will if the fund was not large enough, see Ministry of the Interior to Ordinariate, 23 Apr. 1841 (EAF, B5/37).

⁸⁶ The exact instruction of Demeter was that the money should go to his two surviving siblings, only after their death should the new order get the money. But the siblings renounced so that the money was available at once. The total sum was 25,272 fl. [= *Florin* but spoken '*Gulden*'] and 49 kr. [= *Kreuzer*]: *Pastoral letter*, p. 6. See also Engelbert Krebs, *Geschichte der Barmherzigen Schwestern in Freiburg i. Br.*, als Manuskript gedruckt, (Freiburg, c. 1944).

⁸⁷ Grand Duke Leopold first gave his oral, then his written confirmation 24 May 1843 that he would allow the introduction of sisters of charity, see Maas, *Geschichte*, p. 186f.

get for the implementation of his plan.⁸⁸ In his colleague Raess of Strasbourg and Franz Joseph Buss, professor of political science and law at the University of Freiburg, he found ideal supporters.

Andreas Raess, bishop of Strasbourg (1842–87), was one of the first ultramontane bishops in the German-speaking lands.⁸⁹ The diocese of Strasbourg was a thriving, very 'Roman' diocese with an abundance of priests who 'were in perfect harmony' with their bishop.⁹⁰ During Raess' tenure, many male and female orders and congregations started branch houses there, and several new congregations were founded.⁹¹ His Alsatian fellow-bishop was not only willing to help Archbishop von Vicari in every way to promote the church in Baden, but he himself was the person with responsibility for the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg. Demeter had insisted that the new order of sisters of charity had to be modelled on the Bavarian daughter of the Motherhouse Strasbourg (Motherhouse Munich, established in 1832) and to follow the Bavarian – while not French – constitutions.⁹² Raess promised Vicari to send sisters from Strasbourg and assured him that young Badenese women would be welcomed for training in the motherhouse in Strasbourg. Raess also put Vicari into contact with Abbé François Charles Spitz, the father superior of

⁸⁸ For a detailed version of the following, see Angelika Hansert, 'Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.) *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg, 2008), pp 303–29, here at pp 303–7.

⁸⁹ Andreas Räß (André Raess), born 1794, coadjutor 1840, bishop of Strasbourg 1842–87, see René Epp, René Pierre Levresse and Charles Munier (eds), *Histoire de l'Église catholique in Alsace des origines à nos jours* (Strasbourg, 2003), pp 409–49; René Epp, *Monsignor André Raess, évêque de Strasbourg* (Griesheim-sur-Souffel, 1979); René Epp, *Le mouvement ultramontain dans l'église catholique en Alsace au XIXème siècle: 1802–1870*, 2 vols (Lille, 1975); Heinrich Maas, *Geschichte*, p. 187. Raess had been trained in the seminary of Mainz, the so-called 'school of Mainz' of bishop Colmar, one of the first German ultramontane centres. From there several German ultramontane priests became bishops.

⁹⁰ Epp et al. (eds), *Histoire*, pp 444, 416–20. René Epp, *Figures du catholicisme en Alsace, 1789–1965* (Strasbourg, 2007), p. 189f.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp 420–4.

⁹² Michael Sintzel, *Geschichte der Entstehung, Verbreitung und Wirksamkeit des Ordens der barmherzigen Schwestern*, (Regensburg, 1847), pp 345–58. The statutes came into effect 30 May 1835.

the Alsatian sisters of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, who would play a vital role in the negotiations over the constitutions of the new order.⁹³

The driving force behind the whole scheme, especially in the public eye, was a Catholic layman: Franz Joseph Buss.⁹⁴ Without his zeal, tenacity, ferocity and seemingly endless energy it is questionable whether the founding of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of the Motherhouse Freiburg would ever have come about.⁹⁵ A well-educated man with doctorate degrees in philosophy, law and medicine, he had held the chair of political science and law at the University of Freiburg since 1836, and was elected to the Lower House of parliament of the Grand Duchy of Baden in 1837. In the same year, he addressed the social question with his famous 'factory speech' as one of the foremost politicians in Germany.⁹⁶ Buss also was a stout advocate of the Catholic Church, one of the prominent ultramontane leaders not only in Baden but in all of the German lands.⁹⁷ He stood at the side of Archbishop von Vicari during the *Kulturkampf* or 'Culture War' of Baden, which preceded the all-German one in the 1870s and 1880s.⁹⁸ In what way did he agitate for the introduction of the Sisters of Charity into Baden?

Franz Joseph Buss was not only an accomplished lawyer, but also a prolific writer. Together with Abbé Spitz, he was the main author of the new constitutions which had to be amended several times to get the *placet* of the government.⁹⁹ He wrote the pastoral letter of Pentecost 1845 in which the faithful in every Catholic parish of the country were informed about the new order of sisters of charity, why it was about to come to Baden, and what its goal was, both spiritually and

⁹³ Spitz, *Chronique*, vol. ii, pp 355ff. Maas, *Geschichte*, p 187f.

⁹⁴ Julius Dorneich, *Franz Josef Buß und die katholische Bewegung in Baden* (Freiburg, 1979). It is his doctorate thesis of 1922.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 201–3. Lange, *Franz Joseph Ritter von Buß*, p. 10f.

⁹⁶ Lange, *Franz Joseph Ritter von Buß*, p. 7.

⁹⁷ Schröder, *Armenfürsorge*, p. 44. Franz Joseph Buss had an 'Irish connection': among other leading German Catholics, he had been greatly impressed by Daniel O'Connell and his fight for Catholic freedom and he modelled his political actions successfully on O'Connell's tactics, see Grogan, *The noblest agitator*, p. 25.

⁹⁸ Schröder, *Armenfürsorge*, p. 42.

⁹⁹ Spitz, *Chronique*, vol. ii, p. 74f.

socially.¹⁰⁰ Buss also wrote several newspaper articles in which the public was informed of the progress made to date.¹⁰¹ He was author of a substantial volume on the history of the order, its Catholic spirituality and why this spirituality was the best means to meet the social problems of the time.¹⁰² In the *Landtag* (the state parliament of Baden) of 1846, he was the only parliamentarian who defended the introduction of this new order into Baden against the strong opposition of the Liberal Party. But the parliament had no say in this matter, although they voted against the order; the consent of the grand duke as sovereign was enough.¹⁰³

In the last quarter of 1845, everything seemed favourable for the arrival of the new Sisters of Charity into Baden the very same year,¹⁰⁴ when serious obstacles emerged. According to number 3 of the Order's new constitutions, the sisters had to be invited specifically.¹⁰⁵ Without a contract between the workplace-to-be and the motherhouse (the Motherhouse of Strasbourg acting for the proposed Motherhouse of Freiburg) there could be no state approval and, without that permit, no sisters. The first branch house and future nurse-training centre was selected, namely the university hospital (*Clinisches Hospital*¹⁰⁶) of Freiburg. However, it was jointly owned by the city and the university, and the two parties had been quarrelling about the composition of the administrative council of the hospital for years. The state government in Karlsruhe had to intervene, and by

¹⁰⁰ *Pastoral letter*.

¹⁰¹ *Süddeutsches katholisches Kirchenblatt* 3 (18 Jan. 1845), *Süddeutsche Zeitung für Kirche und Staat* (6 May 1845–6 Jan. 1847).

¹⁰² Franz Joseph Buß, *Der Orden der barmherzigen Schwestern. Übersicht seiner Entstehung, Verbreitung, Gliederung, Leistung, Nothwendigkeit und Zweckmäßigkeit in der Gegenwart*. First published in Switzerland (Schaffhausen, 1844) under the pseudonym 'J. Eremites', 1847 followed by another publication in his own name.

¹⁰³ Öffentliche Sitzung der zweiten Kammer vom 24. Juli 1846 (no. xli), 6. Prot.-Heft, in *Verhandlungen der Stände-Versammlungen des Großherzogtums Baden, Protokolle der Ersten Kammer und der Zweiten Kammer* (Karlsruhe, 1846), pp 173–5.

¹⁰⁴ At first the aim was to introduce the sisters on 1 October 1845, see letter 16 August 1845 from the state government of Baden to Archbishop Hermann von Vicari (EAF, B5/89); Dorneich, *Franz Josef Buß*, pp 201–3.

¹⁰⁵ *Constitutions of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul in the Grand Duchy of Baden* of 9 Feb./13 Mar. 1845, published in Buß, *Der Orden der barmherzigen Schwestern*, pp 597–612; Sintzel, *Geschichte*, pp 361–75, here at p. 362 (§ 3). In Baden itself, the constitutions of the Order were not printed before 1872 when new constitutions had replaced the first ones. The new ones were not to be disclosed to the state government of Baden but to be kept secret.

¹⁰⁶ Shortened to *Clinicum* and later to *Clinik/Klinik*.

the time the matter was finally settled, another year had passed.¹⁰⁷ On 1 December 1846, the sister superior of the new convent arrived at the hospital with a fellow sister to prepare everything. They were joined on 27 December by the other four sisters, accompanied by Mother General Sister Vincent Sultzer and Fr Superior François Charles Spitz of the motherhouse in Strasbourg.¹⁰⁸

Who were the main agents of the whole project? The person of archbishop von Vicari was surely key to the whole enterprise, but it was the sum of the efforts of several participants that guaranteed success in the end. When Vicari acted as executor of his predecessor Demeter's will in regard to the introduction of the order, which Demeter had already determined on, the neighbouring country Alsace with bishop Raess and its vivid Catholic life was brought into the picture. Demeter's money was also essential to win the approval of Grand Duke Leopold whose father had made a promise in the aftermath of the secularisation, based on bishop Limburg-Stirum's will. Both bishops, Vicari and his predecessor Demeter, must have seen the order as a means to rekindle Catholic life in Baden. The sisters would not only serve as role models, but by their eventual distribution all over the country, they would also reach the common people in a way which was not possible for the parish priests. Thus, the sisters could complement the priests' ministry with their service, creating a new kind of spiritual outreach. According to Christian Schröder, the promoters hoped for a stronger confessional profile through their active support of female Catholic congregations.¹⁰⁹

Why did Vicari act the way he did? Munich was not only a model for the rule, but also acted as a warning. The Ordinariate of Munich played a minor role in the whole matter as the municipal magistrate of that city negotiated directly with the Motherhouse Strasbourg. With its focus on the cheap service of future nurses, the whole project of introducing a new religious order to Bavaria nearly

¹⁰⁷ Protokoll des Staatsministeriums der Sitzung 'bei Hof' vom 4. Dezember 1846 (GLA, 233/16475).

¹⁰⁸ Spitz, *Chronique*, vol. ii, p. 75.

¹⁰⁹ Schröder, *Armenfürsorge*, p. 48.

collapsed.¹¹⁰ Archbishop von Vicari therefore kept all the reins in his hands. Geography was also more favourable for Baden than for Bavaria. The proximity of Strasbourg, which could easily be reached by train, made keeping in touch so much easier. It is also very likely that by keeping in close contact with bishop Raess and with the superiors of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg, Vicari wanted his archdiocese to profit as long as possible from the thriving Alsatian ultramontane spirit.¹¹¹ Although he eventually fell out with Raess over the question of Fr Superior Spitz becoming coadjutor of Freiburg, Vicari always wanted 'his' sisters to benefit from what he regarded as the 'fine Alsatian Catholic spirit', which Fr Superior Spitz and the mother general of Strasbourg guaranteed.

From her work on Prussia, Relinde Meiwes has argued that in Germany in a first phase to 1845, predominantly older, foreign congregation models were copied, usually initiated by priests. In a second phase from 1845, new congregations were founded, in two-thirds of the Prussian cases by bourgeois women.¹¹² The Vincentian motherhouses of Strasbourg and its German stems certainly belong to the first category, although for South Germany such generalisation is not applicable. The founders of the Vincentian motherhouses of the Sisters of Charity were not just priests but the highest ecclesiastical authorities; in the case of Munich (1832), the highest political authority King Ludwig I of Bavaria.¹¹³ Catholic bourgeois women apparently played no role at all in the founding process of religious congregations in the German south-west, certainly not those who came from Strasbourg. In fact, there was no lay female agency at all involved. The prince-bishops of Brixen, Seckau and Salzburg asked the Motherhouse Munich to send sisters for new motherhouses in their Austrian

¹¹⁰ Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom heiligen Vinzenz von Paul, Mutterhaus München (ed.), *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern: 1832 bis 2007* (Munich, 2007), pp 28–47.

¹¹¹ For a detailed analysis of the importance of Alsace for the Catholic revival of Baden see also Alexander Schnütgen, *Das Elsaß und die Erneuerung des katholischen Lebens in Deutschland von 1814 bis 1848* (Strasbourg, 1913).

¹¹² Relinde Meiwes, *'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn': katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 2000), pp 96, 113.

¹¹³ *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern*, pp 15, 22–7.

dioceses of Innsbruck (1839), Graz (1841) and Salzburg (1844),¹¹⁴ whereas the dean of Zams had sent his own niece for training into the Motherhouse Strasbourg as the starting point of another new congregation (1823). From Zams a prominent member of the cathedral chapter of Vienna, count Karl von Coudenhove, with the help of the imperial Habsburg family of Austria, initiated the new motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity in Vienna (1832).¹¹⁵

In Germany, the hospital director Dr Adelman of Fulda and the government of the state of Hessen sought the support of the bishop of Fulda to get sisters of charity for their institution in Fulda. Bishop Johann Leonhard Pfaff, in deciding which congregation to choose, alternated between the Sisters of St Charles Borromeo of Nancy and the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg. In the end, he chose the Alsatian motherhouse as its members spoke German.¹¹⁶ In Paderborn, King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, with the consent of Bishop Friedrich Clemens Count of Ledebuer, accepted a petition of the poor relief council in 1827 to install sisters of charity in a former monastery combined with the hospital. As the negotiations with different motherhouses in Münster, Trier, Nancy, Prague and Posen as well as the establishment of their own new congregation failed, Fr Superior Dammers sought help in Fulda. As the congregation in Fulda was still too small, the Motherhouse Strasbourg helped out once more in establishing the new motherhouse of Sisters of Charity in Paderborn (1841).¹¹⁷ In Swabia, Baden's neighbouring German region, it was once again the hospital management of three different towns and members of the Catholic nobility who asked for the introduction of sisters of charity from 1845 on, while the bishop of

¹¹⁴ 175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern, pp 78–83; Emil Clemens Scherer, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von Straßburg: ein Bild ihres Werdens und Wirkens von 1734 bis zur Gegenwart* (Saaralben, 1930), pp 201–27.

¹¹⁵ Scherer, *Kongregation*, pp 188–95. Zams, Vienna and their south-east European stems joined the Motherhouse in Paris and therefore became Daughters of Charity, see Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 193f.

¹¹⁶ Mutterhaus der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom Hl. Vinzenz von Paul in Fulda (ed.), *1834–1984: 150 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern Mutterhaus Fulda* (Fulda, 1984), pp 30–2; Scherer, *Kongregation*, pp 227–9. Bishop Pfaff was a personal friend of Bishop Raess.

¹¹⁷ Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 237f.

Rottenburg-Stuttgart succeeded in getting sisters from Strasbourg in 1852.¹¹⁸ In the same year in Hildesheim, Bishop Eduard Jakob Wedekin got Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul from the Motherhouse in Paderborn.¹¹⁹ (See Figure 1.1 on the following page.)

All these examples show the central role of the Alsatian motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity. The new motherhouses founded by Strasbourg were usually the trailblazers in the German-speaking dioceses who paved the way for other female congregations, of which many were locally created and followed the Franciscan rule.

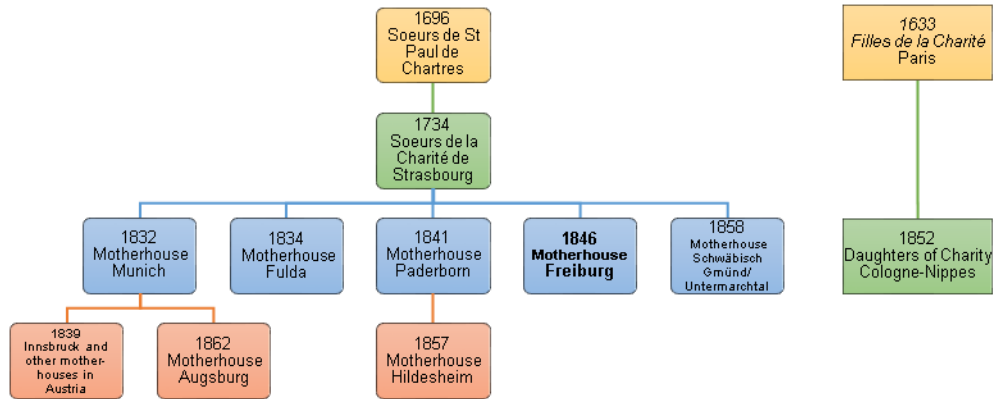
These examples demonstrate the need to examine each order or congregation separately. Each one turns out to be quite unique with regard to founder(s), time and circumstances of the founding, fields of action, political circumstances and the social origin of the members. Even the Vincentian motherhouses, coming from a single congregation, can also differ in one way or another. Given the centrality of the male agency, where were the women in all of this, the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg and of all the other houses? The sources on the establishment of the different new motherhouses indicate that the women who became sisters later were chosen at first by men and sent on to Strasbourg for training. No mention is made here of how the women were involved in that process. The choice of sister was jointly made by the mother general and the father superior of Strasbourg.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Hermann Tüchle, *Die Barmherzigen Schwestern von Untermarchtal. Zur 125jährigen Tätigkeit der Vinzentinerinnen im Bistum Rottenburg-Stuttgart* (Ostfildern 1983), pp 8–11; Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 247f. They succeeded in getting sisters from Strasbourg in 1852; the motherhouse in Gmünd became independent in 1858.

¹¹⁹ Lieselotte Sterner, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in Hildesheim von 1852 bis zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* (Hannover, 1999), pp 45–9.

¹²⁰ Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 341.

Figure 1.1: Family tree of the Sœurs de la Charité de Strasbourg and its offshoots, the motherhouses of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, in the German lands



Source: Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern, Innsbruck (ed.), *150 Jahre Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom heiligen Vinzenz von Paul in Innsbruck* (Thaur, 1989), p. 73, edited by the present author. Here only those motherhouses were included which were founded before 1920 and which formed the 'Federation of Vincentian Congregations' in 1970.

However, during the foundation process of the Motherhouse Freiburg, Fr Superior François Charles Spitz noted in his minutes of the meeting of Archbishop von Vicari, in the committee for the introduction of the order, consisting of Professor Buss, Abbé Spitz and the mother general of Strasbourg in Freiburg on 8 September 1845 the leading role played by the last-named.¹²¹ For a woman of her time it was extraordinary not only to take part in such a meeting, but to insist, as Mother General Sister Vinzenz Sultzer (1813–68)¹²² did, on what conditions the Motherhouse Strasbourg would provide for the sisters, and that without conceding these she would refuse to send them to found new branches.¹²³

¹²¹ François Charles Spitz, minutes of the meeting at the archbishop's palace in Freiburg on 8 September 1845 (MHA Strasbourg, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. ii, pp 357–60).

¹²² Sister Vinzenz Sultzer was born in Strasbourg in 1778 to a locksmith's family. She got a very good, bourgeois education. After the re-erection of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg after the French Revolution, Sister Vinzenz, together with the respective father superior, played the essential role in the growth and success of this Alsatian congregation, see Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 128ff.

¹²³ Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 243.

Conclusion

The new order, the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg had three high-ranking founding fathers, of whom Archbishop Hermann von Vicari played the key role. He was assisted by his fellow bishop Andreas Raess of Strasbourg and by Catholic layman and professor Franz Joseph Buss, one of the heads of the ultramontanists in the Archdiocese of Freiburg. This suggests that Vicari's central aim was to rekindle religious fervour with their help and thus 'transport' into Baden the ultramontane spirit in which the Badenese sisters were about to be trained. Vicari's plan to use female religious as his instruments to 'romanise' his diocese becomes even more significant when it is realised that before 1918 no male religious orders were allowed to found houses in all of Baden. That the members of the new female religious congregation might develop an agency of their own was exemplified in the determination shown by the mother general of Strasbourg, Sister Vinzenz Sultzer, at the meeting with the archbishop, Professor Buss and other male officials who assisted Vicari in establishing the new motherhouse. On the archbishop's explicitly indicated wish the superiors of Strasbourg acted for their new Freiburg branch in the decades to follow.

Chapter 2

The first thirty-five years from 1846 to the 1880s: a slow start

By the end of 1846, Archbishop Hermann von Vicari of Freiburg and his collaborators had succeeded in transferring a branch of the Alsatian *Sœurs de la Charité de Strasbourg* into the archdiocese. The next step was the setting up of the new motherhouse, which would then gradually branch itself out all over Baden and Hohenzollern.

The process of this growth will be the main focus of the first part of this chapter. Who were the agents behind the founding of the several dozen branch houses of the first thirty-five years of the new Order in Baden? What reasons formed the basis of the desire to get sisters for certain enterprises and specific locations? And how did relationships develop between the Alsatian and the Badenese motherhouses, between the Motherhouse Freiburg and the authorities of church and state?

At the middle of the nineteenth century, the French Catholic revival was already underway.¹²⁴ This chapter argues that Archbishop von Vicari used the new Motherhouse Freiburg as an instrument to engender something of that spiritual revival in his diocese, which was taking place at the very same time as the revival was happening in Ireland,¹²⁵ in other parts of Germany¹²⁶ and elsewhere in Europe. Although the Order was not yet able to become a part of the Catholic milieu, the seeds were sown through the spiritual training provided at the Motherhouse Strasbourg over twenty-five years. However, the sisters were not only welcome instruments for the clergy, but for the government as well.

¹²⁴ Catherine Maurer, 'La France, 'pays classique de l'amour'? Les catholiques allemands et le modèle français de la charité (1820–1930)', in: Michel Lagrée, Nadine-Josette Chaline (ed.), *Religions par-delà les frontières* (Paris, 1997), pp 87–99.

¹²⁵ Emmet Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850–75', in *The American Historical Review*, LXXII (1972), pp 625–52.

¹²⁶ Jonathan Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1984).

The good relationship with the state was soon to be tested as the 'culture war(s)' cast the first clouds. Prior to the Germany-wide *Kulturkampf* of Chancellor Bismarck, which succeeded the foundation of the German Reich in 1871, a fierce 'culture war' was fought in largely Catholic Baden. This state was headed by the Protestant Grand Duke Friedrich I, son-in-law of the king of Prussia who later became Kaiser Wilhelm I. Baden's 'culture war' had been initiated in the 1860s, and was copied later by the Prussians.¹²⁷ In this chapter, how the Order was affected by the newly-strained relations between state and church is discussed. Were the sisters hindered by the government or the local dignitaries in living their lives as religious? And if so, could they continue to work in the spirit of the Order?

Internal structure and religious spirit

With this new plant of the Vincentian tree, two main aspects of French Catholic life had entered Baden: a distinctive type of governance and French spirituality. The structure of the Order was based on the new constitutions of 1845. Although nearly identical with the Bavarian constitutions of the Motherhouse Munich (as was Archbishop Demeter's wish in his will), the new Baden constitutions were firmly rooted in the constitutions of the Motherhouse Strasbourg.¹²⁸ This Alsatian congregation had been founded in 1734 by Cardinal and Prince-Bishop Armand Gaston de Rohan as the very first of its kind in that country at the bishop's seat in Zabern.¹²⁹ Its rule was based on that of the *Sœurs*

¹²⁷ Karl-Heinz Braun, 'Kirche im liberalen Bürgerstaat. Das Erzbistum von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende der Monarchie 1918', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918*, (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), pp 121–210, here at p. 167.

¹²⁸ The full text of all three constitutions are published in Michael Sintzel, *Geschichte der Entstehung, Verbreitung und Wirksamkeit des Ordens der barmherzigen Schwestern*, (Regensburg, 1847). The German version of the constitutions of Strasbourg pp 337–44, those of Munich pp 345–60, and the constitutions of Baden pp 361–75, hereafter Sintzel, *Geschichte*. They were also published in F[rantz] J[oseph] Buß, *Der Orden der barmherzigen Schwestern. Uebersicht seiner Entstehung, Verbreitung, Gliederung, Leistung, Nothwendigkeit und Zweckmässigkeit in der Gegenwart* (reprint, Schaffhausen, 1847), the constitutions of Munich pp 547–561, Strasbourg pp 562–569, and Baden pp 599–612.

¹²⁹ French: Saverne. As Strasbourg was one of the centres of the Protestant Reformation, the bishop of Strasbourg had moved his residence to Zabern, see Anthony J. Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City: Protestantism and Religious Culture in Strasbourg, 1870–1914* (Leiden, 2008), p. 25f.;

de Saint-Paul de Chartres.¹³⁰ However, only twenty-five years after its foundation, the young congregation encountered major problems.¹³¹ A new general rule was therefore introduced in 1760¹³² modelled on that of the *Filles de la Charité* of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac.¹³³ During the French Revolution, the sisters were dispersed and had to go into exile abroad.¹³⁴ After their return in 1804, the new centre was in Strasbourg, where in 1813 the new Fr Superior Johann Philipp Sauthier managed to get the sisters to vote for the first mother general, Sister Vinzenz Sultzer.¹³⁵ The basis was now the so-called motherhouse-system, with the motherhouse as the congregation's headquarters and two strong leaders working as a duo: the female part being the mother general and the male the father superior.¹³⁶ This Vincentian model was transported unchanged into Germany.

Both in Strasbourg and in Freiburg, the mother general (*Generaloberin*) was heart and soul of the Order. She had the final say in who was admitted to the community of the sisters, who was clothed, who made profession of vows. She was the one responsible for the formation of the new sisters and sisters-to-be.¹³⁷ In short, the mother general was in sole charge of the human capital, the most valuable asset of the Order. To help the mother general with her tasks, two sister assistants were added to the direction of the Order as her consultants.¹³⁸ To assist in the formation of the recruits, a mistress of novices was appointed by the

Emil Clemens Scherer, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von Straßburg. Ein Bild ihres Werdens und Wirkens von 1734 bis zur Gegenwart* (Kevelaer, 1930), p. 11ff.

¹³⁰ Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 26.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40ff.

¹³² The original constitutions (1733) which were brought from Chartres were lost and they exist only in a transcript made by Fr Superior Philipp Sauthier, see Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 19, footnote 2. After the French Revolution, new constitutions were granted state approval in 1828, see Scherer, *Kongregation*, pp 337–44.

¹³³ The new superior Abbé Antoine Jeanjean (superior 1758–90) named Vincent de Paul the founder of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg, see Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 50.

¹³⁴ Scherer, *Kongregation*, pp 97–111. Some sisters even worked in the old hospital in Freiburg from 1798 until 1816.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 113ff., 126, 128. Johann Philipp Sauthier was father superior 1811–23, Sister Vinzenz Sultzer was mother general 1813–68.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 47ff. Fr Superior Jeanjean was a fervent admirer of Vincent de Paul (canonised in 1737), see Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 49.

¹³⁷ §§ 26, 27, 29, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 368f.

¹³⁸ § 4, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

mother general herself.¹³⁹ The archbishop, who was the official head of the Order,¹⁴⁰ appointed a priest from Baden as his delegate and superior of the Order.¹⁴¹ In place of the archbishop, the father superior oversaw the observation of the discipline determined by the constitutions; he also assisted and advised the mother general in all important matters. Together with the mother general and her two assistants, this priest-superior determined who was admitted to the Order, he clothed the new sisters and he received their vows in specific liturgical ceremonies. The father superior also conducted and presided over the elections and mediated in case of conflict between the sisters. Without his consent, no sister could be released from her vows, and without his knowledge no member of the Order could be transferred.¹⁴² In one third of the fifty paragraphs of the constitutions, mother general and priest-superior were referred to only as a duo with a German term that combined both (*die Ordensobern*). Whenever they had to deal with the public – founding of branch houses, visitating them, handling complaints or managing the revenue – they acted together.¹⁴³ Thus in all intercourse with the world outside the motherhouse, they appeared as joint leaders. For the beginning, it seemed to be much wiser not to provoke the public with too much female power. Decades later, when the public had become more familiar with the internal structure, petitioners wrote to the mother general directly if they had queries or complaints.

In contrast with the unspecified elections in § 7 of the constitutions, no further reference is made to the issue of elections in any other of the fifty paragraphs. In the addendum to the constitutions of 1845 granted by Grand Duke Leopold, both mother general and father superior were appointed, in the case of the mother general it was not even clear by whom. There were also discrepancies concerning the admission to the Order and the dismissal of sisters. In constitution 7 the father superior took part in both; in §§ 27 and 48 he was not

¹³⁹ § 26, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 368.

¹⁴⁰ §§ 1 and 5, see *ibid.*, p. 362f.

¹⁴¹ § 4, see *ibid.*, p. 362.

¹⁴² § 7, see *ibid.*, p. 363.

¹⁴³ §§ 4, 8, 9, 11–13, 22–5, 31–4, 42, 46, 49, see *ibid.*, pp 362–73.

mentioned at all, implying that the females only were responsible in those matters.

That was the theory, the reality was rather different. At first, there was no motherhouse in Freiburg, no community or staff, and no noviciate. Carl Sulzer was appointed as the first father superior by Archbishop von Vicari in 1847,¹⁴⁴ but more than four years were taken up with debates and planning, until building of the motherhouse commenced in the vicinity of the university hospital. Franz Joseph Buss was again the driving force: 'Mr Buss, l'âme de l'œuvre¹⁴⁵ ... parvint enfin à réaliser son pieux et charitable project.'¹⁴⁶ In autumn 1852, when the first contract between the Motherhouse Strasbourg and the Clinicum expired, the building was finished, but the move-in and the appointment of the mother general was delayed by Vicari to the following spring.¹⁴⁷ In April 1853, Sister Gebhard(e) Weber was appointed mother general,¹⁴⁸ but she stayed only for two months in the new motherhouse and was moved on quickly to another post, because the new house was empty and without any function. This course of action was in accordance with the archbishop's determination to prevent the separation of the Motherhouse Freiburg from the Alsatian counterpart as long as he was alive:

For a success of this business I must insist on the continuous connection with your motherhouse. ... The two of us want to conduct the business on our very own; I vouch for it, and you are free to act as you think best...¹⁴⁹

Thus the current father superior of Freiburg was without any authority which duly prompted a bitter complaint to the government from Fr Carl Sulzer.¹⁵⁰ He

¹⁴⁴ Ordinariate of Freiburg to the Grand Ducal board for the Catholic Church, 17 Sept. 1847 (EAF, B5/89).

¹⁴⁵ Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. ii, p. 76.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ Vicari to Spitz, 21 Oct. 1852 (MHA Strasbourg, *Lettres de Fribourg*, 1846–72).

¹⁴⁸ Rosamunde Weber, born in Tengendorf, clothed 22 October 1846, first profession 28 November 1848, was chosen by Mother General Sister Vinzenz Sultzer and by Fr Superior Spitz, appointed by Archbishop von Vicari and granted state approval on 2 July 1853 (GLA, 233/26).

¹⁴⁹ Vicari to Spitz, 17 April 1853 (MHA Strasbourg, *Lettres de Fribourg*, 1846–72), and Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. ii, p. 376: 'Malgré l'expiration du terme du traité, malgré la construction de la maison-mère, Msgr l'achevêque ne voulut point entendre parler de la separation avec la maison-mère de Strasbourg. Il demanda que pendant sa vie les deux maisons n'en fissent qu'une.'

was soon replaced in 1857 by Franz Joseph Marmon, who was content not to have to carry the main burden of responsibility.¹⁵¹ The entire agency was undertaken by the Motherhouse Strasbourg. The sisters-to-be were admitted, chosen, clothed and trained there, then placed at the various posts in Alsace, Baden or even outside those dioceses. The superiors of Strasbourg also visited all branch houses of the Motherhouse Freiburg in Baden in addition to their own. All sisters of both motherhouses were convened in Strasbourg for their annual retreat.

In 1868, ninety-four-year-old Hermann von Vicari died, and the acting archbishop, auxiliary bishop Lothar von Kübel, determined on the separation of the Motherhouse Freiburg from Strasbourg.¹⁵² At the end of 1869, Sister Gebhard Weber moved into the motherhouse.¹⁵³ In the meantime, all German motherhouses of the Sisters of Charity, daughters of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, came together in Strasbourg in 1869 to discuss new constitutions and to try to get papal approval, as too many bishops were involved now who could cause trouble. However, only Strasbourg received the approval of Rome as a motherhouse in 1870.¹⁵⁴ The new constitutions entered the trial phase in 1871.¹⁵⁵

No other offshoot of the Alsatian branch was linked so closely to the mother plant which makes the Order of Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of

¹⁵⁰ Sulzer to Freiherr von Landenberg, 12 Mar. 1857 (EAF, B5/105). Sulzer resigned due to ill health later in the year. His letter did not cause any repercussions, at least there is nothing mentioned in the sources.

¹⁵¹ Franz Joseph Marmon (1820–85), born in Haigerloch (Hohenzollern), member of the cathedral chapter 1865, cathedral parish priest until 1872 (EAF, Personalia Marmon). Until the beginning of the 1860s, he signed as 'Marmont'. Letter Marmon to Spitz, 11 Sept. 1869 (MHA Strasbourg, Lettres de Fribourg, 1846–72).

¹⁵² Due to the Badenese 'culture war', there was no archbishop of Freiburg 1868–82, see Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. iii, p. 187. Spitz himself was divided in his opinion.

¹⁵³ Spitz, *Biographies des Sœurs*, p. 384. Sister Gebhard immediately saw to a better utilisation of the motherhouse.

¹⁵⁴ In the end, the motherhouses applied for papal approval for five motherhouses in total and for the approval of one rule, which all had in common. Rome saw that as an unprecedented breach of the rules, see Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 301.

¹⁵⁵ Scherer, *Kongregation*, pp 296–308. The first attempt started in 1854 but had to be postponed. In 1869, the motherhouse in Munich gave the lead once more. It gave the impulse to try again as it had done in 1854.

Freiburg quite unique. All other 'offspring' of the Motherhouse Strasbourg made themselves independent after only a short period. Thus since the first constitutions of 1845 were never fully implemented, the Motherhouse Freiburg did not really deserve the title of 'motherhouse' in the first twenty-five years of its history. The state government of Baden did not pursue this issue, as the weak reaction to Fr Superior Carl Sulzer's complaint clearly shows. However, the Motherhouse Freiburg had, nevertheless, to tread very carefully with regard to the new constitutions (see chapter 3).

By transplanting the first pillar of French Catholic charity – one of the great female Catholic apostolic congregations – to Baden, a key element of an unexpected 'religious revival'¹⁵⁶ had entered the country. The sisters brought the specifically Vincentian spirituality with them and would become active protagonists when they carried it into the smallest villages of the archdiocese.

In the Motherhouse of Strasbourg, the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus had a very special place.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Saint Joseph was regarded as paragon, a model to whom every sister should be drawn.¹⁵⁸ His spouse, the Blessed Virgin Mary, was especially revered by Louise de Marillac,¹⁵⁹ as became even more evident following the Marian apparitions in the motherhouse of the *Filles de la Charité* in the rue du Bac in Paris in 1830.¹⁶⁰ As 'true' daughters of Vincent de Paul, the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg placed their confidence in divine providence¹⁶¹ and on daily prayer (*l'oraison dirigée*), the regular reception

¹⁵⁶ Maurer, 'La France, 'pays classique de l'amour'?', p. 89.

¹⁵⁷ Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 54.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52f.

¹⁵⁹ Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire des Filles de la Charité: xvii^e–xviii^e siècle. La rue pour cloître* (Paris, 2011), p. 170.

¹⁶⁰ Joachim Schmiedl, 'Herz-Jesu- und Herz-Mariä-Frömmigkeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', in Manfred Hauke (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung. Geschichtliche Entwicklung und theologischer Gehalt* (Regensburg, 2011), pp 146–66, here at p.156f. The Miraculous Medal, which was distributed since 1832, was also very popular with the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg, but it is not known when this devotion started.

¹⁶¹ Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire*, p. 170.

of the sacraments, especially confession and communion, and the annual retreat.¹⁶²

For Franz Joseph von Buss¹⁶³, Andreas Raess, the bishop of Strasbourg, was the driving force behind the renewed Catholic spirit in Baden, and the Order of the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg was the fruit of that fine Alsatian Catholic spirit.¹⁶⁴ Thanks to Raess, the people of Baden could now participate in parish missions in Alsace (which 'refreshed the faith threatened with obliteration'¹⁶⁵). After the Revolution of 1848/49 which occurred in many German states, but was most fiercely fought in Baden, Bishop Raess sent his priests to preach missions in Baden. He arranged for boys of the neighbouring country of Baden to be taken into his seminaries in Strasbourg in order to give them a sound Christian education, and he saw the Motherhouse of his *Sœurs de la Charité* as the cradle of the Badenese daughters of Saint Vincent. For Buss, the bishop of Strasbourg was thus elevated to 'Baden's very own blessed pastor'.¹⁶⁶

Prior to 1872 the superiors of Freiburg were superiors in name only. Besides the layman Professor Buss, the main agents were the bishop of Strasbourg and the Archbishop of Freiburg for the founding process, and after that the superiors of Strasbourg in their own name. The advantage was that the Freiburg leaders had time to grow into their role, whereas elsewhere new congregations had to learn how to act from very early on. With his decision to keep the Motherhouse Strasbourg under his command for fully a quarter of a century, Archbishop von Vicari made sure that the Alsatian religious spirit was transplanted into Baden. The disadvantage was that the Badenese superiors had little responsibility and were overly dependent on Strasbourg.

¹⁶² Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire*, p. 174.

¹⁶³ Franz Joseph Buss was ennobled by the Austrian Emperor in 1863.

¹⁶⁴ Letter from Franz Joseph von Buss to Bishop Andreas Raess of Strasbourg, 2 September 1866 (EAF, Nachlaß Bf. Andreas Raess, Straßburg, 1. Badische Korrespondenz, Vol. 1, 1820–83, Na 68).

¹⁶⁵ Buss to Raess, 2 Sept. 1866 (EAF, Na 68).

¹⁶⁶ Buss to Raess, 2 Sept. 1866 (EAF, Nachlaß Bf. Andreas Raess, Straßburg, 1. Badische Korrespondenz, Vol. 1, 1820–83, Na 68).

The sisters and their fields of action until 1871

To be able to found branch houses and thus to spread all over the archdiocese, the main requirement was a constant influx of candidates for the sisterhood, regardless of whether the Motherhouse Freiburg was active or passive in the founding process. In the first twenty-five years, the Badenese Motherhouse was so closely linked with Strasbourg that only the very first classification of postulants took place in Freiburg in the initial three months. Thereafter the candidates were sent on to the Alsatian capital for their postulancy.¹⁶⁷ After the clothing or reception ceremony, when the new sisters received their habits and their religious names in Strasbourg, they usually spent the noviciate outside of Baden.¹⁶⁸ After the first profession,¹⁶⁹ the new members were assigned to a branch house either of the Motherhouse Strasbourg or of Freiburg.

Compared with other congregations of a similar founding date, the number of the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg grew very slowly. Fr Superior Carl Sulzer observed in 1857 that the number of applicants was very meagre and only a few among these were suitable, so that the eleven-year-old Motherhouse Freiburg only had forty-one sisters while the four-year-old Swabian motherhouse in Gmünd, with only one third Catholics in the diocese, already had fifty members.¹⁷⁰ In 1869 there had been only 155 professed sisters for Freiburg, Gmünd had 173 and Munich (founded by Strasbourg in 1832) had 555 sisters.¹⁷¹ The Nurses of St Francis (Münster/St Mauritz) in the diocese of Münster/Westphalia (founded 1848) accepted over the same time frame an average of nearly forty novices per year, so that in 1872 they had 400

¹⁶⁷ Archbishop von Vicari to the deans of Hohenzollern, 6 October 1859 (EAF, B5/89).

¹⁶⁸ §§ 23–31 of the constitutions of 1845, Sintzel, *Geschichte*, pp 367–9.

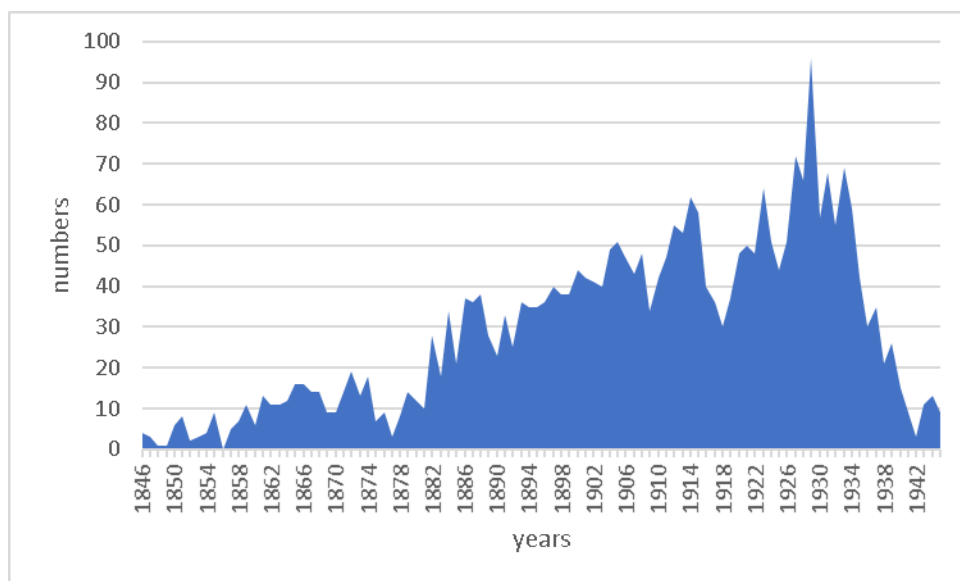
¹⁶⁹ As the order was not monastic and the sisters were not nuns according to canon law, they took only simple vows which they renewed every year. See § 1 of the constitutions, Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 361f.

¹⁷⁰ Sulzer to Freiherr von Landenberg, 12 Mar. 1857 (EAF, B5/105). Gmünd was founded by the motherhouse Strasbourg in 1852, see Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 249f. Scherer mentioned fifty-one clothings until 30 June 1858, when Gmünd became independent.

¹⁷¹ Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. iii, p. 10.

members¹⁷², whereas the Badenese sisters of St Vincent de Paul never had more than twenty clothings per year. In Prussia the Poor Servants of Jesus Christ (founded 1851) had 541 sisters, the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus (founded 1844) 560, and even the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in Paderborn (founded by Strasbourg in 1841), had 259 members after twenty-eight years of existence.¹⁷³

Figure 2.1: Number of clothings per year of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg, 1846–1945



Source: Books of clothing (MHA Strasbourg and Freiburg)

What might have been the reason for such slow growth? Strasbourg was known for its strict selection. The Ordinariate of Freiburg reported to the government of Baden:

... the order [of Strasbourg] proceeds with the admission of the candidates under the strictest conditions and admits nobody whose name carries the slightest blemish; nobody who does not possess qualities to the highest degree necessary to the task.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Wilhelm Damberg, *Geschichte des Bistums Münster 5: Moderne und Milieu 1802–1998* (Münster 1998), p. 101 (chart).

¹⁷³ All numbers of clothings from Relinde Meiwes, *'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn': katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 2000), p. 76.

¹⁷⁴ Ordinariate to Grand Ducal Board for the Catholic Church, 20 Mar. 1847 (EAF, B5/89).

Of nineteen candidates who applied to Strasbourg for admission to the Motherhouse Freiburg in 1845 and 1846, only seven were selected for founding the new motherhouse given the stern church-state regime in Baden.¹⁷⁵ Spitz' successor as superior in Strasbourg, Joseph Guerber,¹⁷⁶ stated that the Motherhouse of Niederbronn (founded in Alsace in 1849) was so successful because the admission criteria for that order were far easier.¹⁷⁷ They numbered 502 professed sisters in 1872, of which some had been placed in twelve branch houses in the archdiocese of Freiburg.¹⁷⁸ However, lesser requirements were only one side of the coin. The Sisters of Niederbronn and the reasons for their successful recruiting will be discussed later in this chapter.

What did an ideal sister of charity look like, and what qualities or characteristics were required? Where did she come from, and in general what social background did she have? A typical, model example is Sister Gebhard Weber, the first mother general of the motherhouse Freiburg. Her former parish priest had known her for four years before she entered the order. According to his report, her father was a well-respected and quite well-off tanner and innkeeper. Sister Gebhard, who took her father's name as her religious name, was one of five children of the first marriage, with five more half-siblings of a second. From early childhood she received a strict Catholic religious upbringing, learning to work hard and use her time prudently. At nineteen she was managing the household of her unmarried doctor uncle to his satisfaction. The priest knew Sister Gebhard for her piety, her domestic skills, fortitude and resilience in the face of difficulties.¹⁷⁹ Franz Xaver Lender, the parish priest during her first post as sister superior of the hospital in Gengenbach, gave her a good reference – Sister Gebhard was sensible, well educated, of upright character, very pious yet

¹⁷⁵ Scherer, *Kongregation*, p. 244.

¹⁷⁶ Father superior of the Motherhouse Strasbourg 1880–1909.

¹⁷⁷ Joseph Guerber, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. iv, p. 232 (MHA Strasbourg). Guerber continued writing this chronicle, which was begun by his predecessor Spitz. The change took place in this volume iv.

¹⁷⁸ Luzian Pflieger, *Die Kongregation der Schwestern vom Allerheiligsten Heilande, genannt „Niederbronner Schwestern“. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der christlichen Liebestätigkeit der neuesten Zeit* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1921), p. 79.

¹⁷⁹ Parish priest of Illmensee to Bezirksamt Blumenfeld, 3 May 1853 (GLA, 235/169).

free of bigotry, economical and frugal and with an indefatigable and exemplary spirit of care for the sick poor.¹⁸⁰ Such high standards were not met by many. The opinion of Fr Superior Charles Spitz' of Strasbourg was that the more rigorous the Order was in its choice of candidates, the more it would prosper.¹⁸¹ If the standards were lowered, this would be regretted later.¹⁸² With such demanding criteria for admission, Strasbourg always had difficulty in attracting enough sisters.¹⁸³

Another reason for the slow growth of the Motherhouse Freiburg in comparison to other, especially Franciscan congregations, may have been the question of how well the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul were known at local level. This question leads directly to the different kinds of branch houses, the work-places of the sisters, and the way in which they were governed. The main task of the Order was the care of the sick poor, both male and female, in hospitals. The sisters could also work in other institutions such as orphanages, institutes for saving neglected children, or with convicts.¹⁸⁴ The second typical Strasbourgian maxim was that the sisters only came when they were requested. They were not supposed to set up houses by themselves, and for every new house, state approval had first to be obtained.¹⁸⁵ The motherhouse was permitted to follow a request¹⁸⁶ and found a branch house anywhere in the archdiocese:

We acknowledge with joy that our Reverend Dean is interested in the introduction of the institution of the Sisters of Charity to Bruchsal. This Order had the right to request the introduction to Bruchsal because a special fund exists there for this reason with a sum of 18,000 fl. However, because the Order always made it a binding rule never to intrude or to impose itself but to send its members only where their work was absolutely called for, therefore for the time being we must postpone the introduction of the Sisters of Charity to Bruchsal until the day the local citizenry

¹⁸⁰ Dean Franz Xaver Lender to Oberamt in Gengenbach, 30 Apr. 1853 (GLA, 235/169).

¹⁸¹ Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. iii, p. 1.

¹⁸² Ibid.: *Il vaut mieux laisser une place inoccupée, que de la remplir par un sujet inutile.*

¹⁸³ Spitz thought the sensible, strong, pious and hardworking girls became more and more rare, especially those from the countryside, the villages of Alsace, Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. iii, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ § 2 of the constitutions of 1845, Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

¹⁸⁵ § 3 of the constitutions of 1845, *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Ordinariate to Dean Gugert of Bruchsal, 3 Nov. 1855 (EAF, B5/36).

will request voluntarily and of its own accord the Sisters of Charity for taking over the management of the hospital either unanimously or by majority decision.¹⁸⁷

With the motherhouse as headquarters at the top, the branch houses formed the middle. The latter operated independently in their own tasks, though the sisters of a branch house were accountable medically to the doctors, financially to the hospital board, and spiritually to the motherhouse. The branch houses had to pay 'motherhouse dues' for the sisters' clothes, and the board had also to house and to feed them. The motherhouse superiors accompanied the sisters to the branch house for the opening, and they made a visitation once a year to check on the sisters, their work conditions and their general conduct.¹⁸⁸

In the first thirty-five years after the founding of the Motherhouse Freiburg in 1846, the Order took over seventy branch houses mostly from the communities, of which three had already ceased to operate by the end of 1871.¹⁸⁹ All branch houses were situated in towns and cities. Among the seventy houses were forty hospitals, of which only three were designed solely for patients (Freiburg, Karlsruhe, Bruchsal), and a further nine very old Holy-Spirit-hospitals, which thanks to their endowed status were the richest ones in the country of Baden.¹⁹⁰ In some hospitals, there were poor, old, sick people along with young orphans. The sisters also managed six orphanages and institutes for neglected children and worked in four theological institutions. In Säckingen (close to Switzerland in the very south of Baden) and Freiburg, they looked after female factory workers. From 1870 on, a completely new type of branch house came into existence: the St Mary house (*Marienhaus*) an establishment for old and sick female domestics, with an employment agency for unemployed and a training centre for future domestic workers. The sick bay in Triberg (Black Forest) during the laying of the train tracks in the Kinzig valley was, owing to its temporary status, unique among the works of the branch houses in that period.

¹⁸⁷ Ordinariate to Dean Fr Gugert of Bruchsal, 3 Nov. 1855 (EAF, B5/36).

¹⁸⁸ §§ 3, 6, 11, 12, 19, 20, 22 of the constitutions of 1845, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, pp 362–7.

¹⁸⁹ The hospitals of Karlsruhe, St. Vincent (1857), Überlingen (1867) and Gengenbach (1870) had to be given up for various reasons.

¹⁹⁰ The Holy-Spirit-hospital in Freiburg was the oldest and was founded before 1122, the others were all before 1500, see Gertraud Wopperer, *Die neuen Formen sozial-caritativer Arbeit in der Oberrheinischen Kirchenprovinz 1834–1870* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1957), p. 65f.

These institutions were all branch houses according to the constitutions. The Freiburg motherhouse was not permitted to care for the sick in their own homes.¹⁹¹ Other, younger congregations from outside Baden filled that gap: from Switzerland, the Sisters of Ingenbohl came into the south of Baden, from Alsace came the Sisters of Niederbronn into the north. Congregations which were eventually founded in Baden, such as those of Gengenbach and Erlenbad, were no competition for the Motherhouse Freiburg.¹⁹² Whenever a branch house was planned with care for the sick in their own home as its main task, the Motherhouse Freiburg was not even invited to take it over, and Niederbronn and Ingenbohl succeeded. As mentioned above, Niederbronn had a much greater number of sisters (the same applied to Ingenbohl), so they could present the necessary number of sisters right away. Those branch houses were nearly all situated in the villages and consisted of only two to three sisters. Those motherhouses from abroad were to be found both in the countryside where the great majority of the Catholics of Baden lived, with several small branch houses in a town or even city. By serving the sick in their own homes their sisters, over time, got entry into every private dwelling, and they met villagers in church. They became well known and widely appreciated in a short period of time. Given their less demanding admission policy, it is no surprise that they quickly outstripped the Motherhouse Freiburg in membership numbers and house foundations.

Ingenbohl had another advantage: the founder and superior of that motherhouse was the Capuchin monk Theodosius Florentini, who preached numerous sermons all over Baden and promoted 'his' sisters at the same time.¹⁹³ The Motherhouse Freiburg did no self-promotion, and unlike the American sisters it did not establish hospitals itself unless it was forced doing that from the

¹⁹¹ In very rare exceptions the Order cared for sick people in their own home but only when it was explicitly demanded of them.

¹⁹² For a detailed analysis of the spreading of those branch houses of the other congregations in Baden, see Barbara Henze, 'Die übrigen Orden', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg im Breisgau 2008), pp 331–87.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 354f.

outside.¹⁹⁴ However, church and state authorities were aware of that problem. The Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul were recommended by the administration of the Grand Duchy to the hospital boards, and Archbishop von Vicari had a letter sent to the deans of Hohenzollern, a region which belonged to the Archdiocese of Freiburg but not to Baden. The priests there were asked to direct suitable candidates to Freiburg/Strasbourg rather than elsewhere as the order did such good work in the archdiocese and needed women of high quality to fulfil this need.¹⁹⁵ The priests thus played a vital role in promoting the sisters. Did it matter if the priests were liberal or ultramontane? In the case of Bonndorf in the Black Forest, the hospital board was formed by fifteen different communities. The fifteen priests were very different in their attitude, but the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul were very welcome to every one of them.¹⁹⁶ In other places, some priests had already found out that sisters were effective assistants in their pastoral work. The Motherhouse Freiburg was prevented from joining in the pastoral work of the villages and of the towns too because the hospitals were a world of their own. The sisters spent all their time there, even for Mass, as most of the hospitals had their own chapel. The poor who entered a hospital often stayed until their death. The sisters were able to influence them in their spiritual life, but the poor were unlikely promoters as most of them had no connections with persons of status in the local communities.

Being an instrument and not an agent proved to be a major disadvantage for the Motherhouse Freiburg when compared with the other congregations who started to come to Baden from the 1850s on. The solution to the slow growth of membership numbers would be in the hands of a later generation. However, among the authorities of church and state the Order had powerful promoters.

¹⁹⁴ Sioban Nelson, *Say little, do much. Nursing, nuns, and hospitals in the nineteenth century* (Philadelphia, 2003), p. 149. Nelson observes that phenomenon for Catholics and Protestants religious associations in Germany alike but sees it as limitation of the Prussian common law.

¹⁹⁵ Ordinariate to the deans of Hohenzollern, 6 Oct. 1859 (EAF, B5/89).

¹⁹⁶ Christian Schröder, *Armenfürsorge und katholische Identität. Südbaden und die Saarregion im historischen Vergleich (1803–1870)*, (Berlin, 2014), p. 166.

The relationship of the Motherhouse Freiburg to the authorities of church and state

According to § 1 of the constitutions of 1845, the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg, was under the control of the church (that is, the archbishop) and under the supervision of the state, the government of Baden. After the motherhouse was built in 1853, the state government appointed Baron Maximilian von Landenberg¹⁹⁷ as an intermediary between the Order and the government.¹⁹⁸ The Order was to report to the commissioner on any changes in the number of sisters and to submit accounts. He was required to ensure that the statutes were followed, and he had to act as a go-between for the different parties if any complaints were received or difficulties arose.¹⁹⁹ On paper, the Order was under strict surveillance. The constitutions were to be observed to the letter.²⁰⁰ However, as early as 1844 while formulating the strict constitutions, Fr Superior Spitz of Strasbourg had been reassured by Franz Joseph Buss: 'Il me donna l'assurance qu'en pratique on [the state government of Baden] serait coulant.'²⁰¹ There is no evidence in the sources that any direct difficulties with the state came up until the 1870s.

The Motherhouse Freiburg was however affected indirectly by one of the laws of the Baden 'culture war', the Trust Law of 1867. It ruled that the Catholic Church was no longer part of the trusts under which hospitals had originally been set up, many going centuries back to the Middle Ages. All the priests were removed from the hospital boards, and the sisters had to deal now only with lay people. In Überlingen (at Lake Constance) from the outset in 1857 there were

¹⁹⁷ Maximilian Euseb Johann Baptist Ludwig Freiherr von Breiten-Landenberg (1805–1868), see Edmund von der Becke-Klüchtzner, *Stamm-Tafeln des Adels des Großherzogthums Baden: ein neu bearbeitetes Adelsbuch* (Baden-Baden, 1886), p. 245. Landenberg was a grandducal Badenese chamberlain.

¹⁹⁸ Baron (or Freiherr) von Landenberg was appointed by Grand Duke Leopold on 29 Aug. 1853, see *Großherzogliches Regierungsblatt*, no. 35, 10 Sept. 1853 (EAF, B5/105).

¹⁹⁹ Freiherr von Landenberg to Fr Superior Spitz, 30 Sept. 1853 (MHA Strasbourg, *Lettres de Fribourg*, 1846–1872).

²⁰⁰ Minister of the Interior Julius Jolly, 30 Nov. 1875 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Breisach, Krankenhaus).

²⁰¹ Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. II, p. 392.

constant disputes between board and sisters. When the parish priest Johann Nepomuk Müller died in 1864, the sisters lost their sole protector and the dispute heated up. The board requested a new sister superior for the hospital, but the Motherhouse Freiburg refused. As there was no solution in sight, the Motherhouse withdrew not only the sister superior, but all the sisters from the hospital and gave up that branch house.²⁰² It is somewhat astonishing that this was the only incident of this kind. The transitions from one board to another went quite smoothly, as far as the Order was concerned, and considering that the sisters were involved in so many hospitals. The relationship of the Order to the church authority was very harmonious, at least if the absence of any documented contentious issues can be taken as indicative of harmony. The geography of Freiburg with everything within walking distance, and the fact that the first two father superiors lived closer to the ordinariate than to the motherhouse, also suggest that problems were settled in person as they arose rather than in writing.

The archbishop was responsible for the Order's spiritual matters and appointed a priest as superior and as his delegate.²⁰³ As long as Hermann von Vicari lived²⁰⁴, he did the utmost in his power to help the Motherhouse Freiburg to thrive. His secretary, chaplain Adolph Strehle, wrote to Bishop Raess of Strasbourg:

You know, most reverend friend, how his Excellency the archbishop and I do everything in our power to help the order to expand and to be sufficient and we look especially to the link with Strasbourg as the lifeblood of the whole [enterprise].²⁰⁵

However, the Order was not only a 'dear child' to the old archbishop, which he cherished and nourished, but also another means to liberate himself from the onerous church-state system. From the very beginning of his tenure, Vicari teamed up with his French colleague Andreas Raess, the bishop of Strasbourg, to bypass the state laws of Baden so as to get a religious congregation. This was part and parcel of his quite obvious plans to transfer the vivid Catholic spiritual

²⁰² Schröder, *Armenfürsorge*, p. 133f.

²⁰³ § 4 of the Order's constitutions of 1845, Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

²⁰⁴ Archbishop Hermann von Vicari died 14 April 1868 at the age of 94.

²⁰⁵ MHA Strasbourg, *Lettres des Fribourg*, 1846–1872.

life from Alsace into the Archdiocese of Freiburg. Vicari asked the superior of Strasbourg, Abbé Spitz, not to separate the Motherhouse Freiburg from the Alsatian motherhouse and to preserve all rights to the mother general and father superior of Strasbourg.²⁰⁶ In that way, Vicari was effectively undermining state authority. In 1863, with new laws put into force by the liberal government of the grand duchy, and at the beginning of the Baden 'culture war', the archbishop ceased to acknowledge the state supervision of the Order's fortune, income and property. He no longer deemed it appropriate for the state to have the control of the finances of the Motherhouse Freiburg. From now on, the father superior was required to submit the financial report to the Ordinariate.²⁰⁷ This transition went off remarkably smoothly, and no reports of any repercussions exist.

According to the extant documents and letters, the relationship between 'mother' and 'child', between the Motherhouses of Strasbourg and Freiburg, seemed to be always most cordial. Effectively until 1872 Freiburg was not a real motherhouse at all. In the first twenty-five years, the Mother General Sister Gebhard Weber bore that title only nominally, she had no real functions at all. There were no assistant sisters, no noviciate, and therefore no mistress of novices. In fact, the first Fr Superior Carl Sulzer complained about his lack of authority to Landenberg, the commissioner of state, which was a breach of confidence towards the archbishop of Freiburg and the father superior of Strasbourg. Over the years, his successor as superior of Freiburg, Fr Franz Joseph Marmon,²⁰⁸ succeeded in having more and more responsibilities transferred, as the number of branch houses grew and spread all over Baden, to reduce the burden of Fr Superior Spitz. When the emancipation of the

²⁰⁶ Archbishop Hermann von Vicari to Fr Superior Spitz, 17 April 1853: 'We two want to conduct this matter [of the order] all alone, ... and you can act freely.' (MHA Strasbourg, Lettres de Fribourg, 1846–1872).

²⁰⁷ Note to Fr Superior Marmon of the report in the Ordinariate of 18 Mar. 1863 (EAF, B5/93). See also EAF, B5/94: Freiburg, Barmherzige Schwestern, Ordensfond, Rechnungsabhör, vol. 1, 1862–1944.

²⁰⁸ Franz Joseph Marmon to Abbé Spitz, 8 July 1871 and 10 Feb. 1872 (MHA Strasbourg, Lettres de Fribourg, 1846–1872).

Motherhouse Freiburg finally occurred in 1872, Marmon was not happy about that at all: 'I would have left – on my part – the present situation for all my life.'²⁰⁹

In its first decades the Order was clearly an instrument of the archbishop of Freiburg, who set the framework, but who also let the superiors fill it out themselves. The relationship to the state was put to a much greater test in the following years of the *Kulturkampf*, the focus of the last part of this chapter.

The *Kulturkampf* ('culture war') from 1871 to 1887 has always been one of the main fields of study whenever church and religion in Germany is involved. Nevertheless, Joachim Schmiedl still listed it as an important lacuna when dealing with the history of German orders and congregations.²¹⁰ The situation of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in the Archdiocese Freiburg will be compared with the results of Relinde Meiwes and her study of the Prussian female religious congregations in the nineteenth century.

Motherhouse Freiburg in the times of the 'culture war(s)' in the 1860s and 1870s

After three wars, Prussia had finally achieved the unification of the second German *Reich* under its rule in 1871. Now it had to face the very same problems as Baden's rulers after Baden came into being in 1806: a great variety of very different German states and regions had to become one unified state. The fear was great that after the strengthened moral position of the pope, the German Catholics, who were now a minority, might try to find allies abroad, and the new Reich would collapse. To prevent this, and to underline the precedence of the state, the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck started a 'war' against his greatest adversary, the Catholic church, its political branch, the centre party

²⁰⁹ Franz Joseph Marmon to Abbé Spitz, 11 Feb. 1872 (MHA Strasbourg, Lettres de Fribourg, 1846–1872).

²¹⁰ Joachim Schmiedl, 'An assessment of the histories of religious communities in Germany', in: Jan de Maeyer, Sophie Laplar and Joachim Schmiedl (eds), *Religious institutes in Western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Historiography, Research and legal position* (Leuven, 2004), pp 71f., 77.

(*Zentrumspartei*) and its religious orders and congregations, the so-called Prussian *Kulturkampf*, the 'culture war'.²¹¹

In her work on female religious congregations in Prussia in the nineteenth century, Relinde Meiwes suggests that the 'culture war' was not only a history of persecution and loss²¹²: Following the end of the *Kulturkampf* in 1887, the fields of activity for women religious had been broadened and their self-esteem strengthened. Forced to modify and specify their fields of activity, the crisis had improved the organisational structure of the congregations.²¹³ The teaching congregations were faced with the choice of change of activity or exile; while the nursing sisters had hardly been affected.²¹⁴ And what of Baden which had anticipated the Prussian *Kulturkampf*, more especially the state's sole motherhouse? Comparing Baden with Prussia in the light of Meiwes' study, what were the immediate and long-term effects of the legislation on the Motherhouse Freiburg?

The *Kulturkampf* legislation

The 'culture war' in Baden preceded that of Prussia by a decade.²¹⁵ The law of the nationalisation of the school inspection in 1864, the cultural exam for

²¹¹ Katherine A. Lerman calls it a 'struggle for civilization': Katherine A. Lerman, 'Bismarckian Germany and the structure of the German Empire', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 147–67, here at p. 159. Gisela Fleckenstein, 'Die Orden und Kongregationen in den Kulturkämpfen', in Erwin Gatz (ed.), *Klöster und Ordensgemeinschaften [Geschichte des kirchlichen Lebens in den deutschsprachigen Ländern seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts: Die Katholische Kirche]* (Freiburg i. Br., 2006), p. 243f.

²¹² The official end was 1886/87, but in 1878 Bismarck changed tactics and repudiated the coalition with the Liberal Party. The height of the *Kulturkampf* was reached in 1873 with the infamous May-laws.

²¹³ Meiwes, *Arbeiterinnen des Herrn*, p. 288f.

²¹⁴ Gisela Fleckenstein, 'Die Orden und Kongregationen', pp 246–9. In Baden, the sisters of Bühl, a congregation founded in Baden, had to leave Germany. Although they set up a new motherhouse in Milwaukee (USA), some sisters returned to Baden after the end of the *Kulturkampf*. They founded in 1919 a provincial motherhouse in Bühl/Baden (p. 249). See also Claus Arnold, 'Internal church reform in Catholic Germany', in Paula Yates and Joris van Eijnatten (eds), *The Churches: The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Church, State and Society in Northern Europe, 1780-1920* (Leuven, 2010), pp 159–84, here at p. 172.

²¹⁵ Josef Becker, *Liberaler Staat und Kirche in der Ära von Reichsgründung und Kulturkampf. Geschichte und Strukturen ihres Verhältnisses in Baden 1860–1876*, (Mainz, 1973). Becker's habilitation/higher doctorate thesis of 1973 is still the fundamental work about the so-called Badenese *Kulturkampf*.

theologians before their installation as parish priests in 1867, the reform of the elementary schools in 1868 with the optional introduction of the non-denominational school, the obligatory civil marriage and the introduction of state marriage registries in 1869/70, the nationalisation of charitable Catholic foundations in 1870 and, last but not least, the laws against public teaching and missions of members of religious orders of 2 April 1872 was enacted just three months before the Prussian equivalent was introduced.²¹⁶ In 1874 Baden once again pioneered the so called 'Old Catholics law'.²¹⁷ Thus Baden came to be regarded as '*the* exemplar of a liberal state' [AH itals.] by contemporaries, and hence served as a model for the Prussian minister Adalbert Falk and his even more stringent laws in Prussia.²¹⁸ In 1876, two years after the dismissal of the minister, Julius Jolly, who had been responsible for the culture war in Baden, the Grand Duke of Baden, Friedrich I changed course and began to pursue 'liberal politics under a conservative mantle'.²¹⁹ From 1878 Friedrich sought the settlement of the Prussian *Kulturkampf*, but he was defeated by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck himself.²²⁰

Was the Motherhouse Freiburg and its branch houses affected by this legislation, and if so, in what ways? As the laws were aimed predominantly at the Catholic Church and the reduction of its influence in society, one would assume that those laws must have made an impact on the Order. Did the good relationship between the Motherhouse Freiburg and the state government become strained in any way during those difficult years?

According to § 2 of the sisters' constitutions of 1845, the main task of the order of the Sisters of St Vincent de Paul in the Archdiocese Freiburg was nursing the poor sick of both sexes in hospitals. Their constitutions allowed them

²¹⁶ Becker, *Liberaler Staat*, p. 127ff.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 339. The 'Old Catholics' (rather 'New Protestants') split from the Roman Catholic Church after the First Vatican Council and the dogma of infallibility in 1870.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 285 and p. 290.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 367.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 368. For further detail on the curtailing of the 'culture war' legislation in Baden see: Manfred Stadelhofer, *Der Abbau der Kulturkampfgesetzgebung im Großherzogtum Baden 1878–1918* (Mainz, 1968).

to work in orphanages, in so-called 'rescue homes' for neglected children and similar institutes.²²¹

The legislation governing the take-over of the Catholic foundations by the state in 1870 was not a major problem for the sisters. Nursing itself was never an object of attack.²²² The composition of administrative boards of the different institutions where the sisters served was key. After the nationalisation of the Catholic charitable foundations, the boards consisted solely of secular members. With the compulsory dismissal of the parish priest from the hospital boards and the loss of the sisters' advocate, the Motherhouse in 1870 summarily recalled the sisters from the hospital of Gengenbach (Black Forest, 10km east of Offenburg, the first branch house of the Order in 1850), after years of conflict with the board members.²²³ Karlsruhe as the capital of Baden led the way not only in politics but also in being the first location where the board had the sisters removed from their civil hospital (*Bürgerspital*) in 1872. It was the only hospital in the entire state of Baden where the Order cared for the Catholic patients solely and Protestant deaconesses the Protestant ones.²²⁴

With the so-called July-law (*Jesuitengesetz*) of 1873, all Jesuits and Jesuit-related orders had to leave Germany. In Baden, the ministry of the interior had all the religious in the country checked to see if they belonged in any way to the ostracised order.²²⁵ The district officials had to report if they had any knowledge of proselytising. The remarks on the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul were usually 'no objections', 'no agitation known', 'very tolerant', 'no complaints', 'best of references'. In Messkirch (south-west of Sigmaringen, between the river Danube and Lake Constance), the sisters had to be reminded that they should limit their efforts to inculcate devotional practice among the residents. In four

²²¹ Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

²²² Fleckenstein, 'Die Orden', p. 251.

²²³ Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. ii, p. 295f. Abbé Spitz called those two branch houses the most troublesome of all in Baden.

²²⁴ Fr Gass to Fr Superior Karl Sulzer, 6 Mar. 1857 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, Bürgerspital).

²²⁵ Ministry of the Interior to all district exchanges, 27 June 1873 (GLA, 235/13117). Julius Jolly had to remind the Ministry of the Interior three times (16 June, 19 September, 24 December 1873) to hand in the report.

towns in the Black Forest region, more bequests for the Catholic Church occurred on the deathbed of hospital inmates when the sisters saw to the dying; and a lot of religious infringements and highhandedness were reported of the sisters of the four institutions in Freiburg, but their self-sacrificing work was also acknowledged.²²⁶ In 1874, when the law about the so-called 'Old Catholics' came into power, two hospitals asked the sisters to leave: Messkirch hospital, where the board now consisted mainly of 'Old Catholics', and Heidelberg, the original (Roman) Catholic St Anna hospital. The hospital and its St Anna church were taken over by the 'Old Catholics'.²²⁷ Of the thirty-seven hospitals which were staffed by the Motherhouse Freiburg until 1873, only three were actually lost to the Order as a consequence of events during the culture war in Baden. As far as the nursing was concerned, the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul were left alone by the state of Baden. However, it was a different story when it came to the children the sisters cared for.

Up to 1874, the Motherhouse Freiburg had five orphanages²²⁸ and five kindergartens in its care.²²⁹ The sisters taught the children in at least three of the orphanages.²³⁰ The (Badenese) law of 2 April 1872 banned religious as teachers.²³¹ Although Sister Proba Brogli and her pupils in Mannheim-Käfertal

²²⁶ Ministry of the Interior, report of 31 Dec. 1873 (GLA, 235/13117).

²²⁷ Report of Sister Sidonia Stoppel, written on behalf of Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer, c. 1930/31 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heidelberg, St. Josefskrankenhaus). In a letter from 14 September 1876, Sister Sidonia wrote to the mother general that Fr Superior Joseph Marmon knew what was going to happen, so the sisters were prepared (MHA Freiburg, Heidelberg, Katholisches Spital).

²²⁸ These institutions were solely for children (Freiburg, Mannheim-Käfertal, Umkirch, Offenburg and Ladenburg). In five other hospitals of the original type the orphans were housed together with the sick and the poor (Pfullendorf, Radolfzell, Villingen, Hüfingen and Breisach. Breisach belonged to the Order and existed only from 1873–5).

²²⁹ Angelika Hansert, 'Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.) *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg, 2008), pp 303–29, here at p. 316f.

²³⁰ Mentioned only in the files of Freiburg, Mädchenwaisenhaus [Girls' orphanage], Umkirch, St. Josephshaus, and Mannheim-Käfertal, Kinderheim (MHA Freiburg).

²³¹ In an addition to this law from 25 October 1872, all religious teachers without a state examination had to cease teaching within four weeks. Sister Proba taught in Käfertal without state examination even in the end of January 1873. The children had to attend the local school from then on, as Sister Proba had lost her teaching license, and the young sisters who received a teacher's formation in the motherhouse (from January 1872) were not admitted to the state examinations (MHA Freiburg, Akte Mannheim-Käfertal, Kinderheim, letters to the motherhouse in 1872 and 1873).

achieved the very best results during an inspection by the district schools inspector as on 3 January 1873, the sister had to leave teaching by the end of the month.²³² In Umkirch (8km west of Freiburg) the parish priest put up a more vigorous fight for the teaching sisters but to no avail; this was despite the fact that the orphanage had been founded explicitly as a school for poor girls by Grand Duchess Stephanie de Beauharnais.²³³

In Prussia, the *Kulturkampf* legislation was executed even more ruthlessly than in Baden. The sister congregation of the Badenese Vincentian sisters, the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Hildesheim not only lost all their teaching positions but also all the institutions where they cared for children, even if they only oversaw the household management and had nothing to do with the education.²³⁴ But Baden did not go unscathed: when the Archbishop of Freiburg was forced to close his boarding schools for boys and the theological seminary, the sisters in Baden lost their jobs as well, as they oversaw the domestic economy of these houses and cared for the sick pupils and students. Four branch houses had to be closed, but the Motherhouse rented the two establishments in Freiburg as its own and took in orphans and old people.²³⁵ Consequently, the government opposed the plan of the Motherhouse Freiburg to establish a much-needed boarding school for home economics in Sinzheim (6km west of Baden-Baden) in 1886, designed especially for country girls of school-leaving age. The more affluent families in the towns of Baden had several choices for the education of their daughters, but none in the

²³² Board member Artaria to the motherhouse, 3 Jan. 1873. The date is obviously wrong and should be 3 February 1873, as Mr. Artaria referred to an event later in January in the same letter (MHA Freiburg, Akte Mannheim-Käfertal, Kinderheim).

²³³ Stephanie de Beauharnais (1789–1860), adopted daughter of Napoleon Bonaparte, married to Karl, Grand duke of Baden 1811–18, see Wolfgang Hug, *Die Geschichte Badens* (Darmstadt, 2016), pp 100f., 104.

²³⁴ Lieselotte Sterner, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in Hildesheim von 1852 bis zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* (Hannover, 1999), p. 64f. Fleckenstein confirmed that the Hildesheim sisters after the 'culture war' concentrated completely on nursing and caring for the elderly. However, she forgot to add 'Hildesheim', so there is the impression that it concerned all orders of sisters of charity of St Vincent de Paul, not just the one motherhouse, see Fleckenstein, 'Die Orden und Kongregationen', p. 251.

²³⁵ Philipp Müller, 'Die Ausbildung hauptberuflicher Mitarbeiter und Mitarbeiterinnen', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), pp 235–91, here at pp 245, 247.

countryside.²³⁶ Not a little cynically, the Minister of Justice, Culture and Education based his rejection not just on the relevant law but the fact that this kind of school had not been mentioned in the Order's own constitution from 1845 – at a time when no such institutions existed.²³⁷

Long-term effects

Overall, the Order's losses due to the *Kulturkampf* were small. The Order lost five out of thirty-seven hospitals, two of those five voluntarily. The sisters of these former branch houses could easily be placed elsewhere. All sisters remained in the orphanages. Although some of them lost their teaching position, they were always needed for other tasks in those institutions. The sisters who served in the diocesan boys' seminaries and the theology students' home *Konvikt*, could return to their posts after the end of the *Kulturkampf*. In the meantime, they had a different clientèle, so that the houses were not lost to the church. Sewing schools staffed with sisters from the Motherhouse Freiburg did not exist before 1874, and they were therefore not immediately affected by the *Kulturkampf*. However, when they came into being from the 1880s onwards (first in the cities and larger towns), the state attacked them at once, as the government was suspicious of anything remotely reminiscent of school and education of the youth. Although the motherhouse viewed the work of those sisters as instructing in a trade rather than teaching, and although the courses were neither held in state schools nor received financial support from the state, the needlework sisters needed a special permit from the state to prove that they did not fall under the law of 2 April 1872. The same applied to the nursery school sisters. When more than forty new nursery schools were founded and staffed by the sisters during 1883–98, each individual sister had to get an official permit.

The relatively mild implementation of the *Kulturkampf* in Baden, apart from the teaching profession, by comparison with Prussia challenges to some degree

²³⁶ Fr Superior Marmon to Ordinariate, 21 Aug. 1885 (EAF, Filialstationen, vol. 1, 1881–1941).

²³⁷ Minister to Ordinariate, letter from 13 Oct. 1885 (EAF, Filialstationen, vol. 1, 1881–1941).

Meiwes' thesis and demonstrates how critically important it is to differentiate at all times between conditions in the various German states.

Conclusion

The spirituality and governance structure of the Motherhouse Strasbourg had been transported unchanged into Baden. This structure consisted of the motherhouse-system with dual leadership, motherhouse dues, contracts, visitations, and the central importance of the rule. With these French elements, the new Motherhouse of Freiburg made a signal contribution to the Catholic revival in Baden. For the first twenty-five years, the novices were trained in Strasbourg from where they brought the ultramontane spirit of Alsace to its German neighbour. For the same period of time, the mother general and father superior of Freiburg had to hand over their agency to their counterparts of the Motherhouse Strasbourg. That sisters came to a village or town only when called which proved to be a major disadvantage since they were less in evidence than the sisters of other competing congregations who were able to take the initiative themselves.

During the first thirty-five years, the state government of Baden viewed the sisters as its instruments too and the loyalty of the Motherhouse Freiburg could be said to have been acknowledged and duly rewarded during the *Kulturkampf*. In the early 1880s and following decades, after the *Kulturkampf* had started to lose momentum, the Order would become proactive in defending its very existence.

Chapter 3

Expansion years of the Motherhouse Freiburg, 1883 to 1918: spreading wings

On 7 January 1883, Fr Superior Joseph Marmon wrote an important letter to the Ordinariate of Freiburg urgently requesting the Ordinariate, on behalf and in the name of the Sisters of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg, to petition the Ministry of Justice, Culture and of Education in Karlsruhe to rescind no. 2 of the Order's constitutions of 1845. This constitution laid down that 'the essential function of the sisters was the nursing of the sick of both sexes in the hospitals.' They were also permitted to care for the inmates of orphanages or houses of refuge, of correctional institutes for female prisoners or other houses of that kind.²³⁸ This purpose had been taken directly from the statutes of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in the Kingdom of Bavaria of 1835 and those of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg of 1828.²³⁹ The Bavarian and Alsatian constitutions mentioned only work in the hospitals, although welfare institutions, lunatic asylums and houses of correction did appear in the annotations of the Alsatian rule of the order.²⁴⁰ This constitution number 2 prevented the Motherhouse Freiburg from nursing of the sick in their own homes and from managing nursery schools. Fr Superior Marmon complained that this proscription was 'decidedly disadvantageous for the Order by comparison with congregations from outside'.²⁴¹

What had happened? Why did Joseph Marmon request a change in the constitutions? Since the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg were allowed only to staff

²³⁸ § 2 of the constitutions of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in the Grand Duchy of Baden, see Sintzel, *Geschichte der Entstehung, Verbreitung und Wirksamkeit des Ordens der Barmherzigen Schwestern* (Regensburg, 1847), p. 342.

²³⁹ Article 1 of the statutes of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg of 1828, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 337.

²⁴⁰ Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

²⁴¹ Fr Superior Joseph Marmon to Ordinariate, 7 Jan. 1883 (EAF, B5/89).

public institutions, the Motherhouse Freiburg had to turn down many requests and it even lost some branch houses for this reason. More significantly, the Order worked with a very limited circle of people in a confined space. They rarely had the chance to mix with the local population as they attended Mass in the hospital chapel rather than the parish church.

To 'become the face of the church', let alone the 'female face', one had first to become visible, familiar to the people. Carmen Mangion dedicated the first chapter of her important thesis to the vital factor of 'visibility'.²⁴² However, she viewed visibility mainly in connection with the fast-growing numbers of convents especially of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in nineteenth-century England.²⁴³ In her work Caitriona Clear also placed stress on the visibility of nuns in Ireland during the same period, covering their various functions in schools, hospitals, orphanages and other institutions in relation to the absolute numbers of convents.²⁴⁴ In this chapter, it is argued that the growth of an order or a congregation was dependent on its popularity, on its public visibility and, moreover, that visibility was related to its specific field of work, since some fields were far more easily 'seen' than others.

Up to 1883, only a very limited number of people encountered the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg outside their convents and associated places of work. In public institutions such as hospitals and orphanages, the sisters could create an enclosed space that was shielded from outside influences, because the residents of those establishments usually stayed and lived there for weeks, months or even years. The hospital in Bonndorf (Black Forest) illustrates the point. The Sisters of Charity took it over in 1857 and,

²⁴² Carmen M. Mangion, *Contested identities: Catholic women religious in nineteenth-century England and Wales* (Manchester, 2008), pp 21–52, here especially at p. 38 and p 51f.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁴⁴ Caitriona Clear, 'The limits of female autonomy: nuns in nineteenth-century Ireland', in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy, *Women surviving* (Swords, 1990), pp 15–50, here at p. 15 and at p. 44.

according to Christian Schröder, intended to live there as recluses: the doors were closed to the public and only the sister superior could admit visitors.²⁴⁵

This invisibility turned out to be a major disadvantage in comparison with younger congregations established in the neighbouring countries of Baden. In Alsace, a new congregation had been founded in 1849 to fill precisely the void that the Motherhouse Strasbourg had neglected to fill, namely the care of the sick and poor in their homes, both in towns and the numerous villages all over the countryside. The *Sisters of the Most Holy Saviour* with the motherhouse in Niederbronn spread into Baden from 1852 on. From the south, a Swiss congregation (founded in 1856), the *Sisters of Charity of the Holy Cross* whose motherhouse was in Ingenbohl, established branch houses in Baden from 1858.²⁴⁶ Both congregations followed a Franciscan rule, and they grew very quickly. By 1873, Niederbronn had already eighty-one sisters in eleven branch houses in Baden alone; Ingenbohl had eighty-eight sisters in twenty-four houses.²⁴⁷ The success of the sisters of those foreign motherhouses constituted a problem for the Badenese Sisters of Charity. Their visibility meant less popular support, fewer candidates and fewer branch houses for their own order. The Freiburg Motherhouse felt compelled to respond. As a first step it proceeded to have the constitutions changed by the state government.

This chapter covers the years from 1883 to 1918, starting with the reasons behind developments from 1883 which introduced the sisters to new fields of activity. How did these come about? The older 'triangle' Motherhouse Strasbourg – Archbishop of Freiburg – state government of Baden evolved, some of the main players stepped back, and the Vatican entered the stage. Who were now the main agents, and what vision did they have in mind? What impact did Rome's decisions have on the Order?

²⁴⁵ Christian Schröder, *Armenfürsorge und katholische Identität.: Südbaden und die Saarregion im historischen Vergleich, 1803–1870* (Berlin, 2014), p. 167.

²⁴⁶ Erwin Gatz and Wolfgang Schaffer, 'Sozial-caritative Orden', in Erwin Gatz (ed.), *Caritas und soziale Dienste* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997), pp 91–110, here at p. 102; Gertraud Wopperer, *Die neuen Formen sozial-caritativer Arbeit in der Oberrheinischen Kirchenprovinz 1834–1870* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1957), pp 84–95.

²⁴⁷ List of 31 Dec. 1873 (GLA 235/13117).

The first section of the chapter will take a look at the constitutions and their development from 1869 to 1885. Subsequent sections will deal with the growth of branch houses, include a statistical analysis and outline of the process which brought the sisters to work in rural Baden. The chapter will conclude with case studies of four different types of another new phenomenon for the Motherhouse Freiburg, the Order-owned houses and the significance of each in its respective field.

The new constitutions and the papal approbation of 1885

The constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg and of all its offshoots including the Motherhouse Freiburg established a system of non-cloistered communities of sisters with simple vows under a motherhouse providing centralised formation and government of dependent branch houses. The very first sisters of charity, the Parisian *Filles de la Charité* of St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac, had received episcopal approval in 1655 and papal approval in 1688.²⁴⁸ This was long before the Apostolic constitution *Quamvis iusto* of Pope Benedict XIV in 1749 ended the enforced enclosure of women religious and granted the members of religious associations canonical legitimacy.²⁴⁹ Unlike some other French congregations, the Motherhouse Strasbourg and its daughters had never been subject to enclosure and could therefore be more versatile and flexible.

With the founding of several offshoots of the Strasbourg Motherhouse in different German-speaking dioceses by request of ecclesial and other bodies from 1832 forward, the original constitutions had been interpreted in a variety of ways. Thus some articles had not been adapted to contemporary usage while practices had developed in some new motherhouses that were not in use in

²⁴⁸ Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire de Filles de la Charité: xvii^e–xviii^e siècle* (Paris, 2011), p. 216f. The very first episcopal approval was given to them by Jean-François-Paul de Gondi, the coadjutor of the archbishop of Paris in 1646, see Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire*, p. 204f.

²⁴⁹ Mary Peckham Magray, *The transforming power of the nuns: women, religion and cultural change in Ireland, 1750–1900* (Oxford, 1998), p. 8; see also Mary Lyons, *Governance structures of the congregation of the Sisters of Mercy: becoming one* (Lewiston, NY, 2005), p. 28.

others.²⁵⁰ Sister Angélique Arth, the mistress of novices of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, saw the necessity of reforming the constitutions to provide for renewal of the congregation and to secure its future existence.²⁵¹ Sister Angélique's agency was both impressive and, to judge from the sources, rare.²⁵²

On her appointment as mother general of Strasbourg in 1868, she and Fr Superior Spitz together determined to review the constitutions. Accordingly, the mother generals and father superiors of the offshoot-motherhouses of Munich, Freiburg, Fulda, Paderborn, Gmünd and Salzburg met with the Motherhouse Strasbourg in 1869 to discuss new constitutions and to achieve papal approval of each of the congregations and their common rule.²⁵³ This would bring about greater independence from episcopal authority, since the congregation now crossed several diocesan borders and hence local bishops became involved. However, the other participants²⁵⁴ at the Strasbourg conference were taken aback to learn that only the Motherhouse Strasbourg had won papal approval on 10 August 1870, and that the approval of the constitutions had been delayed.²⁵⁵ They therefore determined to initiate a test-phase for the new constitutions early in 1871.²⁵⁶

In her study of the congregation of the Irish Sisters of Mercy, Mary Lyons – together with Mary C. Sullivan – identified five stages in the history of the approbation of the Mercy rule, and three stages for the canonical approbation of

²⁵⁰ Letter of the mistress of novices of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, Sister Angélique Arth, to Fr Superior François Charles Spitz, 10 Feb. 1863, cited after Scherer, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von Straßburg. Ein Bild ihres Werdens und Wirkens von 1734 bis zur Gegenwart* (Kevelaer, 1930), p. 297f.

²⁵¹ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 298.

²⁵² *Ibid.* Scherer thought it necessary to mention this agency in a sentence in his 1930 history of the Motherhouse Strasbourg.

²⁵³ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 298f. Two mother generals had to excuse themselves due to illness. The motherhouses of Zams, Vienna, Zagreb, Szathmar, Graz, Innsbruck, Augsburg and Hildesheim had not been invited because they either had lost contact with Strasbourg, followed the Parisian rule or had been installed as motherhouses just a few years ago.

²⁵⁴ Munich and Salzburg had left the conference because they did not agree with any changes of the constitutions; see Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 300.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

²⁵⁶ Roman *placet* 5 July 1872. See the history of the new constitutions in Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, pp 294–308 and 336–50.

this Irish congregation.²⁵⁷ Several drafts of the constitutions had to be written and tested before Rome gave its final approval. In contrast to the Sisters of Mercy, who had sent the initial draft of their rule directly to Rome,²⁵⁸ the constitutions of Strasbourg had been in use for decades, since 1828. The Strasbourg superiors' disappointment was most understandable when, in 1870, they learned that they would have to start the entire process of getting papal approval from the very beginning and without any abridgement. This first test phase was concluded for Strasbourg on 5 July 1872, when the new constitutions entered the trial phase for a period of ten years.²⁵⁹

The main difference between the new constitutions and the old concerned the election of the mother general, now limited to a six-year-term, but with the option of re-election. Prior to this, the mother general of Freiburg, Sister Gebhard Weber had been chosen by the superiors of Strasbourg and approved by Archbishop von Vicari. A council of sisters was now to be elected, together with an assistant, a secretary, a financial director and a mistress of novices; none all these offices had existed before, apart from that of novice mistress in the Motherhouse Strasbourg. The novitiate was shortened from two years to one, though to last a full canonical year. Because of a perennial shortage of space in the novitiate of Strasbourg, the novices were distributed in different institutions all over the city, only called back to the motherhouse from time to time.²⁶⁰ The final vows became perpetual, the Latin office of the Most Holy Virgin Mary was now to be recited, the order of the day was added to the body of constitutions and became compulsory.²⁶¹

After the unification of Germany under the *Second Reich* in January 1871, Baden and Alsace found themselves members of the same nation state; the

²⁵⁷ Lyons, *Governance structures*, pp 32–39.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁵⁹ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 303.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 173f.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 304–6.

Motherhouse Strasbourg of the *Soeurs de la Charité* had become German.²⁶² From the start of year 1871, the two motherhouses appeared to be closer than ever before, although they were not combined canonically.²⁶³ However, after the death of ninety-four-year-old Archbishop of Freiburg, Hermann von Vicari, in 1868, the acting archbishop²⁶⁴ Lothar von Kübel wished for an independent Motherhouse Freiburg. The separation from Strasbourg started with the first profession in Freiburg in spring 1872, while the first clothing took place in autumn of the same year. The attempt to get papal approval for the Motherhouse Freiburg failed in 1873.²⁶⁵

After testing the new constitutions for ten years, the motherhouses of Strasbourg (Alsace), Fulda (Hessen), Freiburg and Gmünd (Württemberg/Swabia) met in 1882 to discuss the constitutions once more. The constitutions received papal approval on 19 December 1884,²⁶⁶ and got the third and final papal approbation on 12 December 1891.²⁶⁷ With the final approval, the Motherhouses Fulda and Freiburg became canonical provinces of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, and their mothers-general became provincial-mothers-superior. They were required to submit annual reports to Strasbourg, and to hold triennial meetings. In his history of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg, Emil

²⁶² But Abbé Jean Charles Spitz, the father superior of Strasbourg, was resentful towards the people of Baden, including the Badenese sisters, as it had been parts of the army of Baden which fought in Alsace and Lorraine and which, in due course, bombarded Strasbourg, destroying many buildings and their cultural contents, see Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. iii, pp 102–7.

²⁶³ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 336.

²⁶⁴ Due to the 'culture war' in Baden, the state of Baden, Rome and the archdiocese of Freiburg could not agree on a successor to Vicari, so assistant bishop Kübel had to lead the archdiocese without ever being appointed archbishop himself. The next archbishop in line was Johann Baptist Orbin, elected in 1882. See Christoph Schmider, *Die Freiburger Bischöfe. 175 Jahre Erzbistum Freiburg: eine Geschichte in Lebensbildern* (Freiburg im Breisgau), 2002, p. 73ff. Also Karl-Heinz Braun, 'Kirche im liberalen Bürgerstaat. Das Erzbistum von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende der Monarchie 1918', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.) *Geschichte des Erzbistums Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), p. 163ff. Kübel was appointed apostolic administrator and nobilitated in 1869 by the king of Württemberg, see Schmider, *Bischöfe*, p. 78f.

²⁶⁵ Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. iii, p. 233 and Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 308.

²⁶⁶ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 341. Scherer called this papal approval 'the final approbation of the constitutions', and therefore contradicted himself by naming the decree of 1891 'the third and final papal approbation'.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

Clemens Scherer took the view that assistant bishop and coadjutor Peter Paul Stumpf of Strasbourg had constitutions eight and fourteen changed without the knowledge or consent of the motherhouses.²⁶⁸ In number eight, the mother general of Strasbourg had to confirm the appointment of the mothers provincial and to conduct a visitation of Fulda and Freiburg every six years. The latter got a seat and a vote in the general chapter in Strasbourg.²⁶⁹ The alteration of number fourteen of the constitutions caused an uproar in all motherhouses: the Fr Superior was no longer permitted to act as confessor of the sisters. As the Archdiocese of Freiburg thanks to the 'culture war' was experiencing a shortage of priests, especially of ones capable of serving the sisters' needs, Joseph Marmon was forced to resign temporarily as Fr Superior of the Motherhouse Freiburg.²⁷⁰ Under a papal indult he was allowed to return to office and permitted to act at least as extraordinary confessor.²⁷¹

For the German motherhouses, especially for Freiburg, the most important consequence of the new constitutions was the permission to care for the sick in their homes, what would become the key to a higher visibility of the Sisters of Charity. A request had been forwarded to the Vatican in 1882.²⁷² After the final papal approbation in 1891, these new constitutions could not be published in Baden, nor be made known in any form to the government. The state of Baden would never have consented to a motherhouse which was canonically combined with a motherhouse outside Baden, despite the fact that Alsace had now become German. As the new constitutions contradicted the old stipulation that no foreign superior could be head of the Badenese motherhouse, they were a fundamental

²⁶⁸ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 343.

²⁶⁹ Gmünd could not agree with that change and irrevocably veered off on its own; see Hermann Tüchle, *Die Barmherzigen Schwestern von Untermarchtal: Zur 125jährigen Tätigkeit der Vinzentinerinnen im Bistum Rottenburg-Stuttgart*, p. 53f.

²⁷⁰ By the end of the Prussian *Kulturkampf*, 1,800 priests had been jailed or exiled, see David Blackbourn, *The long nineteenth century: a history of Germany, 1780–1918* (Oxford, 1997), p. 262.

²⁷¹ Papal indult of 7 Aug. 1885.

²⁷² Superior Marmon stressed the importance of this question, so essential for the survival of the Motherhouse Freiburg, in the meeting in Strasbourg, 14 July 1882: Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 338f. The state of Baden gave its approval in 1883 (correspondence from 7 Jan. 1883 onwards: EAF, B5/89). The effects of this admission to a new field of activity will be discussed later in this chapter

threat to the existence of the Order of Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in the Archdiocese Freiburg.²⁷³

What advantages or disadvantages ensued from the final papal approbation of the constitutions? Apart from the critically important consolidation of its legal existence²⁷⁴ and the growth in prestige now being a papal congregation,²⁷⁵ with greater autonomy from the local bishop, the Motherhouse Freiburg had become more democratic. More sisters could now be elected to the leading positions and the various offices that had not existed before. The office of the mother general superior (canonically the provincial mother superior) was no longer for life. She also had to consult with the sisters' council in a variety of ways: in financial matters where large sums were involved, in erecting or dissolving branch houses and installing local sister superiors; in admitting to simple and perpetual profession, in the dismissal of sisters who had taken final vows, and in the election of the mistress of novices. The power of the mother general only came into play in case of a tied vote; she then had the casting vote.²⁷⁶ The dowry was now restricted to 400 Francs; from then on a dispensation from Rome was needed when the sum was exceeded, so that older, wealthier sisters could provide financial assistance to poorer candidates. The introduction of perpetual vows seemed not constitute a major change for the sisters; the annual renewal had only been a formality. To pray in Latin instead of German was regarded as the price for belonging to the world community of Roman Catholic prayer. The Order's greatest gain was being permitted to take care of the sick at home.²⁷⁷ In fact the 'permission' constituted a return to the rule of Chartres, as Fr Superior

²⁷³ Archbishop Johann Baptist Orbin to Coadjutor Peter Paul Stumpf of Strasbourg, 7 Apr. 1885; Ordinariate to Fr Koch, parish priest in Mannheim, 26 May 1885 (EAF, B5/89), see also Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 346.

²⁷⁴ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 336.

²⁷⁵ The correct title for the motherhouse Freiburg was now 'Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg im Breisgau.'

²⁷⁶ § 83 of the Constitutions (Strasbourg, 1929).

²⁷⁷ Fr Superior Marmon to Motherhouse Strasbourg, 3 July 1885 (EAF, B5/89). Self-sanctification (*Selbstheiligung*) was now in § 1 of the constitutions (Gisela Fleckenstein, 'Von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zu den Kulturkämpfen', in Erwin Gatz (ed.), *Klöster und Ordensgemeinschaften* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006), pp 205–41, here at p. 236). Fleckenstein saw that as a reverence to the monastic orders.

Joseph Guerber of Strasbourg pointed out,²⁷⁸ for, besides the habit, the first four Alsatian Sisters of Charity had brought the Chartres rule with them, following their training at the motherhouse of the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres.²⁷⁹ The Rule of Chartres never required enclosure and indeed the instruction of the poor and the care of the sick at home and in hospital were the sisters' main fields of work. This rule had incorporated the main elements of the Parisian rule of the *Filles de la Charité* of the Rue du Bac of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Additional elements included the power invested in the role of mother general, the consultative but nevertheless important role of the Fr Superior, the motherhouse-system with its central direction and central noviciate, branch houses with detailed contracts between motherhouse and the responsible party of the various institutions, the right of visitation of those houses and, above all, the Vincentian spirituality which imbued its life and mission.²⁸⁰

The disadvantages of the new constitutions for the Motherhouses Strasbourg and Freiburg were the reduction to a one-year noviciate and the ban on the Fr Superior as confessor for the sisters. Both regulations were seen by the sisters of Alsace and Baden themselves as impracticable and were changed back again in 1891 in the finally-approved version without difficulty.²⁸¹ The other pious customs and habits were still maintained, although they were no longer specified in the constitutions.²⁸² Another important outcome of the revised constitutions from 1882 onwards was that the Motherhouse Freiburg was now canonically a province of the Motherhouse Strasbourg. Hence in those years the situation of the Motherhouse Freiburg was a paradox. In the eyes of the public and of the state government of Baden, it was an independent order with an independent

²⁷⁸ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 339.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁸⁰ Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire de Filles*, pp 241–246 (*le supérieur général*), pp 252–260 (*la supérieure générale*), pp 443–459 (*maison mère*), pp 464–469 (*contrats*); Hans-Peter Schaper, *Krankenwartung und Krankenpflege: Tendenzen der Verberuflichung in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Opladen, 1987), p. 137–145.

²⁸¹ Statement of Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 25 July 1885 (EAF, B5/89); Guerber, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. iv, p. 161; instruction of the Ordinariate Freiburg to Marmon, 20 Aug. 1885 (EAF, B5/89); Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, pp 348–350.

²⁸² Fr Superior Joseph Marmon to Motherhouse Strasbourg, 3 July 1885 (EAF, B5/89).

motherhouse, which saw to its affairs in Baden without outside interference. However – hidden to the secular world – it had become legally bound to the Motherhouse Strasbourg. This was the exact opposite of the situation before 1872 when, according to Archbishop Hermann von Vicari's explicit wish, the Motherhouse Freiburg was only a building, a façade, whereas all the direction and decisions for Baden came from the Motherhouse Strasbourg despite the fact that Freiburg was officially and legally independent. These two hidden agendas of all the ecclesiastical authorities, primarily of the archbishop of Freiburg in unison with the superiors of the Motherhouses of Strasbourg and Freiburg, fit perfectly with the principal-agent-theory.²⁸³

According to its canonical status as a province, Freiburg could act only through Strasbourg whenever there were dealings with Rome. However, in 1907 the fact was demonstrated once again that Roman rule did not prove in practice to be as strict as expected. When the Motherhouse Strasbourg sent in the five-year report of 1902–1906 of Strasbourg, Freiburg and Fulda to the Vatican, it got the following three resolutions as an answer. First, in future only houses with a minimum of six sisters were allowed to be established; secondly, that the first profession would be invalid if the novices had not spent at least a full canonical year in the noviciate; and thirdly that all sisters should have a retreat once a year.²⁸⁴ This was a potentially mortal blow to the Motherhouse Freiburg. Among the 154 new branch houses founded between 1883 and the end of 1918, nearly half (eighty houses) were located in rural areas and staffed with only two or three sisters. Since those small houses played an essential role, those Roman regulations caused an upheaval in the Motherhouse Freiburg. Fr Superior Karl Mayer dispatched a sixteen-page letter to the Ordinariate in the form of a bitter complaint and setting out all the reasons why those regulations were impossible

²⁸³ Roman Smolorz, *Die Regensburger Domspatzen im Nationalsozialismus: Singen zwischen Katholischer Kirche und NS-Staat* (Regensburg, 2017), p 16f. Smolorz used this method which originates from economic sciences as a methodology for his study, as explained in the introduction to the present thesis.

²⁸⁴ *Sancta Congregatio Episcoporum et Regularum*, no addressee given, presumably to the bishop of Strasbourg, 16 Feb. 1907, sent to Strasbourg 23 Feb. 1907 (EAF, B5/89).

to follow.²⁸⁵ The Motherhouse Freiburg had tried to close several small branch houses and while it had succeeded in a few cases,²⁸⁶ it met with opposition amongst the people. Catholic private nursing would be destroyed in areas with a large number of Protestants: it was feared that the Protestant deaconesses or lay nurses would simply take over. The Catholic parts of Baden were mostly rural with a very poor population who could not afford to support more than two sisters. They would thus never get the benefit of proper nursing. And, moreover, these were the very regions which served as the reservoir of prospective candidates for the Order. If that lifeline was severed, the very survival of the Motherhouse Freiburg was at stake.²⁸⁷

In the matters of the canonical noviciate and the annual retreat, the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg argued that local circumstances did not allow them to follow the Roman rule as much as they wished to. They already had to ask for the *sanation*²⁸⁸ of the vows of 223 novices. The number of sisters (800), combined with insufficient accommodation in the motherhouse and the fact that the two superiors had to visitate the branch houses on a regular basis, made it impossible to provide for a retreat each year for every sister.

Archbishop Thomas Nörber had the request of the Motherhouse Freiburg translated into Latin virtually verbatim and sent to Rome 31 May 1907.²⁸⁹ Exactly four weeks later the Roman answer arrived. Regarding the important question of the small houses, the *Sancta Congregatio* conceded the archbishop's request, and small houses could still be founded if there was a genuine need and if the

²⁸⁵ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Archbishop Thomas Nörber, 5 Apr. 1907 (EAF, B5/89). The fact that Mayer wrote directly to the archbishop shows how important and urgent those matters were.

²⁸⁶ Eigeltingen, Ilmspan, Mühlhausen and Stetten am kalten Markt. Whenever the Motherhouse Freiburg met resistance, it conceded and allowed the sisters to stay.

²⁸⁷ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Archbishop Thomas Nörber, 5 Apr. 1907 (EAF, B5/89). The letter does not have page numbers.

²⁸⁸ Canonical process by which an invalid act is validated retrospectively, see Sabine Demel, article 'Konvalidation', in Michael Buchberger and Walter Kasper (eds), *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. vi (3rd rev. ed., Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997), col. 335f.

²⁸⁹ It seems to be surprising that the Archbishop of Freiburg interacted with Rome directly rather than through the Motherhouse and the bishop of Strasbourg as Freiburg was a canonical province of the Motherhouse Strasbourg.

bishop could answer to this on his conscience.²⁹⁰ As to the canonical noviciate, Rome insisted on the full year; otherwise the profession would be invalid. The Motherhouse Freiburg could not comply with that 1907 regulation right away, but it asked for 'sanation' to fulfil the requirements of canon law.²⁹¹ To settle the question of the yearly retreats, the Motherhouse Freiburg won a further ten years deferral.

An intriguing aspect of all this was that although Freiburg had become a canonical province of the Motherhouse Strasbourg and with it had achieved papal approval, the problems were neither referred to Strasbourg nor did the Alsatians take any interest in their resolution. The Freiburg sisters were left to fight for their own rights because they were seen as independent agents by Strasbourg. They had recourse to their archbishop who continued to act as intermediary between the Motherhouse Freiburg and the Vatican. The Apostolic constitution *Condita a Christo* of Pope Leo XIII (1900) and the amendatory *Normae* of 1901 not only strengthened the elected superiors and other governing bodies such as councils and chapters of female religious congregations²⁹² but, according to Fr Celestine Freriks, they also determined that 'the general principle as to all Religious Congregations' was that

the Ordinary possesses full jurisdiction over them [the congregations, AH] in both the external and internal forum except in those matters expressly exempted by the Holy See.²⁹³

The correspondence between the respective agents also exemplifies the fact that Rome accepted formal objections to its regulations, and that the papal

²⁹⁰ *Sancta Congregatio Episcoporum et Regularum* to Archbishop Nörber, 28 June 1907 (EAF, B5/89). The original text is the following: *pro gratia iuxta preces, onerata tamen conscientia Episcopi Super vera et praecita necessitate.*

²⁹¹ To avoid the difficulties caused for hospitals in particular by the longer canonical noviciate, the Motherhouse Freiburg successfully petitioned Rome to shorten the noviciate to one year for a three-year period, which was extended in 1916 for another five years, see Mother General Sister Luisa David to Archbishop Nörber, 19 July 1912; Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Archbishop Nörber, 27 Jan. 1916 and the respective answers from Rome, Strasbourg and the Ordinariate of Freiburg.

²⁹² Caitriona Clear, *Nuns in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 1987), p. 55.

²⁹³ Celestine Anthony Freriks CPPS, *Religious congregations in their external relations* (Washington, DC, 1916), p. 86. This work was a thesis in canon law at the Catholic University of America.

approval did not turn out to be a one-way street. The success was so impressive that the bishop of Fulda asked his colleague in Freiburg to let him know how he could have possibly managed to get the dispensation from the ban to establish small branch houses.²⁹⁴ *Conditae a Christo* and the *Normae* thus did not lead to greater restrictions for the Motherhouse Freiburg, such as the Sisters of Notre Dame in Massachusetts (USA) experienced by being confined to their church, convent and school.²⁹⁵ The Badenese Sisters of Charity knew how to navigate within the Roman regulations without losing essential rights according to their constitutions.

Spirituality

As a 'thanksgiving' to God for the new constitutions and their papal approval, Fr Superior Joseph Guerber of Strasbourg dedicated the whole congregation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus on 25 June 1885. This had already been mooted by a predecessor, Fr Antoine Jeanjean, as far back as the eighteenth century. Jeanjean had viewed this devotion as a vital means to inculcate the spirit of unity and love in every sister.²⁹⁶ From 1885 onwards, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was celebrated with special solemnity.²⁹⁷ The veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was promoted by the French nun Marguerite-Marie Alacoque (1647–90) of the Visitation Order, has as its main feature the importance of atonement and thus was closely linked to the revival of individual confession and the introduction of more frequent communion.²⁹⁸ To counter Jansenism in France, this pious practice was promulgated notably by St Jean Eudes (1601–80). The religious orders of the Franciscans and the Jesuits had incorporated it into their spirituality. In 1765 the baroque devotion to the Sacred

²⁹⁴ Vicar general of Fulda to Ordinariate of Freiburg, 18 Jan. 1908 (EAF, B5/89).

²⁹⁵ Holly Folk, 'American Catholic women, 1820–1900: from the Jacksonian period to the progressive era', in Rosemary Skinner Keller, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marie Cantlon (eds), *Encyclopedia of women and religion in North America* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2006), pp 148–60, here p. 159.

²⁹⁶ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 340.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 345f.

²⁹⁸ Anton Ziegenaus, 'Die Herz-Jesu-Verehrung: geschichtliche Entwicklung und theologischer Gehalt', in Manfred Hauke (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung: geschichtliche Entwicklung und theologischer Gehalt* (Regensburg, 2011), pp 35–46, here pp 39–41.

Hearts of Jesus and Mary was officially approved by Pope Clement XIII,²⁹⁹ incorporating the idea of atonement for Jansenism, Gallicanism and subsequently also for the atrocities of the French Revolution.³⁰⁰ In the century from the 1850s to the 1950s the popes themselves actively promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart.³⁰¹ After the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, a connection was forged with the Parisian *Filles de la Charité*, whose novice Catherine Labouré claimed two visions of the Virgin Mary in 1830. In the aftermath, a medallion was printed of the apparition and distributed by the French Sisters of Charity known as the 'miraculous medal'.³⁰² Having been trained and educated for twenty-five years in the noviciate of the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg, the Badenese counterpart, the Freiburg sisters, brought with them these two elements of French spirituality with their emphasis on individual piety and sanctification into the Archdiocese of Freiburg and in time into the smallest villages.

The crucial year of 1883

Up to 1883 the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of Freiburg had taken on the management of forty-three hospitals for sick and poor people, six orphanages, four church-owned institutes, mainly seminaries, and eight other institutes all over Baden.³⁰³ From the mid-1850s two foreign congregations from Alsace and Switzerland had kept expanding into Baden with ever-growing success. Given the difficult introduction of the Order into Baden, those two motherhouses had met with very little opposition from either the state

²⁹⁹ Klaus Guth, 'Herzensfrömmigkeit in süddeutschen Frauengemeinschaften des Barockzeitalters', in Manfred Hauke (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung: geschichtliche Entwicklung und theologischer Gehalt* (Regensburg, 2011), pp 109–30, here p. 112f.

³⁰⁰ Joachim Schmiedl, 'Herz-Jesu und Herz-Mariä-Frömmigkeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', in Manfred Hauke (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung: geschichtliche Entwicklung und theologischer Gehalt* (Regensburg, 2011), pp 146–66, here at p. 148f.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, here at p. 149.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, here at p. 156f.

³⁰³ Fourteen of those houses had already been given up by the Order, lost in the culture wars or through other events, or were a temporary institution only.

government, the Badenese parliament or the liberals in general.³⁰⁴ Not even the allegation of the district government of the Mid-Rhine region that the congregation of Niederbronn was affiliated with the Jesuits caused problems.³⁰⁵ The fact that the motherhouses of Niederbronn and Ingenbohl were not allowed to take over public institutions such as hospitals actually worked in their favour in the sense that they had sufficient personnel to staff several small branch houses throughout the state at a time when medical progress created an increasing demand for 'proper' nurses. Over the years, the growth of both Niederbronn and Ingenbohl even began to challenge the position of the Motherhouse Freiburg, eliciting a response from the Order's superiors.

As noted already, Fr Superior Marmon reminded the archbishop that the rule of the Motherhouse Strasbourg with its exclusive focus on nursing in institutions was not merely outdated but had put it at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* foreign congregations. The Order had come to be regarded as out of touch, so much so that outsiders were now being favoured over the pioneering Badenese motherhouse.³⁰⁶ Up to that year of 1883, the 'White' Sisters of Charity were known only to a limited circle of poor people. The majority of the populace thus were not in a position to value the sisters: they had no contact with them. On the other hand, private nursing had been always part of the Vincentian heritage, permitted by other German offshoots of the Strasbourg motherhouse, such as the Swabian motherhouse in Gmünd.³⁰⁷ The Ordinariate of Freiburg reacted right away to Fr Superior Marmon's complaint, requesting an alteration of the original constitutions, which Grand Duke Leopold of Baden had authorised as far back as 1845.³⁰⁸ In July 1883 after Rome had approved the change of the statutes of the

³⁰⁴ Ministry of the Interior to district government of the Middle Rhine region, 10 July 1857 (GLA, 236/5293). The sisters had to be treated as foreign guests without corporation rights and were not allowed to take over public institutions.

³⁰⁵ District government of the Middle Rhine region to Interior Ministry, 11 July 1857. After a report of the government's church office, the Interior Ministry had no reservations at all about Niederbronn, see Interior Ministry to district government of the Middle Rhine, 17 July 1857 (GLA 236/5293).

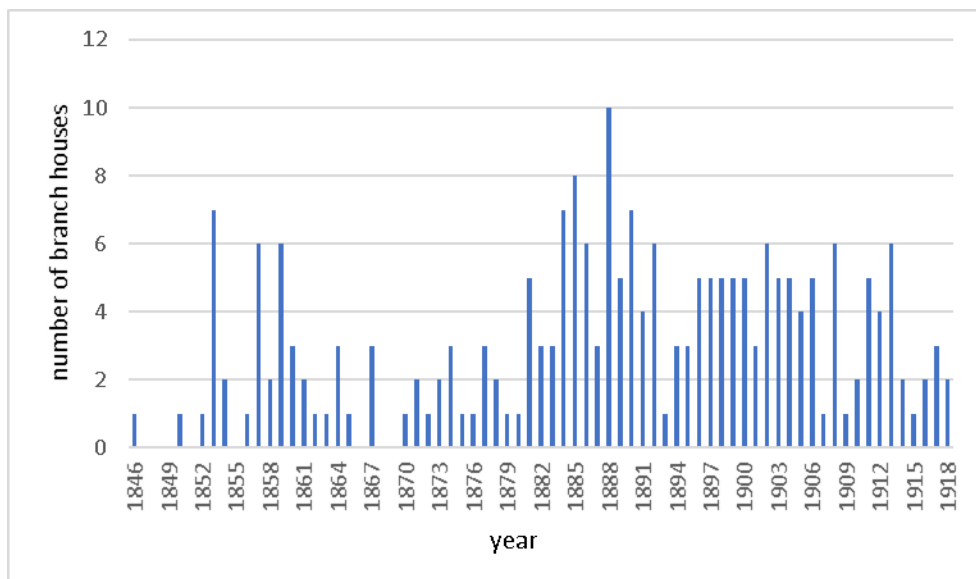
³⁰⁶ Fr Superior Joseph Marmon to Ordinariate, 7 Jan. 1883 (EAF, B5/89).

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ordinariate to Ministry of Justice, Culture and Education of Baden, 9 Jan. 1883 (EAF, B5/89).

Order, the state government gave its approval for the nursing of the sick in their homes.³⁰⁹ In the decades following 1883, the Motherhouse Freiburg expanded accordingly and rapidly throughout the Freiburg archdiocese with some 155 new branch houses being opened in that period. The chronological and geographical distribution of the foundations is displayed in Figures 3.1 and 3.2. The symmetrical 'dip' between the peak years of 1853 and 1888 is striking.

Figure 3.1: Foundation of branch houses of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg per year, 1846 – 1918



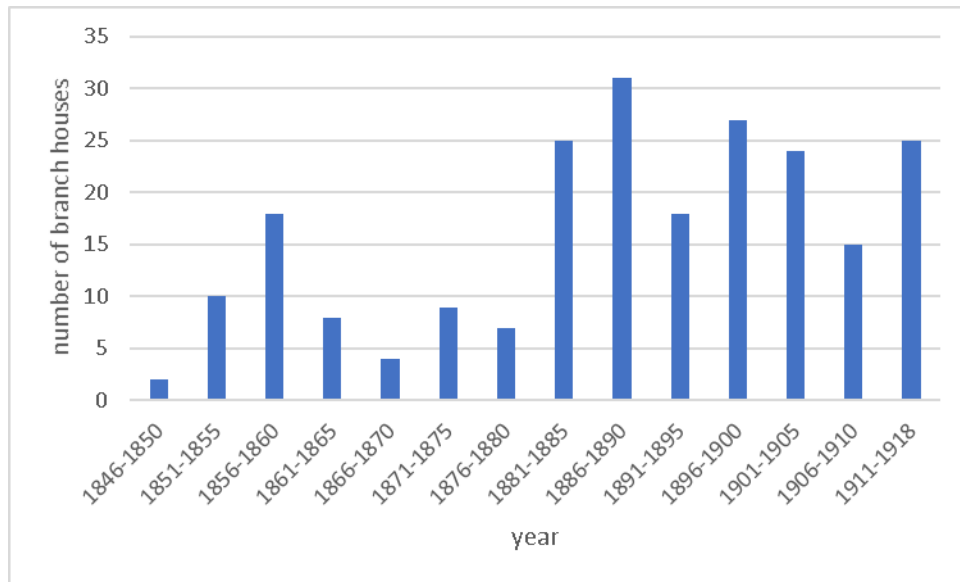
Source: Calculations by the author according to branch house lists and files (MHA Freiburg)

In the first decade after the Order came into Baden (1846–55), when new members had first to be admitted into the Order and trained, only twelve branch houses were founded, on average about one per year. In the second decade (1856–65) this figure was more than doubled (26). The period of the 'culture war' in Baden in the late 1860s and 1870s, and the later Prussian *Kulturkampf* had a demonstrable effect on the expansion of the sisters in the Archdiocese of Freiburg. The apparent 'hiccup' in steady expansion in the early 1890s is attributable to the decision of the new mother general, Sister Luisa David (1898–1916), to allow a period of consolidation.

³⁰⁹ Ministry of Justice, Culture and Education of Baden to Ordinariate, 23 July 1883 (EAF, B5/89).

If the numbers of the foundations of the new branch houses are viewed in five-year phases, the picture becomes even clearer.

Figure 3.2: Foundation of branch houses of the Order of the Sisters of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg in five-year periods, 1846 – 1918



Source: Calculations by the author according to branch house lists and files (MHA Freiburg)

The figures illustrate the point already made above, namely that in Baden the so-called culture war pre-dated that in Prussia, as reflected in the sharp decline in foundation statistics in the early 1860s. Following the gradual settlement of the outstanding issues of the ‘War’, which occurred earlier in Baden than in the North, numbers expanded once more.

What caused this spectacular growth? Was there a special reason or combination of reasons for it? Hospitals were hitherto the sisters’ main field of action. From c. 1880 forward Germany was becoming an important actor in the general advance of medicine and medical technology.³¹⁰ To utilise the new technology and meet stringent standards of hygiene and asepsis, new hospitals were required. An improved medical service in better-equipped and therefore modern hospitals attracted wealthier patients. Reich Chancellor Bismarck’s

³¹⁰ Professor Hermann Lossen to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 28 Nov. 1896, p. 1f. (MHA Freiburg, Heidelberg, St. Josefskrankenhaus).

pioneering introduction of compulsory social insurance from 1883 onwards (1883 health insurance, 1884 accident insurance, 1889 disability insurance, 1891 old age insurance) was also decisive for the growth in hospital numbers, although initially only certain groups of the population such as factory workers profited.³¹¹ Growth in patient numbers led to increasing staff requirements and hence to demands for more sisters.³¹² Since they cost less than other types of nurses, the sisters added also to the financial viability of the hospitals. As recorded in a letter of 1903 from the local parish priest Fr Josef Bechtold of Walldürn, a town in northern Baden known for pilgrimage to the Most Holy Blood relic, savings totalling 30,000 Reichsmark made over the previous fifteen years by the Vincentian sisters of the local small hospital were facilitating the building of a new hospital.³¹³ Most importantly, the sisters kept themselves up-to-date on modern nursing standards and as good team players who collaborated effectively with other medical professionals were an attractive proposition in the general expansion of hospital care in Germany. In the years 1877 to 1900 alone, the number of public hospitals in Germany grew from 1,500 to 2,000, while those in private ownership increased from 316 to 1,117 in the same period.³¹⁴

Another factor proved even more significant in promoting the growth of branch houses and the numbers of sisters in the last decades of the nineteenth century. When in 1882 the German Motherhouses of Fulda (Hessen), Freiburg (Baden) and Gmünd (Swabia) reached an agreement with the founding Motherhouse of Strasbourg to change the constitutions and allow the care of the

³¹¹ There were more patients after the extension of the social insurance laws (*Sozialreformgesetze*) to farm and forest workers: council of Waldshut to Motherhouse, 21 Aug. 1889 (MHA Freiburg, Waldshut, Spital). In the hospital of Engen, the proportion of 'normal' (poor or old) hospital inmates to patients was 7:2, now they were getting more and more patients (MHA Freiburg, Engen, Krankenhaus, brochure, p. 12). In Radolfzell they had 137 patients in 1883, in 1896 there were already 272 per year after 164 in 1895: Dr Mader to mayor of Radolfzell, 6 Oct. 1896 (MHA Freiburg, Radolfzell, Spital).

³¹² An additional sister needed after introduction of health and accident insurance for farm hands and forest workers, for *landesgesetzliche* workers and domestics: council of Meersburg to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 22 Jan. 1891 (MHA Freiburg, Meersburg, Krankenhaus).

³¹³ The Motherhouse Freiburg donated 18,000 of that sum, 12,000 Mark was given as a loan with a loan contract: Fr Josef Bechtold to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 19 May and 20 Aug. 1903 (MHA Freiburg, Walldürn, Spital).

³¹⁴ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 354.

sick in their homes, a new type of small branch house emerged. In villages all over Baden, houses with only two or three sisters could be set up; these often combined homecare of the sick with nursery and/or sewing schools. Eighty new houses of this type were staffed by the Order between 1883 and 1918, of which three were situated in suburbs, not including all the cottage hospitals that added those services to indoor-care.³¹⁵ By providing more and more branch houses even in the smallest parishes all over the country of Baden, the Order gained in visibility. And, the more visible the sisters became, the more young women were attracted to become candidates of the Motherhouse Freiburg.

Effective leadership was a key factor. In November 1884, the first Mother General Sister Gebhard Weber died, to be succeeded by Sister Alban Jörger.³¹⁶ Scarcely twelve months later, Fr Superior Joseph Marmon died suddenly and the archbishop nominated Karl Mayer³¹⁷ in his place. Thus by late 1885 the senior management of the Motherhouse Freiburg had changed. The two new leaders were both of an age. With Sister Alban as the driving force, this dynamic team would oversee the addition of sixty-two new branch houses in the space of only fourteen years (1884–98).³¹⁸ The rapid expansion did not proceed without opposition from some high-ranking sisters and members of the council of sisters for whom the spiritual life of the Order had been subordinated to material considerations. In a lengthy letter dated 18 September 1895, the novice mistress of the Freiburg motherhouse, Sister Vinzenz Rippler, voiced her complaint to the mother general of Strasbourg. Her task, she wrote, was to educate the young members of the Order to be faithful to the constitutions and thus ensure that they

³¹⁵ The state gave its consent to this change of the constitutions in 1883, and Rome approved this change (among others) in 1885: Ministry of Justice, Culture and Education of Baden, 23 July 1883, district office to parish priest Fr Danner of Säckingen, 26 July 1883 (MHA Freiburg, Bad Säckingen, Marienhaus) and Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 341f.

³¹⁶ Sister Alban Jörger (1839–1898), raised and educated in the house of her relative Alban Stolz, the writer of the famous Catholic calendars. Clothing in 1860, first profession in 1862, see Friedrich von Weech (ed.), *Badische Biographien*, vol. v: 1891–1901 (Heidelberg, 1906), p. 354f.

³¹⁷ Dr h.c. Karl Mayer (1837–1922), Fr Superior 1885–1922, portrayed by Simon Weber, *Monsignore Karl Mayer, Superior der Schwesternkongregation vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in Freiburg im Breisgau, in seinem Leben und Wirken* (Breisach, 1923).

³¹⁸ Karl Mayer, *Dem Andenken an die ehrwürdige Mutter Schwester Albana, General-Oberin* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1898), p. 6.

would be robust enough in their spiritual life to meet the manifold challenges from the world and the demands of their various posts. Sister Alban Jörger (1839–98)³¹⁹ however, was more interested in getting as many workers in as short a time as possible for her numerous new projects. Not averse to 'devious ways', she was adept in getting what she wanted.³²⁰ The formation of the novices, which was supposed to last for two years, was now sacrificed to a fast-track one, to allow the novices to be sent out earlier, more branch houses founded and so the Order's prestige enhanced.³²¹ Sister Luisa David, a member of the sisters' council as the elected bursar from 1890 to 1896,³²² was regarded by Sister Alban as responsible for the challenge to her authority. Following the latter's re-election in 1896, Sister Luisa was transferred to Heidelberg in northern Baden as sister superior of the Order-owned St Joseph's hospital, effectively a demotion and, in the event, humiliation by her fellow sister. Sister Luisa, who had been out of active nursing for the previous twelve years, was out of touch with the rapid advances in medicine and nursing of the intervening years and had previously never managed a prestigious hospital. Her evident insecurity in this new role prompted Professor Lossen, the medical director of the hospital, to complain to Fr Superior Karl Mayer: she was not, he suggested, up to the job.³²³

Prior to 1883 and the change of the constitutions, the Motherhouse Freiburg was scarcely in a position to contribute to the formation of a Catholic milieu; the sisters themselves could do so only in a limited manner and within the institutions

³¹⁹ Sister Alban Jörger, born 1839, clothing 1860, profession 1862, death 1898. She became mother general in 1884 and was re-elected in 1890 and in 1896.

³²⁰ Sister Vinzenz Rippler to Mother General of Strasbourg, 18 Sept. 1895 ((MHA Strasbourg, Classeur Fribourg en Brisgau 1846. Documents: Courriers 1 (avant 1964)).

³²¹ Two letters gave evidence of growing dissatisfaction: Sister Vinzenz to Mother General of Strasbourg, eleven-page letter, 18 Sept. 1895, and Sister Luisa to Mother General of Strasbourg, without date, but sent before election in 1896 (MHA Strasbourg, Classeur Fribourg en Brisgau 1846. Documents: Courriers 1 (avant 1964)).

³²² Report of cathedral dean and commissioner Fr Karl Franz Weikum, 13 Nov. 1890 (EAF, B5/89). Sister Luisa was after the election of 15 Oct. 1896 no longer part of the council.

³²³ Professor Hermann Lossen complained to Fr Superior Karl Mayer bitterly about that act of the motherhouse, as the most suitable and highly able Sister superior Sidonia Stroppel, the soul of St Joseph's hospital, had to take up Sister Luisa David's desk job in Freiburg. Sister Luisa would fail in every respect and she was not fit for the job of head of a leading hospital in Heidelberg. Letter dated 28 November 1896 (MHA Freiburg, Heidelberg, St. Josefskrankenhaus). Little did he know that he judged the successor to Sister Alban Jörger, who with Sister Ferdinand Feederle, also from this important branch house, was a future mother general.

where they worked. Now, active in the countryside with its predominantly Catholic population, the Order could make a significant contribution to a general Catholic revival.

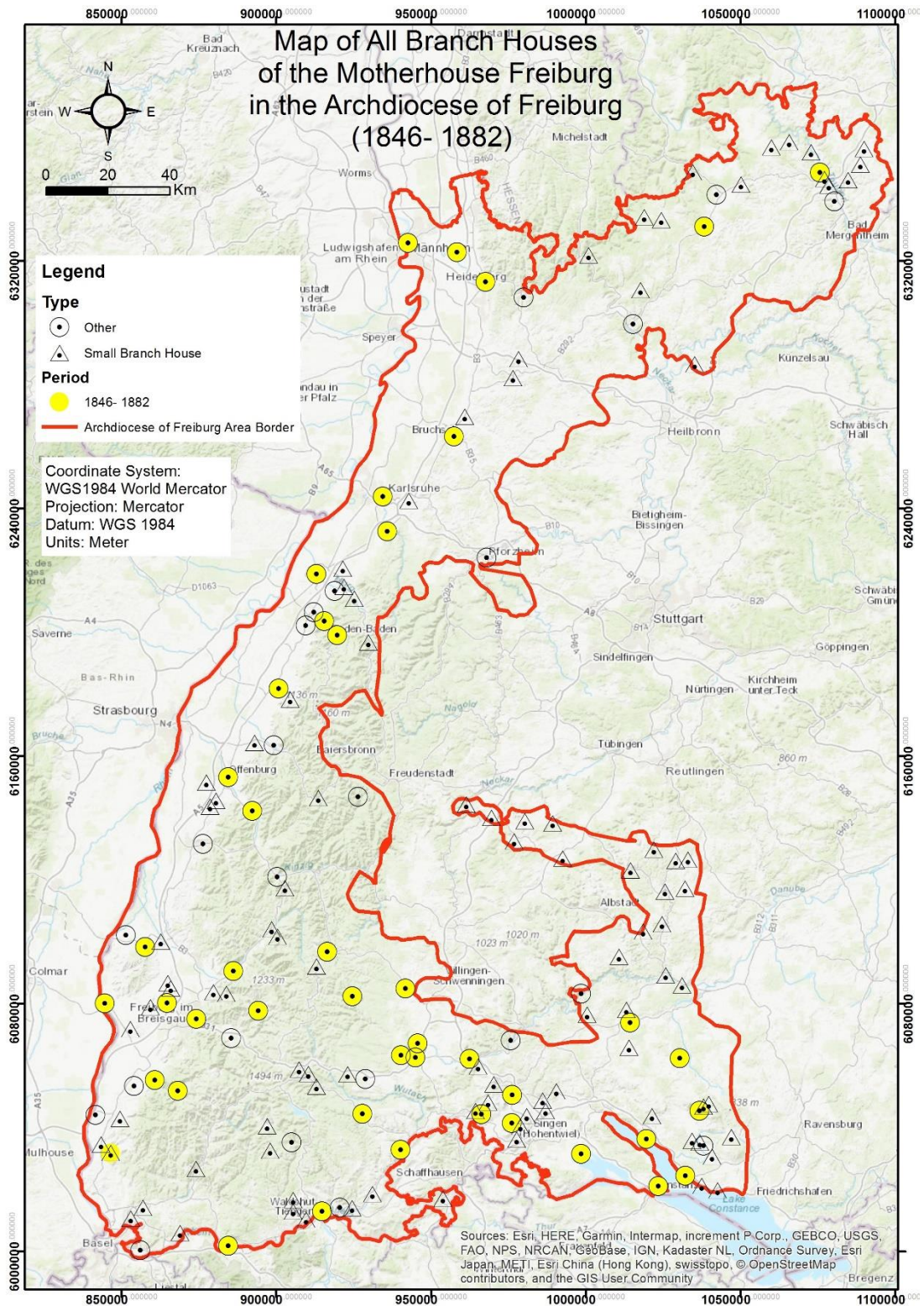
The small branch houses: spreading into the Catholic heartland, the countryside

By the year 1883, the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg were staffing sixty-nine institutions all over Baden, of which forty-five were hospitals with nursing and care for the indigent elderly, amounting to two-thirds of all the branch houses of the Order. With very few exceptions, those houses were situated in large or smaller towns, and the sisters dealt only with the inmates, the hospital boards and the parish priests.³²⁴ The Sisters of Charity did not attend Mass in the parish church except where the hospital lacked a chapel. As they were not part of the normal parish life, ordinary people did not get to know them nor have contact with their particular 'brand' of Vincentian spirituality. (See figures 3.3 and 3.4 on the following pages: map 1 displays in yellow the locations of the branch houses before 1883, which were mainly hospitals, and the houses of the later period without colour; map 2 shows the branch houses in blue which were established between 1883 and 1945, and the houses of the earlier period are colourless.)

Between 1883 and 1918, the Motherhouse Freiburg founded fifty-two small branch houses in the countryside with two to three sisters in each. Who initiated this process and why was Freiburg preferred over other congregations?

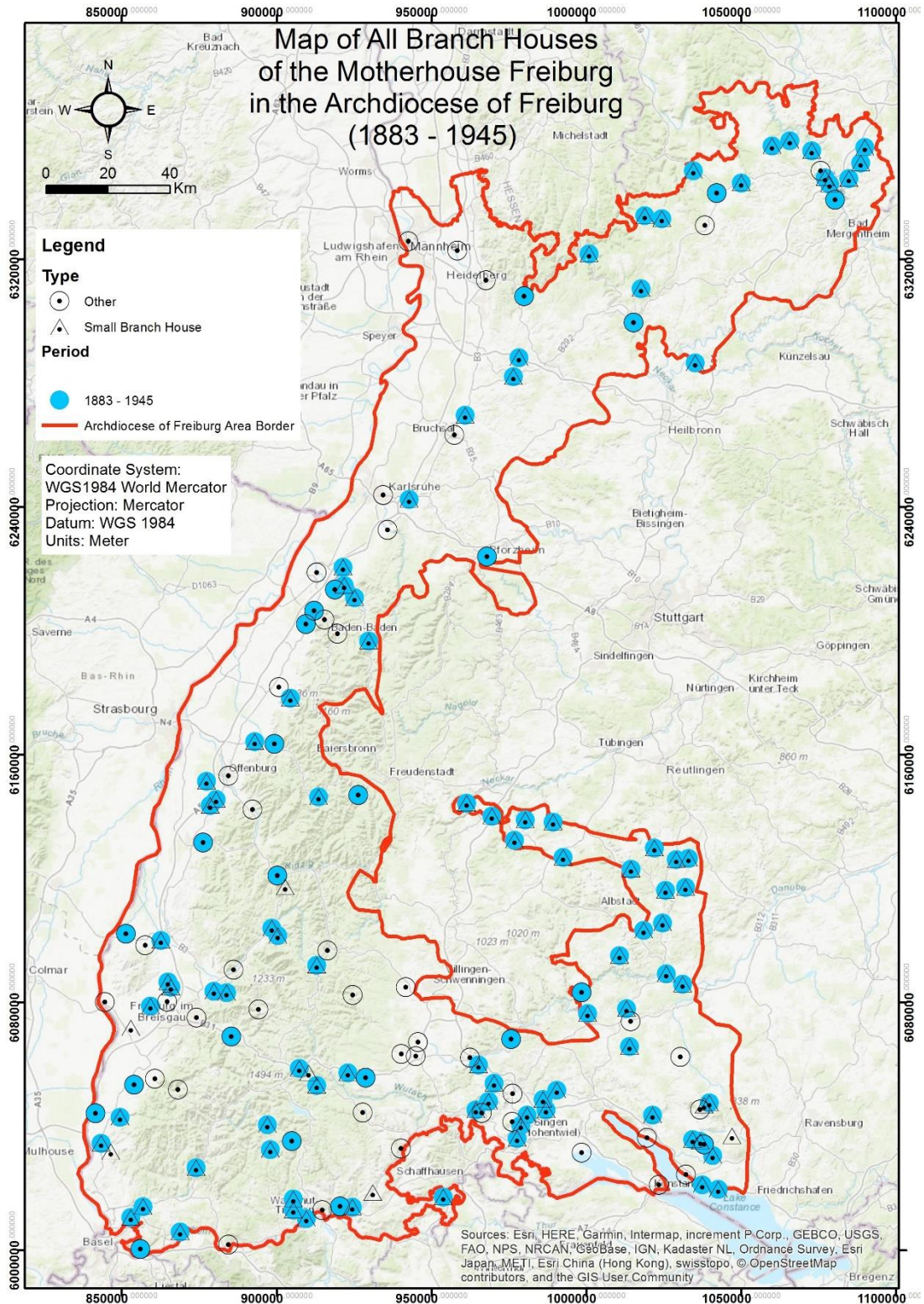
³²⁴ Liel stands out with only one Sister of Charity in place for the care of the sick at home, which was against the constitutions on two accounts: At the founding of this branch house around 1878, the care of the sick at home had yet not been approved as new task, and a branch house had to consist of two sisters at least. The branch houses in St Peter, Weiterdingen and Sasbach were funded by the Catholic Church and served for the education and training of future priests, and for confining wayward priests who had been sentenced by canon law.

Figure 3.3: Hospitals and other institutions of the Motherhouse Freiburg up to 1880/1882



Source: Compiled by Angelika Hansert 2018; for full list of place names see Appendix 2.

Figure 3.4: Branch houses of the Motherhouse Freiburg in the Archdiocese of Freiburg, 1883 to 1945



Source: Compiled by Angelika Hansert 2018; for full list of place names see Appendices 2 and 3.

In the case of the hospitals, the state government, hospital boards and town councils were the key players in the foundation process; the priests or sometimes other local authorities were mainly responsible for setting up the branch houses in the villages. Neither the archbishop nor the Order itself were active.

The vast majority of the new houses, some 60%, came into being thanks to the initiative of the parish priest, a mere 7% in response to engagement by the mayor or the community. Two of the fifty-two houses were initiated by members of the Grand ducal family, one by the head officer of the district office, and one each by a doctor and by a lawyer.³²⁵ How crucial the role was the parish priest played in all of that is exemplified by the complications leading to the Freiburg Sisters of Charity being installed at the hospital in the town of Bruchsal. Dean Gugert had reported to the Ordinariate that everything was ready for sisters to come, the city council was most positive, but the local priest, a Fr Welzer, to whom the hospital board had entrusted the matter, deliberately procrastinated. Dean Gugert's request to the Ordinariate to force compliance from Fr Welzer³²⁶ foundered on the Freiburg motherhouse's principle, namely in the words of the Ordinariate that

the Order of the Sisters of Charity made as its irrevocable principle never to force itself on anybody, never to intrude, but to send its members to those places where their activity was explicitly requested.³²⁷

Some priests, such as the new parish priest of Stetten am kalten Markt (Hohenzollern), had sought to win the sisters for many years³²⁸ and he was determined to secure them for his new parish.³²⁹ Other parish priests were so eager to establish a branch house that they financed it themselves, as in the

³²⁵ Initiators of branch houses were the following: mayor/community: Gammertingen, Hilzingen, Höpfingen, Muggensturm; Grand Duchess: Bernau; Prince Wilhelm of Baden: Hagnau; head officer (Oberamtman) of Säckingen: Beuggen; doctor: Eigeltingen; lawyer: Tengen.

³²⁶ Dean Gugert to Ordinariate, 22 Oct. 1855 (EAF, B5/36).

³²⁷ Ordinariate to dean Gugert of Bruchsal, 3 Nov. 1855 (EAF, B5/36).

³²⁸ Balzfeld, Benzingen, Beuggen, Grünsfeld, Mimmenhausen, Unterglöttental.

³²⁹ Parish priest Fr J. Wolter of Stetten am kalten Markt to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 29 Aug. 1898 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten am kalten Markt, Schwesternhaus).

cases of Bollschweil,³³⁰ Empfingen, Veringenstadt,³³¹ the parish priest of Owingen even declaring that 'the whole institution is solely my private matter.'³³² By contrast, in Hohenzollern, which belonged to the state of Württemberg, the district offices played the main role in establishing branch houses in rural areas, suggesting looser state control than in the neighbouring state of Baden.³³³

What then prompted these initiators of a branch house to choose the Freiburg sisters of charity? The question is of relevance in that by the 1880s several other congregations were already well established in Baden. In some cases the Vincentian sisters replaced those sisters, whether by the decision of their own motherhouse to withdraw its staff (Schönwald)³³⁴ or they were simply dismissed in favour of the Freiburg sisters (Hilzingen³³⁵ and Riegel³³⁶). Dr Gassert of Eigeltingen's choice was determined by the respect he had won for their all-round-skills during his time at the *Klinik* of Freiburg.³³⁷ Fr Wiese of Nussbach described the Vincentian sisters, whom he had long wished to attract if the parish could afford them, as the 'real Sisters of Charity'.³³⁸ He had got rid of their predecessors on the grounds that they lacked the necessary training and, more seriously in his eyes, the necessary authority: 'The farmers recognised very

³³⁰ Fr J. Huber of Bollschweil to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 26 Apr. 1910 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten bei Engen, Schwesternhaus).

³³¹ Parish priest Fr G. Kniger of Veringenstadt to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 28 Feb. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Empfingen, Schwesternhaus).

³³² Parish priest Fr Franz Xaver Hecht to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 23 Nov. 1903. Fr Hecht 'had to fight against major difficulties' in his parish, 13 May 1903 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Owingen, Schwesternhaus).

³³³ Hermann Tüchle, *Die Barmherzigen Schwestern von Untermarchtal* (Ostfildern, 1983), p. 55f.

³³⁴ Parish priest Fr O. Schäffner to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 23 Aug. 1902 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Schönwald, Schwesternhaus).

³³⁵ Parish priest Fr Sprich to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 4 Jan. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hilzingen, Schwesternhaus).

³³⁶ Parish priest Fr Bläss to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 7 Feb. 1902 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Riegel, Schwesternhaus): The Sisters of Mallersdorf 'pay attention to things which do not concern them, and they neglect the nursing.'

³³⁷ Dr Gassert to Fr Superior Karl Mayer (name not mentioned), 10 Dec. 1889 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Eigeltingen, Schwesternhaus).

³³⁸ Fr Wiese was not alone in his belief that the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg were related to the Parisian *Filles de la Charité* of the Rue du Bac. However, he could have also meant that the Sisters of Charity from the Motherhouse Freiburg represented the original Vincentian institute much better than the sisters from other congregations.

quickly that they only had common peasant girls in a habit in front of them.³³⁹ The people of Höpfingen favoured the Freiburg sisters because many young women from the parish had already joined the Order.³⁴⁰ Fr Faulhaber of Distelhausen was not above a little moral blackmail in his attempt to get sisters for his parish immediately by saying he would get another congregation. However, the Motherhouse Freiburg refused to be blackmailed, and Fr Faulhaber was made to wait.³⁴¹

By contrast with the general Catholic public, the 'White' Sisters of Freiburg had been a familiar sight as early as the 1850s to theology students and candidates for the priesthood, simply because the sisters staffed the episcopal and clerical training institutions in Freiburg and Sasbach (mid-Black Forest) and the seminary in St Peter (Black Forest).³⁴² The priests were therefore better acquainted with them than with other congregations, unless they were familiar with the latter in their home parishes or members of their families had joined them.

How could small and often poor villages afford to finance a branch house, which included funding the motherhouse dues and the general upkeep of the sisters? The fortunate ones could count on donations, legacies or endowments of priests, sisters or lay people.³⁴³ However, more usually an association, consisting of as many women or families of the parish as possible, was set up, known variously as the St Elisabeth, St Vincent or St Joseph or simply medical

³³⁹ Parish priest Fr Franz Wiesse to Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 28 Feb. 1883 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Nußbach, St. Josefshaus).

³⁴⁰ Mayor Kaiser of Höpfingen to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 28 Oct. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Höpfingen, Schwesternhaus). The mayor was well acquainted with the right procedure, as he wrote directly to the mother general, something only insiders did. Parish priest Fritz had asked for sisters c. fifteen years earlier, but was told that he had to wait for some years.

³⁴¹ Parish priest Fr C. Faulhaber to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 25 June 1905 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Distelhausen, Schwesternhaus). He also named two sisters who originated from Distelhausen, and that they and sisters from the neighbouring branch houses of Tauberbischofsheim and Lauda, would want to get sisters of their own motherhouse for the parish.

³⁴² After the *Kulturkampf* other training institutions were founded in Constance (Lake Constance), Rastatt and Tauberbischofsheim (north-east Baden).

³⁴³ For example: in Balzfeld relations of sisters, who originated from there, had donated money, such as the siblings of the late Sister Perpetua Blum, see notary Schilling of Wiesloch to motherhouse, 29 Mar. 1900, and a building site, such as from the brother of Sister Alexia: Parish priest Fr G. Meisel to Sister Alexia, 1 July 1901 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Balzfeld, Schwesternhaus).

aid association.³⁴⁴ Every party contributed a small amount of money per year, and every member had the right to be nursed by a sister if they fell ill. The poor usually got the treatment free.³⁴⁵ In some cases the costs of the branch house were divided between the political community and the parish, or the community met the shortfall.³⁴⁶

Often 'desolate' circumstances led to the Sisters of Charity being called to establish branch houses in rural parishes, where 'desolate' might apply to nursing or to moral behaviour. In Sasbachwalden (Black Forest), responses to their coming included 'the joyful sense of sacrifice of the people had shown how much an orderly nursing of the sick was desired'.³⁴⁷ In Pfullendorf (south-east Baden) their arrival was an 'exceptional benefit which was often used and acknowledged',³⁴⁸ while in Trochtelfingen (Hohenzollern) the St Vincent association had 'hope for a great good'.³⁴⁹ In Trillfingen (Hohenzollern) the 'adult youth' was sometimes too full of *joie de vivre*,³⁵⁰ while the parish priest of Owingen (Lake Constance), a Fr Fecht, bemoaned the fact that the girls frequented public houses and saw the sisters as helping to enhance the local moral environment.³⁵¹ His successor Fr Riegger wanted something to keep youths away from public houses and off the street, petitioning Mother General

³⁴⁴ For St Elisabeth associations see Magdalena Lüttgen, *Die Elisabethvereine. Frauen im Dienst am Nächsten seit dem Jahre 1840, insbesondere im Rheinland und Westfalen* (Siegburg, 2003).

³⁴⁵ Fr W. Epp to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 27 Jan. 1902 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Tauberbischofsheim, Krankenhaus).

³⁴⁶ Fr Fridolin Sprich to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 22 May 1896 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hilzingen, Schwesternhaus). Also Fr Haiss of Feldhausen to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 27 June 1910 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Feldhausen, Schwesternhaus), where the community was willing to pay all costs as long as the prospect of Stifterin was still alive. Fr Heinrich Huthmacher of Gruol to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 13 Dez. 1901 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gruol, Schwesternhaus): the community paid motherhouse dues, St Elisabeth association the rest.

³⁴⁷ Report of the St Vincent association for 1886, 6 Jan. 1887 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sasbachwalden, Schwesternhaus).

³⁴⁸ Town council of Pfullendorf to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 28 Sept. 1902 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Pfullendorf, Krankenhaus). On this occasion, a second sister had been requested for nursing the sick at home.

³⁴⁹ Fr Joh. Güntner to Mother General Sister Alban Jörger, 22 Mar. 1897 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Trochtelfingen, Schwesternhaus).

³⁵⁰ Fr Anton Hofer to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 1 Aug. 1911 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Trillfingen, Schwesternhaus).

³⁵¹ Fr H. Fecht to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 13 July 1908 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Owingen, Schwesternhaus).

Sister Ferdinand Feederle to replace the sister in charge of the children and young girls, as being unable to deal with her charges effectively.³⁵²

Even more important for the parish priests in choosing the Sisters of Charity for their parish were the expected spiritual benefits. According to Fr Beuschlein in Stetten bei Engen (south Baden), the 'good example of the sisters was a major spiritual benefit for every parish'.³⁵³ Fr W. of Stetten am kalten Markt (Hohenzollern) expected 'many blessings and great good of such a pastoral cooperation'.³⁵⁴ In Nussbach the parish priest frankly 'hopes for help and support in his ministry'.³⁵⁵ In his thesis of 2014 Christian Schröder suggests from his analysis of the negotiations of 1856 to obtain the Sisters of Charity from Freiburg for the hospital in Bonndorf (Black Forest) that the parish priests involved were looking to the sisters to provide active spiritual support to their colleague Dean Fr Emil Schuler. Schröder sees this as part of a new departure in German Catholic pastoral life, namely, a move away from the priest-centred pastoral care characteristic of the Catholic Enlightenment to a new pastoral concept, no longer exclusively the charge of the parish priest.³⁵⁶

The first Order-owned branch houses

Responsibility for the majority of the new branch houses lay not with the Motherhouse Freiburg, but rather with a board formed by local people or institutions. During Sister Alban's years as mother general, the Order began to found its own houses. Did this expansion of female congregations in Baden, as the church historian Barbara Henze mooted, conform to a set pattern?³⁵⁷ Why was there such chronological and regional diversity between the various

³⁵² Fr J. Riegger to Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle, 3 Feb. 1921 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Owingen, Schwesternhaus).

³⁵³ Fr Beuschlein to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 9 Aug. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten bei Engen, Schwesternhaus).

³⁵⁴ Fr W. to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 29 Aug. 1898 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten am kalten Markt, Schwesternhaus).

³⁵⁵ Fr Wiesse to Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 28 Feb. 1883 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Nußbach, Schwesternhaus).

³⁵⁶ Christian Schröder, *Armenfürsorge und katholische Identität*, p. 166.

³⁵⁷ Barbara Henze, 'Die übrigen Orden', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918*, p. 331–387, here at p. 368.

congregations in the Archdiocese of Freiburg?³⁵⁸ Henze included in her study all female congregations in Baden with the exception of the Freiburg Sisters of Charity, which as the oldest and for decades the only official female congregation in south-west Germany was already an integral part of the religious landscape.³⁵⁹

Four of the seven Order-owned branch houses of the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg will be analysed in this last section. All were founded or built between 1886 and the death of Mother General Jörger in 1898, each of them unique in the context of Henze's findings. The questions to be asked relate to whether the Order itself chose the locations in Baden where it wanted to establish a branch house of its own and the fields of activity planned. What were the founding criteria and what role did the state, the church, the archbishop, the clergy, and other religious communities play?

Oberkirch, Orphanage (*Waisenhaus*), 1888

In 1888, the Order purchased an orphanage for illegitimate and neglected children in the Black Forest village of Oberkirch, owned and run by four women who lived together as Third Order Franciscans. Their community had never consisted of more than five members and had never succeeded in gaining corporate status from the state. Accordingly, when the community got into financial difficulties and was prevented from inheriting a legacy from their fifth member on her death in 1886, a combination of debt and lack of new entrants forced the sisters to turn for help to the Ordinariate in Freiburg. Two other female congregations were already established in Baden, neither of which had corporation rights and could not therefore own property.³⁶⁰ The Order was asked by the Ordinariate to take over both the orphanage and the remaining Franciscan sisters. Although they had long run orphanages, this was the first building to be owned by Freiburg outside its motherhouse complex. It set a pattern of

³⁵⁸ Barbara Henze, 'Die übrigen Orden', p. 368.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 332.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 341f. Hans-Martin Pillin, *Oberkirch. Die Geschichte der Stadt in großherzoglich-badischer Zeit 1803–1918* (Oberkirch, 1978), pp. 224–226.

purchasing and building houses by the Order, a step not taken by any other female congregation in Baden on this scale.³⁶¹ Such a step brought greater responsibilities and financial burdens, and the institution itself could not be given up as easily as a branch house of the Order. In time, however, once vocations began to decline as they did from the 1960s onwards, this vast array of buildings would prove to be something of a millstone for the Order.

Heidelberg, St Joseph Hospital (*St. Josefskrankenhaus*), 1889/90

Sectarian issues were at play in the case of St Joseph's, located in Baden's renowned university city in the north-west of the archdiocese of Freiburg. As the only Catholic hospital its predecessor was regarded as something of a Catholic bastion in the Protestant Heidelberg landscape. Indeed, during the 'culture war' in Baden, the sisters were warned not to give the city council, on whose initiative the Order had been invited to take over the hospital, any reason to discharge them. However, in 1876 under the terms of the *Kulturkampf* law of 1874, first the local Roman Catholic parish church and one year later the adjoining hospital of St Anna were forcibly handed over to the so-called 'Old Catholics' (*Altkatholiken*) after their separation from the Roman Catholics following the First Vatican Council of 1870.³⁶² Catholics throughout the west of Heidelberg were now left without a parish church; the private Catholic hospital of Professor Franz von Chelius³⁶³ was left without accommodation.³⁶⁴ This in its turn brought about the creation of a new hospital, but one in which the former type involving care for the

³⁶¹ Hegne had very few branch houses in its ownership.

³⁶² The term 'Old Catholics' (*Altkatholiken*), (more aptly 'New Protestants'), was used by groups which had separated from the Roman Catholic Church over certain doctrines in the aftermath of the First Vatican Council of 1870; see their history in the Archdiocese Freiburg and where they were to be found: Heribert Smolinsky, 'Synoden □ Antizölibatsbewegung □ Deutsch-katholizismus □ Das Erste Vatikanische Konzil und der Altkatholizismus', in Smolinsky (ed.) *Geschichte des Erzbistums Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), pp 211□34, here at p. 229.

³⁶³ Franz Carl von Chelius (1821□1899), who founded the private Catholic hospital in 1864 and retired in 1896, was a renowned surgeon and associate professor at the university of Heidelberg, see Friedrich von Weech (ed.), *Badische Biographien*, vol. v: 1891□1901 (Heidelberg, 1906), p. 98f.

³⁶⁴ Report of Sister Sidonia Stroppel, c. 1930/31 (MHA Freiburg, Heidelberg, St. Josefskrankenhaus). The poor, long-term residents stayed in the old hospital.

old, the poor, the sick and for orphans was split up, each part going its separate way.

To start with, a house was rented to serve as a substitute church and the adjacent rooms used as a hospital. Twelve years on, the situation of the hospital was dire. The lease was shortly due to expire, the garden too small, There was a public house in the vicinity and the noisy new horse-drawn tram passed in front of the house. More seriously, the available space prevented the hospital from engaging with developments in modern surgery. As there was no other suitable building to rent, the only solution for the Order was to build.³⁶⁵ Opposition arose in Heidelberg to its plans from the Protestant citizenry, more especially from the rich property owners in whose midst the new Catholic hospital was about to be erected. These prominent citizens gave vent to their anger that a (Roman Catholic) religious order had succeeded in taking root in Protestant Heidelberg.³⁶⁶ To strengthen the Catholic position in a Protestant environment was part of the thinking behind the new building, and also the fact that the former private hospital had proved to be a goldmine. The sisters had been able to put by sufficient funds in ten years of its existence to pay for the site for the new building in cash.³⁶⁷ Probably this was why the enterprising Mother General Sister Alban Jörger was able to convince a reluctant Fr Superior Karl Mayer to go along with her plans.³⁶⁸ It would not be correct to suggest that Sister Alban was more interested in the financial rather than the religious aspect of that project. The Motherhouse Freiburg depended on such profitable houses in order to keep the poorer branch houses going. Sister Alban displayed her remarkable tenacity by winning Fr Superior Mayer over. As seen earlier in this chapter, his position in

³⁶⁵ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to the Ministry of Justice, Culture and Education, 3 Dec. 1887 (MHA Freiburg, St. Josefskrankenhaus). Karl Mayer was Fr Superior of the Order 1885–1922.

³⁶⁶ Sister Sidonia Stoppel to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 8 Dec. 1888 (MHA Freiburg, St. Josefskrankenhaus). Report Sister Sidonia, c. 1930/31 (MHA Freiburg, St. Josefskrankenhaus).

³⁶⁷ *Verzeichnis aller Filiale*, a handwritten chronicle of the branch houses, started in 1886, p. 89f. (MHA Freiburg).

³⁶⁸ Engelbert Krebs, *Ordensgeschichte*, part 4: Entfaltung, p. 49. Unpublished typed manuscript, c. 1944 (MHA Freiburg). It is not clear from where Professor Krebs had the information, as there are no footnotes to the text. The St. Josefskrankenhaus became one of the most popular hospitals in Heidelberg, see Krebs, *Ordensgeschichte*, part 4, p. 50.

the new constitutions was even weaker than previously. According to the Order's constitutions, his consent was actually not necessary. Civil law, however, prohibited a woman from signing a contract involving large sums.³⁶⁹

Heitersheim, Bethany of the Good Shepherd (*Bethania zum Guten Hirten*), 1893

Prior to Bethania's foundation no such institution had existed anywhere in Baden for female Catholic delinquents.³⁷⁰ 'Wayward' or otherwise vulnerable girls were generally sent to houses of the Good Shepherd Sisters of Angers in Strasbourg or Mulhouse in Alsace, or to Altstätten in Switzerland, close to St Gallen on the south-eastern border of Lake Constance.³⁷¹ This enterprise, a new venture for the Motherhouse Freiburg, was initiated by donations to the Order for this purpose from lay people and clergy.³⁷² In his letter of 4 February 1893 to the Ordinariate of Freiburg, Fr Superior Karl Mayer remarked on the growing immorality among the youth in the last years. Young girls from the countryside, twenty years of age and even younger, were coming into town and ending up, whether by bad example or by poverty, as prostitutes in public establishments. The Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul met them in the university hospital (*Klinik*) of Freiburg, and tried to get them jobs afterwards or to place them in Good Shepherd institutions abroad but these were now overcrowded. Fr Mayer himself was also urged by several parties to do something, and he and the Order had decided to set up a fund of 3000 Reichsmark. As soon as there was

³⁶⁹ Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918, Band 1: Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (3rd ed., Munich, 1993), p. 74.

³⁷⁰ Alfred Kall, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland: eine Untersuchung zur Gründung katholischer Frauenvereine im 19. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn, 1983), p. 221, citing Heinrich Auer, *Geschichte des katholischen Fürsorgevereins für Mädchen, Frauen und Kinder, Ortsgruppe Freiburg/Br., 1899–1925* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1925), p. 1.

³⁷¹ It was after the First World War, in 1922, that the Sisters of the Good Shepherd of Angers took over their first reformatory in Baden, the *Maria-Viktoria-Stift* in Rastatt, see Patricia Reister, 'Die weitere Entwicklung der Heime bis 1975', in Stadt Rastatt (ed.), *Verwahrlost und gefährdet? Heimerziehung im Landkreis und der Stadt Rastatt* (Idar-Oberstein, 2017), pp 15–32, here at p. 23.

³⁷² Dr Rückert to Mother General Sister Alban Jörger, 8 Nov. 1888 (MHA Freiburg, Heitersheim, Bethania). A woman and a priest each donated 500 Mark for that purpose (a Good-Shepherd-home).

sufficient money, they would buy a house and set up an institution for those girls.³⁷³

In addition to their concern and the support of the Catholic laity, the project was given greater urgency when it was learned that the Protestants were planning to set up an ecumenical association for that very purpose: less than four weeks after Superior Mayer's letter, a house was purchased in Heitersheim, twenty kilometres south-west of Freiburg.³⁷⁴ Six months later the Order found itself compelled to acquire the rest of the estate to prevent a factory from being opened in the neighbourhood.³⁷⁵

The original model had the following characteristics. Inmates who came voluntarily were put into three categories: the magdalens, the penitents and the pupils. These often very large establishments³⁷⁶ were generally to be found in urban centres or in industrialised zones. Other characteristics were the significance of work and the strict discipline which were embedded in a daily routine of religious exercises. It is inappropriate to accuse the congregation of exploiting cheap labour,³⁷⁷ given the amount of heavy labour demanded of children and youths in their own homes at the time, and the early age at which youths were deemed to be workers.

³⁷³ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 4 Feb. 1893 (MHA Freiburg, Heitersheim, Bethania). The institute was never intended to house pregnant girls. These were sent to the institutes of the Good Shepherd sisters, of which three existed in Alsace (Strasbourg, Mulhouse, Altstätten), but none in Baden. Mayer mentioned that he was questioned why the Good Shepherd sisters had no branch house in Baden. He replied that the question was asked out of good reasons, but he gave no other explanation.

³⁷⁴ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, letter from 28 February 1893 (EAF, B6/83). The building was part of a castle, which was the main domicile of the German province of the Knights Hospitallers, or Knights of Malta, the so called former *Comthurei* (MHA Freiburg, Heitersheim, Bethania).

³⁷⁵ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 26 Sept. 1893 (EAF, B6/83).

³⁷⁶ The institute in Strasbourg counted in the decade before 1914 350 inmates, see *Jahrhundertfeier □ 1837□1937: Zur Jahrhundertfeier der Gründung des ‚Guten Hirten‘ von Strassburg* (Strasbourg, 1937), p. 25.

³⁷⁷ Angelika Schwall-Düren, *Kinder- und Jugendfürsorge im Großherzogtum Baden in der Epoche der Industrialisierung. Entwicklung und Zielsetzung der staatlichen, kommunalen und verbandlichen Fürsorge 1850□1914* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1980), p. 298.

The highly structured daily routine in a Good Shepherd institution like High Park in Dublin was intricately interwoven with the convent, where the inmates had to follow the enclosed convent lifestyle.³⁷⁸ That was also the case for Bethania where strict silence was imposed for most of the day.³⁷⁹ The significant difference between the 'original' and Bethania was that there were no pupils in Heitersheim, only the 'penitents' to be reformed and the 'magdalens' who chose to stay there for life.

Planned at first to accommodate twenty to twenty-five girls, by the end of the first year the new institution counted fifty-seven inmates aged between sixteen to twenty years.³⁸⁰ The girls were sent by associations, by the courts or by private individuals.³⁸¹ Four years later, there were as many as 100 young women in Bethania.³⁸² In 1895, Bethania was granted the right to receive girls sent by the state under the terms of the law on compulsory education which allowed the state to take girls who were seen as being 'morally endangered' away from their families.³⁸³ At Bethania, they lived according to a highly structured schedule, where religious education, prayers and Mass alternated with work on the estate.³⁸⁴ These were early days. In decades to come, considerable changes would be made. This institute of the Good Shepherd constituted a novel field of activity for the Motherhouse Freiburg. Having no former experience in this field, the Order had to invest heavily in the material equipment of Bethania, but more especially in the quality of the sisters who would form its staff. Being the first institution of its kind in all of Baden, this added to the pressure under which the

³⁷⁸ Jacinta Prunty, *The monasteries, magdalen asylums and reformatory schools of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland, 1853–1973* (Dublin, 2017) p. 129.

³⁷⁹ [Karl Mayer], *Das Schwesternhaus Bethania 'zum guten Hirten' in Heitersheim am Jahrestag seiner Einweihung den 4. November 1894* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1894), p. 6 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

³⁸⁰ The age limit was soon afterwards lowered to fourteen years.

³⁸¹ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, report from 31 Dec. 1894 (EAF, B6/83).

³⁸² Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, addendum to report, 10 Jan. 1898 (EAF, B6/83).

³⁸³ Ministry of the Interior, decree from 17 Sept. 1895 according to § 23, Absatz 1 and § 40 of the Compulsory Education Law of 27 Nov. 1886 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). First it only applied to 16-year olds and older, a few months later also to the 14–16-year old girls. The right to the Compulsory Education law meant not only that the state paid for those inmates, but also that it could be visited any time by the government and its civil servants.

³⁸⁴ First report of the Society of the Good Shepherd, Ash Wednesday (3 Mar.) 1897 (MHA Freiburg, Heitersheim, Bethania).

Order now operated. Bethania was a showcase, and the Motherhouse could rightly be proud of it, but it was also a constant financial burden. Getting the state on board under the terms of the compulsory education law was financially wise, but by granting the right of that law to Bethania, the state had for its part acquired the right to conduct a visitation of the institution at any time. Being so exposed to the public, it had to be kept rigorously up-to-date in every respect. For an order little experienced in the educational sector this was a constant challenge. In time and under very different political circumstances, collaboration with the state was to prove something of a poisoned chalice (as discussed in chapter 8 of this thesis).

Karlsruhe, St Francis (*St. Franziskushaus*), 1895

After two earlier ventures³⁸⁵ in 1895, the Motherhouse Freiburg continued to be without a branch house in Karlsruhe, the capital of Baden, although other female congregations had been there for decades. This had evidently been exercising Fr Superior Karl Mayer for some time, since the Order was 'Baden's oldest congregation and its very own'.³⁸⁶ In autumn 1894 therefore with encouragement from various sides he even went there to 'scout'. The western part of Karlsruhe had expanded into a sprawling new urban district with 6,000 inhabitants, amongst them 2,000–2,500 Catholics. There was no Catholic church in the locality, where mainly factory workers lived, and allegedly much indifference to everything Catholic. The 'faithful' even went to Protestant services, so as to be able to say they had 'been to church'. The sermons there were said to be as 'good' as those in the Catholic churches.³⁸⁷ Katharina Willmann, a laywoman, had set up a kindergarten and a sewing school in her own home on the outskirts of Karlsruhe and had taken in some boarders. She had been able to get two sisters from the Franciscan motherhouse in

³⁸⁵ In the St. Vinzentiushaus 1853–1857 and in the Bürgerspital (Civil Hospital) 1858–1872.

³⁸⁶ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to parish priest Fr Isemann of Karlsruhe-Mühlburg, undated, but answer to Fr Isemann's letter of 31 Jan. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus).

³⁸⁷ Katharina Willmann to Ordinariate, 14 Apr. 1893 (EAF, B6/99).

Gengenbach as helpers, but she ran out of funds to keep the work up. Miss Willmann wished to donate her heavily-mortgaged house to a congregation or to an order, offering it initially to the Motherhouse of Gengenbach, but they could not come to an agreement. At this point, the Duchess of Andlaw intervened to inform the Order about the problem.³⁸⁸ Mere days later, the council of sisters of the Motherhouse Freiburg readily consented to take the opportunity to gain a foothold in Karlsruhe and opened up negotiations.³⁸⁹ By 16 April 1895 the Vincentian sisters had taken over, though not without eliciting a degree of bitterness on the part of the Gengenbach motherhouse, which (no doubt understandably) felt undermined.³⁹⁰ The new project advanced with the purchase of two neighbouring houses in the eighteen months after the acquisition of the first one, at quite considerable cost. By the summer of 1898 the conversion of the three houses was complete. In addition to the kindergarten and the sewing school, St Francis House (*St. Franziskushaus*)³⁹¹ now served as a centre for the female domestic servants. Sick and retired housemaids could lodge there, the servant women's association under the aegis of the sisters and the chaplain offered a wide range of activities, including religious and practical education, a penny bank and an employment agency and, eventually, a home economics school for girls. The chaplain of the house initiated a men's association and a

³⁸⁸ Duchess of Andlaw to Mother General Sister Alban Jörger, 13 Feb. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus). It is not possible to establish the first name of the duchess, as there were several lines of that family with different additions to the family name.

³⁸⁹ Meeting of 17 Feb. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Minutes of sisters' council).

³⁹⁰ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Fr Superior Wilhelm Berger, Gengenbach, 16, 21, 23, 28, 29 Mar. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus). Superior Mayer even sent a sister from Freiburg to the motherhouse in Gengenbach to explain the situation tactfully in person and to reach an agreement, see Fr Superior Mayer to Fr Superior Berger, 25 Mar. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus). Gengenbach consented but insisted on getting the outstanding motherhouse dues for the time the Franciscan sisters were there: Fr Superior Berger to Fr Superior Mayer, 21 and 28 Mar. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus).

³⁹¹ The Motherhouse Freiburg kept the name that the foundress Katharina Willmann gave the institution. To add to the confusion that there were no Franciscan sisters in St Francis, St Vincent in Karlsruhe had members of the Order of Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg, only from 1853–1858, after that another female congregation took over.

church building association.³⁹² St Francis was now the hub of all Catholic life in that part of the city, and became the cradle of the new parish of St Boniface.

The hostel for maidservants or the founding of a home economics school in 1895 were not entirely new ventures for the Order, it had already invested in them in other places. However, just as in the case of St Francis, problems soon became evident: donations proved mostly to be something of a double-edged sword,³⁹³ requiring further investments. Furthermore, as the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul expanded alongside other congregations in Baden, tensions emerged. In the case of St Francis, the Motherhouse Freiburg tried to tread as carefully as possible, but a sense of grievance at having been ousted by a richer order continued to fester in the Franciscan motherhouse in Gengenbach.³⁹⁴ Meanwhile, establishing a care centre for the maidservants on the outskirts of Karlsruhe the Order met a genuine and highly topical need. Before the arrival of the Vincentian sisters, there were no available services for that sector of the populace in the western part of the capital. Finally, by offering a lively religious and social centre for the Catholic life of the borough, St Francis facilitated the creation of a new parish. This model was replicated over time by the Order in other towns in Baden. The order, though seeking some form of engagement in Karlsruhe at the time, had been planning a hospital rather than an actual parish.

Was there then a set pattern or particular design behind the establishment of these four houses? There is no evidence of this. All four were evenly distributed across the state from north to south; there was no apparent preference for a particular region. As they were all built in the same period and none before 1886, the period of office of the second mother general, Sister Alban Jörger, was clearly the critical factor.

³⁹² Vicar Fr Hummel to unnamed recipient, 10 June 1896, Isemann senior to Fr Superior Mayer, 24 July 1897 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus).

³⁹³ St Francis came not only with a high mortgage but a string of heirs had to be paid off as well; list of payments between 18 Nov. 1895 and 1 Mar. 1896 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus).

³⁹⁴ See above and footnote 151.

Oberkirch, Heidelberg and Karlsruhe came about by chance, not as initiatives on the part of the Order, but were offered to the motherhouse by the Ordinariate and/or by lay people, and the Order responded positively. In the case of Heitersheim since no specific party was mentioned, it appears probable that the Order was directly involved, at least in the choice of location. Nor did the state have any role in these foundations. It was the Order and not the state which responded to the challenge presented as part of the 'social question' in founding Bethania, the first institution of its kind in Baden.

Conclusion

A principal impulse behind the expansion of the Order in the last third of the nineteenth century was its evident consciousness of a need for greater 'visibility' in the Catholic community. As long as the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg remained confined to their institutions – principally the self-contained world of the hospital with its residents and chapel – they could not compete with other congregations coming to Baden from outside and working in the local country parishes.

When the main limitations for a higher visibility were removed, Mother General Sister Alban Jörger became very proactive by restlessly founding new branch houses, entraining the father superior with her; she was not even held back by an internal opposition of her fellow sisters. According to the archival material, future mother generals will only very occasionally display such agency.

In the early 1880s the Order's superiors responded to declining numbers by petitioning to have the 1845 constitutions changed, receiving full and effective support from the Ordinariate. The same happened twenty years later in 1907, when new Roman decrees threatened the position of the Motherhouse Freiburg. Unlike Strasbourg, Freiburg managed to circumvent or delay implementation; while the Order as a general rule viewed the Vatican as guarantor of its legal position, when it came to conforming to Rome's demands Freiburg was capable of successful resistance. Meanwhile, the founding of small branch houses across

the rural Catholic heartland resulted in a rapid growth in candidate numbers. These houses made the Order better known in the populace, not least through the support given by the sisters to the parish priests in their ministry; this was particularly effective in the pastoral care of women and children. In the towns the hospitals experienced a different kind of growth, to which the special care philosophy of the sisters was key.

Chapter 4

Nursing as the main task of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg

When Sister Venantia Bogner of Waldkirch hospital (15 km north-east of Freiburg) died at 66 years on 14 October 1917, the local newspaper published an obituary in which she was portrayed as the Sister of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg *par excellence*. Thus, the public was presented with the core activity of the sisters, the nursing of the sick poor, and the philosophy which underpinned this:

We lived up to now in a time of unruliness, of hedonism and of addiction to pleasure; the people chased amusements, fun, entertainment and revelry, but the pampered generation shied away from sacrifices and renunciation. However, the Sister of Charity chooses voluntarily a life of abnegation, of sacrifice, of humility and of obedience ... She hurries to the huts of the poor and hard-pressed, hastens to the pallet of the sick and the dying, ready to bring aid, comfort and relief everywhere; she sacrifices rest and sleep, she spends whole nights waking, aware of every hint ... to fulfil even the slightest wish of the patient. Like a burning candle which glows and illuminates by self-consummation, a Sister of Charity sacrifices her life in the same way, and consummates herself in the service of the purest love of God and neighbour.³⁹⁵

Nursing of the sick poor formed the fundamental task of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of the Motherhouse Freiburg from the very beginning, a task which they carried from their founding Motherhouse of Strasbourg. In taking the name of the 'apostle of charity' St Vincent de Paul (1581–1660), their nursing philosophy went back to the man himself and his distinctive spirituality. This was grounded in the gospels, especially in Matthew 25:40 'whatever you did for one

³⁹⁵ In the translation, 'Sister of Charity' was put in capital letters to mark the fact that the author of the newspaper article had a particular sister in mind, who represented as *pars pro toto* the whole Order of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg, see *Waldkircher Volkszeitung*, Obituary on the occasion of the burial of Sister Venantia Bogner, 18 Oct. 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Waldkirch, St. Nikolai-Spital). Sister Venantia (1850–1917) was clothed in 1867, and made her first profession in 1869. Being only 16½ years of age at her clothing, she was the youngest Sister of Charity ever to receive the habit for Freiburg.

of these least brothers of mine, you did for me', and in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37.

§ 2 of the statutes of 1845 of the Sisters of Charity of Baden stated that 'the fundamental purpose of the Order of the Sisters of Charity in Baden was the nursing of both sexes of the sick in the hospitals.'³⁹⁶ Its model was the founding Motherhouse of Strasbourg, which Erwin Gatz called 'the archetype of a diocesan female congregation'. It founded several German motherhouses in different parts of the country, whose main task was hospital care.³⁹⁷ The example given by this type of nursing sister was judged by contemporaries as so successful that it also became the model of non-Catholic nursing associations in Germany and abroad, of the Protestant Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth³⁹⁸ and of the lay organisation of the German Red-Cross-sisters. The latter was created primarily to deliver nursing services to the military in times of war.³⁹⁹

The years of the reigns of the three German Emperors, especially of Wilhelm II (1890-1918), marked the transition between a slow-moving world and one at a fast pace, between tradition and progress.⁴⁰⁰ This change became apparent when state and church authorities started to exert their power in the Order's own domain of nursing. In 1907, two laws came into force, one from the Prussian government concerning a state nursing exam, and the other from the Vatican about rural branch houses.

³⁹⁶ Michael Sintzel, *Geschichte der Entstehung, Verbreitung und Wirksamkeit des Ordens der barmherzigen Schwestern*, (Regensburg, 1847), p. 362.

³⁹⁷ Erwin Gatz, 'Von der Beilegung der Kulturkämpfe bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg', in Erwin Gatz (ed.), *Klöster und Ordensgemeinschaften* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006), pp 255-89, here at p. 256. Relinde Meiwes confirms that statement for Prussia: Only the motherhouses of the Vincentian sisters provided residential care as their main task: Relinde Meiwes, *'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn': katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), p. 162.

³⁹⁸ Silke Köser, *Denn eine Diakonisse darf kein Alltagsmensch sein: kollektive Identitäten Kaiserswerther Diakonissen, 1836-1914* (Leipzig, 2006), p. 89 (Fliedner informed himself about the sisters of charity by reading Droste zu Vischering's book), p. 99 (the address „sister“, the motherhouse-system), p. 102 (*Gestellungsverträge*, provision contracts).

³⁹⁹ Gatz, 'Von der Beilegung', p. 162.

⁴⁰⁰ Katharine A. Lerman, 'Wilhelmine Germany', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German history since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 199-226.

In this chapter, the nature of the nursing of the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg will be examined. It starts with the Vincentian nursing philosophy, followed by the conditions governing admission to the profession, nurse training, working conditions and management, up to 1918. The nursing of the sick at home is at the centre of the last section with a close examination of the Roman law of 1907 and its prohibition of all small convents. The chapter will end with the reaction of the Motherhouse Freiburg to that legislation. The main argument of this chapter is that the Order played a major role in meeting all the requirements and expectations that church and state, hospital boards, doctors and parish organisations imposed. How did it defend its core field of action?

The nursing philosophy of the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouses of Strasbourg and Freiburg: a holistic understanding of nursing

Just twenty years after its establishment in 1734, the new Superior general of the *Sœurs de la Charité de Strasbourg*, Abbé Antoine Jeanjean, tried refounding the congregation by appealing directly to the teaching of St Vincent de Paul.⁴⁰¹ He told them in a sermon of 1755:

The lowest, hardest, most contemptuous, grubbiest, most disgusting, often even most dangerous services are her [the sister of charity's] daily exercise. And how often does she have to postpone the prayer, the contemplation and meditation! Why? To do the most obnoxious services in smell and debris, abhorrent to nature. No, this is no place for egotism. What is the most perfect way to serve God? ...she should only call herself handmaid of the sick poor.⁴⁰²

Two years later, Father Jeanjean affirmed that a sister should see Christ in the person of the sick: 'All her works have to be totally plain, mortifying, even disdainful and little... she has to do everything with such an assiduity as if she served the Child Jesus himself directly.'⁴⁰³ In addition, the sister of charity should care for the sick poor by complete self-renunciation. She and her body were in the hands of God as His instruments, her whole trust resting in God alone:

⁴⁰¹ Emil Clemens Scherer, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von Strassburg*, (Kevelaer, 1930), p. 49.

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 51 cites a sermon of the Superior General Abbé Antoine Jeanjean held in 1755.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 53 cites a sermon of the Superior General Abbé Antoine Jeanjean held in 1757.

Dear sisters, be carefree, do your duty, God will provide! And should the work be piled up in such a way, that your health threatens to get damaged, should the sick and poor whom you serve be attacked by infectious illnesses, so that their care seems to imply death for sure, dear sisters, do not fear, do your duty, God will help!⁴⁰⁴

Two main features of Vincentian spirituality were mentioned in these sermons: The care of the sick poor was turned into a service to God, of such importance that prayer and Mass had to be left whenever necessary for tending to the needs of the poor; and secondly, everything had to be entrusted to God's providence.⁴⁰⁵ To be able to respond in such a way, the sisters had to seek to perfect themselves day by day. Hans-Peter Schaper calls the nursing of the sisters of charity a religious addendum to their sanctification.⁴⁰⁶ For them, the spiritual treatment of the poor patients in the hospitals was more important than the physical one, with the spiritual nursing at the same time being a kind of therapy.⁴⁰⁷ In 1844, Franz Joseph Buss, writing as J. Eremites, stated that sins were reasons for sickness and misery, only a turning back to God could help. Repentance of sins was a necessary precondition to healing. The sister of charity was to apply nursing care along with religious teaching and mild admonition.⁴⁰⁸ The main goal was to prepare the sick person for a good death and to see to the reception of the last rites and the sacraments.⁴⁰⁹

The Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouses Strasbourg and Freiburg cared for the sick without regard to religion or sex.⁴¹⁰ Only the field of obstetrics was barred to them, but women in childbed were looked after when the mother fell ill.⁴¹¹ In 1916 Fr Superior Mayer of Freiburg reported to the Ordinariate of

⁴⁰⁴ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 54 cites a sermon of the Superior General *Abbé Antoine Jeanjean* held in 1759.

⁴⁰⁵ Pierre Coste, *Saint Vincent de Paul: correspondence, conferences, documents*, (German ed., 1925), xi, 32.

⁴⁰⁶ Hans-Peter Schaper, *Krankenwartung und Krankenpflege: Tendenzen der Verberuflichung in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Opladen, 1987), p. 135.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴⁰⁸ Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 230f, citing Eremites [Franz Joseph Buss].

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*; for the Pietistic-Protestant view of terminal care see Karen Nolte, *Todkrank. Sterbegleitung im 19. Jahrhundert: Medizin, Krankenpflege und Religion* (Göttingen, 2016).

⁴¹⁰ § 2 of the statutes of 1845, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

⁴¹¹ Meiwes, *'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn'*, p. 167f.

Freiburg on how the assistance of the sisters at gynaecological surgeries was regulated.⁴¹²

Concerning medical care, the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg never claimed to treat the patients on their own but rather they carried out the instructions of the medical doctors regarding medication, diet and treatment meticulously:⁴¹³ 'All the sisters have orders to observe strictly the instructions of the doctors either in hospital or in private care.'⁴¹⁴ Apart from tending the sick, the task of the sister was to scrupulously watch over the patient and to deliver to the doctor a full and truthful report.⁴¹⁵

Given the fact that in the nineteenth century the governments of the German states did not involve themselves much in the health sector, the nursing of the sick in Germany was a void that was filled mainly by the Catholic orders.⁴¹⁶ When, by introducing a state nursing exam in 1907, the state finally started to engage in that area, the Catholic nursing orders of Baden tried to protect their special nursing philosophy: '...the motherhouses of the religious orders will still aim to look at nursing as the most beautiful ideal of Christian charity...'⁴¹⁷ And in a declaration to the Ministry of Justice of Baden, the Ordinariate of Freiburg stated:

...in the nursing, the nursing orders and congregations are about charitable work which is carried by the highest idealism and directed by an especially strict conscientiousness, therefore it is not aimed at earning a living but is more an activity of self-sacrifice, from higher motives.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹² Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 23 Dec. 1916 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴¹³ § 19 of the statutes of 1845, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 366.

⁴¹⁴ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Mathias Zimmermann, 20 Feb. 1892 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Radolfzell, Spital).

⁴¹⁵ Schaper, *Krankenwartung*, p. 136.

⁴¹⁶ Christoph Johannes Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege zur staatlich anerkannten Tätigkeit im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert. Das Zusammenwirken von Modernisierungsbestrebungen, ärztlicher Dominanz, konfessioneller Selbstbehauptung und Vorgaben preussischer Regierungspolitik* (München, 2008), pp 100, 112.

⁴¹⁷ Minutes of the conference of motherhouses of Baden, 7 Apr. 1910 (EAF, B2-41-23). The participants were the fathers superior of the motherhouses of Freiburg, Hegne and Gengenbach.

⁴¹⁸ Ordinariate to Ministry of Justice, 19 May 1910 (EAF, B2-41-23).

Qualities that were required for becoming a member of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul

Neither the Motherhouse Strasbourg nor the Motherhouse Freiburg, which based its constitutions on those of Strasbourg, left applicants in any doubt as to what membership involved. From the onset, the motherhouses made it very clear what they expected from a postulant. They had to fulfil not only physical, but also mental and moral requirements.⁴¹⁹

The girls and young women had to be completely healthy and free from all physical handicaps and faults. The person had to be of at least middle height and strong enough 'to be able to endure all the many, heavy and life-long labour and strains of nursing.' As mental and moral requirements, the candidates needed to possess the necessary talents and intellect to learn nursing and all the duties which came with it, so that they could provide for the sick not only physically, but also mentally, religiously and morally. The postulants should also be able to overcome any disgust and revulsion at certain medical or surgical procedures. They had to consider carefully and to be fully aware of the truly divine vocation to that special and arduous Order: to be a lifelong handmaid of the sick, otherwise they could not possibly endure it.⁴²⁰ The candidates were given a further warning about an aspect of life as a Sister of Charity of the Motherhouses Strasbourg and Freiburg that could not be side-stepped: 'Also, the mortality among the sisters is very high, and at their admission to the Order such a dire future is pointed out to them.'⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ 'Bedingnisse und nothwendige Eigenschaften zur Aufnahme in den Orden der barmherzigen Schwestern', in Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 359f.

⁴²⁰ Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 359f.: Bedingnisse und nothwendige Eigenschaften zur Aufnahme in den Orden der barmherzigen Schwestern.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

The nursing training of the Motherhouse Freiburg

When, in 1846, the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul came to Freiburg, not only was their kind of nursing unknown in Baden,⁴²² but nowhere in the whole country was there a hospital or institution where such nurses were trained. According to Hans-Peter Schaper, who argued in 1987 that the nurse training of the sisters of charity did not take place in its present-day sense: the necessary skills were learnt by practical instructions and transferred from one generation of sisters to the next.⁴²³ Was that also the case for the Motherhouse Freiburg, or were persons from outside the Order in some way involved in the training of the young sisters and the postulants?⁴²⁴

The nurse training of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg took place in the motherhouse in Strasbourg and in the *Bürgerspital* (civil hospital) of that city.⁴²⁵ When Strasbourg housed the noviciate of the Motherhouse Freiburg from 1845 until 1872, the young women from Baden underwent the same education. Thus the Badenese sisters had not only an identical spiritual but also an identical occupational formation so that they could profit as much as possible from the experience of their fellow Alsatian sisters. Relinde Meiwes names the Motherhouse Strasbourg next to the Sisters of St Charles Borromeo of Nancy as the most influential site for nursing practice in Prussia.⁴²⁶ Sister Ignatia Jorth (1780–1845)⁴²⁷, mistress of novices of the Motherhouse Strasbourg until 1832

⁴²² They were unknown to the majority of the population of Baden even though a group of *Sœurs de la Charité* of Strasbourg had spent its exile in Ettenheim and later in Freiburg also during the French Revolution and its aftermath. See Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, pp 101–113.

⁴²³ Schaper, *Krankenwartung und Krankenpflege*, p. 136.

⁴²⁴ Some elements of the development of the sisters' nurse training were discussed in Angelika Hansert, 'Professionalisierung der Krankenpflege im 19. Jahrhundert: Die Vinzentinerinnen', in Stadt Freiburg i. Br. et al. (eds.), *Eine Stadt braucht Klöster □ Freiburg i. Br. braucht Klöster* (Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung 'Eine Stadt braucht Klöster', 25. Mai–1. Oktober 2006 im Augustinermuseum Freiburg im Breisgau) (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006), pp 182–192.

⁴²⁵ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 122. The *Bürgerspital* of Strasbourg was the most eminent hospital in all of Alsace. It was therefore essential for the Motherhouse Strasbourg to respond positively when it got the call to send its sisters there in 1811.

⁴²⁶ Meiwes, *Arbeiterinnen des Herrn*, p. 171.

⁴²⁷ Sister Ignatia Jorth, 1807 clothing, 1809 first profession, succeeded in 1823 the Mother General Sister Vinzenz Sultzer as superior of the sisters of the *Bürgerspital* (civil hospital) in Strasbourg; appointed by Sister Vinzenz Sultzer as her general assistant and mistress of novices: Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul, Mutterhaus

when she became the mother general of the Motherhouse Munich, had an unflinching method of testing a vocation to nursing:

Many come and think they want to become a Sister of Charity. However, then I only send them into the washhouse to wash the feculent washing of the sick. Most of them want to leave before the first day is over, but if one endures, she has a real vocation!⁴²⁸

There is no surviving documentation to indicate whether that method was used only by Sister Ignatia, or if it was typical for the Motherhouse Strasbourg itself. There is also no mention of persons other than the sisters taking part in the nurse training at that time.

The occupational formation structure of the Alsatian *Sœurs de la Charité* was transferred together with the spiritual foundation into the neighbouring country. When in 1845 planning was underway to introduce the Sisters of Charity to Baden, Freiburg im Breisgau was chosen the ideal place for the new motherhouse. That city housed not only the seat of the Archbishop of Freiburg, but also with the *Klinisches Hospital, Klinik* or *Clinicum* the optimal hospital for the training of the young sisters, as it also served as university hospital for future doctors.⁴²⁹ The superiors of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg, led by Mother General Sister Vinzenz Sultzer with the support of Fr Superior François Charles Spitz, made it very clear that the setting up of a new motherhouse in Baden was conditional on the acceptance of the sisters as nurses in the *Klinik* of Freiburg. Without a contract between the hospital board and the Motherhouse of

München (ed.), *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern, 1832–2007*, (München 2007), p. 45.

⁴²⁸ Emil Clemens Scherer, *Schwester Ignatia Jorth und die Einführung der Barmherzigen Schwestern in Bayern* (Cologne, 1932), p. 173.

⁴²⁹ The fact that the hospital was already used for medical training made a big difference to the *Bürgerspital* in Strasbourg, which became a university hospital only in 1872, the year when the Badenese novices and postulants left the noviciate of the Motherhouse Strasbourg. See Norbert Schappacher and Eckhard Wirbelauer, 'Zwei Siegeruniversitäten: Die Strassburger Universitätsgründungen von 1872 und 1919', in Rüdiger vom Bruch and Marie-Luise Bott (eds), *Jahrbuch für Universitätsgeschichte* 13 (2010), pp 45–72.

Strasbourg, the latter was not prepared to help establish the new order in Baden.⁴³⁰

The *Klinik* was secured as the future training grounds for the young Badenese sisters from the end of 1846, so that they would always be up-to-date with the newest developments in medicine. However, until 1872 their training took place in the *Bürgerspital* of Strasbourg.⁴³¹ Only in that year was the noviciate of the Motherhouse Freiburg finally moved to the city of Freiburg itself. With that move, the training of the young recruits had to be organised anew. The Motherhouse seems to have acted immediately. In that year of 1872, Albert Schinzinger (1827–1911) was a surgeon and associate professor at the *Klinik* in Freiburg.⁴³² Already an outstanding military surgeon, Professor Schinzinger had served in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 as head of the largest military hospital of Baden in Schwetzingen (north Baden, 10 km south-west of Heidelberg). Here he met the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg again, whom he already knew so well from the *Klinik*. Apart from that outstanding surgical talent, Schinzinger had a wide range of interests in the medical field, reaching from the treatment of syphilis to breast cancer.⁴³³ After the war, in January 1872, he opened a private clinic in the still quite empty Motherhouse of Freiburg.⁴³⁴ In several rooms, he could take in eighteen to twenty patients, and he had at hand three Sisters of Charity and the postulants to serve as nurses. In

⁴³⁰ Minutes of the meeting on 9 Sept. 1845 (written by Franz Joseph Buss), participants: Archbishop Hermann von Vicari, Mother General Sister Vinzenz Sultzer and Fr Superior François Charles Spitz of Strasbourg, the mayor of Freiburg and the board members of the provisional committee for the introduction of the Order (Spitz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. ii, p. 357–60).

⁴³¹ See chapter 2 of this thesis.

⁴³² Julius Leopold Pagel, *Biographisches Lexikon hervorragender Ärzte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. (Berlin, 1901), column 1499–1500, Paul Schumacher, 'Albert Schinzinger', in: *Badische Biographien*, iv, p. 261f.

⁴³³ With his discovery that there was a relationship between breast cancer and hormones, and with his solution of an ovariectomy, Schinzinger became famous all over Germany in 1889, and is still renowned today: Julia Boländer, *Comparison of two breast cancer collectives of different age concerning tumor characteristics, therapy and outcome: revision of the breast cancer patients in the years 1993–2000 of the gynaecological clinic of the urban hospital in Karlsruhe*, medical dissertation, (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2009).

⁴³⁴ Albert Schinzinger, *Bericht über die chirurgische Privatklinik in dem Mutterhause der Barmherzigen Schwestern zu Freiburg vom Januar 1872 bis Juli 1875* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1875).

his report of 1875, Professor Schinzinger praised the very successful nursing, pointing out that although he undertook many and risky surgeries, in all the three years not one single patient had died. The reason was very likely that the scrupulous cleanliness of the sisters had been combined with Schinzinger's discipleship to Joseph Lister's brand-new antiseptic method.⁴³⁵ According to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, the professor gave the young sisters several practical courses in nursing.⁴³⁶ The postulants and novices therefore received not only nursing instructions from the older and experienced sisters, but they could also prove themselves in practice from the very beginning. In addition to that, it was a medical and surgical expert who taught those special skills. The hospital grew continuously, so that the motherhouse planned in 1884 to build its own hospital, especially designed as a school for the education of the young sisters, 'as there is nowadays more knowledge demanded from them everywhere than in the past.'⁴³⁷

With surgery still in its infancy in the 1870s, the Motherhouse also tried a different approach to the healing of the human body. In 1876, one sister of Freiburg was sent to the Swabian branch of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg, to the motherhouse in Gmünd,

to learn there the science of homeopathy, with which the sisters there undertake many cures by themselves. ...The small homeopathic pharmacy could not flourish here with us. Our patients have their own doctors, and for the sick sisters, too, a doctor is always called, and the medication is given according to his orders.'⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ How progressive the sisters were (with the help of Professor Schinzinger) in using the antiseptic method even before 1875 is evident from the nursing manual of the hospital *Charité* in Berlin dated 1874 where Lister's method is mentioned only casually; in the edition of 1889 antiseptis is a particular focus; see Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, p. 133.

⁴³⁶ Karl Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in der Erzdiözese Freiburg, 1846-1896* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1896), p. 15.

⁴³⁷ Fr Superior Joseph Marmon to Ordinarate, 1 July 1884 (EAF, B5/89). The hospital was named St. Joseph's and built in the following two years right next door to the motherhouse. Obituary of Professor Schinzinger (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, St. Josefskrankenhaus).

⁴³⁸ Chronik von 1876, p. 89f. (MHA Freiburg).

It seems therefore with so many brilliant doctors proactive in research in the neighbourhood, it was impossible for the sisters to follow this different and independent path. Although understandable in the context of the rapid development of academic medicine, it is regrettable from today's perspective that homeopathy did not stand a chance with the Order. The close relationship with the academic doctors also raises the question if the sisters were beholden to the 'Gods in white' or to the rich and therefore paying patients.

Although the Motherhouse already provided a good training-ground for the future nurses on its own premises, it did not miss an opportunity to advance the standard of training whenever that was offered. With the appointment of Professor Paul Kraske (1851–1930) as head of the surgery department at the *Klinik* in Freiburg in 1883, the University Hospital finally started to come up to the expectations of the founding fathers and mother of the Badenese Order of being its training centre. According to nursing certificates in the personal files of the Freiburg sisters, Kraske, a very talented educator, held courses in nursing for the sisters in an organised and systematic way from 1888 to 1909.⁴³⁹ Who was the initiator of those courses? Was the motherhouse so impressed by Kraske's pedagogic skills, that it asked him to teach not only the medical students but also the sisters, or did Professor Kraske offer his teaching to the Motherhouse, being a true teacher who wanted to share his knowledge? The sources are silent on the issue, but the latter seems likely. The instructions for the future nurses consisted of three months of theory, and were combined with a three-months' practical training, which could also take place in the Order-owned St. Joseph hospital right next door to the Motherhouse.⁴⁴⁰ The courses were given once per year; in the first three years (1888–1890) there were two courses a year. At the

⁴³⁹ Jürgen Mäder, *Paul Kraske (1851–1930): Leben und Werk*, (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1989), p. 59. Kraske came from the University of Halle and was pupil of the renowned Professor Richard von Volkmann.

⁴⁴⁰ St. Joseph's hospital was opened in 1886, and Professor Albert Schinzinger was its director until 1908, when he retired aged eighty-one years: Robert Bilger, 'Die Beziehungen des Mutterhauses der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul zur Medizinischen Fakultät der Universität Freiburg und die Geschichte des St. Josefskrankenhauses Freiburg im Breisgau', in *100 Jahre St. Josefskrankenhauses Freiburg im Breisgau* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1986), pp 1–72.

end the sisters received a certificate. Both postulants and novices attended the courses, although the numbers varied between 9% and 84% per cohort according to the needs. On average, 46% per age group finished that training successfully over those twenty-five years, making altogether 423 certified Sisters of Charity in those two decades.⁴⁴¹

The state starts interfering: The new voluntary Prussian state exam in nursing of 1907 and its effects on nurse training

When from the 1890s on the medical sector advanced at speed, it became more and more difficult for the Catholic orders and congregations to meet the demand for more nurses in terms of quantity and quality.⁴⁴² Unlike in England, the Prussian government and the doctors consented to nursing as a dependent medical-auxiliary activity only⁴⁴³ and the Prussian Ministry of Finance refused to give money for nurse training.⁴⁴⁴ Thus unlike England with its Nightingale-model, the female religious motherhouses in Germany had no public and systematic nurse training available to them.⁴⁴⁵

After 1900, discussions started in the Prussian parliament about introducing a law for a nursing exam. To secure the Catholic position in that matter, Prince-Bishop Georg von Kopp (1837–1914) of Breslau, as representative of the Catholic Church, met with the Prussian Ministry of Culture on 30 March 1907. Kopp reported that the Ministry of Culture wanted to accommodate the religious orders as much as possible, and therefore did not want the exam to be an obligation for them. However, it would strongly advise them to participate, especially because the Ministry of War wanted to accept only sisters with exams in future military hospitals. The advice of Kopp to his episcopal colleagues was that the religious should take advantage now, and in accepting the exam ensure

⁴⁴¹ Hansert, 'Professionalisierung', p. 186. Numbers according to the author's calculations based on the nursing certificates in the personal files of the sisters.

⁴⁴² Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, p. 140.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp 98, 100, 112, 207.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 97, 100.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

the best possible conditions for them. If they refused now, a later offer was not likely to be so generous. Based on that report, the Archbishop of Freiburg, Dr Thomas Nörber (1846–1929)⁴⁴⁶ asked a member of the cathedral chapter to confer with Fr Superior Mayer as the representative of the most important nursing order in Baden, and to prepare the necessary measures.⁴⁴⁷

The new law for a nursing exam came into force on 10 May 1907, but it was not made obligatory, in an effort to entice the Catholic orders to agree to it. By then nearly all the German bishops had given up their former opposition.⁴⁴⁸ However, the state governments of Bavaria and Baden refused to follow the Prussian model right away and introduced an obligatory nursing exam only after the First World War, more than a decade later.⁴⁴⁹

The next step for the religious orders was to get state approval for their own nurse-training schools. Above all, they wanted to receive an automatic state approval for all the sisters who had already been working as nurses for years, to avoid putting them through the trouble and expense of a state exam.

On 21 May 1907, Prince-Bishop von Kopp reported to the Ministry of Culture that the religious orders consented to the exam under the following conditions: that they receive public acknowledgement of their nursing schools which were for members only, that the education could take place there under experienced doctors supported by religious, that the superiors of the orders would be allowed to witness exams, and that they got a state approval for sisters who had worked in nursing for at least five years (later reduced to two years).⁴⁵⁰ More than a year later in September 1908, the father superiors of the Badenese motherhouses, Freiburg, Hegne and Gengenbach, conferred about the state exam. They agreed

⁴⁴⁶ Schmider, *Die Freiburger Bischöfe*, pp 117–24. Nörber was Archbishop of Freiburg from 1898 to 1920, the first archbishop born in the archdiocese. To his episcopacy see also the thesis of Hans-Peter Fischer, *Die Freiburger Erzbischofswahlen 1898 und der Episkopat von Thomas Nörber. Ein Beitrag zur Diözesangeschichte* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997).

⁴⁴⁷ Note of Archbishop Dr Thomas Nörber, 15 Apr. 1907 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴⁴⁸ Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, pp 247–51.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 262ff.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 247–51.

to accept the nursing exams after the Prussian example.⁴⁵¹ But nothing had been finally settled, and the discussions went on. When the superiors met again in April 1910, they complained that the financial sacrifices for such an exam were too much.⁴⁵² The Ordinariate of Freiburg asked around in the neighbouring dioceses of Alsace and Swabia, how the motherhouses of Oberbronn, Strasbourg and Untermarchtal handled nurse training.⁴⁵³

In 1911, the Ministry of Culture and Education of Baden planned to follow the Swabian model by asking only the lay Red-Cross-nurses to undergo the state exam; it would not introduce the state exam for the religious sisters as there was no need for it. But the Ministry asked if the orders were willing to adapt their nurse training.⁴⁵⁴ Fr Superior Mayer stated that the Motherhouse Freiburg was ready to comply and to train its future nurses according to the governmental norm with six months of theoretical studies in Freiburg and six months of practical instruction in eleven large hospitals in Baden.⁴⁵⁵ The Motherhouse was certain that by by-passing the state exam (wo-)manpower was increased and a 'pure joy of work' was created.⁴⁵⁶

The Sisters of Charity got another opportunity to advance their nurse training, when in 1911 Professor Adolf Oberst (d. 1933), for many years assistant doctor and assistant medical director at the *Klinik*, succeeded his teacher Professor Kraske as instructor for the sisters. Besides using the textbooks of Battlehner⁴⁵⁷ and Stöcker for nurse training, Oberst had written one of his very own in 1908, which saw two more editions in 1909 and 1927, and it had therefore included all

⁴⁵¹ Minutes of the conference, 9 Sept. 1908 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴⁵² Minutes of the conference, 7 Apr. 1910 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴⁵³ Ordinariate to superiors of Oberbronn, Strasbourg and Untermarchtal, 30 Apr. 1910, answers from the superiors 4 to 6 May 1910 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴⁵⁴ Ministry of Culture and Education to Ordinariate, 6 June 1911 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴⁵⁵ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 22 July 1911 (EAF, B2-41-23). The designated hospitals for the practical part of the training would be: Constance, Radolfzell, Freiburg (*Klinik* and St. Joseph's), Offenburg, Baden-Baden, Rastatt, Heidelberg, Mannheim and Buchen (listed from the south to the north of Baden).

⁴⁵⁶ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 22 July 1911 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴⁵⁷ Ferdinand Battlehner, *Anleitung für Krankenwartung und Pflege Verwundeter*, (Karlsruhe, 1880).

necessary state requirements for nursing.⁴⁵⁸ In the years 1900 to 1909, an internal exam took place at the *Klinik* in Freiburg in the presence of the two medical directors, several assistant doctors and the mother general and the father superior of the Order. 'With this exam, several practical exercises were combined, consisting in applying of different bandages (hat of Hippocrates etc.), dressing, demonstration of clinical patients in their beds, preparation of the operating tables along with treatment and presentation of chirurgical instruments and of medication.'⁴⁵⁹ From 1912, Professor Oberst was medical director of the Order-owned St. Joseph's hospital and head of the nursing training, the theoretical part now taking place solely at St. Joseph's. After the hospital was converted and an extension added in 1912/13, a theatre dedicated for the nursing courses was installed with all available modern equipment. When the sisters moved in on New Year's Day of 1914, they could enjoy it only for a few months, because as the First World War broke out in August, St. Joseph became a military hospital, and Professor Oberst had to leave to serve in the war.⁴⁶⁰ The nurse training programme was suspended for the duration of the war.

What was the situation of nurse education in the other female religious orders and congregations in Germany? Did they introduce a schooling system as early as the Motherhouse Freiburg, simultaneously or later? Who was the 'pioneer of religious nursing schools'?

As the nursing-exam regulation entered into force in Prussia first, the motherhouses in that particular German state were more likely to follow that law than elsewhere in Germany. In Cologne-Ehrenfeld the sisters were taught by doctors in the hospital since c. 1896, and in 1904 there was a nursing school

⁴⁵⁸ Adolf Oberst, *Leitfaden der Krankenpflege: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Bundesratserlasses über die staatliche Prüfung von Krankenpflege-Personen nebst e. Verz. v. Fremdwörtern, welche in der Krankenpflege häufig vorkommen*, (Jena, 1908). Reflecting the demand for this work, a second (1909) and third edition (1927) were published.

⁴⁵⁹ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 15 Dec. 1911 (EAF, B2-41-23). Mayer admitted that this modus was upgradable.

⁴⁶⁰ Robert Bilger, 'Die Beziehungen des Mutterhauses', p. 46.

founded with three-week courses for all the female religious of that order for all the Cologne region.⁴⁶¹

The Sisters of Charity of Münster (*Clemensschwwestern*) started with courses in 1892, where a sister and a doctor taught; the actual nursing school was founded in the motherhouse in 1908. Anja Faber mentions 'especially trained female teachers and doctors taught the sisters', but gives no evidence for this statement.⁴⁶² The sisters who were already working as nurses got state approval, as many as 1,000 altogether. The Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Hildesheim established their nursing school right after the publication of the law in 1907; the school received state approval the following year,⁴⁶³

Bavaria had a different approach. The state did not intend to regulate nurse education and it would definitely not affiliate with the Prussian law. The magistrate of Munich took matters into its own hands and put new laws into force for the hospitals of Munich, where nursing schools were demanded. Therefore, in 1904 systematic courses of several weeks were introduced to the Sisters of Charity of Munich in the hospital *Links der Isar*.⁴⁶⁴ From 1910 on there were theoretical courses with specialist teachers taking place in Schwabing hospital.⁴⁶⁵

According to those examples, the Motherhouse Freiburg was the very first with a recorded, systematic nurse training, starting as early as 1888, and even earlier if one takes the Schinzinger courses into account, which definitely began in the early 1870s. The insistence of the superiors of the Motherhouse Strasbourg on a contract with the *Klinik* of Freiburg paid off decades later, especially when the coexistence of the *Klinik* and the Order-owned St. Joseph's

⁴⁶¹ Schaper, *Krankenwartung*, p. 141.

⁴⁶² Anja Faber, *Pflegealltag im stationären Bereich zwischen 1880 und 1930* (Stuttgart, 2015), p. 173f. Faber mentioned a Sister Claudia Bachofen von Echt who wrote two pre-1900 textbooks on nursing, but it is not clear if that sister later taught in the nursing school, see p. 173.

⁴⁶³ Lieselotte Sterner, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in Hildesheim von 1852 bis zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, (Hannover, 1999), pp 69, 165. The Motherhouse Hildesheim was indirectly a child of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, since it was Strasbourg that founded the Motherhouse Paderborn, from which Hildesheim originated.

⁴⁶⁴ Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul, Mutterhaus München (ed.), *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern*, p. 115.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

hospital influenced each other positively. In that sense, the motherhouse could even be counted among the 'pioneers' for many other religious orders, especially and foremost in Baden.

Working conditions of the Sisters of Charity in the hospitals

As already examined earlier in this chapter, new candidates to the Order were from the outset well aware of the hard, life-long task which was ahead of them, and which very often led to an early grave. With that attitude, the sisters were prepared to take up and endure the worst possible working conditions. As they were working with the sick, who often had severe illnesses or highly contagious infections, falling ill themselves was a permanent professional risk. Christoph Schweikardt states that even a high percentage of the religious died.⁴⁶⁶ What were the conditions the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg had to work in, and what was done to preserve their health?

When the Vincentian sisters started off in the hospitals of Baden from 1846 on, the working conditions were very different from later decades. Cleanliness was, reportedly, one of the sisters' trademarks. When the hospital board of the city of Bruchsal (20 km north-east of Karlsruhe) discussed the introduction of the sisters into its hospital in 1857, the doctor of Waldkirch hospital (15 km north-east of Freiburg), where the sisters already served since 1853, recommended the Order wholeheartedly: '... a hospital gains otherwise under these industrious hands because of the most exquisite cleanliness and of the orderliness.'⁴⁶⁷ When the sisters started to work in Bruchsal hospital on 1 July 1858, they were shocked by the non-existent water pipe and the state the poor inhabitants were in:

⁴⁶⁶ Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, p. 122. According to Georg Cornet (1858–1915) in 1889 three-quarters of the religious nurses had tuberculosis, and more than two-thirds had died as 'victims of their service'.

⁴⁶⁷ The doctor of Waldkirch hospital to hospital board Bruchsal, without exact date (before July 1858), see Christine Raab, *Der Orden der Vincentinerinnen und seine Tätigkeit in Bruchsal. Fachwissenschaftliche Überlegung und die Behandlung des Themas im fächerübergreifenden Unterricht in Grund- und Hauptschule* (Bruchsal, 1995), p. 27.

A well is not available. The water for the people, healthy and sick, and for the kitchen has to be dragged along from the far out-of-the-way *Röhrbrunnen* [name of the well] on the market place. Not even a bathroom is available, and that is even more necessary as many are brought into the hospital, and miserable sick persons are often covered with finger-thick dirt and debris all over the body so that you could sow cabbage and turnip seeds onto it. Turks and Jews make a religion out of the frequent washing of the body, I wished that the Christians would do the same; many pinches out of the sniffing tobacco box could be made redundant.⁴⁶⁸

From the outset, the Sisters of Charity brought cleanliness and order into the hospitals, and they could administer their own nursing philosophy. Ten years later the situation started to change. The tumultuous development of academic medicine from the 1870s on with growing professional standards, the introduction of antiseptics, anaesthetics, x-rays and the beginning of specialisation in medicine, placed increasing strains on a sister nurse, as the materialistic side of the profession took over and nursing was dictated by machines.⁴⁶⁹ From then on, the most common remark in all the files was: 'The work for the sisters is growing constantly.'⁴⁷⁰

This growing workload, which eventually became excessive, posed the greatest health risk to the sisters.⁴⁷¹ Norbert Friedrich calls it the 'permanent trap of excessive demand'.⁴⁷² In 1896, Dr Mader specified the demands on the sisters in the middle-sized hospital of Radolfzell (Lake Constance), which also had a farming section, in common with many of the institutions discussed below. In 1883, they had 137 patients in the hospital, which by 1896 had more than doubled in size, with 272 patients. The sister superior held the directorship and saw to clothes and washing, the garden and a separate house.⁴⁷³ The sister cook tended to the kitchen, the drying-kiln, the cellar, and took part in the night watches. The other three sisters worked exclusively in care. One looked after

⁴⁶⁸ Sister to Motherhouse, without names or date, see Raab, *Der Orden der Vinzentinerinnen und seine Tätigkeit in Bruchsal*, p. 32.

⁴⁶⁹ Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, p. 130□4.

⁴⁷⁰ Dean Ferdinand Hund from Säckinggen to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 21 June 1901 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Wyhlen, Himmelspforte [gate of heaven]).

⁴⁷¹ Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, p. 123.

⁴⁷² Norbert Friedrich, 'Überforderte Engel? Diakonissinnen als Gemeindeschwestern im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', in Sabine Braunschweig (ed.), *Pflege □ Räume, Macht und Alltag. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Pflege* (Zürich, 2006), pp 85□94, here at p. 85.

⁴⁷³ It was called *Kretz'sches Haus*, but the function is unknown, see Dr Mader to mayor, 6 Oct. 1896 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Radolfzell, Spital).

three little orphans, five residents, and in wintertime additionally took care of three to five sick people with 'light' illnesses. Another sister took up to twenty-three sick residents, all male, under her wing, and the last sister had up to thirteen patients, the scabies house and the isolation chamber to manage. All sisters took care of the disinfection apparatus, the setting-up of the rooms, the lights, bandages, instruments and other medical equipment. The only helping hand was some paid lay nursing assistants who carried the food, did the cleaning, sweeping and washing, and tended the garden, the stable, and the fields. The workload was so all-consuming that the sisters had little to no time to mend the clothes and the bedding. In winter, they had 100–107 patients in the house which exceeded the sisters' strength and led to their health suffering.⁴⁷⁴

True to the Order's nursing philosophy not to spare themselves, the evidence is that many sisters suffered quietly, and did not ask for help. Three sisters served in Meersburg hospital (Lake Constance), with one having been sick for years. The other two were still healthy, but they had to do everything. The sister superior alone saw to the nursing, the kitchen, the household, the office and to the direction.⁴⁷⁵ The hospital administrator thought that the sisters would ask for help, 'however they are too modest, even shy, to do this by themselves, and therefore subjected themselves continuously to the greatest efforts.'⁴⁷⁶ In Hüfingen hospital (Black Forest-Baar, 4 km south of the source of the Danube), the sister superior was too parsimonious in 1899 and thought she could do without a fourth sister. Yet by then they were admitting sick workers from the railway construction site and the mayor asked for another sister.⁴⁷⁷ In the private care of the village of Brombach (today part of Lörrach, a city on the Swiss border close to Basel), Mother General Sister Luisa David wrote to the local priest that

⁴⁷⁴ Dr Mader to mayor, 6 Oct. 1896 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Radolfzell, Spital).

⁴⁷⁵ Hospital administrator to town council, 21 May 1873; town council to Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 23 May 1873 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Meersburg, Krankenhaus).

⁴⁷⁶ Hospital administrator to town council, 21 May 1873 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Meersburg, Krankenhaus).

⁴⁷⁷ Mayor to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 15 Sept. 1899 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hüfingen, Krankenhaus).

Sister Erwine always exceeded her strength.⁴⁷⁸ In the First World War, Dr Croissant of Geisingen hospital (on the Danube, 15 km south of Tuttlingen), stated that 'the sisters are scraping visibly the bottom of their barrel of strength'.⁴⁷⁹ At the beginning of 1918, the Motherhouse Freiburg sent two sisters for the household of a new diocesan boarding school for boys in Bruchsal (20 km north-east of Karlsruhe). The director had only one wish: 'If only they bring a big spirit of self-sacrifice'.⁴⁸⁰ Only one sister complained about the working conditions: '...after having sacrificed all my health in the *Klinik*'.⁴⁸¹ A lack of sleep was known to nearly all sisters: 'How often sleep vexated me during the day, only God knows.'⁴⁸²

How did the motherhouse respond? Did Freiburg take little interest in the needs of the sisters as was the case among so many other motherhouses, hospital boards and doctors?⁴⁸³ In Radolfzell (Lake Constance), Dr Mader admitted that

It pains me to see how many young, strong sisters, who start their severe profession with so much enthusiasm, are in a very short time consumed by their severe service and fall ill.

He suggested that the superiors should order the sisters to spend half an hour every day outside the house in fresh air, because the sisters did not listen to him when he told them to do it. In addition to that, every sister should have a holiday of eight days after her annual retreat, and the motherhouse should build a sanatorium for consumptives somewhere in the southern Black Forest.⁴⁸⁴ Dr Frey wished for a fifth sister in Löffingen hospital (Black Forest, 40 km south-east

⁴⁷⁸ Mother General Sister Luisa David to Fr Fröhlich, 21 Jan. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Brombach, Schwesternhaus). The mother general talked about Sister Erwin Faist (born 1866, clothing 1887, profession 1889).

⁴⁷⁹ Dr Croissant to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 26 Sept. 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Geisingen, Spital).

⁴⁸⁰ Director Fr Banholzer to Motherhouse Freiburg, 28 Jan. 1918 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Bruchsal, St. Augustinusheim).

⁴⁸¹ Sister Theotima Hess to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 10 Apr. 1910 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Ettlingen, Krankenhaus).

⁴⁸² Sister Conradin Speicher to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 2 Sept. 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Volkertshausen, Mädchenheim).

⁴⁸³ Meiwes, '*Arbeiterinnen des Herrn*', p. 172f.

⁴⁸⁴ Dr Otto Mader to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 1 Mar. 1902 (MHA Freiburg, Radolfzell, Spital/Pfründnerhaus/Altersheim).

of Freiburg), so that one sister would be on a permanent stand-by, and the health of the others would not be overstrained.⁴⁸⁵

The motherhouse found itself in the predicament of having not only to obey the constitutions, but also of wanting to follow its nursing philosophy, and needing to conserve the health of the sisters as long as possible. However, if the superiors heard of any ongoing problems, which had no hope of being solved, they did not hesitate to terminate the contract and to withdraw the sisters as in the case of the private eye clinic in Baden-Baden. The sisters there had catastrophic working conditions, as Sister Ladislaus Glaser, the sister superior of the local hospital, reported. They had no time to eat or to pray, the work was lowly, and the beds bad, among other things. The contract lasted just one year.⁴⁸⁶ The contract with the new diocesan boarding school for boys of Bruchsal lasted an even shorter time, only four months, in 1918, the final year of the First World War. The workload turned out to be much more than the two sisters the Motherhouse Freiburg was able to send could manage. Freiburg pulled the plug and recalled the sisters. The school director replaced them with five sisters from the Motherhouse Neusatzeck.⁴⁸⁷

As the Order of the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg placed so many sisters in hospitals all over Baden, the sisters themselves benefited by access to specialist medical treatment. The situation was even better in the Order's own hospitals: 'Sister Alexandrine was operated on again according to her urgent wish...'⁴⁸⁸ If a sister reported her illness early enough, everything was done that was possible. For convalescent sisters, in 1895 the Motherhouse

⁴⁸⁵ Dr Frey to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 24 Oct. 1903 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Löffingen, Krankenhaus).

⁴⁸⁶ Sister Ladislaus Glaser to Motherhouse Freiburg, 13 Oct. 1905 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Baden-Baden, Augenklinik).

⁴⁸⁷ Motherhouse Freiburg to Director Fr Banholzer, 20 Aug. 1918; Director Fr Banholzer to Motherhouse, 31 Aug. 1918 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Bruchsal, St. Augustinusheim).

⁴⁸⁸ Sister Sidonia Stoppel to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 26 Mar. 1899 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heidelberg, St. Josefskrankenhaus).

Freiburg opened St Lazarus next to Bethania in Heitersheim, followed in 1911 by the Order's own home for elderly sisters, St Ludwig.⁴⁸⁹

If it was difficult to care for the health of the sisters in normal times, it seemed even impossible when epidemics broke out. In the aftermath of the Prussian-Austrian war in 1866, Sister Luciana Geradewohl died of cholera.⁴⁹⁰ Sister Aurelia Schüle died of typhus in 1871 at the end of the Franco-Prussian war.⁴⁹¹ Sister Lydia Rudolph also died of typhus, in 1883.⁴⁹²

Just before the First World War broke out in 1914, the state entered the nursing domain again with two more regulations. The first concerned mass vaccination as a prevention for epidemics. In 1912, The Ministry of Culture and Education of Baden recommended a regular vaccination every five years.⁴⁹³ After the Ordinariate brought this issue to the attention of the Motherhouse Freiburg, Fr Superior Karl Mayer reported that when a postulant was admitted to the Sisters of Charity, she had to submit a certificate of vaccination among other documents but until then there existed no special instructions about periodic vaccination in the Order. Fr Mayer related that if the sisters had to nurse smallpox patients they got vaccinated in time, as was the case in Freiburg just now (in 1912), also in Durlach (close to Karlsruhe) where smallpox was in the locality. The father superior was thankful to the suggestion made by the ministry. In future, he assured the authorities, the motherhouse would take care that in all the larger hospitals there would be at all times two to three sisters with all the vaccinations available, so that they would always be prepared.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁹ Angelika Hansert, 'Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), pp 303–29, here at p. 321f.

⁴⁹⁰ Fr Michael Zipf to Mother General Sister Primitia Dinger, 27 Feb. 1945 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Dittigheim, Schwesternhaus). Sister Luciana died at 37.

⁴⁹¹ Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 22. Sister Aurelia reached 32 years.

⁴⁹² Chronicle of Sister Clothilde Maier, written in 1900 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Waldkirch, St. Nikolaispital). Sister Lydia was 26 years old when she died.

⁴⁹³ Ministry of Culture and Education to Ordinariate, 6 May 1912 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴⁹⁴ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 12 May 1912 (EAF, B2-41-23): 'This was the case so far and will be in future.'

This example shows the value which the Order put on the new scientific achievements and the readiness of the Motherhouse to follow government instructions. The archbishop expected nothing less from the flagship of the female religious orders in Baden. A different attitude was shown in the response of the female Franciscans of Gengenbach whose motherhouse was situated in Middle Baden. Its sisters viewed vaccination very sceptically and even called it 'poison' which could have a very negative effect to the body if injected on a regular basis.⁴⁹⁵ However, in cases where the sisters were called to infectious patients, the Motherhouse Gengenbach would follow the examples of those of Freiburg and Hegne.⁴⁹⁶

In 1913, the Prussian public health department wanted to regulate the working conditions of people working in hospitals. That meant no night watch after a full day shift, disconnecting the day and night shift, at least nine hours' sleep for those who have to do day and night shifts, at least one afternoon off per week for all shift-workers and at least fourteen days of annual holiday.⁴⁹⁷ Answering the Ordinariate on that matter,⁴⁹⁸ as neither the Motherhouse Hegne nor that of Gengenbach served in large hospitals, their father superiors did not sound as if excess of work was a major problem.⁴⁹⁹

With the Motherhouse Freiburg, it was a different story. Working in larger hospitals meant that their sisters had to shoulder much higher professional demands. After a sister superiors' conference held on 14 October 1913, the Motherhouse Freiburg reported that a certain number of sisters took turns in doing the night watch. The sisters could sleep three hours before and two hours after the night shift, and they went to bed earlier the following night. Under that

⁴⁹⁵ Without date and name of sender (EAF, B2-41-23). The comment of the Ordinariate to that was: 'statement in no way suitable to be send to Karlsruhe (the government)'. The superior of Gengenbach had to rephrase it.

⁴⁹⁶ Fr Superior Paul Weckesser of Gengenbach to Ordinariate, 26 May 1912 (EAF, B2-41-23). This sentence was part of the rephrased letter. Hegne was the third order of female religious sisters in Baden, the motherhouse was on the shore of Lake Constance in the very south of Baden.

⁴⁹⁷ Regulation of the working conditions of the hospital staff, 5 Aug. 1913ff. (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴⁹⁸ Decree of Ordinariate, 12 Aug. 1913 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁴⁹⁹ Answers from Gengenbach, 5 Sept. 1913, and Hegne, 21 Nov. 1913 (EAF, B2-41-23).

system, a sister had night duty once a week. In other hospitals, two sisters shared a night watch with an exchange at 1am, and the following night both went to bed earlier. Here also the sisters were on night watch only once per week. A division of day and night shifts did not yet exist, but the sisters were satisfied with the arrangements currently in place, according to their superiors at least.⁵⁰⁰ With the outbreak of war in 1914, further state regulations were stalled.

The little branch houses: essential for the care of the sick at home, and essential for the Motherhouse Freiburg

At the end of the First World War, in 1918, the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg served in 208 branch houses.⁵⁰¹ The small branch houses in the countryside with only two or three sisters counted 103, which formed nearly fifty percent.⁵⁰² The main task of those small houses was the nursing of the sick in their private homes, in addition to the running of kindergartens or sewing schools or both. In Prussia, for example, it was not possible to establish a network of small nursing centres all over the country. According to a 1913 estimation, there were no nurses in c. 60,000 of c. 70,000 villages with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants.⁵⁰³ Baden was a quite different story: The small branch houses were to be found in nearly every parish of the country. In 1925, the diocesan Caritas association (DiCV) estimated that medical care was provided in 2/3 of the parishes in Baden.⁵⁰⁴

What were the reasons behind the spread of these small branch houses all over Baden? Why did they become so numerous in the first decades of the twentieth century? And how was it possible that an order specifically established,

⁵⁰⁰ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 18 Nov. 1913 (EAF, B2-41-23).

⁵⁰¹ Hansert, 'Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern', p. 323.

⁵⁰² Present author's own calculations based on Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, pp 50–2 where all the branch houses of 1896 are listed.

⁵⁰³ In the so-called *Landkrankenpflegebewegung* Prussia tried to propagate nursing centres, see Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, p. 113ff.

⁵⁰⁴ Renate Liessem-Breitlinger, 'Der Caritasverband für die Erzdiözese Freiburg', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918*, (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), pp 599–621, here at p. 605.

according to its own constitutions, for hospital nursing, could be so prominent in the countryside?

§ 2 of the statutes of the Order of Sisters of Charity of Baden stressed explicitly that the main task was the care of the sick and poor in the hospitals.⁵⁰⁵ In referring to those statutes, an order of the Ministry of the Interior Affairs (18 Sept. 1875) and an order of the Ministry of Justice, Culture and Education (20 Dec. 1882) were issued where the Order of Sisters of Charity of Baden were excluded from taking over the care of the sick at home and from the kindergartens during the *Kulturkampf*.⁵⁰⁶ Over the years, the Motherhouse Freiburg received several requests to found a branch house and to take over private or home nursing care. In 1852, the city council of Baden-Baden asked for an exemption from the statutes limiting the sisters to care of the sick in hospitals, as their new hospital was yet to be built and the council wanted the sisters to nurse the sick at home.⁵⁰⁷ Fr Gass of Karlsruhe let the Motherhouse know in 1857 that very often people asked for sisters for private care, but because there were no Catholic sisters available, Protestant deaconesses were called.⁵⁰⁸ In the same year the Order of the Sisters of Charity even lost the branch house of St Vincent's in Karlsruhe to another female congregation from Alsace on account of its strict statutes.

The situation became more and more urgent by the early 1880s as other orders, with the flexibility to nurse in private homes, encroached upon its field. The principal competitors were the motherhouse of Niederbronn established in 1849 in Alsace; the motherhouse of Ingenbohl established in 1856 in Switzerland, and the motherhouse of Gengenbach in Baden itself, established in 1866.⁵⁰⁹ At the start of 1883, Fr Superior Marmon complained bitterly to the Ordinariate that requests were repeatedly turned down by the Motherhouse

⁵⁰⁵ Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

⁵⁰⁶ Fr Superior Joseph Marmon to Ordinariate, 7 Jan. 1883 (EAF, B5/89).

⁵⁰⁷ City council to Ordinariate, 8 Mar. 1852 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Baden-Baden, Krankenhaus).

⁵⁰⁸ Fr Gass to Fr Superior Marmon, 6 Mar. 1857 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, Bürgerspital).

⁵⁰⁹ Barbara Henze, 'Die übrigen Orden', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), pp 331–387, here at p. 332f.

Freiburg and, *in lieu* of Freiburg, foreign motherhouses had sent their sisters.⁵¹⁰ He sought the revocation of the limiting paragraph in the constitutions, seeing it as disadvantageous and even discriminatory, causing the Motherhouse Freiburg to be left aside as antiquated and out of date. Interestingly Fr Superior Marmon admitted that he did not know how that strict paragraph came into being, as he was superior only since 1857 and had not been involved in the introduction of the Order to Baden.⁵¹¹ He only knew that it had something to do with the Motherhouse Strasbourg, but not that § 2 of the statutes of Baden referred directly to § 1 of the statutes of Strasbourg:

The Sisters of Charity dedicate themselves exclusively to the service of the poor sick who were received into their houses and in the hospitals, which were entrusted to them.⁵¹²

In addition to which: 'the sister superior does not allow the sisters to take on the care of the sick in the private homes.'⁵¹³

The Ordinariate reacted to Marmon's complaint promptly, and on 23 July 1883 without much further ado the state approval of private nursing for the Order of the Sisters of Charity, Motherhouse Freiburg was granted by the Grand Duke of Baden, 'in deviation of the...statutes'.⁵¹⁴ The future branch houses for private care had to be kept separate from the hospitals.⁵¹⁵ The sister nurse was not allowed to work in the kindergartens or sewing schools and vice versa, to avoid infection when the nurse had to care for infectious patients.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁰ Fr Superior Joseph Marmon to Ordinariate, 7 Jan. 1883 (EAF, B5/89).

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 333f.

⁵¹³ Annotations to the statutes of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 343. The Motherhouse Strasbourg restricted itself to the care of the sick in the hospitals and to the poor in other institutions so as to avoid competition among the different congregations in Alsace.

⁵¹⁴ Ministry of Justice, Culture and Education to Ordinariate, 23 July 1883 (EAF, B5/89). The resolution was granted at Mainau Castle on 2 July 1883: Ministry of Culture and Education to district office and Fr Superior Marmon, 23 July 1883 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Säckingen, Marienhaus).

⁵¹⁵ Fr Epp to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 6 May 1904 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Tauberbischofsheim, Schwesternhaus).

⁵¹⁶ Ministry of Cultural, Educational and Medicinal Affairs, Berlin, state approval for establishing a sewing school according to Article 13 of the Regulation of 21 May 1886, letter of 10 Sept. 1901

The establishment of small branch houses caring for the sick at home was in answer to an urgent need, especially in the countryside, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. In Hagnau, on the shores of Lake Constance in the south of Baden, the inhabitants were poor vineyard farmers who had to work outside in all kinds of weather and through the winter. Therefore, there were always many sick people in the village.⁵¹⁷ In Burladingen, an upcoming industrial little town in Hohenzollern, many inhabitants suffered from lung problems and lung diseases because of the factories.⁵¹⁸ The people got into dire straits when they fell sick.⁵¹⁹ They were too poor to call a doctor,⁵²⁰ who was very often not on site,⁵²¹ but far away.⁵²² The farmers called the doctor only when it was absolutely necessary.⁵²³ In Benzingen, a village of farmers and craftsmen, many accidents happened and it was by no means easy to fetch the doctor quickly.⁵²⁴

Some doctors looked at the sisters as competitors when the latter were called instead of them. The priest of Wyhl (16 km north-west of Emmendingen, between the river Rhine and the extinct volcano Kaiserstuhl) referred to the doctors as 'greedy for money', and declared that the people called the sisters especially for minor ailments, 'and therefore the services of the sisters are a big

(MHA Freiburg, Akte Gruol, Schwesternhaus); Fr Fehrenbacher to Mother General Sister Alban Jörger, 27 Oct. 1891 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hagnau); Fr Isele to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 24 Oct. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Tengen, Schwesternhaus).

⁵¹⁷ Fr Fehrenbacher to Mother General Sister Alban Jörger, 27 Oct. 1891 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hagnau)

⁵¹⁸ Fr Biener to Motherhouse Freiburg, 6 Nov. 1930 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Burladingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁵¹⁹ Town council to Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 6 Feb. 1875 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Meersburg, Krankenhaus).

⁵²⁰ Fr H. of Veringendorf to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 28 Feb. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Empfingen, Schwesternhaus); Fr Wehrle to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 11 June 1906 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Rotenfels, Schwesternhaus).

⁵²¹ Women's association to Mother General Sister Alban Jörger, 5 Apr. 1892 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Liel, Schwesternhaus); Fr Wasmer to Motherhouse, 27 July 1902 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Bernau, Schwesternhaus): no doctor was available in the entire valley; Sister Justa Birk to Fr Superior Mayer, 22 Jan. 1915 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Dettingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁵²² Fr Meisel to Motherhouse, 12 Jan. 1903 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Balzfeld, Schwesternhaus); Fr Beuschlein to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 9 Aug. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten bei Engen, Schwesternhaus).

⁵²³ Fr Beuschlein to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 8 Nov. 1913 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten bei Engen, Schwesternhaus).

⁵²⁴ Mayor to Motherhouse Freiburg, 9 Mar. 1918 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Benzingen, Schwesternhaus).

benefit for our poor folk.⁵²⁵ On the other hand, according to the sisters themselves, a doctor told them that there was no other community in the whole state of Hohenzollern where sisters were so much needed as in Gruol.⁵²⁶ In St Peter (Black Forest, about 20 km east of Freiburg), the community council and the doctor were unified in their opinion that sisters were urgently required in such a large and dispersed community 'where the women were less experienced in medical and nursing matters'.⁵²⁷ Especially in times of epidemics, the sisters proved their worth to everybody very quickly: In Gruol (Hohenzollern), the people were at first reluctant to accept them, 'but now they are happy to have sisters when two very severe typhus patients were there.'⁵²⁸ In Muggensturm (6 km north-east of Rastatt), two days after the arrival of the sisters, a severe typhus broke out in several families. The mayor thanked the Motherhouse for such an experienced sister nurse.⁵²⁹

Who were then the agents behind the drive to bring sisters into the smaller communities of the countryside? Who initiated the small branch houses? Usually the local officials took the matter into their hands. Political authorities such as the district office, the mayor and the community council would become proactive; alternatively, it was the church in the person of the local priest. But there were also lay organisations in the form of local associations which were affiliated with either the political or the ecclesiastical part. A typical example of the whole process is the case of Waldkirch, a little town fifteen kilometres north-east of Freiburg.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁵ Fr Kollefrath to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 15 Dec. 1888 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Wyhl, St. Josephshaus).

⁵²⁶ Sister Zeno Münzer to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 25 July 1904 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gruol, Schwesternhaus).

⁵²⁷ District office to Motherhouse Freiburg, 20 Jan. 1914 (MHA Freiburg, Akte St. Peter, St. Josefshaus).

⁵²⁸ Sister Zeno Münzer to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 25 July 1904 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gruol, Schwesternhaus).

⁵²⁹ Mayor Schaub to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 25 May 1892 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Muggensturm, Schwesternhaus).

⁵³⁰ Nursing association, report of 1889 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Waldkirch, St. Nikolaispital).

Before the 1880s, there was almost no external home-nursing available in Waldkirch though a small hospital was in existence, already staffed with the Sisters of Charity since 1853. Illnesses in general created great hardship notably among the poor, but in times out of the ordinary, especially when epidemics occurred, all social strata needed nurses. Thus the local women's association took the risk. In 1885 they founded a separate entity, a nursing association, to finance the Sisters of Charity's work of nursing the sick at home. The members of such an association paid an annual fee with the right to receive nursing care in times of sickness. The money raised provided for two sister nurses who came in February 1886 and settled for the first years in the hospital.⁵³¹ In the report of 1889, the women's association stated that over a period of three years those two sisters attended ten to fifty-two poor sick and administered 1,611 □ 1,852 services to them, in addition to 124 □ 194 night watches. Furthermore, the sisters were also responsible for the acquisition of medical instruments such as syringes, thermometer, bedpans, inhalation apparatus, irrigator, catheter, ice bags, and bathtub that were used by rich and poor.⁵³² The report concluded:

On the grounds of a three-year experience, ... there is no doubt that the enterprise proved its worth in every respect; especially because of the introduction of an orderly system of nursing by sisters of charity, who often provided relief [practical assistance] at a family sickbed and freed many poor families from bitter hardship and distress with gratuitous meals and provisions.'

The women thought with respect of 'such diligence and self abandonment'; and wanted to express the 'warmest thank you for this task and the will to make sacrifices...'⁵³³

Due to the geographical location of many villages and to the poverty of the local communities, working and living conditions in the small branch houses were very difficult. The sisters visited the sick in rain and storm, in snow and ice, by day and night.⁵³⁴ This necessitated walking great distances, which proved to be

⁵³¹ Chronicle of St Nicholas' hospital, Waldkirch, written by Sister Clothilde Maier in 1900 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Waldkirch St. Nikolaispital).

⁵³² Nursing association, report of 1889 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Waldkirch, St. Nikolaispital)

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Sister to Motherhouse, 28 Apr. 1946 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Schlossau, Schwesternhaus).

especially horrendous during wintertime in the villages on the upper slopes of the Black Forest, when the snow was cleared off the roads only later in the day, and the sisters often got completely soaked. Unable to change clothes, they had to stay all day in wet dresses, and when they came home the dress was frozen.⁵³⁵ The routes were idyllic in summer but in winter, which made up two-thirds of the year there, the walking was 'a way of the cross'.⁵³⁶ One of the conditions of getting the service of the sisters in St Peter (Black Forest, 20 km east of Freiburg) was that the sisters had to be fetched and brought back by carriage or sleigh in bad weather, in winter or in long distances.⁵³⁷

Very often inadequate housing added to the bad conditions endured in these small houses. In Gruol (Hohenzollern), the Mother General Sister Luisa David after her visitation in 1904, ordered that the sisters be provided with wooden bedsteads. The priest denied that the house was damp; he blamed the climate as too humid.⁵³⁸ In Rangendingen (Hohenzollern, 8 km north-west of Hechingen) the sister superior of the new branch house was prepared for the poverty of the furnishings and equipment, but found it most difficult that there was no water pipe to or from the kitchen so that the sisters had to carry all the water.⁵³⁹ In Rotenfels (8 km north-east of Baden-Baden), the second story of the building was so bug-infested that it was impossible to live there. The situation was so bad that Fr Superior Karl Mayer threatened to cease the contract and to withdraw the sisters from the village.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁵ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to community council, 19 Feb. 1907 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Rötenbach, Schwesternhaus).

⁵³⁶ Sister Eduard Meier to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 25 May 1907 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Rötenbach, Schwesternhaus).

⁵³⁷ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to district office, 30 Jan. 1914 (MHA Freiburg, Akte St. Peter, St. Josefshaus).

⁵³⁸ Fr Huthmacher to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 8 Sept. 1904 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gruol, Schwesternhaus). As the priest appeared unable to see to the needs of the sisters and to fulfil his promise of building a new house for them, the Motherhouse Freiburg threatened to terminate the contract as a last resort. The Motherhouse did not follow through because, as the priest pointed out, a withdrawal would damage the reputation of the Motherhouse, see same letter.

⁵³⁹ Sister Erwin Faist to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 26 Apr 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Rangendingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁵⁴⁰ Sister Servatia Herzog to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 16 June 1906 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Rotenfels, Schwesternhaus).

In the same village, Rotenfels, typhus was a permanent guest, and the sister nurse asked the mother general if she was allowed to watch every other night. In 1903, the priest could not understand why the younger kindergarten sister did not assist her in the night watches. However, the nurse Sister Zeno Münzer wanted to spare her so that she did not become disgusted and sick for the rest of her life:

Dear good Reverend Mother, it is not easy to keep watch here where it is so filthy and sometimes the straw of the beds completely rotten. I was recently in a house where they kept piglets, chickens and geese in the same room as the sick person was lying.⁵⁴¹

The workload was often overwhelming. In Stetten unter Holstein (Hohenzollern), the one and only sister nurse in 1909 paid 2,906 visits to the sick, got through fifty night watches and an additional 190 other visits. Her colleague taught ninety children over 272 days of school, and from January to March had eighty-four girls in the sewing school in the evenings.⁵⁴²

The sisters also worked tirelessly, in these conditions, under the watchful eye of the public. Father Trescher of Mühlhausen-Ehingen (between Singen and Engen, close to Constance) praised the sisters as 'mirrors of chastity and purity for the female youth', and therefore he wanted to get them for his parish.⁵⁴³ The good example of the sisters was a great spiritual benefit for the parish.⁵⁴⁴ In Nussbach in the Rench valley (5 km west of Oberkirch), Fr Wiesse expected that efficient sisters would be sent who could support his pastoral work significantly.⁵⁴⁵ The priest of Owingen (Lake Constance, 6 km north of Überlingen) hoped for sisters who could recommend themselves in a difficult parish and assist him in his role as pastor.⁵⁴⁶ The demand was for sisters who

⁵⁴¹ Sister Zeno Münzer to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 15 Nov. 1903 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gruol, Schwesternhaus).

⁵⁴² Newspaper clipping, 18 Jan. 1910 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten unter Holstein, Schwesternhaus).

⁵⁴³ Fr Trescher to Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 2 Apr. 1883 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Mühlhausen-Ehingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁵⁴⁴ Fr Beuschlein to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 9 Aug. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten bei Engen, Schwesternhaus).

⁵⁴⁵ Fr Wiesse to Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 28 Feb. 1883 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Nussbach, St. Josefshaus).

⁵⁴⁶ Dean Fr Franz Xaver Fecht to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 3 May 1903 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Owingen, Schwesternhaus).

would exert a good influence on the religious and family life of the parish.⁵⁴⁷ The people wanted to see the ideal of a peaceful and Christian life modelled in the house of the sisters.⁵⁴⁸

With the first papal approval of the constitutions 26 February 1885, the Motherhouse Freiburg had to submit an annual report to the Motherhouse Strasbourg, and every three years a report went from Freiburg via Strasbourg to Rome.⁵⁴⁹ In 1907, *Sancta Congregatio Episcoporum et Regularum* sent its response to the report of 1902–1906 of the Motherhouse Strasbourg and its affiliated German Motherhouses of Fulda and Freiburg. In that comment, the *Sancta Congregatio* banned branch houses with fewer than six sisters as bad for the communal life of the members of the Order, and proposed some central branch houses instead, from where at least two sisters should venture out into the surrounding villages.⁵⁵⁰ Utter consternation followed this announcement in Freiburg. For the sake of the survival of the Order of Sisters of Charity of Baden, the Motherhouse Freiburg decided to fight this regulation and made its arguments clear in a lengthy letter.⁵⁵¹

It stated the unfeasibility of the regulation because the termination of some of those smaller branch houses had already filled the people with bitterness. When the new regulation became public knowledge, that bitterness would change into open hatred towards the Motherhouse Freiburg. It was in Baden already difficult enough to compete with the Protestant and especially the lay nurses who received the highest protection. The Catholic nurses would lose even more terrain to them. Many poor villages could only afford two sisters, and in such communities the sisters were very important, especially morally. The postulants

⁵⁴⁷ C. Schweitzer, head of the St Vincent's association, to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 11 Apr. 1905 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Müllheim, Vinzentiushaus).

⁵⁴⁸ Fr Bogenschütz to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 25 Aug. 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sigmaringendorf, Schwesternhaus).

⁵⁴⁹ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 338.

⁵⁵⁰ *Sancta Congregatio Episcoporum et Regularum*, 16 Feb. 1907 to Bishop of Strasbourg (EAF, B5/89).

⁵⁵¹ Fr Superior Karl Mayer in the name of Mother General Sister Luisa David to Ordinariate, 5 Apr. 1907 (EAF, B5/89).

and novices, who were mainly meant for the service in towns, came predominantly from those small villages in the countryside. To quit branch houses there would mean to lose presence and, therefore, a future generation of sisters. The Motherhouse dared to question the positive effects of central houses, which were not suitable for the climatic and geographical situation of Baden. The sisters of such houses were actually in greater danger on their continuous walks back and forth than sisters based in one village where there was a certain social control by the people. The Motherhouse concluded that the Roman regulation was about to cut the thread of life of the congregation.⁵⁵²

The request was granted by Rome promptly and without much ado. However, the founding of small branch houses was dependent on the 'conscience' of the bishop, and was only to be undertaken when absolutely necessary.⁵⁵³ Fr Superior Joseph Guerber of the Motherhouse Strasbourg had limited sympathy for all the consternation: 'On n'y observait jamais les prescriptions romaines.'⁵⁵⁴ However, the battle was won, and the Order of the Sisters of Charity could continue to establish small branch houses throughout Baden.

Conclusion

This chapter examined nursing as the fundamental task of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of the Motherhouse Freiburg im Breisgau. In their very own field of nursing, the sisters displayed visible agency in defending their philosophy whenever it was threatened, and complied with changes imposed on them only when it was inevitable.

The understanding of the nursing philosophy of the Order is fundamental to the understanding of the Order itself and to its reaction to influences from the

⁵⁵² Fr Superior Karl Mayer in the name of Mother General Sister Luisa David to Ordinariate, 5 Apr. 1907 (EAF, B5/89).

⁵⁵³ *Sancta Congregatio Episcoporum et Regularum* to Archbishop Dr Thomas Nörber, 28 June 1907 (EAF, B5/89): '*...pro gratia iuxta preces, onerata tamen conscientia Episcopi super vera et praecita necessitate.*'

⁵⁵⁴ Guerber, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 11.

outside world. For the sisters, nursing was always a means to express their faith, their love of God and of neighbour, and a way of self-sanctification. Nursing was never just a social activity carried out in a Christian spirit. It was fundamental to their concept of who they were and what they were about. Drawing directly on the gospels, the sisters saw Christ in the poor sick. At the same time, they valued the scientific expertise and experience of the medical doctors and followed their instructions. As academic medicine progressed so quickly, and hospital life was more and more dictated by machines, it became increasingly difficult for the sisters to prioritise the spiritual healing of the soul over the temporal healing the body.

For such an arduous profession in one of the strictest nursing order of all, the admission requirements were indeed extremely demanding as well. The postulants and novices were from the beginning very well aware of what lay ahead of them, and they were never deceived by a too-glorious understanding of hospital work. Those who entered the Order were prepared to undertake a life of suffering and self-sacrifice and expected an early death.

The Motherhouses of Strasbourg and later that of Freiburg saw to the nursing training themselves, which took place in its own premises and in important hospitals at the same time. The more prominent the role of the doctors became in the hospitals, the more willing the Motherhouse Freiburg was to profit from their expertise, and to allow the doctors to participate in the training. With that move, it ensured that the sisters were always to the fore in their profession. The interference of the state by introducing a new state exam in nursing was seen as a threat to the Catholic understanding of nursing, and the Motherhouse tried to exclude the state from its affairs as much as possible.

With the specific spiritual understanding of nursing, the Sisters of Charity always tended to exceed their strengths. The view of their working conditions can therefore only be a secular standpoint. The excess of workload, mainly without a division of day and night shifts, proved to be a major threat to health, apart

altogether from the danger of caring for highly infectious patients. The Motherhouse Freiburg, and with it the doctors of the sister-staffed hospitals, saw to the health of its sisters, but the main responsibility stayed with the sister herself. Just before the First World War broke out in 1914, through introducing closer regulation of nursing and nurse training, the state started to interfere in ways that would collide with the spiritual concept of nursing.

The smaller branch houses were important for the social needs of the people of Baden, bringing basic medical care into the countryside for the very first time. This structure created by the sisters lasts until today, long after the heyday of the religious sisters. At the same time, those houses also met the spiritual needs of the villagers, showing them the charitable side of the church through the Sisters of Charity, who could reach the female part of the faithful and therefore support the local priest in his pastoral care. Together with the other female congregations working in rural branch houses all over Baden, and who covered two-thirds of all its Catholic parishes at the largest extent, the 'White Sisters' became the 'female face' of the Catholic Church at local level. For the Motherhouse Freiburg itself, those small branch houses formed the 'lifeline' for the Order, providing it with the steady stream of postulants. Those candidates were mostly country girls of good health, strong build and a readiness to work hard. This was key to the survival of the Sisters of Charity of Baden. A different kind of survival was asked for in times of war and epidemics when the sisters had to work *in extremis*, in the most difficult situations possible.

Chapter 5

Nursing and the Motherhouse Freiburg in times of war, 1866 to 1918

After the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815, the German states enjoyed a long phase of peace.⁵⁵⁵ Fifty years later, three short wars of unification were fought in a period of seven years with Prussia as the main party. Whereas the 1864 war against Denmark,⁵⁵⁶ fought in the very north of Germany, was of no significance for the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg, the sisters played a small part in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, the first time in their history to be involved in war nursing. Only five years later the Motherhouse Freiburg provided nurses for the soldiers of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 on a much larger scale. It was the First World War from 1914 to 1918, however, which would prove the ultimate test, in terms of scale and duration, the number of sisters involved, the type of work they undertook and the degree of their endurance.

'Nursing in times of war' has a twofold meaning. First, it applies to the nursing of soldiers who had been wounded in action and which was facilitated in field hospitals close to the front or in towns. Secondly, it concerns the civilians on the home front. In this chapter the focus is on the role the Motherhouse Freiburg played in both kinds of nursing, with an emphasis on the first, but also keeping in mind that the quantity of source material is more limited than for certain other chapters, and the coverage in consequence less comprehensive.

What did this engagement in war nursing mean for the Order? What extra demands were placed on the sisters? In a report to the motherhouse a Sister of Charity of Freiburg wrote during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 that 'our knees do not hurt us from kneeling at prayer, but the soles of our feet do from

⁵⁵⁵ The Revolution of 1848/49 is deliberately not taken into account as it was not a planned enterprise by the German states.

⁵⁵⁶ See all the wars of the German unification between 1864 and 1871 in John Breuilly, 'Revolution to unification', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German history since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 124–46, here at pp 130–38.

continuous running.⁵⁵⁷ What frequently had applied in times of peace, so even more in war. At no other time had the sisters to deal with such a large number of seriously wounded patients, and they often worked to complete exhaustion.

Why did the Motherhouse Freiburg engage itself in that all-male environment of war? As seen in chapter two of this thesis, the different 'culture wars' (first in Baden and then in nearly all of Germany) of the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s had resulted in a situation where the newly founded, predominantly Protestant German state distrusted its Catholic citizens. Active support of the government at all levels in times of crisis was a means by which Catholics could prove their patriotic loyalty. The successful management of a major crisis led to public appreciation of the Sisters of Charity and other members of nursing orders and congregations. At the same time war nursing contributed decisively to the development of lay nursing, which gained an esteem it had lacked before.⁵⁵⁸ What were the advantages of war nursing for the Order? Did the engagement of the sisters in this specialised field result in greater appreciation by the populace as well as the state? Popular recognition of the importance of their nursing role could lead to more candidates and therefore greater growth.

And what of Baden? Nursing in a time of war or crisis also brought a religious order or congregation the opportunity to prove to the state its usefulness and the professionalism of its members. This was especially important for a relatively newly-founded religious institution such as the Motherhouse Freiburg, which was still little known outside its own Catholic circle in a state with a Protestant sovereign and a predominantly Protestant elite and bureaucracy. In short, war nursing was a way for the Order to demonstrate that the sisters were good and loyal citizens. Unlike other German or foreign congregations, the Sisters of

⁵⁵⁷ Letter of a total of eleven letters from the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/1871, in Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in der Erzdiözese Freiburg, 1846–1896* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1896), p. 18; name of the sister anonymised by Mayer and letter without exact date.

⁵⁵⁸ Herbert Grundhewer, 'Die Kriegskrankenpflege und das Bild der Krankenschwester im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert', in Johanna Bleker and Heinz-Peter Schmiedebach (eds), *Medizin und Krieg* (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), pp 135–152, here at p. 135. Comparisons may be drawn with developments in Britain following the Crimean War (1853).

Charity of Freiburg had not yet had the opportunity to assist in major natural disasters, as had the Motherhouse Munich of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, the first to be founded by the Motherhouse Strasbourg in 1832 in a German state, and which had been tested in the cholera epidemic of 1836. The Alsatian motherhouse of Niederbronn, founded in 1849, had as its main task the nursing of the sick at home. It too had received its 'baptism of fire' in the cholera epidemic in Alsace in 1854.⁵⁵⁹ The congregation also sent sisters to nurse soldiers in the Crimean War, and branched out into the north of Baden from 1857.⁵⁶⁰ In proving their reliability and competence to government and the people alike during a cholera crisis and in times of war, the Bavarian Sisters of Charity enhanced the attractiveness of the congregation to young women and therefore fuelled its rapid growth.⁵⁶¹ Thus the Motherhouse of Niederbronn in Alsace already had 153 members by the end of 1852, just three years after the founding of the congregation.⁵⁶² For the Freiburg motherhouse by contrast, the cholera epidemic in Mannheim in 1849 had come too early for the new Order to gain public attention.⁵⁶³

Wars and other times of serious crises had two further effects. The wars of the nineteenth century advanced developments in medicine and resulted in a reorganisation of nursing.⁵⁶⁴ Claudia Bischoff sees war as being one of four catalysts for the development of nursing, arguing that religious nurses of both sexes failed to meet professional standards.⁵⁶⁵ Although this could be valid for the situation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, her exclusive focus on

⁵⁵⁹ Luzian Pfleger, *Die Kongregation der Schwestern vom Allerheiligsten Heilande, genannt 'Niederbronner Schwestern'* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1921), p. 21f. (foundation) and p. 36 (cholera epidemic).

⁵⁶⁰ Pfleger, *'Niederbronner Schwestern'*, pp 40 (Crimean War), 49 (branch houses in Baden).

⁵⁶¹ Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom heiligen Vinzenz von Paul, Mutterhaus München (ed.), *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern: 1832 bis 2007* (Munich, 2007) pp 60–3.

⁵⁶² Pfleger, *'Niederbronner Schwestern'*, p. 35.

⁵⁶³ Martin Krauß, *Armenwesen und Gesundheitsfürsorge in Mannheim vor der Industrialisierung, 1750–1850/60* (Sigmaringen, 1993), pp 123–33; Reiner Albert, with Günther Saltin and Roman Nitsch, *Der Caritasverband Mannheim und seine Geschichte* (Ostfildern, 2005), p. 30.

⁵⁶⁴ Eduard Seidler and Karl-Heinz Leven, *Geschichte der Medizin und der Krankenpflege* (7th ed., Stuttgart, 2003), p. 215.

⁵⁶⁵ Claudia Bischoff, *Frauen in der Krankenpflege: zur Entwicklung von Frauenrolle und Frauenberufstätigkeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), p. 74.

lay nursing causes her to overlook the role and the extent of the many female religious directly participating in war nursing.⁵⁶⁶ However, with the founding of the Baden Women's Association in 1859 and especially after its consolidation during and after the *Kulturkampf*, new competition arose for the Motherhouse Freiburg.

The challenge of lay nursing

Laywomen's associations in the German states go back to the years of the Napoleonic wars of liberation (1813–15). They were generally formed by women of noble birth as a female contribution to the war effort. In their desire to fulfil their patriotic duty, these women collected money and materials, and made bandages and clothing for the soldiers. After the war was over these associations were dissolved.⁵⁶⁷ In Baden, however, a female welfare association of this type was to develop in a different, long-lasting direction. It would come to compete with other providers of nursing staff, and so its relationship with the Motherhouse Freiburg would be strained, to say the least.

The Baden Women's Association (*Badischer Frauenverein*) had been established in the aftermath of the battle of Solferino (Italy) in the Austro-Italian War of 1859.⁵⁶⁸ The main goal of this patriotic women's association was to prepare for the eventuality of war by training nurses and teaching first aid, and by collecting materials and money. From the outset, this lay organisation, which had its headquarters in the capital Karlsruhe, enjoyed the support of upper and upper middle class women and the active patronage of Grand Duchess Luise of Baden (1838–1923).⁵⁶⁹ From this association a non-denominational lay sisterhood

⁵⁶⁶ Bischoff, *Frauen in der Krankenpflege*, p. 76.

⁵⁶⁷ Engelbert Krebs, *Geschichte des Freiburger Frauenvereins, 1815–1915* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1915), pp 1–3.

⁵⁶⁸ Kerstin Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein 1859–1918: Rotes Kreuz, Fürsorge und Frauenfrage* (Stuttgart, 2002), p. 25. The battle of Solferino was the hour of birth of the International Red Cross, founded by Henry Dunant and a circle of his friends in Geneva, see Stefan Schomann, *Im Zeichen der Menschlichkeit: Geschichte und Gegenwart des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes* (Munich, 2013), pp 49–83.

⁵⁶⁹ Luise was a princess of Prussia. Her father prince Wilhelm became later Emperor of Germany in 1871. She was the aunt of Emperor Wilhelm II.

evolved,⁵⁷⁰ which later became a part of the German Red Cross⁵⁷¹ and whose members were called 'Luise's Sisters' (*Luisenschwestern*) by the people.⁵⁷² Like its Catholic counterpart in Baden (the Motherhouse Freiburg), the *Badischer Frauenverein* was organised on the lines of the motherhouse-system, and its lay nurses worked on similar lines to the Catholic sisters of charity.⁵⁷³ Their close association with war nursing was also their main characteristic.⁵⁷⁴

Following the loss of the historic landscape of (mainly Catholic) Austria post-1866 and German unification in 1871, the new state of Germany was a predominantly Protestant state with a Protestant sovereign where the Catholics were viewed with suspicion, especially after they started to develop closer ties with the Vatican. Times of crises offered the Catholic nursing orders the opportunity to prove themselves good citizens. And with war being a constant possibility in the nineteenth century, the state was very likely to be in need of good and reliable nurses. The important question for the nursing orders and also for the Motherhouse Freiburg was whether such a public engagement paid off, particularly when straight after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 the '*Kulturkampf*' was unleashed on the newly 'united' Germany.

The first encounter of the Motherhouse Freiburg with war in 1866

The first involvement of the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg with the nursing of soldiers in active service occurred in 1866, when a coalition led by the Prussians fought Austria and her German allies in the so-called 'Brothers' or 'German War' in pursuit of national unity and Prussian hegemony.⁵⁷⁵ This war was a short war, barely six weeks in duration. It was also conducted over distant battlefields, involving a new type of mobile warfare.⁵⁷⁶ Along the river Main and its conflux the

⁵⁷⁰ Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, pp 433ff.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., p. 138; Grundhewer, 'Die Kriegskrankenpflege', p. 139.

⁵⁷² Ibid., p. 10, footnote 41, p. 496.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., p. 435f.

⁵⁷⁴ Grundhewer, 'Die Kriegskrankenpflege', p. 140f.

⁵⁷⁵ Annett Büttner, *Die konfessionelle Kriegskrankenpflege im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 2013), p. 123.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 123f.

Tauber, the Prussian army fought against their former Austrian allies. In the very north of Baden, close to the border with Bavaria, the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg had been serving in the local hospital of the little town of Tauberbischofsheim since 1864.⁵⁷⁷ As the battlefields along the rivers Main and Tauber were so close, the hospital was overwhelmed by wounded soldiers, and the Motherhouse accordingly sent some more sisters in support.⁵⁷⁸ It is not possible to determine who took the initiative for the provision of more nurses for what was effectively a small field hospital, whether it was the Motherhouse, the local sisters, sisters in other branch houses who wanted to help, or the hospital board. As the battles took place in high summer (June and July), the soldiers left behind the scourge of cholera.⁵⁷⁹ Several villages around Tauberbischofsheim were affected, and in one of them, Dittigheim, a Sister of Charity stayed on to nurse those villagers. On 14 September 1866, after her last patient had died, Sister Luciana Geradewohl died herself and was buried there.⁵⁸⁰

The lesson that the German government had learned from 1866 was that a firm and centralised management of voluntary war nursing was greatly needed.⁵⁸¹ The German branch of the Order of Malta undertook, for future wars, to establish an organisation bringing together the Catholic voluntary nursing sisters and brothers and the military chaplains as part of the German Red Cross.⁵⁸² Their main goal was to ensure both the nursing and spiritual care of the Catholic soldiers.⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁷ MHA Freiburg, Akte Tauberbischofsheim, Spital.

⁵⁷⁸ Karl Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 17. Total number unknown, but as the overall number of sisters of the whole Order was still small, there could not have been many. Two are known by name: Sister Luciana Geradewohl (1829–1866) and Sister Xaveria Schelb (1832–1917), see *Donaubote* no. 29, 6 Feb. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hüfingen, Fürstlich Fürstenbergisches Landesspital). The newspaper stated that Sister Xaveria was actually at the battlefield.

⁵⁷⁹ Büttner, *Die konfessionelle Kriegsrankenpflege*, p. 217.

⁵⁸⁰ MHA Freiburg, Akte Dittigheim, 27 Feb. 1945.

⁵⁸¹ Büttner, *Die konfessionelle Kriegsrankenpflege*, p. 125.

⁵⁸² In Baden, the Women's Association of Baden was mainly responsible for the organisation of the nursing and other personnel during war, see Kerstin Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, p. 474.

⁵⁸³ Büttner, *Die konfessionelle Kriegsrankenpflege*, p. 191f.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71

Only four years after the 'German War' of 1866, the Motherhouse Freiburg could afford to assign around fifty sisters to nurse the sick and wounded soldiers in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71. They were sent to military hospitals, which were set up in the state of Baden itself. Fr Superior Karl Mayer drew up a list of these temporary institutions for Karlsruhe, Schwetzingen, Baden-Baden, Offenburg and two for Freiburg, all situated in the Rhine valley, as the front was in the neighbouring French regions of Alsace and Lorraine.⁵⁸⁴ Several civilian hospitals, which the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg already staffed, also took in soldiers.⁵⁸⁵ In Hüfingen (Black Forest) they treated up to a hundred wounded combatants.⁵⁸⁶ As it was the first such enterprise for the Order on that scale, the sisters were asked to report back to the motherhouse. The analysis of eleven surviving letters gives an invaluable insight into those military hospitals.⁵⁸⁷

Invariably, two Sisters of Charity of Freiburg were teamed together in a department of the military hospital with ten to sixty soldiers, with some departments by now having only half the numbers.⁵⁸⁸ One hospital contained altogether 300 men.⁵⁸⁹ The men were not divided according to nationality or religion, the sisters nursed all of them regardless: German and French soldiers together, many Prussians and Bavarians, Protestants and Catholics alike. Among them were also so-called *Turkos*,⁵⁹⁰ whom they reported as very well behaved. All the soldiers were most severely wounded, many were mutilated, some were operated on without any anaesthetics, the vast majority of them

⁵⁸⁴ Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 17.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁶ Joseph Guerber, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 11.

⁵⁸⁷ Published in Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, pp 18–22, eleven in total, but all anonymised and without date.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21f., letters IX to XI. The two sisters together were mentioned in letters II, III, IV, V and IX, pp 18–21.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18, letter I.

⁵⁹⁰ One of a body of native Algerian *tirailleurs* in the French army, dressed as a Turk, see <http://www.websters1913.com/words/Turko> [accessed 23 Oct. 2018]. Most of the sisters must have met a black man for the very first time: 'Some of them were even blacker than a chimney sweep...' in Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 18f., letters I and IV.

died.⁵⁹¹ The most common word used in the letters was 'misery'. It is not possible to tell if the French and the Germans were treated differently by the doctors but the sisters certainly cared for all of them in the same way.

As the Sisters of Charity were viewed as 'professional' nurses, they were assigned mainly voluntary lay personnel to assist them. In one case, the volunteer was called 'a lady',⁵⁹² the others were 'misses' or more specifically '*Luisenfräulein*',⁵⁹³ the latter indicating a member of the Baden Women's Association. There were also male attendants. Other religious were Protestant deaconesses from Basel (Switzerland); only one other Catholic sister was mentioned.⁵⁹⁴ The hospital management seemed to attempt to distribute the Catholic sisters over the wards evenly, and to avoid mixing different orders together. The Red Cross sisters, it was reported, relished the chance to take command over the Sisters of Charity, and sometimes misbehaved, so that they accordingly lost trust.⁵⁹⁵ The Sisters of Charity only had time to care for the patients; the male and female auxiliaries or attendants were supposed to keep everything clean and in order, but they did not always see to that to the sisters' satisfaction.⁵⁹⁶

The regard in which the hospital management held the sisters is apparent from the fact that the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg had always to care for the worst and most difficult cases. However, as the war progressed attitudes changed among the soldiers and the authorities: 'day by day they appreciate our sisters more...'⁵⁹⁷ and 'now they entrust us with the most important [cases]...'⁵⁹⁸ When the war neared its end, and people started to be sent home, the sisters

⁵⁹¹ Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 18, letter I.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 19, letter IV.

⁵⁹³ '*Luisenfräulein*' is a colloquial term for a Red Cross sister, after the name of her president, Grand Duchess Luise of Baden.

⁵⁹⁴ Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, pp 18ff., letters II, V, IX–XI.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20 and p. 22, letters V and XI.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18, letter II.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20, letter V.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21f., letter X.

were urged to stay on: 'However, they do not let us go for any price in the world, as I heard with my very own ears.'⁵⁹⁹

Some sisters accompanied a doctor on ward rounds twice a day for up to seven hours in the first round;⁶⁰⁰ others went with another doctor to renew the bandages.⁶⁰¹ Common to all sisters was the night watch, which had to be undertaken every other night. While the daily routine was already most demanding and tiring enough, the night watch had the worst effect: 'with God's help I endure the night watch...'⁶⁰² 'Sister H. might not stay healthy for much longer as she has been enduring the stresses and strains for seven weeks nonstop...'⁶⁰³ After weeks of that work, most of the sisters were still healthy or 'pretty healthy', only one admitted that 'all are still on their feet, but very tired.'⁶⁰⁴ Another sister even wrote that 'I am happy when I have a lot to do. I am healthy, I even got stronger.'⁶⁰⁵ Psychologically, the misery of the wounded was hard to endure, especially for those new to the work.⁶⁰⁶ However, one sister who had formerly worked only with children and had to learn nursing before she came to the soldiers, was happy to be able to alleviate pain.⁶⁰⁷

With regard to their spiritual life, the situation of the sisters was not easy. Although they tried to do their religious exercises as regularly as possible, very often they had to cut the prayers short.⁶⁰⁸ On occasion, they had no time to attend Mass, often they did not even know the day of the week.⁶⁰⁹ Whenever they had to quit Mass early, they viewed the service to the sick as service to God, following in the spirit of St Vincent.⁶¹⁰ Whenever Mass was held on a

⁵⁹⁹ Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 22, letter XI.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19, letter III.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20, letter VI.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 21, letter VII.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 18f., letter II.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22, letter X.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21, letter VIII.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18, letter I.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20, letter VI.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18f. and p. 20, letters II and VI.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18, letter I.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20, letter VI.

Sunday, even the Protestants attended and apparently enjoyed it,⁶¹¹ a very practical approach in the circumstances. The concern uppermost for every Sister of Charity was to make sure that every dying soldier had received the last rites: 'Mostly Catholics who died [were]...all supplied with the holy sacraments. That was always my big concern.'⁶¹² This care of the most severely wounded soldiers was Catholic care *par excellence*. The sisters applied physical care as much as possible, but the main goal was the care of the eternal soul of the Catholic soldier, and its preparation for a good death. This was only possible when the sister had a solid faith, which she communicated by kind words and a smile on her face: 'They love it when we sisters are cheerful.'⁶¹³ The military hospitals were in operation until the end of April 1871. Some of the sisters fell ill from over-exertion.⁶¹⁴ The first wave of enthusiasm was long past by then.⁶¹⁵ However, surprisingly, only one nursing sister died, repeating the example of Sister Luciana Geradewohl in the war of 1866: as the last victim of the 1870/71 war, the Motherhouse Freiburg lost Sister Aurelia Schüle who died of typhus, shortly after she had buried her last typhus patient.⁶¹⁶

With this engagement in war nursing, the Motherhouse Freiburg had joined other German nursing congregations.⁶¹⁷ The related motherhouses of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Munich and of Hildesheim, which had been founded by the Motherhouse Strasbourg, had also sent some of their sisters to nurse the soldiers in those wars. The Motherhouse Munich had been even

⁶¹¹ Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 21, letter IX.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, p. 21, letter VIII.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁴ Motherhouse Freiburg to mayor of Tauberbischofsheim, 21 Apr. 1871 (MHA; Akte Tauberbischofsheim, Krankenhaus).

⁶¹⁵ Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 20, letter V.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22. Sister Aurelia Schüle (1838–1871), clothing 1861, profession 1863, died 23 April 1871 in Freiburg. Her last patient had five biological sisters in the order. The war of 1866 was followed by a cholera epidemic, the Franco-Prussian War entailed a smallpox epidemic, see Büttner, *Die konfessionelle Kriegskrankenpflege*, p. 218.

⁶¹⁷ Relinde Meiwes, *'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn': katholische Frauenorganisationen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), p. 299. Meiwes names the Franciscan sisters of Waldbreitbach and Salzkotten, the Augustinian sisters of Neuß, the Grey Sisters and the Clement sisters of Münster.

involved in the Austro-Italian war of 1859.⁶¹⁸ Relinde Meiwes notes that it was through the war nursing that the sisters proved themselves both as female contributors to the war effort, assisting the soldiers, and as discriminated Catholics showing their loyalty to the state.⁶¹⁹ The female Catholic nursing orders profited directly in the following *Kulturkampf*. They had demonstrated their indispensability in any future war, so they were spared the fate of their female companions, the teaching orders and congregations, many of whom had to either change their field of action or leave the country.⁶²⁰ This was certainly the case for the Motherhouse Freiburg, which had come out of the *Kulturkampf* nearly unscathed.⁶²¹

Setting out to identify the person responsible for promoting the cause of the Catholic nursing sisters in the *Kulturkampf*, Relinde Meiwes considers the following three possibilities: Georg von Kameke, the Prussian minister of war, Emperor Wilhelm I himself, or his consort, Empress Augusta.⁶²² Of the three persons, the Empress Augusta seems to be the most likely. Her daughter Luise was married to Grand Duke Friedrich I of Baden, and the Empress often visited Baden-Baden and its hospital, where the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg were stationed. She also knew the sisters well and made donations for the hospital chapel, gave money or contributions in kind, and sometimes supported the priest in residence. According to a sister's report, Empress Augusta cried once in front of Sister Superior Alban Jörger (the later mother general 1884–98) because she was so unhappy and yearned to change places with Sister Alban (but Sister

⁶¹⁸ 175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern, pp 142–5. Lieselotte Sterner, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in Hildesheim von 1852 bis zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil. Untersuchung einer karitativen Ordensgemeinschaft vor dem Hintergrund der sozialen und politischen Entwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Hannover, 1999), p. 62f.

⁶¹⁹ Meiwes, 'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn', p. 299.

⁶²⁰ Relinde Meiwes, *Klosterleben in bewegten Zeiten: die Geschichte der ermländischen Katharinschwestern, 1914–1962* (Paderborn, 2016), p. 19f.; Büttner, *Die konfessionelle Kriegskrankenpflege*, p. 409f.; Meiwes, 'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn', p. 299f.

⁶²¹ See chapter two of this thesis.

⁶²² Meiwes named Maura Böckeler who in 1962 held the Prussian minister of war, Georg von Kameke responsible for having defended the nursing orders. Joseph Jungnitz identified in 1892 Emperor Wilhelm I, and in 1909 the Motherhouse of Paderborn of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul spoke out for his wife the Empress Augusta, see Meiwes, 'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn', p. 300.

Alban did not): 'You can profess your faith openly, but I cannot.'⁶²³ If the Empress were a Catholic in secret, it would be a reasonable explanation for her support of the Catholic nursing orders.

The First World War, 1914 to 1918

For the First World War, the voluntary war organisations in Baden were much better prepared than previously. After the war of 1866, the military hospitals were organised according to the Prussian example.⁶²⁴ The war of 1870/71 brought a much higher degree of co-operation on the part of the population.⁶²⁵ The laywomen's associations were affiliated to the Baden Women's Association (*Badischer Frauenverein*) which offered nurse training and organised the voluntary female helpers for the war effort.⁶²⁶ With the 'War Sanitary Order' of 1878 the voluntary war organisations were subordinated to the military authority of the state.⁶²⁷ The 'Regulations for voluntary War Nursing' of 1907 required much higher standards of hygiene, so that the wounded soldiers were no longer placed in barracks but in newer buildings such as schools, concert halls, factories or orphanages.⁶²⁸

For the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg, the First World War turned out to be a much sterner test than the wars of the nineteenth century. With an increased number of well-trained sisters thanks to several years of growth, the Order could now offer the state more nurses. In the two decades before World War I, the Motherhouse Freiburg was asked to report to the German Red Cross on a regular basis: 'A higher number of sisters had to be

⁶²³ Sister Superior Ladislaus Glaser to Motherhouse, report of 6 Nov. 1911 about the Empress Augusta in 1856 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Baden-Baden, Krankenhaus).

⁶²⁴ Mathias Clodius, *Die Lazarettstadt Freiburg i. Br. 1870–1945: ein Beitrag zum Kriegslazarettwesen in Deutschland* (unpublished PhD thesis Freiburg i. Br., 1993), p. 5.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶²⁶ Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, pp 137–50, pp 422–32 and pp 474–81; Clodius, *Die Lazarettstadt*, p. 27. The International Red Cross organisation at Geneva acknowledged the *Badischer Frauenverein* as the only female member of the Red Cross organisation, see Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, p. 138, and Clodius, *Die Lazarettstadt*, p. 50.

⁶²⁷ Astrid Stölzle, *Kriegsrankenpflege im Ersten Weltkrieg: Das Pflegepersonal der freiwilligen Krankenpflege in den Etappen des Deutschen Kaiserreichs* (Stuttgart, 2013), p. 28.

⁶²⁸ Clodius, *Die Lazarettstadt Freiburg*, pp 67ff.

named to the Red Cross, who could be made available in the event of war.⁶²⁹ In 1912, a plea was sent out by the Red Cross to ask if sisters who lived in Hohenzollern could be enrolled, because of the ever-growing demand for sisters for nursing and economic service in the case of mobilisation.⁶³⁰

With the beginning of the First World War on 1 August 1914, many Germans were very enthusiastic and there are reports of soldiers going joyously into their first battle, Catholics and Protestants alike.⁶³¹ The elation was allegedly related to higher levels of education and was predominantly an urban phenomenon.⁶³² However, the people of the far north-east of Germany, of East Prussia, displayed very little enthusiasm about the outbreak of war, nor did the Sisters of St Catherine of mainly Catholic Ermland. The Russian enemy was too close.⁶³³ In the very opposite corner to East Prussia, in the south-west of the German *Reich*, the father superior of the Motherhouse Strasbourg wrote about the war enthusiasm of the German motherhouses which stemmed from Alsace: '... Fribourg, Fulda et Untermarchthal qui envoyèrent avec enthousiasme des centaines au front.'⁶³⁴

However, a closer look into the minutes of the sisters' council does not confirm that claim:

Yet with the month of August, our dear reverend superiors were asked to send sisters into different military hospitals; and with now 8 August there went twelve sisters to the *Friedrich-Gymnasium* in Freiburg to care for wounded warriors. It was

⁶²⁹ Motherhouse Freiburg, 8 Jan. 1913, answer to request for sisters for eye clinic in Baden-Baden, name of addressee not readable; since 1910 at the latest lists had to be sent annually to the Prussian Ministry of War, see Stölzle, *Kriegsrankenpflege im Ersten Weltkrieg*, p. 44.

⁶³⁰ Local Red Cross association to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 12 Sept. 1912 (MHA, Akte Sigmaringen, St. Fidelis).

⁶³¹ Martin Lätzel, *Die Katholische Kirche im Ersten Weltkrieg: Zwischen Nationalismus und Friedenswillen* (Regensburg, 2014), p. 67ff.

⁶³² Relinde Meiwes, *Klosterleben*, p. 33.

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Fr Superior Leo Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 14. As Fr Superior Joseph Sonntag (+ 1916) did not continue writing the chronicle started by his predecessors, his successor Lutz supplemented the missing years.

horrible to watch them taking part in the care of those poor soldiers who went and still go into a just war with devoted patriotism!⁶³⁵

And about three months later:

Three months have already passed since the horrible World War began, and now our dear reverend superiors are being told by the Red Cross in Karlsruh[e], that the army command wishes for a greater number of sisters for the care of the wounded in the military zone, that is in France, and for that service twenty-three sisters have been chosen who shall bring the poor wounded warriors help and good care!⁶³⁶

For the whole four years' duration of the war, there is only one other entry in the minutes referring to a discussion of war-related matters.⁶³⁷ The language of those sources does not sound very enthusiastic. However, it can be noted that the Motherhouse Freiburg answered the army's request for sisters quickly and without further ado, whereas Fr Superior Joseph Sonntag of Strasbourg tried to keep the sisters at home and refused to send them to the front.⁶³⁸ In the beginning, the Badenese Sisters of Charity obviously wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to the German government, but in the case of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, *Francophile* Fr Superior Sonntag did not want to support the German army to fight the French by sending Alsatian sisters. In the eyes of the Germans, this war was just, so the German Sisters of Charity were ready and eager to help the poor soldiers.⁶³⁹

While the Motherhouse Freiburg might not have been too happy about the outbreak of the war, there are indications that at least some of its members in the branch houses were. One sister was so enthused by the mobilisation of the local priest that she wanted to join up.⁶⁴⁰ The Motherhouse did not let her go; she was

⁶³⁵ Minutes of the sisters' council, 1914, second meeting (without exact date) (MHA Freiburg). Exclamation marks in original. For the First World War (1914–18) there are unfortunately no letters from the sisters in the files, they were probably never written. Any information about the sisters during that war is therefore only indirectly and very scarcely available.

⁶³⁶ Minutes of the sisters' council, 14 Nov. 1914 (MHA Freiburg). A short war had been widely expected, therefore nurses, especially secular ones, had been enlisted only for three months, see Stölzle, *Kriegsrankenpflege im Ersten Weltkrieg*, p. 45.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 Nov. 1916. The type of veil of the sisters in the military zones was discussed.

⁶³⁸ Fr Superior Leo Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 14.

⁶³⁹ Lätzel, *Die Katholische Kirche*, p. 62.

⁶⁴⁰ Fr Brandhuber to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 7 Nov. 1914, about Sister Justa Bürg (MHA, Akte Dettingen).

still part of the convent in Dettingen (Hohenzollern, 6 km south-west of Horb) in the following years. In another file there is mention of a letter from the Motherhouse, in which the superiors asked for more sisters to participate in the war effort. Sister Eulalia Sester of Stetten unter Holstein (Hohenzollern, north-east of Burladingen) pleaded with the parish priest, Fr Dieringer, to certify her as being unfit for war. The priest complied and thereupon told the Motherhouse that due to a mild gastric ulcer, Sister Eulalia needed a special diet and could serve much better at home where she was much needed, as the village was completely bereft of doctors.⁶⁴¹

It is difficult to decide why the Motherhouse Freiburg made its brand-new St Joseph's hospital, the pensioners' home St Carolus and the girls' home economics school St Nazareth, all situated on the Motherhouse site, available as a military hospital as soon as war broke out on 1 August 1914.⁶⁴² Andreas Schmider, the spiritual director of the Motherhouse from 1910 to 1920, did not make it clear in his essay of 1915/16 if the Order acted out of enthusiasm or out of duty to prove its sisters as good citizens, or for both reasons. However, the soldiers could not have asked for a better choice. In operation only since 1 January 1914, St Joseph's boasted one-bed rooms, mostly facing south with a balcony, running warm and cold water, electric light which could be dimmed, tiled stoves and an innovative air exchange system. Bathrooms were on every floor, and in the cellar hydrotherapeutic facilities, sunlamps and a swimming pool. The core formed the two new operating theatres which were equipped with the most modern technologies, and which were added to the two older theatres, the laboratories and the x-ray room.⁶⁴³ Seven doctors, twenty Sisters of Charity and fifty to sixty novices and postulants cared for the wounded, Germans and French alike, 1,216 soldiers in total for the first year of war in 67,908 care days. Although St Joseph often admitted severely wounded and dying patients, only twenty of

⁶⁴¹ Fr A. Dieringer to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 7 Nov. 1914 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten unter Holstein). Sister Eulalia Sester, born 1861, clothing 1884, profession 1886.

⁶⁴² Andreas Schmider, 'Das St. Josephs-Krankenhaus zu Freiburg i. Br. als Lazarett im Völkerrkriege 1914/15', in *Caritas*, xxi (1915/16), pp 10–18, here at p. 10.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 10f.

them actually died. Even soldiers with stark bleeding or ulcerous wounds, high fevers or tetanus could be saved.⁶⁴⁴

The high care standard of the Sisters of Charity was widely known. In the military hospital of Meersburg (Lake Constance), the mayor asked the Motherhouse Freiburg for a sister because he wanted to let go of the assistant lay nurses, as they were far behind a religious sister in terms of efficiency.⁶⁴⁵ However, the sisters themselves did not always meet expectations. In the military hospital at the Ettlingen hospital, Fr Albert reported that both of the two Sisters of Charity lacked essential qualities. Sister Petronia Bury, the properly trained nurse, was gruff and rude and did not show a sister-like behaviour, Sister Notburga Dörflinger on the other hand was good and honest, but not a nurse. The sisters' dealings with each other set a bad example, which Dean Albert did not see among the Sisters of Niederbronn or the Protestant Deaconesses.⁶⁴⁶ According to the triennial report of the Motherhouse Freiburg of 1917, Sister Petronia left the Order eighteen months later, on 12 June 1917.⁶⁴⁷

By the end of 1914, 380 Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg had already cared for 12,800 soldiers in 275,000 care days in military hospitals all over Baden.⁶⁴⁸ For the nursing of the soldiers at home and abroad, the required number of sisters had already exceeded expectations after only four months of war.⁶⁴⁹ On 19 November, the twenty-three sisters mentioned earlier travelled into the military zone to care for typhus patients in the military hospital of Cambrai, France.⁶⁵⁰ That number was eventually increased to sixty sisters, whom the Motherhouse Freiburg could barely manage to send, since the Red Cross at

⁶⁴⁴ Schmider, 'Das St. Josephs-Krankenhaus', pp 12, 14f.

⁶⁴⁵ Mayor of Meersburg to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 6 June 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Meersburg, Krankenhaus).

⁶⁴⁶ Dean Fr Albert to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 14 Jan. 1916 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Ettlingen, Spital).

⁶⁴⁷ Motherhouse Freiburg, triennial report of 1917 (MHA Strasbourg).

⁶⁴⁸ Motherhouse Freiburg, triennial report of 1914 (MHA Strasbourg).

⁶⁴⁹ Motherhouse Freiburg to hospital board Offenbourg, 6 Nov. 1914 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Offenbourg, Krankenhaus).

⁶⁵⁰ Motherhouse Freiburg, triennial report of 1914 (MHA Strasbourg).

Karlsruhe was always placing yet another urgent request.⁶⁵¹ Some of the sisters were also sent to the Eastern front, to Russia, Galicia and Macedonia (see figure 5.1 below). Three sisters died in Drohobycz (Poland) and two later at home as a result of the war.⁶⁵² Unlike the Motherhouse Munich, the Motherhouse Freiburg does not possess any war diaries of sisters who served close to the front.⁶⁵³ Sister Hildebert Wohlgemuth gave a presentation on her four years at a front military hospital in January 1920.⁶⁵⁴

There were two types of military hospitals: they were either under direct military command or under the direction of voluntary lay organisations such as the different women's associations. As noted, by 1915 a total of 380 Sisters of Charity worked in thirteen military hospitals in Baden, but they were all situated in towns where there were already branch houses of the Order.⁶⁵⁵ The difference between them was significant, as Sister Eustochium Ebe in Zell im Wiesental stated. She was very happy to have served for three years in the association's military hospital which had been closed for the time being, but she fought tooth and nail not to be transferred to the planned military hospital under army command with 100 beds. It would mean never-ending work with no time off at all.⁶⁵⁶ In Triberg (Black Forest) on the other hand, the situation in the military hospital profited from the arrival of a stricter officer. Apart from Sister Konrad

⁶⁵¹ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Fr Dr Ries, 14 Dec. 1916 (MHA Freiburg, Akte St. Peter, St. Josefshaus). The 'requests' turned during the war into 'admonishments', see Stölzle, *Kriegsrankenpflege im Ersten Weltkrieg*, p. 47.

⁶⁵² Apart from Sister Constantia Geiger's photo there are also photographs of the sisters who died there, lying in state in their coffins and surrounded by flowers (MHA Freiburg, collection of photographs).

⁶⁵³ *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern*, p. 146.

⁶⁵⁴ Newspaper cutting of 26/27 Jan. 1920 without title of newspaper (MHA Freiburg, Akte Bruchsal, Krankenhaus).

⁶⁵⁵ Motherhouse Freiburg, report of 1915 (EAF, B5/89). The hospitals were in the following towns: Baden-Baden (2), Donaueschingen, Ettlingen, Freiburg (4), Hüfingen, Heiligenberg, Meersburg, Tauberbischofsheim and Triberg.

⁶⁵⁶ Sister Eustochium Ebe to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 24 June 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Zell im Wiesental, St. Josefshaus).

Figure 5.1: Sister Constantia Geiger in a military hospital in Drohobycz (Galicia) around 1916, the only surviving photo document of a Sister of Charity of Freiburg in action during the First World War.



Source: Photo collection, Motherhouse Archive Freiburg

Haag, one paramedic, one maidservant and four female helpers made up the nursing team; the last-named were reportedly no help at all, as their only interest was the soldiers, and they refused to clean. Having twenty-five wounded soldiers on her ward, Sister Konrad could still fulfil nearly all her prayer duties and go to Mass two or three times a week.⁶⁵⁷ Elsewhere the sisters were not so lucky. In Eberbach (north Baden) the sisters had so much to do that they had almost no time at all for prayer. They could not wait for the war to end, so that they could come again to retreats in the Motherhouse to recharge both spiritually and

⁶⁵⁷ Sister Konrad Haag to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 29 June 1915 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Triberg, Vereinshaus).

physically.⁶⁵⁸ This additional work, which the hospital sisters had to put up with on top of their normal duty of nursing the sick of the community, sometimes found its acknowledgement. In return for the extra efforts the sisters had to spend on the military hospital, the board of the hospital in Tauberbischofsheim granted all five sisters a much-needed three-week vacation, which was either spent in Order-owned houses or with the sisters' families.⁶⁵⁹

On the home front, care for the general population proved to be increasingly difficult. When in Kuppenheim hospital a military section was opened in 1915, parish priest Fr Winterhalder complained that the four Sisters of Charity had to see to the soldiers in addition to their work in the general hospital, care of the sick at home and the nursery school with more than 100 children, among them about twenty two-year-olds. The nursery school sister had also to do night watches.⁶⁶⁰ However, the Motherhouse Freiburg did not always give precedence to the war requirements. When in November 1914, Fr Kaltenbach of Burladingen in Hohenzollern begged the Order to reclaim Sister Mira Weißschädel from the military hospital in Hechingen (Hohenzollern) because she was desperately needed to head the winter sewing course,⁶⁶¹ the Motherhouse turned down the district bailiff's objection to the sister's removal from the military hospital.⁶⁶² The Order stated that Sister Mira was a home economics sister with a master's diploma in craftsmanship (*Meisterexamen*), much needed in Burladingen because the sister superior was alone (which was contrary to the rule). Freiburg had already given seventy to eighty sisters for military hospitals, and as

⁶⁵⁸ Sister Alacoque Schmidt to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 20 Feb. 1916 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Eberbach, Schwesternhaus).

⁶⁵⁹ Hospital board to Motherhouse Freiburg, 30 June 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Tauberbischofsheim, Krankenhaus). The sisters could not choose where they wanted to go.

⁶⁶⁰ Fr Winterhalder to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 26 Apr. 1915 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Kuppenheim, Krankenhaus).

⁶⁶¹ Fr Kaltenbach to Mother General Luisa David, 9 Nov. 1914 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Burladingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁶⁶² District bailiff to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 27 Nov. 1914 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Burladingen, Schwesternhaus).

Hechingen had a branch house of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, the bailiff should apply to them for help.⁶⁶³

Over the course of the war, women had to replace the male workforce more and more.⁶⁶⁴ To earn much-needed money, charities employed female workers for example to make or to mend military clothing and other textile equipment.⁶⁶⁵ In the *St. Annastift* in Freiburg, the sisters oversaw a place of war employment for 550 women who produced thousands of shirts, jackets, trousers and bedlinen. In 1918 alone, the sisters taught twenty-one shoemaking courses with over 500 pupils and, together with six female workers, they made up to 4,000 pairs of new slippers and repaired 14,560 pairs of outdoor shoes.⁶⁶⁶ In Vöhrenbach (Black Forest), the local women had to go to the ordnance factory and into farming, and had to leave their children without supervision. The mayor asked the Motherhouse to help by sending a sister, so that the community could set up a kindergarten for the children.⁶⁶⁷

The situation became extremely difficult when the hunger years started in 1915. In the countryside where the people had their own gardens, fields and livestock, there was at least something available to eat, but the towns were different. To help the starving population, local governments set up soup kitchens, modelled on the central soup kitchen of Freiburg, which had been operated by the sisters since 1879.⁶⁶⁸ Over the next two years, when the food situation became more and more dire, further soup kitchens were opened. In the

⁶⁶³ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to district bailiff, 28 Nov. 1914 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Burladingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁶⁶⁴ Jürgen Reyer, *Einführung in die Geschichte des Kindergartens und der Grundschule* (Bad Heilbrunn, 2006), pp 123–7; Sylvia Schraut, *Frau und Mann, Mann und Frau: Eine Geschlechtergeschichte des deutschen Südwestens, 1789–1980* (Stuttgart, 2016), pp 176–8.

⁶⁶⁵ In 1917, the *Kriegsarbeitsstätte* (place of war employment) in St Anna-Stift Freiburg employed twenty-four fulltime female workers and 180 female home workers. In 1918 twenty-five fulltime female workers, 100 home workers and 450 knitters were employed, see reports of *Kriegsarbeitsstätte* St. Annastift, Freiburg of 1917 and 1918 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, St. Annastift).

⁶⁶⁶ Statistics of 1918, place of war employment, slipper-department and shoe repair workshop, St. Annastift, Freiburg (MHA Freiburg, Akte St. Annastift, Freiburg).

⁶⁶⁷ Mayor of Vöhrenbach to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 4 June 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Vöhrenbach, Luisenkrankenhaus).

⁶⁶⁸ Although established in 1879, the contract between Freiburg city council and the Motherhouse Freiburg dates 1 Jan. 1899 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, Volksküchen).

end there were seven altogether in Freiburg, which could not have been staffed except with sisters, 'because with other people as staff the whole enterprise is simply impossible.'⁶⁶⁹ Sister Caritas Baumann developed the central soup kitchen into a model, so that other cities like Offenburg and Lahr could follow the example of Freiburg.⁶⁷⁰ When the soup kitchen started in Lahr (a predominantly Protestant town 20 km south of Offenburg) with 250 meals distributed in March 1916, 'the people had tears in their eyes.'⁶⁷¹ By 1917, the sisters served two hot meals daily, at noon and in the evening, for between 1,500 and 1,600 people, with no hot water in the kitchen. They got up at 4.30am and went to bed often later than 10pm. Their only time off was the first Sunday in the month.⁶⁷² Even in the military hospitals, food became scarce. They had very little meat, no potatoes, and only one litre of milk for six sisters per day. Some people who could not afford even the cheap prices of the soup kitchens, sent their children to the sisters. While under the direction of the Red Cross, the sisters were not allowed to give any food away, not even the waste. Once the war was over, about twenty children came with dishes every day and collected the leftovers from the soldiers' plates, and the sisters provided them with everything they did not need any more in the kitchen that day.⁶⁷³

By the end of the First World War in November 1918, the sisters had cared for 87,814 soldiers in 3,157,730 care days altogether.⁶⁷⁴ This care was offered

⁶⁶⁹ Councillor Heitzler to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 13 Apr.1916 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, Volksküchen).

⁶⁷⁰ Lahr city council to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 18 Aug. 1915 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Lahr, Volksküche/Elisabethheim/Marienheim). Sister Caritas/Charitas Baumann, born 1854, clothing 1879, profession 1882.

⁶⁷¹ Sister Eustasia Walter to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 12 Mar. 1916 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Lahr, Volksküche/Elisabethheim/Marienheim). Sister Eustasia Walter, born 1874, clothing 1897, profession 1900.

⁶⁷² Sister Eustasia Walter to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 2 Apr. 1916, 1 Nov. 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Lahr, Volksküche/Elisabethheim/Marienheim). The situations in the other soup kitchens in Freiburg and Offenburg were similar. Offenburg started only in 1918, but as it was the centre for the refugees from Alsace, the soup kitchen was open every day: Offenburg city council, 20 Feb. 1919 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Offenburg, Volksküche).

⁶⁷³ Sister Eustachia Göggel to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 19 May 1919 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Ettlingen, Krankenhaus).

⁶⁷⁴ Caritasverband für die Erzdiözese Freiburg (ed.), *Auf den Pfaden der Caritas. Zum Silberjubiläum des Caritasverbandes für die Erzdiözese Freiburg 1903-1928* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1928), p. 128.

completely free for the state in all the military hospitals in the town of Freiburg as a contribution of the Motherhouse Freiburg to the war effort.⁶⁷⁵ The vast majority of the sisters, no matter where and for whom they had worked, were completely exhausted and in desperate need of a vacation. To make that possible, the Motherhouse intended to buy a former spa hotel in the Black Forest.⁶⁷⁶ In recognition of the service of the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg in the military hospitals, the Mother General Sister Luisa David and the Fr Superior Karl Mayer received as representatives of the Order the high honour of the Red Cross Medal. Dean Fr Albert's comment on that was somewhat over the top: 'I am overjoyed that your merits are being rewarded from all sides, from church and government, from pope and bishop, from Kaiser and Grand Duke!'⁶⁷⁷ The Order closed the last military hospital, St Nazareth on the Motherhouse grounds, on 1 January 1920.⁶⁷⁸

Conclusion

From the 1860s onwards, the Sisters of Charity of the Motherhouse Freiburg played an important role in Baden during times of war and proved their value to the state. As a direct result, the Motherhouse Freiburg and the other German nursing orders and congregations were spared in the Prussian '*Kulturkampf*', which started right after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, the war of German unification. This field of action, which turned out to be more and more indispensable for the government, would also prove to be a life-saver later in wartime history.

⁶⁷⁵ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 1 July 1916 (EAF, B5/89).

⁶⁷⁶ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 21 Nov. 1918 (EAF, B5/92). The purchase was finalised on 21 Mar. 1919.

⁶⁷⁷ Dean Albert of Ettlingen to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 16 Mar. 1916 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Ettlingen, Spital/Krankenhaus).

⁶⁷⁸ MHA Freiburg, Akte St. Josefskrankenhaus I, 1901–35. The nurses who served in the back areas of the war zones were released in April 1919, the service of the voluntary nurses on the home front was finalised 31 March 1920, see Stölzle, *Kriegsrankenpflege im Ersten Weltkrieg*, p. 55.

Germany was well prepared for the outbreak of war in 1914 in respect of the provision and organisation of military hospitals. However, the much longer duration than the expected three months caused many problems. The Motherhouse Freiburg saw care for soldiers as an important contribution to the war effort, even at the expense of the home front. However, the nursing of soldiers did not in every case take precedence over the needs of civilians.

Viewed as professionals in their field, the high quality of the sisters' nursing was not only sought after but came to be expected. The religious sisters had competition especially in the nondenominational sisterhood of the Red Cross Sisters. On the other hand, a fully qualified nurse was not always necessary. As long as she wore the habit of the Sisters of Charity, the religious nurse enjoyed credit in advance: a reputation that had been hard-earned in former times of war and other crises.

In comparison to other affiliated motherhouses like that of Munich, the sisters of the Motherhouse Freiburg left very few documents of their own, so that apart from following the doctors' instructions nothing was recorded of sisterly actions or initiatives for later generations, as well as few of the real hardships and manifold problems which the sisters encountered. How much more work the war meant for every single Sister of Charity, one can only guess. The degree of exhaustion is evident by the simple fact that the Motherhouse Freiburg saw it necessary to buy another house expressly for the recovery of its sisters. The Sisters of Charity's ability to work and function according to their rule had been stretched to the utmost extreme. In a very short time, even these extremes would be exceeded in the Third Reich. However, the Weimar Republic presented other new challenges for the Order which had to be addressed first.

Chapter 6

The Motherhouse Freiburg in the Weimar Republic, 1919 to 1933: golden years?

When the First World War was over in November 1918, the world that was known to the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg had completely changed. Four long years of a cruel war had ended with the defeat of Germany, all monarchs of the country were gone and the German Reich was about to emerge as the Weimar Republic. For a little more than a decade Germany would be governed as a democratic state, something that had never happened before. However, the 'Great War' had not only transformed the political landscape but also induced far-reaching economic and social change. On the road to becoming a welfare state, the Weimar years were shaped by increased state intervention in the field of social policy.⁶⁷⁹

Although the Weimar Republic experienced extremely difficult economic times from the outset until 1924 and again from late 1929 to its end, the term 'golden years' is often used for the 1920s.⁶⁸⁰ It describes mostly the cultural life in certain parts of Germany, especially in the capital Berlin. However, while Ulrich Kluge called 'the golden twenties' a 'literary overstressed cliché',⁶⁸¹ for Roman Catholics in Germany the Weimar years were a time of progress. They managed to consolidate the church-state relationship and to improve their political and social position.⁶⁸² Together with the changed political constellation, cultural restrictions had also lessened.⁶⁸³ A new era dawned for the Catholic Church, as with Article 137 of the new Weimar Constitution of 1919 all political restrictions

⁶⁷⁹ Christoph Sachße, 'Von der Kriegsfürsorge zum republikanischen Wohlfahrtsstaat', in Ursula Röper and Carola Jüllig (eds), *Die Macht der Nächstenliebe: einhundertfünfzig Jahre Innere Mission und Diakonie, 1848–1998* (Berlin, 1998), pp 194–205, here at p. 194.

⁶⁸⁰ Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom heiligen Vinzenz von Paul, Mutterhaus München (ed.), *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern: 1832 bis 2007* (Munich, 2007), p. 153.

⁶⁸¹ Ulrich Kluge, *Die Weimarer Republik* (Paderborn, 2006), p. 141.

⁶⁸² Ursula Büttner, *Weimar: Die überforderte Republik 1918–1933. Leistung und Versagen in Staat, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft und Kultur* (Stuttgart, 2008), p. 277.

⁶⁸³ Gerhard Besier, *Kirche, Politik und Gesellschaft im 20. Jahrhundert* (München, 2000), p. 7f.

on the church were abolished.⁶⁸⁴ For example, state permission was no longer needed for the founding of new branch houses.⁶⁸⁵ The Catholics saw themselves in something of a winning position.⁶⁸⁶ The Catholic religious orders and congregations participated in the general upsurge of the church, the female institutes in particular. The total number of sisters in Germany rose from 60,791 in 1920 to 84,558 by 1935, a rise of 39%. The number of novices rose by 36% to 7,488 over the same period.⁶⁸⁷ However, in the view of Erwin Gatz, the south German dioceses fell behind in numbers compared with those in the west.⁶⁸⁸ The Weimar years also proved to be a time of expansion for the East Prussian St Catherine Sisters of Ermland in the very north-east of Germany,⁶⁸⁹ and for the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of the Motherhouses Munich⁶⁹⁰ and Freiburg in the south-east and south-west of the country. Freiburg reached its maximum absolute number in 1937 with 1,707 professed sisters.⁶⁹¹ Munich reached its peak membership shortly after, in 1940, when it had some 2,800 sisters.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁴ Erwin Gatz, *Die katholische Kirche in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2009), p. 75; Erwin Gatz, 'Vom Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges bis zum Beginn der national-sozialistischen Herrschaft', in Erwin Gatz (ed.), *Klöster und Ordensgemeinschaften* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006), pp 291–310, here at p.291.

⁶⁸⁵ Gatz, 'Vom Ende', 291f.

⁶⁸⁶ Besier, *Kirche*, p. 13, after Albrecht Langner, *Katholische und evangelische Sozialethik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Beiträge zu ideengeschichtlichen Entwicklungen im Spannungsfeld von Konfession, Politik und Ökumene* (Paderborn, 1998), p. 336.

⁶⁸⁷ Gatz, *Die katholische Kirche*, p. 75f.; Gatz, 'Vom Ende', p. 304.

⁶⁸⁸ Gatz, 'Vom Ende', p. 305.

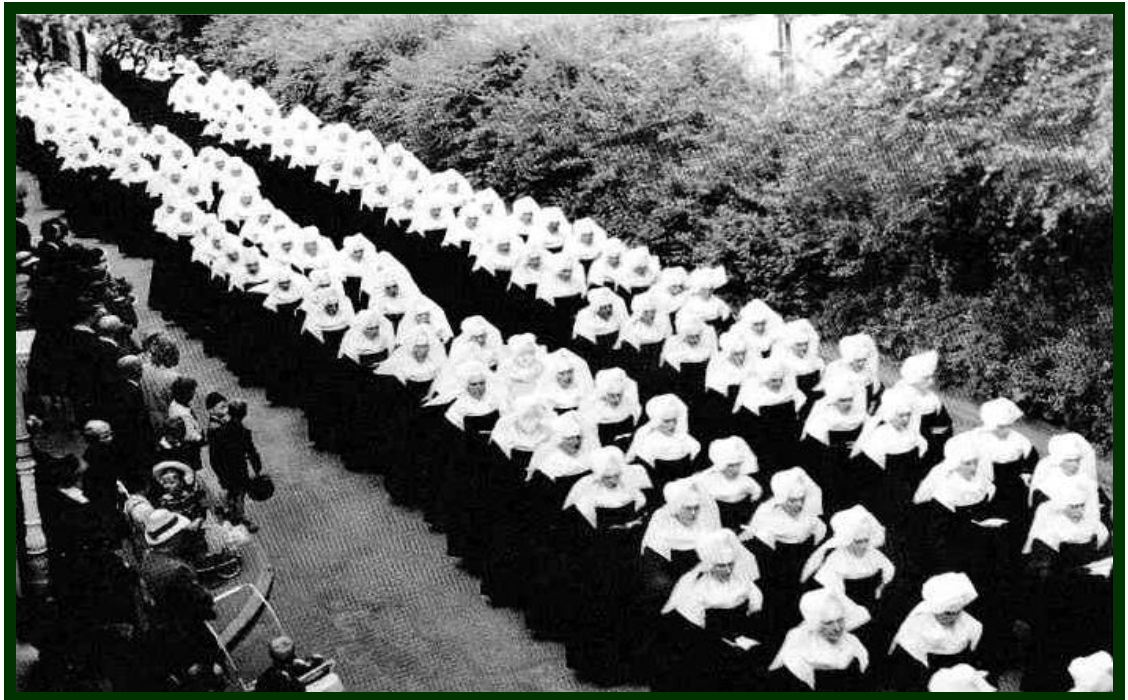
⁶⁸⁹ Relinde Meiwes, *Klosterleben in bewegten Zeiten: die Geschichte der ermländischen Katharinen-schwwestern, 1914–1961* (Paderborn, 2016), p. 47.

⁶⁹⁰ *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern*, p. 154.

⁶⁹¹ Report for the general chapter, 1932–1938 (EAF, B5/89, vol. 1, 1844–1945). To be precise, the absolute maximum in numbers of professed sisters would have been reached some time in 1938, when the sixty-six novices, who were mentioned in the same report, took their first vows.

⁶⁹² *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern*, p. 156. There are two unnumbered charts on that page; the second chart shows the development of the numbers in membership from 1832–2007. The text does not mention the year or the exact maximum number; therefore, the numbers in the thesis text above can only be estimations. It is also not clear if 'membership' in this instance includes the novices or not.

Figure 6.1: Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg, c. 1920s, Corpus Christi procession in Freiburg



Source: Photo collection, Motherhouse Archive Freiburg

Could those years of the Weimar Republic also be considered 'golden', *aureate*, for the Motherhouse Freiburg? The first consideration is the consequences of defeat for the external relations of the Order. How would the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg cope with the fact that the Motherhouse Strasbourg now belonged not just to a foreign but to a hostile country? What impact did the publication in 1917 of the new *Codex Iuris Canonici* have on this complex situation? What was the economic situation of the Order after such a devastating war? Despite the dire economic state of the early years of the Weimar Republic, a once modest, Catholic organisation, namely the German Caritas Association (*Deutscher Caritasverband, DCV*) emerged phoenix-like from the ashes and proved capable of equipping the female apostolic congregations with the necessary tools for survival in a radically changed world. How did this come

about and in what way did it prove to be a 'saviour' for the Motherhouse Freiburg?

Problems caused by the First World War and its political consequences: The relationship with the Motherhouse Strasbourg

The two main problems for the Motherhouse Freiburg in the aftermath of the lost war were how it would relate to the now French Motherhouse Strasbourg⁶⁹³ and the enormously difficult economic context, especially during the hyperinflation of 1923 and the international crisis of 1929 and the subsequent years.⁶⁹⁴

From the beginning of the war in 1914, powerful patriotic sentiments manifested themselves in the different branch houses in Alsace and Baden. Fr Superior Leo Lutz of Strasbourg gave a vivid description of the growing anti-German feeling among the Alsatian sisters.⁶⁹⁵ The Motherhouse Strasbourg had to face the two-fold problem of language and nationality. Since it had always had branch houses in Germany, German nationals entered the *Sœurs de la Charité de Strasbourg* right up to the end of the First World War and, according to Fr Superior Lutz, the Alsatian motherhouse never differentiated between Alsatian (*altelsässisch*) and German (*altdeutsch*) sisters.⁶⁹⁶ However, the Alsatian sisters themselves proved to be quite a heterogeneous group. The majority of them still had German as their mother tongue, and many could barely speak or write French, arising from the fact that most Alsatian sisters had a modest, rural background whereas only the elite practised the French language.⁶⁹⁷ Alsace is a case study in the problems caused by a rise in nationalist sentiment coupled with

⁶⁹³ Emil Clemens Scherer, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von Straßburg: ein Bild ihres Werdens und Wirkens von 1734 bis zur Gegenwart* (Saaralben, 1930), p. 448.

⁶⁹⁴ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister Eugénie Linsy of Strasbourg, c. 1921, 11 Sept. 1922, 30 June 1923, c. 1931 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁶⁹⁵ Leo Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 14. He must have written it after 1916, the year he became superior of the Sisters of Charity of Strasbourg, as his predecessor Joseph Sonntag did not continue writing the chronicle as all the other fathers superior did.

⁶⁹⁶ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 449.

⁶⁹⁷ Alfred Wahl and Jean-Claude Richez, *La vie quotidienne en Alsace entre France et Allemagne, 1850–1950* (Paris, 1993), p. 11.

linguistic differences; between 1870 and 1945 the Alsatians had their nationality changed four times.⁶⁹⁸

After Germany lost the war in 1918 and especially after the devastating Versailles Treaty in 1919⁶⁹⁹ there was not only a border in the river Rhine between the territories of Alsace/France and Baden/Germany, but in the minds and hearts of the different peoples. Germany and France had become 'archenemies' again, and the sisters of the two motherhouses also had to overcome the hatred between the nations.⁷⁰⁰

Before the war started in 1914, there had been lively exchange between the two motherhouses as was exemplified in the leadership shown by Mother General Sister Luisa David of Freiburg (1898–1916).⁷⁰¹ Between Freiburg and Strasbourg not only did an animated correspondence exist, but there was also a regular exchange of visits. In twenty-nine letters sent from Freiburg to the Alsatian motherhouse between 1905 and 1913, mention by name was made of twenty-nine sisters having travelled from Baden to Alsace, and of sixteen sisters from Alsace travelling the other way.⁷⁰² Sister Luisa David still went to Strasbourg for her retreats, and Mother General Sister Eugénie Linsy (1905–1920) generally did the same.⁷⁰³ The vital importance of this personal relationship became evident when in September 1913 Sister Luisa suffered a stroke and her Strasbourg counterpart Sister Eugénie had also become bedridden,⁷⁰⁴ and no-one came forward to take on their mantles. The outbreak of the First World War with its upsurge in patriotic sentiment and many impediments

⁶⁹⁸ Wahl and Richez, *La vie quotidienne en Alsace*, p. 9.

⁶⁹⁹ Richard Bessel, 'Germany from war to dictatorship', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German history since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 235–57, here at p. 246.

⁷⁰⁰ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Marie Alfred Renaut of Strasbourg, 30 June 1923 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁰¹ Mother General Sister Luisa David was one of the last sisters to be clothed in the Motherhouse Strasbourg (1 May 1872).

⁷⁰² Letters from various sisters, 6 June 1905 to 2 Oct. 1913 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁰³ Expressively mentioned: Mother General Sister Luisa David to Mother General Sister Eugénie Linsy, 26 Jan. 1907 and 7 Feb. 1913 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁰⁴ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 445f.

to travel put a final stop to sisterly encounters.⁷⁰⁵ Sister Eugénie was very piqued to learn only by chance that a new mother general of Freiburg had been elected in May 1916.⁷⁰⁶

However, even in times of war the Motherhouse Strasbourg tried to fulfil its visitation duties to the provincial motherhouses. In Freiburg, the roar of guns and cannons could be heard from Alsace, French planes circled over the city and on 23 July 1916, six bombs were dropped in the garden of the motherhouse.⁷⁰⁷ Despite these events, the new father superior, Leo Lutz of Strasbourg, travelled to Freiburg on his first visitation round in November of that year.⁷⁰⁸ Just months before the end of the war, he paid Freiburg another visit, in June 1918.⁷⁰⁹

The change in the relationship between the two motherhouses can be well observed in the attendance at retreats and funerals. As mentioned above, Sister Luisa David of Freiburg and Sister Eugénie Linsy of Strasbourg attended retreats alternately in the other motherhouse, as did other sisters as well. Fr Superior Joseph Guerber of Strasbourg (1880–1909) acted as retreat master in Freiburg several times.⁷¹⁰ During and after the First World War the practice of taking the annual retreat in another country had ceased completely.⁷¹¹ However, there was also a remarkable shift in the attendance at official events such as funerals and general chapters. Nobody from Freiburg was present at the funeral of Fr Superior

⁷⁰⁵ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, pp 435, 442f. Strasbourg was very difficult to reach. The front was in the mountains east of the city, where heavy battles were fought, and Lower and Upper Alsace were divided by a barbed wire fence.

⁷⁰⁶ Mother General Sister Eugénie Linsy to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 8 June 1916 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1916)]. In this election the successor of Sister Luisa as mother general of Freiburg was chosen: Sister Ferdinand Feederle (1916–32).

⁷⁰⁷ Sister Vinzenz Rippler to Mother General Sister Eugénie Linsy of Strasbourg, 25 Sept. 1916 (MHA Strasbourg, Fribourg en Brisgau 1846, Courrier 1 (avant 1964)).

⁷⁰⁸ Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 2, Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 446. Fr Superior Lutz had to do all the travelling himself, as Sister Eugénie could not leave her room any more.

⁷⁰⁹ Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 30.

⁷¹⁰ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 370.

⁷¹¹ Sister Julitta Merk to Mother General Sister Eugénie Linsy, 9 Apr. 1920 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)]. Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle was invited to a retreat to Strasbourg, but excused herself because she was too busy. It is remarkable that it was not just any retreat, but the one preceding the election of the new mother general of Strasbourg.

Joseph Sonntag in Strasbourg in 1916.⁷¹² The absence is noteworthy when it is recalled that Sister Luisa was seated right next to Fr Superior Guerber at the celebration of the golden jubilee of his ordination in 1898,⁷¹³ and she and her colleague from Fulda, Mother General Sister M. Theresia Köhler, attended the funeral of Mother General of Strasbourg Sister Marie-Ange Spitz in 1905.⁷¹⁴ When Fr Superior Karl Mayer of the Badenese sisters died in 1922, Fr Superior Lutz of Strasbourg received by postcard such short notice of the burial date that neither he nor the mother general of Strasbourg could have made the journey to Freiburg in time even if they had tried. Fr Superior Lutz got the impression that an attendance from Strasbourg had not been desired. In his eyes it was a poor excuse that a telegram would have been too expensive.⁷¹⁵

In the aftermath of the First World War, signs that the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg were prioritising their own interests over those of Strasbourg can be read into other important events. The sisters declined to participate in the general chapter for the election of a new mother general of Strasbourg in 1920⁷¹⁶ and 1925,⁷¹⁷ nor did they attend the centenary of the first motherhouse St Barbara in Strasbourg in 1927. Moreover, they had actually refused to make an appearance at the extraordinary general chapter in Strasbourg where the new constitutions were being discussed in 1923.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹² The Motherhouse Freiburg expressed its sympathies in three letters from the Mistress of Novices, Sister Julitta Merk (21 July 1916), Fr Superior Karl Mayer (21 July 1916) and Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle (4 Aug. 1916). Fr Mayer could not attend because of travel difficulties and retreats [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)]. When Fr Superior Guerber died in July 1909, he had a big funeral, but Scherer mentioned no names of attendees. It is very likely that Sister Luisa took part in that, as she was definitively in Strasbourg that month for retreat: Sister Julitta Merk to Mother General Sister Eugénie Linsy, 25 June 1909 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)], Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 374.

⁷¹³ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 369.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

⁷¹⁵ Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 74.

⁷¹⁶ Sister Julitta Merk to Mother General Sister Eugénie Linsy, 9 Apr. 1920 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷¹⁷ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Sister Marie Alfred Renaut, 27 July 1925 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷¹⁸ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister Marie Armand Weber, 20 Aug. 1923 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

With France as one of the victors of the First World War and a new border being erected between the two countries in the middle of the river Rhine to separate Alsace and Baden once again, the Motherhouse Strasbourg had two urgent questions concerning the Motherhouse Freiburg. First, what would happen to the twenty-two branch houses of Strasbourg with their 250 sisters in Hesse, Baden and Hohenzollern? Secondly, how would the relationship develop between Strasbourg and its German provinces of Freiburg and Fulda?⁷¹⁹

The Motherhouse Strasbourg was not the only Alsatian motherhouse with that problem. Of the three existing motherhouses of female apostolic orders in the archdiocese of Freiburg before 1918, only one was genuinely Badenese (Gengenbach, central Black Forest); the other two had been founded by Alsatian (Freiburg) or Swiss sisters (Hegne, Lake Constance). The Motherhouse Strasbourg and three other Alsatian congregations had numerous branch houses in the archdiocese, which caused the Archbishop of Freiburg much concern after the lost war. Accordingly, the Ordinariate summoned Fr Superior Lutz of Strasbourg to Freiburg, together with his colleagues of the Motherhouses of Freiburg and Fulda, to discuss this issue on 15 September 1919.⁷²⁰ Lutz and his colleague Dr Viktor Thielemann of Fulda favoured a new German motherhouse for the German branch houses of Strasbourg, situated in Sigmaringen in Hohenzollern, which was part of the archdiocese of Freiburg, although politically belonging to Prussia.⁷²¹ A new motherhouse for the German branch houses of Strasbourg was a necessity because German parents would no longer allow their daughters to enter a French order.⁷²² Archbishop Dr Thomas Nörber of Freiburg (1898–1920) demanded the houses in Mannheim and Hohenzollern for the Motherhouse Freiburg. His claim was backed by Fr Superior Mayer of Freiburg. Mayer might even have been the driving force behind this scheme, which Fr

⁷¹⁹ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 448.

⁷²⁰ Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 45f.

⁷²¹ Rector Fr Waldner of Sigmaringen to Ordinariate, 20 Oct. 1920 (EAF B2-41-37).

⁷²² Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 450.

Superior Lutz noted with great disappointment.⁷²³ But Fr Superior Lutz of Strasbourg stood his ground and rejected that notion. He said that the sisters themselves preferred to form a congregation of their own. The archbishop was vehemently against the plan of a motherhouse in Sigmaringen as, among other reasons, he did not want to have two motherhouses of the same order in one diocese.⁷²⁴ Therefore, the decision was made some time later to establish the headquarters in the diocese of Mainz.⁷²⁵ The new province of the Motherhouse Strasbourg was canonically erected in 1921 and the new provincial motherhouse was erected in Heppenheim, ironically just a few kilometres north of the border to Baden, and consecrated on 26 September 1927.⁷²⁶

How important the houses in Hohenzollern and the German sisters of the Motherhouse Strasbourg were, can be seen in the fact that the matter was not settled even after the new province of Mainz was erected and the two main protagonists, the archbishop and the father superior of Freiburg, had been replaced. The Ordinariate of Freiburg under its new Archbishop Karl Fritz (1920–31) had a meeting with the recently installed Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer of the Motherhouse Freiburg (1922–54) to see if there was any possibility of an affiliation of the Strasbourg German sisters with Freiburg.⁷²⁷ The issue was discussed in the sisters' council of the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg on the day following but the sisters and both superiors expressed their great concern.⁷²⁸ Fr Superior Schlatterer at first reported to the Ordinariate that the Motherhouse Freiburg had rejected an affiliation after a thorough weighing up of the arguments.⁷²⁹ But only two weeks later he revoked this decision as new facts had surfaced. The sisters' council was now ready to negotiate, but only if the

⁷²³ *Il paraît que le Sup. Mayer était derrière lui depuis longtemps*, see Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 45.

⁷²⁴ Archbishop Dr Thomas Nörber to Bishop Georg Heinrich Maria Kirstein of Mainz, 21 Feb. 1920 (EAF B2-41-37).

⁷²⁵ The decision was made at the general chapter of 20 May 1920 in Strasbourg, but the Motherhouse Freiburg did not participate, see Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 451.

⁷²⁶ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, pp 450–3.

⁷²⁷ Memo of Ordinariate, 6 Oct 1922 (EAF, B2-41-37).

⁷²⁸ Minutes of the sisters' council, 7 Oct. 1922 (MHA Freiburg).

⁷²⁹ Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer to Ordinariate, 18 Oct. 1922 (EAF, B2-41-37).

Strasbourg German sisters would formally request to join. Unfortunately, there is no further evidence in the minutes as to why the matter was still on the agenda and to what new developments Fr Superior Schlatterer was referring. The request some on the Badenese side had hoped for never came.

The second important issue the three motherhouses of Strasbourg, Freiburg and Fulda had to deal with was that of their future relationship. According to their constitutions of 1885, there had usually been a conference of all the motherhouses every third year with alternating venues. However, the meetings scheduled for 1914 and 1917 could not take place due to the war. The next rotational meeting was therefore scheduled for 1920.⁷³⁰ At the conference of the mothers general and fathers superior, which took place from 6 to 8 September 1920 in Freiburg,⁷³¹ the participants had also to take in hand a revision of the constitutions which Rome required be adapted to the new canon law, the *Codex Iuris Canonici* of 1917. Fr Superior Leo Lutz stated that the relationship that had hitherto been among them could no longer prevail and put up for discussion what the new form should be.

The Motherhouse Strasbourg and its two German provincial motherhouses Freiburg and Fulda each had a different view on the matter. Whereas Dr Viktor Thielemann, the Father Superior of the Motherhouse Fulda, wanted to continue the relationship with Strasbourg at all costs, and Fr Superior Lutz hoped secretly that Freiburg and Fulda would both dissociate themselves from Strasbourg, Superior Karl Mayer from Freiburg dreamt of an independent Motherhouse Freiburg.⁷³² It thus soon became clear why in the previous year Mayer had demanded the Strasbourg branch houses in the archdiocese of Freiburg for his motherhouse: he wanted to secure the 'fertile grounds' of rural and pious Hohenzollern so that Freiburg could gain more postulants for its future.

⁷³⁰ Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, pp 64–6.

⁷³¹ It had to take place in Freiburg, because the 82-years old Fr Superior Karl Mayer of Freiburg could no longer travel after having nearly died the previous December. Fr Superior Lutz of Strasbourg would have preferred his own motherhouse as venue, so that he could speak with more authority: Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 64.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

In the two years prior to the next convention on the constitutions in 1923, the issue of the new province of Mainz had been resolved, and Freiburg's eighty-four-year-old Superior Mayer had died (May 1922). The two experienced fathers superior of Strasbourg and Fulda took advantage of the new situation. They settled on Mainz as the venue for the second meeting to discuss the constitutions in November 1922, which was Strasbourg's home ground. This being only his second month in the new job, Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer of Freiburg went along and offered no suggestions of his own.⁷³³

In September 1923 an extraordinary general chapter was held at Strasbourg to discuss the constitutions further before they were sent to Rome for the first review.⁷³⁴ It is noteworthy that all three provincial sister superiors (Freiburg, Fulda and Mainz) had absented themselves from the meeting. Did they have no interest in the constitutions? Or were they too frightened to travel into enemy country? An indication that the latter may have been the reason is found in the remark of Fr Superior Lutz that the new mother general of Strasbourg, Sister M. Armand Weber, and her assistant Sister M. Alfred Renaut, did not attend the 1920 conference in Freiburg because they were too fearful to go there.⁷³⁵ The negative reaction of the mothers general, especially of Sister Ferdinand of Freiburg, is better understood if it is recalled that between 4 February 1923 and 18 August 1924 the French army had occupied Offenburg, a German town about 25 km to the east of Strasbourg. Since it was a vital intersection, all trains were therefore blocked from north to south and from east to west, as were the post and the trade by ship on the Rhine.⁷³⁶ The war was still very real and very close, and left deeper wounds than could be imagined, affecting even decidedly apolitical religious sisters. Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner of Freiburg expressed that sentiment in 1925 when she lamented 'the tragic war years have destroyed so

⁷³³ Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 74. Only the three fathers superior met 6–10 November 1922 to welcome the new member in their midst.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁷³⁶ Hermann Schäfer, 'Wirtschaftliche und soziale Probleme des Grenzlandes', in Josef Becker (et al.), *Badische Geschichte. Vom Großherzogtum bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1979), pp 168–83, here at p. 169f. and at p. 176f. All the trains had to make a detour through the Black Forest.

many idealistic hopes.⁷³⁷ The motherhouses met for the final session on the constitutions in October 1925 in Strasbourg.⁷³⁸ A turning-point was reached when the mother general of Freiburg, Sister Ferdinand Feederle, visited Strasbourg for the very first time. That a new chapter in the relationship between Strasbourg and Freiburg had been opened was very obvious to the sisters themselves: 'With this long-desired visit, the bridge between the two motherhouses was restored. May the dear God grant that the branches unify again in wholehearted love'.⁷³⁹ At this October 1925 conference, the motherhouses agreed that they wished to find a relationship where they could maintain their necessary independence but at the same time keep the constitutions as a unifying spiritual bond.⁷⁴⁰ The decision was to preserve as much as possible the tried and tested elements of the old rule; few alterations were made.⁷⁴¹

One striking point was the stress on the distinction between the mother general of Strasbourg and the provincial mothers. It was the first time that all the different branch motherhouses were called equal. However, despite the selection of Strasbourg as the seat of the mother general, this concession was revoked with practical effect.⁷⁴² The new constitutions were implemented during the conference of 26 September 1928 in Heppenheim after the approval of Rome of the same year.⁷⁴³ This version of the constitutions was in force until a change was necessary after the Second Vatican Council.

⁷³⁷ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Sister M. Alfred Renaut of Strasbourg, 27 July 1925 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷³⁸ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 456.

⁷³⁹ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister M. Alfred Renaut of Strasbourg, 3 Nov. 1925 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)]. Sister M. Alfred had been elected as mother general on 5 Aug. 1925, see Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 459.

⁷⁴⁰ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 455.

⁷⁴¹ The Ordinariate of Freiburg gave its consent to the decisions of the conferences regarding the constitutions and had only very few suggestions for small changes, see Ordinariate to Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer, 14 May 1923 (EAF, B5/89). It also gave its consent that the relationship of Freiburg and Fulda with Strasbourg 'should continue in the same loose way'.

⁷⁴² Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 456.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

The key question remains, what would have happened if the new canon law (*Codex Iuris Canonici*, CIC) had not come into force in 1918?⁷⁴⁴ The very fact that the three, later four, motherhouses had to come together to clarify their relationship and to discuss, over eight years, how to adapt the constitutions to meet the requirements of the new code of canon law, practically forced them to convene over several conferences and to start talking to each other again.

The other interesting point is not only why the Motherhouse Freiburg had a history of dreams of independence, but also why those dreams were never really fought for and followed through.⁷⁴⁵ The fact that nobody from the Motherhouse Strasbourg attended the funeral of Superior Karl Mayer in 1922 fits the picture that he was not particularly friendly towards Strasbourg. Why did Mayer not seize the opportunity that the outcome of the war gave him and at least try to realise the dream of the Motherhouse Freiburg becoming independent at long last? Certainly he would have had the support of the archbishop of Freiburg. Was it Mayer's advanced age, so that he no longer felt up to the task of such a major enterprise? Or was it a kind of lethargy? The Motherhouse of Paderborn had succeeded already in 1872 in that regard,⁷⁴⁶ so why not Freiburg?⁷⁴⁷ According to Fr Superior Lutz, achieving the approval of Rome was too great a challenge. 'On sentait bien que Fribourg eût plutôt révé une autonomie complete, s'il n'y avait pas eu l'obstacle de l'approbation romaine.'⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁴ Although the *Codex Iuris Canonici* was published in 1917 and is always cited as CIC of 1917, it only came into force after Pentecost of 1918, that is 19 May 1918, see Edward N. Peters, *The 1917 Pio-Benedictine code of canon law in English translation with extensive scholarly apparatus* (San Francisco, 2001), p. 23.

⁷⁴⁵ After the failed attempt of the Motherhouse Freiburg in the 1870s to gain independence, no further attempt was made, see chapter 1.

⁷⁴⁶ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 306.

⁷⁴⁷ It would have been obvious that such a large motherhouse as Munich would have become papal by then, but with a Catholic king in Bavaria, there was no necessity for this as long as the monarchy continued. After the kingdom was abolished in 1918, Archbishop Michael von Faulhaber sought papal approval for the constitutions, but not for the congregation. Today, Munich is still a congregation of diocesan right, see *175 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern in Bayern, 1832 bis 2007* (München, 2007), p. 177.

⁷⁴⁸ Lutz, *Chronique de la Congrégation*, vol. v, p. 65. Scherer is very quiet about the Freiburg dreams.

The challenging economic circumstances after the First World War for the Motherhouse Freiburg

By 1928 the Motherhouse Freiburg was staffing 209 branch houses in the Archdiocese of Freiburg; by 1932 that number had dropped slightly to 207. First eighteen, then twenty houses were owned by the Order itself.⁷⁴⁹ Immense efforts were needed to keep all of them up and running.⁷⁵⁰ The downward spiral in the German economy had begun as early as 1914; Niall Ferguson points out that this economic crisis of Germany preceded the Weimar Republic by five years. However, until 1922 unemployment remained relatively low and between 1920 and 1922 German economy even grew rapidly.⁷⁵¹ Two major crises framed the 'golden years' of 1924–28. At the beginning there was an accelerating hyperinflation with economic chaos in 1921–23, and from 1929 onwards a severe deflationary crisis, followed by a second great economic collapse.⁷⁵²

The situation in the German south-west was quite different from the rest of the *Reich*. Baden became a border country once again in 1918 after nearly forty years of increasing economic prosperity, and now found itself having to cope with the break-up of the very close interlocking economy with Alsace. In comparison to the other southern German states of Württemberg and Bavaria, the economy of Baden suffered from an acute shortage of raw materials, much fewer orders and above all the difficulty of finding new markets in a geographically marginalised part of Germany. The size of the work force was too large for the economy to support, with a far higher unemployment rate relative to the rest of

⁷⁴⁹ Rechenschaftsbericht für das Generalkapitel 1922–1928 and 1928–1932 (EAF, B5/89). The motherhouse itself is included in those numbers.

⁷⁵⁰ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister M. Armand Weber of Strasbourg, 30 June 1923 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁵¹ Niall Ferguson, 'The German interwar economy: political choice versus economic determinism', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German history since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 258–78, here at p. 261f.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, here at pp 261–3.

Germany. All the problems of a border country hit the region with full force in the 1920s and did not improve for decades.⁷⁵³

In 1921, Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner, secretary of the Motherhouse Freiburg, wrote to Strasbourg: 'The struggle for life and survival has left an indelible mark on the religious orders, you can feel grateful if you can manage to keep the business of the different houses running.'⁷⁵⁴ The greatest problem was the cash flow: no food, clothes or other necessities could be purchased, forcing individual houses to become self-sufficient.⁷⁵⁵ It proved to be a blessing that, according to the constitutions of 1845, the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg had responsibility for the complete internal economy of each branch house from the outset.⁷⁵⁶ Since in 1925 every second household in Baden had some land to farm,⁷⁵⁷ nearly every branch house of the sisters also had a garden, some even extensive grounds with livestock.⁷⁵⁸ Even a large hospital like Bruchsal depended on this and was proud of its 'cook-sister who [made] everything out of fruit and vegetables grown by her very own hand in the large, model kitchen garden. That is economically very practical and profitable work.'⁷⁵⁹ Having a good garden economy enabled the very survival of some other branch houses: [It is of] 'the highest importance

⁷⁵³ Hermann Schäfer, 'Wirtschaftliche und soziale Probleme', pp 168–83. Not only France, but Switzerland also closed its borders for German produce.

⁷⁵⁴ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister M. Armand Weber of Strasbourg, c. 1921 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁵⁵ Sister Elisabeth thanked the Motherhouse Strasbourg for the 400 *francs* Mother General Sister Ferdinand found in her pocket after her return from a visit to Strasbourg: Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister M. Armand Weber of Strasbourg, 3 Nov. 1925 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁵⁶ Michael Sintzel, *Geschichte der Entstehung, Verbreitung und Wirksamkeit des Ordens der barmherzigen Schwestern* (Regensburg, 1847), p. 364, § 9 of the constitutions of 1845. Only when the complete inner household economy was taken over by the sisters, could they fulfil their task and efficacy uninhibitedly: Fr Superior Joseph Marmon to board of Holy-Spirit-hospital, 27 May 1879 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, Heilig-Geist-Spital).

⁷⁵⁷ Schäfer, 'Wirtschaftliche und soziale Probleme', p. 172. The number refers to 1925.

⁷⁵⁸ Report of Sister Desideria Bernhard to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 28 June 1929, about her time in the boys' boarding school at Sasbach: 'We had always eighteen cows, two horses and forty pigs.' (MHA Freiburg, Sasbach, Heimschule Lender).

⁷⁵⁹ Newspaper cutting [very likely from the *Bruchsaler Bote*; there are two full pages of the newspaper in the file, but neither carries the newspaper title], 16 Aug. 1930 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Bruchsal, Krankenhaus).

for us with our 152 mostly poor boarding pupils that the state of the gardens are in the best of order. I do not know how I can otherwise scrape through.⁷⁶⁰

The contract between the Motherhouse Freiburg and each of the branch houses made the latter liable for an annual motherhouse-due.⁷⁶¹ The money went to the local sister superior who sent it on to Freiburg.⁷⁶² The amount was so minimal that Prince Wilhelm von Baden was 'often left wondering how the sisters could meet expenses for food and clothes with their stipend.'⁷⁶³ However, the poor parishes in the countryside had frequently to plead for a reduction or deferral, especially when severe inflation hit Baden in 1923. Father Karcher of Wyhl asked if he could pay the motherhouse-dues in potatoes, as with several factories now idle in his parish there was simply no cash available.⁷⁶⁴ From Immenstaad, a village on the shores of Lake Constance, Father Katzenmayer begged for a reduction: one litre of milk now cost one million *Papiermark*; as the village had only small farms with three to four cows and the farmers needed what they produced. Dire prospects faced the local workers and craftsmen, while the skippers of Lake Constance had hardly any orders. Most onerous of all were the taxes.⁷⁶⁵ Father Fehring of the *Schafberg* home for the elderly poor in Baden-Baden asked to defer payment as the latest payment amounted to 800 billion *Papiermark*. No cash was available but he hoped for subsidies from the state. Father Fehring reported that it was a permanent battle for daily bread in a literal sense, and he did not know on a Monday how to pay for the bread of the

⁷⁶⁰ Rector Fr Kempter to Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle, 6 May 1929 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Tauberbischofsheim, Konvikt).

⁷⁶¹ For example: contract between the grand-ducal hospital board of Karlsruhe and the Motherhouse Freiburg, 28 July 1858, § 21 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, Bürgerspital).

⁷⁶² Fr Superior Karl Mayer to parish administrator, 16 February 1888 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Volkertshausen, Privatpflege/Nazareth).

⁷⁶³ Sister Oliva Martin to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 6 Aug. 1889 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hagnau, Schwesternhaus).

⁷⁶⁴ Fr Karcher to Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer, 4 Mar. 1923 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Wyhl, St. Josephshaus).

⁷⁶⁵ Fr Katzenmayer to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 24 Sept. 1923 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Immenstaad, Schwesternhaus). He got a 50% reduction: Fr Superior Schlatterer to Fr Katzenmayer, 30 Sept. 1923 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Immenstaad, Schwesternhaus). [As in many cases, the answer of Fr Superior Schlatterer here is only a note on the preceding letter].

coming week. 'And the poor soul weeps, its voice drowned by the body's sheer battle for survival.'⁷⁶⁶

Prior to the First World War the Motherhouse Freiburg could often agree to a reduction of the motherhouse-dues because it had reserves in hand from which it could make up the balance.⁷⁶⁷ However, the Order had lost all its reserve funds as a result of the inflation while prices had increased considerably for everything, for food, clothes and building maintenance. Each sister now cost the Motherhouse 50% more than before the war.⁷⁶⁸ In addition to the costs of living, higher expectations increased the cost of education for the Order, more particularly in the case of the postulants who came mostly from impoverished families. Money was also needed for the care of the sick and the elderly sisters, as the sisters had no insurance. All branch houses that were able to pay had to pay, with only the smaller houses able to get a reduction.⁷⁶⁹ The houses staffed with religious sisters were financially better off than the rest; thus in 1931 the University Hospital of Heidelberg had to pay 279,080 *Reichsmark* per annum more than its Freiburg equivalent had thanks to the Badenese Sisters of Charity in the latter.⁷⁷⁰

The economic situation for the Motherhouse Freiburg was bad enough even when it could not get the necessary income from the branch houses, but at least those sisters were provided for under the terms of the hospital governance. But for the Motherhouse itself and the seventeen, later nineteen, branch houses in its

⁷⁶⁶ House chaplain Fr Fehringer to Motherhouse, 5 Dec. 1923 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Baden-Lichtental, Schafberg)

⁷⁶⁷ Fr Superior Schlatterer to town council, 21 June 1933 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Pfullendorf, Krankenhaus).

⁷⁶⁸ Report of Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer, 9 Dec. 1924 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenzen der Mutterhäuser). Sister Ferdinand and Fr Schlatterer had serious concerns about the incredible price increases, which grew every day: Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister M. Armand Weber of Strasbourg, 11 Dec. 1922 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁶⁹ Fr Superior Schlatterer to hospital steward, 15 Oct. 1928 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hüfingen, Landesspital).

⁷⁷⁰ Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer to director of hospital Billinger, 1 Dec. 1931 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konstanz, Krankenhaus).

ownership, including several hospitals and orphanages, the situation was dire.⁷⁷¹ In the years directly after the war Sister Sibylla Meucht reported from the orphanage of St Vincent in the poor farming village of Sinzheim that they could not implement the district office's demands for renovations and were continuing to have problems getting enough food, shoes and clothes.⁷⁷² Later in 1920 she lamented: 'I am worried to death because of all the money being spent and yet we still have only the most basic necessities.'⁷⁷³

But real catastrophe hit in 1922, when the old Fr Superior Karl Mayer died on 13 May at the age of eighty-four. In combination with the onset of hyperinflation, several Order-owned branch houses fell into serious financial trouble. Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner, the secretary of the Motherhouse Freiburg, updated Strasbourg: 'Reverend Mother, you cannot imagine in what a dire and dangerous situation the Motherhouse and its branch houses find themselves. Every new day now brings new horrors and alarms.'⁷⁷⁴ Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle of Freiburg, she went on, was in urgent need of steadfast support in that difficult time with such serious challenges on all sides, both spiritually and financially. The new superior seemed to be an excellent and honourable priest.⁷⁷⁵ When the new Father Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer (1922–54)⁷⁷⁶ took over the post aged forty-three he discovered that the finances were in turmoil, because over the years the housekeeping had been managed with too great a trust in God and too much largesse. In 1920, for example, his predecessor Fr Superior Mayer recalled receiving a subsidy from the state for the orphanage in Sinzheim, after a former inmate, now a priest in the USA, had

⁷⁷¹ Rechenschaftsbericht für das Generalkapitel 1922–1928 and 1928–1932 (EAF, B5/89). The Motherhouse was not included in those numbers.

⁷⁷² Sister Sibylla Meucht to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 3 Mar.1920 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz).

⁷⁷³ Sister Sibylla Meucht to Sister Aletha Ernst, who was at the Motherhouse Freiburg responsible for the accounts, 12 Oct.1920 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz).

⁷⁷⁴ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister M. Armand Weber of Strasbourg, 20 Aug. 1922 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁷⁵ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister M. Armand Weber of Strasbourg, 11 Sept. 1922 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁷⁶ Emil Richard Schlatterer, born in 1878, ordained as priest in 1902, father superior of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Freiburg, 1 Oct. 1922, died in 1954 (EAF, Personalalia E. R. Schlatterer).

made a substantial donation.⁷⁷⁷ The reformatory Bethania of the Good Shepherd in Heitersheim showed a deficit of nearly one million *Mark*.⁷⁷⁸ The orphanage of St Vincent in Sinzheim was also in dire straits. The local Sister Superior Sibylla Meucht related in a letter in late October 1922, just days after the old Fr Superior Mayer had died, that St Vincent had to feed 125 persons: thirteen sisters, one teacher, seventy-five orphan boys from three to thirteen years, five pensioners of eighty and more years, sixteen seventy-plus-year-olds (among them three *Kleinrentner* with very small pensions), ten girls between fifteen to twenty years in cookery school, and five male and female farm hands.⁷⁷⁹ She could get very little money for the children and only some potatoes from food collection in a neighbouring village, otherwise she had to buy a lot of food and all the firewood. There was no money for the school from the government, apart from a single once-off payment. The old people could not pay and could only do minimal work. Poverty, bitter poverty was everywhere. St Vincent had received no donations or bequests that year so far, whereas in the previous year they had the donation from America, the donation from the archbishop, the papal donation, the district donation, and clothes and food also. Interestingly, in that letter Sister Sibylla had asked the German Caritas Association (*DCV*) directly for help without telling the Motherhouse first,⁷⁸⁰ possibly thinking that with the old father superior gone, that there was nobody in the Motherhouse to turn to about urgent financial matters as she had not yet met Fr Superior Mayer's successor. Fr Alois Eckert, the director of the Caritas Association of the Archdiocese Freiburg, was shocked. He let Fr Superior Schlatterer know that Sinzheim would be bankrupt in no time if that was true and if matters continued in the same way.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁷ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ministry of Justice of Baden, 28 July 1920 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz).

⁷⁷⁸ Spiritual Director Fr Weber to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 20 Oct. 1922 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

⁷⁷⁹ Sister Sibylla Meucht to *Caritas* Director Kliebert, 21 Oct. 1922 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz).

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.* The letter is evidence of the complete despair of Sister Sibylla because it was unheard of to write such a letter to outsiders without informing the motherhouse first. She must have received quite a reprimand, of which there is unfortunately nothing to be found in the file.

⁷⁸¹ *Caritas* Director of the archdiocese, Fr Alois Eckert to Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer, 26 Oct. 1922 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz).

By contrast, the orphanage for girls, St Gebhard in Oberkirch, managed those difficult times much better. The local sister superior fully acknowledged international aid, the 'presents from America'.⁷⁸² In 1922 Sister Erasma Engest reported to Fr Superior Schlatterer that the orphanage had its own shoemaker with leather from its own livestock. It would also get nails for free from the nail factory and paper for free from the paper factory. One of its pensioners would bind books and staple the booklets for the pupils and the house was provided with potatoes by the community every year.⁷⁸³

As a last resort the local sisters superior sent sisters out to collect food themselves. The Sisters of Charity of Freiburg and all the other branches of the Motherhouse Strasbourg had done this only in time of need, unlike sisters who lived according to the Franciscan rule who went 'questing' on collecting tours for their living.⁷⁸⁴ Sister Erentrud Hiss of Bad Peterstal in the central Black Forest sent Sister Ernestine Heidiri home to buy potatoes and vegetables, as there were none available in the surrounding area.⁷⁸⁵ Other superiors did the same, when there were sisters in the convent from rural areas to supply the necessary goods.

As if those difficulties were not enough, the Order inherited four more houses during those years, purchased and extended a hospital in Lörrach in southernmost of Baden and erected a very large new one in Mannheim in the very north of the archdiocese.⁷⁸⁶ Following its inauguration on 15 December 1929, this new

⁷⁸² Sister Erasma Engest to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 15 Dec. 1922 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Oberkirch, Waisenhaus St. Gebhard).

⁷⁸³ Memo of Fr Superior Schlatterer on letter of Sister Erasma Engest to him, 15 Dec. 1922 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Oberkirch, Waisenhaus St. Gebhard).

⁷⁸⁴ Relinde Meiwes, *'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn': katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), p. 208; Relinde Meiwes, 'Armut und Arbeit: Franziskanerinnen in der sozialen Arbeit des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert', in Heinz-Dieter Heimann, Angelica Hildebrand, Bernd Schmies and Christoph Stiegermann (eds), *Gelobte Armut: Armutskonzepte der franziskanischen Ordensfamilie vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart* (Paderborn, 2012), pp 527–52, here at p. 544.

⁷⁸⁵ Sister Erentrud Hiss to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 28 Aug. 1923 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Bad Peterstal, Marienbad). She got them a lot cheaper there, even with the freight charge. Other branch houses did the same: Rector Fr Behrle to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 28 Sept. 1925 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Rastatt, Konvikt).

⁷⁸⁶ The Motherhouse Freiburg was forced to build the hospital in Mannheim due to a legal clause in the deed of donation of another house in Mannheim: Rechenschaftsbericht für das Generalkapitel 1922–1928 and 1928–1932 (EAF, B5/89).

hospital of St. Teresa proved to be in every regard problematic.⁷⁸⁷ It required high staff numbers and its financial problems increased literally daily as recession hit with full force from October of that year. Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner pointed out to the mother general of Strasbourg, Sister M. Alfred Renaut, that with the support of Archbishop Karl Fritz (1920–31) of Freiburg, Fr Superior Schlatterer had risked much in building it. It was the Motherhouse Freiburg that was burdened with the task of paying the interest on four million *Reichsmark* of borrowed money at a time when cash was in short supply everywhere.⁷⁸⁸

In the early 1930s, on the eve of the Third Reich, the Motherhouse Freiburg was struggling. By contrast with the relatively affluent years before 1914, the Order had gone through very hard times virtually throughout the entire period of the Weimar Republic. To speak of these years as 'golden' is therefore a misnomer. Yet even in those bitter times the archbishop of Freiburg was always ready to offer a helping hand, to prevent his flagship congregation failing. Another major source of help that would prove to be of priceless value not only for the Motherhouse Freiburg but for all the female religious orders and congregations in the Archdiocese of Freiburg was the German Caritas Association and its provincial section, the Caritas Association of the Archdiocese of Freiburg. In what way did they come to the aid of the Sisters of Charity?

The role of the German Caritas Association (*Deutscher Caritasverband, DCV*)

During the First World War and in its immediate aftermath, the archdiocese of Freiburg received a number of new religious foundations. To the existing

⁷⁸⁷ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister M. Alfred Renaut of Strasbourg, 30 December 1929 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)].

⁷⁸⁸ Sister Elisabeth Steiglehner to Mother General Sister M. Alfred Renaut of Strasbourg, undated, c. at the end of Dec. 1931, because Sister Elisabeth referred to the death of Archbishop Fritz, which occurred 7 Dec. 1931 [MHA Strasbourg, Courrière 1 (avant 1964)]. The Motherhouse Freiburg received short loans of 70.000 and 40.000 *Reichsmark* (RM) out of the church taxes plus a loan of 100,000 RM from the Ordinariate, in addition there is a reference to the archbishop getting a four million RM loan from a Berlin bank: Fr Superior Schlatterer to Archbishop Karl Fritz, 4 Nov. 1926, 20 Dec. 1926 and 28 Jan. 1927 (EAF, B5/92).

motherhouses of female apostolic congregations, namely, Freiburg, Hegne and Gengenbach, a further four were added, of which three were the foundation of a German motherhouse of an already existing Alsatian apostolic institute with branch houses in the archdiocese.⁷⁸⁹ In all of Germany in 1914 there were 49,508 apostolic religious, 47,545 of whom were sisters.⁷⁹⁰ Each order or congregation worked separately in its own projects and institutions. Catherine Maurer has termed this a 'nearly anarchical growth of single initiatives, which reduced the impact of Catholic charity in general'.⁷⁹¹ An organisation was needed, which would draw together all those good works and give them guidance and direction in order to better respond to the needs of the times. This *desideratum* was filled with the foundation of the German Caritas Association (*Deutscher Caritasverband*, in short *Caritas* or *DCV*). What was its function in the Archdiocese of Freiburg? And in what way could it help the Motherhouse Freiburg and the other female congregations?

In 1897, the *Deutscher Caritasverband* had been founded in Freiburg as an organ of public relations and coordinator of Catholic charities, based on the principle of subsidiarity according to Catholic social teaching.⁷⁹² This organisation gradually branched out with subassociations in every German diocese; the Caritas Association of the archdiocese of Freiburg established in 1903 was one of the first. Although the headquarters of the *DCV* were always situated in Freiburg, offices were also based in the national capital Berlin and in Munich, because Freiburg was too much on the periphery of the German Reich.⁷⁹³ It was Freiburg, as the seat of the archdiocese that became the trailblazer for the *DCV*, its driving force and first president Fr Lorenz Werthmann, secretary to

⁷⁸⁹ Bühl, Erlenbad, St. Trudpert and Neusatzeck, later joined in 1927 by the Benedictines of St Lioba in Freiburg, see Barbara Henze, 'Die übrigen Orden', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), pp 331–87, here at pp 337–58.

⁷⁹⁰ Catherine Maurer, *Der Caritasverband zwischen Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik. Zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte des caritativen Katholizismus in Deutschland* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), p. 27.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁷⁹² Meiwes, *Klosterleben*, p. 72.

⁷⁹³ Maurer, *Der Caritasverband*, pp 76–82.

Archbishop Johannes Christian Roos (1886–1966).⁷⁹⁴ The bishops who succeeded Roos acted in turn as protectors of the *Deutscher Caritasverband*.⁷⁹⁵

In 1916, the German bishops' conference of Fulda decided that *Caritas* 'should be the legitimate representative of church charity'.⁷⁹⁶ With this official endorsement, *Caritas* had the backup necessary to become a really effective pressure group when war ended in 1918, and was well placed to negotiate with the state on behalf of the poor.⁷⁹⁷ In the build-up of the dual structure of the welfare state in Germany, *Caritas* played a key role as the representative of Catholic charity in the country.⁷⁹⁸ *Caritas* and its subsection on a local level had a threefold function for the Catholic orders and congregations. It served as organiser, counsellor and representative for them on public and governmental bodies, especially regarding professional education and further qualifications.⁷⁹⁹ In its capacity as organiser, *Caritas* created the annual conferences of the motherhouses in Baden which took place nearly every year after the end of the First World War.⁸⁰⁰ In their function as superior of the oldest and largest apostolic order of the archdiocese, Fr Superior Karl Mayer and after him his successor Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer served as spokespersons and secretaries, keeping the minutes of meetings.⁸⁰¹ At these conferences the motherhouses of Baden received all necessary information with regard to legal, administrative, financial and educational matters. The motherhouse-dues, for example, were a

⁷⁹⁴ Maurer, *Der Caritasverband*, pp 59–70.

⁷⁹⁵ Hans-Josef Wollasch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Caritas in der Zeit der Weltkriege: zum 100. Geburtstag von Benedict Kreutz (1879 – 1949)* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1978), p. 93.

⁷⁹⁶ E. Holzapfel, *Die Kongregation der Franziskanerinnen vom göttlichen Herzen Jesu Gengenbach, 1866–1966: 100 Jahre Gengenbacher Schwestern* (Gengenbach, 1966), p. 44, citation of remark by Dr Alois Eckert; Christoph Sachße, 'Von der Kriegsfürsorge zum republikanischen Wohlfahrtsstaat', p. 197.

⁷⁹⁷ Maurer, *Der Caritasverband*, p. 169.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34f.

⁷⁹⁹ Holzapfel, *100 Jahre Gengenbacher Schwestern*, p. 44, citation of remark of Dr Alois Eckert; Maurer, *Der Caritasverband*, p. 77. With the St Elisabeth hospital in Cologne-Hohenlind, the DCV founded its institute for health services as headquarters for further training, see Erwin Gatz, 'Vom Ende', p. 306.

⁸⁰⁰ The minutes of the conferences of the years of 1919 [of 1919 only agenda], and 1921–26; none for the years 1925 and 1929 are in the file, see MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenzen der Mutterhäuser.

⁸⁰¹ MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenzen der Mutterhäuser.

topic at nearly every conference. With the help of *Caritas*, the motherhouses could now speak with one voice in this delicate matter and need no longer engage in mutual rivalry.⁸⁰²

Caritas also brought the different branch houses in profile-specific associations under its roof. Thus it founded for example the association of Catholic recreation homes for children and mothers.⁸⁰³ There were no extra fees to be paid for this as the various participants were already paid-up members of *Caritas*.⁸⁰⁴ With a spokesperson directly at the nerve-centre of the government in Berlin, the members of such an association could get the very latest information about developments in their respective fields.

The second function of the DCV and its local equivalents was further education and skill enhancement through special training courses tailored to the needs of the different sisters and congregations. Courses were offered in administration, infant care and child welfare; information was given regarding the state requirements for nurse training, and especially providing the nursing-school-sisters with up-to-date standards. For the latter a special sisters' seminary was established where eventually all the sisters of nursing schools and kindergartens should be trained according to the law.⁸⁰⁵ This institution would become invaluable in the Weimar Republic and in the Third Reich, preventing the sisters from being removed from nursing schools on account of inadequate formation.⁸⁰⁶

In its third function as a representative and advocate for the motherhouses, *Caritas* served as a link between the religious orders and the government or

⁸⁰² See conferences of 9 July 1919, 3 Nov. 1921, 4 July 1922, 7 Feb. 1923 and 9 Dec. 1924 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenzen der Mutterhäuser).

⁸⁰³ Prelate Dr Alois Eckert to branch house Bad Peterstal, 4 Dec. 1920 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Bad Peterstal, Marienbad, 1919–1926). The same associations existed for Catholic hospitals, orphanages, homes for maidservants etc.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ The foundation of the sisters' seminary for courses for sisters in kindergartens and nursing schools was discussed and decided in the conference of 9 July 1919, and again 3 Nov. 1921 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenz der Mutterhäuser).

⁸⁰⁶ Minutes of the conference of 3 Nov. 1921 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenz der Mutterhäuser).

other public bodies. It would not only inform the different motherhouses about state subsidies available for their work,⁸⁰⁷ but also act as their distributor.⁸⁰⁸ Together with the training courses for the sisters, this guidance in financial matters was key to the survival of many religious orders all over Germany in the turbulent times of the Weimar Republic. Relinde Meiwes argues that one result of such qualitative counselling by *Caritas* in the 1920s was the rapid expansion of the Sisters of St Catherine and also of the Grey Sisters in the Ermland region in East Prussia in the years between the First World War and the Third Reich.⁸⁰⁹

For all of these reasons, *Caritas* became very important for the Motherhouse Freiburg also. The *DCV* gave much encouragement for developments which would otherwise have happened only belatedly. Thus in 1895 Fr Superior Karl Mayer (1885–1922) had been not only a founding member of an association which two years later became the German Caritas Association, but he was also the driving force for practical and technical formation as a counterbalance to the more spiritual education offered by the Order of the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg.⁸¹⁰ With his colleagues on the *Caritas* board, Fr Karl Mayer was also in constant dialogue about which social-charitable tasks were necessary, and how the Order should respond to the needs of the time.⁸¹¹

Conclusion

In the years following the 'Great War', in the public appearance the sisters seem to have taken back yet another step as acting persons, in contrast to the new role of women in society. The leeway the increasing state interference left

⁸⁰⁷ Minutes of the conference of 4 July 1922, and about subsidies for small pensioners in conference of 9 Dec. 1924 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenz der Mutterhäuser).

⁸⁰⁸ Maurer, *Der Caritasverband*, p. 177.

⁸⁰⁹ Meiwes, *Klosterleben*, p. 72f.

⁸¹⁰ In this function, Fr Superior Mayer had been the ideal counterpart to Mother General Sister Luisa David (1898–1916) who prioritized a grounded spirituality, see the first part of this chapter and chapter 3.

⁸¹¹ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Archbishop Dr Thomas Nörber, 1 July 1916 (EAF, B5/89).

had become much smaller, and new demands from all sides, professionally, spiritually and economically had an overwhelming effect on the Order.

With the First World War, there was also another irrevocable change: the 'golden years' of the intimate relationship between the Motherhouses of Strasbourg and Freiburg had ended. They could not be renewed to anything like the same extent after the German defeat, not least because the 'old guard' of Badenese sisters who had received their habits in Strasbourg were dying out. The younger generation did not have the strong affection for the founding motherhouse. When the war broke out in 1914, it was not possible to prevent the infiltration of insidious nationalistic elements despite the efforts of the motherhouses to keep out of politics. Problems arising from the new border between Baden and Alsace and the publication of the new code of canon law forced the now French Motherhouse of Strasbourg and its canonical German provincial motherhouses to overcome political differences and to work together in a changed relationship.

Economically the years of the Weimar Republic were never 'golden' for the Motherhouse Freiburg. These followed a similar pattern to that of the Strasbourg-Freiburg relationship: The years before 1914 were prosperous financially, but after the turmoil of the First World War it was much more difficult to find a secure financial footing. The Sisters of Charity of Freiburg were indeed fortunate to find strong supporters in the person of Archbishop Karl Fritz of Freiburg and in the German Caritas Association.

The threefold function of the German Caritas Association for the female religious congregations played a key role for every motherhouse in Baden. The Motherhouse Freiburg profited from its expertise and gave reciprocal benefit to the association through its Fr Superior Karl Mayer who was very active in *Caritas* matters. In the conferences for the motherhouses of Baden, *Caritas* equipped the religious institutes with the necessary tools to be a modern Catholic charity. It organised the houses in different associations according to their different tasks

so that they could gain maximum support from the state. Financially the *DCV* gave invaluable directions without which the survival of many orders would have been in jeopardy. In special training courses the sisters were brought up-to-date professionally so that they could compete with lay professionals in the different fields and not become marginalised or even removed from their tasks. This function of the *Deutscher Caritasverband* will be part of the analysis of education in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

The Motherhouse Freiburg in the Weimar Republic, 1919 to 1933: education and training

The socio-economic and political upheavals of Germany's 'long'⁸¹² nineteenth century, among them the emancipation of the serfs and the destruction of the traditional rural order, hunger crises and industrialisation, claimed many victims in Baden as elsewhere.⁸¹³ The weakest sectors of society, especially children exposed to poverty, were often left destitute.⁸¹⁴ At the same time increasing state intervention in the daily life of citizens, notably in the latter half of the century, challenged the age-old Christian concept of *caritas* as voluntary, unsolicited and independent help for those in need, which had informed the Church's understanding of its welfare role since the Catholic Enlightenment.⁸¹⁵

State intervention took various forms, for example, in demands for the professional training of staff across the broad area of education including early years, child and youth welfare and vocational training. Efforts by the state to regulate the voluntary sector would at times directly challenge the Catholic Church's traditional social remit, such as in the so-called *Kulturkampf* era which in Prussia lasted from 1872 to 1887, but had been anticipated a decade earlier by the Baden authorities.⁸¹⁶ All these factors had far-reaching implications for the

⁸¹² Timo Hoyer, *Sozialgeschichte der Erziehung. Von der Antike bis in die Moderne* (Darmstadt, 2015), p. 84; see more generally David Blackbourn, *History of Germany 1780–1918. The long nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1997).

⁸¹³ Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich, 1993), p. 226.

⁸¹⁴ Hugo Ott, 'Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Entwicklung von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs', in Josef Becker, Lothar Gall, Gerd Hepp, Hugo Ott, Bernd Ottnad, Paul Sauer, Hermann Schäfer, Franz X. Vollmer, Paul-Ludwig Weihnacht, Hans Georg Zier, *Badische Geschichte. Vom Großherzogtum bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1979), pp 103–42, here at pp 108–10.

⁸¹⁵ Andreas Henkelmann, 'Der Weg in den Wohlfahrtsstaat: die Entwicklung der Caritas im langem 19. Jahrhundert', in Christoph Stiegemann (ed.), *Caritas: Nächstenliebe von den frühen Christen bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn, 2015), p. 312.

⁸¹⁶ See chapter 2 of this thesis.

role and self-understanding of the Freiburg sisters, hitherto focused primarily on the care in hospitals of the sick.

In the 1880s Chancellor Bismarck, motivated by his determination to counter the attraction of the Socialist party for the urban working classes, introduced sickness, accident and invalidity insurance schemes, marking the beginning of the German welfare state.⁸¹⁷

One particular source of conflict in Baden was the 'Compulsory Education Law' of 1886, which enabled the state to remove neglected children from their parents to send them either to foster care or a residential institution. The state was now empowered to set aside family authority in the case of young offenders from twelve years of age, but also of younger children, even those who had committed no crime.⁸¹⁸ State-funded 'preventative' care would prove to be both a blessing and a curse for Catholic child care institutions in the years following. According to § 2 of the sisters' constitutions of 1845, the main goal of the Order of the Sisters of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg was the care of the sick poor in hospitals, though they might also staff orphanages, rescue homes (*Rettungshäuser*) or institutes of correction for female prisoners.⁸¹⁹

Given the central status of nursing in the Order, the Motherhouse Freiburg had a long association with hospital management and the training of nurses. Indeed in this, their main role, the Freiburg Sisters of Charity enjoyed an enviable reputation. Up to 1900 the Sister of Charity received formal training in this one area only. With the introduction of a voluntary state exam for nursing in Prussia in 1906,⁸²⁰ other areas of female work required formal training as well, leading to the award of a diploma, and the religious sisters were eventually forced to

⁸¹⁷ Hoyer, *Sozialgeschichte der Erziehung*, p. 94.

⁸¹⁸ Angelika Schwall-Düren, *Kinder- und Jugendfürsorge im Großherzogtum Baden in der Epoche der Industrialisierung. Entwicklung und Zielsetzung der staatlichen, kommunalen und verbandlichen Fürsorge 1850–1914* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1980), p. 197. The law came into force on 1 Jan. 1887.

⁸¹⁹ Michael Sintzel, *Geschichte der Entstehung, Verbreitung und Wirksamkeit des Ordens der barmherzigen Schwestern* (Regensburg, 1847), p. 362.

⁸²⁰ For details see chapter 4.

comply with state regulation. In 1907 Fr Superior Karl Mayer had already complained to the Ordinariate about growing competition from Protestant and lay women.⁸²¹ Twenty years later, following a world war which had seen so many women working in paid employment outside the home,⁸²² the Motherhouse Freiburg found itself having to respond to demands from the state and from the supporters of the different branch houses for 'properly' trained sisters. Moreover, it now faced considerable competition from lay persons as well as from other religious institutes and organisations, Protestant and Catholic, all of whom recognised the importance of training programmes leading to qualifications that were accredited and recognised by the state.

When in 1928 Father Stengel of Gammertingen in Hohenzollern questioned the qualifications of the Freiburg Sisters of Charity in relation to the taking over of a new branch house, he received the following response from Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer:

With regard to exams which apply to our sisters, let me draw your attention to the following state examinations: in nursing (*Krankenpflegeexamen*), baby care (*Säuglingspflegeexamen*), nursery and needlework teaching (*Kinderschwesternexamen* and *Handarbeitslehrerinnenexamen*), youth leadership (*Jugendleiterinnenexamen*), the master craftsman's certificate (*Meisterprüfung*), among others. A very substantial number of our postulants and young sisters are already preparing for one or other of these examinations.⁸²³

This chapter explores the role played by the Motherhouse Freiburg in early childhood education and training, both in day care and in residential institutions. It investigates the training of female youth in vocational schools as part of the *Marienhaus* institution, and the 'life skills' training offered to women of all ages at the parish level in the interwar years of the Weimar Republic. It examines the type of education provided by the sisters in these different settings and how it changed over time. A further focal point is the sisters' own formation in the field of child and youth care, notably with regard to the development of the different types of branch houses providing this care.

⁸²¹ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 5 Apr. 1907 (EAF, B5/89).

⁸²² Wolfgang Hug, *Die Geschichte Badens* (2nd rev. ed., Darmstadt, 2016), p. 159.

⁸²³ Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer to parish priest Stengel, 21 Apr. 1928 (MuHA Freiburg, Akte Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus).

The chapter opens with an in-depth analysis of the some eighty nursery schools and of the problems the Order had to face in that specific field of action. According to the Order's statistics of 1926, nursery schools formed the second-largest group of activities after nursing (with hospital and private home nursing taken together)⁸²⁴ and became one of the linchpins of the Catholic milieu. Then the role of the orphanages is examined as one of the original pillars of the Motherhouse Freiburg and part of the legacy of the Alsatian motherhouse, where the poor and needy received institutional care.⁸²⁵ The chapter then introduces the *Marienhaus* (St Mary's hostel) illustrating the type of care of a particular occupational group which had become the victim of rapid industrialisation and the exponential growth of some of Baden's towns and cities.⁸²⁶ With this engagement the Motherhouse Freiburg acknowledged, on the one hand, the importance of all-round care of a particular vulnerable occupational group. On the other hand it recognised the paramount position of a wife and mother in a Catholic family and thus aimed to educate the girls and young women so that they became pillars of Catholic parish life in the future. One further field of the sisters' work made up the third largest group of the Order's branch house types of the 1920s, the more than seventy-three sewing schools.⁸²⁷ Each of them was an essential element of the parish in town and in countryside and another integral part of the Catholic milieu. The growing demand for formal education and training, the Order's response to external pressures and how the Order contributed to the educational development of its protégés and the formation of its members is addressed throughout.

⁸²⁴ Statistics of the Order of 1926, Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer, 21 Apr. 1928 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Verkehr mit anderen Mutterhäusern 1918–44).

⁸²⁵ Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

⁸²⁶ Twelve houses, of which six were simply intended for maid servants, three provided accommodation for shop assistants, office workers and civil servants, and a further three for factory workers (all female only).

⁸²⁷ Number of sewing schools in the statistics of the Order of 1926, Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer, 21 Apr. 1928 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Verkehr mit anderen Mutterhäusern 1918–44).

Early years childcare and the nursery school

Examples of organised child care, as distinct from the regular schooling of young children, can be found in Alsace, as in other places, in the eighteenth century. In Waldersbach (Ban de la Roche/Steintal) in 1770, the Protestant pastor Johann Friedrich (Jean-Frédéric) Oberlin (1740–1826) established the first *salle d'asile* in his parish to fight poverty and to provide a safe place for children where they were instructed in knitting.⁸²⁸ Günter Erning sees 1826/27 as the starting point for nursery schools in the German states when the translation of Samuel Wilderspin's book about English nursery schools was published in Vienna for the first time.⁸²⁹ In Germany, Theodor Fliedner, like Oberlin a Protestant minister, in 1836 established in Kaiserswerth a motherhouse for a Protestant version of the Vincentian *filles de la charité*, the Deaconesses.⁸³⁰ From the very beginning, the Protestant sisters were trained at Kaiserswerth to become nursery school staff. Later Friedrich Fröbel (1782–1852),⁸³¹ who was a Protestant pastor's son, and later still Maria Montessori (1870–1952) introduced their special pedagogic concepts to pre-schools. However, with the nursery schools being a predominantly Protestant phenomenon and a 'child' of industrialisation, German Catholics at first saw no need for them. In France, Catholic *crèches* and *salle d'asiles* had been established considerably earlier therefore, Catherine Maurer suggests, Germany's reluctance to introduce them arose from cultural rather than religious differences between the two countries.⁸³²

It is quite difficult to define 'nursery school' in German. The greatest difference from the English system is that, up to the present, the German institution has never been incorporated into the school system. Since the

⁸²⁸ Catherine Maurer, *La ville charitable. Les œuvres sociales catholiques en France et en Allemagne au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2012), p. 167.

⁸²⁹ Günter Erning, 'Geschichte der öffentlichen Kleinkindererziehung im 19. Jahrhundert', in Thomas Schnabel (ed.), *Versorgen, bilden, erziehen 1912–1987. Festschrift des Zentralverbandes katholischer Kindergärten und Kinderhorte Deutschlands* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1987), pp 11–25, here at p. 12.

⁸³⁰ Silke Köser, *Denn eine Diakonisse darf kein Alltagsmensch sein: kollektive Identitäten Kaiserswerther Diakonissen, 1836–1914* (Leipzig, 2006), pp 89, 99, 102.

⁸³¹ Fröbel was a student of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), the renowned Swiss pedagogue.

⁸³² Maurer, *La ville charitable*, pp 162–7.

Kulturkampf, it is forbidden by law to teach reading, writing or mathematics in nursery schools before children start school at six years of age.

Over time there have been different concepts or understandings of the institution and therefore a multitude of names. Indeed, the title employed has often been misleading. *Kindergarten*, a term coined by Friedrich Fröbel in 1840, refers to his pedagogy with a special understanding of child's play at its centre. From the beginning it was elitist and applied only to the offspring of well-to-do families. This fact and Fröbel's unspecific *weltanschauung* (world view or philosophy of life) led to its rejection by Protestant and Catholic Church authorities alike.⁸³³ From the 1920s on, the word 'kindergarten' became widespread in Germany, replacing older and more awkward names.⁸³⁴ Based on the special character of a (Fröbel-) kindergarten, such institutions were, for the most part, located in cities, whereas Catholic and Protestant childcare institutions could be found in town and country alike.

The most common word for a Catholic 'nursery school' was (*Klein-*) *Kinderbewahranstalt* which translates as 'child care institute' or 'infant care institute' (*salle d'asile* in French), or (*Klein-*) *Kinderschule*, 'nursery school' or 'play school' in English.⁸³⁵ The problem with this literal translation is the misleading association with 'school'. In this thesis, 'nursery school' is used as the general term because it is well established and well understood; however, it must be kept in mind that the *Kinderbewahranstalt* was never part of the regular German school system.

Only when the new-style institution was promoted during the second 'national Catholic convention' (*Katholikentag*) of 1849, a Germany-wide annual meeting of clergy, members of the laity, and representatives of various church-related organisations, did the Catholic nursery school movement begin.⁸³⁶ Not

⁸³³ Erning, 'Geschichte der öffentlichen Kleinkindererziehung', p. 16f.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁶ Gisela Fleckenstein, 'Erziehungshilfe', in Erwin Gatz (ed.), *Caritas und soziale Dienste* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997), pp 132–145, here at p. 134f.

surprisingly, the earliest foundations took place at the same time as the Catholic revival, when active or apostolic female religious congregations started to increase in number and size, and were thus able to staff and manage these pre-schools. The religious sisters were the heart and soul of Catholic childcare institutions.

Was that also the case for the Motherhouse Freiburg? What role did it play in the nursery school movement in the archdiocese of Freiburg? This chapter argues that the Motherhouse Freiburg took over the task of nursery schools in response to various pressures. There was the example of other Catholic sister's congregations with which, in some senses, they were in competition. There was the likelihood that Protestant providers would take charge of Catholic children if Catholics stayed aloof, something that could not be countenanced. And there was the wish of the local official, whether lay or religious, who wished to provide for local need, reinforced by the views of parishioners (and voters) who saw the nursery school as essential. The priest saw it as a religious good, the seculars as a cultural necessity. It is also argued that the sisters not only fulfilled a need but they also created one. In becoming 'indispensable', they made themselves instruments in the hands of the local authorities but also tools for forming the Catholic milieu.

Around 1910, just before the First World War, Günter Erning notes that there existed c. 7,500 nursery schools and other institutions of this type with c. 500,000 children enrolled across Germany. Of these institutions, 36% were supported by the Catholic Church or by a Catholic institution. The Grand Duchy of Baden was the leading state, at least in statistical terms, with thirty-eight places in pre-schools for every 100 children, followed by Alsace-Lorraine with 31.5%, Württemberg with 23.5% and Bavaria with 14%; in comparison, the numbers were 11.5% in Prussia and only five per hundred in Saxony.⁸³⁷ What role did the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Freiburg play in the development of this distinctive institution?

⁸³⁷ Erning, 'Geschichte der öffentlichen Kleinkindererziehung', p. 25.

According to a congregational chart of 1926, which lists the branch houses according to the different fields of action and the number of sisters in each work, the Motherhouse Freiburg staffed eighty-nine nursery schools (*Kinderbewahranstalt*) and ten kindergartens, making a total of ninety-nine.⁸³⁸ There were 209 branch houses at that time so that 47% – very nearly every second branch house – offered that particular type of childcare.⁸³⁹ This is a remarkable result for an Order which initially staffed only large establishments such as hospital and orphanages.⁸⁴⁰ What led to such growth?

Although the first *salle d'asile* had been founded in Alsace, as stated already, this type of institution was not part of the tradition of the Motherhouse Strasbourg. This congregation staffed only one single *salle d'asile* because, in Alsace at least, this field was considered to be the responsibility of the religious teaching orders.⁸⁴¹ The Motherhouse Freiburg, being an offspring of Strasbourg, therefore supplied sisters to work in nursery schools in Baden in only six places before the *Kulturkampf* hit in the 1870s, and generally at the request of a lay association (of women) or of a factory owner.⁸⁴²

As was the case with elementary school teaching, involvement in this kind of childcare was forbidden by the state to the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg and the other female congregations in Baden during the *Kulturkampf*. The sisters had to leave four of the nursery schools in 1874–76. In Freiburg, at *Maria Hilf*, a branch house for a settlement of factory workers, the nursery school sister displayed a remarkable agency: 'For several years the headship of a nursery school was

⁸³⁸ Statistics of the Order of 1926, Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer, 21 Apr. 1928 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Verkehr mit anderen Mutterhäusern 1918–44).

⁸³⁹ Rechenschaftsbericht für das Generalkapitel 1922–1928 (EAF, B5/89).

⁸⁴⁰ § 2 of the Order's constitutions of 1845, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

⁸⁴¹ Emil Clemens Scherer, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von Straßburg. Ein Bild ihres Werdens und Wirkens von 1734 bis zur Gegenwart* (Kevelaer, 1930), p. 425.

⁸⁴² The nursery schools were established in the orphanages of Offenburg and Mannheim-Käfertal, in the hospitals of Waldkirch, Tauberbischofsheim and Triberg and in a housing estate of factory workers in Freiburg between 1860 and 1874. Two might be even earlier, but the exact date is unknown (Offenburg and Käfertal), see the relevant files in the Motherhouse archive Freiburg.

forbidden for religious; during that time Sister Angela let a 'girl' (a young lay subordinate staff member) head it and a sister supervised her.⁸⁴³

From the early 1850s onwards, nursery schools in Baden were generally founded in association with a small branch house which had as its primary mission the care of the sick in their own homes. According to its constitutions of 1845, which were based on the rule of the Motherhouse Strasbourg, the Motherhouse Freiburg was not allowed to establish houses with such fields of action.⁸⁴⁴ The foreign motherhouses of Niederbronn (Alsace) and Ingenbohl (Switzerland), which operated in Baden without any such prohibition, therefore gained a competitive advantage over the sole state-approved motherhouse of the country.⁸⁴⁵ When the rule was revised in order to secure papal approval, the Motherhouse Freiburg (supported by the Motherhouse of Gmünd/Swabia), seized its chance; the Motherhouse Strasbourg agreed to the change of the constitution in 1882, making possible from now on the establishment of branch houses in the villages of the Catholic heartland of Baden.⁸⁴⁶ In 1883, with the *Kulturkampf* coming to its end, the Ministry of State of Baden gave approval to the Motherhouse Freiburg to implement the changes to its rule that had been canonically approved the year before.⁸⁴⁷ With that, the two major stumbling blocks to sisters of the Motherhouse Freiburg staffing nursery schools were removed. Figure 7.1 illustrates this late engagement in the field, and the subsequent rapid growth in the number of nursery schools staffed by the Motherhouse Freiburg.

⁸⁴³ Verzeichnis aller Filiale[n], p. 73 (MHA Freiburg). Sister Angela Schill later became Mistress of Novices in 1884. It is supposed that the same happened in Waldkirch, where Sister Pia Mussler staffed the nursery school since she came in 1866; see 'Chronik über das St. Nikolausspital in Waldkirch', written by Sister Benno Kopf, 26 Dec. 1921 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Waldkirch, St. Nikolausspital).

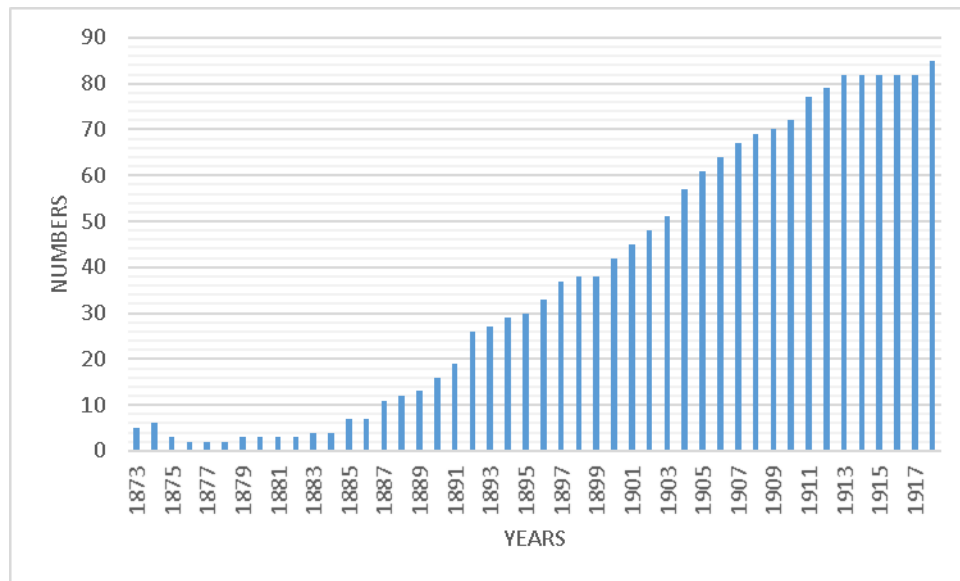
⁸⁴⁴ § 2 of the sisters' constitutions of 1845, see Sintzel, *Geschichte*, p. 362.

⁸⁴⁵ Fr Superior Joseph Marmon to Ordinariate, 7 Jan. 1883, where he explained thoroughly why the constitution needed to be changed in that regard (EAF, B5/89). A further spreading of branch houses over the country meant a better presence for the sisters, which in time would attract new members.

⁸⁴⁶ Scherer, *Die Kongregation*, p. 338f.

⁸⁴⁷ Resolution of the Ministry of State of Baden, 2 July 1883, conveyed by the Ministry of Culture and Education to the district office and to Fr Superior Marmon, 23 July 1883 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Bad Säckingen, Marienhaus).

Figure 7.1: Nursery schools staffed by the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg, 1873–1918



Source: [Author's] Compilation from the files of the branch houses of the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg (MHA Freiburg)

The steep rise in the number of nursery schools from the 1890s on is remarkable, peaking at eighty-five in 1918. From 1918 onwards, the annual total ranged between eighty and eighty-five; at the close of this study, in 1944, there were eighty-two. A comparison with the other congregations operating in Baden is not feasible as Freiburg entered the field much later than, for example, the motherhouses of Ingenbohl and Niederbronn which opened nursery schools in the 1850s. Nor can the numbers in Figure 7.1 be taken as entirely reliable, as quite a few nursery schools operated only from spring to autumn, and the material in the files does not provide the detail necessary to be certain that the nursery school actually operated in every year for which it is listed.⁸⁴⁸

Catholic education philosophy

Apart from the direct competition from other Catholic female congregations, what were the reasons behind the decision of the Motherhouse Freiburg to provide staff for nursery schools? What was the motivation? What was the

⁸⁴⁸ At least a further eighteen nursery schools were mentioned in the files, but they were not listed either in the returns for 1909 or of 1944.

purpose? In 1873, when the Motherhouse Freiburg sent sisters to one of its very first nursery schools, attached to the branch house *Maria Hilf* in Freiburg itself, Fr Superior Joseph Marmon used the formal blessing of the chapel to lay out his views on the education philosophy of a Catholic nursery school.⁸⁴⁹

The starting point was the traditional Catholic doctrine of original sin which, as articulated in the Epistles of Paul in the New Testament⁸⁵⁰ and interpreted by St Augustine, understands all persons as carrying something of the sin or guilt of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Hence, in standard scholastic teaching developed by Anselm of Canterbury and other medieval philosophers, human beings tend more to evil and to idleness than to goodness and to zeal, and have an inbuilt selfishness.⁸⁵¹ Coming from this traditional Catholic standpoint, a number of priests connected with the Motherhouse Freiburg developed the educational philosophy associated with, but not unique to, its nursery schools. Fr Marmon believed that children have to be coerced to be good; they have to learn order and cleanliness from their earliest years. Sensuality and passions must be restrained or overcome. Furthermore, as Fr Mayer admonished, if parents left children to their 'natural' desires and indulged their every wish, they would suffer later for it, and have only themselves to blame. When the father was absent from home all day and the mother overwhelmed with housework, it was of benefit also to the parents to have their children in a place where they were closely supervised and their predispositions directed towards the good.⁸⁵² In his appeal to factory workers to send their children at once to the new nursery school, Marmon argued that it would help parents to carry the great responsibility of

⁸⁴⁹ Speech of Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 1 Nov. 1873 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, Marienhaus).

⁸⁵⁰ Romans 5:12–21, 1 Corinthians 15:22.

⁸⁵¹ Philip L. Quinn, 'Sin', in Edward Craig (ed.), *The shorter Routledge encyclopedia of philosophy* (London, 2005), p. 961; 'Original sin', in Charles Taliaferro and Elsa J. Marty (eds), *A dictionary of philosophy of religion* (New York, 2010), p. 168; Roger Trigg, 'Theological anthropology', in Peter Byrne and Leslie Holden (eds.), *Companion encyclopedia of theology* (London, 1995) pp 453–571, here at p. 469. Anselm of Canterbury explained the fall of Lucifer with original sin, see G. R. Evans, 'The Christian adoption of the Old Testament', in Peter Byrne and Leslie Holden (eds.), *Companion encyclopedia of theology* (London, 1995), pp 47–63, here at p. 62.

⁸⁵² Speech of Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 1 Nov. 1873 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, Marienhaus).

educating their children well, while neglect would weigh heavily on the individual conscience.⁸⁵³ In the inauguration speech for the opening of a nursery school in Ettlingen (about 8km south of Karlsruhe) in 1897, Marmon's successor, Fr Superior Karl Mayer, stressed the importance of starting Catholic education as early as possible, for it was the first impressions of life that had the greatest impact in later years.⁸⁵⁴

The philosophy of early childhood education in the Catholic tradition in nineteenth-century Germany, as set out by Frs Marmon and Mayer and very many of their contemporaries, has come in for sharp criticism from later educationalists. In the eyes of Helge Wasmuth, it did not deal sufficiently with questions of an appropriate early childhood pedagogy as it was centred on Catholic belief and practice. By making religion the basis of all education, it reduced education to moral instruction, religious education and character formation.⁸⁵⁵ The main question here is what is 'appropriate'? This always depends on the type of *weltanschauung* – world view or belief system – of the people involved, and thus the larger cultural context of the time. For the Motherhouse Freiburg and its sisters, and for the Catholic church of which they were members and representatives, education had to be rooted in religion, with its accompanying rules and implications. This was the type of education they offered, that they considered appropriate; the enrolment numbers can be read as evidence that their contemporaries desired or at least accepted this approach.

Gisela Fleckenstein makes an interesting point in arguing that the pedagogy of the nursery school sisters consisted of elements of the traditional orphanage education, to which were added discipline and catechetical experience.⁸⁵⁶ In the case of the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg, that seems to be an exact reading of

⁸⁵³ Speech of Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 1 Nov. 1873 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, Marienhaus).

⁸⁵⁴ Newspaper article on the inauguration of the nursery school in Ettlingen by Fr Superior Karl Mayer, in *Badischer Landsmann*, 6 July 1897 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Ettlingen, St. Vincentiushaus).

⁸⁵⁵ Helge Wasmuth, *Kindertageseinrichtungen als Bildungseinrichtungen: zur Bedeutung von Bildung und Erziehung in der Geschichte der öffentlichen Kleinkinderziehung in Deutschland bis 1945* (Bad Heilbrunn, 2011), p. 282f.

⁸⁵⁶ Fleckenstein, 'Erziehungshilfe', p. 135.

where they came from. The sisters trained in the Motherhouse Strasbourg for the first twenty-five years had experience in orphanages but not in nursery schools. In addition to that, the state government of Baden did not allow the Motherhouse Freiburg to develop a programme of training which would qualify the sisters to teach in the (proper) German school.

There is very little information available about the actual educational programme or even about the normal routine of the day, which is not surprising because the nursery school sisters were usually too busy to write letters or reports. Feasts of the church year were celebrated, for which the children performed special plays, especially for Christmas. They also did handicrafts and their projects were displayed publicly.⁸⁵⁷ Sister Flavia Daigler reported that having so many little children aged from two years on made it difficult for her to teach, so she let them play and learn short prayers instead.⁸⁵⁸ At other times the children played outside⁸⁵⁹ and the sister took the children for walks: 'It is a pleasure to see the children going outside on their cord adorned with flags, led by the sister through the streets of the town...'⁸⁶⁰

In his critique (see above), Helge Wasmuth also characterises Christian nursery schools as emergency relief facilities but with a social welfare character.⁸⁶¹ Timo Hoyer also names the social welfare motif as the dominant constant. Medical-hygienic baby care (*medizinisch-hygienische Säuglingsversorgung*), minding the children of working mothers, and protecting the most vulnerable during supply shortages he identified as the key functions of a

⁸⁵⁷ The sister superior of the small branch house in Lenzkirch sent several newspaper clips to Fr Superior Schlatterer at his request, 30 Sept. 1931, to document nursery school sister M. Michaela's Geier's activities regarding theatre plays and exhibitions (MHA Freiburg, Akte Lenzkirch, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁵⁸ Sister Flavia Daigler to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 20 Oct. 1924 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Watterdingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁵⁹ Fr Huthmacher to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 17 Dec. 1903 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gruol, Schwesternhaus); Fr Rögele to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 4 Oct. 1909 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Röttenbach, Schwesternhaus): the children were mostly outside during the summer.

⁸⁶⁰ Mayor of Gammertingen to Motherhouse, 21 Aug. 1889 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁶¹ Wasmuth, *Kindertageseinrichtungen als Bildungseinrichtungen*, p. 282f.

particular 'social welfare type' of nursery school.⁸⁶² This was exactly the kind of nursery school run by Catholic bodies in both towns and countryside, including those of the Sisters of Charity of Baden. In Immenstaad at Lake Constance, a farming village with many vineyards,

... a nursery school is a real necessity because the people are very industrious and can rarely pay attention to the children especially from spring to autumn so that many children stand about idly ... and are up to much mischief.⁸⁶³

Mayor Schaub of Muggensturm (about 7 km east of Rastatt) asked the Motherhouse Freiburg to send a nursery school sister, as had been done the year before when more than 100 children attended. In his community, two factories employed 100 workers, and a further 200 were employed in the neighbouring town of Rastatt. Their wives were alone on their farms, so that a nursery school would be of the greatest benefit.⁸⁶⁴

According to remarks made by Immenstaad's parish priest, the nursery school was perceived as a means of solving the difficulties caused by so many young children rather than as an educational institute valuable in itself; the opinion of the mayor of Muggensturm hints in the same direction. However, the priests of two other rural villages wanted more than just supervision. In Röttenbach (south-east Black Forest) Fr Rögele was positive that the nursery school would promote both the physical and spiritual wellbeing of his young parishioners.⁸⁶⁵ In Walldürn (Odenwald, north Baden, 23 km south-west of Wertheim), parish priest Fr Dorbath associated high standards of 'order, cleanliness and piety' with the nursery school.⁸⁶⁶ Above all, he saw the potential for training in household management and parenting, concerned especially for

⁸⁶² Hoyer, *Sozialgeschichte der Erziehung*, p. 121f.

⁸⁶³ Fr Katzenmayer to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 5 Mar. 1902 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Immenstaad, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁶⁴ Mayor V. Schaub to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 23 Mar. 1894 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Muggensturm, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁶⁵ Fr Rögele to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 4 Oct. 1904 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Röttenbach, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁶⁶ Fr Dorbath to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 22 Aug. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Walldürn, Krankenhaus St. Josef).

the poor working women of his parish 'who saw only the flower factory prior to their marriage.'⁸⁶⁷

Competition between providers

Before the Catholics had even started to open nursery schools, inter-denominational competition was well underway. Protestants, especially the Pietists, were very active in the south-west of Germany.⁸⁶⁸ In the middle of Baden, which belonged to the diocese of Strasbourg until 1803, Regine Jolberg, a Protestant convert from Judaism and raised in Heidelberg, founded a nursery school and other institutions for the youth in 1840 in Leutesheim, just opposite Strasbourg on the other side of the River Rhine. 'Mother Jolberg', as she was called, developed this establishment into a nursery teacher-training school after her move to Nonnenweier thirty kilometres further south in 1844.⁸⁶⁹ By 1884, this motherhouse had staffed 133 branch houses in Baden with 144 Protestant sisters.⁸⁷⁰ This brisk activity, over four decades, did cause concern among Catholics who feared losing their young to their Protestant counterparts. Requests to the Motherhouse Freiburg for nursery school sisters frequently played on this fear, whether real or imagined.

When Fr Sprich, the parish priest of Hilzingen in the very south of Baden and close to Lake Constance, fell ill in 1904, the Protestant bailiff planned to establish

⁸⁶⁷ Fr Dorbath to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 22 Aug. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Walldürn, Krankenhaus St. Josef).

⁸⁶⁸ There were very active Pietists in all of the neighbouring countries of Baden: in Württemberg, in Basel (Switzerland) and in Strasbourg (Alsace).

⁸⁶⁹ Known as 'Mother Jolberg' or 'Mother Julie', see Adelheid M. von Hauff, *Regine Jolberg (1800–1870): Leben, Werk und Pädagogik* (Heidelberg, 2002), pp 67–110.

⁸⁷⁰ Schwall-Düren, *Kinder- und Jugendfürsorge*, p. 167. The fact has been widely overlooked by historians that in one of the neighbouring villages of Nonnenweier, in Kürzell, the foundation of a congregation of Catholic sisters in 1853 is likely to have been precipitated by the Protestant example. Those sisters, who were members of the Third Order of the Franciscans, took in poor Catholic orphans and cared for them. In Seelbach, only twenty kilometres further east, another congregation was founded in 1866, which developed later into the Motherhouse of Gengenbach, the third largest congregation of female religious sisters in Baden. Three more houses with women religious were founded in the second half of the 1850s in the Badenese region of the former diocese of Strasbourg, see Barbara Henze, 'Die übrigen Orden', in Heribert Smolinsky (ed.), *Geschichte der Erzdiözese Freiburg, Band 1: Von der Gründung bis 1918* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008), pp 337–45, pp 356–9.

a Protestant women's association that would establish a nursery school after the Protestant model.⁸⁷¹ To counter the recruiting of Catholic children from better-off backgrounds by the Protestant minister of Überlingen, also situated at Lake Constance, in 1932, a third sister was asked for as well as a substitute to cover when the nursery school sister was away on retreat.⁸⁷² Towards the end of the First World War, Fr Schlitter of Durlach (5km east of Karlsruhe) gave several pressing reasons as to why he needed a nursery school. Due to the war, the women of his parish had been coerced to work in the factories alongside the men, so that childcare was a pressing issue. In the absence of a local Catholic nursery school, these children had to attend either the Protestant institution with deaconesses, or none at all.⁸⁷³

Competition between the different types of nursery schools intensified from the moment the Catholic institutions appeared on the scene. In 1891, Protestant pastor Spengler of Ettlingen (an industrial town not far from Karlsruhe) made a formal complaint because the district education head officer (*Oberschulrat*) had restricted the Protestant nursery school to sixty-seven (instead of ninety) children according to the room size. On the other hand, the officer had allowed 130 children in the Catholic institution although the room was too small, and the *Fröbelkindergarten* had also been treated more benevolently. In pastor Spengler's opinion, the education head officer and the district doctor were biased in favour of the Catholic nursery school for confessional reasons.⁸⁷⁴

The state government of Baden saw no need to involve itself in setting up or financing nursery schools because they were not part of the school system, as Timo Hoyer points out.⁸⁷⁵ However, after the *Kulturkampf* the state of Baden took all nursery schools under its supervision. The establishment of a new one had to

⁸⁷¹ Fr Fridolin Sprich to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 16 Mar. 1904 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hilzingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁷² Fr Schwarz to Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer, 3 Aug. 1932 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Überlingen, Kindergarten St. Angelus).

⁸⁷³ Fr Schlitter to Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle, 6 Feb. 1918 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Durlach, St. Josefshaus/Christkönigshaus).

⁸⁷⁴ Pastor Spengler to District Office Ettlingen, 30 Apr. 1891 (GLA, 18173).

⁸⁷⁵ Timo Hoyer, *Sozialgeschichte der Erziehung*, p. 121.

get state approval;⁸⁷⁶ the buildings had to meet certain requirements, the number of children was regulated⁸⁷⁷ and every single nursery school sister had to get an exemption of constitution 116, part four of the Elementary School Law of 2 April 1872.⁸⁷⁸ Whenever the sister was to be transferred, the exemption had first to be renewed. All these laws of the *Kaiserreich* became obsolete after the end of the First World War. During the Weimar Republic, the new state youth welfare law *RJWG*⁸⁷⁹ mandated state supervision to the newly-founded youth offices over all child welfare institutions. To secure state approval, all those institutions had to meet basic standards from 1 April 1926 on.⁸⁸⁰

To prevent the spread of contagious diseases, the state insisted on nursery school sisters having a room of their own, which was often not so easy to implement. In Muggensturm (about 7 km east of Rastatt) in 1895, the plan for a new building for the nursery school had to be revised in order to meet state regulations, therefore building had become more expensive and was in danger of being delayed.⁸⁸¹ In Kuppenheim (5 km south-east of Rastatt) in 1900, the nursery sister was no longer allowed to live in the hospital. The superiors of the Motherhouse Freiburg agreed that she could be transferred to a single room as the hospital already had two entrances. If the hospital did not consent, then the nursery school had to go.⁸⁸² In Hilzingen (west of Lake Constance on the Swiss border) in 1904, a dilemma arose when following the law would have resulted in the nursery sister living separately to the other sisters. The Order vetoed that

⁸⁷⁶ Every nursery school was subject to registration according to the Act of 9 Oct. 1869 and of constitution 108 of the Elementary School Law (GLA, 18174).

⁸⁷⁷ In Stetten am kalten Markt (Hohenzollern), the district office allowed only fifty children for the size of the room, but eighty wanted to attend: Sister Makaria Storz to Mother General, Sister Luisa David, 11 Mar. 1904 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten am kalten Markt, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁷⁸ Exemption of 19 Mar. 1891 by the Ministry of Justice, Culture and Education of Baden for Sister Cortona Gutmann in Ettlingen (GLA, 235/18174).

⁸⁷⁹ *Reichsjugendwohlfahrtsgesetz* of 1922/24, see chapter 6.

⁸⁸⁰ Franz-Michael Konrad, *Der Kindergarten: Seine Geschichte von den Anfängen bis in die Gegenwart* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2012), p. 132.

⁸⁸¹ Mayor V. Schaub to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 11 Feb. 1895 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Muggensturm, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁸² District office Rastatt to motherhouse, 22 Aug. 1900; Fr Superior Karl Mayer to district office Rastatt, 28 Aug. 1900 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Kuppenheim, Krankenhaus).

decision, stating that a nursery sister living on her own was against the rule.⁸⁸³ In every case the Motherhouse Freiburg complied with state regulations unless the rule of the Order was violated.

Who was responsible for the introduction of the new institution of the nursery school? In the case of the Motherhouse Freiburg, three key external agents can be identified. During the Second Reich until the beginning of the First World War in 1914, via the district office (*Bezirksamt*), the state government of Baden displayed a keen interest in the establishment of nursery schools at the local level. In Röttenbach, a small village in the middle of the Black Forest forty kilometres west of Freiburg, Fr Rögele informed the Motherhouse Freiburg that the district office was urging the establishment of a nursery school.⁸⁸⁴ Parish priests frequently took the lead, although they sometimes had to undergo a learning process first. In Nussbach, a village in the middle of Baden on the edge of the Black Forest, twenty-five kilometres east of Strasbourg, Fr Wiese saw no need to add a nursery school to a new branch house in 1883.⁸⁸⁵ However, his fellow priest, Fr Müller asked for it, 'because as a pastor, I cannot appreciate highly enough the importance of a well-managed nursery school.'⁸⁸⁶ In their role as community leaders it was the local mayor who, on occasion, took the lead in getting a nursery school running, often urged by social circumstances and in partnership with the local priest and/or women's association.⁸⁸⁷ In Wyhl, a village north-west of Freiburg at the volcanic mountain Kaiserstuhl directly next to the River Rhine, the local council asked the Motherhouse Freiburg not to close the

⁸⁸³ Fr Sprich to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 31 May 1904 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hilzingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁸⁴ Fr Rögele to Fr Superior Mayer, 21 Jan. 1910 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Röttenbach, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁸⁵ Fr Franz Wiese to Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 17 Oct. 1883 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Nußbach, Schwesternhaus). He did acknowledge though that the nursery school was very much desired.

⁸⁸⁶ Fr L. Müller to Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle, 4 May 1926 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Nußbach, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁸⁷ In 1860 in Waldkirch (15km north-east of Freiburg), the women's association itself had founded a *Kleinkinderbewahr-Anstalt* and supported it, see *Statuten für die Kleinkinderbewahr-Anstalt in Waldkirch* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1860), pp 3–6 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Waldkirch, St. Nikolaispital).

nursery school because it was an urgent necessity. The parish consisted of mainly poor families, whose women had to work in the cigar manufactory.⁸⁸⁸

Although in almost all known cases, the agency for the introduction of nursery schools lay outside the Order of the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg, the Motherhouse itself took the lead on occasion. In 1927 Fr Heilig, the parish priest of Müllheim, a small town in the vicinity of Heitersheim, reported to Mother General Ferdinand Feederle, that the nursery school could finally be built, adding that this was something he had been urged to do much earlier by Sister Ferdinand's predecessor, Sister Luisa David.⁸⁸⁹

Financing

Most nursery schools were only possible financially because the female congregations provided the personnel who were much cheaper than lay staff.⁸⁹⁰ For the predominantly poor Catholic parishes in the countryside of Baden, financing of nursery schools was difficult. The most common first step was to establish an association. Depending on the initiator of the project, the association could be founded by the church or by laywomen. The members of the association would sponsor the nursery school, and the attending children would pay a small fee. The laywomen's associations were members of the central Women's Association of Baden in Karlsruhe (*Badischer Frauenverein*) which was incorporated into the International Red Cross.⁸⁹¹ The Catholic associations were commonly named for a saint, such as St Vincent's, St Elisabeth's or St Joseph's society, or simply titled an 'association for the sick'. If the parish was well off, such associations often teamed up with the commune for the financing of the

⁸⁸⁸ Council to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 5 Oct. 1921 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Wyhl, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁸⁹ Fr Heilig to Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle, 14 Jan. 1927 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Müllheim, St. Vinzentiushaus).

⁸⁹⁰ Gisela Fleckenstein, 'Erziehungshilfe', in Erwin Gatz (ed.), *Caritas und soziale Dienste* (Freiburg i. Br., 1997), p. 135.

⁸⁹¹ See Kerstin Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein 1859–1918: Rotes Kreuz, Fürsorge und Frauenfrage* (Heidelberg, 1999).

nursery school or even the branch house itself.⁸⁹² Initially it mattered little whether the money came from a lay or from a religious association; however, the type of sponsorship became very important in the Third Reich.

The very poor conditions under which the nursery school sisters frequently laboured can be deduced from the documentary record, though the sisters themselves displayed a remarkable readiness to make do with whatever was available and made few requests or demands. In Stetten am kalten Markt, in Hohenzollern close to Sigmaringen, the nursery school lacked a good playground, which might not have mattered too much because the winters there were very long and very cold.⁸⁹³ Sister Flavia Daigler complained about the fact that the nursery school had very few toys so that the many little two-year-olds were difficult to satisfy.⁸⁹⁴ Very often she procured materials and made the toys herself.⁸⁹⁵ The sisters also had books on their wish list, which the mayor of Gammertingen in Hohenzollern allowed the Motherhouse Freiburg to purchase directly from the bookseller and publisher Herder, a next-door neighbour of the Order in Freiburg.⁸⁹⁶ Contributions in kind as well as in money were crucial to the continuance of operations.

A standard nursery school consisted of children between three and six years of age but sometimes two-year-olds were accepted. Class numbers ranged widely. In Watterdingen, a village close to Singen and Lake Constance, Sister

⁸⁹² The St Elisabeth association of Sigmaringendorf, together with the local council, paid for the branch house of the Motherhouse Freiburg: Dean J. Marmon to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, without date (c. 1910, before 8 Jan. 1911), (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sigmaringendorf).

⁸⁹³ Sister Makaria Storz to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 11 Mar. 1904 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten am kalten Markt, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁹⁴ Sister Flavia Daigler to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 20 Oct. 1924 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Watterdingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁹⁵ Fr Maier to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 15 Aug. 1939 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus). Fr Maier asked in that letter what to do with those school materials, clearly obtained through the initiative of the sister, when the kindergarten had to be handed over to the Nazi welfare organisation NSV.

⁸⁹⁶ Fr. Göggel, mayor of Gammertingen to Mother General Sister Alban Jörger, 14 May 1889 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus). Dean Kuttruff of Kirchen-Hausen wanted to get a small storybook for children for which the nursery school sister had asked: Fr Kuttruff to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 31 Oct. 1910 [year wrong, because of Superior's answer 8 Nov. 1911] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Kirchen-Hausen, Schwesternhaus).

Flavia Daigler had sixty-three children aged two years and upwards in 1924.⁸⁹⁷ In Kuppenheim, a village next to Rastatt in the middle of Baden, in 1915 the nursery counted more than 100 children, among whom were around twenty two-year-olds.⁸⁹⁸ And in Pfullendorf, a town north of Lake Constance, where the Motherhouse Freiburg also staffed one of its four crèches, 125 children attended the nursery school in 1931, which was therefore one of the largest in the country. Fr Superior Schlatterer of Freiburg himself noted that the number of sisters for that pre-school was far below the state requirements.⁸⁹⁹

Many nursery schools operated only during summertime, especially in the first years.⁹⁰⁰ In 1924, Sister Flavia Daigler opened her school from June to 15 October from eight to eleven in the mornings and from one to six o'clock in the afternoons, but in October, it was closed at five.⁹⁰¹ Fr Fehrenbacher pleaded with the Motherhouse Freiburg not to shut down the institute in winter, because the poor people there had to work in the vineyards during wintertime, and could take the children with them only in the summer.⁹⁰² In Hüfingen in the Black Forest, the women's club also protested against the closure in the winter of 1915.⁹⁰³ In some places, the nursery school was forced to shut down due to a lack of heating material, resulting in the redeployment of the nursery school sister to an institute which did not have the same problem.⁹⁰⁴

⁸⁹⁷ Sister Flavia Daigler to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 20 Oct. 1924 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Watterdingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁸⁹⁸ Fr Winterhalder to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 26 Apr. 1915 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Kuppenheim, Krankenhaus).

⁸⁹⁹ Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer to council of Pfullendorf, 31 Aug. 1931 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Pfullendorf, Krankenhaus).

⁹⁰⁰ Fr Ignaz Rieger of Bermatingen asked for a nursery school sister for the summer for the neighbouring village, see Fr Rieger to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 17 Feb. 1910 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Bermatingen, Schwesternhaus).

⁹⁰¹ Sister Flavia Daigler to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 20 Oct. 1924 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Watterdingen, Schwesternhaus). With some rare exceptions, a nursery school usually closed at midday so that the families could have their main meal of the day together.

⁹⁰² Fr Fehrenbacher to Mother General Sister Alban Jörgler, 27 Oct. 1891 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hagnau, Schwesternhaus).

⁹⁰³ Women's association and parish priest to Motherhouse, 4 Oct. 1915 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Hüfingen, Krankenhaus).

⁹⁰⁴ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Fr Lohr of Messkirch, 4 Oct. 1919 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Meßkirch, Altersheim).

Training of the nursery school sisters

In 1900, the Motherhouse Freiburg established a *kindergarten* (St Angelus in Nazareth House) on the motherhouse premises, mainly to train the novices and postulants.⁹⁰⁵ The term *kindergarten* reveals that it followed Friedrich Fröbel's education theory. Over the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church had eventually given up its former resistance to Fröbel's ideas.⁹⁰⁶ At what is referred to as a course in St Angelus in 1912/13, the trainee nursery sisters received a six-month formation in all technical skills and in practical work, in addition to theoretical lessons in educational theory, kindergarten theory, motion games and manual skills.⁹⁰⁷ Since it is not possible to establish enrolment numbers, it is not clear if all the sisters who actually became 'teachers' in a nursery school had had the benefit of such a training programme.

Competition in the field of teacher training was especially sharp, and long-running. Theodor Fliedner had introduced training courses of one year for the Protestant deaconesses (*Diakonissinnen*) in Kaiserswerth as early as 1836.⁹⁰⁸ Friedrich Fröbel followed with his institution in 1839,⁹⁰⁹ Mother Regine Jolberg set up her nursery school training establishment in Nonnenweier (middle Baden) in 1844 (as discussed above) and the Badenese Women's Association (*Badischer Frauenverein*) started a school for lay child care workers in Karlsruhe in 1863, first offering a six-month course, which was extended to one year in 1865.⁹¹⁰

⁹⁰⁵ Report for the general chapter from 1898–1904 (EAF, B5/89).

⁹⁰⁶ Meiwes, *'Arbeiterinnen des Herrn': katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), p. 197. She mentions the Augustinian Sisters of Neuss in north-west Germany who had sent some of their members to be trained in that method in the early 1880s.

⁹⁰⁷ Certificate of Sister Theodisia Kuhn (1891–1972, clothed 1912, first profession 1913) in her personal file (MHA Freiburg). The document testified her kindergarten training for November 1912 to May 1913.

⁹⁰⁸ Silke Köser, *Denn eine Diakonisse darf kein Alltagsmensch sein: kollektive Identitäten Kaiserswerther Diakonissen, 1836–1914* (Leipzig, 2006), p. 73.

⁹⁰⁹ Erning, 'Geschichte der öffentlichen Kleinkindererziehung', p. 24.

⁹¹⁰ Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, pp 381–90.

In 1914, just before the outbreak of the First World War, the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Freiburg, Dr Justus Knecht (1839–1921),⁹¹¹ founded a Catholic institution for the training of female child care workers and educators in Catholic nursery schools, orphanages and reformatories. Dr Knecht, a gifted teacher and keen catechist himself, wanted the new institution to provide an education which met the requirements of modern pedagogy and would be recognised in professional circles.⁹¹² This early childhood seminary of Freiburg was only the second Catholic institution of its kind in Germany. Its first principal was a trained school and Fröbel teacher, Alexe (Alexandrine) Hegemann, who in 1919 became the first director of the 'child welfare' department in the German Caritas Association (DCV).⁹¹³ It was the religious sisters of Baden who worked in childcare that Alexe Hegemann and, with her the DCV, first had in mind as potential students. Sending their young members to be trained outside the community was not initially welcomed by the religious congregations who were generally wary of interference from outside, especially by the state. Congregations cherished their freedom to set their own goals and follow their own plans.⁹¹⁴ The Motherhouse Freiburg was no exception, finding the kindergarten teacher course unsuitable because the sisters would share classes with laywomen. More seriously, most of their sisters had attended elementary school only, up to the age of fourteen years and thus would not be eligible for the training now on offer.

The hesitancy around the professional training of female religious working in childcare and education was challenged in 1920 by the German bishops' conference at Fulda. Congregations and orders were advised to prepare their

⁹¹¹ Christoph Schmider, 'Weihbischof Friedrich Justus Heinrich Knecht (1839–1921)', in Schmider, *Die Freiburger Bischöfe: 175 Jahre Erzbistum Freiburg. Eine Geschichte in Lebensbildern* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2002), pp 101–18.

⁹¹² Fr Alois Eckert, *Denkschrift über die Lage des Kindergärtnerinnenseminars Freiburg/Brsgr.* (EAF, B7/72).

⁹¹³ Manfred Berger, 'Alexe Hegemann (1877–1926)', in Berger, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Kindergartens: ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 1995), pp 80–4.

⁹¹⁴ Erning, 'Geschichte der öffentlichen Kleinkindererziehung', p. 25.

sisters so that they could participate in further education in these fields.⁹¹⁵ Courses tailored specifically for sisters were created; the first at the Freiburg kindergarten seminary started in 1923.⁹¹⁶ According to Fr Alois Eckert's memoir, these courses lasted eighteen months, and the elementary school formation of the sisters was sufficient for admission.⁹¹⁷

Despite a strong start, demand for these courses quickly fell. One after another, the different motherhouses of Baden founded their own teacher seminaries: Bühl (1925), Hegne and Gengenbach (1929). The Motherhouse Freiburg was left as the largest order sending students, along with some smaller congregations. A change in state regulations in 1928 meant that the eighteen-month course could not continue. The choice was now to send sisters either to study alongside lay women at the two-year kindergarten teacher course or at the one-year childcare course.⁹¹⁸ From at least 1932 onwards, the Motherhouse Freiburg did not send any sisters to the kindergarten teachers' seminary. Between 1923 and 1928 it sent twenty-four sisters for training to eight different courses, the second highest number of all Badenese motherhouses after Erlenbad with fifty-six.⁹¹⁹

Apart from the kindergarten teacher course, the *DCV* introduced a number of other training or formation programmes. These included courses for sisters and lay women who already worked in nursery schools, for those who worked in orphanages, and for those in sewing schools. In 1927, the youth leadership seminary programme was introduced for those who would later work in orphanages or similar institutions, or would take leading positions in childcare

⁹¹⁵ Deutscher Caritasverband (ed.), *Denkschrift: die Schwesternseminare für die Ausbildung klösterlicher Erzieherinnen außerhalb der Schule innerhalb des Deutschen Caritasverbandes* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1928), p. 9.

⁹¹⁶ *DCV, Denkschrift*, p. 10.

⁹¹⁷ Fr Alois Eckert, *Denkschrift über die Lage des Kindergärtnerinnenseminars Freiburg/Brsig, c. 1932*, p. 3. (EAF, B7/72). According to the *DCV*-memoir, a special preparation in the motherhouses was needed to meet the requirements, see *DCV, Denkschrift*, p. 10.

⁹¹⁸ Eckert, *Denkschrift*, p. 4 (EAF, B7/72).

⁹¹⁹ Eckert, *Denkschrift*, statistic at the very end of the memoir (no pagination), (EAF, B7/72).

education.⁹²⁰ By claiming the sisters' training programme to be equivalent in every respect to other programmes,⁹²¹ the *DVC* forced the Motherhouse Freiburg and other motherhouses to tackle the issue of an adequate, up-to-date training for those sisters who worked in education or childcare. However, the Motherhouse Freiburg was involved to a much higher degree in the kindergarten teachers' seminary than the other Badenese congregations. The motherhouse kindergarten St Angelus had become the teaching kindergarten where the students received their practical training,⁹²² Sister Gertrudis Bayer taught at the seminary for two years from 1923 to 1925, replacing Sister Ida Munkel of St Angelus who entered a Carmelite monastery that year.⁹²³ And Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer was chosen to be the representative of all motherhouses on the board of the kindergarten teachers' seminary, after the legal structure was changed and the religious congregations were granted a right to nominate a member.⁹²⁴

Perhaps due to geography (the motherhouse premises was within walking distance of Ordinariate, *Caritas* and the kindergarten teachers' seminary), perhaps due to its pre-eminence regarding age and size, of all Badenese congregations the Motherhouse Freiburg appears to have profited the most by the creation of the kindergarten teachers' seminary. However, it could have benefited even more, had the superiors sent a greater number of sisters to be trained here. When the training of nurses by the Motherhouse Freiburg is compared to the training it offered to its nursery school teachers, it is clear that the latter took second place within the congregation.

⁹²⁰ Eckert, *Denkschrift*, p. 4f., (EAF, B7/72); *DCV* (ed.), *Denkschrift Die Schwesternseminare für die Ausbildung klösterlicher Erzieherinnen außerhalb der Schule innerhalb des Deutschen Caritasverbandes* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1928), p. 21.

⁹²¹ *DCV*, *Denkschrift*, p. 32.

⁹²² Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer to Fr Alois Eckert, 24 Nov. 1921 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Kindergärtnerinnenseminar).

⁹²³ Fr Alois Eckert to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 1 Aug. 1923; answer of Fr Superior Schlatterer, 5 Aug. 1923; Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle to kindergarten teachers' seminary, 22 Aug. 1923 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Kindergärtnerinnenseminar).

⁹²⁴ Eckert, *Denkschrift*, p. 3 (EAF, B7/72); Sister Hilda Stark to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 28 Dec. 1933, attested to Fr Superior's pedagogic skills when she asked him for help (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heidelberg, St. Antoniusheim).

The orphanages and the educational shift in the mid-1920s

In the nineteenth century the state government of Baden did not itself take care of destitute children until after the introduction of the Compulsory Education Act in 1886.⁹²⁵ Diverse other groups, however, did undertake a number of initiatives to help impoverished children and orphans. A nondenominational association of upper class members of society founded in 1836,⁹²⁶ the Protestant Pietists of the 'rescue home movement' (*Rettungshausbewegung*) were inspired by their Swabian and Swiss brethren.⁹²⁷ Its later Catholic counterpart, headed by Archbishop Hermann von Vicari and influenced by a member of the Freiburg cathedral chapter, Fr Johann Baptist von Hirscher (1788–1865), founded several 'rescue homes' for children in the state.⁹²⁸

From very early on in the history of the Motherhouse Freiburg, the Order involved itself also in this field by sending its sisters to staff existing orphanages and to establish new ones. Three phases can be distinguished in this regard. In phase one which lasted from 1853–73 the Order took over six orphanages and five hospitals with a section for orphans. For the most part staffed by Strasbourg sisters as the young Freiburg sisters were not yet experienced enough, each orphanage usually had its own in-house school. Phase two followed shortly after the start of the *Kulturkampf* in 1873 and ended in 1893. After its independence from the Motherhouse Strasbourg and sisters being dismissed by different institutions during the struggle with the state, the Motherhouse Freiburg founded

⁹²⁵ Hoyer, *Sozialgeschichte der Erziehung*, p. 121; Schwall-Düren, *Kinder- und Jugendfürsorge*, p. 230f.

⁹²⁶ Schwall-Düren, *Kinder- und Jugendfürsorge*, pp 78–83. 1836 was the year of the state approval. The vicar general of the defunct diocese of Constance, Ignaz Heinrich von Wessenberg (1774–1860), the most prominent representative of the enlightened clergy, was not only heart and soul of the association but also bequeathed all his fortune to that cause; see Joachim Faller, *'Mir scheint, es wäre an der Zeit zu handeln...': Johann Baptist von Hirscher – Werk und Wirken in einer Epoche des Umbruchs, 1845–1865* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006), p. 171 and Lisa Foege, *Wessenbergs Herzenskind: Geschichte einer sozialen Fürsorgeinstitution in Konstanz* (Konstanz, 2014), pp 20–3.

⁹²⁷ Jens Stöcker, *Das Rettungshaus – ein Lebenszeichen: die Konstitution der Rettungshausbewegung in der bayrischen Pfalz* (Heidelberg, 2010), pp 70f; Schwall-Düren, *Kinder- und Jugendfürsorge*, p. 115; Gertraud Wopperer, *Die neuen Formen sozial-caritativer Arbeit in der Oberrheinischen Kirchenprovinz* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1957), pp 157–201.

⁹²⁸ Faller, *Johann Baptist von Hirscher*, pp 172–5.

seven of its own branch houses including Bethania/Heitersheim for 'fallen' girls, ex-prisoners and other vulnerable young women so that they would not become prey to prostitution.⁹²⁹ In phase 3 from 1909–26 the Order staffed three houses which belonged to a new era of social welfare provision: mother and baby homes and one orphanage which took in the older children of one of the homes. Typical of the new type of 'passage house' was the temporary stay of the inmates who were often single mothers straight from hospital and who needed time and support to figure out their future.⁹³⁰ By 1926, thirteen orphanages and other residential institutions for children were staffed by the Freiburg sisters, who cared for 1,202 children for 272,427 care days in that year.⁹³¹ The Order was different from other congregations in caring for children of both sexes, though the majority were girls.⁹³²

The catalytic effect of the First World War had both freed conservatives from the restrictions imposed by the former government and given impetus to modernist, liberal and communist ideas in the 1920s.⁹³³ Institutional childcare along traditional lines and Germany's religious now faced new situations and challenges.⁹³⁴ Apart from the ever-present financial difficulties, challenges came especially from the state and from direct competitors, notably from progressive education reformists. By passing the National Youth Care Act (*Reichsjugendwohlfahrtsgesetz, RJWG*) in 1922, the German state had set new

⁹²⁹ Breisach, St Vincent (1873–75); Freiburg, former boys' seminary (1874–80); Sinzheim, St Vincent (1886); Freiburg, Nazareth house (1887); Oberkirch, St Gebhard (1887); Ubstadt, St Joseph (1892); Heitersheim, Bethania of the Good Shepherd (1893). The boys' orphanage in Rastatt (1883/84) was the only one of that group which was not in the ownership of the Order at some point. Fr Superior Josef Marmon to Ordinariate, 21 Apr. 1877 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Pension im Konvikt).

⁹³⁰ Heidelberg, St Paulusheim (1909) and its branch, St Antoniusheim (1917), Offenburg, Children- and mother-home (1921), Lahr, Welfare home for children and mothers (1926).

⁹³¹ Statistics of the Order of 1926 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Verkehr mit anderen Mutterhäusern 1918–1944).

⁹³² Two orphanages were solely for boys: the Order-owned St Vincent in Sinzheim and the municipal boys' orphanage in Rastatt; four only for girls: Mannheim-Käfertal, St Gebhard in Oberkirch, Ubstadt and Heitersheim, Bethania; the other institutions took in both boys and girls.

⁹³³ Andreas Wirsching, *Die Weimarer Republik: Politik und Gesellschaft* (Munich, 2008), p. 84f.

⁹³⁴ See chapter 6 of this thesis regarding the economic troubles of the Order-owned orphanages.

standards for institutional childcare.⁹³⁵ The critique of progressive education reformists challenged the religious sisters on the type of youth education offered, the manner of staff training and the qualifications the children could receive.⁹³⁶ To address the issue of inadequate staff training the German Caritas Association urged the female congregations to send sisters to the archdiocesan kindergarten training seminary⁹³⁷ and to the state youth leadership training seminary of the *Caritas*.⁹³⁸ The national bishops' conference also required, that the motherhouses of the Catholic congregations should place only trained sisters with the necessary qualifications as head of orphanages.⁹³⁹ Pressure also came from within the institutions themselves.

Many childcare institutions responded to their critics in the 1920s by rapid modernisation, though for some implementation of the planned reforms was deficient and/or delayed.⁹⁴⁰ Thus in 1927 the board of the orphanage St Joseph in Mannheim-Käfertal planned to implement the new 'family concept' with every sister caring for twenty children.⁹⁴¹ For that scheme, the orphanage board needed not only more but also trained sisters.⁹⁴² Such demands administered a sharp shock to advocates of traditional ways. Four years earlier, in 1923, the local parish priest had reported to the motherhouse on a chaotic situation in the Käfertal orphanage: the sisters could no longer cope with eighty to one hundred

⁹³⁵ It came into effect in 1924 and was generally viewed as a compromise between the Catholic Centre Party and the Social Democrats, see Andreas Wollasch, *Der Katholische Fürsorgeverein für Mädchen, Frauen und Kinder, 1899–1945: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Jugend- und Gefährdetenfürsorge in Deutschland* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1991), p. 139f.

⁹³⁶ Gräser, Marcus, *Der blockierte Wohlfahrtsstaat. Unterschichtjugend und Jugendfürsorge in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen, 1995), p. 91ff.

⁹³⁷ Ibid.

⁹³⁸ It was established by Maria Kiene in her function as child welfare department manager of the German Caritas Association (DCV) and introduced in Freiburg only in 1927, see Annebelle Pithom (ed.), *Religionpädagoginnen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, (Göttingen, 1997), p. 411.

⁹³⁹ In his function as director of the German bishops' conference, he had published the bishops' resolution of 1922 to this effect; see printed resolution of Adolf Cardinal Bertram, 15 Sept. 1922. At that time, the German bishops' convention took place without the participation of their Bavarian brethren.

⁹⁴⁰ See for Westphalia: Markus Köster, *Jugend, Wohlfahrtsstaat und Gesellschaft im Wandel: Westfalen zwischen Kaiserreich und Bundesrepublik* (Paderborn, 1999), p. 190.

⁹⁴¹ Board director Beck to Fr Superior E. R. Schlatterer, 5 Nov. 1927 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Mannheim-Käfertal, Waisenhaus St. Josef).

⁹⁴² Board director Beck to Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle, 31 Jan. 1928 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Mannheim-Käfertal, Waisenhaus St. Josef).

children. In 1932, Dr Karl Bender, the mayor of Freiburg (1922–1933), paid a visit to the local orphanage⁹⁴³ and ordered that the sisters take a special state youth leadership exam (*Jugendleiterinnenexamen*).⁹⁴⁴ Following the reconstruction of the building, 'family groups' should be introduced, each led by a sister, with one trained kindergarten sister per every group of fifteen children. Contrary to expectations, and despite the fact that some members of the Catholic clergy of Freiburg advocated lay staff for the orphanage,⁹⁴⁵ by then the Motherhouse Freiburg could provide sisters with such a training. After an initially shocked response to the mayor's action, – minutes of the sisters' council meeting referred to 'exaggerated and excessive demands' – the Motherhouse Freiburg grasped that compliance was both necessary and politic: 'Make sure that the demands for trained state-certified youth leaders and state-certified kindergarten teacher sisters is fulfilled in future.'⁹⁴⁶ Information about the exact number of trained staff in these institutions is difficult to come by for those years. The family doctor Dr Fischer of St Vincent in Sinzheim described Sister Almehda Reich in 1923 as a particularly well-educated custodian who was concerned for the welfare of the children she cared for and kept up-to-date in the appropriate pedagogic literature.⁹⁴⁷ The temptation to provide the Order-owned houses with sisters who lacked state-recognised qualifications must often have been compelling, although it should be kept in mind that a formal training never guaranteed good work and a sister without formal qualifications could have been highly effective. In the 1930s staff lists of sisters in the orphanage St Vincent's in

⁹⁴³ Dirk Schindelbeck characterised the orphanage in Freiburg-Günterstal as a communal institution, see Dirk Schindelbeck, *'Das wirst du nicht los, das verfolgt dich ein Leben lang!' Die Geschichte des Waisenhauses in Freiburg-Günterstal* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2013), p. 26.

⁹⁴⁴ It was established by Maria Kiene in her function as child welfare department manager of the German Caritas Association (DCV) and introduced in Freiburg only in 1927, see Pithom (ed.), *Religionspädagoginnen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, p. 411.

⁹⁴⁵ Minutes of sisters' council, 17 July 1932 (MHA Freiburg). One of the given dates is not correct; the visit of 28 July probably has to be corrected to 28 June. A leading Catholic prelate and priest at the Cathedral, Konstantin Brettle, and other senior figures wished to get lay personnel for the orphanage. Karl Bender was one of the first victims of the National Socialists, he was forced to resign as mayor in April 1933.

⁹⁴⁶ Minutes of sisters' council, 16 Nov. 1932 (MHA Freiburg). The two sisters were Sister M. Bernarda Büchner (1897–1982) and Sister M. Eugenia Helmling (1895–1977).

⁹⁴⁷ Typed copy of report of district doctor, 17 Jan. 1923 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz).

Sinzheim and of the reformatory Bethania in Heitersheim show that all the sisters in education had received one or more state certificates.⁹⁴⁸ The Motherhouse Freiburg had made up for deficiencies in that regard over a very short period of time, especially thanks to the help and support of the *DCV*.

Training of the clientele

The inadequacies of the instruction received by the children in orphanages run by religious was the final item in the charge sheet of progressive critics.⁹⁴⁹ They viewed home economics for girls as being old-fashioned; its status as an appropriate professional training was in fact already being questioned by contemporaries.⁹⁵⁰ The qualifications on offer to boys were seen as inadequate for the modern labour market.⁹⁵¹ What was the sisters' precise role in preparing their protégés for a life after the orphanage? From 1874, by losing its right to teach due to the *Kulturkampf*, the Motherhouse Freiburg was forced to send the orphans in its care to the local school.⁹⁵² In-house schooling was still provided for the boys of St Vincent in Sinzheim who were taught by a male teacher paid by the Order.⁹⁵³ This education model allowed the boys to choose their profession themselves and, if suited, to obtain an apprenticeship or even enter higher education.⁹⁵⁴ From very early on the Order often took in girls whom they had

⁹⁴⁸ See MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz and Akte Heitersheim, Bethania.

⁹⁴⁹ Gräser, *Wohlfahrtsstaat*, pp 119–124.

⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp 120–4.

⁹⁵² Report of 1903 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Mannheim-Käfertal, Kinderheim St Josef).

⁹⁵³ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to district office Bruchsal, 5 Jan. 1911 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz). The reformatory Bethania was a favourite for the rest of Mayer's life, he was always keen on improving it, see Alfons Beil, 'Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom Heiligen Vinzenz von Paul in der Erzdiözese Freiburg', in *300 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern vom Heiligen Vinzenz von Paul 1633–1933, 100 Jahre Welt-Vinzenz-Verein 1833–1933* (Munich, 1933) pp 54–58, here at p. 57f.

⁹⁵⁴ Answer sheet to questionnaire of Department [of Education?] of Baden, 1927; already stated by Fr Superior Mayer, letter of 5 Jan. 1911 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz). The boys became farmers, gardeners, bakers, joiners or locksmiths, merchant, town hall secretary, notary clerks, opera singer, teachers and male religious (eleven).

trained as domestic servants into their own branch houses if they were unable to find a job elsewhere.⁹⁵⁵

The importance of education for the reformatory Bethania was acknowledged by Fr Superior Mayer.⁹⁵⁶ After a crisis in 1904, a successful transition was effected from a work-place (where each resident contributed to the upkeep of the house) to being a proper training-place for the 'vulnerable' girls.⁹⁵⁷ In 1921 a home economics school was established to enable the girls to maximise their proficiency in the labour market, an opportunity to which, it was reported, the girls responded positively.⁹⁵⁸ Others took the chance to become certified needle workers. For her sound and stimulating teaching methods at Bethania's vocational school, Sister M. Pia Wittmann was lauded by a state official.⁹⁵⁹ Young girls with a poor social background and often deficient elementary schooling did not have many other choices about earning a living.⁹⁶⁰

Discipline, punishment and child abuse

The compulsory education act of 1886 in Baden and later in the Reich in 1900 led not only to a steady income for the orphanages which operated under that legislation, but also to an increase in numbers of 'vulnerable' and often very troubled children who were admitted into residential care institutions. In the eyes of progressive critics, members of religious congregations were not educated in an appropriate manner. They were effectively untrained and therefore incapable of dealing with such difficult youths; to be able to manage their protégés, they

⁹⁵⁵ Foundation director Schlager, 11 Dec. 1899, list of girls who were dismissed from the Freiburg-Günterstal orphanage in the last five years; foundation board to Badenese Women's Association Karlsruhe, 15 Dec. 1899 (StadtA FR, C3 645/4).

⁹⁵⁶ Fr Superior Karl Mayer, printed speech as report for the first anniversary of Bethania, 4 Nov. 1894, p. 1 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

⁹⁵⁷ Bethania report of 1915 (EAF, B6/83).

⁹⁵⁸ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate as addition to annual report of 1921, 1 May 1922 (EAF, B6/83).

⁹⁵⁹ Report of district school inspector Glöckler, 10 Dec. 1930 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). The girls did sports as well, but Bethania reported that it could not cooperate with local sports clubs because of the behaviour and the sensitive health of some of the inmates, see Bethania to Department of Justice, 5 Dec. 1932 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

⁹⁶⁰ Hoyer, *Sozialgeschichte*, p. 126f.

had to have recourse to corporal punishment. Marcus Gräser reports several cases of excessive beating in Protestant male youth institutions in Northern Germany, starting in 1927, which ended up in court. The problem was seen as being so great that in 1928 the term 'crisis of the welfare education' was coined.⁹⁶¹ How did the Motherhouse Freiburg position itself in the matter of corporal punishment? According to the 'spiritual guide' of the Freiburg sisters published in 1932, the sisters acted as parental substitutes. While the sisters should care for the children like a loving mother, punishment was seen as sometimes necessary, but had to be just. No sense of honour should be offended, nor should it be contrary to human dignity. It should be done out of love to the child and to its advantage. The child should know that it could better itself, and how.⁹⁶²

How did the individual sisters, who worked in education, handle this matter in the different orphanages? How did they implement the Order's policy for their work? A 1912 report of the girls' orphanage St Joseph in Mannheim-Käfertal (supported by a Catholic lay organisation) had noted that the principal means of education were the loving treatment, the exhortation of the sisters, the regular, orderly way of living, work and daily religious exercises. In the institution, no other means of correction were used than were allowed at school.⁹⁶³

In 1932, the orphanage St Anthony's home in Heidelberg (also supported by a Catholic welfare association) consisted of eighteen boys and girls between six and fourteen, who had been sent there by the state youth office of Heidelberg. A report of that office of the same year observed notably cordial relationships between children and sisters and no complaints from the children, who sometimes received corporal punishment but which they saw as justified.⁹⁶⁴ At

⁹⁶¹ Gräser, *Wohlfahrtsstaat*, pp 102–6.

⁹⁶² *Geistlicher Führer der Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von Straßburg* (Kevelaer, 1932), pp 68–70 (MHA Freiburg).

⁹⁶³ St Joseph's report of December 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Mannheim-Käfertal, Kinderheim St Josef). This shows that the use of the cane was permitted.

⁹⁶⁴ Report of state youth office Heidelberg, 12 Dec. 1932 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heidelberg, St Antoniusheim). The supporter of the home has been a Catholic women's association until the present day (2018).

the Order-owned boys' orphanage St Vincent in Sinzheim in 1912, Sister Superior Aquilina Seifried reported that the little ones did not listen to or like their teacher, one Sister Armata Bundschuh. Sister Aquilina herself had no problems, but let a male farmhand punish them on the grounds that she could not be with them all the time. The handling of the older boys was easier thanks to a male in-house teacher.⁹⁶⁵ In 1923, this orphanage became the site of an official investigation of particular interest since the subsequent report is such a rare document. According to the district doctor's report, the notorious runaway Arthur Reichert (age not given) was admitted into St Vincent on 2 December 1922 as a last resort. He received a first beating by the responsible sister after having lied about wetting the bed. When he was brought back to St Vincent's after absconding five times in a fortnight, Arthur was beaten again, this time by a war-wounded male employee assisted by a sister. This beating was reported to the authorities. After a thorough questioning of the witnesses including several boys, the doctor elicited the information that Arthur had received a caning in his hometown before he had been brought back to the orphanage, which explained his physical condition. The doctor viewed the first punishment by the sister as in no way excessive, the form of the second as unacceptable though given the circumstances of the employee understandable. The district doctor noted that he knew the institution well by his regular visitations and that the children were in good care. The Sister of Charity responsible for Arthur was, according to the family doctor of St Vincent's, well-educated and anxious for the well-being of the children in her care.⁹⁶⁶ It is unknown if there were any repercussions following this incident, but the report was not of a kind that called for any consequences. Nor, according to the extant documents, did any of the persons involved see

⁹⁶⁵ Sister Aquilina Seifried to Fr Superior Mayer, 18 Sept. 1912 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz). Sister Armata was still a young sister aged thirty-one years.

⁹⁶⁶ Typed copy of report by district doctor, 17 Jan. 1923 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz).

caning in itself as wrong, but as a means of punishment that could be well-deserved and just.⁹⁶⁷

In recent times, the revelation of decades-old cases of physical and sexual abuse had caused scandal all over the world where very many staff of childcare institutions have been accused of misconduct. Some have been tried and found guilty, others exonerated, and still others can never be tried as death has intervened or there are other insurmountable obstacles to knowing and understanding what happened. State-appointed commissions of inquiry, of various types, have brought much evidence into the public domain.⁹⁶⁸ It is unquestionably one of the most fraught and painful fields of historical research, and is ongoing. With regard to the Freiburg sisters, Dirk Schindelbeck has documented in two publications the physical and emotional abuse in the orphanage at Freiburg-Günterstal, the great majority of cases dating from after 1945.⁹⁶⁹ His studies rely mainly on oral history interviews, and he notes that no personal files of the children survive and that very little information about them is available in the archives.⁹⁷⁰ Overall, the surviving archival material is sparse.⁹⁷¹

The history of the orphanage in Freiburg-Günterstal is similar to that of many others, marked with constant financial struggles, either too few or too many children, insufficient staff, all living in a building with inadequate sanitary installations for so many people. In 1894, it had been moved from the city centre next to the cathedral into a former monastery of Cistercian nuns in the village of Günterstal which had just become a suburb of Freiburg, and seen as an idyllic

⁹⁶⁷ See the interviews with seven boys of St Vincent on page two of the typed copy of report of district doctor, 17 Jan. 1923 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Sinzheim, St. Vinzenz).

⁹⁶⁸ A well-known Irish example is the five-volume report, *Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse dated 20th May 2009* (Dublin, 2009), under the chairmanship of Mr Justice Sean Ryan, online at www.childabusecommission.ie [14 Oct. 2018].

⁹⁶⁹ Schindelbeck, *Die Geschichte des Waisenhauses*, and Dirk Schindelbeck, *Wir waren nur verhandelbare Masse. Nachkriegsschicksale in Freiburg-Günterstal* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2014). This thesis deals only with the period up to and including the Second World War.

⁹⁷⁰ Schindelbeck, *Die Geschichte des Waisenhauses*, p. 62. The earliest deregistration book starts in January 1942 and lists c. 550 children and youngsters until the end of the war. The earliest registration book starts in January 1944 and counts nearly 220 until May 1945.

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58. There is very little information at all in the file of the orphanage in the motherhouse archive.

situation.⁹⁷² The governors (*Stiftungskommission*) had kept the institution on a tight budget and the orphanage at first did not have the right to take in children under the Compulsory Education Act (*Zwangserziehungsrecht*).⁹⁷³ The orphanage reached the maximum of 175 children in 1939; they were then divided into six same-sex groups of thirty, cared for by twelve to sixteen sisters.⁹⁷⁴ The way in which the new system of smaller 'family' groups was implemented is exemplary.

In the 1920s, two divergent educational concepts clashed when the youth office of Freiburg and the sister superior engaged in a decade-long battle over 'good', 'undamaged' children, whom the head officer preferred to place in foster care, so that the orphanage would receive only the rest, children with various disabilities and whom others did not want to care for. The sister superior defended herself and her sisters against accusations of lacking pedagogical qualifications.⁹⁷⁵ In 1932, the orphanage underwent a thorough reform in the course of which it was reorganised over time on the 'family concept', two sisters were appointed, holding both the state youth leadership and the state kindergarten teacher examinations.⁹⁷⁶ The archival documents have very little to say on possible incidents. In 1904, the only concern the communal officer for cemeteries expressed about the death of fifty babies in the orphanage for infants was the financing of the transport of the bodies.⁹⁷⁷ The oral history interviews, in which the former residents of the orphanage talked about their stay reaching back to the time before 1945, report slaps in the face, beatings with a broom and being locked away as punishments. One woman complained about the poor and inadequate food and the fact that all children were woken up once at night and put on the potty to prevent them from wetting the bed.⁹⁷⁸ In a case study drawing on a family biography published in 1993, Dirk Schindelbeck portrays the

⁹⁷² Schindelbeck, *Die Geschichte des Waisenhauses*, p. 28–34.

⁹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 36. It is not clear when the orphanage got the right of compulsory education in the end; it seems to have happened between 1918 and the very early 1920s.

⁹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59 and p. 61.

⁹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 44f.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60f.

experiences of two young brothers during their years in the orphanage from 1912 to 1921. Strict order and discipline prevailed and even small offenses were punished severely. As a last resort, the 5-year old had his penis tied to prevent him wetting the bed; beatings were performed on the children in the departments of the opposite sex while naked. Despite such experiences the youngest boy who stayed in the orphanage from aged five to fourteen became a barber and returned later many times to Günterstal to cut the children's hair.⁹⁷⁹

The fact that nothing similar has surfaced in the files of the archive of the Motherhouse Freiburg does not mean that such incidents never happened. How widespread such problems were across the sector more generally is evident from a report of a commission of lay experts, set up by the motherhouse of Ingenbohl in Switzerland, which was released on 23 January 2013⁹⁸⁰ and from an analysis of the care system of the Poor Sisters of the Divine Child of Amsterdam by Annelies van Heijst.⁹⁸¹ A Swiss lay commission examined the residential childcare institutions of the Sisters of Charity of the Holy Cross (*Ingenbohler Schwestern*) of the motherhouse in Ingenbohl (CH). Its report points out the problematic character of traditional documents; because of their habit of often omitting negative matters, researchers relied mainly on oral history methodology.⁹⁸² The commissioners noted the discrepancy between claim and demand, the contradictory currents in pedagogical discourse; sisters who tried their best but as daughters of their time were ready to administer harsh punishments. The children, they found, were harmed physically and mentally. In contrast to today's educational methods, corporal punishment of young children

⁹⁷⁹ Schindelbeck, *Die Geschichte des Waisenhauses*, p. 38f.

⁹⁸⁰ *Ingenbohler Schwestern in Kinderheimen: Erziehungspraxis und institutionelle Bedingungen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Rathausen und Hohenrain. Schlussbericht der unabhängigen Expertenkommission Ingenbohl, 23 Jan. 2013*, see <http://www.kloster-ingenbohl.ch/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Schlussbericht-Expertenkommission-230113.pdf> (accessed 29 Sept. 2018). This congregation is of importance for Baden because the Motherhouse Ingenbohl set up many branch houses there. Hegne (at the shores of Lake Constance) was and still is its provincial house for Baden.

⁹⁸¹ Annelies van Heijst, *Models of charitable care: Catholic nuns and children in their care, 1852–2002* (Leiden, 2008).

⁹⁸² *Schlussbericht der unabhängigen Expertenkommission Ingenbohl*, p. 11.

was taken for granted by society at all levels.⁹⁸³ Challenging circumstances where there could be thirty to fifty children per sister, many children with behavioural problems, inadequate funding, unsuitable buildings and insufficient staff exacerbated the problems.⁹⁸⁴ The commissioners further noted contradictions in the regulations, as for example that the sisters should show the children as much affection as possible yet must keep their distance from them.⁹⁸⁵

In an attempt to understand abuse and deficiencies in care and education, Annelies van Heijst suggests in her analysis of the childcare of the Dutch congregation of the Poor Sisters of the Divine Child that the sisters' rule and care philosophy may have been contributory factors in the mistreatment of children. Did not their very pursuit of 'self-sanctification' with its roots (in van Heijst's view) in monastic asceticism lie at the root of the problem? The Rule's requirement of self-mortification, a so-called 'anti-self training', surely stunted the sisters' emotional, social and spiritual well-being with negative effects on the children's care. Stressing the positive meaning of suffering, they expected similar behaviour from those in their care; hard times were to be seen as positive, to be endured for the 'greater good'. Physical closeness or individual friendships between the sisters were not permitted, a feature which she claims actually caused harm to already disturbed children.⁹⁸⁶

The *Marienhaus*

The *Marienhaus* (St Mary's hostel) system in its late nineteenth- and early twentieth century incarnation represents a striking example of the German Catholic Church's pre and post *Kulturkampf* pastoral policy. In providing houses in urban areas where female domestic servants could come in their rare time off, to socialise with their peers and find 'decent' entertainment in a safe

⁹⁸³ *Schlussbericht der unabhängigen Expertenkommission Ingenbohl*, p. 15.

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹⁸⁶ Van Heijst, *Models of charitable care*, pp 214ff.

environment, always under the supervision of the mainly religious staff⁹⁸⁷ and the (spiritual) direction of the clergy or local parish priest, the church was extending the remit of its pastoral care to a new and ever-growing cohort of young women and teenagers who streamed from the countryside into the cities in search of work.⁹⁸⁸ From very early on [mid-1850s]⁹⁸⁹ the *Marienhäuser* would provide temporary or permanent accommodation for sick and elderly household servants and for those in search of work,⁹⁹⁰ offering a helpline to those in need directly or by letter,⁹⁹¹ even setting up their own Catholic employment agencies in opposition to extant secular institutions. For example in its report of 1910, the employment office of the *Marienhäuser* in Constance counted 2,927 employers' requests, 2,269 unemployed maidservants, and 1,337 placements,⁹⁹² some of them abroad.⁹⁹³

The *Marienhäuser* system thus offers a prime example of the socially conservative German Catholic church's capacity to 'insulate' what were deemed vulnerable members of the faithful from 'the modern world' and yet at the same time to provide innovative and, in the context of the time, a progressive care programme that had their social as well as spiritual welfare at heart.

The pioneers of the *Marienhäuser* system in the mid-nineteenth century were not the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Paul nor other religious

⁹⁸⁷ Alfred Kall, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland: eine Untersuchung zur Gründung katholischer Frauenvereine im 19. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn, 1983), p. 117.

⁹⁸⁸ Gabriele Kranstedt, *Migration und Mobilität im Spiegel der Verbandsarbeit Katholischer Mädchenschutzvereine, 1895–1945: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Katholischen Frauenbewegung* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2003), p. 55.

⁹⁸⁹ Kall, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, pp 112, 117, 121. Kall names the Marienanstalt in Munich (founded in 1856) as one of the first.

⁹⁹⁰ Inauguration speech of the St *Marienhäuser* Freiburg, Fr Superior Joseph Marmon, 31 July 1870 (MHA Freiburg, Akte St. Marienhaus).

⁹⁹¹ *Marienhäuser* report of 1870 and of 1883 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, St. Marienhaus).

⁹⁹² Report of 1910 of the employment bureau of the Marienhaus Constance (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konstanz, St. Marienhaus).

⁹⁹³ Fr Superior Karl Mayer to director of the *Marienhäuser*, 11 Jan. 1896 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, St. Marienhaus). In 1911, 30,000 Germans worked in Paris, of whom 17,700 were women, predominantly employed as housemaids, see Mareike König, 'Bonnes à tout faire': Deutsche Dienstmädchen in Paris um 1900', in Mareike König (ed.), *Deutsche Handwerker, Arbeiter und Dienstmädchen in Paris. Eine vergessene Migration in Paris im 19ten Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2003), pp 69–119.

congregations but rather lay Catholic women's associations.⁹⁹⁴ The Order however began to take over more and more of the established hostels between 1870 and 1900 and the sisters brought with them plenty of relevant experience. From its early years in Freiburg the motherhouse had taken girls into its various branch houses where they received some practical training after leaving school at fourteen in cooking and performing household tasks; they were mainly sent there by their mothers or another family member, though there were some orphans among them.⁹⁹⁵ Documentary evidence supports the argument that the sisters provided additional care and support for the most vulnerable over and above what was generally on offer. Thus a girl whom the sisters felt would clearly not be able to fend for herself might be employed permanently within the hostel in a unskilled role such as kitchen or scullery maid.⁹⁹⁶

Every female religious congregation of Baden had at least one, some two or three,⁹⁹⁷ but none had more *Marienhäuser* than the Motherhouse Freiburg.⁹⁹⁸ The most important feature of the Order's involvement in the *Marienhaus* system was its training courses, particularly prolific in Baden. Over time these training courses developed into vocational schools, despite the Motherhouse Freiburg having always been a nursing and not a teaching order. The accompanying schools may not all have offered state-certified qualifications, as did St Agnes

⁹⁹⁴ Henze, 'Die übrigen Orden', p. 371; Kall, *Katholische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, p. 112.

⁹⁹⁵ Handwritten branch house directory *Verzeichnis aller Filialen* (1886), p. 65f. (MHA Freiburg).

⁹⁹⁶ Foundation director Schlager, 11 Dec. 1899, list of girls who were dismissed from the orphanage Freiburg Günterstal in the last five years; foundation board to Badenese Women's Association Karlsruhe, 15 Dec. 1899 (StadtA FR C3 645/4).

⁹⁹⁷ M. Keller, *St. Agnes als Haushaltungspensionat*, typed manuscript, c. 1946, p. 4 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, St. Agnes). The Motherhouse Gengenbach (Franciscan sisters) founded their household schools in 1887 in Gengenbach, in 1888 in Bruchsal, and in 1890 in Freiburg, see E. Holzapfel, *Die Kongregation der Franziskanerinnen vom göttlichen Herzen Jesu Gengenbach, 1866–1966* (Gengenbach, 1966), pp 148, 150f. The sisters from the Motherhouse Niederbronn (Alsace, German provincial motherhouse in Bühl 1920) founded their school in 1891 in Karlsruhe (Elisabethenhaus), just around the corner from the Franziskushaus., see Luzian Pfleger, *Die Kongregation der Schwestern vom Allerheiligsten Heilande, genannt "Niederbronner Schwestern". Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der christlichen Liebestätigkeit der neuesten Zeit* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1921), p. 216.

⁹⁹⁸ There were seven *Marienhäuser* in Mannheim, Heidelberg, Karlsruhe, Offenburg, Freiburg, Constance and Bad Säckingen. The house in Säckingen served only at the start as that type of branch house. A further ten branch houses had a different clientele, namely female shop assistants and factory workers.

(Freiburg, 1888),⁹⁹⁹ St. Clare's (Karlsruhe, 1896), Constance (before 1917) and Offenburg (1930) but every *Marienhaus* had either a vocational school or a sewing school or even both.¹⁰⁰⁰ In the 1920s the Motherhouse Freiburg had recourse to lay teachers again while the young sisters underwent training to achieve the qualifications that were now required.¹⁰⁰¹

As all female congregations of Baden were active in the *Marienhaus* field, there was a certain amount of competition among Catholic providers. The sister superiors themselves became creative in developing new approaches, keeping their houses at the leading edge. Sister Alodia Jann of St Francis in Karlsruhe not only dared to suggest to Fr Superior Schlatterer which sister would be suitable to complement the staff, she even convinced the motherhouse superiors to introduce a more specialized school to train childcare assistants to certificate level¹⁰⁰² and herself started the process of getting the archbishop's approval.¹⁰⁰³

Sister Gebhard Riegger, sister superior of the *Marienhaus* in Offenburg, on hearing about new qualification standards for home economics in 1928, undertook a tour of houses at Mannheim, Karlsruhe and Bruchsal to find the best teaching methods for her house.¹⁰⁰⁴ Although the *Marienhaus* in Offenburg was

⁹⁹⁹ Department of Justice, Culture and Education of Baden, state approval of St Agnes, 12 Sept. 1905, Nachricht vom Oberschulrat in Karlsruhe an Präses Marienhaus, 23 Sept. 1905 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Freiburg, St. Agnes). St Agnes was preceded by a school on a smaller scale which had been founded in 1873, see St Agnes report of 1880 (MHA Freiburg, Akte St. Marienhaus). M. Keller, St. Agnes, p. 1 (MHA Freiburg, Freiburg, St. Agnes).

¹⁰⁰⁰ Sister Alodia Jann (1849–1930) to Mother General Sister Alban Jörger, 24 Apr. 1896 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus); Sister Agnes Schindler (1865–1946) to Fr Superior Mayer and Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle, 2 Oct. 1917 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konstanz, St. Marienhaus); Report of Sister Gebhard Riegger to Motherhouse Freiburg, 19 Nov. 1928 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Offenburg, St. Marienhaus). Documentation or even any kind of information on these schools is scarce in the files.

¹⁰⁰¹ Sister Alodia Jann to Department of Culture and Education, 3 June 1924, and Department of Culture and Education to Sister Alodia Jann, 18 Aug. 1924 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus).

¹⁰⁰² Sister Alodia Jann (1849–1930) to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 16 Mar. 1930 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus).

¹⁰⁰³ Sister Alodia Jann to Archbishop Karl Fritz, 2 Apr. 1930 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Karlsruhe, St. Franziskushaus). Every other sister would have been reprimanded by the superiors for doing something that was not authorised by the motherhouse; Sister Alodia died soon after at eighty-one.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Report of Sister Gebhard Riegger (1863–1941) to Motherhouse Freiburg, 19 Nov. 1928 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Offenburg, St. Marienhaus).

not suitable for a vocational school, Sister Gebhard managed to establish a formal apprenticeship course for the girls in training. In 1930 the first student took part in an external examination and excelled as top of the course. The practical part examined skills in cooking, sewing, mending, tending clothes (washing and ironing) as well as baking and preserving. The theoretical part was an oral examination.¹⁰⁰⁵

The fact that these in the *Marienhäuser* incorporated schools had to be provided with qualified or state-certified teachers had a positive if indirect impact on the sewing schools in small towns and villages, setting a high standard of work not otherwise available to those on the margins who could not afford to attend a full vocational institution.

The sewing schools

Teaching manual skills in sewing schools represented another substantial field of activity of the Motherhouse Freiburg from the 1880s. The popular term 'sewing school' is misleading, as it was in the case of 'nursery school' discussed earlier in this chapter. Neither type of 'school' was ever incorporated into the regular German school system. To add even more to the confusion, the terms 'industrial school' (*Industrieschule*) and 'occupational school' (*Arbeitsschule*) were also sometimes used as equivalents. It is important to know that the concept of 'industrial school' as known in Baden, and indeed probably in all Germany, was very different to that of Ireland and Britain where they were boarding school-like industrial training institutions for poor, neglected children and expressly intended to keep them from joining the ranks of the indigent and even criminal classes.¹⁰⁰⁶ In 1836 needlework classes at elementary schools had become obligatory for girls in Baden.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰⁵ Without sender [end missing], but very likely Sister Gebhard, to Sister Paciana Kretz (1893–1981), 22 July 1930 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Offenburg, St. Marienhaus). The candidate was now a certified home economics assistant.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Jacinta Prunty, *The monasteries, magdalen asylums and reformatory schools of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland, 1853–1973* (Dublin, 2017), p. 204. Prunty is citing section 44 of the Children

The total number of sewing schools is very difficult to ascertain because often the start and/ or end date were not recorded, and not all the sewing schools operated year-round. In his report of 1909, Fr Superior Mayer named thirty-two sewing schools, a number which includes the home economics schools of the different St Mary's houses (*Marienhäuser*).¹⁰⁰⁸ In the mid-1920s, this number had more than doubled to seventy-three, with 3,685 students and 16,294 school days.¹⁰⁰⁹ In 1930, the Motherhouse Freiburg listed sixty-six sewing schools,¹⁰¹⁰ a number which did not change considerably until early 1944.¹⁰¹¹ Only forty-eight of the sewing schools were named in both 1930 and 1944, the others appeared only in one or other of these years. In total, there existed eighty-nine sewing schools in 210 branch houses at one time or the other between the 1880s until 1945 which makes 42% of all the houses of the Order, the vast majority small branch houses in the countryside. In Germany, female religious congregations were involved in sewing schools to differing degrees. The Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of Hildesheim had a ratio of 29 sewing schools to every 100 branch houses;¹⁰¹² the Sisters of Charity of Fulda 38 to every 100 branch houses.¹⁰¹³ Both congregations originated in the Motherhouse Strasbourg, so were coming from the same root and sharing the same constitutions. This is but one example of the inherent flexibility of the Strasbourg rule with its Vincentian spirit but also the fact that each motherhouse met different circumstances and

Act 1908 with its definition of industrial school as 'a school for the industrial training of children, in which children are lodged, clothed and fed, as well as taught.'

¹⁰⁰⁷ Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, p. 276.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Father Superior Karl Mayer to Ordinariate, 23 Mar. 1909, Statistik der Wohltätigkeitsanstalten betreffend, Verzeichnis der Niederlassungen der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vincenz v. Paul (EAF, B5/89).

¹⁰⁰⁹ Statistics of the Order of 1926 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Verkehr mit anderen Mutterhäusern 1918–44).

¹⁰¹⁰ Verzeichnis der Häuser, Sept. 1930 (MHA Freiburg).

¹⁰¹¹ Niederlassungen des Ordens der barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul i. Freiburg i. Br., 27 Feb. 1944.

¹⁰¹² Lieselotte Sterner, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in Hildesheim von 1852 bis zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* (Hannover, 1999), Anhang 5, Verzeichnis der bestehenden und aufgelösten Häuser der Kongregation 1852–1996, pp 361–70. For the sake of comparison, all those different types of 'school' were treated as the same.

¹⁰¹³ *150 Jahre Barmherzige Schwestern Mutterhaus Fulda, 1834–1984* (Fulda, 1984), pp 75–81, 84–90.

gave a different response. It is therefore important to look at all daughters of Strasbourg first before drawing general conclusions.

To set up a sewing school, the founding party had to meet certain state requirements and secure state approval. This process differed between Baden and Hohenzollern because the latter belonged politically to Prussia (from 1850). In general, out of hygienic reasons in case of contagious disease, the sister nurse was not permitted by the state government to work in either the nursery or in the sewing school.¹⁰¹⁴ In Baden, as per order of 19 May 1922 issued by the Ministry of Culture and Education at Karlsruhe, the sewing school had to get state approval even for private instruction in sewing, dressmaking, underwear-making and work in linen. Fr Valentin Hoch of Niederschopfheim (10 km south of Offenburg) therefore asked the Order for a sewing sister with certificate to help withstand the opposition he was already handling from a certain party.¹⁰¹⁵ Every single year the sewing school also had to get approval from the district office and the chamber of handicrafts (*Handwerkskammer*); there was no question of simply renewing the approval on a roll-over basis.¹⁰¹⁶

Necessity and usefulness were given as the principal reasons for establishing sewing schools but for the local pastors, the effect went much deeper as they saw the schools as a blessing for the girls, and not just in a moral sense.¹⁰¹⁷ In sewing classes, the sisters could reach a part of the faithful to whom the priests had limited access. The schools were also seen as a means of preventing girls from being drawn into the disreputable 'spinning parlors'¹⁰¹⁸ and

¹⁰¹⁴ Ministry of Church, School and Medical Affairs Berlin, 10 Sept. 1901 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gruol, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰¹⁵ Fr Valentin Hoch to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 12 Sept. 1928 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Niederschopfheim, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰¹⁶ Women's association to Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle, 4. Jan. 1929 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stühlingen, Krankenhaus).

¹⁰¹⁷ Chaplain E. to Mother General Sister Luisa David, 1 Sept. 1901 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Kulsheim, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰¹⁸ Fr D. to Fr Superior Mayer, without date, c. 1909 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten unter Holstein, Schwesternhaus).

of teaching them some life skills.¹⁰¹⁹ They were the subject of very high praise from some contemporaries: 'such beneficial parlors of light' (*Lichtstuben*).¹⁰²⁰

In practice a sewing sister was part school teacher and part handicraft artisan; professionally, she drew on skills from both fields. This can be seen in the fact that in Hohenzollern (as a part of Prussia), the Sisters of Charity of Freiburg were allowed to teach in regular schools with the consent of the state. Before and after the First World War they were employed in elementary and continuation schools in Gammertingen, Feldhausen and Owingen.¹⁰²¹ It seems that during the *Kaiserreich* the formation of sewing sisters followed 'traditional' paths, with the young sisters trained in the motherhouse. Some sisters had trained professionally prior to entering the Order.¹⁰²² As in so many other fields, the sisters received a certified formation only if and when it was absolutely necessary. Competition always spurred this process, and most of the time the cities were the places where it was set in motion.

In the 1920s, the Motherhouse Freiburg sent more and more sisters for a certified training to the handicraft teacher training seminary (*Handarbeitslehrerinnenseminar*) of the Badenese Women's Association at Karlsruhe. The *Badischer Frauenverein* offered courses in a variety of fields and of different durations, in textile handiwork, home economics, cookery and commercial education, including the training of instructors for secondary schools.¹⁰²³ In Hohenzollern in 1929, it was particularly important to be a certified sewing sister in case there was need to teach also at a regular school. The state government in Sigmaringen insisted that the sister to be appointed hold a state examination

¹⁰¹⁹ Fr Ferdinand Meyer to Fr Superior Karl Mayer, 14 Nov. 1909 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Neuenburg, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰²⁰ *Der Zoller*, 10 Apr. 1909 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Stetten unter Holstein, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰²¹ Mayor of Gammertingen to Fr Superior Mayer, 2. July 1912; Fr Maier to Fr Superior Mayer, 22 Apr. 1918 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus); teacher and mayor of Feldhausen asking for a sister for cooking classes at continuation school and needlework classes at elementary school, 5 Oct. 1927 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Feldhausen, Schwesternhaus); Fr Superior Schlatterer to Fr R., 27 Mar. 1926 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Owingen, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰²² Sister Ad. received training in the motherhouse and before that at an institute in Mildenberg [Miltenberg, Unterfranken?]: Fr Superior Mayer to Father Hartmann, 12 May 1906 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Eichersheim, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰²³ Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, pp 275–332.

otherwise she would have to commence studies on arrival,¹⁰²⁴ a request that was complied with by the Order.¹⁰²⁵ In the following year of 1930, the process started all over again, when the Motherhouse Freiburg replaced the certified with an uncertified sister, a fact that had enraged the mayor as Fr Stengel stated in his letter.¹⁰²⁶ In her reply, Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle assured the mayor that the Order was keen on providing the branch houses with the best possible service and that the new sister could undergo the examination if necessary.¹⁰²⁷ This remark shows that the Motherhouse Freiburg was confident in the ability of its members and not afraid of external examination; they were reluctant to accept state interference in that particular field of education as they saw it as wholly unnecessary.

Conclusion

During the period of 1919–33, the Motherhouse Freiburg met the state requirements and those of other bodies regarding the training of the sisters in education, in the orphanages, nursery and vocational schools, but only just. The Order did what was absolutely necessary. Improvement in the training of the sisters had been achieved mainly by intervention from outside. *RJWG*, *Caritas* and competition from laypeople, Protestants and even other Catholic congregations spurred the Order to get the necessary number of sisters trained. External, accredited training was expressly for the good of the institutions they staffed rather than for the development of the individual sister, while the Order itself sought to preserve its right to provide its members with in-house training. External training proved to be costly but also time consuming, which brought the Order into conflict with its wish to help people in need as promptly as possible. The social background of the sisters, many of whom had only an elementary school formation, turned out to be a barrier to further education and training,

¹⁰²⁴ Mayor to motherhouse, 9 Mar. 1929 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰²⁵ Motherhouse to mayor, 20 Mar 1929 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰²⁶ Fr Stengel to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 13 Nov. 1930 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus).

¹⁰²⁷ Mother General Sister Ferdinand Feederle to mayor, 25 Nov. 1930 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus).

requiring the creation of specific programmes to accommodate the female religious congregations.

With respect to the training of its members, the Motherhouse Freiburg was not a trendsetter. However, it is of interest that individual Sisters of Charity of Freiburg became active agents themselves. Projects or initiatives that were good for the Order as a whole, rather than something that singled out a certain sister, seem to have met with the approval of the superiors of the Order. The better formation or training the sisters achieved during this Weimar period kept the Order competitive. Though nobody could have foreseen what was to come, it did mean the Order was better equipped for the struggle and battle with the National Socialists in the following decade.

Chapter 8

The Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in the Third Reich, 1933 to 1945: Forecourt of Hell

The era of the Third Reich turned out to be the greatest challenge for the Motherhouse Freiburg as it was for other religious orders. The difficulties were on a far greater scale, and more systemic, than those of the *Kulturkampf*. It became a matter of life and death, fought out behind the scenes, concealed from the eyes of the German people:

It is a grave matter that the public does not hear about the struggle that is raging between the ordinariates and bodies of the government. A layman recently lamented to me that even the church does not defend herself. As I told him different [facts], he was utterly astonished and said that it was essential that the faithful should be made aware of it.¹⁰²⁸

Adolf Hitler succeeded power constitutionally on 30 January 1933 as chancellor of the so-called 'Third Reich'.¹⁰²⁹ His National Socialist German Workers' Party (*NSDAP*) overcame the other political parties and every other local agency of the *Länder*.¹⁰³⁰ From the signing of the concordat between Berlin and the Vatican in Rome on 20 July 1933 forward, every aspect of public life began to be penetrated by the totalitarian ideology and millennial claims¹⁰³¹ of the National Socialists.¹⁰³²

The first six months prior to the concordat have been described as a time where 'the party courted ... the Christian churches and its congregations.'¹⁰³³ During these months the German bishops believed they still had the right to have

¹⁰²⁸ Fr Riescher, parish priest of Jungnau in Hohenzollern, to Ordinariate, 22 Apr. 1937 (EAF, B2-NS-37).

¹⁰²⁹ The First *Reich* lasted from AD 800 to 1806, the Second *Reich* from 1871 to 1918; both were headed by an Emperor.

¹⁰³⁰ Ian Kershaw, 'Hitler and the Nazi dictatorship', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German history since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 318–38, here at p. 324.

¹⁰³¹ Referring back to the 1,000 years of the First Reich, which was called the 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation' since the late Middle Ages.

¹⁰³² Wolfgang Hug, *Die Geschichte Badens* (2nd rev. ed., Stuttgart, 2016), pp 170ff.

¹⁰³³ Jill Stephenson, 'The rise of the Nazis: *Sonderweg* or spanner in the works?' In Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German history since 1800* (London, 1997), pp 298–317, here at p. 308.

their Christian charitable work acknowledged by the state, to recruit and train co-workers and retain the independent existence of their training centres, collect money for their charities, and above all the right to educate all Catholic children in physical or spiritual need, and not only the sick, the mentally deficient or crippled.¹⁰³⁴ At the same time, the National Socialists had founded their own welfare organisation, the *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (NSV) in 1932, declared a party organisation in 1933. As the official state welfare organisation, the NSV competed with the Catholic *Caritas* and the Protestant *Innere Mission*, gaining ground on them year by year.¹⁰³⁵

Archbishop Dr Conrad Gröber of Freiburg has been criticised in recent scholarship as having been too open-minded towards Nazism at the start.¹⁰³⁶ Bishop Clemens August Count von Galen of Münster in Westphalia had no such illusions, and the Catholics of his diocese reacted accordingly by pelting Hitler with rotten eggs and overripe fruit when he visited the town in 1932 on one of his election campaigns.¹⁰³⁷ Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius XII (1939–58), could observe the rise of the National Socialists during his time as papal nuncio in Munich and Berlin from 1917–29. After the 'Act against refounding of parties' of 14 July 1933 when the one-party state had become reality in the German Reich,¹⁰³⁸ disillusionment started to set in. Now Archbishop Dr Conrad Gröber, his

¹⁰³⁴ Adolf Cardinal Bertram, circular of 26 June 1933 (EAF, B2-41-4). In this circular Bertram reported the resolution of the Fulda Bishops' conference of 31 May 1933 about Christian charity.

¹⁰³⁵ See Birgit Breiding, *Die Braunen Schwestern. Ideologie □ Struktur □ Funktion einer nationalsozialistischen Elite* (Stuttgart, 1998), pp 88ff.

¹⁰³⁶ Christoph Schmider, 'Ein merkwürdiger Mann? Conrad Gröber 1872–1948: Erzbischof von Freiburg 1932–1948', in Maria Anna Zumholz and Michael Hirschfeld (eds), *Zwischen Seelsorge und Politik: katholische Bischöfe in der NS-Zeit* (Münster, 2018), pp 411–35, here at pp 420–28; Gertrud Rapp, review of Bruno Schwalbach, 'Erzbischof Conrad Gröber und die deutsche Katastrophe. Sein Ringen um eine menschliche Neuordnung' (Karlsruhe, 1994), in *Freiburger Rundbrief: Zeitschrift für christlich-jüdische Begegnung*, 1995, p. 291, see <http://www.freiburger-rundbrief.de/de/?item=311> [accessed 9 Dec. 2017]. Rapp mentions that Archbishop Gröber changed his course towards Nazism in 1935, Schmider dates it to 1935/36 at the latest.

¹⁰³⁷ Anna-Maria Balbach, *Die Barmherzigen Schwestern zu Münster zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Münster, 2007), p. 37. She reported that Hitler swore never to come to Münster again. Bishop von Galen was later known as 'the lion of Münster' when he accused Hitler and the Nazis in several sermons; he was one of very few bishops who dared to speak openly against the regime.

¹⁰³⁸ Michael Grüttner, *Brandstifter und Biedermänner: Deutschland 1933–1939* (Bonn, 2015), p. 38.

ordinariate, and Dr Benedict Kreutz, president of the German *Caritas* Association, were no longer in doubt as to where the new regime was heading.¹⁰³⁹ In December of that year in a closed meeting with the heads of all female religious orders and congregations of Baden and Hohenzollern, Kreutz, Gröber and some of his ordinariate staff briefed them on their situation in a totalitarian state, addressing the uncertainty and experiences of the past months. They spoke of the Party's strategy to 'hollow out' the Catholic associations and institutions rather than to ban them outright, of plans to replace religious with Nazi nurses, the so-called 'brown sisters', in the hospitals, and on the state's claim to have the exclusive right to educate. They spoke of its indifference towards the incurable, the bringing into line of the communal health associations and their affiliation to the National Socialist welfare organisation NSV. They predicted difficulties regarding the state's attitude towards sterilisation and the Jews, although Archbishop Gröber still believed that Adolf Hitler did not want another *Kulturkampf*. At that meeting of church authorities and religious, the latter were warned to keep their finances in order, and advised that baptised Jewish women should not be excluded from joining an order or congregation. One year later, on 9 January 1935, the now thoroughly disillusioned archbishop voiced his concern about the dangers the new regime posed for the work of the sisters and for Christian charity.¹⁰⁴⁰

Several of these issues affected the Motherhouse Freiburg directly. Educational institutions such as kindergartens and hospitals were key locations for NS efforts to exclude the sisters from some of their fields of action and reduce their influence on the people. The regime increased taxes on the congregations to reduce their income and undermine their livelihood. The orders and congregations now had to plan for the future of their members when there might

¹⁰³⁹ Minutes of the conference of the motherhouses and the female monasteries of the Archdiocese of Baden at the Ordinariate of Freiburg, 4 Dec. 1933 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenz der Mutterhäuser).

¹⁰⁴⁰ Minutes of conference of the motherhouses of the archdiocese in the Ordinariate of Freiburg, 9 Jan. 1935 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenzen der Mutterhäuser Badens, Korrespondenz).

not be a motherhouse left to care for them, especially when the law curtailing the recruiting of new members came into force in 1941.

The Motherhouse Freiburg (together with the other female orders and congregations of the archdiocese) was well prepared, advised and supported by Archbishop Dr Carl Gröber and by the German Caritas Association and its diocesan branch right from the early years of Hitler's regime. None of the orders was involved in the trials that affected other congregations elsewhere in Germany such as the currency trials of 1935. This mainly concerned missionary orders of whom many were inexperienced in handling currency sent from abroad and had therefore violated the strict tax regulations of the NS-state. Fifty-five religious were sentenced to years of imprisonment and they had to pay high fines.¹⁰⁴¹ The trials demonstrated the frightening reach and intention of the regime, and are part of the larger context within which local responses have to be measured. The Archdiocese of Freiburg succeeded in presenting as united a front to the Nazis as possible in the 1930s. Every counter-action of the religious orders was coordinated by Archbishop Conrad Gröber and President Fr Benedict Kreutz of the *Caritas*.

As the forced-sterilisation law was the starting point at which the Nazis hindered the Motherhouse Freiburg directly in its mission, this chapter explores the girls' reformatory Bethania of the Good Shepherd in Heitersheim, under the Third Reich, as a case study. It examines the attitude of the Order and of individual sisters towards the ideology of the new government, and the fate of a certain type of branch house in a totalitarian state. The main question posed is, was there actually a margin within which the Order and its members were able to act? And if so, how did they use it?

¹⁰⁴¹ One congregation concerned was the German provincial motherhouse of the *Filles de la Charité* in Cologne-Nippes; its provincial secretary was sentenced to five years imprisonment, loss of civil rights and a fine of 140,000 Reichsmark, see Marcel Albert, 'Die Orden im nationalsozialistischen und faschistischen Herrschaftsbereich', in Erwin Gatz (ed.), *Klöster und Ordensgemeinschaften* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006), pp 311–50, here at p. 318f. Albert notes 'hypercritical penalties and exorbitant press campaigns' which 'caused the Catholic Church severe damage' (p. 319). The indecency trials in 1936 and 1937 affected only male orders and congregations, see Albert, 'Die Orden', p. 320f.

Bethania of the Good Shepherd (Heitersheim): a reformatory in the Third Reich (1933–1945)

Towards a new clientèle

The reformatory 'Bethania of the Good Shepherd' had been founded in Heitersheim in November 1893 by the Motherhouse Freiburg as the first Catholic reformatory in Baden and in the Archdiocese of Freiburg.¹⁰⁴² This Order-owned institution was dedicated to Christ the Good Shepherd, who cared for his sheep and went looking for lost ones (Luke 19:10) and who sacrificed his life for them (John 10:11). The title 'Bethania' was given in reference to the biblical Bethany at the foot of the Mount of Olives, where the Lord loved to stay with the siblings Lazarus, Martha and Mary (John 12:1–8),¹⁰⁴³ the latter popularly identified with the 'sinful woman' who anointed Jesus in the house of the Pharisee, was forgiven all and sent in peace (Luke 7:36–50). In his inaugural address, Fr Superior Karl Mayer referred to the 'Sisters of the Good Shepherd' (Motherhouse Angers, France)¹⁰⁴⁴ whose special field of action was the 'Christian asylum' as a refuge for 'fallen' and repentant girls and women but who had no branch house in Baden.¹⁰⁴⁵ The "good-shepherd-concept" proved a successful model and was widely copied, even in France.¹⁰⁴⁶ By choosing this specific patronym and by setting up Bethania along the lines of the institutions of the Good Shepherd

¹⁰⁴² See chapter 3 of this thesis which dealt with the founding and characterising of Bethania as an example of the different fields of action of the Motherhouse Freiburg.

¹⁰⁴³ Fr Superior Karl Mayer in his speech at the inauguration of Bethania on 4 Nov. 1893, printed in Karl Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in der Erzdiözese Freiburg, 1846–1896* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1896), pp 87f., 91f.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Schwestern vom Guten Hirten (ed.), *Unterwegs: 150 Jahre Schwestern vom Guten Hirten in Deutschland; 1840–1990* (Munich, 1990), pp 44ff. about their first German foundation in Munich (1840), followed by the houses in Mainz (1854), Trier (1857), Berlin-Charlottenburg (1858), Breslau (1859), and Cologne-Melaten (1862); see also the thesis of Kirsten Gläsel, *Zwischen Seelenheil und Menschenwürde: Wandlungsprozesse weiblicher katholischer Ordensgemeinschaften in Deutschland, Die Schwestern vom Guten Hirten (1945–1985)* (Münster, 2013), pp 90–106.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Fr Superior Karl Mayer in his speech at the inauguration of Bethania on 4 Nov. 1893, printed in Karl Mayer, *Der Orden der Barmherzigen Schwestern vom hl. Vinzenz von Paul in der Erzdiözese Freiburg, 1846–1896* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1896), p. 88.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Catherine Maurer, *La ville charitable. Les œuvres sociales catholiques en France et en Allemagne au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2012), pp 183–5.

Sisters of Angers, it seems to Catherine Maurer as if the Motherhouse Freiburg wanted to benefit from the brand awareness of the Angevin community.

At the beginning of the Third Reich the situation of Bethania gave cause for serious concern though less than for other educational institutes owned or staffed by the Motherhouse Freiburg. In June 1933, with 100 girls in a place which was designed for 150, the institution was only two-thirds full.¹⁰⁴⁷ Seventeen Sisters of Charity, aged between twenty-six and sixty-six, cared for the residents together with nine lay helpers, the spiritual director, a gymnastics teacher and an instructor in needlework.¹⁰⁴⁸ Half of the sisters had been in the house for at least a decade, the others had been appointed to Heitersheim more recently. Eleven sisters held one or more state examinations or they were certified 'masters' in needlework, a highly-regarded vocational qualification.¹⁰⁴⁹ Bethania housed in separate buildings three types of 'normal' young people: 'vulnerable children' in one, 'fallen' girls in a second and apprentices in a third. All were between fourteen and twenty years of age, and out of school. Some took the opportunity of professional training in the home economics school or an apprenticeship in needlework, practising their skills by taking orders from shops together with the sisters.¹⁰⁵⁰ In doing so, they contributed to the upkeep of Bethania. Since 1929, twenty-eight young women had qualified as 'journey[wo]men' (*Gesellenprüfung*) in needlework, but Bethania had difficulties in attracting sufficient orders to survive.¹⁰⁵¹ As inmate numbers continued to decline in 1933 and 1934, Sister Superior Dagobert Lauber and spiritual director Fr Eduard Dummel asked the

¹⁰⁴⁷ Fr Superior Emil Richard Schlatterer to district court Staufen, 9 June 1933 as answer to a complaint submitted to that court (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). The State Youth Office of Baden defended Bethania and rebuked the Chamber of Handicrafts for not realizing how important the education work of the institution was; letter of 8 July 1933 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹⁰⁴⁸ List of staff of Bethania, without date [c. 1934/35] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). The latter two did not live on the premises and were not present every day.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁰ Note of Fr Superior Schlatterer, 21 Jan. 1936 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹⁰⁵¹ Some local shops and associations blamed Bethania for producing too cheaply and therefore for ruining businesses in the vicinity, see footnote 20.

district court to send girls to their house as they had in the past.¹⁰⁵² They could not have imagined that three years later the institution would be overcrowded.

When the Nazi government began to impose its ideology across all levels of public life, it tried to bring into line not just local governments (of the *Bundesländer*), but to exert power over all public bodies. On 29 June 1934, the state youth welfare office of Baden gave the Motherhouse Freiburg ten days' notice to become a 'member' of the Association for unitary public education in the institutions of Baden (*Verband für einheitliche öffentliche Anstaltserziehung in Baden*), effectively the *Gleichschaltung* (conformity) of all educational institutions.¹⁰⁵³ A refusal would have led to the slow but inevitable end of Bethania. But as the Catholic Church had not yet realised where the new political system was heading and not yet experienced how ruthlessly it would enforce its plans, the Caritas Association of the Archdiocese Freiburg consented to the Motherhouse Freiburg joining: 'it goes without saying that our institutions ... make themselves available for the sake of the youth, when the state is calling them.'¹⁰⁵⁴

All too soon it became clear that membership of the *Verband für einheitliche öffentliche Anstaltserziehung* was bringing about a complete shift in the clientèle. Dr Otto Kersten, head of the Baden state youth office in Karlsruhe since June 1933, reorganised all children's and youth institutions of the state of Baden.¹⁰⁵⁵ The Catholic institutions were classified into five groups (so-called lists I–V), with

¹⁰⁵² Sister Dagobert Lauber and spiritual director Fr Eduard Dummel to district court, 8 Sept. 1933 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹⁰⁵³ Baden State Youth Office to Motherhouse Freiburg, 29 June 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). This association was dissolved 1 Apr. 1940.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Fr Alois Eckert, director of the Caritas Association of the Archdiocese Freiburg, to Bethania, 4 July 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹⁰⁵⁵ The so-called 'Badenese youth welfare and youth care reform', see Hans-Werner Scheuing, 'Die Reformen der Erziehungsanstalten durch das badische Innenministerium unter Regierungsrat Dr. Otto Kersten 1933–1936', in *Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises 'Die Heil- und Pflegeanstalt Wiesloch in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus'*, Heft 3 (Wiesloch, 1995), pp 78–101. Otto Kersten (born 1897) was a lawyer and an officer in the First World War who lost one eye after an explosion and was in constant danger of losing the sight in the other. Possibly because of this disability he was an overcorrect civil servant in the interior ministry of Baden. Before he was transferred to Karlsruhe, he was the second highest civil servant of the district office in Freiburg from 1928–1933, see Scheuing, 'Die Reformen', pp 78–91.

the first four intended for the 'normal' children.¹⁰⁵⁶ List V was reserved for all those who suffered from some kind of mental disability, in the language of the Nazis 'genetically damaged and mentally handicapped' (*erbgeschädigt und unterbegabt*).¹⁰⁵⁷ To get an overview of institutional provision across Baden, Dr Kersten inspected several houses in 1933 and 1934, including Bethania for three days in the first week of July 1934. As a result of this visit, he announced that the house was to be changed into an institution 'for safekeeping'. The inmates were to be divided into four groups according to the degree of their mental disability.¹⁰⁵⁸ With Dr Kersten's 'systematic differentiation' the Motherhouse Freiburg had lost its right to choose at least a part of its reformatory intake. Fr Superior Schlatterer vainly attempted to impose conditions to save as much of the 'old' Bethania and its educational work and achievements as possible.¹⁰⁵⁹ Henceforward the institution might receive only Catholic female minors with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities. Among them there would also be schoolchildren.¹⁰⁶⁰ The last directive was another *novum* in Heitersheim: For the first time in the history of Bethania of the Good Shepherd, it would house girls younger than fourteen. The Motherhouse Freiburg refused to admit criminals or prostitutes; the house should be 'closed', but not a prison.¹⁰⁶¹

Bethania was now listed under group V of the Catholic educational institutions, that is, registered for offspring with hereditary diseases and 'feble-mindedness'. There were only three institutions in that category, with

¹⁰⁵⁶ List I consisted of closed institutions, ending with list IV, which served only as *ersatz* for family care.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Christoph Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes. Das 'Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses' und die Kirche. Eine Dokumentenanalyse* (Constance, 2000), document 41 in the appendix.

¹⁰⁵⁸ It was small consolation that Dr Ludwig Sprauer, the head of the medical division of the interior ministry of Baden, announced that Bethania had the best result of all institutions which had been visited by Dr Kersten: district doctor Hummel to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 21 July 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹⁰⁵⁹ Fr Superior Schlatterer to Dr Kersten, 27 July 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). Schlatterer tried to negotiate with Kersten, offering that a safekeeping section would be created at Bethania, but that at least part of the school might continue. He also defended the 'Children of St Francis' concept as essential for the institution.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Baden State Youth Office to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 1 Nov. 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹⁰⁶¹ Reformatory Bethania, no addressee, 27 July 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

Bethania the only one for Catholic girls in all of Baden.¹⁰⁶² It was not surprising that Dr Kersten insisted on Bethania taking in schoolgirls as well, as there was no other Catholic house of this new type for the younger age group. Christoph Schneider took up the lead of Hans-Josef Wollasch in asking if those houses of list V were viewed as 'closed' or 'half-open' institutions.¹⁰⁶³ The safekeeping aspect, which Dr Kersten insisted on, would point to Bethania belonging to the 'closed' category. If a closed safekeeping institution was defined as one that had inmates for life, at the start of the Nazi period Bethania might have been intended to become such an institution, but that intention was changed soon and for a reason.¹⁰⁶⁴

The girls and young women in Bethania now stayed for many years but no longer was their stay open-ended. Before the 1930s, even the girls with severe learning needs or 'mental handicap' had been trained under Bethania to the best of their ability and placed in a job, at the latest when they came of age. Only the 'children of St Francis' (*Franziskuskinden*) stayed in Bethania permanently of their own volition as members of the Third Order.¹⁰⁶⁵ According to an in-house report, the sisters did not see Bethania as a 'closed' institution. Hitherto only the six psychiatric hospitals and asylums in Baden had been accredited by the state as 'closed' where the inmates stayed for life, and Bethania had never been included

¹⁰⁶² Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 106 and document 41. Schneider focused his analysis on the children's home St Anthony in Riegel, where boys of school-age were sent. St Augustinus in Ettlingen was number three on the list V, but it took only boys after they had left school or were in the last year of school.

¹⁰⁶³ Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 124, and Wollasch, *Beiträge*, p. 203f.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Not even the St Joseph's institution in Herten in south Baden which had a high percentage of inmates with very severe disabilities, was acknowledged as a 'closed' institution, see Hans-Josef Wollasch, 'Geistig behinderte Menschen zwischen 'caritas' und Nationalsozialismus: die St. Josefsanstalt Herten in Baden', in Hans-Josef Wollasch, '*Sociale Gerechtigkeit und christliche Caritas: Leitfiguren und Wegmarkierungen aus 100 Jahren Caritasgeschichte* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1996), pp 186–215, here at p. 189.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Head of Bethania to Baden State Youth Office, 16 Aug. 1934, pp 6–9 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

in this category.¹⁰⁶⁶ The change to 'closed' was therefore a fundamental change to its character.

The new type of inmate caused serious economic hardships. Bethania would admit, on a short-term basis, more children and young adults than it was designed for, but for the majority the state would pay a much lower per-diem rate than for the 'normal' girls: what had been 1.70 RM (*Reichsmark*) before the shift was now reduced to 1.30 RM for the older girls and only 1 RM for the schoolgirls.¹⁰⁶⁷ Heitersheim had a steady but very low income, with few opportunities to earn extra money, as the needlework apprentices and the other capable working girls were gone.¹⁰⁶⁸ Funding, according to its superior, no longer covered the basic costs.¹⁰⁶⁹ Under Dr Kersten's list of institutions, the per diem charges were set according to the different categories. The houses for inmates with deficiencies were supposed to receive the higher rate of between 1.60 to 2.00 RM. Hans-Werner Scheuing notes this fact as striking.¹⁰⁷⁰ Practice proved to be rather different. The case of Bethania exemplifies the need to compare official, projected figures with what was actually paid out. The sharp reduction in state support was a clear indication of the state's plans for the slow strangulation of religious institutions.¹⁰⁷¹ Figure 8.1 exemplifies the dependence of Bethania on the state as financial supporter.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Typed report on safekeeping of inmates since the reorganisation of the institutions, undated, but very likely July 1936 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). It is likely that the report was written by Sister M. Pia Wittmann, author of most of the reports dating from that time.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Sister Dagobert Lauber and Fr Eduard Dummel to District Court, 8 Sept. 1933. Of 100 inmates only fifty-six paid the full charge of 1.70 RM, twenty-two had a reduced charge, and twenty-three were free of charge. Fr Superior Schlatterer, 27 Dec. 1934, complained about the per-diem charges of 1 and 1.30 RM as being too low. In the letter of 7 Apr. 1936, Bethania asked for an increase in the charges (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

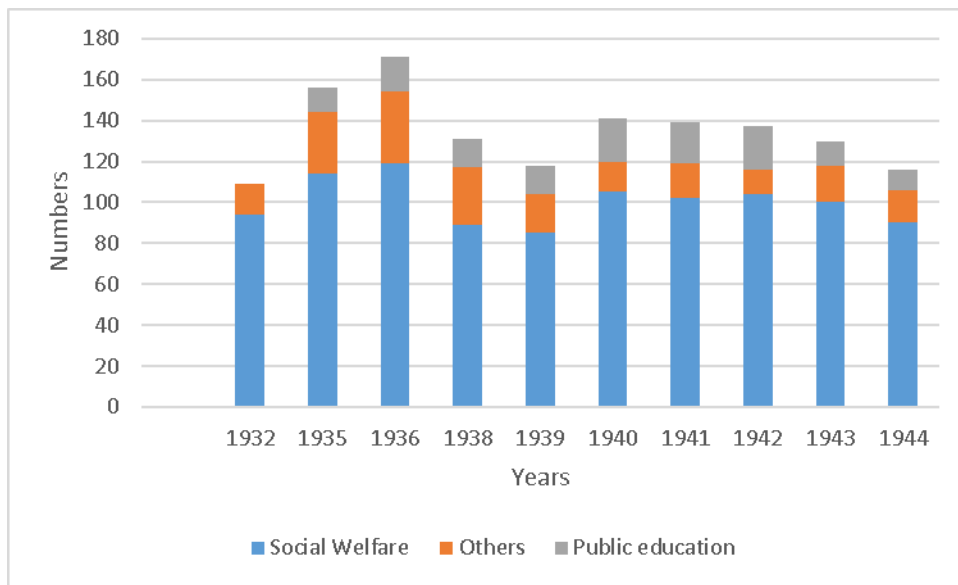
¹⁰⁶⁸ Fr Superior Schlatterer to Interior Ministry of Baden, 25 Oct. 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). The superior called the low charge of 1 RM a financial risk, noting the further economic strain it would put upon them.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Fr Superior Schlatterer to Baden State Youth Office, 27 Dec. 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹⁰⁷⁰ Scheuing, 'Die Reformen', p. 87.

¹⁰⁷¹ The same lower per-diem charge happened to St Anthony, an archdiocesan children's home for boys of school-age, see Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 107.

Figure 8.1: Financial supporters of inmates of Bethania of the Good Shepherd, Heitersheim, 1932-44



Source: Compiled by Angelika Hansert based on annual reports of Bethania of the Good Shepherd, Heitersheim (MHA Freiburg)

Furthermore, Bethania and with it the Motherhouse Freiburg now had to face the challenge of catering for children with mild to severe learning needs. A new type of school, different methodologies and additional teaching support were required, while the best-qualified sisters in needlework were overqualified for their new task.¹⁰⁷² Bethania would now receive nearly 150 new girls from different institutions all over Baden,¹⁰⁷³ of an extended age-range and with different kinds of handicaps or disabilities. For a certain transition period, two very different Bethanias would coexist, until the last of the former inmates had left. The diverse new intake had not only to be formed into a new community, but also into

¹⁰⁷² Fr Superior Schlatterer to Baden State Youth Office, 14 Nov. 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). A training of eight years was needed by a sister to achieve the rank of master in her trade.

¹⁰⁷³ Sister Dagobert Lauber to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 17 Jan. 1935 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). First came eight girls from Schwarzach, then eleven from Rastatt (Sisters of the Good Shepherd), both in the middle of Baden, later from Gurtweil (now part of Waldshut in the very south of Baden). According to the report of 1935, 147 girls in total entered Bethania that year (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

somewhat useful members of German society,¹⁰⁷⁴ which was the greatest challenge of all.

The Sterilisation law and its effects on Bethania

The shift to a new clientele was the first major change imposed on Bethania by the new regime. The second, even bigger change was the introduction of the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring of 14 July 1933 (forced sterilisation law, *Zwangssterilisationsgesetz*), which was enacted on 1 January 1934.¹⁰⁷⁵ Hitler was quite aware of the Catholic Church's opposition to sterilisation and abortion as the papal encyclical *Casti connubii*¹⁰⁷⁶ had only recently been published (31 December 1930).¹⁰⁷⁷ He therefore delayed the publication of the law until after the concordat with the Vatican had been signed, to 28 July 1933.¹⁰⁷⁸ This was the preliminary stage of euthanasia because the state now undertook, under the law, to harm the bodily integrity of a certain group of people and moreover, citizens whom the state expected would not find much support among the German population. This fact was stressed by Hans-Walter Schmuhl,¹⁰⁷⁹ Gisela Bock¹⁰⁸⁰ and Ernst Klee,¹⁰⁸¹ but not every historian would follow their argumentation without requesting more studies to be undertaken.¹⁰⁸² Eugenic ideas and their practical implementation were common internationally,

¹⁰⁷⁴ Report of 1935 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Regierungsblatt* I (1933), pp 529–31.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Casti connubii*, Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Christian marriage, 31 Dec. 1931, online at https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html (English version) [accessed 23 Oct. 2018].

¹⁰⁷⁷ Hans-Josef Wollasch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Caritas in der Zeit der Weltkriege: Zum 100. Geburtstag von Benedict Kreutz (1879–1949)* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1978), p. 195; Alexa A. Becker, *Die Münchener Vinzentinerinnen zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 2009), p. 103f.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ignacio Czeguhn, 'Das Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses vom 14. Juli 1933 und die Erbgesundheitsgerichte', in *The Legal History Review*, 08/2004, volume lxxii, issue 3 (Leiden, 2004), pp 359–72, here at p. 361. Christoph Schneider speaks of 25 July 1933 as the day of publication, and refers to Wollasch, *Beiträge*, p. 196, but there was no date mentioned, see Christoph Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes des*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Hans-Walter Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie: von der Verhütung zur Vernichtung 'lebensunwerten Lebens', 1890–1945* (Göttingen, 1992).

¹⁰⁸⁰ Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen, 1986).

¹⁰⁸¹ Ernst Klee, *Euthanasie im NS-Staat: die 'Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens'* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983).

¹⁰⁸² Sonja Endres, *Zwangssterilisationen in Köln 1934–1945* (Cologne, 2010).

especially in the USA and in northern Europe,¹⁰⁸³ but the Third Reich was unique in its practical implementation and rigour of enforcement.¹⁰⁸⁴ Between 1934 and 1944, compulsory sterilisation was aggressively promoted.¹⁰⁸⁵ From 31 August 1939 on, sterilisation was enforced only exceptionally, as the regime now required the women as also the doctors who diagnosed candidates to contribute to the war effort. No more applications took place from 6 September 1944, and sterilisation was finally ended 1 December 1944.¹⁰⁸⁶

Under the Third Reich, the state in Germany had the right to decide who could have children or, rather, who was not allowed to.¹⁰⁸⁷ Those who were labelled as 'offspring with hereditary disease' (*erbkranker Nachwuchs*) were forced to have an operation, in which the spermatic duct (vas deferens) in males or the oviduct in females were dislocated, blocked or cut.¹⁰⁸⁸ The German bishops could do nothing about the implementation of the law, and they even failed to make sterilisation optional.¹⁰⁸⁹ Archbishop Gröber of Freiburg played a very prominent role in these negotiations with the Interior Ministry of the Third Reich in Berlin.¹⁰⁹⁰ He was also one of the bishops who informed Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber of Munich about the forced-sterilisation conference in the German capital. The issue was also discussed in negotiations between the

¹⁰⁸³ Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, pp 23ff; Becker, *Münchener Vinzenterinnen*, p. 104f.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Czeguhn, 'Das Gesetz', p. 362.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Two laws and seven regulations for their implementation were published over ten years, see Gunther Link, *Eugenische Zwangssterilisationen und Schwangerschaftsabbrüche im Nationalsozialismus, dargestellt am Beispiel der Universitätsfrauenklinik Freiburg* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), pp 508–32 where the full text of the laws and regulations is given in the appendix.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Becker, *Münchener Vinzenterinnen*, pp 111f.

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Dr Adolf Rösch, vicar general of the Ordinariate Freiburg, circular to every parish of the archdiocese, 31 Dec. 1934, number 1 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania); Silvia Ritter, *Zwangssterilisationen in Bonn: Patienten in der Hertz'schen Privatklinik 1934–1945* (Bochum, 2013), p. 48f. Ritter contrasts the 'relatively easy' operation on men with the 'complicated' method for women.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ingrid Richter, *Katholizismus und Eugenik in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn, 2001), pp 394–6; Becker, *Münchener Vinzenterinnen*, p. 108f.; Wollasch, *Beiträge*, p. 196.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Richter, *Katholizismus und Eugenik*, pp 391–7; Wollasch, *Beiträge*, p. 196. The conference took place on 3 November 1933.

German bishops and the Ministry for Church Affairs (*Reichskirchenministerium*) in 1935.¹⁰⁹¹

The candidates for sterilisation were divided into different categories. These were named as congenital feeble-mindedness, hereditary epilepsy, hereditary chorea, hereditary blindness and deafness, schizophrenia, manic-depressive psychosis, severe bodily deformities and severe alcoholism.¹⁰⁹² The numbers of the affected people differ, as exact figures are not yet known. Wollasch assumes c. 200,000,¹⁰⁹³ Balbach speaks of more than 300,000,¹⁰⁹⁴ and Czeguhn of c. 366,000 forced sterilisations¹⁰⁹⁵ in Germany up to 1945. Current estimations, as argued by Link in his thesis on the sterilisations at the *Klinik* in Freiburg, suggest as many as 350,000 and 400,000 as current estimates.¹⁰⁹⁶ Baden played an unenviable role in this matter, contributing the largest number of cases in the first years. Gisela Bock cites the triumphant comment of the State Ministry of Baden in June 1934, that some 572 people had already undergone the operation,¹⁰⁹⁷ rising to an estimated 2,453 to the end of that year.¹⁰⁹⁸ According to contemporary statistics of 1934, Baden was indeed the front-runner with 2.6 applications for sterilisation per 1,000 inhabitants, followed by Hamburg with 2.2, with a country-wide average of 1.3.¹⁰⁹⁹

Implementation of the compulsory sterilisation law was facilitated by the creation of a new public authority in all German boroughs. These health offices,

¹⁰⁹¹ Richter, *Katholizismus und Eugenik*, pp 468ff.

¹⁰⁹² Dr Adolf Rösch, vicar general of the Ordinariate Freiburg, circular to every parish of the archdiocese, 31 Dec. 1934, no. 2 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹⁰⁹³ Hans-Josef Wollasch, 'Kirchliche Reaktionen auf das "Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses" vom Jahre 1933', in Hans-Josef Wollasch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Caritas in der Zeit der Weltkriege: Zum 100. Geburtstag von Benedict Kreutz (1879–1949)* (Freiburg m Breisgau, 1978), pp 195–207, here at p. 205. First published in *Caritas '74, Jahrbuch des DCV*, Freiburg, 1974, pp 290–306.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Balbach, *Die Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Czeguhn, 'Das Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses', pp 359–72, here at p. 371.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Link, *Eugenische Zwangssterilisationen*, p. 168.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus*, p. 248.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Link, *Eugenische Zwangssterilisationen*, p. 167. Although that number declined in the following years and neared the average, Baden still considerably exceeded the average in 1934, 1935 and 1936, see Link, p. 168 and Cécile Mack, *Die badische Ärzteschaft im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2001), p. 139.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Link, *Eugenische Zwangssterilisationen*, p. 168.

headed by the district doctor, had absolute competence in the area of health legislation.¹¹⁰⁰ The directors of medical, penal and care institutions were obliged to report suitable candidates to the responsible health office.¹¹⁰¹ The district doctors then made a first evaluation and forwarded the petition to especially established state 'hereditary-health courts' (*Erbgesundheitsgerichte*) who made the final decision.¹¹⁰² The persons concerned could appeal within a month, and some verdicts were overturned.¹¹⁰³ No convict could escape the operation.¹¹⁰⁴ If necessary, the state would use force to ensure the law was carried out.¹¹⁰⁵

In its directive on the compulsory sterilisation law, the Freiburg Ordinariate drew attention to the distinction between notifiers (for naming candidates) and petitioners (for making orders). From a Catholic point of view, the latter role was forbidden to Catholics.¹¹⁰⁶ Perhaps to prevent any resistance from the Motherhouse Freiburg, Professor Dr Adalbert Gregor of the Department of Justice of Baden appointed himself and district doctor Dr Hummel as so-called notifiers who would report every girl under consideration as a candidate. In that way none of the sisters in leadership at Bethania would have to take any part in it and they would not carry any responsibility. Professor Gregor also advised the sisters to tell the girls' families that the two doctors were to blame in case there were any complaints.¹¹⁰⁷ As argued by Schneider, this dispensation of Catholic

¹¹⁰⁰ Mack, *Die badische Ärzteschaft*, pp 126–130. The district doctors had free rein to identify candidates for sterilisation, see Mack, p. 131.

¹¹⁰¹ § 3 of the first *Durchführungsverordnung* of the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring, 5 Dec. 1933, see Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 83f.

¹¹⁰² Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, pp 84, 109.

¹¹⁰³ Dr Adolf Rösch, vicar general of the Ordinariate Freiburg, circular to every parish of the archdiocese, 31 Dec. 1934, nos 3–5 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). Later the time for appeal was reduced to a fortnight, see Bethania handwritten report *Die amtsärztliche Begutachtung*, without date and signature [c. 1941] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹⁰⁴ Balbach, *Die Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 51.

¹¹⁰⁵ Dr Adolf Rösch, vicar general of the Ordinariate Freiburg, circular to every parish of the archdiocese, 31 Dec. 1934, no. 5 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹⁰⁶ Rösch, circular of 31 Dec. 1934, no. 14.

¹¹⁰⁷ Handwritten report (of Sister M. Pia Wittmann according to the hand), undated but written after 20 Mar. 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). The same applies to the St Joseph's institution at Herten, see Wollasch, 'Die St. Josefsanstalt Herten in Baden', p. 189.

institutions from their obligation to notify, designed to win the Church's collaboration, was only superficially a success.¹¹⁰⁸

The Ordinariate of Freiburg was also concerned if escorting sterilisation candidates to the hospital and back would make the sisters complicit in the sterilisation process and made inquiries into how the Catholic institutions handled it.¹¹⁰⁹ Schneider interprets this move as showing uncertainty around how to approach this problem.¹¹¹⁰ However, it can also be viewed as a willingness of the Ordinariate to take on board the experiences of people in the field; the directive of the Ordinariate fits with the incoming answers from Freiburg and elsewhere.¹¹¹¹ This would offer a corrective to Schneider's own thesis that the Ordinariate did not allow lower-ranked clergy and laypersons any active-emancipatory role in the conflict with the state.¹¹¹² In his answer to the Ordinariate's request Fr Superior Schlatterer reported that the Motherhouse Freiburg had already made sure that none of the sisters would accompany a sterilisation candidate to the *Klinik* in Freiburg. A female social worker would pick her up at Bethania and would bring her back again later. Even if the state had never sent an official for this task, Bethania would never have permitted a sister to do the job but would send a trustworthy layperson instead.¹¹¹³ Other Catholic institutions such as St Anthony children's home in Riegel/Kaiserstuhl proceeded in a similar way, whereas in Münster/Westphalia the Clement Sisters (*Clemensschwwestern*) had to bring the patients to the hospital.¹¹¹⁴ As early as October 1933, the first evaluation of possible sterilisation candidates in Bethania took place. The doctor was Professor Adalbert Gregor, the medical head of division at the Department of

¹¹⁰⁸ Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 84.

¹¹⁰⁹ Dr Adolf Rösch to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 18 May 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). On 1 June 1934 a directive of the Ordinariate was issued for all the orders and congregations of the archdiocese on this matter (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹¹⁰ Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 144f.

¹¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146; Fr Superior Schlatterer to Ordinariate, 24 May 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹¹² Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 146f.

¹¹¹³ Fr Superior Schlatterer to Ordinariate, 24 May 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹¹⁴ Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, pp 144–6; Balbach, *Die Barmherzigen Schwestern*, p. 51.

Justice of Baden (*Medizinalreferent für Jugendwohlfahrt*).¹¹¹⁵ The second evaluation followed in March 1934.¹¹¹⁶ Only a part of Bethania's inmates fell under the law at this point. From 1935 on however, as almost 100% of the inmates had mental disabilities of some sort, nearly all the girls came into consideration (114 of 125 new entrants).¹¹¹⁷ The exact number of the Bethania girls who were forcibly sterilised cannot be ascertained.¹¹¹⁸ In September 1935, the state youth office was aware of some thirty-seven girls who had been notified for sterilisation; of these approximately sixteen had been given the final verdict but the operations had not yet been carried out. Twenty-eight to thirty sterilisations had already been executed.¹¹¹⁹ For the whole period between 1934 and 1945, Gunther Link lists in one of his tables seventy-three young women from Bethania who had been sterilised at Freiburg *Klinik*.¹¹²⁰ In seventy-one of these cases the diagnosis was imbecility (= 99%). On average, those women were eighteen years old, the youngest only fifteen.¹¹²¹

At first, there seems to have been some leeway, as the inmates of the Catholic institutions of list V were left in safety, the sole concession the bishops had achieved in 1933.¹¹²² The Freiburg Ordinariate impressed upon the institutions that, with the assent of the district doctor, the verdict would not be carried out where there was a written undertaking that the inmate would be kept safely in the institution. Without this guarantee, the inmate had to be transferred

¹¹¹⁵ The first evaluation took place 18 and 19 October 1933, see Professor Gregor to Bethania, 2 Oct. 1933 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). Gregor, psychiatrist at St Anthony in Riegel, is renowned as the creator of the intelligence test, see Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 109.

¹¹¹⁶ Handwritten report, unnamed [Sister M. Pia Wittmann according to hand, AH], undated [after 20 Mar. 1934] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹¹⁷ Bethania report of 1935 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). The total number of inmates was 156.

¹¹¹⁸ Lists of names are extant only for the beginning of this process from 1934 on, for 1941 and from 1942 on (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹¹⁹ Dr Otto Kersten, Baden State Youth Office, to Bethania, 23 Sept. 1935 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹²⁰ Link, *Zwangssterilisationen*, pp 198, 211–13.

¹¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹¹²² Archbishop Gröber of Freiburg was one of the two negotiators for the German bishops with the Interior Department in Berlin on 3 Nov. 1933, see Wollasch, *Beiträge*, p. 196, Becker, *Münchener Vinzentinerinnen*, p. 126.

to a different institution.¹¹²³ Only when a young woman was released from an institution could the sterilisation take place.¹¹²⁴ This was common procedure in Baden at first.¹¹²⁵

When in September 1935 Bethania asked the youth office for instructions on where to send Anna S. after her operation, Dr Otto Kersten insisted on Bethania taking her back, the first time there is documentary evidence for such a request.

After sterilisation has taken place these girls require specialist care over and above the natural need for post-operative recovery ...which can be best given the girls by those who know them and in whom they trust. It would certainly lead to severe difficulties, with a negative effect on their educational progress to date, if the minors were deserted or rather transferred. Their return to the institution after sterilisation must therefore be the rule, exemptions are possible only under very special circumstances.¹¹²⁶

Dr Kersten was clearly at pains to make his decision look like an act of kindness and charity to the girls, but the last sentence leaves no room for any doubt that this decision had to be accepted unquestioningly. It turned out to be the first step to a much worse development.

The sisters of Bethania tried to repeal this new rule at a meeting with Dr Kersten on 23 September 1935; more than fifteen handwritten pages of minutes give witness to the heated argumentation that ensued. In Dr Kersten's opinion, everywhere in Germany the prevailing view was that it was best for a girl if she was sterilised right after her entry to an institution; as not till then could the real education start. Otherwise, Dr Kersten argued, the girl would be under permanent stress about the timing of the operation. The sisters denied that and replied that only when a sterilised girl had come from outside and talked about it would the other inmates start to get suspicious. But if one resident after the other was operated upon and then came back, fear would be generated among them

¹¹²³ Dr Adolf Rösch, vicar general of the Ordinariate of Freiburg, to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 1 June 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹²⁴ Minutes of the conference of the motherhouses of the female apostolic congregations of Baden with the archbishop of Freiburg and other high-ranking officials of Ordinariate and *Caritas*, 9 Jan. 1935 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Konferenz der Mutterhäuser Badens).

¹¹²⁵ Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, pp 113f., 126f., 136.

¹¹²⁶ Dr Otto Kersten to Bethania, 23 Sept. 1935 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

about who would be next. The sisters remarked that although girls with learning disabilities were not capable of logic, they felt that the sterilisation operation was wrong. The newcomers from the Good-Shepherd-home in Rastatt were disappointed when they were transferred to Bethania as they thought they were to be discharged. According to Doctor Kersten, Bethania was the only house that demanded the operation at the end of the girl's stay. The sisters said that people would talk and know that whoever was in Bethania had undergone sterilisation and then where was the secrecy guaranteed to the persons concerned?¹¹²⁷ Confronted with the accusation by Dr Kersten that they would just dispatch the girls to get them sterilised and not care about what happened to them afterwards, the sisters stressed that even when former inmates were no longer in their care officially, they visited them in hospital and prepared them mentally for the time after.¹¹²⁸

On 12 November 1935, the final decision from the state youth office reached Bethania, that from now on all sterilisations had to take place during a girl's stay in Heitersheim, and not after she had left it.¹¹²⁹ It was applied to all inmates who had come to Bethania that year; an exception was made for those who had been in residence before that date who were allowed to undergo the operation after they had left. Schoolgirls were safe while they attended classes; after leaving school they had to undergo sterilisation and to be transferred to the department of the past pupils. One week later, Fr Superior Schlatterer commented on this letter in his report to the Ordinariate of Freiburg: from now on, Catholic institutions were no longer seen as 'safekeeping' places by the law, and the regulation demanding immediate sterilisation on entering Bethania would make

¹¹²⁷ Minutes of the conference between Dr Kersten and some sisters of Bethania, 23 Oct. 1935, written 31 Oct. 1935 by Sister M. Pia Wittmann (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). The obligation to maintain secrecy was usually demanded by the state, see Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 137f.

¹¹²⁸ Minutes of the conference, 23 Oct. 1935, pp 5–6 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹²⁹ Dr Ludwig Sprauer, Baden State Youth Office, to Bethania, 12 Nov. 1935 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

the education of the girls much more difficult.¹¹³⁰ Bethania is therefore an example of the changing attitude of the state towards Catholic institutions: an institution one day acknowledged as a 'safekeeping' place (which meant 'closed'), was the next day categorised as no longer a safekeeping institution in order to gain unrestricted access to the inmates.

The new directive that sterilisation had to take place right after their entry to the institution had profound repercussions for the girls of Bethania. The sisters recorded some experiences so that there seems to be little room for doubt about the devastating impact on the residents. When a girl left for the hospital, the other children needed four to five days to calm down again, because they guessed where she was going and feared that they were next. Newcomers from other institutions knew about the facts already and told the Bethanians about it. The result was that some had developed behavioural problems as their way to process the news, others threatened to hang themselves or to abscond, while some blamed the house or the sisters for their situation, but were disabused of this opinion by the older children.¹¹³¹ The sisters noted in the report that the girls were all terrified, before and after the operation; they also knew what was ahead, and they all rejected it. Their reaction varied between despair, depression, anger, agitation, and feelings of inferiority. Katharina H. had severe psychic traumata after the operation, Käthe W. and Emma S. suffered from inferiority complexes, Charlotte S. started to misbehave, was unkind to her fellow inmates and no longer respected authority, Anna H. was full of rancour, Erna G. felt victimised and cried a lot, some girls had changed very negatively, and the majority suffered from some kind of trauma.¹¹³² With those reactions of the girls, the sisters were confirmed in their opinion that it was bad for all parties concerned that the sterilisation took place earlier than before. However, the youth office did not revoke a decision once made. On the contrary, it blamed the sisters for trying

¹¹³⁰ Fr Superior Schlatterer to Ordinariate, 20 Nov. 1935 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹³¹ Report of Sister Amélie Willmann about experiences with the children regarding the sterilisation, undated [1935, AH] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹³² Typed report about difficulties regarding sterilization, which the sisters mentioned in the June 1936 reports of the girls [in pencil: July 1936] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

to avoid the re-entry of Bethanians because in three out of twenty-three cases in 1936, the sisters had successfully requested the transfer of girls to other institutions.¹¹³³ Not only the finality of the operation upset the girls, but also the preparatory visits of civil servants and other officials of the state youth office such as Miss Burger's four-day visitation in June 1936. Such visits, it was detailed, always caused a lot of agitation among the young residents and induced a change of behaviour. They felt they were under scrutiny and felt sorry for themselves as being welfare children. Some were especially malicious afterwards. Some were especially malicious afterwards. One of the longest-resident girls was full of indignation, reporting later to an absent sister:

You can believe me, sister, we all are so happy that this person is gone now. She only wanted to spy out everything, the poor sisters could not get any peace, and the children were all nervous only because of her. That person has not to come back again!¹¹³⁴

The sisters' response

In the first months after the sterilisation law had come into force in 1934, Sister M. Pia Wittmann of Bethania reported that Sister Superior Dagobert Lauber and other unnamed sisters had tried three times to get girls off the hook. The sisters managed to save eight to ten girls in the first round from undergoing the intelligence test, the second time they did not succeed. After the evaluation, Sister Dagobert tried to talk the doctor out of his decision, and sometimes he conceded that the girls could be transferred afterwards, or that the notification could be delayed, but the girls still had to undergo the operation, no matter where they were.¹¹³⁵ Therefore, in single cases, the Sisters of Charity were able to

¹¹³³ Typed report *Verwahrung der Zöglinge seit der Umstellung der Anstalten betr.*, p. 6 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹³⁴ Typed report about the effects of visits and other matters, unnamed, undated [in pencil: Juli 1936; after 22 June 1936, the visitation of *Fräulein* Bauer] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹³⁵ Handwritten report (by Sister M. Pia Wittmann according to hand), undated, but after 20 Mar. 1934 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

succeed, but their scope to act against a legal right of the secular state was very limited. All the official protests of the German bishops were to no avail.¹¹³⁶

Professor Adalbert Gregor's advice, that the best thing to do was not to take in 'mentally deficient' girls in the first place, was not very helpful given the fact that Bethania had no say in that matter. While the girls were safe inside the institution, the sisters were strictly circumscribed in what they could do to help them escape their fate. They could try to send a girl on to another place, in the hope that the operation would be delayed or that she would not have to deal with it at all. Anna, a seventeen-year old, who had already been destined for sterilisation, was 'smuggled' into Bethania by her former institution, but could be sent onwards to St Joseph's institution in Herten¹¹³⁷ right away in an attempt to avoid the operation. Another young woman of twenty-one years of age and therefore an adult could be released at once from welfare education, and three others could be sent to Hub or sent home, 'and then we have nothing to do with the sterilisation.' The Freiburg sisters regretted that they did not have a second house of their Order where they could send children from Bethania in the same way that the Good Shepherd sisters of Rastatt proceeded in their two houses in Rastatt and Baden-Lichtental.¹¹³⁸ If they had more than one house, it would have been much easier to keep the necessary secrecy about sterilisation, above all for the sake of the girls themselves.

After the law that the sterilisation had to be done on entry into Bethania had been enforced, the hands of the sisters were effectively tied. They had very little

¹¹³⁶ Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus*, pp 296f.

¹¹³⁷ Wollasch, 'Die St. Josefsanstalt Herten in Baden'; Philipp Rudolf, 'Euthanasie': 75 Jahre vor der Inklusion', in *Das neue Caritas-Jahrbuch 2015* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2016), pp 146–51. Herten was a highly-esteemed Catholic institution catering for children and adults with mental and physical disabilities, from mild to the most severe. It was unsurpassed in all of Germany at the time in terms of structure and size, and is still in existence today. In 1934, the total number of persons in residence was 933: 78 sisters, 105 employees, 3 teachers and 747 protégés, see Wollasch, 'Die St. Josefsanstalt Herten in Baden', p. 212f.

¹¹³⁸ The Good-Shepherd-sisters of Rastatt had two houses in close proximity, in Rastatt and in Baden-Lichtental. As their superior M. Euphrasia was very supportive of the district doctor regarding sterilisation, they had their girls sterilised and afterwards sent them to another house. Only the priest made difficulties, see Patricia Reister, *Verwahrlost und gefährdet? Heimerziehung im Landkreis und der Stadt Rastatt* (Rastatt, 2017), p. 25.

opportunity afterwards to speak up for their *protégés*. On 19 May 1938, Pforzheim, the most radical youth office of Baden, was enraged that a girl had avoided sterilisation in Bethania after it had sent her there.¹¹³⁹ On the other hand, the sisters had their hands full trying to calm the girls down and to get them back to 'normal' as they were forced to undergo the operation the law demanded. It was through training the girls that the sisters could perhaps extend some protection to their charges. In general, they tried to train the girls with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities as simple maidservants. This aspect was important because everybody who was, in the eyes of the Nazis, in any way useful to the state, had the best chance of survival. Whoever landed in the end in Herten later became a candidate for euthanasia.¹¹⁴⁰

Almost nothing is reported in the contemporary record on the sisters themselves, how they coped with the whole situation of sterilisation and how they felt about being charged with the care of a new and difficult type of resident. On 21 January 1936, Fr Superior Schlatterer noted in only a few words that 'discouragement, nervous exhaustion, tensions, distrust', and 'sister against sister' prevailed at Bethania.¹¹⁴¹ A sister's report mentioned that it was often hard for the religious staff when, in deference to a possible sterilisation, difficult 'children' were either not released or the release postponed for the inmates' benefit.¹¹⁴²

During the Second World War, the carrying out of compulsory sterilisation was much reduced, as there were fewer doctors available who could evaluate a candidate or operate on her. With the beginning of the war on 1 September 1939, the hereditary health courts suspended their practice, effective verdicts were not carried out and the girls could enter employment without sterilisation,

¹¹³⁹ Sister M. Pia Wittmann to Fr Superior Schlatterer, 19 May 1938 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹⁴⁰ Mack, *Die badische Ärzteschaft im Nationalsozialismus*, pp 212–14.

¹¹⁴¹ Fr Superior Schlatterer, handwritten notes, 21 Jan. 1936 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹⁴² Handwritten report *Amtsarzt betr.* (concerning district doctor), without date or signature [c. 1941 by Sister M. Pia Wittmann] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania), p. 4.

but they did have to register their new location or address.¹¹⁴³ In 1940 after the German victory in France, the responsible psychiatrist came back and ordered several sterilisations, which were carried out before the patients left Bethania.¹¹⁴⁴ With the war dragging on, applications for sterilisation were reported in single figures only, and the court took a long time before issuing its verdict.¹¹⁴⁵ There is no mention of sterilisation in later reports.¹¹⁴⁶ The question is, whether the drop in sterilisation numbers was due to a general decline or was for another reason. Three very interesting documents in the Bethania files might throw some light on the matter. From the 1940s on, a Dr Edinger is named as district doctor of Müllheim; he was therefore the person to petition for the sterilisation of any inmate of Bethania. Two documents are lists of 1941 and 1942 on, naming 115 Bethania girls in total and the different medical and psychiatric examinations they underwent. Five of them were destined for sterilisation (nearly 5%), but all medical verdicts from Rastatt (22) and one each from three other district doctors had been overturned by Dr Edinger in a second examination. From 1942 on, some inmates had seen the doctor even three times.¹¹⁴⁷ In an undated¹¹⁴⁸ Bethania report to the motherhouse, an unnamed sister¹¹⁴⁹ stated that the health office in Müllheim was one of the most lenient of all Baden and became even more lenient in the past year. The 'fatherly' doctor was very concerned for the inmates, whenever he could he prolonged the stay at the institution for another six or twelve months, which becomes evident in the two lists. The doctor handed some 'mentally deficient' girls over to a Catholic female social worker who did not hesitate to contest some of the verdicts. According to the report, the collaboration

¹¹⁴³ Bethania report of 1939 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). Christoph Schneider states only that by 1939 the 'sterilisation wave' had effectively stopped, but he does not mention the war, see Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 105.

¹¹⁴⁴ Bethania report of 1940 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹⁴⁵ Bethania report of 1941 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹⁴⁶ Bethania report of 1942, 1943 and 1944 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). In the report of 1942, the only remark about sterilisation ('when necessary it was applied for UM') had been crossed out.

¹¹⁴⁷ Typed lists *Die amtsärztlichen Untersuchungen seit Jan. 1941* and *Amtsärztliche Untersuchungen v. Bethania seit 1942* (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹⁴⁸ Handwritten Bethania report *Amtsarzt betr.[effend]*, without signature [hand of Sister M. Pia Wittmann] and date [after Jan. 1941] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

between doctor and the sisters was good and mutual trust evident; they even teamed up together against the state youth office when necessary. The doctor based his verdict also on the personal files, which the sisters had to keep updated.¹¹⁵⁰ The sister called the composition of those personal case files (*Führungsberichte*) 'one of the most difficult and most responsible written reports', and she had to try not to be too positive in her evaluation.¹¹⁵¹

The characterisation of Dr Edinger, the district doctor of Müllheim, is striking given the thesis of Cécile Mack in which she attests 'a high affinity of the medical fraternity of Baden with the [National Socialist] party'.¹¹⁵² From the archival record, there is evidence that not all doctors were acting badly; every single case has to be seen individually. Even more intriguing is what the word choices of the sister reveal of the attitude of the religious staff towards their protégés; this is even more so because the above-mentioned report was intended to have the doctor and his actions as subject and not the sisters. In contrast to the case files of St Anthony in Riegel, which were semantically more deficit-oriented,¹¹⁵³ the sisters at Bethania tried 'to develop a balanced character' of the inmates, they 'handled each case quite individually' and they 'stimulated even the smallest ability in the best possible way'. In preparation for a medical examination, the sisters trained the 'children', they helped them wherever they could and they 'put their protégés into good humour'. Towards the officials, the sisters 'advocated the interests of the children' and reported 'all the good of the child' to the social worker.¹¹⁵⁴ These words might have been just those of a good teacher, who wanted to place the pupils into the best possible light; however, the educational philosophy of the sisters was not subject, and the intended audience the motherhouse superiors and not state officials or members of the public. Even if

¹¹⁵⁰ In contrast to St Anthony in Riegel, the personal files of the Bethania inmates are no longer extant, see Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 105.

¹¹⁵¹ Handwritten Bethania report *Amtsarzt betr.*[effend], without signature [hand of Sister M. Pia Wittmann] and date [after Jan. 1941] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

¹¹⁵² Mack, *Die badische Ärzteschaft*, p. 140.

¹¹⁵³ Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 155.

¹¹⁵⁴ Handwritten notes without date or signature [after Jan. 1941] (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania).

the picture had been painted positively, it seems evident that, as in St Anthony in Riegel, the sisters exerted themselves wholeheartedly for their protégés.¹¹⁵⁵

This care becomes even more evident in the last days of the Third Reich. Although the motherhouse complex had been destroyed in a bomb attack on Freiburg in November 1944 (of which the sisters and residents of Bethania were witness from afar) and every branch house of the Order had to fight for its very life on its own, Bethania had formed a community which was finally about to be dissolved by the eviction order on Christmas day 1944. In a detailed report the sisters described their sorrow on being unable to find suitable locations to place their challenging charges.¹¹⁵⁶ All but ten were finally sent away safely; those who had no other place to go to were protected by the sisters until the very end of the Third Reich.¹¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

Against the will of the Order, the Bethania reformatory school and refuge in Heitersheim became a trap for girls and young women during the Third Reich where they could not avoid forced sterilisation. Seventy-three cases are documented for Bethania, but the estimated number of unreported cases is likely to be higher. The Ordinariate and the Motherhouse Freiburg distanced themselves clearly from the NS-ideology of compulsory sterilisation. The archbishop, the Order and its sisters could only protest, an open resistance was impossible and would have led to the closure of the institution. Nobody else wanted to care for the girls under such circumstances, whereas the sisters did not see the abandonment of the girls as at all part of what they were about. Bethania is exemplary in showing how such an institution became victim of a

¹¹⁵⁵ Schneider, *Die Verstaatlichung des Leibes*, p. 157.

¹¹⁵⁶ Bethania report of 1944, 15 Jan. 1945 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). This report was, according to a note at the very end, not submitted. In the course of the tumultuous events towards the end of the war and the Third Reich, the report was too detailed and too critical for NS-state officials.

¹¹⁵⁷ District Youth Office Müllheim to Bethania, 17 Feb. 1945 (MHA Freiburg, Akte Heitersheim, Bethania). The Youth Office gave its consent that ten children stay in the care of the sisters; for one of them it could offer a place in the institution in Gurtweil (south Baden).

totalitarian regime. However, there was some margin left for the Order and above all for the sisters of Bethania to act. They tried to prepare the 'girls' as best they could when they had to face a medical examination, they helped the victims to overcome fears and, finally, helped make them ready to face the world outside again. To defend their protégés the sisters did not shy from confrontation with state officials. Every forced sterilisation was one too many, but the sisters of Bethania were helpless in that regard. The NS-state had issued and implemented the compulsory sterilisation law with full force through an apparatus of state including social welfare, juridical, medical and educational parties, some of them explicitly created for that very purpose. Bethania had to be protected as an institution but the evidence is that the sisters also cared for their 'children' in what was a 'forecourt of hell', a last stop before euthanasia. However, compulsory sterilisation was only one small element of direct and indirect attacks on the Motherhouse Freiburg and its sisters during this truly dark period which was the Third Reich. The totalitarian NS-regime left the Catholic Church and its representatives, the religious orders and congregations, in no doubt that it aimed to their complete annihilation.

Conclusion

Since Claude Langlois published in 1984 his seminal study *Le catholicisme au féminin* on the phenomenal rise and growth of French female religious congregations in the nineteenth century, nearly thirty-five years have passed. Langlois' seminal work stimulated a great deal of scholarly enquiry, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon hemisphere, in France and in other French-speaking countries. Once again Germany failed to follow this lead. The very few research projects undertaken on female religious focused mainly on the former Prussian north and west of the country, completely ignoring the predominantly Catholic south and south-west.

This thesis argues that the oldest, largest and therefore most prominent and influential active female religious congregation in the south-west of Germany, the Order of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul of the Motherhouse Freiburg has been overlooked for too long. This Roman Catholic institution became a main player in the social field; the structures it helped to create through the 'female power' of its some 3,300 members are still in place in present-day Germany (hospitals, social services, kindergarten, women's associations), although the vast majority of the sister-staff is gone. However, not only in the social but also in the spiritual field the sisters played a key role in the life of a Catholic parish, contributing to and participating in the so-called Catholic milieu. This was to such a degree, this thesis argues, that the sisters became over time 'the female face' of the Catholic Church in Baden and Hohenzollern, female assistants of the local parish priest who were seen by the public eye as yet other representatives of their faith. The predominantly simple peasant girls had come far and some had excelled.

The present study examines this female religious Order to show how it reacted as a body to the world beyond the walls of its motherhouse and its 209 branch houses, located throughout the archdiocese of Freiburg, over the course of a century, starting from its establishment in 1846. It is argued that in

responding to times of crises the Order did not always act as mere instrument in the hands of different parties but it was also very much able and willing to display agency itself in order to protect its unique identity and advance its own understanding of its purpose or mission. The sisters themselves appeared as actors every now and then themselves in the archival material. The question why it did not happen more often can be referred either to the material that survived, to the kind of material or to the conservative character of the Order. Too much had simply not been recorded, whatever the reason.

The Freiburg branch of the *Sœurs de la Charité de Strasbourg* was founded in 1846, in common with the other offshoots of this branch, by leading men in church and politics. The archbishop of Freiburg, Hermann von Vicari, joined forces with his Alsatian colleague Bishop Andreas Raess and one of the most prominent Catholic political leaders Franz Joseph Buss to introduce this new order into the archdiocese as a first step in a fight against a tight church-state system. Although instruments in the hands of these men through an article in their constitutions – sisters were sent out only when they were expressly asked for – the Mother General Sister Vinzenz Sultzer did play a major role in negotiations (Chapter 1). On their arrival in Baden the sisters brought with them not only the French structure of the motherhouse-system which went back to St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac and their *Filles de la Charité* of Paris; they also contributed with their French spirituality to the Catholic revival in the archdiocese. To ensure this influence on the Catholic faithful of Baden the archbishop mandated that all candidates and novices continue to be educated in Strasbourg which turned out as a period of twenty-five years. Thus the superiors of Strasbourg stayed in power for that time. According to the new Order's rule, the sisters staffed one hospital after another in Baden, supported in this by the state government who through the local district offices actively promoted the religious sisters as nurses. This good relationship and the sisters' well-attested usefulness in this field was an advantage in the *Kulturkampf* in Baden as well as in the Second *Reich* (Chapter 2).

The sisters' limited field of activity as set down in their rule, the concentration on hospitals and other institutions, and the poor visibility of the Order to ordinary Catholics proved to be disadvantages in terms of growth. When in the course of gaining papal approval the Vatican entered the scene as an active player, the Motherhouse Freiburg seized the chance to get the constitutions changed. After the state of Baden gave its consent, the Order was able to found small branch houses in the predominantly Catholic countryside as well as in urban areas, laying the ground for imbuing village life with the 'good' (ultramontane) spirit in which the sisters were first trained in Alsace (chapter 3).

These small branch houses with two or three sisters became the 'lifeline' of the Motherhouse Freiburg, providing it with a rising stream of candidates. The Order, for its part, brought (in many cases) the first-ever medical and educational services to rural parishes by nursing the sick at home and by providing childcare in the nursery schools. The sisters became welcome pastoral assistants to the local priest, especially in reaching out to female Catholics. In the meantime the sisters' service in the hospitals was a decisive factor in modern hospital building and the development of medicine and nursing. Trained in one of Baden's leading teaching hospitals and in one of their own, by stellar professors and medical doctors, the Motherhouse Freiburg made sure that its members received the best possible training. In becoming the 'instruments' of hospital boards and leading medical practitioners, the sisters profited from access to modern medical knowledge; at the same time they had the scope or leeway to permeate nursing with their special Vincentian or Christocentric spirituality (chapter 4). Life as a sister nurse over the period of this study was hard and always life-threatening, most of all in times of war. The Order proved its loyalty to the state by sending some sisters to nurse wounded soldiers as early as 1866, a number that was much increased with the outbreak of the First World War where the sisters served in military hospitals behind the front lines. This special type of nursing was key to the state's attitude not only during the *Kulturkampf* but especially in the Third Reich. War was a catalyst in the expansion of non-denominational secular nursing, especially the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71. Over the period

of this study, the Sisters of Charity encountered lay nurses more and more, but the reputation and skills of the religious nurses proved up to the very end of the Second World War a safe and dense phalanx (chapter 5).

After the First World War the Motherhouse Freiburg had to find new ways to renew the relationship with its Alsatian counterpart, now French once again. Like most German organisations and individuals, the Order met with enormous economic difficulties but managed to get some large new hospital building projects underway. The German Caritas Association (*DCV*) played a key support role by advising the Motherhouse Freiburg and providing training courses for the sisters and other religious so that they were better prepared for the encounter with the NS-state (chapter 6). The years of the Weimar Republic freed the Catholic Church from the former church-state regulations but brought new challenges in the field of education which was not the main field of activity of the Order. The expertise of the *DCV* again proved to be crucial: it provided timely information, advice and practical training for the sisters in education, in the many nursery schools, in the orphanages and vocational schools so that they were able to meet the rising expectations of the public, and to stand up to the secular critics of the 1920s (chapter 7).

Demands of a quite different and much more serious nature were met by the Motherhouse Freiburg in the Third Reich. In the one and only Order-owned reformatory, Bethania in Heitersheim, the new NS-state imposed a change of clientele, and from this moved swiftly to make it a place for candidates for compulsory sterilisation. Resistance would only have been possible at the cost of losing the institution and the residents would have had nowhere else to go. This institution shows in a nutshell how brutal the regime was in operating its policy and how small the margin was for the sisters to act. The thesis has established that in an attempt to support their protégés, the sisters did not shy from confrontations with state officials, though their success was limited.

This thesis is the first-ever historical survey of the Order of Sisters of Charity of Freiburg, designed as a case study of a single complex institution within a

longitudinal timeframe. The history of the *Sœurs de la Charité de Strasbourg* and its offshoots in the German lands show clearly that every female religious congregation is better analysed separately, even if they shared the same rule as others, were shaped in the beginning in the same tradition and lived the same spirituality. At least in Germany the different daughters of the Motherhouse Strasbourg encountered very different political, religious and social circumstances. Thanks to some flexibility, the Motherhouse Freiburg and the other Strasbourg daughter-houses not only shaped their environment but were also shaped by them. Generalisation made on the basis of analysis of just one or even a few congregations are simply unsound, even if the congregation in question was the largest, most important and most widespread.

Religious orders and congregations are also better analysed in longitudinal studies due to their character of continuity and the value they place on memory. They also invest in their own personnel and their thinking is primarily long term. The decision to cover several different topics, over a lengthy time period, instead of making a close study of one particular aspect was a deliberate one. Any one of several topics covered here could merit a PhD-study in itself. The approach of the present study opens up more avenues of research and can be used as scaffolding for other studies in the respective fields. This thesis is both an acknowledgement of the importance of the work of a little-known nursing order with thousands of members; and an encouragement for further comparative research in the wider region of the German Catholic south and southwest.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Superiors of the Order of the Sisters of St Vincent de Paul, Motherhouse Freiburg, and archbishops of the archdiocese of Freiburg since 1846

Mothers general¹¹⁵⁸

1. Sister Gebhard Weber	1853□1884
2. Sister Alban Jörger	1884□1898
3. Sister Luisa David	1898□1916
4. Sister Ferdinand Feederle	1916□1932
5. Sister Primitia Dinger	1932□1952

Fathers superior

1. Karl Sulzer	1846□1857
2. Franz Joseph Marmon	1857□1885
3. Karl Mayer	1885□1922
4. Emil Richard Schlatterer	1922□1954

Archbishops of Freiburg¹¹⁵⁹

1. Hermann von Vicari	1843□1868
2. Lothar von Kübel (acting archbishop)	1868□1881
3. Johann Baptist Orbin	1882□1886
4. Johannes Christian Roos	1886□1896
5. Georg Ignaz Komp (d. before inauguration)	1898
6. Dr Thomas Nörber	1898□1920
7. Karl Fritz	1920□1931
8. Dr Conrad Gröber	1932□1948

¹¹⁵⁸ All information on superiors compiled by Angelika Hansert 2018 based on records in Motherhouse Archive Freiburg, see partly also Emil Clemens Scherer, *Die Kongregation der Barmherzigen Schwestern von Straßburg: Ein Bild ihres Werdens und Wirkens von 1734 bis zur Gegenwart* (Kevelaer, 1930), p. 465.

¹¹⁵⁹ All data according to Christoph Schmider, *Die Freiburger Bischöfe: 175 Jahre Erzbistum Freiburg. Eine Geschichte in Lebensbildern* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2002), p. 207.

Appendix 2: Hospitals and other institutions of the Motherhouse Freiburg up to 1883, as mapped in Figure 3.3. Compiled by Angelika Hansert 2018 from Motherhouse Freiburg archives data.

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
1846	Freiburg	Klinik	Hospital	
1850	Gengenbach	Spital	Hospital	1870
1852	Baden-Baden	Spital	Hospital	
1853	Freiburg	Mutterhaus	Mother-house	
1853	Breisach	Spital	Hospital	
1853	Mannheim-Käfertal	Waisenhaus	Orphanage	
1853	Freiburg	(Mäd.)Waisenhaus	Orphanage	
1853	Waldkirch	Spital	Hospital	
1853	Karlsruhe	Vinzentiushaus	Hospital	1857
1853	Überlingen	Spital	Hospital	1866/7
1854	Freiburg	Heilig-Geist-Spital	Hospital	
1854	Offenburg	Spital	Hospital	
1856	Offenburg	Waisenhaus	Orphanage	1874
1857	Freiburg	Konvikt	Household managem.	1874
1857	Freiburg	Knabenseminar	Household managem.	1874
1857	Bonndorf	Spital	Hospital	
1857	Umkirch	(St Josephshaus)	Rescue h.	
1857	Baden-Lichtental	Schafberg	Hospital	
1858	Bruchsal	Hospital	Hospital	
1858	Karlsruhe	Bürgerspital	Hospital	1872
1859	Meßkirch	Spital	Hospital	1875
1859	Waldshut	Spital	Hospital	
1859	Villingen	Spital	Hospital	
1859	Konstanz	Spital	Hospital	
1859	Pfullendorf	Spital	Hospital	
1860	Heidelberg	Kath. Spital (Anna-spital)	Hospital	1877
1860	Triberg	Spital	Hospital	
1860	Bad Säckingen	Menage	Hostel/soup kitchen	
1860	Meersburg	Spital	Hospital	

Appendix 2 continued (Hospitals and other institutions of the Motherhouse Freiburg up to 1883

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
1862	Radolfzell	Spital	Hospital	
1863	Hüfingen	Spital	Hospital	
1864	Heiligenberg	Spital	Hospital	
1864	Ladenburg	Waisenhaus	Orphanage	1874
1864	Tauberbischofsheim	Spital	Hospital	
1865	Hüfingen	Krankenhaus	Hospital	
1867	Bräunlingen	Spital	Hospital	
1867	Staufen	Spital	Hospital	
1867/1877	Weiterdingen	Discolorium	Household managem.	
1870	Freiburg, Marienhaus	Marienhaus	Hostel	
1871	Triberg	Eisenbahnlazarett	Hospital	
1871	Freiburg	Maria Hilf	Hostel	
1872	Freiburg	St. Joseph (Filiale)	Hospital	
1872	Geisingen	Kreispflegeheim	Hospital	
1873	Breisach	St. Vinzenz	Orphanage <i>et al.</i>	1875
1873	Stühlingen	Lorettokrankenhaus	Hospital	
1874	Freiburg	Former Knabenseminar	Household managem.	1881
1874	Freiburg	Former Konvikt	Household managem.	1880s
1874	St. Peter	Priesterseminar	Household managem.	
1875	Buchen	Spital	Hospital	
1876	Vöhrenbach	Spital	Hospital	
1877	Endingen	Spital	Hospital	
1877	Blumenfeld	Spital	Hospital	
1877	Heidelberg	Privatklinik Chelius	Hospital	
1878	Baden-Baden	Annaberg	Hospital	
1879	Freiburg	Volksküche	Soup kitchen	

Appendix 2 continued (Hospitals and other institutions up to 1883)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
1880	Tauberischofsheim	Privatpflege	Private nursing <i>et al.</i>	
1881	Heidelberg	Marienhaus	Hostel	
1881	Konstanz	Marienhaus	Hostel	
1881	Rastatt	Krankenhaus	Hospital	
1881	Engen	Spital	Hospital	
1881	Freiburg	Studienpensionat Schanzenbach	Household managem.	
1882	Donaueschingen	Karolinenstift (only in winter)	Household managem.	
1882	Triberg	Vereinshaus	Private nursing <i>et al.</i>	
1882	Sasbach	Heimschule Lender	Household managem.	

Appendix 3:

Branch houses of the Motherhouse from 1883 to 1945, as mapped in Figure 3.4, sorted according to region from north to south. Compiled by Angelika Hansert 2018 from Motherhouse Freiburg archives data.

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Odenwald- Tauber			
1884	Tauberbischofs- heim	Gymnasialkonvikt	household managem.	
1886	Lauda	Spital	hospital	
1888	Walldürn	Spital	hospital	
1890	Mudau	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1894	Stein a.K.	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1896	Ilmspan	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1907
1897	Eberbach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1898	Külsheim	Marienhau	private nursing	
1899	Grünsfeld	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1905	Distelhausen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1913	Höpfingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1919	Hochhausen a.d.T.	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1930
1925/26	Neckarelz	Maria Trost	recreation home <i>et al.</i>	
1927	Tauberbischofs- heim	Kreiswinterschule	household managem.	

Appendix 3 continued (branch houses 1883 to 1945)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Odenwald- Tauber			
1935	Lohrbach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1935	Schloßau	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1936	Krensheim	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1938	Dittigheim	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1940	Rippberg	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	

	Region Unterer Neckar			
1885	Heidelberg	Theresienheim	hostel	
1885	Mannheim- Käfertal	Spital	hospital	
1889	Mannheim	Gesellenhaus/Kol- pinghaus	household managem.	1936
1898	Eichtersheim	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1903	Balzfeld	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1908	Mannheim- Waldhof	Franziskushaus	private nursing	
1908	Mannheim- Waldhof	Spiegelfabrik	private nursing/nursing home	
1909	Heidelberg	St. Paulusheim	hospital	1937
1912	Mannheim	Laurentianum	hostel	
1915	Mannheim- Käfertal	Vinzentiushaus	private nursing	
1917	Heidelberg	St. Antoniusheim	orphanage	
1922	Neckargemünd	Genesungsheim	hospital	1933

Appendix 3 continued (branch houses 1883 to 1945)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Mittlerer Oberrhein			
1886	Sinzheim	St. Vinzenz	orphanage <i>et al.</i>	1935
1887	Rastatt	Kindergarten	childcare	
1888	Ettlingen	St. Vinzentiushaus	private nursing	
1890	Bad Rotenfels	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1890	Kuppenheim	Spital	hospital	
1891	Bruchsal	Private Studienanstalt	household managem.	1904
1891	Rastatt	St. Josefshaus	nursing home/hostel	
1891	Weisenbach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1892	Muggensturm	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1892	Ubstadt	Waisenhaus (from 1895)	private nursing/orphanage	
1893	Karlsruhe	St. Franziskushaus	hostel <i>et al.</i>	
1898	Rastatt	Gymnasialkonvikt	household managem.	
1901	Karlsruhe	Marian. Mädchenschutz	hostel <i>et al.</i>	1909
1902	Durlach	Christkönigshaus	private nursing	
1904	Karlsruhe	St. Annahaus	hostel <i>et al.</i>	
1905	Baden-Baden	Augenklinik	hospital	1906
1910	Ettlingen	St. Elisabeth	private nursing	
1918	Bruchsal	St. Augustinusheim	household managem.	1918
1920	Pforzheim	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1922	Karlsruhe	St. Bonifatiushaus	private nursing	
1931	Karlsruhe	St. Angela	private nursing <i>et al.</i>	
1934	Bischweier	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1934	Ettlingen	Spinnerei	private nursing	
1936	Baden-Oos	Landgut Tanfani	recreation home	

Appendix 3 continued (branch houses 1883 to 1945)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Ortenau			
1883	Nußbach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1885	Sasbachwalden	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1886	Niederschopfheim	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1887	Hofweier (2nd: 1904)	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1894
1888	Oberkirch	St. Gebhard	orphanage	
1889	Schutterwald	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1897	Oberkirch	Armenhaus/Pfründner- haus	nursing home	1939
1902	Bad Peterstal	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1903	Offenburg	Marienhaus	hostel	
1912	Offenburg	Krankenhaus	hospital	
1916	Lahr	Volksküche	soup kitchen	1934
1917	Offenburg	Volksküche	soup kitchen	
1919	Bad Peterstal	Marienbad	recreation home	
1921	Offenburg	Kinderheim	nursing/childcare	1941
1924	Haslach	Hansjakobhaus	recreation home	
1925	Bad Rippoldsau	Klösterle/ Haus St. Vinzenz	recreation home	
1926	Lahr	Elisabethheim	orphanage	1933
1934	Lahr	St. Marienheim	nursing home/ childcare	
1944	Mühlenbach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	

Appendix 3 continued (branch houses 1883 to 1945)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald			
1884	Kirchzarten	Hospital for train track builders	hospital	1887
1885	Elzach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1885	Freiburg-Wiehre	Volksküche II	soup kitchen	
1885	Löffingen	Spital	hospital	
1886	Freiburg	St. Josefskrankenhaus	hospital	
1886	Waldkirch	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1887	Waldkirch	Pension St. Margaret	hospital	
1888	Glottertal	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1888	Wyhl	Spital	hospital	
1889	Neuenburg a.Rh.	Spital	hospital	
1890	Lenzkirch	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1890	Schliengen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1892	Freiburg-Günterstal	Krippenanstalt	childcare	
1892	St. Peter	St. Josefshaus	nursing home/ private nursing	
1893	Heitersheim	Bethania of the Good Shepherd	reformatory	
1894	Freiburg	Kindergarten v. Elisabethverein	childcare	
1896	Lenzkirch	Krankenhaus	hospital	
1897	Freiburg	Kartause	nursing home	
1898	Freiburg	Schillerhalle	hostel	
1898	Freiburg	Kath. Lehrlingsheim	household managem.	1920
1900	Freiburg	Nazareth	childcare/ sewing school	
1900	Freiburg-Wiehre	St. Raphael	childcare	1909

Appendix 3 continued (branch houses 1883 to 1945)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Breisgau-	Hochschwarzwald		
1900	Müllheim	Vinzentiushaus	private nursing	
1900	Rötenbach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1902	Riegel	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1903	Freiburg	St. Carolushaus	nursing home/ hostel	
1904	Freiburg	St. Annastift	hostel <i>et al.</i>	
1905	Freiburg	Kindersolbadstation	nursing	1912
1906	Freiburg	Kindergarten Flinsch	childcare	
1908	Löffingen	Kinderschule	private nursing	
1908	Müllheim	Versorgungskrankenhaus	hospital	1931?
1911	Freiburg	Poliklinik	hospital	
1911	Heitersheim	St. Ludwig	nursing home	
1913	Freiburg-Zähringen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1913	Neuershausen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1914	Freiburg	Krüppelheim	hospital/child-care	
1915	Elzach	Krankenhaus	hospital	
1921	Freiburg	Mensa	soup kitchen	1934/37
1922	Freiburg	Hilda-Kinderklinik	hospital	
1922	Freiburg	Hebsack	nursing home	1942
1922	Freiburg	Hautklinik	hospital	
1924	Freiburg	Weihbischofl. Palais	household managem.	
1924	Waltershofen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1931	Freiburg	Notburgaheim	hostel	
1934	Buchheim Freiburg	b. Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1939	Heuweiler	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1944	Yach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	

Appendix 3 continued (branch houses 1883 to 1945)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Hochrhein			
1883	Tiengen	Spital	hospital	
1886	Bad Säckingen	Marienhaus	hostel <i>et al.</i>	
1888	Lörrach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1892	Dogern-Albbruck	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1892	Zell i.W.	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1894	Unteralpfen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1895	Lörrach-Stetten	St. Vinzentiushaus	private nursing	
1899	Birndorf	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1899	St. Blasien	Krankenhaus	hospital	
1900	Beuggen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1901
1900	Wyhlen	Himmelspforte	private nursing <i>et al.</i>	1921
1902	Brombach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1916
1903	Bernau	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1904	Bonndorf	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1906	Jestetten	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1929
1909	Waldshut	Mädchenheim/ Marienhaus	household managem. <i>et al.</i>	
1913	Lörrach	Privatkrankenhaus	hospital	
1913	Tiengen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1913	Unterlauchringen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1929	Lörrach	St. Elisabethenkrankenhaus	hospital	

Appendix 3 continued (branch houses 1883 to 1945)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Schwarzwald-Baar			
1884	Möhringen	Spital	hospital	
1885	Bräunlingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1888	Geisingen	Krankenhaus	hospital	
1903	Schönwald	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1911	Kirchen-Hausen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1912	Villingen	Friedrich-krankenhaus	hospital	

	Region Bodensee			
1883	Konstanz	Armenhaus	(poor house)	
1884	Konstanz	Studienpens. Schober/Konradhaus	household managem.	1901
1884	Mühlhausen-Ehingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1907
1885	Weiterdingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1887	Mimmenhausen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1888	Hagnau	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1888	Volkertshausen	Nazareth	private nursing	
1890	Eigeltingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1907
1890	Immenstaad	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1891	Überlingen	Kindergarten	childcare	
1895	Wespach (Salem-Neufrach)	Armenhaus	nursing home	

Appendix 3 continued (branch houses 1883 to 1945)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Bodensee			
1896	Hilzingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1897	Bermatingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1897	Volkertshausen	Mädchenheim ten Brink	household managem.	1939
1899	Engen	Mädchenheim	household managem.	1926
1900	Konstanz	Augenklinik/ Altersheim II	hospital/ nursing home	
1906	Radolfzell	Krankenhaus	hospital	
1907	Konstanz	Speisehalle	soup kitchen	1937
1910	Stetten b. Engen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1913	Tengen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1918	Neufrach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1925	Duchtlingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1929	Engen	Vereinshaus	private nursing	
1934	Aach	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1938	Betenbrunn	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	

	Region Hohenzollern-Meißkirch			
1889	Gammertingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1894	Sigmaringen	St. Fidelishaus	household managem.	
1896	Empfingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1896	Meißkirch	Krankenhaus	hospital	
1898	Trochtelfingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1899	Stetten a.k.M.	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1907

Appendix 3 continued (branch houses 1883 to 1945)

Start	Location	Name of institution	Type	End
	Region Hohenzollern-Messkirch			
1901	Burladingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1901	Gruol	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1902	Bisingen	Mädchenheim	household managem.	
1903/08	Beuron	St. Bernhard	household managem.	1926
1904	Owingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1906	Benzingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1906	Veringenstadt	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1908	Dettingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1920
1908	Stetten u. Holstein	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1911	Feldhausen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1911	Trillfingen	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1912	Sigmaringendorf	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	1943?
1914	Beuron	St. Gregoriushaus	household managem.	
1920	Rohrdorf	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1922	Steinhilben	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1925	Sauldorf	Schwesternhaus	private nursing	
1926	Beuron	Maria Trost	retreat house	
1940	Beuron	Klosterküche	kitchen	

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Bad Säckingen, Menage/St. Marienhaus

Bad Säckingen, Pfründnerhaus St. Josef

Baden-Baden, Altersheim

Baden-Baden, Augenklinik

Baden-Baden, Krankenhaus

Baden-Lichtental, Schafberg

Balzfeld, Schwesternhaus

Benzingen, Schwesternhaus

Bermatingen, Schwesternhaus

Bernau, Schwesternhaus
Betenbrunn, Schwesternhaus
Beuggen, Schwesternhaus
Beuron, Maria Trost
Beuron, St. Gregoriushaus
Birndorf, Schwesternhaus
Bischweier, Schwesternhaus
Bisingen, Mädchenheim
Blumenfeld, Kreisverpflegungsanstalt
Bonndorf, Krankenhaus
Bonndorf, Privatkrankenpflege
Breisach, Krankenhaus
Brombach, Schwesternhaus
Bruchsal, Krankenhaus
Bruchsal, St. Augustinusheim
Bruchsal, Studienanstalt
Buchen, Krankenhaus
Buchheim (FR), Schwesternhaus
Burladingen, Schwesternhaus
Dettingen, Schwesternhaus
Distelhausen, Schwesternhaus
Dogern, Schwesternhaus
Donaueschingen, Karolinenstift
Duchtlingen, Schwesternhaus
Durlach, St. Josefshaus/Christkönigshaus
Eberbach, Schwesternhaus
Eichtersheim, Schwesternhaus
Eigeltingen, Schwesternhaus
Elzach, Krankenhaus St. Elisabeth
Empfingen, Schwesternhaus
Endingen, Schwesternhaus

Engen, Krankenhaus
Engen, Vereinshaus
Ettlingen, Krankenhaus
Ettlingen, St. Elisabeth
Ettlingen, St. Vinzentiushaus
Feldhausen, Schwesternhaus
Freiburg, Erzbischöfliches Studienheim
Freiburg, Hautklinik
Freiburg, Hebsack
Freiburg, Heilig-Geist-Spital
Freiburg, Hilda-Kinderklinik
Freiburg, Kartaus
Freiburg, Katholisches Lehrlingsheim
Freiburg, Kindersolbadstation
Freiburg, Klinik
Freiburg, Krüppelheim
Freiburg, Maria Hilf/Rislersche Anstalt
Freiburg, Mensa
Freiburg, Missionsinstitut
Freiburg, Pension im Konvikt
Freiburg, Theologisches Konvikt
Freiburg, St. Agnes
Freiburg, St. Annastift
Freiburg, St. Josefskrankenhaus
Freiburg, St. Marienhaus
Freiburg, Städtische Poliklinik
Freiburg, verschiedene aufgehobene Häuser
Freiburg, Volksküchen
Freiburg-Günterstal, Kinderheim
Gammertingen, Schwesternhaus
Geisingen, Krankenhaus

Geisingen, Kreispflegeheim
Gengenbach, Spital
Grünsfeld, Schwesternhaus
Gruol, Schwesternhaus
Hagnau, Schwesternhaus
Heidelberg, Katholisches Spital
Heidelberg, St. Antoniusheim
Heidelberg, St. Marienhaus
Heidelberg, St. Josefskrankenhaus
Heiligenberg, Spital/Krankenhaus
Heitersheim, Bethania
Heuweiler, Schwesternhaus
Hilzingen, Schwesternhaus
Höpfingen, Schwesternhaus
Hofweier, Schwesternhaus
Hüfingen, Krankenhaus
Hüfingen, Fürstliches Landesspital
Ilmspan, Schwesternhaus
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Konstanz, Krankenhaus
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Lahr, Volksküche/St. Elisabethheim/St. Marienheim
Lauda, Krankenhaus
Lenzkirch, Krankenhaus
Lenzkirch, Schwesternhaus
Liel, Schwesternhaus
Löffingen, Kinderschule
Löffingen, Krankenhaus
Lörrach, Privatpflege
Mannheim, Gesellenhaus
Mannheim, Laurentianum
Mannheim, Theresienheim
Mannheim, Theresienkrankenhaus
Mannheim-Käfertal, Kinderheim St. Josef
Mannheim-Käfertal, Privatpflege
Mannheim-Waldhof, Gartenstadt
Meersburg, Krankenhaus
Messkirch, Altersheim
Messkirch, Krankenhaus
Messkirch, Spital
Mimmenhausen, Schwesternhaus
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Müllheim, Schwesternhaus
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Neckarelz, Exerzitienhaus Maria Trost
Neuenburg, Spital
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