

I'm unable to say what year or day precisely. It was in the years around 1968 in a household of academics in Göttingen, a home full of children, I know that, and my parents told me, told us, that we had had a very courageous great aunt who followed her guiding inner principles even though it cost her her life in the end. And I myself was named for her and that is why I noted the appearance of a book about her with particular interest. It was first available in 1966 when I was not yet able to read, but I know that I read it later, the same passages capturing my attention again and again each time. I remember that, too. And it was by Irmgard von der Lühe; Elisabeth von Thadden, *A Fate of Our Times* recounted this woman's entire life, and two situations in particular captured my attention: The one situation in prison, her bound hands, Berlin bombed, and she had to persevere with bound hands until she was led to her execution in the end. I was unable to – as a child I was hardly able to tear myself away from this image and utter horror accompanied this image. But this was accompanied by quite another experience, which I can remember just as precisely: This book related that my great aunt lastly wrote: "Praise the Lord, O my soul", the words from the 103rd Psalm, on the border of her final letter. And, thus, I knew that another voice and language had been in her there, which was stronger than those bound hands. That was already a great comfort as a child, even though I found both [situations] far too grave and I therefore basically continued looking for them in order to be able to transform this existential dimension of both passages into better understanding. And I did that by taking more and more interest in this teacher's life, her desire to follow a genuinely feminine and Christian path by means of progressive education. I found the distinction from the militaristic German Prussian school, on the one hand, and the type of school such as Kurt Hahn introduced with Salem, on the other hand, highly interesting. I found her concern with social issues just as interesting because, inspired by social democracy, Elisabeth von Thadden saw the issue of undernourished children, neglect in the big city, as a commission for Christians to care for them, to help them to learn so early, already at the start of the century. And – third, I naturally found it very challenging and helpful,

however, that the National Socialists' Jewish policy made this admittedly conservative, a German National conservative, woman grasp that a decent person cannot just look on, her horror at the pogrom in '38 being an example, and that she followed her own upright path by accepting Jewish pupils, by maintaining friendships with Jews as well as later even assisting Jews who were being persecuted. That was important to know for me, who, myself being a child of the '80s, naturally would have preferred to have had an upright Democrat and I came to appreciate all the more that a free and autonomous person from very different circumstances can find a shrewd and steadfast path. And, to this day, this is for me the growth in awareness of the Christian resistance about which I myself am quite pleased. Quite rightly, people concentrated for a very long time on Christians' opportunism under National Socialism; people had to be made aware of the tiny minority involved in the Confessing Church or in the resistance in the first place. But to this day, and I think this is also very strongly inspired by 1989 and the new vital awareness of the capability for resistance in the East German churches, there is an awareness of how different Christian conduct beyond solely political resistance, as we see represented differently by Moltke or by Bonhoeffer, how different the conduct of people motivated by Christian faith can be and can thus provide enduring references for us today for a decent, plausible and perhaps even tranquil human life. And to this day this is also represented for me in the notation "Praise the Lord, O my soul", even though the end of life has actually already arrived.