



Scholl Institute of Bioethics

Bioethics Review

The Scholl Institute of Bioethics is a non-profit, Judeo-Christian organization that addresses bioethical issues including euthanasia, physician assisted suicide, the withholding of food and water from non-dying patients, brain death, organ transplantation, genetic engineering, and the rights of disabled or mentally ill patients.

Scholl Institute of Bioethics - A Namesake: A NOBLE TREASON - The Story of Sophie Scholl & The White Rose Revolt Against Hitler by Richard Hanser

OVERVIEW

To quote this documentary: "Sophie Scholl and her brother Hans were handsome bright university students in 1942 Germany. As members of the Hitler Youth, they had once been enthusiastic supporters of the German renewal promised by National Socialism. But as their realization of Nazi barbarism grew, so did their moral outrage.

Hans and Sophie formed a small group of like-minded friends, which initially included two medical students, a student of philosophy, and a fifty-year-old professor. They self-identified as Christians from various traditions-Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox-and they called themselves the White Rose. In a darkened studio lent them by an artist, they printed eloquent anti-Nazi leaflets, which they ingeniously spread throughout Germany.

A Noble Treason tells the true story of this underground group at the University of Munich that instigated, organized, and carried out the first overt resistance to Hitler's regime. What gives *A Noble Treason* its unforgettable and inspiring quality is the personality, character, and courage of the White Rose members, as they resisted the pull of wartime patriotism and overcame their fear of the terrible price they would pay for their dissidence.

The White Rose story is one of faith-inspired idealism despite its bloody--and seemingly final--destruction by the state."

THE YOUTH

When Hitler came to power, 1/30/33, the impact of the New Order was felt first in the schools. National Socialism strove to be the party of the youth. "Whoever has the youth has the future," said Adolf Hitler. There were swastika flags in every classroom and on the walls were portraits of the Fuhrer. School libraries were cleansed of subversive literature. The students were to report any teacher who didn't follow the Nazi ideas. But

this wasn't enough to win over the rising generation. The Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth) was created immediately upon Hitler's control. The training and indoctrination was to produce as Hitler said, "A youth that will be slim and lithe, fast as greyhounds, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel". The young responded to this ideal with joy and dedication. Even Hans was taken in at first when told that he was a member of the master race and as a natural leader became the leader of his troop of Hitler Youth. One of their marching songs even said, "The old must perish, The weak must decay." Everything was very disciplined. Hans's sisters also joined the girls' group. Hitler wrote of the education of girls, "The one goal always to be kept in mind when educating girls is that someday they are to be mothers." Sophie also became a leader and enjoyed the many outdoor challenges. The youth movement was called "the rejection of an outmoded past and the shaping of something new."

Once a year over two hundred thousand Brownshirts of all ages met at Nuremberg to celebrate the annual Party Day. Hans was invited to carry the flag from his area. To quote, "A kind of contagious delirium was generated in which personal identity was absorbed into the sheer mass of brown humanity that pressed in on all sides without remission." But Hans didn't go home elated. There was too much conformity for his liking.

When his group of young boys designed their own flag instead of the swastika flag, it was taken down. Hans and Sophie were very disappointed in the art Hitler chose. They liked a show labeled "Degenerative Art". Hans was forbidden to read his favorite author, Stefan Zweig because he was Jewish. As his older sister explained, "What were they making of our Fatherland? Not a place where a new and happy life could flourish for everyone, as they had promised. No., instead they imposed one clamp after the other on our country until, gradually, all of us were sitting in a huge jail cell, prisoners."

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All freedom was gone as the Nazi Party had stationed on every block, in every apartment house a licensed snoop with the Secret State Police behind them. As Hitler said: "We must put a stop to the idea that it is part of everybody's civil rights to say, write, publish, or paint whatever he pleases. Everyone must know that if he raises his hand to strike at the state, then certain death will be his lot."

FAMILY IMPORTANCE

The father, Robert Scholl, although growing up in a backward area, was encouraged to acquire higher education. He was a wonderful example. The family often talked politics and he listened to a forbidden radio station. As he would say, "Now if you'll excuse me, I'll go and earn a jail sentence." He did end up serving jail sentences. His favorite saying was from Goethe, "Despite all the powers, maintain yourself!" His children often quoted him. Their mother encouraged them to read the Bible. Their faith was very important to them and upheld them until the end.

Both Hans and Sophie had a normal youth with lots of companionship, camping and enjoying the outdoors.

THE SYSTEM

Every German, male or female, had to enter the National Labor Service at the age of nineteen and spend six months on a construction project or a farm. After that came military service. Hans became part of the cavalry but when there was a crack down he, his sisters and brother were put in jail and questioned because they had quit the Hitler Youth. Their home was searched. This just strengthened their dislike for National Socialism. He and thousands of Germans believed that Hitler was an alien upstart whose domination of their country was a temporary aberration of history. The story of Adolf Hitler, someone would say afterward, was the story of how he was underestimated.

THE WAR

In 1939, Hitler had been in power for six years. He took Austria without a bullet, he had a pact with Russia and Italy and now he wanted Poland - the war started 9/1/39. He went from Poland to the rest of Europe.

ONE CHURCH PASTOR SPEAKS OUT

In Munster everyone was amazed when the Bishop spoke out against the euthanasia program for "useless" eaters - those with handicaps or who were retarded. He was not persecuted because the people said the war effort in that region would stop if he was punished. His sermons were duplicated and the Scholls received copies. Hans was heard to say that one should have a duplicating machine.

THE WAR CONTINUES

Czechoslovakia was ceded to Hitler. Hans came back from being a medic in France and felt he must do something to stop this madness and retain one's honor as a man and one's self-respect as a German. To quote a friend, "An idea achieves its full value and significance only when it is converted into reality by action." Hans was acquiring several friends of like-

mind and they felt they had to do something so the world would know not all Germans were barbarians.

SOPHIE COMES TO MUNICH TO THE UNIVERSITY

The university professors were told, "From now on it will not be your job to determine whether something is true or not, but only whether it is in the spirit of the National Socialist revolution." Books were burned and the few professors who did speak out had to speak in code.

THE WHITE ROSE PUBLISHES LEAFLETS - 1942

Hans and his friends met and decided to publish the White Rose leaflets. (Sophie didn't know who published them until later and then she joined them.) They felt that the end of Nazism was near, that information could be spread from person to person and "a wave of unrest" would sweep the land. The leaflets told about the atrocities in Russia by Hitler's troops, the massacre of Jews, the outrages perpetrated on the occupied peoples. Why were they written? Because it is necessary that everyone should be aware of his guilt in having tolerated a government that had committed such crimes. These students felt as martyred

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer felt, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil; God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." (In America we still have the right to speak and act. Yet, how many are silent and inactive about the life issues?)

Four leaflets were written by that summer. They appeared everywhere. Their purpose was, "To call out the truth as clearly and audibly as possible into the German night." Another purpose was to show that not all was well, that underneath the conformity were subversive thoughts. At this time dissidents were beheaded.

Meanwhile at the Scholls' home, their father was put in jail, their mother was badly shaken-up and one of Sophie's dearest friends was killed at war. They had to always watch every word they uttered. In November 1942 Hans came back from the Eastern front, their father got out of jail and Hans and Sophie went back to the university and continued where they had left off. Now Hans had greater plans to reach all the universities and network them together.

In a speech at the university, one of Hitler's men said that the girls at the school should each have a child and his men would help. This shocked the students. One of the professors, who was on their side, saw the totalitarianism of Adolf Hitler on the Right merging with the totalitarianism of Josef Stalin on the Left into one brutalized and inhuman system. He saw nothing to choose between.

In January 1943 the fifth leaflet was spread all over Munich and to seven targeted towns. The Nazi leaders were very worried. The students again misread events and the mood of the German masses, who didn't rebel but followed the Fuhrer long after the dissidents were gone. The sixth leaflet was distributed at the University and both Hans and Sophie were arrested distributing them.

Hans and Sophie Scholl were beheaded on 2/22/1943.