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Antisemitism and Catholicism in the Interwar Period

The Jesuits in Austria, 1918–1938

Abstract

The paper examines the attitudes of the Austrian Jesuits to antisemitism in the interwar period. This question is highly relevant for the study of antisemitism and the Holocaust, because of the strong influence of Catholicism within Austrian society and the prominent role played by Austrians in the Holocaust. The scientific literature has argued that the Austrian context was of central importance to the formation of both antisemitic and anti-antisemitic views among Catholics. However, the dynamics and internal nuances within high ecclesiastical circles have remained understudied. The present research indicates the permanence of an entrenched anti-Jewish tradition as well as the start of a novel reconsideration of this very tradition within the Jesuit Order in Austria. By analyzing tensions in the positions of the Austrian Jesuits, this research contributes to a better understanding of the continuity and rupture in antisemitism in Austria in the period immediately prior to the Holocaust.

This paper addresses the attitudes of the Austrian Jesuits to antisemitism in the interwar period. This problem is highly relevant for the history of both the Roman Catholic Church and Austria, as well as for the history of antisemitism and the Holocaust, because of the significance of Austrian politics for the Church, because of the strong influence of Catholicism within Austrian society and politics, and because of the prominent role played by Austrians in the Holocaust. The positions of the Austrian Jesuits towards antisemitism in the interwar period must be interpreted within the broader perspective of the relations of the Catholic Church to racism and fascism. The literature on these topics, which has expanded after the opening in 2006 of the Vatican archives of the pontificate of Pius XI (1916–1939), has opened a window on the complex, ambiguous and far from uniform spectre of positions contained under the auspices of Catholicism.¹

No other place better than Austria exemplifies the complexity of the factors influencing the Catholics' positions towards Jews and the ambiguity of the resulting attitudes. In the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century, it has been argued, antisemitism was stronger in Austria than anywhere else in Western and Central Europe. Amongst the reasons for this primacy, a particular combination of archaic socio-economic attitudes, cultural conservatism and modern mass political agitation has been cited.² Vienna, with its large, influential Jewish population and its

1 For a recent overview of some of the current debates, see e.g. Robert A. Ventresca, War without End: The Popes and the Jews between Polemic and History, in: *Harvard Theological Review*, 105 (October 2012) 4, 466–490.

2 Peter Pulzer, The Tradition of Austrian Antisemitism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, in: *Patterns of Prejudice* 27 (1993) 1, 31–46.

position between Western and Eastern Europe, had a special place in the picture.³ As the eminent historian of antisemitism, Peter Pulzer, has put it: “If any city in the world may claim to be the cradle of modern political antisemitism it is Vienna.”⁴ If this is true, it is probably even more certain that in the period from the mid-nineteenth century until the early twentieth century Austria was among the Catholic Church’s most important testing grounds for the modern political exploitation of antisemitism as a means of popular mobilisation.⁵ This is how the Austrian correspondent explained the situation in Hungary and Austria for a broader Catholic audience in the influential Roman Jesuit journal, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, in 1884:

“[...] the antisemitic citizen and worker, who before would not know either of mass or preaches or sacraments, and shunned the priest like the plague, now, out of hatred to Jews, attends the Church, shows the Catholic priest his veneration, willingly listens to his admonitions, and ends by becoming a good Christian and caring that his sons are brought up religiously.”⁶

Pulzer has underlined Austria’s and especially Vienna’s homegrown, Catholic, demagogic antisemitic tradition. The *volksrednerische Wiener Stil*, the popular Vienna style, can be traced back to Hans Ulrich Megerle, better known as Abraham a Sancta Clara, who preached against the Jews at the time of the Ottoman wars in the seventeenth century. In the nineteenth century, its heirs included Sebastian Brunner, August Rohling, Josef Deckert, and the Jesuits Heinrich Abel (1843–1926) and Viktor Kolb (1856–1928), who carried the tradition into the twentieth century. It was an anti-intellectual way of preaching and speaking that proved successful in gaining the commercial middle classes and the peasants for the Church throughout the social battles against liberals and social democrats in the late nineteenth century.⁷

The Catholic teaching against the Jews had thus formed into a particular culture in Austria, characterised by popular mobilisation, extreme diffusion, and a strong socio-economic element.⁸ In a sense, during the late nineteenth century, Catholicism

3 Bruce F. Pauley, Politischer Antisemitismus im Wien der Zwischenkriegszeit, in: Gerhard Botz/Ivar Oxaal/Michael Pollak (eds.), Eine zerstörte Kultur: Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus in Wien seit dem 19. Jahrhundert, Buchloe 1990, 221-246; Bruce F. Pauley, German and Austrian Antisemitism in the Interwar Years: Which was the More Extreme?, in: Ingrid Böhler and Rolf Steininger (eds.), Österreichischer Zeitgeschichtetag 1993. 24. bis 27. Mai 1993 in Innsbruck, Innsbruck/Vienna 1995, 272-278.

4 Peter Pulzer, The Development of Political Antisemitism in Austria, in: Josef Fraenkel (ed.), The Jews of Austria; Essays on their Life, History and Destruction, London 1967, 429-443.

5 Giovanni Miccoli, Santa Sede, questione ebraica e antisemitismo fra Otto e Novecento [The Holy See, the Jewish Question and Antisemitism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries] in: Corrado Vivanti (ed.), Storia d’Italia, Gli ebrei in Italia, II Dall’emancipazione a oggi [History of Italy, The Jews in Italy, II From Emancipation until Today], Turin 1997, 1369-1574; Enzo Collotti, Antisemitismo e legislazione antiebraica in Austria [Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Legislation in Austria], in: La legislazione antiebraica in Italia e in Europa. Atti del convegno nel cinquantenario delle leggi razziali [The Anti-Jewish Legislation in Italy and Europe. Proceedings of the Conference on the Occasion of Fiftieth Anniversary of the Racial Laws (Rome, November 17-18, 1988)], Rome 1989, 293-318.

6 Unnamed correspondent, Cose Straniere, Austria (Nostra Corrispondenza) 3. Notizie d’Ungheria. La legge sui matrimonii fra cristiani ed ebrei andata in fumo. L’opposizione moderata e il partito conservatore. La nuova legge sulle arti e mestieri. L’antisemitismo [Foreign Affairs, Austria (Our Correspondent) 3. Hungarian News. The Law on Marriages between Christians and Jews Went up in Smoke. The Moderate Opposition and the Conservative Party. The New Law on Arts and Crafts. Antisemitism, in: La Civiltà Cattolica 2 (1884), 639-640.

7 Peter Pulzer, The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria, New York 1964; Pulzer, The Development of Political Antisemitism in Austria; Pulzer, The Tradition of Austrian Antisemitism; Peter Pulzer, Spezifische Momente und Spielarten des österreichischen und des Wiener Antisemitismus, in: Botz/Oxaal/Pollak (eds.), Eine zerstörte Kultur, 121-140.

8 Pulzer, Spezifische Momente; Peter Eppel, Zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz: Die Haltung der Zeitschrift “Schönere Zukunft” zum Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland 1934–1938, Vienna/Cologne/Graz 1980; Nina Scholz/Heiko Heinisch, Alles werden sich die Christen nicht gefallen lassen. Wiener Pfarrer und die Juden in der Zwischenkriegszeit, Vienna 2001.

had become synonymous with antisemitism in Austria. Maybe it was only in Austria that it was not an abnormal incident when Deckert ended one of his talks with the statement: “Jeder Christ ist ein geborner Antisemit und jeder Jude ein geborner Antichrist. Amen.”⁹ And maybe it was only in Austria that by the 1920s an organisation with the word Christian in its name could be assumed to be antisemitic.¹⁰

The success of the antisemitic Christian Social Party, which won the majority in the Viennese communal elections of the late nineteenth century, divided opinions within the Austrian Catholic Church. It drew support from the lower clergy but was opposed to the Austrian Episcopacy.¹¹ However, despite official complaints from the Austrian bishops, the Vatican decided not to indict the antisemitic line of the party. The Jesuit Cardinal Andreas Steinhuber played a significant role in this decision. His judgment was clear: “To break the force of the Jews, the union of all Christians was necessary. The Holy See cannot enter in merely political questions.”¹²

While the socio-economic dimension of Catholic antisemitism was remarkably strong, nationalism had particularly ambiguous effects in Austria. Austria was about 90 per cent Catholic until after the Second World War.¹³ The Catholic Church had a very strong grip of society through the *Amtskirche*, the important Catholic organizations and associations and the Christian social party.¹⁴ The very construction of the corporate state, the Austrofascist *Ständestaat* from 1934 until the *Anschluss* in 1938 and its ideological basis was presumably very much guided by the Vatican, just as the Vatican’s ideology of a corporate social order expressed in the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* of 1931 was defined in view of its implementation in Austria.¹⁵ However, there was no consensus about what it meant to be a nationalist Austrian or what the Austrian nation state should be like. In the Empire, pan-Germanism had been anti-Catholic and Austrian Catholics had been reluctant concerning German nationalism. With the collapse of the monarchy, the Christian Socials could appear more German without offending other minorities, but the ambivalence remained between allegiance to Habsburgism and pan-Germanism, and this tension acquired new overtones with the emergence of Nazism in Germany.¹⁶

Nazism and Nazi Germany did not have a univocal effect on the attitudes of Austrian Catholics towards antisemitism. Some researchers have even argued that the attitudes of the Catholics were independent from their attitudes towards Nazism. This is supported by the fact that parish presses did not criticise Nazi antisemitism and that individuals and institutions were capable of harbouring both anti-Nazi and

9 Scholz/Heinisch, Alles werden sich die Christen: “Every Christian is a born antisemite and every Jew is a born anti-Christian. Amen.”

10 Scholz/Heinisch, Alles werden sich die Christen; Pulzer, The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria.

11 John W. Boyer, Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848–1897, Chicago 1981, 122–183.

12 Giovanni Miccoli, Santa Sede, questione ebraica e antisemitismo, 1447–1449 [The Holy See, the Jewish Question and Antisemitism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries]; Enzo Collotti, Antisemitismo e legislazione antiebraica in Austria [Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Legislation in Austria].

13 Erika Weinzierl, Zu wenig Gerechte. Österreicher und Judenverfolgung 1948–1945, Graz/Vienna/Cologne 1969.

14 Anton Staudinger, Katholischer Antisemitismus in der Ersten Republik, in: Botz/Oxaal/Pollak (eds.), Eine zerstörte Kultur, 247–270.

15 Rupert Klieber, Quadragesimo anno e lo “Ständestaat” d’Austria Nuova (1934–1938) [‘Quadragesimo anno’ and the ‘Ständestaat’ of the New Austria (1934–1938)], in: Cosimo Semeraro (ed.), La sollecitudine ecclesiale di Pio XI. Alla luce delle nuove fonti archivistiche. Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studio Città del Vaticano, 26–28 febbraio 2009 [Ecclesial Concerns of Pius XI. in the Light of New Archival Sources. Proceedings of the International Study Conference Vatican City, 26–28 February 2009], Vatican City 2010, 347–362.

16 Pulzer, The Development of Political Antisemitism in Austria; Pulzer, The Tradition of Austrian Antisemitism.

antisemitic or pro-Nazi and anti-antisemitic views at the same time. For instance, in 1939 an Austrian Catholic resistance group declared its opposition to Bolshevism, Nazism and the Jews.¹⁷ Other scholars have argued that Catholics in Austria felt an increased need to compete with Nazism in the 1930s and that this competition gave rise to the promotion of a 'Christian antisemitism'.¹⁸ The distinction introduced by circles within the Church between an 'extreme' and regrettable nationalism and antisemitism and a 'permitted' form of antisemitism gained acceptance not only in Austria, but in Germany and Italy as well.¹⁹ If this type of approach may be called competitive in kind, the hypothesis of a more profound symbiosis between Nazism and Catholicism has been advanced in the case of Germany and Austria. This symbiosis or Catholic racist "syndrome" was distinguished by a series of key values: *Volk*, *Blut*, *Reich*, and *Erbsünde*, which constituted a sacralised language common to both Nazism and German Catholicism.²⁰ A fourth category of reaction is that of profound rejection of racism. From having been the cradle of political antisemitism, Vienna, during the *Ständestaat*, with its widespread discrimination and social exclusion of Jews, became the centre of the most radical criticism from a Catholic perspective of antisemitism in Europe. Such counteraction was expressed in a series of journals edited by devout Catholics, but was not diffused by the clerical hierarchy.²¹

Austria in the 1930s thus gave rise to extreme contrasts in Catholic stances to antisemitism. There is little doubt that the majority of the Catholics, including the ecclesiastical hierarchy, were not among those expressing radical rejection of antisemitism. The radical opponents seem to have been rather a quite marginal minority. The following sections will analyse how these differences and tensions were reflected within the Jesuit Order. The Society of Jesus, by tradition closely connected to the Pope, and relatively independent from the hierarchy, represents a learned elite within the Roman Catholic Church which has been very influential politically and ideologically, less through direct political action than through other scholarly and intellectual channels. The analysis is based on comprehensive research of three main sets of Jesuit sources. The first is the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*. Together with the German *Stimmen der Zeit*, it was the most important Jesuit journal, and one of the most important Catholic journals, in the German language. The journal was edited by members of the theological faculty of the University of Innsbruck, which was directed by the Jesuit Order, and it was subject to the authority of the Order Superiors. It was written almost exclusively by Jesuits from the Austrian and German provinces of the Society. The second is the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz S.J.*, a quarterly publication edited in Vienna for internal use by the Austrian Jesuits only. The third set of sources is *Das Archiv der österreichischen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu*.

Compared to some other important Jesuit periodicals, such as the Italian *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the German *Stimmen der Zeit*, and the French *Études*, the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* concentrated on theology and dealt much less with contemporary social and political matters. Observations of immediate relevance to contemporary views on the 'Jewish question' are seldom found in the leading background

17 Scholz and Heinisch, *Alles Werden sich die Christen*.

18 Friedrich Heer, *Gottes erste Liebe. 2000 Jahre Judentum und Christentum; Genesis des österreichischen Katholiken Adolf Hitler*, München 1967; Pulzer, *The Tradition of Austrian Antisemitism*.

19 Giovanni Miccoli, *Santa Sede e Chiesa italiana di fronte alle leggi antiebraiche del 1938* [The Holy See and the Italian Church in the Face of the Anti-Jewish Laws of 1938], in: *Studi storici* 29, (1990) 2, 821-902.

20 John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother. The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965*, Cambridge/London 2012.

21 Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother*.

articles, but rather – and sparsely – in the literary reviews and short notices, i.e. the rubrics *Literaturberichte* and *Kleine Mitteilungen*. Judging from the printed journal alone, it is improbable that the editors of the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* defined strategies with regard to the ‘Jewish question’. The journal shows considerable variation and contradiction both synchronically and diachronically. The only constant characteristic may be the ambiguity, caution and vagueness with which Judaism, race and antisemitism were treated. Nevertheless, the analysis of the twenty years of publications from 1918 to 1938 does point at some trends and developments.

The presence of a local tradition is palpable from 1918 to 1933. Viktor Kolb was praised for his rhetorical skills and Freiherr Karl von Vogelsang, one of the most prominent exponents of nineteenth century Austrian Catholic antisemitism, was lauded as one of the greatest Catholic social thinkers of all times.²² The survival of nineteenth-century Catholic attitudes towards Jews is apparent for instance in an article on demography in which Jews are described as “hypermodern” because of their alleged support of socially corrosive sexual policies.²³ The general vein of the publication in the years following the First World War is firmly anti-liberal and consistent with a dominant conservative Catholic outlook formed through the latter part of the nineteenth century, of which antisemitism seems to have been an almost self-evident part.²⁴

German nationalism does not emerge conspicuously. In 1920 Father Friedrich Klimke praises Ernst Horneffer’s *Erkenntnis die Tragödie des deutschen Volkes* for its “glowing patriotism” (*Vaterlandsliebe*), while warning that the author might have contributed to tearing Christianity out of the German soul “and thereby robbed it of its deepest vitality” (*Lebenskräfte*).²⁵ A very positive review in 1919 of Eberle, the fervent promoter of Austrian pan-German nationalism, and his sociological ideas about the re-Christianisation of society and politics is another indication of what was acceptable to the editors of *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* after the First World War.²⁶

The pressure from modern racist antisemitism elicited sporadic responses in the journal from the beginning of the period analysed here. Franz Krus, in the same breath as he is labelling the Jews as a corrosive, hypermodern “race”, distances himself from the “fanatical antisemites” who concluded that the Jews’ social and moral destructiveness was aimed deliberately against the “*goyim*”. In fact, Krus argues that the Jews were primarily destroying themselves.²⁷ In 1923, the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* replies to criticisms of Saint Ignatius for having been an “almost fanatical friend of the Jews” (*Judenfreund*). In his response, Father Kneller defends Ignatius’ rejection of the “far too exaggerated hatred of Jews” (*Judenhaß*) of the Spaniards of his time. Since the Jews as a people had been “temporarily rejected” (*zeitweise*

22 Karl Pfistermeister, *Ausgewählte Gelegenheitspredigten und Gelegenheitsreden von P. Viktor Kolb S.J.*, Graz 1923, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1924, 131; Rochus Rimml, *Die Gottesbeweise mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die neuesten Ergebnisse der Naturforschung*, von Viktor Kolb S.J., in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1924, 264-265; Josef Biederlack, “Karl von Vogelsang. Zeitwichtige Gedanken aus seinen Schriften. Von A. Lesowsky. 8° (96 S.) Wien 1927, Typograph. Anstalt. S 2.50, geb. S 3,50,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1927, 440.

23 Franz Krus, “Literaturberichte, A. Übersichten. Zur Bevölkerungsfrage,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1918, 392.

24 David Lebovitch Dahl, *Normalization of Antisemitism, 1880–1900: The Case of a Jesuit Community in Rome*, in: *Patterns of Prejudice*, 48 (2014) 1, 46–66.

25 Friedrich Klimke, *Literaturberichte, A. Übersichten, Aus Weltanschauung, Religion und Philosophie, I. Weltanschauung und Religion*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1920, 279.

26 Author unknown, *Kleine Mitteilungen* 2, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1919, 191.

27 Franz Krus, “Literaturberichte, A. Übersichten. Zur Bevölkerungsfrage,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1918, 392.

verstoßen), individual converts had so much more reason to be grateful for being saved from the general shipwreck, and to obliterate the “blemish of their descent” (*Makel der Abstammung*) with particular eagerness. Kneller concludes that Ignatius’ thoughts about the New Christians shows that he had “overcome the national pride of the Spaniards and the pride of the nobility. He used the connection to the Saviour [*Weltheiland*] as the measure in everything.”²⁸ Kneller, in other words, defending the founder of the Order against attacks for having been too friendly towards the Jews, distanced himself from “exaggerated” antisemitism and nationalism while, under the pressure of the attacks, informed by racism, he recognised the permanence of a *Makel der Abstammung* in converts to Christianity.

After Hitler’s rise to power in Germany in January 1933 and the July Putsch in Austria in 1934, the editors’ defence of Church doctrine against “fanatical” or “exaggerated” antisemites intensified. This is evident in three reviews of 1934. In the first, Josef Linder supports the New Testament’s connection to the Old Testament from attacks by antisemites, without however engaging in the slightest criticism of antisemitism itself.²⁹ In the second, Paul Gächter defends the “Semitic” component of the New Testament against attempts by the German Deißmann school to demonstrate the marginal influence of Hebrew. “Nur die semitische Substanz zusammen mit dem griechischen Gewand machen die ganze Fülle und Schönheit des Neuen Testaments aus,” Gächter advocates.³⁰ Thirdly, and most significantly, Gächter reviews Erik Peterson’s *Die Kirchen aus Juden und Heiden*. Gächter praises the book’s reaction to critique raised against the Church for its “original” (ursprünglichen) connection with Judaism. Gächter points out in particular that Peterson in his argument had emphasised “the fact that the salvation and the Apostles came to the Heathens from the Jews”. On the other hand, Gächter expresses reservations concerning Peterson’s treatment of Jews as chosen. Peterson, he argues, could have clarified the concept of “chosenness” (*Auswahl*) better. It was not, Gächter continues, part of the idea in the Old Testament that the Jewish people, “because of its lack of a spiritual attitude made the physical into the only measure of its greatness and thereby became wholly ‘carnal’” (*fleischlich*). Had Peterson explicated this, it would have appeared more understandable to the readers why the Jews had once been considered suitable for the role of God’s people, a role, we may assume Gächter implies, they were no longer fit for. In sum, Gächter supported the “original” connection between Christianity and Judaism, but it appears that he did not display the same approval of such a connection in the present.³¹

After 1934, the Jesuits also concerned themselves more directly with race, and with the problem of eugenics. In 1935, Artur Schönegger reviews Hermann Pfafscher’s *Eugenische Ehehindernisse? Eine kirchenrechtliche Studie*. The book discusses

28 Carl Alois Kneller, “Neue Kunde von alten Bibeln. Mit zahlreichen Beiträgen zur Kultur- u. Literaturgeschichte am Ausgange des 16. Jahrh.s. Von Paul Maria Baumgarten. Rom, Via del Olmata. Im Selbstverlage des Verfassers 1922. Franz Aker, Buchdruckerei, Kommissionsverlag Krumbach (Schwaben) Bayern. XXII u. 402 S.,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1923, 585-593.

29 Josef Linder, “Die antisemitische Bekämpfung des Alten Testaments vom Standpunkt katholischer Bibelbeachtung beleuchtet. Von H. Kaupel. Kl. 8° (48 S.) Hamburg 1933, Lettenbauer,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1934, 279-80.

30 “Only the Semitic substance in combination with the Greek vestment makes up the richness and beauty of the New Testament.,” Paul Gächter, “Primi Saggi di Filologia Neotestamentaria. Letture scelte dal Nuovo testamento Greco con introduzione e commento. Von Giuseppe Bonaccorsi M. S. C. Vol. I: Introduzione – Vangeli – Atti degli Apostoli. 8° (CLXVII u. 640 S.) Torino 1933, Società Editrice Internazionale. Lire 25,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1934, 445-446.

31 Paul Gächter, “Die Kirchen aus Juden und Heiden. Von Erik Peterson. 8° (72 S.) Salzburg (1933), Pustet. S. 3, 90, geb. S 5,” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1934, 446-447.

whether the Church should support, or actively work to introduce, “eugenic rules preventing marriages” if these were based on modern scientific eugenic studies and would protect the “common good of a people” (*Allgemeinwohl eines Volkes*) from the detrimental influence of marriages with “inferior individuals or the racially different” (*Minderwertiger oder rassisch Verschiedener*). Pfatschbacher’s conclusion is that the Church could support attempts by the state to segregate *Minderwertige*, provide marriage advice, and “prevent racially mixed marriages” (*Eehindernissen, auch für Rassenmischehen*). Schönegger’s judgment is characteristically vague and neutral. Pfatschbacher’s treatment was a “first, not yet quite successful account” of how to regulate the difficult questions proposed by “serious eugenics” (*ernste Eugenik*).³² However, this was not in fact the first time the journal referred to the question of eugenics. As early as 1924 the Jesuits had considered the possibility of “a eugenics which is not materialistic, but which is sensible [vernünftigen] and in accordance with Christian morality”.³³

The most explicit discussion of the contemporary ideas of race is laid forth in 1936 by the young Karl Rahner, who was to become one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. In a review of Christel Matthias Schröder’s *Rasse und Religion*, Rahner assumes that “intellectual and spiritual qualities” (*geistiger und seelischer Eigenschaften*) are hereditary, in the sense that “a human being has determinate intellectual qualities because he descends from determinate parents”. However, humans are not univocally determined by their “genes” (*Erbanlage*). Therefore, although there are different races, a fact tacitly acknowledged by Rahner, and different religions, there is no causal connection between race and religion. As a consequence, the idea of a clash between an “Indo-Germanic” and a “Near-Eastern-Semitic” “world of belief” (*Glaubenswelt*), is “completely untenable” (*völlig unhaltbar*).³⁴

Simultaneously, however, with the acceptance of some of the lessons of contemporary ‘racial science’ (*Rassenkunde*) apparent in both Schönegger and Rahner, other Jesuits, addressing current debates in the field of linguistics, underlined the unity of humankind. In two articles of 1926 and 1936, Fathers Dorsch and Perzl both argued that although modern linguistics had described some larger linguistic families, they had not denied the interconnectedness between these families. Race was not a factor in linguistics, they argued, emphasising that following the Catholic dogma of “original sin” (*Erbsünde*) and “salvation” (*Erlösung*) the unity of humankind was indisputable.³⁵

In the second half of the 1930s, the surge of Nazi antisemitism seems to have caused the editors of the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* to approach the ‘Jewish question’ in unprecedentedly vague terms. Within the general cloud of ambiguity however, two contradictory tendencies may be hypothesised, one more accommodating towards racism, the other reacting in defence of Jews.

32 Artur Schönegger, “Eugenische Eehindernisse? Eine kirchenrechtliche Studie. Von Hermann Pfatschbacher. 8° (143 S.) Wien 1933, Mayer, M. 4.” in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1935, 492-493.

33 See the review of Hermann Muckermann, *Kind und Volk; Der biologische Wert der Treue zu den Lebensgesetzen beim Aufbau der Familie*, Freiburg 1921, in: Albert Schmitt, *Literaturberichte, A Übersichten, Moralthologie*, 5, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 1924, 96-97.

34 Karl Rahner, Christel Matthias Schröder, *Rasse und Religion*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 1936, 282-287.

35 Emil Dorsch, Alb. Drexel, *Die Frage nach der Einheit der Menschengeschlechtes im Lichte der Sprachforschung*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1926, 290-292; Johann Perzl, *Die Einheit des Menschengeschlechtes im Lichte der neueren sprachwissenschaftlichen Forschung*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1936, 120-122.

Representative of the first tendency is Josef A. Jungmann's review of the booklet *Kirche im Kampf*, published in 1936 by the Austrian Catholic Action. Included in that publication was a contribution by Father Georg Bichlmair of the Austrian province of the Society of Jesus. His article, *Der Christ und der Jude*, a reprint of a lecture arranged by the Viennese Catholic Action, is widely cited for its accommodation of racist antisemitism.³⁶ Among other things, Bichlmair, who later became the leader of the Austrian Jesuit Province, had proclaimed that Jews belonged to a different race than the German people and, with a formulation that brought him unwanted fame, that the Jews' "apostasy" might have rendered the improvement of their "bad genes" (*schlimmen Erbanlagen*) more difficult.³⁷ Jungmann, who directed the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* almost uninterruptedly from 1927 until 1963, defends his fellow Jesuit's essay as a "speech which is clear in its principles and which has already been the subject of numerous considerations" (*prinzipienklaren Rede, die schon mehrfach Gegenstand von Erörterungen geworden ist*).³⁸

Token of the second tendency are three articles written by Peter Browe on persecutions of Jews in the Middle Ages. The first, published in 1937, is a short review of a book written in English by Arthur Lukyn Williams on the Christian *Adversus Judaeos* tradition. Although the review is rather formalistic, it appears that Browe shows considerable tolerance towards Williams' critical approach. Browe does not approve of Williams' statement that Peter the Venerable's treatment of Jews had been "ignorant". However, Father Browe concedes that this great Church reformer had been "no friend of the Jews" and had had "no understanding of the Talmud".³⁹ In 1938, the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* published Browe's seventy-page essay, *Die Judenbekämpfung im Mittelalter*, which was divided into two parts. The article was a serious scholarly treatment of pioneering quality. Browe is not free from apologetic notions and contamination of racist terminology. In the introduction, he states that it was only with the establishment of Christian rule that Jews were reduced to second class citizens in European societies.⁴⁰ Yet later he writes that counteraction and persecutions had not started until the Jews became rich and powerful and endangered the Christians.⁴¹ Describing the rules introduced by German cities against Jews, he writes that the city councils used plague epidemics and other events as pretexts for ridding themselves of "rassefremden und verhaßten Gäste".⁴² Nevertheless, his analysis of the materialistic and indefensible motives of Christian persecutors is remarkably radical. In particular, Browe's discussion of the conduct of the clergy and papacy amounts to a perhaps unprecedented reconsideration at this level of the persecutions of Jews by the Christian church hierarchy. Thus, Browe states that, although the clerics had not wanted to instigate pogroms, their continuous politics of segregation of Jews, of presenting Jews as a danger to Christians and as persecutors of Christ and of the Church, "at the moment when Jew beaters (*Judenschläger*) went through the country or a heated atmosphere prevailed, must have aroused the spirits even more and encouraged to excesses".⁴³ Browe ends his discussion by judging that

36 Heer, *Gottes erste Liebe*; Weinzierl, *Zu wenig Gerechte*; Eppel, *Zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz*; Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother*.

37 Clemens Holzmeister (ed.), *Kirche im Kampf*, Vienna 1936, 157, 165.

38 Josef A. Jungmann, *Kirche im Kampf*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1937, 156-157.

39 Peter Browe, "A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*. A Bird's-eye view of christian [sic] Apologiae until the Renaissance, 8° (XVII u. 428 S.) Cambridge 1935, University Press. Sh. 25," in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1937, 124-126.

40 Peter Browe, *Die Judenbekämpfung im Mittelalter*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1938, 197.

41 *Ibid.*, 198.

42 *Ibid.*, 207-208.

43 *Ibid.*, 230-231.

the persecutions had strengthened the Jews and their collective spirit and separated the Jews even more from the Christians and thereby obtained the opposite effect to the one desired.⁴⁴ Be it veiled and indirect, there is little doubt that the choice of writing and publishing these articles at this historical moment was meant as a message to be interpreted against the background of the contemporary political situation, a message to the Catholics not only not to support violent persecutions but also not to preach contempt.

The *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* and the *Archiv der Österreichischen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu* provide perhaps quantitatively less material illustrating the attitudes of the Austrian Jesuits to the 'Jewish question' in the interwar period than the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*. Nonetheless, these two other sets of sources complement the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, qualifying the lines of analysis laid forth above.

The *Nachrichten* maneuvered on quite a different level compared to the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*. While the latter was published by the elite of Jesuit scholars in Austria and Germany, the *Nachrichten*, although the authorship is mostly not specified, seems to have been written by a broad variety of fathers of the Austrian province. The topics treated were of a much more practical nature, and it very seldom touches upon ideological or political issues. The sparse remarks of direct relevance, however, confirm two points: the persistence of a conservative anti-liberal tradition throughout the period and the shock within the Austrian province induced by the July Putsch in 1934.

The anti-liberal tradition is revealed by occasional remarks concerning what were considered the main political concerns of the time, namely Bolshevism, Nazism and Freemasonry, as well as by references to Heinrich Abel. Abel's monument was erected on 3 October 1937 in the square in front of the *Universitätskirche* with the participation of outstanding representatives of the City of Vienna, the Viennese Church hierarchy, and Austrian President Miklas, who personally attended the inauguration and held the commemorative speech.⁴⁵ A direct indication of the attitudes of the Austrian Jesuit community towards the 'Jewish question' is to be found in the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ*'s reaction to Bichlmair's speech of 1936. In a report of recent Jesuit activities in Vienna, the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* states:

"Meanwhile, the great stir over the speech, *Der Christ und der Jude*, has settled again. However, P. Bichlmair had to leave the position of President of the *Wiener Pauluswerk*, since the cashier, a baptised Jew and rich factory owner, declared that he did not want to work together with a disguised National Socialist any longer. Interestingly, the stir was greater among some converts than among unbaptised Jews. After the speech, the registrations for baptism fell somewhat, but since November they have started to rise again."⁴⁶

The *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* does not go into detail concerning the contents of the speech, nor does it support it in explicit terms. However, the editors could have chosen to keep silent regarding the controversy or to take a more defensive stance. The offensive remarks concerning the reaction of baptised Jews is a

44 Peter Browe, Die Judenbekämpfung im Mittelalter (Fortsetzung u. Schluß), in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 1938, 384.

45 Author unknown, P. Abel-Denkmal in Wien, in: *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* (September-October 1937), 42-43.

46 Author unknown, Aus unseren Häusern, Wien, I (Universitätskirche), in: *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* (June-December 1936), 9.

sign that the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* did not distance itself from the most controversial points in Bichlmair's speech.

Nevertheless, it is clear from two long reports from 1934 that the Austrian Jesuit Province suffered a severe shock during the July Putsch and that opposition towards National Socialism was strong within the Province.⁴⁷ Research of the *Archiv der österreichischen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu* confirms the coexistence within the Austrian Jesuit community of ingrained anti-Jewish attitudes and strong anti-Nazi sentiment. The example of Georg Bichlmair epitomises the complexity of the positions of the Jesuits in Austria. Scholarly literature has not been at ease explaining Bichlmair's actions. It is well known that the same Bichlmair who had talked about the Jews' "schlimmen Erbanlagen", "bad genes", in 1936, later promoted the *Erzbischöfliche Hilfsstelle für nichtarische Katholiken* in Vienna, running a personal risk in order to save 'non-Aryan' converts to Catholicism from persecution. He was arrested by the Gestapo in 1939 and confined to Beuthen.⁴⁸ But Bichlmair had defended Jews much earlier. On Christmas day 1931 Bichlmair held a radio talk, discussing how injustice, silence and defamation were destroying peace in society. The solution he proposed was the preaching of love and the example he gave was the denunciation of hatred against the Jewish people.⁴⁹

The examples of Bichlmair and other Austrian Jesuits suggest that attitudes towards Jews and attitudes towards Nazism were not correlated in any unequivocal way. However, for a better understanding of the tensions between the Jesuits' positions, more research is needed. This study indicates the presence of a well-established anti-Jewish practice among the Jesuits in Austria and the occurrence of a shock in 1934, after which Jesuit voices began questioning traditional Catholic attitudes towards Jews. It might be that the attitude of the *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* was more representative of the rank and file of the Austrian Jesuit community than the elaborations of Browe and a few other intellectual Jesuits in the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*. Only a minority might have shared Browe's urge to reconsider the entrenched anti-Jewish tradition. Nonetheless, the reactions of this minority are crucial for the understanding of the shifts in attitudes towards Judaism that occurred within the Roman Catholic Church in the 1930s and which foreshadowed the new doctrinal approaches of the Second Vatican Council.⁵⁰

47 Author unknown, Der Juliputsch 1934 in St. Andrä i. Lav., in: *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* (January-March 1935), 8-11; Author unknown, Der Juliputsch 1934 in St. Andrä i. Lav. (Schluß), in: *Nachrichten der österreichischen Provinz SJ* (April-June 1935), 4-7.

48 Connelly, From Enemy to Brother.

49 Archiv der Österreichischen Provinz SJ, Nachlass Bichlmair, Kleine Schriften, Friedenstimmen I. Friede auf Erden. Rundfunk-Weihnachtsrede von P. Georg Bichlmair S.J. Wien, 19 January 1932.

50 Connelly, From Enemy to Brother.

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