Modernism and Cultural Politics in Inter-war Austria: The Case of Clemens Holzmeister

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the work of the Austrian architect Clemens Holzmeister. A leading representative of Austrian architecture between the wars, and a significant figure in the 1950s and 1960s as teacher of the new generation of Austrian architects including Hans Hollein and Gustav Peichl, Holzmeister presents a perplexing image. In the 1920s, he played an important role in the early architectural projects of Red Vienna, but in the following decade he endorsed the Austrofascist regime of Engelbert Dollfuß and Kurt Schuschnigg of 1934–38. This article argues that his work presents other interpretative challenges too, for he was a prolific designer of churches, which have seldom been integrated into wider narratives of modern architecture. However his work is viewed, it was an important barometer of wider cultural and political currents in inter-war Austria, in particular the country's attempt to construct a meaningful identity after the collapse of the Habsburg empire. The aim of the article is not to rehabilitate or recover Holzmeister, but to consider the light his work casts on inter-war cultural politics in Austria, as well as the broader questions over the implicit value judgements that inform histories of modern architecture.

The architect Clemens Holzmeister (1886–1983) occupies a prominent place in the history of twentieth-century Austrian architecture. When awarded the Decoration of Honour for Services to the Austrian Republic (*Ehrenzeichen für Verdienste um die Republik Österreich*) in 1981, he could look back over a career spanning more than sixty years. In Austria he is most commonly associated with the Salzburg Festival, having designed the Festival Theatre in 1925 and then, in 1956, the greatly expanded Large Festival House. He also enjoyed considerable international success, in particular in Turkey, where he was commissioned by the Atatürk regime to design a number of government buildings in the new capital of Ankara, including the Ministry of Defence (1927–30), Central Bank (1931–33), Ministry of the Interior (1932–34), Court of Appeal (1933–34) and Parliament building (1939–61).[1] Holzmeister also taught some of the most important architects working in Austria after 1945, such as Hans Hollein (1934–2014), Gustav Peichl (1928–2019) and the members of the architectural group Arbeitsgruppe 4.[2] Such was his importance as a teacher that a conference was staged at the University of Innsbruck in 2014 on the question of whether it is possible to talk of a 'Holzmeister school'.[3]

This article examines a less discussed stage of his career: the period between 1913 when he undertook his first commission — a boys' school for the Deutsche Heimat [German Homeland] association in Marbach, near Melk — and 1938 when, following the Anschluss, he became an exile. This phase is of interest not simply because of the intrinsic significance of the buildings he designed during these years, but also because it brings to the foreground the complex and often contradictory cultural politics of Austria in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1918, the Austro-Hungarian empire collapsed following defeat in the first world war and the rump state of the Austrian Republic was created. A parliamentary democracy, it was a site of permanent political conflict. Many questioned its legitimacy; monarchists and conservatives rejected the very idea of republican government, while many others of all political persuasions saw it as unviable and instead aspired towards unification with Germany. National politics was paralysed by the battle between left and right: the Social Democrats, whose main power base was in Vienna, and the Christian Social Party. Indeed, civil society became increasingly militarised, with each party organising its own militia to counter the influence of its opponents. Democratic government came to an end in March 1933 when Engelbert Dollfuß, the Christian Social chancellor, seized power and assumed dictatorial powers. Opposition to his rule by Social Democrats and others culminated in February 1934 in an unsuccessful insurrection and brief civil war, following which the left was eliminated as a political force. The Austrofascist dictatorship instituted by Dollfuß outlasted his assassination in July 1934 and, under his successor Kurt Schuschnigg, remained in place until the Anschluss with Germany in 1938.[4]

Inter-war Austrian culture is most commonly associated with the progressive achievements of 'Red Vienna', from the social housing built by the Social Democratic municipality to the brilliance of figures such as Anton Webern, Karl Kraus, Otto Neurath and Sophie Lazarsfeld.[5] Yet this was contested by a conservative and Catholic intelligentsia. As Janek Wasserman showed in *Black Vienna* (2014), writers such as Richard Kralik and Othmar Spann loomed large over inter-war Austrian intellectual life, even if they have since fallen into semi-oblivion.[6]

This article considers how Holzmeister navigated the treacherous waters of inter-war Austrian society and culture. Although celebrated in Austria from the mid-1950s until his death in 1983, he left a problematic legacy. In the 1930s, he was a prominent advocate of the Dollfuß–Schuschnigg regime. In addition, he was particularly known as a designer of churches, which have often held a marginal place in general histories of modern architecture, reflecting the somewhat awkward role that sacred buildings play in a narrative that conceives of modernity and modernisation in predominantly secular terms. Hence the aim of this article is not just to analyse the career of one individual architect, but also to consider the light his work casts on the wider cultural politics of Austria. How might an understanding of Holzmeister inform a critical approach to the meaning of the term 'modern architecture' in inter-war Austria?

FROM TYROL TO RED VIENNA AND THE NEW WERKBUND

Holzmeister was born in the small town of Fulpmes in the Tyrol in 1886. Attending school in Innsbruck, he completed his training in architecture at the Vienna Technical Academy (now the Technical University) in 1919 and then returned to Innsbruck to take

Fig. 1. *Vienna Crematorium, Simmering, Clemens Holzmeister, opened in 1922, postcard photograph (author's collection)*

up a position teaching at the State Design School. In 1924, he was appointed professor of architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.[7] While there he pursued a highly successful career, and in 1933 he became the main architect of the state, rewarded with numerous official commissions. He also enjoyed recognition in Germany (he was professor of architecture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy from 1928 to 1933) as well as in Turkey, where he was working when the Anschluss took place on 12 March 1938. Holzmeister opted to stay abroad, spending nearly two decades in exile in Turkey and Brazil (through his father he had Brazilian citizenship), eventually returning to Austria in 1954.

Holzmeister was not one of the many young architects taught by Otto Wagner at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. He learned his profession under Carl König (1841–1915) and Max Ferstel (1859–1936). The Technical Academy, where they both taught, has tended to be overshadowed in historical memory by the Academy of Fine Arts but, as Christopher Long has argued, it was an important institution of architectural training.[8] König and Ferstel were late historicist architects. Their architectural designs were largely conventional, but pedagogically they provided an important counterweight to Wagner. König foregrounded a knowledge of architectural history, but not at the expense of attention to functional questions, and many of his students became prominent modernist architects of inter-war Austria, including Josef Frank (1885–1967), Karl Holey (1879–1955) and Oskar Strnad (1879–1935), as well as Holzmeister. In keeping with König's insistence that no new architectural language could be invented *ex nihilo*, all of them sought to reconcile a responsiveness to modern demands on architecture

Fig. 2. *Vienna Crematorium, Simmering, ceremonial hall, Clemens Holzmeister, opened in 1922, postcard photograph (author's collection)*

with a consciousness of historical tradition.[9] For his part, Ferstel continued the legacy of his better-known father Heinrich von Ferstel (1828–83), and looking back on his career in 1930 he reflected:

> I was always concerned to keep abreast of the latest innovations of the time, always to remain up to date, but also to defend traditional architecture against the all too crass excretions of the modern movement.[10]

This meant that although he was lukewarm towards the work of, for example, Le Corbusier, he was not hostile to modernism *per se*, expressing an interest in contemporary Scandinavian and Dutch architecture.

Josef Frank set out his ideas in his 1932 publication, *Architektur als Symbol* [*Architecture as Symbol*], which argued for the importance of incorporating decorative, formal and structural elements into the design of buildings that could draw on and echo the historical memory of their users.[11] This was at odds with the widely accepted injunction against ornament articulated by Adolf Loos in his celebrated essay on the subject in 1908.[12] Holzmeister's approach was more conservative than that of Frank; he was an avowed Catholic and frequently voiced his vision for a new architectural culture aligned with Catholic values. He also published widely on the virtues of vernacular architecture, including an entire monograph in 1934 on building in wood.[13] Nevertheless, he was the

Fig. 3. *Crematorium,
Steyr, Franz Koppelhuber,
1927, postcard photograph
(Fostin Cotchum)*

product of a similar education that sought to reconcile the demands of modernity with a recognition of the historicity of human culture and subjective experience.

Given his background and personal beliefs, it is somewhat surprising that Holzmeister was the architect of the first major project of the Social Democratic council of Vienna: the city crematorium (Fig. 1). Opened on 17 December 1922, it was the outcome of a decades-long campaign for the introduction of cremation. Cremation had been legalised in Italy in 1874 and was quickly adopted in Britain, Germany and France. There was an active, organised campaign in Austria too, led by various individuals and groups including the association Die Flamme, founded in 1904.[14] Nonetheless, due to strictures on the part of the Catholic church, cremation remained illegal under Habsburg rule.[15] Thus, even though a crematorium had been built as early as 1916 in the Bohemian town of Reichenberg/Liberec (then still part of Austria), it was not permitted to operate.[16]

This situation changed in 1918 with the fall of Austria-Hungary. While cremation remained technically illegal in the new Austrian Republic, regulation regarding the disposal of the dead, including the possibility of cremation, became a matter for municipal, rather than national, government. Thus when municipal elections brought

the Social Democrats to power in Vienna in 1919, the new mayor, Jakob Reumann, set in motion the building of a crematorium. Events on the larger national political stage also helped embolden the newly elected council: between 1918 and 1920, the national government was a coalition of Social Democrats and the conservative Christian Social Party, providing for a less restrictive atmosphere.

As work progressed, however, the crematorium became increasingly controversial. Conservative commentators baulked at the expense; the cost of some 300 million crowns could hardly be justified, they complained, at a time of considerable hardship.[17] Cremation continued to be rejected by many on religious grounds, too. The Christian Social Party maintained its opposition to cremation throughout the inter-war period, and in December 1922, in an attempt to stymie the project, Richard Schmitz, the Christian Social Party's minister for social affairs, sought to outlaw cremation. He was overruled by the constitutional court, which upheld the autonomy of the municipality, and the first cremations took place in January 1923.[18] Yet cremation continued to be a focus of conflict between the two major parties throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and Social Democratic city administrations elsewhere adopted cremation as a symbolic gesture of wider political affiliation.[19] In Steyr and Linz, for example, both with strong local Social Democratic traditions, crematoria opened in 1927 and 1929, respectively.[20]

The architectural history of inter-war Vienna is understandably dominated by interest in the social mass housing projects of the Social Democratic council.[21] Indeed, attention to the architecture of 'Red Vienna' has often focused more on its progressive cultural politics than on the quality of its designs which, as Manfredo Tafuri argued, were rather conservative.[22] The involvement of Holzmeister, the conservative Catholic, in the crematorium, the earliest prominent symbol of the city's new post-war identity, complicates that image. Holzmeister's design was not radical, but it indicated a deep engagement with contemporary architectural practice. Contemporaries noted that the design, with its pointed-arch doorways and windows, connoted the spiritual values of the Gothic era.[23] But with its stripped-down geometries, they also found it unmistakably modern, its stepped form, zig-zag crenellations and pyramidal roof evoking both modern and primitive. Many who opted for cremation still harboured a religious belief and Holzmeister's design appeared to convey a modern sense of spirituality, not tied to any particular confession or denomination. That was especially the case in the ceremonial hall, a pyramidal space with Gothic arches on each side (Fig. 2). The art historian Franz Ottmann, discussing this 'Gothic in concrete' (*Betongotik*) structure in 1924, commented on its spiritual qualities:

> If the outside has the effect of being almost like some fearful conclusion, the inner gives the effect of purification and ascension, like the forecourt to another world. I dare to draw a comparison with one of the most beautiful buildings on earth, the Taj Mahal in India. The latter is as magnificent as the Vienna crematorium is simple. They both have in common a sense of release, of the ethereal. I think the crematorium is even superior to the oriental mausoleum in its expressive power.[24]

The Gothicising archway was emulated elsewhere — for example, in the 1927 crematorium in Steyr by Franz Koppelhuber (Fig. 3). Holzmeister's design also drew on

Fig. 4. *Crematorium, Hagen, Peter Behrens, 1908, postcard photograph (author's collection)*

an architectural vocabulary that had been developed by expressionist architects such as Hans Poelzig, Bruno Taut and Hans Scharoun, allied with the neo-medieval social and religious idealism harboured by many modernist architects in the early post-war period. Even if this indicated sympathy for a conservative utopia, Holzmeister's building was, as another contemporary observer noted, 'devoid of tradition' precisely because it broke away from what had been customary in crematorium building practice.[25]

When the crematorium had first emerged as a building type, the designers had little to guide them in terms of precedents. But that did not mean they had a free hand. As Timothy Pursell has stated:

> At all costs [architects] wished to avoid creating a building with too alien an appearance. Architecture was a means to 'package' and 'sell' cremation as a burial option. Building attractive crematoria was a means of obtaining acceptance for a new burial form.[26]

Crematorium design thus involved a compromise between a desire to signal the modern and 'progressive' nature of cremation and the need to humanise the process with an architectural vocabulary with which the public was familiar. For the crematorium in Hagen in the Ruhr in 1908, for example, Peter Behrens quoted the eleventh-century facade of the church of San Miniato in Florence (Fig. 4).[27] The chimney was integrated into the design to mimic the campanile, but this suggested a parallel, too, between cremation and the release of the soul from the spiritual bondage of the body. In Paris, the Père Lachaise crematorium by Jean Camille Formigé (1908) was designed as a

neo-Byzantine chapel. As with its counterpart in Hagen, the historical vocabulary was an exercise in legitimation.

Given the hostility of the Catholic political establishment to cremation, Holzmeister's decision even to make a submission to the competition cannot have been taken lightly; he later approached his older half-brother Urban, a theologian at the University of Innsbruck, to intercede on his behalf with the church to gain absolution for his role in the project.[28] Yet the reservations he had about this particular building did not diminish his broader willingness to continue working for the Social Democratic municipality. In 1924, with the reputation he had gained from the crematorium, he was asked to design a housing block of more than three hundred apartments in the western suburb of Penzing, completed in 1925 and originally called the Rott-Bau (the building on Rottstrasse) but renamed after the second world war as the Ferdinand-Blathof (Fig. 5).[29] Its 'butterfly roof' is reminiscent of the tower of the crematorium and, together with the double stack of angular oriel windows above the entrance, introduces 'a rhythm commensurate with the lavishness of the commission', as the city council put it.[30]

The Blathof building may not have represented the most advanced architectural thinking of the time, but the council was evidently satisfied with it because Holzmeister was asked to design a further block on a large site in the northern suburb of Heiligenstadt in 1926. His proposal was rejected by the city authorities, however, and the commission was instead awarded to Karl Ehn, who built the now-renowned Karl Marx Hof on the site.[31] That no further commissions followed was not necessarily a sign of conflict or disagreement with the municipality; in 1929, Holzmeister contributed an article to *The Book of the Association of Austrian Artists*, the first in a planned series presenting contemporary Austrian art and architecture, in which he wrote a defence of the municipal building projects.[32] In this regard, he stood in opposition to Frank, who, along with other prominent Austrian and German architects and thinkers such as Neurath, Taut and Heinrich Tessenow, had become increasingly critical of the municipality's housing policies.

However, if Holzmeister had appeared in the 1920s to be a respected Viennese architect aligned with progressive politics, during the 1930s he increasingly moved to the right. A significant illustration of this was his role in the New Austrian Werkbund, established in 1934 in opposition to the Austrian Werkbund led by Frank. The Austrian Werkbund had been set up in 1912 as a branch of the German Werkbund, but the two had diverged after the first world war: while architects in Germany focused mainly on large-scale housing projects, their counterparts in Austria, especially Frank, were increasingly drawn to small-scale, low-density planning, rejecting the 'massification' of housing. The culmination of this was the estate of seventy houses built for the Werkbund exhibition in Vienna in 1932, including a pair of two-bedroom houses by Holzmeister.[33] Yet there were ideological differences between Frank and other members of the Werkbund. Although his model was the low-density estate, Frank still recognised the need to adapt to mass production. Others held on to the ideal of craft production, as if wishing to preserve the values of the Wiener Werkstätte (which finally went bankrupt the year of the exhibition). Principal among these was Josef Hoffmann, whose work Frank dismissed as out of date. In 1933, sensing the growing hostility in Austria towards 'modernism', Frank accepted an invitation to work as a designer for

Fig. 5. *Blathof housing estate, Vienna, Clemens Holzmeister, 1924–25, photograph of* c. *1924 (Martin Gerlach, Vienna City Archive)*

the Stockholm interiors company Svenskt Tenn and he spent the rest of his career in Sweden. In his absence, Hoffmann, together with Behrens and others, founded the New Austrian Werkbund in December 1933, which formally came into existence in January 1934.[34] Holzmeister was elected its first president.

The split within the Werkbund was ostensibly about attitudes towards design, craft and mass culture, but personal rivalries and petty jealousies also had a role, particularly in relation to Frank's greater international success (he was the only Austrian invited to participate in the 1927 Weissenhof Exhibition in Stuttgart). Moreover, the formation of the New Werkbund took place following Dollfuß's seizure of power in March 1933. The new authoritarian regime put in place a reactionary cultural and political vision based on Catholic social teaching and the employment of an anti-Semitic rhetoric that has since led to its name of 'Austrofascism'.[35]

Holzmeister and the New Werkbund aligned themselves with the ideology of the Dollfuß dictatorship. A central theme was the idea of the family as the moral backbone of society, what James Chappel termed 'paternal Catholic modernism', which became a defining issue for Catholic moralists in the 1920s and 1930s.[36] Under Dollfuß, this meant encouraging the building of estates of single-family homes (*Eigenheimsiedlung*), with gardens to encourage self-sufficiency on the part of individual families — a moral as well as political goal because it lessened dependence on the state and subverted forms of social solidarity based on class.[37] Although the impetus for such emphasis on single-family houses was an ideologically mobilised form of Catholicism, it was, ironically, not

so distant from Frank's ideas; contributions by architects such as André Lurçat, Oskar Strnad and Richard Neutra to the programme of Frank's 1932 Werkbund exhibition employed a rhetoric of middle-class domesticity, family, harmony and proximity to nature that was not necessarily at variance with that promoted by Holzmeister and the New Werkbund after 1934.[38] The latter, however, also adopted the anti-Semitic sentiments promulgated by the new regime, together with a conservative nationalist concern with 'Austrianness'. In keeping with this, Jewish and leftist members of the Werkbund were expelled — including Frank, who, as a Jew, became the target of subsequent anti-Semitic criticism, often coded in terms of a critique of 'internationalists'.[39]

HEIMATSTIL TO CATHOLIC MODERNISM

Holzmeister's career, from architect working for Red Vienna to president of the New Werkbund, presents a perplexing image because, even though he was never a committed Social Democrat, his projects in the city in the 1920s suggest an openness to working with others of different ideological persuasions. In the 1930s, however, the polarisation of Austrian politics and society made this increasingly untenable. Given his role in the exclusion of Frank, Holzmeister is an easy target for censure, although it is notable that Hoffmann and Behrens, equally involved in the establishment of the New Werkbund, have escaped similar criticism. Yet what looks like opportunism in the 1930s has to be seen in the larger context of his work, in which a recurring preoccupation was the question of how to reconcile his Catholic faith with the challenges of a secular modernity. If his shifting attitudes in regard to public housing in Vienna make it difficult to categorise him simply as a reactionary conservative, this is equally the case when it comes to another significant aspect of his work: church design.

The crematorium established Holzmeister's reputation not only because of its prominence as an emblem of Red Vienna, but also because it was in the capital. Until that point, his commissions were of mostly local significance. Before 1923, he figured only in regional newspapers in the Tyrol, but from then onwards he was increasingly featured in the Vienna-based press. This development from provincial to national might be seen as a typical case of successful career progression, except that, as Wilfried Posch has suggested, Holzmeister chose to move from Vienna to Innsbruck in July 1919. The decision was not simply because he was presented with the opportunity to work at the Technical Academy in the city, but because of his feelings of disaffection with the capital and that it had little to offer him.[40] It was also a sign of a deeper commitment to Tyrol and provincial Austria.

In this context we might consider one of his first commissions, the boys' school of the Deutsche Heimat in Marbach, near Melk on the Danube, of 1913–14 (Fig. 6). Holzmeister had joined the association in 1911 and shared its aim of preserving German–Austrian regional cultural identities in the name of the homeland. The school building, completed shortly after he had graduated from the Technical Academy in Vienna, was a conventional Heimatstil design, using a combination of historical and vernacular features such as the rusticated main entrance archway, hipped roof and eyebrow dormer windows. Holzmeister had originally envisaged an even more rustic appearance, with ornate window frames, until his design, when put on display as part of an exhibition mounted

Fig. 6. *Deutsche Heimat Boys' School, Marbach, Clemens Holzmeister, 1913–14, photograph of 2013 (Grubernst)*

by the association in Vienna in December 1913, caught the attention of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who demanded a simplification of the front facade.[41]

The character of the school building and the ideological context in which it was situated might lead one to see in it an example of Holzmeister's conservativism; yet, as with his commissions in Vienna, other impulses were also at work. The term *Heimat* has often been seen as synonymous with reactionary values about cultural and ethnic identity, but this view has been challenged as too much coloured by subsequent political events and the appropriation of the term by Nazi and other reactionary ideologues.[42] In certain respects, the politics of the Deutsche Heimat were not always so distant from those of Austro-German liberalism. While it referred to itself as the Association for Research and Protection of German Cultural Life and the Homeland in Austria, it distanced itself from conceptions of 'Germanness' rooted in ethnicity or race. For the association, being German involved being part of a linguistic and cultural community, and German identity involved an openness to the world. As Richard Kralik, one of the association's leading propagandists, put it in *The Unknown Austria* (1917), 'The essence of being German is cosmopolitan, confederative, it gives due recognition to everything foreign'.[43] Given, too, that even the Austrian Social Democratic Party initially envisaged the unification of the new Austrian Republic with Germany after 1918, the concern with preserving German identity and culture need not be seen as a purely reactionary programme.

*Fig. 7. St John the Baptist Church, Batschuns, Clemens Holzmeister, 1923, postcard photograph
(Vorarlberger Landesbibliothek)*

While Holzmeister's commitment to *Heimat* was not necessarily underpinned by a narrow-minded nationalism, it was deeply inflected by his Catholic faith. One of his earliest projects after the first world war, in 1923, was the parish church of St John the Baptist in the village of Batschuns, in the extreme west of Vorarlberg, close to the Swiss border (Fig. 7). Holzmeister took over the project with the ground plan already laid out (Fig. 8) and the lower part of the walls built, but he considerably altered the eventual design. The church was initially intended to be a Gothic revival building, but instead Holzmeister produced a simplified and stripped-down design that avoided any overtly medievalising ornamentation, with windows that were basic geometric forms — a rose window and simple square windows on the west front, truncated lancet windows elsewhere. The square tower, oversized to establish the presence of the church on its hillside site, recalled Romanesque architecture but, with its unadorned character, was also unmistakeably modern. The simple, primitive form evokes an imaginary vernacular architecture that suggests a rootedness in place — a reflection of Holzmeister's concern with *Heimat*. The pared-down character of the church is continued internally in the single arched nave.

While the proportions recall early medieval Romanesque designs, the church could never be mistaken for early medieval; rather, it follows the philosophy of Holzmeister's Vienna teachers, Ferstel and König, in attempting to reconcile sensitivity to place
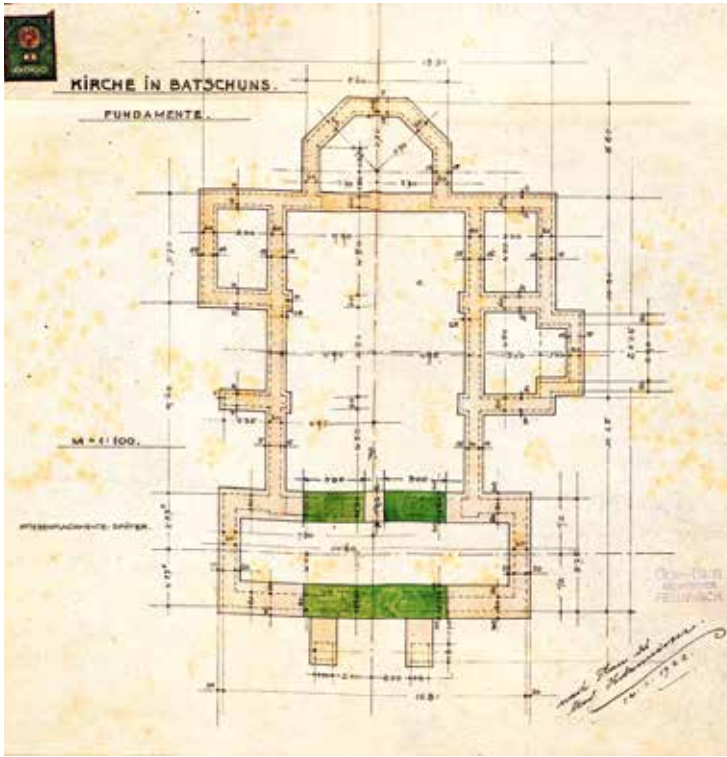
Fig. 8. *St John the Baptist Church, Batschuns, original ground plan (Vorarlberger Landes-Archiv. BH Feldkirch, XIV 40-1631/1923 — Bauakt Kirche Batschuns)*

and historical tradition with the language of modernity. This was recognised by contemporaries: in a 1925 profile, the critic Viktor Trautzl discussed this and other churches designed by Holzmeister and praised an architecture that was both modern and inspired by the 'heimische Landschaft' [local landscape].[44]

Yet, if Holzmeister's design for the Batschuns church was shaped by engagement with the values of his teachers, as well as a concern for place and locality, it was also informed by debates within Catholicism concerning modernity and the appropriate language for church architecture. These consisted of two successive discussions: the first about which historical style was most suited to church-building; the second about the appropriate response to modernism.

With regard to the first, it is well known that the Catholic church was deeply suspicious of contemporary architecture and insisted on keeping to historical traditions. As late as 1917, the Code of Canon Law promulgated by Pope Pius X stipulated that church-building should 'use the forms handed down by Christian tradition and the sacred laws of art'.[45] This was an ambiguous formulation, however, because it did not determine what was meant by 'tradition' or to which particular tradition it referred. In practice, it tended to mean Gothic revivalism. As one handbook of 1870 stated, 'The Gothic style is, to a far greater degree than the others, the exclusive domain of the Catholic church in origin and expression, a constant testimony to the might, the truth and character of the

Fig. 9. *Church of the Holy Spirit, Vienna-Ottakring, Jože Plečnik, 1913, photograph, 2011 (Michael Krannewitter)*

Catholic church.'[46] Conversely, the neo-Renaissance style was criticised for the arbitrary subjectivity of its attitude to tradition as well as its pagan display of naked bodies. As one late nineteenth-century handbook on church architecture put it: 'If, in our times, there are churches in this style that merit being called temples of God, this is not *because* of their style, but *in spite of* it.'[47] The general preference was for Gothic, although other historical styles had their defenders.[48] The cleric and teacher Johann Graus, for example, issued a number of publications opposed to the idea that one style had greater validity than any other.[49]

By the turn of the century, however, the debate over historical style was overshadowed by a far larger one: the so-called 'modernist controversy'. It was initially a theological dispute, in which the Catholic church authorities objected to the writings of a number of British, Italian, French and German theologians who had stressed the value of personal faith and the historical evolution of scripture and church doctrine. Later, the campaign against such intellectual 'modernism' was broadened out under Pope Pius X into a more general attempt to resist the encroachments of modernity.[50] This reached its climax in the 1907 papal encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* [*Feeding the Lord's Flock*], subtitled *On the Doctrine of the Modernists*, which took issue not only with the arguments of various modernist theologians, but more generally with what it termed 'liberalism' (that is, acceptance of a secular public sphere and of the historicity of religious doctrine).[51] This

spilled over into suspicion of modern architecture. There were, nevertheless, efforts to renew church design in light of wider shifts in artistic and architectural practice and thought. In Vienna, the best-known example was Otto Wagner's 1907 church of St Leopold at the Steinhof psychiatric hospital, which aroused much hostile commentary from contemporaries for its departure from Catholic architectural traditions. Perhaps a more pertinent example for the current discussion is the church of the Holy Spirit (1913) by Wagner's student Jože Plečnik in the Vienna suburb of Ottakring (Fig. 9). While Plečnik likewise departed from the tradition of Gothic revivalism, with an austere, unadorned, classical portico and pediment constructed of exposed brick and concrete, he was, in contrast to Wagner, a pious Catholic.[52] His church was thus an attempt to reconcile new ideas in architecture — specifically the use of non-traditional materials — with a commitment to the maintenance of religious values.

After 1918, adherence to tradition continued to have its defenders — for example, the Swiss artist Alexandre Cingria, who in 1917 had written a widely read pamphlet, *The Decadence of Sacred Art*.[53] Yet exploration of contemporary design ideas and practices in church architecture also accelerated. Initially this meant a rejection in many circles of the resurrection of past styles that was the defining feature of historicism, whose eclectic language was seen as a symptom of the fragmented and chaotic nature of liberal secular society. In its place, neo-traditionalism was espoused — in other words, a reworking of historical forms in a modern idiom. Central to this was a programmatic cult of the Middle Ages as the site of the lost unity of the arts. This saw a convergence between the search for cultural and spiritual renewal among more progressive-minded church architects and the concerns of expressionism.

In Germany, for example, Dominikus Böhm (1880–1955), perhaps the most influential and prominent church designer of the inter-war period, explored the symbolic and expressive properties of brick as a medievalising signifier, in a manner parallel to the better-known Hans Poelzig (1869–1936). Churches like Böhm's Christ the King in Bischofsheim (1925) drew on the expressionist use of brick as part of a programmatic interest in a neo-medieval spirituality (Fig. 10). It was an approach that was adopted across northern Europe; the United Protestant Church on Hohenzollernplatz in Berlin by Fritz Höger (1933) and Grundtvig Memorial Church in Copenhagen (Fig. 11) by Peder Wilhelm Jensen Klint (1927–40) are just two notable examples of a widespread phenomenon that also bridged differences between denominations. As Kathleen James-Chakraborty has noted, expressionist architects admired and consciously sought to emulate the emotional and spiritual impact of Gothic architecture.[54] Alongside the emergence of what one might term 'Gothic modernism', the Romanesque was also taken up on account of its supposed use of basic forms that expressed a medievalising primitivism. Thus, whereas Gothic was espoused by influential critics including Wilhelm Worringer, others such as Oskar Beyer (1890–1964), the Dresden-based founder of the Kunst-Dienst [Art Office] of the German evangelical churches, championed the Romanesque as having greater relevance for the present.[55]

Most of the principal figures involved in these debates were based in Germany, especially in the Rhineland, but their influence spread to Austria, and it is therefore not improbable that Holzmeister's 1921 redesign of the Batschuns church as a neo-Romanesque structure was informed by awareness of such discussions. In addition, for all the Catholic church's

Fig. 10. *Church of Christ the King, Bischofsheim, Dominikus Böhm, 1925, photograph of 2009 (Elke Wetzig)*

preoccupation with upholding tradition, it came to accept those modernist design practices and ideas that presented new ways of drawing on tradition as a resource for the present. The use of reinforced concrete by Plečnik, Perret and others, for example, was, for all its apparent modernity, also religiously motivated, for the structural properties of concrete (its greater strength) enabled the creation of large interior spaces and extensive single-naved churches that evoked early Christian basilicas and provided room for larger congregations. The modernist notion of truth to materials gained acceptability too, as an attempt to endow architectural practice with a concern for moral values. Holzmeister's crematorium can also be viewed in this context; its modernist tropes evoked a spirituality that would have been acceptable to many Catholics, as well as being sufficiently indistinct to free-thinkers unaligned with any particular denomination.

While Conservative thinkers such as Michael Faulhaber, the archbishop of Munich, and Conrad Gröber, the archbishop of Freiburg, continued to express hostility to modern art, in the years following the first world war came a flurry of publications on church architecture based on the idea of liturgical and spiritual renewal.[56] These included works by architects, such as *On New Church Architecture* (1919) by the Protestant Otto Bartning, and by theologians and clerics, most notably *Christocentric Church Art* (1922)
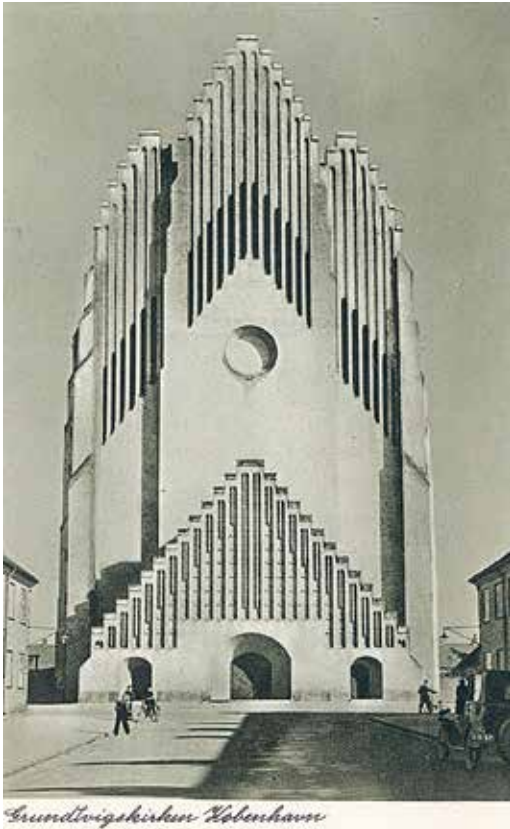
Fig. 11. *Grundtvig Memorial Church, Copenhagen, Peder Wilhelm Jensen Klint, 1927–40, postcard photograph of* c. *1940 (Fostin Cotchum)*

by Johannes van Acken, an attempt to reshape ideas of church-building in the light of liturgical reform movements within the Catholic church.[57]

It is against this background of shifting ideas and debate that we need to consider Holzmeister's work as a church designer, for his designs also reveal an oscillation between innovation and more conservative, traditionalist approaches. Shortly after completing the crematorium, he designed the church of St Mary of Succour (Mariahilfkirche) as a monument to the fallen of the first world war — hence also called Heroes' Memorial Church (Heldendankkirche) — in Bregenz in the western state of Vorarlberg (1925–31). Celebrated in the local press as an 'exemplary model of modern church architecture that will be an example for other countries and parishes', it was in fact a mixture of novel ideas and neo-traditional design elements (Fig. 12).[58] Its simple, massive forms exemplified Holzmeister's continuing interest in neo-Romanesque; the unusual octagonal tower — likened by some to a pagoda — might also be viewed in this light, as a revival of the octagonal or circular bell towers of early medieval church architecture, although there is no specific precedent. The oval ground plan of the central space is also of interest (Fig. 13), reflecting the theological ideas of the German cleric Romano Guardini (1885–1961) whose *On the Spirit of Liturgy* (1918)

Fig. 12. *Mariahilfkirche (Heroes' Memorial Church), Bregenz, Clemens Holzmeister, 1925–31, postcard photograph (Vorarlberger Landesbibliothek)*

emphasised the central role of the community of the faithful gathered around the altar in the act of worship.[59] Against the time-honoured tradition of longitudinal church designs, particularly prominent given the adherence to Gothic revivalism, new internal arrangements and ground plans, including the oval space, aimed to promote a sense of community among worshippers, bringing the community 'into a greater unity than was the case [...] hitherto', in Holzmeister's words.[60]

The church in Bregenz was formally consecrated on 15 August 1931.[61] In the same month, work began on a very different church by Holzmeister, the parish church of St Jude (1931–32) in the Vienna suburb of Döbling (Fig. 14). With its white walls, punched-hole windows and flat roof, the debt to the modernist aesthetic was unmistakeable and there is little about the exterior to suggest that this is a church. That Holzmeister's design was accepted also signified changing attitudes in the Catholic church.

The same could be said of the church of SS Peter and Paul (1931–32) in Dornbach in north-west Vienna (Fig. 15), a striking design consisting of bare, massive, staggered cubic forms, with a similarly unadorned rectangular interior that is only slightly relieved by the flat-arch windows of the nave. This was originally a thirteenth-century building, rebuilt several times, that Holzmeister completely remodelled and extended. The old single-nave church was retained, but Holzmeister's addition was larger and higher than the original and, housing both the altar and the tower (the original having been pulled down in 1880), completely overshadowed it.[62] Indeed, Holzmeister even
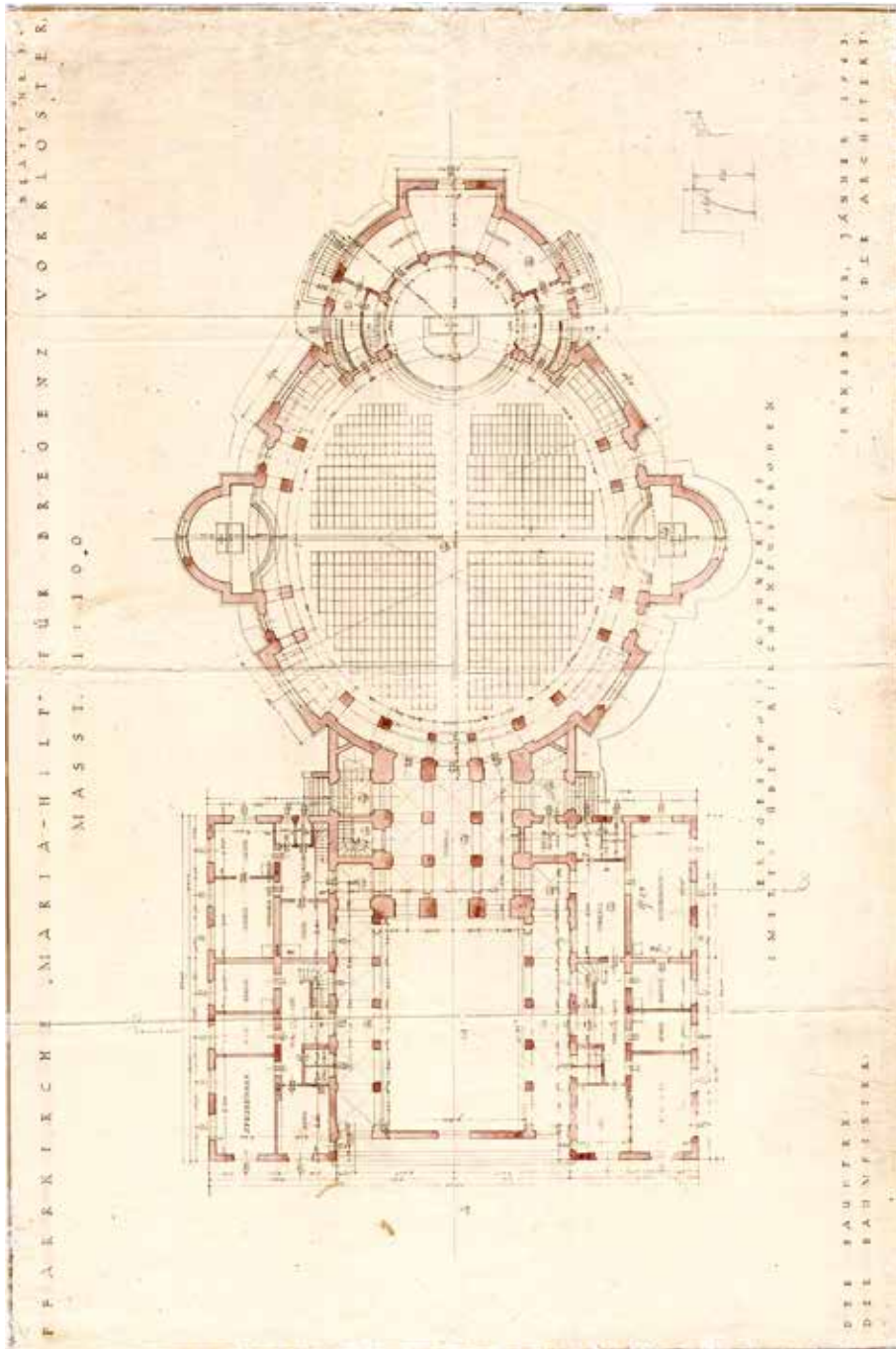
Fig. 13. *Mariahilfkirche (Heroes' Memorial Church), Bregenz, Clemens Holzmeister, 1925–31, ground plan, 1923 (Bregenz City Archive)*

Fig. 14. *Church of St Jude, Vienna-Döbling, Clemens Holzmeister, 1931–32, photograph of 2016 (BWag)*

rotated the axis of the building by ninety degrees, thus almost erasing the memory of the earlier church which, although still providing the entrance, served only as a modest anteroom to the extension that now comprised the main body of the church.

Both projects are striking not only because of the radical departure in architectural idiom, but also because of the apparent disregard for identity and place, which had been so important for Holzmeister's earlier projects. The design of St Jude, for example, stood in stark contrast to the surrounding area, which consisted of allotments and early nineteenth-century tenement blocks. The contrast asserted the presence of the church, although the modernity of the design meant that it did so in a surprising way, given the Catholic church's general role as the upholder of tradition.

St Jude was consecrated in early July 1932 (coinciding with the Werkbund exhibition) and was well received in the architectural press.[63] More surprising was the positive reaction of the conservative *Reichspost* newspaper, which hailed it as a 'masterpiece of modern church architecture'. The paper added:

> The simple lines of this house of God are meant to be [...] an expression of the artistic impulse of the modern age. Its apparent sobriety is a symbol of profound concentration and of pious meditation.[64]

By this time, as the *Reichspost* report shows, even conservative Catholic publications had begun to accept the validity of functionalism as an idiom for architecture; but

Fig. 15. *Church of SS Peter and Paul, Vienna-Dornbach, Clemens Holzmeister, 1931–32, photograph of 2010 (Peter Gugerell)*

Fig. 16. *Corpus Christi Church, Aachen, Rudolf Schwarz, consecrated in 1930, photograph of 2015 (Jürgen Wiener)*

the comment also highlights the ease with which its aesthetic qualities could be interpreted as expressions of piety and spiritual purity. Indeed, Holzmeister could look to a precedent in the work of the German church architect Rudolf Schwarz (1897–1961), whose much-discussed Corpus Christi Church (Fronleichnamskirche) in Aachen (Fig. 16), consecrated in 1930, espoused the minimalism of form that would be taken up in Holzmeister's slightly later buildings.[65] To see this radical change in Holzmeister's approach as the result of Schwarz's influence alone would perhaps be an overstatement; nevertheless, Holzmeister was clearly responding to developments elsewhere in architecture.

HOLZMEISTER THE STATE ARCHITECT

Holzmeister was not the only notable church architect working in Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s; his younger contemporary Robert Kramreiter (1905–65) was also a prolific designer who, having been an assistant to Böhm between 1928 and 1933, introduced many of the latter's ideas into Austria when he returned to Vienna in 1933.[66] However, thanks to his position at the academy, and his success in gaining the larger and more prestigious building commissions — in 1927, for example, he was appointed to redesign the Salzburg Festival Theatre — it was Holzmeister who gained the greater prominence.[67]

The construction of a large number of Catholic churches in the 1920s and 1930s was a response to a practical issue. Rapid urban growth since the late nineteenth century, especially in Vienna, had created many suburbs without any ecclesiastical buildings, and the church had consequently overseen the building of so-called *Notkirchen* [emergency churches], often little more than huts, as a temporary measure to administer to local congregations. The inter-war building programme was meant to replace these. Under Habsburg rule, the Christian Social Party had made the renewal of Christian values core to its mission, but its insistence on staging Catholic rituals at public events, as well as the requirement that city employees list their religious credentials, served primarily, in John Boyer's words, as 'political cudgels to beat down Austrian Social Democracy'.[68] In other words, the call for Christian values was more a political slogan than anything else. After 1918, however, the notion of a Catholic Austria took on new urgency as a placeholder for the vanished imperial order, and upholding Catholic values became a matter of governmental policy, especially when the dictatorship was established in 1933.

Holzmeister was a beneficiary of this shift. Despite his record of working with Vienna's Social Democratic municipality in the 1920s, he became a leading representative of political Catholicism in inter-war Austria, cultivating a personal friendship with Dollfuß. His Tyrolean origins helped in this regard given that, even before the creation of the authoritarian state in 1933, the Christian Social government promoted the regional identities of Austria, especially that of Tyrol, as a counterweight to the Social Democratic metropolis. This, and the fact that Holzmeister was not a product of Wagner's studio, counted in his favour, for he could be dissociated from the liberal culture of the capital. Thus, having already been the head of the architecture department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna since 1924, he was appointed director of the academy in 1931. In 1932, he also became president of the Zentralvereinigung der Architekten Österreichs [Central Union of Austrian Architects] and, in November of the same year, chair of

Fig. 17. *Seipel-Dollfuß Memorial Church, Vienna, Clemens Holzmeister, 1933–34, photograph of* c. *1934 (Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus Museum, Vienna)*

the committee overseeing the programme of artistic and literary events planned for the Allgemeiner Deutscher Katholikentag [Universal German Catholic Congress], to be held in Vienna in September 1933. Marking the 250th anniversary of the lifting of the Ottoman siege of Vienna, the congress was meant to underline Austria's identity as the bulwark of Catholic Europe. At the event Dollfuß — by then dictator of Austria — gave a now-notorious speech (the so-called *Trabrennplatzrede*) in which he expounded his vision of a 'social, Christian, German state of Austria on the basis of the estates, with strong authoritarian leadership'.[69]

Holzmeister made clear his allegiance to this vision with an essay on 'God's Honour in Art' ('Gottes Ehre in der Kunst') in the commemorative album for the congress. He also published the article 'On Catholicism in Modern Art' in the magazine *Moderne Welt*, in which he declared that the Catholic church should be the moral guide for artists.

> The growth [of religious sentiment] in the Catholic world provides the modern artist with a secure feeling and clear judgement about what he can and may do, when he seeks to find expression for Catholicism. He needs this judgement, for recent art has been taking new paths, and is looking for new garments in keeping with the times with which to clothe old ideas. His Catholic sensibility must tell him what the times and the people need.[70]

In the same year (1933), he established the journal *Profil*, which acted as a voice for this Catholic ideology in design and architecture, with frequent articles on religious art and architecture.[71] While Holzmeister introduced the first issue by stating that 'we wish to

Fig. 18. *Memorial plaque to Engelbert Dollfuß in St Michael's Church, Vienna, Hans Schwathe, 1937–38 (photograph by the author, 2017)*

recruit all thinking people as collaborators in the tasks of our time and to strengthen all those full of hope in their belief in a better future', the articles dealt with topics such as 'Paradise Lost: An Overview of Living and Settling in the Countryside' and 'The Sacrifice to the Community', a Luddite photo essay in praise of the harmony of pre-industrial life that included, without any sense of irony, aerial photographs of the countryside.[72]

This was far from the ideals of the former Social Democratic municipality in Vienna (the council was dissolved by Dollfuß in 1933) and of Holzmeister's former contemporaries in the older Werkbund. *Profil*, which became the semi-official magazine of the New Austrian Werkbund, declared itself to be engaged with modernity and the future, but offered a very different understanding of what that meant. In place of the interest in concrete mass housing, for example, it featured articles on suburban family homes, gardens and wooden house construction. All of these were consonant with the combination of *Heimat* politics and Catholic teaching that became the backbone of the social policy of the Dollfuß regime.

From the post-1933 Austrian state, Holzmeister gained numerous prestigious commissions, including the state radio headquarters (with Heinrich Schmid and Hermann Aichinger) in 1935–39. However, given the focus of this article on sacred architecture, the final building to be considered is his design for the Seipel-Dollfuß Memorial Church in Vienna.

Ignaz Seipel (1876–1932) was a Catholic prelate who dominated Austrian politics in the 1920s. A leading figure in the Christian Social Party, he was Austrian chancellor from 1922 to 1924 and again from 1926 to 1929. As one of the founders of the Austrian Republic, Seipel helped persuade conservative politicians to work with their political opponents to set the new state on a sure footing.[73] During the 1920s, however, the increasingly bitter conflict with the Social Democrats left him disenchanted with parliamentary democracy. While it would be incorrect simply to label him a fascist or an advocate of clerical fascism, he was drawn towards an increasingly reactionary conservatism.[74] As a result, he was easily appropriated by Dollfuß as the forerunner of his regime.

Following his death in August 1932, Seipel was buried in the Central Cemetery of Vienna, but only one month later, in September, the idea of building a memorial chapel to house his body was mooted by Hildegard Burjan, a friend of Dollfuß and an influential Christian Social deputy.[75] Burjan was herself nearing the end of her life (she died in June 1933) and, as she became incapacitated, Dollfuß took over the enterprise and turned it into a state-sponsored project. Seven architects, including Robert Kramreiter, Karl Holey (master builder of St Stephen's Cathedral) and Alexander Popp, as well as Holzmeister, were invited to submit designs, and in May 1933 the committee chose Holzmeister's entry.[76] Dollfuß laid the foundation stone in July 1933 and the church was completed in September 1934 (Fig. 17).

By then, the political situation in Austria had changed again. In July 1934, Dollfuß was murdered by Nazis in an unsuccessful attempted coup and he was succeeded by Schuschnigg, who declared his predecessor a martyr to the cause of Austrian independence. At Dollfuß's funeral in St Stephen's Cathedral, the archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Theodor Innitzer, compared Dollfuß to Christ on the cross. The memory of the deceased dictator also became associated with another Catholic hero, Marco d'Aviano (1631–99), the Capuchin prelate who during the Ottoman siege of 1683 supposedly led the defenders of the city to victory over the besieging Ottoman forces armed with nothing more than a cross.[77] As Cardinal Innitzer stated in 1934:

> Marco d'Aviano and Engelbert Dollfuß, the one avowing his faith, the other a martyr — may they both be our sponsors, the advocates at God's throne for our poor, beleaguered Austria, may we soon be the recipients of the good from on high for which they both laboured, struggled, suffered and fought: the peace, honour, freedom and independence of a Christian, happy Austria! Amen.[78]

With this sacralised image of the murdered chancellor, the church was dedicated to Dollfuß as well as Seipel, and until 1939 its crypt contained both their sarcophagi. The meaning of the church thus changed: no longer just a memorial to an eminent statesman, it became the focus of a state-sponsored political and martyrological cult, an 'Austrian pantheon', as one newspaper termed it.[79] Holzmeister was clear about the significance of the project, dedicating a special issue of *Profil* to the design and his own involvement. Here he wrote:

> We have no need to fear criticism, for we went about our work with a pure heart […] we artists and craftsmen did what the sacred flame in our heart burns for: to serve God in all reverence.[80]

The Seipel-Dollfuß church was not the only church erected or rededicated to the memory of Dollfuß; there were others in places such as Hohe Wand in Wiener Neustadt, Laßnitzhöhe near Graz, Neusiedl (south-east of Vienna) and Rekawinkel in Pressbaum near St Pölten). There was also an attempt to create a state iconography of the murdered dictator: in 1937–38, a relief of the praying Dollfuß by the sculptor Hans Schwathe was installed in the tower of St Michael's Church, opposite the entrance to the Hofburg in Vienna (Fig. 18). A large figurative monument to d'Aviano by Hans Mauer was also installed in a niche of the Capuchin church in Vienna in the same year. Yet it is

Holzmeister's church that has drawn the most attention and a number of aspects merit closer attention.

First, given its importance, the location is perhaps unexpected. Rather than a prominent site in the city centre, it was built in the nondescript suburb of Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus, to the west of the city centre. We might explain the church's location by its origins in a private initiative; this may have been the only plot that Burjan was able to obtain. There was another logic to the choice of site, however, which also indicates the priorities of the new regime. The area was a working-class neighbourhood that had grown rapidly since the 1860s. It was thus a typical candidate for an 'emergency' chapel, since the church had not been able to keep up with the rate of urban expansion. Indeed, next to the plot of land on which the church was built was a new communal housing block — now called the Johann-Witzmann-Hof — completed in 1927 by the municipality. The church can therefore be seen as an attempt by the authoritarian regime to establish its presence in an urban space traditionally viewed as Social Democrat territory.

The character of the church can be read in this light, too. Holzmeister designed a low-key structure that evokes a medieval monastery more than the city's grandiose Catholic heritage; this impression is fortified by the fact that the site included, in addition to the church, administration buildings for Caritas Socialis, the Catholic nursing order founded by Burjan. The choice of such a modest structure is all the more striking given that the baroque splendour of the past was repeatedly mobilised by the authoritarian state in its attempt to construct an Austrian national identity.[81] Rather than returning to the overblown rhetoric associated with baroque revivalism, Holzmeister's church was an unobtrusive structure overshadowed by the neighbouring buildings.

The church's character was in part a consequence of the financial constraints suffered by the impoverished depression-era country, but it was also in keeping with the sombre purpose of the church. Equally it reflected Holzmeister's emphasis, outlined in his 1933 article on modern Catholic art and architecture, on the need to blend into the surroundings. It would be sentimentalism, he declared, 'to install a charming old-fashioned building amongst the rows of houses in such a place, in a complex of factories and sheds'.[82] Its style was also informed by political calculations. Although the Social Democratic party had been suppressed as a social and political force by 1933 — its defeat in the civil war of February 1934 merely confirmed its disorganised state — there was still recognition within the regime of the need to foster allegiance and loyalty in working-class neighbourhoods. It was the latest step in a long history of church engagement with working-class communities which the Dollfuß–Schuschnigg regime cultivated and promoted as a means of capturing working-class support.[83] The memorial church was thus conceived as a focal point that, as a visual expression of reverence (*Ehrfurcht*) and humility (*Demut*), to use Holzmeister's terms, would be more accessible to the neighbourhood. A Catholic ethic of work was implied, too, but one that ran counter to the meanings attached to the concept in Marxist discourse.

There is a further dimension to the location of the church. The suburb of Fünfhaus had a considerable Jewish population, with a large synagogue built in 1872 by Holzmeister's teacher König, which was destroyed in the wake of Kristallnacht in 1938. We might also see the church, therefore, as an example of the implementation of the wider policy of 'recatholicising' neighbourhoods.[84] Although the Dollfuß–Schuschnigg regime did not

pursue the strongly anti-Jewish policies of neighbouring Hungary, much less Hitler's Germany, it nevertheless sought to lessen 'Jewish influence' in public life. Construction of such an important church in a substantially Jewish neighbourhood was one means of doing so.

CONCLUSION: READING AUSTRIAN MODERNISM

When the Anschluss took place in 1938, Hermann Neubacher, the Nazi appointee as mayor of Vienna, warned Holzmeister of the dangers of returning to Austria from Turkey. Despite their enthusiasm for the Anschluss, many associates and supporters of the Dollfuß–Schuschnigg regime were marginalised, sacked or even imprisoned by the Nazis. Holzmeister followed Neubacher's advice and decided not to return to Vienna. He was dismissed from his post at the academy before the end of 1938.[85] That year thus marks the end of a specific period in his career and provides a useful point from which one can assess his work and the questions it raises.

Given his trajectory from architect of Social Democratic Vienna to cultural ideologue of Austrofascism, it is tempting to interpret Holzmeister as an unscrupulous opportunist who committed himself firmly to Catholic cultural politics once it became clear that the Christian Social Party and, subsequently, the dictatorship were in the ascendant. However, such a stance would overlook the sincerity of his commitment to Catholic political and social values, and his rightward political trajectory may be compared with the disenchantment with the republic that motivated others such as Seipel. Many Catholics were wary of parliamentary democracy and, after the short spell of coalition government immediately following the first world war, mutual suspicion reigned on both sides. Social Democrats rightly deplored the repeated attempts by their Christian Social opponents to delegitimise the republic while, conversely, the Christian Social Party viewed leftists as harbouring revolutionary plans to usher in an atheistic communist state.

Holzmeister's decision to throw in his lot with Dollfuß may be decried, but, given his religious beliefs, he was never likely to embrace radical socialism. He later distanced himself from his associations with the Dollfuß–Schuschnigg dictatorship and even denied awareness of its authoritarian tendencies. That was a common tactic among conservatives in Austria after 1945, who sought to deflect attention from their collusion in the destruction of the inter-war republic by pointing to their own marginalisation after the Anschluss.[86] Holzmeister's denials might be viewed in this light too, and, as one commentator has suggested, a combination of naivety and ambition may have led him to forgo deeper reflection on the ethics of his career choices.[87]

This article has not, however, been concerned with questioning the personal motivations of Holzmeister, or even with submitting him to some form of moral judgement. Rather, its aim has been to consider the place of his work in the history of Austrian and, more generally, modern architecture in the first half of the twentieth century. The narrative of inter-war Austrian architectural culture has tended to be shaped by a historical memory based on the image of Social Democratic Vienna and the intellectual brilliance of the many figures associated with the city. Yet this leads to a partial and incomplete account given that, as the case of Holzmeister demonstrates,

the landscape of architectural practice was more diverse than such an understanding suggests. The neglect of his work is due to an understandable unease among many architectural historians with the wider politico-cultural project of which he was a part. Even had he not collaborated so readily with the Austrofascist regime, his overt Catholicism and his calls for a recatholicising of contemporary culture might still have made his inclusion in the history of modern architecture uncertain. Churches sit uneasily in the narratives of architectural modernism and tend to be the subject of specialist studies. In this context, one might also mention Holzmeister's younger contemporary Kramreiter, an equally prolific designer of churches who had no association with the authoritarian state, yet has been even more marginalised in the historical record. Even much-admired modernist church architects such as Schwarz, Böhm and the Swiss architect Karl Moser (1877–1949) tend to be absent from general histories of modern architecture.[88]

Holzmeister confounds the easy opposition of modern/anti-modern. While many of his church designs were informed by a deep sense of tradition, others were clearly based on an engagement with contemporary developments in architecture. In this regard, Holzmeister had certain features in common with Frank, whose commitment to modernist innovation was tempered by an emphasis on the need to maintain a connection to architectural tradition and the historical memory of buildings' users.

The story of inter-war architecture in Austria plays out in a specific way a larger theme, namely how Austrians oriented themselves after the collapse of the social and political certainties of the Habsburg empire in 1918. This process involved many different conflicting visions: of emancipation, trauma, nostalgia and ambivalence. The architecture of Holzmeister illustrates one way in which Austrians coped with the loss of the past: not through a simple act of historical revival, but by an attempt to maintain values perceived to be from the past, albeit in a cultural idiom that was more relevant to present times.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BIOGRAPHY

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NOTES

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24 Franz Ottmann, 'Clemens Holzmeister', *Österreichs Bau- und Werkkunst*, 1 (1924), pp. 104–05.

25 Karl Maria Grimme, 'Clemens Holzmeister', *Der Fährmann: Österreichische Monatsschrift für Literatur, Theater, Musik und Bildende Kunst*, 3 (1926), pp. 534–35 (p. 535). All translations my own.

26 Timothy Pursell, '"The Burial of the Future": Modernist Architecture and the Cremationist Movement in Wilhelmine Germany', *Mortality*, 8, no. 3 (2003), pp. 233–50 (p. 239).

27 Stanford Anderson, *Peter Behrens and a New Architecture for the New Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. 35.

28 Posch, *Clemens Holzmeister*, p. 98.

29 Vienna City Council, *Die Wohnhausanlage der Gemeinde Wien im XIII Bezirk: Rottstrasse, Goldschlagstrasse, Felbigergasse* (Vienna: Chwala, 1925). It was designated the 'Blathof' in 1948 in honour of Ferdinand Blat, a member of the Republican Schutzbund killed in the civil war of February 1934.

30 Vienna City Council, *Die Wohnhausanlage der Gemeinde Wien im XIII Bezirk*, p. 7.

31 Blau, *Architecture of Red Vienna*, pp. 320–21.

32 Clemens Holzmeister, 'Die Wohnbauten der Gemeinde Wien', in *Das Buch des Gesamtverbandes Schaffender Künstler Österreichs* (Vienna: Verlag des Gesamtverbandes Schaffender Künstler, 1929), pp. 201–05.

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35 Ernst Hanisch, 'Der Politische Katholizismus als ideologischer Träger des "Austrofaschismus"', in *Austrofaschismus: Politik–Ökonomie–Kultur 1933–1938*, ed. by Emmerich Tálos and Wolfgang Neugebauer (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014), pp. 67–87.

36 James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 65.

37 See Andreas Suttner, *Das schwarze Wien: Bautätigkeit im Ständestaat 1934–1938* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2017), pp. 144–65.

38 Frank, *Die Internationale Werkbundsiedlung*.

39 The origins and course of the split are recounted in Posch, *Clemens Holzmeister*, pp. 236–55.

40 Posch, *Clemens Holzmeister*, p. 69.

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43 Richard Kralik, *Das Unbekannte Österreich: Eine Entdeckungsfahrt* (Vienna: Urania, 1917), p. 32.

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was too close to Protestant church design: see Vladimir Šlapeta, 'Jože Plečnik und Prag', *Bauforum*, 118 (1986), pp. 5–15 (p. 6).

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