

Anticlericalism and the Scars of the *Kulturkampf*, 1864–1904

Besides seeking to limit the costs associated with the development and retention of the Reich's overseas possessions, the German Center Party was equally concerned with ensuring that the Roman Catholic missionaries in the colonies enjoyed the same degree of respect, accommodation, and protection from the imperial authorities as their Protestant counterparts. As long as the annual colonial budgets remained manageable, the attitude of the Catholic party toward such government requests was then largely driven by the missionaries' relative satisfaction or discontent with the various individual colonial regimes. Thus, the confessional underpinning of the Center and the lack of Catholic economic interests in the colonies rendered religious, cultural, and ethical concerns of exceptional importance in party discussions of colonial issues. Precisely in this religious and cultural arena, however, government-Center relations were burdened with the legacy of the *Kulturkampf* and the traditions of popular and state-sanctioned anticlericalism. Indeed, the bitter struggle of the *Kulturkampf* discussed in this chapter left poorly healed scars on both sides that would re-open after 1903 under the strain of reverberations from African civil and military resistance.

Anticlericalism and the Brewing Church-State Conflict

The *Kulturkampf* had erupted in the newly created Kaiserreich of the 1870s as a result of a confluence of cultural, constitutional, political, and diplomatic factors that implicated the Roman Catholic Church as a logical rallying point for those displeased with the Prussian *kleindeutsch* solution to German disunity. As a general rule, German Catholics had endorsed the traditional leadership of Catholic Austria against the challenge of Protestant Prussia during the century-old contest between those two powers for ascendancy in German affairs. Consequently, both the Prussian government and German liberals interpreted the continual Catholic political support for South German and Hanoverian particularism after the Prussian military triumphs of 1866 and 1871 as an expression of disloyalty to the new nation-state. Nor were the official and liberal doubts regarding the loyalties of German Catholics in any

way alleviated by the nationalist aspirations of their Polish and Francophone coreligionists in eastern Prussia and newly-annexed Alsace-Lorraine. Moreover, the confessional allegiance German Catholics owed to a foreign religious authority in Rome only accentuated this problem as it tainted their every political stance with the implication of inspiration from south of the Alps, hence the anticlerical pejorative term ‘ultramontane’ (beyond the mountains) for politically engaged Catholics. Further compounding this purported dubiousness of German Catholic national loyalty was the irreconcilable opposition of Pope Pius IX to the national unification of Italy, Prussia’s recent ally in arms against Austria.¹

Beyond these adverse diplomatic and political alignments, Roman Catholicism under the leadership of Pope Pius IX clashed still more fundamentally with both liberal and bureaucratic values as exemplified in his Syllabus of Errors of 1864. In this pronouncement to the world, the Pope flatly rejected the liberal constitutional principles of religious freedom and state independence from the church.² He further claimed not only that the church had the right to exert direct power in temporal affairs, but also that no pope or ecumenical council had ever exceeded the proper limits of their authority. Pius IX thereby refused to entertain the slightest recognition of the potential legitimacy of common liberal and Protestant critiques of the Catholic Church. Indeed, according to the Syllabus, papal and conciliar transgressions against the rights of temporal sovereigns had not only never occurred, but were also essentially impossible because canonical law purportedly had precedence over civil law whenever these two came into conflict.³

In its defiant conclusion the Syllabus then categorically denied that “the Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile and harmonize himself with

1 Ernst Rudolf Huber, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte seit 1789*, vol. 4: *Struktur und Krisen des Kaiserreichs* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1969), 658–59. M.L. Anderson, *Windthorst*, 140–49, 157–60. Richard Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire (1871–1900)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 17–25. Blackbourn, “Progress and Piety: Liberalism, Catholicism and the State in Imperial Germany,” *History Workshop* 26 (Winter 1988): 60–61. Róisín Healy, *The Jesuit Specter in Imperial Germany* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), 53–54.

2 Pius IX, “Syllabus, Embracing the Principal Errors of Our Time Which are Censured in Consistorial Allocutions, Encyclicals, and Other Apostolic Letters of Our Most Holy Father, Pope Pius IX (Syllabus),” xv, xviii, xlii, liv–lv, lxxvii–lxxix, in *The Year of Preparation for the Vatican Council*, ed. Herbert Vaughan (London: Burns, Oates & Co., 1869), xxiv, xxix, xxxii, xxxvii. Huber, *Verfassungsgeschichte*, 4:653–54.

3 Syllabus, xxiii–xxiv, xlii, in *Year of Preparation*, ed. Vaughan, xxvi, xxix. Huber, *Verfassungsgeschichte*, 4:653.