

Hierarchy and exclusion – Alojzije Stepinac's public speeches against racism

Davor Trbušić*

dtrbusic@hrstud.hr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9896-8412>

Boris Beck**

boris.beck@fpzg.hr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4637-465X>

<https://doi.org/10.31192/np.21.1.5>

UDK / UDC: 272-722.52Stepinac, A.

323.14(042)

Preliminary communication /

Prethodno priopćenje

Primljeno / Received:

11. prosinca 2022. / Dec 11, 2022

Prihvaćeno / Accepted:

12. siječnja 2023. / Jan 12, 2023

This paper analyzes the public speech on the issue of race by Zagreb Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac between 1941 and 1945 as a response to the ideology and practice of the regime of the Independent State of Croatia. On the basis of Stepinac publicly available speeches, epistles and sermons, it is shown that he repeatedly explicitly refuted Nazi racial theories and denounced the persecution of Jews and Roma as unethical. In this way, he also entered the political sphere, to which the leaders of the regime reacted publicly. Stepinac regularly shaped his speeches within the ethos of the Catholic Church and for this purpose used biblical images of the Tower of Babel and the Flood, connecting Christian morality with the condemnation of racist theories. He typically uses an antithesis, insisting that all people are equal regardless of race, and that all people stand against God and they are obliged to behave in accordance with his will. Stepinac explicitly and figuratively refutes the biological hierarchy of the human race, insisting that all people are born equal and have the same inalienable rights, thus directly opposing the racist policy and practice of the Independent State of Croatia, and the result of this is his opposition by excluding anyone from society, which extends the ethics of his Church to all people without distinction.

Key words: *biblical metaphors, blood, Nazism, race, sermon.*

* Davor Trbušić, PhD, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Croatian Studies; Borongajska cesta 83d, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia.

** Boris Beck, PhD, Assist. Prof., Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Faculty of Political Science; Lepušićeva 6, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia.

Introduction

This paper analyzes the Zagreb Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac's¹ public speech on the issue of race between 1941 and 1945 as a response to the ideology and practice of the regime of the Independent State of Croatia. The historical synthesis of the development of the concept of racism and the genesis of the thoughts of totalitarian regimes in the first half of the 20th century about racial superiority and anti-Semitism, with an emphasis on National Socialist Germany, will be presented in the first part of the paper, followed by a rhetorical analysis of Stepinac's public statements about race. The research sample will include the published and publicly available speeches, epistles and sermons of Archbishop Stepinac from 1941 to 1945. At the same time, the sampling will be purposeful, i.e. only public speeches from which Stepinac's attitude towards race can be read will be selected from the published material. Accordingly, two research questions were posed that the qualitative analysis of the content aims to answer: did Stepinac use explicit and/or figurative language when addressing the racial theme, and what semantic features can be observed in his public speech.

1. Science, Racism and anti-Semitism

Race is generally considered to be a group or type of people of common origin,² but it is shown to be a fluid category, subject to different interpretations, i.e. a social construct in which the classification of people based on skin color and other phenotypic characteristics is revealed as a »pseudo-biological concept that has been used to justify and rationalize the unequal treatment of groups of people by others«.³ Societies in which the prevailing idea is that the phenotypes of a certain group of people are correlated with their intellectual, moral and behavioral characteristics are undoubtedly »racist societies«⁴ and so was the Independent State of Croatia.

¹ Alojzije Stepinac was born in Brezarić near Krašić in 1898. After the death of the then archbishop Antun Bauer, he took over the leadership of the largest diocese in Croatia. He operated in the turmoil of three types of political totalitarianism: fascism, national socialism and communism, and in 1946 he was sentenced to a prison sentence of sixteen years and a further five years of deprivation of all civil rights at a staged communist trial. He served his sentence in Lepoglava from 1946 to 1951 and from 1951 to his death in 1960 in the parish house of his native parish in Krašić.

² Michael BANTON, Race – as classification, in: Ellis CASHMORE et al., *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, 4, London and New York, Routledge, 1996, 294.

³ Edouard MACHERY, Luc FAUCHER, Social Construction and the Concept of Race, *Philosophy of Science*, 72 (2005) 5, 1208-1219, 1208.

⁴ Banton, *Race...*, 298.

The development of modern racism based on physical typology can be traced back to the Enlightenment when Carl von Linné first attempted to classify human races in 1735. Although he did not explicitly rank them, epithets such as »sharp«, »inventive« and »law-driven« among Europeans and »cunning«, »negligent« and »driven by caprice« among Blacks point to Linné's qualitative gradation.⁵ Along with him, we should also mention Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and his work *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind*, in which he introduces the term »Caucasoid race«, the so-called europeida.⁶ At the same time, he calls them »the original human race from which other races arose«,⁷ highlights them as »the most beautiful and superior« because of the shape of the skull,⁸ and traces the path towards the belief in the superiority of whites as a scientifically based fact.⁹ Although the so-called scientific racism did not address or specify Jews as an inferior group or a race that threatens the existence of a nation, in National Socialist Germany ideas about race and anti-Semitism were combined and »the persecution and finally extermination of the Jews was consistently and uncompromisingly pursued«.¹⁰ The roots of modern anti-Semitism in Germany are visible as early as 1807 in Prussia, after the defeat of Napoleon,¹¹ and its appearance is explained by the collapse of political thought, which, rejecting classical political philosophy, »favored ideas derived from new historically unfounded concepts that historians, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and biologists had recently discovered«.¹² The end of the 19th century in Germany (Second Reich) was marked by the rise of the *Völkisch* movement – an ethno-nationalist movement that is actually a product of the previous century, i.e. late romanticism.¹³

Adolf Hitler, in the context of the concept of race, was significantly influenced by the French diplomat and writer Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, who is considered the »precursor of Nazi racism« because his works reflect the idea that Aryans, that is, Germans, are »everything that is good and worthy of admiration«.¹⁴ Biddiss also believes that Gobineau was primarily a theoretician of »Arianism rather than Germanism«¹⁵ and that he identified the »super-elite

⁵ Fredrickson, *Racism...*, 56.

⁶ See Hannaford, *Race...*, 206-207.

⁷ Fredrickson, *Racism...*, 57.

⁸ Hannaford, *Race...*, 208.

⁹ Cf. Ellis CASHMORE, Whiteness, in: Ellis CASHMORE et al., *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, 4, London and New York, Routledge, 1996, 378.

¹⁰ Hannah ARENDT, *Izvori totalitarizma*, Zagreb, Disput, 2015, 3.

¹¹ Cf. Arendt, *Izvori...*, 28, 34.

¹² Hannaford, *Race...*, 316.

¹³ Cf. David WELCH, Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: Constructing a People's Community, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39 (2004) 2, 213-238, 217.

¹⁴ Paul A. FORTIER, Gobineau and German Racism, *Comparative Literature*, 19 (1967) 4, 341-350, 342.

¹⁵ Michael BIDDISS, Gobineau and the Origins of European Racism, *Race*, 7 (1966) 3, 255-270, 269.

of Aryans¹⁶ or the so-called a race of princes that is in danger of being supplanted by the »lower non-Aryan classes«.¹⁷ Houston Stewart Chamberlain should definitely be included in the mentioned circle of influence, who, inspired by Gobineau and Charles Darwin, advocated the idea that »the strongest and most capable race could assume its dominance and impose its supremacy and thus curb the process of degeneration caused by racial mixing«.¹⁸ The ideas of a pure race and anti-Semitism were propagated as soon as the National Socialist Party came to power in Germany in 1933. Its political thought reaffirms the ideology of *blood and soil* (*Blut und Boden*). The phrase, known since the 19th century, was popularized by Walther Darré in 1930 in his book *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (*New Nobility from Blood and Soil*), in which the author presents himself to the public as an ardent apologist for the thesis that the farmer is the basis of German society and the backbone of the Nordic/Aryan races.¹⁹ All this served as an ideological basis for the materialization of anti-Semitism through the legal acts of the National Socialist Party. The first significant act was the Law on the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 7, 1933, the goal of which was to »purify« the civil service by compulsory retirement of both »non-Aryans« and political opponents of the regime.²⁰ The idea of the purity of German blood was turned into a legal category in 1935 with the passing of the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, better known as the Nuremberg Laws. Most of the anti-Jewish laws that came into force after the Nuremberg Laws were introduced as supplementary decrees to the Reich Citizenship Law, of which there were eventually thirteen,²¹ and a combination of legislative and repressive coercion resulted in the death of six million Jews in Europe.

During its four-year existence, the Independent State of Croatia was organized on the basis of solutions visible in National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy.²² Although the fascists in Italy also had and in practice implemented

¹⁶ Michael BIDDISS, *The Neglected (V): Gobineau and the Illusions of Progress, Government and Opposition*, 19 (1984) 3, 348-366, 353.

¹⁷ Arendt, *Izvori...*, 170.

¹⁸ Ellis CASHMORE, Chamberlain, Houston Stewart, in: Ellis CASHMORE et al., *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, 4, London and New York, Routledge, 1996, 72-73.

¹⁹ Cf. Clifford R. LOVIN, *Blut Und Boden: The Ideological Basis of the Nazi Agricultural Program*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28 (1967) 2, 279-288, 281-282.

²⁰ Kristen RUNDLE, *The Impossibility of an Exterminatory Legality: Law and the Holocaust*, *The University of Toronto Law Journal*, 59 (2009) 1, 65-125, 69.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 70-73.

²² The entire organization of the Independent State of Croatia rested on the solutions visible in the ruling National Socialism in Germany and fascism in Italy (cf. Mario, JAREB, *Mediji i promidžba u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* [*Media and propaganda in the Independent State of Croatia*], Zagreb, Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2016, 15-16). As proof of this, we should only mention the legal provision on the protection of the honor and blood of the Croatian people, which propagates racial politics and discriminates against Jews in particular (Cf. Petar MACUT, *U sjeni križa, samokresa i noža. Katolički tisak u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj* [*In the Shadow of Cross, Revolver and Dagger. Catholic Press in the Independent State of Croatia*],

a racial policy since 1938 and solved the Jewish question in that way, this does not mean that National Socialism and fascism are synonymous, because there were structural differences between the two ideologies. In his book *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, Slaven Ravlić points out that one of the fundamental differences was that German fascism or national socialism was characterized by militant anti-Semitic nationalism, belief in the racial superiority of the Aryan or Nordic race, racial cleansing and genocide.²³ Following the example of Germany, the Independent State of Croatia propagated racial policy from the beginning and discriminated mainly against Jews²⁴, against whom »three key anti-Jewish legal provisions«²⁵ were issued on April 30, 1941, namely the Legal Provision on Citizenship, the Legal Provision on Racial Origins and the Legal Provision on the Protection of Aryan Blood and the Honor of the Croatian People. This was the introduction to a series of other racial laws and the expropriation, arrest and deportation of Jews, which resulted in their almost complete destruction on the territory of Croatia. Apart from Jews, the regime of the Independent State of Croatia persecuted people of other nationalities, such as Roma and Serbs, who were killed²⁶, imprisoned, forced to emigrate to Serbia or to convert from the Orthodox faith to Catholicism or another recognized religion.²⁷

Split, Redak, 2016, 93), but also other individual provisions whose content reflects anti-Semitic speech, such as the Rules of the Croatian Journalists' Association or the Legal Provisions on Journalists and Journalistic Work.

²³ Slaven RAVLIĆ, *Suvremene političke ideologije* [Contemporary Political Ideologies], Zagreb, Politička kultura, 2003.

²⁴ Cf. Macut, *U sjeni...*, 93.

²⁵ Naida-Michal BRANDL, *Oduzimanje židovske imovine u Hrvatskoj: Zagreb kao studija slučaja* [Appropriation of Jewish Property in Croatia: Zagreb as a Case Study], Zagreb, Leykam International, 2022, 325 etc.

²⁶ As proof of this, the following is a passage from the protest that Archbishop Stepinac sent to Ante Pavelić on May 14, 1941: »This hour I received the news that the Ustashe in Glina shot 260 Serbs without trial and investigation. I know that Serbs have committed serious crimes in our homeland during these twenty years of rule. But I still consider it my episcopal duty to raise my voice and say that this is not allowed according to Catholic morality, so I ask you to take the most urgent measures in the entire territory of the Independent State of Croatia, so that no Serb is killed unless he is proven guilty, for which deserved death. Otherwise, we cannot count on the blessing of heaven, without which we must perish. I hope you won't blame me for this open word.« (Batelja, *Blaženi Alojzije Stepinac – svjedok Evanđelja ljubavi...*, 123-124).

²⁷ Cf. Nikica BARIĆ, Položaj Srba u domobranstvu Nezavisne Države Hrvatske, 1941.-1945. [The position of Serbs in the Croatian Home Guard of the Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945], *Polemos*, 5 (2002) 9-10, 159-175, 160.

2. *Stepinac's public anti-rasistic speech in Independent State of Croatia*

During the four-year existence of the Independent State of Croatia, the most prominent church figure was Zagreb Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac. His activity is in the last decades the subject of historiographical academic papers mostly, sometimes theological, and least of all communication²⁸. In order to improve the knowledge of Stepinac's public discourse, the topic of racism was chosen because of its importance.

2.1. *Explicitness and politics*

Racism is a method of excluding certain members from society in various degrees, from restricting movement, confiscation of property to expulsion and killing, and Stepinac explicitly²⁹ speaks against this ideology in a series of public addresses. For example, in a sermon from October 25, 1942, he says:

»The first thing we claim is that all nations without exception are nothing before God. (...) The second thing we claim is that all peoples and races come from God. There is really one race, and that is God's race.«³⁰

Not only does Stepinac say that all races are equal, which is obviously against the propagation of Aryan supremacy, but he also attacks any calculation with racial characteristics, declaring it irrelevant from God's point of view, and it does so by means of its frequent rhetorical procedure, antithesis, which means »expressing the opposite in a statement by connecting two words, phrases or sentences of opposite meaning.«³¹

²⁸ This group includes Davor Trbušić's doctoral dissertation: Doctoral Thesis, 2022: *Oblici i načini cenzure javnih istupa Alojzija Stepinca u svjetovnom i katoličkom tisku Nezavisne Države Hrvatske* [Types and Methods of Censorship of Public Appearances of Alojzije Stepinac in Secular and Catholic Press of the Independent State of Croatia], <https://dr.nsk.hr/en/islandora/object/hrstud%3A2747> (01.12.2022)/ Doctoral Thesis defended at the Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb on March 30, 2022 and Celestin Tomić's book: *Moć pisane riječi: blaženi Alojzije Stepinac i katolički mediji* [The Power of the Word: Blessed Alojzije Stepinac and the Catholic Media], Zagreb, Glas Koncila, 2006, in which the author analyzes the content of Archbishop Stepinac's written and spoken words about the media, especially the Catholic media.

²⁹ Explicitly means that »something is expressed or shown clearly and openly without any attempt to hide anything«, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/explicitly-political> (01.12.2022).

³⁰ CP (*copia publica trans. proc. s. virt. et mart. S. D. Aloisii Stepinac, S.*), 24, 1716.–1718.; CP means: documents used in the process of declaring Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac blessed, Cf. Juraj BATELJA, *Propovijedi, govori, poruke (1941. – 1946.)* [Sermons, Speeches and Messages (1941. – 1946.)], Zagreb, Postulatura blaženoga Alojzija Stepinca, 2012, 209-211.

³¹ Krešimir BAGIĆ, *Rječnik stilskih figura* [Dictionary of stylistic figures], Zagreb, Školska knjiga, 2012, 51.

Stepinac accepts that there is a difference in physical features and level of culture, but he expressly notes that none of this diminishes human dignity:

»Members of certain race may be of higher or lower culture, they may be white or black, they may be separated by oceans, they may live at the north or south pole, but essentially they remain a race that comes from God and has to serve God according to the norms of natural and positive God's law, written in the hearts and souls of people and revealed through the Son of God Jesus Christ, the ruler of all nations. (...) All of them without distinction, be they members of the Gypsy race or any other, be they Blacks or distinguished Europeans, be they hated Jews or proud Aryans, have the same right to say: 'Our Father who art in heaven!' (Mt 6:9).«³²

Although Stepinac accepts the hierarchization of culture to a higher and lower level, he immediately relativizes it in the statement of the brotherhood of all people, because they have the same Father; the exterior, which can be black or white, contrasts the heart and soul, which should be equal to all; in this sense, the opposition between »proud Aryans« and »hated Jews« is distorted, because there is clearly no reason for either hatred of Jews (which comes from outside) or pride of Aryans (which comes from within); indeed, both are sinful in God's eyes.

In a sermon from October 31, 1943, Stepinac says:

»We have defined our position towards racism since racism existed, not only today. And that point of view is short and clear. The Catholic Church does not know the races that rule and the races that enslave«³³,

which is another explicit statement that opposes state policy. It is symptomatic that Stepinac begins his statement in the first person plural, and then switches to the third person singular. Racism has »principles and strategies of *inclusion* and *exclusion*« and »We, Our Group are self-assigned a better or higher position«³⁴, which means that plural is crucial for racist ideology. We consider political ideology here as »sets of beliefs about politics incorporating specific proposals and general ideas about human beings«, while political ideologists »are involved in the enterprise of persuading people of the soundness of their political ideas in a changing political scene«. ³⁵ Stepinac says quite clearly that his worldview is that of the Catholic Church, and since he expresses it publicly, he is in a real communication situation that »gives him a real context and the possibility of referencing«, ³⁶ as can be seen in the reaction of the

³² CP, Cf. Batelja, *Propovijedi...*, 209-210.

³³ CP, 24, 1720.-1723., Cf. Batelja, *Propovijedi...*, 279.

³⁴ Teun A. VAN DIJK, *Ideology. A Multidisciplinary Approach*, London, SAGE Publications, 1998, 159.

³⁵ Gary BROWNING, *Political ideologies*, in: Barrie Axford et al. (ed.), *Politics: an Introduction*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, 255.

³⁶ Andrea ZLATAR, *Istinito, lažno, izmišljeno* [True, false, invented], Zagreb, Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 1989, 28.

then Minister of Education, Julije Makanec, who wrote in *Nova Hrvatska* on November 7, 1943:

»God has determined each class its circle of tasks; and that's why it's best for everyone to stay with what they were called for. This applies to the full extent to that high church dignitary, who recently crossed the limits of his calling in his speech and began to interfere in matters for which he was not called. The one who does not understand the meaning of political struggle, the one who has no understanding of political values nor knows how to evaluate and weigh them, will always do the best if he stays away from the political affair.«³⁷

One of the modes of Stepinac's functioning in a rigid political system was to place the condemnation of racial theories in the context of the condemnation of both communism (class ideology) and nationalism (national ideology):

»That is why the Catholic Church has always condemned, and still condemns every injustice and violence, which begins in the name of class, racial or ethnic theories. (...) If the principles of racial theories, which have no foundation, are easily applied, is there any security on earth for any people at all?«³⁸

As he equates all people, and puts them only in relation to God, Stepinac also puts all ideologies on the same level if they commit »injustice and violence«, stressing along the way that »the principles of racial theories (...) have no foundation.« At the same time, he notices and admits the physical or cultural differences between people from different countries of the world, but does not accept the violence perpetrated in the name of this.

Another mode for Stepinac is to deny that he expresses political views at all:

»(...) we are not and do not want to be anyone's political trumpet, which adjusts its voice to the hourly wishes and needs of certain parties or individuals. We have always emphasized in public life the principles of the eternal law of God, regardless of whether it is Croats, Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, Catholics, Muslims, Orthodox or anyone else.«³⁹

Since politics »comprises all the activities of co-operation, negotiation and conflict within and between societies«,⁴⁰ any talk about race in a racist society is *ipso facto* political, which is quite clear to Stepinac and his critics.

³⁷ Julije MAKANEC, Pozvani i nepozvani [Invited and Uninvited], *Nova Hrvatska*, November 7 1943., Cf. Juraj BATELJA, *Blaženi Alojzije Stepinac – svjedok Evanđelja ljubavi* [The Blessed Alojzije Stepinac – Witness to the Gospel of Love], Zagreb, Postulatura blaženoga Alojzija Stepinca, 2010, 604-607.

³⁸ CP, Cf. Batelja, *Propovijedi...*, 210-211.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Adrian LEFTWICH, *What is politics?: the activity and its study*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2004, 16.

2.2. People and animals

Fredrickson calls racial theories secular or scientific racism, which prefers to perceive human beings as »part of the animal kingdom, rather than, as is characteristic of biblical terminology, children of God endowed with spiritual abilities that are denied to other creatures.«⁴¹ This is in contrast to how a racist sees himself, which is obvious from this excerpt from Makanec:

»If man is the image and likeness of God, then it is a European man to some degree, certainly more than a black man from central Africa. The Gothic cathedral certainly reflects eternity in a more intense and sublime way than a dirty black hut or a gypsy's hut, and the Ninth symphony is certainly closer to God than the howling of an Australian cannibal tribe.«⁴²

The author moves within orientational metaphors that »give a concept a spatial orientation«⁴³; one contradiction is *up/down*, in which what is up is always better than what is down, and for the language of racism, that concept is essential because what is up has control and power over what is down. The group of orientation metaphors also includes the opposition *inside/outside* (where it is better to be inside than outside), also visible in Makanec's text:

»let [Stepinac] leave [political speech] to the invited, to those whom God has determined to be at the forefront of this struggle of the people as its political and military leaders that carry responsibility for the nation's destiny on their backs.«⁴⁴

There are, therefore, those who are above (Ustasha) and those who are below (eg Jews); there are also those who are inside (racists) and those who are outside, and Stepinac is currently outside, but he is given the opportunity to enter inside (though not to climb up). These conceptual metaphors reveal the complex mental and social geography of the Nazi mind and body, which is also evident from Makanec's linking of the political and the military, because they are indeed mixed concepts, as in the case of race and class or the mass and the individual, which Theweleit writes about:

»Therefore, whoever counts himself as an 'Aryan' or another 'superior race' is saying the following: I am not a lower class, I am not a mass, I am not a proletarian, I am not a woman, I am not an animal. And further: I am a man, an elevated individual, I am a formation, one of yours, of the higher ones, I am forever for the lordship, for the army.«⁴⁵

⁴¹ Fredrickson, *Racism...*, 57.

⁴² Pozvani i nepozvani, Cf. Batelja, *Blaženi Alojzije Stepinac...*, 604-607.

⁴³ George LAKOFF, Mark JOHNSON, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2003, 14 etc.

⁴⁴ Pozvani i nepozvani, Cf. Batelja, *Blaženi Alojzije Stepinac...*, 604-607.

⁴⁵ Klaus THEWELEIT, *Male Fantasies Vol 2. Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, 73.

The racist is therefore in a contradictory relationship with the animal – he is a racist because he aims to separate himself from the animal (Jew, woman, proletarian), but it is precisely racism that connects it with an animal because it is based on the animal in man.⁴⁶

In a completely different way, Stepinac separates man from animal because for him is significant only what comes from God; the animal is opposed to God, as can be seen from his sermon in the Zagreb Cathedral on November 1, 1944, but only because it is outside the moral law:

»There are certainly still many noble hearts on earth today. But when we look at the thousands and thousands of burned homes around the world today, when we hear about the tragedies of countless families, when we look at the thousands of unfortunate children who were left without parents, then we have to say that too many human hearts are still hard and cruel today. Man has lived to such an extent that the words of an old pagan can be applied to care: 'Homo homini lupus – man is a wolf to man!'⁴⁷

The wolf is also the topic of Stepinac's sermon on June 21, 1942, when he reacted to Mile Budak's⁴⁸ story:

»It wasn't long before a note in the newspaper under the title: 'Rebel blood' caught my eye. I read and was amazed at the words: 'Peacemaking... should be destroyed and a new path should be taken from the past.' The article ends with the words: 'We are the offspring of wolf and lion!'⁴⁹

Blood here represents racial purity, that is, the popular notion, still alive today, that hereditary traits are transmitted through blood; the author of the text

⁴⁶ Stepinac also says that racists treat the excluded like animals: »Mercy has become a symbol of weakness and cowardice on earth today. But whatever the world may judge about it, the fact is that charity is one of the most beautiful features of man on earth and more valuable than silver and gold and precious stones. (...) It is therefore one of the essential signs of God the Creator: infinite mercy towards all creatures, and first and foremost towards man, whom he created in his own image and likeness. (...) What can we say then about people, who trampled or stepped on the living image of God the Creator, who insult the life rights of their neighbor without remorse, as if it were a dog or some other animal? We tell them that mercy is a sign of predestination or rejection, a sign of whether they belong to God or the devil, heaven or hell.« (Propovijed preuzv. gosp. Nadbiskupa u prvostolnoj crkvi na blagdan Sviju Svetih 1944. [Sermon by the presb. Mr. Archbishop in the cathedral church on the feast of All Saints], *Katolički list*, November 16, 1944, 552-553, 552). The weekly *Katolički list* is considered a pioneer of Catholic journalism in Croatia. It started publishing on January 6, 1849.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ »Mile Budak published the novella *Buntovna krv* in 1942. Mocking the politics of the HSS, he wrote 'Peacemaking should be destroyed and a new path of the past... We are and remain the offspring of wolves and lions...' On June 21, 1942, Archbishop Stepinac reacted to Budak's novella from the pulpit: 'Contrary to the words, peacemaking should be destroyed, Jesus Christ established the principle Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God.' V. Maček writes about this in 1953.« cited according to Frano GLAVINA, Nadbiskup Stepinac i nacionalsocijalizam u svjetlu izvješća Gestapoa [Archbishop Stepinac and national socialism in the light of the Gestapo report], *Croatica Christiana periodica*, 21 (1997) 40, 85-96, 93.

⁴⁹ CP, 24, Cf. Batelja, *Propovijedi...*, 190.

that Stepinac criticizes, the writer and minister Mile Budak, presents himself as the offspring of a wolf and a lion, thus predators; it also does so in the first person plural, which is a sign of ideological speech; therefore, an opposition was stated, on one side of which is a pure race of bloodthirsty animals, and on the other, peacemakers (unpure).

Stepinac readily puts himself on the opposite side of Budak, and it is interesting how blood is used by him not only as a metaphor for heritage, but also as a metonymy for courage (blood shed for the homeland):

»I believe, first of all, that the writers in question did not think much about what they were writing. If they wanted to emphasize that we have a duty to defend our homeland from an unjust attack, even to defend it with blood, it can be understood, because love for the homeland is also a commandment of God. But if one thinks that everyone can do what they want, and that there are no limits (...) then this is a grave misconception, which cannot produce anything good. In contrast to the words 'peacemaking should be destroyed', Jesus Christ set the principle: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God!' (Mt 5:9).«⁵⁰

Stepinac once again establishes the antithesis, and this time the destroyers of peace are opposed to the prince of peace, i.e. Jesus Christ.⁵¹ As in the previous examples, Stepinac is happy to express his anti-racist thought explicitly:

»And in contrast to the words 'we are the offspring of wolves and lions', there is the revealed truth of God, which was so deeply emphasized by St. John the Apostle: 'See what kind of love the (heavenly) Father has given us, that we should be called children of God and we are.' (1 John 3:1). So if we now ask, who has the right, Jesus Christ, the eternal and infallible Truth, or a miserable man, who is not able to investigate the nature of a single fly, then I think that priority must be given to Christ.«⁵²

No matter how often the church and biblical discourse is evoked, which may be more difficult to understand, but is important to him as a source of ethos,⁵³ Stepinac nevertheless publicly said of the minister directly that he »didn't think much of what he wrote« and that he was a »miserable man«.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ There are numerous biblical references to the Prince of Peace, for example Isaiah 9:6 and 2 Thessalonians 3:16.

⁵² CP, 24, Cf. Batelja, *Propovijedi...*, 190.

⁵³ Ethos as an important factor in rhetoric was first mentioned by Aristotle (see Braet, A.C. Ethos, pathos and logos in Aristotle's Rhetoric: A re-examination. *Argumentation* 6, 307–320 (1992).

2.3. *From Babylon to the Flood*

From what has been presented so far, it is clear that Stepinac connected his anti-rasistic messages with the teachings of the Church, and on several occasions he also uses biblical images and quotations.⁵⁴ Thus, in his sermon on July 13, 1941, he said the following:

»Let this year's pilgrimage be under the motto: 'Those who love Our Lady, hate evil!' It seems as if today's humanity has twisted this meaning and as if its motto is: Those who love evil, hate man! Those who love evil, hate God and Our Lady! But we can't do that. Because in man, no matter what he is, we see the image of God.«⁵⁵

This is an even more direct biblical reference,⁵⁶ and those who do not see the image of God in a man may be recognized as lovers of evil, that is, Nazis and communists.

From Stepinac's perspective, such a worldview is arrogance, so it is not unusual that in his speech about race he cites the biblical image of archetypal arrogance in order to support his argument, for example in his New Year's Eve sermon in 1940,⁵⁷ in which he said:

»How many times have we listened about salutary racist theories? About social justice, which communism supposedly brings with it? And today, here on the Old Year, the year nineteen and forty, looking before us at the new Tower of Babel, we see at the same time the confusion of languages, the confusion of the concepts of good and evil, we see destruction and despair. Humanity wanted to build without God and against God.«⁵⁸

On the one hand, he again equates Nazism and socialism as two equally anti-Christian ideologies, and on the other, he invokes the symbol of the Tower of Babel to suggest that new societies are built against God, so they will inevitably fail.⁵⁹ In the continuation of the sermon, the figure of antithesis sets God's order against the new ideologies:

⁵⁴ Citation represents a »citation intertextual process«, in which the quotation is an »explicit intext« that establishes a »citation relation« to the original; Dubravka ORAIĆ TOLIĆ, *Teorija citatnosti* [Theory of citation], Zagreb, Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 1990, 5.

⁵⁵ Et iste est omnis fructus ut auferatur peccatum! Propovijed Preuzv. Nadbiskupa na Mariji Bistrici prigodom zagrebačkog hodočašća [Sermon Taken by Archbishop on Marija Bistrica on the occasion of the Zagreb pilgrimage], *Katolički list*, July 17 1941, 321-322, 321.

⁵⁶ Stepinac quoted according to the Vulgate (*qui diligitis Dominum odite malum*, Ps 96:10); in contemporary translation and numbering: »The Lord loves the one who hates evil« (Ps 97:10).

⁵⁷ Although the sermon was delivered on December 31, 1940, it was published in *Katolički list* in January 1941, so it was included in the selected sample.

⁵⁸ Humiliamini igitur..., Cf. Batelja, *Propovijedi...*, 34.

⁵⁹ Tower of Babel is »a tower presumptuously intended to reach from earth to heaven, the building of which was frustrated when Jehovah confused the language of the builders (Genesis 11:1-9)«, metaphorically »allegory a scene of noise and confusion«. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/babel> (01.12.2022).

»Not a peace – but discord and slaughter, not a construction - but demolition and destruction, not a place full of happy faces – but hunger and misery, not a place of public and personal security – but anarchy, not a place of wonderful and holy Christian freedom of the spirit – but a rigid slavery with no end in sight.«⁶⁰

The apocalyptic tone appears several times in Stepinac's speeches, for example in the sermon on May 31, 1942:

»The deluge of enraged passions, hatred and revenge is approaching its climax. (...) And it is not necessary to ask when they will end. (...) Then, when God is acknowledged for what he is and due honor is given to him, then, when the arrogant will not consider that they can do as they please, as if they are not responsible to anyone, but when they will beat their chests with their fists and cried: 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'«⁶¹

The biblical image of the flood is not accidental - it is associated with humanity's sin and punishment (like the Tower of Babel);⁶² it is a world without Christ. One of the biblical metaphors that Stepinac uses is the cornerstone, as a paraphrase of Christ:⁶³

»All that spilled blood, whether it was shed in strikes, fueled for years by sinister, unscrupulous communist agitators, whether it was shed in armed conflict at sea, land or air, whether it was shed individually or in masses, throughout the ends of the globe, would be useless, if the cornerstone of the world, Jesus Christ, would not be built again in the foundations of human society, and His Gospel would not be recognized as the only authoritative norm for the organization of human society, and His Most Holy Blood as the only ransom price before God.«⁶⁴

Communism appears again as a threat equal to racism (Nazism), and together they are contrary to God's order. In thematizing the rebellion of man against God, Stepinac goes so far as to call the supporters of racism Jews, as in the sermon on November 25, 1941:⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Humiliamini igitur..., Cf. Batelja, *Propovijedi...*, 34.

⁶¹ CP, 24, Cf. Batelja, *Propovijedi...*, 184-188.

⁶² »Sins multiplied as did humanity, which was all perverted. That's why God sent a flood on the earth and everyone perished in punishment, except righteous Noah and his family«, CATECHISMO DELLA DOTTRINA CRISTIANA, Pubblicato per ordine del sommo pontefice s. Pio X, Libreria editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1959, 11.

⁶³ The cornerstone is the main stone that forms the corner of the building's foundation. This is how Jesus Christ is called in a number of places in the Bible (eg. Mt 21:42-44, Eph 2:20).

⁶⁴ Propovijed preuzv. Nadbiskupa na blagdan Presvete Krvi [Sermon by the presb. Archbishop on the Feast of the Holy Blood], *Katolički list*, July 10 1941, 311-313, 312.

⁶⁵ Ne treba nam polovičnih nego čitavih kršćana! Propovijed preuzv. gosp. nabiskupa dra. A. Stepinca akademičarkama na dan Sv. Kataruin (sic!) 1941. [Sermon by the presb. Mr. archbishop dr. A. Stepinac to female academics on the feast of St. Catherine], *Katolički list*, November 27 1941, 549-550.

»What about today? We see the same picture as with the Jews in the desert.⁶⁶ (...) It is the same picture with many Christians today. For them, Christianity became something that passed. What, they think, is Christianity for us, when we have a choice of many interesting theories? What good is Christian charity when we have a firm fist? (...) And we have come so far, that today the value of race is greater than Jesus Christ.«

In a very sharp inversion, Stepinac tells those who persecute Jews that they are the Jews of our day – because it is the racists who reject God. Without knowledge of Christian theology, it is not possible to understand Stepinac sermon on the feast of the Holy Blood of Christ in Ludbreg, July 3, 1941, when he said:

»And when some humans boast of noble blood, I would dare to assert that there is only one true nobility of blood, and that is the nobility of the blood of the Son of God Jesus Christ, whose participants can become all people of good will. And to that nobility, to the blood of the Son of God, we give recognition today, our praise!«⁶⁷

The »nobility of the blood« represents the theory according to which the Aryan race is above the others, but now it is opposed to the only true »nobility of the blood« which belongs only to Jesus. Stepinac implicitly denies racist theories (because all people are the same by blood), and also introduces the brotherhood of »people of good will« who may be together regardless of human blood, that is, origin. Thus, in Stepinac public speech, blood simultaneously represents both an allusion to Nazism (blood and soil), a metonymy of the futile suffering of the innocent (bloodshed), and a way to overcome suffering and anti-divine ideologies (Redemption).

Conclusion

This paper analyzed the public speech on the issue of race by Zagreb Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac between 1941 and 1945 as a response to the ideology and practice of the regime of the Independent State of Croatia. According to its laws and their implementation, the Independent State of Croatia manifested itself as a racist state, in the sense that certain groups (Jews, Roma and others) are excluded based on their origin; pseudoscientific explanations affirm a racial hierarchy in which the Aryans are at the top and the others are below them. On the basis of Stepinac publicly available speeches, epistles and sermons, it is shown that he repeatedly explicitly refuted Nazi racial theories and denounced

⁶⁶ »The Hebrews (...) through their own fault delayed entering the promised land, and Moses died on its borders, leaving Joshua as his successor, who finally, after forty years of wandering, conquered Palestine...« (*Catechismo...*, 120).

⁶⁷ Propovijed preuzv. Nadbiskupa..., *Katolički list*, 312.

the persecution of Jews and Roma as unethical. In this way, he also entered the political sphere, to which the leaders of the Independent State of Croatia regime reacted publicly. Stepinac regularly shaped his speeches within the ethos of the Catholic Church and for this purpose used biblical images of the Tower of Babel and the Flood, connecting Christian morality with the condemnation of totalitarian societies. As a stylistic device, he typically uses an antithesis, which on the one hand turns the antinomy of Nazism (pure Aryans against impure Jews), insisting that all people are equal regardless of race, and on the other hand establishes a new antithesis in accordance with his worldview: all people stand against God and they are obliged to behave in accordance with his will. Blood is shown to be a core theme in that constellation because it refers simultaneously to racism (the ideology of blood and soil), and to the destruction of war (the shedding of the blood of the innocent caused by that ideology), and to the blood of Jesus Christ, shed for the redemption of all people (perspective of reconciliation of people mutually and with God). Stepinac thus explicitly and figuratively refutes the biological hierarchy of the human race, insisting that all people are born equal and have the same inalienable rights, thus directly opposing the racist policy and practice of the Independent State of Croatia, and the result of this is his opposition by excluding anyone from society, which extends the ethics of his Church to all people without distinction.

Davor Trbušić* – Boris Beck**

Hijerarhija i isključivanje – javni govori Alojzija Stepinca protiv rasizma

Sažetak

U ovom se radu analizira javni govor zagrebačkog nadbiskupa Alojzija Stepinca o pitanju rase između 1941. i 1945. godine kao odgovor na ideologiju i praksu režima Nezavisne Države Hrvatske. Na temelju Stepinčevih javno dostupnih govora, nagovora, okružnica, poslanica i propovijedi pokazuje se da je on više-kratno eksplicitno opovrgavao nacističke rasne teorije te prokazivao progone Židova i Roma kao neetične. Stepinac je svoje istupe redovno oblikovao unutar *ethosa* Katoličke crkve te se u tu svrhu koristio biblijskim slikama Kule babilonske i potopa, povezujući kršćanski moral s osudom totalitarističkih društava. Kao stilsko sredstvo tipično koristi antitezu kojom s jedne strane izvrće antinomiju nacizma (čisti arijevcu nasuprot nečistih Židova), inzistirajući na tome da su svi ljudi jednaki bez obzira na rasu, a s druge uspostavlja novu antitezu u skladu sa svojim svjetonazorom: svi ljudi stoje nasuprot Boga te su se dužni ponašati u skladu s njegovom voljom. Stepinac eksplicitno i figurativno opovrgava biološku hijerarhičnost ljudske rase, inzistirajući na tome da su svi ljudi rođeni jednaki te da imaju ista neotuđiva prava, čime se izravno suprotstavio rasističkoj politici i praksi Nezavisne Države Hrvatske, a rezultat je toga njegovo protivljenje tomu da se ikoga isključuje iz društva, čime etiku svoje Crkve proteže ne sve ljude bez razlike.

Ključne riječi: biblijska metaforika, krv, nacizam, propovijed, rasa.

* Dr. sc. Davor Trbušić, Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Fakultet hrvatskih studija; Borongajska cesta 83d, HR-10000 Zagreb; e-mail: dtrbusic@hrstud.hr.

** Doc. dr. sc. Boris Beck, Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Fakultet političkih znanosti; Lepušićeva 6, HR-10000 Zagreb; e-mail: boris.beck@fpzg.hr.