

RELIGION, POLITICS AND CULTURE IN AUSTRIA.
TRADITIONS, TRANSFORMATIONS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Online-Lecture – Chinese-Austrian-EU Summer School 2021
22nd July 2021 (Franz Gmainer-Pranzl, Salzburg University/Austria)

Centre for Intercultural Theology and Study of Religions at Salzburg University:

- *contextual theology*: reciprocal influence between religion(s) and society
- *intercultural-theological epistemology*: principles and methods of knowledge
- *comparative theology*: dialogue between different religions
- *theology of religions*: reflecting the consequences of religious claims to "truth" and "salvation"

(1) PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ON RESEARCH INTO RELIGION

- "Culture" as a *way of life*
- "Religion" as a *way of salvation*: symbols, rituals, ethics, institutions, knowledge and experiences.
- Understanding "religion" in different perspectives of science:
 - o *religious studies* (empirical investigation): sociology, cultural anthropology, psychology of religion, history of religion ...
 - o *philosophy of religion* (discursive analysis): reflecting the language, concepts, terms and arguments of religious traditions
 - o *theology* (intellectual responsibility based on faith): interpreting life and society in the light of religious truth / reinterpreting religious convictions in the light of present challenges

(2) IMPORTANT PHASES AND UPHEAVALS IN THE RECENT HISTORY OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN (CATHOLIC) CHURCH AND AUSTRIAN SOCIETY

- *The alliance between throne and altar: from "Josephinism" to the fall of the monarchy (1918)*
 - o Empress MARIA THERESIA (1740–1780): persecution of Protestants → Emperor JOSEPH II. (1780–1790): Edict of Tolerance
 - o French Revolution and Secularisation (1803): consequences for the church
 - o 19th century: conflicts between restauration and liberalism
 - o Protestant Patent (1861), Austrian Islam Act (1912)
 - o Proclamation of the republic (12th November 1918)
- *The church in a polarised society (1918–1945)*
 - o Christian Social Party (IGNAZ SEIPEL) ↔ Social Democratic Party (OTTO BAUER)
 - o July 1927: fire in the Palace of Justice, February 1934: revolt of the Social Democrats, suppression of democracy, Austrofascism (ENGELBERT DOLLFUSS, KURT SCHUSCHNIGG)
 - o 1938 annexation of Austria to Nazi-Germany ("Anschluss")
 - o 1938–1945: persecution and assassinantion of the Jewish Community, suppresion of the church
- *"A free church in a free society" (after 1945)*
 - o Shock and silence after Holocaust
 - o Maria Zell manifesto (1952): „No return to the protectorate exercised by a party over the Church"
 - o Since 1960s: "guest workers" coming to Austria, 1979: registration of the Islamic religious community

- *On the road to a religiously plural society (from the 1980s onwards)*
 - o "Religious Denominations in Austria. Baseline study for 2016 – Scenarios until 2046" (research, August 2017)
 - o New religious movements recognized in Austria, pluralization of Austrian society
 - o Right-wing populist/identitarian movements, using Christianity as identity ("Christian Europe"), religious extremism (terror attacks, 2nd Nov. 2020 in Vienna)

(3) NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

- Austria: a "postsecular society"?
- Interreligious dialogue and dialogue between (secular) society/non-believers and members of religious communities
- The Austrian Society in a global world: walking the "Human Path"?

16 religious communities which are currently *recognized* by the Austrian government:

- Catholic Church (Latin, Greek and Armenian Rite)
- Protestant Church (Lutheran, Reformed)
- Greek Oriental Churches (9 communities)
- Jewish Community
- Muslim Community
- Armenian Apostolic
- Syrian Orthodox
- Coptic Orthodox)
- Old Catholic Church
- Methodist Church
- The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints
- New Apostolic Church
- Buddhist Community
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- ALEVI Islamic Community
- Free Churches (Baptists, Evangelical Churches, Pentecostal Churches, Elia Church, Mennonite Church)

→ <https://www.bundestkanzleramt.gv.at/agenda/kultusamt/kirchen-und-religionsgesellschaften.html>

10 religious communities which hold the status of „officially *registered* religious denominations“:

- Old Alevi Community
- Bahá'í
- Christian Community – Movement for Religious Renewal
- Hindus
- Islamic Shiite Community
- Church of the Seventh Day Adventists
- Pentecostal Church of God in Austria
- Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity
- United Pentecostal Church Austria
- Sikhs Community

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