

Religion in Austria

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Austria Steeped in Christendom

Historically, Austria is one of the countries that were once “steeped in Christendom.” These countries originated during the fifteen hundred years that Christianity predominated in Europe. The Reformation in the sixteenth century, moreover, had a lasting effect on the structural formation of Austrian society. The Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), the peace negotiations which ended the Thirty Years’ War, led to a close interplay between Church and State. The decision that the religion of each state was to be settled by the ruler, the phrase “*Cuius regio eius et religio*” meant that, as the ruling Habsburgs were Catholics, Austria, much of which had meanwhile become Protestant, was re-Catholicized. This Counter-Reformation was undertaken with full force on the part of the state and society. Anyone who did not comply lost their social status and, therefore, all means of earning a livelihood. Sometimes, they even lost their lives.

Thus in 1527, the Austrian Emperor Ferdinand I introduced a “Law to Stamp Out and Punish Heresy” which said the following:

Whosoever shall sinfully and obstinately hold beliefs that are against the Twelve Articles of our Holy Christian Faith and against the Seven Sacraments of the Communion of Christian Churches, which clearly marks such a person as a heretic, that same person shall receive due punishment of life and limb in accordance with the occasion and dimension of his wrongdoing, unrepentance, blasphemy and heresy. Likewise, any person who acquiesces with anyone guilty of such heresy as described above shall also be placed under the ban. In like manner, such a person shall be robbed of the freedom Christians enjoy, and shall be declared to be without honor and unfit for any honorable post or office, nor shall he be allowed to hold any such honorable post or office. In the same way, anyone who effects the punishments called for above, or carries out similar punishments, shall not be considered in any way culpable or guilty. A heretic shall not have the power to purchase or sell anything, nor to pursue a craft or trade. Such a person shall not be allowed to make a last will or testament that could be beneficial to him. Likewise, every good Christian father must disinherit his own son if he is a heretic and legally dispossess him of all his paternal possessions. And similarly, the son must disinherit the father [. . .]¹

But not only was church membership and the “true” (that is, Catholic) faith protected and prescribed by the state, participation in the life of the Church was also subject to state laws. Thus, on 7 February 1532, a law was passed requiring “[e]veryone to go to confession and communion at Easter: Secondly, every Catholic of responsible age, both male and female, must prepare themselves for confession and communion provided by the Christian Catholic Church and must therefore draw up a proper list of sins and deliver the same to the master of the house.”² Of course, such decrees also show that people obviously did not always participate in the life of the Church to the extent that the Church or the rulers would have liked. Thus, in a decree issued by the Empress Maria Theresa on 14 July 1770 and entitled “On Keeping Holy Days Holy,” the

Empress notes that certain abuses had arisen. Among other things, it came to her notice, “Celebrating Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and keeping them Holy is being neglected, especially by the common man,” whereupon she passed a decree which aimed above all to give “the common man, who has become lax” no further opportunity for idleness and the excesses which result from it, and by means of better religious instruction which “will lead men to keep the Day of the Lord and his Saints Holy.” Markets were no longer to be held on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation, and all parishes were to hold “Christian Instruction” instead. The Imperial Royal Austro-Bohemian Court Chancery was to ensure that the decree was enforced.³

The result of such policies was not merely that church and state were closely interwoven in this Austrian version of a society steeped in Christendom. All the other important social institutions, like marriage and family, education and schools, research and the penal code were equally closely interlinked.

But not only were the social structures closely interwoven in post-Reformation Austria, Catholicism was seen as a sort of socio-cultural legacy that one took for granted. The everyday life of the population was deeply molded by the feast days, rites, and images of the monopolistic Catholic Church. With time, people automatically belonged to it. Children were baptized, couples married in front of or in the Church, and the dead were buried in Catholic graveyards. People believed what the Church told them to believe, or at least in the package deal as a whole. They were also well-acquainted with their church’s moral directives, and were prepared to go to confession if they did not obey them. For a long time, that was inescapable. Faith and the Church were a part of one’s destiny. They were naturally accepted as a part of one’s life that were simply there. But, in fact, they were actually more than that. The Catholic faith and the Church were collectively “apportioned” to each individual.

Austria as a whole was Catholic and so was its culture. The state was based on Christianity in its Catholic form, “In Austria, as in all those European states which have accepted Christendom as the basis of their constitution, baptism is the necessary condition for civil rights and for full civil legal status.”⁴

Western European Modernization

A change set in when, under the Habsburg Monarchy, western European modernization reached Austria. It was triggered by a mental (nominalism, a new concept of the world), technical (the invention of the steam locomotive), social (transformation of a corporate into a class society with the dramatic impoverization of the industrial proletariat recruited from the now disintegrated ranks of the craftsmen and peasants), and, political revolution (enlightenment, struggles for freedom and social revolutions). Step by step, a modern state was formed, and what had up to then been a culture steeped in Christendom became a pluralistic culture. With that, however, the social position of the Catholic Church changed as well. Unlike the modernization that took place in England or North America, this revolution was also always against the Church because the Church was one of the pillars of the political and social hierarchy. The churches were to lose their political influence so that, without the fierce opposition that religious motivation caused, it would be easier to change society. In practice, this movement led, in Austria, to the gradual withdrawal of the Church from politics and, as a consequence, the retreat of politics from the churches. This withdrawal took place in stages. First of all, the Church withdrew to the ruling dynasty. Then, after democratic political parties had been formed, it withdrew to the “Christian-Social camp,” and, finally, after the experiences shared by all the democratic forces in Austria in Nazi concentration

The large amount of freedom that young people enjoy these days is certainly not good.	65	51	40	40	45	45	40
Where there is strict authority, there is also justice.	44	33	24	18	28	33	21
People should only be allowed have a say or to partake in decision-making when they have attained a certain position through hard work.	62	43	34	29	33	34	22
The most important thing for children to learn is obedience.	86	62	44	48	53	47	41
Index of authoritarianism (1+2/4)	79	67	51	52	57	57	47

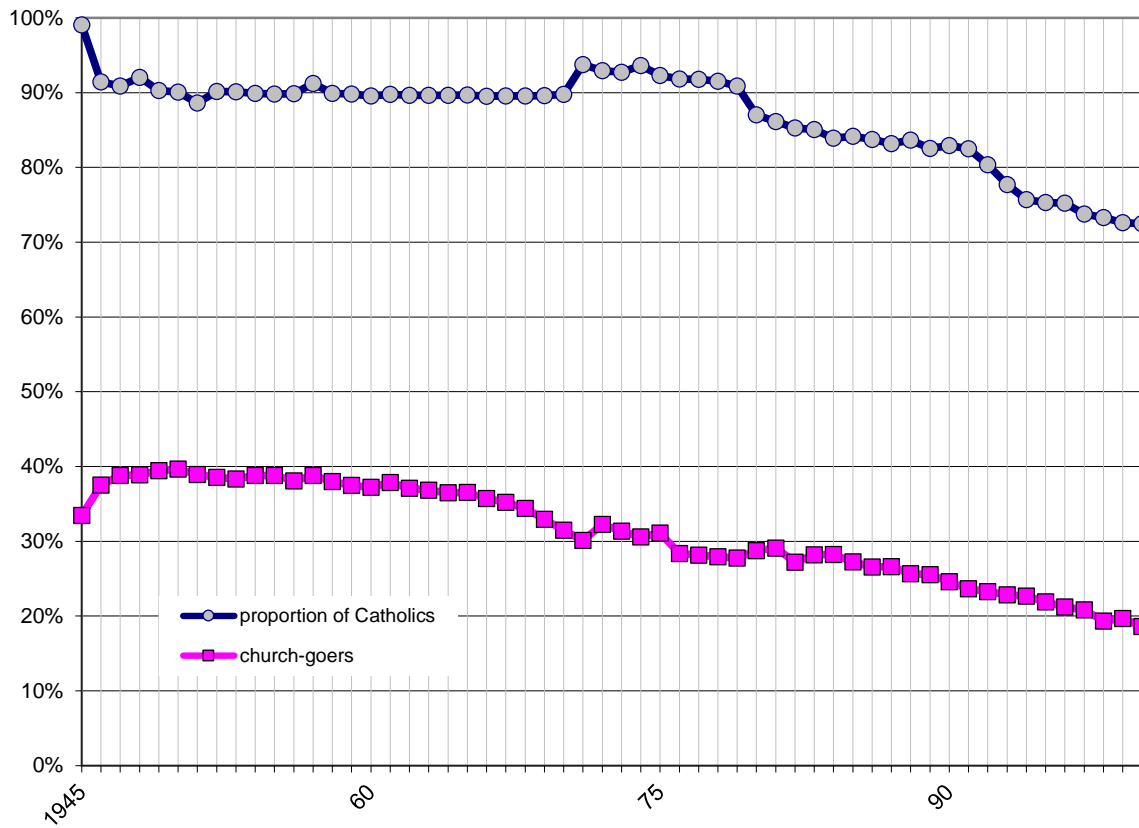
Source: Department for Church Social Research (*Arbeitsstelle für kirchliche Sozialarbeit*, or AfkS)

The Church's Disappearance from Religion

Religio-sociological studies attempted to explain this development by putting it in the “secularization” category.⁶ However, the only evidence we have is that in a very short period of time a process of privatization occurred which led to the Church's disappearance from subjective religion. In the course of this disappearance, “religion” as an objective organization itself changed. What remained of religion was, above all, that which was useful biographically.

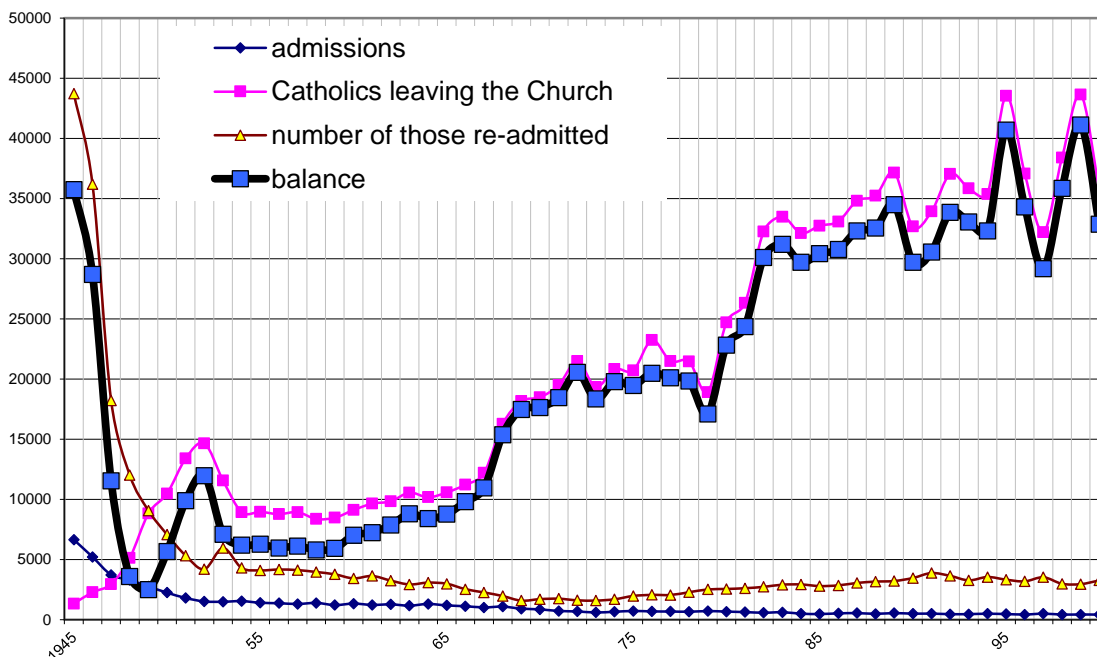
This gradual decline of the Church, above all since the 1970s, is reflected in the statistics which show the proportion of Catholic Church members and of regular church-goers, but also of people leaving or being admitted into the Church.

Figure 1: Development of Church Indicators (proportion of Catholics, regular church-goers) 1945-2000



Source: *Kirchliche Statistik Österreich*

Figure 2: Catholics leaving the Church between 1945 and 2000



Source: *Kirchliche Statistik Österreich*

This dilution of devotion to the Church since the 1970s also meant that, in most cases, church communities now had less influence on people's personal religiousness, with the result that in the year 2000⁷ quite different types of private or communal religiousness existed side by side. "Private" can mean "without others," but can also mean "personal or individual." Individualization can lead to both the evaporation and the personalization of the Christian faith.

For 37 percent of those interviewed in Austria in the year 2000, religion was both a private and a communal matter (See Table 2). For 21 percent, it was a purely private matter. Thus, religion has been privatized. Approximately 28 percent who were not very religious considered religion a purely communal matter. A full 15 percent thought neither the one nor the other was the case.

Table 2: Types of Religious Orientation

	Percentage of the population
Both a private and a communal matter	37
A private and hardly a communal matter	21
If at all, then a communal matter	28
Both comparatively low	15

Source: *Religion in the Lives of Austrians 2000*

People in Austria have obviously subjectivized religion. It is now what Peter L. Berger calls "the compulsion to heresy,"⁸ that is, one is forced to choose. This does not only mean that one has to construct one's own religious creeds, but that it is a matter of one's own choice whether—formally or informally and with or without obligation—one orientates oneself to a church community.

This withdrawal of personal religiousness from an organized Christian church has also effected a withdrawal from religion as a whole. For, according to subjective self-assessment, the four types of orientation are quite differently distributed. For the very religious, religion is 71

percent a private and a communal matter. For religious (but not very religious) people, this percentage falls to 45 percent. For the non-religious, it is only 4 percent.

For one-third of the last three groups listed in Table 1, religion does, however, remain loosely connected with the community. People who are only faintly religious personally regard religion not so much as a personal undertaking, but as something loosely connected with a community. In the three groups which have little personal piety, the percentage of those who regard religion as neither a private nor a communal matter is about the same. Only a minority in all five sub-groups regard religion as a purely private matter.

Religion by Choice

Quite how diversified subjective religiousness has become in Austria since the retreat of religion from the Church is revealed in an ideological typology from the year 2000. This shows how different the religious creeds which people construct for themselves or accept today truly are.

First, with the help of Carsten Wippermann's tools enhanced by our own research tradition, eight ideological dimensions were established. Each dimension is followed by a definition of what it stands for:

- *Humanism*: If God exists, then this is solely in people's hearts. God is that which is valuable in human beings. One does not have to be a Christian in order to be a human being.
- *Naturalism*: Life is ultimately determined by the laws of nature and is part of the evolution of nature. Nature is also the higher power, the cycle of human beings, nature, and the cosmos. There is no answer as to whether there is anything beyond our world. Statements such as "For me, the meaning of life lies in life itself," or "We ourselves give life its meaning" are closely connected with naturalism.
- *Far Eastern*: This philosophy of life is expressed in a belief in reincarnation, which is not only the belief that we will be born again and that death is only a transition to another existence, but includes the belief that how we behaved in a former life effects our present life.
- *Atheism*: There is no God, and even if there is a God, we human beings cannot perceive Him. In any case, death is the end of everything.
- *Theism*: Theists believe in a higher Being, a God who wants to be here for us, who cares for each one of us and who determines the course of the world. They believe in a life after death.
- *Christianity*: Christians expressly accept the beliefs of the Christian faith. They believe in Christ's Resurrection, that God shows Himself to us through Christ and that he will restore His Kingdom.
- *Those who believe in God but not in a Christian sense*: Strangely enough, this is a separate category of believers.
- *Anomie*: This philosophy of life says there is no sense in life.

These eight dimensions were the basis for the cluster analysis which led to the four main categories of philosophies of life (*Weltanschauung*).

The first cluster is made up of very committed Christians. They are consistent in their faith with a strong church commitment. They made up 27 percent of those interviewed. Then there are those who accept certain Christian beliefs, but think that God cannot be understood in the Christian sense. This group is most inclined to assimilate far eastern elements, but is also the most humanist

and has a medium percentage of naturalists. Because of this readiness to combine, we have called them “religion composers.” Almost a third, 30 percent, of those interviewed were in this category. The third type are the naturalists and they tend to be non-Christian humanists with a faint inclination to theism. Neither far eastern philosophies nor atheism mean anything to them. 30 percent of those interviewed belong to this group and this is the group in which anomie (the senselessness of life) is most frequently encountered. Finally, there are the “would-be atheists.” A high percentage of these hold naturalistic, humanist, and atheistic beliefs, but few are believers. Only 13 percent of those interviewed belonged to this group (See Table 3).

Table 3: Main Types of *Weltanschauung*

	Percentage of the Population
Committed Christians	27
Religion composers	30
Naturalistic humanists	30
Those with atheistic views	13

Source: *Religion im Leben der Österreicherinnen 2000*

The main types of *Weltanschauung* can be further examined to uncover the social groups to which adherents of each type belong (See Table 4). For example, in the committed Christians group, there is an over-average percentage of women, elderly people, and the very young (those under age nineteen) as well as people with only a primary school education. However, there are people with secondary and university education in this group, too. The committed Christians tend to live in the country rather than in towns. The lowest percentage of committed Christians is found in small towns with between ten to twenty thousand inhabitants. It is generally true that the higher a person’s education level, the greater the chance of him or her holding atheistic views. They tend to live in small towns. Religion composers are most likely to be found in small towns and in Vienna. There are roughly the same amount, approximately 34 percent, of humanists and religion composers in the city of Vienna. These two groups are followed by very committed Christians (20 percent). The smallest group, at 12 percent, are those with atheistic tendencies.

Table 4: Breakdown of the Four *Weltanschauungen* into Social Groups, in percentage

	Atheists	Humanists	Religion Composers	Very Committed Christians
Gender				
Male	18	31	28	23
Female	8	30	33	29
Age				
19 or younger	11	30	27	32
20-29	15	39	29	17
30-39	13	31	33	24
40-49	11	28	40	21
50-59	16	33	25	25
60-69	16	23	29	32
70 or older	6	25	25	44
Size of Place of Residence				

Up to 2000 inhabitants	11	30	25	34
Up to 5000	11	31	30	28
Up to 20 000	17	30	34	19
Up to one million	14	27	31	27
Vienna	12	34	34	20
Formal Education				
Primary and secondary school	8	26	31	35
Technical school and/or college	13	32	30	24
Secondary school	13	28	33	26
University	18	27	29	26

Source: *Religion im Leben der Österreicherinnen 2000*

The Continuing Trend toward Secularism and Atheism

These surveys show that in Austria, as far as people's *weltanschauung* is concerned, traditional Christianity in its pure form is being abandoned by a certain percentage of the population and that this trend is unbroken. A number of these people hold atheistic views. Theoretically, but sometimes only in practice, they become godless or free of God.

Those who abandon the Christian faith often adopt a very heterogeneous brand of humanism with a strong ecological tinge which places human beings in the center of the world while incorporating them into the never-ending cycle of "nature," which they perceive as their destiny.

The Parallel Trend toward Re-Spiritualization

Withdrawal from the Christian and church sphere of influence does not always result in pure worldliness in the form of atheism or naturalist humanism, however. Socio-religious research data for the city of Vienna between 1991 and 1999 show the recovery of a number of religious and church indicators. The Viennese prayed more in 1999 than they did in 1991, and more of them believed in a personal God whom they consider as playing an important role in their lives. What is more, the inner core of the Christian communities, strengthened by the commitment of its members and by those who regularly attend Sunday Mass, has now become stable.

Table 5: Shifts in Key Religious Indicators in Selected European Cities, 1990-1999, in percentage

	Year	Religious Self-assessment	Belief in God	Belief in a Personal God	Great Importance of God in Life	Sunday Church Attendance
Bruxelles	1990	48	61	27	31	17
	1999	59	78	26	48	29

Belgium, rural areas	1990	71	75	34	36	29
	1999	73	73	26	32	23
Lisbon	1990	51	76	47	37	18
	1999	82	93	74	55	24
Portugal, rural areas	1990	80	90	70	59	45
	1999	91	98	80	65	40
Paris	1990	55	62	24	26	11
	1999	48	62	24	22	9
France, rural areas	1990	54	67	19	19	13
	1999	45	58	17	16	5
Vienna	1990	62	71	19	27	12
	1999	64	79	24	35	13
Austria, rural areas	1990	92	96	39	55	44
	1999	88	91	40	59	37

Source: European Value System Studies 1990-1999; data from the cities compared with data from rural areas.

One of the megatrends of the late 1990s, “re-spiritualization” (to use the term of trend-researcher Mathias Horx)⁹ is evident here. From the first qualified surveys, it is clear that this trend is multidimensional.¹⁰ In a materialistic world from which they feel estranged, people with spiritual needs and desires are looking for an “Exodus into the Ego.”¹¹ Besides exploring one’s inner self, people also investigate cosmic forces and pantheism. Healing is what is important, which means that great significance is ascribed to ritual. Faced with too much choice in a multi-optional society, people seek structure and strictness and, through them, certainties which become important. People want communities with an alternative ethic. Because individuals do not think of the “old world” as capable of producing such communities, people suppose that the “old world” will die and a “new world” for the good and just will take its place. Hardly any of the new movements participates in all these dimensions. Because such spiritual journeys are not always undertaken with a community, diverse individual forms come into being. That, in turn, reinforces the group which we in our research team in Vienna have begun to call “religion composers,”¹² as discussed previously.

After decades of people leaving institutions, it is surprising to find them returning in many different ways and forms to the institution of the established Christian churches. Sometimes this happens “invisibly” in that, without becoming members or participating in church life, people expect the Church to perform certain social tasks. Others begin to take part in one or the other “event” organized by the big churches without binding themselves to congregational membership. But there are also those who are definitely willing to take on a commitment in a church community or in one of the new movements and are even prepared to give up a lot of their time. For those churches that were traditionally supported by a high, stable, and predictable degree of participation on the part of their members, such selective behavior is something to which they are not accustomed. This new way of behaving towards an established church calls for new social practices and unexpected patterns of encounter on the church’s part. Church life in our highly individualized and, therefore, pluralistic societies is itself about to become highly individualized and pluralistic.

The Multireligious Future

Up to now, this analysis of socio-religious development has been restricted to Austria. Today, however, Austria is tightly woven into a European megaculture influenced as much by its

similarities as by its differences. What Europe has in common as far as religion is concerned is the great diversity of types of *weltanschauung*, not only individual ones but also those of whole nations.

Europe, then, is a combination of religious and non-religious attitudes and beliefs. Thus, in the heart of Europe, a region that was for so long steeped in Christendom, there are now three countries where the majority of the inhabitants are atheistic, namely the Czech Republic, Latvia, and the region formerly known as East Germany, but today is referred to as the new German *Bundesländer* or federal states. Around them there are still religious cultures like Catholic Poland, Croatia, and, above all, Malta. Transylvania is multi-denominational while Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece are orthodox. The situation in other countries is polarized. In Slovakia and Hungary, a strong atheistic faction is pitted against an equally strong faction of very committed Christians.

Christianity in Europe is, moreover, divided into several denominations, namely Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism. They emphasise different fundamental values, and this has had a formative influence on European history in recent centuries. Protestantism advocates freedom. Catholicism is skeptical of freedom and advocates justice. For Orthodoxy, neither freedom nor justice is of prime importance; it is chiefly concerned with keeping the heavens open.

Finally, in the coming years, one will have to reckon with the growing influence of Islam, not only if Turkey, which is a Muslim nation within a secular state, becomes a member of the European Union. Islam has already had a lasting influence on parts of Europe, especially the Balkans and certain districts in European cities such as Berlin-Kreuzberg and Vienna's tenth district (where in one single parish there are three rival mosques for people of three different nationalities). European culture would not be what it is today if Aristotle had not been introduced to Islam and been influenced by it, in turn influencing Thomas Aquinas who read about it when studying Aristotle in the south of Spain. Additionally, Islam also introduced Europe to astrology.

Many people today ask themselves whether these different religions (the Christian denominations, the religion composers) and philosophies of life (naturalistic humanism, atheism) will be able to live together peacefully in future in a Europe that is rapidly becoming one. Perhaps Europe can learn from the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. With the exception of the modern religion composers and those with atheistic views, all the variants mentioned above lived together in the former Austrian Empire. With increasing tolerance, Austria managed to accept not only Protestants, but even allowed Islamic soldiers, who had their own rules, to take part in the Catholic Church's annual Corpus Christi procession in Vienna, and permitted specially founded Serb-Orthodox *wehrdörfer* (literally "defense villages") as a bulwark against the Turks in the south of Bosnia and Croatia. Can Austria be a role model for peace between the different religions and, consequently, for peace in the European Union?

The Effects of Religion

Theoretically, religious sociologists have been divided on the subject of the future destiny of religion in the modern world. Some prophesied that religion would disappear altogether; others said it would merely withdraw to the private sphere and become invisible, perhaps just becoming something very personal within individuals.¹³ The one thing upon which they agreed was that the churches had had their day and that "invisible religion" had no influence on people's daily lives and even less on political events.

Recent experiences in and with the Islamic world reveal a very different picture. Here the connection between everyday life and politics is closely knit. Is this because Islam has not yet experienced the Enlightenment and is, therefore, not compatible with a modern state? Or could it be that there are different forms of modernity, those that get along with religion and those that do not?

Using the latest research data, we traced the influence of religion in Austria in its different institutionalized forms. This augments the picture of the role religion plays in Austria, for we not only analyzed religiousness and commitment to the church, but also the effect religious constellations have on people's lives. In particular, the following topics were studied:

- Do a person's social and religious convictions influence how they vote?
- Does religiousness play a role in teaching solidarity?
- Does religion influence the formation and development of gender roles?
- How does religion influence morals?
- Does religion play a role if people get together in small groups and give their relationship a visible form?

Behavior at Elections

Theoretically, a person's religious convictions only have a marginal effect on how he or she votes at political elections. This is because religion has been privatized and because the Church's influence on the formation of individual religiousness has diminished as people are no longer strongly attached to church institutions. The latest research data, however, tell us something different. At the structural level, Church and State—and, consequently, religion and politics—are now largely disconnected, even if not actually separate (as in some European countries like France). This has not changed now that Wolfgang Schüssel, a practicing Christian, is chancellor, or now that one Catholic and one Protestant theologian are on the ethics commission. The Protestant theologian, incidentally, is of the opinion that the present government “ticks the Catholic way” as far as ethical problems are concerned. The rejection of euthanasia by all four parties in Parliament and the government's support of the Hospice Movement by ruling that people who wanted to care for sick or dying relatives at home and in order to do so had to stay away from work could not be sacked, shows that the Christian heritage is still at work in Austrian society.

The influence of the Christian heritage comes out even more clearly in the surprisingly obvious interaction between religious conviction and preference for a political party. There are far fewer people (7 percent) with atheistic beliefs in the People's Party, which has many more committed Christians (39 percent) than in Jörg Haider's Freedom Party (14 percent) or in the Social Democrat Party (21 percent).

As far as the Social Democrats are concerned, it would seem that at least the older generation still has bitter memories of the fierce controversies in the Civil War Years of the mid-1930s when the Christian Socials, at the time led by Prelate Ignaz Seipel, a Roman Catholic priest, and the Austro-Marxists under Otto Bauer were bitter enemies.¹⁴ The alienation between these two factions which went very deep in the days of the so-called *Ständestaat*, or corporate state, on account of the bloody sieges that took place at the time, is deep-rooted and, to a certain degree, still exists today. Thus in Lower Austria, for instance, the Social Democrats and the Greens are vehemently against putting up a crucifix presented by the local bishop in the provincial parliament, while the Freedom Party and the People's Party are in favor of it.

Surprisingly, there are a remarkable number of Christians in the Green Party, yet the Green Party also has the most religion composers. It is, therefore, polarized as far as philosophies of life are concerned. On the one side, there are voters with Christian and social leanings, and on the other, those with socio-critical, feminist, and ecological leanings.

This polarization is reflected in the Green Party's ambitions to form coalitions. One wing is clearly left of the Social Democrats. Should an election point in that direction, this wing would only want to form a coalition with the Social Democrats. The Christian Greens, on the other hand, think that a coalition with the People's Party is not only possible, but desirable, provided, of course, that the neo-liberal economists in the People's Party did not become too dominant and that the Christian Social Trade Unions, the ÖAAB, or the Farmers' Union, the *Bauernbund*, were allowed to have more say in social and ecological matters. The Freedom Party has a small percentage of conservative Catholics who are most likely to sympathize with the fundamentalist (and therefore anti-Islam) circles not only in the Church, but also in the People's Party.

Table 6: Distribution of Voters according to *Weltanschauung* and Church Attendance, in percentage

	<i>weltanschauung</i>				Church Attendance			
	Atheistic	Humanist	Religion Composers	Christians	Sundays	Once a Month	Several Times a Year	Almost Never
SPÖ	17	30	33	21	8	19	41	32
FPÖ	17	40	29	14	7	18	35	41
ÖVP	7	26	27	39	39	18	31	11
Greens	15	25	35	25	18	16	31	34

Source: *Religion im Leben der Österreicherinnen 2000*

Solidarities

As only justice can achieve a lasting peace, the extent to which wealthy, democratic societies manage to enact solidaric policies will be of great political importance in the coming years. This will apply at the national, as well as at the European and international, level. The available reserves of people's willingness to show solidarity thus acquire great significance. In a democracy, policies based on greater justice to balance out the injustices in the economy and in society must both be desired by and voted for by a majority of the population.

The reserves of solidarity in the Austrian population were investigated against this politological background in a research project undertaken by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Value Research at the beginning of the 1990s. Using more or less the same items, it was possible to repeat the survey in 2002. In it, three types of solidarity were defined according to their spatial range:

- "Micro-solidarity" based on the "small world" of the family, friends and neighbors. The investigation of this type of solidarity, which is limited to a small circle, was based on statements such as: "Sharing is the most important thing for children to learn," "Sharing is best learnt in the family", "Without the family one cannot learn to solve conflicts."
- "Meso-solidarity" which is connected with solidarity in the social environment was based on statements such as: "One should be allowed to take from those who have more than enough in order to give to the needy," "Differences in income should be reduced," "If everyone sacrificed a little, there would soon be no more poverty."

- “Macro-solidarity” at the global level whose main concern is the treatment of foreigners and asylum seekers was based on statements such as: “Foreigners should adapt their way of life a little better to that of the people in whose country they live,” “When jobs are scarce, foreigners should be sent home,” “Foreigners should not be allowed to take up any form of political activity in their new country of residence,” “Foreigners should marry people of their own nationality.”

Both Austrian solidarity surveys (the 1992 and the 2002 survey) indicate that “micro-solidarity” is a kind of socio-cultural self-evident truth (On a four point scale, 68 percent are very committed to it (See Table 7). The score for both the positives scale value 1 and 2 is 96 percent). There is much less support for “meso-solidarity” (24 percent are very committed to it. The value for both positives scale value 1 and 2 is 62 percent). Finally, “macro-solidarity” does not have strong support (only 12 percent reach scale value 1. The value for both positives scale value 1 and 2 is 34 percent). The larger the range, the weaker solidarity becomes.

Table 7: Solidarities (according to their range) and Church Attendance, in percentage

Church Attendance	Macro-solidarity	Meso-solidarity	Micro-solidarity
Sundays	8	24	73
Monthly	8	24	77
Feast days	11	21	67
Seldom	12	25	60
Never	18	25	60
All	14	24	68

Source: *Solidaritäten 1994-2002*

The influence that religion has on the solidarity radius varies. If one takes church attendance as one of the most reliable religious and church indicators, then one will find that regular Sunday church-goers tend towards micro-solidarity, while macro-solidarity is less well developed among them.

Church attendance strengthens the readiness to help others locally. Church-goers find it easier to help in the family, and with children, friends, and acquaintances than non-church-goers do. Church attendance, which usually correlates to an attendee’s personal faith, also promotes a readiness to practice solidarity. To be precise, church-goers are more prepared actively to do something for the family, for neighbors, elderly people, immigrants, the sick, and/or the handicapped.

A development that has appeared clearly in the last ten years is that church-goers also belong to that circle of people in modern societies who do not withdraw from civil and social movements. When religiousness is linked with church attendance, it strengthens solidarity in Austrian society, above all when it reduces those fears that work against solidarity and lead to de-solidarization. In practice, the solidarity map corresponds to the church network map: parishes, religious orders, and the aid organizations “Caritas” and “Diakonie.” Religion, therefore, boosts a society’s solidarity capital.

Gender Roles

The mythological narratives of the world’s great religions all define what a man and a woman are. Christianity is no exception here. These religious narratives do not only describe the

vocations of both genders, but also the images that exist of them in the respective religious culture. The most effective influence of religion on gender roles (that is, the way in which a culture expects a man or a woman to live and behave) is the legitimization of traditional role patterns.

In so far as religion legitimizes the formation of images of men and women and how they should behave, it simultaneously becomes one of the most powerful opponents of any change in those roles. What is part of a religious heritage cannot be discovered anew by human beings. This is what makes religion so significant in today's important pursuit of justice for both genders.

One of the few long-term studies on the male role has been carried out in Austria. In 1992, a first empirical analysis of the male role was undertaken.¹⁵ Ten years later, this survey was repeated.¹⁶ The survey results clearly show that men are going through an intense process of development, something which women have already been going through for some time.

Various types of men exist in contemporary Austria. The number of men in traditional roles is declining. They are almost completely absorbed by their work or profession which forms their identity. These traditional men are only marginally present in their families. Their chief role in the family is that of breadwinner, and they delegate the housework and childcare to their wives. In contrast, modern men are the opposite. There are more of them among the younger than among the older generation, and this group has grown significantly in the last ten years. Another group, realistic or pragmatic men, adopt those patterns from both the traditional and modern roles which make life easier for them. Finally, the largest group of men are those that can be formed. They are skeptical about both traditional and modern role patterns. Because these men are enmeshed in a transformative process, they go through phases of destabilization, searching, and learning.

In Germany¹⁷ and in Austria, it was, above all, those responsible for working with men in the Church who were primarily interested in surveys of male behavior. The reason for this was that hardly any men were participating in traditional church group activities any more. The aim was to get men to participate once again and to work out a program for men that was based on credible research findings.

The research data shows that those responsible in the Church will find it difficult to motivate men to participate in church groups. The studies investigated in which social domains modern men (and women) were most likely to develop and whether the Church played a role in those domains. The result is astonishing: the distribution of the four different types of men differs only slightly as far as their church practices go. There are a few more modern men among those who do not go to church, and among the church-goers, there are a few more traditional men. Most of the formable men are found among those who only occasionally go to church.

The situation is quite different as far as the women who were investigated in the same study are concerned (See Table 8). The connection between devotion to the Church and women's image of themselves is much closer than that of men. There are five times as many traditional women among church-goers (25 percent) than among non-church-goers (5 percent). On the other hand, among the women who do not go to church, there are twice as many (44 percent) modern women as among the church-goers (25 percent).

It is obvious that devotion to the Church and to religion hardly plays a role in the development of men's self-image. With women, it is quite the opposite. Women in the Church tend to slow down the development of women's role, whereas women who are not church-goers tend to boost women's role. There are, of course, well-organized feminists in the Christian churches, but they are a minority.

At the same time, the data show how polarized committed Catholics are as far as the development of gender roles is concerned. Modern male church-goers make up 21 percent as

compared to 18 percent made up of traditional male church-goers. There are the same number of modern and traditional women church-goers, 25 percent of each.

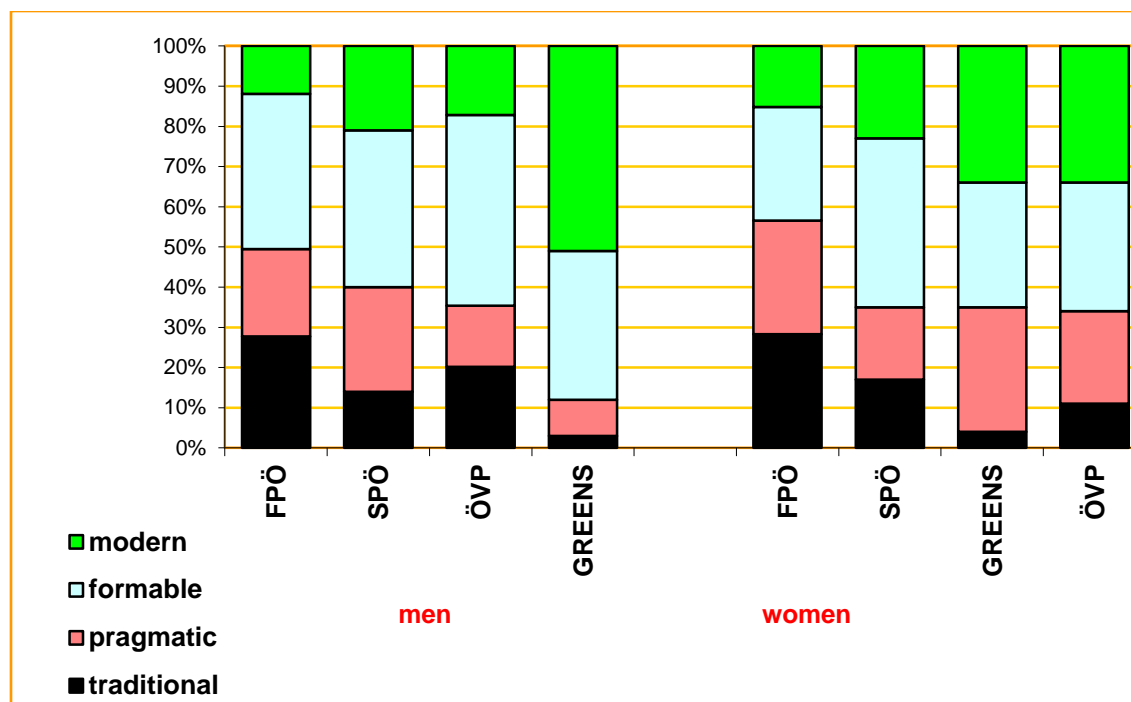
Table 8: Church Attendance and Gender Roles

	Church Attendance	Gender Roles			
		Traditional	Modern	Pragmatic	Formable
Men	Sundays	18	21	18	43
	Monthly	15	14	17	54
	On Feast Days	19	24	15	42
	Almost Never	16	25	20	40
All Men		17	23	18	42
Women	Sundays	25	25	26	24
	Monthly	9	36	21	33
	On Feast Days	13	37	18	31
	Almost Never	5	44	18	33
All Women		12	37	21	30
All		14	30	19	36

Source: *Männer 1992-2002*

The distribution of gender roles in the political parties is also surprising (See Figure 3). Female Freedom Party sympathizers turn out to be traditional women while women who sympathize with the Greens are modern women. As women's politics is a key issue for the Greens, it is not surprising that there are hardly any traditional women and an above average number of modern women in that party. It is, however, surprising that there are more modern women in the People's Party than in the Social Democrat Party, for women's issues have always been a matter of great concern for the Social Democrats.

Figure 3: Gender Roles and Political Preference



Source: *Männer 2002*

Moralities

Since the Enlightenment, morals have been closely linked with religion and religious institutions. The pragmatic thinking of the Enlightenment, represented in Austria in an exemplary way by the Emperor Joseph II, had no feeling for religious mysticism, nor for the contemplative orders, or for mystical worship. The task of religion was to make people happy. This was accomplished when, through faith, people were taught to be obedient and to pay their taxes. Religion was transformed from having been something mystical into something morally useful; thereby, it was reduced. This same principle of usefulness is still reflected in the more modern rules which regulate religious instruction in Austria today and aim at a moral and religious education.

Every mature religion including Christianity has, in fact, a well-thought out ethical system. Religion and morals are not identical in Christianity, but there are normative religious patterns of behavior which the churches imposed by spiritual force. In Austria, this occurred for a long time, aided by the help of the secular state.

This connection between the Christian faith and Christian morals still exists today, of course, with the difference that the Church can only present its moral teaching by appealing to reason and responsibility. The surveys that have been carried out confirm that the Christian churches in Austria obviously still manage to convey their moral concepts to a core section of the population. This potential to form people's ideas does, however, differ depending on the issue concerned.

The European Value System Studies of 1990 and 1999 in which Austria participated studied morality in Europe. A series of moral norms were presented. Those questioned were asked to state what they would not allow under any circumstances, and what in their view was always permissible. Three moral dimensions emerged. The first dimension is "social morality." The following statements were used to identify this dimension:

- claiming state benefits to which one is not entitled
- withholding taxes if one gets the chance
- lying for one's own advantage
- accepting bribes

The second dimension is “life-related morality.” It was concerned with normative values such as:

- when married men or women have affairs
- homosexuality
- abortion
- divorce
- mercy killing (euthanasia)
- suicide

Finally, the third dimension is “material goods morality,” and the following statements were used:

- forcibly unlocking a car which does not belong to one in order to go for a joy ride
- taking drugs like marijuana and hashish

In Austria, as in other European countries, the last of these, namely the “material goods morality” has the greatest support among the population. It is followed by “social morality” with “life-related morality” coming last. Thus, goods are better protected than life. If one were lucky enough to be a car, one would be well protected morally.

A further analysis of the data shows that as far as these three dimensions are concerned, very committed Christians differ only slightly from people with atheistic views on some topics, yet quite considerably on others.

The difference is only slight when it comes to “material goods morality,” which is so highly valued in our modern societies today (10 points). But this difference grows when it comes to “social morality” (12 points) and is even greater when it comes to the “life related morality” (41 points).

Sensitive issues concerning “life-related morality” like euthanasia and abortion but also divorce or homosexuality, will definitely play a lasting role in Austrian cultural politics in the years to come. The more these issues influence the political discussion—and that will certainly be the case Europe-wide as far as euthanasia is concerned because life expectancy continues to rise and with it the cost of caring for the elderly and dying—the more moral options will influence the way people vote. The possibility that a religious faction will clash with a secular faction in such politico-cultural conflicts and that this will once again lead to “sieges” cannot be excluded.

Table 9: Moral Dimensions and *Weltanschauungen*, in percentage

	Material Goods Morality	Social Morality	Life-related Morality
Very Committed Christians	95	86	61
Religion Composers	91	80	37
Naturalistic Humanists	89	75	28
Those with Atheistic Views	85	73	20

Source: *European Value System Study 1999, Austria*

Relationship Formality

The issue of which lifestyle a person chooses, a choice which nowadays everyone is free to make, is closely connected with the above moral dimensions. Besides traditional marriage, other kinds of relationship have become completely acceptable in modern societies today. People can choose to live alone, or to cohabit without binding themselves in any way, or decide to bind themselves to another for a certain period of time.

The Christian churches have always favored marriage, but has allowed people to choose to remain single. Cohabitation, disqualified as “living in sin,” and even more living together for only a certain period of time, are regarded as ethically dubious by the Catholic Church.

However, the Christian churches have only been partly successful in imposing their moral concepts on their loyal members, that is, on regular Sunday church-goers. In theory as well as in practice, a certain percentage of church-goers put the respective situation they are in before norms. Only 39 percent of church-goers (11 percent of non-church-goers) hold that “there are perfectly clear rules as to what is good and what is evil and this applies to everyone and moreover under all circumstances.” But a clear link remains between the formality of relationships and church attendance. Fully 62 percent of church-goers, both men and women, are married, compared with only 36 percent of both men and women who do not go to church. Devotion to the Church, therefore, promotes and protects marriage.

Table 10: Forms of Living Together after Church Attendance, in percentage

	Church Attendance	Way of Life				
		Single	Periodically Single	Cohabiting	Married	Alone
Men	Sundays	10	12	12	62	5
	Monthly	11	14	14	59	3
	On Feast Days	10	18	14	52	6
	Almost Never	14	22	18	36	10
All Men		12	18	15	48	7
Women	Sundays	3	5	6	62	24
	Monthly	6	5	5	66	18
	On Feast Days	7	14	14	49	15
	Almost Never	12	26	14	36	12
All Women		8	16	12	49	16
All		10	17	13	48	12

Source: *Männer 2002*

The above connection, too, is not without significance. Austria belongs to those European countries which confer a higher status on marriage between men and women than on other relationships. It has not yet given same-sex partnerships or cohabitating couples (who are unmarried) the same legal status as married couples. There is even less chance of homosexual couples being allowed to adopt children in Austria.

Religious traditions are still effective in Austria. This is evident not only from the way such cultural and political issues as the privileged status of marriage or the adoption laws have been handled, but also in the way the question of euthanasia and extending welfare state measures to give extra help to those who are nearing the last stage of their lives are handled.

One should, however, not overlook the fact that where issues such as abortion and political regulations concerning foreigners and asylum seekers, Austria is at the moment forging ahead with restrictive practices. Incidentally, this means that the churches have a split and, therefore, have tense relationship with the state and the present government which is led by the People's Party and calls itself "Christian Social." On the one hand, the churches, with their powerful aid organizations "Caritas" and "Diakonie," are in favor of treating asylum seekers generously and promoting help for the developing world in the hope that this will diminish migration. On this issue, the churches have always met with political resistance from all Ministers of the Interior no matter what their party affiliation, first from the SPÖ and then from the ÖVP. The FPÖ is in favor of stopping immigration altogether. On the other hand, however, the churches applaud when the Austrian government supports measures to improve the care of the sick and the dying.

Conclusion

The results of studies examining the role of organized religion in Austria shows that the acceptance of secularization which began in the 1970s only applies in a very limited way to this small country in the heart of Europe. Religion still affects private and political life—at first invisibly, but later also in a church organized form—more than theoretical interpretations of the destiny of religion and the Church in modern western Europe expected it to.

This also comes out in the high expectations people have of the churches in the social field. In response to the question, "Generally speaking, do you believe that your Church/the churches in our country have an answer to?", 60 percent of Austrians believe the Church has answers to "spiritual needs" (church-goers, 85 percent; non-church-goers, 31 percent). Slightly more than a third, 37 percent, want the Church to provide answers to moral problems and to individual needs (church-goers, 62 percent; non-church-goers, 15 percent). Only 29 percent want the Church to provide answers to questions concerning family life (church-goers, 46 percent; non-church-goers, 12 percent) and a similar percentage want it to provide answers to social problems (church-goers, 43 percent; non-church-goers, 15 percent).

Notes

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- ¹ P.J. Riegger, *Corpus Iuris Ecclesiastici, Bohemici et Austriaci* (Wien, 1770), 100 ff
 - ² Ibid., 230.
 - ³ Ibid., Appendix 12-15.
 - ⁴ D.J.Helfert, *Darstellung der Rechte, welche in Ansehen der heiligen Handlungen dann der heiligen und religiösen Sachen sowohl nach kirchlichen als nach Österreichischen-bürgerlichen Gesetzen stattfinden*, 3rd ed. (Prag, 1943), 18.
 - ⁵ So-called authoritarianism, as Theodor Adorno called it, declined noticeably between 1970 and 1990, see Paul M. Zulehner, o.m., *Vom Untertan zum Freiheitskünstler* (Wien: Herder, 1991).
 - ⁶ Paul M. Zulehner, *Säkularisierung von Gesellschaft, Person und Religion* (Wien: Herder, 1973).

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- ⁷ Paul M. Zulehner, u.a., *Kehrt die Religion wieder? Religion im Leben der Menschen 1970-2000* (Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag); Hermann Denz u.a., *Konfliktgesellschaft* (Wien: Czernin, 2001).
- ⁸ Peter L. Berger, *Der Zwang zur Häresie* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1980).
- ⁹ Mathias Horx, *Megatrends der späten neunziger Jahre* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1995).
- ¹⁰ Paul M. Zulehner, "Megatrend Religion," *StdZt* 221 (Feb. 2003): 87-96.
- ¹¹ Hans-Wili Weis, *Exodus ins Ego: Therapie und Spiritualität im Selbstverwirklichungsmilieu* (Zürich: Benzinger, 1998).
- ¹² Definitions such as "patchwork" are pejorative.
- ¹³ Zulehner, *Säkularisierung*.
- ¹⁴ Paul M. Zulehner, *Kirche und Austromarxismus* (Wien: Freiburg, 1967).
- ¹⁵ Paul M. Zulehner, and Andrea Salama, Österreichs Männer unterwegs zum neuen Mann? Wie Österreichs Männer sich selbst sehen und wie die Frauen sie einschätzen. Erweiterter Forschungsbericht, bearbeitet im Rahmen des Ludwig Boltzmann-Instituts für Werteforschung. Österreichisches Bundesministerium für Jugend und Familie, Wien 1994.
- ¹⁶ Paul M. Zulehner, Hg., *MannsBilder: Zehn Jahre Männerentwicklung* (Ostfildern 2003).
- ¹⁷ Paul M. Zulehner and Rainer Volz, *Männer im Aufbruch* (Ostfildern 1998).