

Marian Weingartshofer

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An: Marian Weingartshofer
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Research Centre "Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society"



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RaT-Newsletter



Dear members and friends of RaT,

At the end of the year, this issue brings you our usual packed slate of updates: we're pleased to welcome four new members to the center—**Mark Coeckelbergh**, **Borayin Larios**, **Moritz Maurer**, and **Dirk Schuster**. We're also happy to announce the publication of Volume 40 in the RaT series: [Breaking Boundaries in Theology. In Conversation with Roger Haight SJ](#) (Open Access), with editorial contributions by **Andreas Telser** and **Sebastian Pittl**.

In addition, we highlight recent publications by our members, including a new issue of the open access [Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies](#) co-edited by **Lukas K. Pokorny**, as well as new articles by, among others, **Elisabeth Holzleithner** and **Aysun Yaşar**.

As always, we also present you a selection of events and want to especially draw your attention to the RaT-supported **14. Deutsch-Österreichische Kirchenrechtstagung**, ["Zukunft der Kirche in der säkularen Gesellschaft. Kirchenrechtliche](#)

[Herausforderungen gesellschaftlicher Transformationsprozesse](#)” taking place from February 23–25, 2026.

All this and much more awaits you in this newsletter - happy reading!

Kurt Appel, Noemi Call, Jakob Deibl, Sofiia-Olga Kungurtseva, Daniel Kuran, Magdalena Lorenz, Astrid Mattes, Andreas Telser, and Marian Weingartshofer

PS: Please consider forwarding our newsletter to those interested in the topics we work on! If you are not subscribed yet, just click [here](#).

To download a pdf.-version of this newsletter, [click here](#).

NEW MEMBERS: Welcome to RaT!



Univ.-Prof. Mark Coeckelbergh, PhD
*Faculty of Philosophy and Education
Department of Philosophy
Research Network Data Science*

I'm a philosopher of technology at the University of Vienna. I'm interested in understanding contemporary technologies such as artificial intelligence in their cultural context, including religious ideas and rituals. I'm delighted to be a member of the Centre now and look forward to exploring opportunities for collaboration and conversation.

To learn more about Mark Coeckelbergh's research, [visit his profile on our website](#).



Ass.-Prof. Dr. Borayin Larios
*Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies
Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies*

I am Assistant Professor of Modern South Asian Studies at the University of Vienna and the corresponding principal investigator of the ERC Synergy Project MANTRAMS – Mantras in Religion, Media and Society in Global Southern Asia. My research examines the anthropology and history of mantras, material religion, and contemporary Hindu practices, with a focus on how sound, writing, and embodied performance shape religious experience and social life. My work combines ethnography, philology, and media analysis, grounded in long term fieldwork in India.

Within MANTRAMS, I lead Task Force 3, which investigates the materiality of mantras in their visual, embodied, and digital forms across South Asia. Our team studies mantra inscribed objects, their circulation and commodification, and their roles in both everyday devotional life and online religious spaces. We also explore how these media generate efficacy, multisensory engagement, and shifting articulations of

authority and belonging. As part of this work, I oversee the project's exhibition, which will present our findings through a curated exploration of the material culture of mantras.

Beyond MANTRAMS, my recent work engages with embodiment, ritual expertise, and the politics of cultural heritage in contemporary India. I am delighted to join RaT and look forward to contributing to its conversations on religion and transformation.

To learn more about Borayin Larios's research, [visit his profile on our website.](#)



Dr. Moritz Maurer, BA MA MA

*Faculty of Catholic Theology
Department of Religious Studies*

I am a FWF Fellow (2025–2028) at the Department of Religious Studies. Previously, I served as a Research Fellow at the same chair (2024–2025). Previously, I held positions at the University of Heidelberg and the University of Göttingen and contributed to the DFG long-term project “Zoroastrian Middle Persian: Digital Corpus and Dictionary” at the Ruhr University Bochum. My dissertation on Sasanian and early Islamic Zoroastrianism, *Kosmos, Gesellschaft, Religion*, was published by De Gruyter in 2024.

Although my background is in the religions of West and Central Asia during Late Antiquity, my work has taken me in a very different direction: I have turned to studying the intersections between esotericism and right-wing extremism, as well as the history of free-religious groups. I am especially interested in how *völkisch* religious ideas from before 1945 carried over into, and influenced, non-Christian religious movements in the decades after the war. I have published on topics such as Traditionalism, QAnon, right-wing meme cultures, and esoteric conspiracy theories (“conspirituality”). At the University of Vienna, my research focuses especially on Traditionalist interest in East Asia.

To learn more about Moritz Maurer's research, [visit his profile on our website.](#)



Dr. Dirk Schuster, M.A.

*Faculty of Catholic Theology
Department of Religious Studies*

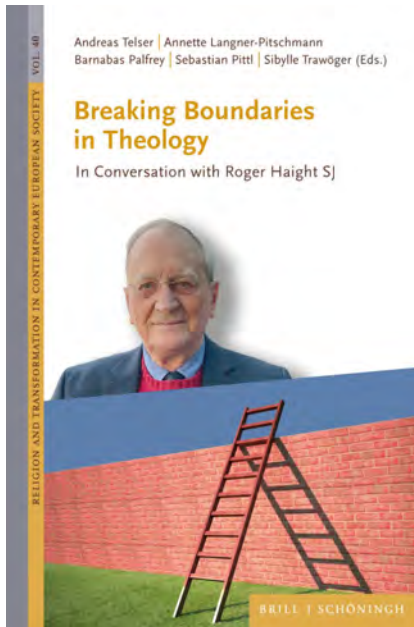
My name is Dirk Schuster and I am 41 years old. I grew up in Saxony (Germany) and studied at the University of Leipzig medieval/modern history and religious studies after graduating from high school. Thanks to a scholarship from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation For Freedom, I was able to write my dissertation and received my doctorate from the Free University of Berlin in 2016. Between 2014 and 2021, I worked as a research assistant at the Institute for Religious Studies and Jewish Studies at the University of Potsdam. In the winter semester of 2019/20, I came to the Vienna Department for Religious Studies through the Erasmus programme – and I was so impressed by the country, the people and the university that I decided on the spot to emigrate to Austria.

Until 2024, I worked at the University for Continuing Education Krems, where I collaborated on the Lower Austrian Provincial Exhibition 2022 in Marchegg and was responsible for provenance research for the Lower Austrian Provincial Collections. At the same time, I was a lecturer at the Department for Religious Studies throughout this period. In addition, I was a guest fellow at the Department of Sociology, University of Hradec Králové, Czechia, in 2021, and a visiting professor at the same department one year later. Since May 2024, I have been working at the Department of Religious Studies as an assistant professor, where I am currently writing my habilitation thesis on the emergence of the völkisch movement in Austria. In recent months, I have also had the privilege of curating the new permanent exhibition on contemporary history at museumkrems, which thematically ties in with parts of my research on the völkisch movement.

In addition to the völkisch movement, I research and publish on religions in National Socialism, special-status Christian communities, secularisation, atheism and, above all, religion in Austria in past and present.

*To learn more about Dirk Schuster's research,
[visit his profile on our website.](#)*

PUBLICATIONS: JRAT, JRAT Supplementa and RaT Series



RaT Series (Volume 40): **Breaking Boundaries in Theology. In Conversation with Roger Haight SJ (Open Access)**, edited by **Andreas Telser, Annette Langner-Pitschmann, Barnabas Palfrey, Sebastian Pittl, and Sibylle Trawöger**

American Jesuit Roger Haight (1936–2025) undoubtedly belongs to the circle of Catholic theologians who have set standards across denominational boundaries, particularly in the English-speaking world. Haight's writings have attracted attention and critical debate. This anthology is the first comprehensive and international examination of central aspects of Haight's theology in dialogue with theologians in the fields of systematic, spiritual, and comparative theology.

With the following contributions by RaT members:

- **Andreas Telser:** [Locating and Showcasing Roger Haight's Theology in a Developing American Catholic Theology](#)
- **Jakob Deibl:** ["... limitless horizon" \(R. Haight\): Aesthetics as a Mediating Sphere for Theology and Spirituality?](#)
- **Sebastian Pittl:** [Introduction to Part III \(Christology in a Pluralist Situation\)](#)
- **Roger Haight and Andreas Telser:** [In Conversation](#)

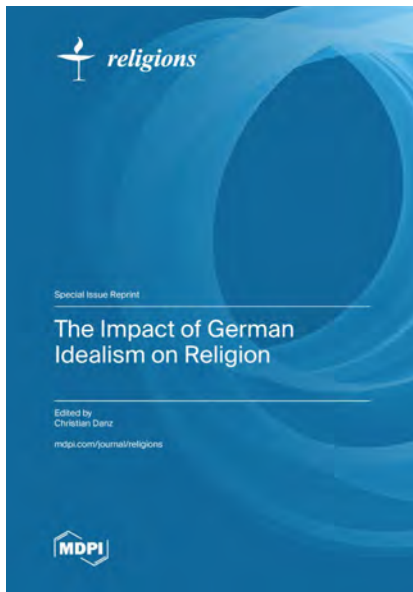
[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)



Latest articles published online in advance (all articles are published open access):

- **Isabella Bruckner:** [Birth Metaphors. The Sculpture Crowning: a Contemporary Translation of the Nicene Creed](#)
- **Rüdiger Lohker and Nikola Pantić:** [Introduction: Charisma, Grace and Power in Religious Traditions](#)
- **Thomas Mark Németh:** [Easten Catholic Churches in Europe – Suggestions for Interdisciplinary Approaches to Their History, Present Situation, and Theology](#)
- **Alisha Saikia:** [Doll Artists and their Dolls. Animators and the Animated](#)
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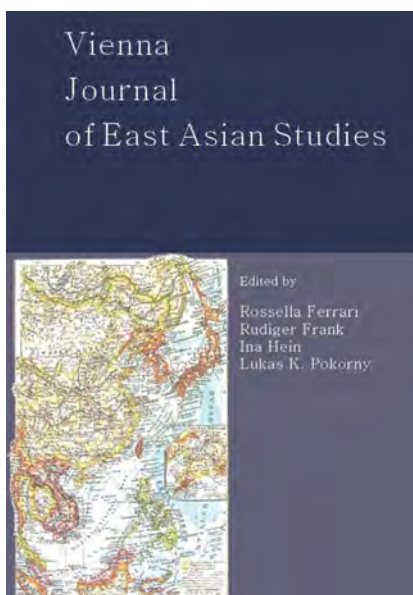
PUBLICATIONS: Monographs & Anthologies



Christian Danz (ed): The Impact of German Idealism on Religion. Basel: MDPI 2025.

The intention of the Special Issues The Impact of German Idealism on Religion is to comprehensively reconstruct the developments of Modern philosophy of religion emanating from German Idealism in a systematic perspective and to analyze the contribution of German Idealism for the formation of the modern understanding of religion.

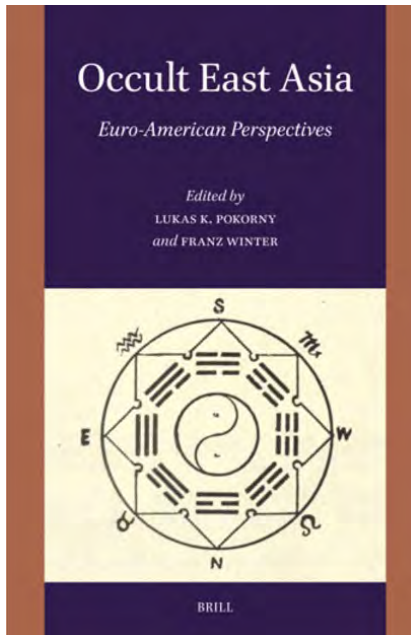
[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)



Rossella Ferrari, Rüdiger Frank, Ina Hein, Lukas K. Pokorny (eds.): Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies Volume 17 (2025): Issue 1 (Nov 2025)

Volume 17 (2025) of the *Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies*, edited by Lukas K. Pokorny, has been published. The journal is published in collaboration with the Research Centre Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society at the University of Vienna. As a result of this close partnership, VEAS has strengthened its focus on articles related to the study of religions in the East Asian context. Volume 17 contains two related articles: (1) "From Dzogchen to Chán via Zen (and Beyond): a Fictional Controversy on Buddhist Meditation in a Post-war Tibetan Novel in French" by Samuel Thévoz and (2) "Sino-Muslim Elites as Agents of Nation-Building? Minority Mobilisation in the West Route Army's Encounter with Islam" by Tommaso Previato.

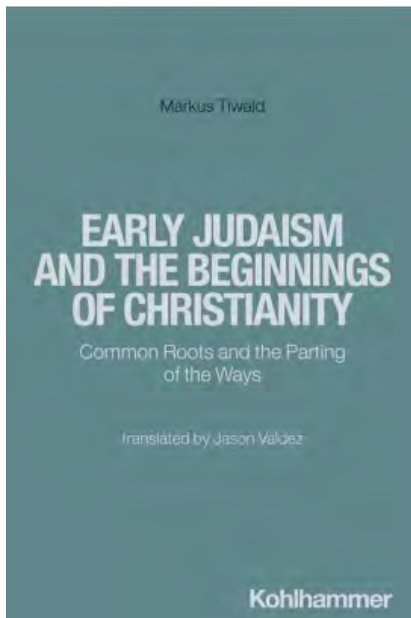
[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)



Lukas K. Pokorny and Franz Winter (eds.): Occult East Asia. Euro-American Perspectives. Leiden, Boston: Brill 2026.

This book examines key actors and themes in the Euro-American esoteric reception history of East Asia. It traces how Western occultists and esotericists have engaged with East Asia, appropriating textual icons such as the *Daodejing* and *Yijing*, or figures such as Fuxi, Laozi, and Confucius into their perennialist cosmos. The resulting amalgam of globally negotiated tropes, or “Occult East Asia,” has co-shaped the imagery and appreciation of East Asia in a range of discourses that extend far beyond alternative religious circles.

[Link to the publication.](#)



Markus Tiwald: Early Judaism and the Beginnings of Christianity. Common Roots and the Parting of the Ways. Translated by Jason Valdez. Vienna: Kohlhammer 2025.

- The translation was funded with the FWF Grant-DOI: 10.55776/PUB1159

Jesus and his first followers were Jews who never intended to form a new religion apart from Judaism. The so called “parting of the ways” between Jews and Christians was long and by no means monolinear. Rather, it was a complex process that stretched over five hundred years, occurring in different places at different speeds and under a variety of circumstances. Highlighting the pluriformity of early Judaism (300 BCE - 200 CE) in its political, sociological, economic, and religious implications, this book shows that what we today call the “beginnings of Christianity” was in fact an integral part of multifaceted Judaism.

[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)

PUBLICATIONS: Selected Articles

Kurt Appel: *Die Theologie als Wissenschaft der Freude*, in: Markus Weisser (ed.), Knut Wenzel (ed.): *Die sakramentale Präsenz des Anderen. Ein Gespür für die Spuren Gottes in unserer Zeit.* Regensburg: Pustet 2025, pp. 327-336.

The article examines the central role of joy in and for theology, particularly in the context of the pontificate of Pope Francis. It argues that joy must be understood as a leitmotif of the Gospel and of Christian existence, inseparably linked with the motifs of mercy—understood as the (co-)bearing of guilt—vulnerability, and the capacity for failure. The study analyzes the biblical message of joy, focusing especially on the pericope John 7:53–8:11, and shows how, after theology’s loss of its ethical and noetic primacy, joy can be articulated as a form

of resistance to the loss of meaning and the anxieties of our time. The article advocates for a sapiential theology that adopts an interdisciplinary posture, contributes to society's self-understanding, addresses prevailing fears, and attends to human vulnerability. In an era of breathtaking social transformation and the erosion of inherited values and narratives, theology, by retrieving its sapiential dimension, can serve as a significant voice of joy and wisdom in the world. This, however, requires substantial changes: above all, structural reforms in theological education, a stronger presence of women, and greater freedom in theological teaching.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Elisabeth Holzeithner: *Zusammenhalt in Vielfalt: Über Diversität, menschenrechtliche Wertepolitik und Pluralitätsfähigkeit*, in: Christian Friesl (ed.), Edith Meinhart (ed.), Regina Polak (ed.): *Wie wir leben wollen - Visionen für eine bessere Welt*. Wien: edition a 2025, pp. 185-202.

The Austrian population has become highly diverse. The pluralization of society is evident in ethnic, social, cultural, linguistic, and religious terms. A key factor in this development is migration—the share of people with a migration background has steadily increased in recent years. With regard to gender and sexual orientation, the opening of marriage to same-sex couples and the legal recognition of genders beyond male and female have expanded the spectrum of possible life paths. Increasing diversity is also accompanied by conflicts, and a productive way of addressing them must be found. This requires clarifying the origins of these conflicts. To work through them, a legal and political framework is needed within which they can be negotiated. To this end, a competence for plurality as a stance needs to be cultivated—on the basis of a human-rights-based value policy. Its principles are reflected in a legal-institutional architecture that implements equality and anti-discrimination in an accessible, low-threshold manner across various spheres of society.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Michael Kramer: *A Legal Analysis of Austria's Cooperation Model for Interreligious and Religious Education in the School Context*, in: *Religions* 2025, 16 (10), 1273.

This article examines the legal and practical dimensions of religious education (RE) in Austria with a particular focus on interreligious education as an emerging pedagogical and societal response to increasing religious and cultural diversity. It begins by situating the discussion within Austria's historical and constitutional framework, in which RE is governed as a *res mixta*—a joint responsibility shared between the state and legally recognized churches and religious societies (CRSs).

The analysis highlights how this model of power-sharing is enshrined in both constitutional and ordinary legislation, granting CRSs extensive autonomy in the organization, content, and supervision of denominational RE. Despite the absence of explicit legal provisions for interreligious education, the article demonstrates that interreligious teaching practices can be implemented through cooperative arrangements between CRSs, particularly when aligned with national educational goals and international commitments to tolerance, religious freedom, and other human rights. It further analyses curricular references to interreligiosity across various denominational RE programs and discusses the institutional potential for integrating interreligious competencies into teacher training and school practice.

Drawing on the example of the project *Integration through Interreligious Education at the University Graz*, a cooperative initiative between the Catholic Church and the Islamic Religious Society in Austria (IGGÖ) from 2017 to 2023, the article outlines how interreligious education was legally contextualized and contractually formalized. The article concludes that interreligious education, though legally unregulated, is both feasible and desirable within Austria's current legal and educational framework. It calls for greater normative clarity

and policy support to ensure the sustainability and broader implementation of such models, which foster mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)

Aysun Yaşar, Katalin Rac: *Tradition, Consensus, and Change in Judaism and Islam. A Historical and a Theological Reading of Ignaz Goldziher's works*, in: Theologische Zeitschrift herausgegeben von der Theologischen Fakultät der Universität Basel 2025, 81 (2), pp. 103-128.

In this article we discuss the work of the Hungarian Jewish orientalist Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) from a Jewish historical and Islamic theological perspectives. By exploring the concepts of tradition, change, and consensus as they interconnect in Goldziher's work on Judaism and Islam, we aim to highlight that these three concepts were key to his understanding of the Jewish and Islamic religiosities' inherently historical and changing character. At the same time, we also discuss the possible correlations between Goldziher research in Islamic and Jewish studies on the one hand and his professional interests and personal experience on the other.

[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)

[Discover more publications by our members](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS



Forum Religionsphilosophie: Ethik in den Religionen

- 10.12., 11:30 a.m.- 01 p.m.: **Tuğrul Kurt:** *İhsân als ethisches Prinzip im Koran und seine Transformation in Exegese und Isrâ'îliyyât-Traditionen*
- 0.12., 11:30 a.m.- 01 p.m.: **Irem Kurt:** *Die koranische Speiseethik*
- 0.12., 11:30 a.m.- 01 p.m.: **Jens Schlieter:** *Die buddhistische Ethik als Kultivierungspraxis und das Problem der ethischen Dilemmata*

[The full programme can be found here.](#)



December 12, 2025: Online-Diskussion: Religion und Politik mit Prof. Dr. Helmut Zander

The DVRW-AK RelPol invites you to an online discussion with Prof. Dr. Helmut Zander (University of Fribourg, Switzerland) on December 12, 2025. The focus will be on Zander's new publication by DeGruyter: *Religion und Politik in Christentum und Islam, Überlegungen zu kulturellen Grammatiken, Pfaddispositionen und Wahrscheinlichkeiten*.

Professor Helmut Zander's magnum opus on cultural

grammars of the relationship between religion and politics, published in 2025, is one of the most ambitious and richly documented contemporary contributions to the discussion in religious studies. The online meeting is intended to facilitate an intensive exchange between the author and the participants.

[The full programme can be found here.](#)



December 16, 2025, Valedictory Lecture by Hans Schelkshorn: Der Gott der Armen. Philosophie des Prophetismus bei Hermann Cohen, Emmanuel Lévinas und im "pensamiento latinoamericano"

07 p.m. - 09 p.m., University of Vienna: Main Ceremonial Hall, Universitätsring 1, 1010 Wien

[Registration required. All information can be found here.](#)

[The full programme can be found here.](#)



Forum Religionsphilosophie: Religion und Psychoanalyse

- 15.12., 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.: **Herman Westerink: Lacan, Luther und die Ethik der Psychoanalyse**

[The full programme can be found here.](#)

14. Deutsch-Österreichische
Kirchenrechtstagung

Zukunft der Kirche in der
säkularen Gesellschaft

Kirchenrechtliche Herausforderungen
gesellschaftlicher
Transformationsprozesse



February 23-25, 2026, 14. Deutsch-
Österreichische Kirchenrechtstagung:
Zukunft der Kirche in der säkularen
Gesellschaft. Kirchenrechtliche
Herausforderungen gesellschaftlicher
Transformationsprozesse

Sky Lounge, Oskar Morgenstern-Platz 1, 1090 Wien

For the 14th time, the German-Austrian Canon Law Conference, this time taking place in Vienna, is addressing current issues in canon law and providing a platform for exchange between academia, students, and practitioners.

In view of the multiple current, epochal transformation processes, the question arises as to how canon law can contribute to promoting church life in the tension between identity (tradition) and relevance (current issues), between the universality of the universal church and the particularity of the local church. The thematic diversity of the presentations indicates the magnitude of the challenges on the one hand, but also demonstrates the topicality of canon law issues on the other.

The conference attaches great importance to exchange between disciplines and among participants. For this reason, speakers from relevant related disciplines and church practice are also invited. After the presentations, there will be ample opportunity for discussion. The working groups available for you to choose from will explore the issues in greater depth and apply them to practical situations. A panel discussion will open up the topic to a wider interested audience.

[The full programme can be found here.](#)

THIRD MISSION ACTIVITIES

RaT members contribute to public discourse by writing in newspapers, giving statements in television and podcasts, and by publishing on our blog:

RaT-Blog @ derstandard

- **Aysun Yaşar:** [Verschwundene Nachbarschaften: Jüdisches Leben in Anatolien](#)
 - For centuries, Antakya and Gaziantep were places of religious diversity—a way of life that was long taken for granted. Today, synagogues and cemeteries bear witness to a Jewish life that has almost disappeared and remind us why it is important to remember it in the present day. Muslims, Christians, and Jews often lived side by side here. Cities such as Gaziantep were closely linked to Aleppo through trade, family ties, and shared neighborhoods.

Notable Media Appearances

- **Kathpress:** [Melk: Religionspolitologisches Forum widmet sich Anti-Gender-Debatten](#)
 - International symposium "Who is Afraid of Gender? Identitarianism in Service of State Power" examines how gender debates shape state power and identity politics - International Speakers. Event organized by **Katerina Koci** and **Dietmar Regensburger**.

RAT-BLOG

During the last months we published articles by our members and guest authors that cover a broad range of topics:

- **Marco Fiorletta:** [Die Natur des Entwurfes: Überlegungen aus einem Hölderlin Entwürfe-Workshop](#)
 - From 24 to 26 September 2025, a transdisciplinary workshop on the drafts of the Homburger Folioheft took place at the University of Vienna under the title "Ein seidnes Maas, des Entwurfes nemlich". Hölderlin lesen: Entwürfe aus dem Homburger Folioheft. The workshop was organised as part of the FWF project Gott in Anmuth in cooperation with the Hölderlin Society and the Research Centre "Religion and Transformation" and was accompanied by Hölderlin experts from various universities and disciplines.
- **Roger Haight SJ:** [On New Ways of Thinking about the Church \(Part I\)](#)
 - For a growing number of Christians, mainly in the Western hemisphere, church-talk has become problematic for many reasons. However, for theology to shy away from or even avoid questions of the church only further limits the credibility of theology.
 - *This excerpt is reprinted with permission from America magazine, published by America Press, Inc. © 2025. All rights reserved. To read the full article, please click [here](#) or visit www.americamagazine.org.*
- **Roger Haight SJ:** [On New Ways of Thinking about the Church \(Part II\)](#)
 - Most Christians have a general idea of how the church developed. The New Testament provides the main entrée into that process, but it does not paint an exact picture of how the church took form in response to the preaching of Jesus and his execution...
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Impressum

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