



**Roland Lehmann.** *Die Transformation des Kirchenbegriffs in der Frühaufklärung.* Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013. xi + 428 pp. EUR 79.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-16-152373-1.



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**Published on** H-Pietism (July, 2015)

**Commissioned by** Peter James Yoder (Berry College)

## The Transformation of Conceptions of the Church in the Early Enlightenment

The European nation building, confessional pluralization, and devastating series of confessional conflicts (e.g., The Thirty Years' War) encountered in early modernity caused some Protestant theologians and philosophers to adapt their positions on jurisprudence and their conceptions of the church to their new social and spiritual conditions. Scholars from England, France, the Netherlands, and Germany were especially attentive to the legal form and status of the church, and their discussions had a long-lasting impact on modern ecclesiastical law. However, little attention has been given to the significance of these debates in the history of theology.

In *Die Transformation des Kirchenbegriffs in der Frühaufklärung*, Roland M. Lehmann explores the development of Protestant ecclesiology in the early Enlightenment, focusing on the interdependency between theology and jurisprudence. Lehmann traces this process of transformation in western and central Europe. His particular achievement is that his study engages both the history of church law and the history of theology.

Lehmann provides evidence that during this important period, the conception of the church changed substantially from what was encountered in the Reformation. His aim is to elucidate the multilayered dynamics of the process, by which the theory of episcopalism was displaced with two competing models: territorialism and collegialism. In light of the complexity of the topic, he seeks to offer a study of the particular positions held by Hugo Grotius, Edward Herbert of Cherbury, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Samuel von Pufendorf, Christian Thomasius, Christoph Matthaeus Pfaff, and Lorenz von Mosheim. By approaching the topic in this way, Lehmann acknowledges a measure of interdependence between these men, while featuring several specific points of view on the constitution and character of the church in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe.

Every chapter includes a historiographical overview and source selection, followed by a chronological and systematic analysis of the particular person's contribution to the debate. In his final chapter, Lehmann com-

piles the five main elements he considers essential in the transformation process. He begins the study with two scholars, each representing an intellectual school that was highly influential for the subsequent shifts in the conception of the church.

Using the example of Hugo Grotius, Lehmann inquires in the first chapter as to how Grotius's doctrine of natural law influenced conceptions of the church. As a consequence of experiencing the impact of the Thirty Years' War, Grotius was emphatic on the superiority of the state over the church in matters concerning ecclesial law. Grotius substantiated his view, not initially with the Bible, but with natural law. He established a flexible system of justifications for rights by distinguishing between natural, divine, and human law. Since it was necessary in this context to give plausible reasons for the existence of God, Grotius elaborated a rationalistic, theistic definition of religion, which, being reduced to only a few principles, he believed would be evident to everybody. This convergence of natural law and rational theology was later enhanced by Pufendorf.

In chapter 2, Lehmann analyzes the influence of Herbert of Cherbury's deism on early Enlightenment ecclesiology. Herbert's view that natural religion was one based on human rationality alone led him to make fundamental modifications to his conception of the church. He set forth "five catholic articles" as the lowest common denominator for all religions. In accordance with Herbert's articles, the "true catholic church" to which individuals belonged was transconfessional, transreligious, and lay-oriented. Here, the church is based on rationality and consists of mature individuals. Lehmann elaborates convincingly that Herbert's ethical and universal conception of the church reached beyond the boundaries of Christian theology.

The next chapter investigates the work of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, whose contribution is seen in his attempts to advance a "church as civitas" ecclesiological model (p. 105). Incorporating ideas from Reformed federalism, Leibniz suggested bringing together the various Christian communities into one united church, while allowing the peculiarities of each group to remain. His diplomatic and intellectual efforts to reunite the various confessions failed, according to Lehmann, because of Leibniz's particular historical context. Applying ideas from metaphysics to ecclesiology, Leibniz described the church as a "kingdom of free spirits" that can only be perceived by God (p. 123). Here, Lehmann rightly points out the connection of Leibniz's ideas to Herbert's claims

concerning the true catholic church.

Chapter 4 examines Samuel von Pufendorf's understanding of ecclesial law. Finding state intervention in religious affairs problematic, Pufendorf attempted to define the spheres of control between state and church in a way that established the sovereignty of the church. Whereas Leibniz had used state law as an analogy for his understanding of the church, Pufendorf applied the idea of an association (*Verein*) to the church. Referring solely to the teachings of Jesus, he developed the notion of the church as a "free and equal society" (p. 164). Lehmann argues convincingly that Pufendorf's position includes aspects of both territorialism and collegialism, and thus the jurist defies a clear attribution to either of the two theories. With the antipodes of Leibniz and Pufendorf, Lehmann demonstrates the paradigm shift from *civitas* to *societas* that was formative for all areas of theology.

In the following chapter, the author provides a nuanced analysis of how the new territorial and collegial impulses in understandings of the church were specifically employed. In order to accomplish this, Lehmann compares the territorialism of Christian Thomasius with the collegialism of Christoph Matthaeus Pfaff. Both scholars rejected the theory of episcopatism and interpreted the church as a community of free and equal individuals. Nevertheless, Thomasius and Pfaff differed as to whether the church should be autonomous or be under the direction of the secular authority. Lehmann points out the different circumstances both scholars combated: whereas Thomasius wanted to address issues within the Lutheran Church that were not eliminated during the Reformation, Pfaff tried to protect the church from state despotism.

Chapter 6 explores how developing conceptions of the church influenced the work of the theologian Lorenz von Mosheim. Mosheim expressed an encyclopedic differentiation of theological ecclesiology (p. 338). Consequently his conception of the church was not confined to dogmatics, but it influenced his writings on church history, pastoral theology, and homiletics. For example, the change from episcopalianism to collegialism can be traced, claims Lehmann, in Mosheim's presentation of church history. Thus Mosheim contributed to the broadening of ecclesiological questions within the theological disciplines.

In *Die Transformation des Kirchenbegriffs in der Frühaufklärung*, Roland M. Lehmann describes the transformation process as a transgression of horizons in two ways (*doppelte Horizontüberschreitung*). One

âtransgressionâ concerns the limits of theology, while the other occurs within theology as a discipline. It would be worth examining further, how this transforming process influenced the congregational life of the churches.

All in all, Lehmann presents a comprehensibly structured, eloquently written, and perspicacious study. It is required reading for anyone interested in the development and dynamics of the conception of the church in the early Enlightenment.

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**Citation:** Sabine Hübner. Review of Lehmann, Roland, *Die Transformation des Kirchenbegriffs in der Frühaufklärung*. H-Pietism, H-Net Reviews. July, 2015.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=44331>



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