

Thomas Wabel

## Die nahe ferne Kirche

### Studien zu einer protestantischen Ekklesiologie in kulturhermeneutischer Perspektive

[The Close Distant Church. Towards a Protestant Ecclesiology from the Perspective of Cultural Hermeneutics.]



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For the Protestant churches in Western Europe, the self-definition within and against a pluralistic environment is becoming increasingly difficult. In a situation of »believing without belonging« (G. Davie), the distinction between the inside and the outside is blurred. Based on the results of the latest decennial nation-wide survey done by the Protestant church in Germany (EKD), Thomas Wabel argues that the numerous forms of participation which characterize an open people's church (Volkskirche) are defined by mutual inclusion and exclusion. Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of culture and Bernhard Waldenfels' phenomenology provide the theoretical framework for developing the categories of identity and alterity, order and disruption, and the metaphor of the boundary that allows for the re-entry of what has been ruled out. The stabilizing element of criteria for membership and the destabilizing experience of transgressing existing boundaries are equally important for the church as an institution which is sensitive to an element of foreignness in the familiar.

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