

Biography



Michael Heymel is born in 1953 in Frankfurt am Main. He studied Theology and Philosophy in Frankfurt and Heidelberg, where he made his doctoral thesis on the Danish religious author Søren Kierkegaard in 1984. As a reverend of the Protestant Church in Hessen und Nassau (EKHN) Heymel has worked in several parishes. Besides he educated lay preachers and conducted a church choir. Then he got singing lessons for several years and made his first appearance with German pop songs of the years between 1920 and 1940. In 2003 Heymel made his postdoctoral thesis at Rostock University on pastoral care and music.

Since 2004 until 2012 he was unsalaried lecturer for Practical Theology at Heidelberg University, teaching Homiletics, especially with examples of great preachers of ecclesiastical history, as well as Liturgy and Pastoral Care with Music. In cooperation with Christian Möller he published a collection *Sternstunden der Predigt* (Calwer Verlag: Stuttgart 2010) about decisive moments in the history of sermon and an interpretation of Kierkegaard's edifying speeches (*Das Wagnis, ein Einzelner zu sein – The Risk of Being An Individual*. TVZ: Zürich 2013).

Between 2008 and 2016 he was employed at the Central Archives of the Protestant Church in Hessen und Nassau, where he was researching on the estate of Martin Niemöller, the prominent Protestant pastor, who spent the last 7 years of Nazi rule in concentration camps. Niemöller's Dahlem sermons were completely edited by Heymel in 2011. In January 2017 he published a new biography on Niemöller which was reviewed in international journals and magazines.

An international conference on Martin Niemöller and his international reception took place in April 2021 at the Evangelische Akademie Frankfurt. It was conceived by Lukas Bormann, professor for New Testament research at Philipps-Universität Marburg, together with practical theologian Michael Heymel, and was conducted in collaboration with study director Eberhard Pausch. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was held as a videoconference. A conference volume was published in 2023 in the series *Arbeiten zur kirchlichen Zeitgeschichte* (AKIZ.B) by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen. In his new comprehensive book *Martin Niemöller. Weg und Wirkung in verschiedenen Handlungsfeldern* (Kohlhammer Verlag: Stuttgart 2025) Heymel shows how Niemöller opened his church to ecumenism and encouraged it to work for a peaceful world.

Heymel has published several books on Kierkegaard, Jewish-Christian Dialogue, Protestant sermon on Mary, hymn writers Paul Gerhardt and Arno Pötzsch, the Post-Reformation history of Protestant hymn books and music in pastoral care. In the *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* he presented detailed biographic enquiries on the German cultural philosopher Walter Schubart and his Latvian-Jewish woman who both fled to Riga and were deported in 1941 to Kazakhstan. A detailed essay on Schubart's life and work was published in 2015.

Heymel has also written short exegetical introductions to the Revelation of John (TVZ Zürich 2018) and the Gospel of John (TVZ Zürich 2020, 2nd edition 2025). In 2021 he published some of his own sermons (*Zum Leben aufblühen*). In order to promote Protestant Christian knowledge of the faith, he wrote an introduction into the basic articles of faith (*Woran glaubst du?* Evangelische Verlagsanstalt: Leipzig 2021) and a book for lovers of church hymns with short introductions to 72 songs, published independently on Amazon: *Evangelische Lieder verstehen* (Limburg/Lahn 2024).

August 2025