Edmund Schlink

Ecumenical and Confessional Writings

The Coming Christ and Church Tradition After the Council

edited by Matthew L. Becker

Edmund Schlink Works Volume 1

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Edmund Schlink Works

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Matthew L. Becker

Volume 1

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Translated by Matthew L. Becker and Hans G. Spalteholz

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Contents

Foreword to the German Edition 7

Preface to the American Edition 10

Edmund Schlink (1903–1984): An Ecumenical Life 15

Abbreviations 42

Book One: The Coming Christ and Church Traditions: Essays for the Dialogue among the Separated Churches

Introduction: The Task 47

Part One: Methodological Considerations 53
Chapter One: The Task and Danger of the World Council of Churches 53
Chapter Two: The Structure of the Dogmatic Statement as an Ecumenical Issue 67

Part Two: Aspects of the Dogmatic Foundation 127
Chapter Three: The Christology of Chalcedon in Ecumenical Dialogue 127
Chapter Four: Christ and the Church 135
Chapter Five: The Expanse of the Church according to the Lutheran Confession 155
Chapter Six: The *Cultus* in the Perspective of Evangelical-Lutheran Theology 166
Chapter Seven: Law and Gospel as a Controversial Issue in Theology 176
Chapter Eight: Apostolic Succession 211
Chapter Nine: On the Issue of Tradition 249

Part Three: Conciliar Encounter 257
Chapter Ten: The Sojourning People of God 257
Chapter Eleven: Christ—The Hope for the World 266
Chapter Twelve: Transformations in the Protestant Understanding of the Eastern Church 276
Chapter Thirteen: The Significance of the Eastern and Western Traditions for Christendom 288

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Chapter Fourteen: Ecumenical Councils Then and Now 298
Chapter Fifteen: The Resurrection of God's People 332

Book Two: After the Council

Preface 339
Chapter I: The Spiritual Awakening of Christendom 341
Chapter II: The Conciliar Awakening of the Roman Church 353
Chapter III: The Resolutions of the Council 371
Chapter IV: The Reform of the Worship Service 381
Chapter V: The Self-Understanding of the Roman Church 392
Chapter VI: The Council and the Non-Roman Churches 417
Chapter VII: The Council and the Non-Christian Religions 437
Chapter VIII: The Council and the World 445
Chapter IX: Scripture, Tradition, Teaching Office 468
Chapter X: Post-Conciliar Possibilities of the Roman Church 479
Chapter XI: Pope and Curia 485
Chapter XII: The Significance of the Council for the Other Churches. 492
Chapter XIII: Anxious Christendom 500
Chapter XIV: Necessary Steps 514
Chapter XV: The Mystery of Unity 523

Index of Biblical References 537
Old Testament 537
New Testament 537

Index of Persons 541

Index of Subjects 547

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Foreword to the German Edition

Whoever reads Edmund Schlink's writings discovers their abiding significance and contemporary relevance. When the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the declaration *Dominus Iesus* three years ago[i] and the ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church became much more difficult, Schlink's book on the council was an important discussion resource for me. His chapter on the Decree on Ecumenism from Vatican II serves as a knowledgeable guide to Roman Catholic ecclesiology and provides criteria for the critical examination needed for it. What becomes clear, above all, is that the prerequisite for a serious ecumenical dialogue is the willingness, at the very start, to be open, for the time being at least, to God's activity in the other churches, rather than from the start to be judgmental about them. This remains one of the strongest ecumenical driving forces which accompanied Schlink throughout his life. One finds it again and again in the most diverse contributions he made from completely different periods of his life.

Edmund Schlink promoted the relation of theology to other fields of study. He appropriated insights from psychology and philosophy, from the natural sciences, and from cultural studies. As a systematic theologian he made frequent reference to the exegetical disciplines and to the history of dogma in the ancient church. The diversity of issues within and beyond the discipline of theology gave his thought a breadth that makes it especially attractive. The diversity of his thought, moreover, is just as evident as the inner coherence of the topics treated from various fields of study. There is a red thread that runs through Schlink's numerous publications, from the early dissertation, *The Human Being in the Preaching of the Church*, to the *Ecumenical Dogmatics*, which appeared shortly before he died. The question, "What is a human being?" [*Was ist der Mensch?*], was his great theme, perhaps even his life's theme. What he wrote in an insightful personal remembrance about Julia von Bodelschwingh, the wife of the director of the Bethel Institutions, Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, characterizes not only the outline of his theological anthropology but also his ecclesiology and his passionate interest in ecumenical matters: "In her thinking she was never satisfied with the established and the familiar, but in a surprisingly original and unbiased way she inquired into why things are the way they are. While staying entirely focused on Bethel, she nevertheless at the same time went above and beyond what was already occurring there. Devoting herself entirely to the people at Bethel, she sought for what was not yet a reality in their lives."[ii] Schlink wanted likewise to be devoted to the separated churches and to discern in them

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a fullness which was not yet realized in an actual confessional form. It was precisely the Lutheran Confession, so he was convinced, that enables the separated churches to seek and discover one another as churches of Jesus Christ, and to come to live in the full breadth of the church of Jesus Christ.

This first volume of Edmund Schlink's works brings together two books, *The Coming Christ and Church Traditions: Essays for the Dialogue among the Separated Churches* and *After the Council.* They belong together even though they were originally published separately. The essays in the first book are more than preliminary studies for the *Ecumenical Dogmatics*, and the second book on the Second Vatican Council is more than the formal report of the official German Protestant observer at that council. What is needed for productive ecumenical dialogue is substantive scholarship in dogmatics and the history of dogma. This is just what these multifaceted texts provide. Beyond that, Edmund Schlink himself was convinced: If the goal of uniting the separated churches is in earnest, then no church can remain as it is now. For that reason, at the very start of every ecumenical endeavor—at the global, regional, or local level—there must be repentance for each church body's intransigence and the widespread sense of ecclesiological entitlement. In one of the last chapters of his book on the Second Vatican Council, Schlink speaks of "anxious Christendom" [*ängstlichen Christenheit*]. Ecumenical zeal is good, but it does not overcome that angst. That can only happen through "the mercy of Christ." Here beats the very heart of Schlink's theology. It is from the action of Christ that we need to come really to know our own church and the other churches. Schlink will then later speak, in the *Ecumenical Dogmatics*, of the "Copernican revolution in the consideration of Christendom." Christ—and not one's own church—must be the criterion for truly perceiving and evaluating the other churches.

This first volume makes accessible the important essay, "The Structure of the Dogmatic Statement as an Ecumenical Issue." As Edmund Schlink worked on this in 1957, he entered into new territory. He allowed anthropological criteria, such as modes of thinking and forms of language, as well as insights from linguistics and the psychology of thinking, to shed light on dogmatic and ecumenical reflection. He understood the differences within the New Testament—for example, between the Pauline and Johannine writings—not only as "differences in conceptuality and historical context, but also as differences in their author's modes of thinking."

The book *After the Council* describes the four periods of the Second Vatican Council, together with its hopes and surprises, its breakthroughs and setbacks. It is a small compendium of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. One learns what constitutes the difference between an assembly of the World Council of Churches and a council of the Roman Catholic Church. One learns what constitutions, decrees, and declarations are. One is astonished at the bold scale and intensity with which the official observers from the other churches were involved in the preparation of important texts and resolutions.

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In controversial theological discussions with the Roman Catholic Church, the question is often raised: "Well, what has come of your council with its ecumenical openness?" Whoever reads Schlink's book on the council carefully will not stop with this question, for it must likewise be asked: "How have we in our own church responded to the council? Are we merely sitting back, or are we challenged toward our own renewal?" At the end of the book Schlink writes, "Beyond that, however, it is correct to say that none of the churches can remain exactly as it is; in every case, a renewal and an unfolding of catholicity, that is, a return to God and a turning toward the other churches, is needed." These are important driving forces in the ecumenical theology of Edmund Schlink, on which we are still dependent even after forty years.

On 6 March 2003 Edmund Schlink would have been 100 years old. A group of his students is preparing a multi-volume edition of the most important works that are either out of print or difficult to acquire. The edition will contain the following volumes: *Ecumenical and Confessional Writings*; *Ecumenical Dogmatics*; *The Doctrine of Baptism*; *The Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*; and *Sermons and Essays.* Each volume will contain an introduction that identifies aspects of the historical influence of the works published in that volume. In this first volume Jochen Eber has provided a biographical introduction.[iii] He situates the most important works by Edmund Schlink in relation to the course of Schlink's life and the context in which they originated, their life-setting [*Sitz im Leben*].

Karlsruhe, April 2003 Klaus Engelhardt

Editor's Notes

[i] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church" (Vatican City: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 6, 2000), available on the Vatican's website, accessed on 22 April 2014, Vatican.va, vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents.

[ii] Edmund Schlink, "Erinnerungen an eine jugendliche Gestalt (Julia von Bodelschwingh)" [Memories of a Youthful Woman], *Frauen in Bethel: Acht Frauengestalten aus vergangener Zeit*, ed. Gottfried Michaelis (Melle: Knoth, 2000), 7.

[iii] See Jochen Eber, "Edmund Schlink 1903–1984: Ein Leben für die Einheit der Kirche," in *Schriften zu Ökumene und Bekenntnis*, vol. 1 (*Der kommende Christus und die kirchlichen Traditionen*; *Nach dem Konzil*), ed. Klaus Engelhardt (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), xi–xxii. This excellent German introduction served as the principal resource for the editor's introduction that is included in the present volume.

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Preface to the American Edition

In 2004 Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht marked the centennial anniversary of the birth of Edmund Schlink and the twentieth anniversary of his death by publishing the first of five volumes that contain his principal theological writings, *Schriften zu Ökumene und Bekenntnis*. The final volume appeared in 2010.

In January 2012 Jörg Persch, the editorial director for theology and religion at Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, invited me to begin an American edition of these volumes. I am grateful to him and to the Schlink family for entrusting me with this important project. I am also grateful to the editors of the German edition: Klaus Engelhardt, Günther Gassmann, Rolf Herrfahrdt, Michael Plathow, Ursula Schnell, and Peter Zimmerling.

Although nearly all of Edmund Schlink's writings in this first volume of the American edition have been available in English for several decades, the publication of the new German edition offered a significant impetus for providing a fresh and more accurate translation of them. Key terms are now translated consistently. Infelicitous and misleading renderings of Schlink's language into English, which more or less happened in the earlier versions, have been corrected. Technical theological terms and concepts received special attention so that their English equivalents are as accurate as possible. Sentences, footnotes, and entire paragraphs that, for whatever reason, were omitted have now been restored. Unlike the abridged English edition of *Der kommende Christus und die kirchlichen Traditionen*, which was published in 1967, this new edition includes all of the essays that appeared in the original book, published in 1961.

Working with Dr. Hans Spalteholz, emeritus professor of English and theology at Concordia University, Portland, Oregon, has been a great joy and privilege and not merely a collaborative labor of love. As a native German speaker, who also served for thirty-five years as a pastor to a German-speaking congregation in Portland, Prof. Spalteholz brought crucial, invaluable expertise to this project. I am truly grateful for the help he has provided me. I do, however, take full responsibility for the finished product.

We have attempted to be as faithful to Schlink's original language and polished style as context and word usage permitted. In general, we have tried to be "as literal as possible" and "as free as necessary." On occasion, we have not hesitated to borrow felicitous phrases and apt expressions from earlier translations of Schlink's works and those of other German writers. We have employed gender-inclusive language to the extent that such use was possible without misrepresenting what the author communicated or forcing his

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language to fit later church developments (for example, regarding the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry; cf. sec. 4 of chap. 8 ["Apostolic Succession"] in Book One below). We believe that were Dr. Schlink alive today he would use such inclusive language, given his strong emphasis on the inclusivity of the whole church within the one body of Christ.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Where Schlink's versification from Luther's Bible differs from the NRSV's, I have placed the latter's verse numbers in brackets. All quotations from the official documents of the Second Vatican Council are based on the English versions that appear on the official website of the Vatican (Vatican.va). Nevertheless, I have also freely made use of the Latin and English versions that appear in Denzinger and Tanner.[1] Where Schlink's German translations of these documents differ significantly from the online English versions, I have compared the German and all available English renderings with the Latin and made whatever adjustments were necessary.

The only material not included here is the biographical essay by Dr. Jochen Eber, which was published in the first volume of the German edition. That essay has been replaced by my own introduction, which is partly based on Dr. Eber's very helpful research.

Footnotes by Schlink appear as normal footnotes in the text (identified by plain superscripted arabic numerals), in a sequence that is identical to the German original (unless otherwise noted). On rare occasions where an incorrect or incomplete title or date appears in the footnotes, these have been corrected and missing publication information supplied. The other, infrequent mistakes in the original citations have been silently rectified. Whenever possible, references to existing English translations of works cited by Schlink are included. If a German work has not been published in English, a translation of its title is placed in brackets immediately after the German title. All translations of quoted German works are mine, unless otherwise noted. Notes added in their entirety in the American edition appear at the end of each chapter and are identified in the text by superscripted roman numerals in brackets. On occasion, an editorial insertion will be included in the body of the text or within one of Schlink's footnotes. These editorial insertions are placed in brackets and marked at the end with the abbreviation "Ed.," to make clear that they are my notes, not Schlink's. Numbers that appear in brackets, either in the text or in footnotes, refer to the page number(s) from the English translation of a given work. Each volume contains indexes of Scripture references, names, and subjects.

1 Henrich Denzinger, ed., *Enchiridion symbolorum: definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum/Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd ed., ed. Peter Hünermann, Robert Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012); Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown, 1990). I have followed Tanner's lead in using gender-inclusive language whenever possible.

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The layout of the American edition retains Schlink's divisions of chapters, sections, and paragraphs. All Greek and Latin terms have been kept in the text and an English translation of the less familiar ones appears in brackets. On occasion Schlink's original German term or phrase is placed in brackets immediately after the English translation, usually because the word or phrase is a technical expression or its etymological roots are significant. I have maintained most instances where Schlink placed quotation marks around certain German words and phrases (and have usually then placed the original word or phrase in brackets after the translation). Where Schlink refers to a word as a word, I have placed that word in italics, not in quotation marks. Material placed in parentheses, either in the body of the text or in footnotes, unless otherwise noted, is original to Schlink's text.

A few remarks on certain specifics of the translation may be of some help to the reader. Normally *church* with a small-case *c* refers to "the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church" or "the church of Jesus Christ," which cannot be strictly identified with any one church body or denomination. (The Latin designation for this, the *una sancta* confessed in the Latin form of the Nicene Creed, will likewise be small-case.) When *Church* appears with a large-case *C*, this term refers to a specific church body (for example, the Roman Catholic Church), a church tradition (for example, the Eastern Orthodox Church), or to a federation of churches (for example, The Protestant Church in Germany).

The word *Anfechtung* is an important term in the Lutheran theological tradition. Luther occasionally used it to translate the Latin term *tentatio*, that is, "spiritual crisis" or "turmoil" or "trial." Luther understood it also in the sense of "being attacked" or "being assailed" by forces opposed to Christ, the gospel, and the church. In such a context, one is being tempted to reject faith in Christ and to despair of God and oneself. So the term can also be translated as "temptation," although that lacks the aspect of "attack." The term will occasionally be left untranslated (as in the seventh chapter of Book One below, where Schlink defines it), or it will be rendered as "spiritual attack and trial." The antidote to such attack, according to both Luther and Schlink, is solely the gospel promise and the comfort it brings to the one who trusts it in faith.

While it would be nice to preserve Martin Luther's use and understanding of the term *evangelisch* (that is, oriented toward the *evangel* or *good news* of Jesus Christ), this word has come to mean something quite different in the United States from what it originally meant to sixteenth-century "evangelicals." Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding, this German adjective will normally be translated as "Protestant" or "Evangelical-Lutheran," depending on the context.

When used in reference to the worship service, the word *Ordnung* will be translated as "order," since it typically refers to the order of service in the liturgy. When used to refer to the organization and administration of those who serve in a given ministry of the church, this word will be translated as "ordering," since it typically refers here to the ordering or arranging of

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ministerial offices (as, for example, in the context of discussions about "faith and *order*"). When modified by the adjective *kirchenrechtlich*, the word *Ordnung* can refer to "canon law" (as in both the Eastern and Western Christian traditions), "church law" (as in the organization and administration of a given Protestant territorial church), or even "church regulations" (as in a church constitution, its ordinances and bylaws, as well as its formal agreements and legal obligations).

Given the confused and weakened state of Christian ecumenism today, which some have described as an "ecumenical winter," one might hope that a re-examination of the key theological writings of one of the great ecumenists of the twentieth century might assist efforts at renewing the ecumenical movement, especially regarding issues of "faith and order" which have been marginalized in recent decades. Since many of the theological issues with which Schlink wrestled are still pressing upon us today, our own thinking about them might be benefited by his. His reflections on the Second Vatican Council, among the first to be published in the wake of that historic event, are still apropos, more than fifty years after their appearance. His incisive, yet respectful theological criticism of the Roman Church (his preferred way of referring to that church body) seems as relevant today as it did in the late-1960s.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife and son for their loving support and for their patience during the time I worked on this project.

Valparaiso University Matthew L. Becker
Feast of Pentecost 2016

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Edmund Schlink (1903–1984): An Ecumenical Life[1]

Matthew L. Becker

An influential teacher, pastor, and professor, and a leading participant in numerous official ecumenical dialogues for more than forty years, Edmund Schlink was one of the most significant Christian theologians of the twentieth century. The author of a weighty dogmatics text, five additional important books, and numerous essays, sermons, and addresses, this second-generation "ecumenical pioneer of the 20th Century" was the central systematic and historical theologian at Heidelberg University between 1946 and his death in 1984.[2] Lauded as a "teacher of the church," as a "forerunner of the Ecumenical Movement in the 20th Century," and as "a quiet reformer" who "lived his life for the unity of the church," Schlink's contribution to the development of ecumenical theology in the second half of the twentieth century was considerable.[3] In the words of one of his most well-known students, "By connecting such ecumenical breadth with a forceful emphasis on the abiding authority of the apostolic confession of Christ, the theological works of Edmund Schlink, and especially his *Ecumenical Dogmatics*, are still exemplary guides today."[4] The recent publication of these principal writings in a new German edition offers a further reason to re-examine Schlink's life and literary output, especially given the fact that many English-speaking students of

1 The following includes material from my essay, "Edmund Schlink (1903–1984)," in *Twentieth-Century Lutheran Theologians*, ed. Mark Mattes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 195–222.

2 Günther Gassmann, "Edmund Schlink–An Ecumenical Pioneer of the 20th Century," *Ecumenical Trends* 33 (2004), 6–10.

3 Michael Plathow, "Edmund Schlink–Lehrer der Kirche: Doxologische und poetische Theologie," *Badische Pfarrerblätter* (March 2003), 61–65 (here 61); Christoph Schwöbel, "Ökumenische Dogmatik: Zum 100. Geburtstag von Edmund Schlink am 6. März 2003," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 52 (2003), 244–58 (here 254); Eugene M. Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer: An Introduction to Edmund Schlink's Life and Ecumenical Theology* (Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 1999); and Jochen Eber, "Edmund Schlink 1903–1984: Ein Leben für die Einheit der Kirche," SÖB 1:xi–xxi (here xi). For additional biographical information on Schlink, see especially Eber's doctoral dissertation, *Einheit der Kirche als dogmatisches Problem bei Edmund Schlink*, Forschungen zur systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie, vol. 67, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg and Reinhard Slenczka (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 18–50; and Klaus Engelhardt, "Biographische Reminiszenz zu Edmund Schlink," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 52 (2003), 242–44.

4 Wolfhart Pannenberg, Foreword to the *Ecumenical Dogmatics*, ÖD ix.

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religious studies, including younger American theologians, may be unfamiliar with this important German Protestant.

Early Years and Education

Edmund Schlink was born on 6 March 1903 in Darmstadt, the capital city of Hessen, south of Frankfurt. His only other sibling, Klara (1904–2001), was born one year later.[5] His mother, Ella (1877–1969), came from a family that had been heavily influenced by Herrnhuter Pietism. His father, Prof. D. Dr. Wilhelm Schlink (1875–1968), who had been raised Roman Catholic but then became Lutheran, was a professor of mechanics and aeronautical technology at the Technical College (*Hochschule*) of Darmstadt, later at the Technical College of Braunschweig, where he also served as rector, and finally back at Darmstadt (after 1921). As a child and young student, Edmund Schlink was interested in literature, philosophy, and music. In Braunschweig he attended the *Wilhelm Gymnasium* (preparatory high school) and also took violin lessons. He even directed a student orchestra there.[6] In her spiritual autobiography Klara recalls how she and her brother enjoyed browsing local bookstores in search of answers to their deepest questions. They spent much time reading such philosophers as Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900).[7]

After completing his university entrance exam in 1922, he studied one term at the University of Tübingen before transferring to the University of Munich (1922–24) where, like his father, he initially concentrated on mathematics and the natural sciences (especially physics). He also studied philosophy, art, and psychology. Following the German custom of listening to the best professors in one's field at several universities before writing one's dissertation, he then studied at Kiel (1924), Vienna (1924–25), and Marburg (1925–27). Eventually he completed his Ph.D. dissertation in psychology and submitted it to the faculty of Marburg in 1927.[8] This work explores personality changes in those

5 After her initial education in schools in Braunschweig and Darmstadt, Klara studied at the Fröbel Seminary in Kassel and "the Inner Missions" (*Inneremission*) school for girls in Berlin. In 1929 she became a teacher in the Mission House Malche in Bad Freienwalde. She then studied psychology, philosophy, and art history at the universities of Berlin and Hamburg. In 1947 she and Erika Madauss (1904–99) established The Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary in Darmstadt. At her ordination as a nun Klara took the name Mother Basilea. Later she wrote several devotional books, including a spiritual autobiography, *Wie ich Gott erlebte…*, *Sein Weg mit mir durch sieben Jahrzehnte* [How I Experienced God…, His Way with Me through Seven Decades], 3rd ed. (Darmstadt: Ev. Marienschwesternshaft, 1980).

6 Eber, *Einheit*, 18.

7 Klara (Mutter Basilea) Schlink, *Wie ich Gott erlebte*, 26.

8 Edmund Schlink, *Persönlichkeitsänderung in Bekehrungen und Depressionen: Eine empirisch-religionspsychologische Untersuchung. Nebst kasuistischen Beiträgen zur Psychologie des Gotteserlebens als Anhang* [Personality Change in Conversions and Depression: An Empirical Study in

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who experience a religious conversion and in those who suffer clinical depression. Partly as a result of this study, which also explores issues in natural religion, he was promoted to lecturer in philosophy at Marburg on 27 June 1929, although he never actually taught there.

A year prior to the completion of this initial dissertation, he himself underwent a religious conversion after suffering a crisis of faith.[9] Although he rarely spoke about this experience, even to his family, in his retirement he recounted that period of his life to some students who had asked him about it:

> We young people after the First World War were disturbed by questions like: What is life? What meaning does life have? One would read a lot of Dostoevsky and Friedrich Nietzsche, great influences on my restless generation. Restless in this way, and wanting somehow to answer the question about the meaning of life, I sat in on some lectures on medicine and law, and also on the history of religions, disturbed by the question, "Why live at all?"—because I hoped in this way to get an answer to the question about the meaning of life. But in my case it was this way: the longer I studied philosophy, the further I was from an answer, and because of that I entered into a genuine existential crisis of meaning. For that reason, I took a year off and worked as a hired hand on a Silesian farm. Out of this crisis, then, I found my way to Christian faith and decided to study theology.[10]

During his time off from the university, he came into close contact with Christians who had been influenced by the Lutheran mystic Jakob Böhme (1575–1624). In particular, a conversation with Pastor Dr. Carl Eichhorn (1855–1934), who in his retirement served a Christian convalescent home, was also instrumental in helping Schlink to overcome his crisis and to steer him in the direction of Christian faith and theology.[11] That spring, in 1926, he returned to Darmstadt, resumed his studies at Marburg (where he also began to study theology more intensively), completed his dissertation in religious psychology under the direction of Eric Rudolf Jaensch (1883–1940), and then turned his full attention toward seeking to understand the Christian faith.

After a short period of study at Bethel Seminary, near Bielefeld in Westphalia, he transferred to the University of Münster in late 1927 in order to

the Psychology of Religion with an Appendix Containing Casuistic Contributions toward the Psychology of the Experience of God] (Phil. diss., University of Marburg, 1927). A portion of this 211-page dissertation was published under the same title in *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie* 70 (1929), 1/2:81–118. Klara also wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on a religious-psychological theme, namely, the significance of the consciousness of sin in the religious struggles of adolescent girls.

9 Eber, *Einheit*, 19. Schlink's sister had also experienced a religious conversion in August 1922. See Klara (Mutter Basilea) Schlink, *Wie ich Gott erlebte*, 30.

10 Edmund Schlink, "Vortrag von Prof. Edmund Schlink im Ökumenischen Studentenheim am 'Hausabend' des Heims," tape-recorded by H. Plathow (6 May 1979) and transcribed by Irmgard Schlink (the translation here differs slightly from that by Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 137).

11 Eber, "Edmund Schlink 1903–1984," xi.

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listen to the most well-known European theologian of the time, Karl Barth (1886–1968). Here Schlink encountered his first ecumenical problems, as he heard the Reformed theologian lecture on ethics and theological anthropology—and criticize elements in the Lutheran dogmatic tradition, especially in the area of Christology. After four semesters of study and research in Münster, where he also heard lectures by Roman Catholic theologians, he completed his theological dissertation in 1930 under Barth's direction. This second of his doctoral dissertations explores "emotional experiences of God" as "an empirical-psychological contribution to the issue of natural religion."[12] Upon completing this work and passing his theological examinations in Münster and Darmstadt (he received the rare mark of "excellent" [*vorzüglich*] on his first exam and was awarded *summa cum laude* after the oral portion), he was promoted to lecturer in Münster in February 1931. On this occasion he delivered a public lecture on the concept of teleology and its continuing significance for Christian theology, later published in the principal journal of German systematic theology.[13]

Initial Teaching and Pastoral Activities

After finishing his second dissertation but before he was promoted to lecturer in Münster, Schlink chose to enter the "preachers' seminary" (*Predigerseminar*) at Friedberg in order to prepare himself for pastoral ministry. In December 1931 he was ordained and began immediately to serve as an assistant pastor to two congregations near Frankfurt. Here he had his first run-in with the Nazi Party because he refused to transport the *Winterhilfswerk* that had been entrusted to him by the Party.[14] A year later he began serving as a campus pastor at the Technical College in Darmstadt, the same place where his father had taught for so many years. In addition to giving lectures to students and faculty on the fundamental questions and issues of the Christian faith, he also discussed with them such matters as the relation of Christ to technology and the problems of German nationalism.

While serving in Darmstadt he kept in close contact with the theology faculty at Giessen, and in 1933 he was invited to become a teaching assistant (*Repentent*) there in order to complete a *third* dissertation (his second

12 Edmund Schlink, *Emotionale Gotteserlebnisse: Ein empirisch-psychologischer Beitrag zum Problem der natürlichen Religion* [Emotional Experiences of God: An Empirical-Psychological Contribution on the Issue of Natural Religion], Abhandlungen und Monographien zur Philosophie des Wirklichen 5 (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1931).

13 Edmund Schlink, "Zum Begriff des Teleologischen und seiner augenblicklichen Bedeutung für die Theologie" [On the Concept of the Teleological and Its Present Significance for Theology], *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 10 (1933), 94–125.

14 Eber, *Einheit*, 21. *Winterhilfswerk* was a Nazi project of public aid for poor people, which was partly instituted to present a positive image of the Nazis within German society.

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theological thesis, the *Habilitationsschrift*) that would allow him to become an official professor of theology in a German university. This post-doctoral thesis in theological anthropology examines how human beings have been understood in the preaching of the church.[15] It was submitted to the Giessen faculty in July 1934, and thus it paved the way for him to be called to that faculty as an un-established university lecturer (*Privatdozent*) of dogmatic and practical theology. Due to pressure from the Nazi secret police (Gestapo), however, which was exerted against him because of his activity in the Confessing Church and because he had publicly criticized the racist leaders of the *Deutsche Christen* (DC) in a sermon, he was removed from this teaching position after only one semester (winter 1934–35).[16]

A positive outcome of this time in Giessen, however, was the life-long friendship that began there with his fellow faculty member, the systematic theologian Peter Brunner (1900–81), with whom he had taught a course on the Lutheran Confessions. Like Schlink, Brunner had also been removed from his university position as a consequence of his opposition to the activities of the DC. As the pastor of a small congregation near Giessen, he had opposed the efforts of the DC to take over the congregation. As a result of his words and actions, he was denounced as anti-Nazi, and eventually spent four months in the Dachau concentration camp in 1935. When Brunner returned from prison to resume his pastorate, Schlink kept the DC pastor who had been sent by the Nazified church administration from entering the congregation and assuming leadership.[17] During these difficult years, he and Brunner, like several others,

15 Edmund Schlink, *Der Mensch in der Verkündigung der Kirche* [The Human Being in the Proclamation of the Church: A Dogmatic Investigation] (Hab. diss., University of Giessen, 1934). This work forms the first part of an expanded, three-part book that Schlink later published under the same title: Edmund Schlink, *Der Mensch in der Verkündigung der Kirche: Eine dogmatische Untersuchung* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1936).

16 Eber, *Einheit*, 21; Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 28. At the end of May 1934, the Synod that met in Barmen issued its *Theological Declaration* (the so-called "Barmen Declaration"). This document, initially drafted by Barth and then edited and augmented by several Lutheran theologians, spoke against the *Deutsche Christen* (DC), namely, those German Christians who wanted to control the twenty-eight regional Protestant churches in Germany, to bring them into alignment with the racist and nationalist ideology of the Nazis, and to organize them into a single imperial church (*Reichskirche*) under the authority of a single bishop appointed by Hitler. See Martin Heimbucher and Rudolf Weth, eds., *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung: Einführung und Dokumentation*, 7th ed. (Göttingen: Neukirchener, 2009). Those who supported the "Barmen Declaration" later organized into "the Confessing Church," of which Schlink was a participant. His sermon, "Pflicht und Versuchung christlichen Bekennens" [The Duty and Temptation in Christian Confessing], was published in *Bekennende Kirche und Welt: Vorträge und Predigten aus den Jahren 1934 bis 1945* [Confessing Church and World: Essays and Sermons from the Years 1934 to 1945], Das christliche Deutschland 1933 bis 1945: Dokumente und Zeugnisse, ed., Arbeitsgemeinschaft katholischer und evangelischer Christen, Evangelische Reihe, vol. 10 (Tübingen: Furche, 1947), 9–26 (reprinted in AB 13–34).

17 For this account, see Peter Brunner, "Bericht von Prf Brunner," in *Jahrbuch der Hessischen Kirchengeschichtlichen Vereinigung* 32 (1981), 495–503; Albrecht Peters, "Ringen um die einigende Wahrheit" [Striving for the Unifying Truth], *Kerygma und Dogma* 29 (1983), 202; and

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were forced back to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as the authoritative witness to church doctrine, especially in a time of church conflict, and they found in them the means for theological resistance against the DC. After the war, the two theologians became close colleagues and friends in Heidelberg.

In the wake of Schlink's removal from the Giessen faculty, he was invited by the director of Bethel Institutions, Friedrich von Bodelschwingh the Younger (1877–1946), who had received positive reports about Schlink's theology and scholarship, to become an assistant professor (*Dozent*) of systematic theology at the seminary in Bethel, where Schlink had also briefly been a student.[18] He began his work there on 1 April 1935, following the departure of Hans-Wilhelm Schmidt (1903–91), the one theology faculty member there to have belonged to the Nazi Party. All of the newly called *Dozenten* at that time were members of the Confessing Church. At the Bethel Seminary Schlink worked alongside such notable individuals as Günther Bornkamm (1905–90), who taught New Testament, Georg Merz (1892–1959), who taught practical theology, and Robert Frick (1901–90), who taught church history. Offering courses and seminars on dogmatics, the Lutheran Confessions, ethics, philosophy, and issues in practical theology, Schlink also regularly preached at least three Sundays a month in local congregations or at the Bethel Hospital.[19] He later wrote that "praise of the Creator from the mouths of epileptics in the *Zionskirche* at Bethel opened for me new dimensions of theological thought."[20] A product of his preaching during these years was a little book of sermons, *Der Erhöhte spricht*, which was the first of his writings to be translated into English.[21] He served in Bethel until March 1939, when the seminary was closed by the Gestapo.

Edmund Schlink, "Predigt in der Trauerfeier für D. Peter Brunner: Professor der Theologie, gehalten am Sonntag Rogate, dem 24. Mai 1981," *Kerygma und Dogma* 28 (1982), 4.

18 For Schlink's activities at the Bethel seminary in the years 1935–39 and 1945–46, see Frank-Michael Kuhlemann, *Die kirchliche Hochschule Bethel. Grundzüge ihrer Entwicklung 1905–2005* [The Seminary Bethel. Principles of its Development 1905–2005], Schriften des Instituts für Diakonie- und Sozialgeschichte an der kirchlichen Hochschule Bethel, vol. 13, ed. Matthias Benad (Bielefeld: Bethel-Verlag, 2005), 53–55, 59–60, 74–81; and Gottfried Michaelis and Andreas Lindemann, *Lehren und Studieren in Bethel 1934 bis 1946* [Teaching and Studying in Bethel 1934 to 1946] (Bielefeld: Bethel-Verlag, 1999), 9–49.

19 Gottfried Michaelis, "Edmund Schlink's Jahre in Westfalen" [Edmund Schlink's Years in Westphalia], in *Lehren und Studieren in Bethel 1934 bis 1946*, ed. Michaelis and Lindemann, 15–19.

20 Quoted by Klaus Engelhardt in his sermon, "Trauergottesdienst für Edmund Schlink am 25. Mai 1984 in der Versöhungskirche Heidelberg-Ziegelhausen gehalten von Landesbischof Dr. Klaus Engelhardt," 6 (typescript; translated by Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 29). Dr. Engelhardt is Edmund Schlink's son-in–law and had been his student. He is the retired president of the EKD.

21 Edmund Schlink, *Der Erhöhte spricht: Eine Auslegung der sieben Worte Jesu am Kreuz und ausgewählter Worte des Auferstandenen* (Berlin: Furche, 1939; 2d ed., Tübingen: Furche, 1948; 3rd ed., Hamburg: Furche, 1954). ET of the third edition: *The Victor Speaks*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958).

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During his years in Bethel he was also active as a theological advisor to the leaders of the Confessing Church in Westphalia and Hessen-Nassau. Toward this end, he had participated as a delegate in the meetings of the Confessing Church at Augsburg (1935) and Bad Oeynhausen (1936). In the struggle against the DC, Schlink and other pastors in the Confessing Church found themselves resisting Nazi ideas and practices in the church, while at the same time taking care not to be accused of overt political resistance against the Nazi regime. While many of the pastors in the Confessing Church had been able to avoid making an oath of loyalty to Hitler in 1934, they could not elude doing so in 1938, at least not if they wanted to stay in office and to provide for their families and congregations.[22] Schlink and the other leaders in their regional Confessing Church advised their pastors to make the oath.[23] Surely they did so, however, with the understanding (made clear in Barth's oath controversy), that the reference to "God" in the oath implied the subordination of the German Leader to the authority of the First Commandment. Despite having made the oath in 1938, Schlink was required to make a second oath to Hitler in December 1941, because of continued political suspicions about his activities.[24]

These years were especially difficult for him, not merely because of the church struggle against the DC and their ideology but also because of the death of his first wife, Elisabeth Winkelmann, who had been a fellow theology student in Münster. They had married in April 1932, but she died from an apparent heart attack in May 1936. After her devastating death, he had to care

22 In 1934 the national Bishop Ludwig Müller tried but failed to demand that all Protestant pastors in Germany make an oath of loyalty to Hitler. Four years later (April 1938) Friedrich Werner, the president of the Protestant High Church Council in Berlin, was able to order all pastors to make such an oath. Each pastor was required to say the following. "I swear: I will be faithful and obedient to Adolf Hitler, the leader of the German empire and people, that I will conscientiously observe the laws and carry out the duties of my office, so help me God" (see Angelika Gerlach-Praetorius, *Die Kirche vor der Eidesfrage: die Diskussion um den Pfarrereid im "Dritten Reich"* [The Church Faces the Issue of the Oath: Discussion of the Pastors' Oath in the "Third Reich"] [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967], 69).

23 It should be noted that in August 1934 Karl Barth also agreed to make the oath of loyalty to Hitler (identical in content to the 1938 oath) that was then required of all civil servants (e. g., university professors), provided he could add a phrase that limited his obedience "to the extent" that he could "be responsible as a Protestant Christian." After this request was rejected, and Barth had been suspended from teaching at Bonn, he made public the reason for his addition to the oath, namely, that no government is above the First Commandment. When the Reformed Alliance in Germany (a federation of Reformed churches in Germany) declared that for Christians the oath's reference to God "excluded any action that would be contrary to God's command as attested in Scripture," and when other members of the Confessing Church had publicly made the same point, Barth then agreed that he could make the oath without any qualification. By this time (Dec. 1934), however, his actions had raised suspicion among his superiors and he was dismissed from his university position by the Cologne administrative court. Cf. Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Biographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress), 255–58.

24 Cf. Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 44.

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for their two young daughters, Johanna (b. 1933) and Dorothea (b. 1935). Two years later, in October 1938, he married Irmgard Ostwald (1914–2006), a former student of his who had also previously studied with Barth in her native Basel.[25] After her arrival at Bethel, Schlink had asked her if she would agree to type the first draft of the book he was then completing, on the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. She agreed and stayed on through the following summer to finish that project. (For relaxation she accompanied him on the piano, while he played his violin.) Toward the end of their collaboration he asked her to marry him. Together they had two children, Wilhelm (b. 1939) and Bernhard (b. 1944).[26] For almost fifty years Frau Schlink would give her husband invaluable theological counsel and support.

After the closure of the seminary in Bethel, Schlink became an official regional church counsellor (*Visitator*) of congregations in the Confessing Church in Hessen-Nassau. Many congregations there were without pastors, and so he was called upon to preach and care for several of them. Within a few months, however, his preaching had put him at odds again with the Gestapo and he was thus banned from speaking in public.[27] After a short stint as a missionary in Schleswig-Hostein, he returned to Westphalia, where he was called to serve as a wartime substitute pastor and a pastoral administrator to two congregations in Dortmund. During this time, he and his family lived in the household of the systematic theologian, Hans Joachim Iwand (1899–1960), who had been director of the Confessing Church's seminary in Blöstau and later in Bielefeld. Because of the frequent allied bombing raids, Frau Schlink and the children returned to Bethel after a few months. A short time later Schlink was called and appointed pastor of a congregation in Bielefeld, but the church authorities in Berlin, all members of the DC, blocked the appointment.[28] Nevertheless, the elders of that Confessing Church congregation, the *Neustädter Marienkirche*, asked him to remain, despite the illegality of such an action. This he did through the end of the war.

Particularly strong and influential memories from this period were of experiences that brought him into close contact with Christians from other confessional traditions. "I could not forget the humble faces of the Orthodox female forced-laborers from Ukraine, who in Bielefeld stepped to the altar of the evangelical-Lutheran St. Mary's Church and to whom I could not deny the Sacrament."[29] He also could not forget the experience of officiating at funeral

25 Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 30.

26 While Wilhelm is an emeritus professor of art history at the University of Freiburg, Bernhard is an emeritus professor of law at Humboldt University, Berlin, and a world-famous novelist. See Bernhard Schlink, *Der Vorleser* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1995; translated as *The Reader*, trans. Carol Brown Janeway [New York: Vintage, 1997]). This novel has been adapted into the award-winning film of the same title.

27 Eber, *Einheit*, 25.

28 Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 43.

29 Edmund Schlink, "Persönlicher Beitrag" [Personal Contribution] in *Männer der Ev. Kirche in*

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services with the local Roman Catholic priest, as together they stood before the mass graves, after a devastating bombing raid. Reflecting later on these various experiences, Schlink wrote:

> Was that only the experience of an extreme situation [*Grenzsituation*, lit. "a border situation"], which is meaningless for normal church life and for the dogmatic understanding of the church? Or was it even a mistake? Or is there not much more the responsibility to think about that which in those days broke open for us in an elementary way with every sign of a truly spiritual inevitability, and to do so with thorough care for its ecclesiological significance and to maintain awareness of it in the engagement with the Confessions? What shines as the truth in extreme situations in the church cannot become false in normal situations, even if it cannot be repeated in the same way.[30]

Schlink would set forth similar thoughts in his book of postwar reflections about "the outcome of the church struggle":

> In the crisis of oppression Christians sought out other Christians, not only in one's home congregation, but also among those scattered about in prisons and in open fields. That a person could be Christ to another, that Christ was present in the mutual consolation of the brothers and sisters, that was the rediscovery of the church…. This discovery was not limited to one's own church confession…. In this discovery of sisters and brothers in other Christian confessions, the differences between them were not annulled, but the accents were shifted and oppositions disappeared over against the reality of the Lord, who is greater than our understanding and more gracious than any dogma of grace. Greater than the differences was the power of the name of Jesus Christ we witnessed to together. We will never be able to forget, that in great need of the gospel's consolation, we heard it from brothers and sisters who belonged to churches in which the pure teaching of the gospel is obscured…. We began… to listen to each other and learn from each other in new ways, to admonish and to warn each other. And it became increasingly clear that none of us could speak and act from one's own confessional position without carefully thinking through and really listening to the voices of the brothers and sisters from the other confession.[31]

While serving in Bielefeld, he was also called to be the director of studies at the *Thomasstift* in Strasbourg, where the Lutheran Church in Alsace educated its pastors. From May 1943 until the Allied armies captured the city in September 1944, he spent half of a month teaching seminary students there and the other half ministering to his congregation 250 miles away. Not surprising, the

Deutschland. Eine Festschrift für Kurt Scharf zum 60. Geburtstag, ed. Heinrich Vogel (Berlin und Stuttgart: Lettner, 1962), 206.

30 Schlink, "Persönlicher Beitrag," 206–7 (cf. Eber, "Edmund Schlink 1903–84," xiii–xiv; the translation here differs slightly from that of Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 49).

31 Edmund Schlink, *Der Ertrag des Kirchenkampfes* [The Outcome of the Church Struggle], 2d ed. (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1947), 19–20, and 39. This essay has been reprinted in AB 69–121.

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students were "amazingly alert and focused on what was most essential."[32] Several months earlier he had discussed his situation with Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45) in a meeting in Berlin.[33] Bonhoeffer informed him that individuals in the German Military High Command had concluded that Germany could not win the war. He advised Schlink not to take up residence in Strasbourg. Only after the war would Schlink learn of Bonhoeffer's involvement in the circle of conspirators in the German Military Intelligence Office (*Abwehr*) who had attempted to assassinate Hitler.

Although Schlink opposed the actions of the DC and was a member of the Confessing Church, he also sought to remain a responsible German citizen *and* a faithful Christian pastor in the context of a totalitarian dictatorship. From the perspective of the present, given what people now know about the Third Reich and its nihilistic, destructive, and evil actions, it is difficult to understand the problems, complexities, and burdens that Schlink and other pastors in the Confessing Church faced between 1934 and the end of the war. Contrary to the above statement by Schlink that the "church struggle" (*Kirchenkampf*) forced Christians to listen carefully to others from differing confessional traditions, the Confessing Church was never very united theologically, let alone politically. The pressure and power that the Nazi regime exerted against its citizenry through its state security and the ever present threat of public denunciation and imprisonment certainly had their effect as well. Still, some today may wonder why Schlink and other pastors in the Confessing Church did not more openly criticize a government they had come to deplore. Clearly his decision not to pursue political resistance against the Nazi state put him in a different place from the course that Bonhoeffer and few others took. Schlink's primary concerns were to continue Christ's ministry of word and sacrament to the people who had called him to be their pastor and to stand with the true church of Christ over against the false (the *Nicht-Kirche*). The concern for his young family also had to have been a factor in guiding his words and actions in this difficult, turbulent period.

After the war, Schlink was among those who preached a strong word of national and ecclesial repentance:

> Just as great as the guilt of the political leadership is the guilt of those church leaders and pastors, who like the false prophets of the Old Testament cried, "God is with us," when God had already long been against us, and who proclaimed God's blessing when they should have threatened God's judgment, who applauded when they should have been silent, and who were silent when they should have given warning. They accommodated God's commandments to the totalitarian claims of political power, whose commands were proclaimed as God's commands and whose actions as God's

32 Edmund Schlink, "Vortrag von Prof. Edmund Schlink im Ökumenischen Studentenheim am 'Hausabend,'" 7; quoted in Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 46. For Schlink's activities in Strasbourg, see also Michaelis, "Edmund Schlinks Jahre in Westfalen," 23–24.

33 Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 45–46.

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actions. They perceived an arbitrary independence in political actions, the administration of justice, and the waging of war that does not belong to them, and they have failed to measure them clearly and openly against the norm of the divine Word. I am speaking here not only of those German Christians who mixed up Christ and Hitler in the most amazing way, who persecuted the true church by denouncing its preachers and congregation members, and who helped to make possible the persecution of Jews by rejecting the Old Testament. I am thinking here also of the others who thought they could preach the gospel without proclaiming the divine law, who thought they could nurture a pious inwardness, without calling out publicly from the rooftops God's claim on all, and who still excused and hoped when the stones already cried out for God's thundering fist. I am thinking of the many whose highest principle was to preserve the church and their own office by compromise and silence, who in secret rejected National Socialism, but in public "joyfully affirmed" it. They have falsely interpreted Romans 13 and kept secret the wisdom, "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29).[34]

Schlink's self-critical attitude toward the church would remain an essential feature of his theology for the rest of his life.

Heidelberg

After the end of the war, Schlink briefly served as the Director of the preacher's seminary in Brackwede, also near Bielefeld, and taught one course ("The Doctrine of the Church") and two seminars ("Justification" and "Luther's *Freedom of the Christian*") in the reopened Bethel Seminary. He also published a little work on "the theological problem of music."[35] By this time he had become well known in German theological circles, not merely because of his actions against the DC but also as a result of the publication of his first major work, *The Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, which has been a standard introduction to these writings right up to the present day.[36] This work as a whole stresses the importance of confessing the faith in the midst of spiritual attacks and trials (*Anfechtungen*) and the persecution of the church. It clearly underscores the centrality of the distinction between law and gospel for the articulation of *all* of the articles of faith. Every essential doctrine of the Christian faith dare not be taught independently of this distinction, that is,

34 Schlink, *Bekennende Kirche und Welt*, 117–18. During the Second World War German soldiers wore belt buckles that stated "*Gott mit uns*," God with us.

35 Edmund Schlink, *Zum Theologischen Problem der Musik* [On the Theological Issue of Music] (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1945; 2d. ed., 1950; reprinted in AB 147–69).

36 Edmund Schlink, *Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1940; 2d. ed. 1946; 3rd ed. 1948; 4th ed. 1954; ET of the third edition: *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961, reprinted by Concordia Publishing House, 2003]). The fourth edition has been reprinted in SÖB, vol. 4 (abbreviated hereafter as TLB).

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independently of faith in the gospel. The political context of the book needs to be underscored as well, since the author analyzed the Lutheran Confessions as the church's faithful exposition of the doctrinal content of the Scriptures, often over against the false understanding of Christian faith as presented by the DC.

Schlink's return to the Lutheran Confessions was not for the sake of fostering a sectarian denominationalism; rather, he discovered in them a basic motivation for seeking church unity:

> …[S]trong impulses toward ecumenical activity must go out from the Church of the Augsburg Confession, for its Confession permits and orders the Lutheran Church to seek and find assemblies of believers also in those areas where no one is pledged to the Augsburg Confession. At the same time, however, this ecumenical activity must remain inexorable in a decisive respect, namely, that it may recognize the unity of churches only where the one gospel is preached and believed.[37]

While already in July 1945 Schlink had been extended a call to teach at the University of Heidelberg, he did not officially accept this call until February of the following year, largely because of the difficult situation of the Westphalian churches and seminaries at that time.[38] He began serving as professor of dogmatic and ecumenical theology at Heidelberg on 15 June 1946. During the previous winter, as a part of an initial reconnaissance, he had lodged with Hans von Campenhausen (1903–89), who had earlier accepted a call to teach church history there. "The hospitality shown him in the situation of poverty after the war and the lively conversation with [von Campenhausen] regarding the tasks of a theological faculty in the intellectual reconstruction of post-war Germany made the decision easy for him to go to Heidelberg."[39] He saw the call to this old medieval city, located along the Neckar River in the shadow of its picturesque castle—a university town famous for its "poets and thinkers" [*Dichter und Denker*]—as a great opportunity to engage the other academic disciplines from his perspective as a Christian systematic and historical theologian.

Together with his fellow theologians, Martin Dibelius (1883–1947), von Campenhausen, and Peter Brunner, Schlink helped to rebuild the theology faculty and make it a major center of theological debate in post-war Europe.[40]

37 Schlink, TLB, 172. Schlink would develop this theme further in "Die Weite der Kirche Augsburger Konfession" [The Expanse of the Church of the Augsburg Confession], *Lutherische Weltrundschau* 1 (1949), 1–13; and in "Die ökumenische Charakter und Anspruch des Ausburgischen Bekenntnisses" [The Ecumenical Character and Claim of the Augsburg Confession], in *The Augsburg Confession in Ecumenical Context*, LWF Report 6/7, ed. Harding Meyer (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1980), 1–28.

38 Eber, *Einheit*, 30.

39 Engelhardt, "Biographische Reminiszenz zu Edmund Schlink," 242. Cf. Eber, "Edmund Schlinks Beitrag zum interdisziplinären Dialog," 159.

40 The Ruprecht-Karls-Universität is the oldest university in Germany. Founded in the late fourteenth century, it soon became a leading intellectual center in Europe, especially for the study of theology and law. The much-vaunted "spirit of Heidelberg," especially embodied later in the

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Heidelberg soon developed into "the best balanced faculty in Europe" and housed "the strongest Lutheran-oriented faculty anywhere at a public university."[41] "The work being done there was well-grounded, energetic, and relevant."[42] Within a few years, Heinrich Bornkamm (1901–77), Gerhard von Rad (1901–71), Günther Bornkamm (Schlink's former Giessen colleague and Heinrich's brother), Wilhelm Hahn (1909–96), and Claus Westermann (1909–2000) had also joined the faculty.[43] Each of these theologians of the so-called "*alte Heidelberger Fakultät*" had been active, leading pastors in the Confessing Church during the *Kirchenkampf*. It is not surprising that they regularly preached in the revitalized *Peterskirche*, the university parish:

> So it was self-evident not only for Schlink but really for the entire "old faculty" that theology and church, scholarship and faith belong together, and that confession is not a matter of historical interpretation but a matter of public and ecclesial witness, also over against other ideologies in the moment of *Anfechtung* and persecution. That the university worship services in the *Peterskirche*, which were led alternately by the professors, were frequently overflowing with worshippers, was a living testimony to this attitude of "the old faculty."[44]

Their published sermons and other writings also helped to attract a fairly consistent flow of students from foreign countries, including many who had graduated from the principal Lutheran seminaries in the United States.[45]

One facet of the theology faculty's collegiality with one another was the formation of a society in which they regularly met to discuss a topic of

scholarly activities of the social scientist Max Weber (1864–1920) and the philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), suffered demise when the Nazis took control of the university in the mid-1930s. Following the Second World War and a process of internal and external renewal, it was officially reopened in 1946. Dibelius, who was particularly important in helping to rebuild the university after the Nazi period, had taught New Testament there since 1915. The systematic theologian Brunner joined the faculty in 1947, a year after the patristics scholar von Campenhausen. The latter had already been called to the faculty in 1936 but had to give up this call a year later, due to his support of the Confessing Church.

41 Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 67.

42 Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 73.

43 Heinrich Bornkamm, who taught historical theology (Reformation), joined the faculty in 1948. The Old Testament scholar von Rad and the New Testament scholar Günther Bornkamm came the following year. Hahn, who taught homiletics, liturgics, and catechetics, arrived in 1950, and Westermann, who taught Old Testament, joined the faculty in 1958. In addition to the above theologians, one should note that the theologically oriented philosophers Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) and Karl Löwith (1897–1973) also taught at Heidelberg in those post-war years.

44 Reinhard Slenczka, letter to the author, 22 January 2009.

45 In addition to Skibbe, the American Lutheran theologian Walter Bouman (1929–2005) completed his doctorate under Schlink's direction in the early 1960s. See Walter H. Bouman, *The Unity of the Church in 19th-c. Confessional Lutheranism* (Ph.D. diss., Heidelberg University, 1962). He was the first to publish a study of Schlink's theology in any language, a short piece that he wrote for the student journal of his alma mater, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis: "Edmund Schlink and the Unity of the Church," *Seminarian* 48 (1957), 10–15. Many other American students attended lectures by Schlink, including Carl Braaten, Robert W. Jenson, and Paul Maier.

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importance. "Here one could experience to what level technical discussion, even concerning controversial topics, could be led. As a newly habilitated faculty member, one would first keep the protocol of the meetings and then be received into the group after giving a lecture."[46]

Within a year of the reopening of the *Ruperto-Carola*, Schlink established an ecumenical institute there, the first of its kind in Germany. (The Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, was formed in the same year.) The Ecumenical Institute of Heidelberg University, which was initially housed in the building of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences, offered a program of lectures and seminars on themes of ecumenical importance. Participants sought "to examine carefully the consonance and differences among Christian churches and the numerous efforts toward Christian unity in our time."[47] Through gifts and grants, especially from individuals in the United States, the Ecumenical Institute was able to build and dedicate a separate building in 1957. This allowed the Institute to provide housing to approximately thirty international students who came to the Institute to study issues of ecumenical theology. Schlink's inspiration to combine student housing with the Institute is compelling: ecumenical teaching and ecumenical life belong together so that theory and praxis can be mutually beneficial to each other. Students from around the world and from different cultural and religious backgrounds could live in close proximity to each other, pray daily in the chapel, and reflect together on their differences and their commonalities.[48] Schlink served as director of the Institute and overseer (*Ephorus*) of the students' living quarters (*Studentenwohnheim*) until his retirement in 1971.

Characteristic of Schlink's own work and a further way in which he influenced the revitalization of Heidelberg University was the encouragement he gave to interdisciplinary research. This encouragement was already evident in his inaugural lecture as professor, wherein he used the scepter of the university as a symbol for a particular relationship between "Christ and the faculties."[49] The image of the twelve-year-old Jesus teaching four figures that represent the four faculties (philosophy, law, medicine, and theology) depicts Bonaventure's vision of truth, knowledge, and wisdom, according to which the

46 Reinhard Slenczka, letter to the author, 22 January 2009.

47 Edmund Schlink, "Der Neubau des Ökumenischen Instituts und Studentenwohnheims der Universität Heidelberg" [The New Building of the Ecumenical Institute and Student Dormitory at the University of Heidelberg], *Ruperto-Carola* 23 (1958), 4. Cf. Reinhard Slenczka, "Ökumenisches Institut der Universität Heidelberg," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 14 (1965), 64–65.

48 Michael Plathow, "Das Ökumenische Institut/Studentenwohnheim der Universität Heidelberg: Eine Einheit von Lehre, Forschung und Leben" [The Ecumenical Institute/Student Dormitory of Heidelberg University: A Unity of Teaching, Researching, and Living] *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* 22 (1978), 117–18, 122–23.

49 Edmund Schlink, "Das Szepter der Universität Heidelberg: Christus und die Fakultäten" [The Scepter of Heidelberg University: Christ and the Faculties] in *Aus Leben und Forschung der Universität 1947/1948*, ed. W. Kunkel (Heidelberg: Springer, 1947), 31–50 (reprinted in AB 125–46).

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crucified and risen Christ is the true teacher of all the faculties. In light of this vision, Schlink was deeply convinced that the public truth of Christian theology ought to be in critical dialogue with all of the disciplines of the modern university. Thus he sought creative ways to bring theology into just such interdisciplinary conversation. Among the most important of these efforts was the annual *Dozententag* in February, a day-long conference for faculty that was hosted by the theology professors and that fostered interdisciplinary discussion about wide-ranging topics of interest, for example, theology and the natural sciences, the problem of nuclear weapons, grace and law, and human rights.[50] Whatever the chosen topic, a theologian and a professor from one of the other faculties always presented formal papers that were then discussed. "Since his call to the university, Schlink was undoubtedly the one who initiated this new alignment of the faculty and frequently supported it as professor and during his time as rector."[51]

Partly in recognition of his positive interaction with non-theological faculty, he was elected rector of the university by the faculty senate in 1953–54. His rector's speech, delivered on 29 March 1953 and published as the lead essay in the inaugural volume of *Kerygma und Dogma*, focused on the contrast between "wisdom and foolishness" as set forth in Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518.[52] In this address Schlink criticized commonly held notions of truth and rationality in favor of a radically alternative view that is grounded in Christian freedom and humility. In response to the central question of the university, namely, "What is a human being?" (*Was ist der Mensch?*), he set forth the Pauline-Lutheran paradox: in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ a human being is both saint and sinner. Faith in Christ frees the scholar to see the world in all of its complexity and to trust that ultimately all truth, including all lasting scientific knowledge, has its unity only in God.[53]

Former students remember Schlink as an engaging teacher, whose occasional sharp gaze revealed an even sharper mind. A person "of medium height and genteel demeanor, with penetrating eyes," he lectured softly in "a

50 Reinhard Slenczka, letter to the author, 22 January 2009.

51 Reinhard Slenczka, letter to the author, 22 January 2009.

52 Edmund Schlink, "Weisheit und Torheit" [Wisdom and Foolishness], *Kerygma und Dogma* 1 (1955), 1–22.

53 For further analysis of Schlink's understanding of the relation of theology to the other university faculties, see Dietrich Ritschl, "Theologie als Erkenntnis: Edmund Schlinks Verständnis von Wahrheit vor dem Hintergrund der Theologen seiner Generation" [Theology as Recognition: Edmund Schlink's Understanding of Truth against the Background of the Theologians of His Generation], *Ökumenische Rundschau* 34 (1985), 287–98. It is important to note, too, that the question, "What is a human being?", is also raised in the first article of the Roman Catholic Declaration on the Church's Relation to the Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra aetate*), which Schlink drew attention to in the first subsection of chap. 7 of *After the Council*. This question is also raised in the tenth article of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Contemporary World (*Gaudium et spes*), which Schlink analyzed in the eighth chapter of his book on the council.

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voice pitched slightly higher and thinner than usual…. A person might easily have conflicting impressions: that he was aloof, almost icy, and at the same time that he was fully open and caring…. Although he always spoke quietly, students knew that he expected work only at the highest level."[54]

Over the course of two to three years he offered lectures on the principal doctrines of the Christian faith that collectively entailed a complete dogmatics. These included courses and seminars on "Prolegomena," "The Doctrine of the Church," "The Doctrine of Justification," "The Self-understanding of Jesus," and "The Doctrine of Baptism in the Main Denominations/Churches and the Unity of Baptism." He developed these lectures at his desk, beneath a reprint of the risen Christ from the Isenheim Altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald, the same image that was hung above Barth's desk. "Enterprising students with short-hand skills soon made mimeographed copies of those lectures available for a German mark or two."[55] On other occasions, visitors from foreign countries were invited to give guest lectures that expanded the horizons of the students.

Personally I received the strongest impressions of Schlink in his seminars, especially in the special seminars and working groups for doctoral candidates, when I was a student and later his assistant. These educational meetings were very carefully prepared and, it must be added, naturally the assistants also had to do their part. There was a clear program, certain tasks with reading, reports, and protocols, and the participants themselves had to be very carefully prepared, which perhaps not all enjoyed. The level of discussion was also correspondingly high. In any case, one could not allow oneself to engage in idle chatter. Schlink was a firm and precise seminar leader who formulated matters sharply and summarized them precisely. On occasion visitors from the larger ecumenical world were introduced in these seminars, for example, very prominent ones, such as Cardinals Bea or Willebrands who were friends of Schlink.[56] In this way I was also able to meet Hans Küng when he was still the assistant to Ernst Volk in Münster (Volk would later become the Cardinal and Bishop of Mainz) and had been invited by Schlink to a seminar on justification. The themes of these seminars were far-reaching and focused on texts from the history of theology, again and again from the whole ecumenical world, but also texts from philosophy. A special experience for all seminar participants was the regular seminar invitation to visit the Schlink house that was specially prepared with much love and care by Frau Schlink. The Schlinks had an open, hospitable home, and in retrospect it

54 Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 71.

55 Dale Krueger, letter to the author, 5 January 2009.

56 Augustin Cardinal Bea (1881–1968) was a German Jesuit who served as the first president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (later called "The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity"), the Curial organization that is charged with the ecumenical affairs of the Roman Catholic Church. Johannes Gerardus Maria Willebrands (1909–2006) was a Dutch priest who also served as president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (1969–89). He later was the Archbishop of Utrecht (1975–83).

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is astonishing to me how many guests from foreign countries and churches came to visit them and how in this way a more lively and in many respects more stimulating exchange was thus cultivated.[57]

Ecumenical Activities

Without question Schlink's most significant extra-curricular concern was his ecumenical work. During the initial post-war years he participated in discussions and debates about how best to reconstitute church government in the German churches. For more than three years he served as a crucial mediator between the two conflicted groups, the Council of Brethren of the Confessing Church, led by Martin Niemöller (1892–1984), and the Lutheran Council, led by two key Lutheran bishops, Theophil Wurm (1868–1953) of Württemberg and Hans Meiser (1881–1956) of Bavaria. The Council of Brethren wanted structural unity that was also based on accepting the Theological Declaration from the Barmen Synod ("The Barmen Declaration") as an official confessional text, whereas the Lutheran Council was opposed to a structural union and did not want to include this Declaration as a part of the EKD's official confessional basis. Schlink's proposal for a broad unity in church life that also maintained the confessional integrity of the various Lutheran and Reformed churches in the new Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) was eventually accepted by both parties and helped to pave the way for the articulation of the constitution of that federation of German Protestant churches.[58]

Another of Schlink's early ecumenical activities was to help organize the first working group of Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians in the world. Begun in the same year that the Institute began (1946), this bilateral dialogue was ground-breaking, since no such other one then existed and the heads of the respective church bodies were not so ecumenically inclined at the time. It is also the longest lasting such dialogue in history. Originally called the Jäger-Stählin Group and then the Ecumenical Working Group of Protestant and Catholic Theologians, it helped to pave the way for Lutheran churches in the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church to become more involved in the modern ecumenical movement.[59] More importantly, this

57 Reinhard Slenczka, letter to the author, 22 January 2009.

58 Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 53–65.

59 For a history of this group, see Barbara Schwahn, *Der Ökumenische Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen von 1946 bis 1975* [The Ecumenical Working Group of Evangelical and Catholic Theologians from 1946 to 1975] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); and Eduard Lohse, "Fünfzig Jahre Ökumenischer Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen" [Fifty Years of the Ecumenical Working Group of Evangelical and Catholic Theologians], *Kerygma und Dogma* 42 (1996), 177–85. Schlink read a scholarly paper before this group on ten occasions between 1946 and 1984, more times than any other theologian. The next

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working group provided Schlink with an important ecumenical venue in which to discuss his ideas, which proved especially helpful as he began working on his dogmatics. In recognition of his ecumenical leadership in the years immediately after the end of the war, the University of Mainz presented him with his first honorary doctorate in 1947. The University of Edinburgh bestowed a similar degree on him in 1953.

A third concern in Schlink's ecumenical work was his efforts to communicate ecumenical ideas and developments to the German-speaking world. He was a co-founder and co-editor of the important ecumenical journals *Ökumenische Rundschau* (Ecumenical Review) (1952–1984)—the first of its kind in Germany—and *Kerygma und Dogma* (1955–1984). Two years before the appearance of the inaugural issue of *Ökumenische Rundschau*, he had assisted Walter Freytag (1899–1959), professor of missiology at Hamburg, in co-founding the German Ecumenical Studies Commission (*Deutschen Ökumenischen Studienausschuss* or DÖSTA), a further venue for engaging ecumenical issues and problems within the German context.

A fourth ecumenical focus was Schlink's involvement in the World Council of Churches (more so than in the Lutheran World Federation). Here he sought to highlight the contributions that the Lutheran Church could make to the larger ecumenical world. In addition to participating in the inaugural assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam (1948), he delivered a key lecture at the Third World Conference for Faith and Order in Lund (1952) and one of the two major addresses at the Second Assembly of the WCC in Evanston (1954), "Christ—the Hope for the World."[60] This latter address provoked some controversy by sharply contrasting Christian hope and the hopes of the modern world for an abiding future. The former is grounded in the coming Christ who also brings the end of the world: "We will then only speak rightly of Christ as the hope of the world if we humble ourselves under God and rightly acknowledge God as the Judge of the world." "…We do not in truth hope for [Christ] as Savior of the world if we do not at the same time await him as Judge of the world. Just as little, however, do we fear him in truth as Judge, if we do not await him as Savior." According to Schlink, "the first action of hope is to

highest number was given by Karl Rahner (1904–84), who served as a reader (*Referent*) on eight occasions. The group almost dissolved in the wake of the 1950 papal promulgation of the dogma regarding the bodily assumption of Mary. At that time Schlink authored "an evangelical opinion" that provided a strong critique of the new dogma, which Schlink and other Protestant theologians thought was neither Scriptural nor based on authentic apostolic teaching. Nevertheless, despite the controversy regarding this Marian dogma, the group of Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians was able to continue working in subsequent decades and was a principal venue for discussions leading to the formation and acceptance of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in 1999. Cf. Gassmann, "Edmund Schlink," 7.

60 For the bibliographical information on these essays, see the initial footnote in each of the pertinent chapters in *The Coming Christ and Church Traditions.*

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proclaim the gospel to the whole world." The "second action of hope is to work for the just ordering of this world."[61] The first action of hope is, however, crucial for properly grounding the second action. Schlink later participated in the WCC assemblies at New Dehli in 1961 and at Uppsala in 1968.

For nearly three decades he made significant, influential contributions to the work of the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order. During several of these years he served as the Commission's vice moderator and a member of its working committee. Through his papers and presentations he provided "decisive impulses and orientations for ecumenical thinking and methodology."[62] For example, he articulated new approaches to such issues as altar fellowship, the eschatological dimension of Christian unity, ecumenical methodology, and conciliarity, and he brought a measure of clarity to them that was very helpful.[63] In 1959 he participated in the official meeting between representatives of the EKD and the Russian Orthodox Church, the so-called Arnoldshainer Dialogue, which focused on the theme of "tradition and justification by faith" and which helped to make possible the entrance of the Russian Orthodox Church into the WCC.[64] That Schlink was chosen to participate in this historic conference was no surprise since he had been a participant in informal meetings with Orthodox theologians since the early

61 The other major plenary address, by Robert L. Calhoun (1896–1983), who was at that time professor of systematic theology at Yale University and also a member of the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order, set forth an "Anglo-Saxon Approach" that seemed to many observers to contrast sharply with Schlink's presentation. Calhoun stressed the realization of Christ and his Kingdom within earthly, historical structures and the importance of Christian moral and social action in the present moment. Cf. Robert L. Calhoun, "Christ the Hope of the World," *Ecumenical Review* 7 (1955): 140–50. While the positions of Schlink and Calhoun seemed to be in irreconcilable tension with each other, they were actually more complementary than contradictory at the substantive level. Whereas the major accent in Schink's address was on the future, eschatological judgment of God, he also acknowledged that the *eschaton* is already a present reality for the Christian, something that Calhoun also acknowledged. While the latter accented the present realization of Christ as the boundary of human existence, he also bore witness to the contingency of human beings before God, which was a principal concern of Schlink's. Cf. esp. Conrad Simonson, *The Christology of the Faith and Order Movement* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 78–83.

62 Gassmann, "Edmund Schlink – An Ecumenical Pioneer of the 20th Century," 8.

63 Cf. also Edmund Schlink, "Herrenmahl oder Kirchenmahl" [The Lord's Supper or the Church's Supper], *Der christliche Student* 24 (1950), 10–20 (translated as "Lord's Supper or Church's Supper," *The Student World* 43 [1950], 46–58, and republished under the same title in *Intercommunion*, ed. Donald Baillie [London: SCM, 1952], 296–302); idem, "The Nature of Christian Hope," *Ecumenical Review* 4 (1951/52), 284–90; idem, "Die Struktur der dogmatischen Aussage als ökumenisches Problem" [The Structure of the Dogmatic Statement as an Ecumenical Issue] *Kerygma und Dogma* 3 (1957), 251–306. For the significance of Schlink's specific ecumenical contributions, see Günther Gassmann, "Schlink, Edmund," in *Ökumene-Lexikon*, 2d ed., ed. Hanfried Krüger et al. (Frankfurt: Lembeck, 1987), 1085.

64 For the official report on the 1959 meeting, see *Tradition und Glaubensgerechtigkeit*. Studienheft Nr. 3, ed. Aussenamt der EKD (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1961). Schlink participated in additional official ecumenical dialogues between the EKD and the Russian Orthodox Church in 1963, 1967, 1969, 1971, and 1973.

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1950s. Already in 1948, he had offered a seminar on "The Church between East and West." In subsequent years he became an even more astute scholar of Eastern traditions of theology. The additional essays he published on Eastern Orthodoxy during this period testify to this.[65] His official trips on behalf of the WCC to Russia and Greece were important events in his ongoing engagement with the Eastern churches and their forms of spirituality. At the meeting of the WCC's Central Committee in Rhodes in 1959, he presented a paper on the significance of Eastern and Western theological traditions for the abiding, essential content of the Christian faith. Here he stressed the legitimacy of the diversity of spiritual and theological forms of expression within the wider ecumenical world and how they ought to complement each other. (One should keep in mind that this ecumenical work took place in the context of the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union.) In recognition of his engagement with the Orthodox tradition, the Institute of Orthodox Theology in Paris, Saint-Serge, bestowed a third honorary doctorate upon him in 1962.

A fifth ecumenical focus for Schlink, which was also the high point of his ecumenical work, was his service as the EKD's official observer to the Second Vatican Council. For two years prior to the start of that historic council, Schlink had been in and out of Rome, assisting the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity as it made plans for inviting official observers to the council. Shortly after one of his meetings with Cardinal Bea in Rome and nearly eight months before the opening session of this historic council, he gave an address at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in which he stated:

All these [Christian] traditions are contained in Jesus Christ, both the Christ who has already come and the one who is to come. He came as the friend of sinners and the enemy of Pharisees and those learned in the Scriptures. He will come as the judge, not only of the world but also of the church—see, for example, the message of the Apocalypse—this is common knowledge. The first step towards the unification of the church will be when we not only know this, but when we are all moved to the depth of our hearts and accept the fact that the Lord of the church makes us all radicals and doubters. Then we shall no longer pride ourselves on the history of our church and its decisions, and face divine justice assured of their certainty, but we shall devote ourselves to penitence, which will show us that the life of our church, its doctrines and

65 Cf. several of the essays included in the third part of *The Coming Christ and Church Traditions*. In addition, cf. Edmund Schlink, "Wandlungen im protestantischen Verständnis der Ostkirche" [Transformations in the Protestant Understanding of the Eastern Church], *Ökumenische Rundschau* 6 (1957), 153–64 (reprinted in KC 221–31 and translated as "Changes in Protestant Thinking about the Eastern Church" in *Ecumenical Review* 10, 386–400); idem, "Zur neuesten ökumenische Stellungnahme des Moskauer Patriarchats" [On the Most Recent Ecumenical Opinion by the Patriarch of Moscow] *Ökumenische Rundschau* 7 (1958), 127–40; and idem, "Der ökumenische Beitrag der russisch-orthodoxen Kirche" [The Ecumenical Contribution of the Russian Orthodox Church], *Kerygma und Dogma* 4 (1958), 191–212 (translated as "The Ecumenical Contribution of the Russian Orthodox Church," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 12 [1959], 41–67).

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its institutions only partially correspond to the fullness of the kingdom of God in Christ. Let us not seek in our penitence to justify and defend ourselves against other churches, but let us, together with them, see ourselves and our need for grace, and in view of that need let us seek no longer to point out the defects in other churches but rather to participate in whatever God has confided to them.[66]

This is the perspective that Schlink had when he witnessed the opening of the Second Vatican Council on 11 October 1962. From that day until the closing of the council on 8 December 1965 he never missed a session. He sat in a tribune reserved especially for the official observers, "right under the statue of St. Longinus, nearer to the presiders' table than even the cardinals were"—among the best seats in the *aula* of St. Peter's.[67]

The decision to admit non-Catholic observers as an integral body was not only unique in the annals of ecumenical councils but also allowed the deliberations of the council to be reviewed by scholars and churchmen who did not share many of the basic assumptions upon which Catholic doctrine and practice were based. As events proved, this decision stimulated a more searching scrutiny of the deliberations and decisions, and it was important for not allowing the attention of the council to focus on issues of concern only to Roman Catholics—or only to Roman Catholic prelates.[68]

At the start of the first session he was elected by the official non-Catholic observers to serve as one of the leaders of a small committee, which also included Bernard Pawley (1911–81) of the Church of England and Lukas Vischer (1926–2008) of the World Council of Churches.[69] According to Douglas Horton (1891–1968), who kept a diary during the council, this committee "was to take care of any matters that might come up, such as the appointment of people to reply for the observers at public meetings."[70] This committee met frequently with the council's officials, especially Cardinal Bea and Cardinal Willebrands, but also with the media. When Bea hosted a

66 Edmund Schlink, "Shaken Spirituality?," delivered to the Ecumenical Institute of the WCC in Bossey, Switzerland, in April 1962. This address was later published as "Pneumatische Erschütterung? Aus der Zusammenarbeit eines evangelischen und eines römisch-katholischen ökumenischen Arbeitskreises" [Pneumatic Shaking? From the Collective Work of a Protestant and Roman-Catholic Ecumenical Working Group], *Kerygma und Dogma* 8 (1962), 221–37. An English translation appeared as "A Report on the Work of an Ecumenical Group of Protestant and Roman Catholic Theologians," *Dialog* 2 (1963), 320–8. Schlink served on the Board of the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies in Bossey between 1954 and 1975.

67 John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 23.

68 O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 33.

69 Douglas Horton, *Vatican Diary 1962: A Protestant Observes the First Session of Vatican Council II* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1964), 20.

70 Douglas Horton, *Vatican Diary 1963: A Protestant Observes the Second Session of Vatican Council II* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1964), 32. Horton, who had served as Dean of Harvard Divinity School, was at the time of the Second Vatican Council a member of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission. His role at the council was as an official observer for the WCC.

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reception for the observers at the start of the first session, Schlink was the one who gave the official response on behalf of all the observers.[71] This was a natural role for Schlink, given his friendship with Bea, who himself certainly helped to set a positive, welcoming tone when he referred to the observers at their initial reception as "my dear brothers in Christ."[72] Their presence in the basilica during all of the council's sessions had a positive effect on the deliberations that took place there.[73] At Schlink's urging, the non-Catholic observers (who initially totaled 46 and then 182 by the end of the fourth period) met regularly as a group with members of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, typically once a week on Tuesdays.[74] It is not surprising that at the start of the other sessions, Schlink was re-elected to serve on the small leadership committee of observers, which now also included a fourth member, namely, a representative of the Eastern Church.[75]

Schlink became an important conversation partner for the cardinals, bishops, and the *periti* (Roman Catholic theological advisors) who attended the council. During its course, he wrote more than sixty reports on the proceedings. While he was generally favorable toward the *ressourcement* dimension of the council, he was on occasion critical of the council's apparent presumption that the Roman Catholic Church was the only true church of Christ and that non-Roman efforts toward church unity amounted to nothing other than a return to Rome.[76] According to Schlink, such a mistaken view, if maintained, would only serve to re-enact the Counter-Reformation and to alienate further both the Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches.[77] If the Roman Church could not acknowledge that the Eastern Orthodox and Protestant churches also belonged to the one church of Christ, there could be little hope for fruitful ecumenical dialogue between Rome and the other churches.[78] For Schlink, the best Catholic theologians of that time stressed that the church is a mystery and that it therefore cannot be defined. Such an insight, he thought, would be a useful starting point for further ecumenical discussion

71 Horton, *Vatican Diary 1962*, 20; Giuseppe Albergio, ed., *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols. (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1995–2006), 2:182.

72 See O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 96–97.

73 O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 97.

74 At the first session there were fifty-four non-Catholics in the tribune, but only forty-six of them were official "observers" who had been sent by those non-Catholic churches who had been invited to send delegates. Cf. Albergio, *History of Vatican II*, 2:179. By the end of the council, however, the distinction between "observer" and "guest" was largely nominal (ibid., 180).

75 Horton, *Vatican Diary 1963*, 32.

76 Horton, *Vatican Diary 1962*, 151 (paraphrasing Schlink). Toward the end of 1963, Schlink gave a lecture in Rome in which he claimed the title of "church" for the Protestant churches. In this lecture he again criticized the notion that some Roman Catholics held, namely, that "ecumenism" means a "return" to Rome. Cf. Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, 3:295.

77 Cf. Horst Schlitter, "Edmund Schlink in Rom," in *Die Vision des Papstes: Erzählung* [The Vision of the Pope: A Story], 2nd ed. (Karlsruhe: Hans Thoma Verlag, 1997), 158.

78 Horton, *Vatican Diary 1963*, 25 (paraphrasing Schlink).

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about the nature of the church, but it was not being fully recognized at the council itself. He was therefore grateful for those steps at the council that led toward "a new point of view," one that looked with "surprising fairness toward other Christians" and that gave "a powerful impulse to the ecumenical spirit."[79] An example of this new attitude were the meetings in November 1964 that Schlink and Visser 't Hooft (representing the WCC) had with Willebrands and a few other Catholic officials to discuss a new kind of ecumenical collaboration between the Roman Church and the WCC and the basic principles for further dialogue between them.[80]

Schlink did not hesitate to criticize other positions and arguments presented by Catholics at the council. For example, he let it be known that he thought that *Gaudium et Spes*'s reading of the world was too optimistic and that it seems to put the church into a "peculiar sort of atemporality" (*eigentümlicher Zeitlosigkeit*) in which it stands above the world and tells it how to order itself socially and politically.[81] Not only had his experience with the Nazis and *Deutsche Christen* led him to conclude that the world is radically fallen, but he was fully convinced that the church's proper role in the world is always oriented toward the gospel. Accordingly, he was quite critical of the council's view that the Christian church is the divinely appointed agent of humanization in the world. Such a view does not properly distinguish between the divine law and the divine promise of the gospel and it tends to muddle the church's proper calling.

More fundamentally, Schlink repeatedly leveled pointed criticism against perceived roadblocks to unity that are inherent within Roman dogma itself, particularly with respect to papal primacy and infallibility and the modern Marian dogmas, including language about Mary's role as "mediatrix." He also was troubled by those who seemed to treat canon law as if it is divine law. He could not see, for example, how the Roman Church could continue to defend the practice of using indulgences, actions that he thought contradicted the gospel.

Despite these criticisms, however, he saw the council as a whole as having tremendous significance for the further progress of the ecumenical move-

79 Edmund Schlink, as quoted in *Documentation Catholique* 60 (1963), 392 (also cited in Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, 2:522).

80 Albergio, *History of Vatican II*, 4:475. An outcome of these discussions was the formation of a working group of representatives of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church that met for the first time at Bossey in May 1965. At that meeting Schlink was one of three theologians appointed to a small committee to develop a proposal for addressing the nature of true ecumenical dialogue. The other key members included Yves Congar (1904–95) and Nikos Nissiotis (1924–86). Their official report to the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches was published in *Ecumenical Review* 19/4 (1967), 469 ff. See also Edmund Schlink, "Die Methode des ökumenischen Dialogs," *Kerygma und Dogma* 12/3 (1966), 205–11.

81 *Gaudium et Spes* is "the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today," promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 7 December 1965. See NK 135 ff.

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ment. His full analysis of the council was widely read in both Roman Catholic and Protestant circles.[82] In his view an outcome of the council was to make clear the need for a "Copernican Revolution" in the self-understanding of the churches, to see themselves as each revolving around Christ, their center:

> Every church is in danger of understanding itself as the center around which the other churches orbit as planets. This lies so close at hand because all Christians are certain that the church whose message brought them to faith—in which church they were incorporated into Christ through baptism, and through word and sacrament they are again and again nourished anew—is the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. But the working of Christ is not restricted to this one church. He works in freedom without being bound by the borders of our churches. We cannot be content to measure other churches in respect to ourselves, but we have to take our starting point with Christ, by whom we are measured along with all churches. He is the sun around whom we, together with other churches, orbit as planets and from whom we receive light. A kind of Copernican revolution is necessary in ecclesiological thinking.[83]

Following Vatican II, Schlink became a member of the Joint Commission of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Delegates of the Secretary of Unity. "This working group was given the task of examining how the collaboration of the World Council and the Roman Catholic Church could be more closely aligned. During the first years there I encountered with great joy a real seeking for new possibilities on the part of the Catholic representatives."[84] As he became more well-known within Roman Catholic circles, it was not surprising that a

82 A revised translation of this work is included as the second part of the present volume. Schlink sent a copy of *After the Council* to his *Doktorvater*, Barth, who sent him an appreciative note on 21 October 1966: "Sincere thanks for sending me your book on the council, which I have read with great interest. Your account deserves high praise and will, I hope, be diligently consulted on our side" (Karl Barth, *Letters: 1961–1968*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 225). Barth then proceeded to indicate he did not agree with Schlink "on the danger of the traditional complex of dogmas which is still in force among the Romans. Naturally they cannot retract what was proclaimed by earlier popes and councils. Nevertheless, from what I know of them, and have just seen confirmed in various bodies in Rome, they have the wonderful ability either (1) to explain away these honorable relics, or (2) to push them on the margin of what they now really want to think and say, or (3) to commemorate them with deep bows, or (4) to keep solemn silence about them. So long as one does not disturb them at this game, but encourages them to seek help along these lines, it has been my experience that one can engage in good and fruitful discussion with them. As a separated brother one may then look a little more hopefully than you do to the future of what is now going on there, in a way that seems to me to be irresistible" (Barth, *Letters:1961–1968*, 225–26). In September 1966, over the course of six days, Barth had met with Catholic theologians, including Cardinal Bea (who had invited him to Rome), Karl Rahner, and Joseph Ratzinger. Barth's visit included a very friendly one-hour private meeting with Pope Paul VI. For Barth's own critical questions that he raised in Rome, see Karl Barth, *Ad Limina Apostolorum: An Appraisal of Vatican II* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968).

83 Schlink, NK, 240.

84 Edmund Schlink, *Zehn Jahre nach dem Konzil–Eine kritische Bilanz* [Ten Years after the Council: A Critical Assessment] (Zurich: Paulus-Akademie, 1975), 18.

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theologian from that church body would write a dissertation on his ecclesiology.[85]

In addition to his reflections on Vatican II, which also contain prescient remarks on the vitality of the non-Christian religions and the loss of Christendom's "security" in the world, Schlink published two further works in this period that relate to his ecumenical engagements. One is his study of the doctrine of baptism that provides a solid historical-critical investigation of the New Testament writings as a way of uncovering the dogmatic basis for the doctrine.[86] Professor Skibbe is correct to suggest that this work was a major resource for the historic WCC document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, on whose development Schlink also offered significant input through his activities on the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order up to the year 1975. The other work from this period is a fictional story that he wrote pseudonymously twelve years after the close of the council.[87] It tells the story of a contemporary pope who in the midst of an illness receives three visions of Christ that lead him to make a transformative and controversial pilgrimage to Jerusalem and then to begin a new ecumenical initiative: the unification of the Christian Church. The book ends with the author's concluding word, whose final paragraph clearly states the intended goal of the work as a whole: "A vision is not a program, but an impulse. It sets in motion. At the same time this narrative intends to be a warning to the churches not to harden themselves again toward one another, and fail to do what they are entrusted to do in the midst of a constantly increasing human crisis."[88]

85 Gerhard Schwenzer, *Die großen Taten Gottes und die Kirche: Zur Ekklesiologie Edmund Schlinks* [The Mighty Deeds of God and the Church: On the Ecclesiology of Edmund Schlink], Konfessionskundliche und Kontroverstheologische Studien, Band XXII, ed. Johann-Adam-Möhler-Institut (Paderborn: Verlag Bonifacius, 1969).

86 Edmund Schlink, *Die Lehre von der Taufe* (Kassel: Johannes Stauda, 1969). This was originally translated as *The Doctrine of Baptism*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972). The four chapters of the book address respectively: (1) the basis for baptism (including subsections on the command to baptize, the historical antecedents to Christian baptism, and the variety of New Testament statements about baptism); (2) the saving activity of God through baptism; (3) the administration and reception of baptism (including a lengthy section on infant baptism); and (4) the form of the baptismal act.

87 Sebastian Knecht, *Die Vision des Papstes* (Karlsruhe: Hans Thoma, 1975). That Schlink was the real author remained a secret, known only to family and friends, until his death. Following his death, a second edition was published in 1997 under Schlink's own name: *Die Vision des Papstes: Erzählung mit einem Vorwort von Franz Kardinal König und Landesbischof Klaus Engelhardt* (Karlsruhe: Hans Thoma, 1997). It has been translated into English as *The Vision of the Pope: A Narrative*, trans. Eugene M. Skibbe (Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 2001). According to a letter that Schlink wrote to his publisher, Arnd Ruprecht, in October 1975, he hoped that the pseudonymous nature of the work would attract a wider audience, especially in Roman Catholic circles, than if he were identified as the author. He indicated in this letter that the perspective of the "narrative" was different from the dogmatic position he would take in his *Ecumenical Dogmatics*. For the citation of the letter, see Eber, *Einheit*, 49.

88 Schlink, *The Vision of the Pope*, 79.

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Final Years

After his retirement from the university on 31 March 1971, he published shorter works on such ecumenical problems as apostolic succession and the papacy. He also was elected to serve on the academic senate of the Ecumenical Institute in Tantur/Jerusalem, which had been formed in the wake of Vatican II and whose academic focus was on "the mystery of salvation."[89] This appointment provided him with other opportunities to interact with other theologians on important ecumenical issues. He remained active in this group until 1980.[90]

Most of his energy in this post-retirement period was devoted to the dogmatics he had promised to write after the completion of his *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions.* Convinced that the goal of complete organic church unity in Christ could only be achieved *theologically*, he stressed the need for a truly "ecumenical dogmatics" as integral to overcoming the divisions within Christendom. His massive *Ecumenical Dogmatics* was published just one year before he died suddenly of an embolism (following surgery) on 20 May 1984. Five days later, his son-in–law, Bishop Dr. Klaus Engelhardt, preached the funeral sermon on the basis of the promise in John 10:27–30: "No one can snatch them out of the Father's hand."[91]

Friends and family remember Schlink and his wife as lovers of classical music (she especially of Mozart and he especially of Bach), as talented musicians, as warm and interesting conversationalists, as caring and friendly hosts. He was a creative scholar and critical thinker, who sought to serve Christ and the needs of the *una sancta* in all of its forms and expressions. He modeled the vision of ecumenical unity that he so often articulated in order to assist the strengthening of the bonds of human and ecclesial community. To be sure, as both Dr. Eber and Dr. Skibbe have noted, Schlink's was "only one voice in the choir of learned voices in the church," but still "his was a voice that echoes into the present."[92]

89 Edmund Schlink, "Das Ökumenische Institut in Jerusalem/Tantur und die Lage im vorderen Orient" [The Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem/Tantur and the Situation in the Near East], *Im Lande der Bibel* 3 (1973), 8.

90 One of the more important lectures that Schlink gave at Tantur was on the notion of "the hierarchy of truths" that was taken up and discussed at the Second Vatican Council and which he thought opened a positive way for discussing ecumenically the "hierarchy of statements" and expressions in the *Oecumene* in relation to the fundamental truth that is the living God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. This October 1972 lecture was published as "Die 'Hierarchie der Wahrheiten' und die Einigung der Kirchen," [The 'Hierarchy of Truths' and the Unification of the Churches], *Kerygma und Dogma* 21 (1975), 1–12.

91 Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 105.

92 Eber, "Edmund Schlink," xxii.

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It [this voice] can never replace this choir but can only sing in support of the choir and hope to be recognized as one of its voices. For no individual can fully portray the reign of God or his deeds. That is the task of the church as a whole, and indeed this happens not only in its life but also in its prayers, sermons, worship and confession, and in its love, service, and suffering.[93]

93 Edmund Schlink, ÖD 71, as cited by Eber, "Edmund Schlink," xxii.

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Abbreviations

AB	Edmund Schlink, *Ausgewählte Beiträge. Kirchenkampf—Theologische Grundfragen—Ökumene*, in Edmund Schlink, *Schriften zu Ökumene und Bekenntnis*, vol. 5, ed. Ursula Schnell (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).
AC	The Augsburg Confession
Althaus	Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966).
Apol.	The Apology to the Augsburg Confession
Aquinas	Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947). References are to the part, the question, and the article.
Barth	Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 13 vols., trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936–69). References will be to principal volume, I–IV, and their parts.
BC	Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000). References are to the page number.
BDAG	Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., based on Walter Bauer's *Greichischdeutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literaur*, 6th ed., trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
CC	Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, trans. J. H. Neilson et al.(Edinburgh/London: Oliver & Boyd, 1967; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968).
DC	*Deutsche Christen* = Christians in Nazi Germany who introduced Nazi ideology into the Protestant churches
Denzinger	Henrich Denzinger, ed., *Enchiridion symbolorum: definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum/Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd ed., ed. Peter Hünermann, Robert Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012). References are to the paragraph numbers that appear in the outer margins of this bilingual (Latin-English) edition.
EKD	*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* = The Protestant Church in

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	Germany. This is the federation of Lutheran and Reformed churches in post-WWII Germany.
FC Ep	The Formula of Concord (Epitome)
FC SD	The Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration)
KC	Edmund Schlink, *Der kommende Christus und die kirchlichen Traditionen: Beiträge zum Gespräch zwischen den getrennten Kirchen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961; reprinted in Edmund Schlink, *Schriften zu Ökumene und Bekenntnis*, vol. 1, ed. Klaus Engelhardt [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004], I:3–276). References are to this latter volume.
LC	The Large Catechism of Martin Luther
LW	*Luther's Works* (American Edition), 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955--).
NK	Edmund Schlink, *Nach dem Konzil* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966).
NRSV	The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (Washington, DC: Division of Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States, 1989).
ÖD	Edmund Schlink, *Ökumenische Dogmatik: Grundzüge*, 3rd ed., in Edmund Schlink, *Schriften zu Ökumene und Bekenntnis*, vol. 2, ed. Michael Plathow (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).
PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Series Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: 1844 ff.)
RSV	The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version (Washington, DC: Division of Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States, 1977).
SC	The Small Catechism of Martin Luther
SÖB	Edmund Schlink, *Schriften zu Ökumene und Bekenntnis*, ed. Klaus Engelhardt et al., 5 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004–2010)
Tanner	Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 1990). References are to the volume and page number(s).
TDNT	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964).
TWNT	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neue Testament*, 10 vols. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1957).
TLB	Edmund Schlink, *Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften*, 4th ed. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1954; reprinted in Edmund Schlink, *Schriften zu Ökumene und Bekenntnis*, vol. 4, ed. Günther

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	Gassmann [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008]). References are to this latter volume.
WA	*D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe* [Weimar Ausgabe], 65 vols. in 127 (Weimar : Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1883–1993).
WCC	World Council of Churches

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Book One:
The Coming Christ and Church Traditions: Essays for the Dialogue among the Separated Churches

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Introduction: The Task

Because Christendom has become increasingly divided in its historical development, a deep shame has emerged over this, its condition in our time. An elemental urge for unity has awakened in all churches. It manifests itself above all in the longing for fellowship in the Lord's Supper and for joint servant ministry[i] in witness to Christ in the world. This call to unity has been sounded most urgently through the voice of the younger churches that no longer want to see the message of Christ in the context of the heathen world refuted by the disunity of Christians. In Europe this call has found its greatest echo among the laity and Christian youth, who constantly experience that threat through nihilism.[ii]

Against this desire for unity stand the deeply entrenched traditions of the separated parts of Christendom: forms of the worship service that have developed in history, formulations of dogmas, and the determination of church order, especially regarding the ordering of ministerial offices.[iii] At important points these differences appear not only as a diversity but also as an opposition. These differences are furthermore burdened by non-theological—anthropological, cultural, and political—factors, which are not applicable to all realms of the whole church [*Ökumene*]. Corresponding to the differences among the traditions is also the fact that the conceptions of the desired unity are by no means in agreement with one another. Even in a common prayer for unity, people do not pray for the same thing. Given this hard evidence, many people conclude that nothing more can be attained than having the separated parts of Christendom draw closer toward one other, that is, toward a more or less loose cooperation in serving one another in mutual aid and in servant ministry to the world, whereby, in the absence of unity, charitable and social tasks could be taken up as a common cause.

But there can be no doubt that Christ wants nothing less than the unity of Christendom in faith and confession, in the reception of his meal, and in the fellowship of the churches' ministerial offices. In this respect, the enthusiasm of the youth, who long for full unity, is justified over against the resignation of many older people. Christ wants to manifest himself in the unity of Christendom to the world as the one Lord to whom all are subject and through whose victory on the cross the enmity between human beings has been overcome and peace has dawned. Indeed, he not only wants unity but he has created it. It is not only his goal but in him it is already a reality. As his work, the church is the one church in all places and at all times. While its unity can certainly be called into question and disfigured by human beings, it cannot be destroyed. Consequently, our task is not to create the unity of the

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church but to describe the unity that is given in Christ and to put aside everything that obscures it.

But how is this to happen? One has to recognize with cool-headed realism that the existing church traditions cannot simply be skipped over, for each Christian has come to know the message of salvation in the context of a given church tradition, and within that tradition each has become a member of the one church, the body of Christ, through baptism. This is unconditionally valid, whether one affirms the principle of tradition or not, regardless also of whether one reflects about the church tradition or understands oneself to be directly and immediately contemporaneous with the earliest Christian community. Whoever would skip over the reality of multiple traditions would not be able to overcome the existing separations but only increase them further. The task is not to ignore the separations among the church traditions but to open up those traditions to one another. One can only wish that the theologians of the separated churches would devote themselves to this scholarly task with the same longing and passion by which the enthusiasts for unity seek to skip over the tradition.

In the present situation in which Christendom is open to unity, we must thus distinguish between two stages of ecumenical dialogue. First, we have to see beyond the borders of the particular church in which we came to faith in Christ and in which, on the basis of baptism and in our reception of the body and blood of Christ, we know ourselves to be members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. We have to look in hope and love for the signs and reality of precisely the same one church in those parts of Christendom that are divided from us. Only when the one church is again clearly recognized there, is the way open for the second stage, namely, for the dialogue about unification. If one were to engage in the second stage before the first, it would fail, even if at first it might seem to succeed.

Viewed as a whole, Christendom today finds itself at the beginning of the first stage of ecumenical dialogue. The experience of unity, which breaks through the separations, demands theological clarification, if it is not to lead to confusion and disappointment. But how will the separated traditions open up to one another in this first stage of the dialogue?

It is not enough to compare other traditions with one's own and to find in them what is already in one's own. Rather, we must inquire into the historical, apostolic foundation upon which the Holy Spirit builds the church and to which all parts of Christendom appeal in one way or another. We must attempt to understand the other Christian traditions—taking into account their particular historical conditions as much as possible—as the transmission and development of the apostolic witness to Christ and, in addition, of the apostolic exhortations and directives. This entails at the same time the necessity to inquire critically into one's own tradition in order to discern to what extent the apostolic tradition has been preserved and unfolded in it or has also been obscured and distorted.

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In looking back to the apostolic witness to Christ, we are at the same time being pointed forward to the Parousia of Jesus Christ proclaimed by the apostles.[iv] Jesus Christ is not only the historical basis of the church but also the present and coming Lord of the church. The nature of the church traditions and their relationship to one another would not be understood if one were content merely to look back to their historical development. Jesus Christ comes as the Judge of them all—that is, as Judge not only of the world but also of the church. The traditions will only be opened up to one another when their provisional nature is understood, indeed when the provisional nature of the church is understood. Within most traditions, however, ecclesiology is taught in strange isolation from eschatology.

This search for the church beyond the borders of one's own church tradition may not be limited to such parts of Christendom that are closely aligned to each other from the start, as for example the Evangelical-Lutheran and the Reformed Church or also the Orthodox and the Old Catholic Church. Rather, the *whole* of Christendom needs to face the question about the one church and to venture taking up dialogue, also with those churches that at first seem to be very far off. Only within the horizon of the whole of Christendom will the opening up of the particular traditions to one another take place in such a way that the opening up of the heart of the one impels the others toward unity. For the members of the Reformation churches[v] this means that they are only seriously engaging in ecumenical dialogue when they undertake it also with the Orthodox Church and the Roman Church.

If one looks at the present situation of Christendom realistically, despite the desire for unity that has emerged, it is clear how difficult, almost unending, the task of the first stage of ecumenical dialogue is. Everyone who participates in ecumenical dialogue is aware of the temptation to become skeptical and to draw back into one's own church body [*Konfessionskirche*][vi], or to give way to the fanatical enthusiasts [*Schwärmern*][vii] who think they can be content merely with the invisible unity of the church. But God's Spirit is already at work in opening up the separated parts of Christendom to one another, namely, by bringing to light what has been kept of the apostolic tradition in the different church traditions and brought about by the living Christ—and by making it a common gift for all of Christendom. Permeating through the walls that separate the churches, a sense of unity in that fullness is already beginning to be perceptible, even though we cannot yet grasp it conceptually and articulate it demonstrably. But these perceptions of emerging unity urgently desire visible embodiment.

All of the essays in this volume stem from dialogues among the separated churches in which I have participated over the past years, both in the World Council of Churches[viii] and in meetings with theologians of the Roman Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. Consequently, the selections are intentionally restricted to issues in the first stage of ecumenical dialogue, particularly those essays that focus on bringing clarity to issues of method-

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