Edmund Schlink

Ecumenical and Confessional Writings

The Doctrine of Baptism

edited by Matthew L. Becker



Edmund Schlink Works Volume 3

V&R



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Volume 3

The Doctrine of Baptism

Edited with an Introduction and Notes
by Matthew L. Becker

Translated by Matthew L. Becker and Eleanor Wegener

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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 I was invited to begin an American edition of these volumes. I am grateful to the editors at Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht and to the Schlink family for entrusting me with this important project. I am also grateful to the editors of the German edition for their contributions to those volumes: Klaus Engelhardt, Günther Gassmann, Rolf Herrfahrdt, Michael Plathow, Ursula Schnell, and Peter Zimmerling.

The American edition, *Edmund Schlink Works*, provides the English-speaking world with a completely new and unabridged translation of the central writings by one of the most impressive Christian theologians of the twentieth century. By any account, Schlink's contributions to the development of ecumenical theology in the second half of the twentieth century were considerable.

Although several of his writings, including his study of baptism, have been available in English for many decades, the publication of the new German edition offered a significant impetus for providing a fresh and more accurate translation of them. The first English edition of *Die Lehre von der Taufe*, which was published in 1972, was an abridgment of the German original.[1] For whatever reason, the translator (or the publisher) left out several of Schlink's sentences as well as important information in some of his footnotes. These omitted materials have now been restored, and complete bibliographic information has been given. Words and phrases that Schlink had emphasized, but which Bouman's translation did not, have now been properly italicized.

This new, unabridged edition of *The Doctrine of Baptism*, which is based on the second German edition that was edited by Peter Zimmerling, strives to be faithful to the language, style, and ideas of Schlink. In general, my co-translator Eleanor Wegener and I have tried to be "as literal as possible" and "as free as necessary" in our translation. Where literal accuracy and clarity conflicted, we preferred to side with clarity. Thus, on occasion, paraphrase seemed more faithful than literal fidelity. Key

1 Edmund Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972). Bouman occasionally omitted from his translation statements that were based on historical-critical research, e. g., Schlink's references to Second Isaiah, his acceptance of mainstream scholarly views toward the historical Jesus, the Synoptic Problem, etc. Bouman drew attention to these omissions by using ellipses.

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terms that occur in all the volumes are translated consistently. Technical theological terms and concepts received special attention so that their English equivalents are as accurate as possible. On occasion, we have not hesitated to borrow felicitous phrases and apt expressions from earlier translations of Schlink's writings and those of other German authors. We have employed gender-inclusive language to the extent that such use was possible without misrepresenting what Schlink communicated or forcing his language to fit later church developments. We believe that were Professor 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. The exception is Schlink's traditional use of masculine pronouns for God, which we have maintained. This use of masculine pronouns should not be understood to imply gender but to avoid theological formulations that suggest division in God, or that appear to compromise God's unity.[2]

When Schlink used a participial noun or a nominalized adjective to describe one or more of the three Persons of the Trinity, or if he described them in a relative pronoun clause, we have kept the term(s) in lowercase letters (e. g., the one who exists eternally, the coming one, the crucified one, the living one, the one who creates anew, etc.). However, we have capitalized similar constructions when they are used as terms of praise or as proper titles (e. g., God the Preserver, the Holy One of God, the Living One, the Ancient of Days, the Highest, the Son of Man, the Savior, the New Creator, etc.).

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2 Cf. Schlink's reflections on this issue in his book, *Ökumenische Dogmatik: Grundzüge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983; 2d ed., 1985; reprint with a foreword by Wolfhart Pannenberg and an afterword by Michael Plathow, 2005), *SÖB*, 2.206–10 (ET: *Ecumenical Dogmatics: Basic Features*, *ESW*, 2/1.355–59).

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quotations, or when it appears in all uppercase letters as *HERR* in the German text), but we translate "*Herr*" as "Lord" in all other settings, e. g., for God as the Lord of creation, for Jesus as Lord (= Greek *Kyrios*). I have not followed Schlink's practice of italicizing direct quotations from the Bible.

Schlink cited his scholarly sources in normal footnotes in the text (numbered consecutively—beginning anew in each main section—and identified by plain superscripted Arabic numerals). Incorrect bibliographic information (which is infrequent) has been silently rectified, and that which is missing or incomplete I have added. In those few places where Schlink did not provide a citation for material he quoted, I have added the bibliographic information and an editorial comment in a footnote. As a result, the footnote numbering in this edition differs slightly from that in the German original. Whenever possible, references to existing English translations of works cited by Schlink are included within brackets, even if those works were published after his death. To help the reader identify this bracketed information that has been added by me to Schlink's text, I have inserted the notation "—Ed." Unless otherwise noted, all other brackets in the text are also by me, not by Schlink. Parenthetical remarks that Schlink himself inserted into the text are free of editorial notation. While I have not tried to identify all the places where Schlink was quoting or alluding to his own earlier work (e. g., his sermons), I have tried to cite the most important sources from his own publications that he drew upon here, and I have tried to identify material from this volume that he used elsewhere, e. g., in his magisterial *Ecumenical Dogmatics*. For references to the church fathers and other classic theologians, I have cited the primary source (as found in a critical edition) and, if possible, provided a reference to its most recent English translation. 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. If a work of Schlink's has been translated into English, I have provided the English title in parentheses after the German title (in the initial citation only). The page number(s) for the translation appear(s) in parentheses (or brackets in some necessary instances) after the German page number(s).

It is hoped that this book will be used as a resource by students of theology and the history of Christian thought. For the sake of those who are less familiar with the history of philosophy and theology, I have added explanatory notes. Such notes, which are unique to this American edition, appear at the end of each main section and are identified in the text by bolded superscripted lowercase roman numerals in brackets. As initially a student of psychology and then as a Lutheran theologian, Schlink expected his readers to follow the technical terms and the nuances that these special fields employ. While he usually cited his sources, he often made theological, philosophical, historical, and other cultural allusions that I will sometimes, but not

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always, indicate in a note at the end of a section. At the end of the book, I have provided indices of Scripture references, names, and subjects.

The layout of the American edition of *The Doctrine of Baptism* retains Schlink's manner of dividing the book into four main sections (Chapters A-D) and a conclusion. It is important to note that Schlink's study of baptism first appeared as one of three long treatises in the fifth volume of *Leiturgia*, a handbook on Evangelical-Lutheran worship, which was published in 1969.[3] Schlink's contribution to this 840-page volume was then published at the same time as a separate book under the same title by the same publisher. The structure and content of Schlink's treatise in the fifth volume of *Leiturgia* are thus identical to the structure and content of the stand-alone book. (The only difference is that the table of contents for Schlink's treatise in the *Leiturgia* volume appears at the end of that version, unlike its placement at the beginning of the stand-alone book.)[4] I have thus followed Schlink's outline structure (referring to his chapters by letters and not numbers), and I have kept his original paragraphing, although on occasion longer paragraphs are broken into shorter ones. I note these instances with the symbol ¶. I have also followed Schlink's practice of formatting his brief excursi in a smaller font size and with narrower line spacing. Since he placed the bibliography of his sources at the end of

3 Edmund Schlink, "Die Lehre von der Taufe" [The Doctrine of Baptism], in *Leiturgia: Handbuch des Evangelischen Gottesdienstes* [Liturgy: A Handbook of Evangelical-Lutheran Worship], 5 vols., ed. Karl Ferdinand Müller and Walter Blankenburg (Kassel: Johannes Stauda, 1969), 5.641–808. This fifth volume was devoted to the baptismal service (*Der Taufgottesdienst*). The Greek term λειτουργία [*leitourgia*] means "service of a formal or public type, *service*" (BDAG, 591). The other two treatises in this volume are by Georg Kretschmar, "Die Geschichte des Taufgottesdienstes in der alten Kirche" [The History of the Baptismal Service in the Ancient Church], 1–348; and Bruno Jordahn, "Der Taufgottesdienst im Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart" [The Baptismal Service from the Middle Ages to the Present], 349–639. Stauda published a hard-cover edition of this same handbook in 1970. Georg Kretschmar (1925–2009) was a Lutheran theologian and the former archbishop of the Lutheran Church in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia. Before his ordination in 1954, he studied theology at Tübingen, Bonn, Heidelberg, and Oxford. He received his doctorate at Heidelberg in 1950, where he had studied under Schlink. Prior to his pastoral work in Russia and Ukraine, where he also engaged in ecumenical discussions with Eastern Orthodox theologians, Kretschmar taught New Testament and church history at Hamburg and Munich. He also was a scholar of the German "church struggle" (*Kirchenkampf*) in which Schlink was involved in the 1930s and early 40s. Bruno Jordahn (1908–88) was a Lutheran pastor and scholar of liturgical studies. After studying theology at Tübingen, Jena, und Königsberg, he served as a pastor in the Confessing Church and then in various Lutheran congregations in Germany.

4 The second edition of Schlink's treatise on baptism—which is identical in structure and content to the first edition published by Stauda in 1969, except for the German editor's introduction that was added to that second edition—was published as the third volume of *SÖB*, *Die Lehre von der Taufe*, ed. with an introduction by Peter Zimmerling (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

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his introduction, that is where I have placed it as well. The bibliography that I have created is located at the end of the book.

All Greek and most Latin terms have been kept in the text, and an English translation of the less familiar ones appears in brackets. I have not retained Schlink's German custom of referring to the classic creeds and confessions of the church by their Latin titles, e. g., *Nicaenum*, *Constantinopolitanum*, *Apostolicum*, *Chalcedonense*, *Augustana*, etc., Instead, I have used their traditional English titles, e.g, the Nicene Creed, the Constantinopolitan Creed (also called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed), the Apostles' Creed, the Chalcedonian Definition, the Augsburg Confession, etc. It is important to note that "the Nicene Creed" refers solely to the original creed adopted at the Council of Nicaea in 325, whereas "the Constantinopolitan Creed" (or "the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed") refers to the Nicene Creed as modified and adopted at the First Council of Constantinople in 381. I have also not retained Schlink's custom of using the Latin term *credo* to refer to one or more of the specific creeds and confessions in Christianity, e. g., the Apostles' and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creeds. I have thus translated *credo* as "creed," allowing the context to determine its meaning. For the sake of readability, Greek words are not italicized. The transliteration (italicized) and an English definition, when necessary, follow in brackets or in an editor's note. 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 a neologism, or its etymological roots are significant. I have maintained most instances where Schlink placed quotation marks around certain German words and phrases (in which case, then, the original word or phrase is usually, but not always, placed in brackets after the translation). Where Schlink referred initially to a word as a word, it is put in italics. I have not followed his custom of italicizing names or surnames in the text.

A few remarks on certain specifics of the translation are in order: We have translated *Amt* as "ministerial office" or sometimes simply as "office." *Anfechtung* (plural: *Anfechtungen*) is an important term in the Lutheran theological tradition. Luther occasionally used it to translate the Latin term *tentatio*, that is, "spiritual crisis," "turmoil," or "trial." He understood it also in the sense of "being attacked" or "being assailed" by forces opposed to Christ, the gospel, and the church. *Anfechtung* thus involves fear, one's conscience, sin, the awareness of guilt and shame, and the testing of one's faith. In short, it refers to a kind of spiritual anguish. In such a situation, one is being tempted to reject faith in Christ and to despair of God and oneself. The term can thus also be translated as "temptation," although that lacks the aspect of "attack" and "assault" (on body, mind, and soul). The term is occasionally left untranslated, or it is rendered in one of these other ways, depending on the context. The antidote to such "trials and tribulations," according to both Luther and

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Schlink, is solely the gospel promise and the comfort it brings to the one who trusts it by faith.[5]

Normally *church* with a lowercase *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 Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, will likewise be rendered in lowercase letters.) The term *churches* with a lowercase *c* refers to "all churches," church bodies in general, or to groupings of church bodies, e. g., the churches of the Reformation. When *Church* appears with an uppercase *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 an official federation of churches (for example, The Protestant Church in Germany). The German term *Gemeinde* is normally translated as "congregation" or "community," depending on context, but in some settings, it is rendered as "church."

While it would be nice to preserve 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 contemporary United States from what it originally meant to sixteenth-century "evangelicals." Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding, this German adjective is normally translated as "Protestant" or "Evangelical-Lutheran."

In Schlink's context, the term *Konfessionskirche* implied more than merely a "denomination" (in the American sense of this term). Rather, it points to the confessional or doctrinal identity and nature of a particular church body or tradition, even of those church bodies and traditions that do not have explicit confessional statements or creeds. This term is normally translated as "church body" or "confessional group" (i. e., one comprising multiple church bodies from the same confessional tradition).

Schlink used the term *Reformationskirchen* ("churches of the Reformation") to refer to the two main branches of Protestantism, namely, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the Reformed Church.

It is important to note that Schlink frequently used language relating to war and military conflict. For example, he used the German and English term *Front*—which in both languages can mean either the frontline in a battle or the line of a weather front—to refer to historic conflicts wherein the mainstream orthodox and catholic church struggled to define its teaching over against false teachings that had to be re-

5 See, e. g., Martin Luther, "Tröstung für eine Person in hohen Anfechtungen" (1521), *WA*, 7.784–91; ET: "Comfort When Facing Grave Temptations," trans. Martin Bertram, *LW*[1], 42.183–86. Cf. also Bertram's comment about the difficulty of translating the term *Anfechtung*, *LW*[1], 42.181.

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jected. When the reader encounters the term *front*, that word should be understood to refer to such theological conflicts in the church's history.

In most contexts *Gemeinschaft* has been translated as "community" or "partnership" (e. g., "church community," "community with God," "community with the ancestors in the faith"), although "communion" seemed more fitting in some settings, especially, e. g., in relation to the Lord's Supper, the communion of saints, or communion with the triune God. When it was difficult to know which shade of meaning to favor in a context, "community" was the default choice.

For Schlink, the term *Gottesdienst* ("the service of God") refers first and foremost to the *Dienst Gottes*, God's service to us in and through Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. This same risen and exalted Christ is now present and active through the word and sacraments in the Christian congregation. Faithful response to this divine service is the *Dienst der Gemeinde*, the service of the congregation, in hearing, repenting, praying, singing, confessing, bearing witness, doing works of mercy, etc. *Gottesdienst* thus encompasses both God's service to the congregation and the congregation's service to God. While the term *Gottesdienst* will normally be translated as "worship service," and its adjectival form as "worship," Schlink's theological presuppositions about it should be kept in mind.

The German word *Mensch* is normally rendered as "human being," "human," "person," or "humankind." Often the German singular is translated by English plurals to avoid introducing masculine-specific pronouns. The more abstract *Menschheit* is almost always translated as "humanity," but in a few places it is rendered as "the human race."

When used in reference to the worship service, *Ordnung* is 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 specific ministry of the church, this word is translated as "order" or "ordering," since it typically refers here to the ordering or arranging of 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). In some contexts, the term will thus be translated as "ordinance." In reference to creation, however, *Ordnungen* is normally translated as "orders of creation" or "orderly structures" within creation.

While *Säuglingstaufe* is always translated as "infant baptism," *Kindertaufe* is usually translated as "infant baptism," except when it appears in the context of *Säuglingstaufe*, in which case it is rendered as "the baptism of children" or "children's baptism." In this same context, *Kleinkind* is usually translated as "toddler."

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As I mentioned at the end of my preface to the first volume of *Edmund Schlink Works*, in view of the confused and weakened state of Christian ecumenism today, one might hope that a re-examination of the key theological writings by 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.

I am grateful for the assistance provided to me by the following archivists: Dr. Peter Engels and Jan Malte Dittrich of the Stadtarchiv in Darmstadt; Sabine Dietzsch-Uhde of the Hessisches Landesarchiv in Neustadt; Thorben Gützlaff of the Stadtarchiv in Braunschweig; Friederike Mischke of the Landeskirchliches Archiv Wolfenbüttel (for the Ev.-luth. Kirche in Braunschweig); Ingrun Osterfinke of the Landeskirchliches Archiv for the Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen, in Bielefeld; Dr. Ingo Runde and Jens Starick of the Universitätsarchiv at Heidelberg University; and Georg Siebert of the Zentralarchiv of the Evangelische Kirche in Hessen und Nassau, in Darmstadt.

John Hannah and William Shimkus read earlier drafts of the manuscript and helped me greatly through their questions, comments, and suggestions for improvement. I owe a debt of gratitude to Sara Shoppa of the Christopher Center Library for procuring difficult-to-find books, articles, and other scholarly materials.

On April 21, 2023, just a few months after the publication of the large second volume of *ESW*, the *Ecumenical Dogmatics*, Dr. Hans G. Spalteholz died at the age of 92. As a native German speaker, a long-time professor of theology, and a dear friend, he brought crucial, invaluable expertise to our collaborative work on the first two volumes of *ESW*. Although he was unable to assist in the production of this third volume, many of his interpretational solutions from the earlier volumes do appear here. I remain grateful to him for all the help he provided me and for all that he taught me during the fifty years of our friendship. He is deeply missed.

I would like to express special appreciation to my research assistant and co-translator Eleanor Wegener, who carefully proofread the manuscript against the German original and improved the translation in many places. Although all possible care has been taken to produce an accurate translation, I take full responsibility for the finished product.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my wife Detra and our son Jacob for their loving support and patience during the time I worked on this volume.

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Valparaiso University
Feast Day of S. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo
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Introduction to the American Edition

Matthew Becker

According to his birth certificate, Edmund Schlink was born in his parents' apartment on Hölgestrasse in Darmstadt, in the German state of Hessen, on March 6, 1903, at 5:15 pm.[1] His father Georg Wilhelm, who was a young professor of mechanics and aerodynamics at the large and important technical college there, completed the certificate of birth a few days later at the city hall. That form states that Edmund, the firstborn child, had been given the middle names Wilhelm and Ludwig. Normally, according to ecclesial culture, at least one of those names would identify the person's baptismal sponsor. While the reference to the first of those names is obvious, the second one likely linked the child to Grand Duke Ludwig I (1753–1830), under whose rule the first constitution for the Grand Duchy of Hessen was ratified. Ludwig was particularly revered by Roman Catholics in the city, since his Hessen constitution granted them a greater level of religious freedom. Accordingly, when the city's central Roman Catholic Church was built between 1822 and 1827, it was given the name "St. Ludwig." Modelled on the Pantheon in Rome, its domed structure stands a mere 100 meters up the street from where Edmund was born.

In addition to the birth certificate, the official Darmstadt registration form for the family also lists Wilhelm Schlink as Roman Catholic, while his wife Ella (neé Heuser) is identified as Protestant.[2] When Edmund's name was added to that form shortly after his birth, he too was listed as Catholic. While that original entry would later be heavily (but not entirely) crossed out and replaced by "evang." (in handwriting and ink that are different from the original entry), clearly "kath." was written first in the box marked "religion." When Edmund's only other sibling was

1 "Geburtseintrag von Edmund Schlink," Best. 901, Nr. 698–302 (dated March 11, 1903) (Neustadt: Hessisches Landesarchiv). For a more in-depth overview of Schlink's life and work, see my introductory essays, "Edmund Schlink (1903–1984): An Ecumenical Life," in *ESW*, 1.15–41; and "Edmund Schlink's *Ecumenical Dogmatics*," in *ESW*, 2/1.37–59; as well as my book chapter, "Edmund Schlink: Ecumenical Theology," in *Generous Orthodoxies: Essays on the History and Future of Ecumenical Theology*, ed. Paul Silas Peterson (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2020), 23–41. Cf. Jochen Eber, *Einheit der Kirche als dogmatisches Problem bei Edmund Schlink* [The Unity of the Church as a Dogmatic Issue according to Edmund Schlink] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 18–50, 297–98; and idem, "Edmund Schlink 1903–1984: Ein Leben für die Einheit der Kirche" ["Edmund Schlink: 1903–1984: A Life for the Unity of the Church"], in *SÖB*, 1/1.xi-xxii.

2 "Meldekarte von Dr. Wilhelm Schlink," Best. 12–18 (Darmstadt: Darmstadt Stadtarchiv).

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born, his younger sister Klara, her "religion box" would be marked "evang," like that of her mother's. At that time, it was a common practice in mixed-denominational marriages in Germany to assign male offspring to the denomination of the father and female offspring to that of the mother.[3]

Some ninety years after Edmund's birth—many years after the death of his first wife and about ten years after his own death—his second wife, in her oral testimony to one of Schlink's former doctoral students, implied that her husband had been baptized as a Protestant and that Wilhelm "became a Protestant at the time of Edmund's baptism."[4] According to Schlink's daughter as well, the family Bible states that Edmund was baptized as "evangelisch" in Darmstadt.[5] But these statements do not fit with the official city records, nor with the cultural and ecclesial customs mentioned above. When the Schlink family moved to Braunschweig, Lower Saxony, in 1906, so that Wilhelm could take up a new position as a professor of aerodynamics at the technical college there, he and his son were again registered as "Catholic," while his wife and daughter were registered as "Lutheran."[6]

Only later, sometime during his school years—and for reasons that can only be speculated about today—Edmund became a confirmed member of St. Katharinen Lutheran Church in Braunschweig.[7] According to his confirmation record, he was confirmed on September 22, 1918. Unfortunately, he was sick on the day of the service, and so one of his pastors had to visit him later at his home to complete the official rite.

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3 I am grateful to Dr. Margarethe Hopf for informing me about this custom. In mixed marriages, the practice of assigning children to the church body of the mother or father, based on the gender of the child, is still followed today in some German families. In the opinion of archivists at the Stadtarchiv, Darmstadt, Edmund Schlink was initially registered as "Catholic," shortly after his birth. Later, the abbreviation "kath" (= "Catholic") was crossed out and the abbreviation "evang" (= "Protestant") was added (Jan Dittrich and Sabine Lemke, face-to-face conversation with the author, July 12, 2024). When I asked an archivist with the Archive for the Protestant Church of Hessen and Nassau for his opinion, he stated, "It seems clear to me that Edmund Schlink was originally registered in Darmstadt as 'Catholic,' and then later he was registered as 'Protestant,' probably when he returned to live in Darmstadt after having lived in Braunschweig" (Georg Siebert, face-to-face conversation with the author, July 9, 2024).

4 Irmgard Schlink, as paraphrased by Eugene M. Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer: An Introduction to Edmund Schlink's Life and Ecumenical Theology* (Minneapolis: Kirk House, 1999), 18.

5 Johanna Hopfmüller, email message to the author (May 22, 2024). The entry for Edmund in the Schlink family Bible reads: "geb. 6.3.1903 in Darmstadt, ev. luth. in Darmstadt getauft, in Braunschweig konfirmiert."

6 "Meldekarte von Dr. Wilhelm Schlink," Nr. 192 (Braunschweig: Braunschweig Stadtarchiv).

7 "Confirmation Certificate for Edmund Schlink," *LAW Kirchenbuch 404*, "Braunschweig St. Katharinen 1918," Nr. 191 (Wolfenbüttel: Landeskirchliches Archiv Wolfenbüttel), 281.

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That same confirmation certificate indicates that Schlink was baptized on September 21, 1903, but the box for the "place of baptism" was left unfilled.[8] Where did the baptism take place? Unfortunately, the baptismal records from both St. Ludwig (where Wilhelm was a member) and the Protestant Stadtkirche (where Ella was a member) were destroyed during an Allied bombing raid in September 1944, as were the records for the Protestant Church in Hessen. The records for Darmstadt's Catholic diocese, housed in Mainz, were also destroyed during the war. So Schlink's official baptismal record is now unrecoverable, and thus we cannot know for sure where he was baptized. Nevertheless, based on the two city registration forms, as well as Schlink's middle names and the cultural practice in mixed marriages of often assigning the religion of the father to the son, it seems very likely that Edmund was baptized at St. Ludwig Roman Catholic Church, just down the street from his parents' dwelling, despite what is written in the family Bible. It is also possible that he was baptized at home. Most important is the fact that he and his father remained listed as Roman Catholic even after the family moved to Braunschweig in 1906. If Edmund had been baptized in the Protestant Stadtkirche in Darmstadt, why then would he have been officially recorded as "Catholic" on the Darmstadt registration form (in the year of his birth) and on the Braunschweig registration form (three years after his baptism)? Is it not more likely that Wilhelm had Edmund officially recorded as "Catholic" because Edmund had in fact been baptized as a Roman Catholic (either at St. Ludwig or at home)? If so, it appears that the most significant German Lutheran ecumenist of the twentieth century, who was also one of the most influential confessional Lutheran theologians of the past hundred years, began his Christian life as a baptized Roman Catholic. From the beginning, he lived in an ecumenical environment. Perhaps as a young child, he even accompanied his father to Catholic mass, although Klara and other family members recall that Wilhelm attended mass only infrequently.

If Edmund was baptized as a Roman Catholic, which seems likely, did he know this information? Was it perhaps later suppressed? Or even forgotten? How did the memory arise of his having been baptized as a Protestant—and that Wilhelm became a Protestant at the time of Edmund's baptism? Why does the family Bible state that Edmund was baptized "Protestant in Darmstadt"? Answers to these questions can only be speculative.

It seems likely that when Edmund moved back to Darmstadt with his family in 1921 and had to be registered again with the city officials there, the "kath." that had been written on the form at the time of his birth (and baptism) was now crossed out and replaced with an "evang." That the Braunschweig registration form did not

8 *LAW Kirchenbuch 404*, "Braunschweig St. Katharinen 1918," 281. On this form, in the box for baptismal name, his middle names are reversed: "Ludwig Wilhelm."

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include a similar revision was probably due simply to the parents not sensing a need to update a city registration record after Edmund's confirmation. In any case, one cannot help but wonder if he ever shared with any of his dialogue partners this information about his early "Catholic" childhood, if he himself was aware of it.

The fact that Edmund was not baptized shortly after his birth also suggests that there must have been some discussion between the parents about where their son would be baptized. Could it be that they finally decided he would be baptized as a Catholic but then later instructed as a Protestant? Again, one can only speculate about that early situation. As he would stress later in his life, what is essential is the baptism itself, "…in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," not the specific church body in which that one baptism upon the triune name was administered. Indeed, the baptismal formula would have been identical for infant Edmund, whether he had been baptized at St. Ludwig or at the Stadtkirche (or at home).

Eventually, however, when Edmund started public school, his parents would have had to tell school officials which type of religious instruction they wanted their son to receive, Catholic or Protestant. All indications point to the parents checking the "evang." box at that time.

In addition to the generic Protestant instruction he would have received in public school, Schlink was taught Lutheran doctrine by the two pastors of St. Katharinen, Martin Bücking (1868–1954) and Johannes Schlott (1878–1953).[9] While the First World War was being fought on battlefields not far away, one or both of these pastors would have instructed Schlink and his fellow confirmands about the basic content of Luther's Small Catechism, albeit from a perspective that was strongly German-nationalistic. Luther's four sections about baptism and the responses within them would prove to be central to Schlink's faith and subsequent theology. Particularly important for the mature Schlink were Luther's description of the benefits granted in baptism: the forgiveness of sins, redemption from death and the devil, and the gift of eternal life.[10] Baptism is "a grace-filled water of life and a 'bath of the new birth in the Holy Spirit.'"[11] Schlink's mature baptismal theology was deeply shaped by Luther's catechetical teaching, which Schlink first learned as a teen-ager.

Based on his own subsequent testimony, however, Schlink's baptism—regardless of where it had taken place—was not all that important to him during his childhood

9 For information about Bücking, see Dietrich Kuessner, *Ansichten einer versunkenen Stadt: Die Braunschweiger Stadtkirchen 1933–1950* [Views of a Sunken City: The Braunschweig City Churches 1933–1950] (Wendebourg: Krebs, 2012). For information about Schlott, see Dietrich Kuessner, *Johannes Schlott 1878–1953: Ein Beispiel deutsch-christlicher Theologie in der Stadt Braunschweig* [Johannes Schlott 1878–1953: An Example of German-Christian Theology in the City of Braunschweig] (self-published, 1983).

10 Martin Luther, SC, IV (Holy Baptism), *BC*, 359.

11 Luther, SC, IV (Holy Baptism), *BC*, 359.

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and young adulthood. Only later, in the context of a crisis of meaning that he suffered while studying for a degree in clinical psychology, did he come to appreciate the promise of his baptism and see it as the foundation for his further life. That crisis was brought on by critical questions about the meaning of human existence, about the nature and purpose of human beings, and about the problems of suffering and death. This crisis of meaning was exacerbated by his demanding academic course load and clinical research.

As his sister Klara recounted later in her autobiography, she and her brother sought truth through the study of the natural sciences, law, art, and the history of religions, and by reading the works of key German philosophers, such as Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), only to arrive at "agonizing periods of doubt and inner conflict."[12] Particularly unsettling for both Schlink siblings was German existentialist philosophy, since it flatly rejected the idea of a divinely given purpose for human beings. Such human-centered philosophy forced individuals back upon themselves and insisted that they must decide their own identity and fate. While Schlink sought to find a solution to the great problems of human life through philosophy and psychology (including psychiatry and psychoanalysis), he eventually concluded that "the meaning and essence of human existence cannot be fathomed in all these ways."[13] While Klara would undergo a kind of religious conversion and eventually form a Protestant spiritual community, Edmund was encouraged to take time off from his university studies to work on a Silesian farm.[14] It was there that he, too, experienced a spiritual rebirth. In the wake of that experience, he determined that after he finished his doctorate in psychology, which he did in 1927 (at the insistence of his parents), he would begin the study of theology.

Clearly, Schlink did not understand the spiritual renewal he experienced in Silesia to have been an additional event beyond his baptism, let alone a matter that was more important to him than what had happened to him in his baptism. Rather, that renewal led him to return to his baptism. From this time onward, Schlink's life as a Christian would be marked by the daily return to his baptism and to the promises attached to it. At his funeral service in 1984, those same baptismal promises were again voiced in the sermon and the liturgy—and they were accompanied once more by the sign of the cross and given affirmation in the congregation's "Amen."

Since Dr. Zimmerling helpfully addresses the content and significance of Edmund Schlink's treatise on baptism, I simply want to complement his introduction by briefly drawing attention to a few key moments in the development of Schlink's

12 M. Basilea Schlink, *I Found the Key to the Heart of God* (Darmstadt: Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, 1975), 25.

13 Edmund Schlink, "Lebenslauf" (Heidelberg University, January 17, 1951), Universitätsarchiv, Heidelberg University.

14 Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 19.

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teaching about baptism. In this way, I hope to provide some historical context for the emergence of the book.[15]

I. Münster

The starting point for Schlink's scholarly investigation of baptism, in the context of all the other theological subjects he studied, may be traced to his matriculation at the University of Münster in Westphalia in the winter semester of 1927–28. In a letter to his parents that October, he explained his rationale for studying theology in that predominantly Roman Catholic setting.[16] First and foremost, he wanted to hear Karl Barth (1886–1968), the most well-known theologian of the time, who had joined its small Protestant faculty two years earlier and who had just published his *Christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*.[17] Schlink also wanted to get away from Bethel Seminary, where he had briefly studied theology after completing his initial doctorate.[18] Bethel had few offerings in biblical exegesis and, as he told his parents, "a university theological faculty would be of much greater value for my education."[19] Schlink had to have been pleased when Barth later agreed to serve as his dissertation adviser.[20]

Barth himself seems to have left Lutheran Göttingen for Catholic Münster because he was convinced that dialogue with theologians in the Roman Church would

15 See Peter Zimmerling, "Einleitung," in Schlink, *Die Lehre von der Taufe*, *SÖB*, 3.vii-xix. Cf. the brief summary of Schlink's theology of baptism by Eber, *Einheit der Kirche als dogmatisches Problem bei Edmund Schlink*, 97–107.

16 Edmund Schlink, letter to his parents (27 October 1927, sent from Bethel), in the Zentralarchiv of the Evangelische Kirche in Hessen und Nassau, Darmstadt. For a partial translation of this letter, see Skibbe, *A Quiet Reformer*, 20.

17 Karl Barth, *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf: Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes - Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik* [Christian Dogmatics in Outline: The Doctrine of the Word of God - Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics], vol. 1 (München: Kaiser, 1927; reprint, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe, vol. 14, ed. Gerhard Sauter [Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1982]). The Protestant theology faculty in Münster was first formed in 1914.

18 For Schlink's initial doctoral dissertation (in clinical psychology), see Edmund Schlink, "Persönlichkeitsänderung in Bekehrungen und Depressionen: Eine empirisch-religionspsychologische Untersuchung nebst kasuistischen Beiträgen zur Psychologie des Gotteserlebens als Anhang" (Ph.D. diss., University of Marburg, 1927). Erich Rudolf Jaensch (1883–1940), professor of psychology at Marburg, had served as Schlink's doctoral adviser. Translations of Schlink's three doctoral dissertations will be included in *ESW*, 5.

19 Schlink, letter to his parents (27 October 1927).

20 For Schlink's initial doctoral dissertation in theology, see Edmund Schlink, *Emotionale Gotteserlebnisse: Ein empirisch-psychologischer Beitrag zum Problem der natürlichen Religion*, Abhandlungen und Monographien zur Philosophie des Wirklichen 5 (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1931).

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be far more fruitful for addressing substantive dogmatic issues than continuing his debate with liberal Protestantism, which, in Barth's view, had surrendered itself to the study of history and the philosophy of religion.[21] For Barth, who remained in Münster until 1930, the substance of the Christian faith had been preserved, if also distorted, in contemporary Catholicism, whereas modern Protestantism had almost completely betrayed it.[22] In these years (1927–30), Schlink witnessed Barth's own critical engagement with Roman Catholic figures and ideas, e. g., in his lectures on "Dogmatics II" (i. e., christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and sacramental theology), "Ethics I," and "Ethics II," as well as in his seminar on the first part of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*.[23] During this period, Schlink would have also learned about or even attended Barth's public lectures on aspects of Catholic teaching, such as the doctrine of the church (which includes both affirmation and criticism of Catholic sacramental theology).[24]

It is important to note that in this period, Barth was still basically in agreement with John Calvin's teaching about baptism. Barth made that point clear in a lecture on Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments that he had given to a group of Westphalian pastors in 1926, as well as in his regular seminar on Calvin's *Institutio*.[25] Barth's

21 See Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critical Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 376.

22 See, e. g., Karl Barth, "Der römische Katholizismus als Frage an die protestantische Kirche" (lecture delivered in Bremen, March 9, 1928), in *Die Theologie und die Kirche*, Gesammelte Vorträge 2 (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer, 1928), 329–363; ET: "Roman Catholicism: A Question to the Protestant Church," in Karl Barth, *Theology and the Church: Shorter Writings 1920–1928*, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 307–333. See also McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 381.

23 For the content of these lectures, see Karl Barth, *Ethik I: Vorlesung Münster Sommersemester 1928*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe, vol. 5, ed. D. Braun (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1973); Barth, *Ethik II: Vorlesung Münster Wintersemester 1928/1929*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe, vol. 6, ed. D. Braun (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1978). ET: *Ethics* trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981).

24 See, e. g., Karl Barth, "Der Begriff der Kirche" (lecture delivered in Münster, July 11, 1927), in *Die Theologie und die Kirche*, 285–301; ET: "The Concept of the Church," in *Theology and the Church*, 286–306. For analysis of Barth's engagement with Roman Catholic theologians in this period, see McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 376–391; Wilhelm Neuser, *Karl Barth in Münster, 1925–1930* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1985); and T. F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology, 1910–1931* (London: SCM, 1962), 93–118.

25 Karl Barth, "Die Lehre von der Sakramente" (1929) [The Doctrine of the Sacraments], in *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten 1925–1930*, Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe, vol. 24, ed. Hermann Schmidt (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1994), 393–441. Cf. his reflections on baptism as a sacramental sign in his classic commentary on Romans, *Der Römerbrief*, 8th ed. (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer, 1947), 168–87 (ET: *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933], 191–207). Cf. Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 167.

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criticism of Roman Catholic sacramental theology at that time was also informed by Calvin's mature teaching about the sacraments. Only later, after 1940, would Barth express serious criticism of the practice of infant baptism, an argument that Schlink took seriously but ultimately rejected. While Schlink would always be respectful toward his *Doktorvater*, with whom he agreed on many points—e. g., regarding the starting point of Christian theology in the divine revelation of the Word—he maintained his basic Lutheran stance vis-à-vis Barth's criticism of Lutheran teaching about the distinction between law and gospel, the differences between the old and new covenants, the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and the divine action of grace in baptism.[26]

Münster was also attractive to Schlink because it had "a good practical theologian (Stählin)" and an "outstanding Roman Catholic faculty."[27] These statements that he shared with his parents point toward Schlink's budding devotion to ecumenical-liturgical renewal. Wilhelm Stählin (1883–1975) was one of the leading German-Lutheran theologians of his day and a principal figure in a movement of liturgical renewal within the Protestant Church in Germany, the Berneuchen Movement, which had begun in 1923. This group, which was influenced by other movements of liturgical renewal, e. g., the work of the French Benedictine monk Prosper Guéranger (1805–75), sought to find a form of church life that would speak meaningfully to those who had fought in the First World War and had come home broken, scarred, and disillusioned. Stählin insisted that the Christian life had to be rooted in the sacraments, which form the center of the church's liturgy. Indeed, key aspects of this liturgical movement included a renewed emphasis upon the centrality of baptism and the Lord's Supper (including more frequent participation in Holy Communion), the development of a more comprehensive biblical lectionary for use in worship, the importance of biblical preaching, and the creation of new models of prayer and liturgical music. The aim of the movement was the renewal of the active participation of the laity in the worship life of the church.

Looking back on those early decades of liturgical renewal, Schlink took note of the fact that this broad movement, of which Stählin's activities were a part, played a significant role in the spiritual awakening of European Christendom after the First World War:

> So there arose a liturgical movement in many churches that was not primarily determined by historical and aesthetic interests, but rather was rooted in the basic hunger for the living word of God and for sacramental participation in Christ's death and resurrection, and in

26 On these theological differences between Schlink and Barth, cf. my essay, "Edmund Schlink on Theological Anthropology, the Law and the Gospel," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24 (Summer 2010): 151–182.

27 Schlink, letter to his parents (27 October 1927).

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> the desire of people to offer themselves as a sacrifice of praise to God in the fellowship of believers.[28]

This broad movement of liturgical renewal must be considered a key influence on Schlink's own interest in liturgical studies and the pastoral aspects of a renewed liturgy, which led him in his later life to focus intently on the doctrine of the church's sacraments.

In addition to Barth and Stählin, other members of the Protestant faculty at Münster who would have influenced Schlink's developing theology included Johannes Hänel (1887–1956 [Old Testament]), Johannes Herrmann (1880–1960 [Old Testament]), Otto Schmitz (1883–1957 [New Testament]), and Georg Grützmacher (1866–1939 [church history]). (Karl Heim [1874–1958 (systematic theologian)] had left Münster just as Schlink was arriving.) The work of retired professor of practical theology at Münster, Julius Smend (1857–1930), who focused on the history and nature of evangelical-Lutheran worship, would have likewise had an impact on the young Schlink's understanding of liturgics, including liturgical art, and sacramental theology.

At Münster Schlink also heard lectures and attended seminars by the principal Catholic theologians on the faculty there. They included Franz Diekamp (1864–1943 [professor of dogmatics]), Joseph Mausbach (1861–1931 [moral theology]), Max Meinertz (1880–1965 [New Testament]), Joseph Schmidlin (1876–1944 [missiology]), and Georg Schreiber (1882–1963 [church history]). Other Catholic scholars who spent time there also had an impact on Schlink's thinking, including Erich Przywara (1889–1972), who participated in Barth's seminar on Aquinas.[29] It is quite likely that already in this period of his education Schlink would have studied the standard four-volume dogmatics text by the modern German Catholic theologian

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28 Schlink, *Nach dem Konzil*, *SÖB*, 1/2.14 (ET: *After the Council*, *ESW*, 1.344). The broader movement to which Schlink was here referring included liturgical renewal in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and other church bodies. These efforts focused on developing new musical settings of the liturgy, promoting individual devotional piety and frequent participation in the Eucharist, as well as encouraging ecumenical work in liturgical studies. At the Second Vatican Council, in December 1963, the council fathers adopted the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," which endorsed the aims of this broader liturgical movement, encouraged the active participation of the people in the church's worship life, authorized the use of the vernacular in the liturgy, and opened the door for other worship reforms, e. g., new orders of the mass, a new lectionary, and new rites of baptism, confirmation, etc. (cf. *ODCC*, 2.1146).

29 In these years, Przywara, who was a German-Polish Jesuit priest, was particularly interested in engaging Barth's critique of the analogy of being. See Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics - Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John Betz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014). For a helpful introduction to his life and ideas, see Thomas F. O'Meara, *Erich J. Przywara, S.J.: His Theology and His World* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

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Matthias Scheeben (1835–1888), which Schlink would later cite in his lectures and writings.[30] Based on his student activity, it is clear that he had embraced an ecumenical openness at Münster that would remain central to him for the rest of his life.

II. The *Kirchenkampf* and the Lutheran Confessions

After completing his initial doctorate in theology (1930) and after spending a further year studying practical theology at the preachers' seminary of the Hessen-Nassau Church (in Friedberg, near Darmstadt), where he would have further developed his understanding of the sacraments and learned about their proper administration, Schlink began to serve as a Lutheran pastoral assistant in Buchschlag and Sprendlingen, two neighboring villages a few miles south of Frankfurt. Ordained on December 20, 1931, he also worked as a campus pastor at the technical college in Darmstadt, where his father had returned to teach aeronautics. During these years, when Schlink worked on his second doctorate in theology (at the University of Giessen), he administered baptism to people and taught about baptism, both as a part of confirmation instruction and in his campus ministry. He also preached about the centrality of baptismal grace in several sermons. Once again, Luther's catechisms were central to his pastoral work, his proclamation of the gospel, and his administration of the sacraments.

During this early period of his pastoral ministry, he and other confessional Lutherans in Germany came into conflict with the so-called *Deutsche Christen* ("German Christians" ["DC"]), whose racist ideas and Nazi-aligned practices would call into question orthodox Reformation teachings, including the doctrine of baptism.[31] The DC were deeply antisemitic, anti-doctrinal, and strongly nationalistic. By the fall of 1933, with the help of the Nazi propaganda apparatus, they were able to take control of twenty-five of the twenty-eight territorial churches (*Landeskirchen*) in Germany. Their aim was to create a single national "empire church." Toward that end, they wanted to "purify" the Protestant churches of anything that even hinted at Judaism (e. g., some DC wanted to remove the Old Testament from the

30 Matthias Josef Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, 4 vols. (Freiburg i. Breslau: Herder, 1873–87).

31 For more on the *Deutsche Christen*, see Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*, 2d ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

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Protestant Bible). Their slogan was "One Leader. One People. One Empire. One Church."[32]

The doctrine of baptism was a central issue in the *Kirchenkampf* ("church struggle"), for the DC insisted on implementing the Nazi's Aryan Paragraph in the churches in order to remove from church leadership positions anyone of Jewish descent, even if the person was baptized.[33] According to a law adopted by the General Synod of the Church of the Old Prussian Union (which was the largest and most influential of the German territorial churches):

> Anyone not of Aryan ancestry, or married to a person of non-Aryan ancestry, may not be called to serve in the clergy or as an official of the general church administration. Clergy or officials of Aryan ancestry who enter into marriage with a person of non-Aryan ancestry [e. g., Jewish ancestry] are to be removed from office. The definition of non-Aryan ancestry is to be determined according to the stipulations of imperial laws… Clergy or officials of non-Aryan ancestry or married to a person of non-Aryan ancestry are to be retired.[34]

As a result, several pastors, professors, and church leaders of Jewish background lost their employment in the Protestant territorial churches. The apostle Paul's teaching about baptismal unity and equality (e. g., Gal. 3.26–28) was simply ignored or dismissed by the DC.

Because of serious questions about the implementation of the Aryan Paragraph in the churches, especially in view of the traditional Reformation teaching about baptism (by both Luther and Calvin), pastors in the Hessen-Kessel Church asked the Protestant theology faculties at the universities of Marburg and Erlangen to give their opinion as to whether the enactment of such church legislation was

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32 "Ein Führer – Ein Volk – Ein Reich – Eine Kirche" (Pastor Hermann Grüner, "Was Wir 'Deutschen Christen' wollen. 6 Thesen für 'Deutsche Christen'" ["What We 'German Christians' Want: 6 Theses for the 'German Christians'"], *Allgemeine Ev. Luth. Kirchenzeitung* 67 [1934], 325).

33 On April 7, 1933, the infamous Aryan Paragraph was introduced as part of the Hitler's *Gleichschaltung* efforts. (*Gleichschaltung* = "getting everyone in the same gear," getting everyone in line with Nazism and its total claims upon the individual). The Aryan Paragraph was technically called the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Service." This law allowed the Nazis to purge from civil service all political opponents of Nazism, as well as Jews.

34 "Kirchengesetz betreffend die Rechtsverhälnisse der Geistlichen und Kirchenbeamten vom 6. September 1933," Generalsynode der Evangelischen Kirche der altpreußischen Union ["Church Law concerning the Legal Relationships of Clergy and Church Officials, as of September 6, 1933," General Synod of the Protestant Church of the Old Prussian Union], in *Quellen zur Geschichte des deutschen Protestantismus 1871–1945*, ed. Karl Kupisch (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1960), 267. The law did not apply to relevant individuals if "special contributions to the formation of the church in a German spirit are in evidence" or if the person had served in the German military in the First World War.

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consistent with the word of God, the Reformation confessions, and the preamble of the recently adopted national church constitution.[35]

The Erlangen faculty offered an equivocal endorsement of the church legislation, since heretofore the church had always had the responsibility to insist on qualifications that must be met before one could be considered for the pastoral office, e. g., German citizenship in the German Empire, but also "biological characteristics: age, gender, and physical fitness," …and now "the requirement of Aryan ancestry has been added."[36] If there was to be a true German-national church, the pastor must be of the same ethnic-racial identity as the majority members of the German congregation. In the view of the Erlangen theologians, a baptized pastor of Jewish descent was unqualified to serve in a German congregation.

By contrast, the Marburg opinion flatly states that the introduction of the Aryan Paragraph into the Protestant churches is "irreconcilable with the nature of the Christian church as that is determined by Holy Scripture—the only authority—and by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and as that is attested by the confessions of the Reformation."[37] Not only must the freedom of the church be protected in order to carry out its spiritual tasks under the word of God, but in addition, the church "has never supported legal restrictions on baptized Jews."[38]

> If a state, out of political considerations, now finds that such restrictions present themselves when it assesses racial factors… such restrictions can claim no validity in the realm of the church as such, since the church is nothing other than the community of those who

35 See Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The German Churches Under Hitler* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 145–46.

36 "Theologisches Gutachten über die Zulassung von Christen jüdischer Herkunft zu den Ämtern der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche (Erlanger Gutachten)" ["Theological Opinion on the Admission of Christians of Jewish Descent to the Offices of the German Protestant Church (Erlangen Opinion)"] [September 25, 1933], in Kurt D. Schmidt, ed., *Die Bekenntnisse und grundsätzlichen Äußerungen zur Kirchenfrage des Jahres 1933*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934), 1.184. This *Gutachten* (= "expert theological opinion") was written by two systematic theologians at Erlangen at that time, Werner Elert (1885–1954) and Paul Althaus Jr. (1888–1966).

37 "Gutachten der Theologischen Fakultät der Universität Marburg über den Arierparagraph in der Kirche (Marburg Gutachten)" ["Opinion of the Theological Faculty of the University of Marburg Regarding the Aryan Paragraph in the Church (Marburg Opinion)"] [September 28, 1933], in Schmidt, ed., *Die Bekenntnisse und grundsätzlichen Äußerungen zur Kirchenfrage des Jahres 1933*, 1.179. This *Gutachten* was largely written by the dean of the Marburg theological faculty at the time, Hans von Soden (1881–1945). Unfortunately, Dean G. Stroud mistakenly attributes the Erlangen Gutachten to the Marburg faculty. He accuses the Marburg faculty of taking the Erlangen position, i. e., that Jewish Christians should be excluded from the pastoral office. In fact, the Marburg faculty argued against the Erlangen position. Cf. Dean G. Stroud, ed., *Preaching in the Third Reich* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 29–30.

38 "Marburg Gutachten," 1.180.

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> believe in Christ and have been baptized in his name. It would cease to be this in the fullest sense if it allowed any other bases of differentiation in its community.[39]

Because of baptism, Jewish Christians are as fully members of the church as are Christians of other ethnic origins.[40] In the opinion of the Marburg theological faculty, the church has frequently failed in its mission because it has given more weight to issues of race and ethnicity than to the foundational sacrament of baptism, which unites the baptized with Christ and with one another. Particularly apropos is the statement of the apostle Paul: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3.27–28 [RSV]).

The sermons and lecture notes that Schlink produced in the aftermath of this theological argument make clear that he sided unreservedly with the Marburg opinion. His alignment with Marburg's baptismal theology also becomes clear in light of his support for the Barmen Theological Declaration, which had been written mostly by Barth and which also condemned the heresy of the racist and pro-Nazi DC.[41] Through essays Schlink wrote in this period, he sought to strengthen those Lutheran congregations that had adopted this Declaration as their own confessional statement.[42] In this way, he provided a public rationale for how the doctrinal content

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39 "Marburg Gutachten," 1.180.

40 "Marburg Gutachten," 1.180–181.

41 The official text of the Barmen Declaration is contained in *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung: Einführung und Dokumentation*, 7th ed., ed. Martin Heimbucher and Rudolf Weth (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2009). For my translation of it, from which the following quotations come, go to http://matthewlbecker.blogspot.com/2012/10/pericope-of-week-theological.html (accessed 9/9/24). For analysis of the Christians who signed the Barmen Declaration, see Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, 2 vols., trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

42 See Edmund Schlink, "Die Verborgenheit Gottes des Schoepfers nach lutherischer Lehre: Ein Beitrag zum lutherischen Verständnis der ersten Barmer These" [The Hiddenness of God the Creator according to Lutheran Doctrine: A Contribution toward a Lutheran Understanding of the First Barmen Thesis], in *Theologische Aufsätze Karl Barth zum 50. Geburtstag*, ed. Ernst Wolf (München: Kaiser, 1936), 202–221. This essay, which was published as a separate pamphlet by Kaiser in the same year, was later used to form the second chapter in Schlink's study of the Lutheran Confessions. For the second essay that defended the Barmen Declaration, see Edmund Schlink, *Gesetz und Evangelium: Ein Beitrag zum lutherischen Verständnis der 2. Barmer These* [Law and Gospel: A Contribution toward a Lutheran Understanding of the Second Barmen Thesis], Theologische Existenz Heute 53, ed. Eduard Thuneysen (München: Kaiser, 1937). This essay was modified to form the central chapters in Schlink's study of the Lutheran Confessions, namely, the third and fourth chapters on law and gospel.

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of the Lutheran Confessions—to which he had unconditionally subscribed at his ordination on December 20, 1931—is fully consistent with the six articles of the Declaration. The third and six articles, in particular, relate directly to the Lutheran doctrine of baptism. Quoting Eph. 4.15–16 (Christ as the sole head of his body, the church), the third article confesses that Christ "acts presently as the Lord in word and sacrament through the Holy Spirit." The church of "forgiven sinners" is Christ's "property," a theme that Schlink would later stress in connection with God's salvific action through baptism. Through baptism the sinner is transferred into the ownership of Christ, and on this basis, Christians are "to live solely from his comfort and by his direction in anticipation of his appearance." Barmen thus declares: "We reject the false doctrine, as if the church could relinquish the form of its message and its order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions." The task of the church, in which its freedom is grounded, consists in this, namely, "to pass on the message of the freeing grace of God to every nation, in the place of Christ and thus in service to his own word and work through sermon and sacrament."

Shortly after earning his second doctorate (*Habilitation*) at Giessen, in systematic and practical theology, Schlink taught briefly at the University of Giessen (winter semester 1934/35), before being removed by the Nazis for perceived anti-Nazi views. A positive outcome of his time there was the life-long friendship that he began 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 would also be removed from Giessen's faculty for his anti-Nazi views. In fact, he would spend 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.[43] During these difficult years, he and Brunner, like several others, 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, where Brunner taught between 1947 and 1968. His theological analysis

43 For this account, see Peter Brunner, "Bericht von Prof. 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 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.

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of the Lutheran worship service would serve as the first volume of *Leiturgia*, while Schlink's study of baptism formed the conclusion of the final volume.[44]

Following Schlink's removal from the Giessen faculty, which took place in 1935, 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.[45] He began his work there on 1 April 1935. Because of its relative independence from the *Landeskirchen* and the state apparatus that related to the Protestant churches in Germany, Bethel became a haven for young theology professors who ran afoul of the authorities at the various state universities. All the newly called *Dozenten* at Bethel at that time were members of the Confessing Church.[46] At Bethel, Schlink worked alongside such notable scholars 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. Schlink offered courses and seminars on dogmatics, the Lutheran Confessions, theological anthropology, the foundation of ethics in law and gospel, philosophy and theology, Paul's letter to the Romans, the doctrine of predestination, and the sacraments. For the first time, in the winter semester of the 1938–39 academic year, he also taught a special seminar on Luther's doctrine of baptism.[47]

In March 1939, after acting on rumors that "anti-Nazi preaching and teaching" were taking place at Bethel, the Gestapo closed the seminary. In the fall of

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44 See Peter Brunner, "Zur Lehre vom Gottesdienst der im Namen Jesu versammelten Gemeinde," in *Leiturgia: Handbuch des evangelischen Gottesdienstes*, vol. 1 (Geschichte und Lehre des evangelischen Gottesdienstes), ed. Karl Ferdinand Müller and Walter Blankenburg (Kassel: Stauda, 1954), 84–361 (ET: *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, trans. Martin H. Bertram [St. Louis: Concordia, 1968]). Cf. footnote 3 in my preface above.

45 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, 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, 1999), 9–49.

46 The Confessing Church (*Die Bekennende Kirche*) was a faction within the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) that sought to prevent the Nazification of that church body between 1933 and 1945. Schlink was among the younger pastors who were members of the Confessing Church, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45) and Eberhard Bethge (1909–2000). See Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*; and Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, rev. ed., trans. Victoria Barnett (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

47 "Vorlesungs-Verzeichnis" for the Winter-Semester 1938–1939, Theologische Schule Bethel, in the Landeskirchliches Archiv, Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen, Bielefeld.

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that year, just weeks after Germany's invasion of Poland, the thirty-six-year-old Schlink became an official "visitor" to several Lutheran congregations in Hessen-Nassau and Westphalia that belonged to the Confessing Church. He carried out this ministry—illegally—through the end of the war.

The principal scholarly work that Schlink produced in this period was his book on the theology of the Lutheran Confessions.[48] Schlink's analysis of these writings, including his presentation of the doctrine of baptism, must be understood within the context of the *Kirchenkampf*. In his view, these confessions are not "Lutheran," sectarian writings but are instead a normative witness to the orthodox faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. "They therefore make their claim not only with respect to the time in which they arose, but for all time to come, even until Christ's return."[49] Schlink's analysis stresses the importance of actively confessing the evangelical-catholic faith amid spiritual crises and trials (*Anfechtungen*), when the church itself is undergoing persecution. The book's assertions were tested not only during the *Kirchenkampf*, when the orthodoxy of the Protestant Church in Germany was at stake, but also within the context of Schlink's own personal life, in the aftermath of his first wife's death (in 1936) and in view of the challenges of caring for their two young daughters.[50] One can only imagine that the Lutheran doctrine of baptism—not to mention Schlink's own baptism, as well as those of his first wife and young children—took on new importance in this period of conflict, grief, and ongoing struggle in the church.

In the midst of these *Anfechtungen*, Schlink discovered in the Lutheran Confessions, especially the Augsburg Confession, a theological rationale for seeking unity with Christians beyond the borders of his own church body. The seventh article of the Augsburg Confession maintains that the sufficient basis for unity among churches is agreement in the preaching of the gospel and in administering the sacraments according to the gospel. This consensus is the *sine qua non* for unity among those who bear the name of Christ.[51] The unity of the church, however,

48 See Edmund Schlink, *Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften* (München: Kaiser, 1940; 2d. ed. 1946; 3rd ed. 1948; 4th ed. 1954). The fourth edition was republished as the fourth volume in *SÖB*. An English translation of the third edition appeared as *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961, reprinted by Concordia, 2003). A translation of vol. 4 of *SÖB* will be published as vol. 4 in *ESW*.

49 Schlink, *Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften*, *SÖB*, 4.6.

50 In October 1938 Schlink married Irmgard Ostwald (1914–2006), a former student of his who had also previously studied with Barth in her native Basel. They had two sons, Wilhelm Schlink (d. 2018), who was an art historian, and Bernhard Schlink, who is a lawyer, a professor of law, and a novelist. Schlink's daughter, Dorothea (d. 2019), was the wife of the former bishop of the Protestant Church in Baden, Klaus Engelhardt, who was also a former chairman of the council of the Protestant Church in Germany.

51 Schlink, *SÖB*, 4.172 (footnote 17).

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