

BOOK REVIEWS

Ecumenical Dogmatics: Basic Features. By Edmund Schlink. Edited by Matthew Becker. Translated by Matthew Becker et al. Edmund Schlink Works, Volume 2/1 and 2/2. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2023. 2 vols. 1,277 pp.

Edmund Schlink (1903–84) published his *Ecumenical Dogmatics* in German in 1983, only a year before his death. Although much of Schlink's work was translated into English in his own lifetime, the *Dogmatics* was not. English readers now have the work, not only a remarkable contribution to theology on its own, but also Schlink's integration of nearly all of his work into a singular theological vision. For the anniversary of his birth in 2003, a group of German scholars and students of Schlink collected his works in a German edition, comprising five volumes. The publisher also commissioned Matthew Becker to edit and translate the whole series into an English edition, of which two volumes have already appeared. Theologians and historians of Lutheran theology and ecumenism will benefit from this translation.

Schlink composed the *Dogmatics* in consequence of his years as a theologian and ecumenist. Becker provides an introduction to Schlink's life and an overview of the *Dogmatics*. The team's translation is excellent and accessible. Becker follows Schlink's text closely, to the point of reproducing it in forms unusual for contemporary English style: Schlink's frequent emphasis on words through italics or *gesperrter* text gets translated as italics and his excursuses are set off in small print. Schlink's *Dogmatics* had no notes, retaining its few citations in the text itself, which Becker makes into footnotes. Those citations are not uniform. Lacking a bibliography or reference to the first full citation, tracing the full bibliographic data for some works cited requires an onerous search. Lastly, Becker provides infrequent pieces of background information, flagging some names or ideas but leaving others without comment. Anticipating what readers need beyond Schlink's writing is a justifiably difficult task.

The *Dogmatics* offers an important avenue for ecumenical theology because of Schlink's proposal for theological method. This contribution lies in his attention to the relationship between Christian confession, praise, or preaching, the root of those activities in divine action, and the resulting complex structures of doctrine, dogma, and confession that Christians have developed to consider the relationship between practice and God's work. Driven by the unity of the church in the Triune God's action, Schlink holds that the theological task starts with God's activity, attends to the criteria of the apostolic witness, and then engages the theological and dogmatic histories that have followed and developed into division and reunion. Schlink's chief contribution is his demand that theologians consider this constellation of matters as theological structures. Other ecumenical proposals for theology resemble Schlink's, such as that of the Groupe des Dombes, which calls for mutual reconciliation and conversion to the one church, the various official Roman Catholic programs, Anglican efforts, as well as the post-liberal attention to linguistic practices, even if few of them have taken Schlink's efforts into account. Among this list, Schlink stands out for his requirement that theological inquiry root itself in divine action first with reflection on language and then with practice as a consequence. Such attention promises, for Schlink, to pursue ecumenical reform and reconciliation.

A good example of this is Schlink's work on sacrifice and the Lord's Supper, which is an abstract of his more detailed arguments in service of the German Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. This work, which is a chapter in a volume edited by Schlink and Karl Lehmann as *Das Opfer Jesu Christi und seine Gegenwart in der Kirche* (1983), has not been translated into English. Similar to the work of J. M. R. Tillard and John Zizioulas, whose labors supported the international Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox dialogue, Schlink makes anamnesis, or remembrance, to be the central proclamatory act of the Lord's Supper. This anamnesis is both promissory, pointing to the future of the Kingdom of God given in the Supper, and memorial, recollecting Jesus' self-giving in the cross to his self-giving in bread and wine. Schlink tries to do justice to both Roman Catholic and

Lutheran theological structures in this proposal. Compared to such statements as Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, Schlink's work still demands attention because of its unrelenting sense of the priority of God's gracious promise in the Lord's Supper, from which any act of anamnesis proceeds.

Schlink often adumbrated his arguments throughout the *Dogmatics*, so often readers may find themselves wanting more warrant or thinking from him. In his summary of the tasks of ecumenical theology in his introductory chapters, Schlink writes that this book is just an outline of some elements of such a theology. Perhaps because of this brevity, Schlink's book spans most traditional topics of theology and attends to major disputed and ecumenical questions. For this book, English readers are in debt to Matthew Becker and his fellow translators.

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Loci Theologici: tópicos teológicos, de 1521. By Philip Melancthon. Translated by Eduardo Gross. São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 2018. 477 pp.

This book is the first bilingual critical edition (Latin and Portuguese) of the 1521 version of the *Loci Theologici* by Philip Melancthon (1497–1560), the great German humanist and reformer. The 1521 *Loci Theologici* was the first edition of an oft-revised work. It contains, as Melancthon said, a synthesis of the “main topics of Christian discipline” (18).

This volume brings Melancthon's work into Brazilian Portuguese for the first time. The translator, Dr. Eduardo Gross, is professor of Philosophy of Religion at UFJF (Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Brazil). His academic path included theological studies in Brazil and the United States, as well as post-doctoral research under the guidance of Dr. Günter Frank, KIT/Melancthonhaus, Germany, 2019. He is currently researching the humanistic dimension in Melancthon's thought. The translation was originally presented for the purpose of achieving the current highest title in Brazilian federal