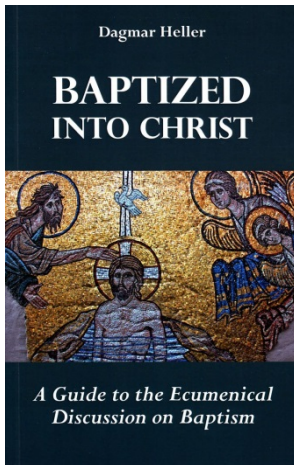


Dagmar Heller



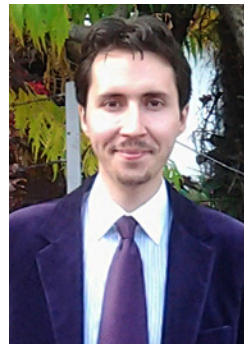
Review:

Baptized into Christ. A Guide to the Ecumenical Discussion on Baptism

World Council of Churches
Publications, Geneva, Switzerland,
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Order at the World Council of Churches (WCC). She was also responsible for bilateral theological dialogues of EKD in Germany and is co-author of numerous works for WCC Publications, including "Becoming a Christian", "Ecumenical Pilgrims", "Eucharistic Worship in Ecumenical Contexts" and "Interpreting Together".

Dagmar Heller's book "Baptized into Christ. A Guide to the Ecumenical Discussion on Baptism" is an authoritative guide to the historical, theological and practical issues of the Baptism and offers an overview of the ecumenical theological discussion on baptism: the different confessional view, Faith and Order work on baptism, bilateral conversations on baptism, the theological issues behind the divergences on baptism, the historical development of the divergences, ways towards mutual recognition of baptism as they have been proposed or realised on local and regional as well as multilateral and bilateral levels.

Dagmar Heller offers her assessment of the prospects for and path toward Christian unity on this most basic sacrament of Christian identity. This present book provides an overview of the confessional traditions of baptism, of the history which led to the contemporary ecumenical situation regarding the baptism.

Heller mentions at beginning the statement from the ecumenical document "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry": "through Baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity". According to her, this statement includes two major aspects: there is one, common baptism and this baptism is a uniting bond for all Christians. So, mutual recognition of baptism is one of the most important goals for the ecumenical dialogue.

The book has five chapters. One can read in the first chapter about the general ecumenical situation concerning baptism and

especially the attitude of different confessional traditions toward mutual recognition.

The second chapter presents the history of baptism and its theological conception (baptism in the New Testament, in the Early Church, in the Middle Ages, in the time of Reformation and after this, until today).

Chapter three introduces the reader into the ecumenical discussions on baptism in international, multilateral and bilateral dialogues.

A systematic view can be found in chapter four, where she offers some insights into the nature of the ecumenical theological discussions and the doctrinal difficulties preventing mutual recognition (the controversy on infant baptism, on spirit baptism, the controversy over the baptismal formula, the controversy on immersion, affusion - pouring - or sprinkling, the new controversy - inculturation of baptism, the new challenge - baptism as entry into the local congregation).

The final chapter presents the most recent work towards mutual recognition of baptism on multilateral level as well as in bilateral discussions and agreements on national levels. There are also presented some perspectives for further ecumenical work.

Dagmar Heller highlights in conclusion that churches have to become more conscious of the fact that "one baptism" is a baptism into the body of Christ, which is not just identical with a confessional or local church, but is a universal entity that goes beyond human understanding.

I would like to recommend this new publication and I think that "Baptized into Christ" is indeed a gift and a responsibility for all of us, to become one in the body of Christ.