

Foreword

The texts collected here come from different periods of my teaching and research at the Universities of Bamberg and Tübingen. In this and in their thematic classification they represent the result of my pastoral theological and practical theological work, especially what is important to me to this day. This English volume will not have an analogous German volume.

The theme of this book suggests that it is always about the connection between faith and commitment, spirituality and social practice. Spirituality will be recognized in the fruits; spirituality will be the source of solidarity. Again and again, the dynamic of this theme is emphasised and with it also the associated turn of the Second Vatican Council from word to deed, from faith to experience, unfolds.

In one of his last speeches at a conference with Greek scientists and trade union representatives in Athens in May 2001, Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist of culture, made it clear how dangerous knowledge, reduced to performance and application, is when it is linked to the processes of globalisation policy. The knowing person then becomes the accomplice to a development against which they would actually have to stand if he or she combined their knowledge with the commitment to more justice. Bourdieu therefore qualifies the dichotomy in the knowing minds between knowledge and commitment as disastrous and demands knowledge that cannot be put to service for anything, but which, with all its professionalism, never ignores the horizon of justice. However, this commitment side of knowledge can only emerge and live if it is anchored in and networks with the corresponding social movements and organisations. What this means for the relationship between social educational institutions and the pastoral mission of the Church must be spelled out accordingly, especially in the field of pastoral work.

Sometimes the original context comes to light in the essays, such as the discussion about the Women's World Day of Prayer in 1995 on the question of whether Palestinian Christian women are allowed to pray the Jewish lamentation prayers of the Bible. This sense of occasion does not prevent, but rather encourages the transfer of the discussion to other and current contexts, such as the forthcoming World Day of Prayer in 2024, which will again come from the experiences of Palestinian women.

The translations are mostly pre-translations, not in the sense that they are not complete translations, i.e., raw translations, because they are complete, but they were also always correctable and made precise against the background of

theological meanings and ideas. Some texts I translated first and then had corrected. This is especially true for the sermon attempts at the end of the book.

I thank all those who have taken the trouble to translate, understand and edit my texts with all my heart. I would particularly like to thank Mrs Margaret Lampe, who has examined the entire text for its English compatibility, so that the English language is not overly injured by the permanent temptation to Germanise it. I would like to thank her for her patient, prudent, interested and often difficult clarification of the English text. Many thanks also to Mrs Andrea Töcker for doing the typesetting.

Since I have worked on the English text to the end, supplemented it and changed it, all mistakes and clumsiness are at my expense. The respective translators have no liability in this respect. In the appendix at the end of the book the translators are named as far as I know them. Since the division of the chapters does not always coincide with the published articles, there are overlaps in the translation parts as well, i.e., they are insertions and changes that I have first translated and then inserted myself.

I would like to thank the editors of the publishing house, Mr Sebastian Weigert and Mr Florian Specker, for their kind support of the project and the editors of the series "Praktische Theologie heute" for inclusion in the series. I think back fondly on more than 25 years of our work and our meetings in this circle, especially on the fascinating colleagues with whom I was allowed to work.

The deeper motive for this publication is also emotionally anchored. The very idea that I will be able to give this book away on my next visits to England and Ireland to people I am very fond of fills me with joy; I am also looking forward to sending this book to my colleagues and friends in the countries where I was invited. I was invited to give guest lectures or have guest professorships at Pretoria at the Unisa (I am thinking in particular of Henny Pieterse and Jaco Dreyer), at Augustin College in Johannesburg as well as in Chicago at Loyola University and at Theological Union College (with Robert Schreiter). Before that I learned and participated in a training course for catechists at the Lumko Institute in Johannesburg.

It's been 50 years since I came to England for the first time. Many trips followed, almost always also to Buxton, sometimes with different company, in 1973 as chaplain with my youth group from the parish of St. Michael in Nuremberg, several times also with my sister Irene and with Brigitte Fastenmeier and Ulrike Bechmann. My Anglophilia began in 1969, while I was still a student, with a working stay at the Spastic Society Residential Centre in Buxton, in the High Peak District south of Manchester. After many subsequent stays in Buxton, this city became something like my English home.

I dedicate this book to all those whom I have learned to appreciate and love in these contexts:

To the deceased in grateful memory:

Biddy McCarthy and her father John, with whom I lived in 1971 in my diocesan internship in Buxton. Janice Baker, the other dear colleague in care. Gerry Collins, the priest in Buxton, later Ashbourne. For several years I was allowed to spend two to three weeks each in his parish so that he could go on vacation. Fr. Dennis Higgins, Buxton as well. We were connected by an intense friendship and deep spiritual understanding. I am also thinking here of my school friends Hans-Günther Nievelle and Erwin Meiler, who accompanied me to England several times. They also died far too early.

To the living in friendly affection:

In Buxton Pat McDonald and her family, to whom I am very much indebted until today. Sr. Bernardette Doherty from Presentation Convent and her hospitable family in Ireland, Sue and Mike Hardman and their family, thank you again for a long and cordial friendship. I have wonderful memories of the hikes to Solomon's Temple and through the Goyt Valley. Martin and Nicki Ott and their family near Lincoln, for whom I was allowed to conduct the marriage ritual in the village church of Holton le Moor.