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»FORMATION OF FAITH« – TERMINOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

What conceptualities determine and steer the perceptions, analyses and proposals of the protestant churches in Europe on the theme of »formation«? While the English term *education* serves as a »container concept« for very diverse ideas, other language areas offer greater possibilities of differentiation. Leading terms have their day and are subject to fluctuating modes. In Germany in the 1960s the concept of *formation* began to come under suspicion of being too closely identified with normative idealistic conceptions of culture and an elitist canon of knowledge. Both seemed scarcely able to cope any longer with the modern technological world. In its place the more neutral concept of *learning* moved to the centre of discussion and the discipline now called itself theory of *education*. Surprisingly, the German linguistic area¹ has seen since the 1990s a renaissance of the idea of *formation*, admittedly often in a narrowed sense of the term: under the pressure of comparative international investigations of the competences acquired in the school system (the PISA study and others) the question of the effectiveness of the educational system in Germany has been posed in a new way. *Formation* has again become a leading theme, but is now largely reduced to education and life-long processes of adjustment to a rapidly changing economic world and an everyday culture dominated by the media.

Academic religious education and the churches in Germany were quick to take up the new discussion of formation and at the same time to

¹ In what follows we can only take up the debate as conducted in German, as it is only here that the scene was set by the terminological distinction between education (*Erziehung*) and formation (*Bildung*) and a specific understanding of the idea of formation. However, the following reflections are borne by the hope that these conceptual differentiations can be helpful for other language areas as well.

introduce counterpoints to the themes of public and academic debate.² Here there was much discussion of »religious formation«. Now more recently the idea of »faith formation« has been brought on the table as a possible leading concept.³

I FORMATION AS A GOAL OF LEARNING?

Even if the concepts are commonly confused in everyday use and in debates about educational politics, we should keep the various main aspects associated with them distinct.

Learning is the broadest concept, characterizing a life-long process of enduring interaction between persons and the world in the course of which people's behavioural patterns are altered through the experiences they have had. Every change of behaviour conditioned by experience (including changes in perception) is thus learning.

Under *socialization* is understood the building of behavioural dispositions enabling an individual to belong to society or a group as a member. Through it the symbols and life-interpretations, the norms and values of a society, are learnt and appropriated.

Education is understood as activities which aim to advance the personality of other persons in some respect or another. Where education takes place, one »leads« others so that they will come to a meaningful life.

² The most important documents and evidence for the theory of formation and its adoption in the church are: K. E. NIPKOW, *Bildung als Lebensbegleitung und Erneuerung. Kirchliche Bildungsverantwortung in Gemeinde, Schule und Gesellschaft* (Gütersloh 21992); P. BIEHL / K. E. NIPKOW, *Bildung und Bildungspolitik in theologischer Perspektive* (Münster 2003); *Maße des Menschlichen. Evangelische Perspektiven zur Bildung in der Wissens- und Lerngesellschaft*, ed. Kirchenamt der EKD, 2003; *Kirche und Bildung. Herausforderungen, Grundsätze und Perspektiven evangelischer Bildungsverantwortung und kirchlichen Bildungshandelns. Eine Orientierungshilfe des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, ed. Kirchenamt der EKD, 2009.

³ Cf. H. J. LUIBL, Glaubensbildung als Zukunftsweg? Glaube & Bildung in nachmodernen Zeiten, in *forum erwachsenenbildung* 2009, H. 1, 12-16, 16.

»Education is that active procedure in which the older generation inducts the next into the techniques of culture, mediating facts, meanings, values and social knowledge so that the one hand the society regenerates, on the other in the process of growing and ripening with the help of adults the child is integrated in society.«⁴

Thus a certain asymmetry between educator and educated is already implicit in the idea of education. Education aims at socialization, but transcends it at the same time, for it also aims at overcoming the educational asymmetry.

Education is a social activity that is normatively determined from the side of the educator. It is oriented towards particular envisaged goals (educational goals, norms, values). As a rule, education is a unit of activity lasting for a considerable time. By contrast with many other socializing processes, it occurs deliberately (intentionally). Education is also an attempt which does not necessarily lead to success.

Education implies a particular view of humanity: it is necessary because humans are cultural beings, not merely steered by instinct. As »physiologically premature« (Adolf Portmann) or as unspecialized, biologically »incomplete beings« (Arnold Gehlen) they depend on the development of their way of life, and so on education.⁵

Yet is the concept of education wide enough to characterize all the learning in Christian life? Must Christians be educated all their lives? Does the picture of leading out of dependence really fit all Christian learning? There are good reasons not to speak of the education of adults but of adult *formation*. Thus the concept of formation must be further explored.

The concept of formation is also rooted in a particular view of humanity. Coming originally from the mystical theological thought of Meister Eckhart, who meant by it the »information«, i. e. the indwelling of God in human beings, it became – above all in the educational thinking of 19th century German Idealism – the leading concept of a normatively stamped view of personality development.

⁴ H.-J. FRAAS, *Bildung und Menschenbild in theologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen 2000), 31.

⁵ Cf. W. PANNENBERG, *Anthropologie in theologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen 1983), 36–37.

»The core of the concept of formation is characterized by the uniqueness of persons. Here they are seen from their activity of forming, i.e. in their engagement with their surrounding cultural environment. The goal of this individual spiritual activity lies in the worthwhile personality.«⁶

The classic concept of formation in the epoch of Wilhelm von Humboldt necessarily includes the following dimensions⁷: moral responsibility, thinking by means of instrumental rationality (the understanding: strategic) and reflexive rationality (the reason: truth-oriented and communicative), practical work activity and the aesthetic capacity for perception and expression.

The goal of this formation is to develop the personality in such a way that it can explore the world and independently live well within it.

»Formation is the free and responsible unfolding of the activity of the self through stimuli between self and world, between the individual and society. Thus it constitutes the self-orientation of the person in the tension-filled relationships of life.«⁸

The concept of formation presupposes a subject capable of shaping its own freedom. The process of formation runs along with an increase of freedom as the capacity for action.

»Since a certain measure of capacity for action must be presupposed as always present, formation as a standard of quality (by contrast with non-formation) means a capacity for action which is *intensified and enlightened about itself* in all the interactive contexts affecting a person.«⁹

Peter Biehl, a protestant religious educator who has worked extensively on the theme of formation, takes up ideas of the general educationalists

⁶ F. W. KRON, *Grundwissen Didaktik* (Munich ²1994), 119.

⁷ Cf. W. KLAFFKI, *Neue Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik. Zeitgemäße Allgemeinbildung und kritisch-konstruktive Didaktik* (Weinheim ⁵1996), 32-33.

⁸ J. KUNSTMANN, *Religion und Bildung. Zur ästhetischen Signatur religiöser Bildungsprozesse* (Gütersloh 2002), 148 (in connexion with Wilhelm von Humboldt).

⁹ R. PREUL, Kirche als Bildungsinstitution, in: *Der Bildungsauftrag des Protestantismus*, ed. F. Schweitzer (Gütersloh 2001), 101-123, 105.

Helmut Peukert and Heinz-Joachim Heydorn to emphasize that formation is always about the realization of a common shared freedom.

»The elementary meaning of formation lies in gaining identity and the capacity to act in a concrete historical situation in the face of the challenges of the future. In itself formation is a practical relation to the future; it is the most elementary of the human forms of praxis and the one most extensively reaching out to the future. It may be understood, following Heydorn, as a process in which the future is constantly uncovered as what enables human subjectivity to take shape.«¹⁰

It is important that Biehl (and most colleagues in the discipline follow him here) distinguishes between the human subjectivity unfolded in the formation process and the personality preceding and underlying this activity of the subject.

»In the process of formation what is involved according to our understanding is the *process by which the human person becomes a subject in the society* as a constant uncovering of the possibilities given him. This process always presupposes personal being as the ground of human freedom and self-determination. *A human must first become a subject in the process of his formation – a person he always already is.* Formation is thus *a phenomenon following from personal being.*«¹¹

Thus formation as a process, an envisaged goal and an attribute of subjects is to be set in relation to fundamental theological and anthropological determinations of human being. To this extent formation is by what it involves a normative concept with rich presuppositions and so by no account to be confused simply with acquiring knowledge or learning to conform. Therefore we may say in an abstract formula: formation aims for human freedom, which in Christian perspective is to be answered for before God, fellow-humans and oneself.

Church documents have repeatedly stressed that this involves more than linguistic competence and mathematical ability (as the PISA tests

¹⁰ P. BIEHL, Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen und das Problem der Bildung. Zur Neufassung des Bildungsbegriffs in religionspädagogischer Perspektive, in *Bildung und Bildungspolitik ...* (see fn. 2), 9-102, 21.

¹¹ Op. cit., 40.

might suggest): In the memorandum published in 2003 by the EKD (Protestant Church in Germany) »Maße des Menschlichen«, the attempt is made to understand formation holistically and in an integrated way. For this the study brings a wider understanding of formation to view: formation is called to be ethical, social, religious, intercultural, aesthetic, media-critical, ecological, historical, adequate to the future and appropriate to the phases of life.¹²

»The protestant church understands formation as the combination of learning, knowledge, ability, awareness of value, postures (attitudes) and freedom to act in the horizon of life-interpretations which establish meaning.«¹³

With this it is clear: on a protestant reading, formation equally involves general learning and personality development, as well as school, career and further education.

Three basic perspectives or patterns of formation may be described, to follow Karl Ernst Nipkow¹⁴, as: forming, unfolding and self-forming.

Formation as *forming* connects with the arts and crafts metaphor of »forming«, as when a potter moulds clay into shape. Admittedly the danger exists here of reducing formation to social conditioning. Formation as *unfolding* can be related to organic models of development. The danger here is an all too linear idea of progression and an idealization of processes of self-unfolding. Finally formation is to be understood as *self-forming*, as the self-steering of behaviour. The advantage of this third view is that it can integrate both the others. Naturally the relation to tradition also belongs to such formation. »The ›mediation‹ of (religious) ›views‹ naturally retains its meaning, as does religious ›accustoming‹, initiation into the life of religion.«¹⁵

With this, formation becomes the concept of a pedagogical goal with which socialization and education are also to be coordinated.

¹² *Maße des Menschlichen* (see fn. 2), 15.

¹³ Op. cit., 66.

¹⁴ Cf. K. E. NIPKOW: Bildung in evangelischer Perspektive - Eine analytisch-kategoriale Skizze, in *Zukunftsfähige Bildung und Protestantismus*, ed. H. Rupp / Ch. Th. Scheilke / H. Schmidt (Stuttgart 2002), 50-64, 56-58.

¹⁵ Op. cit., 60.

2 THE INDISPENSABILITY OF THE CONCEPT OF FORMATION FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Formation aims at the realization and shaping of one's own freedom and humanity, thus at the art and style of living. The whole person should be able to develop freely within the possibilities of his or her life. He should at the same time respect the freedom of others, develop a life-profile suited to community and the preservation of nature and deal responsibly with his own finitude and fallibility. In such an understanding of formation, Christian educational visions converge with impulses from the tradition of the European Enlightenment.

Precisely because of these normative implications the concept of formation is indispensable and must not be degraded in the wake of the PISA studies merely to being able to meet the economic challenges of the day.

On the basis of these considerations, formation will be understood in what follows as a heightened capacity to recognize, interpret and reflect and so as the realization of freedom understood in all its multiple dimensions. The aim of all efforts for education and formation is to lead to such an all-embracing human formation. Christian faith and religious formation in the narrower sense are not in competition with this broader formation, but support this kind of understanding of it without aiming to determine it theologically. Recently this has been clearly recognized by the representatives of general education as well. Thus Dietrich Benner affirms:

»On the one hand religion is an indispensable area of human feeling, thinking, willing and acting which cannot be replaced by the other fields of praxis and horizons of education. On the other precisely this area depends today on a transmission of tradition which cannot only take place in the inner rooms of churches and confessions, mosques and temples, but must also be secured through voluntary public education and instruction. Religious concern for the world and religious thematizations of the various world-relationships are thus balanced at the same time by an educational concern for religion.«¹⁶

¹⁶ D. BENNER, *Erziehung – Religion, Pädagogik – Theologie, Erziehungswissenschaft – Religionswissenschaft. Systematische Analysen zu pädagogischen, theo-*

While here religious formation is assigned its own rights and a province of its own from a general educational viewpoint, Helmut Peukert, a general educationalist from a theological background, goes even further to affirm:

»*The project of formation, however, remains incomplete without the confrontation with those basic experiences of humanity which were and are to be had in boundary situations and at the limits of one's own ability to experience and are testified by the history of religion in such diverse ways. The question is then whether a reflected relation to religion so understood must be seen as a constitutive element of formation.*«¹⁷

A positive answer to this question can argue anamnetically, with Peukert, that formation as a life-form of freedom depends upon an kind of freedom in solidarity which is anamnetic and reaches out for complete freedom such as can (and should) be realized in Christian faith and life.¹⁸ If freedom is accordingly understood in Christian terms as communicative and co-operative, as endowment and response as well as finite,¹⁹ then this also holds good for formation in Christian freedom:

At the beginning stand trust and unconditional recognition, not the expectation of achievement. For our own freedom and dignity are founded on the love of others, finally on God himself. Such formation gains its profile as creative *post-formation*: As the God of the Bible defines himself in faithfulness, love and justice as free for humanity, so we humans ought to use our freedom as images of God. Experience of God in the symbols

logischen und religionspädagogischen Reflexionsformen und Forschungsdesiderata, in *Erziehungswissenschaft, Religion und Religionspädagogik*, ed. E. Groß (Münster 2004), 9–50, 33.

¹⁷ H. PEUKERT, *Erziehungswissenschaft – Religionswissenschaft – Theologie – Religionspädagogik. Eine spannungsgeladene Konstellation unter den Herausforderungen einer geschichtlich neuartigen Situation*, in *Erziehungswissenschaft ...* (see fn. 16), 51–91, 81.

¹⁸ On Peukerts differentiated theological and educational theory of freedom cf. P. BUBMANN, *Fundamentelethik als Theorie der Freiheit. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit römisch-katholischen Entwürfen* (Gütersloh 2010), 287–295.

¹⁹ On the concept of freedom from a theological standpoint see BUBMANN (see fn. 18), 337–365.

of the holy and care for other people, even for the alien, thus belong together. This cannot happen without *information*: Where the Holy Spirit »informs himself« into our lives, primal trust is built, dreams and visions grow of a good life, of peace, justice and the preservation of nature. These reflect back on our attitudes to life and the values we hold.

Freedom is also a skill that needs to be learnt. So formation involves education – everyday practical, professional, scientific, political, ethical, aesthetic-cultural, and, embracing all of these, religious. The Christian art of living profits here as religious formation from tried and tested forms of leading Christian life which can be learned in their outward shape: First to be named here is the *art of meeting and celebrating God*, in hearing and reading the Bible and other literature, through meditative contemplation of symbols, works of art and spaces, in prayer, music, movement, mystical absorption; then *the art of passing on the Gospel*, through testimony and narration, preaching and publishing, common confession and teaching in an inviting style; further, the *art of forming ethical judgment and counsel, of helping and accompanying people in their lives* and finally the *art of developing and cultivating community*.

In all this the capacities of perception, speech, interpretation and action, i.e. the cognitive-theoretical, pragmatic-ethical and aesthetic aspects, are bound together.

»Mental (exploring meaning), ethical-political and aesthetic formation are equally originally inherent in religious formation. They correspond to the structures of our overall biblical-Christian tradition. [...]«²⁰

3 FAITH AND LEARNING

Faith is a disposition (traditionally understood as one of the theological »virtues«) which arises from particular experiences. This disposition combines emotions (e. g. trust and fear) and convictions (e. g. confessions

²⁰ K.E. NIPKOW, Wünsche an eine zukunftsfähige Religionspädagogik aus wissenschaftlicher Sicht, in *Religionspädagogik im 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. F. Schweitzer / Th. Schlag (Gütersloh 2004), 53–70, 65 (italics in the original).

and ethical principles). Much of this lies below the cognitive level which can be expressed in speech.

Faith comes about »in, with and under« numerous learning processes. Theologically it is to be understood as the work of the Holy Spirit and so as involving both divine and human action together.

In the view of Pauline Protestantism faith itself is understood as a gift of God or as the work of the Holy Spirit. In its core it is a primal trust in God and an acceptance of God's word of justification. »Faith« in this sense cannot be learned or manufactured. It is a gift, namely the gift of primal trust in life and in the Giver of life. However the forms of expression and the contexts in life in which it arises can be altered, developed, shaped and learnt. The Holy Spirit works in this process through human acting, feeling, speaking and thinking (faith as a charisma that can be developed and forwarded). Finally, Christian faith shows itself in a great variety of religious expressions. Dealing with the symbols, signs, rituals and language of religion is itself an art which can be learned and must be mediated afresh to each generation.

»This does not withdraw faith from God's disposal and turn it over to human learning; rather the *learning of faith is itself to be grasped as a pneumatological event* which as a human datum is determined by God's action in the Spirit. [...] The opposition between God's action and human action cannot in the end be maintained because the sovereign action of God in the Holy Spirit is worked out precisely through human participation and therefore is carried through as human action before God.«²¹

Faith is to be understood as an existential attitude reaching eschatologically towards freedom, as a »beginning existence« which ever and again attunes itself to God and as a »peregrine existence«²², an existence journeying on pilgrimage. This necessarily links it closely to learning.

Faith as a fundamental experiencing of reality qualifies the whole of life anew and so induces learning processes. Faith as the experience of

²¹ I. SCHOBERTH, *Glauben-lernen. Grundlegung einer katechetischen Theologie* (Stuttgart 1998), 36.

²² Op. cit., 51–52.

justification leads to a new perception of life, to new interpretations of reality and the performance of new actions, and so in the end to a change in the images of God as well.

»The growth in experience and knowledge, the expansion of understanding of self and world, are a result of processes of formation. To that extent faith and religious life depend elementarily on formation. The formation of faith includes ›continuing rewriting‹ of the symbols and images. The images of God grow along with with the history of a life; when they break, they point beyond themselves to the true God whose image is Jesus of Nazareth. It is part of the formation of faith that its ›image history‹ is held open for new experiences and corresponding language images [...].«²³

4 FAITH FORMATION AS A LEADING CONCEPT

The concept of faith formation has (so far) only rarely been brought into the Protestant discussion of religious education. Michael Meyer-Blanck and Karl Ernst Nipkow use it occasionally,²⁴ Hans Jürgen Luibl has employed it programmatically as a »keyword«²⁵. To some, it may sound too much like a backward step to a kind of catechizing mainly intended to mediate dogmatically correct knowledge of the faith. Against that Luibl rightly insists that what »faith formation« is about is not »secondary pedagogical transfer of supposedly pre-existing and established knowledge of faith«, but »a methodical explication of faith«²⁶:

»Faith formation is that formation which, assured of its ground and its own developments, adopts a conscious, reflective attitude to religion and its own religiosity.«²⁷

²³ BIEHL, *Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen* (see fn. 10), 50.

²⁴ Vgl. M. MEYER-BLANCK, »Gotteserfahrungen im Lebenslauf – der gefährdete Glanz« <http://www.evangelische-jugend.de/Glaubensbildung.353.0.html>, here 6–8; NIPKOW, *Bildung als Lebensbegleitung* (see fn. 2), 103f.

²⁵ Cf. LUIBL, *Glaubensbildung* (see fn. 3), 16.

²⁶ Op. cit., 14.

²⁷ Ibid.

In the Roman Catholic Church the name is used for academic departments of religious education, as for example the department of »Faith Formation« in the centre of the German Bishops Conference for youth pastoral care or in institutions of the BDKJ²⁸. However, there is also a department of »Faith Formation« in the protestant info portal, »Kindheit - Jugend - Bildung«²⁹.

The concept seems appealing, on the hand to keep in touch with the boom in educational debates, on the other to name the specific distinctiveness and basis of Christian formation. In this it picks up the motifs that led to the terminologically unfortunate demand for missionary formation³⁰. What it does is to thematize formation in the context of the effective power of faith and draw the mutual relationship of formation and faith into the centre of the protestant churches' engagement in educational theory and practice.

Here three aspects of such a faith formation may be distinguished and put on a trinitarian theological foundation:

- Formation *before* faith (pre-formation)
- Formation *through* faith (in-formation and post-formation)
- Formation *out of* faith (out-formation, formation outwards)

4.1 FORMATION BEFORE FAITH AS PROVISIONAL AND CONSEQUENT LEARNING IN THE FRAMEWORK OF CREATION (PRE-FORMATION)

Faith always has a pre-history, an entrance hall: This is the place of creatureliness, into which God's justifying promise comes. Here there are more or less supportive contexts and locations to encourage faith. And here there is much to learn: capacity for symbolic awareness and expression, for listening and for ritual, for empathy and much more, all

²⁸ Cf. <http://www.afj.de/index.php/referat-glaubensbildung> (downloaded 21. 9. 2011); for example BDKJ in the archdiocese of Bamberg: <http://www.jugend-im-erzbistum.de/referate/glaubensbildung/index.html> (downloaded 21. 9. 2011).

²⁹ <http://www.evangelische-jugend.de/Glaubensbildung.353.0.html> (downloaded 21. 9. 2011).

³⁰ Cf. for clarification of this debate: A. RÖSENER, Religiöse Erwachsenenbildung im Dschungel von Mission und Dialog, in *forum erwachsenenbildung* 2009, H. 1, 7-12.

that could be described as »religious competence«. The encounter with the Bible, its comprehending interpretation and familiarity with liturgical and religious culture belong here.

»The objectifications or manifestations of faith meet us – but now in a specific sense – as religion, as cultural phenomena, as educational riches. As such they can be empirically approached, taught and learned.«³¹

In the meeting with the cultural forms of expression of religious experience, a »consequent« formation occurs which at the same time can point forward to new faith. After faith is before faith, and so *pre-formation* never ends. By its nature religious learning is life-long learning, because the room for the faith that is ever and again given anew always has to be prepared afresh. Such pre-formation always remains provisional and consequent – and cannot compel faith to come or guarantee it.

4.2 FORMATION THROUGH FAITH AS THE DEVELOPMENTAL LOGIC OF JUSTIFIED HUMAN BEING (IN-FORMATION AND POST-FORMATION)

»The encounter evoking faith is given by God as a call, as a calling out, as the opening of a new situation. Such faith is setting out, adventure, the opening for something new; it sets new learning in process.«³²

Because God in-forms himself into humans, grasps them and sets them in motion, they dare to get up and go forth and follow new (formation) ways. Faith is the trusting entrance into the new situation and its shaping. In the openness *and* the boundedness of freedom given, the faithful follow through and reflect God's own movement towards humans. Formation becomes post-formation of God's own incarnation and thus discipleship of Jesus Christ. While the in-formation of God's saving reality has its primary locus in the symbolic communication forms of the proclamation of the Gospel and the reception of the sacraments, its post-formation beyond the field of liturgical symbolic language is directed above all to diaconal formation: Diaconal learning is expression and consequence of the experience of justifying faith. Those who are grasped by

³¹ FRAAS, *Bildung und Menschenbild* (see fn. 4), 30.

³² Op. cit., 25.

God's word of grace learn to devote themselves to the neighbour, especially the needy.

4.3 FORMATION OUT OF FAITH AS AN EXPRESSION OF LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (OUT-FORMATION IN THE CHRISTIAN ART OF LIVING)

There is development in the life of faith - growth, but also setbacks. By the working of the Holy Spirit sanctifying faith arises: charismata can unfold and spread, virtues are nourished, helpful rules for living discovered and visions or promising signs of the kingdom of God cultivated. Such consistently methodical formation, filling out a culture of the art of Christian living, always refers back to the contingent original experience of the gracious word of justification and can on no account replace it.

»So much is admittedly already apparent, both theologically and in terms of developmental psychology: The appearance of growth applies, theologically speaking, in human, anthropological perspectives (*coram hominibus*), not in regard to the fundamental situation before God (*coram deo*). It holds good, in terms of developmental psychology, for the undeniable facts of human development which pertain to the *structures of faith*, e.g. the forms of the understanding of faith and of its expressions in life. It does not hold good for faith's recognition in its essential concern: that God may daily forgive and daily accept and create anew from the ground up.«³³

Every aspect of the charisma of Christian freedom is capable of being developed: the aesthetic ability to perceive and experience, the capacity for expression and the gift of speech, the competence to act discriminately and judge ethically. Such formation of the Christian art of living takes place as *formal* education in class contexts (for example, confirmation classes) just as in many *informal* learning situations through everyday encounters or information and entertainment via the media.

Every area of church work is thus at the same time a development arena for faith formation: worship and proclamation, pastoral care, congregation-building and development, *diakonia* and, of course, the church's educational work in the narrower sense.

³³ K. E. НИРКОВ, *Grundfragen der Religionspädagogik*, vol. 3: *Gemeinsam leben und glauben lernen* (Gütersloh 1992), 106.

5 EUROPE AS A CONTEXT FOR PROTESTANT FAITH FORMATION

How far does Europe play a part in the formation of faith? Hans Jürgen Luitl programmatically suggests »Faith formation as the way to build and develop European Protestantism«³⁴.

Under the aspect of *pre-formation* it would be a matter of preserving and maintaining the accessibility of the Christian culture historically developed in the European cultural context. Working with the Bible has to stand in the centre here. The heritage of church music with its enormous significance for faith formation is in a special way entrusted to European Protestantism. The development of the human rights ethos, including at the same time the freedom of faith, must be strengthened. Engagement for the universal human right of education is itself an expression of protestant faith formation.

Faith formation as *in-formation* and *post-formation* requires on the European level appropriate places learn about the common liturgical assurance of the message of justification and European efforts for diaconal learning. European Kirchentags and diaconal congresses could become focuses for such in-formation and postformation: in combining the celebration of the Gospel with contemporary social-ethical words and actions for the times.

Formation *out of faith* as filling out the Christian art of living in the contemporary European context needs to draw today on the meeting of various outworks of the protestant cultivation of faith. National and regional contexts and specialities offer opportunities for mutual enrichment and common learning – also precisely through enabling awareness of differences. The diversity of protestant forms of faith means that Europe should be seen as offering place and opportunity for a pluralist protestant faith formation. Because such faith formation is an expression of communicative freedom, it depends on encounters to let the diverse charismas fertilize each other. The European protestant churches have the chance and the challenge to give these meetings space.

³⁴ LUITL, Glaubensbildung (see fn. 3), 12.