

## ■ INTRODUCTION

### **50 Years: Christ Liberates – Therefore Church for Others! The Transformation of the Theological Interpretation of Society and the State-Church Relationship in the GDR at the Beginning of the 1970s Using the Example of the Federal Synod of the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR in 1972**

The lecture *Christus befreit – darum Kirche für andere*, which Heino Falcke gave in 1972 to the Synod of the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR, contributed significantly to Falcke's fame, although it was not allowed to be published. Falcke, a systematic theologian with a doctorate and habilitation, who had had enough experience with the repressions of the SED dictatorship, sought in his lecture a liberation from the politically imposed confinement of the church, and he sought it under theological aspects, which the state, however, could only understand in a political and ideological dimension. In particular, the concepts of »improved socialism« and »mature cooperation« triggered massive reactions on the state side. Despite the ban on its publication, the lecture experienced a diverse reception. The aim of this volume is to reconstruct the most important strands of its reception history.

Heino Falcke, born in 1929, was the director of the preacher's seminary of the Evangelical Church of the Union in Gnadau near Magdeburg from 1963. In 1963, he had played a leading role in writing the *Ten Articles on the Freedom and Service of the Church*, which clearly rejected the political and ideological impositions of the SED dictatorship. Even if the motif of the *church for others* does not appear here, typical motifs already sound here: »We act in disobedience if we do not examine where we can serve the preservation of life according to God's will in the state« (Art. VII: The Authority). Or: »When the church stands up for its right in the world, it thereby defends the freedom of proclamation and ministry« (Art. VIII: The Life and Ministry of the Church). This became concrete not least in the advocacy of conscientious objectors.

In 1973 Heino Falcke became provost of the Erfurt parish. He held this office until his retirement in 1994. During this time, Falcke became one of the most important representatives of East German Protestantism, and, finally, in international ecumenism as well. Even during his retirement, he tried to make his experiences heard in a critical perspective on the reunited protestant church in Germany.<sup>1</sup>

1 About the biography as a whole see Veronika Albrecht-Birkner, Heino Falcke – Theologe der Freiheit. Laudatio anlässlich der Ehrenpromotion in Siegen am 28.11.2012, in: dies. / Heinz-Günther Stobbe (Hg.), Heino Falcke. Einmischungen. Aufsätze, Reden und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren, Leipzig 2014, 11–28.