Ordained and professional – contradictory or complementary attributes of the pastor? Professionality in the ordained ministry

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Professionalism is usually associated with a high standard of professional knowledge and efficiency. It also denotes frictionless, at times even coolly performed work with a certain distanced attitude. Professionalism in a sociological sense means something completely different and - as you will see – something which does not construct professionalism and ordained ministry as oppositions but rather as mutually interpretative.

Within the Protestant Church of Germany (EKD), much thought has lately been given to fundamental reforms. The concept of professionalism plays a central role in these reforms – used synonymously with efficiency. The "board" of the EKD, the EKD council (*Rat der EKD*), published a paper titled "Church of Freedom" (*Kirche der Freiheit*) in 2006. In this paper the problems affecting the church at the break of the 21st century are addressed and strategies and solutions for developed. In the following, I will develop my own understanding of the term professionalism by discussing the various descriptions of problems and the solution strategies proposed for them in the EKD paper.

I will start with some thoughts on the question what professionalism actually means in the ordained ministry . I will then follow up on tendencies of de-professionalisation in the ministry and use these as a background for trying to understand how the church as an organisation tries to domesticate pastors and thus subliminally generates a new image of the pastor. From the perspective of the organisation the pastor then is increasingly turned into a branch manager of a large company rather than the ordained herald of the word of god in an autonomous parish. This argument leads us to the problem of a dogmatically sound and equally realistic idea of the church (4) and an equally grounded concept of organisation. Concerning recent attempts of the church management to enhance the quality of pastoral work, some critical questions about the management qualities of the church will have to be asked (5). I would like to conclude by forwarding some ideas on the Lutheran doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (6).

1. What is professionalism in the context of the ordained ministry?

Sociologically the term professionalism denotes a specific typology and structure of an occupational group collectively referred to as the professions. The classical professions include pastors, physicians and lawyers. One could also add the teaching profession. Professions require systematic knowledge of a culturally relevant subject matter. They provide – in direct interaction with people – inclusion in the functional systems of the professions, as such the legal, the medical, the religious, and the educational system. And as professions, they control the standards of professional training independently and develop a professional ethos.[1]

A significant characteristic of professions is that they make no strict distinction between person and occupation, between the private and occupational sphere. The reason for this unusual linkage is the fact that professions depend on credibility and authenticity to function. A physician has to appear credible and authentic; otherwise nobody would trust him regardless of his medical expertise. The criteria for this credibility – and with them the "*Verhaltenszumutungen*" (restrictions in freedom of conduct) – are different for a physician and a pastor, but they are similar

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[1] See Isolde Karle, Der Pfarrberuf als Profession. Eine Berufstheorie im Kontext der modernen Gesellschaft, 3. Auflage Stuttgart 2008. Special thanks to Michael Waltemathe and Volker Bach for the translation of this manuscript into English.

insofar as they all make certain requirements of the individual's way of life, demand that all appearances and social interactions not contradict credibility and integrity.

Credibility, integrity and authenticity play a central role for professions because the professions deal with existential problems. These problems directly concern human identity. They are problems which carry extraordinary risk and are always very personal for the individual: law, health, solace/salvation, the formation of identity. Neither health, law, faith, nor identity can be bought or manufactured. Financial considerations within the professions are therefore relegated to a lower level. If I should think that a physician recommends a certain treatment for his own financial gain, I would lose trust in him or her immediately. On the other hand no physician can guarantee a cure in case of a serious disease. Professionals can be very effective at making success more probable, but their ability to control the final outcome is limited by the extremely complex issues they have to deal with. That is what can be called the "technological deficit" (*Technologiedefizit*) of the professions.

It is true that all professions represent a culturally relevant subject matter. However, this they can only convey to their respective clients if they have their trust. There is – as a consequence – a strong connection between the *interactive side* of professions and the *content* they represent. A sermon, for example, will only resonate with the listeners if the people who hear it get the impression that it means something to the preacher him- or herself and that the preacher is involved with the message he or she tries to convey with her or his whole life. This does not mean that he or she has to have answers to all questions or that he or she portrays him- or herself as a paragon of all virtues. Quite the contrary, a well-communicated sense of insecurity and uncertainty shows an authentic person who is still wrestling with

matters of Christian faith. It shows that the pastor feels challenged by the tenets of the Christian faith and called to provide new interpretations and refreshing thoughts on the matter. Luther was deeply convinced that an authentic, credible preaching of the word of God can only stem from doubt and struggle.

Thus, the ministry not only supports the person, but the person equally supports the ministry. This is true today more than ever, as the parishioners of individualised modernity expect much more from their individual biography and in terms of forms of communication and actions addressing their individual needs. For the pastor this is most apparent in the field of occasional services. Preparational talks before a funeral or a wedding nowadays are 30 minutes longer on average than they were 30 years ago.

2. Tendencies towards deprofessionalisation

We can observe professions starting to feel the pressures of individualisation and pluralisation of lifestyles, biographies and careers in modern society. People have become sceptical of the asymmetrical relation between the holder of the profession who monopolises expert knowledge and the layperson who is dependent on the professional's knowledge. Not only pastors, but also physicians whose academic medical knowledge has become suspicious, even teachers who have to deal with independent students and parents who mistrust their competence can attest to this development. In this regard the pastoral profession faces challenges which are typical for all professions. People want to be respected as autonomous individuals and thus come into conflict with the relatively strong asymmetry which is part of the classical professions.

Christian Grethlein mentions another probable cause for deprofessionalisation of the ordained ministry: the loss of acceptance of the Christian faith and its reflexive figure – theology. Theology is

being questioned and doubted in its relevance for professional utility and with respect to its function for church-management from within that very church.[2] Volkhard Krech observes in this context that vague relationships towards the client – which on the one hand make up a significant part of the profession, on the other hand must not become dominant – are on the rise throughout the pastoral profession. In accordance with Grethlein, Krech locates the cause for this in a lack of applicational knowledge and thus in educational deficits.[3] "The pastor less and less applies religious expertknowledge to the specific situation of a person in a methodic and situationally appropriate way, but instead tries to accompany the client: He intimates that he understands them. He shares their helplessness and suffers vicariously with them."[4] This analysis is reinforced by an empirical study on the occupational satisfaction of pastors, which shows that they do not deem scholarly theological competence as primarily relevant for their occupation.[5] I will refer to the major challenges concerning the content of the pastoral profession at the end of this paper.

But now I intend to focus on another relevant factor which enforces deprofessionalisation by trying to define the work of a pastor as a job like all others and not as a profession. Person and occupation are not identical in a profession but relate to one another in a multitude of ways. Pastors experience this overlapping of person and office more and more as an imposition which they are no longer willing to tolerate. They value the creative leeway in shaping their parish and the high degree of autonomy their profession affords them. These two factors are their basic source of job satisfaction. On the other hand, they express the wish for a stricter distinction between private and professional life. This is especially important for those with just a part time contract, as they wish to be entitled to use their "off-time" for a second job or other interests, or to bring up their children.

As understandable as these wishes are in the highly individualised situation in modern society, one must realistically point to a consequence of this development: Professional autonomy will decline the more the pastoral profession is uncoupled from the person practicing it. Trust in the person of the pastor will be reduced, while the need for standards and regulation will rise – as it does in many other jobs as well. The relatively tight connection between person and office in the pastoral profession is the source of the autonomy the pastor enjoys, which has its objective ground in the autonomy and authority of the word of God as the basis for the ordination of the pastor. The connection of person and office guarantees that a pastor does not view his or her profession as a job like any other, but works with an inner conviction and a high sense of responsibility; as a professional and spiritual caregiver, the pastor is dedicated to the people who ask for accompaniment or help. The professional ethos warrants trust in the pastor, trust that he or she will not abuse his or her privileges and freedom but use them for the good of the individual, the parish and the church.

It is thus unrealistic for some pastors expect to reconcile completely being professional without this including an even halfway authentic self-expression of their person, their way of life and their

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[2] See Christian Grethlein, Pfarrer(in) sein als christlicher Beruf. Hinweise zu den veränderten Rahmenbedingungen einer traditionellen Tätigkeit, in: ZThK 98 (2001), 390f.
[3] See Volkhard Krech, Berufung – Beruf – Profession. Empirische Beobachtungen und systematische Überlegungen zur Entwicklung des Pfarrerhandelns, in: M. Lehmann (Hg.), Parochie. Chancen und Risiken der Ortsgemeinde, Leipzig 2003, 124.
[4] Ibid.
[5] See Peter Höhmann, Professionsbrüche im Pfarrberuf, in: D. Becker/R. Dautermann (Hg.), Berufszufriedenheit im heutigen Pfarrberuf. Ergebnisse und Analysen der ersten Pfarrerzufriedenheitsuntersuchung in Korrelation zu anderen berufssoziologischen Daten, Frankfurt 2005, 59.

willingness to associate beyond their "professional purity"[6]. Trust, autonomy of action and occupational ethos are inextricably linked, extending even to the restrictions of conduct ("*Verhaltenszumutungen*") – which come with the pastoral ethos – though changes within a changing social environment are possible and in progress. Thus, certain perceivable changes in what can be considered credible and what not with regard to lifestyle are taking place. A divorce is no longer a problem of credibility in principle, while a pastor who regularly beats his children will have a monumental problem. The situation of homosexual couples in the vicarage is somewhat more complicated, but even this should only be a matter of time until it becomes widely accepted that the quality of a partnership and not the hetero- or homosexual basis must be the criterion for Christian credibility.[7] At this point the Christian church certainly has need for reform – and should, in the spirit of Christ, urgently distance itself from discriminatory cultural habits.

More than 70% of parish-members – according to the latest survey of church members by the EKD – expect their pastor to be an example, a role model.[8] The study carried out on occupational satisfaction of pastors confirms these high numbers on the role-model-function. Pastors, on the other hand, do not want to be a role model and reject this conception of their role. Expectations of the function of the pastor obviously clash. "The empirical results seem to show that the communicative accentuation of the pastoral role is tied to the way of life of a person when looked at from the outside, while pastors themselves seek to shape their work more as an occupation. These two can not be seen as an alternative, but rather point to an uncircumventable tension."[9]

Pastoral interaction – like all types of professional interaction – structurally relies on specific *and diffuse* socio-relational elements. Every profession does not only have a clearly defined occupational role but also diffuse socio-relational elements. The mission to spread the gospel is connected with vague interactions, which result from the fact that a conversation on existential questions relies on an atmosphere of trust. Especially in pastoral care it is of elementary importance that a person feels perceived as an autonomous individual in a specific situation; and that the pastor who has this perception appears to be authentic him- or herself. The demands and impositions that come with these expectations are not only problematic, but can be seen as a chance for extraordinary occupational satisfaction and a high autonomy of action in the occupational field. This aspect should not be underestimated. Karl-Wilhelm Dahm stated in this regard that regarding "the ecclesiastical expectations", the pastor "should not only see and use the negative parts but also the positive possibilities more clearly."[10]

I actually think that the relatively high expectations concerning exemplary lifestyles are not so much a moral or bourgeois model. These expectations rather express the desire for a lifestyle visibly shaped by faith and, as such, an exemplary

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[6] Andrew Abbott, Status and Strain in the Professions, in: AJS 86 (1981), 823.

[7] See Isolde Karle, „Da ist nicht mehr Mann noch Frau". Theologie jenseits der Geschlechterdifferenz, Gütersloh 2006.

[8] See Claudia Schulz, Lebensstile in der Kirche: Erwartung, Beheimatung, Beteiligung, in: J. Hermelink/I. Lukatis/M. Wohlrab-Sahr (Hg.), Kirche in der Vielfalt der Lebensbezüge Bd.2. Analysen zu Gruppendiskussionen und Erzählinterviews, Gütersloh 2006, 53.

[9] Hans-Richter Reuter, Gutachten zum Pfarrerbild für eine Revision der Kirchenordnung der evangelischen Kirche in Hessen und Nassau, URL: <http://egora.unimuenster.de/ethik/pubdata/ekhngut achten.pdf> 2008-11-20, 21

[10] Karl-Wilhelm Dahm, Emotionen und Ambivalenzen im parochialen Pfarrberuf, in: Becker, Dieter / Dautermann, Richard (Hg.), Berufszufriedenheit im heutigen Pfarrberuf. Ergebnisse und Analysen der ersten Pfarrerzufriedenheitsuntersuchung in Korrelation zu anderen berufssoziologischen Daten (Empirie und kirchliche Praxis 1), Frankfurt 2005, 257.

Christian way of life. Pastors are not only expected to exhibit a specific pattern of occupational action but a credible lifestyle, a more or less integral and integrated way of life which exemplifies some of the things the pastor tries to convey from the pulpit.

3. Domestication by an organisation – The pastor as a branch manager

A profession is typically associated with a high degree of autonomy of action. For the pastoral profession, this autonomy is threatened by an increasing dependence on the church as a modern organisation. Jan Hermelink points out that the concept *"Kirche der Freiheit"*, published by the EKD council, tries to organisationally subordinate the pastors, to domesticate them and thereby restrict their direct responsibility in the parish.[11] As the church understands itself as a modern organisation, it seeks to subordinate every church-activity under general goals. The church orients itself by studying motives for church-membership and as such aims towards a certain public perception and not towards its own self conception, tradition or program.

Especially the role of the pastor is expected to conform to these general goals. One of the accusations made toward the pastors in "Kirche der Freiheit" is that their pastoral working is not sufficiently orientated towards its genuine task which has to do with "recognisability, reliability, approachability and consciousness of style"[12]. These criteria are typical for the perspective of a modern organisation: occupational action is supposed to be – as it is in a business venture – discernible

across a range of persons and parishes and therefore reliable insofar as the adresses of pastoral acting recognise their experiences not only as having to do with an individual – original and charismatic as he or she may be – but with the brand "Protestant" (*"Marke evangelisch"*), the church as a whole.[13]

This modern organisational interest of the church as a whole is even more obvious when one looks at the validation criteria: They are not about the content of Christian preaching but about the quality of style, "about craftsmanship and infrastructural accuracy, recognisability of a certain profile"[14]. The Christian message is no longer controlled by the parish – as Luther wanted it – but by higher authorities within the organisation. Oberkirchenrat Thies Gundlach, mainly responsible for the paper, affirmed this programme in an interview. As there can be no consensus found regarding the content of the Christian message anyway, and it is thus no longer verifiable, the reforms are especially concerned with the "how" of pastoral action.

That this restricts the autonomy of pastoral action in a very sensitive manner is recognisable by the many biased formulations in the paper. The core of discontent of the church management when pastors are concerned is the accusation that "many live in a self-referential situation in which they only follow their own consciousness and the approval of their parish". These pastors pay homage to "pastoral separatism" instead of adopting the "aims of the church as a whole".[15]

While the Protestant church used to be proud of the principle of vocation by one's own conscience, which was the origin of Luther's reformation and thus a criterion to distinguish the empirical from the true church, being guided by one's conscience seems to have become a problem for the church as a modern organisation, as has the

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[11] See Jan Hermelink, „Sind Sie zufrieden?" Die Domestizierung des Pfarrberufs durch die kirchliche Organisation, in: Ders./S. Grotefeld (Hg.), Religion und Ethik als Organisationen – eine Quadratur des Kreises?, Zürich 2008, 119-143.

[12] Kirche der Freiheit. Perspektiven für die evangelische Kirche im 21. Jahrhundert. Ein Impulspapier des Rates der EKD, hg. v. Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, Hannover 2006, 50.

[13] See Hermelink, „Sind Sie zufrieden?", 134.

[14] Ibid, 135.

[15] Ibid. and Kirche der Freiheit, 72.

autonomy of pastoral acting. At the same time orientation in faith and the gospel and the connection to ordination with them are not mentioned. The bond between the pastor and scripture, confession and parish recedes behind the demands of the organisation. Pastors explicitly become functionaries.

The other recommendations, too, show that pastors are looked upon as branchmanagers rather than professionals spreading the gospel: The pastors are exhorted to overcome the "common phobia concerning professionality"[16]. They are to structure their work goal-oriented, flexibly and effectively and present themselves as effective employees. Even the abilities pastors are asked to improve – "missionary innovation-competence", "giftoriented motivation- and qualification-competence" and "qualified leadership competence"[17]– are all competencies which are meant to strengthen an organisation. "It is alarming to see how massively pastoral action is being occupied, even domesticated by the churches' organisational evolution. It is also alarming to note that in this same way, the traditional pastoral duties are pushed into the background: Pastoral care or the propagation of faith by complex processes of learning – ultimately a theologically responsible unfolding of the contents of faith in public speech – all this seem strangely taken for granted, or at least not to be increased and as such are no longer a concern for a church management which is solely concerned with modernising and functionalising the church."[18]

This rather narrow perspective is understandable insofar as the church as an organisation is under considerable pressure to change. The problem is, however, that the church management takes this pressure of societal change and passes it on to the pastors without filtering. "Now it is the individual pastor who has to pay the price for societal problems of a whole organisation with his mental attitude and his professionality."[19] It is awfully clear that this is massively overtaxing the individual's abilities.

Pastoral action seems completely determined by the organisation. But as the organisation cannot order the pastors how to do their work, they have to rely on endlessly repeating their demand for mental change ("*Mentalitätswandel*") to attain their goal. The independence, the autonomy of the pastor, which is based on scripture and confession, thus becomes a problem for a hierarchical organisation that tries to undertake specific reforms and lead the business called church into the future.

The trend towards perpetual change is thereby merely copied from society as a whole and applied to the church: new offers and goals must be developed, new needs have to be analysed. "As modern society describes itself as permanently changing ... this must be true for the church and its pastoral activities as well."[20] The targeted reforms are thus characterised by an innovation- and escalation stress which will frustrate, deplete and exhaust the pastors and the other employees and volunteers of the church. At the same time the difference between top and bottom, between the demands of the church management and the experiences in the parishes will become a divide hard to bridge. It seems that the organisational logic comes into conflict with the spiritual foundations of the church.

4. What is church?

It is truly a major problem that Protestantism until today has been unable to form a widely accepted doctrine of the visible church. Among many theologians

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[16] Wolfgang Huber, cited by: Renate Meinhof, „Der Allgegenwärtige", in: Süddeutsche Zeitung, Jg.64, Nr.28, 03.02.2008.

[17] Kirche der Freiheit, 72.

[18] Hermelink, "Sind Sie zufrieden?", 136.

[19] Jan Hermelink, Pastorales Wirken im Spannungsfeld von Organisation und ‚geistlicher' Darstellung. Aktuelle Tendenzen der Fremd- und Selbstwahrnehmung, in: Pastoraltheologie Heft 97/10 (2008), 399.

[20] Ibid.

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and pastors a certain degree of helplessness prevails when they are asked about a Protestant doctrine of the church. Karl Barth speaks of a widespread "ecclesiastic docetism" which looks past the visible church and declares its historical form indifferent, or even rejects the notion.[21] The problem is to place the visible and the invisible church in such a relationship that the organised church is not only negatively related to the church of faith. The invisible church is not the opposite of the visible church, it happens within the visible church, but is not identical with it. It is fundamental for the Protestant church to be a creation of the word of God. Luther uses the beautiful metaphor of the conception of the congregation by the word. Everywhere the gospel is announced and taught and people find faith or are being strengthened in their faith, church happens.

Church therefore is first and foremost the congregation gathering for the preaching of the gospel, and only in the second instance is it an organisation. The fundamental meaning of church is *congregation*, not office or institution – Luther states this in "Von den Konziliis und Kirchen" in 1539.[22] Organisation and church management in this regard do not have the task to lead a major business but to reflect in a cautious and self-critical manner how to strengthen and liberate pastoral action in the parish. First and foremost, an organisation as complex as the Protestant church should know the limitations of church management as well as of pastoral activities. The reform paper of the EKD overestimates the controlling capabilities of the organisation "church" significantly. One feels called to remind them of the Protestant tradition and of the differentiation between the acts of God and the acts of human beings or of the difference between the acts of the spirit and human actions.

The primary task of the pastoral profession is – in the Protestant perception – first and foremost preaching. But the individual adoption of the word of God can not be done by an organisation. The Protestant church can thus not as easily define itself as an organisation as the Roman Catholic church can – which identifies the visible church with the church of Jesus Christ almost completely. Faith can not be chosen and, even with the best possible methods and ways, not securely induced. Winning faith can be promoted organisationally, but in a strict sense it defies organisational grasp. "The birth of the church from the gospel in this sense can not be organised."[23] Thus even the question of church-membership can not be answered legally and organisationally in any satisfactory manner. The visible church and the community of the faithful are not congruent. Thus the question of membership is different for an organisation and for the parish in which people without confession, Roman Catholics and Protestants can congregate. From a dogmatic point of view, the question is even more difficult, as there are faithful who do not take part in parish life and on the other hand there might be active members of the congregation who have no bond to faith at all.

Furthermore the hierarchical structure of the organisation in a certain sense is a problem for a Protestant church which is a "bottom-up" church, oriented along the lines of the *communio sanctorum*. If the church constitutes itself by the word of God, "it is not the centralised and medially communicated decisions, but rather their local implementations in the responsibility of the parishes and the local pastor which build the hidden as well as the visible church of the word of God. The organisationally centered domestication of

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[21] Karl Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik IV/1, Zürich 1960, 730.
[22] See Martin Luther, Von den Konziliis und Kirchen (1539), in: WA 50, 488-653.

[23] Jan Hermelink, „Organisation" – Ein produktiver Begriff zur interdisziplinären Erforschung von Religion und Ethik? Ein evangelisch-theologisches Resumé, in: Ders/Grotefeld (Hg.), Religion und Ethik als Organisationen, 272.

pastoral action is therefore in no small conflict with their theological foundations."[24]

In the studies the EKD has undertaken, even the church members signal that they expect the church not to be an organisation like all the others. Especially the relatively high expectations concerning the person and lifestyle of the pastor are an obvious indicator in this regard. The personal impression of the person of the pastor, which is vital in direct interaction, eludes organisational control and functionalisation. The effect of a way of life or a spiritual attitude can not be measured or optimised toward a goal. "Here, the organisationally specified understanding of the pastoral profession clearly comes to an end."[25] Jan Hermelink states: "As clergymen, the pastors stand for a church which is not totally rationalised and flexibilised, but preserves that which supports my existence and orientates beyond all planned action and measurable work."[26] The spiritual dimension in this regard is critically opposed to the idea of organisation. A certain resistiveness ("*Widerständigkeit*") is constitutional for the church, which in a certain sense is at odds with organisational and current society and thus always points to the transcendent in opposition to the immanent world, drawing its credibility from this orientation.

The church can not easily seek to be more cost-effective and attractive. Its message does not fit into a market, even if the churches are on the market. The priorities of church activities have to be justified from the main tasks of the church.

5. What is leadership supposed to mean?

Trying to orient itself by using a modern concept of organisation, the church finds itself in trouble by too closely resembling businesses and administrative bodies. The problem lies in the mandate pastors are ordained to fulfill. Furthermore, church management tries to use management and leadership concepts which seem dubious by the lights of contemporary management and organisational studies. I would like to elaborate on this:

5.1 The organisation as network

The EKD-paper "*Kirche der Freiheit*" tries to accomplish its reforms by favoring rigid organisational structures, offices, posts and positions and underestimates the uncontrollable, simple and volatile social structures radically. The reform experiments lead in the wrong direction, "because they do not relate to a church as *congregation of the faithful* and thus to a loose network, but to division of labour and hierarchy and a change in 'paradigms and mentality'"[27] for the employees. The harsh critique of the efficiency and effectiveness of communication structures in the parishes and among the church employees puts pressure on these frail interactions which make up the church in the first place. Especially the vague interactions enable the church to deal with vague expectancies. Too much order, profile and clarity is not productive. Especially the religious system should have a working relationship with the unknowable, the temporary and the defective.

That means that the organisational side must not be privileged solely. Rather, the interactive and the religious side must be reinforced. Anna Stöber, in agreement with Niklas Luhmann, has pointed out the complex interaction between the three types of systems: organisation, interaction and religion. Her analysis shows that nowadays the formal organisational

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[24] Ibid, 273.
[25] Hermelink, "Sind Sie zufrieden?", 132.
[26] Hermelink, Pastorales Wirken, 402.

[27] Maren Lehmann: Leutemangel. Mitgliedschaft und Begegnung als Formen der Kirche, in: Hermelink, Jan / Wegner, Gerhard (Hg.), Paradoxien kirchlicher Organisation. Niklas Luhmanns frühe Kirchensoziologie und die aktuelle Reform der evangelischen Kirche (Religion in der Gesellschaft 24), Würzburg 2008, 129.

perspective is privileged over interaction and religion. The church as an organisation can only grow if it enables its interactive foundation to provide enough freedom to unfold and that all three types of systems can stabilise and support each other in balance.[28] Not new centers and rigid structures but general conditions in which the people can work intrinsically motivated for the church have to be created.

The gifts and opportunities of the church are primarily found in its message and in the people that support it, not in its financial power or in its medial self-representation – although the importance of this should not be underestimated. A reduction of the church to a service agency, as Uta Pohl-Patalong suggests, will prove the death of Protestant ideas.[29] She completely misunderstands the elementary importance of interactive encounter and the link of sociability and religion which would be torn apart. "Not concentration but networking emerges as a sensible strategy for the church – networking with strong and motivated interdependencies on the spot."[30]

5.2 De-motivation by motivation

The negative evaluation of the pastors is a significant mistake from a leadership point of view. Many pastors show high commitment at a local level. This is confirmed by studies on occupational satisfaction, which show a surprisingly high satisfaction with the profession and its varieties accompanied by strong dissatisfaction with the respective church management. Studies like this have been carried out over the past few years throughout the EKD. They are, however,

not seen as a challenge, the pastors are instead made the scapegoat for declining church quality and finances. Their work is defamed as lacking and unprofessional.[31] That this does not improve pastoral motivation and their identification with the organisation – low as it already is – is pretty obvious.

"All motivation is de-motivation"[32] the philosopher and management consultant Reinhard Sprenger writes, because it is based on mistrust and a culture of suspicion. All motivational techniques see the employee as lacking motivation and tend to replace intrinsic motivation by extrinsic. Especially in the evaluation of pastors, the EKD paper is informed by this very idea. A change in mentality and an increase in motivation-, innovation-, and mission competence is demanded and at the same time the threat is implied that even more pastoral jobs will be cut if the pastors do not comply with these demands. Creativity is based on feeling delight while learning and "it blossoms only in a truly accepted culture of trust. That means for management strategies: scale back the pressure of justification!"[33] Mistrust destroys creativity. Intrinsic motivation is vital and this can not be controlled or ordered from the outside. Furthermore it is de-motivating to masquerade goals as visions which are unreachable, as is common in reform programs. The EKD actually aims to reach 100% of the Protestant population with christening, wedding and funeral services. Too high expectations demotivate as much as too low ones. Customer-orientation, too, must be critically examined. Of course, work is always work for others, but even in sales, submissiveness to the customer does not work on a long-term basis – only if the salesperson shows some spine will he or she be taken seriously. This will all the

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[28] See Anna Stöber: Kirche – gut beraten? Betrachtung einer Kirchengemeinde aus betriebswirtschaftlicher und funktionalistisch-systemtheoretischer Perspektive, Heidelberg 2005, 78ff.

[29] See Uta Pohl-Patalong, Von der Ortskirche zu kirchlichen Orten. Ein Zukunftsmodell, 2. Aufl. Göttingen 2006 (2004).

[30] Dieter Becker, Die Kirche ist kein Supertanker, in: Zeitzeichen 12/2006, 14.

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[31] See ibid, 13.

[32] Reinhard Sprenger, Mythos Motivation. Wege aus einer Sackgasse, Frankfurt/Main 2005, 12.

[33] Ibid, 133.

more prove valid for the clerical profession.

This point is not to be understood as opposition to staff-appraisals, but these should be done in the spirit of mutual respect, dignity and trust and not in the spirit of control and mistrust. The pastoral profession involves the whole person. Therefore the individual talent, the unique and the autonomous and even the critical must be supported, even if this is sometimes difficult for an organisation which naturally sees the negative aspects of individuality first and tries to solve the problem by setting standards.

But the pastors, too, have reason to question themselves: The studies on occupational satisfaction show that pastors on the one hand do not trust church management, yet on the other hand their expectations of church-management are high and with high expectations comes an enormous potential for disappointment. But why should improvement in occupational satisfaction for the pastor have much to do with the church management anyway? Freedom of action and choice means to be in charge of shaping one's own occupation and occupational satisfaction. As much as we need to rely on others to be appreciated, dependence on feedback and an addiction to praise, and with it the potential for corruptibility and self contempt, are fatal. Especially in the Protestant church, this perspective should not be too difficult to adopt if one accepts that God, not other humans, ascertains our dignity. "It is the respective individual decision if I am willing to let others decide what the quality of my life is or not. This freedom of choice is the source for my self-esteem... That means: stop complaining of the conditions which are not always as one would like them to be. Take responsibility for a creative approach to developing one's life which embraces both its ups and downs and uses these as a chance for learning.

Self-motivation can thus only mean: taking responsibility for motivation for oneself."[34]

6. Professionalism and priesthood of all believers

The tendency toward deprofessionalisation in the pastoral profession shows itself in the fact that the churches increasingly use preachers without a theological education. The reform-paper "Kirche der Freiheit" aims to have about two thirds of all sermons held by lay-preachers and lecturers by the year 2030. This development is not questioned as stemming from tight financial resources, but promoted as evidence of growth against the trend. That means that the council of the EKD expects the quality of sermons not to suffer by them being held by non-theologian preachers. Quite the reverse, they see it as a measure among many which is supposed to increase church-service attendance on Sundays from 4% today to a projected 10%. It almost seems that there is no need for academic training education or a theological profession to preach the gospel. Luther's idea of the priesthood of all believers is completely misunderstood if it is changed into a doctrine of the pastoral profession of all believers. Luther intended the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers as a strong rejection of the Roman Catholic understanding of priesthood, which moved the priest into special proximity to God by a sacrament that which fundamentally distinguished him from the non-priests. Luther, on the other hand, grounds all ministry, the ordained ministry, too, in the priesthood of all believers. All believers have been equipped with the same dignity by baptism and are called to preach the gospel. To equate the priesthood of all believers with that of all laypersons is therefore a Catholic understanding, not a Lutheran. It is important for Luther that every believer is an autonomous Christian and

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[34] Ibid, 269.

does not only have the right, but the duty to witness the gospel. But this dignity does not mean that everybody can do this as well as the others. The question of *competence* is a different concern, especially when publicly representing the gospel and dealing with criticism and doubt in a differentiated, discerning fashion and being knowledgeable of scripture. That is why an academic education plays such a distinct role for the ministry in Protestantism.

For Luther, academic education, personal talent and charisma ideally come together in the best of the pastoral profession. In this, Luther leaves no doubt: The pastoral profession requires the best kind of people. Therefore for the Protestant church the crucial question is who is best suited to preach the gospel publicly. Personal as well as professional criteria are vital to answer this question, but not the question of a perceived clerical class. It is a great blessing that the religious distinction between priest and layperson has been replaced by a qualification-oriented approach within Protestantism. Luther states this shortly and precisely: "All Christians are priests, but not all are pastors"[35].

That does not mean that only pastors may preach the gospel publicly. It is just more probable that a pastor, who has shown the respective qualifications personally and proven them in the course of a demanding education is better suited to preach publicly than somebody who has not had theological and homiletic education and never dealt with modern criticisms of central concepts of Christian faith like resurrection, salvation, grace, sin etc.

The Reformed church tries everything to make sure that faith is not only followed in the form of rituals, but individually understood and acquired. 200 years after Enlightenment, and with religious sociali-sation on the wane, this has become a complex task placing high demands on

sermons and the ability of the Christian faith to stand its ground in processes of education. In pastoral care, too, theological power of judgment and not only the communicative abilities of the pastor are required to deal with questions of meaning and futility, suffering, or the question of eternal life.

Pastors therefore are not first and foremost communicators and trainers but theolo-gians. The church – in a Protestant percep-tion – is founded in the gospel and based on the hearing of the gospel. "Such hearing is the nature of the church which is basically *ecclesia audiens* and only as such *ecclesia docens.*"[36]. *Publica docere* does not require a special consecration, but it does require persons who can be trusted to show a certain biblical and theological judgement, and these are usually theologically educated persons.[37] The church should thus have all reason to concentrate its reform efforts on preaching and especially on the content, not only on the methods of presentation. That these contents can no longer be stated absolutely is not an impediment but the reason for communication and reflexion in the first place.

Last but not least: The Protestant church can not limit itself to occupational action. Pastors are key figures for the Protestant church – no doubt about that – but they only serve a large and manifold community of Christians who not only shape the church but live it in manifold concrete and authentic ways. The fourth study on church membership by the EKD shows that more than half of the church members want to see many other paid and volunteer members of the church – apart from the pastors – involved in shaping its future. It is elementary for the Protestant church that members without theological education can take part in the theological dialogue, that their experiences, their

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[35] Martin Luther, Der 82. Psalm ausgelegt (1530), in: WA 31/1, 211.

[36] Eberhard Jüngel, Indikative der Gnade – Impera-tive der Freiheit. Theologische Erörterungen IV, Tübingen 2000, 376.
[37] See ibid., 380.

stories and their questions concerning religion, God and faith play a part in this conversation. As newer studies concerning volunteer office in the church show, they are highly motivated. They represent a potential for the Protestant church which can not be overstated. To develop this potential is a major and permanent challenge for the Protestant church and its pastors.