

Outrageous Words and Unnoticed Words on the Challenges Facing the World and the Church

Comments on the Second Chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*

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In the second chapter of his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis highlights the crisis of communal commitment. He does so in two steps: the first part is on “Some challenges of today’s world”⁹⁵ and the second part on “Temptations faced by pastoral workers”⁹⁶. Pope Francis thus employs the basic structure of the Second Vatican Council document and, in particular, the two pastoral constitutions which later dominated responses to the Council: *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*, where the emphasis is on the (work of the Church in the) world and the Church itself.⁹⁷

However, the structure of the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* also directly follows the logic of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Seen schematically, the content of the Constitution cannot be represented as statements revolving around a single centre in concentric circles. Rather, it was profoundly impacted, in particular, by the fruitful discourse of two Council theologians, Karl Rahner and Dominique Chenu⁹⁸. Both left considerable marks on

⁹⁵ Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World, <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/News/2013/Evangelii-Gaudium>. All references to the Exhortation will be shown in this article as EG followed by the relevant section numbers: EG 52-75., 26 November 2013.

⁹⁶ EG 76-109.

⁹⁷ Cf. Sievernich, Michael, *Neue Evangelisierung im neuen Pontifikat*, in: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 98, 2014, 1-2, 3-6, 3.

⁹⁸ On the productive tension between Council theologians Karl Rahner and Dominique Chenu, cf.: Bauer, Christian, *Konzilsrezeption in Deutschland – Anmerkungen zur Nachgeschichte des Zweiten Vatikanums*, in: *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge* 123, 2012, 10, 32-37.

the Constitution so that the essence of *Gaudium et Spes* can be formulated as centering around two focal points – like an ellipse: the one is society, and the other the Church.⁹⁹ To express this tension, the Council Fathers point out in one of the first footnotes on this “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” that their document comprises two parts which form a unit. The footnote, which came to be debated with some intensity, shows in two sentences the two poles to which the Church has committed itself. It emphasises, “by way of explanation” that “the constitution is called ‘pastoral’ because, while resting on doctrinal principles, it seeks to express the relationship of the Church to the world and modern humankind. The result is that, on the one hand, a pastoral slant is present in the first part, while, on the other hand, a doctrinal slant is present in the second part.”¹⁰⁰ This programmatic footnote, which came to dominate the entire genealogy of the Pastoral Constitution, established a new relationship between the Church’s pastoral work and dogmatic theology. The two elements are now no longer in a relationship of subordination, but form an inner/outer constellation, with neither of the two poles being mutually exclusive.¹⁰¹ Pastoral care, in the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes* and with due regard to the significance of Pope Francis’s definition, must now move in a field of tension, revolving around these two centres (moving from the specific to the general).

This structural parallel between the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Gaudium et Spes*¹⁰² shows Pope Francis’s roots in

⁹⁹ Cf. Sander, Hans-Joachim, *Theologischer Kommentar zur Pastoralconstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute Gaudium et spes*, in: Hünermann, Peter; Hilberath, Bernd Jochen, *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, volume 4, 581-886, 590.

¹⁰⁰ The fact that this comment was inserted as a footnote about the title of the Council document – a Pastoral Constitution called “The Church in the Modern World” – shows that the paper was indeed intended to be programmatic in character.

¹⁰¹ Sander, Hans-Joachim, *op.cit.*, 687.

¹⁰² Another element that points to the roots of this document in Council theology is its name: *Evangelii Gaudium* – words which refer to John XXIII’s programmatic opening address *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, with its opposition to any prophecies of doom while also advocating a pastorally minded Council and picking up the semantic thread in the title of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Cf. Dowling, Kevin, *Es gibt keine Alternative zur echten Evangelisierung! Reflexionen eines südafrikanischen Bischofs zu Evangelii Gaudium*, in: *Forum Weltkirche* 2, 2014, 14-19, 15. Philipp Müller, by contrast, maintains the theory that *Evangelii Gaudium* clearly refers to the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, published ten years after the Second Vatican Council. Cf. Müller, Philipp, *Evangelii Gaudium*, in: *Pastoralblatt* 66 4, 2014, 99-103, 100.

Council theology. In his Exhortation, which Francis himself sees as programmatic at an early stage of his pontificate, he refers to social and ecclesiastical woes in a way that is surprisingly open and, indeed, also surprisingly clear. At the same time, he does not retreat into a general attitude of cultural pessimism – although he does, of course, present a cultural critique.¹⁰³

When we look at the challenges mentioned by Pope Francis, it is worth noting that he is seeking to promote a new missionary thrust that goes hand in hand with the social dimension of evangelisation and which overcomes the inward-looking focus of European theology. This theology has recently centred rather alarmingly – indeed almost ecclesio-pathologically – on issues of structure, gender and sexual morality within the Church. Pope Francis has now added fundamental issues of social and business ethics, explicitly asking why central issues of justice, human rights and an option for and with the poor should be such marginal questions when we are so concerned to find contemporary approaches to evangelisation.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, however, this expansion of the Church's focus also shows that the Church's universality is greatly enriched by the pontificate of a Pope whose roots are outside Europe. "Focusing on a globalisation of responsibility, the Papal Exhortation unmistakably draws attention to the fact that southern countries are putting the question of the poor on the Church's agenda."¹⁰⁵

Some challenges in the world today

Pope Francis expresses himself very clearly in the face of contemporary social challenges. He emphasises that "this Exhortation is not a social document"¹⁰⁶, but that his socio-critical thoughts are intended to describe the place where we should feel challenged to engage in (re-)evangelisation. He certainly does not mince his words. Having been confronted with the life-threatening consequences of (global) economic structures in Latin America, the Pope says "No to

¹⁰³ Cf. EG 84.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Dowling, Kevin, *op. cit.*, 16.

¹⁰⁵ Sander, Hans-Joachim, *op.cit.*, 5.

¹⁰⁶ EG 184. In this section Pope Francis also emphasises that "neither the Pope nor the Church have a monopoly on the interpretation of social realities or the proposal of solutions to contemporary problems".

an economy of exclusion”, “No to the new idolatry of money”, “No to a financial system which rules rather than serves” and “No to an economy which spawns violence” and then proceeds to comment on a range of cultural challenges as well as the challenges of inculturation¹⁰⁷ and urban cultures.

One central point of criticism in this passage concerns the social challenges posed by the financial sector, which has forgotten the subservient character and the role of money in the real economy and has elevated the multiplication of money to an end in itself.¹⁰⁸ Francis criticises the “absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation”¹⁰⁹, speaks of the “idolatry of money”¹¹⁰, denounces the greed for money, possessions and power, points to the intricate link between greed, corruption and tax evasion, which stand in the way of economic and social development in large parts of the world, and exhorts his readers “to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favours human beings.”¹¹¹ Yet he does not simply look at such issues at the level of individual ethics, but places his ideas on poverty within the realm of institutional ethics where they really belong – undoubtedly a move which is perceived as a stumbling block by many readers from industry.¹¹²

These very clear words on economic challenges in the second chapter of his Exhortation have provoked a particularly intense media response in Germany, and numerous economists have been

¹⁰⁷ EG 67-70. Pope Francis's comments on the challenges posed by the inculturation of faith show that inculturation is seen more as a missionary method whereby the Church's tenets of faith are clothed in cultural garments, so that they are then embedded within a foreign context. Inculturation, however, can also be seen as an interactive event, axiomatically based on a perspective whereby God is seen as present in all cultures (including non-Christian cultures). Such a perspective is partly the merit of the Jesuit Order, of which Bergoglio is a member. These thoughts have been formulated by Pedro Arupe, quoted after Sievernich, Michael, *Von der Akkommodation zur Inkulturation – Missionarische Leitideen der Gesellschaft Jesu*, in: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 86 4, 2002, 260-276, 268. Such an inculturation approach would challenge us to listen first and to seek an understanding of how *Nostra Aetate* has also been realised in other cultures. Cf. also Orobator, Agbonkhanmeghe E., *Umkehr, Veränderung und Verwandlung – Die Kraft der Evangelisierung aus afrikanischer Perspektive*, in: *Forum Weltkirche* 123 2, 2014, 20-24, 20.

¹⁰⁸ EG 55.

¹⁰⁹ EG 56, cf. EG 202.

¹¹⁰ EG 55.

¹¹¹ EG 58.

¹¹² EG 202.

looking at the Pope's ideas and positions in some detail.¹¹³ After the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium* a substantial response among journalists and economists was drawn almost exclusively by the Pope's thoughts on social and economic challenges. The German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* alone ran two (opposing) articles, one entitled "The Pope Is in Error"¹¹⁴ and the other "Does Capitalism Actually Kill?"¹¹⁵. Another daily, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, published three articles on the Pope's document: "Points which the Pope Keeps Silent About"¹¹⁶, "The Church Despises the Rich"¹¹⁷ and "The Pope's Errors on Economic Issues"¹¹⁸. The prestigious weekly paper *Die Zeit* published two widely read articles about the ideas the Pope set out in his Exhortation: "Unholy Critique of Capitalism"¹¹⁹ and "The Pope and Industry"¹²⁰.

The criticism the Pope received from the media covered seven different aspects:¹²¹ firstly, a defence against the harsh critique of capitalism as perceived in the Apostolic Exhortation; secondly, criticism of the Pope's supposed ignorance of basic economic issues; thirdly, the view that his ideas expressed a form of anti-capitalism reflecting a widespread attitude within the Church; fourthly, the Pope's allegedly inappropriate translation of Argentinian economic complexities (as observed by himself) to other national economies; fifthly, the Pope's limitation of his critique to an "unbridled capitalism"; sixthly, his failure to see the reduction in poverty that has actually taken place, particularly in countries with strong economic growth such as China, India and Brazil; and, finally, references to the Pope's use of words which are believed to indicate that he was mainly concerned about communication within the Church.

¹¹³ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, *Der Papst irrt – der Papst hat recht – 'Evangelii gaudium' in der Sicht von Ökonomen*, in: *Herder Korrespondenz* 68 3, 2014, 119-124, 119.

¹¹⁴ Beise, Marc, *Der Papst irrt*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30. November 2013, 26.

¹¹⁵ Prantl, Heribert, *Kapitalismus tötet*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7. December 2013.

¹¹⁶ Schäfer, Christoph, *Was der Papst verschweigt*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29. November 2013.

¹¹⁷ Hank, Rainer, *Die Kirche verachtet die Reichen*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1. December 2013.

¹¹⁸ Grözinger, Robert, *Wie der Papst in Wirtschaftsfragen irrt*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30. December 2013.

¹¹⁹ Joffe, Josef, *Heillose Wirtschaftskritik*, in: *Die Zeit*, 12. December 2013, 10.

¹²⁰ Jungbluth, Rüdiger, *Der Papst und die Wirtschaft*, in: *Die Zeit*, 19. December 2013, 14.

¹²¹ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, op. cit., 119-124.

Another reason why Pope Francis's critique of economic inequalities sounded so radical was that he did not see the evil of poverty as an inevitable corollary of an "otherwise" successful economic system and thus as something that might be balanced out in monetary terms through redistribution of wealth under a social market economy. Pope Francis sees poverty not just as a monetary issue, but as a social or sociological sore, and he believes that its worst scar is the social exclusion of the poor. Francis uses harsh words in describing this exclusion as a scandal, and he demands not merely monetary compensation, but the social inclusion of the poor. This, however, would require far-reaching institutional reforms.¹²²

It is quite surprising that Pope Francis's Exhortation should have provoked such harsh media coverage. Notwithstanding all the fierce criticism *Evangelii Gaudium* aroused, Pope Francis said hardly anything in this document that his predecessors had not already said or which they had not at least expressed in similar ways. Minority ownership of the means of production was condemned as evil by Pius XI in 1931 (*Quadragesimo Anno*), warning that "freedom of competition, while justified and certainly useful provided it is kept within certain limits, clearly cannot direct economic life".¹²³ Within this "Papal line of tradition" we should also mention John XXIII's Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, his successor Paul VI's Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, and John Paul II's letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.¹²⁴ There is a striking continuity between Pope Francis and his predecessors when he denounces the undesirable developments of our modern world, particularly in the industrial societies – developments which are marked by excessive individualism, unreflected consumerism, superficial utilitarianism and a culture of materi-

¹²² Cf. Pies, Ingo, *Papst Franziskus – Kein Gegner des Marktes*, in: *Stimmen der Zeit* 139 4, 2014, 233-242, 238.

¹²³ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno_en.html, 23.04.2015.

¹²⁴ We might also mention the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, in which the Council Fathers reason in favour of an option for and with the poor, based on incarnation theology: "Christ was sent by the Father 'to bring good news to the afflicted' (Luke 4:18), 'to seek out and save what was lost' (Luke 19:10). Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder." (LG 8). Cf. Maier, Martin, *Papst Franziskus und die Kirche der Armen*, in: Holztrattner, Magdalena M., *Innovation Armut – Wohin führt Papst Franziskus die Kirche*, Innsbruck and Vienna 2013, 123-136, 124f.

alism.¹²⁵ Moreover, the connection between evangelisation, on the one hand, and advocacy of fair economic structures, on the other, was repeatedly mentioned in earlier Church documents. The World Synod of Catholic Bishops, for instance, used the following words as early as 1971: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”¹²⁶

Pope Francis had already made it quite clear during the pre-conclave, when he was still Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, that he would pick up the ideas expressed by John Paul II (together with his critique of exploitation, suppression and marginalisation and of an economic development that excludes broad sections of the population): “The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only in the geographical sense but also to go to the existential peripheries: those of the mysteries of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and of religious indifference, of thought, of all misery. When the Church does not come out of itself to evangelise, it becomes self-referential and then gets sick [...]”¹²⁷ At the time it had already become obvious that the option for and with the poor was both a pastoral and theological objective for Pope Francis.¹²⁸ He points out in *Evangelii Gaudium* that, for the Church, “the option for the poor is

¹²⁵ Cf. Wiemeyer, Joachim, *Evangelii gaudium – das Programm eines Pontifikats*, in: *Die Neue Ordnung* 68 2, 2014, 100-109, 100.

¹²⁶ Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971, in: <http://www.cctwincities.org/document.doc?id=69>, 17 September 2014.

¹²⁷ Cardinal Bergoglio’s (now Pope Francis’s) Speech to the Cardinals before the Conclave, criticising “Theological Narcissism” (27 March 2013), <http://catholicismpure.wordpress.com/2013/03/27/cardinal-bergoglios-now-pope-francis-speech-to-the-cardinals-before-the-conclave-criticising-theological-narcissism/> A similarly clear position was taken in Aparecida’s final document in which Jorge Maria Bergoglio had a considerable hand: “We commit ourselves to work so that our Latin American and Caribbean Church will continue to be, with even greater determination, a travelling companion of our poorest brothers and sisters, even as far as martyrdom. Today we want to ratify and energise the preferential option for the poor made in previous Conferences. That it is preferential means that it should permeate all our pastoral structures and priorities. The Latin American Church is called to be a sacrament of love, solidarity, and justice within our peoples.” CELAM, Aparecida 2007. Final Document of the 5th General Assembly of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. 13-31. May 2007, <http://www.aecrc.org/documents/Aparecida-Concluding%20Document.pdf>, section 396.

¹²⁸ Pope Francis mentions this “option for the poor” in 91 passages in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one"¹²⁹.

There was also a vehement discussion of Pope Francis's critique of "trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world" – theories which the Pope sees as "an opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts"¹³⁰. It is certainly true that trickle-down theories should not be misused to whitewash any economic development that leads to an unequal share in economic growth and contributes towards an increasing social gap between rich and poor. Nevertheless, observations made in empirical social research indicate that economic growth does generally lead to a trickle-down effect which then benefits the poor – observations which cannot simply be disproved.¹³¹ At this point it might perhaps be preferable to adopt a more complex perspective without questioning the trickle-down effect as such, but looking at regulatory measures which genuinely help the positive effects of economic growth, so that it increasingly impacts the daily lives of the poor.

What was helpful in the vehement discussion which followed the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium* in Germany was the much publicised intervention of the economist Ingo Pies. He pointed out that "the Apostolic Exhortation certainly cannot simply be [...] classified as hostile to the market"¹³² and that, to arrive at an assessment of

¹²⁹ EG 198.

¹³⁰ EG 54.

¹³¹ Cf. Dollar, David; Kleineberg, Tatjana; Kraay, Aart, *Growth Still is Good for the Poor*, Policy Research Working Paper, No. 6568, in: <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-6568>, 17 September 2014. Thomas Sowell, "Trickle Down" Theory and "Tax Cuts for the Rich", Hoover Institutional Press Publication, No. 635, Stanford 2012. Interestingly, such a theory – which seems sympathetic towards the market – is not particularly popular, especially not among theologians. What I found quite revealing was the biased form of criticism presented recently, in April this year, of the arguments put forward by the economist Vesa Kanninen at the European Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) in Helsinki. Vesa Kanninen stated that the global spread of much-maligned capitalism has led to a global reduction in hunger and poverty and that never, in all of human history, have so many people gained freedom from the misery of extreme poverty within two decades as during the time of global economic growth in the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st. This idea did not fit into the economic worldview of numerous conference delegates, and so their responses were ideological in character as the delegates were unable to reconcile their own positions with any positive statements on capitalism.

¹³² Pies, Ingo, op. cit., 236.

its economic ideas, it is not good enough to read the harsh-sounding words of the second chapter in isolation. *Evangelii Gaudium*, he says, should be read without any ideological bias. He emphasises that the Exhortation contains a clear commitment to economic growth¹³³, with discrimination-free labour markets as an integral part of an effective poverty reduction policy¹³⁴, that it advocates open borders and sees migrants as an opportunity for one's own development¹³⁵. Furthermore, he continues, the chapter honours the work of entrepreneurs and their economic "endeavours to multiply the goods of this world and to make them accessible to everyone"¹³⁶.

The responses to and the debate on the economic challenges mentioned in *Evangelii Gaudium* show that there was a good deal of controversy over Pope Francis's economic critique. Yet what makes the vehemence of media responses so surprising is that the Pope's words are clearly in line with the social teachings of his predecessors. There seem to be two major reasons why Pope Francis's critique of social ills provoked such stormy responses among the media. First of all, *Evangelii Gaudium* is written in a new and unfamiliar style, showing that Pope Francis is not primarily concerned about politically acceptable formulae or about using a moderate language that befits the Magisterium. He does not seek political correctness or an academically balanced choice of words (which would then make him unassailable!). Instead, he follows the Old Testament tradition of prophetic speeches¹³⁷, as indicated explicitly at several points in his Exhortation.¹³⁸ This is particularly apparent in the second chapter where he talks about the "crisis in communal commitment" and where, in the first part, he responds to the challenges of today's world "in the style of a prophetic speech"¹³⁹. Perhaps the exciting, new feature of this Apostolic Exhortation is that the Pope does not seek to explain things but to stir us up. Rather than desiring to be unassailable, he

¹³³ EG 204.

¹³⁴ EG 184.

¹³⁵ EG 201.

¹³⁶ EG 203.

¹³⁷ Cf. Wiemeyer, Joachim, *Evangelii Gaudium – das Programm eines Pontifikats*, in: *Die Neue Ordnung* 68 (2014) 2, 100-109, 104. Nothelle-Wildfeuer, Ursula, *Eine Frage der Authentizität – Arme Kirche – Kirche der Armen*, in: *Stimmen der Zeit* 139 (2014) 9, 579-590.

¹³⁸ EG 215 and EG 218.

¹³⁹ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, op. cit., 122.

wishes to stimulate debate. His intention is not to be right but to move the Church forward. “He is not endeavouring to present a systematic treatise on social issues and potential solutions. Instead, his words are a social critique of the system that permeates the entire world and where money has become an end in itself and developed a life of its own, divested of any social responsibility.”¹⁴⁰

Secondly, Pope Francis’s programmatic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* is not just a matter of words; his critique is also strikingly reflected in practical ways, in his own life.¹⁴¹ At the modal level he demonstrates through symbols, gestures and lifestyle what he expresses materially in words through his sermons, letters and documents.¹⁴² In fact, his very choice of a name illustrates his agenda. After all, it was Francis of Assisi who showed the 13th-century Church a path of renewal in conjunction with a radical life of poverty. So this was more than an option *for* the poor. It was more far-reaching and a genuinely radical option to be *with* the poor.¹⁴³ His very first trip during the early days of his pontificate was probably equally as programmatic as his Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, since it involved travelling to Lampedusa. Situated between Tunisia and the Italian peninsula, this island is a place where countless African refugees have been arriving in boatloads, often after critically hazardous crossings – a place which clearly illustrates the deadly consequences of economic disparity. And it is, indeed, new that a Church leader should take such a clear, unmistakable position, in both words *and* deeds, against an economic system that has not (yet) managed to secure at least survival for all people – let alone “fullness of life”¹⁴⁴. This, in fact, seems to be the real dynamite and the reason why the Pope’s economic critique in *Evangelii Gaudium* has been debated with so much vehemence and such great controversy. Even in the first year of his pontificate it was accepted that Pope Francis really

¹⁴⁰ Nothelle-Wildfeuer, Ursula, op. cit., 586.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Müller, Philipp, *Evangelii gaudium*, in: *Pastoralblatt* 66 (2014) 4, 99-103, 102.

¹⁴² Cf. Klaus Vellguth, *Dienende Christen in einer dienenden Kirche – Anmerkungen zum diakonischen Anspruch des Christentums und zur Rückbesinnung des Christentums auf seine Wurzeln im Apostolischen Schreiben Evangelii gaudium*, in: Augustin, George; Sailer-Pfister, Sonja; Vellguth, Klaus, *Christentum im Dialog – Perspektiven christlicher Identität in einer pluralen Gesellschaft* (FS Risse), Freiburg im Breisgau 2014, 445-460, 459.

¹⁴³ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, op. cit., 124.

¹⁴⁴ John 10:10.

meant what he said and that he would actively advocate the points he mentioned in *Evangelii Gaudium*. His Church will not look away when the globalised world is divided into two classes – the rich and the poor – at the expense of the have-nots, regardless of whether this is perpetrated by a rampant form of capitalism and social Darwinism or by an unfettered neo-liberalism¹⁴⁵. Instead, Pope Francis reminds his Church that Christ was sent by the Father “to bring the good news to the afflicted”¹⁴⁶, and he will continually tell the Church that this “means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor”¹⁴⁷. This socio-ethical intention is in no way obscured by Pope Francis’s fundamentally pastoral style in *Evangelii Gaudium* nor, indeed, by his frequent use of ethical words with a focus on the individual (something that may well be problematic in a description of institutional ethics¹⁴⁸).¹⁴⁹ Yet despite the sharpness of his (prophetic) words and the match between word and deed, the Pope’s comments on social challenges in chapter two of *Evangelii Gaudium* cannot be understood as a general critique of capitalism in the sense of indiscriminate black-and-white thinking.¹⁵⁰ For instance, Pope Francis clearly values the work of entrepreneurs¹⁵¹ and also of politicians: “I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor!”¹⁵² “It seems bizarre,” says Friedhelm Hengsbach, “that the Pope’s Exhortation is read as a critique of capitalism, even though this word is not mentioned a single time.”¹⁵³ Pope Francis’s intention is not to discredit capitalism, but to highlight the perspective of the poor, the economically marginalised and the excluded.¹⁵⁴ This, incidentally, is also a major ecumenical concern. On 5 September

¹⁴⁵ It seems worth noting at this point that Pope Francis does not express himself indiscriminately against capitalism as such, but against the excesses of a “deformed market economy”. Cf. Pies, Ingo, op. cit., 236.

¹⁴⁶ Luke 4:18.

¹⁴⁷ EG 188.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Pies, Ingo, op. cit., 233.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Wiemeyer, Joachim, op. cit., 105.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Pies, Ingo, op. cit., 233-242. Nothelle-Wildfeuer, Ursula, op.cit., 579-590.

¹⁵¹ EG 203.

¹⁵² EG 205.

¹⁵³ Cf. Hengsbach, Friedhelm, op. cit., 123.

¹⁵⁴ Reichert, Wolf-Gero, *Inwiefern tötet diese Wirtschaft? ... oder warum der Papst nicht irrt, sondern lediglich Perspektivität fordert*, in: *Forum Weltkirche* (2014) 2, 25-29, 25.

2012, a year before the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium*, the World Council of Churches unanimously decided in a Central Committee meeting to adopt a mission statement entitled *Together Towards Life*. The authors consistently use the phrase “mission from the margins”. Speaking just as clearly as Pope Francis, they say that the central concern of evangelism and mission is opposition to the rule of the global free market for as long as this market demands “an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature”¹⁵⁵.

Temptations faced by pastoral workers

Whereas, in the first half of the second chapter (on the crisis of communal commitment), Pope Francis primarily talks about the challenges facing today’s world, the second part of this chapter is about temptations faced by pastoral workers, especially those within the Church itself. A first glance at the structure of the two sections (on the challenges of today’s world and on the challenges facing pastoral workers) shows that the entire chapter has been composed with a certain structural sensitivity or symmetry almost. In both sections – on the challenges of today’s world¹⁵⁶ and on the temptations faced by pastoral workers¹⁵⁷ – Pope Francis starts with an introduction regarding his intentions in what he is about to say. Next, both sections are divided into seven steps. In the second section he starts by saying that a pastoral worker should be sustained by a missionary spirituality. Another element paralleled in the structure and diction of the first section is his provocative formulation of four negatives – this time on the temptations of pastoral workers: “No to selfishness and spiritual

¹⁵⁵ In its mission statement, the WCC also says: “Jesus has told us ‘You cannot serve God and Mammon’ (Matthew 6:24). The policy of unlimited growth through the domination of the global free market is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature. It makes the false promise that it can save the world through creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry.’ This is a global system of Mammon that protects the unlimited growth of wealth of only the rich and powerful through endless exploitation. This tower of greed is threatening the whole household of God. The reign of God is in direct opposition to the empire of Mammon. (World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, “Together_towards_Life.pdf”, section 31, from: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>, no. 5. September 2012, 23.04.2015.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. EG 52.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. EG 76-77.

sloth”¹⁵⁸, “No to a sterile pessimism”¹⁵⁹, “No to spiritual worldliness”¹⁶⁰ and “No to warring among ourselves”¹⁶¹.

But before presenting these sharp negations Pope Francis first expresses his “gratitude to all those who are committed to working in and for the Church”¹⁶². Particularly in view of the many scandals triggered by Church workers in recent years, he draws attention to “so many Christians who joyfully sacrifice their lives and their time”. Yet Pope Francis also feels troubled that “we are seeing in many pastoral workers, including consecrated men and women, an inordinate concern for their personal freedom and relaxation”¹⁶³ with a “heightened individualism” which has led to “a crisis of identity” and a “cooling of fervour”. Using the same prophetic language as in his section on the injustices of capitalism, Pope Francis now focuses on shortcomings within the Church which stop both the laity and priesthood from engaging in committed missionary dynamism for fear that it might deprive them of their free time.¹⁶⁴ He criticises “de-personalised experiences” of pastoral work with a greater emphasis on organisational matters than on people – being “more concerned with the roadmap than with the journey itself”¹⁶⁵, a “grey pragmatism of the daily life of the Church, in which all appears to proceed normally, while in reality faith is wearing down and degenerating into small-mindedness”¹⁶⁶, identifying “in some places a spiritual ‘desertification’”¹⁶⁷. Anyone reading those words with a critical view of the current state of the Church in Germany may well gain the impression that Pope Francis is directing his words especially at the *ecclesia transalpina* where the very word “de-secularisation” is felt to be provocative and where people have rather cosily settled down into systems which are comfortably and conveniently supported by an automatic church tax arrangement.

¹⁵⁸ EG 81-83.

¹⁵⁹ EG 84-86.

¹⁶⁰ EG 93-97.

¹⁶¹ EG 98-101.

¹⁶² EG 76.

¹⁶³ EG 78.

¹⁶⁴ EG 81.

¹⁶⁵ EG 82.

¹⁶⁶ EG 83.

¹⁶⁷ EG 86.

But while theologians in Germany have formed an alliance with economists and journalists and taken an intensive interest in the Pope's economic critique, there has so far been very little debate or indeed response to Pope Francis's pastoral criticism of the Church and its pastoral work. Yet the Pope speaks extremely clearly in criticising those with "an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church's prestige", so that through their work "the life of the Church turns into a museum piece or something which is the property of a select few".¹⁶⁸ He also talks of a "business mentality" within the Church, "caught up with management, statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God's people but the Church as an institution".¹⁶⁹ What gives him cause for concern is not church planning as such – something which is necessary in view of the Church's many forms of involvement¹⁷⁰ – but planning that becomes an end in itself and which does not serve evangelisation, because "the mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen is missing".

Seeing that the debate in the Church – especially among pastors in Germany – has predominantly focused on Church structures and that this debate has been accompanied by spiritual desertification, Pope Francis's words in his Exhortation should really have triggered either a storm of protest or a pained reaction in the *ecclesia transalpina*. In fact, in the second part of chapter two in *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis may well have touched a sore point, particularly in the German Church, where questions should be asked as to whether the pastoral style of so many pastors¹⁷¹ is really conducive towards evangelisation manifesting "the mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen". So far, however, very few theological articles have been written in Germany answering this critique of faulty developments in the Church's pastoral work. The theological response to the second chapter has focused far more on Rome's critique of unfair economic structures than on Pope Francis's concerns about precarious devel-

¹⁶⁸ EG 95.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Vellguth, Klaus, *Kirche und Fundraising – Wege einer zukunftsfähigen Kirchenfinanzierung*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2007.

¹⁷¹ As a theologian who has headed the marketing unit of a Church organisation for several years as well as working in missiology and pastoral theology, I expressly wish to apply the critical words of the Exhortation to church workers [like myself] who must allow themselves to be challenged by *Evangelii Gaudium* and ask themselves if their work has been "more concerned with the roadmap than with the journey itself" (EG 82).

opments in pastoral care (with its fixation on structures). It seems to me that the response to *Evangelii Gaudium* in Germany has revealed a blind spot – and one that is perhaps even being cultivated. But looking the other way is unhelpful. Just as politicians and business managers should feel challenged by Pope Francis's prophetic words on undesirable developments in the capitalist economic system, so theologians, pastoral care workers, priests and bishops must allow themselves to be challenged by the Pope's prophetic words on undesirable developments within the Church and in pastoral care. The prophetic challenge of *Evangelii Gaudium* is certainly not a call to adopt an attitude of proud arrogance, on the assumption that the Pope's criticism is directed at others, and then to reflect upon it in a spirit of judgmentalism. Rather, we must look critically at ourselves, make a missionary U-turn in our own lives, apply the words of the Exhortation to ourselves and understand that there is a crisis in our own level of commitment.

Conclusions

Looking at the two parts of the second chapter on the crisis in communal commitment, it is clear that Pope Francis's economic critique is seen by many readers of his Exhortation as outrageous and that this has led to an intensive response and debate about his ideas. On the other hand, what he says in the same chapter about the temptations of pastoral workers has so far passed relatively unnoticed. It is useful to study the formal structure of the second chapter of the Exhortation (on the crisis in communal commitment) and to look at its traditional roots in the logic of *Gaudium et Spes* (as well as the logic of Vatican II), as this may help us to discover our own blind spots. The structure of *Gaudium et Spes*, which is reflected in this second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*, clearly shows Pope Francis's intention: Following the best tradition of the Council, he wishes to look at the challenges facing both the Church and the world. The two are not seen as diametrically opposed but, indeed, intricately linked. After all, every Christian is also part of the world and very much involved in its sinfulness – just as the world has its home in the Church (and in its sinfulness).

Significantly, in its response to the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Church in Germany has looked in some depth at

the challenges of today's world and dealt in some detail with Pope Francis's economic critique as well as the various responses to his critique. What is missing so far, however, is an equally committed and profound response to the Pope's prophetic words on the temptations faced by pastoral workers. Yet these words from Rome – many of them quite strong – on the challenges facing pastoral workers are similar to his economic critique in that they should not be seen as a scholarly analysis or as infallible utterances *ex cathedra*. In his Exhortation, Pope Francis addresses prophetic words to his readers that are intended as a wake-up call. Pope Francis wants his readers to step out of their comfort zones; he encourages them to overcome their self-satisfied and self-sufficient attitudes and to open their hearts to a new spirit of missionary zeal. Therein lies the richness of the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium*: Pope Francis invites us to accept the challenges of the Church and the world “without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment”. He includes all pastoral workers in that invitation, saying: “Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!”¹⁷²

¹⁷² EG 109.