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Money Matters in Pastoral Vocation – An Empirical Study

The interviews conducted with the 33 Reformed Pastors in the Reformed Church in Hungary make it clear that their relation to money bears an intrinsic ambivalence, which is part of pastoral identity. Living on the border between two worlds, the pastor carries the message of the Kingdom of God and represents a spiritual value system and lifestyle that is meant to be different from that of our world. Mostly, a shortage of money, social or clerical unfairness is mentioned in the interviews, however, amounts of money that are more than necessary can also create tension in a pastor's life.

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In our world, we tend to attribute a special kind of metaphysical power to the flow of money.² It is seen as an instrument that drives the competitive market according to its own laws. In the church, on the other hand, other laws and values are at play. Philip Goodchild sees it the following way:

“All religions, in essence, direct and distribute time, attention, and devotion. Religions enrich life by establishing patterns for living. If there is an opposition between God and money, then fundamentally it comes down to this: wealth contains its own principles according to which time, attention, and devotion are allocated. In a society organized primarily for the pursuit of wealth, nothing could seem more evident and unquestionable than that time, attention, and devotion should be allocated to the pursuit of wealth. It is the very obligation to do so that constitutes the spiritual power of money.”³

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² M. HAILER: *Gott und die Götzen: über Gottes Macht angesichts der lebensbestimmenden Mächte*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006. 361–366.

³ P. GOODCHILD: *Theology of Money*, London, SCM Press, 2007. 3.

33 interviews with Hungarian Reformed Pastors seem to make it clear that their relation to money bears an intrinsic ambivalence, which is part of pastoral identity. Mostly, a shortage of money, social or clerical unfairness will be mentioned. However, as we would see, amounts of money that are more than necessary can also create tension in a pastor's life. In their case, ambivalences of life and paradoxes of human existence are topped with the contradiction of "seeking the things that are above" and having to live in this world. Ministers have to proclaim the message of God living on the border of these two universes. They appear to their environment and themselves as ambassadors of a value system and lifestyle that is different from this world. Standing up for a norm on the border of these two worlds will certainly not go without tension.⁴

1. Complexities of the Meaning of Money

What does money actually mean to society? It is in itself a complex phenomenon, as it has multiple meanings apart from the exchange of goods. Money can be an instrument for accumulating products. It can also be a means to pay. And it even has the function of symbolic value. Károly Polányi ventures as far as talking about its function as a means to power. After all, it was the powerful who imposed fines, customs, and other obligatory fees, and collected them also by power. In ancient societies, fees payable to gods and deities were collected by the representatives of higher power, i.e. the priesthood.⁵ In his doctoral thesis, András Szabó B. differentiates between the horizontal (exchange) and vertical (power, the sacred) dimensions of money accordingly.⁶ In addition to this complexity, there is the dimension of time as well – says Taylor, who describes money as something like a dense batch of energy and time: "In

⁴ Andrew R. MORTON: *A határon élni*, in: KARASSZON István (szerk.): „Hálával áldozzál...” – A Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem Hittudományi Kara tiszteletbeli doktorainak tanulmányai a 150. évforduló ünnepén, Budapest, KRE-HTK, 2005. 377–389. See also: BODÓ, Sára: *Lelkipásztori hivatás és spiritualitás*, in: FAZAKAS, Sándor – FERENCZ, Árpád (szerk.): „Krisztusért járva követségben...” Teológia – igehirdetés – egyházkormányzás: Tanulmánykötet a 60 éves Bölcskei Gusztáv születésnapjára, (Acta Theologica Debrecinensis; 3.), Debreceni Református Hittudományi Egyetem, Debrecen, 2012. 303–320.

⁵ POLÁNYI, Károly: *Kereskedelem, piacok és pénz az ókori Görögországban*, Budapest, Gondolat, 1984. 304–313.

⁶ SZABÓ, B. András: *Az áldozattól a pszeudoesztakológiáig – A pénz kulturális szerepeinek teológiai értékelése* Budapest, Evangélikus Hittudományi Egyetem, 2015. 43.

money the past, the present, and the future meet to inform one another... history and eschatology meet and inform one another.”⁷ Christian religion offers a wide spectrum of how one can relate to earthly possessions (money included): from lay ascetics, through building monumental cathedrals, to current large-scale projects of the church. This diversity might be due to the intricacy of the role money plays:

“From a psychological aspect, money is not a single symbol, but it encompasses a variety of symbolizations. In our views about and attitude towards money, we express not only financial value, but a host of socially modifying factors as well. E.g. where did it come from, or on what occasion we received it.”⁸

Money is portrayed not simply as a medium of exchange, but as a symbol, it also brings extra layers of meaning and emotional associations to the surface. It is exemplified by the way a pastor evaluates social trends:

“The end times are hidden in God. However, in my opinion, these processes are unstoppable. Money is utilized for everything. The business world and what it does. Through all its private banks. How do I view the world? As something that will soon be ready to be destroyed. The other day, I heard a political scientist explain that he can see this in the whole world, in almost all the greater segments, so in almost all the great segments of the world, he can see a moral decay. Be it the corruption in politics one can hear, see or know about. Be it the scandals that broke out in FIFA. Be it art or music industry. Everything is declining. And it's not just the Atlantic world that's declining, but the whole world, almost the whole world.” (15/20)

Money has more than fiscal value. Rather, “money and possessions are, as it were, extensions of the self: symbols of power, success, sexual identity, wellbeing.”⁹ It is challenging for a pastor to consider money simply as an instrument, or the guarantee for a certain standard of living. This kind of dichotomy can be discovered all through those interviews where money issues were mentioned:

⁷ S. TAYLOR: *Soul and Money – A Theology of Wealth*, New York, Episcopal Church Center, 1991. 7.

On the notion of money as a flow of energy, see also: N. WARIBOKO: *God and Money – A Theology of Money in a Globalizing World*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2008. 7.

⁸ KÖRÖSSY, Judit – LISZNYAI, Sándor: *A pénz pszichológiája és a gazdasági szocializáció*, in: HUNYADY, György – SZÉKELY, Mózes (eds.): *Gazdaságpszichológia*, Budapest, Osiris, 2003. 249–380, 351.

⁹ KÖRÖSSY–LISZNYAI: *A pénz pszichológiája és a gazdasági szocializáció*, 375.

“So, the world comprises of at least two parts: the visible and the invisible. And we desire both of course, they are both important for us. I wouldn’t want to play the two off against each other. Very often pastors tend to talk only about the invisible, and say nonsense like »brothers, money doesn’t matter«, or what not. But this is stupid, and many times, it’s exactly the pastor him- or herself who craves money the most, and he/she is the most chained by it. Be authentic, put your words in sync with your life. That’s the only way I can teach.” (18/50)

2. Ambivalent Relation to Money and Wealth

Some Bible passages concerning money typically appeared in the interviews with pastors, e.g. the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: “You have no greater treasure (and in this sense, it doesn’t matter if you belong to the clergy or laity), so you have no greater treasure than what you store up in heaven.” (15/22) Biblical aspects keep turning up in most cases – even if not word for word, but certainly on the level of attitude. When it comes to pastoral identity, it is important to point out that, even though material possessions do not rank high in the biblical worldview, two principles still offer important guidance in financial matters: the “blessing on diligent work” and “the labourer deserves his wages” (1 Tim. 5:19). Money and wealth do not seem to be good or bad *per se*, rather they are portrayed either as hindrances in the relationship with God, or as the fruit of God’s blessing:

“I want to go to Heaven! This is my long-term plan. [Me and my wife] often talk about the fact that we feel we are at the right place, we feel good, we like it here. This is our home in every sense of the word. However, if the Lord so wishes one day, we might leave. The prospect of moving to a bigger house or earning more money – I had many opportunities for this – never interested me to the least extent. Instead we are watching out for an inner assurance about the journey, that this is what He meant for us.” (14/120)

One glimpse at church history reveals that for centuries, joining the clergy was a means of social breakout for many. Throughout the history of the church, as long as it imposed tithes and had powerful sponsors or patrons, there was constant ambivalence and tension between affluence on the one hand, and abstinence from earthly wealth on the other. According to Max Weber’s famous, but much contested theory, puritan thought has greatly contributed to initial capital formation.¹⁰ However, this dichotomy

¹⁰ M. WEBER: *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Penguin Books, 2002. On Weber’s influence on Hungarian thought, see: NAGY, Károly Zsolt: *Max Weber Protestáns etikájának recepciója a magyar református teológiában a második világháború előtt*, in: HOPPÁL Mihály (főszerk.) – BERTA Péter (szerk.): *Ethno-lore, A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Néprajzi Kutatóintézetének Évkönyve, XXVI. MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézet, Budapest, 2009. 239–261.*

was present in Protestantism just as much. It is God who, as a sign of God's mercy, grants earthly possessions. Nevertheless, self-control, ascetics, and modesty are all important.¹¹ It remained unclear from the interviews what is considered much, when it comes to money and wealth. There is a dissonance between the world of faith and the world of money, which is also echoed in the New Testament: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Mt. 6:24)¹²

"I'm fed up with the fact that our church is such a wuss. Anyhow, I just can't reconcile the two. I had already earned too much. No, I'm gonna put it very bluntly: I had already taken too much money to still waste my time with the church. I guess it was a bit inconsistent to go up to the pulpit sometimes. Although I don't think I ever had to preach, ever had preached anything that I didn't mean." (1/12)

The above-quoted pastor explained that one of the reasons why he/she left the church was exactly this situation. Namely, that wealth and the ideas around pastoral vocation were irreconcilable.¹³ A similar kind of tension made another pastor leave his church community for another one: "And in this village, there was a real classy, beautiful vicarage, built from a grant. I wasn't happy to live in a place like that because it didn't reflect the reality around me." (2/14)

Although it's not possible to draw strong conclusions based on such a number of interviews, it seems clear that in the church, there is an informal notion of an ideal life standard, fit for today's society. We have no exact data about its extent. However, the interviews make it evident that a greater deviation from this standard (be it positive or negative) creates significant tension between a pastor and their environment, a pastor and their colleagues, as well as in the pastor's psyche.

¹¹ The Old Testament considers wealth the blessing of God. See: RUFF, Tibor: *Lebetnek-e gazdagok a kereszények?* in: Új Exodus, XII. évf. 2-3. szám, 2001. 46–55.

¹² One Hebrew word used for money is *mammon*. This expression stems from the Aramaic, and it appears in the New Testament as well. Depending on the context, it can have a variety of meanings. Some derive it from the Phoenician word *mommon* ("gain"), other from the Hebrew *matmon* ("treasure"). It could also have been used as the equivalent of the Hebrew מָוֶן ("money") as early as the time of Jesus. He mentions its Greek counterpart *mamonas* in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Mt. 4:24), as well as in the *Parable of the Dishonest Manager* (Lk. 16:9–13). W. BAUER: *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin–New York, 1988. 994; F. KARRENBERG: *Geld – IV. Sozialethisch*, in: *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart – Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, Zwieter Band: D-G, Mohr, Tübingen, 1980. 1318–1320. 1319.

¹³ M. JOSUTTIS: *Der Pfarrer ist anders – Aspekte einer zeitgenössischen Pastoraltheologie*, Ch. Kaiser, München, 1982. 157.

3. Money as a Deficit Motif

Several theories confirm that money in itself does not motivate. In other words, beyond a certain point, it is not possible to motivate anyone with the amount of money.¹⁴ According to Maslow's theory, our human needs can be ordered into a hierarchy. As soon as a need is satisfied, we will strive to satisfy a higher need:

“Human needs arrange themselves in hierarchies of pre-potency. That is to say, the appearance of one need usually rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more pre-potent need. Man is a perpetually wanting animal. Also, no need or drive can be treated as if it were isolated or discrete; every drive is related to the state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of other drives.”¹⁵

If we assume Maslow's motivation theory is right, it can be inferred that material possessions are not on the top of the pyramid. This is demonstrated well in the interviews where pastors explain how they prioritize values:

“When I told my parents that I was going to seminary, my father and my mother said the same thing: very well, but first go and get a proper profession, with which you can make money. And they were right you know, because as a pastor, you just cannot make good money. It's actually, it's a nice hobby being a pastor. A really nice hobby, for sure, but you're just going to starve to death, period. So, after all, they were right, I shouldn't have chosen this profession, when I thought about making a living. If I think about the beauty of this profession then I couldn't have chosen a better one. And I guess that's the reason I'm still doing it. Cause it's worth it, for all the struggles, it's worth doing theology.” (22/8)

“That's exactly what's weird about it. I don't ever get this feeling that oops I missed out on something, no. I would have been crazy to quit in the hope of more money or prestige. I mean, there are things that make you feel, that there are things that show you: you are where God wants to see you.” (14/95)

Maslow's thesis about the hierarchy of needs is true the other way around as well: as long as one of our basic needs is not satisfied, we are unable to strive for the satisfaction of higher needs. In church history, there are plenty of examples of people who consciously gave up their basic needs in order to dedicate their lives to higher causes. On the other hand, there can be situations where it is not the need for transcendence or self-actualization that matter the most: when it is not about ourselves, our career

¹⁴ FODOR, László: *Gazdaságpszichológia*, Budapest, Noran Libro, 2013. 182.

¹⁵ MASLOW, Abraham H.: *Hierarchy of Needs: A Theory of Human Motivation*, 8.

aspirations, but e.g. about the well-being of our loved ones or children. In that case, the need for safety or social needs can overwrite previous life aspirations – thereby causing a pastor a lot of inner tension.

“I wouldn’t have been able to properly sustain myself, let alone a family. Saving: no chance. So, I was being humiliated by the Reformed Church as its teacher of religion. My work was not appreciated. Church leaders acknowledged it, yet they never did anything to change that... So, I was doing this for years, with incredible zeal. And I was honestly living from the air around me, or this zeal. But you just can’t do that for very long.” (5/85)

As an amendment to Maslow’s views, in order to better understand the interviews, it needs to be mentioned that in Frederick Herzberg’s theory, money is not one of the motivators, but one of the hygiene factors.¹⁶ According to Herzberg’s motivation theory, there are two kinds of factors in work: inner motivators one the hand, which are the sources of satisfaction; and mental health (hygiene) factors on the other hand, which cause dissatisfaction. Improving mental hygiene factors will not bring about satisfaction, it will only eliminate dissatisfaction; likewise, the lack of motivation factors will not cause dissatisfaction, only the lack of satisfaction. It is the motivation factors that make people satisfied, and it is the lack of mental hygiene factors that make them dissatisfied. Consequently, money as a motivator at work, drives people only up to a certain point. Yet, if they are deprived of the money that is necessary for the desired living standard, then the lack of it can turn into a highly demotivating factor. In those interviews where money is brought up, it is usually mentioned in this manner, as a deficit motif.

“While my mother was trying to feed us on such a shoestring budget that you wouldn’t believe. It was common that she made me scratch the butter off my bread, because I had spread it too thick. These are age-old stories, but that’s how tight our budget was, honestly. It was tight in the sense that, if they had been in real big trouble, their parents or grandparents could have supported them. But they simply wouldn’t see it, or rather, it was hard for them to see how little we had. This is something I see, I often see with first generation pastors... that they get into this really bad financial situation and their parents simply don’t understand how can that be. Their child doesn’t earn much, fine, but not enough to, say, pay for the gas bill? To make ends meet? There are tons of such stories in the church. If someone is not ready for this, it can get really dramatic in a family.” (17/3)

¹⁶ F. HERZBERG: *One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?* in: Harvard Business Review 46. 1968/1. 53–62.

Most interviewees get the sense of not being appreciated in their pastoral vocation either in society, or in the church. They also deem this unfair. Pastors, too, live in this society, hence they are also influenced by consumerism: there is a correlation between their self-esteem and the money they make, or do not make. Self-esteem depends on several factors: besides a religious lifestyle and the appreciation of the environment, financial reward is also part of the formation of self-worth.¹⁷

“No salary, no people, no manse. Ok. An ancient manse with wet walls. Historic churches, on the brink of collapsing, non-existent community, there are no people. There’s no money. I mean, when I left, I was making 22,000 net, per month... Just imagine having this much for a salary. So, there’s a pastor, with a salary of 22 thousand net, per month. Now what? What to do? How am I gonna buy firewood? How’re you gonna make ends meet?... What do we see all around? Many, many people with broken lives. Miserable people who have been crippled in this struggle. With great loyalty... A lot of loyal people are being broken, going insane because of these things, because of ministry. We’ve seen what the number one purpose of a pastor, or a parish is for that matter: that pastors wouldn’t go insane. That’d be a start.” (17/36-37)

As it is obvious from the previous interview, money is not merely a medium of exchange; it is also a channel of communication.¹⁸ It conveys a subjective message in human relationships: whose work is worth so much for the society, or in this case, the church.¹⁹ American philosopher and religious scholar Needleman sees the following connection between money and the sense of being appreciated:

„Fifty percent of who we are, in this day and age, has to do with the money question. Our health, where we live, where we go, what we do with our time, how we are respected or not, what we can accomplish, all our sufferings and pleasures, one way or the other, are related to money. Money is so tied into our sense of self-worth. It may be rooted in the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Max Weber had a thesis that Calvinistic Protestantism looked upon success in the world as a sign of God’s favor. How one succeeded in the world of business and commerce, became a sign of not just our material worth, but our spiritual worth and our worth as human beings as well. Money then became very intimately connected with a sense of self.”²⁰

¹⁷ SZONDY, Máté: *Anyagi helyzet és boldogság: kapcsolat individuális és nemzetközi szinten*, in: *Mentálhigiéné és Pszichoszomatika*, 8 (4), 2007. 291–307.

¹⁸ SZABÓ: *Az áldozattól a pszeudoesztakológiáig*, 34.

¹⁹ GOODCHILD: *Theology of Money*, 8.

²⁰ M. WEST: *Tie Your Camel to the Hitching Post – An Interview with Jacob Needleman*, in: *Personal Transformation*, vol. 8. Number 5. 2000. 43–48.
http://www.personaltransformation.com/jacob_needleman.html See also: J. NEEDLEMAN: *Money and the Meaning of Life*, Doubleday, 1994. 61.

If one possible component of self-esteem is remuneration, and pastors receive less of it, then a question arises: are there any areas in their lives, apart from religious motivation, where they receive positive feedback and encouragement, in order to tackle their experience of deficit?

4. Difficulties in the Exchange of Money and Love

According to Edna B. Foa and Uriel G. Foa, humans have a number of resources with which they can reward one another.²¹ The authors describe different types of resources in their theory: status, information, money, goods, services, love, tools, and thoughts. In social interactions amongst humans, concrete objects are being exchanged as resources, but symbolic ones, highly personal as well as material ones are also being exchanged. As the diagram reveals, almost any type of resource will be exchanged with any other type of resource (or even its own type) in social interactions.

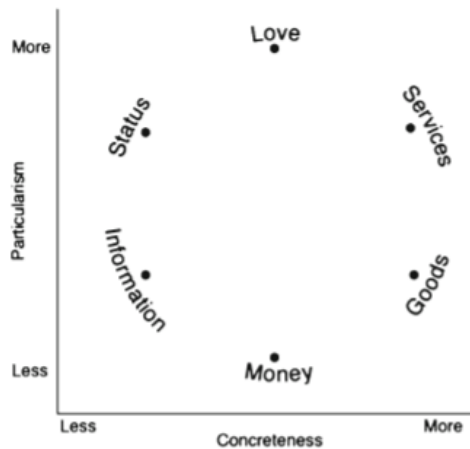


Figure 1.²²

²¹ Edna B. FOA – Uriel G. FOA: *Resource Theory: Interpersonal Behavior as Exchange*, in: K. J. GERGEN – M. S. GREENBERG – R. H. WILLS (eds.): *Social Exchange: Advances in Theory and Research*, Plenum, New York, 1980. 77–94.

²² Edna B. FOA – Uriel G. FOA: *Resource Theory of Social Exchange*, in: K. TÖRNBLOM – A. KAZEMI (eds.): *Handbook of Social Resource Theory: Theoretical Extensions, Empirical Insights, and Social Applications*, Critical Issues in Social Justice, Springer Science + Business Media, New York, 2012. 15–33.

There are many kinds of transactions in our financial lives, as well as our everyday lives. In these interactions, different resources are being exchanged. They are not independent of each other. E.g. the value of love resource highly depends on who we receive it from, whereas the value of money is less determined by its source. However, in a church context, even this has significance. Since if a pastor is financially dependent on the church, then this money is not independent of all persons. Further tension can be created in this context by the fact that, according to the theory of exchanging resources, exchanging money with love is not acceptable. Yet, what a pastor does is not simply providing service to the parish, but he/she is supposed to serve them out of love. When love is exchanged (be it a horizontal or a vertical exchange) it should rather be considered a “spiritual currency”,²³ like for example favours, good deeds, or words of affirmation. In such an exchange-theoretical equation, the value of money becomes a sensitive issue both for pastor, and parish. The former develops a feeling of shame towards money. It is depicted as a moral sin.²⁴

“So, lots of people, also in my community, were saying that I must have taken this job thingy at the city council only to gear myself up and stuff. And when they saw that all the money ended up in their pockets, they were really surprised and kept asking why don’t I spend it on something else? I just said, money isn’t the point. The point is faith.” (7/108)

Being a pastor is first and foremost a spiritual vocation. Therefore, the question arises: what remuneration is justified?²⁵ Manfred Josuttis identifies the root of the problem in the following:

“The notion that a pastor has to be different, means that they expect that, at the end of the day, they will experience the kind of human freedom which is not based on money or possessions but God. Living in a middle-class society, pastors seek to reconcile money and God with each other. As theologians, they will have to resolve the intrinsic conflict between the dependence of the prophets and the security of the priesthood.”²⁶

²³ Jürgen VON HAGEN – M. WELKER (ed.): *Money as God? The Monetisation of the Market and its Impact on Religion, Politics, Law, and Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014. 8.

²⁴ JOSUTTIS: *Der Pfarrer ist anders*, 165.

²⁵ H. PACHMANN: *Pfarrer sein – Ein Beruf und eine Berufung im Wandel*, Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2011, 79.

²⁶ JOSUTTIS: *Der Pfarrer ist anders*, 169.

5. The Principle of Fairness

Whenever money becomes emphatic in an interview, it is usually connected to the notion of fairness. What most interviewees complained about, is the fact that having the same qualification, but serving at a different location, or on a different level in church hierarchy, makes a huge financial difference. This unfairness is internal to the system, and it is less relevant to the question of where pastors financially find themselves compared to other groups of society. The principle of fairness is an especially sensitive question in human relationships, for those who work within the same organization, or those who work in similar positions.²⁷ It becomes a demotivation when pastors with the same or similar qualifications, working in the same position are rewarded very differently (by money, appreciation, bonuses, benefits, or other allowances). In this case, it is not merely the absolute value of these commodities that matter, but their relative value as well, compared to what others earn.

Tolerating unfairness in the church is all the more difficult, since the unfavoured ones perceive a system that would not allow open discussion about these financial biases, instead it insidiously sustains inequality. As it is demonstrated in the interview quotes below, injustice within the church system and the sense of unfairness can create major inner conflicts:

“About the same kind of vices: that there is a dog eat dog situation among pastors, they ban each other from their parishes, they are so jealous, if a pastor gets a little more money somewhere, or they don’t let each other conduct funerals in their territories, because then they lose the funeral charge.” (7/120)

“How is it that pastors don’t tend to relocate to smaller places in Hungary? A call from God? The Holy Spirit always guides them towards the higher salary? This Hungarian Holy Spirit is really cool, eh? So, let’s not go into that... because we’ll end up cynical.” (17/44)

Conflicts in the relationship between pastoral identity and money or possessions can be traced back to three causes: partly they are “natural” concomitants of this vocation; they are partly caused by the lack of straightforward teaching in the church; and they are partly rooted in the anomalies of the organizational functioning of the church. In coping with and tolerating these tensions, I believe Needleman’s summary is valid:

²⁷ J. S. ADAMS: *Inequity in social exchange*, in: Leonard BERKOWITZ (ed.): *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, Academic Press, New York, 1965. 267–299. See also: J. S. ADAMS: *Toward an understanding of inequity*, in: *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1965, Vol. 67. 422–436.

“Money is the principal means in the modern world for organizing the material part of ourselves and our lives. To know money is to know the organizing, desiring, creating ways that we act in the world... The meaning of spirit appears when it’s related to our life in the world. While we’re on this earth, we are meant to be in relationship to these two worlds. The real meaning of life comes when you feel and know that there is a connection [...] Phrases in the great traditions, »a pearl of great price« and »the one thing needful«, speak of that one thing which is the only really important thing in life: the spiritual truth in your own heart... At the same time, there are a lot of secondary things that are pretty important, that need our attention and care; otherwise, »the one thing needful« will be impossible.”²⁸

Living between two worlds

As I see it, the main point where the vocation of a pastor differs from other vocations is that the pastor does not only face the questions and challenges of living the Christian life as other believers do, but „models” and teaches these. From time to time, whether from the pulpit, in a religious education class, or in a personal conversation, the pastor „makes available” his/her relationship with God, as well as his/her reflections on the world and himself/herself. This is a lifestyle that continually looks for connections between the Bible’s testimony and today’s world. The church is an organization that is here and is to come, it is visible and invisible at the same time; it is very much in the world, but does not live by the values of this world. Living on the border between two worlds, the pastor carries the message of the Kingdom of God; he/she represents, for himself/herself and for his/her environment, a spiritual value system and lifestyle that is different from that of our world. It is necessary that the pastor, just like any Christian, comes into, and remains in a relationship with God, himself/herself, and his/her environment. He/she must be honest with himself/herself in personal dilemmas, and as an „official Christian”, the pastor must find confidence of being a role model for Christian life and live according to nonmaterial values in the middle of a consumer society.

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²⁸ WEST: *Tie Your Camel to the Hitching Post*, 47.

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