

Abstract

The purpose of the present thesis is to put the idea of finances, that is, money in its right place in the structure of theology. The thorough study that has been made on the subject is based on the widely used notion of „life-world” which was taken as a dogmatical starting point for the research. The conceptual usage of the term „life-world” emphasises the public relevance of money as one of the basic institutions of human culture today. In order to be able to situate the idea of money in the structure of theology, we first need to take the outcome of sociological and economical research into consideration. These two areas – sociology and economy – and the relating disciplines are much more money-concerned by their nature. When the above mentioned effects are substantially observed by a theologian and are taken into account by his or her cogitation, the important features and qualities of money will come natural to him or her as well: they will stand out and become squarely obvious. Four in these theologically significant qualities of money are being examined in this theses, such as its capability to evaluate, the way money stands with time, the loss of money’s validity and the role money plays in obtaining or abstracting freedom. Money, as the communicative means of the dispensation of scarce resources in the society, concentrates on deficiency and has the „limited” as its starting point. In order to eliminate the threat caused by the „limited”, money tries to find a way to the infinite (unlimited), which, as a matter of fact, cannot be reached by any kind of quantitative and quantifiable accession or increase. Money as a means of communication can be considered as the result of a threefold resultant. The first is the change signifying horizontal communication, while the other two is doing the same with the vertical: these are power and the sacral resultants. Power as a resultant is enhanced by the everyday connection of money to power or authority. On the contrary, the sacral roots are not at all apparent today. At the same

time, at the early stages of the modern era in Western Europe there happened a vital revaluation in the history of money, which undoubtedly led to the development of global free-market capitalism. From then on a progressively accelerating monetary process can be perceived in the society. The prime factor here is the drawing away from the obsolete order of the medieval society based on donation and the switch over to capitalism determined by money which is now released from the interest-ban. By the evolvement of the new monetary (money and interest) system an emerging concentration process is brought into action. Money loses its value (e.i. its substance or fund) and the constraints of interest caused by the trusts behind money result in an optional increase but also in a compulsion. Through the functional differentiation in the society the logic of one sub- system will cover the sphere of another sub-system, too. By now money has become the primarily decisive means of communication in the society. One reason of it may be the enormous breakthrough of economical enterprises all over the world. Another reason of the appraisalment of money today can be the worldwide abrasion of those historico-political but also economic values that determined the identity of a society for many centuries in the past. We may say that money as such can even take over the function that religion has been standing for over the previous range of time. The image economy makes of a person, changes, too. Taking hold of the human personality by aspects typical for the philosophy of economy is unacceptable because of the theological definiteness of a human person. The anthropological consequences of the theological survey of money certify that the basic claim of economy to be by all means rational cannot be fully accomplished. The man determined by his economical environment can only be specified by his emotive circumstances which are far from being rational, even in the post-modern, scientific era. In order to alleviate the effects of the harmful process of putting money in the first place, economy should be reinstalled as an integral part in human culture as a whole. This way money, beyond its peculiar undistinctiveness which is determined by the sheer practical aspects of its usage, may acquire a more abounding character. Money and affluence can both be taken as a product and as a part of human culture only if we are aware of the evolution of money and its application in history. Inculturation in a theological sense is meant to find the place of money not only in the area of Christian ethics, but in dogmatics, too. The dogmatical start-up of money can be the estrangement of man, which leads to – after the words of Paul Tillich – a formless dynamics. In the opinion of some theologians, money – contrary to the estimations made in the fields of economics –, is not a neutral entity. Within the frames of theology money has its place in hamartology, since – taking the nature and the texture of money as a default position – human existence can only be defined as a mood or form of life that is determined by deficiency. Con-

trary to that, the different orientation of Christianity intends to communicate the infinite within the frames of the finite world. We may come to the conclusion that both on a personal and a collective level, this kind of communication can serve as an alternative way of existence beside the one determined by money. The potency of this new alternative is drawn out of Christian eschatology. Accordingly we may say that the real theological limit or – in a more figurative sense – barrier for money originates in the absence of the eschatological factor. That is why the divine position of money can only be a sociological observation and not a theological definition. The conflict between money and eschatology plays an important role also in the history of theology. The most offensive violation of the limit set by the New Testament between this world's possessions (e.i. immanence) and transcendence was the attempt to have justification expressed in plain financial terms. Another radical attempt to step over this limit has its point of departure somewhere in secularized modern age free-market capitalism. In this context money has such an impact on one's everyday life that can easily make one forget his or her life's eschatological dimensions. By its self-centeredness and its demand of totality this process makes the idea of eschaton relative and empty. If the critical function is taken seriously, the theological conception of sin should be taken seriously, too. One may as well say, that to the relevant endeavor to be able to expose the concept of sin in a modern and a more differentiated way than before, the throughgoing theological survey of money can give an essential contribution. Justification is the basic experience of eschatology. By this experience not only the future gets into shape, but one's present day observations gain a new meaning, too. The particular apprehension of justification involves in itself the opportunity and the dimensions that the revaluation of money can bring along. Justification in its original sense is nothing else but an economy-based metaphor with the meaning of the restoration one's freedom. The latter however is a practical, effective and caritative materialization of a dogmatical axiom. As shown by the example of the development of the theory of justification in the past, the conception of sin and its supra-human dimension can be more evidently apprehended through the idea of money. The meaning of sin as a state of estrangement can well be captured today in the order and the structure of a society highly dominated by the imperious influence and authority of money. Having money primarily implies the chance to cover one's material needs and in the second place it can give one the chance for participation in society. The compelling duty of the Christian churches today is the active representation and transmission of the veracity of justification in the society through an economy-conscious way of existence. As a consequence of its theological allocation money will become the subject of a learning process. In some way it has to be integrated in the human struggle for survival both on an individual and

a public level. The above mentioned learning process first opens up the future as a perspective and then the eschatological dimensions of life as a whole. Drawing the final conclusions of the research, having gotten in with money, a really widespread personal and common learning is supposed to begin, which will make humans be able to set the necessary limits and be able to consider material goods as more attractive in the long run.