Exploring the present discourse on the Early Church Fathers’ teachings on poverty in order to develop proposals for the Johannesburg church’s engagement with the poor

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature              Date
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Abstract

In post-Apartheid South Africa the issues relating to poverty and specifically missional engagement with the poor remains a priority. In order to foster creative imaginations for this missional task, this research focuses on the discourse on four Early Church Fathers’ engagement with the poor. This discourse was brought into dialogue with four Afrikaans Johannesburg churches through phenomenological interviews. Using Susan Holman’s interpretive framework of sensing, sharing and embodying the kingdom dialogue between the teachings and praxis of Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Augustine and four Johannesburg churches were explored in order to develop proposals for the Johannesburg church’s mission towards the poor.

Key words:

Rich; Poor; Early Church Fathers; mission; poverty; wealth; post-apartheid; Afrikaans churches; Johannesburg
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CHAPTER 1

1. STUDY OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction to the study

As a pastor, the contextual arena of my vocation is that of an affluent congregation in Johannesburg called Claypot. In order for us to live faithfully in our city, Claypot has identified Mammon as the chief enemy of our faith, for "we cannot serve two masters" (Mt 6:24). We find ourselves in a post-apartheid era where the divide between the haves and the have-nots is still enormously wide.

As a community we have been on a journey to dismantle the seductive power of money. This has led us into the exciting world of breaking the barriers between rich and poor. Being with the underprivileged has helped us to get in touch with our real humanity and also our own poverty. Most of us never realized how integrally the faith journey is linked to being with the poor. I, for one, was raised in the last years of apartheid. This meant that I lived the privileged life of a white middle-class Afrikaans male. For the first 25 years of my life, the circles I lived in, the friends I made and the faith I lived out had almost no interaction with the deprived. Apart from the beggars at intersections and the occasional outreach, my life never intersected with the poor. My theology did not challenge me with the Missio Dei.

Claypot started a study on what the implications of a journey of the rich towards the poor would be for us. It took us back to the teachings of the early church fathers. What we discovered has become a liberating invitation to challenge our lives of constant increase in standard of living and become part of God's mission towards the poor.

1.2 Problem statement
The suburban churches in Johannesburg have not risen fully to the challenge of poverty; the gospel has been reduced to an individualistic endeavour with a private eschatological hope. In particular, the social dimensions of the gospel with its economic implications have been left behind. This dichotomy between faith and wealth has led to a compartmentalization of the Christ follower’s responsibility towards the poor. Wallis (2005:76) comments, “Poverty is no more just a political issue than slavery was; … [I]t is a question that challenges everything we say about our faith in God and our allegiance to Jesus Christ. In other words, the massive nature of global poverty presents us with more than a test of our economy; it confronts us with a test of our conversion.”

With the crowning of capitalism as the dominant economic arrangement of our era (Soto 2001:1), the church cannot afford to accept this prevailing system uncritically. We are called to live in the rhythms of an alternative kingdom. Punt (2000:325) states that poverty is one of the major credibility issues for the post-apartheid church. During the first four centuries the early church had an amazing impact on the culture around it. Synthesizing faith and wealth launched it into a radical mission towards the poor. This in turn led to immense credibility and growth. Even one of its staunchest opponents, the atheist emperor Julian, commented:

Atheism (i.e. Christian faith) has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help we should render to them.

(Shelley 1995:36).

Unfortunately, as Countryman (1980:1) has shown, the early church fathers’ teachings and practices towards the poor have almost disappeared in the twentieth century’s ideological battles between capitalism, socialism and
communism. Their voices have been enlisted as support for arguments for or against these ideologies.

Gonzalez (2002:xii) states that the study of the doctrine of wealth in the patristic writings “has usually been ignored by historians of theology, and it is even less known by the church at large”. These early Christ followers, according to Stark (1997:84), were known for their love towards the poor, and they were the leaders in areas of benevolence.

In a post-apartheid South Africa there is a tendency for church members to expect the government to attend to the issues of poverty, yet although it is a major role-player, government cannot solve poverty on its own. Western development and the recent political freedom of our democracy have not yet liberated the poor.

The church has an immense opportunity to once again play a leading role in working with the poor. Yet we are faced with a problem of resources. The scarcity is not financial but exemplary. This study explores whether the example of these early followers could serve as an impetus for the South African church’s mission today.

The early Christians’ teachings and conduct towards the poor attracted many in the Roman culture towards Christ; this example waned with the legalizing of Christianity and the birth of Christendom. Yet in response to the legitimization of the church by the Roman Empire the monastic tradition was born. The monastic tradition took ministry to the poor seriously; and continued living the teachings of the early fathers.

Unfortunately the Constantinian church lost the teachings of the fathers and this led to a distinction between “normal” Christians, who could retain wealth in a relatively selfish manner, and the “super” Christians, whose imagination was impregnated with the teachings and the examples of the church fathers.
Gonzalez (2002:232) notes that capitalism developed “most rapidly in societies and churches where the monastic movement was no longer present to serve as a reminder – even though at times a very imperfect reminder – of earlier Christian views on the relationship between faith and wealth”.

The question of faith and wealth, and specifically how it influences the church’s mission, has been raised by Newbigin (1978:95), stating, “The ideology of the free market has proved itself more powerful than Marxism. It is, of course, not just a way of arranging economic affairs. It has deep roots in the human soul. It can be met and mastered only at the level of religious faith, for it is a form of idolatry. The churches have hardly begun to recognize that this is probably their most urgent missionary task during the coming century.”

With the fall of communism it is now time to allow the early church fathers to be in dialogue with ideologies that have now become commonplace in our society and churches. In our South African context this is free market capitalism.

Therefore the question that this study addresses is: What did contemporary theologians rediscover about the teachings and praxis of selected church fathers and how can their discoveries guide us in developing proposals for our own mission towards the poor?

1.2.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to formulate proposals for a model which could help the Johannesburg Afrikaans churches to engage with today’s poverty. This will be done through studying the discourse by contemporary theologians on the early church fathers’ beliefs and practices, with special reference to their kerugma, diakonia and koinonia.

1.2.2 Delimitations of the study
• This study will not read the fathers in the Greek or Latin texts but will study the way in which these fathers are interpreted in the present discourse on their message to present economic issues (notably the works of Justo Gonzalez and Susan Holman).

• This study will not perform text-critical analysis on New Testament passages.

• This study is not a sociological and economic profile of the early church.

• This study will not look at English-speaking South African churches.

• This study will not look at studies of church fathers other than Clement of Alexandria, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom and Augustine.

1.2.3 Guiding questions

• What is the present discourse on the views of the early church fathers’ practices and beliefs in relation to the poor?

• What are the beliefs and practices of the Afrikaans churches in Johannesburg in relation to the poor?

• How can the present discourse on the early church fathers guide us in our modern-day dilemma?

1.2.4 Definition of terms

The early church fathers (ECF): In this study the early church fathers will be a collective term used for Clement of Alexandria, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom and Augustine of Hippo.

Afrikaans churches in Johannesburg (AJC): This refers to the churches that took part in the research.
1.2.5 Assumptions

The first assumption is that the early church fathers had specific, definable beliefs and practices towards the poor.

The second assumption is that a study of the rediscovery of their beliefs and practices will produce structured questions to be used for interviews.

The third assumption is that the Afrikaans churches in Johannesburg have specific beliefs and practices towards the poor that can be evaluated in the light of the teachings and practices of the early church fathers.

1.3 Research gap

In the battle between the political camps of socialism, communism and capitalism during the 20th century, the early Christian fathers’ teachings have been reduced by these differing camps to “champions of their own or as whipping boys for the opponents’ point of view” (Countryman 1980:1).

They were not heard as voices with their own, valuable message for us in the 21st century. This gap is now being filled by the present discourse on the ECFs. The present discourse attempts to understand the meaning of the ECF texts for the context of modern Europe and the USA. This discourse has not, however, interpreted the meaning of the ECF’s teachings on wealth and poverty within the context of a rich, white, congregation in the Africa of the 21st century – a context of which the present sample of the Johannesburg suburban churches in this study can be seen as representative.

Research on the fathers’ teachings on wealth and poverty and an evaluation of the Johannesburg suburban churches’ beliefs and practices towards the poor in the light of this research has never been conducted.
In the Science of Mission our responsibility towards the poor is frequently emphasized, but there is a definite research gap into how the teachings and practices of the early church fathers can help us in our mission to the poor.

Hengel (1986:231) concludes in his study that “In many respects, an abyss separates us from the early church. But for that very reason we must try to see those things that still link us together, with the aim of making its spiritual and social life fruitful for our crisis-torn time”. This conclusion describes the research gap which has led to this study.

1.4 Methodology

This study will make use of an adaptation of Van Engen’s (1994:248-253) “methodological components of a biblical theology of mission” described as a “tripartite theology of mission”. The model develops new avenues for mission by looking at a specific context (C), using qualitative research methods such as observation, interviews and focus group discussions. It then rereads Scripture (A) in the light of the given context, which leads to new mission actions of the faith community (B). All three arenas are linked through an integrating theme.

For the purposes of this study the model will be adapted by using the three phases that are based on answering the guiding questions mentioned in 1.2.3.. The model will therefore:
• Explore the present discourse on the beliefs and practices of the early church fathers using a critical literature review (Mouton 2001:179-8), (A) in the adapted model
• Explore the beliefs and practices of the Afrikaans churches in Johannesburg using a qualitative phenomenological design (Leedy & Ormrod 2005:139), (C) in the adapted model
• Develop proposals for models for mission towards the poor, (B) in the adapted model

The integrative theme is poverty.

Throughout the research process each arena will thus influence the other arenas and thereby help in the development of an interactive methodology. Each phase will now be described in fuller detail:

1.4.1 Literature review

Mouton (2001:280) notes that the selection of literature has to be “representative” in order to come to an understanding of the relevant scholarship. Therefore the
base texts chosen to explore the beliefs and practices of the early Christian fathers are the following:

- *Property and riches in the early church* – (Hengel 1986).
- *The rich Christian in the church of the early empire: contradictions and accommodations* – (Countryman 1980).
- *The economic problem in biblical and patristic thought* – (Gordon 1988).
- *Poverty and leadership in the later Roman Empire* – (Brown 2002).
- Wealth and poverty in early church and society – (Holman 2008)
- God knows there’s need – (Holman 2009)

As stated above, I made use of the works of Gonzalez and Holman as the primary basis for discourse. In addition to these texts the early Christian fathers’ writings were consulted (using translations) and relevant journal articles were incorporated into the study.

### 1.4.2 Phenomenological design

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:139) describe this method as “a study that attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a particular situation.”

### 1.4.2.1 Data collection

a) Sampling
Creswell (1998:148) notes that a phenomenological study should have a sample size of 5 to 25 individuals. The sample in this research consisted of the four ministers of the Afrikaans churches mentioned. In addition to these individuals, focus groups with the members of each church were conducted. These focus groups consisted of 8-12 people. The total number of interviews was thus four, and the number of focus groups was also four. Polkinghorne (1989:47) notes that subjects chosen should have had experience in the topic being researched and must be able to express themselves. Van Kaam (in Polkinghorne 1989) proposes that subjects have six important requirements:

- Lingual skills that will enable them to express their experiences
- The ability to reflect on emotions and feelings without reserve and shame
- The ability to express how these emotions influenced behaviour
- Having had the experience at a relatively recent date
- Ability to exhibit a spontaneous interest in their experience
- An ability to write or report their experiences

With the abovementioned requirements in mind, the participants for the focus groups were chosen from members of the churches. All participants were asked to complete a consent form.

b) Interviews

The data were obtained through in-depth interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2005:4) describe interviews as “conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion”.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:147) suggest that questions be prepared in advance. Researchers are to “limit your list of questions to a small number, perhaps five to
seven”. Using the overall categories of what the fathers believed and practised (derived from the literature review), a list of questions was prepared.

Interviews were held in places that offered the least distraction.

All interviews were recorded in order to comply with the suggestion of Leedy and Ormrod (2001:149) to “record responses verbatim”. In addition to the recordings, field notes were taken in order to write down other observations.

c) Data analysis

Polkinghorne (1989:50) describes data analysis as “the core stage of the research efforts … [I]ts purpose is to derive from the collection of protocols, with their naïve descriptions, to specific examples of the experience under consideration, a description of the essential features of that experience”. The data were analysed using a “data analysis spiral” (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:152).

The data were:

- Organized, breaking down the text into smaller units and themes
- Perused in order to discover possible categories or preliminary interpretations
- Classified in categories and themes in order to find meaning in the data.
- Synthesized in order to offer propositions and hypotheses.

d) Validity

The validity of the study was tested using the nine general criteria developed by Leedy and Ormrod (2005:154-155):

- **Purposefulness**: the study sticks to the questions posed by the research problem.
- **Explicitness of assumptions and biases**: the researcher communicates assumptions and biases.
- **Rigour**: there is precision in data collecting and analysing.
- **Open-mindedness**: there is a willingness to accept new data that differ from expectations.
- **Completeness**: this is achieved by taking the appropriate time to gather data.
- **Coherence**: the data yield findings that are coherent through triangulation, and contradictions are reconciled.
- **Persuasiveness**: logical arguments and weight of the evidence persuade one interpretation to the exclusion of others.
- **Consensus**: there is consensus between the researcher, participants and other scholars.
- **Usefulness**: the research is useful for promoting better understanding of the area studied.

### 1.4.2.2 Development of proposals for new models of mission

The data collected through the literature review and the interviews were used as a basis for this phase. After comparing the data, suggestions for further studies are presented.
CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will explore the present discourse on the beliefs and practices of the early church fathers, using a literature review.

The present discourses on the teachings and practices of Clement of Alexandria, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom and Augustine were reviewed in order to rediscover what these leaders believed and practised with regard to the poor and how this influenced their mission towards the people around them. These beliefs were then used to structure interviews in the latter part of the study.

Each section of the literature review therefore consists of a) Background and social standing; b) Kerugma; c) Questions arising for interviews. Before this study delves into the abovementioned areas, this study will offer a general introduction to the literature review.

2.1 Introductory remarks

At the outset of this study we have to consider whether the teachings of the early church fathers on wealth and poverty can help us in our current economic situation. Is the gulf between our and their times not too great?

The early church's attitudes and practices towards the poor have been researched in the twentieth century under the rubric of the battle between communism and capitalism. The purpose was to either prove or disprove the suggestion that the early church fathers were communists, and this debate revolved around the question of private property (Ryan 1903). Between the two World Wars “the controversy seems to have collapsed of exhaustion caused by the endless repetition of the same arguments” (Countryman 1980:8). In the
1980s we see a new discourse emerging, as can be seen in the following overview.

Countryman (1980:18) notes that these studies were an anachronistic reading of the patristic age and advises that studies of this period may “have relevance to the economic controversies of our time … the first step toward discovering that relevance would be to turn one’s back on the modern issues and concentrate on the life of the ancient world”. He steered the research into a new direction by looking into the role of the rich in the early church. Through a study of the social role of the rich, he concluded that the early church had a mixed reaction towards the wealthy. On the positive side, they saw riches as a means to obtain rewards if they were used as almsgiving. On the other hand, Christians had to separate themselves from their possessions by “spiritual detachment and physical simplicity of life” (Countryman 1980:209).

Avila (1983:13) challenges Countryman in noting that recent developments in “our knowledge of socioeconomic and political conditions of the ancient world has increased tremendously in recent years …. [T]heir work has made it possible concretely to situate the writings of the early Christian philosophers in both their socio-cultural and their political-economic context”. By looking at Clement of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom and Augustine, he concludes that the “political and social form of the early Christian movement was really communism or socialism”, and thereby continues the old rationalization for proof-texting the early church fathers in order to support a specific economic ideology (Avila 1983:152).

Hengel (1986:230) looks at the role of property and riches in the early church and shows that the issue was “not settled in the early church, nor was there any clear and comfortable solution”. He attributes the development of the church’s doctrine on wealth to the influence of Greek natural-law thinking and the ethics of Judaism. He contends that the example of Christ drew these two streams
together and that it “liberates believers to do good with open hands, to overcome social barriers and to work for a just order”. In order to obtain the rewards of the life hereafter, the early church encouraged the concept of merit, and by so doing motivated believers to use wealth in order to obtain their salvation.

Mullin (1983:64), in his survey of the early church, shows that the fathers’ doctrines were influenced by: the Jewish tradition, the Graeco-Roman tradition, and the Stoics. “What emerged was a group of attitudes and practices, already defined by the early fifth century, never in harmony and sometimes incompatible, but usually capable of generating dynamic and constructive evolutions of Christian behavior”.

Gonzalez (2002:xiii) defines his study as a “history of the views that Christians held on economic matters, particularly on the origin, significance, and use of wealth”. He surveys the writings of the Greeks, Romans and Jews as a background; furthermore he looks at the writings before and after Constantine.

In contrast to Countryman (1980), Hengel (1986), Mullin (1983) and Weaver (1987), who state that there were no defining and normative teachings among the fathers with regard to the poor, Gonzalez concludes his study by summing up the common views of the early fathers:

- Faith and wealth should be discussed together.
- Usury and any loan on interest are to be condemned.
- In giving to the poor one lends to God.
- Not helping someone when it is within your power is like thievery.
- Wealth is not bad in itself; it is the person who uses wealth who uses it for either good or bad.
- Alms were given by distributing everything one had above the necessities of life.
- Private property is acceptable, with the limitations that: God is the ultimate owner; we are only temporary owners; wealth was begotten through
injustice and should be tempered through proper use (usually defined in terms of sufficiency or usefulness).

- Wealth should be shared (Gonzalez 2002:225-229).

Holman (2009:6) believes the early Christian writers are interlocutors who could aid us in our mission by informing and challenging our current dialogues about social justice. Childers (2003:71) describes this as “expand[ing] their circle of dialogue partners”. He notes that the church fathers’ criticism of materialism can raise some important questions for us.

Holman notes further that there are commonalities between our time and those of the early fathers. They also

- Faced risk, insecurity, destructive responses, and violence
- Faced enormous social problems
- Had biases and prejudices
- Faced similar difficulties in deciding how best to use philanthropic resources
- Made good and bad decisions
- Lived in a “complex social … network of theological disagreements, inflation, war, floods, fire, hail, drought, and constantly changing politics.

She then proposes “several paradigmatic models to guide a narrative reading … that might enable us to practically apply their teachings “to social welfare issues today”. She notes that though there is a historical distance between us and the early Christian fathers, we can benefit by being open to a dialogue. She notes that there are dangers in “quoting from these authors out of context”, yet “the challenge to sensibly apply these ancient moral writings to related problems in our own world also offers exciting opportunities”.

Holman proposes four signposts for interpreting the texts of the early church fathers. Firstly, she advocates not accepting the text at face value but being open to those places where the text troubles us – she notes that “the practice of
‘helping the poor’ in the ancient world did not always ensure ‘social justice’ as we understand it” (2009:11). Secondly, she reminds us of the context of “a society that was framed and defined within a patronage model” (2009:12), which is vastly different from our capitalistic and democratic ideals. Thirdly, these texts hardly touch on the “gendering of poverty” (2009:14). Fourthly, she advises that one should “be aware of points at which the ancient authors also differed among themselves” (2009:14).

Even though the distance between the early church fathers and us is vast, keeping Homan’s signposts in mind we will now explore the thoughts of four of the prominent leaders of the early church. We will explore each one under the headings of a) Background and social standing; and b) Kerugma. We will then also explore questions for interviews.

In 1978 Newbigin (1978:95) noted that capitalism was already winning the battle as the prominent economic system of the time. He noted that it was not just an economic ideology; he went so far as to call it a form of idolatry. The implications for mission were immense. Newbigin stated that the church has an immense responsibility to face this challenge and called it the “most urgent missionary task during the coming century”. With the fall of communism Newbigin's words became even more relevant. In the following explorations of the thoughts of Clement of Alexandria, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom and Augustine we will take a tentative step towards this “most urgent missionary task”.

2.2 Clement of Alexandria

2.2.1 Background and social standing

Clement (c.150–215) was the head of the catechetical school in Alexandria. With the early church’s penetration into the Roman Empire, it evolved into a “mixture
of social levels” (Meeks 1983:3). Countryman (1980:48) notes that Alexandria was a moneyed city in the empire, and Clement himself was rich and “at home with the subject of wealth”. As more affluent people sought to enter the church, Weaver (1987:369) explains that a diversity of opinions resulted in a debate as to whether they should be allowed to become members of the church.

Some members wanted to include the rich recruits, as it afforded them some affluence and influence within their cultural milieu. Others were sceptical and recalled Jesus’ radical call for renunciation. Clement of Alexandria wrote a treatise on this question entitled “Who is the rich to be saved?” As Gonzalez (2002:112) reports, this was the “first attempt at a systematic discussion of the relationship between faith and wealth”.

The treatise was based on Jesus’ teaching about the rich man in Mark 10:17-31; which includes Jesus’ famous phrase that “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Mk 10:25). This particular text sparked intense debate: the main contention was whether it was possible for the rich “to be saved without surrendering their wealth entirely” (Countryman 1980:48).

Clement was influenced by the Stoic principle of *apatheia*, with its ideal of freeing the soul from any passionate attachments (Gonzalez 2002:113, Newhauser 2000:11-12, Weaver 1987:370, Countryman 1980:61).

His Stoicism, “predilection of Platonic philosophy” (Phan 1984:63) and the school’s famous allegorical method of interpretation influenced the writing of the treatise. In addition to this paper he also refers to the issues of faith and wealth in his other books entitled *The instructor* and his *Stromata*.

### 2.2.2 Kerugma

#### 2.2.2.1 Attitudes towards the rich (Who is the rich man to be saved?)
Clement introduced his treatise with a double injunction. In the first place, wealthy people should not be praised, for the attention and adoration given to them will lead to pride and encourage them to “utterly despise all things except wealth” (Wogaman & Strong 1996:34). The rich should not obtain any special treatment. In this context one sees the echoing of James’ embargo against showing partiality towards the wealthy (Ja 2:1).

Clement balances his opening injunction by, on the other hand, admonishing those who are engaging with the wealthy not to be “rudely insolent” towards them and also not to “cringe to them for … avaricious ends” (Clement 1990:11). These commands reflected opposing opinions within his school. Having laid the foundational balancing motivators, he then instructs those who do engage with the rich to:

- Relieve the rich of despair by the Word of God
- Admonish them not to “entertain a causeless fear”
- Teach them how, like an athlete, they should train themselves for the race set before them (Roberts 2007:591-592)

The rich man should contemplate God’s generosity but should not think that entrance into the church and the kingdom will be without effort and without training. Clement therefore saw the rich not as automatically unworthy of salvation; but they would have to train in order to enter the eternal kind of life (Johnson 2005:779). Training becomes a metaphor that Clement employs in this writing and he returns to it on a regular basis.

2.2.2.2 Hermeneutical method

After quoting Jesus’ story of the rich young ruler, Clement reflects on his hermeneutical method. He admonishes his readers to “not listen to His utterances carnally” (Davis & Hays 2003:95). Clement has been considered a founder of the hermeneutics of allegorical interpretation (Osborn 2005:78). Using
this deeper hermeneutic, Clement explains that Jesus did not really intend the young man to give away his possessions in the literal sense. What matters is that he rids his heart of the ebb and flow of his emotional attachments towards wealth. In this passage one traces the Stoic influences in his writing, the true meaning of this passage being an inner renunciation – possessions must be banished from the soul. In this regard he serves as the forerunner of those who interpret the difficult words of Jesus by “spiritualizing the text” (Moreschini & Norelli 2005:264).

Clement’s reasons for focusing on an inner renunciation are:

- Those who do not have the necessities of life cannot seek God because of their continual struggle for survival.
- Giving all to the poor is not a new phenomenon; others have done the same in order to obtain leisure time to accumulate wisdom and to gain fame and glory (he cites Anaxagoras, Democriti and Crateses).
- Some who give away their possession lust even more for possessions because of their loss.
- Those who have nothing cannot give to others (Willard 1991:194) – therefore if everyone gives their possessions away, Jesus’ command to feed the hungry would be nonsensical.
- Money in itself is not to blame; it is the owner who uses the money to either “possess” it or do “good” with it. Money is only an instrument; the person who uses the money determines whether it will be an instrument of good or evil.

His hermeneutic serves in developing the rationalizations mentioned above.

2.2.2.3 Hermeneutical quandary

Osiek has asked whether following Clement’s hermeneutical method leads to any physical practices to “strip the soul from these passions”, or if Clement is only
advocating a specific attitude towards money, a “virtue of detachment” (1983:137). Does his non-carnal interpretation lead to any form of practical engagement or does he only advocate a specific attitude?

Gonzalez has noted that some scholars have described Clement’s treatise as only a challenge to one’s emotions, having the right heart, without any effect on the financial aspects of one’s life. These scholars hold that Clement was “expanding the eye of the needle” (2002:114) so that the wealthy could enter more easily into the kingdom.

Newhauser states, “Such sentiments had the effect of justifying the existing gulf between rich and poor, and of devaluing social change; ultimately, they amount not only to a theological idealization and legitimization of wealth in the church, but of poverty as well” (2006:12). The same train of thought is found in Lindberg: “Clement of Alexandria even claimed that because the rich person need not worry about livelihood, he may be less greedy and therefore closer to salvation” (1981:39). Countryman describes Clement’s writing as a treatise “devoted … to vindicating the possibility that the rich can be saved even as the rich” (1980:49).

In contrast to the above conclusions, Karras holds that Clement’s treatise is “much more than that … for it is founded on a notion of responsibility, reciprocity, and stewardship” (2004:49). Gonzalez also thinks that there is more to Clement’s treatise than having the right heart. He writes, “On the contrary, both in this treatise and in his other works, Clement repeats and adds to the harsh words … elsewhere about excessive wealth and luxury” (2002:114). Hellerman (2001:151) describes Clement’s treatise as “a dialogue in highly practical terms about Christian social responsibility”.

When one reads the rest of the treatise one is inclined to agree with the latter statements rather than the former. Weaver concurs, concluding that for Clement “it was one’s attitude towards possessions and the behaviour which issued from that attitude which counted before God” (1987:371). Osborn (2005:251), who describes Clement’s work as “sensible and subtle”, succinctly disagrees with
Hengel and Countryman when he states that “most of his interpreters have missed the point because they have limited the solutions to two – either the rich man should abandon his wealth or he should hold on to it”.

### 2.2.2.4 Hermeneutics evolving into praxis

Clement illustrates through specific portraits how his hermeneutic will flow into practice, how (to use his metaphor) the rich can train. The rich can be affluent and avoid the pitfall of clinging to possessions by becoming what Pelikan (2003:19) describes as the “genuinely ‘poor in spirit”’. He describes the passage as

> …[a] remarkable passage, which could probably without a great deal of difficulty be transposed into any era of Christian history (and, for that matter, into any Christian confession), Clement set forth five component and tightly interrelated principles of the Christian stewardship of property and money.  

(Pelikan 2003:20)

Pelikan (2003:20-24) summarizes these characteristics of the wealthy who are truly poor as people who:

- see possessions as the gift of God; material things are not inherently evil
- understand that possessions were given for the purpose of other men and for their benefit
- are not slaves to their possessions; Clement is the father of the famous maxim that we should possess our possessions and not let our possessions possess us
- do not define their life and identity by what they possess
- are able to live through either abundance or loss (echoing Paul in Phlp 4:11-13).
This paragraph is an example of how Clement shows an inner attitude flowing into concrete actions. It is this synthesis of attitude and actions that he sees as the goal for the wealthy, or in other words “worthy training”.

2.2.2.5 Redefining rich and poor

In addition to his definition of those who are “poor in spirit”, Clement then proceeds to redefine “rich” and “poor”. The rich person is one “who is rich in virtue, and is capable of making a holy and faithful use of any fortune”. The poor person is he “who is rich, according to the flesh, and turns life into outward possession, which is transitory and perishing, and now belongs to one, now to another, and in the end to nobody at all” (Stackhouse 1995:145).

The rich man in Jesus’ parable was an example of someone whose soul clung to possessions. Clement comments that for this man it was necessary to withdraw from his wealth and enrol in a discipline where he could be re-trained to use possessions in the right way.

In this way Clement shows paradoxically that for some it will be necessary to actually renounce their possessions in order to rid their souls of them; an emotional exercise will not suffice (Gonzalez 2002:114).

(Sider 1997:76) comments that this man’s withdrawal would not place him in a position of being destitute, because Jesus told him to renounce his possessions and then follow Him; “in other words, he invited him to join a community of sharing and love, where his security would not be based on individual property holdings, but on openness to the Spirit and on the loving care of new-found brothers and sisters”.

In one of his strongest passages, Clement reiterates that for some the desired attitude will only be obtained by total renunciation of possessions. “You may even
go against wealth. Say, ‘Certainly Christ does not debar me from property. The Lord does not envy.’ But do you see yourself overcome and overthrown by it? Leave it, throw it away, hate, renounce, flee” (Alexandria 1990:127).

Here it becomes clear that even though Clement is in fact countering a “harshly literal interpretation” (Weaver 1987:369) of Jesus’ words that call for everyone to renounce all of their possessions, he is in no way capitulating to an unconditional acceptance of the wealthy in the Christian community.

Hengel gives a balanced view of Clement’s intent when he writes:

> The generally expressed radical and rigorist criticism of property was toned down and made more inward, though the possibility of completely renouncing possessions remained open. Riches were judged critically, but were no longer ruled out in principle; stress was laid, rather, on strict obligations to the community and the right use of them. Inner freedom in the detachment of faith had to prove itself in generosity and the renunciation of avarice and luxury.

(Hengel, 1986:226)

In order to give hope, Clement shows that even though the disciples were astonished by His stark remarks, Jesus told them that what is impossible with man is possible with God. The only thing that is needed to enrol in this training school is willingness, for “God conspires with willing souls” (Old 1998:302).

2.2.2.6 Usefulness as against luxury

Clement shows that someone who has been born into wealth is not automatically barred from heaven. For if one is cursed for being born wealthy, then that person is “wronged by God, who created him, in having vouchsafed to him temporary enjoyment, and in being deprived of eternal life. And why should wealth have
ever sprung from the earth at all, if it is the author and patron of death?" (Stackhouse 1995:146).

Being born to wealth is therefore a responsibility and those who are born into wealth have, according to Clement, very specific responsibilities. Those born into privilege are challenged to break the power of wealth by developing a life of simplicity, exercising self-control and seeking God by following the commandments. Such a person is redefined as someone who is poor (Carr 2001:44).

In modern parlance, the above concepts can be seen as understanding the difference between contrasting lifestyles of either luxury or necessity, popularized in the simplicity movement (Foster 2005). Clement devoted some of his other writings to consider the “luxury of some in social circumstances where other persons are poor” (Avila 1983:36). In the second book of *The Instructor*, he wrote that:

> Those concerned for their salvation should take this as their first principle, that all property is ours to use and every possession is for the sake of self-sufficiency, which anyone can acquire by a few things. They who rejoice in the holdings in their storehouses are foolish in their greed. "He that hath earned wages," Scripture reminds us, “puts them into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6). Such is the man who gathers and stores up his harvest, for by not sharing his wealth with anyone, he becomes worse off.

(Avila 1983:35)

Clement makes a distinction between possessions that are used and those that are held. The use of property is a means toward self-sufficiency. Yet whenever holding possessions becomes a goal it is an act of foolishness. For Clement, holding possessions that are not used for self-sufficiency degenerates into a lifestyle of luxury; this way of life will be lived at the expense of the poor and will render the possessor worse off and mark him as a fool. This utilitarian
perspective towards possessions leads him to criticize the rich in Alexandria. For him the rule is the use of possessions: “Expensiveness should not be the goal in objects whose purpose is usefulness. Why? Tell me, does a knife refuse to cut if it be not studded with silver or have a handle of ivory?” (Wood 1953:126), and also “It is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want” (Gonzalez 2002:115).

2.2.2.7 Redefining the purpose of ownership

Under Roman law, the ownership of property was seen as total and absolutist. This pervasive philosophy regarding property infiltrated the Alexandrian Church. Clement challenges it when he mimics a conversation with someone exhibiting this mindset:

God brought our race into communion by first imparting what was His own, when He gave His own Word, common to all, and made all things for all. All things therefore are common, and not for the rich to appropriate an undue share. That expression, therefore, “I possess, and possess in abundance: why then should I not enjoy?” is suitable neither to the man, nor to society. But more worthy of love is that: “I have: why should I not give to those who need?”

(Roberts et al 1994:268).

Countryman questions whether the above passage is not a “rhetorical flourish, an extreme statement introduced purely to form the basis for a fortiori argument?” He adds, “The fact that Clement introduces this teaching against private property at only two places in his voluminous writings suggests that it is hardly one of his leading intellectual motifs” (1980:58).

Avila challenges Countryman’s statement when he describes Clement’s purpose as a challenge to the “absolutist conception of ownership” (1983:38) and argues
that he taught that goods are instruments towards fulfilling needs and creating community (1983:41).

Whatever excess one has should be given away. “What the rich should do with the superfluous – with that which goes beyond the necessities and is therefore a burden – is to distribute it” (Gonzalez 2002:116). Clement contrasts hoarding possessions – “I have more than enough, why may I not enjoy?” with an attitude that says “I have more than enough, why not share?” the former statement is not worthy of a human or a society. The latter, for Clement, shows that a person is “perfect, and fulfills the command: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself’” (Saxby 1987:67).

The building of community is a worthy use of possessions. Goods are given for strengthening a reciprocal bond between members of the Christ-family. Hellerman (2001:157) notes that, “Clement essentially demonizes any member of the community who would hesitate to practice … generalized reciprocity in the sharing of his riches with those in need”. Possessions are therefore for the purpose of supplying one’s necessities and for giving and helping those in need by creating community. Clement therefore allows for engagement in the economic endeavours of Alexandria, for “success in their economic engagements will put them in a better position to come to the aid of their fellow citizens” (Gordon 1989:86).

2.2.2.8 Motivations for giving

Through a retelling of the parable of the Good Samaritan, Clement illustrates who one’s neighbour is. Quoting Matthew 25, he shows that whatever is done to the least of these is done unto God (Roukema 2004:61). He reminds the audience once again that attitude flows into action, that “love buds into well-doing” (Roberts et al 1994:599).

The rich should not wait to be solicited by the poor but should be proactive, seeking out opportunities to give. Sommer (2007:271) has described how
Clement is not seeing helping the poor as only a “crass commercial transaction”; the relationship between the rich and poor is not to be a hit-and-run affair. Instead it becomes “the beauty of a relationship brought to maturity”. This relational emphasis makes a claim on the rich and the poor to enter a relationship. The age-old temptation to give impersonally in “one grand gesture” is re-imagined to be “over a long period” (Osborn 2005:253).

In their giving, Clement admonishes the rich not to judge who is worthy or unworthy. They do not know who is really on the side of God and who is not. It is in fact better to err on the side of action than to find out later that you were supposed to give and did not. In very strong terms he points out that the rich can overlook someone who should have received their help, “the penalty for which is the punishment of eternal fire” (Roberts et al. 1994:600). The rich should therefore give freely but seek especially for those who “have power with God to save” – in other words, those who can pray and thank God for the help given to them; the rich are specifically exhorted not to use age and external looks as a criterion of whether to give. They are encouraged to forge alliances with people with whom “the rest of men” are not associating:

- Pious old men
- Orphans dear to God
- Widows armed with meekness
- Men adorned with love

These people become associates in order to:

Obtain with your money such guards, for body and for soul, for whose sake a sinking ship is made buoyant, when steered by the prayers of the saints alone; and disease at its height is subdued, put to flight by the laying on of hands; and the attack of robbers is disarmed, spoiled by pious prayers; and the might of demons is crushed, put to shame in its operations by strenuous commands.
In this passage we see some elements of the rich being a patron to the poor. The poor reward their patrons by interceding for them with God. In this regard Clement shows a major motivation for becoming involved with the poor. It is the concept of immediate reward in terms of the beneficiaries’ intercessions, but also the eternal rewards that will be given by God.

2.2.2.9 Obtaining a financial mentor

Clement concludes his training recommendation with the thought that the passions of the soul would not be eradicated at once. The inbred passions of many years can be healed only through “God’s power and human intercession, and the help of brethren, and sincere repentance, and constant care” (Roberts et al 1994:602).

Clement describes how he envisions the rich, who are “pompous and powerful” (Fitzgerald 2008:287), allowing the brothers to help them, and how they can come to sincere repentance and constant care. This can be achieved by setting someone over them as a “trainer and governor”, a person who would be allowed to:

- Speak freely into your financial situation through harshness in order to speak healing
- Intervene when the “soul has uninterrupted pleasure”
- Pray for the rich man

Clement explains that when rich people allow a person like this into their life it will be a sign that the rich are really on the road of repentance.
2.2.3 Summary and questions for interviews

Even though Clement employs a hermeneutic that challenges a strictly literal interpretation of Mark’s passage, he in no way gives uncritical carte blanche to the rich. For Clement, riches are tools that should be seen as utilitarian devices given for the purpose of self-sufficiency. Superfluous goods should be given to the poor in order to provide for their needs. Riches should not cling to one’s soul, and therefore the rich should do whatever is needed to prevent riches possessing them, for a snake

will twist around the hand and bite; unless one knows how to lay hold of it without danger by the point of the tail. And riches, wriggling like a snake either in an experienced or inexperienced grasp, are dexterous at adhering and biting; unless one, despising them, use them skilfully, so as to crush the creature by the charm of the Word, and himself escape unscathed.

(Roberts et al 1990:280)

Questions for interviews:

- How do you interpret the story of the rich young ruler in Mark 10?

In asking this question the interviewer would note what form of hermeneutics were used to face the challenge of this and other texts wherein Jesus challenges the rich in their mission towards the poor.

- Do you have a friendship with a poor person? Describe the relationship.

The interviewer would determine the nature of the relationships fostered between the Afrikaans churches that partook in the study and the poor in their areas. Clement’s emphasis on a long-term relationship would be used as a comparison.
2.3 Basil the Great

2.3.1 Background and social standing

Basil was born in Cappadocia in 329 into a prosperous family (Cunningham 2002:82) and it is suggested that he was an elite person from the curial class. Newhauser (2006:23-24) relates that Basil was trained in the legal and rhetorical fields, after which he joined the monastic order. He later ministered in Cappadocia as the bishop during the fourth century, a time when taxation forced farmers from their land, with the result that previous landowners were added to the ranks of the poor (Gonzalez 2002:173). Karayannopoulos (1981:375) describes how, in addition to these hardships, a famine struck the land, with the result that food prices escalated. Basil postulated that the famine occurred as punishment for the excessive greed of the rich.

This disaster provided the needed stimulus for Basil to create several structures that helped in ministering to the poor in Cappadocia. Gonzalez (2002:174) describes how Basil, “was the man of action, who organized relief for the poor on a sound institutional basis”. Avila (1983:47) adds that he organized “communal institutions, including schools of art and industries, orphanages, and retreat houses”, known as the Basileias (Brown 2002:35), also referred to as the Basiliad.

These developments to the city were the beginning of an attempt by Basil and his contemporaries to “reconstruct Greek culture and society along Christian lines, in a way that both absorbed its traditional shape and radically reoriented it” (Daley 1999:432).

Basil established the first complex of philanthropic institutions and washed the feet of lepers, setting an example of altruistic philanthropy (Holman 1998:207).
Christians were the originators of hospitals, with Basil and his contemporaries leading the way (Stackhouse et al 2001; Glick, Livesey & Wallis 2005).

Patitas (2008:269-270) summarizes “eight essential facts about his [Basil’s] effort”, synthesizing the works of Holman (1999) and Daley (1999). They are:

- It was centred on a chapel and was administered by the clergy.
- It was built on either Basil’s family estate or on land given by the emperor.
- It had a hospital, residence for travellers and the poor, clergy and bishop housing, a leper hospital and workshops for teaching and practising trades.
- The poor had to work at the Basileias and were trained in a trade.
- It attracted immigrants, who were being cared for by Basil and the clergy, also described by Miller (1984:55).
- Basil launched an all-out attack on the “loan sharks”.
- Basil’s rhetoric continually urged the wealthy to turn their opulent lifestyles into help towards the poor.
- The old Caesarea became a ruin; the new city survived through the centuries, Frazee (1980:30) describes it as Basil’s “most important project” as a bishop.

After the legalization of Christianity, the state offered the church support in the form of gifts and tax exemption; this in turn led to a moral obligation to help those who were in need. According to Brown (2002:31), “The notion of ‘care of the poor’ helped to define the place of the Christian church in Roman society. It acted as a discreet control of the clergy. They were to know their place – closer to the poor than to the top of society”.

Karayannopoulos describes how Basil’s own wealthy upbringing and standing gave him credibility to be able to petition fellow wealthy members on behalf of the poor; what gave him further credibility, “was the consistency of his character and the total and complete acceptance and adoption of the Christian principle which
he professed and preached” (1981:379,384). This gave him the credibility of someone who led by example and gave the “larger part of his wealth to the cause of the poor” (Siepierski 1988:313,321).

When Basil became bishop, Karayannopoulos notes he “never stops admonishing and reprimanding those of his fellow citizens who do not practice the social commands of charity, philanthropy, Christian love and who, instead of helping the brethren in need, limit themselves in the selfish enjoyment of their riches”(1981:377).

In addition to giving hands-on help, Basil also petitioned the leadership of the Empire to give aid to those who were suffering. These letters were sent to the upper strata of society and included those who were deemed to be powerful (Karayannopoulos 1981:377).

Guy (2004:155) describes how Basil moved the worlds of the institutionalized state-church and the monastic order closer together, achieving a balance between the asceticism on the one hand and conservatism on the other. Gordon (1989:102) and Newhauser (2006:33) also show how this reordering of what had been separate institutions brought the monastic and lay needs closer to each other.

Basil therefore gives us an example of someone who built bridges between the rich and the poor in the context of the different social groupings in his time.

2.3.2 Kerugma

Holman (1999:340) describes the purpose of Basil’s preaching as rhetoric to move the rich towards helping the famine-struck poor and thereby “gaining access to the local grain the rich were refusing to sell”. Daley (1999:442) also shows that his preaching “brought about a more equitable distribution of the local reserves.” Newhauser (2006:24) describes how Basil’s ascetic training flavoured
his teachings and lifestyle in terms of a Christian’s response to the poor. Basil’s attitude to the sin of avarice started with his challenges towards the clergy, which are “much more rigorous than what he has to say to the laity” (Newhauser 2006:23). He especially spoke out against bishops who accepted fees from those they ordained, and his hardest words were reserved for the clergy who mismanaged funds.

Basil pointed to the Hellenists around them as better role models than the Christians themselves. Daley (1999:447) describes how Basil reminded the rich that they had an inspiring example in the early Christian community of Acts 2.

Constantelos (2008:207) shows that Basil's kerugma was never divorced from the real social issues around him. A recurring theme in his preaching is a reference to Matthew 25:31-46. Daley (1999:442-447) notes that Basil delivered three powerful sermons (Homilies 6,7,8) with strong themes of what, today, would be called "social justice and economic equality”. We will now explore some of the themes explored in his teachings.

2.3.2.1 Love as the foundation

Fundamental to Basil’s preaching on the rich’s responsibility towards the poor was love. He clearly stated that love should move the rich towards the poor and that this included moving possessions. By taking for themselves more than they need, the rich show that they do not truly love their neighbour.

Newhauser (2006:24-25) explains that this foundation of love expresses itself by the rich using their goods in the right way, which he defines as using what is needed and giving the rest away. Basil defined what the rich really needed as bread for food and a tunic and coat for clothing.

2.3.2.2 Usury
Patistas (2008:283) notes that Basil used his preaching to admonish and warn against the usurers of Caesarea. Basil is regarded as the one of the Greek fathers who most fiercely opposed usury and he used his preaching to rail against its effect on the poor (Maloney 1973:247). According to the law of the time, 12% interest was allowed, yet some people lent at a rate as high as 50%, and Gonzalez (2002:175) states that the lenders were actually after the securities that were given in order to obtain the loans.

Maloney (1973:248) explores Basil’s exposition of Psalm 14, giving a vivid impression of his disdain for usurers; in it he warns the poor not to borrow money. He shows how new riches are short-lived and how the loan would suffocate the poor later. The poor are free, Basil tells his hearers. They are not bowed with cares and worries as are the rich. But the debtor is both poor and worried. He worries about his possessions. He jumps when a knock comes at the door. He asks nervously who is there; he is covered with perspiration and filled with anxiety. He searches for a way to flee. The rich should give to the poor without interest and those who have practised usury in the past should give their profits to the poor. Constantelos (1981:84) also mentions that Basil taught the poor to keep their desires in check and not to take out loans, for that would force them into servitude.

2.3.2.3 From charity to justice

McCormick and Connors (2002:29) point out that the rich can easily see that they are to be praised for their voluntary charity of giving, but in Basil’s rhetoric, giving to the poor was not an issue of charity; it was an issue of justice.

Basil urges his audiences to give away all superfluous goods to the poor. If they keep the extra for themselves, then they are stealing from the poor (Kingston 1992:378). Wright (2003:135) quotes Basil as saying, “The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat hanging unused in the closet belongs
to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your home belong to the one who has no shoes; the money you put in your bank belongs to the poor."

2.3.2.4 Liturgy

Basil used the liturgy to connect people to God and to others. It was an “invitation for the metamorphosis of the congregation as well as of society” (Constantelos 1981:85). Through the communion cup he reminded the rich and the poor that all were equal before God. The prayers and songs also brought the suffering poor to mind. Holman (2009:21) notes that in the Roman world a service done to the community was called a liturgy, and that the liturgy includes worshipping the divine and serving the community. “Liturgy is thus an ordered service that addresses human need in a manner that is in every sense a sacred act”.

2.3.2.5 Discerning who is really poor

Holman (2000:487) points out that Basil, in contrast to Clement, taught that a middleman was necessary to determine the worthiness of the poor. This would ensure that the really poor are helped and that resources are not wasted. Gonzalez (2002:178) compares Clement’s donor-focused approach, which sees the poor as an aid towards the spiritual journey of the rich, with Basil’s emphasis, which showed a “genuine concern for the poor”.

Rousseau (1998:153) describes how Basil, in order for the poor to receive what they needed, developed a system that ensured careful management of resources. Individuals were encouraged to give to managers (the bishops) who would make sure that the resources were channelled correctly.

2.3.2.6 Redefining rich and poor
Like Clement before him, Basil redefines the rich and the poor. The rich are actually poor because they have so many desires. Their poverty is also shown in that they do not use what they have but continue to toil in order to get even more, which they also do not enjoy. They strive the whole time to become the richest and are not content with what they have. These desires make them poor (Gordon 1989:105).

2.3.2.7 Motivation for giving

Like Clement, Basil motivated the wealthy to give by reminding them that they were investing with God when they did so. Gordon (1989:107) states that Basil advocates a “macro-economic argument for charity” and uses the metaphor of a well. A well that is used produces better water than one that is left stagnant, “so let your wealth run through many conduits to the homes of the poor. Wells that are drawn from flow the better; left unused, they go foul. So money kept standing still is worthless; moving and changing hands, it helps the community and brings increase” (Haughey 1977:125).

Basil motivated his audiences, according to Daley (1999:446), to give to the poor and “to disregard even the claims of family and status”. Using children as an excuse for not giving was an invalid excuse and he chastised those who did not give while they were alive but left money in their wills (Newhauser 2006:27). Siepierski (1988:323-324) describes how Basil uses the ability of animals and inanimate forces to share their resources as an example for rational men, who are challenged to do the same.

2.3.2.8 How one is to give

Gonzalez (2002:177) points out that for Basil the quantity of what should be given is determined by superfluity. Therefore the rich should define what their real needs are. They should avoid making up myriad excuses to justify an ever-
increasing standard of living. Basil noted that the rich are like someone who goes into a theatre and, being the first one there, bars all others from coming in. It is this attitude of “exclusive ownership” that Basil criticized (Gonzalez 2002:177). For Basil, the rich had to see their privilege as a tool to help the poor; any other interpretation of wealth was wrong – wealth was given for sharing (Gonzalez 2002:178).

Basil also challenged the propensity of the rich to use their wealth to gain social power, which in turn leads to the oppression of the poor and to the further enrichment of the already wealthy. Brown (2008:291) explains that Basil saw wealthy people’s propensity to accumulation as a bad habit that could be broken.

Giving was always a voluntary endeavour for followers of Jesus, yet Basil and the other Cappadocian fathers used the pulpit to move the rich towards generosity by ridiculing their callous hearts and showing how laughable their attitude towards the poor were. Gonzalez (2002:181) describes how “these leaders showed not the slightest inclination to soften the harsh words of Scripture for the benefit of the rich”.

2.3.2.9 Letters

Basil used his education and letter-writing skills to move the government towards helping the case of the poor. Gonzalez (2002:181) describes how Basil challenged systemic injustices by corrupt officials.

Basil did not see the government as the ultimate solution for eradicating poverty, but he did challenge officials when they were perpetrating injustice. Basil’s letters were addressed to government officials “asking them to reverse specific policies or decisions that bring suffering to the poor” (Gonzalez 2002:182). Basil lived out a solution and this led to his biggest legacy, the building of the Basiliad. According to Kopecek (1974:300), “It would be difficult to imagine a bishop’s spiritual authority being used any more vigorously to attain a patriotic end.”
2.3.2.10 Basil’s new city

Basil spent a vast amount of his energy in developing and managing a system that could channel resources and skills to the poor. This culminated in the building of his Basileias which, according to Verhey (2002:130), became a prototype, and is described by Crislip (2005:103) as the “first hospital for which any significant evidence surfaces”.

It was his practical way of channelling wealth from the rich towards the poor. This happened through the new city he built. Some of the wealthy opposed this system, Gonzalez (2002:183) shows, because it deprived them of accolades; giving to the Basiliad did not give them as much recognition for their donations.

In addition to the “new city” on the outskirts of Caesarea, Basil also encouraged the development of “brotherhoods”, where followers of Jesus gathered in villas on the edges of society and country houses in order to “be an ideal Christian household, giving its surpluses for the aid of the poor” (Guy 2004:156). These brotherhoods were experiments in which followers occupied themselves with voluntary poverty and almsgiving. These brotherhoods varied in size but all of them were designed, according to Brown (2008:290), “to meet the traditional duty of every Christian household – the care of the poor”.

2.3.2.11 Questions for interviews

Questions for the interviews are:

- How often are the poor mentioned in your church’s liturgy?
Basil used the liturgy to keep the poor in the forefront of his church’s mind. This question aims at determining how congregants are reminded about the poor in their area.

- **Are Christians called to give charity or administer justice? What do you think is the difference between the two?**

This question explores whether the Afrikaans churches share in Basil’s reasoning that sharing with the poor is not a voluntary choice but an imperative.

### 2.4 John Chrysostom

#### 2.4.1 Background and social standing

John Chrysostom was born in Antioch and was part of a wealthy family. John’s mother, a widow, made sure that John received an excellent education and he was baptized at the age of 23. He spent six years pursuing the monastic life. During his monastic years he damaged his body to such an extent that he returned to Antioch and served for five years as a deacon, whereupon he became an elder. He preached in the main church for twelve years. He was an eloquent preacher. Chrysostom was a nickname meaning “golden mouth”. It was attributed to him a century after his death (Gonzalez 2002:200-201).

Under imperial edict, Chrysostom was abducted from Antioch and was then forced to become the Bishop of Constantinople. Florovsky (1955:38) reports that Chrysostom’s vast income was redirected towards the poor and employed in the building of hospitals. He also worked tirelessly to reform the clergy’s relationship with the wealthy, and Brown (2002:59) posits that Chrysostom was “shocked to find that so much money devoted to the care of the poor was absorbed by the support of persons who were by no means poor”. Krupp (1991:187) has shown
that Chrysostom’s attitude towards the clergy, specifically the fact that he did not spend the money for the poor on the clergy, was a one of the reasons why he was criticized. The poor were to receive the alms of the wealthy – it was not meant to pamper the leaders of the church.

Chrysostom “reorganized and promoted the hospitals and hospices of the city, even going so far as to emulate Basil in his attempt to set up a suburban institution for lepers; he sold church assets, presumably using the money for philanthropic purposes” (Mayer 2001:62).

Chrysostom saw himself as a shepherd of both the poor and the rich. Yet, it was the rich who murmured and accused him of always speaking against them. Bury remarks that “Chrysostom’s spirit attracted the lower classes, and his tirades against the rich delighted the poor” (1958:95). Maxwell argues, however, that Chrysostom’s congregation did consist of different socio-economic groups and that these different groups “were gathered together in the church” (2006:67-69). Chrysostom himself reckoned that the people of Antioch consisted of 10% of people who could be classified as extremely wealthy, another 10% as extremely poor, and the rest in between. According to him, 80% of the city fell in the “middling classes” between these two extremes. Brown (2002:48) describes this middle class as being in “a ‘grey zone’ between the well-documented splendor and luxury of the rich and the dramatically depicted destitution of the poor”.

Chrysostom’s preaching in Constantinople on behalf of the poor vexed the empress to such an extent that he was exiled twice. He died on his way to his final exile (Karras 2004:50).

2.4.2 Kerugma

Unlike Clement, Chrysostom did not write a specific treatise on the church’s responsibility towards the poor. Instead, as Leyerle (1994:29) has shown, his
sermons include numerous allusions to the topic at hand. Papageorgiou (1995:236) notes that in John’s sermons on the book of Romans "he touches upon the issue of wealth and poverty in one way or another in almost all thirty-two homilies”. Greeley (1982:1163) described John’s preaching as “never abstract theoretical formulations but … explained with descriptive and imaginative analogies and immediate practical applications”. We will now explore some of the themes found in his preaching.

### 2.4.2.1 Giving and receiving makes one human

Chrysostom saw in the extending of mercy to another human being the trait that distinguishes humans from animals. Using the analogy of nature, he showed that God endowed different geographical areas and peoples with different goods so that they could be shared with one another. Gonzales (2002:202) states that for John the logic of God’s purpose concerning wealth is that:

- We were all created out of Adam, so that there would be solidarity between humans.
- God gave everyone different goods so that we would by necessity communicate with one another – “giving others that of which we have abundance and receiving that which we lack” (Morley 2007:20).
- The purpose of resources is that we should love one another with them.

### 2.4.2.2 The rich are robbers

Karras (2004:51) shows that Chrysostom defines a robber as a person who has the ability to share resources and decides not to do so. Therefore, if someone had more than was necessary, then it should be given away. In one of his sermons he taught that “those who have something more than necessity demands and spend it on themselves instead of distributing it to their needy
fellow servants, they will be meted out terrible punishments. For what they possess is not personal property; it belongs to their fellow servants” (Avila 1983:84).

2.4.2.3 Redefining rich

Like Clement before him, Chrysostom also redefined the term “rich”. He asserted that those who give much are rich and not those who possess much. Gonzalez (2002:202) describes the numerous metaphors that Chrysostom used to make this point:

- Rich people are like someone who is always thirsty and always needs a drink. They are never satisfied.
- Rich people are like hijackers who steal; for a short while they enjoy their feast but at some point they will be punished.
- Rich people are like actors with a mask on; when you remove the mask – then you see that there is no virtue beneath it. (Gonzalez 2002:203).

[Let us do the same in the case of wealthy people: let us never consider those people healthy who are always yearning and thirsting after other people’s property; let us not think that they enjoy any abundance. For if one cannot control his own greed, even if he has appropriated everyone’s property, how can he ever be affluent?”

(Chrysostom & Roth 1984:40)

Guroion (1991:343) notes that when teaching parents how to raise their children, Chrysostom said that when he looked “out at the culture, he saw that Christians were captives to its man-centered standards of success and happiness, and he pleaded with Christian parents to nurture another kind of character in their
children”. This new definition of riches was at the centre of what he wanted to instil in the children of the congregation.

2.4.2.4 Private property, ownership and inheritance

The Roman justice system allowed the use and abuse of property as one wished; in contrast “Chrysostom has scant respect for Roman legalization of ownership. To him ownership is meaningless, because God alone is the true owner” (Avila 1983:97). Gonzalez (2002:204) notes, however, that Chrysostom “clearly presupposes private property” when he uses Abraham and Job as examples of rich people who were virtuous.

Paradoxically, Chrysostom contends that all riches have injustice at their roots. If one traces the lineage of inheritance then it will be found that somewhere someone robbed someone else of something, for “God in the beginning did not make one man rich and another poor” (Krupp 1991:193). John, like some of the fathers before him, appeals to nature to show that God created all things to be in common. Inequalities must therefore stem from injustice. “The rich have that which belongs to the poor, even though they may have received it as an inheritance, no matter whence their money comes” (Gonzalez 2002:205).

Owensby (1988:38) notes that Chrysostom was the first of the fathers who spoke on the morality of inheritance and comments that he saw two negatives in leaving an inheritance. Firstly, it took away from the poor and secondly, it made the recipients lazy. Chrysostom conceded, however, that one could inherit wealth and not be unjust. In his sermon on Timothy, he engages in a dialogue with someone who inherited riches. Through a series of questions and answers, John shows the responsibilities of someone who has inherited money:

Let your riches be justly gained, and without rapine. For you are not responsible for the covetous acts of your father. Your wealth may be derived from rapine; but you were not the plunderer. Or granting that he did not obtain it by robbery, that his gold was
cast up somewhere out of the earth. What then? Is wealth therefore good? By no means. At the same time it is not bad, he says, if its possessor be not covetous; it is not bad, if it be distributed to the poor, otherwise it is bad, it is ensnaring. “But if he does not evil, though he does no good, it is not bad,” he argues. True. But is not this an evil, that you alone should have the Lord’s property, that you alone should enjoy what is common? Is not “the earth God’s, and the fullness thereof”? If then our possessions belong to one common Lord, they belong also to our fellow-servants. The possessions of one Lord are all common.

(Krupp 1991:194).

Having received an inheritance places certain obligations on the recipient. Acknowledging that an inheritance brings these responsibilities links the inheritance to issues of social justice. Avila (1983:97) argues that the recognition is only a beginning and without further rectification of the present order it will be “a continuing and fresh robbery.”

2.4.2.5 Mine and thine

John described the words “mine” and “yours” as improbable for a follower of Christ (Schaff 2007:56). The only reason one possesses things is for use and even this will not always be certain, for possessions can be stolen, lost, damaged or the possessor can die. By God’s grace we received everything, even our own lives. The correct posture in all of this is to see oneself as a pilgrim and tourist – in this posture, possessions cannot be hoarded because pilgrims travel light.

Therefore John challenged his congregation to avoid using the words mine and yours (Hoose 2000:176). Chrysostom stated, “There is not mine and thine, but
this expression is exterminated that is a cause of countless wars” (Schaff 2007:439). Chrysostom refers back to the Acts 2 community as an example of people who had no talk of “mine and thine”. He concedes that it “may seem a riddle” but he nonetheless lifts this community up as an example and shows how the rich and the poor were “bound together”.

Gvosdev (2000:125) declares that wealth is not just an individual achievement, and as such Chrysostom noted, “Possessions can only be justified by their use: feed the hungry, help the poor, and give everything to the needy”.

2.4.2.6 Every beggar an altar

John Chrysostom, following Paul, saw the church as the Body of Christ. In his teachings he retrained his congregants’ imaginations to see every beggar as an altar where they could make sacrifices to God (Greeley 1982:1163). Caner (2002:163) has noted that these sermons were amongst the first “sustained and sympathetic view of the urban poor in the Greco-Roman world”.

Maxwell (2006:71) describes how Chrysostom mentioned the poor outside the church buildings in his sermons and he told the rich that they had to look at the beggars more favourably because at least they were not stealing. He also challenged the women, “to forget about fancy jewelry and give alms instead”. Chrysostom spoke of the guilt that they should feel when they were all dressed up for church and paraded past the poor who crowded the church’s steps. He also compared the basins outside the church, where people washed their hands before entering, to the poor, who would allow lay people to cleanse their souls by giving alms, if only they would take the opportunity.

Brown (2002:86) notes that the state of a beggar before a rich man was for Chrysostom a parallel to the state of the believer before God.
2.4.2.7 Motivation for giving

Chrysostom’s main motivation for giving was that the donors would be rewarded for their giving. Because the poor person is to be identified with Christ, whatever is done to the destitute is being done unto Jesus (Brown 2002:95, Greeley 1982:1164).

Leyerle (1994:29) shows how John’s preaching used the concept of investment to explain to the wealthy how they could make a profit by turning towards the poor. The best investment strategy consisted in investing in the poor. Yet they should also know that it was not a get-quick-rich scheme.

Chrysostom knew his congregation. He suspected that they would respond to his advice … by murmuring about how “slowly” God pays back investments. To them any expenditure on the poor represented the senseless cultivation of people from whom no reciprocal good could be expected. Chrysostom countered this prevailing opinion with a longer view of social interaction. Almsgivers would find on the day of judgement that they had secured for themselves the most effective of patrons (Leyerle 1994:40)

Antioch was imbued with patron-client relationships whereby the rich gave wealth in order to obtain the vote and support of the recipients. The poor were, however, excluded from becoming patrons. Chrysostom changed all this when he attributed to the poor a “valuable commodity, namely, special access to God” (Leyerle 1994:41). The rich could give the poor perishable money; the poor would pray for them so that God would reward them.

For Chrysostom, giving alms was one of the highest virtues and through his incessant preaching he “wanted them eventually to stigmatize and ridicule
whoever ignored beggars as much or more so than the loose woman or glutinous man” (Maxwell 2006:125).

2.4.2.8 Challenging rationalizations

In his preaching, Chrysostom challenged all the different reasons why people were unwilling to give. Chief among them were that it was the church’s responsibility to help the poor, and that the rich already gave to the church and could not take responsibility for what the priests did with the money (Brown 2002:65). Krupp (1991:190) reports that in one of his sermons John explains that the church’s income was “one of the lowest among the wealthy”. With it the church supported 3000 widows, virgins, sick people, people in prison and clergy; this gives some perspective on how rich the wealthy really were.

Chrysostom also challenged the habit of the rich to give to only the deserving poor. He preached, “You must not demand an audit of a person’s life – just correct the poverty and supply the need” (Krupp 1991:152).

Chrysostom also encouraged his members to give to unbelievers. “If you see anyone in affliction do not be curious to enquire further about who he is. His being in affliction is a just claim to your aid. He is God’s, be he heathen or be he Jew, since even if he is an unbeliever, still he needs help” (Greeley 1982:1164).

It was because of the callousness of the rich that the poor went to extremes to catch their attention. “They might blind their own children or engage in spectacular feats, e.g., chewing the skins of worn-out shoes or fixing sharp nails into their heads” (Greeley 1982:1166). All of this was the responsibility of the rich, because they ignored the poor who were trying to elicit pity through these acts.

Another rationalization used by the rich was that most of the poor were not native citizens. Maxwell (2006:71) notes that even though they were not all citizens of Antioch, Chrysostom insisted that these foreigners were worthy of the help of
Christians. Chrysostom urged every person in the congregation to give. Because almsgiving benefited the donor’s soul, it was important for everyone to give.

2.4.2.9 A hierarchy of sin

Chrysostom’s view on sin had the love of money at its apex. Unlike the sins of drunkenness, fornication or theft, accumulation of possessions was a sin that took a long time to come to fruition. “Chrysostom was well aware of the time and energy that becoming or staying wealthy required – nobody could claim that their corrupt business practices had been an accident on one drunken night. Also, attachment to wealth worked against the highest virtue, almsgiving, while illicit sex only violated the lesser virtue of celibacy” (Maxwell 2006:125-126).

The best virtues were those which benefited not just the person practising them but also other people. Chrysostom even went so far to shock the virgins of his community, according to Gordon (1989:106), by telling them that it would be better for them to desire a man than not to give alms.

2.4.2.10 The rich and the clergy

It was very difficult to assimilate the wealthy into congregational life. Not only did they want to dictate where their donations went, they also wanted the clergy to act as clients towards them as their patrons. This influenced ecclesiastical life to the extent that the rich wanted a say in who became bishops and priests. Chrysostom vehemently protested against this state of affairs (Leyerle 1994:45-46).

2.4.2.11 The rule of functionality

Chrysostom judged style and fashion according to a principle of functionality. Jewellery and other flamboyant accessories were condemned because they fell in the category of the superfluous and the money could have been given to the poor (Krupp 1991:192). Determining needs was a constant question posed to
Chrysostom. He does, however, allow for some people needing different things from others (Gordon 1989:107).

2.4.2.12 Questions arising for interviews

- **Why don’t we share more with the poor?**

This question was aimed at discovering the different rationalizations and reasons used for not engaging with the poor. John Chrysostom (and the other church fathers) challenged specific rationalizations with scriptures, stories and images.

- **Do you think receiving an inheritance is just or unjust, and what should followers of Jesus do with it?**

In a post-apartheid South Africa, the beneficiaries of apartheid (mostly whites) have prolonged their advantage through inheritances.

2.5 Augustine and poverty

2.5.1 Background and social standing

Augustine was born on 13 November 354 and he was raised by a Christian mother and a non-Christian father in Tagaste in Northern Africa (Avila 1983:105). He is regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the church (Gonzalez 2002:214) and his thoughts on charity became fundamental to the medieval version of Christianity (Lindberg 1981:39). Though he grew up in a respectable family, his family was not considered wealthy (Weaver 1987:378). Brown notes that his father made tremendous sacrifices in order for him to further his education (Brown 2000:9) in a legal career. His educational path led him to Carthage, where he developed an interest in “a philosophical foundation for his
life” and became a Manichean (Avila 1983:105). After his studies he returned to Tagaste, where he taught grammar, then returned to Carthage to teach rhetoric and then moved on to Rome for better instruction. It is here that he met Ambrose and was baptized in 387 (Brown 2000:117).

Upon returning to Tagaste, he sold his material possessions and gave them to the poor (Van den Hoek 2008:68) and undertook a life of discipline committed to prayer, study and the poor. He became priest at Hippo and later the bishop, from 396–440 (Kreider 1999:54). In a time when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire he was challenged by how he could attract pagans to Christianity. One of the ways in which they could be attracted was through the church’s involvement with the poor; this was done, amongst other ways, by helping the poor and building almshouses (Kreider 1999:56). Augustine died at Hippo on 28 August 430 (Avila 1983:106).

2.5.2 Kerugma

Augustine both converged with and diverged from the teachings of the church fathers before him. His tremendous influence on the church, however, ensured that his thoughts on wealth and poverty became the dominant view of the church and “much of what had been said earlier was forgotten” (Gonzalez 2002:214).

His teachings on wealth and poverty are best illustrated in his correspondence with a layman named Hillary, who had come in contact with the teachings of Pelagius. Pelagius proposed that the ideals of asceticism were normative for the Christian life and that the rich had to divest themselves of all their possessions if they wanted to become Christians (Weaver 1987:378).

Augustine’s neo-platonic world view led him to develop a utilitarian view of wealth. This philosophical view postulated that wealth in itself is not evil; it depends on the person dealing with the wealth. Avila notes that it is difficult to
determine which philosophical stream contributed most to Augustine’s thoughts; in addition to Platonic thought he also finds traces of Stoic thought in his thinking (Avila 1983:115).

2.5.2.1 Using and enjoying

For Augustine, avarice is a sin that originates within the person who misuses wealth. He set forth the principle that certain objects are designed for use and others to enjoy. When objects that are to be used are enjoyed, evil arises; conversely, when objects that are to be enjoyed are used, evil also arises (Gonzalez 2002:214-215). Newhauser (2006:91) states that ultimately, in Augustine’s thought, only God is to be enjoyed, and sin arises when we use God to increase our wealth. His remedy for the rich is therefore based on the “metaphorical transformation of worldly wealth to something unreal … a reorientation of the will: temporal matters were to be used for life’s necessities, the divinity to be enjoyed for its own sake”. The ultimate remedy for the rich person is to be greedy for God.

2.5.2.2 Use and abuse of wealth

Augustine further distinguished between right use and abuse of wealth. When one uses it rightly, it is legitimate owning. Abusing objects shows that one does not “legitimately possess” (Gonzalez 2002:216). Augustine’s thoughts regarding money relate to the rights Roman law granted to private property, which were the right to use, the right to enjoy and the right to abuse (Avila 1983; Gonzalez 2002:118, 216). “The urgent thing to discard, for Augustine, is the absolutist and exclusivist Roman law idea of ownership, because it legalizes not the proper use but rather the abuse of property” (Avila 1983:121).

2.5.2.3 The truly necessary and the surplus
He also made a distinction between what is truly necessary and what is surplus. The only things that are truly necessary are food, clothing and shelter. He does, however, make concession to those who have become accustomed to some luxurious items (Ramsey 1982:235). Newhauser shows that in translating the concept of “enough” from a monastic to a laity context, he defines “enough” as “the limits of an individual's social and economic circumstances” (2006:89). It is in this part of his teaching that Augustine provides a major loophole for the rich.

Because the rich have so many extras, they are not using those objects to enjoy God; to retain wealth in this way is to “misuse it”. The Christian is therefore to have a utilitarian view of possessions, wherein they only take what they need and give the superfluity away. Not to do this is to commit fraud.

Gonzalez (2002:217) notes that in Augustinian teaching, giving away what is superfluous is not to be called “liberality; it is a mere act of restitution”. (Newhauser 2006:88) notes that Augustine’s criticism of the greedy person was “that it destroyed justice in human beings’ relationships with each other … , and thus the greedy person attempted to take for himself what was justly the property of another”. In equating this grasping or unwillingness to let go of the superfluous with thieving, Augustine is agreeing closely with the church fathers before him (Gonzalez, 2002:216).

**2.5.2.4 Lending money, atoning for sins and transferring wealth**

Lending money should be done without expecting interest, and giving is to be preferred to lending. Like some of the church fathers before him, Augustine views almsgiving as an instrument that prepares a way for atoning for small sins; in giving alms one is wiping the Lord’s feet (Ramsey 1982:228). The rich person is to transfer wealth from this life to the next by having mercy on the poor. Augustine talks more than his predecessors about giving money for the purpose of building church buildings (Gonzalez 2002:217).
2.5.2.5 Using the poor?

In Augustine’s thought the poor are sometimes reduced to nothing more than vehicles for attaining salvation and wealth in the life hereafter. “What are the poor to whom we give but bearers carrying our wealth to heaven? Give, therefore to your bearer, who hauls your gift to heaven” (Gonzalez 2002:218). Augustine’s neo-platonic view places the poor in a hierarchy where they become useful for the spiritual development of the rich that finds its ultimate expression in the enjoyment of God – in other words, stated more explicitly, he uses the poor for spiritual formation (Newhauser 2006:93). The rich-poor relationship is defined in purely commercial terms, wherein the poor are seen as receivers of alms and thereby enriching the wealthy (Lindberg 1992:387).

Augustine taught that it was God who made the rich and the poor. These static categories serve to place the poor and rich in a mutually beneficial relationship: “Who made the two? The Lord made the rich so they could find help in the poor, and the poor to test the rich” (Gonzalez 2002:218). They can help carry each other’s burdens. The rich can do it by giving their extra away and the poor by receiving the extra of the rich and praying for their donors.

2.5.2.6 Criteria for giving

One is to give to another on the claim of their humanity (Ramsey 1982:231). Pope (1994:300) shows how Augustine’s teaching on the order of love provided criteria for who should be helped; these criteria included place, time and circumstances. One cannot take responsibility for poverty in other geographical areas and can only help when the time and circumstances allow one to become involved.

Augustine challenged parents who did not give alms because they were saving money for their children’s future (Avila 1983:119). They were to consider Jesus as one of their family members and give to Him by giving to the poor; God would
take care of their children and an excessive anxiety towards providing patrimony is an act of mistrust (Ramsey 1982:230).

2.5.2.7 Practical and (and realistic) commands

Moving beyond theoretical rhetoric about poverty and riches, Augustine taught the rich to give at least a tenth of their income and possession away (Finn 2006:51). He gave this practical, tangible advice because he sensed that “few will follow his advice” (Gonzalez 2002:220). This is a concession he makes for the flock he is shepherding. Alms did not only include money in Augustine’s thought – he also included

feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, sheltering the fugitive, visiting the sick and shut-in, ransoming the captive, carrying the crippled, leading the blind, comforting the sorrowful, healing the sick, directing the lost, counseling the perplexed, and providing for the poor. To these may be added pardoning the sinner or anything associated with that, such as issuing a rebuke or even administering corporal punishment, so long as it is done with love.  

(Ramsey 1982:241)

A further concession from Augustine was the distinction he made between the commands and the counsels of perfection. Finger (2004:238) points out that the counsels of perfection were meant for those in the monastic orders, and texts like Acts 2 and 4 were only meant for them; those outside the monastic orders were not bound by the radical implications of renunciation. The ideal for normal Christians is not to sell all their possessions, yet he does believe that “the highest order of life on earth is precisely that of those who give up their wealth and choose to live in a monastic community” (Gonzalez 2002:219).
2.5.2.8 Paradoxical reality

In his battles with the Donatists, Augustine defended himself by saying that “God has granted civil authorities the power to set and determine property rights” (Wood 2002:20; Gonzalez 2002:220). Gonzalez concludes his discussion of Augustine’s view on the poor by noting how, “in spite of all his exhortations to individuals on economic matters, when it came to applying these principles to the social order Augustine reverted to his Roman legal upbringing”. In this sense Augustine’s kerugma on poverty and wealth was paradoxically opposed to his practice. The ideal and reality did not correspond with each other.

The paradox was created by his reliance on the imagination of the empire by which, “all things belong to those to whom the existing order confers them. If the result is that some are poor and some are rich, that is God’s doing and not for us to question” (Gonzalez 2002:221).

Fedetov (1963:139) describes this paradox in Augustine’s theology as a “theological tendency to justify social evil”. Avila comments on this paradox and notes that for Augustine the “direct concern is with the moral or ethical meaning of ownership, as distinguished from the legal viewpoint … the legal should be directly governed by the ethical” (1983:120). In this way Augustine is painting an ideal against the rigorist and absolute application of private property in the Roman Empire, which left the poor destitute.

Yet, as Avila (1983:123) has shown, Augustine’s kerugma was supplemented by the development of a few monastic communities as well as some almshouses that became an organizational vehicle for distribution to the poor.

2.5.3 Questions for interviews

- How do you distinguish between needs and wants?
Augustine (and the other church fathers) worked with the categories of needs and superfluity; this question aimed at exploring these categories in the surveyed churches.

- How much should a follower of Jesus give and how much do you give now?

This question aimed at comparing Augustine’s concession of starting with 10% with the ideals of the Afrikaans churches surveyed.

2.6 Summary of interview questions

The interview questions are designed to explore both cognition and actions towards the poor.

- How do you interpret the story of the Rich Young Ruler in Mark 10?
- Do you have a friendship with a poor person? Describe the relationship.
- What are the reasons why we don’t share more with the poor?
- Do you think receiving an inheritance is just or unjust, and what should followers of Jesus do with it?
- How often are the poor mentioned in your church’s liturgy?
- Are Christians called to give charity or administer justice; what do you think is the difference between the two?
- How do you distinguish between needs and wants?
- How much should a follower of Jesus give and what percentage of your income do you give now?

In addition to these questions, the following questions were asked of the leaders of the congregations:
- How often do you preach about the responsibility of the rich towards the poor?

- What percentage of the church’s budget goes towards the poor?

- How do you see your role as a leader in engaging with the poor?
CHAPTER 3

3. INTERVIEWS

This chapter reports on the interviews conducted with four communities and their leaders. The interviews were conducted to explore the beliefs and practices of the Afrikaans churches in Johannesburg, using a qualitative phenomenological design.

During the interviews the integral theme was poverty and the various questions arising from the literature study were used to facilitate a general conversation wherein “people’s perceptions, perspectives, and understandings” (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:139) were discussed.

At each church the leaders were interviewed separately and then a small group from that particular community. One of the four leaders was part of the interviews conducted with his church members. The leaders were asked to organize a group that would be representative of the community and not be a specialized group doing mission in the church, like the outreach committee. In all the churches the groups consisted of small groups who had been constituted prior to the research. The data was captured on an mp3 recorder and then transcribed. What follows is a reworking of the data, which were:

- Organized by breaking down the text into smaller units and themes
- Perused in order to discover possible categories or preliminary interpretations
- Classified in categories and themes in order to find meaning in the data
- Synthesized in order to offer propositions and hypotheses
- The interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and transcribed in English; in some cases translations are reported verbatim and reflect renditions of interviewees’ direct words
These data will be presented in two main units, consisting of the leaders and the members of the communities. These two units will be subdivided into seven themes corresponding to the main questions used to facilitate the interviews.

In order to compile questions for the interview, Holman’s framework was used in order to bring continuity between the questions arising out of the literature review and placing them within a structure that could serve as a conduit for the interviews.

She describes her framework as a way to “interpret their nuances in a manner that is fair to both their world and to ours… [I] offer three interpretive paradigms for such a venture: sensing the poor, sharing the world, and embodying the sacred kingdom” (2009:15).

She offers these paradigms as flexible ways to “apply bits of the complex past to present issues while respecting ancient nuances and cultural differences” (2009:15), and describes the steps as possible blocks one could use to articulate a faithful movement that reflects the heart of the matter in different contexts. The three interpretive paradigms will now be discussed.

3.1 Questions pertaining to sensing the poor

Sensing is the movement wherein people become aware of the need(s) around them. These needs are embodied in people. It can be described as developing awareness. Holman describes it as the “literal experience of the ‘other’ through the physical senses” (2009:15). She describes the sensing as physical as well as emotional experiences, which include but are not limited to:

- anger
- compassion
- shock
- tears
- disgust
- empathy
- overwhelming grief
- repulsion

This sensing need not be emotional and can also include “a new awareness of something that then influences decisions about how to use time, relationships, and resources” (2009:16).

Although sensing usually happens through seeing, Holman opts for the word sensing rather than just seeing, “to deliberately include within this paradigm the full range of human neural responses. Describing such encounters as ‘sensing’, rather than using more common emotional terms such as ‘feeling’, allows the reader more broadly to engage” (2009:16).

Sensing can therefore be described as an awareness that could come through cognition or emotion and through different mediums that include “media, travel, engagement in social ministry, or other personal experience of poverty” (2009:16).

Questions used in the interviews related to sensing were those exploring:

- Who the rich and the poor in South Africa are
- Whether interviewees had a relationship with a poor person

The sensing happens within the body of the one sensing and is therefore still at a distance from the need of the person being sensed. This creates distance that allows the person sensing some time to reflect on what an adequate response might be.

For Holman, sensing becomes the first step in the journey of engagement with the poor. She notes how the early church fathers used this to bring before their congregants an awareness of the poor.

3.2 Questions pertaining to sharing the world
Holman describes sharing the world as the full range of engagements leading from the sensing. They are the ways in which we engage and constitute a full range of activities that usually fall under the auspices of social justice, charity and the giving of alms. They encapsulate the movements from an inner disposition to actual contact with the other. For Holman these activities include, but are not limited to “empowering justice” (2009:19) through:

- sharing goods
- sharing space
- offering hospitality
- sharing gifts by volunteering
- practising or lobbying for divestment
- sharing ideas
- sharing poverty

Holman opts for the word “sharing” instead of “giving”, “because real justice, relief, and cosmic healing are never one-way activities; they are engagements in reciprocity and relating to one another equally at the level of creation” (2009:20).

The bulk of the interviews explored this aspect and the following questions related to aspects of sharing the world:

- What does your church teach concerning giving?
- Why are people not more involved with the poor?
- What is the role of the church in helping people to distinguish between needs and wants?
- Would you open your budget to someone else for viewing and do you think people in your church would be willing to do that?
- How much should we give?
- What ways do you use to determine whether you should give?
3.3 Questions pertaining to embodying the kingdom

Holman sees embodying the kingdom as ushering into this world the ideals and hopes of the *eschaton*. Christians endeavour to answer the phrase in the Lord’s Prayer where we pray, “on earth as it is in heaven”.

When Holman describes embodying the kingdom, she notes the importance of the word “liturgy”. Although the word signifies the ordering or structuring of the worship service, she also notes that the word was used to denote serving the city. The word therefore has this double meaning.

Liturgy is therefore a place where we see the sacred and secular divide come together, “Liturgy is thus an ordered service that addresses human need in a manner that is in every sense a sacred act” (2009:21). In the paradigm used by Holman, service to the poor then becomes an identifying with Christ. In His embodying Himself in the poor, our embodied response becomes a sacred act towards Christ. Mission towards the poor therefore is mission from and to Jesus.

The embodying encompasses both the outer and the inner realities of a person as a whole. The questions on liturgy explored this aspect of Holman’s model. Even though no further questions were directly asked under this heading, a lot of the answers given to previous questions gave insight into the ways in which interviewees viewed the integration of sacred and secular through an embodying of the kingdom.

3.4 Meet the leaders

All four leaders who were interviewed were under the age of 40 and male. One of the four is the senior leader (senior pastor) of the community, the other three serve on a team of ministers. The leaders all minister in Afrikaans churches situated in the suburbs of Johannesburg. Three of the churches have a membership of over 1000; the other has 600 members. Three different
denominations were represented. All the churches are older than ten years. All four leaders have preaching and teaching responsibilities at their church. A fifth church was invited to be part of the research but refused the invitation to be part of the research.

All four leaders were asked the same questions and the interviews lasted an average of an hour and a half per respondent. The leaders were asked additional questions, not asked of the members, which covered areas pertaining to their role as leaders in the community (3.4.1; 3.4.5 & 3.4.10). All the leaders indicated interest in being part of any follow-up work.

3.4.1 How do you interpret the story of the Rich Young Ruler in Mark 10?

Because the oldest treatise on the subject of wealth and Christianity is Clement’s treatise, the interviewer used it as a foundational conversation starter with the leaders in order to gauge how their thinking compared with Clement’s teachings. Commonalities and distinct comments now follow.

Commonalities:

- Respondents shared an uneasiness with this passage.
- All respondents felt that this passage should not be used as normative for all Christians; none of them knew a person who had taken this passage literally.
- Respondents would not want to preach on this passage.

Distinct comments:

- The first leader described himself as this rich young ruler: “I am young, rich and want to go to heaven.” He then described his journey with this text as one of struggle and said he had preached on it once, using it as a
vehicle for confessing to the church that he struggles with this in his own life. He wondered whether the poor really need money. He would be interested to study this Scripture text with poor people in order to get their take on the text. The text also made him wonder about the poor and their role in this passage (the other three leaders did not talk about the poor when thinking about this passage; they focused on the rich and their wealth).

- The second leader felt that the universal truth of this passage is that everyone should be wary about the one thing that can come between an individual and God (idolatry). This relational blockage was money for this rich man, and God tested only his willingness to give up his wealth. By walking out on the conversation he misunderstood what Jesus really meant and cut off any further conversation. The leader also commented on the fact that the disciples had a notion very like the prosperity teachers today, that when you are rich you are so because God has blessed you.

- In contrast to the second leader, the third leader felt that the danger is to see this passage only as metaphor and to spiritualize the passage. Yet for him it also shows a principle: that one has to give away what is between you and God. He also wondered if the disciples’ reaction didn’t signify that one has to divest oneself of wealth with the right motives – not just to get more. He felt that this passage talks about whole-life stewardship and not just money.

- The fourth leader mentioned that his ex-colleague had preached on this passage and that the reaction was not good. He attributes this to the Afrikaners’ taboo on subjects of money, sex and politics.

### 3.4.2 Who do you think are the Rich in South Africa?

All four leaders responded to this question in a materialistic sense. The rich are those people, the “other”, who have more than they have.
One of the leaders described a rich person as someone who “lives in a nice neighbourhood, has a vacation house and a lot of other cars as well as cash”. Another leader described the rich as those who have the material capability to free up time for self, travel, luxuries.

The rich are those who always want more and are always comparing themselves with people who have more than them.

All four leaders had an uneasiness about identifying themselves as the rich, though two of them reflected on the importance of seeing the rich as relative to whom you compare yourself with. “In terms of Africa I am rich” and “When I look at my gardener I know that I’m rich and envy his life without stress”.

3.4.3 Who do you think are the “middle class” in South Africa?

When the leaders described the middle class they used the following descriptors:

- Those who have enough to get by and can travel.
- Those who have a house with three rooms, a swimming pool (if you are lucky), DSTV and a car or two.
- The Afrikaner and his house.
- People with a car and a house with debt.
- Those who can go on vacation.
- People with a steady income.
- Those who pay taxes.

In discussing the middle class, two leaders described themselves as middle class. One of the leaders who described himself as middle class said that he would “describe himself as middleclass in his congregation and rich in the country”. Because he spends most of his time in the congregation, he therefore identifies strongly with the middle class. He then commented that the elders in his church are all rich and that this is a strategy so that they will look out for him.
Rich elders will feel pity for him and this will ensure that he will always have enough money.

The two who described themselves as rich did so because one leader felt that he had access to riches and the other because his awareness of the broader South African economic situation forced him to accept that he is rich.

3.4.4 Do you have a friendship with a poor person?

Owing to the myriad definitions of friendship, in this question a friend was defined as someone you would share a meal with. Out of the four leaders three answered that they had no friendships with poor people. The reasons given for this were that:

- It is frustrating to be in a relationship with someone who has a different worldview, because socio-economics bring a specific outlook in life.
- It is a romantic idea that doesn’t work, because there is no “connection between us”, and if this leader had to live with integrity then he would never be able to be friends with a poor person.
- It is “the in thing to have a poor or black friend”, and this leader wanted to make sure he had the right intentions.
- Except for beggars, this leader has no contact with poor people.

The leader who said yes qualified his answer saying that he answered hesitantly. His friendships with the poor are with his domestic worker and gardener and with people he meets through their church’s outreach, but he would not eat with these people. This leader then shared the fact that they have a commission helping people who are going through some crisis. They help them to cover the basic needs (groceries, transport for interviews, medical) but are looking for criteria on how to help these people. He notes that the problem with this is that the helping becomes very impersonal. Because these funds are being administered it becomes functional and cloaked in anonymity. It is done in this way because it is
very shameful for people to ask for help; they want to be perceived as not asking for help. It is the poverty of not asking for help.

3.4.5 What do you teach concerning giving in your church?

One of the leaders described their teaching as the giving of a tithe. The members of the church pledge to give 10% of their income and save 10%, but he added that they actually believe that everything belongs to God.

The other three leaders gave less definite guidelines, but used the following statements to explain their teachings on giving:

- One should give in abundance.
- Give till it hurts.
- Giving is your whole life and includes more than money.
- It is about stewardship as a lifestyle.
- Although we have a theology of stewardship it doesn’t really challenge people because it works on the assumption that one should give 10%.

The churches have different ways in which they appropriate the money for ministry:

- In one church 15% of their church budget goes to “outside ministries” (it was raised from 10% last year) and 60% for staff salaries.
- Another church asks for pledges once a year and these are used for the day-to-day ministry of the church. Their weekly offering goes towards poor relief.
- The next church has an Article 21 company as a separate entity that takes care of the poor relief. The leader describes this as “paying professional people to take care of the poor”. They also started an organic group of people who consist of the “really rich people” to find out how they are thinking about finances and wealth. On a yearly basis they also ask people for pledges towards the whole budget. This leader commented that they are finding that the younger members in the church don’t give towards projects (like
buildings) but are interested in giving towards people. Three times a year they
give feedback on the financial situation in the church.
- The fourth church uses 80% of their budget for maintenance. The leader
doesn't know the exact percentage that goes to the poor. The extra 20% goes
towards mercy ministries inside and outside the congregation. They have a
full-time social worker on the staff who takes care of the food pantry and
oversees the care of the poor. They encourage people to pledge annually and
also have special thank-offerings during the year. They also give feedback
during the year on three occasions.

3.4.6 Why are people not more involved with the poor?

The reasons given by the leaders were:

- The prevailing consumer culture we live in, “I come to church to get not to
give”. I give to this church so that I can get a good sermon and service.
- We have built walls around us and we don't see “the faces of the poor” any
more.
- People are centred on their own children (and their education), so when they
go to university they spend all their money on education.
- People don’t want to get involved in other people’s lives, they want to stay
detached.
- Our identity is that we are a suburban church and that poverty is out there
and that it is some other people’s ministry to engage the poor.
- The poor are dehumanized. They become “the thief”, “lazy”, “need help”,
“outside the gate”, “a security risk”.
- People are tired of giving to church structures and don’t trust the church with
money.
- People make a distinction between “our people”, which means poor white
people, and the others. They don’t want to give towards black poverty.
- People become involved where there is a personal link; without this link they
don't give.
3.4.7 What is the role of the church in helping people to distinguish between needs and wants?

One of the leaders confessed that he had not thought about this aspect of the church but noted that he felt that in its most extreme form people only need God. He wondered what a calling-based interpretation of this would be. People would determine what their calling was and then determine what was needed for the faithful performance of that calling. He also noted that the specific community one is part of would determine the definitions of needs and wants.

Two of the leaders said that they felt that it was a responsibility of the church but they didn’t have practical tools to discharge this responsibility. One mentioned that his colleague, who is no longer there, challenged some people to live on 10% of their income and give 90% away. This made him very unpopular.

The other leader saw their series on stewardship as something that touched on this area. He also mentioned that they engage businessmen on their social responsibility and that they have people who speak to the congregation about the poor and that this helps in an indirect way.

3.4.8 Would you open your budget to someone else for viewing and do you think people in your church would be willing to do that?

One of the leaders mentioned that it would be helpful for him and his wife to open their budget to other people as “accountability partners” as long as there was trust. He felt that by not talking about the topic a lot of uncertainty arises.

The other leader did not share this openness towards the specifics of one’s budget. He felt that people were open towards a general topic of stewardship but not in terms of the rands and cents of people’s budgets. He mentioned that it was still a private matter for people and that they were sensitive about it. He also
wondered how a congregation would perceive a movement like this. On what basis would it happen? Would the church view the leaders with suspicion if a movement were started where people opened their budgets to one another?

3.4.9 How are poverty and the poor mentioned in your church’s liturgy?

One of the leaders mentioned that the poor and poverty are mentioned in sermons every now and then, but apart from this there is no prominence and they have no strategy to give exposure to the poor in their liturgy.

The second leader mentioned that apart from the weekly offering in which people dropped money into the offering plate in silence, there is no mention of poverty-related issues in the liturgy. Once a year a group from the informal settlement visits their church, but then there is a clearly observable drop in attendance and after the service during the tea time the congregation go home instead of drinking tea.

The third leader mentioned that they have a weekly focus on one of their projects or outreaches. One of these outreaches constitutes 30 families’ adopting families from the local “squatter camp” for a day, during which they have a sporting event and a day together. They have also preached a series on Luke.

The fourth leader did not feel like commenting on this subject.

3.4.10 Have you developed a sermon on theology around the concept of inheriting money?

None of the leaders had done this. In their minds it is definitely something that has to be explored in our South African context, but they had not been in contact with any theory or practice with regard to this. One leader mentioned that within his cultural framework an inheritance is a given, like retirement.
Another mentioned that by thinking about this question he realized that he is part of a community of people who leave others an inheritance, and that this leaves him with certain privileges and responsibilities. These include using his intellect and education for the greater good as well as the skills he has. He also wondered what this would mean for BBBEE and property in South Africa.

3.4.11 How do you feel about your role as a leader of the church in terms of engagement with the poor?

All four leaders mentioned their difficulty in terms of this area of their ministry. Some of the comments made were:

- “The extent of the poverty in our country makes this a big issue so I rather tackle some other issues.”
- “I am afraid to talk as a leader about this because then I’m implicating myself and will have to do something!”
- “I believe in embodiment and because it is not in my life I don’t feel comfortable talking about this.”
- “It is not a lifestyle for me yet.”
- “We are trying our best to help people to cross boundaries but it is difficult; we realize that this is more than just a project-driven strategy.”
- “I think about this constantly but don’t feel like talking to the church about this because it is just a philosophical conversation.”
- “I have to practise what I preach.”
- “I have a huge internal conflict about this; there are so many stories of what doesn’t work. Don’t we just cause more harm?”
- “Aren’t we just exposing people to a version of the Western life?”

3.5 Meet the congregants
The congregants were invited to an evening of discussions around the issues of mission towards the poor. The meetings were all conducted in small groups in people’s homes. The meetings lasted two hours, during which the interviews were facilitated by questions that arose out of the literature study. Males and females constituted the groups. One of the group meetings was attended by the pastor of the church. This might have had an influence on the responses to the questions.

The questions and responses will now be reported.

3.5.1 The church’s response to rich people

All the interviews were introduced by a description of the background of Clement of Alexandria’s engagement with the people of Alexandria. The groups were asked to give their thoughts on the situation.

The general response to the question whether a rich man can be saved or can be part of the church was that it was preposterous.

- “It is besides the point … because it is not about money, it is about being saved and what you believe in … it is about your soul”
- “It is ludicrous, why? It is not per se that they are using their wealth in a bad way”.

Respondents felt uncomfortable with the idea that people could be excluded because of their financial status. One’s wealth or otherwise is not the main identity marker for people: “Richness doesn’t determine who we are or what we do!” Responses to the debate brought a defensive posture from all the groups; defending the rich against the poor.

New questions were proposed that were more pressing,

- “Can a Christian become rich?”
- “Shouldn’t we give things away …?”
One respondent felt that there was a “real church” and a “building church”. He felt the church tolerated the rich because they can practically “foot the costs of the church buildings”.

There was a feeling that those who are rich were made so by God and that He calls them to steward their resources well.

Respondents felt that God gave riches in order for you to steward them (whether you have plenty or nothing). One respondent said that the rich have it harder than the poor because it is easier to give a tithe when you earn less than when you earn much. He mentioned the difference between tithing on R1000 and tithing on R10 000. All the groups conceded that Jesus spoke on riches and money on many occasions.

3.5.2 Who are the rich people in South Africa and are you rich?

Respondents in all groups commented on the relative nature of what it means to be rich, “It is all about perception … what is rich for one is not for another …”

Even though there is a sense that it is relative it is also linked with a strong comparative aspect: “You compare if the person has more than you” and “I have a dream of where I want to be, when someone who walks in and has more than me … then he is rich” and “If you have a salary of R100 000 a month you can still not have enough and have to turn pennies”, as well as “If I look at my bank account I wouldn’t describe myself as rich; I want to have so much more.”

Most identified that the rich are those who have more than they have, “Those bastards who go to France, have the 4 x 4’s and the vacation houses”. It is the others who are living ostentatiously, “Lolly Jackson is rich” and “Our CEO is rich … he earns R14 million a year and has several holiday houses”.

One respondent defined “rich” in terms of her visits to the supermarket, “If I am in the supermarket and the person takes from the shelf what they want and takes
out the cash then they strike me as rich. A comfortable, stress-free, no-worries, don’t-turn-pennies kind of life."

Respondents also defined rich by looking at the lower strata of society and romanticizing them, “I wonder if those who have bread on the table and something to ride with isn’t rich compared to everyone in our country (and a house) compared to South Africa’s people” and “I gave a black woman a job; in her ‘little environment’ she is rich. She doesn’t strive for more; she sees herself as rich and don’t want more.” Another respondent commented that “In Africa there are people who are doing sustainable farming and for me that person is not poor.”

Many respondents commented that when they reflected on the bigger world or African context they knew that they were well off, but that, “If I take a broader perspective then I feel rich … but in my day-to-day I don’t feel that way.”

There was also a tendency to move from a materialistic definition of being rich towards an emotional and spiritual definition. One respondent worded it in this way, “In my personal life being rich is about money in my church life it is giving your talents.” Another respondent commented that “It is not about money, it is about being saved, Money has nothing to do with it.”

One respondent recounted how mission in Africa has taught him and his wife that there is another kind of wealth. Riches are also happiness, time and respect for someone, “I see this kind of wealth in relationships and family … wealth is not just the material aspects but also the familial context. Around a braai in South Africa it is about money, but on a spiritual level being rich is totally different.”

This sentiment evolves into a definition of the rich person as someone who is contented and has good relationships. The respondent who gave the black woman a job responds that she, “earns the least in the company but she is content and therefore she might be the wealthiest. She has inner fulfilment because she is sharing with others”.
In the conversations there was also a general tendency to defend the stance of the rich in opposition to the poor as static categories predetermined by God, “The Bible says that you will always have the poor with you.” There was also a tendency to see the stance of the rich in service of the poor, “Did the first church not have rich people who could help other people? Not everyone was poor … otherwise people couldn’t give” and “What are we doing with our money?"

Most of the respondents would not describe themselves as rich (out of all the interviews, only two people self-identified as rich), “I don’t feel that I’m rich. It is a labelling mechanism, so I won’t describe myself in those terms.” Two of the respondents identified themselves as rich. One of them stated that “I see myself as rich, I have more than what my parents had and more than 90% of people I work and live with.”

3.5.3 If you are not rich, are you middle class?

When the term middle class was introduced to the different groups, almost all of the respondents associated with the term: “I like that label”, and most felt comfortable self-identifying with it. The middle class is a “household with two cars”.

Others identified with the term but in a self-deprecating manner, “Humbling, whacked down and average, we are not at the bottom but also not in the top. We suffer, we don’t have enough, we moan and feel sorry for ourselves” and we are “boring”. It is a suburban life that makes some feel threatened because “the middleclass is dying”.

Those who didn’t associate with the term fell into two camps. The first were the two respondents who identified themselves with the rich. The second group felt that though they were not rich, the middle class represented a group that was beneath them, “We are afraid to see ourselves as middle class because it is
something to be ashamed of”, and “They are led by the capitalists.” They found themselves in an in-between state, neither rich nor middle class but also not poor.

The groups interviewed discussed how their thoughts about the middle class were developed within the confines of Afrikaner culture.

3.5.4 Do you have a friendship with a poor person?

None of the groups interviewed reported on a friendship with a person who was poor. Some of the groups had difficulty answering this question because of the relativity of the definition of “poor”. One member said that, “It depends who the poor are. In my reference system I have a friendship with a poor person who has a house and a superbike … mm … maybe they are not really poor … but for me they are. If they invite me for a braai then I take the meat.”

Some respondents at first identified friendships with their domestic workers and gardeners but then realized that this was not friendship. “The guy who works for us, he has worked for 16 years for us. We grew up together and Sam … I won’t say … it depends how the friendship is defined … we give him support … we give his children our children’s old clothes … there is not just the superficial stuff … he will ask me for help … for instance when he asked me to help him buy a car … it is not a “backhand” relationship if he wants something, like clothes he will ask me directly. He will sms us on birthdays. We have never visited one another. I think it is a friendship … I want to say yes but I cannot really say because it all depends on all of the definitions.”

Some respondents equated relationships built on short-term mission trips with friendships but also retracted: “Another way is outreaches … some friendships do develop … but is only once a year … so what impact does it really have?”
A few respondents marked their uneasiness with being in friendships with poor people and noted that it is impossible, “It is a class thing … I don’t know … you associate with people in your own circle … your kind of people … maybe my brother is my friendship … he is poor” and “I don’t have black friends because I don’t know a black person who can speak fluent Afrikaans and has a Western worldview … I am not a racist … we have nothing to say because I don’t want to speak English with my friend because I want to be comfortable.”

All of the groups noted a desire of some sort to explore relationships with the poor, “It is bad that we don’t have someone like this.”

3.5.5 What are some of the reasons people don’t become involved with the poor?

- Geography: “The places where we stay are protected and have high walls around them”
- Isolation … “A lot of people feel they want to give but they don’t know how or where.”
- Comfort: “I want to be comfortable in my friendships and have a place where I can relax.”
- “I feel guilty about my lifestyle when I am with poor people, so I would rather not be confronted by them”.
- Abstraction: “We read about the poor in the papers, but they are still far removed from our daily lives. Unless we see beggars at the robots.”
- “It is not everyone’s responsibility – some people should do this.”
- Fear: “Our presuppositions develop into unfounded fears; for example, is poverty infectious? My mother told me to always socialize upwards not downwards.”
- It is hopeless: “To really connect with poor people you have to become poor, we must become part of each other.”
- Feeling overwhelmed, “The need is just too big, where and with who should I start?” and “No one wants to become involved … otherwise the person might latch onto you … giving money won’t be enough … if only there was a place that could do this for us.”

- Being critical about the poor, “It is the easy way out to beg and to not have a real job … they steal, rape, take and suffer from trauma.”

- Selfishness: “If I give to other people will I have enough?” and “They think it is their money and they worked for it … I have to enjoy this … this is mine.”

- Busyness: “We live under immense pressure in Johannesburg, we don’t want to listen to someone else’s problems” and “People are overcommitted and don’t have margin.”

- Success: “If I can do something substantial … buying groceries … if I can see that I am making a difference … this money of mine has made a difference … that is what I want.”

- Lack of knowledge: “I don’t have the know-how. So I don’t do anything.”

- Distrust: “People have seen how money has been mismanaged.”

- Tribalism, “We want to look after ‘our people’ and the biological family and people we know.”

3.5.6 Do you think the church has a responsibility to help people distinguish between needs and wants?

All the groups indicated that they think it is the church’s role to help distinguish between needs and wants, “if the church doesn’t do it … then who the hell will … if we don’t change the culture then who will?”

Once again the relative nature was pointed out, “needs are food, housing and security, but the problem is how one defines these” and “it is difficult to determine … is it shopping at Checkers or at Woolworths?”

The distinction was made between essential needs, and wants that were defined as “nice-to-have”. One respondent mentioned their battle with getting DSTV and
mentioned that it was not wrong to have wants “but they have to be responsible” and that when they decide to indulge in wants they “have to off-set it with giving”.

The sentiment that all we need is God and that, “all else is nice-to-have” was voiced in the groups.

The reality was brought out that the church has a collective battle with this. “How can we challenge the members in our churches if we as a local church always upgrade?” someone commented, with reference to an announcement over the weekend that was introduced with the phrase “we want to upgrade … and we need more money”. She reflected on how the building of a luxurious building has moved from a want to a need.

One respondent stated, “It would take prophets to challenge the cultural values and meta-narratives that create wants, and you will lose your job if you do this. Prophets challenge the identity, values, meta-narratives of the consumer culture – we need prophets”.

One respondent mentioned that there is “nothing wrong with wants and that there are a lot of verses in the Bible that mention that we should make our wants made known to God”. For this respondent, a conversation about the distinction between wants and needs will bring unnecessary guilt, “I think one has to become content in order to make your wants known to God.”

Another respondent mentioned that their church undertook a practical exercise to help them distinguish between needs and wants. One weekend they received a hanger, a tract and a chocolate. During the week they had to put a piece of clothing on the hanger in order to give that away. The chocolate and the tract were for a cashier, to say that their service was appreciated. “You walk into the house and look at your clothes and think you can give this to someone but you want it. Giving something that I want and not something that is stained or crumpled … changed my mindset … it challenged me … it hurt me.”
Yet another one was reminded that their church studied the Lord’s Prayer and he was struck by the phrase “not because we deserve it” and by praying for “daily bread”. He wondered what that really is, because “our needs are so different”.

**3.5.7 Would you be open to revealing your monthly budget to another person in order to distinguish between needs and wants?**

The reality of this challenged all groups. One group related that they had talked about doing this “when we discussed 40 days of purpose we talked about the idea … but doing it literally will be a challenge … it will become apparent that you are not as middle class as you pretend to be … it will be evident that you are actually [not] giving in relation to what God is giving to you. You might be ashamed about the relations between what you actually receive from God and actually give”.

Another respondent reacted that he sees it from a different angle and that he would be afraid to do this. “What if I feel ashamed if I show my monthly salary and then people will look at it and say ‘shame’?” and it would be “shaming”. There was also a feeling that it could become controlling and that it might inhibit giving: “You must give generously … I wouldn’t want to feel guilty because then I won’t give with a free heart … maybe it will help … but don’t tell me what to do.” Some also felt that it could “become a way of bragging” and this would be a pity because “I believe I have to give in secret, otherwise I have already obtained my reward”. This was echoed by another person wondering if “this wouldn’t make someone proud, as in ‘I want to show you how much I am giving’”.

Some saw this as an opportunity to help bring “money in line with the kingdom” and also to “help those who are not that good with money … it will be good for them to get input into this”. Another respondent stated that the person looking at the budget must know his stuff and could not be the church because “the church is not the best with money”.
“If everyone is willing to do this then I will too”; otherwise “it is your own personal matter”.

One member said that to open her budget would “feel like opening herself for abuse … I will be hesitant to tell people what I earn … otherwise all kinds of needs will come to light … I also want things for myself like DSTV and beautiful clothes.”

Another respondent said that she would be open to sharing her budget “if we have the same purpose with it … if we use the surplus to help people … then I will do it!” Some also felt that it “could be interesting and that it could be good accountability”. It could also be an opportunity to learn from each other.

Some respondents felt that hesitancy to talk about the nuts and bolts of your budget might be “because they don’t feel at peace what is going on in their finances. Spending too much money on DSTV and too little giving to the church and other institutions”. Other respondents felt that “If I go over my budget with the Lord then there is no reason why I shouldn’t open up my budget towards someone else; and ‘would I buy this if my mother was standing next to me?’ echoes this. I know I would spend things differently if I knew someone else saw it.”

The reluctance of some members is shown in the tension between thinking of money as one’s own, on the one hand, and as God’s, on the other. The tension is shown in the response that, “My first reaction is that it is my money and a personal matter how I decide to spend it. It is a private matter. What I say to myself is that it is so … but I have nothing of my own … but one feels so! “

There was also a strong feeling that one’s money is “private for the Afrikaner and that sharing the details of it would be inappropriate”.

3.5.8 How much should we give?
Some respondents said that they “give a tithe” but then qualified the statement by saying that, “tithe is a category word, when I use it I don’t really mean 10%, I just mean giving.” Another respondent said, “It is easy, we should give a tithe”, and another that, “the Bible says we should give a tithe and if you don’t do it then the blessing will not be on you”. Someone felt that a tithe “is not enough to pay my conscience off and I feel that it should be more than just a debit order” and “a tithe is just a start … by giving your tithe you haven’t stolen from God, one has to give beyond the tithe”. Another made a connection between how much one should give and the needs and wants discussion. A few respondents confessed that they “battle to give a tithe”.

There was also a tendency represented in all the groups towards moving away from a concrete concept of rands and cents towards making giving “a spiritual principle … you must give what you feel in your heart”; and “It is really easy for me to give money but my time … it is a huge sacrifice … it is easy for me to give the money so that other people can go out into a mission … then I don’t have to do it”.

In all the groups there was a question of whether one “should give money?” The sentiment was that it is more valuable to give of one’s time and that “your whole life becomes a resource for God”. The giving of money should also be an invitation to the “giving of yourself”.

3.5.9 What ways do you use to discern whether you should give?

Respondents reported the following way in which to decide because, “we have to give responsibly … I have to think what will happen with my money”.

- Relationships: “I give to people I actually know so that they can be empowered”.
- Are they grateful? “If they are not grateful then I don’t give”.
- Listening to God’s voice: “I only give when I feel prompted by God to do so.”
- Fairness: “I don’t give to people at the robots because some people who stand at robots make more money than people that work.”
- Work: “I give to people who do something”.
- Anonymously: “I give in the crowd because I don’t want to be involved personally. It is safer to give this way.”
- Christians only: “I only give to Christians and Christian organizations”.
- Church: “I give to the church because they know what to do with the money”; and “I only give when my local church condones it or if it furthers the mission of the church”; also “Create the ministries that I can give to so that I don’t have to go there myself.”
- Not monetary: “I give food, not money, for they just use the money in unhealthy ways … but this is also tricky for when I give blankets they sell it for drugs”; and “We have to work towards a place where you are not giving but helping. After 13 years of giving stuff we haven’t seen anything … they sell stuff … and give it away … or break it.”
- Our people: “We have to give money to people who are like us … Afrikaners.”
- Impact: “You don’t just want to give without knowing that it will really make a difference.”

3.5.10 Does your church mention the poor in the weekly liturgy?

Respondents predominantly reported that the respective churches they are involved with did not mention the poor in their weekly liturgy. One couple (who are very involved with mission in their church) felt that the church they are part of does this on a regular basis. They do this by introducing a table outside the church building where they focus on a different outreach every month. There is also a yearly service where the congregation is given a report on how “they have made a difference … even though they have never met the Mozambican people.”
3.5.11 Have you heard a sermon on the ethical implications of receiving an inheritance?

None of the respondents had heard any sermon on the topic.
CHAPTER 4

4. DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEWS

We are now moving towards the aim stated at the beginning of this study. Before proposals for the development of a model can be made, some reflections on the interaction between the literature study and the interviews follow.

In discussing the literature and interviews, the research will make use of the methodology proposed by Holman (2009). In her study she bridges the gap between her academic endeavours and their application to current poverty issues. She calls her methodology “emphatic remembering” (2009:7), and describes both words.

When she describes the word emphatic she notes that the word connotes “the capacity to participate in the visceral emotions or thinking of another” (2009:7). She describes how empathy towards the poor or the early church fathers does not obliterate the otherness of those who are not-me. Yet, empathy offers an encounter where “both the self and needy ‘other’ … stand together yet … be distinct within the same encounter” (2009:7).

She also notes that the word remembering can have two meanings: firstly the mental faculty of memory, the internal recall of what has happened, and secondly, as re-membering, becoming part of a whole again, in a reconstruction that gathers together (2009:8).

She notes that the texts we discussed in Chapter 2 have “perpetual immediacy” (2009:10) in any age but notes that a cross-disciplinary approach like the one in this study carries certain risks, and therefore one has to “read between the lines” (2009:10). Three of the challenges she highlights are:

- Remembering the unique context in which the early church fathers wrote
- Being aware of different use of vocabulary between the then and the now
- Realizing that these texts are “laden with biases and complex agendas” (2009:10-11).

In discussing ways to deal with these risks, Holman proposes practices that could help to not just “accept these texts at face value” (2009:11). These practices or signposts are to

- “Be open to where the story troubles me” (2009:11).
- “[K]eep in mind that most historical texts about responding to poverty were written by authors who accepted the context of a society that was framed and defined within a patronage model entirely unrelated to modern ideals of democracy and inherent political equality” (2009:12).
- [Be aware that they say] “very little about the women's issues that so powerfully touch our own modern understanding of justice, and they say almost nothing about the gendering of poverty”(2009:14).
- “As a careful reader … be aware of points at which the ancient authors also differed among themselves” (2009:14).

4.1 Following Holman's signposts

During the literature study it became apparent to the researcher that the gaps between twenty-first century South Africa and the early Christian fathers are immense. Furthermore, some of the writings reflected in the discourse “troubled me”. In what follows some of these areas will be discussed.

4.1.1 Atonement for sins

In the early Christian fathers’ writings, a motive for helping the poor is to atone for one’s sins committed after baptism. This practice goes against what has been taught after the Reformation.
4.1.2 Rich and poor as static categories

Augustine 2.5.2.5 viewed the rich and poor as static categories, where the position they find themselves in is explained as sanctioned by God. This viewpoint, which has been taught as a kind of caste system worldwide, perpetuates injustices.

4.1.3 Using the poor

Because the early Christian fathers’ conception of poverty relief was so focused on almsgiving, the poor regularly serve the role of the betterment of the rich. The poor become utilities for the spiritual formation of the rich. The reasons used for engaging with the poor are for eternal rewards or some other spiritual benefit to the rich (cf.Lindberg 1981).

4.1.4 Differences among the early Christian fathers

Even though Gonzalez (2002:225-226) highlights the similarities between the fathers, it becomes apparent that there were also differences between them. Therefore, presenting the teachings of the early Christian fathers as if they were uniform cannot be continued after the literature review. A prime example of this is the worthiness of the poor. Some of the fathers said that all the poor are worthy of help, whereas Basil scrutinized the poor in order to decide who were truly worthy. However, even though some differences do exist, the consensus will be discussed below.

In what follows the data of the interviews and the literature on the current discourse of the fathers will be discussed under the three interpretive paradigms used to report on the interviews: sensing the poor, sharing the world and embodying the kingdom.
4.2 Sensing the poor

4.2.1 The leaders’ sense of the poor

All four leaders showed an immense awareness of the poor. This awareness came through personal contact with the needy. None of them, however, described being in a relationship or friendship with a poor person.

Contacts with the poor were through beggars in the street or the occasional outreach. In some cases the sensing happened through people’s stories, the professionals who are paid, those who are "outsourced to be with the poor”.

According to the leaders, sensing the poor is hindered by the tendencies of consumerism and individualism, their own included. Where the early church fathers took their own privilege seriously and also took practical steps towards using that privilege for the use of others, the leaders interviewed in this study had different views on locating themselves on the socio-economic scale. They battled with naming their socio-economic status. Three of them felt comfortable with the label middle class and one leader described himself as poor compared with his congregants. Their hesitancy in acknowledging their wealth hindered them from engaging fully with the subject of wealth and the poor with their congregations. They reported that they could only preach if they practised and embodied what they believe. As we have seen in the literature review, part of the early fathers’ effectiveness was that most of them divested themselves of the privileges they obtained through their social class and used their education and privilege on behalf of the poor.

All four leaders mentioned being overwhelmed by their sensing poverty on the one hand, and being unsure of what the best way of engaging would be on the other. Holman describes these aspects of sensing when she writes that there are two reactions to sensing, the one is a knee-jerk, unreflective activism and the other is being overwhelmed (2009:35).
Sensing is not enough for the leaders and the feeling of being overwhelmed is compounded by a realization of being part of a “knee-jerk activism” through the outreaches of their church communities. All the leaders wondered if the ministries towards the poor are really helpful.

The leaders spent most of their time with the people in their congregations and their needs are at the centre of the ministry. In this sense they are using their privilege to enrich their churches.

Where the early Christian fathers lived into the tension between rich and poor and built bridges between the two, the interviewed leaders felt the tension of having to be sensitive towards the rich. The reality of keeping the rich constituents happy creates ambivalence for the leaders. They feel the challenge of Jesus towards engagement with the poor, but also the reality of the rich people in their churches. Concern for the poor reverts back to a focus on the rich. All the leaders reported feeling a sense of guilt when the topic of engagement with the poor is raised.

4.2.2 The members’ sensing of the poor

Like their leaders, the members also have a sense of the poor. Their sensing is usually impersonal and abstract. They mostly hear about the poor from other sources. This leads to a division between those sensing and those being sensed. The poor are “those” people out there who are always making demands on “us” in here.

Most of the members identified themselves as middle class and from this location their sensing was primarily of the rich above them. Sensing those below them is therefore hindered by an incessant focus on those above who have more.

The abstract sensing of the poor was mainly through the media (3.5.5).
This is often accompanied by stories of how benefactors tried to help the needy and how they were ungrateful or took the giver for a ride. These reported stories were predominantly negative and added to feelings of hopelessness.

Sporadic contacts included:

- Beggars at the robots (3.5.9)
- People encountered through outreaches (3.5.4)

The closest sensing reported was in the context of relationships with people employed by the members of the churches, domestic workers and gardeners (3.5.4). For some, the paying of workers a good salary constituted the sum of their sensing and engagement with the poor. Paying a decent salary became the definition of mission to the poor. This was typified in one incident where someone expressed their love for the poor through the fact that their domestic worker could also use the double-ply toilet paper.

All of the sensing, except for one couple, was described with uneasiness. This uneasiness could be described in three categories. The first is a sense of being overwhelmed with the vastness of the needs. The second is a frustration at their inability and a lack of know-how on what to do. The third is a sense of despair in that sensing had sometimes been translated into action but these actions did not bring about the desired change and effect that the givers intended.

Members also reported feelings of fear. They are afraid of the poor. Where they live and the implications of engaging the poor are some of the fears that were mentioned. Guilt was also a theme. When the topic of the poor comes up, members feel trapped in a sense of not doing enough and feel guilty. There is a strong sentiment in the members that guilt is not good and that surely God does not want us to feel guilty.

Johnson (2000:9) notes that followers of Jesus in modern America feel trapped in their response to the poor. “The most common causes of this sense of being trapped seem to be guilt, powerlessness and fear.” The interviews showed that
members of Afrikaans churches today feel all three of these entrapments with regard to sensing mission with the poor.

4.3 Sharing the world

4.3.1 The leaders and sharing the world

The leaders’ reaction to the sharing of the world explored mainly one aspect of the “full range of actions” mentioned by Holman (2009:19). Most of the discussions were focused on material resources and mainly about the giving of money. Sharing became synonymous with the giving of money.

Although in some of the responses giving was broadened to include whole-life stewardship, the conversation always came back to money. The sentiment of the leaders was that the sharing was not enough and that it was usually impersonal and outsourced to professionals. The giving was therefore with a long arm and did not include personal involvement.

The tendency towards a pure monetary definition of giving and sharing is consistent with research done in the United States of America (US), where it was found that most Christians in the Evangelical church see poverty as materialistic and the solution to poverty as the giving of money (Fikkert & Corbett 2009).

The reasons given by the leaders as to why people don’t share the world were various, yet a few overall themes came to the fore, namely the consumer culture and the prevalence of individualism:

- The consumer culture that has invaded the church; members don’t see themselves as givers; they have a primary identity of receiver.
- Isolation through specific boundary markers. Members actualize the sharing responsibility only towards the biological family or ethnic group; all other people are distanced from becoming recipients of sharing. This includes the continuance of apartheid ideology, where a distinction is made
between “our kind of people” and “them” and also in geography between suburban and “squatter” people.

- A growing distrust of the church was also reported. Members do not want to give so that a building gets built or a pastor gets enriched. They would rather commit to sharing that is more direct.

From the literary review it became clear that the early church fathers made frequent use of the categories of needs and wants in order to free up resources that could be shared. Sharing the world was defined by keeping wants in check.

In comparison with the clear and direct teachings of the fathers on the stupidity of superfluity, none of the leaders had a practical plan or process that could help people distinguish between needs and wants. The closest positive strategy was a sermon series on stewardship. Stewardship assumes the giving of 10% to God (through the church) and then being a good steward of the rest.

Although all the leaders reported that the church played a crucial role in “sharing the world” they did not have tools to do this.

One of the questions examined the openness towards one of the methods used by Clement of Alexandria, to openly share one’s financial doings with another person. Two of the leaders felt positive towards a movement of opening their budget to another person if it would happen in a relationship of trust. The other leaders felt uneasy and wondered what the motivation would be. The sentiment was shared that congregants would be open to sharing general stewardship principles but not the details of what they actually do with their finances. The handling of finances is private and the leaders felt uneasy to have this kind of engagement with their congregants. They fear that congregants will think they have ulterior motives. Where the early fathers had a radical honesty towards their congregants in order to move them towards the poor, the leaders interviewed felt a responsibility to work sensitively with their congregations.
One of the aspects of “sharing the world” that the church fathers engaged was the issue of the ethics and the missional impact of receiving and ultimately giving an inheritance away. None of the leaders have explored this aspect in theology.

4.3.2 The members and sharing the world

Like the leaders, the members’ main paradigm for interpreting “sharing the world” was the giving of money, although there were also sentiments of sharing oneself.

Sharing of the world was interpreted by most as an activity that does not involve the intimacy of close relationships but rather happens through outsourcing to professionals or the church leaders who could be involved with the poor. The reasons for this long-distance involvement included wanting to stay comfortable, fear of the poor, having too much distance from the poor (geographically and ethnically), hopelessness, selfishness and a lack of knowledge.

The standard for giving was reported as the tithe and was the main way in which the world is shared with the poor. When this standard is cross-referenced with the reporting of the leaders, two things are apparent. Firstly, except for one church the tithe was not the official standard for the teaching on giving. Secondly, the tithe is used in many ways through the churches’ budgets and only a small portion actually goes towards mission to the poor (the highest percentage was 20% of a church’s budget going for missions).

All the groups were in agreement that the church has a vital role to play in helping people to distinguish between needs and wants. Yet the practical implications of this were debated due to the relative nature of needs and wants and how difficult it would be to go against the consumer culture that always creates more wants. A minority of the members interviewed felt that it would only heighten people’s guilt when a distinction is made between needs and wants, and therefore they justified a lifestyle of wants, because, they say, God wants us to have our wants.
Opening one’s budget in order to determine needs and wants was not something the groups were positive about. Reservations of motive as well as the effects it would have were debated at length. The Afrikaner culture does not permit one to be open about finances. A minority of those interviewed would be open to discussing the details of their spending habits with others and were excited about giving the extra away.

Members have different ways of determining whether someone is worthy of sharing the world with. These methods of discernment were as varied as the individuals interviewed, and revealed that the congregants did not have teaching or training in this kind of discernment. In all the interviews there was a desire for instruction on how to know how to become involved in a responsible manner.

The members maintain a difference between themselves and “them”, the outsiders who want to make a claim on “our” resources. There is not a “powerful recognition of a mutual commonality of interdependence” (Holman 2009:147). There is also not a sense of offering hospitality to the poor.

None of the members had heard teachings regarding the ethics of an inheritance, and there was a suspicion that it might be another way for the church to get “their hands on my money”.

4.4 Embodying the kingdom

4.4.1 The leaders and embodying the kingdom

Although some of the leaders did mention the poor in the liturgy during the service, they did not feel comfortable with the frequency and thought it was not purposeful enough.
Seeing Christ in the poor did not figure in the interviews with the leaders. Sharing with the poor is motivated by the sensed needs and not by a sacred identification of the poor with Jesus. Liturgy was also not seen as a service done in the world outside of the Sunday worship moment. It was not seen as “an ordered service that addresses human need” (Holman 2009:21). The leaders shared uneasiness in bringing the poor into the liturgical space on a regular basis. One leader’s church found a way of bringing them into the space by representing them on a table outside the building through a ministry fair. In this way the poor become part of the worship space without being directly visible or by disrupting the service. Another church invites a poor neighbouring church to fellowship with them four times a year; the whites poorly attend these services and there are only a few white people drinking tea with the black people after the service.

Whereas the early Christian fathers saw the poor as a sacred representation of Christ among them, the leaders did not describe the poor in this way. Whereas the early fathers had a strong emphasis on Matthew 25, the leaders interviewed made a stronger connection with the challenging or problematic nature of the poor, which caused them to focus more on the rich than the poor.

### 4.4.2 The members and embodying the kingdom

As with the leaders, the members did not feel that the liturgy reminded them of the poor. Ministry to the poor was not viewed as something done unto Jesus but rather a good deed, or a charity. Like the leaders, the members viewed the poor in terms of the challenges posed by them. The members saw their main engagement as giving money to the church. For them the liturgy was something that happened on a Sunday during worship and not a service rendered in a mission to the world.
5. PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER STUDY

5.1 Current research and missiological trends

In order to make proposals that link the discourse of the early Christian fathers and the Afrikaans Johannesburg churches (AJC), some current research and missiological trends will be looked at. These include:

- Post-colonialism
- The neo-monastic movement
- Missional church

5.1.1 Post-colonialism

A proposed model for engaging with issues of poverty will work with the paradigms used by Holman. It will take into account the movement from sensing to sharing and finally to embodying. Each of these paradigms will be discussed in terms of its proposed missiological implications. In order to do this, Holman’s categories will now be discussed in conversation with the work of Rieger (2004).

Rieger discusses the movement away from mission as colonialism and shows that even though we are now in a time of post-colonialism, we are still doing mission which is in subtle ways tainted with the colonial mindset (Rieger 2004:201).

Rieger discusses three “contemporary efforts at mission” and starts with “mission as outreach” (Rieger 2004:212). Mission as outreach falls under two of Holman’s categories, namely sensing, and sharing the world. Rieger describes “mission as outreach” as churches awaken towards the needs that are present and towards the church’s responsibility to live for more than themselves. He writes that mission as outreach is a “learning about the perceived needs of the other and
what might be done about it: the situation is ‘appalling’, the needs are ‘desperate’, and ‘we’ have to do something about them”. The sensing that happens during these outreaches legitimately takes care of the victims but it does not ask the question of why there are victims (2004:213-214). In terms of Holman’s writings, these outreaches usually fall within the category of a “kneejerk leap” (2009:18), where the needs are responded to without careful thought. It is this unreflectiveness that keeps in place the macro system that causes the very needs that are sensed. The challenge for those who are sensing is therefore not just to help but also to learn. Rieger describes this when he notes, “What if the question is not first of all, What can we do? but, What is going on? and, How might we be part of the problem? Unless these questions are raised in the encounter with people on the mission field, nothing will change” (Rieger 2004:214). Without this examination, sensing and sharing become what Lindberg calls “a higher hedonism”: “service to others motivated by promise of eternal reward” (1981:32).

The second effort Rieger discusses is “mission as relationship”, a mode that he describes as a progression because the mission is not one-way. Within a relationship there is now room for “greater mutuality” and “mission projects would be concerned not primarily with "getting the job done" but with working together. Relational teaching and preaching would let us take some of the concerns of the people seriously” (2004:215). This mode reflects the long-term relationship envisioned by Clement of Alexandria in 2.2.2.8 above. Holman describes sharing the world in this sense when she notes that, “real justice, relief, and cosmic healing are never one-way activities, they are engagements in reciprocity and relating to one another equally at the level of creation”. The challenge with relationships is the embedded power structures that still prevail within these relationships. In this sense the early Christian fathers, with their patron-client model, cannot help us “to give an account of the deeper inequalities and differentials in power”(2004:218).
Rieger’s discussion ends with the third effort, which he rather confusingly calls “inreach”. Rieger describes this as follows.

One of the more recent emphases of volunteer mission teams has been on what comes back to those who are in mission. Among the things that are often identified as coming back are (besides a long list of insights into the social locations and the lives of other people) a new awareness of one’s privileged status, one’s obligation to help others, and perhaps a somewhat changed awareness of oneself. Here, "outreach" is beginning to be reshaped in light of what, for lack of a better word, might be called "inreach".

(Rieger 2004:220)

Mission as inreach takes place when the missionary act is seen as an initiation from God. In this sense the people being part of the mission are not bringing their goods or expertise or resources to the poor. The task of those who are in mission is to give up control to God and to commit all to God. He is the owner of all. This commitment includes power relations as well as economic spoils begotten through injustices. Bevans and Schroeder (2004:360) confirm the above when they caution against a “position of superiority” in mission. Rieger notes further,

Mission begins with the conversion of the missionary self - in light of God's own mission. Such a conversion includes repentance, a confession of what distorts God's mission, and a turning away from these things, particularly from our own attempts to form the other in our own mirror image (neocolonial authority) and to direct economic and other affairs to our own exclusive benefit (neocolonial power).

(Rieger 2004:222)

In this sense Holman’s third paradigm represents inreaching, where she proposes embodying as, “more than external liturgy. It is something that engages
personal inner wholeness. To think of liturgy in this way is to consider all of life as an engagement in the sacred realm” (2009:21).

In proposing a model these tendencies noted by Rieger will be kept in mind. It will attempt to move to a sensing, sharing and embodying that leads to a critical examination and a holistic mutual movement of embodying.

5.1.2 The neo-monastic movement

One of the groups that have made use of the teachings of the early Christian fathers in informing its mission is the neo-monastic movement. In order to offer proposals for further studies the work coming from their engagement with the early fathers will now be discussed.

As shown above (2.3.1), Basil played an important role in bringing the worlds of the lay and monastic movements together. In the neo-monastic communities this role of Basil is once again revived. The neo-monastic movement links the church back with its monastic roots. In their book, *The twelve marks of a new monasticism*, the authors acknowledge “a movement of radical rebirth, grounded in God’s love and drawing from the rich tradition of Christian practices that have long formed disciples in the simple way of Christ”. They call this movement a “new monasticism” (Wilson-Hartgrove 2008). The neo-monastic members are also described as the “new friars”, who use the impulse of the early church to shape their imaginations in terms of mission to the poor (Bessenecker 2006:108). Hayes (2007:263-264) describes how he was influenced by the examples of the early church and describes them as “messages from the sub-conscious church”.

Of particular interest for the proposals that will be made is the second mark of the twelve marks of a new monasticism, where the authors draw from the example of some of the fathers mentioned in the literature study.
Shaine Claiborne wrote the second mark. He also wrote two other pieces that are relevant to the proposals (Claiborne 2008; Claiborne & Haw 2008). Claiborne himself serves as an example of a link between the vast economic divides within Christianity itself; he served with Mother Teresa and worked at one of the largest megachurches in America (2005:26). He notes how he searched for a movement that could help him understand what it means to be faithful to the Gospel. In his search he found a group of homeless people who “opened their eyes to the economy of the early church” (Rutba House Organization 2005:27).

He discusses this influence of the early church under four headings. Firstly, he reflects on the church’s tendency to brokerage relationships with the poor to other people or organizations. He writes, “The more I’ve gotten to know rich folks, the more I am convinced that the great tragedy in the church is not that rich Christians do not care about the poor, but that rich Christians do not know the poor” (Rutba House Organization 2005:28). This observation has been confirmed by current research when one looks at the reporting on relationships with the poor. Claiborne took a survey of Christians and asked whether they would affirm that, “Jesus spent much time with the poor”. Eight percent of respondents agreed, whereas only 1% spent time with the poor themselves. Once again, the current research confirms this as true for the churches surveyed in this study.

Claiborne explains that only 1% have relationships with poor people because of the “layers of insulation” that exist between the rich and the poor. These layers include lifestyle, geography and then “more subtle ones like charity” which include tithes, short-term mission trips and donations, which “accomplish some good”, but “can also function as outlets that allow us to appease our consciences and still retain a safe distance from the poor” (Rutba House Organization 2005:28).

For Claiborne, brokerage diminishes the family character of the church, where the rich and the poor are enveloped in a new family rather than becoming givers and receivers of money. “The church becomes a place of brokerage rather than an organic community… the church becomes a distribution center, a place where
the poor come to get stuff and the rich come to dump stuff. Both go away satisfied (the rich feel good, the poor get clothed and fed), but no one leaves transformed. No radical community is formed (Rutba House Organization 2005:29).

Secondly, Claiborne explores what he describes as an “economics of rebirth”, where redistribution happens not as a prescription for community but because people are in a relationship and have moved beyond the brokerage model. They redistribute because of the claim made on them through the relationship. Commenting on the sharing and distribution in the book of Acts he writes, “they held all in common precisely because they were of one heart and mind, as rich and poor found themselves born again into a family where some had extra and others were desperately in need.” Claiborne comments that these relationships of love supersede economic theories of both Capitalism and Marxism: “When we truly discover love, capitalism will not be possible and Marxism will not be necessary.” This emphasis on the church as a family is echoed by the work of Hellerman (2009), who describes how the church’s view of family influenced their economic arrangements. Claiborne quotes Basil as saying that violating this family cohesion by not distributing when one has the means to do so becomes a form of theft (Rutba House Organization 2005:30).

Thirdly, Claiborne explores a “theology of enough”. God made the world in such a way that there is enough for all. Like the early Christian fathers, he explores numerous texts to show how followers of Jesus are challenged to take what they need and not fulfil every wish and want generated by the commercial industry. He suggests, “neither the prosperity gospel nor the poverty gospel, but the Gospel of abundance rooted in a theology of enough” (Rutba House Organization 2005:31-32).

Lastly, Claiborne explores the same passage that Clement of Alexandria used for his “Who is the rich man?”, namely the rich young ruler. He notes how rebirth and redistribution become one movement under Jesus. He notes how we run away from texts like this because it will not be popular to preach its meaning. He
imagines the disciples’ uneasiness with this passage, “We need some rich folks here, Jesus … we’re trying to build a movement”. For Claiborne, the implications of following Jesus are radical: “Jesus doesn’t exclude rich people, he just lets them know it will cost them everything they have”, and the passage also shows that becoming part of the Jesus movement means joining “an economy diametrically opposed to that of the world” (Rutba House Organization 2005:33-34).

One of the most practical outcomes of the neo-monastic community’s engagement with Claiborne’s suggestions above is the concept of the “relational tithe”. Samson and Claiborne (2009:134) explain that the impetus of the relational tithe was to move away from the brokerage described above. The project is described in this way: “We tithe in a common fund. Then as people are in relationship with others who have needs, they can bring those needs to the group. In this way all of our giving within the tithe fund is only to people we know, or are no more than one relationship away from. We support people in our neighborhoods, but have also had the privilege of giving to people in need on every continent”.

Like Fiedler (2009:92), my interest in this subject also arose from reading The Embezzlement papers on the relational tithe site1. The concept of the relational tithe has now moved into the writing of a book (Claiborne & Peterson 2010).

In the making of proposals some continuity with the works of the neo-monastic communities will be kept in mind.

5.1.3 Missional church

The word “missional church” has its roots in a response to the work of Leslie Newbigin and comes from the “Gospel and Our Culture Network”. It is a

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1 www.relationaltithe.com
movement that asks questions about the church’s mission, specifically in the US. Out of this movement was published the book *Missional church: a vision of the sending of the church in North America*. Roxburgh (2009) notes that the missional church became the primary way to describe the challenges facing the church (Saayman 2010). In the primary book that came out of this movement, Guder (1998:68) notes the tendency of churches to go back to earlier church forms, claiming that they are the true form. He notes that the early church had different arrangements responding to specific situations. Yet their study emphasizes the importance of challenging the status quo in terms of, in particular, “property, wealth, and endowments” (1998:241).

Roxburgh notes that the missional church is not “a label that points to a primitive or ancient way of being church”. He shows that there are many who take this stance and want the church to move towards an idealistic version of the church (usually based on what it was during the first three centuries). He advocates such remembrance and understanding but also issues challenges for new, imaginative ways of missional engagement (2009:33).

### 5.2 A proposed model for engagement

The proposed model will use the discourse of the early Christian fathers for an imaginative engagement with a mission with the poor. It is not a blueprint based on the discourse of the fathers, but is an interpretive engagement with it.

The model will be tested and explored in three stages (figure 1), beginning with the pastors and then moving on to the leaders (elders, stewardship/finance council members and mission team leaders); then the members will be invited into the process. This progression will create feedback loops that will help to refine and contextualize the model.
The model will make use of Holman’s three stages of sensing, sharing and embodying (figure 2). All the stages will be described and some practices suggested for their exploration.
The model functions in a dynamic interaction, with each phase influencing the others. Even though there is an interactive dynamic, the model starts with sensing, then moves to sharing and finally integrates into embodying. After the embodying phase the journey is not done – the mission continues and builds on the learning and experiences in the previous phases. The arrows point towards an outward focus, signifying the mission. The sensing circle is larger than the other two, signifying that not everyone who senses will move into sharing and embodying.

5.3 Proposal for sensing

In order for mission to take place an agent is sent. This agent is not a blank slate, and plays an important role in the mission. In the Kritzinger (2002) missional cycle, the dimension discussed first is agency. In order to engage in our agency,
certain questions have to be asked. Kritzinger states, “This is where our missionary praxis has to begin.”

- Where are we inserted into social reality?
- How are we involved in our community?
- Where do we fit into the existing roles of gender, class, culture and “race” operating in society? (2002:153)

When Clement of Alexandria wrote his treatise he entitled it, “Who is the rich man to be saved?” Even in the title this dimension of agency is elucidated. As the interviews showed, the interviewees had difficulty in answering the question of agency in terms of their socio-economic position in South African society. In all of the interviews with the leaders and members, only two people felt comfortable with calling themselves rich.

Roxburgh (2009:123) notes that the missional journey does not start from an idealistic future but from the present. The mission starts somewhere. This implies that the AJC will have to be challenged about the reality of their agency. For me (and Claypot) this means renouncing what we have come to describe as “the lie of the middle-class” (Smith 2010:30). Before this challenge, our sensing was limited to a view that the rich in South Africa were other people. The challenges of Jesus regarding wealth and mission were not for us, but people living in the rich neighbourhoods. Once we renounced this lie, the journey of discovering our own agency commenced. By facing our agency, the missional journey could start. I call it a start because, as Kritzinger (2002:154) notes, before we go on a mission we have to become aware of and face our own hang-ups and frustrations. In the proposal two levels of awareness will be explored: first, being the beneficiaries of apartheid, and secondly, other South Africans – the poor. Kritzinger notes that “one’s personal identity is shaped by who one’s primary interlocutors (discussion partners) are … we need to ask who the … people are that we allow to interrupt our conversations … the answers we give to these questions do not merely have implications for our practice of mission, they are
the first steps, the very foundation, of our mission praxis. Everything else flows from this" (2002:156-157).

In order for the AJC to engage with the question of agency, the leaders will have to be courageous enough to challenge the different identities and desires within themselves and the churches they lead. It will be no different from the conflict experienced by the early Christian fathers, described in Countryman’s observation that “the officers of the church were conscious how much the congregations depended on the rich and their gifts” (1980:172). The danger for pastors is to allow this dependence on the wealthy to inhibit their engagement with the agency question. John Chrysostom’s challenge to the clergy shows that this is not something that was foreign to the early fathers, and this was part of what Chrysostom challenged in the clergy of his own time. How the leaders and pastors view their own agency will have a radical influence on the congregations that they lead.

During the interviews it became clear that the interlocutors of the AJC are the rich who have more than they have. When they speak to the poor they talk about them and not with them. That is why the proposals suggest an engagement starting with the pastors of the community exploring identity and then building relationships with the poor. In order to engage the agency question and therefore the sensing dimension, the following practices are proposed:

- Apartheid’s legacy
- Pilgrimage of hope
5.3.1 Facing apartheid’s benefits

Sensing starts with locating oneself in terms of the overall context of the place in which one is carrying out mission. In the South African context, one cannot speak about the Afrikaners’ being, and specifically their socio-economic space, without also speaking about the legacy of apartheid. The Afrikaner has benefited from the oppression of apartheid, and for a purposeful missional engagement this must be brought to the fore. Accepting responsibility for benefits of the privileges received through oppression is only the start of a process that includes much more than just an intellectual exercise and awareness – it calls for a conversion. Tutu (1999:273) describes the contours of a process that goes beyond an intellectual acceptance, “Apartheid provided the whites with enormous benefits and privileges, leaving its victims deprived and exploited. If someone steals my pen and then asks me to forgive him, unless he returns my pen the sincerity of his contrition and confession will be considered to be nil. Confession, forgiveness, and reparation, wherever feasible, form part of a continuum.” We have to face what Njabulo S Ndebele calls “inherited, problematic inheritance” (Steve Biko Foundation Trust 2009). It is this aspect of inherited socio-economic
privilege in post-apartheid South Africa that LenkaBula (2005:104) describes when she writes that “our life experiences reveal that very little has changed in the area of economic and social justice. Many of our relations in this sphere are still, to a large extent, shaped by apartheid hierarchical relations”. The early Christian fathers’ teachings on the receiving of an inheritance could be explored in relation to this, especially for the group of Afrikaners who did not actively participate in the enforcing of apartheid. The missional implications of growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, as beneficiaries of apartheid, have to be explored.

One of the implications of apartheid for the Afrikaans churches in Johannesburg is that it has forced the church into an enclave where there is no direct sensing of the poor. Trapped in a class-based society, the white Afrikaans churches create a sub-system where the comparison is always upwards towards those who have more. The poor are not part of this system and daily life; they are not our interlocutors. The churches become places where the needs of the Afrikaner are met. Jansen has proposed that the reason why the Afrikaans church is so homogeneous is because it is a safe place where Afrikaner culture can continue and where there is “Afrikaner protectionism … where Afrikaners can be white and Afrikaans without interference” (Jansen 2009:35). It is this homogeneous existence that Katongole and Rice challenge:

… the gift of God’s story calls us both to a journey … and to a serious determination to name and resist the privileges, ungodly desires, patterns of life, identities and loyalties that have become to be regarded as normal simply because they are part of our racial, cultural, national and tribal identity.

(Katongole & Rice 2008)

Roxburgh (2009:70) challenges the homogeneous mindset when he writes that, “The gospel story is about God, not us; it is about what God is doing for the sake of the world, not about meeting the needs of self-actualizing, middle-class,
Western people.”

A radical engagement with the question of agency in terms of the apartheid legacy is desperately needed, as Bosch notes

We have to take our history into our hope. This means that we have to transform our history into something new. History can be a prison that locks us in. But it is also, paradoxically, the key that can open that prison. Only by taking both the guilt and the grandeur of our history – individually and corporately – upon us, can we use that history on our way toward hope. Some people take only the guilt of their history with them. Then they resemble that American missionary and become paralysed. Others take only the grandeur of their history with them and are incapable of seeing its relativity and flaws.

(Bosch 1991a:125)

Bosch also notes that mission in South Africa “involves making believers sensitive to the needs of others, opening their eyes and hearts to recognize injustice, suffering, oppression, and the plight of those who have fallen by the wayside, carrying a message of hope and new life into a situation of desperate poverty, meaninglessness, and violence, and working for reconciliation and reconstruction” (1991b:150).

Bosch reflects that the role of the church towards the white Afrikaner is firstly to change the false anthropologies instilled during apartheid; this “will evoke repentance, a confession of guilt, and a willingness to embark on the road toward restitution” (1991:158). He cautions against confessions without action and states that “It will be part of the mission of the church in South Africa to help White Christians make their repentance more audible and more tangible” (1991:159). He notes that repentance as a group is hard but argues that it is necessary. He also challenges the church (specifically the Dutch Reformed Church) to firstly
follow through on its confession of guilt at the Rustenburg Conference by spells
gout its consequences; secondly, help those who are “currently confessing their
guilt only haltingly and reluctantly and who need pastoral guidance to execute the
shift from an apartheid frame of reference to a worldview which embraces all
people as equals and as brothers or sisters”. Thirdly, they have a responsibility
towards those who resist any form of repentance or responsibility. These people
have learnt their mindset from the church under apartheid.

The acceptance of white privilege is a major challenge (Gruchy 2002:195) for the
Afrikaner and white South African churches. Yet, we are discovering that this is
of paramount importance within our South African context. According to us, a
failure to face this would be a failure to be faithful to the Gospel and our context.

Steve Biko identified the reason for the reluctance of engaging with this process
of awareness when he wrote:

> Equally we should agree that through living in a privileged society,
> and through being socialised in a corrupt system, our white
> Christian counterparts though brothers in Christ have not proved
> themselves brothers in South Africa. We must agree also that
> tacitly or overtly, deliberately or unawares, white Christians within
> the Churches are preventing the Church from assuming its natural
> character in the South African context, and therefore preventing it
> from being relevant to the black man’s situation.

(Biko & Stubbs 1987:58)

Biko wrote these words many years before our democracy was realized, in an
address entitled “The church as seen by a young layman”. It is this awareness
that is desperately needed in white communities so that we can become part of a
brother and sisterhood that is more reflective of our South African context.
Participants exploring this dimension of sensing will visit the Apartheid Museum as well as the Voortrekker Monument. These visits will lead into facilitated discussions designed to explore sensing. They will take into account issues of identity as they relate to the dimensions of guilt and grandeur mentioned by Bosch above.

There are more complex reasons for poverty in South Africa than only the apartheid legacy (Van Niekerk 2002:164-176). He notes the different factors leading to the current South African situation and cautions against a simplistic equation of blaming everything on apartheid. He notes that confession of guilt should include confession of pride and laziness: pride in Western developments' insistence that they know best and the laziness of our simplistic and easy solutions to poverty. He proposes that the needs of actual people have to be placed in the centre, and that this can only happen when people are in real relationships that move beyond abstractions (Van Niekerk 2002:175). The second practice is designed to move participants towards these relationships.

5.3.2 Pilgrimage of pain and hope

Even though the early fathers had different models for engaging specific poor people in their unique circumstances, Clement’s injunction to build long-term relationships fits well with the relational emphasis discussed above. The AJC desperately need to develop these relationships in order to engage in mission. The crucial element of relationships in mission is described by Kritzinger, who notes: “All mission is characterised by encounter, mission happens when Christians meet other people. Since mission is encounter, missiology should be ‘encounterology’ – the critical-creative study of everything that goes into the transformative encounters we call mission” (Kritzinger 2008:2). Sensing has to move beyond the self towards the other and the self is discovered in relation to the other.
One of the challenges in the engagement of the AJC with the poor is that it largely falls under Rieger’s “outreach mode”. Relationships in this mode are still delimited between static givers and receivers. The pilgrimage of pain and hope works towards Rieger’s “mission as relationship” mode.

Trevor Hudson, a Methodist minister, provides an example that will form the foundation for this second sensing practice. In the 1980s he undertook “Pilgrimages of Pain and Hope” for his white suburban community. He recounts how he felt that he was to “take members … with …to where … brothers and sisters are suffering”. This was a new experience for him and his congregation. He recounts, “Most of us had never consciously related our Christ-following to these social realities, nor ever had the experience of sharing life and learning from those who knew firsthand the pain of these social contexts” (Hudson 2005:17-18). Hudson (2005:18) makes a helpful distinction between the attitudes needed for pilgrimage when he describes the postures of a pilgrim:

- Pilgrims rather than tourists (Mugambi 2008)
- Learners rather than teachers
- Receivers rather than givers
- Listeners rather than talkers

The pilgrimage experience espouses three essential ingredients (Hudson 2005:19-21.

- Encounter with pain and hope
- Reflection on the encounter
- Transformation

Each pilgrimage has a preparation phase where people are trained. “We were not about to visit sacred shrines or religious venues of historical interest, but
rather tip-toe upon the holy ground of other people’s suffering”. During the preparation the following areas are explored (Hudson 2005:29).

- Learning to be present
- Learning to listen
- Learning to notice

While encountering suffering, Hudson teaches pilgrims to learn how to see differently, get in touch with their own poverty and also the richness within. The purpose of pilgrimage is to expose “ourselves intentionally to the suffering of others” so that the others “would change us and help us respond in appropriate ways” (2005:18). In this sense pilgrimage becomes a way of sensing and becoming aware of the other. This is confirmed by Katongole and Rice (2008:91) when they describe pilgrimage as a posture different from mission. For them pilgrimage is an antidote to the haste that is so prevalent in suburban churches with an outreach mentality, who want to complete the mission fast and then move on. This superficial work and quick solutions are ways in which the suburban churches mask their own brokenness and poverty (Katongole & Rice 2008:83).

Pilgrimage can be described as a precursor to mission and therefore has mission in mind (Bartholomew & Hughes 2004:176). A pilgrimage is an inward journey or an introspection, the place where one asks the bigger questions of complicity (Katongole & Wilson-Hartgrove 2009). Bosch (1991c:373-374) refers to the church in mission as “God’s pilgrim people”.

Adding to Hudson’s example, Katongole and Rice (2008) propose three tendencies that have to be worked against. The first is haste, mentioned above, the second is distance, which the pilgrimage addresses, and the third is innocence, which the first proposal combats. An authentic mission to the poor will not be a quick fix, and the charity model of doing mission from a distance will not suffice. Augustine and Basil moved their communities away from feeling good
about their acts of charity by challenging the innocence of thinking that you are doing good if you are in fact only making restitution.

Katongole and Rice suggest that pilgrims adopt the practice of lamentation: “We are called to a space where any explanation or action is too easy, too fast, too shallow – a space where the right response can only be a desperate cry directed to God. We are called to learn the anguished cry of lament” (2008:77).

A pilgrimage of pain and hope will be planned with the leaders of the churches. The location will be decided by taking into account which relationships the church has developed. The pilgrimage will be preceded by the training mentioned above. The hope is that the pilgrimage will move churches from Rieger’s outreach mode of mission towards a relational mode. The leaders of the churches will then prepare a pilgrimage of pain and hope for the members of their congregations.

5.4 Proposals for sharing

By exploring the legacy of apartheid and experiencing a pilgrimage of pain and hope, a journey of sensing and therefore of agency has been started. This does not mean that the sensing phase is over. Yet the preceding phase will lay a foundation from which sharing can take place from more than just the charity-based modes of mission. Research in mission and development work has shown that mission is far more than just the giving of money. Yet in our South African context this can easily become a way for the rich suburban church to sidestep its responsibility to interrogate money in the light of mission to the poor.

In reading the discourse on the early Christian fathers, it became apparent how directly they challenged the difference between needs and wants and confronted people’s desire to indulge in luxuries. Their injunction was clear: the luxuries are meant for the poor. It is this challenge that has to be interpreted in the AJC. Just as individuals battle with consumerism, the church as institution is also realizing
that it can easily become a kind of shopping mall where people’s wants are fulfilled (Jethani 2009:127). The churches become “vendors of religious goods and services” and do not see themselves as “called to be bodies of people sent on a mission” (Guder 1998:108). In order to move into sharing we have to deconstruct the consumer mindsets we have developed as individuals and as church bodies. Niemandt (2007:98-102) notes that we are blessed in order to bless others and that one of the best cures for individualism is listening to stories. If the churches want to be a blessing to those around them they will have to take stock of what they have been blessed with. Yet in the face of consumerism and ever-rising standards of living, the rationalizations against “downward mobility” are many. If the AJC’s interlocutors remain themselves, then the stories they listen to will only strengthen the rationalizations for moving upwards. By building on the sensing phase, relationships can be fostered that can add different stories and interrupt the rationalizations.

Proposals for sharing:

- Challenge rationalizations for not becoming involved with the poor
- Move towards opening budgets to one another and talking about needs and wants
5.4.1 Working with rationalizations

As the discourse on the early Christian fathers showed, they spent a lot of energy engaging with the different rationalizations offered by their congregants for not becoming involved with the poor.

In his book, *The freedom of simplicity*, Foster (1998:83) uses the early fathers and some other saints as examples of how you should conduct yourself regarding money and mission. He notes, “We who live in a world of half-truths and rationalizations and intellectual gymnastics that keep us from hearing and obeying the word … need to hear their witness.”

In one of the most definitive studies on mission and money, Bonk (2007:36) notes that missionaries find it difficult to talk about money because they have been caught up in the ideas and methods of progress, “making the rationalization of personal affluence possible”. Furthermore, the consumer society has influenced them deeply, while “the churches from which missionaries derive their ethical cues and their financial support virtually ignore biblical teaching on greed
and covetousness, elevating both sins to the level of virtue”. Even though this study was not directed at the traditional missionary ideal but rather at the church members as missionaries to their local environment, Bonk’s reflections ring true for members of the AJC. In another place Bonk writes, “ Included in every mission studies curriculum should be at least one seminar exploring biblical teaching on wealth and poverty, the rich and the poor, with implications drawn and applications made for Christian missions and missionaries” (2007:171).

(Bosch 1990:39) warns against rationalizations that give permission for an ever-escalating move upwards on the social ladder. He also cautions against developing a viewpoint that reduces the clear injunctions of Jesus from self-sacrifice, self-control and solidarity to only having the “right attitude” towards money.

The reasons people are not involved with the poor mentioned in the interviews above contain rationalizations; working with these rationalizations will be paramount for an engagement towards mission. Some rationalizations that came out in the interviews were:

- Didn’t Jesus say that we’ll always have the poor with us?
- If you give a man a fish you feed him for a day; if you teach him to fish you feed him for a lifetime — I want to make a big difference, not just something small.
- The government is doing such a bad job with the taxes I already pay.
- They have to do a better job (or how can we prophetically help them to do a better job?)
- Our church is not called to engage society in this way.
- What does it help, I once …… (followed by a story of trying to help someone with no results – this usually initiates counter-testimonies of how people got burnt trying to help).
- Africans cannot be helped because of all the corruption.
- Poor people are poor for a reason: sloth, drunkenness, stupidity, ungodliness.
- I want to help the poor but not in a "fleshly" way – I’m waiting for a revelation from God.
- This stuff reminds me of the ‘social gospel’ – what does it help if we send someone with a full tummy to hell?
- I just preach the Gospel.
- It’s dangerous to become involved with poor people – you can lose your life if you go into the squatter camps.
- Black people are not ‘my kind of people’ – isn’t there white people that we can reach out to?
- I did a spiritual gift inventory and I don’t have a passion or the spiritual gifts to help the poor.
- I don’t want to fall in the trap of doing ‘good works’; it’s all about grace.
- Charity starts at home, I’m doing my best to give my children the best …

In working through these rationalizations members can move closer towards an engagement with the poor.

5.4.2 Training together – towards an openness about money

The interviews showed that members of the AJC view money and particularly the use of their money as a private and personal affair. Talking about the intimate details of money is hard, whereas the sharing of intimacy with God is talked about freely. As noted above, Clement of Alexandria employed the metaphor of training when he challenged the rich in his community. In his training programme he suggests:

- A new definition of who the rich and the poor are (2.2.2.5).
- Opening one’s financial dealings to another person (2.2.2.9).

In order to move towards sharing the kingdom it will be of crucial importance for the AJC to grapple with a new definition of who the rich and the poor really are. In the interviews respondents oscillated between defining wealth in terms of the physical and spiritual dimensions – depending on the social space they occupied.
Next to the fire with friends, rich meant money, whereas in the sanctuary it meant spiritual treasures. Part of the training that Clement and the other fathers undertook was to redefine “rich” and “poor” and thereby show the rich where they were lacking and were poor themselves. The importance of linguistics in this manner has missional implications. Chrysostom cautioned against the words “mine” and “yours” (2.4.2.5), and Basil (2.3.2.6) also used his teachings to change the way people talk. One of the tendencies of the AJC is to view the poor as lacking in all areas, whereas the rich (in wealth) have no deficits and have all the wealth (spiritual and material) at their disposal. This dynamic creates a one-way culture of outreach where there is no mutuality.

Fikkert and Corbett (2009:67) explore this dynamic when they mention how the material rich can so easily fall into a god-complex and the materially poor into feelings of inferiority. This leads to an equation that forms the bedrock of their thesis. They state that a “material definition of poverty + God-complexes of materially non-poor + Feelings of inferiority of materially poor = Harm to both materially poor and non-poor”. Biko (2006:21,71) has shown that a hasty integration between white and black people with their in-built inferiority and superiority complexes has as a result “a one way course, with the whites doing all the talking and the blacks the listening”.

As the literature review showed, the early Christian fathers envisioned something more than just this one-way mode of mission. Therefore, it will be paramount to expose the AJC to new ways of defining poor and rich which would enable them to embrace our mutual brokenness or, as Bosch worded it, “there are no haves as opposed to have-nots; we are all, simultaneously though in different ways, both haves and have-nots (Bosch 1991a:125).

In this training in a redefinition of poor and rich, the work of Myers (2002) can be used, wherein he advocates a “holistic understanding of poverty” which he defines as “relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its
meanings” (2002:86). These broken relationships consist of God, Self, Community, Others and the Environment and are embedded in social systems.

As noted before, the sharing of money is but one aspect of sharing the world. Yet in post-apartheid South Africa, where 41% of the equity is still in the hands of the whites (Thys 2010), it is crucial to speak into this situation and think through the missional implications. Spiritualizing the implications of mission on economics or reducing it to having the right attitude will not be adequate if we are to make missional impact inspired by the early Christian fathers, who described non-engagement as stealing from the poor.

For the last two years I have been part of a reconciliation conversation where people from the informal settlements and the suburbs of Johannesburg come together to talk about following Jesus together in our post-apartheid South Africa. In one of the sessions a man from the “squatter camp” said to the suburbanites that he feels saddened that the wealth we received as beneficiaries of apartheid will be passed onto our children and their children through inheritance.

In order to “desacrilize money” (Ellul 1984:112), the suggestion of Clement will be used, where he urged “the rich to find a man of God to set over yourself as a trainer and a mentor” (Alexandria 1990:47). The purpose of the trainer is to develop a sense of accountability and to open a space for someone to speak honestly about the spending of money. In this sense, “his words may be harsh, but they will bring healing”. The person helps to distinguish between needs and wants or, in other words, luxuries and necessities, for “nothing is more detrimental to the soul than uninterrupted pleasure”. The mentor offers a set of eyes as well as prayers and words of encouragement.

It was clear from the interviews that there is a sense that the church has a responsibility to help parishioners distinguish between needs and wants. The closest churches came to this was under the teaching of stewardship that
relegates 10% of resources to God, and the rest to savings and good management. Concrete conversations leading towards realistic discussions about lifestyle choices were not reported. Because the AJC are socialized into a system where the comparison is mainly upwards, needs and wants escalate each year and there is a sense of continual discontent. (Witherington 2010:156), a leading New-Testament scholar, notes that there are clear guidelines about luxuries that should be avoided by followers of Jesus, “expensive clothes, ridiculously expensive jewelry, unnecessarily large gas-guzzling luxury vehicles, enormous houses with rooms that are seldom if ever used”, yet for the AJC these mentioned categories were not as obvious. He further suggests that 

every Christian should begin to draw up a list of his or her own necessities of life, and then list the luxuries. This will require a good deal of thought, and the process alone is beneficial because it fosters critical thinking about one's lifestyle and whether or not it is godly. This process of discernment and de-enculturation is crucial to spiritual health, and for freeing ourselves to do more for the kingdom, with less focus on self and one's own family”.

(Witherington 2010:56)

Because of the homogeneous nature of the AJC, the problem with an exercise like the one mentioned by Witherington is that within a wealthy suburban church environment one might actually start to justify some wants as needs. By building relationships with economically poor people (in the sensing phase) and by challenging the "infinite capacity for rationalizing decisions about money and possessions" (Witherington 2010:145), the AJC could start to face their privilege and move beyond a one-dimensional upward movement.

In his study on The freedom of simplicity, Foster (1998:163) notes that opening the details of your finances to another is a “hazardous ministry”. He counsels that this ministry can be engaged by:
- Assembling a small group of people or a person with whom you can share intimately
- Choosing people who are qualified as wise, sensitive to the Spirit, not impressed by money and able to speak the truth in tenderness
- Agreeing that the sharing should be open and detailed
- Listening to the adviser, especially when he or she highlights possessiveness, and not becoming defensive

A search into South African examples of groups engaging this kind of mission yielded no results. Ministries dealing with financial matters fell in the stewardship category or within the realm of seeing a financial advisor or planner. If the financial planner was a Christian, he or she worked on the stewardship principle mentioned above – give 10% and be a good steward of the rest.

In Washington DC, the Church of the Savior developed a ministry called the “ministry of money”, which has recently been renamed to the Faith and Money Network. The members engage with the issues of money and faith and state that they create groups that “talk freely and openly about our relationship with money and how it affects our personal lives, our families, our church, and our world”. The process that they follow is called “household practices” and includes a seven-fold covenant. This covenant was developed by the Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries.² These include surplus capital, negative capital, giving, environment, consumption, solidarity and work/Sabbath. Through this seven-fold covenant they help people to become engaged with mission in a way that includes their finances. They work around the asking of questions in seven areas that include: surplus giving, debt reduction, giving, environment,³ consumption, solidarity and work/Sabbath. Participants are asked to “think of at least one

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³ “More than sixteen centuries ago, St. Basil cited as already long-established fact the ‘ruthless cruelty’ of humans that prevented ‘the voice of the earth’ from rising to God in song” (Davis 2008:55)
specific commitment they can make in each of these seven areas for one year”. Questions used to develop the covenant include:\(^4\)

- Does my household have surplus capital? How can I move toward making more of my capital available for community development? What would I have to do to convert my investments to socially responsible (SRI) and/or community investment options?
- What is my household debt level (mortgage, car notes, credit cards, and student loans should be calculated separately), and what is my debt-to-savings ratio? Because debt should never be an asset or strategy, how can I move toward reducing my debt load?
- Gifting helps build social relations rather than private capital. What are the history and values around my giving? What is my relationship with those to whom I give, and how does my giving contribute to transformation of that relationship?
- What concrete steps can I take to make my household and lifestyle significantly “greener”?
- In what ways can I go further in reducing my consumption and changing my patterns to conform to sustainable patterns?
- What am I doing to interact in a meaningful way with people from a very different social stratum than my own, particularly those who are marginalized?
- How can I improve and expand my disciplines of assuring I have regular rest from work and adequate space for spiritual reflection and renewal?

According to the Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, “between 2004 and 2009 we held 12 retreats for about 250 people. On the aspect of surplus capital alone, we

\(^4\) http://www.faithandmonneynetwork.org/sites/default/files/Household_Sabbath_Economics_Covenant.pdf
saw participants move over five million dollars into socially responsible and community investments”.\(^5\)

The covenant shows the influence of the early Christian fathers and serves as a practical example of how we can appropriate their work for a contemporary missional engagement. Basil’s ministry had a significant emphasis on helping congregants battle the urge to go into debt. He also challenged the loan sharks to stop their usurious practices (2.3.3.2). The AJC have a responsibility towards their members to teach the folly of living a lifestyle financed by credit. Even though it is not within the scope of this study, it is worth noting that the loan sharks play a big role in the economics of the poor in the informal settlements. They lend money at exorbitant rates and people are trapped on a daily basis.

As early as 1974 the Lausanne covenant stated, “Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism” (Sider 1997:183). Sider works on the premise of a graduated tithe, suggesting beginning with a tithe (cf. Augustine’s lowering of the bar, above) and then an increase of 5% per year, “until you reach the level of generous sharing that you believe God wants you to enjoy” (1997:200). In order to engage with the graduated tithe, one will have to give up on some of the luxuries of life. Yet Blomberg, a prominent New Testament scholar, states that “the concept of a graduated tithe is both biblical and foundational for contemporary Christian stewardship” (2000:248).

More recently, Heuertz and Pohl (2010:65-66) note that in building friendships with those on the margins our ideas of what we really need changes and “challenge our lifestyles of consumption when they build generous and gracious lives out of very few material resources”. They also suggest the graduated tithe.

In order to develop this sense of sharing, the following are proposed:

- Groups are developed who can open up the details of their budgets. These groups can be as small as two and as large as twelve people.
- These groups commit to Augustine’s minimum of 10% giving.
- The groups work on defining needs and wants within their own lives and talk to members in the group about their conclusions.
- The sevenfold covenant should be contextualized for the AJC.

5.5 Proposals for embodying

Holman describes embodiment as a state wherein ideals of a philosophical and spiritual nature are embodied in concrete actions (2009:20). It is that space where the divide between sacred and secular is broken down, where liturgy means both worship and service. She describes embodying as an “ordered service that addresses human need in a manner that is in every sense a sacred act”. In embodying the kingdom, the external service or mission to the poor becomes an “engagement with the sacred realm” (2009:21).

Matthew 25:31-46, a text quoted extensively by the early Christian fathers, becomes one of the most popular paradigms of this embodiment. The mission is not an extra activity but becomes the essence of an integrated life. In his provocative work *A black theology of liberation*, Cone expresses this embodiment when he describes those who help others not because it is a Christian stepping stone but because it is the human thing to do. He writes, “Because the work of God is not a superimposed activity, pious frauds are caught out in a trap. They are rejected because they failed to see that being good is not a societal trait or an extra activity, but a human activity. They are excluded because they used their neighbor as an enhancement of their own religious piety” (Cone 2010:135). Niemandt (2007:98) describes how the new missional churches have a sense that mission takes place in the world when the division between sacred and
secular is demolished. Mission becomes a way of life and not just a conversation on a Sunday.

Embodiment therefore has to do with liturgy as worship and as involvement in society. It moves towards Rieger’s inreach mode. The proposals for embodiment are:

- Bringing the poor into the liturgy as worship
- Discerning where to do liturgy as service
- Learning how to administer resources generated by the sharing stage

5.5.1 Liturgy as worship

In order for the AJC to engage with the mission to the poor, an engagement with poverty during the worship service is essential. This engagement was exemplified by Basil. Constantelos (1981:84-85) notes that “Basil's Liturgy is a springboard for social action and societal involvement. The petitions and prayers are not meant to be rhetorical exclamations, poetic romanticism, or supplications
for God alone to hear; they are meant to penetrate man’s heart and mind and become an impetus for *agape* in *diakonia*—love in practice”.

As the AJC engage in their mission to the poor, research has to be done on how often the poor are mentioned in the liturgy of song, in prayers and in the sermons. Constantelos mentions that for Basil the liturgy was part of religious education and “an invitation for the metamorphosis of the congregation as well as of society” (1981:84-85). As the AJC engage in embodying mission, the developing of liturgical prayers, songs and sermons will be essential.

One of the liturgical practices that offers rich possibilities for embodiment is that of the Eucharist. Cavanaugh (2008:xii) notes that the Eucharist enacts a story of abundance and through its practice “we radically call into question the boundaries between the haves and the have-nots”. Kritzinger also sees this missional possibility of the Eucharist when he states that “If we can transform our Holy Communiions from "private affairs with God" (which they have become in our individualistic suburban life) into real celebrations of the *communal* nature of God’s grace and of the *mission* for equality, unity and liberation which begins at the Table, then it can become a potent force to re-evangelise the white church”. He describes how the Eucharist serves as a criticism of economic structures that cause poverty, as well as serving as a place where confessions of sins can be made and from which restitution can flow. He concludes that “If the Eucharist can once again become such a place to confess sin (personal and social) and to commit oneself to deeds of restitution, it will become the vehicle for re-evangelising the white church”.

The white Church has a local example of how the Table can become a place of mission in the work of the late Nico Smith and the Koinonia movement. Through this movement rich and poor, or in the 1980s black and white, shared meals together as an act of liturgy. The formation of groups like this might offer exciting missional possibilities.
Katongole (1998:38) posits that praying the Lord’s Prayer and celebrating the Eucharist challenges the life of the church: “If one takes these practices seriously, then one begins to harbour valid doubts about, and to seek alternatives to, the liberal economic story that tries to convince us that we exist as individuals, driven by self-interest, who regard the other as a competitor for the same limited resources. Once again the neo-monastic community has taken these challenges upon itself and developed two resources that can help with these ways of embodying. The books, *Becoming an answer to our prayers* (Claiborne & Wilson-Hartgrove 2008) and *Common Prayer: A liturgy for ordinary radicals* (Claiborne, Wilson-Hartgrove & Okoro 2010) offer a foundation that could be contextualized for South Africa.

The AJC will have to work on imaginative ways to incorporate mission to the poor in our liturgies. The writing of new liturgies, sermons and revised Eucharistic practices is proposed.

### 5.5.2 Liturgy as service

(Claiborne et al. 2010:10) note that the world liturgy has by definition the connotation of public; the liturgy is “a dialogue, a divine drama in which we are invited to be the actors. We become part of God’s story. We sing God’s songs. We discover God’s ancestors. And their story becomes ours”. The liturgy is about more than just the Sunday worship service and is about “being sent forth into the world to help write the next chapter of the story” (2010:11).

In an article written for the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Beeld*, Neels Jackson gives practical advice to people wanting to help the poor. Neels is the Religion editor of Beeld. In his article he advises people towards two principles. Firstly that poverty is much more than a deficit of money. People have to discern what is really needed; sometimes one has to give of oneself. Secondly, join people who are
already involved with the poor. He mentions social workers, NGOs and orphanages. What he does not mention is the church (Jackson 2011). When the Religion editor of the main Afrikaans newspaper omits the church as a vehicle of helping the poor, questions have to be asked about whether the church is seen as an active agent in poverty relief by the general public.

The interviews showed that the members of the churches were desperately seeking for guidance in terms of how to perform service and become involved. The relational tithe mentioned above is one way in which a community can help its members share. Through a network of relationships people serve each other within a relational rhythm. But the relational tithe is but one option. Churches have to develop teachings and practices that can help members engage in serving.

In the teachings of the early Christian fathers discussed above, there was discussion about the difference between the worthy and the unworthy poor. Some of the fathers felt it was not in the spirit of Christ to audit or decide who needed help, whereas Basil suggested that the clergy play a mediating role in deciding who the deserving poor were and how best to help them. These kind of conversations have to be dealt with, and churches have to discern how they will become involved and teach members practical skills.

Fikkert and Corbett (2009:103-122) draw a helpful distinction between relief, rehabilitation and development and note that one of the biggest mistakes churches make is to respond with relief in situations where rehabilitation or development should have been the intervention. They note that it is crucial for churches to “have a set of benevolence policies in place to guide decision making when working with materially poor people. These policies should flow from your mission and vision and be consistent with a biblical perspective on the nature of poverty and its alleviation” (2009:108).
The AJC will have to evaluate the formal mission or outreach ministries they are currently involved in and evaluate whether they are engaging in paternalistic missions which include paternalisms of knowledge and resources – spiritual, labour and managerial (Fikkert & Corbett 2009:115-119). In order to carry out helpful service, the following best practices have to be pursued:

- “Ensure participation of the affected population in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the assistance program” (2009:111).
- “Conduct an initial assessment to provide an understanding of the situation and to determine the nature of the response” (2009:112).
- “Respond when needs of an affected population are unmet by local people or organizations due to their inability or unwillingness to help” (2009:112).
- Target assistance based on vulnerability and need, and provide it equitably and impartially (2009:112).

In teaching members to engage with the poor, the AJC have to take into account the best practices in the field. This would include theology, as well as practical steps. The proposals include:

- Developing practical steps for church members to attain best practices
- Evaluating current outreaches and compiling a list of ministries members can become involved in

### 5.5.3 A missional application of resources

Once extra money and resources are available, the question remains of what one does with them. How can they be used for mission that moves beyond the charity model already mentioned? If that money is only filtered into church budgets designed to fulfil the needs of the parishioners, then it is not going towards the poor and has no missional value. This is where the early fathers’ teaching on theft becomes very pertinent. If the money given to the church does not flow to the poor, is it theft? Have the AJC dealt with the way in which they
have obtained their wealth? Gonzalez notes that if one is to engage with the early Christian fathers on the topic of wealth,

We would begin by questioning the existing order of wealth and poverty … we would no longer take for granted that whatever one has, has been given by God. We would help believers to place, not only management of their wealth, but their acquisition of it, under the judgment of God’s word. And we would be doing the same with the wealth of the church.

(Gonzalez 1997:12)

The challenge facing the AJC is not just for individual members but also for the budgets of the churches at large. In this sense the theme of stealing from the poor expressed by the fathers becomes pertinent. Gonzalez challenges the church to ask this difficult question: “Is this building being withheld from the needy in such a way that it constitutes theft as Basil would have understood it? We must ask it at the level of our national denominations and institutions: Are we investing so many resources on ourselves and our own institutional maintenance that we are guilty of theft?” (1997:12)

In his study of the patristic writings, Mayhew (2005) notes that in his readings he has “come across almost nothing that examines the fiscal priorities of congregations in the light of this patristic legacy. Articles abound on the responsibility of individual believers to conscientiously steward their financial resources but silence prevails on what is the appropriate use of this sacred revenue by the church once it has been collected”. Mayhew proposes that churches should challenge the assumption that the money received through tithing belongs to them by right. Churches assume (as with personal stewardship) that giving 10% of the church’s finances to mission is the biblical norm. The view that this is sufficient must be evaluated in the light of Scripture and the writings of the early Christian fathers. He notes that the church is to
channel its resources to the poor and that this was not in the domain of generosity but was in fact an act of restitution, because Augustine noted that, “not to give to the needy what is superfluous is akin to fraud” (2005:4). He notes that churches budget according to the perceived needs of the congregation and then divide the rest up between the different missionary endeavours of the church. This is because of “our theology of stewardship which appears to be quite different than that of the early church” (Mayhew 2005:5).

If money given to the church is largely used to benefit the members through the paying of staff and programmes, then giving has become largely part of a consumer model where people pay for the spiritual services they receive. The poor once again receive the leftovers. Mayhew (2005:18) states that “no area demands a more urgent conversatio morem than our attitude toward church expenditure”. He wonders what would happen if churches saw their “income” as primarily for the poor and mission rather than for the church’s needs. He proposes that churches fight consumerism and do church more simply. This thought is reinforced by Goldingay (2009:655), who states, “There is no basis for saying that tithes must be paid to the church. Indeed instead of using tithes to pay pastors and keep church buildings ambient, we might use them to offer nourishment, education, basic health care, and health education for people in the two-thirds world”.

Logically the proposals so far build upon each other (figure 3). By addressing the agency question the AJC can explore who they are. One of the ways in which this exploration is deepened is through the hearing of counter-narratives. The pilgrimage of hope will offer these voices and also move the AJC away from abstractions towards relationships with real people. Out of this encounterology, the AJC can then take stock of the resources and lifestyles they currently have and interrogate the rationalizations that keep their current lifestyle choices in place. Because of the counter stories and relationships, questions can now be asked about the difficult subject of money and resources and how we encourage
explorations in terms of needs and wants. These questions will not only be asked by individuals about their own lifestyles but also by the church as a family and specifically its own budget.

**Figure 3**

It often happens that churches leave the stewardship of the church’s finances to those who have become successful in the business world. The success and methods obtained in those settings are not necessarily the skills needed in working with the budget of a church. That is why it is crucial that the leaders who are responsible for the budget-at-large be exposed to the different stages of sensing, sharing and embodying. After they have journeyed through the stages, a new imagination could evolve. An engagement with the church’s budget is a missional imperative, for as Hays notes

… no matter how much hermeneutical squirming we may do, it is impossible to escape the implication of the New Testament’s address to us: imaginative obedience to God will require of us a sharing of possessions far more radical than the church has ordinarily supposed … for the church to heed the New Testament
challenge on the question of possessions would require nothing less than a new reformation.

(Hays 1996:468)

This new reformation will be an economically missional movement where the AJC engage with the poor. This reformation will take time. Mayhew notes,

A radical realignment of how we spend our money, along with discovering imaginative ways to generate the extra income necessary to cover our operating costs, can only happen incrementally. Feasibility studies need to be done, and congregations have to grow in vision and passion for the poor. Perhaps a local church could make such a paradigm shift in five to ten years, but even if it takes fifteen to twenty, it is still worth the effort.

(Mayhew 2005:20)

Each church will embody this in ways that are unique to its context and the relationships that have been fostered. Through the stages of sensing, sharing and embodying, the churches will be in a place where they can move away from abstractions and live into the needs of poor people with names and stories. The rich churches themselves can also become more astutely aware of their own poverties and become part of the missio Dei. Walking with the poor, they can make a joint difference in South Africa and become alternative missional communities.

5.6 Concluding remarks

I am writing this conclusion while watching major protests happening in Egypt. During the commercial break, DSTV (which has featured in the interviews)
advertises an HD PVR Decoder. The commercial ends with the line, “At only R1899 it is not a luxury; it is a necessity”.

During this research I have been challenged by my own contradictions in terms of mission to the South African poor. I am also a white Afrikaner and have been a beneficiary of apartheid. I have rationalized many luxuries as necessities and isolated myself from the poor. Bringing the discourse on the early Christian fathers’ teachings and kerugma into a conversation with the AJC has therefore been a challenging conversation for me personally. As a pastor, and a leader of the Claypot community, I have been engaging with this challenging conversation presented by the early fathers for the last five years.

Contextualizing the impetus of their passion for the poor as well as their confrontation of the wealthy has brought about a “creative tension”, to use one of Bosch’s favourite phrases. The tension is worth it.

In the last decade there has been a huge revival in the church in terms of recovering what the early church did. The language of becoming an Acts 2 church is in vogue. Missional and emerging Christian books all hark back to the pre-Constantinian time as the church that should be recovered. Yet the economic implications of the early church are usually ignored (though the neo-monastic movement is one of the exceptions). Somehow we feel comfortable talking about the theology, doctrine and passion of the early churches, but not their economic commitment. Talking about their economics and suggesting an engagement with it becomes labelled as anachronistic.

Even though the early Christian fathers had a total different economic system from the capitalistic one we function in, this study has shown that the discourse on the early fathers can offer valuable insights for a contextualized engagement in our current South African milieu. The personal examples of Clement, Basil, Chrysostom and Augustine challenge us. Their tireless efforts towards the poor and their prophetic engagement with the wealthy in their congregations showed their commitment to Jesus as he shows himself in the poor. They understood that
“being converted to God, rich and poor are converted toward each other” (Bosch 1991c:104). It is a conversion process that is desperately needed in our post-apartheid South Africa. This study is a tentative proposal towards such a conversion.
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