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Poverty as the Impact of the COVID-19: A Biblical Approach in Bridging the Impacts of Social Changes Caused by Global Corona Virus

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Abstract--This is an ethnography study that aimed to find out the real condition of poverty in Indonesia. A preliminary study showed that there are massive social impacts in the new normal due to COVID-19. Three kinds of poverty can be seen in real terms namely extreme poverty, absolute poverty, and relative poverty. Moreover, when viewed from the biblical approach, there are two words used that helped us in our research on poverty, namely "race" = "poor people" and "dal" which is more translated as "weaker" than "poor". The Bible does not state a single view on poverty but mentioned some Bible passages. The first is idleness poverty. This poverty is caused by laziness or negligence over personal responsibility to look for means to meet needs. The Bible uses ants as an opposite example of laziness in the book of Proverbs 6:6. The second is theodise poverty. This poverty is illustrated by Job who was stripped off of his riches, yet he was able to accept and embrace whatever the Lord gave to him. The third is conventional standard. This poverty is about corruption by the people in a specific position and power that is clearly and directly stated in the book of Amos. Looking at our status quo, there is one more poverty caused by the global pandemic which is COVID-19. This is called multidimensional poverty. This poverty has tremendous and drastic effects on the quality of education, employment, health, etc. Poverty due to COVID-19 does not only elevate the problem of having ends meet but also raises a multi-disability problem. The effective ways to bridge this problem, according to this research, are sufficiency and effectivity movements using the hermeneutics method.

Keywords---biblical approach, COVID-19, ethnography, poverty as the impact, social changes.

Introduction

Based on the survey and observation which were done by the writers, the poverty rate during the COVID-19 pandemic increased quite sharply. Nearly half a billion of the world's population is falling poor due to COVID-19.¹ This situation shows that the world is not ready for the global pandemic at all. The impact of poverty seems to go beyond the health problems caused by COVID-19. The mitigation of COVID-19 which seeks to place the most vulnerable as the priority has in fact created a new vulnerability of multidimensional poverty. The result is not entirely countermeasures but a risk exchange between the risk of poverty and the risk of disease due to COVID-19. This virus is able to make people starve first than increase poverty every where caused by the complex contingences dealing with the weakening of economic and health condition (Ambarita, 2018; Bergant & Karris, 2002).

Although pandemic history is not a new in the history of the world civilization, but COVID-19 outbreak becomes so unique because of its rapid mass transmission compared to the last hundred years. The deadly speed of its spread and the slow mass vaccination have indirectly pushed many people into poverty.

Entering a new normal, with existing COVID-19 is not as easy as imagined. The problem is increasingly complex and a number of dilemmas arise behind the new normal efforts. The impact on the economy remains challenging to circumvent. Experts said that the types of poverty are mostly relative and situational targeting people below the middle class. Its diverse causes further complicate the eradication of this type of poverty (Huey, 1993; Boltvinik, 1990). The various efforts and plans prepared by several countries in the world appear to battle over a number of dilemmas.

This paper was not intended to answer all the problems of poverty due to COVID-19 because of a short time frame on the condition of this research (Licoppe & Smoreda, 2005). This paper is more of a short and enlightening writing on poverty due to COVID-19 using a biblical theological approach especially the Old Testament in the hope of bridging a number of social changes imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic with adaptive and responsive strategies following the new normal (Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2017).

Methodology

This is an ethnography research using hermeunetics method in interpreting the data collected from literature resources and society (Beynon-Davies, 1997; Schembri & Boyle, 2013). Hermeunetics is a research method on the scientific interpretation or philological method, or even taken as a science of all linguistic understanding. Due to its function as a method in this study, the data were obtained qualitatively, then were described, interpreted, exegeted, and transcribed using descriptive qualitative approach. Since the study is a part of

¹ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/half-billion-people-could-be-pushed-poverty-coronavirus-warns-oxfam>, (accessed April 9, 2020).

human life, this method is also termed as existential phenomenology and of existential understanding.

Results and Discussion

Defining poverty is not easy. There are various views and opinions on what poverty is from various scientific points of view. In addition, the dimension of poverty is also relatively broad, concerning the dimension of tranquility, scarcity of access to knowledge, scarcity of access to work, scarcity of the most basic needs, including the abandonment of children, and many other dimensions. Therefore, it is rather impossible to define poverty that can bind all dimensions and points of view (Roach & Roach, 1972).

In KBBI (Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language), poverty is defined as a state of worthlessness; poverty or very low income or absolute poor circumstances where the population or a portion of the population can only meet the food, clothing and housing that are indispensable to maintain a minimum level of life.² Meanwhile, in an economic sense, poverty is associated with something called a living wage that allows families to meet their basic needs without using public assistance and gives them the ability to deal with emergencies and make future plans³, hence the inability to meet them, is interpreted as a poor state (Huey, 1993; Lempp, 2009).

Meanwhile, in terms of human rights, the broad definition of poverty is a violation of a human's basic human rights, and in a narrow sense, is a violation of one or more elements in the human rights spectrum.⁴ However, viewed in a more general picture, poverty can be interpreted in three fundamental senses. The first is so-called extreme poverty. There is no consensus yet on extreme poverty, but the definition given by Boltvinik⁵ seems quite helpful to define extreme poverty as a household situation that despite having devoted all its income, it will not be able to meet the food needs because the availability of food still requires a number of equipment such as oil, etc. In addition, due to the absence of clothing, people in this category cannot travel to work. This poverty is considered incapable of buying masks and soap and does not have sufficient access to clean and running water to wash hands during COVID-19 pandemic (Buheji, 2019; Nainupu, 2014).

The second is absolute poverty. The Copenhagen Declaration as cited by Spiker⁶ calls absolute poverty as a condition characterized by severe shortages of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. This is not only a matter of income but also access to social services. This type of poverty is considered the second most affected in the COVID-19 period (Zhai & Du, 2020; Muhammad et al., 2020).

² [https://kbbi.web.id/miskin \(poor\)](https://kbbi.web.id/miskin (poor)) (accessed August 12, 2020)

³ Nelson Brian, (ed.), *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Economics*, (India: Abhishek Publications, 2009), 107.

⁴ Øyen, E. „Poverty Production: A Different Approach to Poverty Understanding”, in N. Genov (ed.), *Advances in Sociological Knowledge over Half a Century*, (Paris: International Social Science Council, 2002), 86

⁵ Boltvinik, J. "Pobreza y Necesidades Básicas. Conceptos y Métodos de Medición" in *Regional Project to Overcome Poverty*, (Caracas: UNDP, 1990), 34

⁶ Spicker, Paul, Sonia Alvarez Leguizamón, David Gordon, *Poverty: An International Glossary*, Second Edition. International Studies in Poverty Research (London: Zed Books, 2007), 7-8

The third is relative poverty. Poverty is relatively understood to standards that exist elsewhere (economic distance) in a society (Tri et al., 2021; Phukan, 2021). Roach and Roach⁷ defined this poverty as a relative gap, between the supposed and the rough. This can be in the form of inadequacy of nutritious food, facilities, standards of service that are common or commonly found in a society. This type of poverty is considered the most affected by COVID-19 (Acosta et al., 2008; Parker et al., 1988).

Poverty according to the Bible is a very complex and diverse reality. Our job is not only to look at this diversity, but to deepen our awareness of this diversity. Alkitab often refers poverty to the most basic form of material destitution (Jewkes et al., 2015; Sprangers & Schwartz, 1999). There are a number of words in the Old Testament used to refer poverty and the poor. In this paper, the author deliberately chose only two terms namely "ras" and "dal", not in order to ignore the importance of the other designation, solely in considering that these two words can be used to describe the relative poverty that is similar to the relative poverty that occurred in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic (Gara, 2002; Spicker et al., 2007).

The Old Testament did not distinguish particularly between the poor and the poor, between "race" and "dal". In some circumstances the word "dal" is more translated with 'weak' than 'poor'. Even in some texts, the Old Testament 'dal' is understood not entirely in the poor sense. One example is Exodus 31:15 which gives the obligation of the poor to pay half a shekel of offerings, as well as in Leviticus 14:21 which stated that the opportunity for the poor to offer sacrifices, though less than others. Similarly, concerning the "race" of the "poor", in the parable of Nathan (2 Sam 12:1-4) mentions that the poor man has his own sheep and his house. This picture gives the impression that the meaning of poverty contained by these two terms is more relative poverty, not poverty in the absolute sense, let alone poverty in the sense of total destitution. The same is also found to appear in various other texts.

In addition to describing the state of poverty, "dal" is also used to describe the condition of the poor who are so vulnerable or weak (Prov. 14:31; 22:16; 28:3). This condition is rarely used to refer to the poor in the sense of 'race' and the poor in other senses in the Old Testament. It refers to vulnerable to oppression, their neglected rights (Prov. 29:7), and resulting in them screaming and needing a defense (Prov. 21:13). Therefore, it can be concluded that 'dal' contains at least 2 fundamental aspects, first is the vulnerable person and the second is the poor (bnd. Ams. 14:31).

Bridging the poverty problem due to COVID-19

Almost in all national and international crises, no exception of COVID-19 pandemic, poor people are always the most vulnerable (Suryasa, 2019). At first glance, the problem of COVID-19 against poverty that appears on the surface is a decrease in income and purchasing power (Rifai, 2016; Scheffler et al., 2005). However, the problem of poverty has gradually become more and more complex

⁷ Roach, J.L., and J.K. Roach (ed). *Poverty: Selected Readings*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 23

beyond the problem of lack of money, namely multidimensional poverty. COVID-19 mitigation measures have the potential to adversely affect the lives of the minimal and living needs of the poor⁸, including global unemployment which is expected to increase by about 10% by the end of 2020⁹. This is expected to slow down the handling of poverty by up to a decade, even up to 30 years in certain countries that are more severely affected¹⁰. There is hardly a safety net that can save you from falling into poverty.

Multi-dimensional poverty due to the global COVID-19 pandemic has expanded to the level of quality of education, employment, and health, etc. This means that poverty due to COVID-19 not only causes problems of loss of life needs, but also creates new problems, namely multi-disabilities (Romdhani, 2020). If it is traced back to finding the root cause, then one of the most responsible in this condition is global capitalism. This crisis does not occur overnight, but the result of a system that has been embraced for centuries by the world, which in fact is not capable in facing pandemic (Spangenberg, 2010; Widayati, 2011).

According to Buheji's analysis, the most affected poverty is relative poverty. Many of the middle class will feel the blow of socioeconomic decline. Income inequality will increase due to instability in various budgets (Buheji, 2019). The second poverty affected is absolute poverty. Many people will fall below the poverty line as a result of the large number of unemployment and the difficulty of finding work. The third poverty is extreme poverty, where the percentage of people experiencing scarcity of basic food, clean water, shelter, education increases¹¹.

Furthermore, how to bridge the problem of poverty due to COVID-19 with a theological frame of mind, with a full awareness that this initial question is not in order to simulate all problems of poverty into theoretical theological issues is discussed. Considering the problem of poverty is a fundamental problem of life itself faced by everyday people, it is more than just a theological problem.

Poverty is not a situation considered ideal by God's people, because it is understood that God does not want His people to be poor. The Lord has shared all the resources He has provided justly. Although Deuteronomy 15:11 mentions "for the poor shall ceaselessly be in the land; that is why I command you, thus: Thou shalt open your hands wide unto thy brother, the oppressed and the poor in thy land", and also the words of Jesus according to John 12:8 "For the poor are always with you, but I will not always be with you", not in order to idealize poverty or lose to poverty. The context of these two verses are in no way in despair or surrender, let alone indifference to the poor.

⁸ Buheji, M. "Poverty Labs- From „Alleviation“ to „Elimination and then Prevention“ in *Journal of Social Science Studies*, (UK: AuthorHouse, 2019), 108-122. Buheji, M., Dunya, A. *The Intent- Shaping the Future of Poverty*, (UK: AuthorHouse, 2019), 120

⁹ Sumner, A Hoy, C and Ortiz-Juarez, E. *Estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty*, United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research Publication (UNU- WINDER) Working Paper, April, 2020 hal. 43. <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Publications/Working-paper/PDF/wp2020-43.pdf>. (accessed April 4, 2020)

¹⁰ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/half-billion-people-could-be-pushed-poverty-coronavirus-warns-oxfam>, (accessed April 9, 2020)

¹¹ Buheji, M (2019a) *Re-defining Our Approaches to Extreme Poverty: An Attempt to Disrupting Contemporary Poverty Alleviation Approaches through Inspiration Economy Project- A Case Study*, (International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues, 2019), 80-89.

The context of these two verses is more on the issue of poverty which is always going to be a challenge. Human existence will not be immune from poverty. Although the world is advancing in various fields, the world is still dealing with the problem of poverty. Any method or system of any kind has the potential to have a bad impact, one of which is creating a new poor person.

Who dare to protect the Poor?

The law of Moses included the law of the covenant (Ex. 21:1-11; 22:21-24; 22:25-27; 23:3, 6), the law of holiness (Lev. 19:10; 19:13, 15, 25) and other laws seeking to place and ensure the poor into good treatment¹². Even the application of the law is not categorized into the universal nature of the law, but on the family nature with reference to family relationships.¹³ Similarly, deuteronomis history consistently opposes all forms of exploitation and counters prophetically the greed and greed of the poor.¹⁴

Wisdom literature places a significant emphasis on attitudes and charitable deeds for the poor.¹⁵ Nanum draws it in some contexts to the fact that the poor and the poor are not taken for granted. Wisdom literature does not have a single attitude towards poverty, but a variety of attitudes in accordance with its context (Kanca et al., 2020). There are a number of contexts in which the poor are placed to be the ones responsible for their own fate. As well as lazy attitude and lack of effort or subjugation in the situation, etc.

Instead, there is a context in which poverty and suffering are seen as part of the theodition of God¹⁶, as seen in the book of Job and Ecclesiastes. Furthermore, in prophetic literature, in particular Amos and Micah, emphasized criticism of the attitudes and behaviors of leaders, in this case political and religious leaders, who did not care for the poor and even tended to exploit the poor. Instead, there is a context in which poverty and suffering are seen as part of the theodition of God¹⁶, as seen in the book of Job and Ecclesiastes.

Furthermore, in prophetic literature, in particular Amos and Micah, emphasized criticism of the attitudes and behaviors of leaders, in this case political and religious leaders, who did not care for the poor and even tended to exploit the poor.¹⁷ At first glance in the New Testament, the emphasis on poverty can be traced in the history of Jesus and in the oldest testimonies. Gospel writers describe Jesus himself as part of the poor (Lk. 9:58), blessing the poor (Lk. 6:20-21; Mat. 5:3), preached to them (Lk. 7:22), cared for them (Mark. 6:36; Lk. 12:33; Mark. 10:21; Lk. 16:19). New Testament literature always reflects the same attitude despite the diverse forms and patterns, and is not as radical as Jesus.

¹² Scheffler, EH. Deuteronomy 15:1-18 and poverty in (South) Africa, in Otto, E & Le Roux JH (eds.), *A critical study of the Pentateuch: An encounter between Europe and Africa* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2005), 97-115.

¹³ For example, it can be seen starting from the simplest things, such as the use of terms, for example Deuteronomy 15: 2 which uses the term "brother" to poor people.

¹⁴ Bosman, Gous & Spangenberg 1991; Farisani 2005

¹⁵ Armenfrömmigkeit - see Rahlfs 1892; Kraus 1979: 188-193; Groenewald 2003: 147-153;

¹⁶ Spangenberg, I.J., *Poverty in Israel's wisdom literature*, in Scheffler & Van Heerden (ed.) (2010), 101-120.

¹⁷ I.J., *Poverty in Israel's...*, in Scheffler & Van Herden (ed.), (2010), 101-120

Mark describes the act of caring for the poor as an ongoing act (Mark.14:7). Similarly, Luke described the poor more broadly, even putting poverty into one context. Similarly, the book of Acts fairly much discussing the issue of poverty. In addition, concern for the poor in the New Testament is associated with other aspects of humanity, as well as dignity and suffering.¹⁸ It should be underlined that neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament canon contains any element of breeding against poverty, because the emphasis is precisely on caring for the poor. The call to sell property and give it to the poor seemed like an eradication of greed, but at the same time he was trying to eradicate poverty.

God's solidarity for the poor

The Lord responds to poverty with great care for the poor. There is no part of the suffering of the poor that goes unnoticed and the watchful eye of the Lord. Therefore, the poor do not fight alone. Then, God identified Himself with the poor. God chose to be known as God to the oppressed. Not reluctant to be associated with the oppressed. He identifies Himself with the poor because He loves the poor. Although it does not mean that the poor buy all the love of God, not blind love. For God does not allow us to defend the poor when he is truly guilty (Ex. 23:3); but also on the contrary the Lord defended the poor when they were persecuted (Ex. 23:6).

God is so connected to people who are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, etc. God chose to be among the poor. God is present in the social and historical context of poverty. Keep in mind, the Bible is not idealizing a life e.g. wealth becomes something most ideal, so the Bible rejects poverty, absolutely not. The Bible in particular wisdom literature clearly rejects all forms of wealth accompanied by injustice, hatred, hostility and moreover greed. The only ideal life is to live in truth, justice, love and peace, which is the Living Movement in Sufficiency

Wealth is not the most precious of all things in life. There are a number of accounts in the wisdom literature about the rich who often hate and oppress the poor. Proverbs 17:1 shows the same resistance to the idealization of wealth, "it is better to have a dry loaf of bread accompanied by tranquility, than to house meat food accompanied by disputation". Again, it is worth looking at the purpose of the word 'dry kerat' here is not an analogy for the total destitution of the really poor, it can be judged as the normal condition of the farmer or worker. That is, although in general wealth seems so desirable but tranquility is more necessary than wealth. On the contrary, at the same time, wealth has the potential to be a danger and a trap.

Two things I ask of You, do not reject it before I die, namely: Keep away from me cheating and lies. Don't give me poverty or wealth. Let me enjoy the food that's my part. That, when I am full, I will not deny You and say, Who is the LORD? Or, if I am poor, I steal, and defame my God. (Proverbs 30:7-9) His main idea was to reject wealth and poverty, by asking for sufficiency. Poverty can be avoided by hard work, skills and abandoning laziness and waste that are thought to be strong as one of the main causes of poverty. And those who are sufficient have a

¹⁸ I.J., *Poverty in Israel's...*, in Scheffler & Van Herden (ed.), (2010), 61–102

duty to be generous to the needy. Wealth is not underestimated when obtained in an honest and innocent way, although it is necessary to remain awake to all its dangers and temptations. Wealth is only to be enjoyed (Prov. 31:10-31) not to seek power and seek opportunities to dominate others. Although in many cases it seems as if the poor deserve their fate.

Proverbs 31:10-31 can represent an ideal family image of the contribution of wisdom literature. The family described as having achieved sufficiency through hard work and honesty. One indicator of ideal family here is illustrated through an attitude that remembers the needs of the poor by being generous to them. Similarly, the description of a king's duty set forth in Proverbs 31:1-9, even though the life of a king is more than sufficient, but the duty of a king to the poor is a basic task. The concept of the king as the protector of the poor is a very absolute thing.

Proverbs 21:13 gives today's readers sufficient information about social criticism of the lack of generosity to the poor, by covering the ears of the sufferings of the poor. This criticism refers not only to the oppressors of the rich, but to anyone who does not care about the suffering of the poor. The oppressor here is not the image of a strong man who heartlessly ignoring the cries of the poor, but of a selfish passer-by who refuses to come to the aid of a neighbor in need. So it is likely that his social impact will be ignored when he needs the same help. The one who deceives and persecutes the poor is considered a fool, for The Lord will protect the poor and the oppressor will be His enemy.

COVID-19 is an invisible enemy that is indiscriminate, which forces the world to unite for the common good. If the poor, because of indifference and generosity, are left alone to fight against poverty by increasingly exposed to the COVID-19 chain, then the spread of COVID-19 will be more wide open and can infect anyone until the end of the vaccine is found. According to this study, an effective to bridge this problem is the movement of sufficiency. If all this time workers or employees are always required to be loyal to the employer company, COVID-19 challenges the opposite, now the employer company is expected to be more loyal to workers or employees. With a basic assumption that termination of employment (layoffs) has never been part of the solution, precisely gave birth to a new problem.

All forms of multi-dimensional poverty alleviation efforts need to take into account two main things, short-term adverse impacts and long-term adverse impacts. In the early days of COVID-19 in Indonesia, a number of churches have sought social action in the form of free distribution of food. This solution is rated as a short-term solution. The movement of life adequacy and generosity in the form of long-term that can be done by the church and other social institutions should lead to mentoring and assistance. The Church has ample access to explain the biblical roots that support the understanding of why everyone is required to help the poor. Planned mentoring and efforts to break the attitude of indifference starting from the nearest neighbor. Such an attitude I do not care about my neighbors as long as I have the advantage and can satisfy my greed. The attitude of utilizing the needs of the poor in pursuit of greed, such as raising prices by forming a monopoly.

Adaptive strategy and responsive strategy in facing COVID-19

This paper is not intended to answer all the problems of poverty due to COVID-19, other than it is impossible for a paper to carry out these efforts in a relatively short time. In this case, the author seeks to explain the right strategy to face COVID-19, namely adaptive strategy and responsive strategy. In KBBI, adaptive means easy to adapt to circumstances.¹⁹ Adaptive strategy is the best definition as a component with a predictable degree of success that an individual chooses in a decision-making process.²⁰ With regard to the discussion in this topic, COVID-19 is a sudden global issue with a tremendous destructive impact. In this case, the adaptive strategy tries to make innovation and growth.

Furthermore, talking about this adaptive strategy means that adaptation must be able to still refer to the value of truth. In the Bible, we can see an adaptive story, Abraham, for example, a character who seems so adaptive. Abraham said that the wife herself is a brother, that is, her younger sister. As a result, Pharaoh rebuked him.²¹ It seems that adaptive behavior is evident in this story of Abraham and Sarah while they were in Egypt (Gen. 12: 10-20). In the story of Abraham, this seems to be an act of his environment in order to meet his needs in this case when there was famine. If the Bible records that Abraham and Jacob experienced famine, this means that hunger threatened the lives of all people at that time. The danger of hunger has driven all people into poverty and live in suffering. Abraham was classified as a person who was at that time, but they were forced to flee to Egypt to save themselves from the dangers of starvation.²²

The stories are about the fathers, one of whom Abraham repeatedly emphasized in terms of secrets. The call of Allah to Abram is narrated by not telling the reason (Gen. 12). That Abram was not a "hero" in a physical or spiritual sense, evident from his attitudes and actions in facing danger in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20); particularly showing the weakness of the fathers.²³ At that time, there was first attack coming when they entered Canaan. In Canaan, hunger often encourages people to wander in search of sustenance, usually to the rich land of Egypt (Gen. 12:10). "Abraham went to Egypt to live there as a stranger, for there was great hunger in the land. Notice that there is no preaching of any of the messages or words of God. Perhaps the absence of God's message means: Abraham departed on his own wisdom, not on the basis of trust and obedience to the word of God. Rarely out crossing into Egypt is commonplace. Egypt's immigration office does not always, but at times, grant temporary entry-permits as nomads. And the state of emergency was urgent and inviting: life as a stranger, who in the land of Egypt was humiliated and insulted, considered still better than suffering from hunger.

¹⁹ [https://kbbi.web.id/adaptif\(adaptive\)](https://kbbi.web.id/adaptif(adaptive)) (accessed August 20, 2020)

²⁰ Weka Widayati, *Ekologi Manusia: Konsep, Implementasi, dan Pengembangannya (Human Ecology: Concept, Implementation, and Development)*, (Kendari: Universitas Haluoleo, 2011), 58

²¹ Watchman Nee, *Allah Abraham, Allah Ishak dan Allah Yakub (God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob)*, (Yayasan Perpustakaan Injil Indonesia, 2019)

²² Marthen Nainupu, "Pelayanan Gereja Kepada Orang Miskin" ("Church Service to the Poor"), *Jurnal Theologi Aletheia*, (September 2014), 74

²³ Christoph Barth, Marie-Claire Barth Frommel, *Theologi Perjanjian Lama 1 (Old Testament Theology 1)*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2016), 66.

However, this journey was not commanded by God. Abraham departed on his own behalf.²⁴

When they were near Egypt, Abraham said to his wife, "Indeed I know that you are a beautiful woman. When the Egyptians see you, they will say: it is his wife. So they will kill me and let you live. Say, that thou art my brother, that I may be treated them well because of thee, and that I may be spared for thy cause" (Gen. 12:11-13). It was a compliment to Sarah's beauty at the age of 65 that it remained interesting that Abraham thought the Egyptians could try to kill her because of Sarah. And its beauty is not only in Abraham's eyes. "When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptian saw that she was very beautiful, and when Pharaoh's retainers saw Sarai, they praised her before Pharaoh, and she was brought to her palace" (Gen. 12:14, 15).

Although Abraham thought the Egyptians could kill him to get his wife, he is sure they will treat him with respect if they think he is their brother. And that was true. They gave him many animals, such as sheep, oxen, donkeys, male and female slaves, donkeys and camels (Gen. 12:16). Indeed, Sarah was Abraham's brother, a half-brother (Gen. 20:12). Such marriages were not uncommon at the time. He apparently still has family ties to Abram (Gen. 12:14).²⁵ But all they told Pharaoh was half-truth, and half-truth was a lie to God. He doesn't appreciate sin. This is what adaptive strategy is called. And indeed the Bible forbids this action to happen because Pharaoh's gift to Abraham became a harlot's reward (Deut. 23:18). Then, the arrangement of the prize is somewhat disturbed a little: we look forward to the "female donkey" directly behind the "male donkey" and not interspersed with male slaves and female slaves". Slaves are among the belongings. Camels were not known in Egypt before Persian times; but the sheep and oxen were a suitable gift to the wanderers, for it was her flock that was her riches.²⁶ Why would Sarah follow this plan? Is it not in this case of obedience to God beyond obedience to the husband? A wife is not responsible for obeying the husband when obedience is requested contrary to God's will (cf. Kis. 5:29). Sarah could have refused. However, it shows the depth of her true faith and obedience. Sarah believed God's promise that Abraham would become the patriarch of a great nation. He also believed that God would intervene and save him before immoral acts occurred. It could happen seeing the size of Pharaoh's pet. She also believed God would reunite her with her husband and save them from Pharaoh's power. And because he believes, he's submissive. God could protect them from the selfishness of Abraham's plan, but Sarah's faith in God and obedience to her husband remain beautifully depicted in the Old Testament story. The real test of the wife's obedience when she found out her husband made a mistake. It is hard to imagine a man doing as lowly as Abraham did (Gen. 12:15, 12:18-20). He failed Sarah, pathetic, but God was faithful to her. He appreciated his faith and saved him. He never ignores those who believe in Him.

²⁴ Walter Lempp, *Tafsiran Alkitab: Kitab Kejadian 12:4-25:18 (Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis 12: 4-25: 18)*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2003), 42.

²⁵ Nico Gara, *Menafsir Alkitab Secara Praktis (Practically Interpreting the Bible)*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2002), 37

²⁶ Walter Lempp, *Tafsiran Alkitab: Kitab Kejadian 12:4-25:18 (Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis 12: 4-25: 18)*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2003), 46.

All this is wrapped up in a great secret: The secret of the presence of Jehovah, the mighty God of Israel. Perhaps we may say: God's wrath and His actions as a judge converted Pharaoh to the relationships Abraham hid.²⁷ The story of Abraham in the midst of famine in Egypt gives the idea that in fact, Abraham was not a hero, but one who when he fell, was lifted up and awakened by God, one who when lost, corrected and straightened; one who, when guilty, is justified by his God. Poverty due to COVID has similarities with poverty in the context of Abraham who is not in extreme poverty, but relative poverty that seems to be sudden. As for the Bible, the strategy of domestic governance; family economy;²⁸ so that people do not starve, suffer, the house is well managed. If we look also, in the Bible, there is a strategy of hoarding by Pharaoh which is unhealthy because it is piling up a handful of people and is able to create gaps (Gen. 41:1-57). There is also an economic term in the wilderness that is rather good and must travel it is the promised land that symbolizes the place of God's presence.

In KBBI, responsiveness is fast (like) responding; hearted; is response; not foolishness.²⁹ Actions as a form of response undertaken by an individual or group, rely heavily on (a) the experience and knowledge possessed by the concerned, (b) the availability of natural resources in their environment, and (c) the time available to provide. It also includes the ability to manage expenses in accordance with the existing financial circumstances and the plans and budgets that have been prepared; able to make choices or selections for their needs, which are really needed when this or in the future, which is not or lacks urgency; able to make savings to realizing the wishes and needs of the future that have been planned (e.g. to buy land, vehicles, houses, children's tuition); able to manage finances in such a way that it does not get stuck in debt or buy on a credit basis; able to determine targets, develop work programs or targets³⁰ response.³¹ Responsive strategies are presumably a model of sudden poverty; aggressive; without a signal; poor people become subjects so they are not paternal and out of poverty without us seeing that poverty is not something that is rejected.

The story we can see is the story of Jeremiah in Jer. 29:7 "Seek the welfare of the city where you are, and pray for it to the LORD, for its welfare is your welfare". Jeremiah rejected their assertion by sending a letter to the exiles through his friends sent via diplomatic channels to Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 1-3). This letter (vv. 4-23) urges the exiles to prepare for the possibility of long stays in their colonial lands, to dwell there (vv. 4-6), to pray for the welfare of Babylon (vv. 7), and should not pay attention to false prophets (vv. 8-9). In verses 10-14, Jeremiah assures them that after seventy years, God will turn their fate back to the motherland. The letter continues with a threat against two false prophets from

²⁷ Lempp, *Tafsiran Alkitab (Bible Commentary)*, 46.

²⁸ Able to manage expenditures in accordance with existing financial conditions and prepared plans and budgets; able to make a choice or selection of their needs, which ones are really needed now or in the future, which are not or less urgent; able to make savings to realize future wants and needs that have been planned (for example, to buy land, vehicles, houses, school fees for children); able to manage finances in such a way so as not to get into debt or buy on credit; able to determine targets, compile work programs or targets.

²⁹ <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/responsif> (responsive) (accessed August 20, 2020).

³⁰ <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/responsif> (responsive) (accessed August 20, 2020).

³¹ Weka Widayati, *Ekologi Manusia: Konsep, Implementasi, dan Pengembangannya (Human Ecology: Concept, Implementation, and Development)*, (Kendari: Universitas Haluoleo, 2011), 60.

Babylon (vv. 21-23).³² Text of Jer. 29:7 also seeks to develop ideas about social missions as responsive strategies. In the text, the Lord has commanded the conduct of the social mission to the Israelites, who were in the exile of Babylon. To them, the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah, commanded that the Israelites seek welfare where they were being banished.³³ In addition to urging the exiles to settle in Babylonia, Jeremiah encouraged them to pray for the peace and prosperity of the “city” (in context, Babylon, not Jerusalem, intended). Volz points out that this is the only place in the Old Testament where prayers for one’s enemies and for unbelievers are praised (see. Mat. 5: 43-48; Rom. 12:21; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Ptr. 2:18). That’s practical advice even if it is hard to practice. It is never easy to pray for someone’s enemy. However, it is in their best interest to do so. Responsive strategies are presumably a model of sudden poverty; aggressive; without a signal; poor people become subjects so they are not paternal and out of poverty without us seeing that poverty is not something that is rejected. If Babylon prospers, the outcasts will also succeed. Praying for the government has become a Jewish custom. Even today prayers for heads of state and other political leaders are part of Sabbath services and festivals (cf. Wis. 6: 1-11; Rom. 13:1-7).³⁴ A particularly responsive strategy through Jeremiah’s story in Jer. 29:7 seeks to urge the people who are in exile to pray for the peace and prosperity of the “city”.

From a Biblical perspective, we can observe biblically how to reduce poverty with Paul’s pattern of teachings through the principle of balance, voluntary principles according to ability and sustainable principles. First, the principle of balance in which Paul taught a principle of balance (justice, equality). He wanted a congregation capable of helping the underprivileged. At that time, the churches in Judea were in economic difficulty, so the churches outside Israel should give their help. Thus, the balance (equality or justice) and the gap between them is not too wide and deep. In 2 Cor. 8:8-15, Paul gives the doctrine of economic balance among the churches. “For you are burdened not so that others may be lightened, but that there may be balance. So let now, your excesses suffer their shortcomings that their excesses may be sufficient for you, that there may be balance” (vv. 13-14). Here Paul encouraged the Corinthian believers to gather offerings for the poor in Judea. “Our brethren would tell you of the grace bestowed upon the churches in Macedonia. While being tempted variously in various afflictions, their joy overflowed and although they were very poor, yet they were rich in generosity. I testify that they have given according to their abilities, even beyond their capacity they gave more than we expected” (vv. 1-5).

Second, the voluntary principle of ability; by setting an example for the Macedonian churches, Paul encouraged the Corinthian believers to also be cheap. But he insisted that he did not force it, but rather tested the sincerity of their love. Paul wanted the gift of the Corinthians’ love not by compulsion, but spontaneously and willingly, to be driven by the love that was in them. “For if ye are willing to give, then your gift shall be accepted, if your gift is based on what is

³² Dianne Bergant, Robert J. Karris, *Tafsir Alkitab Perjanjian Lama (The Old Testament Interpretation of the Bible)*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002), 567.

³³ Darsono Ambarita, *Perspektif Misi dalam Perjanjian Lama & Perjanjian Baru (Mission Perspectives in the Old & New Testament)*, (Medan: Pelita Kebenaran Press, 2018), 123.

³⁴ F. B. Huey, Jr., *New International Version: The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Jeremiah, Lamentation*, (United States of America: Broadman Press, 1993), 253.

in you, not based on that which is not in you" (vv. 12). This principle is reaffirmed in ps. 9:7: "Let each give according to the willingness of his heart, not with sorrow or out of heart, for God loves him who gives with joy." In fact the Corinthians liked to give and it was boasted to the Macedonian churches. 'It's been a long time since you started doing it and making decisions to get it done, too. So now, finish the execution (8:10-11).

When the Macedonian churches responded with the positip "Of service to the saints I no longer need to write it down to you. I have known your willingness of heart as to where I boast of you to the Macedonians. I said, "Akhaya has been ready since the past year". And your activities have become a stimulant for many people". (9:1-2). When the Macedonian churches responded positively, Paul boasted to the Corinthians. Paul seemed to contain the churches as competing healthily in giving for the benefit of the poor. Although it has given abundantly, but if it can still be improved, then it should be more improved.

Third, sustainable principles; "On the first day of each week let each of you according to what you obtain – set aside something and keep it at home, lest the gathering be held only when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). Paul taught that donations to the poor are not only collected incidentally, but every Sunday they set aside offerings of love for social assistance purposes. Paul taught that acts of love continue from week to week. Since the beginning of his ministry, Paul has shown his concern for social service. Agabus prophesied of the famine that would occur throughout the world when he visited Antioch along with a number of other prophets. The famine occurred about the middle of the first century at the time of Klaudius' reign. The Church of Antioch spontaneously, where Paul also served with Barnabas, collected donations, according to their own abilities and sent them to Jerusalem through the intercession of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 17:27-30). In galatians, the earliest considered epistle of Paul, he says: "Therefore, as long as there is an opportunity for us, let us do good to all, but especially to our brethren" (Gal. 6:10). When Paul was recognized as an apostle to the Gentiles the requirement was that they "remember the poor, and that is what I really sought to do" (Gal.2:10). From the beginning, Paul was determined to help the poor through his servants outside Israel. In accordance with his determination, Paul collected donations for the poor in Judea and on his related journey to Jerusalem, he brought donations from Macedonia and Akhaya (Rom. 15:22-23). Paul held that because the Gentiles had a share in the spiritual property of the Jews, it was obligatory and proper for the Gentiles to serve the Jews with their earthly possessions (vv. 27). Thus, Paul had great concern for poverty and went to great lengths to raise donations for people in Judea. The donation is set aside regularly, sustainably, voluntary and generous, in accordance with the ability given by God to each. In this way, the principle of balance is achieved and the "gap" between the poor and the rich does not widen and deepen. Moreover, when the Israelites suffered greatly economically, the Non-Israelites were obliged to help them. The service of the pulpit is not neglected, but the service of the "table" or should not be ignored either. The two must walk together.³⁵ How to reduce poverty biblically, we can observe the pattern of Paul's teachings through the principle of balance

³⁵ Rifai, "Tinjauan Alkitab tentang Kemiskinan (Biblical Overview of Poverty)", (Surakarta.), 23-26.

(justice, equality), voluntary principles according to ability and sustainable principles through donations.

Conclusions

As stated at the beginning, this paper is an effort to build bridges to the social impact of poverty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the broader sense, the connectedness or relationship is a necessary bridge not solely in a methodological framework, but in the wholeness of life, in the essence, God has created that all worlds interconnectedly with the number of consequences if this bridge is damaged let alone disconnected. COVID-19 is forcing the world to unite for the common good, one of which is through a solidarity movement in the form of sufficiency and generosity.

Therefore, the author will close this brief study with four views, namely: Firstly, multidimensional poverty alleviation due to COVID-19 which requires public responsibility from the church. The Church should go public with a clear message that to be a Christian who acts in a secular context, we are more than just a caricature in the form of the distribution of foodstuffs. Second, the Church also needs to avoid dependence on social assistance arising from COVID-19. Everyone must take responsibility for himself without relying on reinforcements. However, the only way to arrive at this condition is a path of solidarity in the form of generosity. Everyone must be included in the economic and social process according to their respective roles.

Third, the choice to be generous to the poor is not a paternalistic relationship, an upper-bottom relationship, a donor with a recipient, but a relationship that gives the poor as much space and access as possible to get out of the abyss of poverty and against any form of deviation leading to marginalization. Fourth, for conditions such as pandemics, the government including the church must embody a form of “enabling justice” meaning justice that focuses on unequal opportunities in terms of contribution and responsibility for the society that will offer advantages to a group of people who are sufficient or generous (giver) to a group of people who are weaker than poor (needy).

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