



Church and Poverty

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Abstract

The way a person understands poverty and its causes tends to shape the way a person is how to expose it. Most governments and most institutions define poverty as a whole based on material terminology. If the perception of material used for the problem of poverty is a complete understanding, it is not surprising that the local church is not included. The Bible gives a different understanding of poverty, according to him the most fundamental cause of poverty is spiritual. Sin is that which corrupts and distorts relationships which in many ways creates various forms of human poverty in material, social and spiritual forms. Within this framework of understanding the church can be involved. There are seven things that can be done by the church to be involved in transformational development (leading transformational): serving the community; call people to faith; bring out students who are holistic; contributions to civil society; being a pastoral companion; be the voice of prophethood; provide alternative explanations.

Keywords: *Church; Poverty; Leading Transformational*

Introduction

The church is a place where the congregation gathers and performs worship to God who is the creator of all that exists, from a church emerges an important organization for the congregation and for the community, while the meaning of the Church in Greek is called "Ekklesia" means "who is called out". Church is also often defined as "the community of believers." The word called out is understood to mean to be salt and light. From there we must fully understand the true meaning of the church because the church does not only function as a place of worship but plays an important role for the congregation and society, the emergence of the church must be beneficial to the surrounding, of course, be a blessing. We know that the church is a group of believers who come to worship God and praise this general and narrow thinking. If the church is only interpreted like that then the function of the church is not its true function because if we think about it rationally, we will find a broader meaning because church attendance in the community must be well known and be a good example, therefore we must understand well what the true function of the church is. The presence of the church is nothing but helping those who are in quotes, they are not of our faith, not thinking about our own organization if we do good things then this will reflect the true nature of Christ to reach those who need salvation, if vision and mission Christ wants to be achieved we must be known first through the good nature of the church as said by the Lord Jesus: a good tree will bear good fruit. The church is often known as a group of rich people and many are blessed by God, if so,

let us play an active role in society. If we understand very well that the role of the church for the state is very important, especially in these very difficult times, many of whom are experiencing economic hardship, this is where the church should play an active role for those who really need a helping hand from church organizations. The church is present in the community to be the light of the salt dam. It is hoped that the church's contribution will not only help the poor, but also have an impact on the transformation of a more decent life. In this case the church has a social mission, social mission is an effort made by the church to solve problems that occur in a society¹ The church is expected to function not only to the surface, but to take concrete steps to action. It is not only the problem of poverty, but also the inculcation of an attitude of justice which gives space to the poor to take part in church life.

Social actions that are often carried out by the church, such as distributing basic necessities to poor congregations, holding cheap markets, giving money and so on are a form of the church helping the congregation's economy. For a transformation, the church cannot stop at the stage of merely providing assistance, but efforts need to be made so that the congregation is not only helped but also experiences growth in their lives. One of the efforts that the church can do is empowering the congregation and the surrounding community by empowering the congregation and the community as a manifestation of expressing God's teachings in everyday life and encouraging the congregation to fight for faith in the current social reality. The collaboration between the church and the community will have a significant impact. The church needs to have social concern in the community to reflect God's word so that the poor "do not fail" in seeing the Lord Jesus. This scholarly paper will first provide a summary of the Bible's position on the nature and causes of poverty, and then on the Christian understanding of development. Departing from these insights, this scientific paper will propose seven roles in which the church is expected to play an active role in poor communities. These roles in turn pose a challenge for the church to be ready and equipped to carry out its role. If we read the existing case studies on agricultural development and other socio-economic development in rural Java, we will see that the following changes have occurred in recent years: unequal / unfair distribution of direct benefits. whether or not by the use of new biological and chemical technologies in rice production, new technologies in soil processing, soil weeding, harvesting and processing of products that reduce production costs for owners of large fields but at the same time reduce employment and opportunities to earn a living for labor, Decreasing real agricultural wages: unequal opportunities for real agricultural credit: unequal opportunities for obtaining agricultural credit on other government subsidies. more landless farmers and more purchases of agricultural fields by wealthy villagers and the elite city.

Method of Research

The author used to deskriptif-library² by conveying that the church has a unique legitimacy and role in the development process, through a Transformational Building or a holistic framework. Writing uses descriptive methods to explain a number of challenges for churches and Christian aid agencies and development agencies. Socio-economic development tends to be viewed by many as a secular and material activity. The church is rarely involved in the discussion or in providing solutions to these problems.

Result and Discussion

The relationship between the Church and the State is an issue that has been a matter of debate in the history of the participation of the Church in politics, even according to Andreas A. Yewangoe, the relationship between Church and State is not something that is easy to formulate. History has shown us

¹ Sebastian C. H. Kim, "Mission's Public Engagement: The Conversation of Missiology and Public Theology," *Missiology* 45, no. 1 (2017): 60..

² Zaluchu, Sonny Eli. 2020. "Strategi Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif Di Dalam Penelitian Agama." *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili Dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 4(1):28–38.

that, it is not uncommon for a race to dominate each other. In the case of Church-State, the State dominates the Church, so that everything that applies in the Church is determined by the State. Since Konstantin the Great (4 AD) became a Christian, the tendency of the State to determine what is good and what is not good. In Indonesia, especially during the colonial era, we also face a similar case. The Dutch colonial government, among other things, placed what it called “Commisarissen” in the assemblies of the 'De Indische Kerk' Congregation, which at that time was the State Church, which functioned as representing the interests of the State.³

According to Donald Jay Losher, in general the views on the relationship between Church and State are divided into three categories, namely strict separation, assimilation and interaction. Strict separation can do nothing against the State, because Christians choose themselves not to play a role in the political or social sphere. Assimilation is also not capable because religious people have been controlled by the government and its ideology, so that they are only able to accept all policies passively. Neither assimilation nor strict separation have been able to play an active role in social and political change. It is the attitude of interaction that can last a long time in the contemporary period, because transformation and liberation play a much more active and positive role, although also with a greater risk but play the most active, critical and positive role for the State and society.⁴

In contrast to Zakaria J. Ngelow, who divided it into 5 models, namely: the unity of the Church with the State, which gave the Church power over the State. The so-called ecclesiocracy; the unity of the Church with the State, which gives the State power over the Church. This is called erastianism; a certain denominational unity of the church with the State which is referred to as The Establishment Principle; an official acknowledgment of the governmental authority of Jesus Christ and His Word by the State. This is known as National confessionalism; and complete separation between Church and State in all respects, which is called secularism.⁵

The Church and the State in the New Testament expressing politics as a certain area (provisional) separate from the life of the Church. There is a tendency to focus on religious rituals that deny the works of the flesh and things that are secular in nature. The people consider that political affairs are secular affairs and should be shunned. This can be seen by the existence of the Esene community who lived in the Qumran cave in the first century. They were waiting for a Messiah who was able to liberate from Roman hegemony. This kind of attitude can be categorized as a strict secularism model.

According to Calvin, as quoted by Andreas A. Yewangoe, regarding this matter, the relationship between the Church and the State is two circles whose center is Jesus Christ.⁶ So both the state and the church have one center only, namely Jesus Christ. In other words, both church and state ministry originated from one source, namely Jesus Christ. It's just that their scope of service is different. One may be more limited, while the other is more "broad". Martin Luther on the other hand speaks of two separate kingdoms, but there are also points of contact between them.

How to place these points of contact precisely, of course, requires deep understanding and extraordinary sensitivity in dealing with what is happening in society.

From the description above, our group concludes that the Church and the State have the same responsibility, namely for the welfare of the people (people). The two did not intervene with each other.

³ Weinata Sairin dan J.M. Pattiasina, Hubungan Gereja dan Negara dan Hak-Hak Asasi Manusia, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996, hlm, 23.

⁴ *Ibid*, hlm, 105

⁵ Zakaria J. Ngelow, Pengalaman Kristen dalam hubungan agama dan Negara, Pointers pada seminar Gereja, Negara dan Isu-Isu Agama, download, 15 Juni 2015

⁶ *Ibid*

The state guarantees freedom for church members to carry out their services according to their beliefs, and the Church has a responsibility to criticize the implementation of a just state life for all people.

Christian Understanding of Transformational Development

A framework for understanding poverty and its causes provides the basis for a biblical understanding of transformational development. Transformational service must seek to restore relationships within oneself, with others, with the environment and with God.

This framework leads us to the two goals of transformational development: transforming people and transforming relationships. First of all, humans must have the opportunity to be who they really are. Since poverty includes two insights which are inherent to one another regarding identity, namely regarding their readiness and also their purpose for being created, this form of development seeks:

- a. Restoration of identity, becoming a human being created in God's image and identity.
- b. The restoration of vocation, as a productive executor of the gifts and the world that God has given them.

Transformed humans know who they really are and the work they have to do in the world. The second objective of Transformational Development is for the selection of fair and peaceful relations. This includes relationships in society, with people who are different from us and with God. The result is productive work, justice, sharing, embracing each other, mutual peace and care for creation. Apart from that, the restoration of relationships includes a call to a personal relationship with God which is mentioned in the Bible, through belief / faith in the Son of God and possibly by the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is another dimension to the restoration of a just and peaceful relationship that is important to mention clearly. Poverty is the result of disconnected and locally inequitable relationships, but also comes from higher levels of social organization. The global economy has an impact on the village. The cost of repaying a country's loan is borne by people who do not have schools or health benefits that do not meet the requirements. Mistakes made by big financiers damage the economies of lending countries and the lives of the poor.

Transformational development among the poor relates to the macro level of government, national and international policies and the global economy. Biblical understanding of transformation should broaden the understanding that transforms people and transforms relationships with people who occupy the macro level of the problem. Changes at the level of ordinary people will move with difficulty if it is not followed by changes in policy at the macro level. Without a change in policy, continuous change will be problematic.

The Role of the Church in Transformational Development

Based on the premises, we can turn to the topic of the role of the church and its teachings on socio-economic transformation. Because our current definition of poverty and response is holistic - including material, social and spiritual - the church, along with other religions - local institutions have a clear role and place. Problems regarding values in society; who or what is worshiped and who is "God" is in front of us and is directly in the church territory. With this more inclusive framework for thinking about and responding to poverty, we can say with confidence the role of the church in Transformational Development.

Before it can be discussed what role the church might play, however, an important caveat - must be made. In many places where poor people live, the Bible verita has been brought to life in the form of local churches. Often God has put down the sign of God's Kingdom. Christians working to provide Free assistance and development agencies need to respect this fact and give respect to brethren who have been

deeply involved in civic life. The decision for the role of the church in terms of responsibilities and decisions of local churches, no outside party has the right to coerce. What are the key roles for the church to play within the framework of Transformational Development?

Serving the Society

As Christians, of course we are familiar with the notion of a diaconia. Diakonia is a term that comes from the Greek word *deaconin* which means literally to help or serve while in Hebrew *syeret*, which means serving. Diakonia, is known as one of the mission of the church which is included in the Tri Tasks of the Church. which is based on the example of Jesus Christ. As the Lord Jesus repeatedly told His disciples that whoever wants to be first, let him be the last of all and whoever wants to be the greatest, he must be a servant. In serving us participate in development and for the advancement of the nation, promote community welfare, the church's participation in serving includes the following: Providing assistance to earthquake victims, participating in social activities, providing guidance in rural areas, providing counseling, free medical treatment, building schools in disadvantaged areas. From some of the above activities the church has the opportunity to be involved in National development, namely an act of Transformational Development.⁷

The church can be a service to its people by utilizing wind and wood and water to become a technology that makes the world more comfortable to live in or sing with the whole of creation, or work side by side with people with good intentions towards a better social hierarchy. When the church is ultimately to lead, it is in the form of serving, in applying the creative energy released in Christ to the stewardship of creation and bringing fallen structures closer to God's true purpose.⁸

The Personal Calling of Faith in Christ Jesus

Transformational development requires changed people and changed relationships. This is the goal of Christian witnesses, the personal calling of faith in Christ Jesus. Obviously, prikoology can help people to organize their personal lives, and people with good intentions can find solutions for the well-being of society. The Christian experience is that the full potential of transformation is not possible without having the impact of the transformation which is an experience with God. It is the church's duty to create a condition in society that raises questions to which the gospel answers and, in doing so, invites people to faith in Christ.

Bringing Up Holistic Students

When in the best position, the church acts as a source of value formation, the church can be a significant source of example and confirmation in working for life and "Shalom". This is not a call to preach in society as the church is part of, and people are biased in it, but to be living witnesses of the gospel as a whole. If the church is in the best condition, the church equips and sends out holistic students, who are committed to serving the community in the community's quest for prosperity.⁹

Contribution to Civil Society

The church can play its role as a civic organization, working to increase people's access to economic and political power. John Friedman has made two interesting cases that the increasing size of the global economy, followed by a reduction in the role of government, has led to a decline in the socio-

⁷Filsafat Postmodern. Bandung: CV Pustaka h.48–62,

⁸Andrianti, S. (2012). Pendidikan Kristen: Keseimbangan antara Intelektualitas dan Spiritualitas. Jurnal Antusias, 1-32

⁹Anggu, P. (2005). Pertumbuhan Karakter Kristen. Jurnal Jaffray, 26-30

economic participation of the poor. He called on civic organizations, including churches, to step into the void and work to broaden people's access to political and economic power.¹⁰

It seems like a strange role for the churches, but it is starting to happen. For example, in Los Angeles, some creative rethinking of the nature of financial institutions and the role of the church has led local churches to provide a link between poor caretakers and financial institutions that had previously rejected proposals to establish offices. - their offices in poor areas. The church found they had an absolute advantage that financial institutions could not replicate: they represented societies that were so closely interconnected with one another that they were large enough to create a viable and accessible market. In this role, churches serve the public to financial power. Another example from the United States, John Dilulio,¹¹ a lawyer and Princeton University is looking for answers to juvenile crime in the city center. In particular, Dilulio looks for social institutions in the city that can provide alternative models for “gang” (criminal group) membership and role models for children who are without affection, parents who are able to take responsibility for teaching about things that are big and wrong, accustomed to feeling joy at the joy of others, suffering of others, happiness when doing the right thing, feeling tormented, when doing wrong. He found that the only institutions that consistently met this criterion were the African-American Pentecostal churches. This discovery led Dilulio, a Katgoli¹² to Gere Rivers, pastor of an African-American Pentecostal church in Boston, and undertook a partnership that challenged the United States government to think completely differently and racially about how to aid recovery in downtown America. Rivers is aggressively promoting the idea “that religious institutions are better equipped to deal with the problems of the poor from the government. These religious institutions have public support for everything from crime prevention to welfare reform. Dilulio and Rivers began to get opportunities for meeting sessions with political liberals and conservatives.

Pastoral Care

Transformational Development is hard work and success is difficult to obtain and harder to obtain and even harder to maintain. The church must provide accompaniment and have the patience for a transformative journey. This is necessary for two groups of people. The poor, oppressed and sinned against the need for help in the midst of their sorrow; it is the work of “merciful service”.¹³ People working for social transformation need a passion that can endure them for the tough journey; This is a job that leads to psychiatric counseling and sometimes even stress counseling caused by trauma.

The normative framework for discussions on poverty is material. All statistical measures are material and social. Western governments insist on responding to poverty materially, while rigidly rejecting the involvement of religion as inappropriate. These explanations and attitudes are wrong and must be questioned. The separation between church and government is a reflection of the dualistic separation from the West which separates religious and material things. Imposing a common view in poor third world countries is a form of neo poverty.¹⁴ Churches and social teachings have much to impart in a narrow-minded world that believes that poverty is simply the absence of things, money, ideas and power. We need to stop apologizing that we are Christians and try hard to be able to contribute to the ongoing discussion.¹⁵

¹⁰Astika, M., & Bunga, S. S. (2016). Hubungan Kompetensi Sosial Guru Kristen terhadap Perkembangan Karakter Siswa: Tantangan Pendidikan Kristen dalam Mencerdaskan Youth Generation. *Jurnal Jaffray*, 64-76.

¹¹ Ibid

¹²Baginda, M. (2016). Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Berbasis Karakter pada Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah. *Jurnal Ilmiah Iqra'*, 1-12.

¹³Darmawan, I. P. (2014). Pendidikan Kristen di Era Postmodern. *Jurnal Simpson: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 37-46.

¹⁴*Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 37-4 Badan Pusat Statistik. “Persentase Penduduk Miskin Menurut Provinsi 2007-2018.” Diakses 24 2018.

¹⁵<http://sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel?tid=321&wid=000000 0000>. Barrett, Charles Kingsley. Acts 15-28.

Believing in a Holistic Theology and Doing a Holistic Missiology

Some churches and development agencies are active in inviting people to have a relationship with God, and are not as strict about relationships between people and their environment. Several other churches are active in the ministry of justice and peaceful relationships, but not very serious in their ongoing relationship with God. Both views are neither holistic nor biblical.¹⁶

The framework for social transformation proposed by this paper calls for churches that are equally committed to spiritual or soul-nurturing and social service. Research carried out among churches in Canada is increasing in number and social impact of great value in two areas of life and practice. The nurturing of the soul is the development of one's faith, the dedication of one's life, acts of faith in daily life, commitment to truth and teaching the Bible about God's commandment to love God and your neighbor as yourself. Social service is community service, the importance of social action, helping the poor and correcting incomes in society.¹⁷

Involved in the Socio-Political-Economic System

This holistic framework requires that all human beings are created, including social, economic and political systems, all of which fall within the scope of God's saving work. Churches and development agencies need to look at banking institutions, profitable businesses, political executing groups, thinkers at the policy level and international multilaterals, such as; The United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as part of God's world, need to hear the message of the gospel as much as everyone. Where other people act as "God" in the lives of the poor, the church must also act, claiming corruption. Churches need to be open to the notion that the church, for the community of the poor, is a social institution with the potential to act as bridges to financial and political institutions that have, in terms of Transformational Development, we must confront a fact regularly. balance: it is a very important fact that what God left behind was not a book or a statement of faith, not a rule of life but a society that we can see.¹⁸ He committed the whole work of salvation to society. The existence of the church does not depend on our understanding or faith regarding this matter.

Therefore, our aim should be to help the church become who it is, not judge it or delegate it to lesser Transformational Development. We must remember that everyone needs information - ourselves, the poor and the church. We are all on our way. "Working toward a relationship of mutual spiritual accountability with local churches" is part of being holistic in taking the gospel and its context seriously.

Ultimately, Christian aid agencies and development agencies need an attitude adjustment when dealing with local churches. We are part of the local churches and they are part of us. This is actually what is meant by the one body. We need to open our minds and share our expertise as a family. We need to see the gifts that God has placed in His church just as we institutions of churches see individual Christians and become institutions for the gifts God has given us. Together, we are God's response to the outcry of society.¹⁹

¹⁶Brummelen, H. V. (2009). *Berjalan dengan Tuhan di dalam Kelas*. Jakarta: Universitas Pelita Harapan. Calvin, Y. (2013). H.23

¹⁷ Alexander, Loveday. "Luke's Political Vision." *Interpretation* 66, no. 3 (July 2012): 283–293. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964312443184>

¹⁸Ghozi. (2015). *Teologi Posmodern: Menimbang Konsep Naturalisme-Teistik*. Teosofi, 91-107.

¹⁹Dawa, M. F. (2005). *Peran Pendidikan Kristen melalui Akademi Jenewa dalam Usaha Reformasi Protestan dari John Calvin*. *Jurnal Theologia Aletheia*, 25-40

Conclusion

From some of the things above, it can be concluded that the church has an extraordinary responsibility to be involved in various aspects of life that have an impact on being a blessing and light in the community who do not know Jesus Christ (compound). In doing some of the things above, the Church will function in accordance with the vision and mission of the Lord Jesus, namely to become light and salt for this nation. Doing diaconia is the responsibility of the church as God's people who are faithful and obedient to Him. This manifestation makes the Church more recognized for its sweet fruit. Salt and light also have their own characteristics and characteristics which are allegorically interesting to be associated with Christian duty-character traits. For example, salt as a fertilizer to fertilize and preserve, becomes a picture of the duty of Christians to prevent corruption and moral corruption. The quality of light that represents the duty of Christians to expose darkness and guide people in the right path. There are at least two important things conveyed by the Lord Jesus in His sermon on Salt and Light. First, being a Christian is not just a status, but is followed by the character and traits that are attached to it. The Lord Jesus emphasized the importance of being salt and light that has character and nature in accordance with their essence.

In the book of the prophet Isaiah it is mentioned that the people of Israel daily seek God, know all His words and regularly fast, but their deeds are abominable to others. Even though they ritually humble themselves before God, God does not heed them (Isa. 58: 3-4). Like salt that has become tasteless. "If the salt becomes tasteless, with what is it salted? It is of no use except to be thrown out and trampled on by people." (Matt. 5:13). The presence of the Church as a Christian identity, it is important for us to understand that, if the identity of the Church is bad then we who are known as Christians will experience a bad image, therefore it is important to show that the church is able to be involved in Transformational Development, namely in the form of a Diakonia, serving and is involved in various community activities. If this concern is applied, the Church will undoubtedly help reduce the impact of poverty in this nation.

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