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AN INVALUABLE EDUCATION: LOOKING AT POVERTY AND PROSPERITY WITH THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and describe how poverty and prosperity were in the time of Old Test. Poverty and prosperity became very important because they had a wide interrelationship in the life of the Israelites. In the Bible we find that the factors both generating wealth and poverty are the same as those seen in general. In his poverty, people are still taught to make offerings and share blessings with others and also to pay attention to the life of the priest. Prosperity theology or prosperity theology (English: prosperity theology or prosperity gospel), sometimes also called successful theology, is a Christian theology that teaches that prosperity and success (rich, successful, and perfectly healthy) are external signs from God for his loved ones. Furthermore, at the end of this paper it will be concluded that Poverty and Prosperity that the standard of poverty and prosperity is not material from God.

Keywords: Poverty, Prosperity, Life of the Israelites.

1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty and prosperity are two important topics that have continued to be discussed throughout time. From ancient times to the modern era, poverty and prosperity have always colored the world. However, the Bible is very prominent in dealing with the issue of poverty because there are far more poor people than the rich. So the discussion of poverty and prosperity is very important because it has a broad connection in the life of the Israelites, including in terms of ethics (Tenai, 2016).

It was found that the factors both generating wealth and poverty are the same as those seen in general. But there are also causes for God's intervention to work in the process. It is stated that indeed poverty can be caused by masculinity and extravagant living (Proverbs 6:6-11). But it is also mentioned that poverty can be caused by natural disasters, such as what happens because of oppression (Proverbs 2:6-7).

Leviticus shows how God arranged so that the poor and foreigners had food in ancient Israelite society based on agriculture. When the Israelites reaped the produce of the land, they did not live it to the end and did not collect the crops that were left behind. Also if the grapes fall during picking, do not pick them. All of them were left for the poor and foreigners to collect. The way the Lord works through this Jubilee Year and Sabbath Year is conveyed by James L. Mays thus: The basic observance of the Sabbath Year was a complete rest for the land. No crops were to be sown, nor was a full harvest to be made. Israel was to live off what grew of its own accord in the fields and vineyards. The Year of Jubilee provided for a general overhaul of economic and social life to restore persons and property to their rightful conditions. Land was to be returned to its original owners, slaves were to be set free. It was meant to be a kind of new beginning, a point in time when all who had failed to maintain their place in society were given a chance to start again.

In the Sabbath year and jubilee year, the Israelites did not cultivate his land. Whatever grows on the land, it becomes food for the poor and the animals of the forest. And for those who have land, there is no loss. Because in the sixth year before the rest of the land is cultivated, God will pour out the results for the next three years. This belief encourages people to take good economic action. Thus a rich man, will not be harmed when resting to plant his land and give it to the poor. God's way of uplifting the economic life of the poor in

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the Priesthood is not simply to provide for life. But assistance is provided to the extent that economic independence and financial freedom are achieved. People who need help must be willing to fight for their fate, not just rely on help.

When success has been achieved, the face value in terms of giving sacrificial offerings to God is also required to rise according to the increasing circumstances. And it's his turn to help other poor people. This is what is intended that the economic system designed by God through spiritual upbringing is able to lift the poor out of their poverty and not make them poor (Marbun et al., 2022). Even in times of poverty, God still requires the poor to make sacrificial offerings according to their ability. The sacrificial offerings given, too, were enjoyed together with other parishioners and priests.

In his poverty, people are still taught to make offerings and share blessings with others and also to pay attention to the life of the priest. People are taught to see that he is not a poor man who can only live out of mercy. The rich as well as the poor, if they are mentally poor, support their economy by 'asking' or 'begging'. Enriching oneself through the help of others without wanting to strive to be independent (S. D. Potgieter, 2015).

Verkuyl in his book says that begging is a serious and flawed depravity in society because it has a considerable negative impact: not contributing to the production process and the source of crime and criminality. The poor are not the object of the church's diakonia program. But the church must make the poor a subject in its poverty alleviation. Churches and other Christian institutions should be vigilant in this diakonia ministry. Not thinking narrowly means diakonia ministry based on love and kindness.

Prosperity theology or prosperity gospel, sometimes called successful theology, is a Christian theology that teaches that prosperity and success (rich, successful, and perfectly healthy) are external signs from God for his loved ones. This love of God is obtained as a predestination, or given as a reward for prayer or good services made by a person. Meanwhile, God's penance (which in Christianity is done through Jesus Christ) aims to provide blessings of success and health (Loader, 2014).

Prosperity theology is one of the theologies in the Charismatic Movement, in addition to other features that emphasize the movement of the spirit (each person can be filled with the Holy Spirit with certain signs in his life). Prosperity theology is a teaching about the perfection of life for every believer in terms of economy and health. In terms of economics, his theology is referred to as "successful theology," which is characterized by success. This theology believes that a blessed Christian is one who is successful in his life. In health, a person who is blessed by God is always healthy and perfect in life, there is no defect, has the ability to heal divinely. This theology can simply be referred to as a teaching that emphasizes that God is the Great God, rich, full of blessings and that people of faith will surely experience a life full of blessings, rich, successful and abundant.

In addition, often his teachings highlight offerings or tithes as a form of investment in the Lord, as found in the book of Malachi 3:10. This verse is often referred to in prosperity theology in order to collect offerings in the church. People who believe in this teaching usually make their offerings in the hope that they will get more blessings from God.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method we made is a qualitative method with a study of the Old Testament context. This paper is an ecotheological analysis that puts forward Poverty and Prosperity based on the Israelites. The object of study are Old Testament texts that are closely related to their particular themes referring to Poverty and Prosperity. The presentation will start from the definition of Poverty and Prosperity in the theological concepts of the Old Testament and how the relationship between Poverty and Prosperity in the Old Testament. The theological meaning of Poverty and Prosperity finally serves as a basis for reflection for ecological theology at the end of this paper.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Poverty and Prosperity in the Old Testament

The word that appears most "poor man" in the Old Testament is *ani* : it is used 77 times and especially in the book of Psalms: 29 times. Literally it means one who bows, who lives in a low state. He had to look up, when

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dealing with a taller person. The “*ani*” is a hunchbacked person, who is under pressure and in a dependent relationship. The Spanish language has a word that describes that state of affairs well: *humilados* people, people who are demeaned, derived, which as a result of economic actions can no longer stand tall. The word is obviously the word-relation, the word that describes a relationship, in which it attracts the attention that the one facing the *ani* is not the rich, but rather the wearer of violence, the suppressor, the invader, who plunges the *sesa* manya into a low position and maintains it in that state. The existence of opposition is decisive.

Very close to the word *ani* is the word *anaw*. Although these words are used occasionally, as if they had the same meaning, the word *anaw* tends to be less materialistic (De Vries, 2015). The *anaw* is a person who feels himself small (before God); he is humble and meek. The pressure here can be more on poverty as a spiritual *sekapah*. The word *anaw* in the Old Testament is found 18 times, among its 11 times in the Psalms. For physical weakness and material kinanism is mainly used the word *dal*. For example, the word used to describe Pharaoh's oxen from Genesis 41:19 and the next is *dal*. In Dutch there is a proverb *in de dalles zitten* (=being in *dal-dal*), which comes from a dialect of the Jewish language (=yid *dis*); meaning: being in a bad position. The proletariat that lives in the inner areas called *dalat ha'arets*.

The word *ebyon* performed a lot (60 times). This word refers to the person who is in the position of asking. It can apply in two ways: to man as a beggar, it can also happen before God (compare the title of the book Dr.O.Noordmans *Zondaar en bedelaar* = Sinner and beggar). All of these words in the Bible are full of emotion. The words are not neutral, not asal mentioning something out of thin air, but rather pointing to circumstances that require rapid change. It wasn't until the end of the Old Testament that a more neutral sense arose: *rush*, the poor. The word *rush* means "to be poor", "to be in a state of poverty." What is interesting is the fact that prophets have never used this more neutral word. In Amos 2:6 and 7 all these words appear in a sentence (except the word *rush*, however Amos a prophet may be): "For they sold the righteous (*tsadiq*) for money, and the poor (*ebyon*) for a pair of shoes; they trampled the heads of the weak (*dallim*) into the dust and turned the path of the miserable (*anawim*)."

From this quote it also becomes clear that, Amos is not proposing poverty as a neutral matter. It was reinforced again because he put the poor on the same line with a just man. For Amos being poor is parallel to being righteous. I will still discuss this parallel more broadly (Büssing, 2019).

Resuscitating the various kinds of impoverishment above it is shown that it must be experienced by every human being who lived specifically in ancient times in Israel in the world because sufferers both in economic terms and from persecution in ancient and post-modern times are never separated from human life except those who are fully dependent on God.

Israelis who live on agriculture have to lose their harvest, caused by bad weather resulting in famine. This situation has resulted in many people who need money to buy seeds. But the best solution for those who need money, they lend to the lord with the requirement that the harvest will be given to replace the money. Daniel C. snell states that:

In dry years the peasants needed a loan from one season, to the next, and the dry years tended to occur horribly successively the peasants could mortgage his land to his relatives as in Jeremiah 32 or with others. The specific causes of poverty in the Old Testament The Jews generally believe that people who experience poverty are evidenced by disobedience to God. Even sometimes the poor are perceived as a "social disgrace". Some of them are referring to the sound of God's Word from the book of Proverbs which is written thus "It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, the labors will not add to it" Proverbs 10:22. God's blessings will only flow to people who are loyal to God, so that people become rich. But the cause of the poverty that occurred among the Israelites in its history written in the book of the Old Testament is so.

1. Famine makes poor (Genesis 41:55-57).
2. Natural disasters that result in damaged harvests.
3. Extortion of *ribah* in debt.
4. Judgment by the powerful or rich (Amos 5:12).
5. Poor as a result of being looted by the invading enemy.
6. Human misconceptions such as lazy, greedy drinkers, preferring to do evil such as stealing, etc.

In the first books of the Bible, wealth was not a problem. The true nature of biblical thought from that time was that wealth was a consequence of trying to enforce the rules of God. In the realm of the minds of the Greek people "wealth" was the result of sight and skill. In the realm, the early wealth was a consequence guaranteed by God of the observance of the rules of the Covenant. An example is Abraham. His wealth is only a mere blessing. A righteous or just person experiences prosperity. Throughout the Old Testament this Abrahamistic line is very obvious. The (healthy) realization that listening to God's commandments, both for oneself and for society is a very rewarding endeavor, still appears very clearly the thing it sees in the bond connected with the fifth word: "that thou mayest be prosperous and happy." It is translated: "that thou mayest be old" in Indonesia. It is a sign of shalom, that all men shall be silent under the vine and the fig tree, respectively, without being surprised by people (1 Kings 4:25; Mikha 4:4).

It is good now that we note that the Hebrew history of the time of the patriarchs, property or property in which was not a special right at the expense of others in his environment. The possessions were the wealth of the wandering tribe, where all the members in the extended family environment benefited from the prosperity of the tribe. If one member becomes rich, then all the tribesmen get rich. In that age of wandering it seems that people did not even use a word for "poor man."

Prosperity is generally regarded by Jews as evidence of God's blessing. Abraham was very rich, a lot of cattle, his silver and gold. Genesis 13:2 The Psalmist also praises that wealth, wealth and wealth are in his house forever (Psalm 112:1-3). They are blessed for having a good faith that is the Fear of God and the morals are full of virtue. When God offered Solomon what he wanted to ask for and would be definitely given. King Solomon only asked for wisdom and understanding, Solomon did not ask for wealth, property or the life of his ruler, nor did he ask for a long life.

So talking about poverty cannot be separated from the prosperity in a group, there must be one among those whose economy is inadequate. The Bible never gives a prohibition to Israel, speaking about prosperity it is never separated from the land because it is from the land that the Israelites make a living and a place to live. The source of livelihood for the Israelites was from land or agriculture. Farming is done by Israel to make ends meet and produce additional leftovers to sell outside of the needs of his family (Ariawan, Situmeang, et al., 2021).

3.2 Measures of Poverty and Prosperity

According to Boerma, Baker, and several other sources as summarized earlier, there are three measures of poverty and prosperity, namely:

a. Economics

Based on the historical facts of biblical literature it is clear that for the Israelites poverty was closely related to the economic system and structure of society of that era. That's why in Genesis especially the word "poor" does not appear but the term "starvation" (Genesis 12:10; 41:27, 31). For, in the days of the patriarchs, it was understood that wealth was not a private property, but a tribal or family wealth. It is also understood as the result of his labor in obedience to the rules established by God.

- House

But as Israeli life moved from a nomadic lifestyle to a peasant one and they remained in residence, the relationships of ownership changed. Where the house where ordinary people live (poor) only has one cubicle. Some of the chambers were high-floored and the other parts were made lower. The wealthy had larger dwellings with many cubicles made around the inner court. The houses were flattened by the roof and the stairs leading to the roof were made to the outside of the house. Above the room was often made again a room.

- Soil

Previously, economic differences and social classes did not exist because the family was a financial unit, but now social class and poverty have become social problems. This resulted from the settlement in Canaan where the Israelites turned into small farmers who stood alone, managed, cultivated a piece of land to be their own. Each lived off the land he was cultivating. If the land he

cultivated was infertile, the harvest failed, he became poor and sold himself and his family as slaves. So the competition of life is no longer in the framework of togetherness, but maintaining and enriching oneself. This kind of pattern of life causes people's joints to change. The poor (landless) confronts the rich (landowners). The gulf between the rich and the poor is widening.

b. Social

Poverty in the Old Covenant and wealth are actually closely connected with God. Both notions are considered correlative. The view of it is more on its aesthetic aspect (Proverbs 30:8-9* etc.) than in its economic aspect. From his natural view, poverty is really an ugliness. Although God always causes all things, man himself can be blamed as the cause of the ugliness (unemployment: Proverbs 6:9-11; 24:30-34; lust for fun: Proverbs 21:17 and others). In general, OT acted in defense of the poor (Job 5:15; Psalm 72:12-15). The prophets protected them. The law seeks to alleviate its shortcomings. Poverty is seen as a contempt, and does not count anymore. Because he is poor, then his rights become less than those of others and his mind is also judged to be less, for example; Nabal history (1 Samuel 25:10-11). Being a poor person is equivalent to being an oppressed person, the poor are trapped in a vicious circle that can only be penetrated by the treatment and attitude of the rich, which never happens. The poor become the same as society – including the lower classes–people who do not listen to them. "being poor" and "being stepped on" became *ama*. The Standard Phrase "treads on the poor" (Amos 4:1; Proverbs 14:31; 22:16; 28:3; Zakharia 7:10; Psalm 72:4) says the cause of poverty lies in the rich.

c. Spiritual

The Books of Wisdom have actually recognized the division of society in various social levels. The background to this division is not injustice as it is in the prophetic books, but it is because this fate and deeds are mainly seen in the book of Proverbs. Job questioned this link. Wherefore we find in Job who was obedient (pious) before God, lost all his possessions, his children, and he slept in dust because of the sickness he suffered. The people of Job's day were convinced of the existence of a just God-ordained law of karma. Good and righteous people, wise people, must be rewarded by God. They became happy, prosperous and prospered and succeeded in their lives. Misery (poor) and misfortune can temporarily befall a good person, but it is just a kind of trial and trial. In the end they will be blessed by God and become happy. On the contrary: fools, wicked and ungodly are surely punished. Even if they seem to be happy and prosperous, but it is only for a while and the happiness is quasi-mere. Job's experience shows that it is not always poverty (misery) as a punishment or otherwise material wealth as evidence of god's blessed people. For, it is manifestly shown that Job was a righteous and honest man, fearing God and shunning evil. Thus the category of blessed by God is not to all the rich (Ariawan, Kristyana, et al., 2021). The rich are called blessed by God to the extent that his wealth is not the result of extortion or that causes others to become victims. His wealth is not an obstacle to heaven, for the Bible does not reject man from enjoying the materials/goods of the earth in the corridors of honesty, away from extortion, oppression of his fellow human beings. The notion of blessing or blessing is not as simple as giving materially and physically. The word blessing is translated from the word "*barakh*" which has the literal meaning of maintaining a deep and intimate relationship with God and others. So even if a person does not have abundant wealth, or material success in his life, if a person remains in a deep and intimate relationship with God and others, that person is also referred to as a person blessed by God. On the other hand, even if a person is materially abundant in wealth and wealth, but all are obtained regardless of his relationship with God and the principle of justice, honesty, and love, the situation is not a sign of a life blessed by God (J. H. Potgieter, 2013).

4. CONCLUSION

Poverty does not arise by itself. People don't get poor because he's lazy, but people get lazy because he's poor. The beginning of poverty is something about low economic levels or because of coincidental factors. In Israel's day wealth treated the poor as inferior. Poverty is seen as a symptom of a negative, despicable, deprived, and useless human attitude. Poor are seen as impossible to have wisdom so that they will become oppressed. The relationship between the poor and the rich is a causal relationship. Poverty in the Old Testament points to three groups, namely widows, orphans and nomads. God pays great attention to the poor, the afflicted and the oppressed. Talking about poverty is also inseparable from prosperity. There are three measures of poverty and prosperity, namely: economic, social and spiritual. If there are still many poor people

today, it is not a reason not to inherit the kingdom of heaven, but also the faith and beliefs of Christians who are part of the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

Through this understanding, rich Christians are willing to share with those who are poor to become a channel of blessing and the embodiment of God's providence of His people. So both poverty and wealth are actually closely connected with God. Because both topics are considered to exist in a reciprocal manner. The standard of wealth is not material from God, the Spiritual standard is not necessarily rich. Rich is not the standard of blessing or the main reference because demons can also provide. We must enter into the theology of the cross invisibility of matter but spiritual wealth. Wealth is the impediment to the entry into the kingdom of heaven the word of God Christians will not be rich to the material.

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