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Human Trafficking Crime Networks and Pastoral Efforts for Prevention

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Abstract

Human trafficking is human exploitation, and it contradicts the biblical message which encourages equal and harmonious relationships between humans. Therefore, efforts needed for prevention. This study aimed to expose the criminal network of trafficking in persons specifically from Southwest Sumba Regency where Malaysia is a destination country. Data analysis based on Holland and Henriot model of the pastoral circle. The method used was descriptive qualitative. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and literature studies, which were analyzed in depth. The result was that an effective pastoral action to prevent human trafficking is based on a deep understanding of trafficking in persons with adequate theological reflection.

Keywords: slavery; human trafficking; pastoral care; pastoral circle method; human equality; human dignity

INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is the unlawful act of transporting or coercing people in order to benefit from their work or services, typically in the form of forced labor or sexual exploitation. However, it is a global phenomenon that requires international deliberation.¹ Therefore, the issue of migrant workers in Indonesia is not isolated rather it is closely related to the new era of globalization because it has become one of the catalysts that trigger human trafficking.² The development of information and transportation in various regions and countries makes it easier for people to be conveyed from one place to the other. However, almost every area experiences the flow of this global movement. Meanwhile, poverty and unemployment in many countries have driven a large number of people to move from their hometowns to other places that offer better employment opportunities and improved economy. Unfortunately, the perpetrators of internationally organized crimes have put this to good use. Therefore, globalization and post-modern era have sustained this

modern-day slavery in the form of human trafficking.

Based on the history of civilization, human trafficking is actually not a new humanitarian crisis, rather it is perceived as the new face of slavery. The study carried out by Mendelsohn (1949) stated the reality of various institutions of slavery in the Near East from about 500 years before Christ to the era of early Christianity.³ This reality is similar to the present-day human trafficking where the main factors causing slavery are poor economy and immorality. The poverty level or economic state of a number of people involved is exploited by certain individuals involved in criminal networks to make profits. Irrespective of the fact that there have been several serious efforts to overcome slavery through international movements⁴; it has remained a never-ending human tragedy throughout history until this post-modern era. Maxwell (1975) carried out a study that analyzed the correlation between the Catholic Church and the institutions of slavery for approximately 1400 years, starting from the era of the Apostles to the middle Age.⁵ According to Maxwell,

¹ D. R. Hodge, "Assisting Victims of Human Trafficking: Strategies to Facilitate Identification, Exit from Trafficking, and the Restoration of Wellness," *Social Work* 59, no. 2 (April 1, 2014): 111–18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swu002>.

² Diana Betz, "Human Trafficking in Sout East Asia: Causes and Policy Implications" (Naval Postgraduate School, 2009), <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a501444.pdf>.

³ Isaak Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient near East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 5.

⁴ "Struggle against Slavery, International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and Its Abolition," UNESDOC Digital Library, accessed November 14, 2020, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000133738>.

⁵ John Francis Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church, the History of Catholic Teaching Concerning the Moral Legitimacy of the Institution of Slavery* (London: Barry Rose, 1975), 10.

the teachings of the church regarding the practices carried out by various slavery institutions were morally validated. In this era, slavery appeared under a new face, namely human trafficking. In the book written by Schirmacher (2013) entitled *Human trafficking, the return of slavery* reported that modern slavery has made humans seem like goods that are conveyed from one place to another in the global market.⁶

In Indonesia, human trafficking occurs in various forms. The most common is the migration of labor both internally and externally, and most of them are illegal. Furthermore, their conveyance often occurs through smuggling.⁷ During this process or while at work, they usually experience various acts of fraud, harassment, and violence, both physical and verbal, which causes trauma.⁸

The discussion so far revolves mainly around two points: prevention of human trafficking and helping all victims. Many authors review these two points from various aspects such as economics and law. Pastoral theological reflections present

themselves throughout a certain social context.

Novelties of the study lie within the social context of Sumba Island that is related to the pastoral activities of the local Church (Diocese of Weetebula). To that end, reflection begins an in-depth understanding of social analysis and theological reflection before a pastoral plan of action has to take place.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative method.⁹ This type of research is carried out in a natural setting or phenomenon. In this circumstance, it adheres to the naturalistic or phenomenological paradigm.¹⁰ Besides, this method refers to movement combining interaction with reflection. Therefore, it is compatible with pastoral activities.

This research was carried out in Sumba and Malaysia. Data were obtained through interviews with several former migrant workers and several prospective migrant workers who had just been recruited

⁶ Thomas Schirmacher, *Human Trafficking, the Return of Slavery* (Boon: Culture and Scienc, 2013), 1.

⁷ Anggie Yunda, "Upaya Indonesia Dalam Menanggulangi Kasus Human Trafficking Di Selat Malaka," *Padjadjaran Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 3 (2020): 176, <https://doi.org/10.24198/padjir.v1i3.26192>.

⁸ Everd Scor Rider Daniel, Nandang Mulyana, and Budhi Wibhawa, "Human Trafficking Di Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Share: Social Work Journal* 7,

no. 1 (2017): 1–129, <https://doi.org/10.24198/share.v7i1.13808>.

⁹ Burhan Bungin, *Penelitian Kualitatif Komunikasi, Ekonomi, Kebijakan Publik, Dan Ilmu Sosial Lainnya* (Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group, 2007), 68.

¹⁰ Iskandar, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Aplikasi Untuk Penelitian Pendidikan, Hukum, Ekonomi Dan Manajemen, Sosial, Humaniora, Politik, Agama Dan Filsafat* (Jakarta: Gaung Persada, 2009), 32.

in Sumba. Furthermore, the two visits to Malaysia (April 2016 and December 2019), created ample opportunities to explore the situation of Indonesian migrant workers, including the female domestic workers in Kuala Lumpur and those employed at the two oil palm plantations (Rimbunan Hijau and Tan Ahn Companies in Sarawak, Malaysia). In-depth interviews and observations of their workplaces were carried out to understand the ins and outs of the recruitment process as well as their working experiences in Malaysia.

The theoretical basis used in this study is transformative pastoral from Holland and Henriot (see Result and Discussion below). In line with the method, the steps include: First, the author's exposure to the network activity of the crime of human trafficking from Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara to Malaysia; second, the social analyzes in terms of economic, cultural, and political aspects; third, the theological reflection reviews regarding human trafficking from the Christian faith perspective based on Scripture and Church teachings; and finally, a brief review of how the pastoral ministry handled human trafficking issues in the Diocese of Weetebula, Sumba.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Holland and Henriot's Pastoral Circle

Human trafficking debases human dignity and it causes the victims to seem like traded commodity. Based on this situation, the pastoral activities of the church seek to re-dignify these individuals and to prevent this crime. Recently, efforts to prevent human trafficking have become a common concern of the church leaders globally. The World Council of Churches (WCC) through Contact Magazine specifically discusses such trafficking. Stefanie Blicke, a contributor of the magazine, stated the importance of understanding human trafficking, efforts to prevent and assist victims.¹¹ Likewise, it discusses what the Catholic Church does with its Social Teaching. Pope Francis stated that human trafficking is "an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ... It is a crime against humanity."¹² Therefore, human trafficking is an aspect of the pastoral concern of present-day churches.

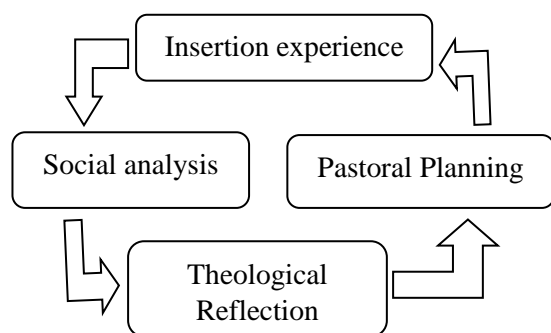
There are many pastoral approaches that are possible in dealing with humanitarian issues. John Trokan lists eight methods

¹¹ Stefanie Blicke, "Victims of Human Trafficking: Understanding, Preventing and Assisting," *Contact No. 184*, May 2007, <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/File/con-184.pdf>.

¹² Pope Francis, "Address of Pope Francis to Participants in the International Conference on

Combating Human Trafficking," Casina Pio IV, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/april/documents/papa-francesco_20140410_tratta-persone-umane.html.

of pastoral and theological reflection.¹³ For this study, the author chooses the transformative method from Holland and Henriot with an aim to motivate people to actively involve themselves in the struggle for social justice. In addition, this method has been widely used in the pastoral reflection of churches in various parts of the world so that the book by Holland and Henriot has been published in 21 editions.¹⁴ The transformative pastoral approach described by originators in the form of pastoral circle includes four stages, namely: insertion experience, social analysis, theological reflection and pastoral planning.¹⁵ The pastoral circle can be illustrated as follows:



Through application, development in four stages occurs according to the local situation. A pastoral handbook published by Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) adds implementation and evaluation stages.¹⁶

The insertion experience stage answers the question "What was the experience like and what was the impact?" This stage describes situations causing humanitarian problems and this provided the basis for the next step. The second stage, namely social analysis, answers the question "Why did it happen? Who benefits and who suffers?" At this stage, the problem's causative factors were carefully investigated. The third stage is theological reflection. This stage answers the question "What do all these mean from the perspective of faith". In that stage, relevant biblical texts and Church teachings were reviewed. That stage determines what the faithful can do based on Scripture and Church teaching's guidance to answer the very problems. The fourth stage, namely pastoral planning, gives pastoral answers in planning concrete action.

Insertion Experience: Human Trafficking

In accordance with the UN convention in Palermo (2000), human trafficking encompasses several elements, including recruitment, forceful departure, violence,

¹³ John Trokan, "Models of Theological Reflection: Theory and Praxis," *Journal of Catholic Education* 1, no. 2 (1997), <https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.0102041997>.

¹⁴ John Gonzales, "The Pastoral Circle," accessed February 5, 2021, <https://catholicvolunteernetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-Pastoral-Circle.pdf>.

¹⁵ Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis—Linking Faith and Justice* (New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 7.

¹⁶ "Manual on Economic Justice, Vol. 1, the Pastoral Circle," AEFJN, accessed February 5, 2021, <http://aefjn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Manual-on-economic-justice-1.pdf>.

fraud, abuse of power, as well as offering and receiving payments for sexual exploitation, forced labor, the practice of slavery and the harvesting of human organs.¹⁷ These afflict a lot of Indonesian citizens.

Based on the narratives of the victims, several facts concerning the recruitment process were summarized. The recruitment process is carried out in a cunning manner which is reported as follows:

- *Persuasion and Fraud*.¹⁸ Field recruiters persuade prospective labor migrants to travel abroad by promising them large salaries.
- *Document forgery*.¹⁹ The identities of victims were often faked to make the process of departure easier; for example, the ages of underage candidates are altered in their identity documents in order to qualify them as adults.
- *Manipulative agreements*. The field recruiter usually makes an agreement with the parents of the prospective migrant worker. This is usually carried out by the signing of a letter which stated that the parents of the prospective migrant workers permit their children to travel abroad while the recruiter pays them a certain amount of compensation. Subsequently, assuming the agreement is violated, their departure is cancelled, and their parents must return the compensation in a much larger amount.

However in reality, it was the recruiter who did not hand over the stipulated amount of money to the victims' parents, while they had already left.²⁰

Before leaving for their destination, they are placed in temporary shelters in several places, where they often experience intimidation, physical and verbal abuse, closely monitored, and prohibited from contacting their families and other people outside the shelter.²¹

Meanwhile, when they arrive at their destination, no one helps them to obtain a permit stating that they are legal workers according to the regulations of that country. As a result, most of them are illegal workers and are prohibited from leaving the house. This makes it difficult for them to speak up when they are unjustly treated.

Social Analysis

John Prior writes that human trafficking is closely related to the global economy which involves many parties ranging from job seekers to field recruiters.²² Within the network, there are work teams secretly intertwined to ensure the smooth journey of

¹⁷ "Annex 2 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Article 3," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed November 14, 2020, https://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/a_res_55/res5525e.pdf.

¹⁸ All former migrant workers interviewed in Sumba in August 2019 admitted to the same thing, namely that they experienced persuasion and the promise of a large salary.

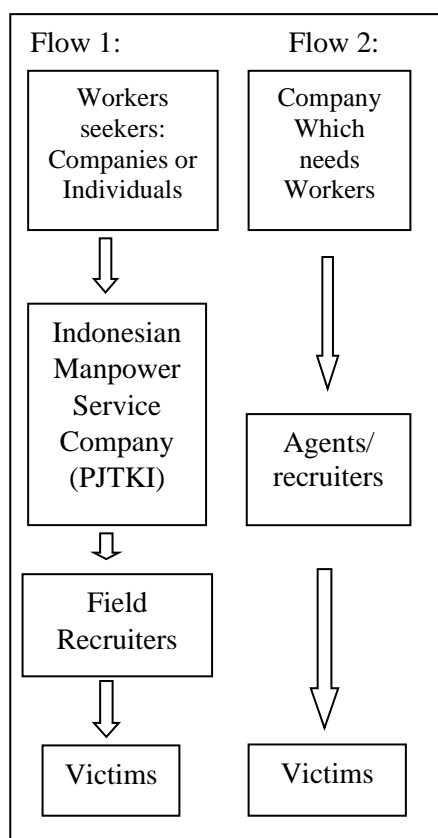
¹⁹ AK, Interview 3 August 2019 in Patunu village, Waipaddi, Southwest Sumba.

²⁰ Desi, Interview 13 August 2019 in Lete Loko village, Southwest Sumba.

²¹ MGR, Interview 2 August 2019 in Kalembu Weri village, Southwest Sumba.

²² John Mansford Prior, "Kehadiran, Kesabaran, Ketekunan Misi Dalam Sebuah Pusat Perdagangan Manusia," *Jurnal Ledalero* 13, no. 1 (2017): 21, <https://doi.org/10.31385/jl.v13i1.64.21-44>.

the victims.²³ The network flow is illustrated as follows:



Large companies such as Oil Palm Plantations obtain labor by cooperating with certain PJTKIs, which in turn employ field recruiters (flow 1). PJTKI usually receives a certain amount of money from either the companies or individuals that need the Indonesian migrant workers. The money is intended to be used for the entire recruitment process starting from the period of departure to their destination. It includes

compensation money for the families of prospective migrant workers, services for field recruiters, document processing costs (including bribing officers to issue fake documents), accommodation, medical and consumption costs at temporary shelters, as well as transportation from their origin to destination.

These transactions involve multiple parties with their respective "shares", and they are generally categorized as "human trafficking." This term has been widely used, although the victims themselves detest it, particularly the agents and recruiters. It is a means of stigmatization that causes poor self-esteem, as well as the disclosure of their identity, which is against the law.²⁴ AL, an individual that was originally an Indonesian migrant worker, although later became a rich agent after recruiting a lot of friends from their hometown, stated that "they don't feel like being traded, however every activity does cost money, and the company has made funds available to that effect."²⁵

There are also companies that work directly with certain agents from Indonesia to recruit approximately 200 to 500 people

²³ Robert Minsel and Yohanes Celvianus Manehitu, "Komoditi Yang Disebut Manusia: Membaca Fenomena Perdagangan Manusia Di Ntt Dalam Pemberitaan Media," *Jurnal Ledalero* 13, no. 2 (2017): 365, <https://doi.org/10.31385/jl.v13i2.78.365-398>.

²⁴ Kevin Bales, Laura T. Murphy, and Bernard W. Silverman, "How Many Trafficked People Are

There in Greater New Orleans? Lessons in Measurement," *Journal of Human Trafficking* 6, no. 4 (2020): 375–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2019.1634936>.

²⁵AL, interview December 23, 2019 in Igan, Serawak, Malaysia.

from their hometowns (flow 2). These agents were also formerly migrant workers, although after being recognized by the Company as possessing high persuasive abilities, they were used to recruit friends from their places of origin. They were not only given money for the recruitment fees, they were also paid an enormous salary by the Company, assuming they successfully recruited a number of workers. Payment of their salaries is made in two ways. Firstly, the agent is appointed as an employee of the Company and is given a monthly salary of approximately RM. 12,500 (which is roughly equivalent to IDR 40 million).²⁶ Secondly, the agents are offered 10 percent of the monthly income of all the migrant workers they were able to recruit, and they earn relatively hundreds of millions of rupiah monthly. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Company's agents are so eager to recruit prospective migrant workers from their hometowns.

Furthermore, the agent or recruiter does not attach much importance on the legality of the recruited member. Most of the migrant workers arrive at their destination (Malaysia) only on a regular visit status. Immediately, they get to their destination (for example, an oil palm plantation located far from the city), they are registered

under the Company by a recruiting agent, occupy the barracks prepared for them, and commence work. The Company does not care about their legality because it is beneficial to them. Relating to their illegal status, the workers are paid substandard wages based on the agreement between both parties through an agent. Furthermore, if an accident or death occurs, the Company tends to do a hands-off stance. Migrant workers do not receive proper treatment (for example, proper care, repatriation of the body when a worker dies), including insurance.

The women who work as domestic servants in families are usually treated unjustly as well as exposed to all forms of harassment. Furthermore, they are easily deceived. They do not have the understanding of the entire situation; for example, an employer deposits a certain amount of money at a PJTKI because of the desire to employ a maid. The amount of money paid includes a year's salary of the workers. As the consequence, the workers did not earn any salary for a year, and when they protested they were ignored.

From the description above, it appears that the causes of human trafficking include several aspects, namely, economic, cultural and political, which are closely related to one another.

²⁶AL, interview December 23, 2019 in Igan, Serawak, Malaysia.

The main problem related to the economic aspect is poverty and injustice in the workplace. Poverty and the desire to improve family economy are the main reasons why people choose to become migrant workers, despite the risks.²⁷ However, the intention to improve their standard of living failed because they are trapped with these trafficking syndicates.

In their workplaces, they receive meager wages, while some are not paid. The agreed wages between the Indonesian Migrant Worker Services Company (PJTKI) and prospective migrant workers are not paid for one year or even more. However, even when it is paid, it is not in accordance with the previous agreement. This situation is because of their status as illegal workers, therefore no matter how much amount they are paid, they are unable to protest or sue according to the applicable law.

Meanwhile, the cultural aspect is related to two contradictory points - globalization, which has challenged all corners of the world and underdevelopment which is experienced in some other parts of the world.²⁸

These two are closely related to each other and they are part responsible of the increase in human trafficking cases. The developing countries from which most migrant workers come from, when reached by the current of globalization, are increasingly sending migrant workers abroad and most of these prospective workers are less educated.

Furthermore, the political situation in developing countries with corrupt bureaucratic structures has exacerbated the matter with the result in the loss of public awareness of people's rights.²⁹ The victims of human trafficking in Sumba and their families do not intend to sue the perpetrators before the law, partly because they feel their struggle will be in vain. In addition, the mentality of wanting to get rich quick makes some people have the heart to sacrifice their neighbors.³⁰ All of the above-mentioned, economic, cultural and political factors, facilitate the spread of human trafficking cases.

Theological Reflection

Human Trafficking as Slavery

Many writers categorize human trafficking today as a form of modern slavery.

²⁷ Betz, "Human Trafficking in Sout East Asia: Causes and Policy Implications.", 13.

²⁸ Ibid., 16.

²⁹ Dedi Mulyadi dan M. Rendi Aridhayandi, "Putusan Mahkamah Konstitusi Tentang Pemilu Serentak Dihubungkan Dengan Pencegahan Korupsi Politik," *Jurnal Hukum Mimbar Justitia*, Fakultas

Hukum Universitas Suryakencana 1, no. 2 (2015): 532-49.

³⁰ Rizky P P Karo Karo et al., "Penyuluhan Hukum Tentang Human Trafficking Dan Kekerasan Rumah Tangga Pada Masyarakat Sumba," *Sbdamas*, 2019, 284-91, <http://ejournal.atmajaya.ac.id/index.php/sabdamas/article/view/1018>.

Here, the writer uses the Bales theory. Bales writes that slavery, both in the classical and modern era, has the same essence, which is exploitative. Bales mentions several criteria by which a relationship is called exploitative and therefore slavery: a) there is a control based on the use of force both potential and actual; b) the wages paid are low so that they cannot fulfill the basic needs of the workers; c) the work brings economic benefits to the employer.³¹ In line with Bales, the Mission Theology Advisory Group (MTAG), the ecumenical body of the churches in England and Ireland, states that modern slavery is the umbrella term to describe all forms of slavery, trafficking and exploitation.³² The commission illustrates the matter in a formula: Action + means + purpose = Trafficking. The action refers to the movement of the victim from the place of origin to another place. The means pointed to how victims were coaxed, coerced with threats of violence and intimidation. The purpose refers to the purpose of the move, namely, exploitation. Based on the author's research, it appears that human trafficking meets both the criteria given by

Bales and the formula from the MTAG above, so that it can be categorized as a form of modern slavery.

Slavery in the Bible

The Bible is no stranger to the situation of slavery because the Israelites themselves had experiences as slaves while being held captive in Babylon (2 Chronicles 36: 20 – 21).³³ Like the other nations conquered by Babylonia, the Israelites were also made slaves for various menial jobs. Therefore, the prophet Jeremiah mentioned that apart from the nobles who were captive were also craftsmen and blacksmiths (Jeremiah 24: 1).

In the Bible, slavery takes many forms in terms of how slave status is obtained. Each type of slave also determines how the relationship is between slave owners and slaves. It also suggest how to free slaves from their status. Slave status is obtained in several ways.³⁴ *First*, slaves were bought from foreigners. The ancient custom of buying slaves dates back to Abraham's time. Abraham is said to have owned slaves whom he bought with money from foreign-

³¹ Kevin Bales, "Testing a Theory of Modern Slavery," accessed February 8, 2021, https://lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/bales_test_theory_0607.pdf.

³² "A Theology of Modern Slavery," Mission Theology Advisory Group (MTAG), accessed February 9, 2021, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58f723af1b631bc0c1e17415/t/5926cca115cf7>

d9f3d558d17/1495714984847/A+Theology+of+Modern+Slavery.pdf.

³³ Herowati Sitorus, "Teologi Pembuangan: Suatu Kajian Teologis Konsep Teologi Pembuangan Menurut Yeremia," *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation* 4, no. 1 (2020): 56–75, <https://doi.org/10.46965/jtc.v4i1.217>.

³⁴ Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient near East*, 10, 13, 18.

ners (Genesis 17: 12 – 13). Israel, when it became a sovereign kingdom maintained such custom. *Second*, Hebrew slaves. The phenomenon of selling sons and daughters and even selling oneself to others to become slaves is also mentioned in the Bible (Exodus 21: 1 – 11). The reason why people become slaves could be poverty or because they were being pressed by debt. In Nehemiah 5: 5, there are complaints among the Jewish people in Jerusalem, who, although they were not taken captive, because of poverty, were forced to sell their children to become slaves. Likewise, the widow mentioned in II Kings 4: 1 – 7 was being threatened by a debt collector who would take her two children into slavery because she could not pay off the debt of her deceased husband.

How are slaves treated? In the Old Testament, slavery was legal. Therefore, the Israelites, including the priests were allowed to buy and own slaves (Leviticus 22: 10 – 11; Numbers 31: 25 – 26).³⁵ However, there were regulations on slave rights too, especially Hebrew slaves. The regulations can be seen from the following facts:

- Exodus 21: 1 – 11) is a rule regarding the rights of Hebrew slaves. These regulations provided excellent protection for slaves. Regarding a slave woman, it is

said that even though she was sold by her father because of poverty, there was an agreement that she be made a wife or daughter-in-law by her master and be treated accordingly. Otherwise, she must be allowed to be redeemed, or she must be released unconditionally and unsold again to a stranger.

- If a person injures a slave until his eyes are damaged or his teeth are knocked out, the slave is freed as compensation (Exodus 21:26)
- Apparently the rule of piercing the ears of a slave who voluntarily wanted to serve his master for life (Exodus 21: 6; Deuteronomy 15:17) parallels the custom of imposing a slave mark (a mark incised with a hot iron) on the body, usually the face of slaves in ancient Babylonian regulations as a sign of ownership, especially when the slave was trying to run away from his master.³⁶ The Bible, on the other hand, corrects Babylon's harsh rule, with one where slaves only want to voluntarily serve their masters. Such is expressed by having their ears pierced.
- Regarding slaves who ran away from their masters, according to Babylonian regulations, the person who housed the slave had to be punished with a fine.³⁷ Deuteronomy 23: 15 – 16 in contrast, obliges people to house such a slave and treat him well.

In biblical legislation, there are five ways a slave can become free.³⁸ *First*, a Hebrew slave purchased by a fellow Hebrew is released unconditionally in the seventh year after working for his master for six years (Exodus 21: 2; Deuteronomy

³⁵ Darius Jankiewicz, "Hermeneutics of Slavery : A ' Bible-Alone ' Faith and the Problem of Human Enslavement," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 12, no. 1 (2016): 47–73, https://research.avondale.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1166&context=theo_papers.

³⁶ Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient near East*, 43.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

15: 12 – 14). If he comes single he is also released as a single. If he comes with his wife he is also released with his wife. However, if the master gives him a woman as a wife, then the wife and children born of her are the right of the master, he is released alone. *Second*, those who surrender themselves to fellow Hebrews because they are poor are to be treated not as slaves but as hired hands and released in the year of Jubilee (Deuteronomy 25: 39 – 41). *Third*, a girl who is born as a free person but sold by her father (because of poverty) with an agreement to become a wife by her master or son of her master, is released if the master does not fulfill what is promised (Exodus 21: 7 – 11). *Fourth*, a person who because of poverty becomes a slave to a foreigner, still has the right to be released and his family members redeem him with money. *Fifth*, a slave who is injured by his master until his eyes or teeth are broken, is freed unconditionally (Exodus 21:26).

The situation of slavery continued in the New Testament times. The slave metaphor used in the Gospels, as well as in Paul's letters, must have originated from the social situation that recognized the master – slave relationship. For example the Servant of

God (Luke 1:38), the Servant of Christ Jesus (Romans 1: 1) or in a negative sense such as slaves of sin (John 8:34), slaves of money (1 Timothy 3: 3). Slavery at that time was inseparable from the economic situation of the Roman Empire. Justin Meggit writes that there is a wide gap between the few who are rich and most people who are living in poverty.³⁹ Eben Scheffler illustrates the same thing with the details that about 68% of the population live in poverty and do not meet their daily needs.⁴⁰ Many New Testament passages indicate such situation. The habit of selling children and wives and even oneself as slaves because of being in debt and in poverty apparently still existed in Jesus' time. The parable of the man who was unable to pay off his debts and was threatened with being sold with his wife and children in Matthew 18: 25 – 34 indicates such habit.

The New Testament does not go into detail about Jesus' attitude toward slavery.⁴¹ This fact has resulted in many theologians arguing that the Bible supports slavery.⁴² However, if one looks carefully at Jesus' teachings, for example his programmatic sermons in the Nazareth Synagogue at the beginning of his public ministry,

³⁹ Justin Meggit, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1998), 42.

⁴⁰ Eben Scheffler, "Luke's View on Poverty in Its Ancient (Roman) Economic Context: A Challenge for Today," *Scriptura* 106, no. 0 (2013): 115, <https://doi.org/10.7833/106-0-152>.

⁴¹ Jankiewicz, "Hermeneutics of Slavery : A ' Bible-Alone ' Faith and the Problem of Human Enslavement", 50.

⁴² *Ibid.* 51.

Jesus' attitude is clear. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, / because he has anointed me/to bring good news to the poor. / He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives/ and recovery of sight to the blind, / to let the oppressed go free, / to proclaim the year of the Lord's favorite" (Luke 4: 18 - 19. By reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Jesus was fulfilling God's will as the Prophet Isaiah agenda of bringing liberation.⁴³ By declaring the Year of God's Grace (the year of jubilee), Jesus began the fulfillment of the liberation of the oppressed, including the slaves.

Paul's attitude is even clearer because, Paul emphasizes the equality of all Christ's disciples. According to Paul, the Christian community is an eschatological community, which no longer recognizes the difference between slaves and free people because they are all one in Christ (Colossians 3:11).⁴⁴ An example of Paul's attitude toward equality is found in Philemon 1: 10 - 18. Paul calls for Philemon a change of attitude in his relationship with Onesimus, from a master – slave relationship to a relationship between equal brothers. Paul wanted Philemon to acknow-

ledge Onesimus not only as a fellow disciple of Christ but as a human being worthy of respect.⁴⁵

The Church and the Anti-Slavery Movement

The classic understanding that slavery was legal continued until the 18th century. In the 18th/19th century the anti-slavery movement emerged. The abolitionist movement based on the Protestant ethic was strongly against slavery, especially in England. As a result, the British Government officially ended the slave trade, which was marked by the publication of *The Act of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1807), followed by the United States (1808) and other countries.⁴⁶ In the same century the Popes in Rome also called for the abolition of slavery. Pope Benedict XIV via *Bulla Immensa Pastor* (December 20, 1741) condemned the slavery of Native Americans.⁴⁷ Likewise, Pope Pius VII wrote letters to the king of France (1814) and the king of Portugal (1823), urging the abolition of slavery. In addition, Pope Gregory VI published an encyclical letter entitled *In Supremo Apostolatus* (1839) calling on all

⁴³ "A Theology of Modern Slavery", 2.

⁴⁴ Meggit, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 181.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Yvonne C. Zimmerman, "Christianity and Human Trafficking," *Religion Compass* 5, no. 10 (2011): 567–78, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2011.00309.x>.

⁴⁷ Pope Pius X, "Lacrimabili Statu. Encyclical on the Indians of South America to the Archbishops and Bishops of Latin America," accessed February 10, 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_07061912_lacrimabili-statu.pdf.

church members about the abolition of slavery.⁴⁸

Christian Response: Attitude to Human Trafficking

The fact about the legality of slavery in the social context of the Old and New Testament worlds in no way builds a basis for the legality of slavery in the world, both in classical and modern times. The Mosaic Law did allow slavery but with strict regulations.⁴⁹ If we read the phenomenon of human trafficking today, considering the regulations on slavery in the Mosaic Law, there is an immense difference. Human trafficking is a crime and is illegal, while the slavery discussed in the Old Testament is legal, but the substance is not really an exploitative relationship between slave owners and slaves. To properly understand the texts on slavery, a dynamic hermeneutics is needed, namely, understanding them considering broader biblical principles.⁵⁰ The main principles that are at the heart of biblical ethics, such as "man is created in the image of God," "love your neighbor as yourself," "God is love," cannot be annulled with a narrow understanding of certain passages of scripture.

⁴⁸ Pope Gregory VI, "In Supremo Apostolatus, Condemning the Slave Trade," accessed February 11, 2021, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/greg16/g16sup.htm>.

Moreover, the reality is that human trafficking and modern slavery are much worse than slavery in the Bible. The slaves mentioned in the Bible have full protection. Even, slaves were not always poor, but they could also be rich and could buy slaves as mentioned in II Samuel 9: 9 - 11: Ziba, a slave of King Saul, also owned slaves.

Trafficking in persons is exploitative. The basic teaching of the Bible is against all exploitative relationships. Therefore, human trafficking requires the involvement of Christians to overcome it. Such involvement is part of taking part in the *Missio Dei* (Mission of God). In his plan of salvation, God has reconciled the world to himself through the incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit. This plan of salvation is an impetus for Christians to be involved in the struggle for equality and harmony in human relations. Fellow humans must be humanized because all humans are created with the same dignity, namely as *imago Dei* (Genesis 1: 26 - 27). This compelling idea is the basis for respecting the dignity and freedom of humans as said in the Second Vatican Council: "True freedom is a glorious sign of God's image in man."⁵¹ Using Voster's

⁴⁹ Jankiewicz, "Hermeneutics of Slavery : A ' Bible-Alone ' Faith and the Problem of Human Enslavement.", 60.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 64.

⁵¹ Council Vatican-II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes 17,"

expression, *Imago Dei* simply means that human beings have an extraordinary relationship with God, and because of that, they have the right to be respected, cared for and treated properly.⁵² This is the major driving force for volunteers fighting to eradicate human trafficking.

Of course, many other biblical ideas can be Christian answers such as the commandment of love, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22: 39; Mark 12: 30; Luke 10: 25 - 27), the commandment to love one another (John 13: 34 - 35). What is required is a deeper involvement through concrete actions.

Pastoral Planning

The handling of human trafficking in the Diocese of Weetebula so far has been carried out by volunteer groups initiated by Catholics even though in collaboration with various parties including other religions. Two parties are involved in handling human trafficking and assisting victims: "Volunteers Network for Humanity" (J-RUK) and "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation" commission (JPIC - Commission) of the Diocese of Weetebula. Assistance is still limited to efforts to prevent the departure of victims who experienced fraud from field recruiters.

What has not been done yet is the prosecution of the perpetrators of fraud into the realm of justice. According to the members of the J-RUK team when accompanying victims, most victims prefer not to continue the problems they face in the realm of justice. This situation is related to the focus of the J-RUK movement that is more on the efforts to prevent human trafficking through education and the raising of awareness in the community on the consequence of the choice to become migrant workers. In addition, J-RUK is only a group of humanitarian volunteers and does not have competent volunteers in the field of advocacy and legal assistance for victims.

Nevertheless, J-RUK still contributed to finding alternative solutions in assisting the victims. Through collaboration with the Congregation of the ADM Sisters, the victims who have experienced violence are accommodated for recovery; particularly, trauma recovery. In 2019, the ADM congregation established a recovery house for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. In 2015, J-RUK with some NGOs held a demonstration demanding that the local government evaluate the activities of Manpower Service Company (PJTKI) in Sumba.

accessed February 24, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

⁵² Nico Vorster, "A Theological Perspective on Human Dignity, Equality and Freedom," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 33, no. 1 (2012): 1-6, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v33i1.719>.

Meanwhile the diocesan JPIC-Commission involved in the effort to deal with the victims of human trafficking is still as limited as J-RUK. The focus of the JPIC-Commission is to raise awareness as regards the dangers of human trafficking through catechesis and through the building of networks in parishes. The Diocese Pastoral Center issues catechetical modules for meetings in the congregation and short films for animation, on human trafficking.

In a Pastoral assembly of 2016, the Diocese set a five-year pastoral direction. In the meeting it was determined that the focus of pastoral care was the development of faith knowledge and the economic improvement of the people. The new pastoral direction answers the situation of the low level of education and economy of the people. In that occasion JPIC-Commission proposed for the attention to assist victims of human trafficking and to make necessary efforts of empowering their economic life. Until now, this goodwill has not yet had a significant impact on the fight against human trafficking in Sumba.

Although challenging to realize, these activities were continued because the Church pushed for preventive education and socialization against the dangers of human trafficking. These are facilitated

through the assistance of the JPIC-Commission and Catholics who are members of J-RUK.

To further the efforts of preventing human trafficking, the importance of building a tidier network has to be considered. This includes the expansion of networks with experts and legal practitioners, i.e. lawyers to fight the established network of human trafficking syndicates. Apart from that, for better socialization that is oriented toward the transformation of the people's mindset, spiritual encounters in basic ecclesial communities can also be conducted. In such an encounter, the issue of human trafficking is discussed along with a reflection on the Scriptures. A good example can be seen in the publication of FAST (Faith Alliance against Slavery and Trafficking).⁵³

CONCLUSION

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery because it is exploitative and it is degrading human dignity or the very image of God. The Bible is strongly against every form of exploitative relationship between humans. Therefore, in the Bible, there are strict rules about slavery to prevent every form of exploitation of humans by fellow humans. Even in the New Testament, there is a tendency to abolish slavery. The elimi-

⁵³ "Human Trafficking Prevention: Bible Study/Small Group Guide," FAST, accessed

February 12, 2021, <https://faastinternational.org/about-us/contact-us>.

nation of every form of exploitation of humans is part of the mission of God who wants to reconcile man to himself through his Son Jesus Christ. God only wants equality and harmony in human relations. Therefore, the struggle of Christians to eradicate human trafficking is their participation in God's mission. Efforts to eradicate it should begin with a deep understanding of the problem of human trafficking and adequate theological reflection before concrete steps. The pastoral action taken includes efforts to expand the network to be more effective in preventing it. In addition, it is necessary to consider a more touching form of socialization, such as in the form of spiritual meetings with the aim of achieving the transformation in society. The transformative effort is an effort to change the mentality, character, mindset, and action patterns of society that presume the crime of human trafficking, which is packaged with the labels "sending migrant workers" or "to migrate" as a banality in social reality.

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