

Ethical Principles in the Book of Proverbs and Its Implementation for Sexual Education in the Land of Papua

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Abstract

Ethics in the Book of Proverbs touches almost all aspects of the praxis of human life in the world. This view is contrary to the view that separates theology and ethics in general. These two aspects not only regulate the problem of an abstract relationship between man and a transcendent God, but about the rules of human life. It also regulates the wider relationship between fellow humans even with the environment and the universe. This diversity shows a very broad scope not only regarding the writing style but also regarding the moral message it conveys. There is a problem when Christian ethics comes into contact with practical matters in aspects of people's lives in Papua. Christian ethics categorically rejects adultery and upholds marital fidelity. But in practical life there is behavior that legalizes" adultery. Through qualitative descriptive research methods that discuss these aspects, this paper shows that belief in God must have a real impact on humanitarian issues. In its application, man needs to have wisdom based on the fear of God.

Keywords

ethics; the book of proverbs; wisdom; moral behavior



I. Introduction

Ethics has a very important place in the writings of the Old Testament (hereinafter referred to as the OT). OT preaching not only regulates the issue of abstract relationships, between man and the transcendent God, but about the rules of human life in the world. Therefore, in the OT between theology and ethics is inseparable. This characteristic is seen in introducing and describing God. (Wright, 2003)

In its implementation, the issue of ethics in the OT is not just regulating about individual issues. But, it also regulates broader relations between fellow human beings even with the environment and the universe. That is why the ethical scope of the OT touches on aspects of human life, namely: economic, political, social, environmental aspects. (Abineno, 2003); (Verkuyl, 1992) But efforts to understand the ethical message of the OT must be built through a responsible approach. This is because the context of the OT era is different from the context of the present. (Wright, 2003)

OT scholars agree that the ethical aspects of the Book of Proverbs are numerous and concern almost all aspects of the praxis of human life. They often refer to the Book of Proverbs as a collection of writings of various different styles. (Lasor, 1994) This diversity shows a very broad scope not only regarding the writing style but also regarding the moral message it conveys. (Lasor, 1994) Therefore, in this paper, only aspects of sexual ethics and their causal factors and their relevance for sexual education in the Land of Papua will only be discussed through qualitative descriptive research.

II. Research Method

This research is qualitative research with a descriptive method, which seeks to describe or describe various matters relating to ethical principles in the book of proverbs and its implementation for sexual education in the land of papua. This research discuss aspects of sexual ethics and their causal factors and their relevance for sexual education in the Land of Papua. For this reason, various sources of literature or literature in the form of books and scientific journals are latest and relevant in the form of research results related to it.

III. Results and Discussion

The book of Proverbs writes about the ethical aspects of courtesy, mental and moral attitudes and grammar. (Wahono, 1986) Therefore, according to Kidner (Kidner, 1974), the Book of Proverbs deserves to be used as a reference for the moral foundation or "*the basic moral*". The reason is because the Book of Proverbs deals fully with aspects related to human morals.

In the OT, one of the violations of the ethical aspect is adultery which is considered a very serious and shameful offense. Even in some cases adultery is subject to the death penalty (Compare Leviticus 18:1-30; 20:1-27). (Paterson. 1997) The book of Proverbs opposes violations of sexual matters. The picture of this transgression is an infidelity committed by a man to the wife of his fellow man. This spirit arises to maintain the purity of the people so as not to commit disgusting acts. Therefore, very severe punishment is imposed on the perpetrator. (Paterson, 1997)

The rejection of the abuse of liquor is also found in another passage in the Book of Proverbs which writes the effects of the decline in self-awareness as a terrible danger. Concretely mentioned the various negative impacts caused by liquor. The social impact can be poverty (Proverbs 21:17). He can make a person dare to defy the law and act unfairly: "*Lest for drinking he forgets what has been established, and bends the rights of the oppressed.*" (Proverbs 31:5)

3.1 The Phenomenon of Wisdom

The collection of proverbs in an effort to strengthen the kingdom through education:

The role of education around the palace was also found during the time of king Solomon. For a strong government, wisdom in the palace is needed, so that they can control the entire kingdom. In the Deutronics saga in I Kings 3:5-15 and 5:15-26 king Solomon needed wisdom so that he had the ability to rule successfully and had the view to distinguish right from wrong. (Sitompul, 1974)

Wisdom is related to intellectual intelligence. However, the focus of wisdom is more towards the abilities needed to live. (Cf.Baker's thought) Wisdom is closely related to practical knowledge that helps a person to be able to act and speak correctly. Ability to avoid and at the same time skills in dealing with various problems that arise. Wisdom is also related to the ability to understand the right words so that a person is able to give the right reaction according to the meaning of the words conveyed. (Longman III)

In the Book of Proverbs it is said that wisdom begins with the fear of God in all life. Whereas ignorance is not ignorance in intellectual matters per se but an attitude of deliberate disparagement of moral principles and piety. Therefore the Book of Proverbs wants to also assert that any moral transgression, whatever its form is referred to as

ignorance. The wisdom he gains makes him able to realize a God-fearing life. The book of Proverbs wants to emphasize also that the purpose of wisdom is to make people respect God. Wisdom focuses more on a person's ability to respond to God's rules according to Proverbs the problem of intelligence is not only an intellectual problem but also concerns the maturity of attitude and action. (Murphy, 1998)

The characteristic of wise people is characterized by a lifestyle that upholds honesty, justice and truth. That means wisdom is not a matter of the ability to think but also the ability to behave maturely according to God's commands. (Murphy, 1998) This kind of wisdom can only be obtained through education and obeying God's commands. The book of Proverbs has a double meaning, namely "*instructions*" and "*disciplines*". This indication must be understood that the problem of fulfilling the demands of God's commands is a factor that should not be ignored in education. According to Astuti *et al* (2019) Education is an obligation of every human being that must be pursued to hold responsibilities and try to produce progress in knowledge and experience for the lives of every individual.

Thus, it is abundantly clear that wisdom is necessary in order for one to distinguish between true life and evil life. (Kidner, 1974) In the sense of the Book of Proverbs demands that the character and moral possessed by man is character and morals built on: Truth, justice and honesty. Aspects of a Theocentric nature are connected to aspects that are anthropocentric in nature. This means that the aspect of trust in God must have a real impact on humanitarian issues. In his application, man needs to have wisdom so that he is able to describe in behavior that is in harmony with His will. (Brown, 1996)

Departing from this fact, it can be said that the ethics in the Book of Proverbs is a reflection of wisdom. Primarily wisdom is based on the fear of God (Cf. Proverbs 10:23; 8:13). For this reason, in the Book of Proverbs there is a kind of life's suggestion that people always actively seek wisdom as a basis for supporting the way of life (Proverbs 24:14 cf. Proverbs 8:11; 16:16). The ethical aspects in the Book of Proverbs are numerous and concern almost all aspects of the praxis of human life including the sexual aspects and their causal factors. Some aspects of such ethics are:

First, About adultery. In the Bible (Alkitab) printed by the Indonesian Bible Society (hereinafter abbreviated as LAI), the word "zinah" in the book of Proverbs is only found in 2 verses, namely in Proverbs 6:32 and 30:20 which means "to be procrastic, to be unfaithful." (Baker, 2002) In the OT the word adultery refers more to transgressions in sexual matters. Sex outside the institution of marriage that is not recognized by society as the constitution of marriage can be referred to as adultery. (cf. Saragih, 2018) Including disloyalty to a married couple whose shah can be called adultery. But apparently, in the OT polygamy cannot be categorized as adultery because it is a marriage constitution recognized by society. (Douglas, 1986)

The book of Proverbs opposes violations of the sexual aspect. Proverbs chapters 5, 6 and 7 affirm the rejection of the practice of adultery. Indications of the death penalty for the practice of adultery are seen in Proverbs 5:23: "*He died because he did not receive an upbringing*". Indications of stupidity as a result of not accepting upbringing, are referred to by the Book of Proverbs as the cause of various evils. Includes the practice of adultery: "*Whoever commits adultery is not sensible; the one who does so is self-destructive.*" (Proverbs 6:32) It's an act of stupidity that only brings punishment and self-destruction. (Pareira, 2006)

Some of the forms of adultery alluded to and opposed in the Book of Proverbs, are: Sex reward: Indications of prostitution in order to obtain some material gains seem to have been known in those days. Thus came the practice of rewarded sex by a group of

professional sex peddlers. It seems that many of the Israeli men are caught up in the practice of prostitution. Such conditions are certainly very detrimental to the culprit. Material loss is one of the effects: *"So that strangers should not feast upon your wealth and the fruits of your labors are in the homes of unknown people."* (Proverbs 5:10)

Even honor and self-esteem will be at stake for the perpetrator of prostitution. The perpetrator of prostitution has given up his *"honor"* to others. The culprit not only gave up his property but also his pride. Even prostitution can lead a person to death: *"His feet descend toward death, his steps towards the world of the dead."* (Proverbs 5:5) The book of Proverbs advises that sex rewards, buying and selling sex or prostitution are unjustified acts (Compare Proverbs 7:24-27). (Alden, 2002)

Infidelity: Indications of infidelity are also apparent in the context facing the author of the Book of Proverbs. The picture shown by the Book of Proverbs is an infidelity committed by a man to his fellow *man's wife*: *"So is the one who comes to his fellow man's wife"* (Proverbs 6:29). The word *"neighbor"* refers to the fellow tribes of Israel. Having sex with others in Israel's own tradition is very strongly opposed. This prohibition is very clearly described in the Book of Leviticus (Leviticus 18:20; 20:10). This spirit arises to maintain the purity of the people so as not to commit disgusting acts. Therefore, very severe punishment is imposed on the perpetrator. (Paterson, 1997) In the Book of Proverbs itself, the form of punishment is not very clear. But the punishment is very severe than the punishment imposed on a thief (Cf. Proverbs 6:30-31). (Clifford, 1999) Any form of action of a domestic destructive nature -including infidelity- is a futility that will actually produce chaos. (Murphy, 1998)

Second, About liquor. Although liquor is not a medium that causes the high number of cases related to sex problems, namely Sexually Transmitted Infections (hereinafter written STIs) as well as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (hereinafter written HIV) and *Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome* (hereinafter written AIDS) in Papua. However, alcohol abuse is a driving factor in causing STIs, HIV and AIDS. (Hasil Survei Terpadu HIV & Prilaku (STHP) Papua, 2005) Alcohol abuse is the main factor triggering a person to be *"desperate"* to take high-risk actions (risti) that cause STIs and HIV and AIDS. According to research, sex relationships that have an impact on STIs and HIV and AIDS in Papua are mostly carried out by people who like to consume excessive alcohol. This can be understood because at the time of intoxication, a person cannot master himself against the effects of sex abuse. More than 90% of HIV and AIDS cases in Papua occur due to unsafe sex, namely changing partners and not using condoms. This activity is carried out through reward sex in the localization. It is usually done while -after- consuming drinks that are high in alcohol and cause a person to lose consciousness or get drunk. Alcohol abuse in Papua is a worry. Some are even desperate to use spirtus, methanol and bethadine. Therefore, there are often cases of death due to his abuse. In a drunken condition, the risk of contracting STIs, HIV and AIDS is very large. (cf. Zeth, Asdie, Mukti, Mansoden, 2010)

In the Book of Proverbs liquor is synonymous with wine, that is, a drink produced from processed grapes. In the OT, wine was associated with feasts or occasions (Daniel 1:5). Wine is also used in worship (Isaiah 51:7; 28:7-8). Wine and its preparations were very useful in the lives of the israelites. Drinking excessive wine, however, which can have a negative effect, is not justified in the Bible (Isaiah 5:11-13). Because wine can cause intoxication and people who drink it excessively will lose self-control. (Browning, 2007)

The phrase about the positive aspects of wine is also described in the book of Proverbs (see, Proverbs 3:10). But uncontrolled overuse will actually have a very detrimental impact: *"People hit me, but I don't feel sick, people hammer me, but I don't think so. When am I killed?"* (Proverbs 23:35) In fact, it can be a trigger for the emergence of forms of evil. Therefore in the Book of Proverbs it is mentioned of the vigilance of the intoxicating misuse of wine: *"Wine is a scorn, liquor is a scorn, it is not wise for one who staggers because of it."* (Proverbs 20:1) Murphy (1998) says that the rejection of liquor abuse is found also in another passage in the Book of Proverbs that talks about liquor:

"Alcoholic beverages are personified and then characterized by juxtaposing with predicates describing the effects of excessive drinking. The condemnation of overdressing is also clear from Proverbs 23:29–35. The same disagreement occurs in other contexts, for example, as conducive to poverty (21:17; 23:21). It must not be forgotten that the Wisdom of Women serves wine (9:5). But inebriation is not for the wise."

The impact of the decline in self-consciousness due to liquor is described by the Book of Proverbs as a terrible danger. It is described as a snake that seems harmless but can at any time spout deadly venom: *"But then it scoops up like a snake, and spouting can be like a powder."* (Proverbs 23:32) The analogy about the poison of the viper gives an idea of the very serious danger of the liqueur. This picture parallels that said in Deuteronomy 32:33. This picture wants to affirm how -very- dangerous it is if a person has been overpowered by liquor. At first liquor was very interesting and seemed harmless. But when a person has been dragged down by liquor, indeed he is heading for destruction. (Murphy, 1998)

The social impact can be poverty (Proverbs 21:17). He can make a person dare to defy the law and act unfairly: *"Lest for drinking he forgets what has been established, and bends the rights of the oppressed."* (Proverbs 31:5) This includes breaking the law on adultery because the mind of a drunken person cannot be controlled. Therefore, to the young people are reminded that they do not get caught in the snare of liquor. This is because although liquor has a charming appeal, it will drag a person to destructive destruction (Proverbs 23:31–32). To this condition, the Book of Proverbs exhorts: *"Thou shalt not be among the drinkers of wine and the gluttons of meat."* (Proverbs 23:20) (Murphy, 1998)

Third, About self-mastery. In his writings on the Book of Proverbs, Sitompul said that the aspect of self-mastery is considered important in order to anticipate deviant behavior. Even the aspect of self-mastery is considered one of the important things in the Book of Proverbs. (Sitompul, 1974) The center of self-mastery lies in the human heart. Here the heart is not only the place where human feelings reside but the heart is the place of reason or an understanding that is acceptable to human reason. Even the heart becomes the center where man knows or rejects God. The heart functions as a "spiritual organ" that can communicate with God and that has the priority of making a decision. (Sitompul, 1974)

The role and function of the heart in human life is very important. People who do not have self-mastery will make him perish. He has no handle on life and he will live without control as well as without consideration. (Verkuyl, 2005)

The book of Proverbs itself asserts that the self-mastery of man centered in the human heart is obtained through experience and upbringing Therefore it is always described that those who give upbringing are parents whose impressions have life experience.

The function of self-control through consideration of conscience is very important in ethics. Mainly as the controller of the human mind when he is about to make a decision. That is why then human beings must always train in terms of self-control. By continuing to seek to harmonize the heart, mind, and even the entire existence of human life in total harmony with the path that God desires.

3.2 The Ethical Relevance of the Book of Proverbs to the Situation in Papua

There are three main ways or strategies known in efforts to overcome the spread of STIs, HIV and AIDS, namely: A (*Abstinence*) or fasting for sexual intercourse. B (*Be faithful*) or faithful to one partner. C (*Condom*) or using condoms for couples who are at risk consistently & correctly. There are also those who add by way of D= Drugs/Drugs: REJECT! E = Equipment = do not use dirty / non-sterile needles. This method or strategy continues to be informed because this method is considered the most effective way to reduce cases of HIV and AIDS. It is undeniable that this method or strategy has helped several countries and also several places in Papua in reducing the transmission rate of HIV and AIDS. Because in an effort to overcome HIV and AIDS, the ABC method is known, namely A = *Abstinence*, B = *Be faithful*, and C = *Condom*.

In its implementation, strategies and methods A and B in efforts to combat HIV and AIDS do not pose ethical problems. It is even easily accepted by the church because strategies A and B are considered in accordance with Christian ethics that reject adultery and uphold marital fidelity. However, the C or *Condom* strategy is still a hot topic of debate in society, including in the church. The reason is because it seems as if condom use "legalizes" adultery. This is because the use of condoms is often misused to "secure oneself" when committing adultery. But we cannot turn a blind eye that condoms are the most effective tool for preventing STIs, HIV and AIDS. Helena Picauly (2007) says that condoms are 10,000 times more effective in preventing STIs, HIV and AIDS. This is the dilemma faced by Papua in efforts to prevent STIs, HIV and AIDS through the use of condoms. This issue is an ethical issue that the church needs to answer. On the one hand STIs, HIV and AIDS must be prevented but on the other hand there is a "justification" effect on the practice of adultery. (cf. Rewasan, 2021)

In light of the dilemma, it is the ethical considerations of the Book of Proverbs that affirm that we need to have wisdom based on truth, justice and honesty to answer them. In this sense we must not ignore that truth, justice, and honesty, must be based on fear and respect for God. It can therefore be asserted that the abuse of condoms to legalize adultery is an unaccountable act. In his writing Darmaputera and Hendrata (1995) said:

"Condoms won't make sex one hundred percent safe. Because no condom can be guaranteed or given a one hundred percent safe warranty! I therefore fully agree with the opinion that it is very dangerous to give the illusion that as long as you have used a condom, then sexual relations with anyone can take place safely.... I said above, that the originators of the idea of providing condoms based their ideas only on reasons of a purely practical and pragmatic nature. I am convinced that, normatively speaking, it is likely that they are also as confident as we are. It's just that they take into account what is often not or less taken into account by people who tend to think normatively like us."

This is where the role of wisdom or reason and conscience plays its role in sorting out and choosing an ethical decision. In connection with this John Stott (1993) says:

"Christian reason is 'a mind that is equipped with information in all fields, trained and skilled to deal with the problem of secular controversy in a reference to Christian principles."

Similarly with the problem of liquor and its abuse. This is also a dilemma because liquor is always related to customary issues. However, its misuse is a fairly complex problem. In fact, research proves that alcohol abuse is a trigger -indirectly- for STIs, HIV and AIDS in Papua. In this case then self-control must be put forward. Without self-control by continuing to follow the will for the sake of "enjoyment" alcohol will actually weaken human reason in making decisions. If man's decision is under the control of alcohol then man will encounter destruction. Hence the irresponsible use of alcohol should be categorically rejected.

Thus, in all respects ethical decisions based on Wisdom and God-fearing self-control must take precedence. If this aspect is done surely the number of STIs, HIV and AIDS can be suppressed: *"Who holds to the true truth, towards life, but who pursues evil, towards death"* (Proverbs 11:19).

"Regarding the rampant cases of obscenity 'The police will disseminate it to schools.' Merauke, Arafura News, Merauke Police Chief AKBP. Hadi Ramdani, SH when met by Arafura News in his office on Friday (14/4) said, with the increasing prevalence of obscenity crimes that occur in the jurisdiction of the Merauke Police, they will conduct socialization in several schools in Merauke city." (Arafura News, 2009).

Cases related to the issue of sex violations almost every day adorn the news of local mass media in Papua. Starting from cases of incest, Paedophilia, rape, infidelity, are rife in Papua. Even the case of perverted video footage of a pair of students of one of the schools in Merauke, until now has become a topic of discussion in the community. The thing that is quite surprising at this time is the case of a husband and wife becoming the perpetrators of obscenity. In its reporting on the case, Arafura News reported:

"For fear of being divorced by her husband IS (the perpetrator) aged 30 years, his wife LM (19) who lives in Padang Raharja village, Malind District, is desperate to tell her own neighbor DN (14) who is still in junior high school to have sex with her own husband. Even more depraved, LM first practiced how to have sex with the perpetrator in front of the victim. The victim is told to look at his ways to be practiced with the perpetrator. After the perpetrator had bodily contact with LM, the victim was then told by LM to get in touch with the perpetrator." (Arafura News, 2009).

Women's activist in Merauke, Henny Suparman Astuti, SH told Arafura News that the rampant cases of obscenity and violation of sexual problems in Merauke were caused by moral problems. Therefore, the perpetrators need to be punished as severely as possible. (Arafura News, 2009) In connection with this statement, the author agrees that aspects of strict legal provision need to be enforced in order to minimize the proliferation of cases of sexual offenses that are very rampant. Even the OLD Testament including the Book of Proverbs does not tolerate forms of sexual transgression. The form of the death penalty in the OT provides evidence of a lack of tolerance for perpetrators of sexual misconduct.

However, the provision of legal sanctions alone is not enough. Likewise, by making all the rules or laws as stated in the pornography and pornography laws that are said to be able to counteract the problem of sexual misconduct and abuse. The rise of sexually related cases that occur in Papua and even elsewhere in Indonesia shows that legal sanctions and all laws are not enough. The law raises new problems related to human rights. Especially in Papua, it causes problems with local cultural values.

An important aspect and being the basis of the correct and responsible formation of character must be born of the human individual. This effort can be done by increasing the sensitivity of conscience and morality through good and correct education. The formation

of individual behavior is influenced by internal and external factors, one of which is the school environment. Research by Fajriani, Hardjono & Sumardiyono (2021) found that there is an influence of education system towards HIV / AIDS prevention behavior in junior high school students in Surakarta ($p = 0.009$). HIV/AIDS prevention behaviors are more common in boarding school education systems than in public school education systems. Aisyah and Fitria (2019) explain that the higher the rate student knowledge of the dangers of AIDS, then the better an individual is in controlling his behavior. Darmaputera and Hendrata (1995) said:

"Therefore, a massive education and outreach campaign to all members of the public is very necessary. The whole community must be given information that is as clear and accurate as possible.... Therefore, the appeal through educational awareness efforts is the most effective and recommended way."

The way the Book of Proverbs does deserves to be a model in moral formation. In this case the delivery of education is continuously conveyed through proverbs. The goal is for the listener, namely the learner to be more wise so that they can think, act and be intelligent in harmony with God's will.

In an effort to minimize "sexual crimes" as is often the case in Papua, the role of education is also very important. For this reason, all components, namely the family, community, schools and churches must play an important role. The role is to correctly and responsibly provide education that suits your needs. When necessary information about the sexual is also presented correctly. (Abineno, 2002)

In order for the goal of education to be achieved, a curriculum kit on good and correct sex is needed. One of the tools needed in the sex curriculum is the material. In this case, material from the OT, especially the Book of Proverbs, can be used as a reference because the material and methods are relevant to the Papuan context.

IV. Conclusion

The book of Proverbs is a book that emphasizes the importance of wisdom as the most precious provision for human life. The main purpose of wisdom for man is like the path that guides man into the gate of a detrimental life. Not only pleased man but lived a life pleasing before God. Therefore, the Book of Proverbs repeatedly confirms the importance of wisdom. Even wisdom is referred to as something priceless: *"For wisdom is more precious than gems, whatever one wants, cannot match it."* (Proverbs 8:11)

In relation to ethics in the Book of Proverbs, wisdom also plays a very important role. With wisdom, one can have the understanding to distinguish between good and evil attitudes in life. Primarily wisdom becomes a kind of ethical guide when people think, speak, behave and apply. Even wisdom can be called the center of "self-control" when man is about to make a life decision. In other words, the Book of Proverbs affirms that wisdom is always put forward in various ways, including in terms of implementing ethical decisions.

Departing from this fact, the Book of Proverbs invites its readers to actively seek wisdom. Wisdom can be gained through experience, education and teaching, especially through self-conquest of God: *"The fear of god is the upbringing that brings wisdom."* (Proverbs 15:33a)

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