



"GENDER STRUCTURE" (BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER EQUALITY)

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Abstract

The issue of Gender does not yet have a common ground. Women are always considered weak and helpless human beings. However, in some ethnic groups in Indonesia, the opposite is true. Men are deemed to have no value to women. This study aims to examine the concept of gender equality from a biblical perspective. As the primary source of teaching authority, the Bible provides a solid picture of gender equality. The research method used is exploratory qualitative. The results of the study state that the Bible consistently discusses the principle of gender equality. Because gender equality is essential, many activists voice this principle in the struggle for human rights. Therefore, viewing humans as the noblest created beings is the basis for this struggle for gender equality. Thus, opportunities and responsibilities in all aspects of life own by all humans and created by God.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Theology, responsibility, woman, man*

I. Introduction

The term "gender" comes from the English word. Judging from the meaning, sex and Gender are often equated. This meaning gives rise to misunderstandings about Gender, which is always associated with sex or Gender. Of course, it must be distinguished the meaning of the words sex and Gender. Sex is a permanent biological difference between men and women, a nature from God that cannot be changed. Meanwhile, Gender is defined as the division of roles and tasks between men and women based on their socially and culturally constructed nature.¹ The concept of Gender is formed from social and cultural processes that refer to the division of roles and positions between men and women in social communities.

Today, the issue of gender equality continues to discuss in all areas of life that occur not only in Indonesia but also globally. The meaning of gender equality refers to the issue of inequality between the existence and position of men and women in society. Why did the issue arise, become interesting to discuss, and even become a prolonged upheaval? This issue started with the discriminatory treatment of women influenced by gender bias. Gender bias occurs when one male and female party harm because of

¹ Rianingsih Djohani, *Dimensi Gender dalam Pengembangan Program Secara Partisipatif* (Bandung: Driya Media, 1996), 7.

injustice.² The injustice here means that one of the parties (male or female) has a better condition and position. In the context of Indonesia, where the majority of the population adheres to a patriarchal culture, women are the ones who tend to be disadvantaged. Women are shrunk or limited in their space and do not have the same opportunities as men. They see women as objects or victims supported by the assumption of position differentiation due to social construction as a necessity.

Senjaya and Utaminingsih argue that gender roles are not too important if they do not cause injustice and marginalization. Gender inequality is a system and structure in which men or women are victims of injustice built on the distinction between men and women. Gender inequality can manifest in economic marginalization, political rights, and violence. Injustice can also display by abstraction through stereotypes or negative labelling and inequality where placement occurs as ordinances in relations or hierarchies based on Gender.³ Ideally, gender roles will not be a problem as long as there is a harmonious position or role between men and women.

What does gender equality mean? Equality between men and women or boys and girls refers to equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Equality does not mean that men and women will be the same, but rather that their options and duties will not depend on the sex they were born. Gender equality implies that everyone's interests, needs, and priorities are carefully considered.⁴ According to Ismail and his colleagues, gender equality is limited to gender differences between men and women. Still, lies inequality in obtaining their rights as human beings.⁵ Equality also refers to fair treatment in the equal division of tasks regulated by society, without discrimination based on sex. So, it can conclude that gender equality is the realization of a balance between men and women in fulfilling their rights and obligations and not experiencing discrimination based on their gender identity.

Has gender equality been achieved between men and women? Gender equality has not yet been fully realized. Gender problems are still found in education, economy, law, employment, socio-cultural restrictions (especially patriarchal culture), and gender-based wage gaps. According to my observations, Gender will not be a problem if there is a forum that facilitates an open space for men and women. The church is a forum that can accommodate gender issues. In this case, the church needs to redefine the meaning of ecclesiology dominated by men. Feminist activists such as Asnat Niwa Natar offer a feminist perspective on church ecclesiology that shows concern for cases that befall women. As the body of Christ, the church participates in social problems, such as violence and injustice that happen to women. Thus, this places the church into a contextual church that sided with those who were oppressed and excluded.⁶ Although various efforts to uphold justice and equality between men and women have been made and echoed loudly, many cases corner women and even negate the meaning of their

² Dewa Nyoman Dalem, "Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Bias Gender Penggunaan Kontrasepsi Pada Pasangan Usia Subur Di Desa Dawan Kaler Kecamatan Dawan Klungkung," *Piramida* 8, no. 2 (2013): 93-102.

³ Silvia Senjaya dan Alifilathin Utaminingsih, "Feminist Thought and Gender Theology," dalam *13th International Interdisciplinary Studies Seminar* (Malang: EAI, 2020), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4108/eai.23-10-2019.2293083>.

⁴ Cliff Bird dan Seforosa Carroll, *Theology of Gender Equality* (Port Moresby, 2016), <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/251166/Theology-of-Gender-Equality-PNG-April-2016.pdf>.

⁵ Zulkifli Ismail dkk., "Kesetaraan Gender Ditinjau dari Sudut Pandang Normatif dan Sosiologis," *SASI* 26, no. 2 (2020): 154-161, <https://doi.org/10.47268/sasi.v26i2.224>.

⁶ Asnath Niwa Natar, "Gereja Yang Berpihak Pada Perempuan (Sebuah Eklesiologi Gereja Perspektif Feminis)," *Musāwa: Jurnal Studi Gender dan Islam* 17, no. 1 (Januari 30, 2018): 51-61, <http://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/pusat/MUSAWA/article/view/1799>.

existence. For example, if a woman is positioned behind, it will be difficult for women to become equal partners with men. It means that all women have not enjoyed their rights. Is this a sign that hopes for equality between women and men have a dash? Is there a solution capable of bridging the gap between men and women regardless of gender identity? How does the Bible or Christian theology address gender issues?

Therefore, in this article, there are two focuses of discussion on the issue of gender equality between men and women within the scope of Christian theology.⁷ According to the Bible, the Bible concept of Gender comes from the creation narrative that states that God created humans in His image (Gen. 1:26-28). God created males and females equal. They are blessed by Him, given equal rights, roles, and responsibilities to manage the earth. This explains that the Bible emphasizes equality between men and women. However, this does not mean that there are no issues related to gender equality. According to the Bible, what does equality between men and women mean? How does the church address issues relate to gender equality? This discussion hopes that it will provide adequate understanding and answers regarding issues related to gender equality from the perspective of Christian theology.

II. Method

The researcher first conducted a study of Gender from a biblical perspective. This study uses an exploratory qualitative method. The researcher chose this method because the analysis in this article entirely refers to the analytical model from the literature study, which makes optimal use of all materials and content related to gender equality.⁸ Furthermore, the building of gender theology becomes a theory to assess current gender practices.⁹

III. Discussion

The concept of gender equality from the Old Testament perspective *People in the Image of God, but Different Genders*

Humans are creatures created by God (cf. Deut. 4:32, Isa. 45:12, Ps. 8) or God's representative on earth to rule over all other creations, carry out all His commands and glorify God. God created males and females according to His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27) so that humans are unique creatures compared to other creations. That is, men and women bear the image of God or the owner of the same image in terms of value, dignity, and responsibility to care for, manage, and protect the earth, as God has mandated them to do (Gen. 1:28).

Humans are part of the order of creation. From the creation process, God formed man from the dust of the ground, while the woman was from a man's rib (Gen. 2:7, 21-

⁷ Gernaida Krisna Pakpahan, "Teologi Hadir sebagai Jawaban kekinian," dalam *Quo Vadis Pendidikan Teologi Pasca Pandemi?*, Pertama. (Jakarta: Hegel Pustaka, 2021), 174-175.

⁸ Robert Paul Trisna, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Sebuah Analisis terhadap Metode Hermeneutik Pentakosta," dalam *Reaffirming our Identity: Isu-isu Terpilih Menjawab Perubahan Sekaligus Mempertahankan Identitas*, ed. Junifrius Gultom dan Frans Pantan (Jakarta: Bethel Press, 2014); Muryati Setianto dan Christian Reynaldi, *Hermeneutik: Ilmu dan Seni Menafsirkan Alkitab* (Jakarta: GL Ministry, 2018).

⁹ Donny Charles Chandra, "Fungsi Teori dalam Metode Penelitian Kualitatif" (Research Gate, 2019).

22). Interestingly, the Hebrew word for male is יָשׁוּב (*'ish*), while a female is יְשֻׁבָּה (*'ishshā*). Regarding this uniqueness, Yates revealed a similarity of sound stress between the two words because *'ishshā* is a derivative form of *'ish*.¹⁰ It strongly emphasizes that women's status is equally human. So, in Hebrew, the word "woman" is no different from "man."¹¹

Based on his thirty years of research into Genesis 1-2, Davidson asserts that men and women are ontologically equal in God's eyes and equal partners without a functional hierarchy. This fact is evidenced by the absence of any indication of the hierarchical order of humans because both are equally blessed and given a covenant mandate by God (Gen. 1:28).¹² According to him, the creation of women is the climax/culmination of God's creation of the universe, and the rib contains the literal meaning of "side" so that women create to stand on the side of men as an equal partners.¹³

Wickstrom agrees with him regarding Adam's rib, which God used to create woman. Based on several quotations from the commentaries and lexicon, he shows that there are two צֵלָה (*tsēlā'*) words from 28 times in the Bible which are translated as the human rib. According to him, this is very unfortunate because the word should be interpreted as "side." Examples can be seen in Exodus 25:12 and 36:25. With this understanding, God took one side of Adam to create Eve so that Eve was the other side of Adam. The Bible refers to them as "one flesh," not one bone or rib (Gen. 2:24).¹⁴

Heterosexuality is not differentiating between humans but God's purpose or plan in establishing a monogamous marriage (Gen. 2:22-24).¹⁵ So, the study of the Hebrew words for male (*'ish*), female (*'ishshā*), and rib (*tsēlā'*) above proves that these two genders are both ontologically and functionally equivalent so that no one is higher or lower among them.

Worthy Helper (Ezer Kenegdo)

The Bible provides additional information about the woman in Genesis 2:18, 20 by calling her "a helper worthy of her." This phrase is translated from the term *ezer kenegdo* ($\text{עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדָּהּ}$), which comes from two Hebrew nouns, namely עֵזֶר (*'ēzer*) which means "help, supporter, helper."¹⁶ Moreover, כְּנֶגְדָּהּ (*neged*) means "opposite, partner, different something or someone, equal partner."¹⁷ The word *neged* contains the preposition כִּי (*ke*), which means "as according to", and the third-person singular suffix הָ (*ô*) which means "its."¹⁸ So, based on its etymology, the term means a helper or partner

¹⁰ Kyle M. Yates, "Penciptaan," dalam *Tafsiran Alkitab Wycliffe* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2004).

¹¹ Yehuda Mandacan, "Kesetaraan Pria dan Wanita (Gender) Menurut Alkitab," *Logon Zoes: Jurnal Teologi, Sosial, dan Budaya* 2, no. 1 (2018): 42-58.

¹² Gernaida Krisna R. Pakpahan, "Telusur Karya Ruakh (Roh) dalam Perjanjian Lama," *Diegesis: Jurnal Teologi: Jurnal Teologi* 4, no. 2 (2019): 1-14.

¹³ Richard M. Davidson, "The Creation Order for Man-Woman Relationships: Genesis 1-2," *Memory, Meaning & Life*, last modified 2013, diakses pada Februari 24, 2022, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/mml/118>.

¹⁴ Steven P. Wickstrom, "Adam's Rib," *SPW Books* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1-7.

¹⁵ Wendy Farley, "Duality and Non-Duality in Christian Practice: Reflections on the Benefits of Buddhist-Christian Dialogue for Constructive Theology," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2011): 135-146.

¹⁶ D. L. Baker dan A. A. Sitompul, *Kamus Singkat Ibrani-Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000).

¹⁷ William Lee Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: BRILL, 2000).

¹⁸ Baker dan Sitompul, *Kamus Singkat Ibrani-Indonesia*.

who is like Adam, but at the same time different. Refers to Eve, who is the same, befitting, conforming, equal, or equal to Adam as a human being and the image of God, but of a different gender.

Alter admits that this term has been known for a long time but is very difficult to translate. Generally, *ezer kenegdo* is a helper whose position is as a companion, not a women's subordination.¹⁹ Likewise, Wickstrom did not find a good translation for the word *ezer* because of the breadth of its meaning. Therefore, according to him, the term "sustainer," namely someone who strengthens and supports physically and mentally, is more suitable than a "helper." Regarding the phrase *kenegdo*, he prefers to use the meaning of "equivalent," which is the same in value, size, strength, effect, significance, and so on. So, he proposed that the term *ezer kenegdo* be understood as "a helper/sustainer equivalent to him."²⁰

Furthermore, Sarna connects the term with Genesis Rabbah 17:2 and interprets it as "a helper who fits him."²¹ Of course, the helper here does not demean women because the word *ezer* relates to God, whose role is to help humans. This verse reads:

"Whoever has no wife exists without goodness, without a helpmate, without joy, without blessing, without atonement, ... without well-being, without a full life ... indeed, such a one reduces the representation of the divine image [on earth]." The free translation reads, "Anyone who does not have a wife is in a state without kindness, without a helper, without joy, without blessings, without repentance, ... without welfare/health, without a full life ... of course, as someone reduces representation image of God [on earth]."²²

From the explanation above, the term does not express the idea of a woman's devotion as a subordinate but complementary equality with the same freedom. Thus, women stand parallel or in a line as *kenegdo* for men and are on the men's side. Interestingly, 16 *ezer* words out of 19 times in the Bible refer to God as the helper of His people or a stronger nation than any other nation. This fact clearly shows that *ezer* is a saviour (lifesaver) and is not an inferior position, but a relationship that benefits both parties to aim at God, humans, or animals.²³

In this regard, Stott says that God uses the word *ezer* as a "helper of the people." In other words, *ezer* does not just mean "helper," and the word commensurate does not mean "similar," but "complementary" or "complementary."²⁴ Likewise, Karman agrees that the word *Ezer* is often used by God in the OT as "helper" in Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7, 26; Psalm 33:20, 146:5, "the help of Israel" in Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalm 115:9-11, 121:2, 124:8, and "military aid" in Isaiah 30:5; Ezekiel 12:14; Hosea 13:9. That is, this word describes strength. He also mentioned the masculine Gender from the word *Ezer*, which means "helper, " a characteristic of women and men. So,

¹⁹ Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton & Company, 1996).

²⁰ Wickstrom, "Adam's Rib."

²¹ Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989).

²² Grecetinovitria Merliana Butar-Butar, "Ezer Kenegdo: Eksistensi Perempuan dan Perannya dalam Keluarga," *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation* 4, no. 1 (2020): 44-55.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ John Stott, *Christian Mission in The Modern World* (Laysister: IVP Books, 1975); John Stott, *Isu-isu Global: Penilaian Atas Masalah Sosial & Moral Kontemporer Menurut Perspektif Kristen* (Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih, 2015).

supposedly, men do not need to feel superior when helping someone because it is everyone's duty.²⁵

Then, Barth stated that God created man from singular to plural, expressed by masculine and feminine traits. Both are human beings who reflect God's image and are blessed and given the same power by God.²⁶ Zega reiterated that God did not treat them differently even though they were both biologically different and had distinct characteristics but instead gave them a balanced duty and responsibility.²⁷ Kline also sees it from the perspective of the image of God, namely that women were created for men not as enslaved people but as consorts who are worthy of him. Thus, the term *ezer kenegdo* refers to conformity or similarity. Just as man is the image and glory of God, so a woman is also the glory of man.²⁸ That is why, Mandacan argues that men must view women as persons who are made for them, not as helpers, but as persons who are compatible with and equal to themselves and recognize themselves as representatives of the image of God.²⁹ So, as Davidson says, Genesis 1-2 does not contain any words or commands of God that subordinate women to men or restrict women from contributing fully and equally with men in all work and ministry. Genesis 1-2 clearly shows Adam and Eve as men and women who are fully equal, both ontologically and functionally. According to him, ontological equality means men and women have the same value in God's eyes, while functional equal means they have the same relationship without hierarchy or social level.³⁰

The Purpose of Creation of Ezer Kenegdo

There are many mixed expert comments on why men need an *Ezer kenegdo*, namely women. For example, some interpreters think that women need to help men look after and maintain the garden (Gen. 2:15), give birth to children (Gen. 1:28), or take responsibility for the marital relationship.³¹ Others decided not to limit Eve's help (cf. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Prov. 31:10-31). However, particular is that a woman is very different from a maid.³²

According to Wenham, the term *Ezer kenegdo* does not refer to women's identity but complements the limited shortcomings of men. That is, women exist to help men functionally.³³ Karman agrees with him and says that the purpose of creating *ezer kenegdo* needs to be seen from Adam's work because there must be little work, so Adam needs a helper. He showed well that there were three things Adam did, namely to cultivate and maintain the garden (Gen. 2:15), name all the animals (Gen. 2:19), and multiply and multiply (Gen. 1:28).

²⁵ Armand Barus, "Konsep Kemiskinan dalam Lukas-Kisah Para Rasul," *Jurnal Amanat Agung* 16, no. 2 (2020): 53.

²⁶ Christoph Barth dan Marie-Claire Barth-Frommel, *Teologi Perjanjian Lama 1* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2017).

²⁷ Yunardi Kristian Zega, "Perspektif Alkitab tentang Kesetaraan Gender dan Implikasinya bagi Pendidikan Agama Kristen," *Didache: Journal of Christian Education* 2, no. 2 (2021): 160-174.

²⁸ Meledith G. Kline, "Penciptaan," dalam *Tafsiran Alkitab Masa Kini: Kejadian-Ester* (Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih, 2008), 184.

²⁹ Mandacan, "Kesetaraan Pria dan Wanita (Gender) Menurut Alkitab," 57.

³⁰ Davidson, "The Creation Order for Man-Woman Relationships: Genesis 1-2."

³¹ Dianne Bergant dan Robert J. Karris, ed., *Tafsir Alkitab Perjanjian Lama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002).

³² Butar-Butar, "Ezer Kenegdo: Eksistensi Perempuan dan Perannya dalam Keluarga."

³³ G. J. Wenham dkk., *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 68.

Karman points out that the last job requires a woman's vital role. This point explains why Eve was created so that they could both carry out God's covenant mandate to bear children. However, he stressed that this matter of descent needs to be understood differently for today's times because, at that time, only Adam became human. Regardless of its meaning for the present, Karman sees its primary purpose, namely the equality of the mandate of men and women. In other words, husband and wife do not walk alone but unite, depend on, and complement each other with their respective roles. It has indeed been proven that domestic life is a shared responsibility, not stemming from a superior-inferior relationship.³⁴

Gender Equality from a New Testament Perspective

The concept of equality between men and women in the Old Testament is echoed in the New Testament. This concept can already be seen in the Greek words for male ἄρσεν (*arsen*) and female θῆλυ (*thēlu*) in the NT, which differ in function from the Septuagint (LXX). In the LXX, the word *arsen* refers to a male person as distinguished from a female person (cf. Gen. 1:27, 5:2, 17:14, 23, 34:24; Exod. 1:16-18, 22, 12:5; Lev. 12:7; 15:33; 27:3, 5-7; Num. 5:3). However, in the NT, the word *arsen* refers to the male as Gender only, not the person (cf. Mk 10:6, Lk 2:23, Rom 1:26-27, Rev 12:5). The use of the words *arsen* and *thēlu* in the NT does not refer to men and women in marriage as husband and wife but only refers to the gender differences between men and women.

Equality from the perspective of the Apostle Paul

One text that deals with this are Galatians 3:28, which reads, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither enslaved person nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ. Jesus." In this verse, Paul emphasizes the equality of status as a child of God, not limited by nationality, social level, and Gender. There is no difference because everyone and everything he owns has been ended through the crucifixion of Christ so that all become one in the body of Christ.³⁵ Of course, Paul did not write the verse carelessly because an event happened behind it. According to McKnight, patriarchal culture is still inherent in the NT era, such as the role of priests, which men can only do. In addition, there is also the inferiority of women because they are not taught about the law, are required to take care of children, are not seen as witnesses in court, and even sit separately from men in the synagogue.³⁶

Because the culture is still strong, Paul wrote this statement to show an important change considering the NT era has arrived. The change he meant was that religious privileges were no longer relevant in the NT. The reason is apparent: in Christ, everyone is an equal member of the church as a child of God and can participate fully in a religious context. Everyone here, including women, enslaved people, and marginalized Gentiles in the OT era.³⁷

Hansen added another comment, revealing that humans' horizontal relationship has become new. Because the vertical relationship between humans and God renews through the sacrifice of Christ. All the dividing walls or human barriers in social status,

³⁴ Yonky Karman, *Bunga Rampai: Teologi Perjanjian Lama* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2007).

³⁵ Berlina Lumban Gaol, "Kedudukan Perempuan dalam Alkitab dan Masa Kini," *Filadelfia: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 1, no. 1 (2020): 15-35.

³⁶ Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

³⁷ Mandacan, "Kesetaraan Pria dan Wanita (Gender) Menurut Alkitab," 58.

culture, economy, and Gender are no longer valid in Christ. That is why Paul places great emphasis on the importance of equality and the unity of believers who are closely knit in the body of Christ. Thus, the rational superiority of Jews over non-Jews, social class of free people or enslaved people, male or female sex is contrary to the essence of the Bible.³⁸

Although referred to as equality, this concept still maintains differences in citizenship, social or economic status, and Gender. In other words, if a Jew becomes a Christian, he remains a Jew and vice versa. If enslaved people became Christians, they remained enslaved and did not immediately escape their status as enslaved people. Thus, Paul wants to emphasize that after becoming one with Christ as a child of God, believers are now one with other believers regardless of their background, social status, and Gender.³⁹

Equality from the perspective of Jesus Christ

Paul and Jesus himself were also very much against the discrimination that occurred in His day. It can be seen in John 8:2-11. John 8:2-11 tells of an adulterous woman brought by the Jews to Jesus to be punished. However, Jesus' words in verse 7 show that He was against their discrimination. The reason is, of course, because Jesus highly upholds gender equality and understands God himself does not distinguish between men and women. So, according to him, injustice and discrimination are human products, not God.⁴⁰

Many accounts show that Jesus had frequent dealings with women. For example, Jesus was born of a woman named Mary, Jesus met the woman as the first person He saw after rising from the dead, and so on. In addition, women are still valued by Jesus because He knows that women have an excellent and noble role.⁴¹ Thus, as Kalintabu said, Jesus saw that there was no superior or inferiority between men and women. Both are equal and have the opportunity to enjoy God's grace. So, even though they are equal, men and women are not alike because equality and likeness are two different things.⁴²

Jesus tried to change the patriarchal (Jewish) culture paradigm by allowing women to listen to His teachings and become His followers. Based on this information, I think that although the twelve disciples were men, the entire Bible record above shows several women as His followers or disciples: Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2), Mary, and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Even in John 4:5-30, Jesus met the Samaritan woman, a cultural transgression at that time. In John 15:22-28, the Canaanite woman also asked Jesus for help, and in Luke 7:44-50, Jesus was anointed by a woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee.

The Church's Attitude towards Gender Equality

³⁸ G. Walter Hansen, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Galatians* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2010).

³⁹ Mandacan, "Kesetaraan Pria dan Wanita (Gender) Menurut Alkitab," 58.

⁴⁰ Benyamin Telnoni, "Peran Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Membelajarkan Kesetaraan Gender pada Anak Usia Dini," *Jurnal Abdiel: Khazanah Pemikiran Teologi, Pendidikan Agama Kristen, dan Musik Gereja* 4, no. 2 (2020): 167-179.

⁴¹ Gaol, "Kedudukan Perempuan dalam Alkitab dan Masa Kini."

⁴² Heliyanti Kalintabu, "Kajian Teologis tentang Perempuan dan Peranannya dalam Pendidikan Agama Kristen Gereja," *Jurnal Shanana* 4, no. 1 (2020): 57-72.

Indeed, the church as the body of Christ is a place of fellowship for believers from all walks of life, both adults, children, men and women. In this case, men and women like *Imago Dei* have the same right to be called upon to carry out their duties and responsibilities. Therefore, men and women are given the same opportunity to actualize themselves in ecclesiastical ministry. They are equal partners and co-workers of God working together to bring *shalom* on earth. There is no superior or inferior space for men and women. The church is the centre of Christian teaching and awareness. Therefore, the church has a central role in fighting for gender equality. To minimize inequality or injustice against women, the church should take the following actions:

Aware and Concern about Gender Issues

Awareness that gender issues are the starting point for whether the church can voice gender equality.⁴³ If the church is already in this position, the next step is to take real action by opening up opportunities and involving all congregations in ministry regardless of gender identity. Thus, the church has built a gender awareness perspective for God's congregation. Evidence that the church has an awareness of gender equality is by looking at the composition of God's servants in the church. If there is still one dominant Gender, the other Gender is not given the same opportunity. So gender equality is still far from the attention of the church. On the other hand, if the church involves all genders, the awareness has been well internalized. Just as women can participate in the state's life, so can the church.⁴⁴

Restoring the Positions of Men and Women as Bearers of God's Image (Gen. 1:27)

The creation narrative shows that humans create in the image of God. It is the common humanity called "the image-bearer of God." the image of God positions humans of different genders but equal because both are bearers of the image of God. It indicates that men entered into an equal relationship with women. So, the actual form that the church can do is a collaboration between men and women that are in harmony with their roles, responsibilities, and capacities without eliminating their differences, especially for churches that are still in the circle of patriarchal culture, for example, the community of Gereja Kristen Protestan di Bali (GKPB). In terms of quantity, their strategic leadership is dominated by men. In addition, Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT) also does not provide equal opportunities for women to occupy leadership positions at the synod level. The essence of collaboration is to maintain mutual rights and obligations, create harmony in differences, and women become equal partners of men so that the relationship between the two parties becomes equal or not unequal.

For example, men and women can occupy strategic positions in church organizations because they have the same rights. Both also need to be allowed to voice

⁴³ Andreas Budi Setyobekti, Susanna Kathryn, dan Suwondho Sumen, "Implementasi Nilai-nilai Bhineka Tunggal Ika dalam Membingkai Keberagaman Pejabat Gereja Bethel Indonesia di DKI Jakarta," *SOTIRIA (Jurnal Theologia dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen)* 4, no. 1 (2021): 1-10.

⁴⁴ Gernaída Krisna R. Pakpahan, "Perempuan dan Kerajaan Allah," dalam *Reaffirming our Identity: Isu-isu Terpilih Menjawab Perubahan Sekaligus Mempertahankan Identitas*, ed. Junifrius Gultom dan Frans Pantan (Jakarta: Bethel Press, 2014); Ivonne Sandra Sumual, "Perempuan dalam Gerakan Pentakosta," dalam *Reaffirming our Identity: Isu-isu Terpilih Menjawab Perubahan Sekaligus Mempertahankan Identitas*, ed. Junifrius Gultom dan Frans Pantan (Jakarta: Bethel Press, 2014); Ivonne Sandra Sumual, "Potret Perempuan Gereja dalam Berbangsa," dalam *Bergereja dalam Bingkai Kebangsaan* (Jakarta: STT Bethel Indonesia, 2016).

their opinions in ecclesiastical discussions and meetings or develop church programs. Other opportunities are pulpit ministry, such as preaching and teaching the people of God.

The Bible explicitly speaks of gender equality. This principle is derived from human ontology. When man was created, God made man and woman in the image and likeness of God. This human existence causes the responsibility and opportunity to work and belong to all humans, regardless of Gender. Thus, gender equality is the responsibility of all human beings created in God's image and likeness. Therefore, a collaboration between men and women needs to prioritize carrying out life activities. Starting in taking care of the family, church organization, career, and other aspects of life. If there is discrimination from one Gender, then equality has been tarnished.

IV. Conclusion

Gender equality is discussed by the Bible in several places, such as Genesis 1:26-27, 2:18-22, 34:12; Exodus 21:7; Leviticus 12:1-5; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; 1 Samuel 18:25; Nehemiah 6:14-15; John 8:2-11; Galatians 3:28; and others. Since the beginning of creation, God never intended to make humans live alone. He brought a woman to a man as a helper beside him to respect each other, respect, share, cooperate, prays, worship, serve, and live together side by side as a unit before God. It is the camaraderie that shows togetherness.

The concept of humans (men and women) as bearers of the image of God wants to express complementary parallels. Women are created as *ezer kenegdo* for men in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, mainly carrying out the covenant mandate. There is no room for discrimination against women. The presence of Christ reinforced the unequal relationship between men and women, which is shown through His attitude and ministry. In line with Paul's writings, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28 NIV).

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