

## Mangongkal Holi in Toba Batak Culture: The Distortion of Sin and the Transformation of the Gospel Its Implications in Christian Religious Education

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the theological meaning and socio-cultural function of Mangongkal Holi and its application to Christian Religious Education (PAK). The research method used is a literature study with a qualitative approach, through the analysis of contextual theological literature, cultural anthropology, and faith pedagogy. The results of the study show that Mangongkal Holi contains noble values such as respect for ancestors, social solidarity, and gratitude, but still has the potential to experience distortion of meaning due to sin in the form of glorification of social and economic status. Therefore, PAK needs to develop a contextual-critical pedagogical approach that is able to assess, interpret, and transform cultural practices to align with the Christian faith and God's mission. This article emphasizes that Mangongkal Holi can be used as a concrete arena of faith learning, where the gospel is tested and lived in a real cultural context.

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## INTRODUCTION

Culture is an inherent dimension in human existence as intelligent beings. Through culture, humans build a system of meaning that shapes personal and communal identity, regulates social relations, and directs the religious orientation of a community. Thus, culture cannot be understood merely as an outward product, but as the deepest expression of man's way of understanding reality, himself, others, and with the Divine.

This understanding is in line with the definition of "culture" in the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, which refers to the mind, intellect, and the results of human creation. From the root of this understanding, culture includes: (1) the results of human mental activities such as beliefs, arts, and customs; (2) the entire knowledge of humans as social beings that becomes a guideline in action; and (3) the results of reason processed from the environment for the sake of common welfare. Thus, culture is not neutral, but full of values, meaning, and orientation of life.

In this context, customs occupy an important position as an adhesive element in a culture. Customs are not just a collection of customs, but a normative system that regulates almost all aspects of people's lives. Schreiner (1994) noted that the Toba Batak custom includes the dimensions of religion, law, family relations, social life systems, and arrangements about death and life after death. Therefore, customs for the Toba Batak people do not only function pragmatically, but also have a deep existential and religious meaning.

This understanding explains why the Toba Batak people, including those who adhere to Christianity, still maintain and respect the customs. Customs not only govern life "here and now", but also provide a framework of meaning about death and the life after. In the traditional view of the Toba Batak, the fulfillment of the custom is believed to contribute to the achievement of a prosperous and harmonious life, both for individuals and communities.

One of the traditional expressions that has significant theological and social weight is the Mangongkal Holi ceremony. If translated into Indonesian, Mangongkal Holi is interpreted as the ceremony of digging (*mangongkal*) the bones (*holi*) of a deceased person after a certain period of time for the purpose of being reburied in another more respectable place followed by a party ceremony (Hutapea, 2015). This practice has been going on since pre-Christian times in the context of the Toba Batak animistic beliefs and continues to be passed down to this day.

When Christianity entered the Batak Land, the Mangongkal Holi ceremony was not immediately abolished, but underwent various adjustments. The Church in many contexts takes on a supervisory role and provides a new framework for its implementation (Hutagaol & Prayitno, 2020). Nevertheless, the presence in this customary practice under the supervision of the church raises a not simple theological question: does the supervision of the church guarantee that the entire meaning and practice of Mangongkal Holi is in harmony with the Christian faith? Are there still elements that have the potential to conflict with Bible authority? Or is the church developing a new theological formulation that is contextual, but not yet fully criticized reflectively?

These questions demand a serious theological study of cultural theology. The Bible, especially in the creation story, declares that everything God created is "indeed very good" (Gen. 1:31). Man was placed in the garden of Eden as the image of God (*imago Dei*) and was called to be God's co-workers in maintaining the order of creation. In this perspective, culture can be understood as a cosmic space designed by God, where humans carry out the divine mandate in managing life in an orderly and meaningful manner (Walton, 2015).

However, this order is distorted when humans fall into sin. Sin not only affects man's relationship with God, but also affects the entire order of life, including culture. Walton calls this condition disorder, which is the destruction of divine order due to man making himself the center of reality, replacing God (Walton, 2015). In line with that, Plantinga (2000) understands sin as an act that undermines shalom—the wholeness, harmony, and peaceful prosperity of creation.

In this condition of sinfulness, culture—even if it comes from Allah's mandate—is not immune to pollution. Kobong (1997) emphasized that humans tend to develop a rebellious lifestyle, no longer as a partner of God, but as the center of order. As a result, cultural practices, including customs, need to be constantly preserved and critically evaluated in the light of God's word.

In the study of intercultural theology, the thinking of Stephen B. Bevans provides a conceptual framework that is essential for understanding the relationship between the gospel and culture. Bevans asserts that theology is never born in a cultural vacuum. Each theological reflection is always the result of a dynamic interaction between the gospel, cultural contexts, human experience, and church traditions (Bevans, 2002). Thus, the context is not just the background of the proclamation of faith, but a constitutive element in the theological process itself.

However, Bevans insists that context must always be placed in a critical dialogue with the Gospel. The gospel should not be completely subjugated to culture, but it should also not be imposed *a-historically* (not historically connected) and *a-cultural* (not culturally connected). The relationship between the gospel and culture, according to Bevans, is dialectical: the gospel is rooted in culture while at the same time challenging, measuring, and transforming it (Bevans, 2002).

It is within this framework that cultural practices such as the Mangongkal Holi ceremony cannot be simply judged as "good" or "bad", "Christian" or "unchristian". On the contrary, the practice needs to be understood first in its symbolic meaning, social function, and religious horizon in the Toba Batak community. This approach is in line with what Bevans calls the anthropological model. This model relies on an approach that departs from an appreciation of the noble values that have lived in a culture. But this approach must be complemented by a counter-cultural model, namely the courage of the gospel to defeat cultural elements that are not in harmony with God's love, justice, and sovereignty (Bevans, 2002).

Furthermore, Bevans reminds that the church's failure to engage critically with culture often results in two extremes: a total rejection of local culture or an

uncritical acceptance that ends in syncretism. In the context of Mangongkal Holi, these two extremes are equally problematic. Total rejection has the potential to break the cultural identity of the Toba Batak people, while acceptance without theological reflection can negate the biblical authority and the core thrust of the Christian faith.

Departing from this framework, the Mangongkal Holi ceremony needs to be studied interculturally and theologically, not to negate the Toba Batak culture, but to assess, interpret, and transform it to be in harmony with the Christian faith and the mission of God. This is where the role of Christian Religious Education (PAK) becomes strategic, especially in developing a contextual and critical pedagogical approach, which is able to bridge the Christian faith with the reality of local culture.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

The Mangongkal Holi tradition has long been a concern in anthropological studies as a rite of death that is full of symbolic, social and religious meanings. Research by Silalahi et.al (2019) shows that Mangongkal Holi contains local wisdom values rooted in Toba Batak culture in the form of: gratitude, respect, responsibility, mutual cooperation, consensus in dialogue, and prestige/pride. Hutapea (2015) views Mangongkal Holi as a rite of death to strengthen clan identity, maintain genealogical balance, and strengthen the social status of the family in the Toba Batak community. This ceremony is not just an act of bone removal, but a symbol of collective memory reconstruction and social legitimacy. Meanwhile, Sari et.al (2022) emphasized that Mangongkal Holi has a strong integrative function because it involves collective participation across generations, economic status, and even across religions. This perspective emphasizes that the rite acts as a mechanism of social *cohesion* that supports the mechanical solidarity of the Batak Toba community.

Hutagaol and Prayitno (2020) revealed that Mangongkal Holi underwent a significant transformation after the entry of Christianity, especially in the context of the HKBP Church. This ritual was not abandoned but underwent a theological reinterpretation so that it was no longer understood as a worship of the spirit, but as a ritual of historical and cultural respect for the ancestors. These findings show the dynamics of negotiation between the Christian faith and local culture. Recent research by Sihombing et.al (2025) expands the perspective by analyzing Mangongkal Holi as a cultural symbol that is in harmony with the values of Pancasila, especially in the aspects of humanity, unity, and social solidarity.

Schreiner (1994) is one of the most influential theologians in discussing the relationship between the traditional Batak Toba and the Gospel. He emphasized that Batak customs are not just a social system, but also a religious system that regulates human relations with the spirit world and life after death. Therefore, the encounter between the Gospel and customs is never neutral, but always confrontational and dialogical.

In a contextual framework, Stephen B. Bevans (2002) states that the Christian faith is always present and lived in a particular cultural context.

Through models of *contextual theology*, Bevans emphasizes that the cultural context is not just an object of mission, but a theological locus in which God reveals Himself. However, he also emphasized the need for a critical attitude so that the Gospel is not reduced to mere cultural legitimacy. Kobong (1997) also developed a contextual theological approach by asserting that the Christian faith is not present in the cultural void. However, Kobong reminded that human culture has been polluted by sin, so the process of inculturating faith must be accompanied by a critical attitude.

The above view is also in line with H. Richard Niebuhr (1951) in *Christ and Culture*, who describes the typology of the relationship between faith and culture as a dialectical spectrum - from Christ in opposition to culture to Christ transforming culture. This typology is widely used in the study of contextual theology, including in reading Christian traditional practices in Indonesia. Carson (2008) asserts that the relationship between Christ and culture has always been in a dynamic tension between the transcultural truth of God and the temporal cultural practice. This perspective is relevant to reading Mangongkal Holi as a practice that can not only be seen only on the basis of its outward appearance, but must be tested on the basis of its theological orientation.

Plantiga (2000) and Walton (2015) deepen this discourse by placing sin not only as an individual moral violation, but as a structural distortion of God's purpose in culture. Plantinga (2000) views sin as a disorder of *the divinity census* that causes humans to lose their sensitivity to God and replace it with false beliefs that are subjectively justified. This perspective is particularly relevant to reading religious cultural practices that are formally "Christianized" but still substantially retain a non-Theocentric and Christ-centric orientation.

Walton (2015) emphasized that sin presents *disorder*, which is cosmic disorder when humans position themselves as the center of reality. In the context of cultural rituals, sin is not always present in the form of explicit idolatry, but often appears in the form of self-centeredness, the search for social legitimacy, and economic glorification.

Brueggemann (1997) enriches this discourse by asserting that biblical texts always function as *testimonies* and *counter-testimonies* that test the praxis of faith in concrete contexts. That is why the use of biblical texts to legitimize cultural practices - including the command to respect parents - must always be tested hermeneutically and ethically.

The results of theological studies that directly mention Mangongkal Holi are still limited. Using the theory of Husk and Kernel, Gultom and Marbun (2024) stated that the church is invited to play an important role in providing a new understanding that cultural traditions or rituals (including Mangongkal Holi) are not just cultural heritage but as part of the spiritual journey of the faithful. By distinguishing between core values (kernels) and outward forms of rituals (husk), the study confirms that values such as respect for parents, gratitude, and social solidarity can be maintained without sacrificing the core of the Christian faith. In this case, the church needs to help its congregation to recognize the spiritual experience contained in each stage of the Mangongkal Holi procession

so that they not only celebrate the Mangongkal Holi culture but also feel the presence of God in each of the ceremonial *tahapa tahapa*

Sinaga et.al (2023) uses Durkheim's perspective to explain that the rituals of the Mangongkal Holi tradition form an awareness of social solidarity and appreciation for ancestral history and heritage through *the collective effervescence* of the Toba Batak people. However, these two studies have not connected theological and pedagogical studies in an integrative way.

Based on the literature review above, it is illustrated that there have been several studies on Mangokal Holi with anthropological and sociological approaches, including with the approach of national values. Meanwhile, in relation to the Mangongkal Holi tradition and theological studies are still limited, let alone studies that explicitly relate it to the pedagogy of faith in Christian Religious Education.

Therefore, this article wishes to offer a theological-pedagogical study of the rituals of the Mangongkal Holi tradition and formulate implications for contextual Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of sin theology and cultural theology in reading the practice of Mangongkal Holi. And with a pedagogical-theological approach, this study will link the cultural practice of Mangongkal Holi with the formation of faith and character in the perspective of contextual Christian Religious Education. Therefore, this article does not just explain what Mangongkal Holi is, but how and why it is read critically in the light of the Christian faith and the pedagogy of Christian Religious Education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In compiling this article, the method used is a qualitative approach with a literature review design. In his book "Qualitative Research Methodology", Moleong (2017, p. 17) stated that literature studies are effective in creating a complete understanding of complex social and cultural phenomena. For this reason, in this literature study, the author will collect books and other literature such as journals and articles that explain the complex relationship between the gospel and culture, especially the culture of the Toba Batak tribe, and of course its implications for PAK.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Meaning and Function of Traditional Ceremonies and Mangongkal Holi***

The Toba Batak people are known to have a strong attachment to customs as a value system that governs social, religious, and genealogical life. Obedience to customs not only governs human life today, but also includes an understanding of life after death. One of the tangible forms of obedience is the implementation of the Mangongkal Holi traditional ceremony, which is specifically expected to be carried out by economically established families or descendants.

Since ancient times, the ancestors of the Toba Batak emphasized the importance of maintaining the clarity of the lineage and the survival of the ancestral land (*bona pasogit*). Therefore, each clan is expected to have a representative monument and cemetery complex in the land of origin, where ancestral bones are collected and genealogy is recorded. This practice serves as a

symbol of respect for ancestors as well as a marker of the social status of a clan. It is within this framework that Mangongkal Holi is understood as a traditional rite that realizes the genealogical respect and collective identity of the Toba Batak (Supsiloi & Sinaga, 2016).

The symbolic meaning of this ceremony is reflected in the traditional teachings that have been passed down from generation to generation, as quoted by Schreiner (1994, p. 193): "*Binahen saring-saring ni amanta on tu tambak na guminjang (tambak na tumimbo). Stone ginjang (timbo) ma panggabean, tu ginjang (timbo) ma parhorasan. Tumpahan ni ompunta Martua Debata, Dohot tumpahon ni tondi ni raja di loloan*, which emphasizes that the placement of ancestral bones in higher places is expected to bring prosperity, prosperity, and blessings to posterity. This phrase shows that Mangongkal Holi not only has a socio-cultural dimension, but also a strong religious dimension.

As a major rite, Mangongkal Holi is a complex ceremony and involves the involvement of many parties. The procession requires labor, time, and great costs, and involves social interaction across generations and economic statuses (Sari et al., 2022). Although the nuclear family that organizes the ceremony is often economically established, the participation of a large family of one clan remains a must. Thus, Mangongkal Holi serves as a means of unifying that affirms communal solidarity among all descendants, both rich and poor.

The implementation of this ceremony is based on the principle of *dalihan na tolu* (a three-legged furnace) which involves *hula-hula* (the female giver), *dongan tubu* (the clan sister), and *boru* (the female recipient) (Hutagaol & Prayitno, 2020). In addition, the involvement of traditional elders, local governments, and churches shows that Mangongkal Holi has a strategic position in the Batak Toba social order. Through a mature process of deliberation and division of roles, this ceremony is carried out as a shared responsibility.

From a sociological perspective, Mangongkal Holi reflects what Durkheim calls mechanical solidarity, which is a form of solidarity inherited from the commonality of values, beliefs, and genealogical ties. Through cooperation and mutual cooperation based on *dalihan na tolu*, this ceremony serves to maintain social cohesion and strengthen the kinship ties of the Toba Batak (Viorenza & Lumban, 2024).

The study of Silalahi et.al (2019) identified nine main values contained in the Mangongkal Holi tradition, namely: (1) gratitude, (2) respect, (3) humility, (4) blessings, (5) responsibility, (6) cooperation, (7) prayer, (8) dialogue, and (9) prestige or appreciation. These nine values show that Mangongkal Holi is a rite that is loaded with ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions, so that it has a significant influence on the formation of the identity and collective consciousness of the Toba Batak community.

### ***Tracing the Complicated Relationship of Christian Faith in the Mangongkal Holi Traditional Ceremony***

The relationship between the gospel and culture is a classic discourse in Christian theology that always presents a tension between acceptance and

criticism. Since the beginning of the history of the church, the encounter of the Christian faith with the local cultural context has never taken place neutrally, but has always been colored by a process of inculturation, rejection, and transformation. In the Indonesian context, including in the Batak Land, this relationship often stops at the dichotomy between faith that is considered "pure" and culture that is considered "polluted", or conversely the acceptance of culture without adequate theological reflection.

Stephen B. Bevans (2002) asserts that Christian theology was never born in a cultural vacuum. Any theological reflection is always contextual because it is influenced by culture, social experience, and historical reality. Nevertheless, Bevans also reminds that the contextualization of faith must be done critically so as not to get caught up in the relativism or syncretism that is the core impulse of the Gospel.

In the context of Toba Batak, Mangongkal Holi is one of the main loci of encounter between the Christian faith and local culture. Various studies have shown that Christianity, particularly through the HKBP Church, has adapted to this rite by eliminating elements of animism and incorporating ecclesiastical regulation (Hutagaol & Prayitno, 2020). The rules for the implementation of Mangongkal Holi are now regulated in the Ruhut Parmahanion dohot Paminsangon (RPP) HKBP, which emphasizes that this rite is understood as a form of respect for ancestors, not as a worship of spirits (Schreiner, 1994; Viorenza & Lumban, 2024).

However, structural and liturgical adjustments do not necessarily eliminate deeper theological problems. One of the crucial questions that needs to be wrestled with is how Toba's Batak Christians establish a theologically correct relationship with their dead. On the one hand, the Toba Batak custom emphasizes the desire for a relationship with ancestors; On the other hand, the Christian faith demands the purification of the orientation of the relationship so as not to go beyond the limits of biblical respect (Schreiner, 1994).

The typology of *Christ and Culture* by H. Richard Niebuhr (1951) helps to read this dynamic. The practice of Mangongkal Holi reflects the combination of the model of Christ above Culture and Christ as the transformer of Culture. The Church does not reject customs totally, but seeks to hide them under the authority of Christ. However, as Carson (2008) warns, this integrative approach still maintains tension because human culture is always in a state of sinfulness and requires constant correction by God's Word.

In the perspective of sin theology, Plantinga (2000) emphasizes that sin undermines the human sense of divinity, so that religious practices can be distorted, including in the form of seeking blessings, social legitimacy, and economic prestige packaged in religious symbols. Walton (2015) added that sin creates cosmic disorders when man places himself at the center of reality. In the context of Mangongkal Holi, this distortion can arise when rituals emphasize social status and collective pride rather than being oriented towards God.

This condition is in line with Walter Brueggemann's (1997) warning that the biblical text is never neutral and always serves as both a testimony and a counter-witness. The use of texts such as Exodus 20:12 to justify customary practices must

be critically tested so that God's Word is not reduced to symbolic legitimacy for human ambition.

Bevans (2002) classifies several contextual theological models, including *the translation model*, *the anthropological model*, and *the praxis model*. In the context of *Mangongkal Holi*, an anthropological approach that overemphasizes cultural acceptance risks obscuring the critical dimension of the Gospel. Therefore, a critical contextual theological approach is needed that integrates the anthropological and normative elements of the Bible in a balanced manner.

Christopher J.H. Wright (2006) affirms that the Bible must be read within the framework of *missio Dei*, where God actively confronts all forms of idols, including cultural idols. In this light, *Mangongkal Holi* should not be understood solely as a neutral ancestral tradition, but rather as a cultural practice that must be constantly renewed by the Gospel.

### ***Affirmation of Biblical Authority and the Transformation of the Meaning of Mangongkal Holi in the Framework of Christian Religious Education***

The relationship between the Christian faith and Holi cannot be reduced to a dichotomy of faith versus culture. *Mangongkal Holi* is an expression of local wisdom that is full of social and symbolic value, but still requires critical theological assessment. The affirmation of biblical authority in this context does not aim to eliminate culture, but rather to place culture under the norms of God's Word that are transcultural and normative (Carson, 2008).

Bevans' (2002) thinking helps to place *Mangongkal Holi* as a theological locus, but not as the final authority. The gospel functions to measure, measure, and transform cultural meanings to remain theocentric oriented. In the light of sin theology, distortions of ritual meaning can appear in subtle forms, such as the glorification of prestige and social competition, although the element of spirit invocation has been formally eliminated.

One of the biblical texts used as the basis for the traditional *ceremony of mangokal holi* is God's Word to honor fathers and mothers so that the elderly and the condition of the offspring are good and prosperous (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:2-3). It is on this order that the tradition of honoring ancestors, including *the mangokal holi* ceremony, stands. It is in this context that Burggeman's thought becomes important to truly put the word of God to the test of the correct context and motivation in the Toba Batak culture. In addition, testing this text is also necessary to avoid the text of God's Word only being used as a basis for carrying out *the traditional mangokal holi* ceremony, even though the real motivation is to show one's economic prowess in the place of origin of his ancestors. Even though in old age the fathers (or their ancestors) there was no sincere attention for a myriad of reasons.

Brueggemann's (1997) hermeneutic approach emphasizes that biblical texts always serve as both a testimony and a counter-testimony. Therefore, the text of the Bible's use to legitimize *Mangongkal Holi*—for example, the command to respect parents—must always be accompanied by a critical evaluation so that God's Word is not reduced to symbolic legitimacy for human interests.

In the framework of *Missio Dei*, Wright (2006) reminds that God always confronts idols in all their forms, including cultural idols. Therefore, the claim of the purification of Mangongkal Holi by Christianity needs to be continuously tested so that the custom is not absolutely exceeded obedience to Christ.

Here Christian Religious Education plays a very strategic role, not only as a medium of doctrinal transfer, but as a space for critical, reflective, and transformative faith formation.

### ***Pedagogical Implications for Christian Religious Education (PAK)***

The complexity of the relationship between Christian faith and Mangongkal Holi shows that contextual theology is an ongoing reflective process. Christian Religious Education plays a strategic role in equipping the faithful with the theological ability to critically and responsibly assess and transform cultural practices (Groome, 1980; Pazmiño, 2008).

Based on the above theological analysis, there are several important pedagogical meanings for the development of contextual Christian Religious Education in the practice of Mangongkal Holi:

### ***Integration of Sin Theology and Cultural Theology in the PAK Curriculum***

PAK needs to integrate an understanding of sin not only as an individual moral transgression, but as a structural and cultural distortion (Plantinga, 2000; Walton, 2015). Thus, students are able to recognize that cultural practices that seem "good" and "religious" still have the potential for deviation if they are not oriented to God.

### ***Contextual-Critical Pedagogical Approach***

PAK needs to develop a pedagogical approach that is dialogical and reflective. Mangongkal Holi can be used as a contextual case study that encourages students to:

- a. appreciate cultural values,
- b. criticizing its theological motivation and meaning,
- c. and establish a responsible attitude of faith.

This approach distances the PAK from indoctrination and leads to the formation of mature faith.

### ***PAK as a Means of Cultural Praxis Transformation***

The ultimate goal of PAK is not the rejection of Mangongkal Holi, but the transformation of its meaning and practice. Through faith education, Mangongkal Holi can be directed to:

- a. an expression of gratitude to Allah for the family history,
- b. A Cross-Generational Faith Learning.
- c. and cultural practices that affirm that God, not customs, is the center of life.

### ***Strengthening the Missiological Dimension of PAK***

In the perspective of *Missio Dei*, PAK is called to equip students to be able to become Witnesses of Christ in the midst of their own culture (Wright, 2006). Mangongkal Holi, in this case, is not only an internal tradition of the Toba Batak

community, but also a contextual, ethical, and prophetic witness space for Christian faith.

Based on this study, Mangongkal Holi can be understood as a concrete faith learning arena, where the gospel is tested and lived in a real cultural context. Therefore, PAK needs to integrate sin theology and cultural theology in the curriculum, develop a dialogical-critical pedagogical approach, and direct the transformation of the meaning of Mangongkal Holi so that it becomes an expression of gratitude to Allah, a means of learning faith across generations, and cultural practices that affirm God as the center of life.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study confirms that the Mangongkal Holi traditional ceremony is a Toba Batak cultural practice that has a deep social, genealogical, and symbolic meaning, as well as being a complex meeting space between the Christian faith and local culture. Mangongkal Holi cannot be understood solely as a neutral tradition, but as a cultural practice that lives in the dynamics of faith, history, and social relations of the Toba Batak people. Therefore, the relationship between the Christian faith and Mangongkal Holi cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy between faith and culture, acceptance or rejection.

Through an approach to intercultural theology and critical contextual theology, particularly drawing on the thinking of Stephen B. Bevans, H. Richard Niebuhr, as well as the reflections on the theology of sin from Plantinga and Walton, this study shows that the contextualization of faith always demands a dialectical attitude: an appreciation of cultural values as well as the prophetic courage to test and transform them in the light of biblical authority.

The affirmation of biblical authority over the practice of Mangongkal Holi is only theologically possible if the Bible is understood as a critical norm that tests culture without negating it. Christian Religious Education, in this case, has a strategic role to develop a contextual-critical pedagogical approach that transforms the meaning and praxis of Mangongkal Holi to be in harmony with the Christian faith and the mission of God.

This study also confirms that the tension between faith and culture is not a threat, but rather a fertile pedagogical and theological space for the formation of contextual Christian faith in Indonesia.

## **FURTHER STUDY**

Future research is strongly encouraged to further explore the practice of *Mangongkal Holi* within Toba Batak culture by adopting broader and more in-depth interdisciplinary approaches that integrate anthropology, sociology, contextual theology, and Christian religious education. Such studies may examine more closely how traditional beliefs about sin, ancestral veneration, and ritual symbolism interact with Christian doctrines of salvation, forgiveness, and resurrection. In addition, longitudinal and comparative studies across different Batak subcultures or other Indonesian ethnic communities would be valuable to identify similarities and differences in how local traditions are negotiated within Christian contexts. Future researchers may also consider employing qualitative methods such as ethnography, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation involving church leaders, educators, and community elders to better understand the dynamic process of cultural reinterpretation and gospel transformation within contemporary Christian life.

Furthermore, future studies could focus on the pedagogical implications of *Mangongkal Holi* in Christian Religious Education, particularly in shaping students' theological understanding, moral formation, and cultural identity. Investigating how this tradition is addressed in religious education curricula, catechesis, and church-based learning programs would provide practical insights for educators in contextualizing biblical teachings without compromising core Christian values. Research that examines the perceptions of younger generations, especially Christian youth and students, would also be essential to understand how cultural traditions influence faith development in a modern and globalized society. Such studies would contribute significantly to the development of culturally sensitive yet theologically grounded models of Christian education in multicultural settings.

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