



Contextual Reconciliation of the *Toba Batak* Based on the Synthesis of the *Mangalahat Horbo* Tradition of the *Toba Batak* in North Sumatera in Indonesia and the Abrogation of the Torah Law in Ephesians 2:15

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Abstract

This research begins with the highest values of the Toba Batak ethnic group in North Sumatera in Indonesia, which reflect the principle of family or kinship. A study of six hundred Toba Batak Umpasa (common sayings) reveals that they are deeply embedded in a cultural structure that emphasizes respect for one another. However, in reality, the Toba Batak people uphold the principle of Mardomu at tano rara, meaning there can be no peace until someone dies for not forgiving. This research aims to establish a dialogue between the mangalahat horbo tradition and the abrogation of the Torah in Ephesians 2:15 using grammatical and syntactic analysis. The results of the analysis will be synthesized using Stevan Bevans' approach. Thus, this paper concluded that the mangalahat horbo tradition and the abrogation of the Torah in Ephesians 2:15 not only restore damaged relationships but also result in a boundless reformation of relations among the Toba Batak ethnic group in North Sumatera, Indonesia.

Keywords: Reconciliation; Mardomu at Tano Rara; Toba Batak; Mangalahat Horbo; North Sumatera; Indonesia; Ephesians 2:15

Introduction

Indonesia, a country with ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, is a strong force in upholding the values of kinship and brotherhood. Of the many ethnic groups in Indonesia, the Toba Batak in North Sumatera is one that upholds strong family values. This is reflected in their traditional practices, which adhere to a patrilineal kinship system, placing descent through the male line. For the Toba Batak, men are the successors of the clan, thus understanding social relationships within the Batak customary structure. This inherent relational structure demonstrates the high level of kinship values within the Toba Batak ethnic group, evident in the dalihan na tolu (the highest socio-cultural structure) understood as somba marhula-hula, manat mardongan badan, and elek marboru. This demonstrates the interconnectedness of one another and demonstrates their identity, which is synonymous with harmony, mutual respect, appreciation, and a distance from conflict. Harahap and Siahaan (1987) examined 600 Toba Batak Umpasa and produced 109 values grouped into nine sections. These include the value of kinship, which encompasses primordial relationships

within a tribe, blood relations, and harmony with other tribes. The three elements of dalihan na tolu, whose relationships are formed through marriage, are also referred to as kinship. Second, religious values emphasize the relationship between humans and the Creator. Third, the value of *Hagabeon*, which emphasizes the importance of having many descendants. Fourth, the value of *hangasapon*, which emphasizes nobility or authority. Fifth, the value of *Hamoraon*, which encourages the Toba Batak people to possess considerable wealth. Sixth, the value of *hamajuon*, which encourages seeking knowledge in distant places.

The six values of Toba Batak Umpasa (Harahap and Siahaan, 1987).

No.	Value	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Kinship</i>	34,33
2.	<i>Religious</i>	17,25
3.	<i>Hagabeon</i>	12,32
4.	<i>Hasangapon</i>	3,70
5.	<i>Hamoraon</i>	4,58
6.	Progress	6,87

However, in reality, in the social and kinship practices of the Toba Batak people, facts are often encountered that can actually cause division and undermine the established order of brotherhood. One crucial phenomenon that often triggers serious problems in Toba Batak kinship is the principle of *mardomu at tano rara*. Literally, this phrase refers to "meeting in red soil" or "meeting at the grave," referring to a violent conflict between two parties that sets aside hostility and refuses to reconcile until death. Furthermore, this conflict not only builds lifelong enmity but also results in fracturing relationships between generations. In other words, *mardomu at tano rara* essentially creates a "wall of separation" that hinders true peace and allows conflict to drag on until death. This situation not only erodes the cherished values of kinship but can also impact the spiritual and social life of the Toba Batak Christian community in North Sumatra in Indonesia. Furthermore, the difficulty in forgiving is also due to the Toba Batak people's high self-esteem, making it extremely difficult to achieve consensus. This characteristic, in sociology and anthropology, is often associated with a culture of honor and shame. In such cultures, reputation and social standing are highly valued, and threats to self-esteem can be a significant barrier to conflict resolution, even hindering reconciliation efforts such as forgiveness.

Furthermore, *mardomu at tano rara* is often triggered by three main factors: social structure, *dalihan na tolu*, and clan relations, but social relations are the most dominant of the two. Therefore, reconciliation in this context is difficult to achieve due to hatred within the Toba Batak community and the inability to reach a consensus. Thus, it can be said that the cultural values that shape the Toba Batak civilization are still vulnerable to various conflicts.

In this context, the need for contextual reconciliation is necessary without shifting cultural values. Meanwhile, in the perspective of Bevans (2002) explained the importance of articulating Christian faith within a local cultural framework so that the Gospel's teachings can be relevant and transformative within the community. This approach allows for dialogue between local traditions and biblical teachings to produce theological understanding that can address the specific challenges of a given cultural context. Despite being vulnerable to various conflicts, the Toba Batak also have a tradition that can strengthen social ties between one another, known as *mangalahat horbo*. This ritual is believed to be a space for reconciliation in resolving conflicts both communally and personally. This tradition has deep symbolic meaning, including as a symbol of redemption, purification, and community unification. Siregar (2021) in his research on the controversy over the *mangalahat horbo* tradition, stated that the *mangalahat horbo* tradition has the intention and purpose of reviving ancestral traditions and uniting the Batak tribe, called "*horbo bius*." However, places such a tradition as maintaining the unity of the Toba Batak people so that they are not easily divided by colonialism. Meanwhile, Edi Sihombing (2020) offers, the purpose of the *mangalahat horbo* tradition, in addition to its

relationship with Batak traditional ceremonies, is also as an expression of gratitude to mula jadi na bolon, a tradition that is believed in and maintained, but only satisfies the traditional aspect, and does not touch on the theological aspect. Apart from that, Simanjuntak (2005) in his research suggests that the mangalahat horbo tradition is a ceremony of self-purification and atonement for sins in the Toba Batak culture. These studies above showed that the tradition of mangalahat horbo is often carried out in social and traditional contexts that tend to emphasize social values in general, especially local wisdom, but has not been discussed theologically. Although mangalahat horbo has long been part of cultural practice, its theological potential to become a bridge for deeper reconciliation, especially in dealing with the principle of mardomu at tano rara, has not been fully explored comprehensively within a Christian theological framework. Thus, this needs to be discussed so that cultural values are not only seen as human practices, but also make them a means to know God.

Theologically, exploring the mangalahat horbo is crucial because it allows the Gospel of Christ to be at home in the Toba Batak, making the message of faith more relevant and transformative for local listeners. If this is ignored, it could potentially foster a persistent sense of unease between faith and cultural identity. Ultimately, religion's transformative power in addressing profound social issues like mardomu at tano rara will be diminished. On the other hand, Ephesians 2:15 offers a strong theological foundation for Christ's abolition of the Torah with all its commandments and ordinances. This verse radically portrays Christ as the one who breaks down the "wall of separation" between Jews and Gentiles, creating "one new man" living in peace and unity. This biblical teaching provides a transformative perspective on how barriers can be overcome and new unity built through Christ's sacrifice. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the potential for contextual reconciliation among Toba Batak Christians by synthesizing the meaning of sacrifice in the mangalahat horbo tradition and Ephesians 2:15 regarding the abolition of the law. Through this analysis, this research demonstrates the potential for formulating a contextual theological model that not only addresses the negative impacts of mardomu at tano rara but also strengthens local traditions with Gospel values to achieve a comprehensive and transformative peace within Toba Batak society.

Research Method

This paper will employ a qualitative method, utilizing various supporting literature. In this method, the authors will first briefly explain the mangalahat horbo tradition. Next, both will exegete the text of Ephesians 2:15 based on grammatical and syntactic analysis. The results of this exegesis will be synthesized with the mangalahat horbo tradition based on Stevan Bevans' approach (Bevans, 2002), where both texts will be dialogued to produce a solution offering in realizing a theology of reconciliation without walls: Christ as the Divine Horbo.

The Mangalahat Horbo Tradition as a Symbol of Sacrifice and Conflict Resolution in the Toba Batak Tradition

In Toba Batak tradition, the term mangalahat horbo means slaughtering a buffalo. This tradition was introduced and practiced by the Toba Batak people long before the Dutch colonial era. This tradition, like mangalahat horbo bius, is a regional tradition, strengthening community ties. When this activity persists, the community remains united and united, making it difficult for the Dutch to colonize. Besides its unifying nature, the mangalahat horbo tradition is also believed to have religious significance. Simanjuntak (2005) explained that this ritual aims to provide the best offerings and express gratitude to God, known as Debata Mula Jadi Na Bolon. It is believed to bring about change and also serves as a ritual to transform the profane into the sacred.

Among the Toba Batak people, this ritual is typically performed when going down to the rice fields, during livestock breeding, and during disasters. For example, prolonged drought, cholera, smallpox, and other calamities are conveyed through a prayer for safety from undesirable events. Furthermore, this ritual is

also used as a social initiation and as a forum for resolving social conflicts among members of the Toba Batak ethnic group.

According to Siregar (2021), the mangalahat horbo ritual can influence communal life within social relationships among Toba Batak. First, this activity is carried out to prepare things needed before the event takes place. For example, the saur matua ceremony, mariaraja, marhata sinamot, conflict resolution, etc. This aims to unite opinions in deliberations so that something is hoped for, and also as a form of support for the family. That way, everyone is required to be responsible and present to take part in Pasada Tahi. Second, this tradition can also be applied during ulaon mompo (putting the body into the coffin). Usually in this event, a buffalo is slaughtered and only for those who died saur matua, which means there are no more dependents because all of their descendants have married. This event involves all parties including suhut, dongan badan, hula-hula, tulang, bona tulang, dongan sahuta. This event is witnessed by the hula-hula because they will pray for the bereaved family to Debata Mula Jadi Na Bolon. Third, for the Batak people, the mangalahat horbo ritual can also be applied during mariaraja (deliberation). This activity also involves all elements of dalihan na tolu, namely, dongan badan, hula-hula, boru, dongan sahuta, which aims to organize the sequence of events so that all parties understand their positions and positions when the event is held on the appointed day. This means that everyone can express their opinions so that the event can be carried out well. Based on the description, although there are many more philosophical values of mangalahat horbo need to be explained, but in our opinion this brief description represents all the elements that are essentially the same. Thus, it is clear that the purpose and function of this ritual is to strive to create unity and peace among the Toba Batak ethnic group.

Results and Discussion

Christ's Death as a Transcending Atonement Ephesians 2:15

The law is no longer binding

In this passage, the Apostle Paul has a new perspective regarding the law. Based on the results of his exegetical study of the text of Ephesians 2:15a, he views the law as something that is not binding and powerless because of the death of Christ. This expression is simultaneously the peak of hope for Jews and Gentiles, and at the same time brings peace between them. This is stated by Paul in verse 11 by using the word "καταργήσας," which is an aorist active nominative plural participle. A past action that has been completed by the main verb in the word ἔστιν verse 14 refers to Christ. Thus, it can be translated He has made inactive and powerless.

In the first century AD, the word katargesas is found in several ancient literatures, for example, the collection of ancient Hellenistic writings, the writings of Euripides of Athens in 480 BC, the collection of Poimadres, and mystical writings of Egyptian origin. Some ancient sources that are described mean it as "looking inactive," referring to the condemnation of someone because of laziness. Meanwhile, in the Septuagint LXX, it is applied to people who are enslaved by certain circumstances that can destroy.

In Paul's letters, for example, Romans 7:2, the word is interpreted as inactivity in an activity, or completely ineffective. However, in Ephesians 2:15, the word refers to ἐντολῶν (commandment) and δόγμασιν (decision), elements of nomos. This means that the law, in its commandments and decisions, is no longer active and effective. So, in this passage, does Paul intend to undermine his belief system in the Torah? If so, it would certainly contradict Paul's statement regarding the holiness of the law. Please note, Paul was not new to the law of Moses. In his testimony in Galatians 1:14 "and in the Jewish religion I am far more advanced than many of my peers among my people, as someone who is very diligent in maintaining the customs of my ancestors." It seems that Paul in this case wants to describe himself as a Jew from the tribe of

Benjamin who really understands the values of the Torah. As a Pharisee, he not only understood, but practiced the teachings of the Old Testament down to the smallest details.

John R.W. Stott explains that the terms entolon and dogmasin in Ephesians 2:15 do not refer to the Ten Commandments, but rather to ceremonial laws and their provisions, such as circumcision, sacrifices, regulations regarding clean and unclean food, the Sabbath, and marriage. These are binding provisions, referring to the 613 laws interpreted by the Jewish rabbis. In this regard, Frank Thielman agrees that Paul meant by the commands and provisions, which cannot eradicate sin. He continued, that in the hands of humans, the law has become an instrument of hostility. This is what Christ abolished with His death, as Paul proclaimed in his letter to his audience in Ephesus.

This abolition is explained by Paul using the word *λύσας* (verse 14), which means that He has destroyed in His own flesh through His suffering and death. This sacrifice became a perfect act once and for all on the cross. Christ is in his position as the end of all forms of the law (Romans 7:4). He is the new law that has come (Galatians 3:25). Not only that, the death of Christ is the peak of understanding Christology and Soteriology, in the sense that all discussions regarding the law end with salvation in Christ, not through the Law (nomos), so that through His sacrifice once and for all makes the system no longer necessary.

The end of the law (nomos) in Christ through His death does not mean that Paul meant to say that the law was useless. Rather, what he meant was that the Jewish rabbinic interpretation of the Mosaic law, which formed a written oral regulation in the Mishnah, was abolished. For Paul, it was no longer useful and was completed at the cross. Thus, this power made the Jews and Greeks who heard the letter to the Ephesians who had been united in Him to live in a way that glorified God without relying on the rules of the law that caused them to be united. More than that, the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, which illustrates an understanding of the supreme demonstration of God's power, has occurred in Christ, whom God raised from the dead and exalted to a position of authority in the heavenly realm above all spiritual powers. Through His blood we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

Out of a Life of Sin

The death of Christ is the key point in the entire passage of the book of Ephesians, emphasizing Christological doctrine. Christ's death also served as the foundation for Paul's thinking in expressing the core of his teaching, in which His supremacy transcended all the ages his listeners experienced. This event became an undeniable definition of the existence of Jews and Gentiles in the past. Their former position was far removed from God, without Christ, and enslaved to sin (Ps. 2:1-10).

Being far away and separated from Christ, Paul calls them as *ἐν σαρκὶ* "according to the flesh" (Verse 11), which is contrasted with "*ἀκροβυστίᾳ*" (uncircumcision). Showing a clear distinction between Jews and Gentiles "in the flesh" according to the worldly view. In the Greek world such terms often referred to flesh, bones, blood, emotions, desires, which generally refer to the totality of the body. Meanwhile, in the Septuagint LXX the use of *sark* is found 145 times. While in the Hebrew Septuagint this word is understood not in the sense of circumcision, the sacrifice of the flesh, and characterizes the layers of spirit and flesh, but rather a case in Judaism. Meanwhile in the Hebrew Talmud and Midrash it is understood as the whole human being. The phrase "in the flesh" is also inseparable from the old system, although the Gospels provide more specific explanations in relation to God. For example, in Matthew 16:17, it is interpreted as "flesh and blood," signifying the human race's inability to know God. Furthermore, in Mark 14:38, it shows a visible dualism, linked to prayer, that God will make good the weakness of the flesh. Paul also connects this with humanity and the physical existence associated with Christ.

Therefore, the term "in the flesh" in Ephesians 2:15 is more accurately understood as humanity's sinful state or fallen state due to its rejection of the Messiah. In this sense, Paul reminds the Jews of their weakness, even though the promise had been given, and even the outward sign of circumcision was no longer

meaningful to him. More explicitly, the physical aspect of the old Jewish law no longer mattered because of Christ. Therefore, the reference to "in the flesh," in the distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision (*ἀκροβυστία*), emphasizes that their (Greek-Jewish) bodies proclaimed their idolatrous character.

Furthermore, they were also described as inexperienced, depicted as people walking and groping in darkness, dirty, and desperate, in a very poor and messy condition. Paul's purpose in this case was to emphasize the inferiority of all the rules of the law, believed to be guides to salvation, unable to lead them to a true knowledge of God. For Paul, Christ's death was a means of bringing people out of a life of sin and awakening their hope in Christ, and at the same time a reason to always give thanks to God.

The word Paul uses is *vuvī*, an adjective that describes their nature or existence after being in Christ *ἐν Χριστῷ*, which is an incorporative unity, meaning that the existence of Jews and Gentiles is a direct result of coming closer. They are brought closer to God through His blood, which is the means of forgiveness of sins that unites all things in the person of God who is present in history. The Messiah, through His sacrifice on the cross, God's purpose of salvation is accomplished, so that He is the opener of a new humanity, as well as the brotherhood of Jews and Gentiles in His body, namely the church. Therefore, the difference is no longer a provision that applies to Gentile Christians in Ephesus as people who are alienated from God's promise. So based on that, the moral requirements for entry into the Jewish community are no longer provisions or conditions such as circumcision or proselytization or even oral laws, but because of Christ. Through Him they are worthy to receive their share as people living under God's grace. Likewise, those who have believed no longer need to follow the old provisions. For Paul, within the body of Christ, the church, salvation is sufficient only through His death on the cross, not through the unsaving rules of the Torah. However, it is important to understand that the moral law still applies as a result of transformed lives, building their unity within the body of Christ, because He has become their example in their actions and in their relationships with one another.

Breaking Down the Wall of Separation Between Jews and Greeks

Christ's work in abolishing the Torah with all its commandments and regulations has produced a new understanding for both Gentiles and Gentiles. This action, manifested through His death, simultaneously eliminated the hostility between Jews and Gentiles, ultimately resulting in a new relationship in Christ through His reconciliation. This explanation is summarized using the coordinating conjunction *γάρ*, which functions as an explanatory concept of empathy, meaning "truly." The presence of the conjunction aims to explain or provide a conclusion to chapter 2:11-13, which explains the privileges received from Christ over both Jews and Gentiles who have been transformed.

As for the method used by Christ, Paul explains it with *καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας*, which can be translated "and He has abolished the middle wall of separation" which is the enmity. The past tense of the verb *λύσας* as a completed action, where the nominative case explains the work of Christ on the cross, by which he reconciled both parties by abolishing an enmity in His own flesh and no longer needing to exist between Jews and Gentiles.

In the writings of the church fathers Eratosthenes and Hesychius, the wall of separation is understood as a partition, which separated the courtyard for proselytes from the Jews in the temple with a width of 1.5 m, and there is a notice on limestone in Latin and Greek that states that all foreigners are forbidden to enter the Temple area. Anyone who violates this prohibition is ready to be sentenced to death as found in 1871 and 1935. This is less acceptable, because the context does not provide information that Paul meant that. But the meaning of the wall of separation in this passage refers to the "Torah" in the form of its regulations. This means; the Jews have a lifestyle and fellowship that makes them special, so that they are truly different from all other nations.

The Torah in the sense of a dividing wall that causes hostility between Jews and Gentiles can be used as an example of all the barriers that have damaged all fellowship between humans. The hostility that occurred has been destroyed by Christ with His blood and does not need to occur again between humans who are in Christ. His blood makes those who were once enemies, now reconciled through Him Αὐτὸς verse.14 which is a third person singular pronoun, which means the subject of the reconciliation comes through Christ not from the regulations of the Torah because He is peace for both.

The atonement accomplished by Christ is used by Paul in this context by using the word ή ειρήνη which is a predicate nominative that functions as a subject, can be interpreted as "peace". After Homer's time this word became a common term in astrological texts. The word peace broadly has two meanings, stating a suitable state, as well as peace and harmony. This word is also related to the government of Luke 14:320, also found in the writings of Testament of Judah 9:7, Anna Comnea, Alexias 1148 AD. However, in Aristotle's writings in IV BC, Mirabilia 119, 84a, it means peace and not a dangerous situation Luke 11:21.

The concept of "Eirene" in Greek refers not simply to a relationship between several people, but to a state of peace, or a time of peace. Its literal meaning is a period of rest from war, which is essentially more than just a state of peace. In classical Greek, this word is interpreted as an act of peacemaking. Meanwhile, in the context of the Old Testament, the word "peace" refers to "the grace of God." Essentially, the goodness and virtues associated with shalom refer to Israel's relationship with God. Meanwhile, in the Septuagint, it is interpreted as a state of rest. Until the New Testament, the word has a similar use among Jewish rabbis. It is used as a greeting and general statements understood as a state of well-being and safety. Later, it is used as a farewell greeting (Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50; James 2:16). Paul also frequently uses this word as an opening greeting in his letters, as well as as a closing greeting. But in this context, the word is used by Paul in relation to the state of being at peace with one another, and peace shared with you who are far and near. Such a statement explains a concept of life that Christ the person of peace is not merely rhetorical, but a reference to the incarnation and death of Christ who bore their sins in his body (1 Peter 2:24), to create both in himself one new man, in Christ where God works to produce the new man. Paul's purpose in this passage is to change their interpretation of the law, by not viewing the law as a fixed price for salvation, but rather as a guide to the Covenant. Thus, for Jews who have become Christians, they no longer need to keep the law because Christ has become their model in terms of exemplary behavior.

Synthesis of Mangalahat Horbo with Ephesians 2:15 Towards Contextual Reconciliation of the Toba Batak

Bevans (2002) emphasizes that when we recognize the importance of context for theology, we also acknowledge the absolute importance of context for the development of both scripture and tradition. This means the importance of context in shaping human thought patterns within the locus of theology. The synthesis model is a theological process that engages in genuine dialogue with others, allowing our existence and culture to dynamically emerge as we formulate theology. Although mangalahat horbo and Ephesians 2:15 differ in context, in dialogue with each context, new theological value can be discovered, as each theology can build its concepts on the ideas of another culture while maintaining its own values. This occurs because each theology has the ability to integrate ideas from other cultures while maintaining its own core principles, a crucial method for achieving significant reconciliation within the Toba Batak community.

In Ephesians 2:15, the Apostle Paul fundamentally describes how Christ's death abolished the Torah with its commandments and ordinances. This refers to the removal of the dividing wall that previously separated Jews and Gentiles, not only religiously but also socially. This divine act radically destroyed hostility and created one new humanity in Christ, a reality that transcends ethnic and legalistic boundaries. Analogous to the dividing wall torn down by Christ, the Toba Batak people face a similar barrier in the form of the principle of mardomu at tano rara. This principle, which requires conflict to continue until the death of one party, effectively creates perpetual hostility that undermines kinship and hinders true peace, allowing hatred to fester from one generation to the next. This proposed synthesis emphasizes that Christ's sacrifice,

which destroyed the theological-historical dividing wall, can serve as a powerful paradigm for breaking down the wall of mardomu at tano rara in the Toba Batak cultural context.

The tradition of mangalahat horbo, with its symbolic meaning as a purifying sacrifice and community unification, inherently holds the potential for reconciliation to restore social relations between people. In this case, buffalo blood becomes a symbol of conflict resolution. This ritual has long served as a means of building social unity, carried out by traditional communities, emphasizing only the socio-cultural, and symbolic aspects. Therefore, if viewed solely as a cultural ritual without transformation by the Gospel, it can lose its predictive power in addressing deep-rooted conflicts, as evidenced by the continued practice of mardomu at tano rara. Through the lens of Ephesians 2:15, mangalahat horbo is no longer understood simply as a practice for building social unity; it is elevated and enriched as an anticipation, or even a preliminary reflection, of Christ's sacrifice as a typology of the divine horbo, who paid the ultimate price for true reconciliation. Christ's sacrifice on the cross completes and transforms the meaning of sacrifice in mangalahat horbo, elevating it from a traditional ritual to a theological-social paradigm for profound and sincere restoration of relationships.

This synthesis posits that Ephesians 2:15 with mangalahat horbo can be understood not merely as a traditional ritual, but as a local typology of Christ's work, interpreted in two elements: first, the buffalo's blood symbolizes humanity's longing for true peace, which is only fulfilled in the blood of Christ. Second, Christ's abolition of the law can be understood as the abolition of all forms of social boundaries, including ethnic boundaries, customs, or separating structures. Third, Christ becomes the contextual center, where He is not merely a model, but the power that enables the Toba Batak community to change their practice of reconciliation. Thus, Christ becomes the divine buffalo, the divine sacrifice that once and for all restores the entire human social order.

The abolition of the Torah (Ephesians 2:15) and the mangalahat horbo ritual resulted in a restoration of social relations that went beyond merely resolving conflicts, to a genuine reformation of relationships. Christ's death not only resulted in the restitution of sin, but also directly created a new, unified humanity, eradicating all differences and dividing walls. This transformation of relations, in which there were no longer any Jews or Greeks, thus encouraged the Toba Batak people to view mangalahat horbo not merely as a means of resolving momentary conflicts. Rather, this ritual became a path to the restoration of relationships that united all differences based on Christ's love and forgiveness, forming a new community free from the shackles of mardomu at tano rara. This was the restoration of the bonds of brotherhood and the dignity of a community that had previously been fractured.

Through Jesus, the meaning of mangalahat horbo deepens, and the principle of mardomu at tano rara can be eradicated by the power of forgiveness and unity He offers. It is Christ who makes possible the reformation of relations among the Toba Batak ethnic group. Salvation and reconciliation in Christ offer a radical way out of the cycle of conflict, inviting every Batak person to experience the love of Christ, who willingly bore the cross and erased the barriers of separation to build a new togetherness. Therefore, the contextual reconciliation of the Toba Batak based on the mangalahat horbo and the death of Christ is not merely symbolic, but a transformative force that repairs fractured relationships. If this ritual is only considered a tradition without a theological dimension renewed by the Gospel, the Toba Batak ethnic group will be vulnerable to division. Thus, it is clear that the mangalahat horbo tradition is not only seen as a means of restoring interpersonal relationships, but is also understood as a reformation of social relations that unites all differences within the Toba Batak ethnic group.

A Theology of Reconciliation Without Walls: Christ as the Divine Horbo

It is common for contextual theology approaches to view tradition as a form of theological expression rooted in responses to the unique needs and dynamics of a community. Within this framework, tradition is understood not as something static, but as a vehicle for local theology that continually interacts with its

social, cultural, and historical context. Schreiter (1985) emphasizes the importance of understanding the cultural conditions in which a particular theological style can develop authentically. He offers two strategic steps to broaden awareness of religion as a form of theological expression: first, seeking parallels in local traditions that enable a genuine dialogue between tradition and revelation; and second, reducing the potential for theological paternalism that often accompanies a universal approach to truth.

Echoing Schreiter, R. J. and E. Schillebeeckx (1985) further enriches this understanding by emphasizing the importance of cross-cultural experience as a means of challenging the superiority of certain cultures in interpreting the Gospel. For Sanneh (1989) translating the Gospel into local cultures is not a compromise, but rather a correction of the dominant culture's singular claims and an acknowledgment that divine providence is also evident in the narratives of local cultures. In the Batak cultural context, the mangalahat horbo ritual holds profound significance. It is not simply a traditional event, but a symbolic act that marks the restoration of relationships. When two groups or families are at odds, they offer a buffalo as a sacrifice. Its blood signifies that the hostility has ended and that damaged social relations are now restored. After the blood is spilled, the two previously separated parties sit down to eat together, signifying their reunion in the spirit of peace. In this ritual, blood serves as a sign of the cleansing of wrongdoing and a path to renewed togetherness. Beneath this symbolism, however, lies a powerful theological intuition: true peace always requires sacrifice.

When this tradition is read in light of Ephesians 2:15, a rich dialogue between faith and culture emerges. Paul writes that Christ, by his human death, abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, in order to create in himself a new humanity and thereby establish peace. This sentence carries a profound message of liberation: that all systems of separation, including the religious laws that created a distance between Jews and Gentiles, have been annulled by the blood of Christ. Christ's death is a divine act that dissolves all barriers that divide humanity, whether social, ethnic, or religious. Moltmann (1993) calls this work cosmic reconciliation, the act of God breaking down the walls of hostility and restoring creation to peace. Similarly, Dunn (1975) asserts that the gift of the Spirit blurs the traditional distinctions that create social barriers. In this light, Christ's death is not simply an individual soteriological event, but a social act that gives birth to a new community without borders and without walls.

The ritual of mangalahat horbo and the death of Christ in Ephesians 2:15 can be read in a mutually illuminating synthesis. In this traditional ritual, buffalo blood symbolizes social peace, while in the Gospel, Christ's blood becomes the true reality of redemption. In both, there is the same movement: from separation to unity, from conflict to fellowship. However, what in mangalahat horbo is performed symbolically and temporarily, in Christ is fulfilled universally and eternally. The blood of the horbo merely signifies a social covenant between humans, but the blood of Christ restores humanity's relationship with God and with one another. Seen from this perspective, Christ can be understood as the Divine Horbo, a sacrifice no longer an animal, but God himself, who gave himself to abolish all laws that separate. Just as the horbo serves as a means of reconciliation in Batak culture, Christ becomes the divine sacrifice that restores humanity's relationship with God and with one another. However, the blood of Christ does not simply erase conflict but creates a new human order that is no longer limited by ethnicity, law, or custom. In other words, Christ is the Divine Horbo whose blood establishes true peace, which is not ceremonial but transformational.

Through this approach, the encounter between Ephesians 2:15 and mangalahat horbo produces a new theology: a theology of reconciliation without walls. This theology is rooted in the Batak cultural experience, which values peace through sacrifice, but is elevated to a universal level through the work of Christ, who restores all things within Himself. In this theology, custom is not erased but transcended. Christ affirms the peaceful values inherent in custom, yet simultaneously frees it from exclusivity. He transcends ethnic, customary, and legal boundaries and creates a new community based on love and forgiveness. The theology of reconciliation without walls views salvation as a process that encompasses both social and spiritual dimensions. Salvation is no longer understood simply as personal liberation from sin, but rather as the restoration of human relationships and the creation of a new society. In Batak language, this theology refers

to marharoan bolon, meaning a greater fellowship where everyone is accepted without barriers. The church, in this theology, is a community that learns to be a space without walls: open, dialogue-oriented, and courageous in practicing love that transcends boundaries. Just as the blood of the horbo unites the divided, so too the blood of Christ eliminates hostility and fosters unity.

Thus, “Christ as the Divine Horbo” is not merely a symbolic analogy, but a concrete manifestation of the incarnation of the Gospel in the Batak context. In Christ, God speaks through the language of the indigenous people; through the symbol of the horbo, He affirms His unifying love. This is what Bevans (2002) means when he says that the Gospel “becomes flesh again and again in every context that receives it.” Christ’s death abolished the Torah, just as the blood of the horbo abolished conflict. However, Christ’s work goes further: He not only signifies peace, but also creates a new humanity, a humanity without walls, living in love, justice, and forgiveness.

It is at this point that the theology of reconciliation without walls becomes more than a mere contextual reflection; it is a testimony that the Gospel always finds its own form within culture. In Batak land, that form takes the form of the Divine Horbo, who through His blood dissolves the walls of hostility and calls humanity to live in true peace. This theology invites the church to continue building a life of peace, not by imposing uniformity, but by celebrating love that transcends all boundaries. In Christ as the Divine Horbo, the Gospel is no longer foreign, but dwells within culture, speaking its own language, and redeeming humanity without walls.

Conclusion

Through a synthesis of mangalahat horbo and Paul’s teachings, this study argues that reconciliation is not merely the restoration of social relations, but the total transformation of life toward a new order of humanity at peace in the love of Christ. Christ is understood as the Divine Horbo, the true atoning sacrifice that eliminates all social, customary, and ethnic boundaries, just as the blood of the Horbo once eliminated conflict in Batak land. Thus, Christ’s sacrifice not only transcends the symbolic meaning of custom but also affirms the universal power of reconciliation, elevating Batak cultural values to the light of the Gospel. Thus, this study presents a new form of dynamic contextual theology, in which Batak culture is not ignored but transcended by the Gospel. Mangalahat horbo becomes a dialogical medium that allows Christian faith to find its “home” in Batak land. The resulting reconciliation is not merely a temporary resolution of conflict, but the formation of a new community that lives without walls, reconciles in love, and experiences a new identity in Christ, who renews all things.

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