



## *Dalihan Na Tolu* Analogy as an Approach to Strengthen Men's Ministry Role

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**ABSTRACT:** Of all categorical ministry, men's ministry are not as actively involved in the church ministry as others do. This article discusses the ways to strengthen men's ministry role in the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) in present day through cultural approach. The research used cultural analogy approach. Data were collected by using observation and interviews. In analyzing the data, the researcher employed relevant literature sources such as books and journal articles. The research shows that the elements of Batak principles of *Dalihan Na Tolu* upholding a Batak person and his/her families of *Hula-hula*, *Dongan Tubu*, and *Boru* were found to be still relevant. The principle's framework could be used as an approach to strengthen role of male church parishioners in the church by associating it with another three elements: the Church, *Bibel* (the Bible), and the family. Thus, *Dalihan Na Tolu* as a cultural principle is applicable to church ministry setting by association of: (1) the organized Church to *Hula-hula*, (2) the family to *Boru*, and (3) *Bibel* as *Dongan Tubu*.

Keywords: *dalihan na tolu*, Batak, men's ministry, HKBP

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## INTRODUCTION

*Koinonia* (fellowship) ministry in HKBP is categorized into several sections: Sunday School, Teen Ministry, Youth Ministry, Women's Ministry, Men's Ministry, and Ministry for the Elderlies (Kantor Pusat HKBP, 2015, pp. 45–53). This category-based system is applied across all branches and levels of HKBP. The church, based in Pearaja (Tarutung, North Sumatera), has 35 districts, 790 resorts (dioceses), and 3,651 parishes (Almanak HKBP, 2022, p. 515). The category-based ministry is considerably large in HKBP compared to other denominations.

Presently however, men's ministries (*Kategorial Ama*) across HKBP parishes are not as active as other categories, even though it should be the church's ministry backbone. Although the organizing committee (BPH) for the ministry has been formed, activities tend to stagnate. The stagnation is clearly visible by the minimal role in performing with men's ministry choir during

Sunday divine services, visiting parishioners with illness, consoling the bereaved, and attending church organization meetings, Bible studies, family worship services, and other church gatherings.

In Seminar for *Amas* (male adults and fathers) held in 5 HKBP districts, Butarbutar (2021b), the Bishop (*Ephorus*) for HKBP revealed that before 1990s, a third of the total parishioners attending Sunday services consisted of male adult parishioners. However, in present day only 10-20% of total parishioners attending Sunday services are male. The number not only consist of male adults, but also male teens, youths, and elderlies. Before, male adults, especially fathers, are the social and spiritual center of a Batak family. Now, in spite of that, fathers do not become the center anymore, often passing the responsibility to their spouses. Some Batak fathers no longer become the bulwark of Christian faith to their families: they no longer pray and attend regular services, even lose faith to God (Butarbutar, 2021b).

This is concerning since it endangers faith of Batak male adults, especially fathers, and therefore necessitates the search for the root of the problem. There are likelihoods that this condition represents a much bigger problem, like the peak of an iceberg. The 160-year strong HKBP, established in October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1861 (Butarbutar, 2021a, p. 519) needs to be able to overcome this problem to ensure its future growth and development.

Therefore, this research tries to present a proposal for encountering this problem through cultural approach. This research took place in HKBP Magelang, a parish within HKBP synod. Even though this parish is open to parishioners of other ethnicities, the majority of its parishioners are Batak diaspora with firm commitment to Batak cultural traditions. Bataks, especially those living in the proximities of Lake Toba, have a philosophy of life firmly held for hundreds of years, becoming a pearl of local wisdom called *Dalihan Na Tolu* (Manullang, 2018).

According to Aritonang (2006) *Dalihan Na Tolu* is the philosophy or socio-cultural outlook relating to Batak community and culture. This philosophy is a result of collective meditation and reflection of ancestors of Batak people in finding the truth of life and in creating an idea related to desired social life (Gultom, 1992, p. 54). *Dalihan Na Tolu* plays a role in being the source of Batak moral and ethical code called *ruhutruhut paradaton*. (Sinaga, 2000, p. 156). It is because of that reason that *Dalihan Na Tolu* is always present in all important Batak ceremonies, such as baby showers, marriages, funerals, housewarmings, and post-ritual receptions such as those after baptism and confirmation of faith. Hence, the concept of this *Dalihan Na Tolu* philosophy was chosen to approach the problem stated in this article.

There have been several researches conducted on *Dalihan Na Tolu*. Firstly, research by Hasibuan & Rahmat (2020) on community strategies to preserve this philosophy. Secondly, research by Irfan (2018) on the relation of *Dalihan Na Tolu* cultural values to general Batak community life,

especially its political dimension. Thirdly, research by Sitanggang et al. (2020) on the application of *Dalihan Na Tolu* for character education, especially in terms of teaching respect, decency, honesty, justice, responsibility, and care. The three researches mentioned have not touched the analogical application of *Dalihan Na Tolu* to strengthen men's ministry role in HKBP. Since *Dalihan Na Tolu* is still relevant to present-day Batak life, this research intends to respond the problem statement on how *Dalihan Na Tolu* analogy strengthens male adults' ministerial role in HKBP. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to answer the aforementioned question.

## METHOD

The researcher used cultural analogy in understanding the dynamics of community as a group with similar culture to describe a population, situation or phenomenon being studied. The data used were collected from interviews, observations, and documentations. Primary data were collected by employing direct observation and interviewing the informants. By conducting direct, in-depth interviews with open questions, the researcher obtained ease of information access (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gilbert et al., 2018). In this research, the researcher studied the concept of *Dalihan Na Tolu* from various literary sources and prepared a concept of role of male adults and fathers.

The research was conducted in HKBP as the main spiritual home for Batak Christians in Indonesia. Direct interviews were conducted in HKBP Magelang parish, with parishioners spreading across Magelang city, Magelang regency, Temanggung, Blabak, and Muntilan. In general, the research informants were those representing the church's parishioners, such as members of the church's sessions, the church's pioneers, and representative of male adult parishioners, with their personal information classified.

An analysis of findings was then conducted in order to present a model of approach which in

turn can satisfy the need of responding to this research's problem statement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Dalihan Na Tolu

*Dalihan Na Tolu* can best be translated as "The Three-Legged Furnace". A symbol of Batak social system, the philosophy consists of three pillars, namely *Dongan Tubu* (in-group clan), *Boru* (wife-receiving clan), and *Hula-hula* (wife-giving clan). As its function goes, although made simply, a furnace becomes a part of daily human activities of cooking for survival (Siahaan, 1982, pp. 18–19). *Dalihan Na Tolu* is not a caste system since every Bataks are positioned within all three units with the units interchangeable depending on the occasion. The Bataks, a patrilineal community, feel solid if supported their *Hulahula* (the respected and high-positioned), *Dongan Tubu* (the mutually-helping and equally-positioned relatives), and *Boru* (the sheltered and protected).

According to T. M. Sihombing (2000) *Dalihan Na Tolu* is an expression stating the unity of familial relationship in Batak ethnicity taken from an illustration of *tolu dalihan* (three stones used as foothold of a furnace). The furnace consists of three balanced stones placed on top of a flat surface and set in such a way that if lines connect them, an equilateral triangle shape will form with 120 degrees flank angle each. The three stones act as footholds for a traditional fireplace, with firewoods placed within the stones' perimeter. Such arrangement is intended to maintain balance in order for the pot placed on top of these stones to not fall during *penjerangan* (cooking) process. Based on the laying out of the *dalihan* in a flat surface, *dalihan na tolu* can also be interpreted as *tolu sahundulan* (three elements in the same level) in "equality" and "unity". The Bataks believe that prosperity and happiness will be realized when the three elements of *Dalihan Na Tolu* unite, as in the case with human, consisting of united three

elements of *hosa* (breath), *mudar* (blood), and *sibuk* (flesh) (Sigalingging, 2000, p. 12).

The *Dalihan Na Tolu* philosophy is very much ingrained in Batak culture. It is a philosophy bringing forth a message of harmonious partnership, in which elements of social life have mutual understanding (Marbun & Hutapea, 1987, p. 37). In its practice, this simple philosophy has admittedly noble values of local wisdom, proven by commitment of the Batak community to these values and, in extension, their culture, both those living outside their cultural lands and those staying, even those marrying other ethnicities and those adhering to non-Christian religion.

A positive influence of this philosophy is apparent in the low number of divorce within Batak community. Cunningham in his research admitted that divorce within Batak Christians were low, with Bataks taking pride in their family unity, which was different compared to the high number of divorce in the United States (Cunningham, 1958, p. 44). This condition is established by the Batak control system produced by this philosophy, which will try to unite the quarreling parties and to harmonize them to stability. Since this philosophy creates such a control, it is therefore undoubtable that the *Dalihan Na Tolu* philosophy positively impacts the Batak community.

In several researches, this philosophy is found to be implementable to other fields of life, such as in character building education, in collective leadership of a team, in learning model, and even in business relationship management. However, other studies showed that in terms of good government, bureaucracy, and democratic exercises, the philosophy has a negative impact due to its vulnerability to ethics and moral violation in a common law-based society. Based on its broad application to various fields, the researcher believes that this philosophy can also be implemented in strengthening the role of male adults and fathers in the Church.

Name	Origin	Interview summary
RS (2021) (P)	Muntilan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The informant expressed his disappointment to the pastor.</li> <li>• He also talked about the long home-church distance and high cost of travel.</li> </ul>
JS (2021) (P)	Magelang city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The informant expressed his internal laziness which impacts his family.</li> <li>• He only goes to the church during special occasions, such as infant baptism, marriage, confirmation, or Christmas, due to traditional ceremonies.</li> </ul>
EM (2021) (P)	Magelang regency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic factor necessitated the informant to work on Sundays, since he was starting a family at the time of interview.</li> <li>• He also expressed the lack of approach and care from the Church, since he oftentimes felt ashamed and unworthy, which caused him to avoid Church's administrative duties. The feeling was different, however, if traditional ceremonies come into question.</li> </ul>
SIN (2021) (W)	Magelang city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The informant expressed his embarrassment to go to the Church due to family issues.</li> </ul>
FS (2021) (P)	Temanggung	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The informant was an elderly and this impacted his mobility.</li> </ul>
NB (2021) (P)	Blabak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The informant expressed that the Church's men's ministry lacked impact to family relationships.</li> </ul>

Table 1. Interview summary

### Hindrance to Male Adults' Attendance

In this section, the researcher presents summary of interviews with informants conducted in 2021 on account of the hindrance to their church attendance in Table 1.

Based on the data presented, there are two principal groups of hindrances to male adults' church attendance, namely: 1) internal hindrances coming from within self, such as laziness or reluctance to go to the church & feeling of inferiority, shame, or unworthiness in taking part in the church ministry and 2) external hindrances coming from circumstances such as economic factor and problems with distance & time.

In light of these hindrances, it is necessary to find an appropriate approach suitable to conditions of HKBP male adults and fathers who are usually Bataks themselves.

### Findings

In this research, it was found that Christian

association of *Dalihan Na Tolu* has existed for a long time. The philosophy was adapted in Christian context by associating each tenet with similar Christian symbols, namely: 1) the organized Church as *Hulahula*, 2) the family as *Boru*, and 3) *Bibel*/the Bible as *Dongan Tubu*.

It is in line with the three different functions each Batak man plays in traditional ceremonies. For example, when a nephew or niece of a Batak man's sister marry, he becomes the *hula-hula* in the family. When a person of similar clan to the Batak man's wife holds traditional feasts, he becomes the *boru*. When a person of his clan hold feast, he becomes the *dongan tubu*. If the *Dalihan Na Tolu* philosophy is to be referred, each supporting element has its own role, is equally positioned, is balanced, and is united. Similarly, if one of the three Christian elements aforementioned is taken out, the spiritual life of Batak Christians will be affected.

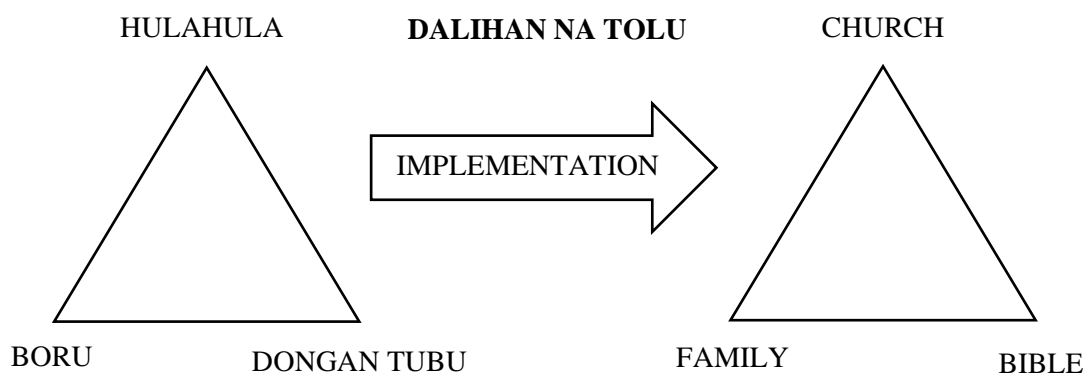


Figure 1. *Dalihan Na Tolu* implementation model

### ***The Church as Hulahula***

According to Aninda (2013), *Hulahuka* is a position with utmost respects paid, even considered by Bataks as *Debata Na Tarida* (the visible God), able to give blessings. In a traditional event, the *hulahula* formally has an important role, not only as a party in the traditional rituals and processions within the event but also as the party whose presence is most awaited during its commencement (R. M. Simanjuntak et al., 2021). For Batak Christians, this role applies to the Church and her ministers as well. Prayers from a Church minister will always be sought for in initiating and ending a traditional ceremony. Church ministers are also reserved special and revered places in various occasions. These shows the important position and authority of the Church as a spiritual organization or institution for Batak Christians.

The informants in their interview also expressed the similar notion that the Church and her ministers as an organization have a high position in the eyes of the congregation. Furthermore, it is in line with (Lumbantobing, 1996, p. 114), stating that this form of reverence is also reserved to HKBP ministers, namely the full-timers (pastors, catechists, deacons and deaconess, *Bibelvrouws* or woman evangelists), male & female elders, and evangelists. The Church is considered to have sufficient spiritual wisdom, which makes the opinions of her pastors or members of her presbytery to be taken oftentimes as reference. In various social activities, the Church are often involved due to her great influence and

authority.

In *Dalihan Na Tolu*, *Hulahula* is considered as the fount of blessing, lineage, and life line of Batak people. The Church, considered as the vicar of God in the world, has spiritual role for her congregation. She becomes the fount of blessing by literal means of routine blessing during worship service and shares the salvation given by Christ's sacrifice on the cross in order for its congregation to have eternal life. It is for that reason that the Church is comparable to *Hulahula* in *Dalihan Na Tolu* philosophy.

In addition, the Church also becomes the center of Batak community. News of various happenings, especially those of Bataks, will oftentimes find their way to the Church. As a community center, the network the Church owns is strong, proven by the vast existence of full-timers (pastors, catechists, deaconess, etc.). In establishing a new HKBP parish somewhere, the surrounding Batak community and HKBP parishes are usually involved, starting from establishment of evangelism post to *Huria* preparation and full parish multiplication.

The Church also becomes a place to prepare a full, readily-applicable education material suitable to her congregation. A duty of its kind is always attached in every types community, moreso in a faith-based or religious one (Nuhamara, 2007, p. 1). Therefore, not only the Church is a community center for her congregation but also a center of their education. It is no wonder that the Church has a

strategic role and position, since she understands her potential by thinking and caring for her congregation's needs and preparing for the facilities and infrastructure to achieve them.

### *The family as Boru*

In a traditional Batak event, *boru* is the group with the lowest position, often called as *hatoban*, *par-hobas*, and *siloja-loja* (the “servants”). Bataks who at a certain event occupy this position are unable to refuse anything commanded by those in *hulahula*, only being able to respond to those commanding them by “*sipangoloi do Hami Raja nami*”, translated in English as “we can only subject ourselves to the command of work” (Pane, 2019). It is true that *boru* does the ‘dirty work’, but the *hulahula* should also be astute in doing *elek* (persuasion and protection) to them in order to ensure the success of their work. For that reason, the quality of the *boru*’s work reflects both their obedience to the *hulahula* and their *hulahula*’s astuteness in directing the work. Based on this notion, the family becomes the spiritual *boru* of male adult parishioners, especially fathers, since it becomes the place of their whole-hearted self-expression. By executing their role as the family’s priest (spiritual director), leader, example, and protector, Batak fathers will determine the shape and direction of their respective families. Hence, a Batak father needs to be capable in showing his best personal qualities in order to gain respect and voluntary obedience & following by their family members. All of the above ultimately boils down to the spiritual quality of a family, since a good family will also be a support for the fathers. This relationship comes both ways: fathers who strive for their family’s well-being will gain support from them.

According to Informant PBS (2021), a father should have *sahala* or wisdom, whose existence is assessable from his family’s condition. Informant SIN stated that family harmony heavily depends on the way its leader, the father, manage his ego, emotions, and pride, due to having patrilineal background. He further opined that a

father needs to develop a gentle-but-strong demeanor for his family’s well-being.

According Informant FS (2021), a father needs to truly push his family spiritually. As the priest, they become an example due to having a great responsibility to bring his family closer to God. For example, in Sundays it is the father who should be “fussier” to awaken his children and bring the family to the church, rather than the mother. He should be responsible in dropping off and picking up his family members in various Church activities. Even if his wife is considered a studious reader of the Scripture, he should be twice more diligent since he should be able of interpreting its content.

Informant JS (2021) posited that when asked to lead a prayer group, male adult parishioners, especially fathers should not refuse it, taking initiative at the first opportunity instead, since according to his personal testimony, it would bring good things into fruition, such as that he nowadays experienced. His children’s life surpassed that of their parents and they became pride of the family, since everywhere they live, they would always involve themselves in the Church ministry.

According to Informant RS (2021), male adult parishioners, especially fathers who are involved in the Church ministry eventually would become wiser, more authoritative, and more charismatic, which in turn make them the pride of their family. Therefore, the Church needs to open as many doors of opportunity as possible to their involvement and create a conducive atmosphere for her congregation in order to ensure a healthy spiritual growth.

Informant EM (2021) said that the problem is found in fathers who often take pride in their position and knowledge on tradition but neglects his own family. They should balance his role in carrying on tradition, taking care of his family, and being involved in the Church. He testified that ever since he took on church ministry more intensively, he progressed in terms of social life, especially in tradition matters and his family became more blessed, including in terms of their economic

standing. Hence, he himself could testify on many fathers taking on church ministry whose offspring are currently successful, despite the fathers themselves living plainly. This encouraged him to be more active in the Church.

According to Informant SIN (2021), it is a pride of Bataks to have a harmonious family. Thence, everyday conversation in Batak culture always starts with questions like “How are your children?” “What school grade are they in?” “Where do they study?” and “What are their academic achievements?” since from these seemingly “chit-chatty” questions, the family condition is inferred and assessed. The fathers in Batak culture seldom wear expensive clothes or accessories since it is their nature to be low profile, to be not bothered by trivial matters, and to avoid ridicule from their friends. It is different from their wife and children who usually wear nice and classy (often found in parties), which is customary in Batak culture. By doing this, the wife and children are protecting their family's dignity and, by indirect extension, stating that the father has means to meet the needs of his family.

The family is the obvious reflection of a male adult, especially a father, both in spiritual life and realities of life. However, it occurs often that a father seems to take care his outside circles, such as friends and colleagues, better than his own family, causing his best sides to seldom appear, if not appearing at all, to his family. A wise father should balance his life in all things, both in family, community, and church life.

### ***Bibel as Dongan Tubu***

A free translation of *dongan tubu* is “siblings of the same mother and father” (*Tubu* = birth), but in practice, its meaning is broadened to “siblings” of one clan. The resulting older-younger sibling relationship, similar to familial relationship, becomes a tight bond. In starting a Batak traditional feast, the *suhut* (feast host) invites *dongan tubu* in his house in accordance to the feast's agenda, such as *pasahathon ulaon* (giving duty to *dongan tubu*)

above traditional offerings. This is a form of *manat mardongan tubu* (being considerate to member of the same clan), implying honor to *dongan tubu* and at the same time, giving him responsibility to successfully carry the event with zero mistake (Pasaribu, 2020).

Similar to a successful Batak traditional ceremony, good Christian spirituality starts from the correct source. It is in this way *Bibel* plays a role in providing and accompanying the congregation to have good spiritual life by reading it. *Bibel* (Batak word for the Bible) is one of the spiritual supports for male adult parishioners, especially fathers. It is always placed prominently in a special place at a Batak Christian home, symbolizing a Batak Christian household just as the installation of the cross and images of Christ do. In addition to *ulos* (Batak fabric), *Bibel* can be gifted to Bataks, since it is considered to have an exclusive value.

JC Nommensen, Apostle to the Bataks successfully translated the New Testament in 1878 and the Old Testament in 1894. This makes the complete *Bibel* to have been known to Bataks for a long time. Since birth, Batak Christians have known *Bibel* and if the parents can afford it, each family member will have his/her own *Bibel*. Before its digital availability, Batak Christians will usually bring *Bibel* with *Buku Ende* (HKBP hymnary), with those two becoming the necessary components in Batak HKBP congregants' homes. Even though *Bibel* is considered sacred, this does not hinder family members to freely read them, with their *Bibel* taken care of well in pristine condition. Its physically bulky form does not hinder Batak Christians to bring physical *Bibel* to the Church until now, even though they had had it available in digital format.

*Bibel* is introduced to Batak Christian children in every Christmas celebration held by the Sunday school, Batak community in the region of residence (*punguan*) or Batak clan they are affiliated in. Usually, the children will present themselves and utter *Bibel* verses in Batak, assigned to them to memorize beforehand, with different verses to memorize each year. HKBP gifts her teen

parishioners after their confirmation of faith (*manghatindakhon haporseaon*) and newly-wed parishioners after wedding (*manjalo pasupasu parbagason*) the *Bibel*. Even in funeral, the deceased's coffin will be filled with his/her favorite items and the *Bibel* will also be placed there. A Batak's Batak language proficiency is measured from the way s/he reads *Bibel*, since some of Batak words are pronounced differently from its spelling, such as *sangsang* which should be properly pronounced as *saksang*. A parish's altar is also sanctified by *Bibel*, since usually a *Bibel* and a cross will be buried together under the chancel as the symbol of God's presence in the Church.

*Bibel* is the main source of spiritual reference for Batak Christians. Many of their personal names are sourced from *Bibel* (some Biblical names are adapted to fit Batak pronunciation in *Bibel*), symbolizing their parents' hope to them. Batak Christians also use it as a source of comfort. Often, in their sadness or loneliness, Batak Christians will open their *Bibel* to seek comforting verses or sing hymns from *Buku Ende*. Parents often tell stories from *Bibel* to their children. One of them is the story of Cain and Abel which they use to teach sibling harmony. Even when Batak Christians curse someone—admittedly a bad habit among them—they will use references from *Bibel* such as comparing someone to Judas Iscariot when the person betrays them or to Thomas when the person is hard to convince.

Interestingly, similar concepts are found between Batak customs and those indicated in the Old Testament, such as in lineage preservation (*tarombo* and *marga* or clan), in *pariban* marriage (taking wife from one of the daughters of a Batak man's mother's brother like Isaac or Jacob), in cosmology, in hierarchy in clan relationship, in the art of cursing, in exhuming their dead (*mangokal holi*), in having mourners and lamentation during funerals, in the position of firstborns, in gender relationship, in monotheism (the Batak concept of *Hamalimon – Parmalim – Ugamo Malim*), in dietary law, and in various stories and myths of creation.

Before a Batak Christian sets out to settle in foreign lands, as a form of granting assent, their parents will hand them *Ulos*, symbolizing the parents prayers and *Bibel*, symbolizing the True Friend in pilgrimage, with the instruction to read it always and wear them in church services. Based on the description, it becomes apparent that *Bibel* is considered the spiritual *Dongan Tubu* for Batak Christians due to its unique and important position in their daily life.

## Discussion

The findings aforementioned conclude that the Christian conceptual association to *Dalihan Na Tolu* was proven to be exist, but the extremely-low awareness of Batak Christians to this association in present day indicates a degradation of values. The current development with its many traits, such as social change, accelerated technological advancements, cultural and communal shifts due to globalization becomes the influencing factor. Modernization in every line of life has changed the ways of life considered traditional. Some of the informants' answers also reflect this trend, starting from economic demands which makes some of them work on Sundays to attitudes that put more importance in their children's academic achievement rather than spiritual quality and even smaller things such as the decision to name their kids based on favorite football club names rather than Biblical names. These examples show the currently existing changes which influence male adult parishioners' spiritual supports. These changes in turn generally shows, in a direct and/or indirect manner: 1) the low level of Church authority due to decreasing level of respect she enjoys, 2) the relegation of family spiritual quality to secondary or tertiary priorities, 3) the change in the position of *Bibel* or the Word of God compared to older times.

However, if the *Dalihan Na Tolu* is to be referred, one can understand that the weakening of one or more supports will affect overall balance. Thus, an effort to rehabilitate each spiritual supports of male adult parishioners suited to the modern

times is needed. In doing this, the objective desired should be the male adult parishioners' desire to serve and be obedient to God. However, this level of awareness should essentially be started from within, since no matter how big the effort is, it will be in vain if there is no reciprocal internal reception. Consequently, in order to do it, there should be a party actively involved in "knocking on the door" in the hearts of these parishioners and in consistently bringing them into this effort.

### ***The Church's role***

The researcher sees it fit that the Church should take initiative in these rehabilitation efforts. Apart from its philosophical role as the male adults' *hulahula*, the Church (HKBP) should do this as the form of her pastoral responsibility to the male adult parishioners, since she has the necessary resources and people to do it. In addition to her function as the male adult parishioners' support, the Church can encourage or support her fellow supporters: the family and *Bibel*.

Firstly, the Church needs to always preserve her authority in the face of her parishioners, whether it is in her role as an organization, as a place of ministry, or as a center of Batak community. This is necessary, so that not only Bataks can respect the Church, but also that the Church can be heard, which in turn enables her to exercise her mission to encourage her parishioners and in extension, the Batak community. As a huge organization, HKBP needs to continually reform itself to minimize and avoid commonly-faced potential problems, such as internal conflicts, politics, and financial and systemic problems, which will always affect congregational life if they ever got laid bare open for public consumption.

The Church and her ministers are the vicar of God in this world for spiritual matters, such as praying, blessing, training, protecting, visiting, and facilitating the congregation. However, sometimes disappointments arise that lead to bitterness and reluctance to fellowship due to personal discontent with church ministers. That is why the Church needs

to nurture her ministers so that they always have a loving, wise character and are far from seeking personal or group gain (Bataks are proud about their clans). In addition, a minister is always encouraged to be able to immediately resolve problems so as not to drag on, be sensitive to the condition of the congregation, and at least know the problems of each individual congregation.

From the interview, it was found that various obstacles of the male adult parishioners, such as distance from home, economy, family harmony, can only be needed if there is a will from the ministers to tackle them. The ministers must also actively invite the congregation to be aware of all problems and encourage them to immediately find a solution. As Informant PBS (2021) said, *Dalihan Na Tolu* will only become true if this Batak proverb is realized: "*Aek godang do aek laut, dos ni roha do sibahen na saut*" (things only happen in agreement). If an agreement in a spiritual community or association exists, surely its works and activities will be carried out well. This is in line with the teaching Jesus on the spirit of togetherness in love and in one faith that the Church and her ministers can do in bringing the congregation and the Batak community to harmony, including in the development of programs and services within the Church itself.

If the Church is able to uphold its authority, apart from getting respect, the desire to have fellowship and participate in the congregation will emerge by itself because they realize that fellowship is a necessity in itself. Like a firebox, the church's task in communion is to become a spiritual vessel that gathers various embers of the congregation's faith so that they are always close, gather and strengthen each other among themselves, so the Church must be consistent in its efforts so that its presence as a way of blessing, giving joy & peace, and place of faith growth is actually felt by the people around him.

### ***The Church and family***

The Church should consistently remind her

male adult congregants, especially fathers on their spiritual duty in their family. In line with God's command in Deut. 6:6-9, fathers should "put the Word of God as frontlets between their eyes" and "bind them on their hands", meaning that they should remember them and do them anywhere and at any time (Darmawan, 2019; Utami et al., 2021).

Based on interview results, the Church should successfully nurture on her male adult congregants' behaviors, attitudes, and realities such as *sahala* or wisdom (PBS), desire to bring his family closer to God (FS), spiritual initiative (JS), desire to be the pride of their families (RS), ability to balance family, tradition, and church roles (EM), and harmonious family creation (SIN). These notions are in line with Biblical principles for fathers, namely nurturing (1Tim 5:8), training (Prv 22:6), loving (Tit 2:4), being an example (Phil 4:9), surrendering children to God (I Sam 1:24-28 and Luk 2:22), not offending (Col 3:21 and Eph 6:4) and interceding in prayer (Job 1:5).

There are many ways to nurture understanding to these things, such as teaching them in sermons, in formal or informal meetings of men's ministry, and in person if needed. However, the most important thing in the nurturing effort is the commitment of each Church activist to propagate it whenever possible. Sometimes, activists feel reluctant to communicate them or consider themselves to be aware of them already, but this attitude is highly subjective, since each male adult parishioner has different backgrounds forming and influencing their respective principles and worldview. It is for this reason the Church should successfully etch this understanding to her male adult congregants to encourage them to spiritually forming their family, which in turn will further inspire their involvement in church ministry.

Dana (2013) stated that psychologically, self-actualization or self-worth is more needed for men (who, in this case, are male adults, especially fathers) and in general, their self-actualization takes place in their community and family. Related to this, the Church with her ministers should instill to her

male adult parishioners that "competition" in terms of their family's spiritual quality is a form of self-esteem and gives them a high actualization value. However, the Church should not end her efforts in instillation alone, but she must also give appreciation in her male adult parishioners' efforts in bringing their family into a devout spiritual life. In addition, one should aware that the role and involvement of male adult parishioners is not only limited to fellowship or worship services, but is also apparent in other media, such as contribution in spiritual thoughts, musical abilities, and financial abilities, to name a few. Whatever the form is, the Church should essentially be open & accepting, as well as not being negligent herself in rewarding her male adult parishioners' efforts.

In order to support her male adult congregants, the Church needs to approach them through their families. According to Informant NB (2021), Church activities should be designed to actively involve all members of family, starting from Sunday schools, teen fellowships, youth fellowships, to women's & men's ministries and the ministry to the elderlies. The Church needs to give special attention to the spiritual quality of her Sunday school pupils, teens, and youths, since if the present generation fails to pass the torch to these future generations, they will face problems of faith and ministerial role similar to those of today. Hence, the researcher views collective spiritual growth of families in the Church as undeniably integral and runs in proportion to the growth of their leader, the fathers.

### ***The Church and Bibel***

In Joshua 1:8, it is emphasized that God's people should not forget speaking and meditating on the Torah, so as to be able to act with caution. This means that God's word should always be with Christians in their daily life, not only as their guiding light, but also as a reminder of God's covenant and blessing to them. *Bibel* is the center and essence directing Christian life (Homrighausen & Enklar, 2011, p. 61; Nainupu & Darmawan, 2021).

It is the only source of knowledge on the design of salvation underlying philosophies, principles, curricula, methodologies, and activities (Budiyana, 2011, p. 22; Karnawati & Widodo, 2019; Reynaldi, 2019). In the Old Testament, there written sublime things experienced by God's people under His guiding hand throughout their life history. Similarly, the New Testament was written to teach Christians on the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and its influence in human life (Katarina & Darmawan, 2019; J. M. Simanjuntak, 2014). The male adults should fully realize and understand *Bibel's* importance in their daily life, since not only it is a mere collection of religious texts, but also a proof of God's presence throughout human history and therefore becomes a foundation of faith for the faithful.

It is in this situation that the Church should become an active participant in hammering this notion to the male adults. The fast pace of technological development such as smartphones has influenced many changes. The technology offers not only quicker communication modes, but also faster information collection. In this manner, the technology offers many alternatives to traditional entertainment outlets, in the forms of audio and visual entertainments that indulge human senses (Ronda, 2019). As a result, nowadays this technology is slowly replacing the position of the Bible, which used to be male adults' and fathers' daily companion.

It is in the researcher's view that the Church needs to be involved in her parishioners' lives in order to restore the *Bibel's* position as the male adults' *dongan tubu*. The Church needs not to forbid their use of these technologies, but to learn the ways in which the technologies can be utilized in order to sustain the growth of male adults' and fathers' faith. The Church can enrich her parishioners' knowledge on the *Bibel* through easily accessible audio and visual digital contents (Darmawan et al., 2021; Zaluchu, 2020). She can also play her role in the social media world by creating an interactive social-virtual environment discussing knowledge around the *Bibel* & social trends, even facilitating online

prayer request by involving male adults and fathers. Furthermore, the Church can hold online meetings such as revival services, seminars, discussion fora, *Bibel* study, and even fellowship services by determining the time possible for male adults and fathers to join.

However, not only she must do the aforementioned, the church in particular must also be able to encourage and guide male adults and fathers to bring his family closer to the *Bibel*. Murrow (2005) reiterated the results of various studies, showing that many male adults and fathers had an inclination to orient themselves with challenges. They were not interested to many of the church's programs since the programs were oftentimes boring for them. However, Hymers Jr (2007) rebutted the statement, saying that while it is true that male adults have values oriented to challenge, the problem laid not in the church's program design, but in the programs' ability to challenge them, which in this case should be about how they can win their family's souls and bring them to the *Bibel*.

In relation to this matter, informant JS (2021) added that the depth of Biblical wisdom of a father determines the state of souls in his family. It is for that exact reason that the Church needs to engage male adults, especially fathers to evaluate how God works through their family members, since their closeness to *Bibel* should not only be evaluated by how much time they spend in being spiritually active, but also by how close their family members are to *Bibel*, shown by the family members' routine attendance and prayer life.

## CONCLUSION

The philosophy of *Dalihan Na Tolu* can be used as an approach in strengthening ministry role of male adults in HKBP Magelang parish. Whether realized or not, this philosophy is spiritually present in Batak Christians' life, in which the Church organization as *Hula-hula*, the family as *Boru*, and *Bibel* as *Dongan Tubu* have upheld their spiritual life. In the spiritual life of Batak Christians, the

Church plays similar role in importance as the *hulahula* in Batak culture. The key to improving Church existence is by maintaining its authority before the parishioners, especially the male adults and fathers. The Church should not only become passive by receiving and expecting honor from its parishioners, but through its authority and its activists' relentless work, become active in building the parishioners' spiritual life, including by influencing families and providing correct Bible interpretations. Therefore, HKBP parishioners who, since incidentally coming from Batak culture, have a strong and solid feeling

of social life, also feel the same in their daily spiritual life. The Christian equivalent of *boru* for Batak male adults is their family, since within it they can express their priestly and leadership roles by becoming example and protector, guiding it to a certain form and direction. In a good culture, Christian spirituality starts from the right source. *Bibel* is the spiritual source accompanying the parishioners to have healthy spirituality, and therefore become an equivalent of *Dongan Tubu* in supporting Batak male adults' spiritual life.

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