


## REFORMED TRADITION, GEREJA KRISTEN SUMATERA BAGIAN SELATAN CULTURE, AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

## TRADISI REFORMED, KULTUR GEREJA KRISTEN SUMATERA BAGIAN SELATAN, DAN KITAB SUCI

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### ABSTRAK

Artikel ini dilatarbelakangi oleh kegelisahan melihat bagaimana di Gereja Kristen Sumatera Bagian Selatan (GKSBS), tradisi Reformed terkesan kurang atau bahkan tidak relevan. Tesis artikel ini adalah tradisi Reformed relevan untuk GKSBS selama itu ditempatkan dalam "dialog kritis-apresiatif dengan kultur nglari dan mandiri" dan dalam "dialog otoritas dengan Kitab Suci." Untuk mendukung tesis tersebut, penulis mencoba "menggambarkan pertemuan faktual" dan "mengimajinasikan dialog kritis-apresiatif" antara tradisi Reformed dengan kultur nglari dan mandiri, lalu menempatkannya dalam dialog otoritas dengan Kitab Suci. Hasilnya, didapati bahwa walaupun kultur nglari menantang, bahkan mengalahkan sejumlah aspek dari tradisi Gereformeerd, ada titik temu dan potensi saling melengkapi antara tradisi Reformed yang lebih luas dengan kultur nglari. Penulis juga menemukan bahwa dalam banyak aspek, tradisi Gereformeerd saling meneguhkan dengan kultur mandiri, tetapi tradisi Reformed yang lebih luas bisa juga saling mengkritisi dengan kultur ini. Kendati demikian, baik tradisi Reformed maupun kultur GKSBS masih perlu direformasi seturut dengan Kitab Suci.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** tradisi Reformed, kultur GKSBS, nglari, mandiri, Kitab Suci.

This article is motivated by the anxiety to see how Reformed tradition seems less relevant or even irrelevant in Gereja Kristen Sumatera Bagian Selatan (GKSBS). This article thesis is a Reformed tradition, which is relevant to GKSBS, as it is placed in a "critical-appreciative dialogue with nglari and mandiri culture" and "in an authority dialogue with Holy Scripture". To support the thesis, the writer "describe factual encounter" and "imagine critical appreciative dialogue" between Reformed tradition and Gereja Kristen Sumatera Bagian Selatan (GKSBS) nglari and mandiri culture, and then place them in authority dialogue with Holy Scripture. The results have found that there are meeting points and complementary potency between a boarder Reformed tradition and nglari culture eventhough the nglari culture defeats some Gereformeerd tradition aspects. The writer also found in many aspects, not only in Gereformeerd tradition, that affirms with mandiri culture each other, but also in a broader Reformed tradition which is able to criticize the culture each other. However, both Reformed tradition and GKSBS culture still need to be reformed according to the Holy Scripture.

**Keywords:** Reformed tradition, GKSBS culture, nglari, mandiri, Holy Scripture.

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## Introduction

Historical-institutionally,<sup>1</sup>GKSBS (*Gereja Kristen Sumatera Bagian Selatan/Southern-part Sumatra Christian Church*) can be classified as a Reformed church.<sup>2</sup> Her grandmother's church was GKN (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland/Reformed Churches in the Netherlands*) and her mother's church was GKJ (*Gereja-gereja Kristen Jawa/Javanese Christian Churches*). Historically, GKN was founded by Abraham Kuyper who restored early Reformed confessional dogma (except article 36 of Belgic Confession) and church order.<sup>3</sup> When missionaries from GKN worked in Central Java, they did not only proclaim the gospel, taught the confessional dogma and baptism but also built a complete church institution in accordance with the GKN model.<sup>4</sup> As a result, GKJ was born; after a long time later, GKJ looked like a copy of GKN. Then, GKSBS, as the daughter church of GKJ, also has a "similar" church model with GKJ, her mother church, and GKN, her grandmother church.

I say "similar" because as a socio-culturally, GKSBS never becomes a copy of GKJ. GKSBS is a transmigrant church that has its uniqueness. Her early members were transmigrants who came from various denominational and cultural backgrounds. Before the GKJ missionaries came, they had done *nglari* (seek and find each other), and they became *mandiri* (autonomous) Christian communities through the *nglari*.<sup>5</sup> In the later history of GKSBS, the meaning of *nglari* and *mandiri* have expanded. *Nglari* is used to name many experiences that are started from "feel lonely," "looking for brother and sister in faith," "meet with brother and sister in faith," "visitation by missionary," "welcoming newcomers," "embrace the native tribes," "evangelism," "general *diakonia*," until "build dialogue."<sup>6</sup> *Mandiri* is used to name experiences starting from "move," "survive," "have own land," "become an autonomous church," "consolidation," until "*mandiri* for the sake of mission."<sup>7</sup>

Along with time, those *nglari* and *mandiri* experiences crystallized to be, said, GKSBS *nglari* and *mandiri* culture. *Nglari* culture has several aspects, namely: "mutual respect for personal spiritual experience," "keep the brotherhood," "emphasis on familiarity," "expectation that pastor can be a friend for congregation members," "give convenience to prospective members," "have a sensitive ethnic value," "prefer to inward evangelism," "have ideals of transformative *diakonia*" and "put forward dialogue." Then *Mandiri* culture has several aspects, namely: "tendency to change easily," "work ethic," "spirit to own and conquer the land," "emphasis on the autonomy of the congregations," "spirit of consolidation," and "missionary awareness."

<sup>1</sup> I purposely use the term "historical-institutional" to distinguish it from historical actor's point of view.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, *Reformed Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 246.

<sup>3</sup> H. Berkhof and I. H. Enklaar, *Sedjarah Geredja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Malia, 1967), 320–23; Christiaan de Jonge, *Apa Itu Calvinisme?* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1998), 27.

<sup>4</sup> Th. Müller Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1966), 181.

<sup>5</sup> Kristanto Budiprabowo, "Teologi (Pasca) Transmigrasi: Perubahan Sosial Dan Kesadaran Diasporik Gereja Kristen Sumatera Bagian Selatan" (Master's Thesis, Salatiga, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, 2005), 27; Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, "Naskah Akademik Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS" (Sinode Gereja Kristen Sumatera Bagian Selatan, 2020), 27–29; Cf. Bauswein and Vischer, *Reformed Worldwide*, 246.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, "Naskah Akademik," 79.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, 94.

Meet with GKSBS *nglari* and *mandiri* culture, *Gereformeerd* tradition (from GKN to GKJ) is more or less challenged. Compared with *nglari* culture, *Gereformeerd* tradition has a number of aspects that seems incompatible, namely: “emphasis on dogma,” “enforcement of church discipline,” “solemn worship,” “pastor as the minister of the Word and sacrament,” “emphasis on church order,” “ethnocentric tendency,” “outward evangelism,” “tendency to satisfy with reformativ *diakonia*” and “non-compromise principle.” Compared with the “tendency to change easily” in *mandiri* culture, *Gereformeerd*’s “tendency to be conservative” also seems incompatible. Seeing in more real cases, for example, in several GKSBS congregations where I have ever served and lived in, I see how ecclesiastical discussions are more coloured by the statements “according to me ...,” “based on my experience ...” rather than “according to the Bible ...” or “refer to our doctrinal standard ...” I have also seen how even among the consistory members, the understanding dogma is not considered as something important. The majority of consistory members also seem to be *ewuh pekewuh* (unpleasant) when church discipline needs to be enforced. Regarding expectations to the pastors, I see how the most congregation members expect their pastor to be a good friend for them more than be a good minister of the Word and sacrament.

So far, there is an impression that Reformed tradition is less relevant or even irrelevant to GKSBS. But scientifically, this impression still needs to be tested. Moreover, it should be remembered that Reformed tradition is broader than *Gereformeerd*. It is possible that while *Gereformeerd* tradition is less relevant or even irrelevant to GKSBS *nglari* and *mandiri* culture, other variants of the Reformed tradition may be more relevant. By saying “relevant,” I do not mean only accommodative but transformative.

In this article, my thesis said that Reformed tradition is relevant to GKSBS as long as it is placed in a “critical-appreciative dialogue with *nglari* and *mandiri* culture” and “in an authority dialogue with Holy Scripture.” “Critical-appreciative dialogue” assumes that “Reformed tradition” is equal with “*nglari* and *mandiri* culture” so that they can appreciate and criticize one another. “Authority dialogue” assumes that Holy Scripture has authority over tradition and culture according to *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) principle. However it is different from authoritarianism, that the questions from the contexts (that is, “Reformed tradition” and “*nglari* and *mandiri* culture”) can be asked to the Holy Scripture. From these questions, there will be a hermeneutic process through a liberating (not oppressive!) biblical message in order to obtain the answer.

To support my thesis, I will present my arguments that are guided by these three contextual-theological questions:

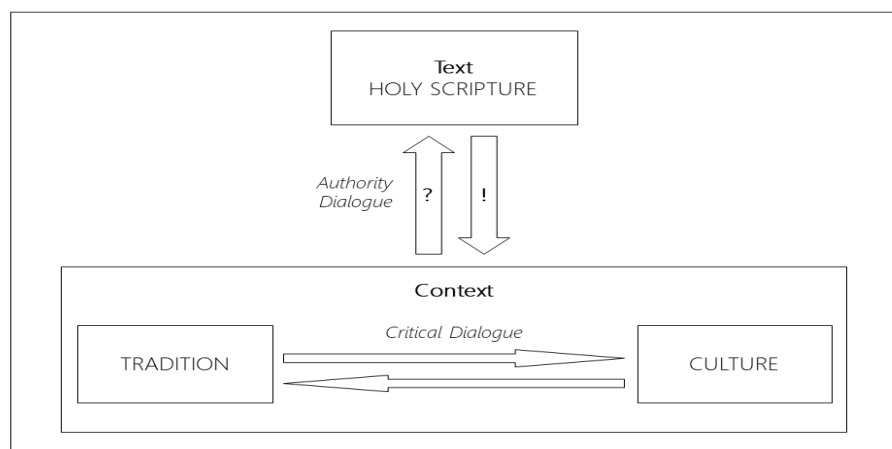
1. How, factually, is the encounter of the Reformed tradition (in this case *Gereformeerd* tradition from GKN to GKJ) with GKSBS *nglari* and *mandiri* culture?
2. How, imaginatively, can broader Reformed tradition be placed in critical appreciative dialogue with GKSBS *nglari* and *mandiri* culture?
3. How should “critical appreciative dialogue between Reformed tradition and GKSBS in *nglari* and *mandiri* culture” be placed in “authority dialogue with the

## Holy Scripture”?

Unlike previous writings related to Reformed tradition and GKSBS, this article uses *nglari* and *mandiri* as the perspective. Indeed, it can be found in *Naskah Akademik Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS* (Academic Manuscript of GKSBS Principles of Teaching), *nglari* and *mandiri* that perspectives have already been used. However beyond the academic manuscript, this article will describe more clearly about GKSBS *nglari* and *mandiri* culture.

## Methods

Academically, there are many choices of contextual theology models or methods.<sup>8</sup> Still considering the benefits for GKSBS, I think it is better to keep continuity with, namely, “GKSBS method of contextual theology,” which *Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS* (Team for Formulation of GKSBS Principles of Teaching) that has built like this:



**Figure 1. GKSBS Method of Contextual Theology**

Source: Tim Perumus Pokok-pokok Ajaran GKSBS

Learning from Stephen B. Bevans, this method takes into account of “the Holy Scripture,” “tradition,” “culture,” and “social change.”<sup>9</sup> Similar to what Bevans calls the “anthropological model,”<sup>10</sup> context is mapped firstly, and from here, theological questions has arisen. Different from Bevans, in GKSBS, there is no sharp distinction between “culture” and “social change” because in (trans)migrant communities both of them are identical. Another difference with Bevans is that “tradition” also placed as “context,” in this case, historical-ecclesiastical context. While Bevans places “tradition” as “Text,” which is equal with the Holy Scripture, GKSBS places the Holy Scripture (consist of 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books) as the only normative Text above “tradition” and “culture.” This is done based on the unquestioned axiom of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone).

Indeed, learning from history, so there will be danger if *Sola Scriptura* is misused to legitimate “anti-tradition” and/or “anti-cultural” attitude. But, this should not be the case if the Holy Scripture is properly understood in the frame of God’s continual revelation

<sup>8</sup> It can be seen, for example, in Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002); Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007); Sigurd Bergmann, *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Angie Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Joas Adiprasetya, “Towards an Asian Multitextual Theology,” *Exchange* 43 (2014): 119–31, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1572543X-12341313>.

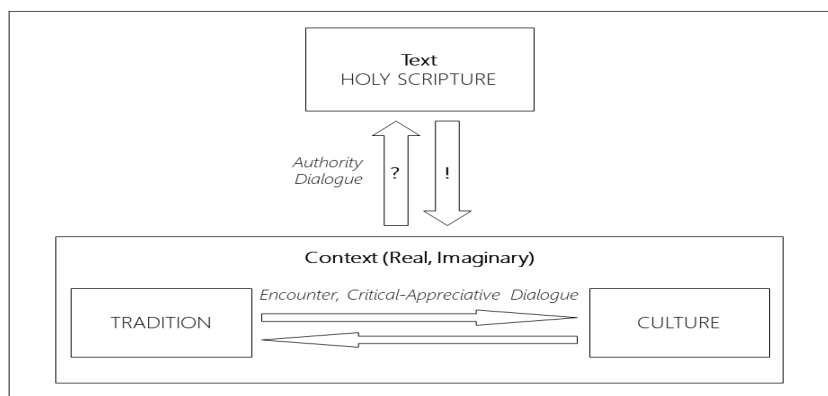
<sup>9</sup> Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Bevans, 54–56.

throughout history. Through tradition and culture, God also reveals Himself, and the Holy Scripture is the “glasses” through which this revelation can be seen clearly.<sup>11</sup> On the other side, tradition and culture can be used by the Holy Spirit in providing illumination to understand the Holy Scripture better. There is also a danger that *Sola Scriptura* is misidentified with oppressive authoritarianism. However it can be avoided by presupposing that the Holy Scripture’s authoritative message is not oppressive but truly liberating. This true liberation occurs in affirmation as well in criticism toward the context.

Regarding to the steps, at first, “tradition” and “culture” will be explored and then are placed in “critical dialogue.” Similar to critical dialogue in pedagogy, the ‘participants’ (“tradition” and “culture”) are considered equal so that they can criticize and sharpen each other. Through this critical dialogue, sharp contextual-theological questions will emerge. From these questions, “authority dialogue” with the Holy Scripture will take place. Of course, “authority dialogue” assumes that the Holy Scripture has an authority above tradition and culture. The different from authoritarianism, questions from the contexts (that is, “tradition” and “culture”) can be asked to the Holy Scripture. In these questions, there will be a hermeneutic process through which a liberating (not oppressive!) biblical message will be obtained as the answer.

So far, I see that the GKSBS method of contextual theology is quite good in general so I will use it. However, there are also modifications as along with developing appreciative inquiry in GKSBS, “critical dialogue” will be enriched into “critical-appreciative dialogue.” Considering that critical-appreciative dialogue between Reformed tradition and GKSBS culture has not happened so much, then I will distinguish between “**real context**” (that is, “factual encounter” between “*Gereformeerd* tradition” and “GKSBS *nglari* and *mandiri* culture”) and “**imaginary context**” (that is “imagination beyond the fact” about “critical-appreciative dialogue” between “broader Reformed tradition” and “GKSBS *nglari* and *mandiri* culture”). So, at first, I will describe the “real context.” and next, I will imagine the “imaginary context” beyond the real context. At last, I will place the “imaginary context” (that I have imagined) and Holy Scripture (as the normative Text) in authority dialogue.



**Chart 2. Modified GKSBS Method of Contextual Theology**

Source: The Author

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 69–71.

## Results

### Reformed Tradition and Nglari Culture

#### Between Dogma and Personal Spiritual Experience

At least until the 1940s (before the door was opened to modern and liberal theology),<sup>12</sup> the *Gereformeerd* tradition of GKN strongly emphasized Reformed confessional dogma as contained in Belgic Confession (except article 36 about the duty of civil government to protect true religion and eradicate heresy), Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort. For GKN, confessional dogma was the second norm after Holy Scripture. Arrived in Java, missionaries from GKN only taught the Heidelberg Catechism to Javanese Christians.<sup>13</sup> However, GKJ, as a daughter church of GKN, still inherited *Gereformeerd's* dogmatic-confessional character.<sup>14</sup> By some pastors with GKJ background, this dogmatic-confessional character was ever tried to be applied to the Christian transmigrant community in Southern-part Sumatra, which later became GKSBS. But, this trial was responded with resistance.

Resistance could be understood in a socio-culturally way because *nglari* culture put forward “mutual respect for personal spiritual experience.” This value has arisen from GKSBS ancestors’ experience who felt lonely, without brother and sister in faith, when they just arrived as colonists/transmigrants in Southern-part Sumatra. Although there were neighbors who were also colonists/transmigrants, they still felt lonely. So, from this point, some of them began to *nglari* (sought) the Lord personally, and according to their testimony, they experienced as a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup> Because of that, they converted themselves from just nominal Christians to be committed Christians. Then, they sought a deeper understanding of the Christian faith by referring to their own spiritual experience rather than the church dogma. Even after meeting with brothers and sisters in faith, missionaries, and congregation pastor, they still referred more to their personal spiritual experiences. Because it sometimes or even often occurred that everyone held on to “beliefs based on his/her experience,” confusion and disputation. To resolve this problem, they built a culture of “mutual respect for personal spiritual experience” in a sense “let everyone hold on to beliefs based on his/her experience,” “do not blame one another regarding to the belief.”<sup>16</sup> This culture worked on emphasizing the confessional dogma as in the *Gereformeerd* tradition which tended to be neglected.

From this phenomenon, there was an impression that “emphasis on dogma” (in accordance with *Gereformeerd* tradition) and “respect for personal spiritual experience” (in accordance with *nglari* culture) were “either-or” options. But, this impression could

<sup>12</sup> de Jonge, *Apa Itu Calvinisme?*, 94; Gerrit Riemer, *Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Di Indonesia: Asal, Sejarah, Dan Identitasnya* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2009), 17–18.

<sup>13</sup> Regarding to the reason why Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort were not taught to the Javanese Christians, it can be seen, for example, in D. Bakker, “Damarang Gesang: Toentoean Kangge Marsoedi Kawroeh Bab Kitab Soetji Bagejan III: Piwoelang Agami Kristen Catechismus,” n.d., 101. Here, Bakker as missionary from GKN implicitly said that it was more contextual if in the future, pasamoean Kristen Djawi Tenggara sisih Kidoel (South Central Java Christian congregation), would make her own confessional document which more adequate answered the challenges of Islam and Kejawan in the Javanese context.

<sup>14</sup> At least, it can be seen from the process until now, the candidate for GKJ church officials (pastor, elder and deacon) must state that he/she will obey the doctrinal standard (formerly *Heidelberg Catechism*; since 1996 *Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKJ*) before the ordination is served upon him/her.

<sup>15</sup> Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, “Naskah Akademik,” 80–81.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, 84, 93.

be reduced by remembering that the variants of Reformed tradition integrating dogma and spiritual experience in history. For example, the classical Reformed tradition of John Calvin began with dogma, continued with internalization in the heart and led to Christian godly life.<sup>17</sup> Beyond John Calvin, Puritanism in England seriously studied Reformed dogma to achieve religious experience through a renewed Christian life.<sup>18</sup> Next to Puritanism, Reformed Revivalism, especially Jonathan Edwards, warned about the dangers of defective orthodoxy and guides experiencing in a true religious affection.<sup>19</sup>

If GKSBS members can get acquainted with these variants, perhaps they will be more open to Reformed dogma. However, it is also possible that they remain resistant. In *nglari* culture perspective, they might ask: “Why should we start from the dogma?” “Is it not valid if we start to do theology from experience?” By these questions, the usual assumption in Reformed tradition that “dogma creates experience” is challenged. It is not easy to answer this challenge because, in fact, GKSBS members, or at least some of them, have spiritual experiences even though they do not know dogma. Without empathy for these experiences, dogmatic teaching will only be seen as irrelevant or even insulted.

In the Holy Scripture, the dogmatic teachings, without empathy for experiences, are criticized. By telling the story of Job and his friends debate, the Book of Job’s narrator warns about the danger of rigid orthodoxy as depicted in the figures of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. The books of gospel narrated how Jesus also opposed the teaching model of the scribes and Pharisees, which ignored the struggles of grassroots people. Nevertheless, Matthew also noted that Jesus was not against a true dogma taught by the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23: 3). Even Jesus said that every scribe who has been received His experiential lesson about Heaven’s Kingdom is like a master of the house who takes out new and old treasures from his treasury (Matthew 13: 52). It illustrates how the integration of “biblical-dogmatic knowledge” with “experience” will become a spiritual richness. About which one came first, the Holy Scripture told both Paul, who at first had a biblical-dogmatic knowledge and Peter, James, John, who at first experienced an encounter with Jesus. However, as Paul said in his letter to the Ephesian congregation, believers must pursue the unity of true faith and knowledge in love (Ephesians 4: 5, 13–15), including GKSBS members.

## Between Enforce Church Discipline and Keep the Brotherhood

Besides emphasizing the teaching of dogma, the *Gereformeerde* tradition of GKN is also concerned with the enforcement of church discipline. Historically, it was a reaction to the weak enforcement of church’s discipline in NHK (*Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*), from which Abraham Kuyper and his followers were separated themselves.<sup>20</sup> Back to the Church Order of Dort, GKN practiced three steps of church discipline: *First*, admonishment by the church

<sup>17</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1536), III.vi.2.

<sup>18</sup> Brian Armstrong, “Puritan Spirituality: The Tension of Bible and Experience,” in *The Spirituality of Western Christendom II: The Roots of the Modern Christian Tradition*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 241–42.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affection* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1746).

<sup>20</sup> de Jonge, *Apa Itu Calvinisme?*, 159.

council. In this step if the person repents, he/she is released from church censure. *Second*, if the person has not repented after being admonished, the church council will announce his/her violation to the congregation and forbid him/her to partake in the Lord's Supper until he/she repents. *Third*, if the person keeps hardening his/her heart after the first and second step, church council will take an extreme action that is "announce ex-communication" until he/she confesses a sin in front of the congregation.<sup>21</sup> By GKJ, this kind of church discipline was theoretically inherited and adapted from Javanese culture.<sup>22</sup> However, in practice, the enforcement of church's discipline is sometimes, even often, constrained by *ewuh pekewuh* (unpleasant) tendency.

In GKSBS, the tendency of *ewuh pekewuh* to enforce church discipline is getting stronger. This is related to *nglari* culture, which always tries to "keep the brotherhood." The root of this aspect of *nglari* culture is the experience of "looking for (*nglari*) brothers and sisters in faith." In the collective memory of GKSBS members, we may know that looking for brothers and sisters in faith was not easy in the colonization and transmigration era. Various efforts (planting pine trees, singing Neng Gunung Wah Neng Are<sup>23</sup>, asking the transmigration officer, visiting door to door, etc.) must be made though sometimes it takes a long time.<sup>24</sup> "Keeping the brotherhood" became an important aspect of *nglari* culture by remembering the experience before. There is also a fear that the enforcement of church discipline will only damage the brotherhood as its side effect. Then GKSBS church discipline was gradually deconstructed at first in practice and then, since 2015, in her church order also.

If this case is discussed in the worldwide Reformed forum, most strict Reformed churches may ask whether GKSBS is still a true church or not. They ask this question because it refers to Reformed doctrinal standards,<sup>25</sup> they believe that "enforcement of church discipline" is the third mark of the true church (after "pure proclamation of the Word" and "service of sacraments under Christ's institution"). The more moderate Reformed churches may respond more gently by saying that church discipline does not determine whether a church is true or not. However, church discipline is necessary to build in a good church life. If John Calvin is also presented and asked to speak, he will support the attitude of more moderate Reformed churches.<sup>26</sup> As he has ever said in his *Institutes*, he will remind us that church discipline should be accompanied by meekness and it is to heal, not to kill.<sup>27</sup> The church council and members should pray earnestly for the conversion of the excommunicated person when ex-communication is announced, if

<sup>21</sup> "Church Order of Dort," Reformed Standards, article 71-78, accessed February 20, 2022, <https://reformedstandards.com/three-forms-of-unity/church-order-dort.html>.

<sup>22</sup> For example: In admonish, church council will try to apply the philosophy of "*kena iwake ora buthek banyune*" (achieve the goal without complicate the problem) as far as possible. Considering the culture of shame, confession of sin may be made only in front of church council and only then will be announced to the congregation.

<sup>23</sup> Javanese translation of Dutch Christian hymn *Op Bergen en In Dalen* by Ahasverus van den Berg (1733-1807). Indonesian translation in *Kidung Jemaat 66: Di Gunung dan di Lurah*.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, "Naskah Akademik," 83.

<sup>25</sup> "Belgic Confession," n.d., article 29; "Heidelberg Catechism," n.d., question and answer 83-85; "Westminster Confession of Faith," n.d., article XXX.

<sup>26</sup> W. F. Dankbaar, *Calvin: Jalan Hidup Dan Karjanya* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1967), 169.

<sup>27</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.xii.11.



necessary, it is accompanied by fasting.<sup>28</sup> For GKSBS, what Calvin and moderate Reformed churches say will likely be more acceptable and enlighten that enforcing church discipline can go hand in hand with keeping the brotherhood.

Back to the Holy Scripture, it is clear that church discipline as practiced by most Reformed churches has a strong foundation especially in the gospel, according to Matthew. In Matthew's perspective, there is no discipleship without discipline. Indeed, discipline, according to Matthew, is different from the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees, which only become a heavy burden for the people (Matthew 11: 28, 23: 4). But, it is also different from antinomianism of the enthusiasts (Matthew 7: 22–23). It is no coincidence that Matthew uniquely records Jesus' words regarding key power (Matthew 16:19) and the enforcement of discipline (Matthew 18: 15–20) that He entrusts His church. However, Matthew also warns about the danger of hypocritical judgement (Matthew 7: 1–5) and the arrogance of religious leaders (Matthew 23: 8–12). The church is identical with "brethren" in which all members are equal brother and sister as he said (Matthew 23: 8). Church leaders are firstly equal (*primus inter pares*), not higher than other members. They even have a greater responsibility to serve their brother and sister in humility (Matthew 23: 9–12). When they enforce church discipline toward their brother/sister, they have to keep the brotherhood spirit and avoid judgmental and arrogant tendencies.

### Common Worship: Solemn or Familiar?

As Reformed worship tradition in general, GKN worship tradition is characterized by "solemnity" and "simplicity". Solemnity means "quietness and earnest sobriety". Simplicity means only doing what God commands to do or, more concretely, without many liturgical ceremonies and rites.<sup>29</sup> Here, the influence of 16th century Reformation can be seen, which, instead of simply adapted medieval rites to the Reformation dogma (as was done by Lutheran and Anglican reformation), and prefers to replace Roman Catholic mass with simple pulpit-centered worship. In the Enlightenment era, this preference was strengthened by the contemporary spirit to discard religious rites that were considered superstitious. Deliberately, according to the church planting mission model, GKN missionaries bequeathed this Reformed worship tradition to daughter churches, including GKJ. So understandable if GKJ continued GKN worship tradition almost without any changes for a long time.<sup>30</sup> However, because "solemnity" and "simplicity" characterize Reformed worship in general, GKJ worship tradition is not much different from other Javanese churches such as GKJTU (*Gereja Kristen Jawa Tengah Utara/Northern Central Java Christian Church*) and GKJW (*Greja Kristen Jawi Wetan/East Java Christian Church*). They are not *Gereformeerd* but also Reformed.

<sup>28</sup> Calvin, IV.xii.14.

<sup>29</sup> Wilbur Bruinsma, "Let the Earth Keep Silence: The Solemnity of Reformed Worship," *The Standard Bearer: A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine*, October 15, 1994, 31–33.

<sup>30</sup> Indeed, not without reason GKJ continued. Simplicity was continued because it made her worship different from Roman Catholic and other religions worship which, from their points of view, are too complicated ritual matters. Solemnity was continued because it is in accordance with the character of Javanese people.

By GKSBS ancestors, the Reformed worship tradition was more or less still continued. Historically, soon after the first meeting with brothers and sisters in faith, they committed to worship together every Sunday.<sup>31</sup> As there was no pastor yet at that time, they are dare/*nekat* (in the sense of “dare themselves”) to take turn leading the worship. They used the worship order of the previous church from which they came as far as they remembered. Although based on limited memory, their worship order still showed “solemnity” and “simplicity”, which a character of Reformed worship tradition. Besides, as a continuation of *nglari* that led to an encounter, “familiarity” characterize interaction before and after worship.<sup>32</sup>

Socio-culturally, Reformed worship tradition’s simplicity is compatible with the social character of (trans) migrants who do not like complexity. It can be understood that GKSBS’ worship still seems simple up to now. But, there is a problem when the solemnity in Reformed worship tradition meet with *nglari* culture. Different with Javanese high culture which is more characterized by “religiosity” (reverence toward the sacred), *nglari* culture is more characterized by “familiarity”. Indeed, in the early era of the transmigrant Christian communities in Southern-part Sumatra (which later became GKSBS) could be seen that solemnity in worship was still preserved because their simple reason said it was the tradition a simple reason. After meeting with Pentecostal-Charismatic worship tradition and hearing liturgical discourse to develop fellowship aspect in worship, the practice of GKSBS worship shows the tension between “solemnity” and “familiarity”. On one side, there is an effort to preserve the solemn character of GKSBS worship so that GKSBS remains Protestant. On the other hand, “familiarity” is interesting partly because it is compatible with GKSBS *nglari* culture. Even, from time to time, familiar expressions from Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition are more and more absorbed by GKSBS congregations in their worship.

In Reformed worldwide family today, there are Reformed churches who also experience about the tension between “solemnity” and “familiarity,” also “traditional” and “contemporary” regarding to their worship practices.<sup>33</sup> Generally, they have solved this problem by developing a “directory for worship” as customary in a Reformed tradition since Post Reformation era. The worship style, details formula in order of worship can be flexible but liturgical principles in directory for worship must be attended. These liturgical principles are derived from Reformed dogma of God-centered, emphasizes on both His transcendence and immanence, that views Him in covenant relationship with His people etc.

For GKSBS, this can be a good insight. Indeed, from 2002 to 2005, *Tim Liturgi GKSBS* has composed a kind of “directory for worship” in *Draft Liturgi Kontekstual GKSBS* which was proposed to *Sidang VIII Sinode GKSBS* in 2005 in Bengkulu. Nevertheless, after this

<sup>31</sup> Evert Hoogerwerf, *Transmigrasi Dan Pertumbuhan Gereja: Sejarah Pertumbuhan Dan Perkembangan Gereja Kristen Sumatra Bagian Selatan (GKSBS) 1932-1987*, 1997, 387–88; Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, “Naskah Akademik,” 83.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Hoogerwerf, *Transmigrasi Dan Pertumbuhan Gereja*, 387–88.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. David J. Engelsma, “Reformed Worship vs Liturgical ‘Renewal,’” *The Standard Bearer: A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine*, October 15, 1994, 29–31.

synod assembly, there are only several orders of worship that are well socialized to the congregations especially Sunday order of worship. It is good if GKSBS develops (again) her directory for worship seriously before struggling with order of worship in the future.

However, it must be remembered that according to the Holy Scripture, the essence of worship is not to obey the directory for worship or implement the order of worship but to have the experiences on both sides as personally and communally, about a covenant relationship with God the Father, through Jesus Christ His Son and in the Holy Spirit. Both solemnity and familiarity are necessary in common worship to arrive at this essence. Solemnity does not mean only fear of God but also awe of and love for Him. This is need to be conditioned not only through “proclamation of the Word” (start from *Votum* /Call for Worship until Sending and Blessing) but also in “the well-prepared prayers and songs” (as a response toward the various proclamation of the word), “gesture,” and “sensory elements”. Familiarity does not mean without vertical orientation. In common worship and daily life, the familiarity of God’s chosen people should be in and through Christ that are done by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit which also for the glory of God the Father.

### Pastor: “Minister of the Word and Sacrament” or “Friend for Congregation Members”?

It is common in Reformed tradition to identify the pastor with “minister of the Word and sacraments.” GKN follows this identification without any doubt. For example, it can be seen in “Form of Ordination of the Ministers of God’s Word” which from 16th until 19th century was used by all Calvinist/Reformed churches in the Netherlands and functions up to now in celebration worship of traditional Calvinists/Reformed congregations.<sup>34</sup> There, it is explained that “... the pastoral office ... is nothing else but the preaching of the gospel, accompanied with prayer, and the administration of the holy sacraments ...”<sup>35</sup> In GKJ, this identification has gradually shifted along with the increasing number of pastors who prioritize “*dolan* (visiting) homes of congregation members” rather than “preaching”.<sup>36</sup>

The ministry model of prioritizing *dolan* was also applied by GKJ missionary pastors when they were sent to Southern-part Sumatra. Their reason to apply this model was not simply because that is the tradition. They had a reason based on their experiences when just arrived at Southern-part Sumatra. They felt that (a little) *nglari* could be struggle for the Christian transmigrants at that time. Just as before they came, Christians transmigrants had to *nglari* (seek with various efforts until find) one another then as soon as they arrived,

<sup>34</sup> Th. van den End, ed., *Enam Belas Dokumen Dasar Calvinisme* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 457.

<sup>35</sup> “Liturgy of the Reformed Churches,” Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 457, accessed February 20, 2022, <http://ccel.org/creeds/neth-ref-liturgy.txt>.

<sup>36</sup> I say gradually because for a long time, missionary pastors from GKN who work in Java monopolized authority to preach and administer the sacraments (and do other ecclesiastical rites). They were reluctant to ordain natives as pastor with the same authority as them. Indeed, at that time there were natives who ordained as pastor assistants; but those pastor assistants might only read the sermon from missionary pastors and did not have authority to compose their own sermon. After those missionary pastors went home, their monopoly patterns were imitated by some of the next natives pastors. Then it happened, *guru Injil* (evangelist) and *penatua* (elder) might stand in the pulpit but only to read the sermon of those natives pastors. But along with time, the situation had changed that GKJ pastors no longer monopolize the authority to preach. Even, there were many GKJ pastors prioritize *dolan* (visiting) to homes of congregation members, rather than preaching.

they had to *nglari* the existed Christian transmigrant communities.<sup>37</sup> Through this experience, they were inspired by prioritizing *dolan* in order to continue *nglari* which led to the encounter. Indeed, they preach, often administer sacraments and do other ecclesiastical rites on Sunday. On another day, they might lead family visitation worship. However, more than those services, they visited (*ndolani*) the homes of Christian transmigrant communities members as much as possible. By doing *dolan* continually, they became close with those transmigrant Christians and even were considered as friends.<sup>38</sup>

Along with time, the experience of “closeness with pastors” has formed another aspect of GKSBS *nglari* culture that said: “the expectation of pastor can become a friend for congregation members”. For that, in the opinion of many GKSBS members until now, the main way is *dolan* diligently. This kind of *dolan* cannot be replaced by just coming when there is a fellowship. GKSBS pastor should take the time to just *dolan*. As the side effect, pastor who *dolan* diligently will be considered good, while who will not be considered less or even not good.

The purely pulpit centered as the perspective of reformed tradition brings an expectation to the pastor in GKSBS *nglari* culture that might be viewed as a deviation because it is not in accordance with the calling of a pastor as minister of the Word and sacrament.<sup>39</sup> The perspective of Reformed tradition that has been influenced by the culture and which highly appreciates specialization of the phenomenon for pastors who are diligent to *dolan* as might be recognized as something good. However, then there is a question: “What is the difference with a social worker?”<sup>40</sup> Most GKSBS members may answer it: “Your question is irrelevant with GKSBS context. In the GKSBS context, the pastor should be a generalist, not a specialist”. And more positive response comes from the Reformed Puritan tradition. Referring to Richard Baxter, people from the Reformed Puritan tradition will say that *dolan* is necessary to convey God’s word message personally.<sup>41</sup> But, some of GKSBS members respond: “Do not *dolan* to my home for preaching.”

Back to the Holy Scripture, it was good to attend the ministry of Paul, the apostle of the Thessalonian congregation where his gospel proclamation and his close relationship with congregation members were integrated very well. During his stay in the midst of the Thessalonian congregation, Paul was faithful both to tell the gospel according to God’s will (1 Thessalonians 2: 4) and was being gentle like a nurse taking care of her children (1 Thessalonians 2: 7). With the members of the Thessalonian congregation, Paul was affectionately ready to share the gospel of God and himself (1 Thessalonians 2: 8).

### *Between Implement Church Order and Give Convenience*

In *Gereformeerd* tradition, church order is the third norm after Holy Scripture and

<sup>37</sup> Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, “Naskah Akademik,” 28.

<sup>38</sup> Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, 86.

<sup>39</sup> Thom S. Rainer, “Fifteen Reasons Why Your Pastor Should Not Visit Much,” Church Answers Featuring Thom Rainer, August 31, 2016, <https://churchanswers.com/blog/fifteen-reasons-pastor-not-visit-much/>.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Howard L. Rice, *Pastor as Spiritual Guide* (Grand Avenue: Upper Room Books, 1998), 14-15

<sup>41</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 2002), 83.

confession. Indeed, *Gereformeerd* churches believe that Holy Scripture is sufficient but the teaching of the Holy Scripture is so rich and scattered. Therefore, the confession is made as the second norm in summarizing the Holy Scripture's main teachings. Then the church order about concretizing confession in the church life is made as the third norm. "As it is" (not "as far as") in accordance with Holy Scripture and confession, so the church order must be obeyed, except, there is an extraordinary case. Faithfully, GKJ continues this *Gereformeerd* tradition.<sup>42</sup>

Theoretically, GKSBS also places church order as the third norm after Holy Scripture and confession.<sup>43</sup> But in practice, regarding services to the new member or prospective member, there is a tendency to compromise church order. This tendency is related to the custom of "giving convenience" which also an aspect of *nglari* culture. If traced, this custom is rooted from the "welcoming newcomers" experience in the transmigration era. At that time, the search for and the encounter with newly arrived transmigrant were re-actualized by previous *nglari* experiences.<sup>44</sup> They did not want to lose new brother and sister who had been searched until found, GKSBS ancestors welcomed them and gave them convenience to join the Christian transmigrant community. From time to time, whenever there is a newcomer or prospective member, the same pattern is repeated so that the custom of giving convenience is formed and became will be an aspect of *nglari* culture.

The GKSBS's tendency to compromise church order may be seen as a weakness in the most strict Reformed churches' eyes. Referring to 1 Corinthians 14: 40, they believe that the church will be crowded if the church order is not faithfully obeyed. However, the Reformed churches who have adapted to their tradition with the social character that favors freedom will likely defend GKSBS. For them, human is more important than rules.

How about the Lord Jesus? In the Synoptic Gospels, through the stories of Sabbath debate, it was clear that according to Him, the principle is "rules are made for humans, not humans for rules" (Mark 2: 27). However, while living on earth, the Lord Jesus, in His humanity, obeyed the Law substantially (Galatians 4: 4). That means, in dealing with rules such as church order, Jesus' disciples should not be too strict or too loose.

## Pastor: Between Ethnic Sensitive Value and Ethnocentric Tendency

Theoretically, GKN recognized that the church is universal in a sense of "embracing all nations without any discrimination". However, in practice in the mission fields, GKN more or less showed an ethnocentric tendency. Especially in South Africa, the ethnocentric tendency was ever shown through silence, even supporting the politics of apartheid.<sup>45</sup> In

<sup>42</sup> At least until *Tata Gereja dan Tata Laksana GKJ 2005*, GKJ stated explicitly that the Bible is the first norm, *Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKJ* is the second norm and *Tata Gereja dan Tata Laksana GKJ* is the third norm. Based on these three norms, ecclesiastical decisions should be taken. In *Tata Gereja dan Tata Laksana GKJ 2018*, normativity of the Bible, *Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKJ* and *Tata Gereja dan Tata Laksana GKJ* are no longer explicitly stated. But in its "Mukadimah," there is still a statement that "... Dalam melaksanakan tugas panggilannya, ... GKJ menata diri ... berdasarkan Alkitab, Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKJ serta Tata Gereja dan Tata Laksana GKJ yang berwatak pastoral transformatif."

<sup>43</sup> It can be seen, for example, in *Gereja Kristen Sumatera Bagian Selatan, "Akta Sidang VIII Sinode GKSBS Di Bengkulu 23-26 Agustus 2005," 2005, article 11 point 3a.*

<sup>44</sup> Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, "Naskah Akademik," 84-85.

<sup>45</sup> Bauswein and Vischer, *Reformed Worldwide*, 450.

Java, GKN's ethnocentric tendency can be seen from her attitude that required indigenous Christians to follow the Western lifestyle and excommunicated Kyai Sadrach and his followers who maintained the Javanese lifestyle. All of them were done based on missionaries' ethnocentric assumption that Western culture is Christian and civilized.<sup>46</sup> As a daughter church of GKN, so GKJ ever had a similar ethnocentric tendency.<sup>47</sup>

How about GKSBS? In early period, GKSBS tended to identify herself as tribal church, or Javanese church. Nevertheless, it cannot immediately be said that GKSBS inherited as an ethnocentric tendency from GKJ. Therefore there were many GKSBS ancestors who had a GKJ background and it should be reminded that most of them were nominal Christians in Java. It is not easy to imagine that GKJ's character had been internalized in them. Likewise, after they were in Sumatra, GKJ missionary pastors did not direct them to be a tribal church like GKJ. They were recommended, even, by GKJ missionary pastors to integrate with native tribes. Most likely, GKSBS tendency to identify herself as Javanese church was more influenced by transmigrant's need for identity.

When more and more people from other ethnic joined, GKSBS's tendency to be a tribal church seemed changing. Positively, it can be said that GKSBS began to extend her *nglari* praxis to other tribes and "ethnic sensitivity" started to be built in GKSBS church life. But in wider social life, GKSBS was immersed in social isolation tendency between transmigrant and native tribes for a long time. Although GKJ missionary pastors had strongly recommended to social integration in the past, but GKSBS was still reluctant. This reluctance was likely influenced by the ethnocentrism of Javanese transmigrants in general. *Mbilung* predicates that is given to the native tribes implied in a negative view, even stigma, that native tribes were uncivilized.

In 2005, under the theme of her 8<sup>th</sup> Synod Assembly was "*Sumbagsel sebagai Rumah Bersama*" (Southern Sumatra as a Common Home), GKSBS tried to *nglari* native tribes by inviting two traditional figure/*tokoh adat* from Lampung and Bengkulu as the speakers in a seminar that had started the whole series of Synod Assembly. However, at that time, GKSBS had been disappointed because those *tokoh adat* rejected GKSBS's idea about inclusive, equal brotherhood as implied in the formula "*Sumbagsel sebagai Rumah Bersama*". Even so, the idea to *nglari* the native tribes has not completely gone as two years later after the 8<sup>th</sup> Synod Assembly (2007), "ethnic sensitivity" was included in the formula of *Nilai-Nilai GKSBS* (GKSBS Values).<sup>48</sup> This could be seen as a projection to change ethnocentrism with ethnic sensitivity so that people of diverse ethnicity will live in a just peace.

In Reformed families worldwide, the issues regarding to ethnicity and racial disharmony are not foreign anymore. Some of the Reformed churches in America (RCA/Reformed Church in America, CRCNA/Christian Reformed Churches in North America,

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Soetarman Soediman Partonadi, *Komunitas Sadrach Dan Akar Kontekstualnya: Suatu Ekspresi Kekristenan Jawa Pada Abad XIX*, trans. Widi Herijati Rahadi (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 257.

<sup>47</sup> Like GKN tended to be only oriented to Western culture, so it was in early GKJ tended to be only oriented to her mestizo culture (*landa wurung, Jawa tanggung*). While Javanese language was still used, many expressions of Javanese culture were removed and replaced with expressions of Western culture. But later, aware about her context, the ethnocentric tendency of GKJ became more oriented to traditional Javanese culture. At least, this can be seen from the use of *gamelan* in worship and *wayang* (puppets) show for evangelism.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, "Naskah Akademik," 39-40.

etc.) have seemed to be so identical with Dutch American subculture, but, now they have been more intercultural.<sup>49</sup> Against to the politics of apartheid, Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) in South Africa has adopted Belhar Confession since 1986.<sup>50</sup> According to this confession, the universality of the church and Christ's work of reconciliation become the basis of unity and reconciliation between church members from various racial backgrounds. As a consequence, the separation based on natural diversity is rejected.<sup>51</sup>

Back to the Holy Scripture, it is clear that racism must be uprooted. Paul, the apostle, clearly proclaimed that Christ, by His death upon the cross, had broken down the inter-tribe wall, inter-ethnic, inter-nation hostility (Ephesians 2: 14). Also, Paul the apostle gave an example about ethnic sensitivity when he said to the Jews that he became as Jews to win Jews (1 Corinthians 9: 19). Even, John gave an eschatological vision that the honour of the nations would be brought to the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21: 26).

### Inward or Outward Evangelism?

In the history of Christian missions, GKN is recorded as an active church in the evangelism world. Her mission fields are scattered in various parts of the world. This is in accordance with *Gereformeerd* missiology that Christ sends His church (not mission agency) to proclaim the gospel for the nations, to baptize and build church organization. That is why GKN missionaries are not only volunteers but also, even mainly, pastors.<sup>52</sup>

In the early period of GKJ, *Gereformeerd* tradition to evangelize outward was continued. Although in the later period, along with no more *guru Injil* (evangelist), outward evangelism generally got rare.<sup>53</sup> Even so, according to GKSBS historical record, in the late 1970s to early 1980s, when GKSBS was still GKJ Synod Region I, Kokomas (*Komisi Komunikasi Masyarakat/* Commission for Communication to Society) of GKJ Synod opened evangelism in Lampung through *wayang* performance. However, later on, it was prohibited because of the suspected Christianization,<sup>54</sup> on another side this open evangelism was not enough to encourage GKSBS to do the same.

Influenced by *nglari* culture, whose origin was exclusive, GKSBS generally seemed uneasy to evangelize outward compared to inward-oriented. The coming of missionary pastors were more experienced as pastoral visitation rather than evangelism. Even if those missionary pastors did a little bit of evangelism, it would be "inward evangelism" in the sense of leading nominal Christian to be true Christian. Of course, they hoped that in the future, the Christian transmigrants and their descendants will evangelize outward. In

<sup>49</sup> Reformed Church in America, "History of the RCA," Reformed Church in America, accessed February 19, 2022, <http://www.rca.org/about/history/>; Christian Reformed Churches in North America (CRCNA), "Our History," Christian Reformed Churches, accessed February 19, 2022, <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/history>.

<sup>50</sup> Mary-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel, "The Belhar Confession: Born in the Struggle against Apartheid in South Africa," in *Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Struggle for Justice: Remembering 1960-1990*, ed. Mary-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel and Robert Vosloo (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2013).

<sup>51</sup> "Belhar Confession," n.d., point 3.

<sup>52</sup> Chr. G. F. de Jong, "Metode Pekabaran Injil Menurut Gereja-Gereja Gereformeerd," in *Sumber-Sumber Tentang Sejarah Gereja Kristen Jawa 1896-1980* (Kampen: Theologische Universiteit Kampen, 1995), 3-4.

<sup>53</sup> Ngabehi Gapurosegoro, "Yang Hampir Dilupakan," in *Merenung, Memaknai, Menulis: Menapaki Jejak Untuk Meneguhkan Arah Langkah*, ed. Tim Penulis Buku Kenangan Panitia HUT XX GKJ Sidomukti (Salatiga: GKJ Sidomukti, 2014), 82-85.

<sup>54</sup> Hoogerwerf, *Transmigrasi Dan Pertumbuhan Gereja*, 323; Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, "Naskah Akademik," 32.

the present, there are more opportunities to evangelize outward through occasional worship at congregation members' homes in which their neighbors from different religions also will come. However, those opportunities are rarely used. Rather than explaining the unique gospel message, the words conveyed more often only touching the universal values. Indeed, there are exceptions. GKSBS Tanjung Bintang congregation continuously organizes evangelistic training. GKSBS Pamenang congregation integrates evangelism with *diakonia* into Anak Dalam tribe. Nevertheless, these are not representative enough to describe GKSBS generally.

By Reformed evangelical churches, most likely this phenomenon will be criticized because without any outward evangelism, the church will have died. By conservative Reformed churches, maybe there will be a little defense regarding to inward evangelism. They can say that what Belgic Confession means by the "pure proclamation of the Gospel"<sup>55</sup> firstly is also internal proclamation. Moreover, not certain that all visitors of the church are true believers.<sup>56</sup>

Biblically, it cannot be denied that there are commands and invitations to evangelize those who do not yet believe (Matthew 28: 19–20, Mark 16: 15, Luke 24: 47–48, Romans 10: 14–15). However, there is also a foundation of inward evangelism. For example, Jesus commanded the Gerasene after being healed to evangelize his relatives (Mark 5: 19). Then, it is necessary to remember about Luke's perspective that evangelism should be a natural expression of joy because of the encounter with the risen Christ (Luke 24: 32) and the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4: 31).

### Charitable, Reformatory or Transformative Diakonia?

In the Netherlands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, GKN did reformatory *diakonia* by developing educational institutions, fighting for justice and democracy through parliament and mass media, etc. The enforcement of Ethical Politics in Indonesia was more or less related to the struggle of GKN. However, the colonial mentality prevented GKN from doing transformative *diakonia*, such as against colonialism and fighting for Indonesian independence. The colonial mentality also influenced GKN with arrogant charity to do many charitable *diakonia* for her daughter churches in the colonies without thinking about empowerment.<sup>57</sup>

As the side effect of GKN's charitable *diakonia*, GKJ became so dependent on GKN and was reluctant to do *diakonia in a long time*. Overdependency on missionary made her prefers to take than to give. Nevertheless, moved by charity gradually, GKJ began to do charitable *diakonia* such as almsgiving to the poor that became a routine activity at certain events.

While GKJ congregations in Regional Synod II and Regional Synod III still did *diakonia* limited to charitable, GKJ congregations in Regional Synod I (Southern-part Sumatra), who

<sup>55</sup> "Belgic Confession," article 29.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 83–85.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Th. Sumartana, *Mission at the Crossroads: Indigenous Churches, European Missionaries, Islamic Association and Socio-Religious Change in Java 1812-1936* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1993), 71–74.



later became GKSBS, had done some various activities, related to current social issues, and “general *diakonia*” (social service which is not only for church members, but also for society members in general). Influenced by *nglari* culture, GKSBS forerunners embrace society around and networking with NGOs, especially Yabima (*Yayasan Bimbingan Mandiri*), so that general *diakonia* is not only charitable but also reformative and transformative that can be done even continually until now. Through this continual general *diakonia*, *nglari* culture is enriched with “ideals of transformative *diakonia*”.<sup>58</sup>

The general *diakonia* of GKSBS most likely will be supported by reformed churches which is accustomed to social struggle. For them, there is no contradiction between piety and social struggle activity. Otherwise, Reformed people must be both pietists and activists though<sup>59</sup> reformed churches which are accustomed to supporting the status quo will respond with pessimism. For them, because the world has fallen to sin, all attempts to transform will be in vain.<sup>60</sup>

However, Holy Scripture clearly describes how the prophets opposed idolatry, unrighteousness and injustice in the midst of society. Amos, for example, publicly criticized Israeli society in his day because they trampled upon the poor, afflicted the righteous, took a bribe, and turned aside from the needy in the gate (Amos 5:11-12). Even so, he also built hope for justice by saying: “... let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5: 24). In the New Testament, Jesus criticized the scribes and the Pharisees who observed various offerings but had neglected justice, mercy and faith, which are the weightier matters of the Law (Matthew 23: 23). He also built justice by paying special attention to the marginalized as an example which was followed by the early church later (cf. 1 Corinthians 12: 23).

## Pastor: Between Dialogue and Non-Compromise Principle

Reacted to NHK, which tends to be compromising, (early) GKN strongly emphasized the non-compromise principle. She did not want to be like NHK whose identity became unclear due to compromise too much. GKN did not especially compromise with regard to the dogma clearly. Mixed with Dutch social characters who tend to be *zakelijk*, GKN seems rigid and anti-dialogue.

For a long time, GKJ was strongly influenced by GKN’s non-compromise principle. However, adapting to the value of harmony in Javanese culture,<sup>61</sup> the dialogue was still developed. The dialogue became more putting forward with *nglari* experiences in GKSBS. Influenced by tiring debate experiences so dialogue increasingly led to compromise everything, including dogma, that both could be dialogued and compromised.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, “Naskah Akademik,” 33.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example Dirkie Smit, “Those Who Pray and Do Justice and Wait for God’s Own Time,” in *Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Struggle for Justice: Remembering 1960-1990*, ed. Mary-Anne Platjies-Van Huffel and Robert Vosloo (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2013), 301.

<sup>60</sup> Allan A. Boesak, *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation, and Calvinist Tradition* (New York: Orbis Book, 1984), 89–90.

<sup>61</sup> Explanation about the value of harmony in Javanese culture can be read in Franz Magnis Suseno, *Etika Jawa: Sebuah Analisa Falsafi Tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1991), 69–72.

But apparently, later GKN (and then, after unified with NHK and *Lutherische Kerk*, became PKN/*Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*/Protestant Church in the Netherlands) also put forward dialogue because it seems more compatible with intellectual culture.<sup>62</sup> We can imagine that she will agree with the dialogue culture which GKSBS has built. But, the rigid Reformed churches might say “dialogue is sin.” Unlike these two extremes, Reformed moderate churches will say: “dialogue yes, compromise no.”<sup>63</sup>

The principle “dialogue yes, compromise no” reminds us of James, who teach that heavenly wisdom is at first “pure” and then “peacemaker” (James 3: 17). Dialogue is needed in order to get a peacemaker, but purity should be kept. In dialogue, as James also wrote in his letter, everyone should be a good listener before he/she say (James 1: 19). Besides that, in light of the story of Jesus’ conversation with the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15: 21–28), it is clear that authenticity and sincere appreciation are needed in dialogue.

## Reformed Tradition and Mandiri Culture Conservative or Progressive?

Because of born from the desire to restore orthodoxy, early GKN tend to be conservative in the matters of doctrine, especially about church order and liturgy. For about a half century (1890’s until 1940’s), Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canon of Dort were accepted as doctrinal standards without any question and addition.<sup>64</sup> Presbyterian system (according to the Kuyper’s interpretation on Church Order of Dort) was maintained almost without change.<sup>65</sup> Liturgical formula from 16<sup>th</sup> century continued being used without ever being revised.<sup>66</sup> By GKJ, this conservative tendency was followed for about 60 years (the 1930s until the 1990s).<sup>67</sup>

Partly due to the influence of GKJ, GKSBS also tended to be conservative. This tendency was strengthened by GKSBS members’ need to have their identities while living as transmigrants in *tanah seberang*. GKSBS as a transmigrant church has tended to change easily as it was related to “mandiri” culture which was formed firstly from the experience of “move”. It must be recognized that it was not easy to discern either GKSBS in a conservative way or GKSBS in a progressive way. Sometimes, even often, it is unpredictable.

Consulting with other Reformed churches worldwide, there is also more or less tension between conservatism and progressivism. The Reformed churches tend to be in conservative way because, like the reformers, they do not want to be heretics by teaching Trinity and Christology that deviated from “historic-ecumenical creeds and canon” (Apostolic Creed, Nicene Creed, and Canon of the Council of Chalcedon). “The Five *Sola*”

<sup>62</sup> de Jonge, *Apa Itu Calvinisme?*, 159.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Greg Sinclair, “Dialogue and Mission,” CRCNA Network, December 4, 2014, <https://network.crcna.org/global-mission/dialogue-and-mission>.

<sup>64</sup> de Jonge, *Apa Itu Calvinisme?*, 93.

<sup>65</sup> de Jonge, 137.

<sup>66</sup> End, *Enam Belas Dokumen Dasar Calvinisme*, 457.

<sup>67</sup> Since 1990s, GKJ began to experience significant change in doctrinal standards, order of worship, and *pertelaan* (forms for administer sacraments and other ecclesiastical rites). At 1992, order of worship and *pertelaan* were revised. At 1996, *Heidelberg Catechism* (which for about 60 years has been the doctrinal standard of GKJ) was replaced by *Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKJ*.

(*Sola gratia, Solus Christus, Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura, Soli Deo Gloria*) and “Five Points of Calvinism” (Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, Perseverance of saints) are also believed as eternal truth. On the other side, Reformed churches also tend to be in progressive way because from *nadere reformatie* (further reformation), they inherit the motto *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei* (reformatory church should always be reformed according to God’s word). Indeed, this motto can be interpreted liberally as so easy in order to change with time. However, it seems that the majority of Reformed churches, at least theoretically, will interpret this motto moderately as “biblical dynamism” in which they are continually renewed toward perfection and enabled to challenge the tendency of the time.<sup>68</sup>

Back to the Holy Scripture, it is clear that both conservatism and progressivism are criticized. For example, Matthew warns about the dangers of conservatism that are made void the word of God for the sake of tradition (Matthew 15:6b). About progressivism, Luke warns that the progressive people are in danger of “spare their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new” (Acts 17:21). Therefore, it should be remembered that the most important is not to be conservative or progressive but faithful to the word of God.

### Christian Work Ethic?

*Gereformeerde* tradition emphasizes on “work is worship” that in the context of the cultural mandate”. Influenced by this teaching and the natural environment in the Western world that requires hard work, a western Christian work ethic has been developed. Even until the post-Christian era, secular remained Western people were influenced by this work ethic. Because of this work ethic, the Western world got to advance. However, this work ethic also has side effects, such as workaholic, too action-minded, and less contemplative.

In Java, missionaries from GKN also taught the work ethic, but the natural condition seemed becoming spoiled. Spoiled by nature, Javanese people tend to be easy-going. In wrong perception, this easy-going tendency is often identified with *alon-alon waton kelakon*. Whereas, *alon-alon waton kelakon* actually means working carefully and diligently in order to obtain maximum results. When maximum results are not achieved, they will say: “ya sudah ... saya *nrima* ...” Here, *nrima* was misunderstood as fatalism thinking.

Arrived in Southern-part Sumatra, Javanese Christian transmigrants were not spoiled by nature again. Like it or not, they had too *nrima* in the sense: “this is the reality ... now, let us doing what can be done”; work ethic, which is “realistic,” criticizes the fatalistic attitude in one side and the ambitious-idealistic work ethic in another side. Although this work ethic only oriented to survive in early time, later it would be transcended. It was crystallized with time as an important aspect of *mandiri* culture.<sup>69</sup>

For Reformed people in the Western world, the work ethic and cultural mandate were taught by reformers seem not foreign anymore. They knew, and they lived in it, however

<sup>68</sup> Cf. S. A. Strauss, “Reformed Theology for the 21st Century: Confessional, Contextual, and Ecumenical,” *Acta Theologica* 25, no. 2 (2005): 145–46, <https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v25i2.49024>.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSB, “Naskah Akademik,” 95–96.

for Reformed people in Asia, work ethic might still be a struggle. Perhaps working ethic lived by GKSBS ancestors and their descendants could give enlightenment.

Biblically, working ethic in GKSBS *mandiri* culture has a foundation in the book of Ecclesiastes. On one side, Ecclesiastes teaches that everyone should receive and enjoy what is his lot (3: 22), not envy, be quiet (4: 4, 6). On the other side, it is also taught that “whatever your hands find to do, do it with your might ...” (9: 10). Better if this is enriched with the insight from Paul’s teaching to work quietly (Greek: *hesykhia*), in awareness of God’s presence (2 Thessalonians 3: 12).

### Must Conquer and Own the Land?

Born in Colonialism and Enlightenment-era, *Gereformeerd* tradition is about more or less influenced by the spirit to “conquer and own the land.” Positively, this spirit may produce creative efforts to tame the wild natural environment. But negatively, especially in the context of colonialism, this spirit contributes to the oppression of indigenous people and the destruction of the natural environment.

On the another side, in Javanese culture, feudalism (from the word *feudum* which means “landlord”) identifies land ownership with self-esteem. As a result, those who own land can be so proud, while those who do not own land can be so shame .

When GKSBS ancestors struggled to own the land, they were first influenced by feudalism in Javanese culture. They did not want to be shame again because they still did not own any land. Nevertheless, before owning land, they have to survive by cultivating the land without ownership. Indeed, it was not easy to cultivate the land. But through the sermons of missionary pastors so they got the “spirit to conquer and own the land” as taught in *Gereformeerd* tradition. Furthermore, they conquered the land in sight, reaped its fruit from time to time and saved the money until legally they owned land. Then, from time to time, the “spirit to conquer and own the land” was transmitted until crystallized as an aspect of *mandiri* culture.<sup>70</sup>

Compared with Reformed tradition in America, “spirit to conquer and own the land” which have been an aspect of GKSBS *mandiri* culture showing the similarity. As though the experience of the ancestors migration of Reformed churches in America got the spirit to conquer and own the land, so did the ancestors of GKSBS. As in America, this spirit manifested positively through the cultivation creativity that made the land more fertile and more productive like the promised land, which manifests positively in Southern-part Sumatra. But let not be forgotten, as in America this spirit ever manifested negatively through “marginalization of the natives,” so this spirit ever manifest negatively in Southern-part Sumatra.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, not GKSBS ancestors, by themselves, who marginalized the natives from their lands but the New Order government did. However, just accepting the New Order government’s land was arguably the same as justifying their injustice. Moreover,

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, 96–97.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 215–17.

GKSBS members also had negatively manifested the spirit to conquer land through “ecological destruction.” In the future, what is negative does not repeat and what is positive develops more and more.

Therefore, it should be remembered that according to the Holy Scripture, the land belongs to God (Leviticus 25: 23). Human ownership of land is not absolute but relative. Indeed, there is promised land materially here and now in the Old Testament. Though it is the type of heavenly promised land. That is why in New Testament, the promise to own land here and now is discontinued. Even, New Testament strongly illustrates the believers as pilgrims on the earth.

### Autonomy?

In organizing church life, the *Gereformeerd* tradition tries to maintain a balance between local autonomy and synodal togetherness. Local autonomy is emphasized because local congregations are seen as the whole church (not only a part of the church!). It is in the local congregations that settles the main strength of the church. It is not *classis*/presbytery or synod, but the congregation is the form of the church. That is why only a congregation is led by council/consistory as a representative of Christ. However, *classis*/presbytery and synod are still important in order to bring the congregation walking together. Formally, synodal togetherness is tied to the confession, church order and decisions of synod assembly. With the assumption that the congregations voluntarily “have surrendered a part of their autonomy to the synod” and “will obey all decisions of the synod assembly,” there is not officer or institution that is given an authority to put in order.<sup>72</sup> From GKN, GKJ has inherited this model until now.<sup>73</sup> Different from GKJ, GKSBS has modified this model in theory. According to *Tata Gereja GKSBS (2015)*, the form of the church is no longer only congregation but the congregation, *classis* and synod. As a consequence, all of the three are led by Council. Because there are Council of Classis and Council of Synod, class and synod that exist continually so that, in accordance with the motto *Rumah Bersama* (Common Home), togetherness among the congregations can become more intense.

At least in Indonesia, the other *Gereformeerd* churches such as GT (*Gereja Toraja*/Torajan Church) and GTM (*Gereja Toraja Mamasa*/Mamasan Toraja Church) also have applied that kind of modification. As GKSBS, they know that the presbyterial system as in *Gereformeerd*/Kuyperian tradition is less helpful to build synodal togetherness.

However, in practice, the autonomy of congregation, even autonomy of groups in one congregation, is still dominant. Historically, this can be understood because the embryo of GKSBS transmigrant Christian communities formed sporadically and in early time was autonomous (*mandiri*) one another.

<sup>72</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949), 648.

<sup>73</sup> *Tata Gereja dan Tata Laksana GKJ (2018)* is still in the opinion that the form of the church is only congregations which is autonomous but voluntarily bind themselves in classical and synodal togetherness. As the consequence, classes and synod are not led by *majelis* (council), but only appoint *badan pelaksana*.

But, what can be understood does not mean that it has to be justified. Paul, the apostle, clearly teaches that the unity of the body of Christ must be sought and members of the body must care for one another.

### What Kind of Consolidation?

Since the beginning, *Gereformeerd* tradition was colored both by “division” and “consolidation”. GKN that Abraham Kuyper founded was a fraction of NHK and the result of merging with CGK (*Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken/Christian Reformed Churches*). Not long after it, some of ex CGK separated themselves again. Later, K. Schilder and his followers separated themselves from GKN and founded GKV (*Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt/Liberating Reformed Churches*). After that, many *Gereformeerd* churches were born of the divisions.<sup>74</sup> However, there were also some efforts toward consolidation. GKN, for example, sought consolidation with her daughter and granddaughter churches by pioneering Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) (1946) which later changed to Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) (1988) and since 2010 united with WARC (*World Alliance of Reformed Churches*) to be WCRC (*World Communion of Reformed Churches*).<sup>75</sup> So far, the “spirit of consolidation” could be seen even though the orientation was still denominational.

Like her mother church, GKJ also showed the “spirit of consolidation”. Through REC and WARC, she consolidated with other Reformed churches worldwide. Also, she sought consolidation with other Javanese churches, and as a result, BMGJ (*Badan Musyawarah Gereja-Gereja Jawa/Deliberation Agency of Javanese Churches*) was born. Later, she also sought consolidation, which was more ecumenical oriented, by joining in DGI (*Dewan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia/Council of Churches in Indonesia*, that later was changed into PGI/*Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia/Communion of Churches in Indonesia*) and WCC (*World Council of Churches*).

How about GKSBS? In GKSBS, a “spirit of consolidation” is inherited and formed through the experience of becoming an autonomous (*mandiri*) synod. At the beginning of being autonomous synod, GKSBS has joined in BMGJ, PGI and REC. However, for a long time, GKSBS has focused more on internal consolidation. The reason is quite logical: many internal matters still need to be addressed. For the thing which seems simple like uniformity used of the name GKSBS (no longer GKL/*Gereja Kristen Lampung*, GKSS/*Gereja Kristen Sumatera Selatan*, GKJ/*Gereja Kristen Jambi*, GKB/*Gereja Kristen Bengkulu*), but the process is quite long.<sup>76</sup> Since 2020, there were signs of improvement with the promotion of “*Menjadi Gereja yang Mandiri dan Terbuka*” (*Become Independent and Open Church*) as the theme of GKSBS Synod 2020-2025.

In the history of Reformed Christianity, the tendency was to be so busy with internal consolidation and was not strange anymore. The attention of Reformed churches on church organization could be both a strength and a weakness. A strength because it could make

<sup>74</sup> Bauswein and Vischer, *Reformed Worldwide*, 390.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. World Communion of Reformed Churches, “History of the WCRC,” World Communion of Reformed Churches, accessed February 21, 2022, <http://wrcr.ch/history/history-of-the-world-communion-of-reformed-churches>.

<sup>76</sup> Tim Perumus Pokok-Pokok Ajaran GKSBS, “Naskah Akademik,” 44.

Reformed churches look solid. A weakness of Reformed churches was sometimes, even often, only took care of themselves. In Reformed perspective, it should be remembered that church organization is only an instrument to help the church manifest its essence.

Back to the Holy Scripture, the story of Babylon tower always warns about the danger of consolidation which against God (Genesis 11). On the other hand, the Book of Acts gives enlightenment about consolidation and mission in the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

### Missionary Awareness?

Faced with the development of mission actions, in both *diakonia* and evangelism, GKN is immediately aware of the importance being a church missionary in a holistic sense that primarily by the mission agencies, then by the church mission which should be carried out. In the church life, evangelism and *diakonia* must be integrated and dedicated to the glory of God. For a long time, this missionary awareness was also lived by GKJ.

Influenced by *mandiri* culture, GKSBS made a difference. Soon after GKSBS became an independent synod, "church fathers" of GKSBS composed *Buku Putih*, which stated the ideals of GKSBS in order to be "regional missionary church" (*gereja daerah yang misioner*). Though it was Not very clear what it meant. However, the orientation was to integrate with local society at a glance next, there were efforts to 'fill' "regional missionary church" with social praxis such as "caring about social problems", "participating in build civil society", "eradicating poverty", "striving for ecological recovery," and covering these with theological language such as "become a faithful servant of God" and "toward hopeful Southern-part Sumatra".

Here, it can be seen the awareness about context but can produce questionable whether it is about missionary awareness or not. Several contemporary Reformed churches in Europe who have been so adapted to secular society may defend GKSBS by saying, "Yes, it is missionary awareness". But, Reformed churches who are more influenced by pietism will say, "No, it is secular; nothing difference with secular NGO".

Indeed, biblically, because Jesus' disciples are "in the world, but not of the world," so all of their actions to the church have done and should be reflected again and again: "What is the difference with the world?" "Is the salt still salty?" Further, in the light of the Lord's Prayer, which should be the heart of church mission, it is important to discern whether behind the action that has been done there was a direction to the glory of God, openness to the work of God, or submission to the will of God.

### Conclusion

As a matter of fact, some aspects of GKSBS *nglari* culture challenge, even defeat some aspects of *Gereformeerd* tradition. "Mutual respect for personal spiritual experience" challenges "emphasize dogma". "Keep brotherhood" challenges "church discipline". "Emphasize familiarity in and around worship" challenges "emphasize solemnity".

“Demands that the pastors can be friend” challenges “role of the pastors as minister of the Word and Sacrament”. “Give convenience” challenges “emphasize church order”. “Ethnic sensitivity value” challenges “ethnocentric tendency”. “Preference to inward evangelism” challenges “emphasize on outward evangelism”. “Ideals of transformative *diakonia*” challenges “tendency to satisfy with reformative *diakonia*”. “Put forward dialogue” challenges “non-compromise principle”. One aspect of GKSBS *mandiri* culture is the “tendency to change easily” that can challenge one aspect of Gereformeerd tradition, that is “tendency to be conservative.” But, more dominant, there is a mutual affirmation between Gereformeerd tradition and other aspects of GKSBS *mandiri* culture, namely “work ethic”, “spirit to own and conquer the land”, “emphasize on autonomy”, “spirit of consolidation”, and “missionary awareness.”

Through imaginary critical-appreciative dialogue between broader Reformed tradition and GKSBS *nglari* culture that makes meeting points and complementary potential can be found. Through imaginary critical appreciative dialogue between broader Reformed tradition and GKSBS *mandiri* culture, can also be found the criticizing each other.

Both Reformed tradition and GKSBS *nglari* and *mandiri* culture still need to be reformed according to the Holy Scripture.

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