

# The Impact of Calvinist Teaching in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Of eighty-nine churches that belong to the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, forty-eight of them, located from Sumatra to Papua, declare themselves to be Calvinist or Reformed.<sup>1</sup> Calvinist communions are the largest of the Protestant denominations in Indonesia. This article illustrates how Calvinist thinking entered Indonesia and what kind of Calvinism is found in the Indonesian churches to the present. In theology and practice, these churches with their Calvinist background continue to keep the Calvinist or Reformed tradition alive.

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## Introduction

**A** 1998 monograph on Calvinism by Dutch church historian Christiaan de Jonge showing the relation between the churches in Indonesia and the Dutch Reformed (*Gereformeerd*) churches was the first publication about Calvinism in Indonesia, and it motivated Indonesians to more research.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jean-Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, eds., *The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 220–70.

<sup>2</sup> Christiaan de Jonge was at that time a professor of church history at Jakarta Theological Seminary. His book, *Apa Itu Calvinisme?* (What is Calvinism?) was published in 1998 by BPK Gunung Mulia in Jakarta.

This article presents how John Calvin's teaching entered the Dutch East Indies<sup>3</sup> and its impact on the churches in Indonesia, and it focuses on the parties that brought Calvinism and the characteristics of the Reformed faith they brought—the United East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or VOC), the mission societies that worked at the initiative of para-ecclesiastical groups, and the mission bodies of specific Calvinist churches. Finally, the role of the Indonesian Evangelical Reformed Church (*Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia* or GRII) in revitalizing Calvinist thinking will be presented.

### **I. Calvin's Teaching Arrives in the Dutch East Indies**

The VOC was founded by the Dutch government as a shipping and trading company, and its primary objective was commercial, not religious. The right to govern all of the occupied territories of the Dutch Republic in Asia stretching from Persia to Taiwan (Formosa) were given to it, so the VOC was thus the “government” with which the emerging church in Indonesia had to deal.<sup>4</sup> Its primary objective was to gain a monopoly in commerce between Asia and Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Because the VOC was the “Dutch government in Indonesia,” the need to attend to matters of religion could not be avoided. According to Calvinist understanding, as represented by article 36 of the Belgic Confession (1561), the government is to protect the church and to advance true religion, that is, Reformed religion,<sup>6</sup> and so the VOC could not neglect matters of religion; in fact, it was responsible for them. Besides, two other factors made the VOC to attend to religious matters. First, the crews of ships and the VOC staff in Indonesia consisted partly of members of the Reformed Church. They needed spiritual care. Second, indigenous Catholic Christians who had become Protestants requested ministry from the Dutch as their new overlords after the Portuguese left.<sup>7</sup> These responsibilities were spelled out concretely in what was called the second “letter of authorization”

<sup>3</sup> At the time of the VOC, Indonesia was known as the Dutch East Indies.

<sup>4</sup> Th. van den End, *Harta Dalam Bejana* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1979), 219; cf. H. Berkhof and I. H. Enklaar, *Sejarah Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1986), 237.

<sup>5</sup> Th. van den End, *Ragi Carita 1* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999), 33.

<sup>6</sup> See Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, eds., *Creeks and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 424; cf. Th. van den End, ed., *Enam Belas Dokumen Dasar Calvinisme* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 53.

<sup>7</sup> See Christiaan de Jonge, “Calvinisme di Indonesia,” in W. David, ed., *Toma Arus Sibak Ombak Tegar* (Ambon: Percetakan GPM, 1995), 21.

(*octrooi*) issued by the General Council to the VOC in 1622.<sup>8</sup> Based on this, the VOC claimed that all matters of religion were in its hands, including public worship, organization, supervision, and finances. As a result, the VOC expelled the Catholic missionaries, considered to be Portuguese and Spanish spies, and replaced them with Protestant personnel. Catholics switched over to the Protestant, Reformed camp.

The VOC did not have its own way of organizing religious life, but instead followed the patterns of the Reformed Church in the Dutch Republic. In public worship, the liturgy was the same as in the Netherlands, down to the time of services. The VOC followed the presbyterian-synodal church order specified in the Synod of Dort (1618–1619) with modifications here and there; for instance, the VOC itself called ministers. It also followed the Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Canons of Dort (1619). The Reformed Church in Indonesia was a copy of and was tied to the mother church in the Netherlands.<sup>9</sup>

So, as stated by de Jonge, the Christianity that colored the work of the VOC in religion, that was impressed upon the employees, and that was taught to Indonesians was the one and only true religion, the pure Christian faith taught by the Reformed Calvinist Church. For this reason, only the Reformed Church was permitted to serve in the Dutch East Indies at that time.<sup>10</sup>

As far as possible the VOC tried to make sure that the ways of the mother church in matters of organization, teaching, and church practice were followed.<sup>11</sup> The Three Forms of Unity became the foundation of teaching, both in preaching and other settings. According to Carel Theodorus, the obligation of a pastor and congregational teacher to hold to the Forms of Unity was spelled out in the church order of 1624. Pastors, visitors of the sick, and congregational teachers had to sign a manuscript of each of these documents.<sup>12</sup> In the area of organization, they put into practice the church order finalized by the Synod of Dort, which followed a presbyterian-synodal system.

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<sup>8</sup> De Jonge, *Apa Itu Calvinisme?*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–32.

<sup>10</sup> De Jonge, “Calvinisme di Indonesia,” 22.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Carel Wessel Theodorus Baron van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam, *De Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië: Haar ontwikkeling van 1620–1639* (’s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1947), 39; cf. J. Mooij, *Geschiedenis der Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Weltevreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1923), 127.

The Indonesian people were introduced to Calvin's teaching not by a mission society of the church but through a commercial company.<sup>13</sup> This had two consequences. First, the teachings introduced through the Three Forms of Unity did not take deep root in the indigenous people in the Dutch East Indies because the planting of religious teaching was not the goal of the VOC. Second, because the church was fostered by a state institution, the VOC, it became a state church, and any freedom of the church to organize itself ceased to exist until at least 1934, when congregations in Minahasa were organized to become an independent church called the Christian Evangelical Church. Note too that Calvinism in the Dutch East Indies was a result of the adaptation of Dutch Calvinism to the Indonesian context.<sup>14</sup>

## II. *Reformed Doctrine and Para-ecclesiastical Mission Societies*

Calvinism also began to arrive in the Dutch East Indies at the end of the eighteenth century through mission societies founded at the initiative of members of several churches. The background of the formation of these mission societies involves changes in Europe during the seventeenth century: the Enlightenment and Pietism. Of these two streams, Pietism had the greatest influence on evangelistic efforts, including those in the Dutch East Indies.<sup>15</sup> In the eighteenth century, interest in mission further increased as a result of its influence. After the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society (1792) and the London Missionary Society (1795), which were especially aimed at evangelization, an initiative arose among Dutch Christians to form evangelistic mission societies.

A group of Christians formed a mission society called the Netherlands Missionary Society (*Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap* or NZG) in Rotterdam in 1797. In Germany, the Rhenish Mission Society (*Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft* or RMG) appeared in 1828. Besides these, there were Christians who started evangelistic activities on their own initiative.<sup>16</sup>

From the start, the NZG sent missionaries to South Africa, India, and the Dutch East Indies, but from 1839 until around 1900 the NZG worked in

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<sup>13</sup> See also Jan S. Artonang and Karel Steenbrink, eds., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 99–132.

<sup>14</sup> Van den End claims that the Calvinism that entered Indonesia in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was a tamed and castrated Calvinism. See Th. van den End, "Calvinisme dan Pengaruhnya Dalam Ajaran Gereja Protestan di Indonesia," in Agustinus M. L. Batlajery and Th. van den End, eds., *Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2014), 131.

<sup>15</sup> Van den End, *Ragi Carita 1*, 139–42.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 151–52.

Indonesia only in specific areas, such as the Moluccas, Minahasa, Timor, East and Central Java, Karo in North Sumatra, Central Sulawesi, Bolang Mangondow, and later in South Sulawesi and Sawu.<sup>17</sup> Even though all the NZG pioneers belonged to the Reformed Church, various theologies and streams of spirituality came together in its fold. Some followed the orthodox traditions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including those who interpreted these traditions according to the Pietist pattern of the eighteenth century. Some held on to the teachings of Calvin and the Three Forms of Unity, while others maintained relationships with the Pietistic Herrnhut movement or the revival in England. Others were influenced by the Enlightenment.<sup>18</sup> They could work together because they emphasized the experience of Christian faith in love and witness, and they were not tied to specifically Reformed teachings and confessions of faith, church order, and liturgy. It was considered enough if they held to the Old and New Testaments and to the Creed.<sup>19</sup> In the churches mentioned above, the fruit of NZG evangelization, the Calvinist heritage is seen in their use of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Psalter. Nevertheless, Pietism was also present.

Furthermore, in Batavia in the middle of the nineteenth century, a small group of Christians initiated evangelistic efforts. They established an organization of their own called the Society for In and Outward Mission in Batavia (*Genootschap voor In en Uitwendige Zending te Batavia* or GIUZ). Its goal was to expand the kingdom of God among Christians, unbelievers, and Muslims. Later it gave attention only to nominal Christians. The GIUZ had a branch in the Netherlands called the Java Committee, at first only channeling funds but later becoming the mother organization for missionaries to Angkola and to the Madurese people in the eastern part of Java. The work in Batavia was turned over in 1903 to the Netherlands Mission Association (*Nederlandsche Zendingsvereniging* or NZV).<sup>20</sup> This organization had worked in the Dutch East Indies since the period of the VOC and followed Calvinist teaching based on the Three Forms of Unity. The NZV had come into being in 1858, the Utrecht Mission Association (*Utrechtsche Zendings Vereeniging* or UZV) in 1859, and the Netherlands Reformed Mission Association (*Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Zendings Vereeniging* or NGZV) in 1859. These three organizations were established partly by the traditional Calvinist party and a group that left the NZG.

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<sup>17</sup> Th. van den End, *Ragi Carita 2* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999), 19.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

The NZV was established as a protest against the influence of modernism in the NZG, but those who established it were concerned that it too might be infiltrated with modernist thinking. Therefore, only those who confessed the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and stated they would not work with anyone who denied his divinity could become members. The NZV worked in West Java among the Sundanese and the Chinese, and later in Southeast Sulawesi. The NZV inherited the theology of the NZG, which was not yet influenced by modernist thinking and which emphasized the Calvinist tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The NGZV was active in Central Java and on Sumba. It was established by people who left the NZG and did not want to join the other organizations alongside it. The people who established it embraced orthodox theology and desired to hold fast to Calvinist theology. In 1894 the NGZV was incorporated into the Mission of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Zending der Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederlandsch Indië* or ZGKN, see next section) which worked in Central Java.<sup>21</sup> The churches that resulted from evangelization by this mission manifested definite Calvinist teachings.

Later, one other mission organization, the Reformed Mission League (*Gereformeerde Zendingsbond* or GZB), was established in 1901 by a group of Christians from the Reformed (*Hervormd*) Church who had not left the Dutch Reformed Church during the events of 1886 (the so-called *Doleantie*). The name *Gereformeerde* (Re-reformed) indicates that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tradition was their reference, but some of their members had a spirituality with a Pietistic shade. With the help of the NZG, they began to work in Toraja and the area of the kingdom of Luwu in South Sulawesi. In organization, they followed the Mission of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (ZGKN).<sup>22</sup> It is clear from the name (*Gereformeerde*) that the GZB was Calvinistic. Therefore, the churches in Toraja (*Gereja Toraja*) have a Calvinist identity, although a Pietist spirituality was apparent among them.

Most of these mission organizations had a Reformed (*Gereformeerde* or *Hervormd*) background of Calvinism blended with Pietism. Other denominations such as the Mennonites also established missionary organizations. The Netherlands Lutheran Society (*Nederlandsch Luthersch Genootschap*), founded in 1872, worked on the Batu Islands off Sumatra. Its missionaries were trained at the Rhenish Mission Seminary in Barmen. A number of Free Evangelical Congregations (*Vrije Evangelische Gemeenten* or VEG) of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 24–25.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 25.

the Reveil (Revival) movement carried on mission work on the island of Samosir in cooperation with the *Unierte* (a combination of Lutheran and Calvinist) tradition. They worked in South Kalimantan, North Sumatra, and Nias.<sup>23</sup>

None of these interchurch mission societies brought in Dutch Calvinism only.<sup>24</sup> They did not deliberately spread Calvinist teachings, as Calvinist thinking was mixed with Pietistic zeal. Leonard Hale in his research on the Pietistic heritage in the churches in Indonesia states that the missionary bodies worked under two flags, namely the Reformed background and Pietistic spirit.<sup>25</sup> The Reformed background can be found in the use of the Heidelberg Catechism by missionaries like Joseph Kam from the NZG, who translated it into Malay.<sup>26</sup> The Pietistic spirit is seen in the stress on holiness rather than confessional tenets. The important thing was the salvation of souls, not membership in a specific church. Nevertheless, because interchurch mission societies included Calvinists, it is understandable that Calvinist teachings and practices are found in churches scattered across nearly all parts of the archipelago. A presbyterian-synodical system is still used by many churches in Indonesia, and the election of presbyters and deacons is practiced. In some churches the Heidelberg Catechism is still used in catechism classes.

### III. *Reformed Doctrine and Church Mission Organizations*

From the end of the nineteenth century (1892) to the middle of the twentieth century several smaller Reformed churches such as the *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken* (CGK) and the *Vrijgemaakt Gereformeerde Kerken* started mission efforts.

Another mission organization was the ZGKN, which was founded by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* or GKN) in 1886. This church's theology stated that evangelization is to be carried out by the local church itself, not by organizations established by individual Christians. When converts are baptized, they form a congregation on the same level as the GKN congregations in the Netherlands. The ZGKN began work in 1896 in Banyumas, Kedu, Yogyakarta, Surakarta,

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Aritonang and Steenbrink, eds., *History of Christianity*, 137–73.

<sup>25</sup> Leonard Hale, *Jujur Terhadap Pietisme* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996), 67.

<sup>26</sup> See I. H. Enklaar, *Joseph Kam Rasul Maluku* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1980), 112; cf. Otjep Rahantoknam, *Het Netherlands Zendeling Genootschap op Amboina van 1815–1865* (Groningen: Landelijk Stennpunt Educatie Molukkers, 1986), 49.

and several other locations in Central Java.<sup>27</sup> In these congregations the Psalter and the Heidelberg Catechism (translated into Javanese) were used, and the formula for the administration of the sacraments was the one used in the Netherlands.<sup>28</sup> So the Calvinist character of the churches born from this mission is clear. This can also be seen in church organization: no congregation has a higher position or authority than the others, a characteristic of the presbyterian-synodal order.

Some mission organizations were not the offspring of the Reformed church. An example is the Mennonite Mission Association (*Doopsgezinde Zending's Vereniging* or DZV), formed in 1847 by the Mennonite Church in the Netherlands. The characteristics of this church are the rejection of infant baptism, oaths, and military service, and congregationalism.<sup>29</sup> From 1851 it worked in North Central Java and later in North Sumatra (Angkola-Mandailing) as well. One of the churches that grew out of the work of this mission is the Evangelical Church of Java (*Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa* or GITJ). At first, it manifested a congregational system of government, but later it moved in a moderate synodal direction. One of their missionaries, Pieter Jansz, was the first to translate the Heidelberg Catechism to be used as a teaching aid.<sup>30</sup> Even though this church was not Reformed, certain Calvinist teachings entered it through the use of the Heidelberg Catechism.

#### **IV. Calvin's Teaching and the Gereja Reformed Injili**

Finally, Calvinist teaching entered Indonesia through the Indonesian Evangelical Reformed Church in Indonesia (GRII) beginning in the 1980s. The objective of this movement is to bring the churches back to the basis of the revelation of God in the Bible championed by the Reformers, particularly Calvin and his followers to the present day.<sup>31</sup> It holds to the Reformed confessions of faith: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.<sup>32</sup> It founded the International Reformed Evangelical Seminary and spreads Calvinist teaching by translating Calvin

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<sup>27</sup> Hommo Reenders, *De Gereformeerde zending in Midden-Java, 1859–1931* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2001), and Van den End, *Ragi Carita 2*, 238–39.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Tong, *Gerakan Reformed Injili* (Jakarta: Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia, 1999), 8.

<sup>32</sup> Yakub Susabda, *Pengantar ke dalam Teologi Reformed* (Jakarta: Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia, 1994), 5.



and Reformed literature and promoting the writing of theological books. A well-known leader and theologian of this church is Stephen Tong.

So, from the end of the nineteenth until the middle of the twentieth century, mission societies were established by Reformed churches of the Dutch Reformed type. They did not bring in other than Calvinist teachings. However, because their area of work was limited, the churches established as a result of their work did not spread throughout Indonesia. Calvinist teachings were present in those churches when they became independent, and it exists in certain churches in Indonesia.<sup>33</sup> Later, the impact of Calvinism was also found among Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches.<sup>34</sup> Jan Aritonang states that the Baptists' teaching on the authority of the Bible and church and state was influenced by Calvinist teaching. John Melton points out that the London Confession (1647), the Philadelphia Confession (1742), and the New Hampshire Confession (1833), used by Baptist churches, are modifications of the Westminster Confession and have many similarities with Calvinist confessions.<sup>35</sup> In the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion of the Methodist church, the teaching about the Trinity, Christ, the sufficiency of the Bible, sin, salvation, and new life was influenced by Calvin's doctrines.<sup>36</sup> The same is true for the Pentecostal Church's teaching on sanctification.<sup>37</sup>

## V. *The Impact of Calvinist Teaching*

The question that arises is what kind of Calvinist teaching we find in the churches in Indonesia and what kind of Calvinistic heritage is present to this day.

### 1. *In the History of the Indonesian Churches*

Historical records show that when Protestantism was first brought to Indonesia, it had Calvinist features. Therefore, the first Protestant characteristics of Indonesian churches were those of the Reformed faith. For that reason, Indonesian churches with the largest membership are Calvinist or *Uniert*. When Calvinist teachings and practices were brought to Indonesia, they could not be fully implemented because they needed adaptation, but the

<sup>33</sup> For churches in Indonesia that can be categorized as Calvinist, see Bauswein and Vischer, eds., *The Reformed Family World Wide*, 230–31.

<sup>34</sup> See Jan S. Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran Di Dalam Dan Di Sekitar Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1995), 139, 161, 169.

<sup>35</sup> John G. Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Detroit: Consortium Books, 1993), 97.

<sup>36</sup> Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 161.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

Calvinist influence was there. Moreover, even if it was nearly eradicated at the time by the administration's political policies, Calvinism lived on and spread to nearly all regions of the Indonesian archipelago.

## 2. Theological Discussions

To delve into the teachings of Calvin for a deeper understanding and to look for the meaning that it held for churches in Indonesia is interesting. This can be seen by what happened when three books about Calvinism were issued by the publisher Gunung Mulia.<sup>38</sup> The first time they were published, they sold out rather quickly.

Furthermore, during the last decade, interest in studying Calvin has emerged. There have been writings by Emanuel Singgih, Eben Nuban Timo, and Henny Sumakul. In his book *Reformasi dan Transformasi Pelayanan Gereja* (Reformation and Transformation of Church Ministries) published in 1997, Singgih discusses how Luther and Calvin reacted to the societal changes of their time. He sees not only that the Reformation gave an answer of faith to these challenges, but also that the Reformation brought about social change.<sup>39</sup> Calvin in particular was concerned about shaping and developing Christian character through discipline, and in the face of social changes marked by the reformation in Indonesia, we can take inspiration from Calvin by promoting the growth of personhood and liberty in the development of human individuality.<sup>40</sup> In his *Pemberita Firman Pencinta Budaya* (Preacher of the Word, Lover of Culture; 2005), Nuban Timo concludes that the predestination doctrine can be seen in Atoni Timorese carvings of *tiba*. A *tiba* is a cylindrical tobacco or betel box made of wood. Quoting J. A. Loeber Jr., Nuban Timo says that the ornamental carvings on the top of a *tiba* show the philosophical and dogmatic intention of the carver, which was, according to Loeber, to express the importance of customs and tradition (*adat*) that their forebears received from God and were considered sacred. According to Nuban Timo, the design of each *tiba* represents deep social and religious meaning closely related to God's stated directions for humanity.<sup>41</sup> So, although Nuban Timo does not totally agree with the predestinarian teachings of Calvin, those teachings are reflected in the *tiba* as

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<sup>38</sup> The three books referred to are de Jonge, *Apa Itu Calvinisme*; van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*; and Batlajery and van den End, eds., *Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda*.

<sup>39</sup> Emanuel G. Singgih, *Reformasi dan Transformasi Pelayanan Gereja Menyongsong Abad ke-21* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1997), 49.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–60.

<sup>41</sup> Eben Nuban Timo, *Pemberita Firman Pencinta Budaya* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2010). 141.

he presents it.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Sumakul has written a dissertation entitled *The Concept of Vocation in the Minds of Migrant Workers of the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa [Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa or GMIM] in Post-modern Time* (2005), in which he discusses the understanding of calling in the theology of Calvin during the postmodern era. He observes that for Calvin vocation is related to the omnipotence and the providence of God. It is important for the understanding of perseverance in how Christians answer the call and conduct their lives in a holistic sense, not only at home but also in their economic, social, and political lives. From the viewpoint of postmodernism, what Calvin and Reformed theology offer gives meaning to people's lives as Christians.

### 3. Calvin's Positive Influences in the Life of the Churches

Calvin's theology of unity influenced the ecumenical movement and the Protestant churches in Indonesia. The Dutch United East India Company (VOC) and mission societies in Indonesia left behind a legacy of Calvinist traditions preserved by the churches. Examination of the teaching, confession of faith, church order, liturgy, and other church practices reveal the following aspects:

The Batak Christian Protestant Church (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan* or HKBP) in its confession of faith recognizes the Reformed doctrine of the true church as defined by the three signs of the church mentioned by Martin Bucer and Calvin. This is interesting because the traditional legacy of this church is not fully Calvinist but can be referred to as *Uniert*. Of the signs of the true church it is said,

We believe and confess that the church is the true church: 1) where the Gospel is purely preached; 2) where the true sacraments are administered in accordance with the Word of Jesus Christ; 3) where discipline is imposed to prevent sin.<sup>43</sup>

Similar signs are indicated by another church in the Batak area of North Sumatra, the Gospel Propagating Christian Church (*Gereja Kristen Pemandar Injil* or GKPI) in its confession of faith. One point asserts that the church is called to be faithful to the ministry and calling ordained by Jesus Christ. That faithfulness is evidenced primarily in willingness to preach the word of God and administer the sacraments. It is those two features that signal the existence of a true church.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in the Indonesian Methodist

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted from Lazarus H. Purwanto, *Indonesian Church Order under Scrutiny* (Kampen: van den Berg, 1997), 81–82.

<sup>44</sup> GKPI, *Pokok-Pokok Pemahaman Iman Gereja Kristen Protestan Indonesia* (Pematang Siantar: Sinode GKPI, 1993), 18.

Church, the understanding of the church is also Calvinistic and is expressed in the Twenty-Five Articles of the Methodist Faith (*Dua Puluh Lima Pokok-Pokok Kepercayaan Methodis*). Article 13 states,

The visible Church of Christ is a fellowship of faithful men where the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things.<sup>45</sup>

If we examine the definition of the church in the Statement on Mutual Profession (Understanding) about the Christian Faith (*Pemahaman Bersama Iman Kristen* or PBIK), we see that the church's catholic and universal dimension is adequately presented. The church's scope is unlimited, crossing the boundaries of tribe, nation, language, and class: the church is catholic.<sup>46</sup> The catholic nature of the church of Jesus Christ is found in several Calvinist confessions of faith, such as article 27 of the Belgic Confession and chapter 25 of the Westminster Confession of Faith.<sup>47</sup> Chapter 4, article 13 of the Statement on Mutual Profession of the Christian Faith also echoes Calvin's teachings about the church and state. The government, as an institution ordained by God, is entrusted with the task of protecting people and rejecting evil, and the church is called to pray for and assist the government, but also to admonish it if it misuses its authority.<sup>48</sup>

Some churches clearly identify themselves with Calvinism in their confessions. These include, for instance, the Toraja Church. In the introduction to its church order, it is stated that this is not detached from previous confessions but is "in connection with" them. Its Reformed confession refers to "The Three Documents of Unity, the Geneva Confession, the Westminster Confession, etc."<sup>49</sup> This church specifically considers those confessions to be its own as well. In this respect, many churches at the beginning of the twentieth century used the Heidelberg Catechism as a catechismal textbook before compiling their own handbooks upon becoming independent. Until 2002 there was still a church whose church order stated that the Heidelberg

<sup>45</sup> Quoted from Purwanto, *Indonesian Church Orders*, 100; cf. Lukas Vischer, ed., *Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches* (Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1982).

<sup>46</sup> PGI, *Lima Dokumen Keesaan Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994), 56; PGI, *Dokumen Keesaan Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 29; PGI, *Dokumen Keesaan Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2006), 83.

<sup>47</sup> Th. van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*, 43 and 130; I. John Hesselink, *On Being Reformed Distinctive Characteristics and Common Misunderstandings* (New York: Reformed Church Press, 1988), 87.

<sup>48</sup> PGI, *Dokumen Keesaan Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 81.

<sup>49</sup> Vischer, *Reformed Witness Today*, 48.

Catechism was used in that church.<sup>50</sup> The Catechism has also been used as a handbook for catechism courses in practical theology at seminaries.<sup>51</sup> De Jonge observes that when theological schools were established in Indonesia, it was usually Calvinist theology that was taught. The lecturers were Calvinist, as were the handbooks of dogmatics that were used.<sup>52</sup>

The Calvinist understanding that the Word of God and will of God must be upheld in all walks of life is still a model for Christians in society at large. The will of God must be conveyed not only in the church, but also to and in the world. This understanding is supported by the presence of Christians in politics, despite its tarnished image. Even in this case, the will of God must be upheld.<sup>53</sup> Zakaria Ngelow noted that the presence of Christians in national mass movements was motivated by a Calvinist understanding. Some Christian politicians, among them A. Latumahina and I. Siagian, have sought to justify their involvement in politics by referring to the teachings of Calvin and Abraham Kuyper. Referring to the view of Kuyper, they consider that Christian teaching underlies politics, as the government is the servant of God. They reject the view that religious affairs are separate from worldly affairs, that is, the affairs of state, and so Christians are not to be associated with politics;<sup>54</sup> instead, their understanding contributed to the formation of the Indonesian Christian Party (Parkindo) in 1945.

The church orders of many Indonesian churches with a Calvinist background follow a presbyterian-synodal system.<sup>55</sup> Some mention this system

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<sup>50</sup> Article 4 of the Central Java Indonesian Christian Church [*Gereja Kristen Indonesia* or GKI] Church Order on doctrine states, "As a Reformed church, the Central Java GKI accepts the Reformation doctrine included in the Heidelberg Catechism." In chapter 4 of this Church Order it is stated that before arranging and assembling its own catechism books, the Central Java GKI used as its catechism book *Pengajaran Agama Kristen: Katekismus Heidelberg* [Christian Religious Teaching: The Heidelberg Catechism] published by BPK Gunung Mulia, Jakarta.

<sup>51</sup> This, for example was in effect at the Fakultas Teologi, Universitas Kristen Indonesia Tomohon. The writer himself experienced this while studying at the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Church in the Moluccas in Ambon (*Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Gereja Protestan Maluku* or STT GPM), 1977–1981.

<sup>52</sup> Christiaan de Jonge, "Calvinisme di Indonesia ditinjau dari Perspektif Teologi," in Batlajery and van den End, eds., *Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda*, 77.

<sup>53</sup> Zakaria J. Ngelow, *Kekristenan dan Nasionalisme* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994), 89–93; cf. Saut H. Sirait, *Politik Kristen di Indonesia: Suatu tinjauan etis* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 210–14.

<sup>54</sup> Ngelow, *Kekristenan dan nasionalisme*, 91–92. Sutarno discusses this problem as well in his dissertation, "Het Kuyperiaanse model van een christelijke politieke organisatie: een onderzoek naar zijn doelmatigheid als middel om het politiek-staatkundige leven vanuit het christelijk geloof te beïnvloeden" (ThD diss., Free University Amsterdam, 1970).

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, GPM Church Order 1990. The introduction states, "For the sake of order within the life of the church, the Protestant Church of the Moluccas has decided to dynamically and creatively maintain, guide, and develop the structure and function of church

in the introductions and others in the bodies of the ecclesiological bases for their church orders.<sup>56</sup> The system consists of elements such as a council of elders and assemblies at the level of the classis and the synod. Also, the procedure for electing elders and for calling ministers, elders, and deacons is still practiced in certain churches.

In the worship service, the Psalms have not been eliminated from the treasury of ecclesiastical hymns even though many new hymnals have been published to enrich the Indonesian repertoire. In some congregations, Psalms are sung during a designated worship week every month. In others, the Psalms can be sung in any worship service.<sup>57</sup>

One of Calvin's important contributions to the liturgy of the Calvinist churches was the *votum* (vow in the presence of God) from Psalm 124:8: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Calvin referred to this as the *adjutorium* (help).<sup>58</sup> According to Johannes L. Ch. Abineno, the *votum* is an element that characterizes the legacy of Calvin in the Reformed churches in Indonesia, inherited from the Dutch Reformed church.<sup>59</sup> The Synod of Dort required that this formula be used as a *votum*, the worshipful affirmation of the presence of God among his followers.<sup>60</sup> Calvin's other contributions to liturgy include the reading of God's law in the form of the Ten Commandments (or other authoritative passages to replace it) after the confession of sins and assurance of pardon. In the Lutheran tradition, by contrast, the order of worship does not include the reading of God's

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leadership in line with the presbyterian-synodal order." Other examples are the 1982 and 1996 GPIB Church Orders, which give a special explanation of the meaning of what presbyterian-synodal means. Yet another one is the 1984 GKJ (*Gereja Kristen Jawa* or Christian Church of Java) Church Order. For these last two church orders, see Purwanto, *Indonesian Church Orders*, 28, 62. See also article 6 of the East Java GKI Church Order (1996) and article 2 of the GMIM Church Order (1999).

<sup>56</sup> Purwanto discovered this in his research on the various church orders from churches in Indonesia.

<sup>57</sup> The writer has had experience with several GPM congregations that alternate the ecclesiastical hymns to be used into four weeks. They are *Dua Sahabat Lama*, *Mazmur* (Psalms), *Nyanyian Rohani*, *Kidung Jemaat*, and *Pelengkap Kidung Jemaat*. The Protestant Congregations Church in Irian Jaya (*Gereja Jemaat Protestan di Irian Jaya* or GJPI), a Reformed Church in the Province of Papua established through the evangelistic efforts of the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* in the Netherlands, only sings Psalms during worship.

<sup>58</sup> Raszyd Rachman, *Pengantar Sejarah Liturgi* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999), 96.

<sup>59</sup> Johannes L. Ch. Abineno, *Unsur-unsur Liturgia yang dipakai Gereja-gereja di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 3; cf. "Calvin's Liturgy," in Van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*, 417–18; Rachman, *Pengantar Sejarah Liturgi*, 96; T. Brienens, *De liturgie bij Johannes Calvijn* (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1987), 187–93.

<sup>60</sup> Rachman, *Pengantar Sejarah Liturgi*, 8–9.

law.<sup>61</sup> According to Abineno, the order—confession of sins, forgiveness of sins, and proclamation of the word—is from Calvin.<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, the liturgy for the celebration of the Lord's Supper used by several churches is nearly identical to that of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. This can be seen in the words spoken by the pastor while breaking the bread and distributing the wine. A practice of testing or self-examination (*perhadliran*) carried out before Holy Communion still exists in worship services.<sup>63</sup> On Maundy Thursday it is meant as a reflection on the last supper of Jesus with his disciples in anticipation of his death.<sup>64</sup> This does not deviate from the order of Holy Communion in the churches of the Calvinistic tradition. The words in the Order of Matrimony used by the Dutch Church, remind us of the Indonesian church custom of announcing to the congregation that the couple intends to marry and requesting that any objections be made known.<sup>65</sup>

Indonesian churches, which are enriched by variety, can learn from Calvin's sense of tolerance toward diversity. Variety is found in society in religion, tribe, and culture. There is a very popular national motto called *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* which means "unity in diversity." Calvin recognized diversity so long as differences do not amount to fundamental disagreements in faith. The diversity in different churches and in society is not a problem if it has nothing to do with basic factors. Churches in Indonesia reached an agreement about fundamentals in faith when they accepted the Statement on Mutual Profession (Understanding) of Christian Faith. In society, there is the *pancasila* (five basic principles of the state) that unite Indonesians.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, differences are still found in worship practices,

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<sup>61</sup> The Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, a merger of the four largest Lutheran churches in the US and Canada, compiled the Lutheran Book of Worship in 1978. This book includes several liturgical settings used by the Lutheran Church. The reading of God's law, however, is not found in any of these settings. See Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran*, 50.

<sup>62</sup> Abineno, *Unsur-unsur Liturgia*, 29.

<sup>63</sup> In GPM.

<sup>64</sup> In certain congregations of the GPIB and in the GKI.

<sup>65</sup> Van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*, 496. After announcing several times the couple's plans to marry, some congregations follow the announcement with these words: "In essence the order of marriage is a worship service of the congregation, and for that reason the entire congregation is invited to attend." The author experienced this in the Central Java GKI in Salatiga. This practice is in line with Calvin's view of the service of marriage and is customarily used by churches in the Netherlands. See Rachman, *Pengantar Sejarah Liturgi*, 98–99; Van den End, *Enam Belas Dokumen*, 449; see also Brienens, *De liturgie*, 224–25.

<sup>66</sup> Derived from Sanskrit and Pali, the word *pancasila* means five principles: "Panca" (five) and "Sila" (principle). The five principles of *pancasila* are the principles of One Lordship, a Just and Civilized Humanity, the Unity of Indonesia, the Principle of Peoplehood Guided by the Spirit of Wisdom in Deliberation and Representation, and Social Justice for all the people of Indonesia.

in the way hymns are used during worship, in methods of evangelism, and so on. When those differences are not considered fundamental, the distance between churches is lessened.

## **Conclusion**

The relation between the churches in Indonesia and Calvinism is evident. Studies on Calvin and his theology are to be promoted both in churches and in academic circles. Many publications widen the perspective of Indonesian Christians as to what Calvin's theological ideas mean and which are relevant in Indonesia today. The more studies there are on Calvin, the more Reformed teachings are useful to the churches in their presence and calling in the world. We must be thankful for the Reformed Evangelical Church of Indonesia (*Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia*) and the publishing movement that took the initiative to translate and publish books about Calvin and Calvinism in Indonesian. In this way, the teachings of Calvin and Calvinism can be spread throughout Indonesia so that the churches may provide feedback on their relevance.