

The Fading (Lost) Colour of Reformed Theology in Reformed Churches in Indonesia and the Urgency of Reformation in the 21st Century

Stevri P.N. Indra Lumintang

International Reformed Evangelical Seminary Jakarta

Email: stevri.indralumintang@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to reveal the fading (lost) colour of Reformed theology in churches with Reformed backgrounds or patterns in Indonesia as a reason for the urgent reformation agenda at the beginning of the 21st century (today). This objective is motivated by the gap between Reformed theology that faithfully upholds the truth of the Bible and the compromise of church leaders and/or theologians that results in the fall of the church and the loss of hope for the world (tragic). The research used historical-theology method, with the finding that the fading colour of Reformed theology in some Reformed churches denominations in Indonesia started since the entry of Reformed theology and churches that have been "castrated", taken captive (colonised) by state churches that are not interested in theology, lied to by the strong influence of modern liberal theology trends and postliberal postmodern theology trends, and fooled by the imposition of Western Christian culture and the denial of local culture, which resulted in the alienation of Reformed theology in Indonesia. This very alarming condition results in the loss of identity, guidance and the (fundamental) spiritual influence of Reformed theology. This finding is an input for the churches to be open to an urgent reformation agenda as the only solution.

Keywords: *reformed theology; reformed churches; 21st century reformation*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkapkan pudarnya (hilangnya) warna theologia Reformed dalam gereja-gereja yang berlatar belakang atau bercorak Reformed di Indonesia sebagai alasan mendesaknya agenda reformasi di awal abad ke-21 (saat ini). Tujuan ini dilatarbelakangi oleh adanya kesenjangan antara theologia Reformed yang setia menjunjung tinggi kebenaran Alkitab dengan sikap kompromi para pemimpin gereja dan/atau theolog yang berakibat pada kejatuhan gereja dan hilangnya pengharapan bagi dunia (tragis). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode historis theologis, dengan temuan bahwa pudarnya warna theologia Reformed dalam beberapa denominasi gereja-gereja Reformed di Indonesia dimulai sejak masuknya theologia Reformed dan gereja-gereja yang "dikebiri", ditawan oleh gereja-gereja negara yang tidak berminat terhadap theologia, dibohongi oleh kuatnya pengaruh theologia liberal tren modern dan theologia postliberal tren postmodern, serta dibodohi oleh pemaksaan budaya Kristen Barat dan pengingkaran terhadap budaya lokal, yang berakibat pada keterasingan theologia Reformed di Indonesia. Kondisi yang sangat memprihatinkan ini mengakibatkan hilangnya identitas, pegangan, dan pengaruh rohani (fundamental) dari theologia Reformed. Temuan ini menjadi masukan bagi gereja-gereja untuk membuka diri terhadap agenda reformasi yang mendesak sebagai satu-satunya Solusi

Kata Kunci: theologia reformed; gereja-gereja reformed; reformasi abad ke-21

Article History:

Received: 23 Desember 2024

Accepted: 12 Mei 2025

Published: 05 Juni 2025



Introduction

Absoluteness is the character of biblical truth that rejects all forms of compromise against unrighteousness in the world. The church is the sole agent of God and His word (the Bible) upholding the truth of the Bible without compromise according to the nature and main function of the church. Such a biblical character characterises Reformed theology that does not give the slightest room for compromise against any form of unrighteousness. David J. Engelsma asserts that "Reformed believers advocate neither world-flight nor world conformity" (Engelsma, 2023). In other words, Reformed Christians illuminate the world with their cultural mandate, and preach the gospel to the world with their primary mandate, says Stephen Tong (Tong, 2013). The attitude of upholding the truth of the Bible was pioneered by the pioneers of the reformation movement, including John Wycliffe and Jan Hus, into a church reformation movement in the 16th century, namely the movement to return to the Bible as the only reference and standard of truth as championed by the reformers, including Martin Luther and John Calvin. The reformation movement through reformation theology continues, among others by reformed theologians, continuing the struggle of the reformers, especially John Calvin. Reformed theologians continue to fight to keep the "fire of reformation" burning, with the spirit of upholding the truth of the Bible, without compromise. Believe in the God of the Bible or the God of the non-Bible. Stephen Tong asserts: "If Baal is God, worship Baal. If Yahweh is God, worship Yahweh. There is no compromise. The spirit of Elijah must be revived in the Reformed faith today." (Tong, 2014).

The fading of theology equals the fading of identity, grip and influence. In reality, because organisational churches often fall into compromise, since the apostolic era of the early centuries and continuing in the era of the church fathers until the pre-reformation era of the 16th century. The destruction of the church began with the compromising attitude of theologians and/or church leaders who placed the Bible on an equal footing with the traditions (culture) of the church organisation, where through the Pope, the church became not only a propertied power, but also a political power (Baiton, 1956). Economic and political power resulted in the immoral behaviour of church leaders, where the Pope not only liked to collect gold (treasure), but also women (adultery), so that the church was full of immorality (Kristiyanto, 2004). The fall of the church in various practices or acts of immorality is stimulated by the influence of political and economic power that has poisoned the leaders and/or theologians. The fall of the church is rooted in the fading colour of theology (Lumintang, 2017). The church is controlled by leaders and church traditions (culture) that reject the absoluteness of the Bible followed by immoral behaviour. God does not want His church to be defiled by dirty church leaders, therefore, He always cleanses reformed theologians and uses them to cleanse His church.

John Calvin was the main theologian of the second reformation after Luther. Luther introduced reformation theology and Calvin systematised it, which was later called Reformed theology. John Calvin's theology became its own "colour" with the Calvinism or Reformed worldview. Reformed theology then "coloured" churches in many parts of the world with Reformed colours that uphold the absolute truth of the Bible comprehensively and systematically. Furthermore, through Calvin's successor theologians, Reformed churches continue to be reformed in accordance with the motto *Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda*. At the same time, the church was continually undermined by its theologians with their theologies that had changed and had even lost the heart of theology, namely the Gospel (Bible). As a result, by the end of the century of the modern era, theology had actually been transformed by modern theologians into not only faded colour but lost colour, especially liberal theologians who made theology merely a scientific science. Furthermore, theology has not only become discoloured, but increasingly lost, especially at the beginning of the postmodern era. Theology is ending, as Carl Raschke argues in his book *The Next*

Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity (Rashcke, 2004). Ten years later, Christine Helmer wrote a book entitled *Theology and the End of Doctrine* (Helmer, 2014). Both assert that the influence of postmodernism has caused theology to be pushed aside.

The loss of the colour of theology to the same colour as all sciences began with the fading of the colour of Reformed theology in the world, not least in Indonesia. From the very beginning, the entry of Reformed theology and churches in Indonesia was problematic. Church historian Th van den End assesses: "The (Reformed) Calvinism that entered Indonesia in the 17th and 18th centuries was a tamed and castrated Calvinism" (End, 2015). Christiaan de Jonge, a church historian, is of the same opinion: "The preaching of the gospel, the Calvinist character, became less visible in Indonesia. The Protestant church, which continues the church of the VOC era, is organised as a state institution for morality and religious affairs, which hardly shows any of the Calvinist characteristics it inherited." (Jonge, 2001). In other words, the colour of Reformed theology has faded. He has revealed before that forms of Calvinism are accepted in Indonesia, but the content is rarely truly understood, let alone difficult matters such as the doctrine of predestination (Jonge, 2001). That is why Reformed theology in Reformed churches in Indonesia is either shallow or its colour has faded. Not to mention the modern (liberal) theology that is more humanist in nature (Jong, 2015), so that the Reformed colour is fading. The fading of the colour of Reformed theology in many Reformed churches is revealed in the compromising attitude that combines worship (syncretism) with tribal religious rituals. Syncretistic practices are very much found in tribal churches in Kalimantan, Java, North and Central Sulawesi, Maluku and so on. Stephen Tong observes: "Today, some of the Reformation church leaders have strayed too far from the original Reformation teachings." (Tong, 2014).

Observing and responding to this very alarming condition of the Reformed churches, a number of studies have emerged. Agustinus M.L. Batlajery, in his article entitled "Challenges for Calvinist Churches in Indonesia" states that Calvinist (Reformed) teachings are not embedded and rooted in certain regions, and goes on to describe the challenges facing Calvinist (Reformed) churches today (Batlajery, 2014). Christian de Jonge explains that Calvinism in Indonesia has changed due to the influence of 19th century international evangelism and ecumenism in his article "Calvinism in Indonesia Viewed from a Theological Perspective" (Jonge, 2015). Lumintang has also written "The Mission Movement of Reformed Churches in Indonesia Today" in the book *Contemporary Missiology* (Lumintang, 2009). Long before this article, Stephen Tong had written "Reformed Theology and Its Relevance for Today's Church" in the book *Towards the Year 2000: Challenges for the Church in Indonesia* (Tong, 2000); and an article entitled "Why Reformed Theology?" (Tong, 2014). However, no one has examined the title of the article: "The Fading (Lost) Colour of Reformed Theology in Reformed Churches and the Urgency of Reformation Today." This study attempts to answer the question: Why has the colour of theology in Reformed churches faded and how to make Reformed theology shine the light of the gospel again? This question is fundamental and urgent to answer, with the aim of revealing the condition of Reformed churches that have lost their identity, grip and influence, as an urgent reason to return to reformation. It is only through reformation (recalvinisation) that the Reformed churches can once again uphold the absolute truth of the Bible in the world through their evangelistic and cultural mandates in all fields.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with inductive reasoning. To find evidence that Reformed theology has faded in Reformed churches in Indonesia, the author uses historical theology methods, not theological history. The historical research method is a systematic effort to collect original data and evaluate the authenticity of the data in relation

to past events by paying attention to causes, effects or trends about events that can help explain current events and anticipate future events (Gay, 1983). The original data referred to in this research is literature that discusses the origins, development of theology and the Reformed church in Indonesia since the beginning, which coincides with the entry of the VOC and its development until the beginning of this postmodern era. The historical literature was analysed using the content analysis method. This method is a research technique used systematically to explain and analyse the content of (historical) literature such as books, articles or newspapers to make valid inferences from the text to the context in which it is used (Lumintang, 2016; Krippendorff, 2004). The steps of historical research with this analysis are as follows: Searching for data, interpreting and linking information with primary and secondary sources to understand past events and thoughts. The collection of historical data is done through methodical and comprehensive research on primary and secondary sources (Elena et al., 2009). Analytical techniques of the historical theology method: (1). Analysing some theological points of the Reformed churches from primary sources. (2). Examining theological points based on Reformed theology from primary sources such as confessions of faith and catechisms. (3). Uncover what has faded and/or been lost. (4). Affirming the importance and urgency of Reformed theology, and so on.

Findings and Discussion

The Origin of the Reformed Church and Theology in Indonesia

Church historian Th. van den End states: "Calvinism (Reformed) entered Indonesia through two channels, the state church (since 1605) and the evangelical organisations (since 1814)" (End, 2015). The state church line coincided with the entry and settlement of the Dutch in Banten in 1596. They knew that trade in Indonesia was profitable, so in 1602 the Dutch government established the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) which was given the right to act and armed by the Dutch Government (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008). In 1605, they captured Ambon from the Portuguese and made it the centre of Dutch rule. They also expelled the Portuguese and Spanish, including their missionaries (End, 1993), and the native kings were forced to trade with the VOC. Since then the Catholic Christians in Ambon became Reformed (Aritonang, 2016). Because it was considered less strategic, in 1619 the centre of Dutch government moved from Ambon to Java in Jayakarta, which was later renamed Batavia and later Jakarta. In this context, the Reformed church was under pressure from the State, especially by way of colonisation.

The history of the entry of the Reformed indeed began at the same time as the "black" history, namely the presence of Dutch colonialism and imperialism. Therefore, it is undeniable that scholars argue that the existence of the Reformed is closely related to colonialism (Bosch, 1991). Although the Dutch Reformed churches did not intend to participate in colonialism, the mission of the churches in general, such as the English and French Reformed in the world, as well as the Dutch, coincided with the colonial era of these nations in many parts of the world such as Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia (Thomas, 2000). It is true that the early Reformed church was under state control through the VOC, which did not aim at religion, but at trade, but it was they who brought in and financed ministers from the Netherlands (End, 2015). The church was not really free as it was under the influence of the VOC with its economic and political interests. The VOC initially only recognised the Reformed church in Indonesia, and then in the 18th century it became open to other churches, especially the Lutheran church (Batlajery, 2014).

On the one hand, the Reformed churches in the colonies in the world, including the Indonesian Reformed churches, had it easy because they were fully supported by the (Dutch) government (End, 1993). Especially with the Belgic Confession where in article 36 the government supports the promotion of the church and rejects everything that hinders the

development of the true church (i.e. Reformed) (End, 1995). On the other hand, however, the Reformed churches were actually bound, because of the control of the VOC (End, 1995), dependent on the VOC so that the church lost its freedom of self-government, was bound, used by the state, did not have a church order and confession of faith (Batlajery, 2014). The State's influence over the church diminished when the VOC was dissolved in 1799. In the spirit of the European Enlightenment, from 1807 the State declared religious freedom in the colonies (End, 1993). Nevertheless, the Dutch Government in Indonesia continued some of the VOC's policies towards the church. Therefore, the Indonesian Protestant Church (GPI) was formed and put under the control of the Governor-General, and made a church-state (End, 2016). That is why in the following years, especially before Indonesian independence, many Reformed Christian leaders broke away from the State Church, such as A.A. Maramis and Sam Ratulangi who played an important role in the beginning of the *Kerapatan Gereja Protestan Minahasa* (KGPM).

Apart from the state church (GPI) under the control of the VOC and the entry and development of Reformed theology and churches in Indonesia was very much influenced by the role of missionary institutions formed by individuals in the Netherlands. The establishment of mission agencies was very much influenced by 18th century Pietism. They realised that evangelism was the essential task of the church (Jonge, 2001). Due to the influence of Pietism in 1797 in Rotterdam, Netherlands the *Nederlandsche Zendeling-Genootschap* (NZG) was founded (Berkhof, 1993). NZG came to Indonesia and worked in Maluku, Minahasa, Poso, Timor and East Java, Tanah Karo and others (Batlajery, 2014). The Java Comite (JC) was established in 1854 and operated in East Java, Madura, Batavia and the Batak lands; the *Negerlansche Zendelings-Vereeniging* (NZV) in 1858 worked in Southeast Sulawesi and West Java; the *Utrechtsche Zendings-Vereeniging* (UZV) in 1859 worked in Halmahera and Papua; the *Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Zendings vereeniging* (NGZV) in 1859 and the *Vrouwen Zendings Bond* (VZB) in 1929 (Randwijck, 2004). In general, these mission agencies were not under the influence of the state. The role of mission agencies was so great that by the mid-20th century, Reformed churches flourished in many parts of the Republic of Indonesia.

Reformed churches with an ethnic background in Indonesia include: *Gereja Protestan Maluku* (GPM), *Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa* (GMIM), *Gereja Masehi Injili Timor* (GMIT), *Gereja Protestan Indonesia Bagian Barat* (GPB), *Gereja Batak Karo Protestan* (GBKP), *Gereja Kristen Protestan Simalungun* (GKPS), *Gereja Kristen Pasundan* (GKP), *Gereja Kristen Indonesia* (GKI) West, Central and East Java, *Gereja Kristen Pasundan* (GKP), *Javanese Christian Church* (GKJ), *Jawi Wetan Christian Church* (GKJW), *Balinese Protestant Christian Church* (GKPB), *Sumba Christian Church* (GKS), *Gereja Masehi Injil Sangir Talaud* (GMIST), *Toraja Church*, *South Sulawesi Christian Church* (GKSS), *Southeast Sulawesi Protestant Church* (Gepsutra), *Gereja Masehi Injili Halmahera* (GMIH), and *Kalimantan Evangelical Church* (GKE) (Lumintang, 2006). Although rooted in the Dutch Reformed churches, these churches have changed, not only due to historical factors, the influence of Pietism and the world enlightenment, but also as a result of their adaptation to the Indonesian context (Batlajery, 2014). The context of colonisation and the struggle for independence, a pluralistic religious, cultural and ethnic context that is different from the context of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. The different contexts of the reformed churches are natural and even appropriate, but the neglect of reformed theology is unnatural. The fundamental difference between Indonesian and Dutch Reformed theology is context, such as religious, ethnic and cultural plurality. The fundamental thought of Reformed theology is biblical theology only, while in the modern era, the influence of liberal theology has made Reformed churches in Indonesia and the Netherlands treat the Bible not as the absolute word of God, containing the word of God or being the word of God.

The "Two Colours" of Reformed in Indonesia: Ecumenical and Evangelical Reformed

Indonesia was indeed the vast working area of the Dutch Reformed churches from the 16th to the 20th century. Until the end of the last 20th century (1995s), Reformed churches accounted for 40% of all Protestant Christianity (Batlajery, 2014). As of 2014 there are 88 Reformed church denominations and most of these churches are categorised as "mainline churches". Some claim to be Reformed (Calvinist) and some claim to be influenced by the Reformed (Aritonang, 2016). Christiaan de Jonge states: "The Calvinism (Calvinist or Reformed) that is dominant in Indonesia today can be called an open and ecumenical Calvinism (Jonge, 2015). This is one of the "colours" or styles of Reformed in Indonesia, namely ecumenical Reformed. Jan S. Aritonang recognises that: "Most of these churches, especially those in the 'mainstream' category, were born out of the work of churches and zending that came from the Netherlands, whose Protestant churches were generally Calvinist in character." (Aritonang, 2016). The "mainstream" churches that Aritonang refers to are those whose roots are in other churches within the Fellowship of Churches in Indonesia.

The Reformed "colour" churches have historical backgrounds, worship systems, governance systems, and doctrines rooted in the Dutch Reformed churches, and are even considered as subsidiaries of the Dutch churches (Jonge, 2001), it is also rooted in the respective cultures of the tribes in Indonesia. The Reformed Church in Indonesia has become stronger organisationally and more widespread since King Willem I mandated the formation of the Indonesian Protestant Church (GPI) in 1815 (Aritonang, 2016). Marselinus Gual's interview with Pastor Andriano Wangkay states:

Between 1816-1941, the GPI in Batavia was under state control, in accordance with the call of King Willem I in the Netherlands on 4 September 1815. Then King Willem I issued Decree No. 88 on 4 September 1835 that all Indonesian Protestant Churches (as the Protestant Churches in the Dutch East Indies were then called) be united into a state church (Gual, 2016).

After the Dutch surrendered to Japan on 8 March 1942, the GPI also changed, where its membership did not include churches that were established before the GPI was formed, namely those in the Eastern part of Indonesia such as GMIM, GMIT and so on. Unfortunately, the GPI did not have the formulation of a Reformed Confession of Faith, so that in later years, the GPI lost its Reformed theological style (Aritonang, 2016). Thus, Reformed theology and churches in Indonesia have lost the reformed spirit that upholds theological truth above all interests. In this case, Reformed theology and churches compromise. Because of the loss of Reformed theology, there is also a loss of evangelistic activities, church systems do not contain references to the Calvinist confession of faith, said Th van den End (Aritonang, 2016).

The "spirit" of Enlightenment (Aufklärung) that swept Europe caused state affairs to be separated from religion (church). Moreover, the basic Reformed teachings are almost lost in the Reformed churches in Indonesia, so that many opinions state that the Reformed teachings are no longer rooted in the tribal churches (Aritonang, 2016). One of the influences of the Enlightenment (Aufklärung) in 18th century Europe was the opening of some Reformed mission agencies to modern theology. In the 19th century the Nederlandsche Zendeling-Genootschap (NZG) was dominated by liberal theologians and they influenced many Reformed churches in Indonesia (End, 1994). Some are still influenced by Pietism which affirms Jesus Christ individually as Saviour and others seek to make Christian theology acceptable to modern man (Jonge, 2015). One of the reasons for the establishment of the Negerlansche Zendelings-Vereeniging (NZV) was as a protest against the NZG which had been influenced by liberal theology (randwijck, 1989). Likewise, one of the reasons the

Nederlanche Gereformeerde Zendings-vereeniging (NGZV) was established was because they did not want to join the NZG which had been dominated by liberal theology (Wellem, 2004).

In addition to the influence of liberal (modern) theology, government (Dutch) control over the Reformed churches and the deep roots of the pluralistic tribal culture in Indonesia the Reformed churches struggle with the mystical influence of old religions. This is very easy to see clearly, such as the Reformed churches in the author's homeland, namely in Minahasa, where the practice of syncretism of tribal religion and church is found. This was also revealed by Th van den End, that:

The teachings, rules and worship of this church did not become a powerful weapon in the struggle of the gospel against paganism which manifested itself for example in the use of usages (mantras) in the imposition of customs over the gospel...however much the gospel they brought was coloured by the traditional elements of their old religion (End, 2015).

The teachings of Calvin and Calvinism (Reformed) are no longer seen in the churches. Therefore, Reformed churches and institutions are judged to be no longer in their original form, becoming hierarchical, paternalist and racialised, which is not a Reformed character (End, 2015). The state of the Reformed churches deteriorated due to the influence of liberal theology through the NZG, anthropocentric preaching and the practice of syncretism between the gospel and mystical "smelling" traditions, as well as the "spiritual lethargy" seen in the decline of worship into poorly understood religious rites. The gospel they preach is a gospel that has been compromised with cultural elements from old (tribal) religions, so that what occurs is the practice of syncretism (End, 2015).

Observing the situation of the churches in Indonesia as stated above, especially the dissatisfaction with the confusion of contemporary Christian teaching and the inability of the liberal theology and emotional Christian movements to represent true Christianity, Stephen Tong thought of the need for an Evangelical Reformed Movement (Tong, 2011). Stephen Tong's definition of the Evangelical Reformed Movement is a spirit of faithful return to the Bible (Tong, 1994). With this spirit, the struggle of the Evangelical Reformed includes two aspects, namely: First, the struggle to restore the understanding of theology based on God's revelation in Scripture pioneered by the reformers, especially the Calvinist (Reformed) wing and its successors until now. Secondly, to stir up the spirit of evangelism and mobilise Christians to directly preach the gospel. Following up on these two aspects, the Evangelical Reformed Movement held Christian Faith Formation Seminars (SPIK), established the Evangelical Reformed School of Theology (STRIS), established libraries, pioneered churches and gospel outposts, translated and printed Reformed theological books, conducted mass evangelism, discipleship, and trained evangelists (Tong, 2011). Evangelical Reformed is a Reformed "colour" or style with the same historical and doctrinal roots as ecumenical Reformed, but different because Evangelical Reformed is an actualisation of the Reformed faith with an evangelical and evangelistic spirit, including in terms of fighting for and upholding the truth in all fields. Actually, the historical root of Reformed theology (church) like John Calvin is Evangelical Reformed, because according to Evangelical Reformed is God's way of calling back Ecumenical Reformed, which is a call to return to the Bible, obeying and being faithful to the Bible purely as the source and highest standard of Christian teaching and behaviour (ethics).

The Fading Colour of Reformed Theology in Indonesian Churches

Reformed church historians have concluded that although the Reformed churches in Indonesia have historical ties with the Dutch Reformed churches, due to the lack of church formation since the VOC era, the influence of Reformed tradition or theology is less

prominent in the area of doctrine (theology) (Jonge, 2001). It is not so much that Reformed theology in the Reformed churches has faded away. Even in the beginning Reformed theology faded away in the Reformed churches, let alone later and even today. Augustine Batlajery, indeed, argues that: "We should not say that the heritage of the Calvinistic tradition has disappeared from the churches in Indonesia. What we should say is that in our churches in Indonesia the heritage of the Calvinistic tradition is still preserved." (Batlajery, 2014). The question is what exactly is the Reformed heritage that is still preserved in the Reformed churches? Of course what is still there is only the church system, worship system and government system, while the main thing, namely the teaching or theology with its theological belief system, is no longer seen (writing) and or heard (teaching). Thus, because the main thing no longer exists, let alone is only stored or only stored, then in fact, Reformed theology is no longer still said to be faded, but has indeed been lost. If it still exists, then surely the influence of Reformed theology (church) in today's world, as in past centuries, is still felt and seen in the power of spiritual transformation that has an impact on transformation in all fields.

The teachings on the absoluteness of the Bible, the emphasis on God's sovereignty and glory, God's election (double predestination), the gospel and the law are no longer unheard of, but almost unheard of (Batlajery, 2014). It is even being criticised by Protestant church leaders and/or theologians as an advocate of religious pluralism. What other Reformed teachings or theology remains today? The Reformed who came to Indonesia did not preach the full teachings of Calvin, especially the teachings that are very prominent in Calvinism. Although the Reformed churches in Indonesia, such as Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan (GKJW), Gereja Protestan di Indonesia Bagian Barat (GPIB), Gereja Masehi Injil Minahasa (GMIM), Gereja Protestan Maluku (GPM), Gereja Kristen Injili di Irian Jaya (GKI) and Gereja Kristen Evangelis Kalimantan (GKE) acknowledge that they have Reformed roots, in reality these churches do not emphasise Calvin's teachings (Lumintang, 2006).

The author was born and raised in a Reformed church environment in Minahasa, but never heard in catechism classes and church pulpits or never read in church documents about the acronym TULIP (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saint). What is still heard and read on church feast days are reformation slogans such as Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide and Sola Christo, but even these are just slogans, not emphasised in congregational teaching, without a description of their background and biblical and theological understanding. In addition, due to the demands of religious plurality, and the decline of the spirituality of the Reformed church in Indonesia, these mottos of the reformation are "reluctantly" interpreted again (Lumintang, 2006). The colour of Reformed theology is fading, because the Reformed churches do not answer the objections of many to Reformed theology (Thomas, 2000; Bosch, 1991), among others, regarding double predestination, which is considered incompatible with the teachings of the Bible (Batlajery, 2014). Many people avoid Reformed theology, not least Reformed Christians themselves.

The state of Reformed Christians in Indonesia is either shallow in doctrine (theology) or unclear (blurred or faded), because for Augustine Batlajery, this is because the Reformed confessional documents were not embedded and rooted in the indigenous Indonesian Christians. They were not embedded in the first place, not only because it was not the purpose and capacity of VOC (state church) officials, but also because the Reformed churches lost the autonomy of national leadership (Batlajery, 2014), except after the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. In addition, in church development, churches are generally one-sided, focusing only on the evangelistic mandate for conversion, salvation and personal piety and paying less attention to the cultural mandate of renewing the life of the community or society in all fields through the law of God and for the glory of God in

accordance with Reformed theology (Jonge, 2015). The condition of Reformed churches in Indonesia today is very much influenced by the theology of leaders and or theologians whose Reformed theological colours have faded or even disappeared, as Stephen Tong observes:

Today, some of the Reformation church leaders have strayed too far from the original Reformation teachings. For example, they no longer hold the principles of the Reformation, including sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, and so on, so that Protestant church people have been influenced by contemporary theologies that call themselves Reformation traditions, but have actually deviated a lot. For example, the neo-orthodox schools of both Karl Barth and Emil Bruner all consider themselves Reformed. They consider themselves to be defending Reformation theology, but their spirit and basic principles are far removed from the original Reformation (Tong, 2013).

The Alienation of Reformed Theology in Indonesian Churches

In addition to Reformed theology having faded in many Reformed churches, also on the other hand, Reformed churches were started by the state through the Trading agency (VOC), so that the church was under state control. Especially churches that are members of the Protestant Church in Indonesia (GPI) where the state is not interested and has the capacity to take care of teaching (theology), so that Reformed theology is not only superficially understood, but also still feels "alienated" in Reformed churches in Indonesia which are in a plural social, economic and cultural context. Besides, because the Reformed churches in Indonesia are imitations or copies of the Dutch Reformed churches (Jonge, 2001), so that what happens is Christianisation or Westernisation (Jonge & Aritonang, 2015), and also the state church is in the interest of the state (government), hence its teachings (theology) are not rooted and deep. The state church is indeed not concerned with church teaching (theology) (Jonge & Aritonang, 2015), so Reformed theology did indeed fade away from the start.

There was no attempt to embed Reformed theology (teachings) in the cultural context in which the Reformed churches existed, because from the beginning the state church was antipathetic to local (indigenous) culture which was often regarded as elements of heathenism and idolatry that had to be eradicated (Batlajery, 2014). Therefore, to be a Reformed Christian is to leave one's culture (tribal) and enter another culture, namely the culture of the Western church that is not in accordance with one's nature. Because of the neglect of theology, except for certain circles in Reformed church centres, Reformed Christians live in dualism, Christianity and old religion, church and idols, church worship and tribal religious rituals, church holiness and the promotion of evil in the centres of Reformed Christianity. Such a situation is not only still going on, but it is getting worse, that is, it is becoming more and more like the world, as explained below.

Loss of Identity, Handbook and influence of Churches in Indonesia

The loss of Reformation churches in many countries in Europe began with the loss of Reformed theology in many European leaders and/or theologians. Similarly, the loss of identity, grip and influence of the Reformed churches in Indonesia began with the fading colour of Reformed theology due to factors of compromise with local culture, the context of national religious plurality, the influence of modern (liberal) and or contemporary theology, as well as changes in the "spirit of the times", namely from modern worldviews to postmodern worldviews. Modern worldviews are the same as the scientific worldview that produces atheism and liberal theology. Liberal theology is theology without the gospel and evangelism. This has become a reality in the history of missions in Indonesia as observed by

Benyamin Intan, that "Many servants of God from the Protestant Church embrace liberal theology which basically ignores mission work." (Intan, 2017). Postmodern worldviews manifest in a number of contemporary theologies, religious pluralism and new age movements (D. A. Lumintang & Lumintang, 2023). Both worldviews of the two eras have and continue to influence the world and the churches are no exception. As a result, churches have become like the world (Lumintang, 2017).

Reformed churches, which since their establishment (existence) in many regions of the Republic of Indonesia have not been rooted and deep in their theological identity and grip, have experienced two great shocks, namely with the liberal theology of the modern era and the postliberal theology of the postmodern era (Lumintang, 2006). Theology is not just fading, it is disappearing. One of the signs of the fading colour or loss of Reformed theology in churches with a Reformed background and or pattern is the fading and even death of world missions and evangelism. The fading and even death of world mission-evangelism in Reformed churches reveals the loss of the gospel in those churches. The churches are now only doing what any other organisations in the world, such as service and production companies and political parties, are also doing, and are never ahead of them. The main task of the church, which is to preach the full gospel to reach the whole world in all areas, has been neglected. As a result, the world is falling further and further away without hope, because the gospel is being lost in the church and evangelism is being lost in the world (Lumintang, 2022).

Because the gospel has been lost in Reformed churches, the spirit of church renewal has been lost. This is evident in the lifestyle of the congregation that does not characterise the Reformed spirit, still engaging in occult practices, far from a godly life, and the diminishing spirit of worship of the congregation. In addition, the loss of the gospel (Reformed theology) in such churches can be seen in the loss of the spirit of evangelistic mission (Lumintang, 2006). Reformed churches over the years have only spent time and church funds on humanitarian matters, organisation (administration) and fighting over and/or maintaining leadership positions. Whereas organisation and leadership are not the main task but for the main task, which is to preach the whole gospel in the whole way to the whole world. The result of the author's analysis, why Reformed churches are no longer involved in evangelistic missions to the nations (as in the past), because Reformed theology (INJIL) has been lost and because the concept of mission and evangelism has changed (not the Gospel anymore, but ecumenical) which only emphasises social responsibility and concern.

Restoring the Colour of Reformed Theology in Indonesian Churches and the Role of the Indonesian Evangelical Reformed Movement/Churches

The conditions and consequences of the fading and even disappearing colour of Reformed theology in Reformed (Protestant) churches must be quickly realised by church leaders and Christians in Indonesia today, as Stephen Tong has stated with great concern (Tong, 2013). Even though since the 1920s there have been reformation efforts known as "recalvinisation" of the Reformed churches in Indonesia with the aim of releasing the national (indigenous) churches from the bonds of the state church (Dutch), so that they return to their full theological meaning, back to the essence of Reformed theology that upholds with full loyalty to biblical truth. However, because the church did not have a clear theological identity and grip, coupled with the challenges of the times in the form of the "spirit of the age" which manifested itself in the form of liberal and postliberal theology, the church continued to fall into an attitude of compromise (Jonge, 2001).

There is no other way but reformation. In accordance with the motto of reformation, the Reformed churches will not stop reforming themselves to return to the Bible and the nature of the church of Jesus Christ. In accordance with the author's article entitled Reformed

Theology and Church Reformation Always Happening and Will Never End, there is only one way to restore the colour of Reformed theology, namely reformation. Reformed theology results in church reformation. Reformation is the essence of theology and the church, as the turning point of church theology. Church reformation begins with theological reformation. Theological reform is not the church's agenda, but God's agenda (Lumintang, 2017). Since reformation is God's agenda, it is God's own work. Christ is the Head of the Church, He certainly does not want His church to be ruled by the grave (Matthew 16:18), hence the church is constantly being reformed (renewed) (Lumintang, 2017). Christ is the Head of the church and the church is His Body (Rom 12:4-5 and 1 Cor 12). There is no way He would allow His church to be defiled and perverted by the ministers of the church. It is impossible for the Head of the Church to allow His Body (His church) to be defiled by the members of His own body. The Head of the church establishes the members of His body which, although many, are different from one another, yet are one body and harmonious (1 Corinthians 12:12, 20, and 27). It is impossible for the Head of the Church to allow the members of His body to make His body stagnant (dysfunctional), sick, and progressively backward. He must revive, dynamise, mobilise, heal, and even restore the essence of His church.

By its very nature, the church is one, holy and am (universal). The Head of the Church does not want His church to be divided because of the interests of each church (member) or because of the arrogance of one church to another. The Head of the Church also does not want His church to be defiled by the practices of church members and/or ministers that are not in accordance with the nature of the holy church. He does not want homogenisation, indigenisation and discrimination in His church. Therefore, Jesus Christ always evaluates and examines the church through the preaching and teaching of His word. He will always call and appoint His instruments for His reforming purposes. Howard Snyder writes that: "The church must always be critically examined by the written word of God and by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the incarnate word, applied to us by the Holy Spirit." (Snyder, 2006). The Lord Jesus often said: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mar 1:15, Mt 3:2; 4:17). Whenever the gospel is preached, it is the time of reformation (Bornkamm, 1965). The Lord Jesus raises up theologians to be his instruments of reformation year after year and century after century. The reformation will never end, on the contrary it is continuous, because Jesus Christ the Head of the Church continues to guard His church until He comes to take it away.

One example of a church that was reformed by Christ to be His instrument of reformation in the world is the Reformed Evangelical Church of Indonesia (GRII). This church began with and continued with the Reformed Evangelical movement. The rise of this movement was due to God's call, and the burden of looking at the very sad condition of the Indonesian Reformed churches described earlier. That is one of the reasons for the rise of the "Reformed Evangelical" movement in Indonesia today. This "Reformed Evangelical" movement is spearheaded by Stephen Tong who asserts that the reformed churches in Indonesia have lost their Reformed soul, due to the influence of liberal theology. Therefore, to restore it, they use the term "Reformed Evangelical", an actualisation of the Reformed faith with an "Evangelical" spirit (Lumintang, 2006). Only a reformed church can reform (colour) the world with the gospel through Reformed theology, as the following discussion explains. The term 'colour and colouring' is of course just an analogy of the power and influence of the church (theology) in terms of changing the world. Since the core of theology and the church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is only the Gospel that can change the world through the preaching (mission) and teaching of church people.

Colouring the World with the Colours of Reformed Theology

Reformation and Reformed theology has not only reformed the churches in the 16th century, but has coloured the world through the Reformation churches since the 16th century until the 21st century. In particular, Calvin with his theology has made the church and city of Geneva into a model church and city of the Reformation. From the church and city of Geneva (Reformed) Reformed theology as a light for the world spread widely to the world in all fields with a single agenda, namely preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in its entirety in its entirety to the world as a whole. Reformed theology (Calvinism) is biblical-exegesis, which was continued by theologians after him who greatly influenced the reformed churches in later centuries (Muller, 2012). In addition, Calvin's influence as pastor of Geneva made the city a model of an influential Christian city (Muller, 2012), and his contributions in the fields of politics and government, science, economics, morality, education, literature, society and also religious freedom have influenced the world since the 16th century as a whole (Kelly, 2001).

The fruits of reform must result in comprehensive and fundamental change. Because it is comprehensive and fundamental, reformation is not just a name. Therefore, even if the name of the church is reformed or reformed or presbyterian, the name does not automatically reveal that the church is truly a reformed or reformed church. In fact, many churches named reformed or evangelical or protestant, but life is not reformed or evangelical or protestant. R.C. Sproul writes: "When we say that Reformed theology is evangelical, we mean that it shares with other Protestant groups a commitment to the historical doctrines of sola Scriptura and sola fide. Since the sixteenth century, the term evangelical has undergone significant development, making it difficult to define today (Sproul, 1997). Reformed is not just a theological colour, but a Reformed worldview and movement. This worldview is revealed (recognised) in the Reformed way of thinking and living. It is the Reformed way of thinking and living that becomes the "container" of the gospel and it is the gospel that "colours" the church and the world in all fields. The way to do this is as the 16th century reformers did, which is to be God's agent of reformation for the church by teaching and preaching the word of God purely because only the Word can reformation.

Conclusion

Reformed theology is one of the "colours" of church theology that has proven to colour the church and the world since the 16th century until the following centuries. A few centuries before the 16th century, the world and the church were colourless, even in darkness along with the Dark Ages, but God illuminated and coloured the churches with Reformed theology. As a result, the church can read the Bible clearly and admire the colour (beauty) of theology that comes from the Bible and that aims for the benefit of the Bible. Praise God! Reformed theology was brought into Indonesia by Western churches. It was a gift of God to the Indonesian people. Unfortunately, organisational churches with Reformed backgrounds caused and or allowed Reformed theology not to be Indonesianised, but westernised and compromised, so that Reformed theology became faded, unclear and no longer shining. Therefore, the colour of Reformed theology has faded, lost its colour, and even turned into another colour, namely the colour of science alone, thus losing its identity, grip and influence.

The above conclusion is formulated from the findings that the fading of the colour of Reformed theology in Reformed churches in Indonesia began with the introduction of Reformed theology and churches that have lost their original colour; dominated by the strong control of the state church that is not interested in theology and theologising; lied to by liberal modern theology trends and postliberal postmodern theology trends, and fooled by the imposition of Western Christian culture (Westernisation) and the denial of local

culture (Indigenisation), which resulted in the "alienation of Reformed theology" in Indonesia. As a result, many Reformed church members do not know John Calvin at all, let alone his unrivalled teachings and system of thought and faith. Those who were originally Reformed lost their identity (uniqueness), became the same as the churches in general, and even became similar to the world (earthly worldview). Because they lost their identity, they also lost their grip, so that many churches were "carried away by the times" (modern and postmodern worldviews), thus losing the power (influence) of true (spiritual) transformation that has an impact on cultural, social, economic, political transformation and all other fields. There is no other way, no new way, except to return to the original path, namely reformation. Reformed churches hope for God's grace to return to Reformed theology (the meaning, basis, character and subject matter of theology), to its origins, its original colour, so that it can shine again. This paper is a recommendation for the urgency of the Reformation agenda of Reformed churches in Indonesia, as has been done by the Indonesian Evangelical Reformed Movement and with its International Evangelical Reformed Theological Seminary.

The findings of this study can be an input for churches in general, and Reformed churches in particular, both as a reference for evaluating church theology (identity), as well as an urgent push for the church reformation agenda as the only solution for churches that have faded the colour (identity) of their theology.

References

- Aritonang, J. S., & Steenbrink, K. A. (Eds.). (2008). *A history of Christianity in Indonesia* (Vol. 35). Brill.
- Aritonang, J. S. (1995). *Berbagai Aliran di dalam dan di Sekitar Gereja*. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Baiton Roland H. (1956). *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*. Beacon Press.
- Batlajery, A. (2018). Tantangan Gereja-Gereja Calvinis Di Indonesia. *Buku Penghormatan James Haire*, 125–146.
- Berkhof Enklaar. (1993). *Sejarah Gereja*. Gunung Mulia.
- Elena Totou, Katitori Akrivi, Vassilakis Costa, ect. (2009). Captureing the Historical Research Methodology: An Experimental Approach. *International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation (ICER)*.
- Engelsma, D. J. (2023). The Reformed worldview on behalf of a godly culture. *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, 38(2), 2–46.
- Gual Marselinus, "Gereja Ayam dan Simbol Kebangkitan Kristen Pribumi," Dalam *Merdeka.com*, 26 Desember 2016: <https://www.merdeka.com/khas/gereja-ayam-dan-simbol-kebangkitan-kristen-pribumi.html>
- Helmer, C. (2014). *Theology and the End of Doctrine*. Presbyterian Publishing Corp.
- Intan, B. F. (2017). Misi Kristen di Indonesia: Kesaksian Kristen Protestan. *Societas Dei: Jurnal Agama Dan Masyarakat*, 2(2), 325. <https://doi.org/10.33550/sd.v2i2.21>
- Jonge, Christiaan de. (2001). *apa itu Calvinisme?*. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Jonge & Aritonang. (2015). *Apa dan Bagaimana Gereja?*. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Jonge, Christiaan de. (2015). *Calvinisme di Indonesia Ditinjau dari Perspektif Teologi, Dalam, Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda: Dua Belas Tulisan mengenai Calvin dan Calvinisme.*. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Kelly, D. F. (2001). *Munculnya Kemerdekaan di Dunia Modern: Pengaruh Calvin terhadap Lima Pemerintahan dari Abad XVI-Abad XVIII. terj. I. Tjulianto*. Momentum.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). Reliability in content analysis: Some common misconceptions and recommendations. *Human communication research*, 30(3), 411-433. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>.
- Kristiyanto, E.,A. (2004). Reformasi dari Dalam. *Sejarah Gereja Zaman Modern*.
- Lumintang, S. I. (2006). *Theologia dan Misiologia Reformed: Menuju Kepada Pemikiran*

- Reformed dan Menjawab Keberatan. Batu: Departemen Litaratur PPIL.
- Lumintang S. I. (2009). *Gerakan Misi Gereja-Gereja Reformed di Indonesia Masa Kini, Dalam Misiologia Kontemporer: Menuju Rekonstruksi Theologia Misi yang Seutuhnya*. Depart. Multimedia YPPIL.
- Lumintang, S. P. N. I., & Lumintang, D. A. (2016). *Theologia Penelitian Dan Penelitian Theologis*.
- Lumintang, D. A., & Lumintang, S. C. (2017). *Theologia Reformasi Gereja Abad XXI*.
- Lumintang, D. A., & Lumintang, S. P. N. I. (2023). New Age Movement in Holistic Christian Education and Mission Perspectives: An Integrative Approach. *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, 22(2), 673–700. <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol22.iss2.art14>
- Lumintang, S. P. N. I. (2022). The Lost of Gospel in The Church and Evangelism in the World: The Deadly Scream and the Answers. *Jurnal Ilmiah Religiosity Entity Humanity (JIREH)*, 4(2), 195–217. <https://doi.org/10.37364/jireh.v4i2.116>
- Lumintang, S. P. N. I., & Daliman, M. (2023). Reformed Theology and Church Reformation Always Happening and Will Never End. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 10(5), 155. <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v10i5.4670>
- Mills, G. E., & Gay, L. R. (1983). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications*. pearson.
- Muller, R. A. (2012). Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation. *Baker Academic*.
- Randwijck. (1989). *Oegtgeest*. Gunung Mulia.
- Raschke, C. (2004). *The next reformation: Why evangelicals must embrace postmodernity*. Baker Academic.
- Snyder, H. (2006). *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement (Indonesian)*.
- Sproul, R. C. (2005). *What is Reformed Theology?: Understanding the Basics*. Baker Books.
- Sumartana, T. (1994). *Mission at the crossroads: indigenous churches, European missionaries, Islamic association and socio-religious change in Java, 1812-1936*. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Thomas, N. E. (2000). *Transformasi Misi Kristen: Teks-Teks Klasik tentang Misi dan Kerkistenan Sedunia*. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Tong, S. (2002). *Theologia Reformed dan Relevansinya bagi Gereja Masa Kini, Dalam Menuju Tahun 2000: Tantangan Gereja di Indonesia*. Momentum.
- Tong, S. (2011). *Gerakan Reformed Injili: Apa? dan Mengapa?*. Momentum.
- Tong, S. (2013). *Reformasi dan Theologi Reformed*. Momentum Christian Literature.
- Tong, S. (2017). Mengapa Teologi Reformed? *Verbum Christi: Jurnal Teologi Reformed Injili*, 1(1), 7–23. <https://doi.org/10.51688/vc1.1.2014.art1>
- Van End, T. (1993). *Ragi Caritas: Sejarah Gereja di Indonesia, 1500-1860*. Jakarta: PT BPK Gunung Mulia, terjemahan.
- Van den End. (2015). *Peranan Calvinisme Dalam Gereja-Gereja Kristen Protestan di Indonesia" Dalam, Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda: Dua Belas Tulisan mengenai Calvin dan Calvinism*. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Van den End, T. (2016). *Harta dalam bejana: sejarah gereja ringkas*. BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Wellem, F. D. (2004). *Injil dan marapu: suatu studi historis-teologis tentang perjumpaan Injil dengan masyarakat Sumba pada periode 1876-1990*. BPK Gunung Mulia.