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The significance of Calvin's theology of mission and its realisation in the 16th Century for 21st-century church mission in Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine the theological themes of mission in the works of John Calvin and their implementation in the 16th century, as well as their significance to the mission of the present-day church. This purpose contradicts the criticism of modern mission experts who consider Calvin to have made no contribution to the mission movement and even to have weakened it. However, an in-depth study of Calvin's works, using a theological-historical method, reveals the meaning of mission, the Bible as a missional book, the mission of the Trinity, the holistic mission of the kingdom of God, the church as the sole agent of mission, the missionary function of the apostles, holistic mission, and inclusive mission to the nations. All of these were implemented by Calvin in Geneva in the 16th century, continued and contextualised by Calvinist mission experts and missionaries in many countries, including Indonesia, in the 21st century.

1. INTRODUCTION

The phrase "mission theology" only emerged when the book *Theology of the Christian mission* was published by Gerald Anderson in 1961. In fact, the concept has existed since the founding of the

church, and was developed by theologians, including John Calvin. Indeed, John Calvin is well known as a great theologian and leader of theologians (Godfrey 2009; Klooster 2009), even Barth (2007) called Calvin a giant of theology since the 16th century. Van Engen (2000:814) asserts that

> Reformed theory of missions has its roots in the thought of Calvin and was subsequently articulated in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by those who followed him.

Many of the traces of thought and mission movements that began with Calvin continue like a chain through history to the present day (Schirrmacher 2009; Horton 2011:151-169). Calvin has guided missionaries to the Word, provided a mission message, purified mission motives, and generated relevant mission methods (Van den Berg 1956:72-73). Easter (2001:142) asserts that

> Calvin laid the foundations of mission through the rediscovery of the gospel. He scrutinised to remove errors and explain in detail the gospel as the Bible presents it.

Nevertheless, a number of modern scholars criticised Calvin. Along with Martin Luther, Calvin was considered uninterested in missionary thought and movements, and did not organise missionary outreach, compared to what Roman Catholic monks did (Tucker 1983:67). Reformers were thought to be ignorant of the world outside their country, but Neill (1973:189) writes: "Naturally the reformers were not unaware of the non-Christian world around them." Similarly, Hogg (2002:2) comments that Calvin denied the Christian obligation to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Warneck (1901:10, 19) strongly criticised. The reformers were considered to have not only no missionary action, but also no idea of mission, because their theology prevented it. Kene (2014:73-74) adds that Protestant missions not only occurred in the context of colonisation, thus becoming a stumbling block, but also because its doctrines such as the doctrine of predestination became a stumbling block for global missions. Bosch (1995:241-243) exposes the negative sides of Calvin's doctrine and Calvinism that paralyse mission efforts such as justification by faith, predestination, and the fatalism of total depravity. Calvin and Luther were also accused of not producing a missionary impulse, because they considered the Great Commission to apply only to the apostolic age (Thomas 2019:47). The office of apostle in the early church was a special case, occurring only at that time, and it no longer existed in subsequent regular churches until now (Thomas 2019:55). That is why, in later centuries, William R. Estep, in the writings of Horton (2011:151), stated: "Logically, Calvinism is anti-missionary." In later years, criticism from anti-Calvin and Calvinism grew stronger, due to Hyper-Calvinism's view that God's decree cancelled man's duty (Walker 1925:98; Toon 1988:324; Watson 2000:278).

Responding to the criticisms of some mission scholars, Calvin's followers and successors from time to time gave their responses. Easter (2001:141-160) wrote *Missions in the Reformed tradition from the sixteenth to the twentieth century.* A number of essays on *Calvin and mission* (Edwards), *Calvin's missionary message* (Van der Berg), *Missionary dynamic in the theology of John Calvin* (Chaney), *Calvin's missionary thought and practice* (Pogson), *John Calvin and his missionary enterprise* (Hulse), *John Calvin on evangelism and mission* (Van Neste), and *Calvin the evangelist* (Beeke) edited by Schirrmacher (2009) in the book *Calvin and world mission*. Simmons (2009b) takes a historical look at Calvin and missions from several European countries to overseas missions in Brazil. Likewise, Coleman (2009:28-33) wrote a historical overview of Calvin and missions, and Labuschagne (2009) provided some highlights of Calvin's theology and his role in mission in Geneva and Brazil. Weems (2015) examines Calvin's doctrine of predestination, election, and reprobation and asserts that it has no negative influence on the mission of the church, but rather dynamises it.

In fact, the topic of Calvin's impact on mission has been studied at length. However, from some of the literature that has been presented previously, it is deemed necessary to find the themes of mission theology extracted from Calvin's writings in the 16th century and applied in the context of the demands and challenges of mission since then, from Europe to the nations, including in Indonesia in the 21st century. The mission of the churches, in general, and of the Reformed churches, in particular, faces great demands and challenges, ranging from Reformed theology that is not rooted in many Reformed churches, and the strong influence of animistic practices of previous religions (folk religion), as well as the influence of liberal theology from the West, and the fact of religious pluralism in Indonesia. There is a wide gap, both geographical and temporal.

There is indeed a time gap between Calvin's mission context in the 16th century and the mission context of the church in the 21st century and a space gap between Europe and Indonesia. The gap between Calvin's theology of mission and the mission movement with the condition of Reformed churches in Indonesia, as well as the challenges of religious pluralism in the 21st century demand the need for Reformed theological themes of mission nowadays. The themes of Reformed mission theology remain relevant. The themes of Reformed theology of mission are rooted in Calvin's writings, have been applied by Calvin himself in his mission in European countries and in many parts of the world, including Brazil, continued and developed by Reformed churches globally. Following the lead of Buys' (2013) research on the relevance of Calvin's mission for African churches, this article seeks to bridge the geographical gap between Europe and Indonesia, as well as the time gap between the 16th and the 21st centuries.

This article aims to examine the theological themes of mission in Calvin's works, which have contributed greatly to the global mission movement since the 16th century, and their significance for mission in 21st-century Indonesia. To achieve this objective, the researcher employed a historical-theological method to systematically explore the relationships between concepts (Gay 1983:145). Researchers collected and interpreted authentic data on Calvin's historical background, thinking, and missionary practices as primary sources, supported by Calvinist commentaries as secondary sources and their relevance to the contemporary context, including Indonesia (Dreyer & Pillay 2017).

2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Calvin did not write a specific book on systematic mission theology, but he wrote more about *the Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which included his Bible commentary, treatises, and sermons (Haykin 2009:171). However, the books he wrote in the 16th century contain themes of mission theology, which were later discovered and developed (contextualised) by Calvinist theologians and missionaries in various parts of the world, including Indonesia, particularly in the context of the demands and challenges of mission in the 21st century.

3. CURRENT DEMANDS AND CHALLENGES OF MISSIONS IN INDONESIA

The demands and challenges of mission in Indonesia, apart from being influenced by changes in the world mission paradigm, are also, of course, shaped by the multi-context of the Indonesian nation itself. The paradigm of world mission theology is changing, especially from the Enlightenment paradigm to the postmodern paradigm to interdependence, as Bosch (1995:349-362) wrote in his book *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, including changes in the elements of the ecumenical mission paradigm (Bosch 1995:368-510). James (2015:217-232) reveals the political and religious turbulence that demands a new concept of mission and approach. The paradigm shift in global missions has also impacted missions in Indonesia. There has been a shift in the theme of evangelism towards social responsibility and interfaith dialogue, from the mission of the church to the world to the mission of the church through the world (Lumintang 2009:21-72).

A paradigm shift is occurring in Indonesia. The context of poverty has prompted a number of churches to develop social missions, rather than through evangelism (Silalahi 2020). Rantesalu (2022) only proposed a mission through social services. A number of theological students also initiated the

idea of social transformation mission along with Christian education, but they did not discuss evangelism at all (Ramba *et al.* 2024). Some theological students discuss the mission of evangelism in public spaces, by reinterpreting Matthew 28:18-20, by prioritising the mission of harmony in order to maintain social relations (Walean 2021:33). For Suriawan (2023), religious pluralism is both a challenge and a mission opportunity, but he rejects evangelism and proposes a mission of peaceful reconciliation with other religions. Rumengan (2020) firmly rejects evangelistic missions, and only emphasises inclusive and dialogical missions in his writing entitled *Mission in the Context of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia*.

The mission of dialogue between people of different religions as a substitute for evangelism has long been voiced by ecumenical theologians such as Soetapa (1981:18-19) with his argument that all history (Islam and Christianity) is identical to the revelation of God. Likewise, Tanja (1988:47-48) declared a change in mission, no longer evangelism but fellowship with people of other faiths. Darmaputera (1991:168) asserted that the main task of Christian mission is not evangelism (monological), but dialogue. Theology students were influenced, seeing evangelism as a dilemma, so they only developed dialogue and social services for the sake of harmony between different religious communities (Mulya 2022:188-199). Not only social mission and religious plurality, the idea of the church's mission in the midst of ecological crisis has also emerged, but the full mission of salvation has been transformed into an ecological mission of salvation (Purwanto 2021).

The problem is that the Reformed theology of these reformed churches has lost its true reformed "colour" (Lumintang 2025:277-290). The problem is that, since the Reformed church and theology entered Indonesia in the 17th century, it has been a tamed and neutered Calvinism (Van den End 2000:131). De Jonge (2001:377), a church historian, is of the same opinion: "The preaching of the gospel, the Calvinist character, became less visible in Indonesia." Batlajery (2018:123-146) states that Calvinist teachings are not embedded and rooted in certain regions, and because of this, Calvinist churches presently face severe challenges. The condition of Calvinist background churches is further exacerbated by Western mission practices that prioritise Western culture and ignore local culture, as well as the influence of liberal theology and the syncretic practices of church members with their tribal religious beliefs (Lumintang 2025:277-290). As a result, Calvinist churches not only changed their mission concepts and practices, but they also lost track of their mission data. To overcome this, the author invites these churches to return to the roots of the Reformed churches' mission, namely Calvin's mission theology and its implementation from Geneva to the nations, from the 16th to the 21st centuries, as follows.

4. TERMS AND MEANING OF MISSION IN CALVIN'S WRITINGS

Although the term "mission" only became popular with the rise of the modern mission movement in the late 18th century (Horton 2011:155), and became particularly popular during the rise of missiology in the late 19th century (Butler *et al.* 2024:6-7), it had long been used, even in a simple sense, including by Calvin. While Calvin does not explicitly use the terms "mission" and "*Missio Dei*", he provides a solid foundation for the notion of God's mission in the world. An important term and understanding for Calvin is that of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Christ (Calvin 1845:300). Further, Bayes (2009:6-7) reports on Beveridge and Battles' translation of Calvin's *Institutes*, using the term mission, twice referring to the mission of Christ, twice also referring to the mission of the apostles, and once referring to the mission of reformation. Bayes (2009) himself found the term "mission" in Calvin's writings 50 times, though not in the modern sense. Calvin (1979a:402; 1979b:381) explains that the whole world is subjugated to the authority of Christ, by means of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in every place around the world. At the heart of mission is the proclamation of the Gospel, the absolute will of God (Calvin 1948:90), which is to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world, for it gives life to all (Calvin 1948:40). The kingdom of Christ, the "invincible kingdom", will be "vastly extended" because God makes "his sceptre stretch far and wide". Christ's kingdom is being extended throughout the world (Simmons 2009). Later, Reformed thinkers such as Abraham Kuyper continue this understanding with the statement:

> There is not a square inch in the whole of creation over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine' (Herderson 2008:12-14).

This is the foundation for the holistic mission of Calvinists in all fields.

5. THE BIBLE IS GOD'S MISSION BOOK

In essence, mission is the act of God introducing or revealing himself in general and in particular. According to Calvin, because general revelation does not make people recognise him, God provides another guide, namely the Bible, as the light that makes himself known as a person (McNeil 2006a:69-70). Easter (2001:142) emphasises that

> Calvin relaid the foundation of mission by re-discovering the Gospel. He sought to remove error and expound the Gospel as the Bible presents it. The Institute[s] profess to do just it. Calvin stressed the sovereignty of God's Word over the church. Scripture must rule and dictate her message and activity.

The Bible must also govern and control mission activities. At its core, God's mission is the work of God introducing himself and his will to human beings, and that only through the Scriptures (McNeil 2006a:70). Mission without the Bible is not Christian mission. Therefore, the Calvinist missiologist Verkuyl (1978:90, 101) states that the Bible is the book of mission. This was reinforced by the Reformed missiologist Van Engen (1996:65) who wrote:

> The narrative of Scripture is the story of God's Trinitarian mission. When we take seriously the narrative of Scripture, we are impressed with the fact that mission in the Bible is profoundly God's mission.

The entire Bible recounts the work (mission) of God the Three Persons of the Trinity, so it is not wrong to call the Bible a book of mission.

6. THE SOVEREIGN GOD OF THE TRINITY (*MISSIO DEI*) IS THE CHURCH'S MISSION MOTIVE AND MODEL

According to Calvin, just as God the Trinity is the greatest theme of Christian theology (Warfield 2000:198), so it is the greatest theme of mission theology. Calvin organised *The Institutes of the Christian religion* in four major sections based on the structure of the Trinity in accordance with the framework of the Apostles' Creed (Letham 1988:571), namely the knowledge of God as Creator (God the Father), God the Redeemer (God the Son), the way of receiving Christ's grace (God the Holy Spirit), and the community of Christ (the church) (McNeil 2006a). Calvin (1950) taught that the three persons of the Trinity work to extend his kingdom to the ends of the earth. Calvin's theology of mission, God the Father at the centre, Christ at the centre, focuses on the glory of God in Christ, including human effort. Not so with the Roman Catholic Church, its mission motivation on merit and asceticism (Simmons 2009:186). Starting from this framework of Calvin's Trinity, Reformed missiologists take Calvin's trinitarian mission as a model. Verkuyl (1978:5) defines missiology as the study of the saving activity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit throughout the world. So is Kuiper's trinitarian mission model:

> The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the author both of salvation and of the gospel of salvation. He is indeed the author of evangelism (Kuiper 1966:22).

Therefore, God's mission belongs to God, and can only be carried out by God himself, while the church is only an instrument of God's mission.

7. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF HOLISTIC EVANGELISM AND MISSION

The universal kingdom of God is one of the fundamental themes of Calvin's theology (Beeke 2009:164), which later became the theme of Calvinist (Reformed) theology (Greenway 2000:155). Specifically, Calvin discusses the progress of the kingdom of God in Christ, from the beginning of his kingdom to its consummation (Wilcox 1995:204-209). The kingdom of God was extended by the apostles and continued by the church throughout the ages. This is also confirmed by Calvin in his interpretation of 2 Corinthians 2:12:

> The kingdom of Christ is extended through the preaching of the gospel in the many places opened by God Himself (Calvin 1993a:154-155).

The church spreads it through the proclamation of the Gospel of the kingdom of God, influencing all aspects of life in the world, as an arena for God's glory (Calvin 1993a). The role of the church is to spread the kingdom of God, intercede (McNeill 2006:876-877, 904), and preach the Gospel to all people, as outlined in his interpretation of Isaiah 7:5 (Calvin 1981:99). Calvin also discussed the kingdom in relation to civil government, that spiritual (eternal) and civil (temporal) governments are indeed different, but they are not contradictory (McNeil 2006:1485-1487). This is the basis for Calvin to be involved in the affairs of society (state) in all fields (Kelly 1992:19-24; De Jonge 2001:27). This view was underpinned by Calvin's educational background as a jurist, moralist, humanist, and theologian, showing his extensive role in the city of Geneva (Hall 1956:27). This concept was developed by Calvinist theologians and missionaries (Hall 1956:295), among them Abraham Kuyper (2016a; 2016b) with his work on common grace and kingship of Christ.

8. THE CHURCH AS THE SOLE AGENT OF GOD'S MISSION

Calvin distinguishes between two types of churches, the true church and the false church, and only the true church is part of the kingdom of God (McNeil 2006:1041). The true church is the universal, invisible community of the elect (McNeil 2006:1021). The office of the church is formed by the Word of God and must be in accordance with the Word of God (McNeil 2006:1072). Calvin asserted that the church of God is where the Word of God is preached and heard, accompanied by the ministry of the sacraments (McNeil 2006:1021, 1023, 1046). Calvin's (1845:386) principle of the concept of the gathering of

the church only through the preaching of the Word fuelled the passion (pure motivation) for evangelism and world mission (Gentiles). Calvin believed that Matthew 28:16-20 applies to the church in all ages. (McNeil 2006:1041). In addition, Calvin (1993b:192) taught that "Christ, through his servants, has conquered the whole world under his power through the preaching of the Gospel". The true church is the church that preaches the Gospel. Therefore, according to Calvin, the church should daily long for God to gather his church from various parts of the world, spread and multiply through the preaching of the Gospel of the church (McNeil 2006:1041). This is the reason why Calvin sent many missionaries to many countries, including refugees, who returned to their home countries as messengers of the Gospel.

9. THE APOSTLE FUNCTION AND THE MISSIONARY CALL OF THE CHURCH

Calvin based the offices of the church on Ephesians 4:11-12, namely apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Calvin writes:

> Of those only the last two have an ordinary office in the church; the Lord raised up the first three at the beginning of his kingdom, and now and again revives them as the need of the times demands (McNeil 2006:1056).

The Pope is not an apostle like Peter and Paul. Calvin himself did not distinguish between the office of apostle and the universal mandate for the whole church, but his explanation of the Great Commission and the office of apostle is not very clear, leading to other interpretations (Easter 2001:143-144). In fact, there is no indication that Calvin recognised the Great Commission only at the time of the apostles, since all believers are a royal priesthood. Calvin asserts: *First*, apostleship is concerned with the task of preaching the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15) (McNeil 2006:1056). The task of preaching the Gospel everywhere is as an extension of his kingdom in many places. *Secondly,* the title of prophet no longer exists today, or it is less clear that it is limited to those with special gifts (functions) (McNeil 2006:1057). *Thirdly,* "the apostleship is not an empty title, but a laborious office" (function) (Calvin 1979b:383).

Calvin himself once called Luther a meritorious apostle of Christ, who with his ministry made the light of the Gospel shine (Calvin 1979b). In this regard, Calvin does not deny the relevance of the Great Commission (Mk. 16:15; Mt. 28:18-20). These texts explain that

> [t]hrough the proclamation of the gospel in every place, they are to bring all nations to the obedience of faith (Calvin 1979b).

Further,

> In Matthew, it is they who are taught to teach; but Mark expresses the teaching, that they should preach the gospel; and in short Matthew himself adds that teaching them to scrutinise everything that the Lord has commanded (Calvin 1979b).

In Calvin's commentary, he never speaks of limiting the relevance of this Great Commission to the apostolic era. Preaching the Gospel to all nations is the essential task of the church at all times. Christ came to be a light to the nations (Calvin 1979b). This is the mission of the church inclusively, as explained below.

10. INCLUSIVE MISSION TO THE NATIONS

Calvin taught the duty of Christians to introduce the true religion to all people inclusively (McNeil 2006:1495). Because of the far-reaching power of the Gospel, God shows his heart to all people, inviting (calling) them to salvation and the confession of his righteousness (1 Tm. 2:3-4) (Calvin 1948:54). This external call is because the power of the Gospel itself makes people respond to the Gospel (Calvin 1948). Furthermore, in his sermon on 1 Timothy 2:2-3, Calvin states that the Gospel is preached to all people without exception. With regard to the doctrine of predestination, Calvin explains:

> For as we know not who belong to number of the predestined or who do not belong, we ought to be so minded as to wish that all men saved. So shall it come about that we try to make everyone we meet a sharer in our peace. But our peace will rest upon the Sons of peace (Luke 10:6, cf. Matt. 10:33) (McNeil 2006:964).

God not only predestined those he chose to be saved, but he also predestined the preaching of the Gospel as the means to bring about his election (Simmons 2009:140). In fact, God invites all people to participate in salvation. He wants the doctrine of salvation to be enjoyed by them and others. Calvin also quoted Psalm 2:8-9:

> I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession (Simmons 2009:54).

Hence, Horton writes a clear summary of Calvin's sermon on 1 Timothy 2:3-5: "We must labor as much as possible to draw those to salvation who seem to be afar off" (Horton 2011:154).

Calvin was accused of holding the view that the Great Commission had been fulfilled during the time of the apostles. However, Calvin's interpretation of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) was in accordance with the

extraordinary role of the apostles, but that role (office) was temporary and had ended during their time (the apostles) (Simmons 2009:187). Therefore, he opposed the papacy as a permanent office in the Roman Catholic Church. He did not oppose the Great Commission and argued that it had ended at the time of the apostles. For, the Lord gave his disciples the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations in Matthew 28:18-20 and this was the fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 49:6 to be a light to the nations (Calvin 1972:246-247). Calvin affirmed that the Lord Jesus was sent not only to the Jews, but also to all people. He confirmed this by quoting Isaiah 2:4: "He will be the Judge of the nations". Calvin explained:

> The Prophet here shows that the boundaries of his kingdom will be enlarged, that he may rule over various nations (Calvin 1981:99).

Beaver (1973:56-57) writes that Calvin connects the kingdom of God and the preaching of the Gospel:

> Christ's kingdom was not only on earth, when he commanded the gospel to be preached in every place, and it has not yet been completed at the present time.

Mission in Calvin's understanding is the mission of the kingdom of God which is inclusive, that is, for all people in all places on this earth.

11. REALISATION OF THE THEOLOGICAL THEMES OF CALVIN'S MISSION: TEACHER, DIRECTOR OF MISSION, MISSIONARY TO THE NATIONS

It is true that the mission of the Reformed churches began in the 17th century. Hughes (1973:40) argues that mission and evangelism are not consistent with Calvin's character as a theologian. In fact, Calvin had left behind the themes of mission theology, as described earlier, as well as historical data on the realisation of mission theology through his involvement in the context of world mission at that time. Easter (2001:144) makes the same point, namely that

> [a]ll the aspects of Calvin's thought that we have mentioned are important for missionary endeavour. He was truly missionary minded in that he saw the plight of mankind, the grace of God in Christ, and the duty of the church to preach the gospel to all people; also because his whole life was concerned with believers who were outside his country, his concern was to spread a biblical understanding of the faith in Europe, this shows his missionary spirit.

Calvin realised the themes of his theological mission through his role as a teacher and director of missions for the nations, as explained below.

11.1 Calvin renewed the city of Geneva into a world centre for education and missions

Calvin returned to the city of Geneva (1541) and began his role with the mission of urban renewal. Where, previously, the government of Geneva was very chaotic, the people were immoral and full of heresy, Calvin's presence renewed the city of Geneva that became one of the most significant places in Europe of the time (Hall 1956:28). There was a social, spiritual, and moral revolution (Grier 2001:217). Calvin taught and applied the concept of two kingdoms (civil and spiritual), the role of the church towards the civil magistrate, the elimination of heresy, the responsibility of believers to the government, and changing the political situation in Geneva with the word of God (Kelly 1992:15-30). After reforming the city of Geneva, Calvin made Geneva a centre for refugees, evangelised France, and was the centre of the mission movement in Europe, even the New World (Grier 2001:218; Simmons 2009:200). Those whom the Roman Catholic Church persecuted in many countries fled to Geneva, thus doubling the population of the city, but some became disciples of Calvin (Simmons 2009). They were trained and became both church ministers and missionaries to various nations (Labuschagne 2009:5). No less than 142 ministers (missionaries) were sent from Geneva under the leadership of Calvin (Simmons 2009:190).

11.2 Calvin prepares trained missionaries

Calvin established the Church of Geneva, the city of Geneva according to the Bible, as a centre for biblical studies (the Geneva Academy) to prepare missionaries. Bayes (2009:9) writes:

> The city become a temporary heaven for European nations. Refugees came from Britain, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Poland, Bohemia and elsewhere. While there they studied God's Word in depth.

Calvin believed that the missionaries should be thoroughly prepared, trained to read the Bible in the original languages, and steeped in sound theology (Horton 2011:153). In this regard, Calvin was deeply committed to training ministers and missionaries with rigorous theological studies (Hall 1956:27). Bayes cites data from Frank James:

> Calvin did not want to send uneducated missionaries back to the dangers of Catholic France. He believes that a good missionary had to be a good theologian first, and so he inspired and educated them (Hall 1956:12).

Calvin believed in Christ's sovereignty over the whole world; hence, the desire to send messengers of the gospel to evangelise the world to declare Christ's sovereignty (Loizides 2009).

11.3 Calvin taught and implemented holistic mission in his ministry

Starting from the mission theology theme of Christ's sovereignty over the whole world, Calvin developed holistic mission in all fields through education, printing, government (politics), and the economic principles of the city of Geneva (Simmons 2009:91-92). Along with teaching world evangelism, Calvin also cared for orphans, the poor, places for refugees in times of crisis, including providing principles and social assistance for the needy (Hall & Burton 2009:15-16). Calvin also taught about the principles of finance, business, and economics and their application in markets and trade (Hall & Burton 2009). Van Til (2001:95-116) reveals Calvin's ideas and impact on all of life, including his impact on politics, culture, humanity (liberty), economics, arts, and education. According to Kelly (1992:4),

> John Calvin must be considered part of the vital sinews, … helped to hold together a skeletal system of political, economic and religious life in the Western nation states for the four hundred years.

This is what modern missiologists understand as holistic mission, which is the proclamation of God's Word in all areas to realise a complete life.

11.4 Calvin seeks a holy and missionary church

Based on the theme of mission theology that the church is the sole agent of God's mission in the world and the function and missionary calling of the church (all believers). Calvin and the magistrates made the church of Geneva a model missionary church. First, to maintain the integrity (holiness) of the church, Calvin stated that the Geneva church was free from external influence, hierarchy, political interference, and state control (government) (Hall & Burton 2009:2122). Furthermore, based on his principle that wherever the gospel is preached and the sacrament is served, that is where the church is present. In this spirit, Calvin sent many missionaries to the nations, and they established thousands of churches. In France alone, by 1562, there were roughly 2150 churches with a congregation of approximately two million members, many of whom studied under John Calvin and became missionaries (Loizides 2009). In addition, Easter (2001:145) reports that many Christians who were originally sent by the government to fulfil their duties in colonised countries, but were converted to the Calvinist faith, became involved in evangelising the indigenous population.

11.5 Calvin sent and supported his missionaries

Departing from the theme of inclusive mission, namely preaching the Gospel in every place in the world, Calvin and the church leaders (consistory) sent missionaries. First, Calvin sent missionaries to bring the Gospel to the Roman Catholics in France in 1555 (1553), and, by 1559, the missionaries had established 100 churches. It is reported that the pastors led by Calvin had sent 88 missionaries to many different places to preach the Gospel (Hughes 1973:45-46). Furthermore, Calvin sent missionaries to many nations, even to Brazil. Fourteen missionaries were sent to Brazil, especially to reach the indigenous tribes of Brazil (Easter 2001:144). The missionary outreach lasted until 1562 (1564), and they established over 2000 churches (Bayes 2009:11). Calvin not only sent missionaries, but he also invested himself in long-term relationships with them (Coleman 2009:28-33). Calvin continued to maintain his communication with the missionaries through correspondence, encouraging them, and praying for them on the mission field. This was Calvin's form of mentoring those he sent out (Bayes 2009:48-49).

12. SIGNIFICANCE OF JOHN CALVIN'S THEOLOGY OF MISSION FOR 21ST CENTURY CHURCH MISSION IN INDONESIA

Nowadays, Calvin guides us to the Word to subject our missionary message, motives, and methods to its direction (Easter 2001:144). Just as Calvin began his mission of renewal in the city of Geneva, in accordance with the motto *Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda*, so too in Indonesia. After returning to Calvin's theology of mission (Reformed), it was then possible to revise the mission that had been influenced by religious pluralism. Furthermore, by way of this article, churches are invited to engage in inclusive mission to the nations and holistic mission in all areas. These practical steps can be applied by churches nowadays, as discussed below.

12.1 A call to Reformation: Calling Calvinist churches in Indonesia back to the Bible, mission theology and the World Mission Movement

In the introduction of this article, the accusation of mission scholars and mission historians that Calvin had no mission ideas and actions, and that his theology is considered to weaken and hinder world mission, has been silenced with the themes of Calvin's mission theology accompanied by his role in world mission. In fact, the Reformed churches in Indonesia are hardly any longer involved in the world mission movement. De Jonge (2001:377), a church historian, is of the same opinion:

> The evangelism, the Calvinism, has become less visible in Indonesia. Protestant churches hardly show any of their inherited Calvinist characteristics any more.

Apart from the influence of liberal theology (De Jonge 2015:73), according to Van den End (2015:131), "The Calvinism that entered Indonesia in the 17th and 18th centuries was a domesticated and emasculated Calvinism".

Calvinism is not embedded and rooted (Batlajery 2018:123-146). In fact, according to Tong (2013:87), "[t]oday, some of the reformed church leaders have strayed too far from the original Reformation teachings". That is why, apart from the basic calling of God, the poor condition of these Calvinist churches also encouraged Tong (2011:3) to establish the Reformed Evangelical Church of Indonesia (GRII) and the International Reformed Evangelical Theological Seminary (STT-RII). What Tong (2013:65) means by the Evangelical Reformed Movement is a spirit of faithful return to the Bible. That is the reason for writing this article to encourage Calvinist churches to return to church reformation (renewal) and to relearn and apply Calvin's theology of mission.

12.2 Revision of the mission of churches influenced by religious pluralism

Religious pluralism is one of the mission challenges in the 21st century. This position rejects the uniqueness, finality, or decisive claims to God's revelation in Jesus Christ (Pentury & Lumintang 2022:57). They believe that the truth of all religions comes from the same source and object of worship and should be the same, meaning the differences only exist in perspectives (Knitter 1989:37). Religious pluralism challenges us to hold firmly to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Saviour even as we work for increased tolerance and understanding among religious communities (Taylor 2000:19). Religious pluralism completely paralysed Christian mission in the perspective of Calvin and the Bible.

Religious pluralism rejects both the theology of mission and the act of Christian mission to non-Christians for the following reasons: God is already present in other religions (anonymous Christians) (Murillo 2023); Knitter's (1989:125) concept of *heilsoptimism* (the possibility of salvation outside Christianity); Hick's (1980:36) Copernican revolution theory, and Jesus is not God, according to Song (1993:16, 31). Therefore, they reject the doctrine of the finality of Christ, and evangelism, as well as the traditional concept of "God-Church-World" (Gnanakan 1997:30) and replacing it with the contemporary concept of "God-World-Church" (Thomas 2000:175). Calvin's theology of mission revised Calvinist churches that had been influenced by religious pluralist views, with the mission model of the Trinity, Christian finality as the core of persuasive mission and evangelism, the church as the sole agent of God's redemptive mission (Bavinck 1960:7).

12.3 Invitation to engage in the Evangelistic Mission Movement to the nations

Many Reformed and/or Evangelical world mission experts talk about the completion of the Great Commission mission (Mt. 28:18-20) with the goal of nations, peoples, and languages worshipping God (Rv. 7:9-12). According to the Joshua project (2024), there are still 195,366,000 (69.9 per cent) unreached people in Indonesia (Joshua Project 2024a), and 1,913,533,000 (23.7 per cent of the world's population) in the world (Joshua Project 2024b), mostly located in the 10/40 window, not counting nominal Christians, who are targeted for evangelism in Indonesia and the world. Just as Calvin made the Geneva Academy a place for the preparation of theologians-missionaries, so the International Evangelical Reformed Theological Seminary and other theological seminaries, which uphold the Gospel and world evangelism, have become centres for preparing and sending theologians-missionaries to unreached nations.

12.4 Encouragement to churches to seek holistic mission

Holistic mission is now understood in two senses. First, the mission of preaching the entire Gospel, through the role of the whole church to the whole world (Douglas 1989:25). Secondly, the mission of Gospel proclamation and social responsibility, the former being the gap (Heldt 2004:151), or the mission of stewardship of all God's creation (McConnell 2000:448). Calvin formulated and carried out these two modern understandings in the 16th century. Calvin emphasised, first, the inclusive preaching of the Gospel to all people (nations) and secondly, the reign of Christ (theocracy) through preaching the Gospel in all regions, all over the world, through all fields, whether politics, economics, culture, education, science, literature, art, trade, and all other fields. Subsequently, in later years, Neo-Calvinism developed it with the principle of "spherical sovereignty", especially by Abraham Kuyper with the principle of "one square inch". This holistic mission to all people and through all spheres is also very relevant to the demands of the postmodern world society, including in Indonesia.

13. CONCLUSIONS

John Calvin was not only a great theologian, but also a missiologist and director of evangelistic missions to the nations starting in the 16th century and continuing through Calvinist missiologists and missionaries in subsequent centuries until the 21st century. Although Calvin did not write a specific

handbook on missiology, his masterpiece book, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* and his commentaries abound in themes of mission theology. Calvin not only contributed to the theology of mission, but he was also actively involved in preparing, sending, and supporting missionaries to the nations in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Scholars of modern mission and mission history use modern mission measures to judge and compare with 16th-century mission work. That is not fair, honest, and objective. Modern missionaries criticise Calvin for his lack of missionary ideas and actions, because they do not find them on the surface of Calvin's writings, especially *The Institutes of the Christian Religions* and his Bible commentaries and sermons. On the contrary, all these criticisms have encouraged many Calvinists to find the themes of mission theology in Calvin's writings. Calvin left not only a legacy of theological themes of mission that are relevant throughout the ages, but also historical traces of his active involvement in the world mission movement, evangelism, and holistic mission.

The mission theology of the 17th and 18th centuries and even of the early 21st century is a continuation, development, and contextualisation of the themes of Calvin's 16th-century mission theology. The themes of mission theology as a reference and Calvin's mission movement as a model remain significant to the demands and challenges of the 21st-century mission, starting with the call for reformation of the mission of churches with Calvinist backgrounds in Indonesia, to revising the concept and practice of church mission that has been influenced by religious pluralism, and moving churches to engage in evangelistic missions to the nations, and holistic missions in all fields in Indonesia nowadays.

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