

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Nature of the Problem

The main problem of this study is based on two statements of the Confession of the Toraja Church (CTC) in its doctrine of 'death' referring to the relationship between God and man, that is: "Sin is the breaking of the true relationship with God and rebellion against God in daily life. The breaking of the relationship with God means *mankind's death completely*"¹ (the CTC 111:6), and in the formulation referring to the wages of sin, that is: "The wages of sin are death. Death is the *death of mankind completeiy*"² (the CTC VIII:5).

In these formulations, the use of the term ' *completely*' , instead of the CTC understanding of mankind ¹ *totally*' , ² ³ is the product of a number of mistakes concerning the concepts of the human-being. The classic philosophical anthropological concept of mankind in

¹Lukas Vischer, ed . , Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches (Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1982), p. 50.

²Ibid., p. 58.

³In his translation for the same word "seutuhnya" (Indonesian), in the CTC VIII: 4, Dr. James Haire uses the right word "totally", that is: "The resurrection is the resurrection of mankind 'totally*".

dualistic or dichotomic thought, for example, thinks of the body and the soul or spirit as the opposite of two separable entities. In this case; however, I would argue that the CTC has never meant "*completely*"* for mankind, because mankind has never been composed of the body and the soul or spirit as distinct and separate entities. Mankind is rather the intrinsic 'one' person, wholly, as a whole body and soul or spirit. To use the term 'body' for a person is only to refer to that person (totally) from the *visible* aspect, and conversely, to use the term 'soul or spirit' for a person is only to refer to that person (totally) from the *invisible* aspect. According to this premise, the title of this study is not '*the complete death of man*' but "*The Total Death of Man, as a whole body and soul*" which is what the CTC intrinsically wishes to express. This is the basic problem of terminology.

In addition to this problem of terminology, the formulation of '*the total death of man*' has long been debated with varying interpretations of 'death', especially concerning the immortality of the soul, spirit, self, existence, or what ever term is used to mean immortal.

It is clear that every conception of death must be based on a conception or worldview of '*what is man?*'. In

*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Massachusetts: G & C Merriam Company, 1973). The meaning of "Complete" in 1 a: "having all necessary parts, elements, or steps" .

reality, as every scholar knows, the conceptual conflict on the topic of '*what is man?*', has been debated for centuries in the field of philosophical and Biblical anthropology. It is unlikely that this issue will ever be resolved. Despite this, I still consider the concept of '*the total death of man*' a valid issue for analysis. It is not just the issue of terminology which forces me to conduct a thorough study, but above all, the serious discussion among the members of the Toraja Church currently seeking a theological perspective on '*death*' .

Such a problem requires me to trace back the CTC compilers' theological perspective on death. The challenge is to discover why the initially approved formulation of the compilers¹ confession about death, later came to be disagreed with? Should the definition of '*the total death of man*' be preserved in the CTC as well?

Theologically, I agree with **Lucy Bregman** who stated that:

We will look at three distinct themes within theological writing: renewal of interest in eschatology; concern over "immortality" and "resurrection" - or the battle between supposedly "Platonic" and "Hebraic" forms of thought; and the motif of divine suffering. It seems that much of what theology has had to say about death can be viewed through these three categories of idea.^s

Therefore, every conception of death depends on the kind of

^sLucy Bregman, Death in the Midst of Life: Perspective on death from Christianity and Depth Psychology (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1992), p. 114.

idea held, especially concerning these three distinct themes. That's why **Ray S. Anderson** says that, even though Christian theology has the same source of theological themes, namely, the Bible, there are still:

many theologies of death, even as there are many philosophies of death. ... Here too one must say that there is no single Christian theology of death upon which all would agree, even as there are a range of philosophical questions and opinions within a Christian theology of death.⁶

It is true that in reality there are many kinds of theology of death. Therefore, the question is, what kind of theology do the members of the Toraja Church have?

Certainly, both theology and philosophy have thematical and methodological difficulties answering the various questions on death, but in reality philosophers have more methodological difficulties than theologians. **Ladislaus Boros** says that the most important and fundamental of these difficulties for a philosopher is that: "no man has a direct experience of death."⁷ And "when a philosopher speaks of death he is speaking of a metaphysical process, which he generally describes as the 'separation of the soul from the body * ."⁸

But conversely, within Christianity itself, **Bregman**

⁶Ray S. Anderson, Theology, Death and Dying (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986), p. 1.

⁷Ladislaus Boros, S.J., The Mystery of Death (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), p. 1.

⁸Ibid., pp. 2-3.

says that:

what Christianity has to say about death and dying is tied more or less directly to its Central narrative, that of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because this narrative is unique to Christianity, what this religion has to say about death will also be unique. ... Such a position means that theologies that are "Christocentric" will be given preference over those that are "theocentric."⁹

And even though they have the same *'Christocentric'* thought,

there has been much debate over the sources of authority and the methods appropriate for theology. Should theologians begin from the Bible, from Christian tradition, or from "experience"? Between traditional formulations and today's apprehensions of divine reality? How much status should be given to "secular" thought-forms, including those of depth psychology?¹⁰

In addition to thematical and methodological difficulties

for theologians, **Ladislaus Boros** states that,

the great turning point in theological reflexion came when death itself began to be examined by the theologians. What really happens to the whole man at the moment of death?¹¹

It is questions such as these which account for doubt in the conception of the CTC about *'the total death of man'*.

B. The Need for Study

This study is based on the traditional themes in the field of systematic theology, that the formulation of the total death of man refers to the doctrine of *mankind* (in the

.....
⁹Bregman, p. 112.

¹⁰Ibid .

Boros, p. 3.

CTC III) and *eschatology* (in the CTC VIII).

Because this study will also deal with some kinds of philosophical systems, I need to analyze the problem from a philosophical theological perspective and state my apologetic writing as a member of the Toraja Church in representing and defending our theological system for the sake of our integrity. I also intend to look for the exact answers to mythologic, cosmologic, metaphysic, rationalistic, empiristic questions in the guise of some debaters; and explore various theological frameworks such as dualistic, dichotomic, trichotomic, or the ontological analysis of the human being. I will also examine the effect of many kinds of world view and many of the certain theological conceptions of death in the spectrum of modern theology. I shall apply my system of philosophical theology with caution. In fact, we need to use extreme caution, heeding Colin Brown's warning that:

We should neither fail over ourselves in the naive way of some sophisticated intellectuals to embrace the latest philosophical fashion, nor run away in panic like some unsophisticated pietists. Rather we should take a cool, hard look at every new trend and evaluate it in the light of our experience and faith.^{x2}

It is clear that the conceptual conflict of the doctrine of death between the members of Toraja Church puts their integrity at risk; however, they continue struggling

^{x2} Colin Brown, Philosophy & The Christian Faith (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1968), p. 271 .

to search for a shared theological perspective of death. It is hoped that this study will go some way towards finding a solution.

The identity and the theological position of the Toraja Church should be reviewed within the spectrum of modern theology. This should include ascertaining whether the type of Christianity held follows: *conservative*, *moderate* or *Progressive* thought, and the position of theology in their perspective on the eschatology. Therefore this study will try to assess and renew the formulation of the characteristics of theology, the position of the world view, the type of Christianity, and also the religiosity held by the Toraja Church up until now.

C. The Significance and the Purpose of the Study

The significance of this study is established at two levels, that is the theoretical and the practical. On the theoretical level is the attempt to reach an understanding of the CTC in formulating its doctrine of death by analysing the underlying conceptions, as outlined above.

On the practical level, for the sake of the integrity of their fellowship, this study will challenge the members of the Toraja Church to discuss their doctrinal problem seriously in the theological field and try to avoid non-theological conceptions of death. Practically, this

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of the Toraja Church contextually.

The purpose of this study is in the attempt to answer the following questions:

1) Has '*the total death of man*' come about as a qualified concept that stands for the incorruptibility, establishment, clarification, and defense of the special theological system of the CTC?

2) Does the formulation - '*the total death of man*' - represent a special theology of the Toraja Church?

3) Or is '*the total death of man*' also found in other churches?

4) Has '*the total death of man*' in the CTC come about as a deviation of the Toraja Church from orthodox-Calvinism?

5) Is it possible to decide the theological position of the Toraja Church to this day? What type of Christianity does it follow most recently? What kind of exegetical approach and interpretation methods does it use to reflect the Word of God, especially around the themes of anthropology and eschatology?

Such is the significance and the purpose of this study. All the above questions will conduct me to find answers throughout this study.

D. Theological Framework

The theological foundation of this study is based on

the reformed side of contextual theology in Asia. This is a theology that was initially described as a transposition theology by C.S. Song (the transfer of Western theology from the West context into Asia).^{x3} But whatever term is used to describe theology in Asia, there are two factors in dealing with theological reflection in its context, that is, firstly, the various Asian cultures, such as the identity of the Toraja Church which inherited the traditional culture of the Torajan tribe. Secondly, the process of modernization affecting all aspects of social life, economy and politics in Indonesia.

But the theological framework of this study can also be defined from the perspective of modern theology which emanated from the West. There are four positions as stated by C. Mei Loucks and others which are, *Liberalism/Modernism; Evangelical Liberalism; Conservative Evangelicalism; and Fundamentalism*,¹⁴ Or in the words of Tony Lane, *Liberalism; Evangelicalism; Neo Orthodoxy; and*

^{x3}Daniel J. Adams, Teologi Lintas Budaya: Refleksi Barat di Asia, trans. Dachlan Sutisna dan K.G. Hamakonda (Jakarta: PT BPK Gunung Mulia, 1993), pp. 90-92.

Rein Veenboer, "Pendekatan Teologi Choan Seng Song dan Ke-IIimiah-an Teologi," Teologi dan Praksis Pastoral, ed. Tjaard G. Hommes & E. Gerrit Singgih (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1992), p. 41, also makes the point of Song's critique to Western theology.

^{x4}C. Mei Loucks, Professor of Historical Theology, International Theological Seminary, class lecture on: A Critical Examination of the Enlightenment > ITS, Los Angeles, California, 1992.

Existential ism.¹-* Historically, the Toraja Church developed from the theology of the GZB's mission. Its position can be defined as *The Evangelical Liberalism* or *Neo-Orthodoxy*. Dr. **Th. van den End** stated that the theology of the Toraja Church was an output of the Orthodox-Calvinism which was linked up with Pietism and Ethical Theology.³⁻⁶ But the position has certainly shifted since then, however, because the GZB had introduced '*ethical missiology*' (Ethical Theology) which took an a-posteriori and placed too much emphasis on culture.¹⁵ * ¹⁷In this way it is obvious that the Toraja Church tends to emphasize its ethical missiology more. Since it was established on March 25, 1947, the reflection of the Toraja Church depends not only on the doctrinal desire of GZB, but most of all on its dealing with Torajan culture. This means that there is actually doctrinal conflict between the CTC and the classic doctrine of GZB over such issues as the doctrine of 'man and death*.

In the three distinct types of Christianity, that is: *the Progressive* (the context pole), *the moderate* (the balance between the poles), and *the conservative* (the text

¹⁵ T o n y Lane, Runtut Pijar: Sejarah Pemikiran Kristiani, trans. Conny 11 ein-Cor puty (Jakarta: PT BPK Gunung Mulia, 1993), pp. 196-235.

^{xs}Th. van den End, "Zending dan Masyarakat Feodal: Satu Kasus", Terbit Sepucuk Taruk, ed. Th Sumartana; Martin Lukito Sinaga; Patmono Sk & F. Ukur (Jakarta: P3M STTJ Balitbang PGI, 1993), pp. 209-210.

Lane, p. 211 .

pole), this study might be considered to hold a moderate position. Our attitude in Asia signifies our theological position. Adams says that Asian people love the idea of "both this and that" disposition, and not the ¹¹ whether this or that" which informs Western attitude of thought.¹⁰ It is therefore suitable for us in Asia to take the moderate position. This study will attempt to apply itself to critical and practical theology through the moderate position. By doing so I am adopting a constructive theological framework which ensures that new issues are dealt with openly.

In the eschatological views and the methods of interpretation, it seems that this study takes up the position of 'amillennialism', one of the three theological positions that Dr. Wyatt classified for Protestantism: "Dispensational Premillennialism, Amillennialism, and Historical Premillennialism,"^{x9} as the wage of a certain eschatological conception about the millennium Kingdom in Rev. 20:1-6. There is a formulation in the CTC that indicates the position, that is in Ch. VIII: 1 'The end of time has begun with the coming of Jesus Christ.' This statement is in accordance with the amillennialist thought

^{x8}Adams, "Theology . . .", p. 106.

^{x9}Robert John Wyatt, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of New Testament, International Theological Seminary, class notes on New Testament Graduate Seminar, ITS, Los Angeles, California, 1993.

that the millennium Kingdom in Rev. 20:1-6 is only a symbol for the church to keep struggling throughout its life since the coming of Jesus twenty centuries ago. Dispensational and Historical Premillennialism, however, interpret it literally and emphasize the second coming of Jesus.

This is the delineation of the theological framework of this study. This theological foundation and framework will conduct me in my analysis of the doctrinal problem.

E. Delimitation

Because there are too many conceptions of ¹ death* from the fields of philosophy, religion and Science, this study will be limited to the problem of the CTC, especially in debating the formulation of '*the total death of man*'.

Although some philosophical, theological, and even cultural observations are the subjects of criticism in this study, this is due to the influence of these concepts on the compilers' and the debaters' views of ¹*the total death of man*' in the CTC.

While every religion talks about sin, '*the total death of man*' is only the doctrine that relates to an interpretation or special commentary professed by the Toraja Church about sin and its wage. Any other interpretations mentioned here are for the purpose of comparison only.

F. Hypothesis and Assumptioris

In outlining the purpose of this study, the following hypothesis and assumptions need to be established:

1) '*The total death of man*' as the wages of sin, is the formulation which represents a special doctrine of those who based their belief on the sovereignty of God, on God as the Creator and on man as total body and soul or spirit created by God. Becuase sin is the breaking of the true relationship with God and rebellion against God in daily life, to be outside the relationship with God means death, even though the individual has not actually died yet. Jesus himself said: "Allow *the dead* ..." (Luke 9:60).

2) Frankly, the conception of '*the total death of man*' is not a new theme of theology in Indonesia. Around 25 years ago, Dr. D.C. Mulder presented his idea about the total death of man.²⁰ Interest in the Christian conception of death has been renewed because some theologians of churches in Indonesia have taken philosophical and other traditional views of death too much into consideration. In this case the Toraja Church quietly re-emphasized doctrine of death. It even went so far as to formulate the doctrine firmly i n its confession.

3) I submit that '*the total death of man*' has two

²⁰D.C. Mulder, "Manusia Sebagai Kesatuan," Penjadar: Madjalah Theologia Bulanan, Maret dan April, 1958, TH. IV No. 9, p. 3, dan No. 10, p. 1.

likely consequences for the Toraja Church from an ecumenical perspective: the formulation could cause endless trouble for the integrity of the church if every church had an unbending attitude within this conflict; conversely, it could strengthen the integrity of the church if the non-theological conceptions of death were seriously rejected.

4) One of the particular characteristics of the Calvinistic churches is that they have no standardization of their confession. Bernhard Lohse has noted that each church of the Reformed Churches has its own confession, because basically the Reformers intended not to build their own church, therefore there was no single confession when they became the Reformed Churches. They even showed an impressive differentiation of their confessions.²¹ It is only for this that each Calvinistic Reformed church is committed to having a firm confession. This was caused by the uncompromising attitude of **Calvin** himself. Thus the CTC should not be considered an exception to the classical doctrine of **Calvin** as it firmly adopts the style of Calvin's own attitude. I believe that **Calvin** never meant the dogma of the churches to be static.

5) It seems true to assert that we take a moderate position within the spectrum of modern theology. In addition to sophisticated dogmatic terms such as the assumption of

²¹Bernhard
trans. Dr. A.A.
p. 243.

Lohse, Pengantar Sejarah Dogma Kristen,

James Haire for the CTC,²² in reality it is clear that the CTC is a synthesis of the balance between theological knowledge and the religiosity of members to the Scripture. We do not conduct our theological reflection purely from intellectual or emotional, material or spiritual, Progressive or conservative outlooks, but rather, we apply it contextually and constructively with an open mind and close analysis of every new trend in theology, evaluating our theology in the light of our moderate position.

G. Definition of Terms

The total death of man. A Clarification in using the term ' *completely*' as a mistaken translation of what the CTC means ' *totally*' , as I have clarified at the beginning of this chapter. The total death of man is the doctrine related to the Biblical conception of sin, where the wage of sin is not confined to the body but relates to man as the body and soul totally. Death is the breaking of the true relationship with God, and not the separation of the soul from the body according to classic philosophical understanding of death. Therefore, in this case, it is essential to bear in mind that *the total death of man* is a formulation which refers not only to the moment of dying, but has more widespread reference to the breaking of the relationship.

Vischer, ed., Reformed . . . , ¹¹ p. 32.

The resurrection of mankind totally . The term

'total'¹ is also used for mankind in his or her resurrection as formulated in the CTC dogmatically. The CTC has formulated it as a *synthesis* in dialectical thought about **life** (*thesis*) and **death** (*antithesis*) of man, surely in the idea of totally and in the belief in the sovereignty of God .

The Toraja Church. The **Toraja Church** is one of the Protestant churches of Indonesia which was established on March 25, 1947 as the fruits of GZB's mission in Toraja since 1913. It has been a member of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI) since 1950. Its church polity is a presbyterial-synodal form.

Gereformeerde Zendingsbond (GZB). GZB is one of the Dutch missionary churches from 'De Nederlandsche *Herformde Kerk*'. It was established in 1901. This mission acquired its own characteristic in linking up *classical Calvinism* and *Pietism*, and even *ethical missiology*. Its position is on the right side of 'De Nederlandsche *Herformde Kerk* '. It has been operating as a mission in Toraja since 1913.

The Confession of the Toraja Church (The CTC). The ratification of the CTC definitively took place on November 27, 1981 in the board-meeting of the executive board of the Toraja Church in the name of the sixteenth general assembly 1980 (general synod XVI) of the Toraja Church. Before the CTC, the Toraja Church used to confess as the guideline, that is *the Heidelberg Catechism, 37 chapters of the*

confession of Gereformeerde, and 5 chapters of *against the Remonstrant*. The CTC is the reflection of the Word of God, thus its authority is secondary. Accordingly the CTC is changeable depending on its context.

H. Organization of the Remainder of Study

Chapter II presents a review of selected literature and previous conceptions of death, both in philosophical and biblical anthropology historically, and of their conceptual conflict over what is meant by mankind and death.

Chapter III describes the theological basis and research of this study including the theological position in the spectrum of modern theology and the exegetical commentaries on some theological terms (such as *nian*, sin, resurrection and eternal life) in dealing with and talking about death.

Chapter IV presents the results and findings of this study in which all thoughts, conceptions, and perspectives on death are tested by the hypothesis and assumptions delineated in chapter I. All of the results and findings will be discussed and formulated for their implication according to their purpose.

Chapter V presents a conclusion of this study consisting of a summary, the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, and a recommendation for the future study of this topic.