

Globethics Repository

The logo for Globethics, featuring the word "Globethics" in white, sans-serif font centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

Reciprocal Relationship between Church and State in Indonesia

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see <https://www.globethics.net>. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see <https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy>.

Item Type	Book chapter
Authors	Setio, Robert
Publisher	Globethics.net
Rights	Creative Commons Copyright (CC 2.5)
Download date	2026-07-07 13:37:15
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/173801

13

RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN INDONESIA. A RESPONSE TO AGUSTINUS BATLAJERY FROM CALVIN'S PERSPECTIVE

Robert Setio, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Calvinist churches in Indonesia¹, unlike their Catholic sister, have consciously taken a position of not being directly involved in political matters. They have rather opted to make benign comments about political events that do not require a deep or serious involvement in politics. Such a position may be seen as being derived from Calvinist understanding of the division of church and state, but it is in fact mirroring the legacy of the ideology of the New Order regime. The authoritarian regime, by arguing that politics is exclusively a matter of the government, succeeded in silencing anyone other than its own political ideal. The churches chose to live in accordance with the will of the regime so that it would not have to contradict the powerful government, and, at the same time, it would enjoy the protection of the government, however

¹ Presented in a seminar to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Calvin, organised by the Indonesia Christian Church (GKI), Jakarta, December 2008.

232 Calvin Global

superficial it was. Now, as the times have changed and the country is in the transitional state to being a truly democratic country, the church should reconsider its position. Learning from Calvin's doctrine of the kingdom of God and the relationship between Church and State, this article proposes endorsing a more active involvement of the church in politics. As David VanDrunen has argued, Calvin and early Calvinism, despite our common understanding, did indeed have an optimistic view of the state and secular affairs. It is true that the doctrine of the two kingdoms teaches the difference between the spiritual kingdom represented by the church and civil kingdom embodied in the state. However, the difference is not meant to put the church in a higher position than the state or the other way around. Neither does it mean to disengage the church from the state. As a representation of God's rule in the world, the state organises all kinds of activities and relationships among the members of the society including the church. Even though the church has its own role as a reflection of God's redemptive act, it may not exclude itself from the world outside. The world should be understood as the sphere of God's creative work too. This positive understanding of the world and the state may provide a solid theological basis for the Indonesian Calvinist churches to become involved in political matters, not in order to strive for their own interests but to contribute to the interests of all that make up the state, especially in the realisation that Indonesia is a heterogeneous state and that Christianity is only a minority in the country.

First of all, I would like to emphasise my understanding of the explanation put forward by Augustinus Batlajery.² My understanding is: the notion of "theocracy" (God's sovereignty, to be precise) among Calvinists carries quite a strong rhetorical dimension. When the term was used

² His paper is titled *Teokrasi dalam Masyarakat Majemuk Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru (Theocracy in the Heterogenous Society of Post New Order Era)*.

during the identity establishment of the Protestants against the Pope's power in Rome, the rhetoric became "only God reigns, Pope does not."

Later on, in the Netherlands, the same notion was used in a different oppositional framework. It was no longer to oppose the Pope but towards the seed of humanism which is "the spirit of liberalism" triggered by the French Revolution. The most obvious was the model proposed by Abraham Kuyper and his *Gereformeerde*. They deliberately jumped into practical politics with the aim of maintaining the church's existence in the face of liberalism. Whether or not it succeeded is a different story.³

In the United States the story was different. Presbyterians who claimed themselves as Calvinists used theocracy to oppose the English government. The rhetoric was then "only God reigns, England does not". That opposition eventually resulted in the establishment of the United States of America. If we want to draw parallels with the present time, as argued by Kevin Phillips and quoted by Batlajery, the democracy practised in the States can also be attributed to the development of theocracy by the Calvinists.⁴

How is the implementation of Calvin's or Calvinism's theocracy notion in Indonesia, then? On this, Batlajery sounds a bit shy if not hesitant. He is reluctant to follow Calvin's or Calvinism's rhetoric either from the Netherlands or from the United States. His reason is that: in Indonesia, Christianity is not alone. There are several religions in Indonesia. *Corpus Christianum* - the implementation of Christian theocracy - is only suitable for western countries in the past when Christianity was still in its golden period and became the only religion available. The condition in Indonesia is different. It is impossible to implement *Corpus*

³ The recent phenomenon of "the empty" church in western Europe may be taken as a proof for the success of liberalism, nevertheless, for some, Christianity is still the belief of the people. The people still retain their belief but do not want to belong to a church.

⁴ As argued by Roger Trigg that Christianity in the U.S. should not be confined to the private sector only since it has a contribution in the formation of the secular society (Trigg 2007).

234 Calvin Global

Christianum in Indonesia which is a multi religious country. Whenever theocracy is discussed and going to be applied, it has to be inclusive and cannot be limited to Christianity, let alone only Calvinism. Every existing religion and faith has a roles to take in shaping and implementing an inclusive theocracy, something which could be seen as normal, although in reality this form needs to be pursued further. On this, Batlajery himself will have to address the query.

While waiting for further explanation of the inclusive theocracy concept, I also take up part of another proposal made in Batlajery's writing. The proposal is similar to that of what was done by the *Hervormd* in the Netherlands for whom the church should play a prophetic role in politics. What it meant was that the church voiced the criticism towards the wrongdoings that took place in practical politics. However, the church limited itself to take that role only and did not once participate in practical politics. The church remained outside of practical politics. By doing so, it could be assured that its voice is more objective and not controlled by partisan or sectarian politics.

Although the truth in Mr. Batlajery's idea on the role of PGI (*Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia* – Indonesian NCC) can be proven, especially in the present leadership, it needs further examination, however, whether or not the reason is the same with that of *Hervormd* church. Or, probably the reason is because PGI is not yet able to free itself from the way of thinking laid down and nurtured by the New Order regime, despite the fact that this regime no longer exists. At that time the authoritarian government succeeded in implanting the notion that politics was not supposed to be openly discussed. It was only politics according to the government that was allowed to be publicly discussed. Communities and religious institutions such as PGI had to voice the government's voice and unwaveringly support its policies. The government domination was often followed by the creation of a debilitating horrific atmosphere which left people with only two choices: go with the

government or be silent on political matters. We will discuss this issue further below. In the meantime, I will have a look at the possibility that the reason PGI and many churches in Indonesia took the stand of not going into politics and “just” functioned as the messenger of prophetic voice stemmed from the notion of separating the church from the state. I will put forward the result of David VanDrunen’s study which showed understanding which separated “the Kingdom of God” (church) and “worldly kingdom” (government/states) from Calvin and the early Calvinists. Such notion may have inspired the understanding of the Indonesian churches in their stand of staying away from political matters.

2. Calvin’s doctrine about State and Church in the light of God’s Sovereignty

As mentioned in Batlajery’s explanation, Calvin clearly stated who he addressed to in his *Institutio*. It was, as a matter of fact, King Francois I from France. However, taking a closer look at the book, people barely notice any idea concerning states, politics and the like which might have been suitable to be addressed to a king. Instead, the book discusses things mainly about Christianity. Therefore, it was no surprise that the book was better known as a doctrinal book rather than somekind of political guidance.

Furthermore, Batlajery also states that Calvin almost never mentioned the term theocracy. And whenever someone wants to learn about Calvin’s ideas on theocracy, it is better to learn his explanation on God’s sovereignty. In it, one can clearly see his idea on the duties and functions of the state. The main duties and functions of the state according to Calvin are stated by Batlajery in his elaboration. I just would like to underline a point: for Calvin, the state should be run based on the natural and moral laws. As a lawyer, it seemed that Calvin believed that nature and moral had their own justification. The reasons, in accordance with

236 Calvin Global

rationalism, were objective and intact. They were not influenced by subjective and temporary interests. Thus, laws derived from nature and moral awareness were solid and reliable. A country needed such a foundation to serve the function of placing all its citizens in an equal position. For the citizens, the state needs to guarantee that there is equal (objective) treatment for every citizen that lives in it.

If Calvin put the notion of state and government in the frame of God's sovereignty, we can understand that he not only wished to have a nation which was bound to God - that is how theocracy is - but also one which projected God's sovereignty in its life. The state's officers were, on one hand, expected to always have respect and be bound to God and, on the other hand, in carrying out their duties, keep in mind that they were implementing God's sovereignty. When discussing God's sovereignty, Calvin often quoted verses from Psalms which described the vastness of God's power, that the power covered the whole universe without exception. The Psalms and other Old Testament books frequently include such descriptions of God, God was often understood as the all embracing God. Nature is often used in order to describe such a God. By looking at nature, people were expected to understand God's almightiness and become aware of God as Creator. Nature, therefore, would make people realise that God exists. Therefore, a state governed on the principles of nature would also make its people aware of God. Using wording similar to that Calvin frequently used: God has made Himself understood by people through nature and the state, if the state indeed reflects the natural laws which are open and not discriminative for all.

Calvin's understanding about a state gives an idea about the vastness of a state's role. We could even say that the position given to the state is too big. In that case, we need to ask whether it is proper to give the state such a big power?

It is true that the running of a country can be corrected. It is not always the case that a state's officers do what they are supposed to do. Natural laws and moral awareness do not always become the foundation of the officers' actions. When such things occur there should be correction. In this case, I think Calvin would not oppose correction towards the state. However, if everything is already settled, which is to say if the authority has indeed obeyed natural laws which are open and not discriminative, and if it listens to moral demands clearly, can we then give the state such enormous power? It seems that we need to allow space for cautiousness. We do not want the state to act as God. Our question is then whether Calvin indeed intended to give such enormous, even absolute, power to the state? In other words, was it just the state which was encouraged and supposed to manifest God's sovereignty?

In his article "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine and the Relationship of Church and State in the Early Reformed Tradition"⁵ David Van Drunen explained that actually Calvin, like Luther, also put forward the idea of differentiating church and state. Church for him represented God's kingdom, Christ's kingdom to be precise. While the state represented kingdoms in the world (although it is still in the framework of God's sovereignty). The two kingdoms did not only represent two different worlds but the rules applied to govern them were also different. Van Drunen stated, "Calvin distinguished clearly between Christ's redemptive rule in the spiritual kingdom, experienced now in the church, and God's providential rule in the civil kingdom, comprising the state and various areas of life outside the church."⁶

In addition to Calvin's opinion, Van Drunen also examined the viewpoints of three prominent Calvinist figures who lived in the early stage of Calvinism: Johannes Althusius (1557-1638, living in the border

⁵ In *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 49, 2007. Van Drunen mentions parts of the *Institutio* which contain the idea of the two kingdoms: II, 15,3-5; III, 19,15; IV, 20,1-2.

⁶ VanDrunen, pp. 743f.

238 Calvin Global

of Germany-the Netherlands), Samuel Rutherford (1600-61, from the British islands), and Francis Turretin (1623-87, from Geneva). Van Drunen also studied two church documents: The Second Book of Discipline (1578) from the Scotland Synod Assembly and the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) (1646). The result of his research on these figures and church documents which represented Reformed Orthodoxy, showed that even if they did not always use the same language, they emphasised three kinds of important differentiation between church and state as they understood it from Calvin. These three are:

*First, he considers the spiritual kingdom to be redemptive in character while he considers the civil kingdom a realm of God's providential care, but not of his redemptive grace. Second, he sees the spiritual kingdom as spiritual and heavenly while he sees the civil kingdom as external and earthly. Finally, Calvin teaches that the spiritual kingdom finds expression in the present age exclusively in the church while he teaches that the civil kingdom finds expression especially in the civil government, along with other cultural matters such as scientific and artistic endeavors.*⁷

The differentiation in this regard could be easily understood as an effort to thrust the church forward because the church was considered able to reflect Christ both in channelling the redemptive grace and in its spiritual and heavenly character. However, if we can put aside for a while the conception that everything spiritual is of higher value than the physical, it is likely that we will no longer get the impression that the differentiation was intended to put the church in a higher position than the state. What we will get is just the difference between the church and the state but not in the sense that one is higher than the other. Church is indeed different from state but it does not mean that the church is higher than the state. The church and the state both have the mandate of realising the presence of God. However, the way this happens differs depending on

⁷ VanDrunen, p.747.

whether the church of the state do the implementation. If the church implements God's redemptive grace, the state implements *providentia Dei*.

VanDrunen himself wanted to use his research to give enlightenment to those who, in the context of secular society, often complained of the alienation of church or religion from the public discourse. In the United States, for example, the teaching of religious subjects is limited more and more. Even subjects that do not directly address religion, but, have religious connotations are also banned.⁸ In Europe we often hear that the church no longer has much attraction. There are more people who choose to be atheist rather than religious. In this kind of situation there are people who oppose and blame secularisation. In their view secularisation has caused religions especially Christianity, to collapse. Secularisation is viewed as the enemy of religions. Towards this kind of opposition, Van Drunen commented,

A number of influential schools of thought among contemporary Christian theologians take a decidedly negative view of the concept of the "secular," identifying it with an Enlightenment quest for autonomy, moral fragmentation, and the exclusion of religious discourse from the public square. In its place, they call for a specifically Christian approach to, and account of, the social realm. The Reformed two kingdoms tradition may provide theological reasons for believing that there are not just two alternatives, a secular social order that is amoral, anti-religious, individualistic, and grounded in autonomous reason, on the one hand, and a Christian social order that is moral, religious, communitarian, and grounded in orthodox theology on the other. The older Reformed idea of the civil kingdom suggests that a theologically rich Christian account of a secular realm is possible. Working from a two kingdoms doctrine, one might posit that there is a "secular" realm (in its etymological sense of concerning "this age"), a common space shared by all human beings despite religious differences. Yet this secular realm need not be dismissed as anti-religious or immoral, for Cod is

⁸ For example, the prohibition for teaching "Intelligent Design" by the Federal Court of Pennsylvania District in 2005. Trigg, p.7.

240 Calvin Global

creator and sustainer of the civil kingdom and governs it by the law of nature. From this perspective, attempts to engage in common, non-religiously exclusive public discourse do not betray Christian truth but an endeavor that a rich theological account of reality suggests is a possibility and even a responsibility.⁹

In my view, Van Drunen's important message based on his study on Calvin's and orthodox Calvinists' opinions is not only meant for those (Christians) who are against secularisation in Western countries, but, also for us in Indonesia who need to learn to "let go" of "the taking over" of God's work by those outside the church. Politics, economics, culture, science and every single thing related to "secular," earthly matters cannot be regarded as low and less worthy. They also contribute to implementing God's presence although in different ways from the church.

I also think that the differentiation between the church and the state (we can now expand "the state" to matters outside the church) needs to be addressed in the discussion about the involvement of the church in politics. In the light of the differentiation, what soon comes to our realisation is that the church does not need to get involved in politics. The involvement of the church in politics will confuse the differentiation proposed by Calvin. The confusion of the differentiation may become the sign of the church's distrust towards the state: that the state is actually incapable of taking care of itself without the church's involvement. However, what comes across more strongly for me is that the confusion will affect professionalism. It is true that in Indonesia anybody can handle anything. Religion can be managed by those who are not expert in religion. And the same case applies to politics. It is even worse that in order to be a politician, one can just rely on his or her popularity, and not his or her professionalism. Eventually, we have to deal with dissatisfying outcomes of such practice. Therefore, it is important for us to learn

⁹ VanDrunen, p. 762.

from Calvin in order that we can have better outcomes resulting from professional endeavours and processes.

So far, I have tried to follow Calvin's viewpoints with an assumption that his opinions can serve as a reference on how to run the state. Now, I would like to outline whether the ideas could really be applied in Indonesia. In the introduction I already mentioned that there was a demand during the New Order Era to regard politics not as something that belonged to the public domain. The regime enforced the system in such a way that not everybody could get access to politics. Efforts to have political discourse outside the platform set up by the government were silenced. In short, the New Order regime wanted to deal only with politics according to the version that it established. Non governmental institutions including the church were also requested to be loyal to government policies. If any political discussion was to happen in the church, it had to be according to the government's version. In general, however, people did not have courage to talk about politics. Especially in certain communities such as GKI (Gereja Kristen Indonesia – the Indonesia Christian Church), the trauma caused by 1965 tragedy was still strongly imprinted. Eventually, people chose to be apolitical, or at least, not to discuss politics in the open. Considering that the situation had gone on for as long as the New Order regime was in power (over 30 years), it is very likely that people have still not got over this terrifying image of politics, even today. People do not have enough courage yet to talk about politics openly even though the situation has changed. For many, politics is still an alien territory.

This kind of condition has been more or less adopted by the church. The implication is that the church alienates itself from politics. The justification frequently used is that politics is not part of the church's business. The church only deals with spiritual matters while politics belongs to physical territory. Therefore, politics is not supposed to become the church's business. The separation between the church and politics which

242 Calvin Global

seemed to be based on Calvin's proposition has to be seen as the consequences of the depoliticisation of civil society which was systematically and deliberately imposed by the New Order regime. In this regard, we need to make correction to such separation. It is clear that Calvin never imagined that his idea to separate between the church and the state would be used to justify fear towards the state when the state acts authoritatively and oppressively.

In line with this we need to reexamine the church's stand to choose not to involve itself in political affairs directly but only in voicing a prophetic voice. If the reason for it is that politics is considered dirty and that the church should not let itself become dirty by involving itself in politics, it is obvious that this viewpoint is not in line with Calvin's intention to separate between the church and the state. Calvin did not view the state as dirty; and that was the reason it could not be united with the holy church. For Calvin the state is the realm of God's sovereignty. It is not possible that something which is about God's sovereignty be considered dirty. Therefore, it was not possible that Calvin considered the state as dirty.

Considering all of these issues, we need to be cautious when trying to apply Calvin's system of the relationship between State and Church in the Indonesian context. Maybe we need to say that the differentiation between the church and the state does not suit Indonesian context as it is yet to free itself from the image of politics implanted by the New Order.

3. Political involvement of the church

What maybe more suitable with the situation in Indonesia is the model where the church directly involves itself in politics. Although this option still looks pretty new to most Christians in Indonesia, we need to consider this alternative seriously. It is not because we are not supposed to stay imprisoned in the fear of politics or be negatively prejudiced to-

wards it. It is also not because there have been more and more ministers going into into the political world, that we should necessarily justify their options. This is because the political world in Indonesia is still seeking its format and is not yet stable. Under such conditions, it is a call for the church to take part in shaping the political world so that politics can develop in a more stable and healthy way. The endeavour is carried out with one goal: the betterment of life of the people of this nation. Without political stability and health it will be difficult for the people to have a better life. Often when the political situation is chaotic, there are certain parties who will provoke people to do certain things to give the provocators certain advantages out of the chaos but which will eventually cause disadvantages to the people themselves.

It can all be prevented if the political situation is in a good state. It is therefore mandatory for all parties to ensure that the politics in this country is really stable and conducive. For this reason the church has to take an active role.

The reference that we can use to encourage the involvement of the church in politics is the same with Calvin's statement about the state which said that the state is the territory where God reveals His sovereignty. Politics, similar with the state, can also be regarded as the territory where God reveals His sovereign. As the territory where God works and reveals His glory and love toward the people, politics must also be taken as the area of church service because the church should take part in managing whatever that becomes God's. The church also needs to humbly accept the fact that politics is the tool used by God to introduce Himself. The acceptance will not have any negative implications for the the church's position as the locus of knowing about God. The church remains the locus of knowing about God, albeit, not the only one. Knowledge of God can also take place outside the church including through politics. This does not imply that the political world is free from issues that make it difficult for people to know about God from inside.

244 Calvin Global

We cannot deny the impression or reality that politics is full of dirty intrigues and at complete odds with the character of God that we generally know of. However, this does not justify denying that God is capable of revealing Himself through politics. The dirty games that frequently happen in politics do not reflect God's existence for sure. Therefore, it has to be opposed. The political world has to be sterilised from all kinds of intrigues and fights which are never in line with the politics itself. Politics is supposed to be clean. It is not impossible to have clean politics. It takes actions to present clean politics. What is more important is the conviction that politics is indeed clean.

In terms of the extension of God's sovereignty, I personally agree with what Calvin proposed, however there are areas where I do not agree with him in regards to the notion that the church manages only spiritual matters. In my view, such exclusive understanding about the church is difficult to implement in Indonesia. Acute problems such as poverty, corruption, low level of education and many deadly diseases in this country will not allow the church to deal only with "heavenly" matters. I believe that it has been mentioned many times in different occasions by different people.

We have to admit that there are many who have the same opinion as Calvin, such as those who find it difficult to accept the church's deep involvement in social issues. It is true that the church's responsibility is to care for the spiritual life of its congregations, however that duty cannot be well implemented unless it is related to the physical aspects of life. Human being's spiritual life cannot be separated from, and even is closely related with physical needs. Crises related to the physical realm such as economics and politics will certainly impact spiritual life. On the other hand, spiritual crises will also make people unable to lead a normal life. In short, the separation between spiritual and physical will not make us understand life as a whole and will cause impairment.

In this regard we need to be concerned that when religion is positioned only as the source of spiritual life it will only make it an escape route from life's pressure. When the financial and political crises worsened, life's burden grew heavier, frustration escalated, the religion which offered "heavenly promises" became extraordinarily welcome. It seems that people could experience relief from daily life pressure through religious activities, especially through sermons using the catharsis model, however, is not this kind of relief fake? It is true that the emotional touch is important to address issues especially in the context of sermon, however, if it makes people deny the reality of life which they have to deal with as soon as the sermon is over, sooner or later they will find greater difficulty dealing with existing reality. People may have a more negative outlook to the world so that not only is religion separated from reality of life but also is opposite to the reality of life. This kind of condition is very open to violence. We need to consider that the perpetrators and provocateurs who commit violence for the sake of religion actually have the same notion that the world is the enemy of religion and therefore has to be destroyed. Another possibility of seeing religion as the enemy of the world is the ignorance of the world; that what happens to the world is not the business of the religion. If the world is translated as politics, then the attitude of ignorance to politics becomes the symptoms which appear in the surface. I think we face a lot of this kind of attitude in the church. Therefore, my disagreement with Calvin's exclusive view on the church also indicates my disagreement with attitudes which we often find in the church at the present time.

However we also have to keep in mind that in Indonesia, religion plays very crucial roles in the efforts of improving the people's life. It is because the people put religion in a central position in their life. It is true that even with its significant position, religion is not always successful in fulfilling its functions as inspirer and motor to overcome the problems faced by the community. In some cases religion fails to serve as the so-

246 Calvin Global

lution and even becomes part of the problem itself. With this awareness in mind however, we still have strong reason to expect much from religion. It is not an exaggeration to say that for Indonesians, there is no problem that can be solved without having to involve religion. The result may not always be satisfying, yet trust in religion is not lost. The right response to this phenomenon is that religion takes part in the activities of running the state. If the church involves itself in politics, either in broader or practical terms, the people will take it as an appropriate step to establish better political conditions.

The next question is, however, should the church's participation be in the form of the establishment of a Christian political party? Or through involvement in the Christian parties that already exist? To put it frankly, I do not agree in full with it. The justification of my disagreement is that putting the church's participation in Christian parties will make the church seem to be totally moving into the territory of the state to use Calvin's term. The church would be seen to be identical with a political party, either in its own view or in the way others view it. Apart from political duties, the church still has other responsibilities. In other words, Christian political parties will limit the church's duties to the political domain alone.

In addition to the reasons previously mentioned, there is another more crucial reason: politics should reflect the real conditions of society. If the real condition in Indonesia is multi religions, and even 'multi' in different settings, too, (in Batlajery's words), then politics has to reflect this. Thus the involvement of church in the political world should be in the form of plural involvement. In the case of political party involvement, it has to be multi religions, multiethnic, multicultural etc. Only in this kind of condition can we discuss God's sovereignty which is all embracing. In this regard we need to learn much from Calvin. When talking about the state, he based the understanding on God's sovereignty. He used the understanding of *Christ's sovereignty* only when he

talked about church. He consciously differentiated one from the other. However the intention was not to differentiate between God and Christ in a confrontational manner. It is more appropriate to understand the differentiation understood as an effort to accept existing different customs. The custom of the church is different from that of the state. In the church's custom, what is more salient is Christ while in the context of the state, people are more familiar with the term God. Or, if we may say it the other way, God introduces Himself to the church through Christ while He makes Himself known as God to people in the context of the state. Fortunately, for the Indonesian context the differentiation is already appropriate and we simply need to use it.

If the church is willing to involve itself in politics, what steps are to be taken to implement the involvement? It is an appropriate question to raise since in the Indonesian context the church's involvement in politics may draw unfavourable reactions from those who are not Christian. We have to accept the fact that inter-religions relationships and the relationships between people in Indonesia is not yet smooth. The relationship is still often marked by suspicion and even competition which is ruinous. People often feel that their fellow human beings from other religions oppress them. The oppressed will feel that they are not being treated fairly. It is also believed that there are serious efforts to incite people to convert to other religions. The proofs of such incitement are often used as a means of provocation, creating tension. In terms of Christianity, there is strong impression that Christians are aggressive in inciting others to convert to Christianity. It happens because of the use of aggressive methods to provoke people to convert to Christianity. It is not only the viewpoint of people outside Christians, even among Christians there is a notion that there are certain groups of Christians or churches which aggressively seek to multiply the number of their congregations. The effort is made by attracting those who are already Christians but belong to other congregations. Therefore, if the effort is already viewed as disturb-

248 *Calvin Global*

ing by fellow Christian, it will be felt to be all the more so by followers of other religions. This kind of condition is made worse by the emergence of new churches which, for certain reasons, do not want to join the existing churches includes the building of new churches. It results in the establishment of new church buildings in different places without any coordination. This unavoidable phenomenon makes people outside the Christian faith suspicious towards Christians. Christians are considered as not being sincere in living side by side with those from different religions. Christians are judged as trying to get opportunities to convert others to their religion or to join in their group. In order to prevent such endeavours, it is necessary to establish certain regulations especially through politics and laws. Various legal issues and political strategies are taken to ensure that Christians do not dominate others from different religions. As a result, Christians often feel restrictions on their actions. Thus the question of whether there will be a chance for the church to get involved in politics is a vast one.

The best strategy to deal with the situation is by being low profile, albeit, not being passive or apathetic. The church needs to be actively involved in politics by building a more attractive image. A few steps in this direction that the church could take would be to maintain the image of being tolerant and cooperative and by formation of young political cadres. This cadre formation is not intended to lead these young people to be the country leaders who will fight only for the Christians. Although, of course, they can be expected to always remember and be loyal towards the church. However, the loyalty should not be a short-sighted one. Their loyalty to the church cannot make them ignorant towards the existence of other people. The main values implanted in these cadres are not only to bring benefits for the church, but they have to be applied in all situations and in relations with anybody. Whenever the church is treated unjustly, they have to defend the church. However, they have to do the same whenever other parties outside the church get

similar unfair treatment. This kind of neutrality is hard to find, if we expect improvement in the future we need to put efforts to make it true by training our young people to get accustomed to being neutral. Without carrying out well-planned training, it will be difficult to expect that the present condition will get improved at all. It will be better if the church has a political cadre formation programme which aims at preparing future leaders in all aspects of life. However, it should be done according to each function to make it clear. For example the group which is prepared to fill positions in the government should be different from the group which is aimed at filling posts in community organisations.

It can be assumed that the results of the establishment of political cadres can only be seen after a long time. How about for now? Although we realise that we cannot do much about the present condition, the same endeavours can still be carried out. The platform is still the same: nationalism. The objective is also clear that is to build a society for the sake of the whole nation without looking at the differences of primordial and social backgrounds. What about the target? For sure, it is not for those who will just start in the political world, instead, it is for those already there. The church needs to organise training for politicians who are already active in politics. They may already know what to do and therefore they do not need further training from the church but we cannot just assume this is the case. At least the church needs to invite politicians who are the members of congregations to discuss this. Should it involve everybody? If the platform used by the church is politics with a pluralist character which reflects Indonesian society, the ones who should get the church's attention are the politicians with the same platform. The church need to provide encouragement, support and blessings for these politicians so that in carrying out their duties, they can always hold on to the platform that they already chose and that are in line with the church.

250 Calvin Global

The active role of the church is very much expected, so the church can implement its role as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Without losing respect for those who choose to be outside politics and “just” voice the prophecy concerns, I want to put forward that it is difficult and unfair if, in such a position, the church demands improvement in politics. Obstacles arise because the church will be considered to not know the real issues of political life because it never directly gets involve. Therefore, if the church voices criticism, even though it is intended to encourage improvement, it will be considered as the voice of those who know nothing about politics. Consequently, the concerns will not be considered.

4. Conclusion

Calvin's and Calvinism's ideas are still very useful in the current Indonesian context. There are indeed issues that we need to consider as inappropriate, such as the differentiation between the church and the state if it is only used to support the movement of depoliticisation of civil society promoted by the New Order regime. We may also disagree with Calvin's notions about the church's duties being only to deal with spiritual matters. However, Calvin's idea of the state as the realm of God's sovereignty is still very relevant for us. It is a viewpoint which offers an alternative to the negative views about earthly matters. In this light, earthly matters cannot be considered as unimportant and having no relationship with God. The door to come to the territory outside the church is now open. From the same understanding we also learn that worldly matters should become the collective business of every community member of the society. If so, for the Indonesian context, the right platform to accommodate collective issues is the platform which has most similarity with the community's condition; the platform which has a pluralist character.

Bibliography

Batlajery, Augustinus M.L., *Teokrasi dalam Masyarakat Majemuk Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru* (Theocracy in the Heterogenous Society of Post New Order Era), Manuscript, 2008.

Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion Book 2, 3 and 4*, trans. Henry Beveridge.

Trigg, Roger, *Religion in Public Life: Must Faith be Privatised?*, Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2007.

Van Drunen, David, "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine and the Relationship of Church and State in the Early Reformed Tradition", in *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 49, 2007, 743-763.