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Calvin's Ideas on the Church-State Relationship and their Meaning for the Churches in Indonesia

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SUMMARY

The issue of the relationship between Church and state is as old as the Christian church itself but it became a major concern at the time of the Reformation. This article discusses Calvin's political thought and his view of Church and state in particular. Against the dominant views of *Caesaropapism* and papal supremacy which subordinate Church to state or vice versa, Calvin – like the Anabaptists – advocated a separation between Church and state.

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RÉSUMÉ

La question de la relation entre l'Église et l'État se pose depuis la naissance de l'Église, mais c'est devenu une préoccupation majeure à l'époque de la Réforme. Le présent article traite de la pensée politique de Calvin et plus particulièrement de son point de vue sur la relation entre l'Église et l'État. Contre le point de vue dominant du *césaropapisme* et de la suprématie du pape qui subordonnait l'Église à l'État ou vice versa, Calvin, comme

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Frage der Beziehung zwischen Kirche und Staat ist so alt wie die christliche Gemeinde selbst, doch zur Zeit der Reformation wurde sie zu einem Hauptanliegen. Dieser Artikel erörtert Calvins politisches Denken und insbesondere seine Ansichten zu Kirche und Staat. Gegen die vorherrschenden Auffassungen des *Cäsaropapismus* und der päpstlichen Vorherrschaft, welche die Kirche dem Staat unterordnete oder umgekehrt, befürwortete Calvin – wie die Anabaptisten – eine

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But unlike the Anabaptists, who rejected participation of Christians in government offices, Calvin argued for mutual assistance and reciprocal cooperation between Church and state. The article shows that Calvin's view of the proper relationship between Church and state is important for the churches in Indonesia. With reference to current affairs, I shall argue that the Indonesian churches should adopt Calvin's political thought as *normative* for the Church-state relationship.

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les anabaptistes, plaidait pour la séparation de l'Église et de l'État. Mais, contrairement aux anabaptistes qui refusaient la participation de chrétiens à des fonctions de gouvernement, Calvin soutenait que l'Église et l'État devaient s'accorder assistance mutuelle et coopération réciproque. L'auteur montre ici l'importance que revêt ce point de vue de Calvin pour les Églises en Indonésie. En rapport avec les événements actuels, il plaide que les Églises indonésiennes gagneraient à adopter cette pensée politique de Calvin comme leur norme.

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Trennung zwischen Kirche und Staat. Doch anders als die Anabaptisten, welche die Teilnahme von Christen am Staatsdienst ablehnten, plädierte Calvin für eine gegenseitige Hilfe und Zusammenarbeit zwischen Kirche und Staat. Der Artikel zeigt, dass Calvins Sicht der richtigen Beziehung zwischen Kirche und Staat von Bedeutung für die Gemeinden in Indonesien ist. Im Hinblick auf die gegenwärtige Situation wird argumentiert, dass die indonesischen Gemeinden Calvins politisches Denken als *normgebend* für die Beziehung zwischen Kirche und Staat annehmen sollten.

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1. Introduction

What does John Calvin have to say to us today? Numerous scholars have noted that Calvin's political ideas have led to a movement that changed the landscape of modern politics. Some have focused on his impact on the origins of modern politics,¹ while others have highlighted his connection to the development of Western law and human rights,² as well as his impact on the democratic movement,³ but not a few of his critics have accused him of inhibiting freedom and democratic ideas.⁴

Proper analysis of Calvin's political thought will unsurprisingly lead to the conclusion that the right relationship between Church and state inevitably became a major concern for Calvin. The issue of Church-state relationships was, as David Little puts it, 'as old as the Christian church itself and in an important sense had been at the heart of Christian cogitation, in its diverse forms, from the beginning of Christianity'.⁵ So Calvin was obliged to work on the issue, and his foundational ideas on the subject can be found in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* as well as in his extensive commentaries on scriptural passages related to political issues.

Against *Caesaropapism* or *Erastianism* – the idea of a state-controlled Church – and papal supremacy – the idea of a church-controlled state – Calvin, like the Anabaptists, advocated a separation between Church and state. Based on his doctrine of the two kingdoms, Calvin argued that Church and state are to be kept distinct from each other. But against the Anabaptists, who rejected participation of Christians in government as civil magistrates, Calvin argued that both Church and state are ordained by God. He was convinced that when Church and state are separate from each other, both can maintain their reciprocal cooperation and mutual responsibility. But how – in Calvin's thought – the Church should fulfil its responsibility toward the state and the state toward the Church in a specific historical situation is the question addressed in this article.

It is important to note that Calvin's developed understanding of the relation between Church and state has been widely influential. 'Building in part on classical and Christian prototypes,' John Witte confirms, 'Calvin developed arresting new teachings on authority and liberty, duties and rights, and Church and state that have had an enduring influence on Protestant lands.'⁶ Indeed, his political thought played a significant role in

democratic societies globally.⁷ In this context, I will argue that Calvin's idea of how the Church should properly relate to civil government is *normative* and that as such it may contribute to the development of the relation between religion and state in the Indonesian context. It should thus be taken into consideration by the Protestant Church in Indonesia when it reflects on its role in society.

2. The background of Calvin's thoughts

When Calvin came on stage in the sixteenth century, the relationship of Church and state had for many centuries been difficult due to the tensions and struggles between the earthly powers and the popes, and in response the new Protestant peoples 'created problems, proposals, and promises'.⁸ In essence, there were three views concerning the relationship of the Church to civil government. First, the *Caesaropapist* or *Erastian* view held that the state should control the Church; second, the papal supremacy view held that the Church should control the state; and third, the Anabaptist view argued for total separation between Church and state.

2.1 Caesaropapism

One may define *Caesaropapism* as '[a] system whereby supreme authority over the Church is exercised by a secular ruler, so even doctrine is subject to state control'.⁹ The authority exercised by the Byzantine (East Roman) Emperors over the Eastern Church, especially in the centuries immediately preceding the Schism of 1054, is the best way to illustrate *Caesaropapism*.¹⁰ The Byzantine Emperor would typically manage the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Eastern Church by controlling the election of patriarchs and setting the territorial boundaries of their jurisdiction. By implication, any decision of a church council required the emperor's approval in order to be binding.¹¹

Caesaropapism also occurred in the Western Church when England adopted this position in 1534, after king Henry VIII declared himself to be the 'pope' of the Church of England. The first break with Rome took place when pope Clement VII declined Henry's request to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. The pope's refusal was due in part to his fear of offending Catherine's nephew, Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. In 1529, after compiling a manuscript from ancient sources that argued that by law it was he, and not the pope, who should be the head of the Church

of England, Henry called a parliament and set about the Reformation of the Church. In January 1531 the new Church of England recognised Henry VIII as 'the singular protector, the only and supreme lord, and as far as is permitted by the law of Christ, even the supreme head' of the Church of England. The pope excommunicated Henry in 1533. In 1534 the Act of Submission of the Clergy ended the pope's influence, and the first Supremacy Act proposed for Henry to be the Supreme Head of the Church of England. These constitutional changes gave the monarch supremacy over the Church of England so that all its legislative decisions must have royal consent.¹²

Given his doctrine of the 'two kingdoms', it seems that Martin Luther would argue for a separation of Church and state. Following Augustine's eschatological distinction between the city of God and the city of man, Luther believed that God had established two kingdoms, namely, a kingdom of God and a kingdom of the world, with distinct purposes:

Here we must divide the children of Adam and all mankind into two classes, the first belonging to the kingdom of God, the second to the kingdom of the world. Those who belong to the kingdom of God are all the true believers who are in Christ and under Christ ... All who are not Christians belong to the kingdom of the world and are under the law.¹³

Luther made it clear that believers and unbelievers have different realms. He went on to argue that in relation to these two kingdoms, God has established two governments:

For this reason God has ordained two governments: the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal, which restrains the un-Christian and wicked so that – no thanks to them – they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace.¹⁴

These two governments ought to be kept distinct; they should not mingle with each other.¹⁵ It is a constant work of the devil, Luther argued, to confuse these two governments.

The devil never stops cooking and brewing these two kingdoms into each other. In the devil's name the secular leaders always want to be Christ's masters and teach Him how He should run His church and spiritual government. Similarly, the false clerics and schismatic

spirits always want to be the masters, though not in God's name, and to teach people how to organize the secular government. Thus the devil is indeed very busy on both sides, and he has much to do.¹⁶

Later, however, Luther's position regarding Church-state relationship changed, taking a direction which led to an unexpected and sometimes contradictory outcome, both theologically and politically. In spite of his previous clear distinction and separation between political and ecclesiastical power, in his address *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* Luther criticised the division of the spiritual and temporal spheres. Based on his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, Luther argued that 'all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office'.¹⁷ This means that if the clergy is not faithful to the Church and does something harmful to the well-being of Christians, any believer can take the necessary steps which are within their power against the clergy for the preservation of the Church. Through this statement Luther took away some authority from the Church – by saying that everyone is a priest – and gave more authority to the temporal sphere.¹⁸ By implication, he allowed any believer to save Christendom by summoning a council if they would find a problem in the spiritual sphere. He considered the 'temporal authorities' as best suited for calling a council in such cases, since they are 'fellow-Christians, fellow-priests' and thus they should exercise the office they have 'received from God'.¹⁹

Thus, in spite of his early doctrine of two kingdoms, by breaking down the division between the spiritual and temporal spheres Luther gave the secular authorities power over the Church. Therefore, the Lutheran territories in Germany which had been influenced by his political thought ultimately advocated the spirit of *Caesaropapism*, which in Protestant circles was later called *Erastianism*.²⁰

2.2 Papal supremacy

Papal supremacy, the claim by the popes in Rome that all power – spiritual and temporal – belongs to the pope, developed during the medieval period. The Holy Roman Empire, for example, was under the control of popes for considerable periods. It was pope Gelasius I (492–496) who promulgated the doctrine of two powers (or two swords) which

he called ‘the sacred authority of the priests’ and ‘the royal power’. While these two powers were independent in their own spheres of responsibility, Gelasius insisted that the emperor must bow to the will of the pope in spiritual matters. In his influential letter to Emperor Anastasius in 494 Gelasius wrote,

Two there are, august emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled, the sacred authority of the priesthood and the royal power. Of these the responsibility of the priests is more weighty in so far as they will answer for the kings of men themselves at the divine judgment. You know... that, although you take precedence over all mankind in dignity, nevertheless you piously bow the neck to those who have charge of divine affairs and seek from them the means of your salvation.²¹

This statement was soon widely accepted as authoritative and formed the foundation of Western European political thought for almost a millennium.

Advocates of papal supremacy argued that the main reason why the pope has two swords and therefore authority over both the spiritual and temporal spheres is that he is the vicar of Christ himself; as such the pope is the successor of the apostle Peter, to whom had been given ‘not only the universal church but the whole world to govern’.²² They argued further that Peter, who ‘administers the higher end of divine salvation and will speak at the Last Judgment for the kings of men’, has ‘a far greater responsibility on earth than Caesar, whose mission was to provide only short-term, temporal well-being’.²³

Although the pope himself would not use the temporal power but delegate its use to temporal powers, he still had absolute power and authority, and if necessary, was able to command the temporal power for the sake of the Church’s benefit. As pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) explains,

Both then are in the power of the church, the material sword and the spiritual. But the one is exercised for the church, the other by the church, the one by the hand of the priest, the other by the hand of kings and soldiers, though at the will and sufferance of the priest. One sword ought to be under the other and the temporal authority subject to the spiritual power. For, while the apostle says, ‘There is no power but from God and those that are ordained of God’ (Romans 13:1), they would not be

ordained unless one sword was under the other and, being inferior, was led by the other to the highest things.²⁴

In short, the Roman Church under the rule of the pope has full power in both temporal and spiritual affairs.

2.3 The Anabaptist view

The Anabaptists, the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, argued for the total separation of Church and state. The Schleithem Confession of Faith (1527) by Michael Sattler – the main Anabaptist confession – says in chapter 4:

We have been united concerning the separation that shall take place from the evil and the wickedness which the devil has planted in the world, simply in this: that we have no fellowship with them, and do not run with them in the confusion of their abominations. So it is; since all who have not entered into the obedience of faith and have not united themselves with God so that they will to do His will, are a great abomination before God, therefore nothing else can or really will grow or spring forth from them than abominable things. Now there is nothing else in the world and all creation than good or evil, believing and unbelieving, darkness and light, the world and those who are [come] out of the world, God’s temple and idols, Christ and Belial, and none will have part with the other.²⁵

This quotation explains that the main reason for the Christian community to be separated completely from the world is the absolute conflict that exists between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of darkness. A radical dualism between Christians and civil government is also suggested in chapter 6:

Their citizenship is in this world, but that of the Christian is in heaven. The weapons of their battle and warfare are carnal and only against the flesh, but the weapons of Christians are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil. The worldly are armed with steel and iron, but Christians are armed with the armor of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and with the Word of God.²⁶

The chapter concludes by affirming that Christians ought not to serve as magistrates due to the absolute contrast between flesh and spirit, the world and heaven. ‘[T]he rule of the government is according to the flesh, that of the Christians

according to the Spirit. Their houses and dwelling remain in this world, that of the Christians is in heaven.²⁷

3. Calvin on Church and state

3.1 On Luther, Caesaropapism and papal supremacy

Calvin's views on Church and state cannot be separated from his doctrine of two kingdoms. He took up Luther's two kingdoms approach in many important respects,²⁸ but he developed it further in a different direction because he did not agree with the way Luther had defined the relationship between Church and state.

Following Luther, Calvin believed that God has established two kingdoms with distinct purposes:

[T]here is twofold government in man: one aspect is spiritual, whereby the conscience is instructed in piety and in reverencing God; the second is political, whereby man is educated for the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among men. These are usually called the 'spiritual' and 'temporal' jurisdiction ... by which is meant that the former sort of government pertain to the life of the soul, while the latter has to do with the concerns of the present life ... For the former resides in the inner mind, while the latter regulates only outward behavior. The one we may call the spiritual kingdom, the other, the political kingdom.²⁹

The distinction between these two kingdoms must be constantly kept in mind. Calvin was concerned about those who 'unwisely mingle these two, which have a completely different nature'.³⁰ How distinct they are is evident from the fact that when people think about one kingdom they 'must call away and turn aside the mind from thinking about the other'.³¹ Thus Calvin would never tolerate either *Caesaropapism* or papal supremacy. *Caesaropapism* is unthinkable for him because he is convinced that the role and nature of civil government concern temporal matters, and that its power is based on coercion. It is true that Calvin argued that, along with peace and public justice, the civil government is responsible for establishing godliness.³² However, this role of the government toward religion remains outward, temporal, and limited to this life. Otherwise, 'the civil and earthly government cannot be distinguished from the spiritual kingdom of Christ'.³³

By maintaining the authority and independence of the Church, Calvin argued against the *Erastianism* which characterised the Church-state relation in England and in the Lutheran territories in Germany.³⁴ Calvin even described Henry VIII as the apostate Israelite king Jehu, who enthusiastically obeyed the call of a prophet to overthrow the dynasty of Ahab but continued to hold on to the idolatrous worship of king Jeroboam. In short, 'the reformation under Jehu was like that under Henry', where Henry 'pretended great zeal for a time: he afterwards raged cruelly against all the godly and doubled (*duplicavit* – duplicated) the tyranny of the Roman Pontiff'.³⁵

On the other hand, Calvin also rejected the doctrine of papal supremacy. He regarded the Roman Church as a corrupted church.³⁶ The pope, claiming to be Christ's deputy, not only had supreme jurisdiction in all ecclesiastical matters, but by claiming supreme power over civil power, Calvin observed, the pope also 'rules barbarously and tyrannically'.³⁷ He further showed that by confusing its ministry of Christ's spiritual government with magisterial political claims, the Roman Church had disclosed its obsession with 'secular power' and its 'lust for dominion'.³⁸ Clergies were more interested in exercising political power than in fulfilling their spiritual functions as ministers of Christ. 'In them Christ lies hidden, half buried, the gospel overthrown, piety scattered, the worship of God nearly wiped out'.³⁹ Consequently, when the papists elected a bishop, 'they choose a lawyer who knows how to plead in a court rather than how to preach in a church'.⁴⁰ The problem was 'not simply the politicization of ecclesiastical authority', as Matthew Tuininga has put it, 'but the exercise of magisterial power over religion, as if Christ has placed his authority at the discretion of the church'.⁴¹ The Roman Church was a corrupt church because it ignored its fundamental ministry, that is, the ministry of the Word.

3.2 On the Anabaptists

Although Church and state should be kept distinct, both are, according to Calvin, legitimate and divinely ordained. In Romans 13 Calvin notes Paul's description of government as 'an ordinance of God' and princes as 'ministers of God'. For Calvin, civil government is not only a 'holy and lawful' vocation but also 'the most sacred and by far the most honorable of all callings in the whole life of mortal men'.⁴² While he does not see civil government as part of Christ's spiritual kingdom,

he considers it to be under the lordship of Christ.⁴³ In short, unlike the Anabaptists he does not think of the two kingdoms as ‘antithetical’ and irreconcilable.⁴⁴ Calvin explains this when discussing Jesus’ classic statement, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things are God’s’:

Christ’s reply ... lays down a clear distinction between spiritual and civil government, in order to inform us that outward subjection does not prevent us from having within us a conscience free in the sight of God. For Christ intended to refute the error of those who did not think that they would be the people of God unless they were free from every yoke of human authority ... In short, Christ declares that it is no violation of the authority of God or any injury done to his service, if, in respect of outward polity, the Jews obey the Romans.⁴⁵

Calvin considers the Anabaptists’ rejection of Christian participation in civil government as overthrowing the political order. It indicates their failure to appreciate civil government as a gift of God’s providence that is essential to human life, since it establishes ‘civil justice and outward morality’.⁴⁶

For Calvin, the error of the Anabaptists consists in their misunderstanding of what Jesus says about the relation of the spiritual kingdom to the political order. For example, the Anabaptists interpret Jesus’ warning to the disciples not to be like the rulers of this world as indicating that a distinction should be drawn between Christians and unbelievers. For this reason, they argue, Christians ought not to serve in political offices. Thus they fail to take into consideration the distinction between the two kingdoms, as Calvin maintains:

[T]he design of Christ was, as I have said, to distinguish between the spiritual government of his Church and the empires of the world.

While political government such as that of David and Hezekiah required ‘a scepter, a crown, a throne and other emblems of royalty’, the spiritual government appointed by Christ emphasises the maxim ‘not to *rule*, but to *serve*’. In short, the comparison which Jesus makes between his disciples and the rulers of this world is not ‘between Christians and ungodly men, but between the nature of their offices’.⁴⁷

3.3 Calvin’s own view

Although distinct, Church and state are not anti-

thetical and irreconcilable: both are legitimate and divinely ordained institutions. And since both are under Christ and must serve his purposes, Calvin advocates ‘their mutual interaction’.⁴⁸ Whereas Little employs the term ‘disassociate and interconnect’ to describe the relation between Church and state in Calvin’s thought,⁴⁹ W. Stanford Reid summarises Calvin’s political thought as ‘that of mutual independence, but also of mutual helpfulness and support’.⁵⁰ In other words, although they are separate from each other, Church and state have a mutual responsibility for each other.

Yet how should state and Church fulfil these mutual responsibilities? Calvin argues that along with peace and public decency, civil government is ordained to take care of ‘godliness’, that is, ‘to promote religion, to maintain the worship of God, and to take care that sacred ordinances be observed with due reverence’.⁵¹ It is important to note that this role of the government – known as the care of religion (*cura religionis*) – has to be fulfilled indirectly, for Calvin considers the state’s responsibilities to relate only to the outward, external manifestation of religion. He clearly states that the state should have concern for ‘the outward worship of God’, ‘public offenses against religion’, ‘a public manifestation of religion’ and a ‘public sacrilege’.⁵² Thus Calvin would not entrust civil authorities ‘to make laws according to their own decision concerning religion and the worship of God’.⁵³ In brief, civil authorities have a responsibility toward religion but their power remains outward and temporal. They could not usurp the spiritual functions of the Church.

On the other hand, Calvin believes that the Church should play an important role with regard to the state. The main responsibility of the Church is to set forth the biblical teaching concerning the state and its function. Calvin frequently reminds the Church that in administering its role toward the state it should not interfere in its operations. The Church may advise the state as to what God’s law says, but it cannot determine how that law is to be applied in civil jurisdiction, since the Church does not have, as Calvin explains, ‘the authority to force’ through ‘the sword’ which the state ‘commonly inflicts’.⁵⁴ However, Calvin realises that some issues of civil affairs, such as sexuality, marriage and family, have civil as well as ecclesiastical dimensions. In cases like drunkenness and prostitution, for example, both state and Church ought to be involved in rendering punishment, such as imprisonment by the state and – if there is

no repentance – excommunication by the Church. In this case the Church would be able to ‘help the magistrate in order that not so many may sin’, so that Church and magistrate can be ‘so joined that each serves to help, not hinder, the other’.⁵⁵

In conclusion, Calvin’s view of Church and state is quite different from the other positions. As demonstrated above, he firmly rejected the papal supremacy, the subordination of the state to the ecclesiastical authority in the late Middle Ages. He also opposed the *Caesaropapist* or *Erastian* subordination of the Church to the civil authority in England and the Lutheran territories. And although he might agree with the Anabaptists that there ought not to be any confusion between the temporal and spiritual orders, he argued for a Christian involvement and participation in holding offices in the civil government. His ideal was not a total separation of the temporal and spiritual kingdoms, but rather their cooperation and reciprocal collaboration, in which each is free in its own sphere.

Calvin’s view of Church and state was developed in his context within Christendom, and presupposes the conviction that public morality should reflect Christian moral convictions. At the beginning of the third millennium the context in which we live is different and Christendom is no more. As Indonesia is an extremely diverse country, both religiously and culturally, I also realise that the Christendom setting of Calvin’s model cannot be applied directly to the Indonesian situation. Nonetheless, I will argue that Calvin’s idea of mutual interaction and cooperation between Church and state should be viewed as *normative* because it has a strong biblical foundation and is theologically sound. If so, it must be applicable to the Indonesian context and may contribute to the development of the relation between religion and state in this context.

4. The contribution of Indonesian churches

4.1 Background

The Dutch colonisation of Indonesia began in 1602 and lasted until the country’s independence in 1945. The Protestant churches of Indonesia knew Calvin’s political thought and his views on the proper relationship between Church and state in particular. Yet Dutch colonialism in Indonesia through the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*

(VOC, United East-Indies Company)⁵⁶ was motivated mainly by economic greed and not by evangelistic purposes. The initial contracts between the Dutch government and the VOC make no mention of Reformed Christianity, but from 1623 the VOC committed to involve itself in the propagation of Reformed Christianity.⁵⁷ However, it was not the VOC but missionary societies and organisations, such as the *Zending der Gereformeerde Kerken* (ZGKN),⁵⁸ which spread Calvin’s teaching and Reformed ideas among the Protestant churches in Indonesia.⁵⁹

With almost 20,000 islands⁶⁰ spread over an area of more than 9,800,000 sq. km,⁶¹ Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world; with its population of 250 million, it is the world’s fourth most populous country. Indonesia is arguably one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse nations. There are over 300 different ethnic groups with more than 250 distinct spoken languages.⁶² All major world religions are represented, along with a wide range of folk religions and animistic beliefs. However, approximately 87% of the population are Muslims, making Islam the largest religious group in Indonesia by far.⁶³

Because Indonesia was religiously pluralistic, the founding fathers of the nation early on fully realised the danger of dominance of the majority religion; accordingly, they paid careful attention to the problem of religion and the state. Their concern is expressed in chapter 29 of the 1945 Constitution or *Undang-Undang Dasar*, which declares that ‘the State is founded on the principle of One Lordship’ and ‘the State guarantees the freedom of each citizen to embrace his/her own religion and to worship according to his/her religion and belief’. This statement contains three basic thoughts. *First*, Indonesia is not a theocratic state since no religion is explicitly mentioned in the Constitution. This means that the State will be fair to all religions and not take sides with any one religion. *Second*, being founded on the principle of One Lordship, the State appreciates and encourages the contribution of diverse religions to the life of the nation.⁶⁴ *Third*, the Constitution must guarantee the freedom of individuals to change their belief or religion. However, in reality Indonesian politics has not lived up to this ideal.

4.2 Discriminatory legislation

A deviation from the constitutional requirement for the government to be neutral toward all religions happened when in 1965 President Sukarno

issued a decree, the first article of which reads:

Every person is prohibited to deliberately, in public, tell, encourage, or seek public support to give an interpretation of a professed religion in Indonesia, or to engage in religious activities that resemble the activities of that religion, if such interpretation and activities deviate from the basic teachings of that religion.⁶⁵

Although this decree listed the six religions to which most Indonesian people adhere (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism), it does not imply that these were the only officially recognised religions. But from 1974 onwards, when religion became a decisive factor in validating a marriage, these six religions became the official ones, which discriminates against citizens who subscribe to *aliran kepercayaaan* (mysticism).⁶⁶

Following this decree, a new article was added to the Constitution of Criminal Law, which includes imprisonment as a possible penalty:

A penalty of imprisonment of up to five years will be imposed on any person who deliberately, in public, expresses hostility towards, or abuse, or desecrates an official religion in Indonesia, with the intention of preventing people from embracing any official religion based on the belief in one Lordship. (Article 156a of the KUHP)

This law implies that followers of an official religion no longer have the freedom to give an interpretation of their religion, as in doing so they could be convicted of desecrating their religion and thus committing a criminal act. Obviously, the attempt to ‘criminalise’ religion confines religious freedom because a discontinuity exists between the Constitution and the laws under it.

Based on Calvin’s teaching on the relationship between Church and state, the Indonesian churches should have rejected this law which reflects the idea of papal supremacy in which the state is subordinated to the authority of religion. But regrettably, the churches have not voiced their opinion on this matter because this law could also help them to purify their teachings by using the hand of the state. Religious believers who do not exercise their faith according to its official interpretation can be punished on the basis of this law. Religions which welcome the state’s intervention in their internal affairs may initially have the good and noble intention of encouraging believers to be more faithful to their religion, but in reality, the

state intervention fosters hypocrisy and taints the image of those religions.

Moreover, official religions that make use of the state’s power are often unaware that this power can have counterproductive effects on their religious legitimacy conferred by the state. For example, during Sukarno’s period in office Confucianism was acknowledged as an official religion, together with Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism. However, in 1978 a ministerial decision announced that Confucianism was no longer acknowledged as an official religion and therefore banned in Indonesia.⁶⁷ Not until the administration of president Abdurrahman Wahid in 2000 was it again declared an official religion.

It is important to note that in reality, Article 156a of the KUHP has often been ‘expanded’ indefinitely to catch anybody regarded as desecrating religion, and that the victims are usually minority groups. One example involves the recent prosecution of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, also known as Ahok, the Chinese-Christian governor of Jakarta, who was falsely accused of insulting the Quran based on a particularly controversial edited video of a speech he delivered in September 2016. Ahok was convicted on blasphemy charges and sentenced to two years in prison. He also resigned from his office. A curious matter to be noted in this case was the judges’ final decision on his conviction, which they based on Article 156a of the KUHP, despite the fact that the prosecutors had previously dropped these charges. Many saw the former governor’s trial and conviction as a case of injustice and protested against it. In addition, with regard to our present discussion, the use of Article 156a of KUHP can be seen as a subordination of the state to religion in the pattern of the religionisation of politics which could in the end produce a ‘theocratic state’. But again, the Indonesian churches regrettably kept silent and did not take a clear standpoint on this matter, since, as mentioned above, they might benefit from this law to purify their teachings.

It is true that Ahok’s case shows the manipulation of the state by religion for its own interests. However, seen from another perspective, what happened is not merely the religionisation of politics, in which a certain religion demanded a greater role as the sole decision-maker on matters of the state, but it was also the politicisation of religion. Many observers saw the prosecution of Ahok as politically motivated: religion was dragged into the public sphere and made a symbol of contention

and a tool for winning votes. This subordination of religion to the state in the form of a politicisation of religion will in the end result in a 'state religion'. If they took Calvin's view of Church-state relations as *normative*, the Indonesian churches ought to reject the *Caesaropapism* or *Erastianism* in which religion is subordinated to the state's authority.

In brief, religion and state must never be totally fused. The religionisation of politics in the form of 'theocratic state' and the politicisation of religion in the form of 'state religion' should be considered illegitimate options. This does not imply, however, that the churches in Indonesia should support a total separation of religion and state. As discussed above, although Calvin agreed with the Anabaptists that Church and state are distinct, he rejected their total separation. A secular state, which promotes absolute separation between religion and state and thus marginalises religion to the private domain, should also be rejected by the Indonesian churches.

4.3 A state based on *Pancasila*

Calvin's political thought rejects not only a theocratic state and a state religion, but also a secular state. In what follows I shall argue that it is, on the other hand, easily compatible with *Pancasila*, Indonesia's national ideology.⁶⁸

Indonesia's founding fathers agreed that despite being the largest Muslim country in the world, Indonesia should not become an Islamic state. The influence of western education on the founding fathers during the Dutch colonisation did not make them choose a secular state either. Rather, Indonesia should be a state based on *Pancasila*, which is neither a theocratic state nor a secular one.⁶⁹ Being a non-theocratic state means that religion and state must never be totally fused. The *Pancasila*-based state would thus reject not only the possibility of an Islamic state, but also ecclesiastical supremacy and *Caesaropapism* / *Erastianism*. On the other hand, being a non-secular state means that religion and state must never be totally separated. The *Pancasila*-based state would thus reject the Anabaptists' total separation of Church and state. Hence within the *Pancasila*-based state, religion and state – although separate from each other – will cooperate and take some responsibility for each other. In this context, the churches in Indonesia can use Calvin's principle of mutual interaction and reciprocal collaboration between Church and state *normatively* and apply it

to *Pancasila's* proper relationship of religion and state.

The question then is how religion and state can fulfil their mutual responsibilities without being trapped in the discourse of the religionisation of politics and the politicisation of religion. I would suggest that this is where the Ministry of Religion has a key role.⁷⁰ Based on the *normative* use of Calvin's political thought, I will argue that the Ministry of Religion should facilitate the fulfilment of the responsibilities of both religion and the state.

When dealing with the responsibility of the state towards religion, the Ministry of Religion must retain the state's primary tasks, as Calvin has put it, not only to establish peace and public decency but also to take care of godliness. This role of the government, however, must be carried out indirectly, that is, limited to the outward, external manifestation of religion. This means that when dealing with disrupting religious manifestations, the Ministry of Religion is only allowed to prohibit certain manifestations or interpretations of that religion but not to prohibit the religion itself. This regulative function of the Ministry of Religion should be based not only on considerations of public justice and public morality, but mainly and primarily upon the requirement that the Ministry secures the fundamental rights of the adherents of all religions and freedom of belief. Thus the Ministry of Religion's regulative function should not usurp religion's spiritual functions. In this sense the Ministry's interventions may not be imposed permanently and should be removed as soon as possible in order that a large measure of freedom can be assured.

On the other hand, when dealing with the responsibility of religion towards the state, the Ministry of Religion has to realise that whereas religions have no intention of interfering in the state's internal affairs, they have an important role to play in the nation's socio-political life. Religion, as Calvin puts it, may set forth the biblical principles concerning the state and its function. In this case religion may, for example, 'lay a strong moral, ethical and spiritual foundation for nation-building as an implementation of *Pancasila*', as mandated by the 1998 'Guidelines of State Policy'. In doing so, religion – along with the state – could be involved in some issues of civil affairs such as sexuality, marriage and family.

In conclusion, by revisiting Calvin's views on Church and state and applying them *normatively*

to the struggle that the Indonesian churches are facing, this article has shown that Calvin's political thought is still relevant to our world today. It is amazing that the *normative* use of Calvin's view on the proper relationship of Church to state is highly compatible with *Pancasila* and may make an important contribution to the relation of religion and state in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country.

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Endnotes

- 1 See Ralph C. Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundations of Modern Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989).
- 2 R.D. Knudsen describes Calvin as 'the patron of modern human rights. In his thought he anticipated the modern republican form of government Calvin stood against the abuses of power in his time and wrestled with the problem of the right to revolt.' R.D. Knudsen, 'Calvinism as a Cultural Force', in W.S. Reid (ed.), *John Calvin: His Influence in the Modern World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 13; see also John Witte, Jr., *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- 3 According to John McNeill, democracy 'is not a term in favor with Calvin. He does not advocate democracy in and of itself: he fears its deterioration into anarchy. Nevertheless, his notion of "aristocracy tempered by democracy" approaches our conception of representative democracy. It becomes unmistakably clear in his later writings that the ideal basis of government is election by the citizens.' John T. McNeill, 'The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought', *Church History* 18.3 (1949) 169. See also Robert M. Kingdon, *Calvin and Calvinism: Sources of Democracy* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1970).
- 4 Ernst Troeltsch describes Calvin as 'notoriously rigid' and his personal view as 'as undemocratic and authoritarian as possible'. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Churches* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949) 2:628. Roland Bainton declares that the Reformation is not compatible with religious liberty, particularly under Calvin, 'the arch-inquisitor of Protestantism' and 'dictator of Geneva'. Roland H. Bainton, *The Travail of Religious Liberty* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953) 53.
- 5 David Little, 'Reformed Faith and Religious Liberty', *Church and Society* 76.5 (1986) 6.
- 6 John Witte, Jr., *Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 2; see also Douglas F. Kelly, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World: The Influence of Calvin on Five Governments from the 16th through 18th Centuries* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992).
- 7 See Christopher Stückelberger and Reinhold Bernhardt (eds), *Calvin Global: How Faith Influences Societies* (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2009).
- 8 Peter A. Lillback, 'The Relationship of Church and State' in Matthew Barrett (ed.), *Reformation Theology: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017) 675–676.
- 9 J.D. Douglas (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 173.
- 10 F.L. Cross (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 264.
- 11 Roland H. Bainton, *Christendom: A Short History of Christianity and Its Impact on Western Civilization*, Vol. I: *From the Birth of Christ to the Reformation* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966) 112.
- 12 Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, Vol. II: *Reformation to the Present, A.D. 1500—A.D. 1975* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) 801–802.
- 13 Martin Luther, 'Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed', in *Luther's Works* Vol. 45: *The Christian in Society II*, ed. Walther I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962) 88–90.
- 14 Luther, 'Temporal Authority', 91.
- 15 'Now he who would confuse these two kingdoms,' says Luther, 'would put wrath into God's kingdom and mercy into the world's kingdom; and that is the same as putting the devil in heaven and God in hell.' Martin Luther, 'An Open Letter on the Harsh Book against the Peasants' in *Luther's Works*, Vol. 46: *The Christian in Society III*, ed. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) 70.
- 16 Martin Luther, 'Psalm 101' in *Luther's Works*, Vol. 13: *Selected Psalms II*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1956) 194–195.
- 17 Martin Luther, 'To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate' in *Luther's Works*, Vol. 44: *The Christian in Society I*, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 127.
- 18 See Luther, 'To the Christian Nobility', 127–133.
- 19 Luther, 'To the Christian Nobility', 137.

- 20 After the Swiss theologian Thomas Erastus (1524–1583). Matthew J. Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church: Christ's Two Kingdoms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 41; Lillback, 'Relationship of Church and State', 686–687.
- 21 Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050–1300* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964) 13.
- 22 Tierney, *Crisis of Church and State*, 132.
- 23 Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) 139.
- 24 Tierney, *Crisis of Church and State*, 189.
- 25 Karl Koop (ed.), *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition 1527–1660* (Kitchener: Pandora, 2008) 28.
- 26 Koop, *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 31.
- 27 Koop, *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 31.
- 28 Harro Höpfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 44.
- 29 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006) III.19.15.
- 30 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.20.1.
- 31 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.19.15.
- 32 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.20.2.
- 33 John Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 12:10.
- 34 Thomas G. Sanders, *Protestant Concepts of Church and State: Historical Backgrounds and Approaches for the Future* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) 226.
- 35 John Calvin, *Commentary on Hosea* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 1:3–4.
- 36 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.2.10.
- 37 John Calvin, *Commentary on Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 60:10.
- 38 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.11.14.
- 39 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.2.12.
- 40 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.5.1.
- 41 Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 188.
- 42 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.20.4.
- 43 See Gordon J. Kiddie, 'Calvin on Civil Government', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 32 (1981) 23–35.
- 44 See Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.20.2.
- 45 John Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 22:21.
- 46 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.20.1.
- 47 Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew*, 20:25.
- 48 John T. McNeill, 'John Calvin on Civil Government', in George L. Hunt (ed.), *Calvinism and the Political Order* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965) 41.
- 49 Little, *Reformed Faith*, 9.
- 50 W. Stanford Reid, 'Calvin and the Political Order' in Jacob T. Hoogstra (ed.), *John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1959) 252.
- 51 John Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Timothy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 2:2.
- 52 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.20.2–3.
- 53 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.20.3.
- 54 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.11.3.
- 55 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.11.3.
- 56 At that time Indonesia was known as the Dutch East-Indies.
- 57 Karel Steenbrink, 'The Arrival of Protestantism and the Consolidation of Christianity in the Moluccas 1605–1800' in Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink (eds), *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008) 99–100. Thus Christian mission was included in the VOC's organizational structure, first as part of the Department of Trade and Colonies, and later as part of a new department called the Department of Education, Worship and Industry. Gerry van Klinken, *Minorities, Modernity and the Emerging Nation: Christians in Indonesia, A Biographical Approach* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003) 9–10. The main reason for this inclusion is the principle *cuius regio eius religio* (whose realm, his religion) which the Dutch government embraced at that time. Article 36 of the Dutch Confession of Faith (*Confessio Belgica*) states that the government was obliged to 'preserve the holy Church, oppose and eradicate all forms of false religion and idol worship, abolish the kingdom of the antichrist and advance the kingdom of Jesus'. Th. Müller Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia*, second edition (Jakarta: Badan Penerbit Kristen, 1966) 30.
- 58 The ZGKN was the missionary organisation of the Neo-Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church founded by Abraham Kuyper.
- 59 Th. van den End, '1800–2005: A National Overview. The Last Decades of the Colonial Era: 1900–1942' in Aritonang and Steenbrink, *History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 167. See also Agustinus Batlajery, 'The Unity of the Church according to Calvin and Its Meaning for the Churches in Indonesia' (PhD dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2010) 94–106.
- 60 6,044 islands have been named and the rest remain nameless; only 931 islands (less than seven percent) are inhabited. *Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia 1992* (Jakarta: Biro Pusat Statistik, 1992) 3.
- 61 Four-fifths of Indonesia, however, is water. The land area covers 1,900,000 sq. km. *Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia 1992*, 3.
- 62 Hildred Geertz, 'Indonesian Cultures and Communities' in Ruth T. McVey (ed.), *Indonesia*

- (New Haven: HRAF, 1963) 24.
- 63 The 2010 Indonesian census recorded 87.18% Muslims, 6.96% Protestants, 2.91% Catholics, 1.69% Hindus, 0.72% Buddhists, 0.05 Confucians and 0.13% designated as 'others'. Badan Pusat Statistik, *Sensus Indonesia 2010* at www.sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel?tid=321&wid=0 [accessed 13 August 2012].
- 64 See Benyamin F. Intan, *'Public Religion' and the Pancasila-based State of Indonesia: An Ethical and Sociological Analysis* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).
- 65 Presidential Decree No. 1/1965 Concerning the Prevention of Abuse and/or Disrespect of Religion.
- 66 Suara Pembaruan, 28 November 2006.
- 67 Decision issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, SE No.477/74054/BA.01.2/4683/95, on November 18, 1978. See Chandra Setiawan, 'Khonghucu dalam Kemajemukan Agama-agama di Indonesia' ['Khonghucu in the Plurality of Religion in Indonesia'] in Ferdinand Suleeman, Adji Ageng Sutarna and A. Rajendra (eds), *Bergumul dalam Pengharapan: Buku Penghargaan untuk Pdt. Dr. Eka Darmaputera* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001) 463–464.
- 68 Derived from Sanskrit and Pali, the word *Pancasila* means five principles: 'panca' (five) and 'sila' (principle). The five principles of *Pancasila* are the principle of One Lordship, of a Just and Civilized Humanity, of the Unity of Indonesia, of Peoplehood Guided by the Spirit of Wisdom in Deliberation and Representation, and of Social Justice for All the People of Indonesia.
- 69 For a detailed discussion, see Intan, *'Public Religion' and the Pancasila-based State of Indonesia*, 39–44.
- 70 The Ministry of Religion was established on January 3, 1946, as part of Sukarno's administration. Since then it has become a permanent part of the administration of all Indonesian presidents. Initially, the Ministry of Religion dealt with one religion only, Islam, but it subsequently expanded its jurisdiction to include all official state religions beside Islam: Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian.