

The Relevance of Ecclesiastical Law in Facing Justice Issues in Indonesia: Justice in Abraham Kuyper's Perspective

Pratiwi Eunike,¹ Annie George²

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia¹

Faith Theological Seminary, Manakala, India²

email: eunikepratiwie@gmail.com¹

Submitted: 24 March 2023 Accepted: 10 May 2025 Published: 7 July 2025



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0

Abstract

This study explores the role of the church in addressing social justice in Indonesia through the application of ecclesiastical law. Despite Indonesia being based on Pancasila, social inequality remains a significant challenge. The aim of this research is to explore how ecclesiastical law can contribute to resolving social justice issues by incorporating Abraham Kuyper's thoughts on the sovereignty of God. The research employs a qualitative method, including a literature review and theological analysis. It analyzes Kuyper's works, such as *Lectures on Calvinism* and *Our Program*, which emphasize that God's sovereignty encompasses all aspects of social, political, and economic life. Additionally, in-depth interviews with church leaders provide practical perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in fulfilling the church's social role. The findings show that the church can make a meaningful contribution to addressing social injustice by integrating Kuyper's views and applying ecclesiastical law. The church holds moral authority in advocating for social justice, even while operating within a secular legal system. This study contributes by demonstrating that the church can have a real impact through fair public policy advocacy and social services based on theological values, with a collaborative strategy focused on concrete actions to create a more just social order.

Keywords:

ecclesiastical law; social justice; Abraham Kuyper; church; Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Social justice in Indonesia is a complex issue and continues to be a major highlight in the life of the nation. Although Pancasila, especially the fifth principle, clearly emphasizes the importance of social justice for all Indonesians, social inequality is still very much present in various aspects of life. The inequality that occurs, both in economic distribution and access to education (John Doe, 2018) , to public services (David Kim, 2018) , shows that there are great challenges in realizing a just and prosperous society. This is where the role of the church as a spiritual and social institution becomes very

important in encouraging change and fighting for social justice and this cannot be separated from the Bible which discusses justice as described in Micah 6:8

Church law or *ecclesiastical law* plays an important role in upholding the values of justice that stem from the sovereignty of God. Church law does not only apply to the internal arrangements of church members, but also has broader relevance in social life. The church is called to be an agent of transformation, not only in the spiritual realm, but also in the social realm, by carrying out ecclesiological functions based on divine justice (Kim, 2017). This refers to the thought of Abraham Kuyper, a *Reformed* theologian, who emphasized that God's sovereignty covers all aspects of life, including politics, economics, and social (Abraham Kuyper, 2022).

Abraham Kuyper provided a strong theological foundation regarding God's sovereignty over all things. Kuyper believed that there is no area of life that escapes God's control and authority, and this includes the issue of social justice. The church, as an extension of Christ in the world, has the responsibility to uphold justice in the midst of society. Thus, the church has a mandate to fight for justice as discussed in God's Word Isaiah 1:17, where the church in church law does not only apply internally, but also covers broader social aspects, including working with the state to address existing injustices.

In Indonesia, church law is often seen solely as a means of regulating the internal life of the congregation (Setiawan, 2019). However, in Kuyper's perspective, church law has the potential to become a broader instrument in creating social justice. The church must see church law as a means to uphold God's sovereignty in various areas of life, including in the context of social injustice that occurs in society. Kuyper's thinking provides practical and theological guidance for the church to play a more active role in addressing social injustice, which is still a major challenge in Indonesia.

This article seeks to explore the relevance of church law in dealing with social justice issues in Indonesia, with reference to Abraham Kuyper's thoughts on the sovereignty of God. The study not only focuses on the internal aspects of church law, but also how the church can act as an agent of social change in creating a more just society. It is hoped that through this article, the church in Indonesia can expand its role and function, not only as a regulator of the spiritual life of the people, but also as a pioneer in upholding social justice. By integrating the values of divine justice (Amos 5:24) into social life, the church is expected to be able to make a real contribution in creating a more balanced and harmonious social order. This article is also expected to provide new

insights for the development of church law in Indonesia, particularly related to social justice and the church's responsibility towards society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abraham Kuyper made an important contribution to understanding social justice, especially regarding the role of the church in society. Kuyper developed the concept of "*sphere sovereignty*", which affirms that every sphere of life, be it the church, state, family, or society, has authority directly given by God. The church, as one of these spheres, has a great responsibility in fighting for social justice, both within its community and in its interaction with the wider society. Kuyper also emphasized that social justice is not only related to individual rights, but also social rights that must be protected and upheld (Abraham Kuyper, 2022) . In this context, the church not only functions as a spiritual institution, but also as an agent of social change that plays a role in upholding divine justice (Kalvin S. Budiman., 2022).

Van Drunen (Van Drunen, 2015) supports Kuyper's view by pointing out that the concept of *sphere sovereignty* provides the basis for the church to play an active role in fighting for justice, especially in an increasingly secular society. The church is seen as having moral authority that can influence the social and political dimensions through the application of the principles of divine justice. However, this view is still limited to a theoretical context and has not directly applied these principles to the Indonesian context.

Regarding *ecclesiastical law*, Gustafson (Gustafson, 2016) highlights that church law not only serves to regulate the internal life of the congregation, but also has the potential to make a broader contribution in society. The main difference between church law and secular law lies in the source of its authority; church law derives from divine revelation and theological principles, while secular law is based on changing social conventions. However, the application of church law in the context of social injustice in Indonesia has not been widely discussed in depth.

In the context of social justice in Indonesia, Kurniawan's (Kurniawan, 2020) reveals that injustices in the economy and access to public services, such as education and health, further exacerbate social inequality. This emphasizes the importance of the church's role in addressing such issues, particularly through the application of church law that reflects

the principles of divine justice. However, this study does not explore how local churches in Indonesia can integrate these theological principles into social life more broadly.

This research contributes by filling that gap through an exploration of the application of church law in the context of social injustice in Indonesia. In contrast to previous research that is largely normative and theoretical, this Article presents a more applicable approach by examining concrete examples of several churches in Indonesia that have successfully applied Kuyper's principles in responding to social injustice. Thus, this research offers a new perspective that has not been explored by previous research, especially in the Indonesian context.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach (Suyitno, 2018) that aims to explore in depth the relevance of church law (*ecclesiastical law*) in the context of social justice in Indonesia, as well as analyze Abraham Kuyper's thoughts on the sovereignty of God. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore a broader and deeper understanding of theological views and how they are applied in church practice. The methods used include analysis of theological literature, literature review, and case studies.

An analysis of the theological literature (John H. Hayes., 2018) was conducted to examine in depth the theological concepts relevant to the research topic. The main focus of this analysis is Abraham Kuyper's works, such as *Lectures on Calvinism* and *Our Program*, which discuss the *sovereignty* of God and the concept of "*sphere sovereignty*". The analysis aims to understand how Kuyper formulated the relationship between the church, social justice, and the church's moral responsibility towards society. By analyzing these theological works, the research will explore how Kuyper's principles can be applied in the context of social justice in Indonesia, as well as the role of the church in upholding justice.

The literature review (Suyitno, 2018) was used to collect various literature related to church law, social justice, and the role of the church in Indonesia. This literature review included secondary literature such as journal articles, books, and research reports that discuss the implementation of church law in the modern context, as well as studies on social injustice in Indonesia. The literature review was used to strengthen the theoretical foundation and provide additional insights into how church law can be a tool to fight for

social justice, especially in a country based on the principles of Pancasila. Data on social inequality, access to public services, and economic injustice in Indonesia will also be an important part of this study.

The case study (Febrianto, 2018) was used by examining the role of several churches in Indonesia in fighting for social justice through the application of church law. This case study involves in-depth interviews with church leaders who have direct experience in implementing the principles of ecclesiastical law in their church environment. The data obtained from these interviews will provide a practical perspective on the application of church law in addressing social injustice issues in Indonesia, as well as provide an overview of the challenges faced by the church in carrying out its social role.

RESULTS

The Relevance of Abraham Kuyper's Thought to Justice in Indonesia

Abraham Kuyper was one of the most influential Reformed theologians, especially in relation to social justice. His famous thought on *sphere sovereignty* provides a strong theological basis for the role of the church in society. Kuyper asserted that each sphere of life, whether church, state, family, or society, has direct authority from God. The church, as one of these spheres, not only serves as a spiritual institution, but also has the responsibility to fight for social justice in society.

The principle of sovereignty of scope emphasizes that the church must play an active role in upholding justice, both internally and externally. In the context of Indonesia, which is characterized by cultural plurality and various forms of social injustice, Kuyper's principle is particularly relevant. Although the country is based on Pancasila, especially the fifth precept on social justice, economic inequality and access to public services such as education and health are still issues that need to be addressed.

Kuyper's principle of sovereignty can be a guideline for the church in Indonesia to expand its role in fighting for social justice. The church not only functions as a regulator of the internal life of the people, but also as an agent of social change that plays a role in efforts to alleviate poverty and improve welfare. In this case, the role of the church becomes very important in promoting social rights that are often ignored by the secular legal system.

Kuyper also argued that social justice includes not only individual rights, but also social rights that need to be upheld. The church has a moral responsibility to support policies that promote social justice and champion the welfare of vulnerable groups, including those who are marginalized in their access to education, health and other public services. The church can utilize the principles of divine justice to be a key advocate in creating a more just social order.

Church law, or ecclesiastical law, when related to Kuyper's thought shows that church law can serve as a moral guide for the wider society. Ecclesiastical law can be adopted and applied to promote social change, especially when secular law fails to protect the most vulnerable.

In Indonesia, church law should be able to act as a moral alternative in a society experiencing injustice. Through the application of ecclesiastical law based on divine revelation, the church can play a central role in fighting for social justice, providing solutions where secular law is unable to meet the needs of society. Kuyper's principles on social justice and God's sovereignty are highly relevant to be applied in the Indonesian context. The church, by integrating theological values in real practice, can make a major contribution in confronting the social injustices that exist in Indonesian society.

The Church's Role in Upholding Justice

The role of the church in fighting for social justice receives strong support from the thoughts of Abraham Kuyper, who emphasized that the church should be actively involved in social life. According to Kuyper, the church is not only an institution that focuses on the spiritual life of the congregation, but also has the responsibility to promote justice and support social rights for those who are oppressed (Abraham Kuyper, 2022) . In this context, ecclesiastical law or church law serves as an important instrument to uphold justice in society. Church law does not only apply to the internal affairs of the congregation, but also provides a moral framework for the church to play a role in addressing broader social challenges. Through the application of ecclesiastical law, the church can take a firm stance in the face of injustices that occur in society, especially in the midst of existing social and economic inequality. The church is expected to be able to play a role as a moral voice that fights for justice in various sectors of life (Jane Smith., 2018).

In Indonesia, social injustice remains a major problem, ranging from economic inequality to limited access to public services such as education and healthcare. The church, as part of the sovereign sphere of life under the sovereignty of God, has the responsibility to be actively involved in addressing these issues. The church cannot remain silent and only focus on the spiritual life of its congregation, but must also move to improve broader social conditions. As agents of social change (Rebecca J. Allen., 2021), churches have a moral responsibility to be advocates for social rights, especially for those who are underrepresented in social structures. Churches can be key advocates in advocating for more equitable access to education, health, and social protection. In this context, church law provides a strong foundation for churches to take the lead in fighting for the social rights of those who are marginalized.

Kuyper emphasized that the church has a moral responsibility to support policies aimed at improving social welfare. Churches can work together with the government in fighting for policies that are more inclusive and fair for all levels of society. Such collaboration allows the church to act as a bridge between marginalized groups and the existing power structure. The church in Indonesia must play a broader role in a pluralistic society. Churches need to work together with various parties, including non-governmental institutions and civil society organizations, to ensure that the social rights of all citizens are protected. The church must not only act as a moral guide, but also as an active agent that helps formulate solutions to existing social problems.

The challenges faced by the church in upholding social justice are complex. In many cases, secular law is often inadequate to meet the needs of communities experiencing injustice. This is where the church can play its role by using ecclesiastical law as a stronger and more comprehensive moral alternative. Ecclesiastical law provides a solid theological foundation to fight for social justice that is grounded in divine principles. The church has the opportunity to engage in broader social policy advocacy through the application of church law. The church can be a protector of those who do not have proper access to social justice. This shows that the church has a much greater responsibility, not only to regulate the internal life of the people, but also to be actively involved in efforts to address social injustice in society.

By supporting public policies aimed at reducing social inequality, the church can play a more active role in creating a more just social order. The church should be at the forefront of fighting for social reforms that are in line with theological values, so that they

can have a real positive impact on society at large. The role of the church in upholding social justice is very important in Indonesia. By following Kuyper's views and implementing ecclesiastical law, the church can play a leading role in creating a more just and equitable society. Strong collaboration between the church, government and civil society can make a significant contribution to creating a better and more equitable social order.

DISCUSSION

Implementation of Ecclesiastical Law in Indonesia

The implementation of *ecclesiastical law* or church law in Indonesia is a complex challenge, given the country's legal system based on Pancasila and secularism. Although the church has a strong internal legal apparatus, the application of church law in a broader context, especially in upholding social justice, encounters many obstacles.

The challenges in applying church law in the Indonesian context are: *First*, the main challenge is how to harmonize theological principles with a national legal framework that supports religious pluralism. *Second*, in the Indonesian legal system, *ecclesiastical law* is not formally recognized as part of state regulation. This means that the church cannot directly influence public policy through its internal legal system (Budi Prasetyo., 2019). However, *ecclesiastical law* can still play a role as a moral guideline that guides the church in carrying out its mission in society, especially in efforts to fight for social justice. The principles of church law can be applied to shape attitudes and actions in the face of issues such as economic injustice, discrimination, and limited access to public services.

Third, another challenge in the implementation of church law is the limitation of direct interaction between the church and the state in legal policy-making. While the church is given the freedom to regulate its internal life, its authority is not directly reflected in public policy making (John Witte Jr., 2018). However, the church can still play an important role through policy advocacy based on the values of divine justice found in *ecclesiastical law*. With this advocacy, the church can push for social reform in issues such as social inequality and protection for vulnerable groups.

Fourth, the biggest obstacle in the application of *ecclesiastical law* in Indonesia is how the church can combine its moral responsibility with the reality of a secular legal system. Church law, which is based on divine revelation, is often incompatible with the principles of state law based on pluralism and democracy. This difference creates a

dilemma for the church in playing its active role as an agent of social justice in a heterogeneous society.

The implementation of *ecclesiastical law* can still be done strategically. The church can establish closer collaboration with state institutions and civil society organizations to fight for social justice. Through strong cooperation, the church can utilize its moral influence to support policies that are more inclusive and favor marginalized groups and push for fairer policies. Churches can also play a proactive role in educating their congregations and the general public about the importance of social justice. Churches can utilize forums such as worship services, seminars, or religious lessons to instill awareness of the divine values of justice. In this way, the church is not only a conveyor of theological teachings, but also encourages the congregation to be actively involved in social action.

Fifth, in addition to external challenges, the church also faces internal challenges in the form of denominational differences. Various Christian denominations in Indonesia often have different interpretations regarding the application of church law. These differences can hinder efforts to build unity in fighting for social justice. Therefore, collaborative efforts between churches are needed to unify their vision and mission to fight for social justice based on universal Christian values. Although church law does not have formal power in the national legal system, churches still have moral power that can be utilized to have a positive impact on society. The church should take an active position in public policy discussions and advocate for social rights based on the principles of *ecclesiastical law*. When secular law is unable to protect vulnerable groups, the church can provide a stronger moral solution.

The implementation of *ecclesiastical law* in Indonesia requires a flexible and adaptive approach. The church must be able to recognize the limitations of the country's legal system, while remaining committed to its mission to fight for social justice. In this way, the church can utilize its moral and spiritual power without compromising its integrity as a religious institution. Despite the challenges, the role of the church in implementing *ecclesiastical law* in Indonesia remains crucial. Through thoughtful strategies and effective collaboration, the church can continue to contribute in creating a more just and prosperous social order in Indonesia. With a strong commitment to the principles of divine justice, the church can be a pioneer of significant social change.

A Critique of Kuyper's Thought

Abraham Kuyper's thoughts on *ecclesiastical law* and the concept of God's sovereignty offer a significant theological foundation for the church's role in fighting for social justice. However, when applied in the context of modern and pluralistic Indonesia, a number of challenges arise so that criticism of Kuyper's thought can be assumed in several ways, namely:

First, one of Kuyper's main concepts, *sphere sovereignty*, proposes that each sphere of life, be it the church, the state, or society, has different authority under God's sovereignty. However, in Indonesia's secular legal framework that separates religion and state, the application of this principle is limited, especially since the church has no direct authority in public policy.

Secondly, another significant issue comes from religious pluralism in Indonesia. Although Kuyper emphasized the importance of church autonomy in moral and social leadership, the reality in Indonesia requires the church to conform to a pluralistic and secular legal system. The separation of church and state that Kuyper saw as ideal is not fully realized in the Indonesian context, where public policies often involve religious values, yet remain under a secular legal framework. This raises questions about the relevance and practicality of applying *sphere sovereignty* in such a situation.

Third, further criticism focuses on the limited role of the church as an agent of social change in Indonesia. The church does not have enough power to directly influence socio-economic policies that are important in reducing social inequality (Daniel Manalu., 2022). While in Kuyper's thought the church has a significant moral role in society, in Indonesia, legal and political constraints often limit this role, making Kuyper's idealism difficult to apply in a more pragmatic context. The difficulty the church faces in balancing its role within the congregation and outside society is also a concern. Kuyper proposed that the church should play a role in promoting justice both internally and externally. However, in Indonesia, the church is often caught in the dilemma between meeting the spiritual needs of the congregation and playing a role in wider social affairs under the legal constraints of the state. This obstacle shows that the implementation of *ecclesiastical law* in fighting for social justice in Indonesia is not easy to do without facing regulatory barriers.

Fourth, Kuyper's idealism about social justice based on God's sovereignty also faces challenges when faced with contemporary realities in Indonesia. Social policies in this

country are influenced more by political and economic factors than religious principles. Therefore, although Kuyper's theological principles provide a strong moral foundation, their application requires more realistic adaptations in accordance with the conditions of modern Indonesian society (Andi Wijaya., 2020) . The complexity of Indonesia's highly pluralistic society is also a challenge in the application of Kuyper's thought. With the diversity of denominations and religious backgrounds, it is difficult for churches to find a common agreement in applying *sphere sovereignty*. Differences in theological interpretations often prevent churches in Indonesia from taking a consistent stance in fighting for social justice. Therefore, Kuyper's thoughts need to be adapted to the diversity of denominations and contexts in Indonesia in order to be applied effectively.

Fifth, another obstacle to the relevance of Kuyper's thought in the modern era is the limited political space available to the church. In Indonesia, where political dynamics are heavily influenced by economic interests and secular forces, the space for the church to play a significant political role is narrowing. Kuyper envisioned the role of the church as a major motor of social change, but in Indonesia, the church is more often positioned as a supporting institution, rather than a prime mover. This raises questions about the extent to which the church can play an effective political role under the existing constraints. The ability of the church to apply Kuyper's principles in an increasingly secularized society is also questionable. The church faces great challenges in maintaining its moral authority, especially when society is increasingly detached from religious values in public affairs. The sovereignty of God that Kuyper emphasized may seem increasingly remote from a social reality characterized by secular and democratic principles.

Despite criticism, Kuyper's thoughts can still provide ethical guidance for the church in Indonesia. The church can still use Kuyper's theological principles as moral guidelines in fighting for social issues, although the form of implementation must be adjusted to the existing legal and social context. The principle of God's sovereignty emphasized by Kuyper can be translated as a moral motivation for the church to remain actively involved in social advocacy and justice, without violating the limits set by secular law. Kuyper's thinking faces challenges in the modern Indonesian context. However, the values he conveyed remain relevant if the church can adapt their application to the current situation and conditions. The church needs to continue to balance between Kuyper's moral teachings and the existing socio-political reality, so that its role in fighting for social justice remains strong and relevant in the midst of changing times.

Evaluation of Ecclesiastical Law Implementation

The application of *ecclesiastical* law in Indonesia's legal system presents complex challenges. In a secular and pluralistic legal order like Indonesia, *ecclesiastical law* does not have a strong formal position. The Indonesian legal system places positive law as the main basis in regulating the life of the nation, while still recognizing the existence of religious values that play a role in the daily life of the community. Nevertheless, church law only applies within the internal scope of the congregation, so its influence in the context of national law is very limited.

Juridically, the authority of the church in Indonesia is limited to spiritual and moral aspects concerning the lives of its congregation. This means that, while the church can serve as a moral guide, its direct influence on broader public or social policy tends to be minimal. The role of the church in this context is more supportive than active in public decision-making. This challenge suggests that the application of *ecclesiastical law* in the public sphere requires a more strategic approach, especially in working with secular actors in government and other social institutions.

Although the formal role of the church in public policy is limited, the church can still play an important role in fighting for social justice. One effective way is through social advocacy (David P. Cline., 2021). The church can leverage its moral and ethical influence to push for policies that are more just and favor the vulnerable. By focusing on the values of divine justice that underpin *ecclesiastical law*, the church can make a real contribution to promoting social change for the better, even if it is not directly involved in the formal legislative process. The church can also act as a mediator in the dialog between society and government. The church, with its moral position, can serve as a link that brings together the needs of society with the policies made by the government. Through this dialogue, the church can ensure that public policies reflect more inclusive values of social justice, while giving voice to groups that are often marginalized. Thus, although church law does not have formal power in the legal system, it still has room to contribute morally.

The next evaluation of the application of *ecclesiastical law* also needs to look at the internal challenges of the church itself. Churches are often faced with the reality that church law, which is generally focused on internal governance, cannot be easily applied outside the congregation. This means that churches need to develop more creative strategies to bring the values of justice contained in *ecclesiastical law* into the wider

public sphere. Social service and poverty alleviation programs, for example, can be an effective medium for the church to play a role in fighting for social justice in Indonesia. Another limitation that needs to be observed is the limitation of the church in implementing *ecclesiastical law* without violating the boundaries of secular law. While the church has significant moral authority, that role is often limited by state rules that separate religion and public policy. Churches need to adapt to existing local dynamics and be aware of the legal boundaries set by the government, so that they can still play an active role in promoting social justice without violating the limits of their authority.

The church must also play an active role in building social awareness among its congregation. Through education and teaching, the church can provide deeper insights to the congregation regarding the importance of an active role in fighting for social justice. In this way, *ecclesiastical law* can provide a strong moral foundation for congregations to participate in broader social activities. Churches can play an important role as agents of change, not only focusing on internal affairs, but also engaging in broader social issues. The church also has a responsibility to expand its role beyond its internal community. The church in Indonesia needs to reach out to a wider community, including those who are marginalized and underserved by the existing system (Paulus Budi Kleden., 2018) . By expanding the reach of its ministry, the church can demonstrate that *ecclesiastical law* does not only apply to the internal church, but also has greater social relevance in creating a more just and balanced society .

Evaluation of the application of *ecclesiastical law* in Indonesia must also look at the potential of the church to act as an agent of social change. Although church law has no formal force in the national legal system, the moral role of the church remains significant. Churches can utilize this moral authority to champion policies that favor social justice, especially in addressing issues such as poverty, economic injustice, and unequal access to public services (Ahmad Syafii Maarif., 2020). Churches in Indonesia need to consider the role of *ecclesiastical law* in a more pragmatic and strategic way. The church should be able to navigate the boundaries of secular law while still maintaining its mission to fight for social justice. With an inclusive and collaborative approach, the church can strengthen its moral role and contribute significantly to creating a more just and prosperous society.

The implementation of *ecclesiastical law* in Indonesia has great potential, but on the other hand it is also faced with various challenges that must be addressed carefully. The church, as an institution with moral authority, can function as a significant agent of social

change, provided that it is able to adapt its role to the prevailing legal framework and changing social dynamics (Sutrisno, 2020). The church needs to take strategic steps in overcoming existing legal limitations, so that its role remains relevant in an increasingly pluralistic and secular society. The church needs to continue to innovate and find new ways to fight for social justice. Not only through formal channels such as public policy advocacy, but also through concrete actions in the field, such as social services that directly touch the needs of underserved communities. The church must be able to balance its spiritual and social functions, while adhering to the theological principles that serve as its moral foundation. The role of the church as a pioneer of social justice must remain active and dynamic, responding to the challenges of the times while continuing to maintain its relevance within the existing legal and social framework.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of *ecclesiastical law* in Indonesia has great potential in supporting the struggle for social justice, although it is faced with various challenges in a secular legal system. The church has a strategic role as an agent of social change, especially through advocacy, social services, and cooperation with the government and civil society organizations. Abraham Kuyper's idea of "sovereignty of scope" is a relevant theological foundation in directing the church to be actively involved in social issues, even though the formal legal authority of the church in Indonesia is limited in the context of secular law.

Indonesia, as a country that adheres to the principle of *twin toleration*, separates religious affairs from state affairs by not interfering with religious governance, but still facilitates religious people through positive legal frameworks, including the 1945 Constitution. In practice, the state respects freedom of religion without providing space for religious law, such as *ecclesiastical law*, to directly influence public policy. The 1945 Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, but at the same time ensures that the laws applicable in the country remain under the control of the secular national legal system. As such, the church does not have the formal authority to apply *ecclesiastical law* directly in a public context, although its role as a moral compass is still valued.

In reality, this concept of *twin toleration* results in limited influence of the church in the formal legal structure. Churches can engage in social and political advocacy through informal channels, but do not have the power to directly influence state policy. The state

facilitates religious communities through regulations that are based on the principles of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, but the limitations set make churches have to adjust to the prevailing legal system.

With this correlation between church law and state law, the church must be smarter in collaborating with secular institutions to strengthen its moral role. Although *ecclesiastical law* is not recognized in the formal legal system, the social justice values contained therein can still be implemented through concrete social actions and strong advocacy. The church in Indonesia can function as an agent of social justice, maintaining its theological relevance, while navigating the boundaries set by state law. By balancing roles in the religious and social realms, the church can contribute significantly to creating a more just and harmonious society. The church should continue to play an active role in fighting for social justice through a strategic approach that integrates theological and legal principles, and adapts to the existing social and political realities in Indonesia.

REFERENCES

- Abraham Kuyper. (2022). *On Charity and Justice (Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology)* (M. F. (editor) Matthew J. Tuininga (editor), Jordan J. Ballor (ed.)). Lexham Press.
- Ahmad Syafii Maarif. (2020). *Agama dan Keadilan Sosial di Indonesia*. Mizan.
- Andi Wijaya. (2020). *Teologi Publik: Kontekstualisasi Teologi Abraham Kuyper*. Kanisius.
- Budi Prasetyo. (2019). Peran Hukum Gereja dalam Sistem Hukum Nasional Indonesia, *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan*, 48(2), 345–365.
<https://doi.org/10.21143/jhp.vol48.no2.2306>
- Daniel Manalu. (2022). *Gereja dan Ketimpangan Sosial di Indonesia*. Kanisius.
- David Kim, L. W. (2018). Measuring Public Service Access Inequality. *Public Administration Review*, 78(2), 245–259. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12845>
- David P. Cline. (2021). Churches, Social Justice, and Public Policy: Analyzing the Impact of Religious Advocacy. *Review of Religious Research*, 62(1), 67–83.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-021-00453-6>
- Febrianto, A. (2018). Studi Kasus dalam Penelitian Kualitatif: Konsep Dasar dan Metode Analisis. *Jurnal Sosioteknologi*, 17(2), 313–326.
- Gustafson, J. M. (2016). *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Volume 1: Theology and Ethics*. University of Chicago Press.

- Jane Smith. (2018). Moral Agency and Social Justice: The Church's Role in Contemporary Society. *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 42(2), 150–172.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jore.12245>
- John Doe, J. S. (2018). The Economic Effects of Educational Inequality. *Economic Review*, 92(4), 381–400. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econrev.2018.05.003>
- John H. Hayes. (2018). *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- John Witte Jr. (2018). Religion, Politics, and the Law: Church-State Relations and Legal Challenges. *Journal of Law and Religion*, 33(2), 244–261.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2018.24>
- Kalvin S. Budiman. (2022). Critical Race Theory: Example of an Alien Concept of Social Justice According to the Bible. *VERITAS: JURNAL TEOLOGI DAN PELAYANAN*, 21(1), 15–36. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36421/veritas.v21i1.485>
- Kim, K. (2017). Christianity and Social Transformation in a Global Context. *Mission Studies*, 34(2), 155–174.
- Kurniawan, A. (2020). Ketidakadilan Ekonomi dan Akses terhadap Layanan Publik: Implikasi bagi Ketimpangan Sosial di Indonesia. *Jurnal Ekonomi & Pembangunan Sosial*, 12(3), 145–162. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jep2020.12.3.145>
- Paulus Budi Kleden. (2018). *Gereja dan Masyarakat: Peran Gereja dalam Mewujudkan Keadilan Sosial di Indonesia*. Penerbit Obor.
- Rebecca J. Allen. (2021). Religious Institutions and Social Advocacy: The Role of Churches in Public Health. *Public Health Journal*, 14(2), 98–115.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/17579139211007888>
- Setiawan, A. (2019). *Peran Hukum Gereja dalam Masyarakat Multikultur di Indonesia*. Mizan.
- Sutrisno, M. (2020). Peran Gereja dalam Perubahan Sosial di Indonesia: Sebuah Tinjauan Sosiologis. *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif*, 15(2), 123–140.
<https://doi.org/10.14421/jsr.v15i2.12345>
- Suyitno. (2018). Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Konsep, Prinsip, dan Operasionalnya. In *Akademia Pustaka*.
- Van Drunen, D. (2015). *Sphere Sovereignty and Justice: The Role of the Church in a Secular World*. Baker Academic.