CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA:
MISSION AND POLITICAL ACTION IN
THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF JOHANNES VERKUYL (1908-2001)

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THEOLOGY
OF CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
HIDALGO B. GARCIA

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
MAY 2006
This dissertation entitled

“MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA:
MISSION AND POLITICAL ACTION IN
THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF JOHANNES VERKUYL (1908-2001)”

written by

HIDALGO B. GARCIA

and submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

has been accepted by the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

James A. De Jong, Th.D.

John Bolt, Ph.D.

Roger S. Greenway, Ph.D.

Robert P. Borrong, Ph.D.

August 28, 2006

Date

Henry De Moor, Th.D.
Vice President for Academic Affairs
To

Inda
Paulina Baltazar Garcia

and

Mama
Santa Batoon Roldan

in loving memory
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vii
ABBREVIATIONS ix
ABSTRACT xii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1
The Question in Context 2
The Thesis in the Light of Ecumenical and Evangelical Understanding and Practice 6
Significant Terms Defined 13
Why Johannes Verkuyl? 16
Methodology, Structure, and Sources 19
Verkuyl in Scholarship and the Limits of Study 25

PART ONE
MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA IN THE LIFE AND CAREER OF VERKUYL

CHAPTER TWO: FORMATIVE YEARS AND EARLY INFLUENCES SEEDS OF MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA 31
The Faith of the Family: Piety and Politics 31
Early Lessons in Social Dynamics 37
The NCSV Influences: Church Unity and Mission 40
Intellectual Influences: Brussaard, Barth, and Noordmans 44
Pastoral Engagement with Church and Society 49
Conclusion 53

CHAPTER THREE: MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA IN INDONESIA 55
Hearing the Cry for National Independence 58
Face to Face with Political Reality 62
The Verkuyl Group in Japanese Concentration Camp 68
Lobbying for the Republic 72
Laying the Groundwork for Human Rights especially Religious Freedom 84
Minister of the Word of God and Non-Partisan Politics 90
Peace-Making in the Midst of Hostilities 94
Grappling with Communism 98
Post-War Missio Politica Oecumenica in Writing and Teaching 101
Missio Politica Oecumenica and Missionary Work 116
Conclusion 118

CHAPTER FOUR: LATER MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA FOR OTHER NATIONS 122
In Ecumenical Circuit 124
Advocating for World Diaconate 131
Campaigning against Apartheid 134
PART TWO
MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA
IN THE THOUGHT OF VERKUYL

CHAPTER FIVE: POLITICAL ACTION IN MISSION
AND MISSIOLOGY

Missio Politica Oecumenica: Some Usage
Elements of Missio Politica Oecumenica
Missio Politica Oecumenica: Its Relation to
Missio Dei, Missio Ecclesiarum, Missio Hominum
Missiology: Towards Reformation of Church and Society
History of Mission and Political Action
Reformed Missiological Antecedents in Missio Politica Oecumenica
Conclusion

CHAPTER SIX: THEOLOGY OF MISSION
IN ITS POLITICAL DIMENSION

Biblical and Theological Foundations for Missio Politica Oecumenica
Kinds, Nature, and Approach of Biblical and Theological Foundation
Universality of Christian Ethics and Mission and Political Action
A View of History and Mission and Political Action
The Goal and Aspects of Mission in its Political Dimension
The Goal of Mission
Proclamation and Conversion
Church Planting and Church Growth
Diaconate: Local, National, and International
Conclusion

CHAPTER SEVEN: MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA:
THREE TASKS

Critical Reflection of Ideologies
The Nature of Ideologies
Ideologies Defined
Benign Character of Ideologies
Pseudo-religious Character of Ideologies
Ideological Character of Religion
Ideologies and Mission
| Ideologies and the Gospel                          | 237 |
| Ideologies and Missions                           | 238 |
| Ideologies and Unity of Churches                 | 239 |
| Political Dialogue as Mission                     | 240 |
| Marxism-Leninism: A Pseudo-Religion               | 242 |
| Two-fold Aim of Christian-Marxist Dialogue       | 242 |
| Atheistic Character of Marxist-Leninist Ideology  | 244 |
| Communism as Religion                             | 248 |
| Challenges to Christianity                        | 248 |
| Apartheid: A Denial of the Gospel                 | 251 |
| Unity of Humankind                                | 253 |
| Solidarity in Sin and Guilt                       | 256 |
| Apartheid and Missions                            | 258 |
| Promotion of Religious Freedom                   | 260 |
| The State of the Freedom                          | 261 |
| Religious Freedom and Mission                     | 263 |
| Intolerance with the Gospel and Tolerance in Mission | 264 |
| Transformation of Society                         | 265 |
| Christian Political Ethics                        | 265 |
| Critique of Public Theologies                     | 273 |
| Toward a Theology of Transformation               | 276 |
| Conclusion                                        | 282 |

**CHAPTER EIGHT: MISSIONARY SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL STANCE: THREE CASE STUDIES**

Some Preliminary Notes                                | 284 |
| Imperialism, Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism, and Apartheid: Some Definitions | 285 |
| Ambivalence of Missions-Colonialism Relations        | 285 |
| China: Missions and Imperialism                      | 288 |
| The Sin of Commission: Taking Advantage of Colonial Booty | 288 |
| The Sin of Omission: The Incomplete Christian Revolution | 289 |
| Churches and Missions under Communist Rule           | 295 |
| Communism and the Unity of the Church                | 298 |
| Indonesia: Missions and Nationalism                  | 302 |
| The Inconsistencies of Ethical Colonial Policy       | 303 |
| Colonialism: Ignoring the Winds of Change            | 309 |
| Missions: Proclaiming the Good News of National Self-Expression | 312 |
| South Africa: Dutch Reformed Churches and Apartheid  | 318 |
| A Christian Legitimation of Racial Segregation       | 319 |
| Apartheid and Ecumenical Relations                   | 323 |
| Dutch Churches: Key to Abolition of Apartheid        | 326 |
| Conclusion                                           | 329 |

**EPILOGUE**                                           | 331 |
**PROPOSITIONS**                                       | 340 |
**BIBLIOGRAPHY**                                       | 343 |
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A significant phase of my academic journey has concluded with the completion of my dissertation, and so I would like to express my profound gratitude to the many people who have been with me on that journey.

I am indebted to my dissertation committee: Dr. James De Jong, my supervisor, for his critical guidance, constant encouragement, and editorial work, not to mention his keen interest on the subject; Dr. Roger Greenway, whose views were valuable in writing the dissertation; Dr John Bolt, for his careful reading and helpful suggestions; and Dr. Robert Borrong, my outside reader, for his encouraging comments.

The doctoral faculty of Calvin Seminary—Professors Ronald Feenstra, Richard Muller, John Cooper, Calvin Van Reken, and Lyle Bierma—have helped develop the academic and intellectual aspect of my walk with God, as well as my missiological friends, Dr. Gary Bekker and Professor Pieter Tuit.

Every meeting with the staff of Calvin Seminary—especially Rev. Richard Sytsma, Ina De Moor, John Vander Lugt, and Christine Mulka—was always a joyful experience, and the staff of Hekman Library—especially Rev. Eugene Schemper, Paul Fields, Kathy de Mey, and Kathy Struck—made researching less frustrating.

I will always be grateful to the donors of generous scholarships that Calvin Seminary granted me—Tulip Assistantship and Stewardship Doctoral Fellowship—and to the Grace Foundation for 4 years of scholarship. Servants Foundation in Canada made a grant that opened the way for me and my family to come in the USA and start my studies. Special thanks to Rev. Gary Roosma, who represented me in the foundation.

Southeast Asia Bible Seminary (SAAT) made possible my research trip to Indonesia in 2002. Special thanks to Dr. Daniel Lukas Lukito, president of the seminary, for all his support to me and my family, to Dr. Atty Tanudjaja, the academic dean, for inviting me to teach a missiology course, part of which was on Verkuyl, and to Rev. Martus Maleachi and Rev. Benny Solihin for their encouragement and spiritual support.

The library staff of Theological Seminary in Jakarta (STTJ) were very helpful in locating Verkuyl literature. The seminary president, Dr. Borrong, helped facilitate my research in the library, and I had meaningful discussion with the dean of graduate studies, Dr. Kadarmanto Hardjowasito, regarding my research work.

I will never forget my two mentors in the Dutch language, Dr. William Stronks and Rev. Michael De Berdt, whose help with Dutch translation is invaluable, not to mention our friendship that developed in the process.

Brookside Christian Reformed Church has been our spiritual home in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I am indebted to the late Rev. Norman Meyer and Rev. Paul DeVries,
from whose life and preaching, respectively, I have always been reminded of what is basic and yet essential for ministry. Friends whose practical friendship my family and I will not forget: Gordon and Florine Buys, Glen and Gloria Van Andel, Randy and Sharon Bytwerk, Larry and Carla Van Tongeren, Ron and Jan McGee, John and Sue Boerman, George and Ina Harris, John and Eve Nagelkerk, John and Tina Netland, Glen and Sue Breuker, Martin and Barbara Essenburg, and Ken Post and his late wife, Carol.

Thanks, too, to our good “neighbors” in Grand Rapids: Tom and Laurie Vanderkodde, Lois Mikami, Bob and Bertie Cunningham, Betty Medendorp, Max Daza, Sandy Palmatter, and the members of the Indonesian Fellowship from Calvin College and Seminary, especially Rev. and Mrs. Johannes Susanto, Rev. and Mrs. Paul Hidayat, and Dennis Sidharta and his family in Surabaya, Indonesia.

It was a joy to serve two Korean churches in Michigan, Korean Presbyterian Church in Flint and Han-Mee Presbyterian Church in Battle Creek. The generosity of Elder David Kim, Elder Chung, and Rev. Jung Kang was most needed especially during the last year of my dissertation writing.

Overseas Missionary Fellowship—International (OMF) and its Philippine Home Council, then chaired by Dr. Isabelo Magalit, decided in favor of my study plans and granted a year of scholarship. My former OMF colleagues in Indonesia especially Revs. Michael Dunn and Rosemary Aldis have always encouraged me by their faithful interest.

My family and I will always cherish the gifts, hospitality, and encouragement of our Filipino friends: Marlene Crisostomo, Doru and Ellen Ioan, Max and Dory Bermudez, Scott and Arlene Truax, and Chris and Dee Bunque.

I am grateful to family members, especially Jac and Nitz García and Daphne Roldan, for looking after my mother and mother-in-law so that I could do my studies undisturbed. My father-in-law, Constante Roldan, deserves my gratitude for his constant encouragement and affirmation.

Last but not the least, my own family. My two boys, Amos and Micah, have always taught me that there is more to life than writing a dissertation and thereby in effect, albeit unconsciously, helped facilitate the completion of my studies. Their affection, even if I feel I do not deserve it at times, is unchanging. My academic success has been as much a result of the support and love of Maryan, my wife, for me as my own efforts. I would never have attained the dream of getting this academic degree without her willingness to bear all the stress and strains that went with it. Since I consider my graduate studies a conjugal pursuit, I decided to dedicate this dissertation to the people who have meant most to both of us, our mothers, who passed away while I was doing my studies. By their sacrificial lives I learned important lessons that have influenced much of my life and, therefore, what I have written in this dissertation.

For all these saints, soli Deo gloria.
ABBREVIATIONS

ANC  African National Congress

ARP  Antirevolutionaire Partij
   Anti-Revolutionary Party

BPK  Badan Penerbit Kristen
   Christian Publishing House

CCA  Christian Conference of Asia

CCPD  Commission on the Churches’ Participation in Development

CEBEMO  Centrale voor bemiddeling bij medefinanciering van
   ontwikkelingsprogramma’s
   Center for Mediation of Joint-Financing of Development Programs

CHU  Christelijke Historische Unie
   Christian Historical Union

CLD  Agency for Christian Literature Development

CLF  Christian Literature Fund

CPN  Communistische Partij Nederland
   Communist Party of the Netherlands

CSP  Christelijk Staatkundige Partij
   Christian Political Party

DGI  Dewan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia
   Council of Churches in Indonesia

DICARWS  Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service

DWME  Division of World Mission and Evangelism

EACC  East Asia Christian Conference

GERINDO  Gerakan Rayat Indonesia
   Indonesian People’s Movement
GKI  Gereja Kristen Indonesia  
Christian Church in Indonesia

GMKI  Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia  
Student Christian Movement in Indonesia

GPIB  Gereja Protestan Indonesia Barat  
Indonesian Protestant Church in the West (of Indonesia)

GZB  Gereformeerde Zendingsbond  
Reformed Missionary Union

ICCO  Interkerkelijke Coordinatie Commissie Ontwikkelingsprojekten  
Inter-denominational Coordinating Committee for Development Projects

ICJ  Vereniging van indonesische christen-jongeren  
Association of Indonesian Christian Youth

IIMO  Interuniversitair Instituut voor Missiologie en Oecumenica  
Inter-university Institute for Missiology and Ecumenics

IKV  Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad  
Inter-church Peace Council

IMC  International Missionary Council

Java-CSV  Java-Christenstudenten Vereniging  
Christian Student Association in Java

KNIP  Komitee Nasional Indonesia Pusat  
Central Indonesian National Committee

KVP  Katholieke Volks Partij  
Catholic People’s Party

NCSV  Nederlandse Christen Studenten Vereniging  
Dutch Christian Student Association

NIZB  Nederlands-Indische Zendingsbond  
Dutch-Indies Missionary Union

NOVIB  Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand  
Dutch Organization for International Aid

x
NSB  Nationaal Socialistische Beweging
      National Socialist Movement

NZR  Nederlandse Zendingsraad
      Dutch Missionary Council

OMF  Overseas Missionary Fellowship

PARINDRA Partai Indonesia Raya
       Pan-Indonesian Party

PARKINDO Partai Kristen Indonesia
       Christian Party of Indonesia

PERKI Persekutuan Kristen Indonesia
       Christian Fellowship of Indonesia

PESINDO Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia
       Socialist Youth of Indonesia

PI Perhimpunan Indonesia
    Indonesian Association

PKI Partai Komunis Indonesia
     Communist Party of Indonesia

PSI Partai Sosialis Indonesia
     Socialist Party of Indonesia

SDAP Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij
      Social-Democratic Labor Party

STTJ Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Jakarta
      Theological Seminary in Jakarta

UKI Universitas Kristen Indonesia
      Christian University of Indonesia

VU  Vrije Universiteit
    Free University (in Amsterdam)

WARC World Alliance of Reformed Churches
ABSTRACT

This is a study on the relationship between evangelism and church planting and political action. Against the background of polarization between the ecumenical movement and the evangelical movement on the question, the study demonstrates that missio politica oecumenica defined as struggle for justice and righteousness and against evil is a distinct and integral aspect of mission, alongside kerygma, koinonia, and diakonia. It develops this thesis from the life and thought of Johannes Verkuyl (1908-2001), a Dutch Reformed missionary to Indonesia who was involved in the decolonization of the country. His experience in Indonesia, together with his later experience as a mission executive, in which he was involved in various political activities, shaped his missiology. This study analyzes his missiology in its political dimension, and thus, provides a basis for missio political oecumenica. Part one presents Verkuyl’s life from the political angle with due attention to the historical contexts in which he lived. Part two deals with Verkuyl’s thought on mission and political action. It examines his understanding of mission and missiology and the relationship between political action and missio Dei, missio ecclesiarum, and missio hominum. It considers different loci of missiology in both their vertical and horizontal dimensions, showing that missio politica oecumenica is a horizontal aspect of mission rooted in the vertical dimension of salvation. The integral aspect of missio politica oecumenica with mission is shown in the fact that political issues such as ideologies, religious freedom, and transformation of society have missionary significance and that dealing with them is part of mission. The study demonstrates how, for Verkuyl, the political stances committed by churches and missions
in China, Indonesia, and South Africa have affected the life and witness of churches in those countries and, therefore, offer guidance for the exercise of political action in the future. The study relies mainly on primary sources in three languages: Dutch, Indonesian, and English and interacts with available secondary materials. Scholarship on Verkuyl is just beginning, but his influence on major missiologists is considerable. One value of this study is the promise Verkuyl’s missiology holds of bringing ecumenical and evangelical unity in mission.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

History informs us that churches have always been involved, rightly or wrongly, consciously or unconsciously, in political affairs. Much literature has been written on this indisputable fact. Christians and churches through the ages have reflected on political questions, made use of common biblical themes, and appealed to a wide range of Old and New Testaments texts to engage in political discussion.\(^1\) Two recent political theologians, Jürgen Moltmann and Johannes B. Metz, have emphasized the political meaning of Christian theology and practice and have encouraged theological reflection both in the West and Third World countries to include political critique of theologies and of their contexts. While one may not fully agree with these political theologies, they serve as a reminder that theology, as any human thought, has a political dimension. The contemporary Western principle of the separation of church and state cannot completely free one party from engaging the other.\(^2\) Non-involvement could be a stance for the status quo and its impact may be greater than positive political activism. The question is not whether Christians and churches should participate in political affairs, but exactly how they should respond to the political aspect of reality.

\(^1\) See for instance Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan, eds., *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999).

\(^2\) For instance Stephen Carter in his book, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1993), 107, argues that “the significant aspect of the separation of church and state is not, as some seem to think, the shielding of the secular world from too strong a religious influence; the principal task of the separation of church and state is to secure religious liberty.”
The Question in Context

This study will go beyond the question of whether churches should be involved in political affairs. Instead, it will attempt to reflect on whether political action is a part of mission, a debate among Christians that has been going on in missiology. The question whether political action is a part of mission has been a controversial subject in missiological discussion over the years and reached a climax when the World Council of Churches (WCC) Uppsala Assembly in 1968 and the Bangkok World Mission Conference in 1973 issued provocative statements on the mission of the church. Largely on the influence of J. C. Hoekendijk, the conciliar movement took a stance that the world, not the church, was the place where God was at work. Hence, the church should participate in the world, especially where movements for humanization and emancipation take place. Fearing the subtle return of the Social Gospel influence, evangelicals insisted, as a reaction to these meetings, that evangelism and church planting constitute the mission of the church. Since then, alienation has marked the relationship between the two movements.

---


4 While we use the words “evangelicals” and “ecumenicals” here these are not usually mutually exclusive categories; they are more fluid than the common rigid impression. See Arthur Glasser, “Evangelical Missions,” in *Toward the Twenty-first Century in Christian Mission*, ed. J. Phillips and R. Coote (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 9-12 for a categorization of evangelicals and “The
But these meetings offered a good time for both movements to reflect and reconsider the concerns raised by the other, leading to some mutual learning and convergences. Thus, the evangelical Lausanne Covenant (1974) affirms that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of Christian duty (art. 5). Some think that this rather bold statement is due to the challenges from previous WCC meetings. While it is careful to define evangelism as “the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God (art. 4),” it bears some ecumenical concern about oppression, alienation, and injustice (art. 5). This is a significant broadening of evangelical understanding, although it does not overcome an insidious dualism that maintains evangelism as primary over against socio-political involvement (cf. art. 6). Since Lausanne, evangelicals, at least those subscribing to the Covenant, have reflected on the relationship between evangelism and socio-political action. A series of consultations has been held on the question under the auspices of both the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization (LCWE) and the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF, now called the World Evangelical Alliance, WEA). The consultation on evangelism and social action in Grand Rapids in 1982 is especially noteworthy. It provided no consensus on the proper relationship between the two tasks, but, importantly, socio-political issues are getting increased attention among the evangelicals.

---


On the other hand, the WCC adopted a document, "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation" (1982), which is considered to be a benchmark statement and is warmly acclaimed by both conciliar and non-conciliar churches. Another noteworthy WCC document is the statement from the Stuttgart Consultation in 1987, in which both conciliar and non-conciliar evangelicals participated. It is based on the "Ecumenical Affirmation" and covers a broad range of issues. In addition, it served as a bridge between conciliar Christians and evangelicals in the period before San Antonio (CWME, 1989) and Lausanne II (LCWE, 1989).

Overall, there have been encouraging signs of rapprochement between the two movements. While some of the evangelicals in more recent years have changed their attitude from being polemical to being engagingly constructive, some conciliar evangelicals have remained critical of both ecumenical and evangelical movements, especially those who participated in the WCC meetings. Three examples of the latter are in order. First, at the WCC Assembly in Vancouver in 1983, a letter written by evangelical participants expressed their disappointment that the Ecumenical Affirmation (1982) was not referred to in any plenary session, which indicates their hearty endorsement of the ecumenical document. They did not feel that Vancouver adequately treated either Gospel proclamation or the invitational dimensions of evangelism.6 Second, at the 1989 CWME World Mission Conference in San Antonio, Texas, an important letter from those with evangelical concerns was addressed to the Lausanne II Conference in Manila. It clarifies and defends the identity of the WCC, noting that its "concern for

---

the rights of the poor does not mean that the WCC has relinquished the central concern of devotion and faithful witness to Jesus" and that "it is not a retreat from an affirmation of the centrality and finality of Jesus Christ." The letter affirms the concerns of the evangelicals and encourages them to pursue these concerns which they bear as a gift and a trust for the worldwide body of Christ. The signatories suggested that the next world conferences of the Lausanne movement and the WCC be held at the same time and place for possible networking of evangelistic programs. Lastly, in the 1991 WCC Assembly in Canberra, evangelical participants commented that the lack of coherent theology was a serious weakness for the many concerns of the WCC. They expressed that they shared the same concerns as the WCC agenda: justice, peace, the integrity of creation, contextualization of the gospel, and religious pluralism. But for these conciliar evangelicals there is a need for theology that is both rooted in the Christian revelation and relevant to these contemporary problems. As they argue, "This theological deficit not only conspires against the work of the WCC as a Christian witness but also increases the tensions among its member churches."9

However, missiological convergences have not been significantly realized in the practice of evangelicals. The evangelicals have merely paid a lip service to the Lausanne Covenant’s statement that evangelism and socio-political action are both part of Christian duty. Hence, they have limited themselves to local diaconal issues, as if the Lausanne statement did not exist. Many of them are still of the opinion that evangelizing people

---


8 "Letter from Those with Evangelical Concerns," 433, 434.

9 Cited in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology*, 238.
naturally transform societies, a proposal that does not seem to be working in undeveloped and politically unstable Third World countries where Christianity is reportedly growing significantly. Even on a massive scale, religious conversion does not automatically lead to socio-political transformation unless it is intentionally done.

The ecumenicals, on the other hand, remain sensitive to socio-political issues, but it is not clear whether their practice of mission is related to the proclamation of the gospel and bringing people to a saving relation with God through faith in Christ. As Lesslie Newbigin in the 1960s and 1970s lamented, “it was far more important to get people involved in action for justice and development than to have them converted, baptized, and brought into the church.” In spite of encouraging progress in missiological thinking, it seems that the two tasks are still treated as mutually exclusive in practice. In this context the question regarding the relationship between political action and mission can be raised anew.

*The Thesis in the Light of Ecumenical and Evangelical Understanding and Practice*

This study is an inquiry on whether political action is a part of mission. As indicated by the context presented above, the question is far from passé. For the modern ecumenical movement, political action is an inherent part of mission that has been its practice and understanding all these years. Furthermore, that political action has always been on the agenda of conciliar meetings. Thus, for the ecumenical movement the question is already settled.

---

But the significance of the question of this study lies in the fact that there are various understandings of mission. Therefore, the question must be raised: do we understand mission in terms of social, cultural, and political transformation, as the conciliar movement does? To be fair to the ecumenical movement, there is nothing wrong with transforming society; it remains a part of that kingdom vision that the church needs to pursue. But if mission is more than political action, how is it related to other aspects of mission, such as gospel proclamation, the calling of people to repentance, and bringing them into a just and loving fellowship of the church? This matter is not clear in the conciliar movement, because evangelism and church planting are overshadowed by concern for political transformation. The complaint of some evangelicals that the ecumenical project lacks biblical and theological rootage may be legitimate. Again, to be fair to the ecumenical movement, it does not deny the proclamation of the gospel and the planting of churches, but its practice marginalizes them.

This inquiry does not start from an understanding of mission that is almost synonymous with political transformation or humanization; that would leave this study nothing to demonstrate. Instead, this inquiry starts from an assumption that basic to the mission of the church are evangelism and church planting. This does not mean that evangelism and church planting exhaust the missionary task of the church, but that they are basic in that mission. In light of this understanding of mission, the question can be raised: is there a place for political action? If so, how does political action relate to evangelism and church planting? And how do they affect one another other? Our answers to these questions constitute the thesis of this study:
• that political action, like evangelism and church planting, is a distinct aspect of mission,
• that political action is an integral part of mission, or that the four aspects of mission, including social service, are integrally related, and
• because political action is an integral aspect of mission, it has missionary significance.

The focus of this inquiry has been examined from the ecumenical perspective. It is also necessary that it be probed from the evangelical perspective. In the era of the Lausanne Covenant, the question “is political action an aspect of mission?” might no longer invite as serious a debate as before. But in spite of the double mandate statement of the Covenant, not all agree that socio-political involvement is a part of mission, even those who endorsed the Covenant. For instance, John Stott, the main architect of the Covenant, would surely think that the social (and the political) is a part of mission: “I now see more clearly that not only the consequences of the commission but the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus.”11 In this connection, he thinks that the relationship between the two is that of partners.12 Others, like Donald McGavran, have a different opinion. For McGavran political action is one of those good things Christians do, but is not included in what the church is called to do in


mission. Arguably, the view that mission and evangelism are synonymous is the predominant view in the evangelical movement, as is indicated by the name of their major gatherings. Most, if not all, were called congress on “evangelism” or “evangelization,” like Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974. In contrast, the conciliar conferences were on “mission.” The evangelicals tend to avoid using “mission” for the name of their major gatherings, and this is significant especially if we compare that with the conciliar habit of using both “mission” and “evangelism” for their conferences, corresponding to their Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). For the evangelicals, the mission of the church is evangelism, while the conciliar position both distinguishes the two and combines them. Even if socio-political issues are discussed in these evangelical meetings, they are peripheral and, in actual practice, evangelism and political action are separated, with the latter usually being marginalized.

So, when the question is raised whether political action is a part of mission, it is far from settled among evangelicals, at least, in practice. This study challenges the common, implicit assumption that mission is synonymous with evangelism. This does not mean that evangelism is compromised. In principle those with evangelical concerns from the CWME World Mission Conference in San Antonio were right in holding that concern for the rights of the poor does not mean compromise of the evangelistic mandate. The view of mission proposed here is broader and it includes both evangelism and socio-political action.

---

Moreover, there has been a question regarding the priority of evangelism in relation to socio-political action, which is a result of the ambiguity of the Covenant itself. According to the Covenant, evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of Christian duty, leaving the impression that they are equal. However, it also declares that “in the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary (art. 6).” The Grand Rapids Report on Evangelism and Social Responsibility (1982), through the influence of Stott, comments that the priority of evangelism is only logical and conceptual, but in practice the two are “inseparable...Rather than competing each other, they mutually support and strengthen each other...(chapter 4, par. d).”\textsuperscript{14} This is a position of compromise, for in the Lausanne Congress many from the Third World were uneasy about the phrase “evangelism is primary,” fearing that socio-political involvement would be sidelined and thus the inseparableness and partnership of the two violated. They expressed themselves more strongly: “We must repudiate as demonic the attempt to drive a wedge between evangelism and social action.”\textsuperscript{15} Rene Padilla in particular, addressing the Lausanne Congress in 1974, would refuse to state the matter in terms of primary and secondary, but rather in terms of obedience:

I refuse...to drive a wedge between a primary task, namely the proclamation of the Gospel, and a secondary (at best) or even optional (at worst) task of the Church. In order to be obedient to its Lord the Church should never do anything that is not essential....nothing that the Church does in obedience to its Lord is unessential.”\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} Cited in Stott, \textit{Making Christ Known}, 183.

\textsuperscript{15} Cited in Stott, \textit{Making Christ Known}, 24.

In this study, it is assumed that evangelism does not have priority over political action or vice-versa. Both of them have been willed by God and are rooted in his design for creation and redemption. Consequently, doing both of them is a matter of obedience and calling. If the question of priority is raised, the answer should be dictated by what God wants us to do based on the Word of God in a certain context, not by a pre-formulated declaration.

Moreover, it is assumed that evangelism and political action are distinct, but inseparable. Distinguishing certain types of intentions and effects helps to clarify this discussion. Evangelism and political action are distinct in the sense that their conscious intentions are distinct. Their intentions are derived from the nature of their activities. The intentions of political action are political, while the intentions of evangelism are spiritual.\(^{17}\) Political action is done simply for the social and economic and political welfare of the people, while the intention of evangelism is that people might turn to Jesus and become part of his church. Thus, unlike the mainline evangelical understanding, one is not a bridge or means, or a consequence, of the other. Churches do socio-political action even if it would not lead to conversion (not everyone that Jesus fed or healed believed in him and presumably he knew this beforehand; nevertheless, he served everyone). Also evangelism should be done even if it will not lead to transformation of political structures. Each is done in its own right; each has its own biblical justification.

While evangelism and political action are distinct, they are also inseparable. As we have said above, they are integrally related, a fact not evident in the current

\(^{17}\) The use of “political” and “spiritual” in this context might create the impression that the spiritual is related to God and the political is not, and therefore the former is more important than the latter. This distinction should not be made. Every activity that involves the created order, including the political,
evangelical practice. This is so because both have biblical justification, both are rooted in
the gospel, and both are a manifestation of the love and justice of God. The Lausanne
Covenant certainly has biblical foundations for stating that evangelism and political
involvement are both part of Christian duty. Furthermore, their inseparableness may be
seen in the effects that one might have on the other. While each is distinct and has its
own conscious intentions, at times it produces something beyond such intentions. So,
while political action is intended to ameliorate the suffering of the people, it may create a
situation in which the gospel is better received. Similarly, while the aim of evangelism is
to elicit a faith response and all that is involved therein, it may also make people
conscious of their fundamental rights as humans created in the image of God.

As a result, we can speak, not only of intentions, but of effects as well. Intentions
are those that are within the nature of an activity, while effects are those beyond the
nature of an activity. So a political action’s intention, or intended effect, is political, viz.
creating a better society. However, it may have an unintended effect related to
evangelism. Similarly, evangelism’s intention, or intended effect, is basically spiritual,
but it may unintentionally produce a better society. In terms of unintentional effect, there
is a sense in which one can be a bridge or consequence of the other, as many evangelicals
tend to think. This is so because, while the two are distinct, they are also essentially
inseparable and affect each other.

The effect of either evangelism or socio-political action, intended or otherwise, is
not always positive for either the church or society. Instances will be cited in which this
is the case. The mistakes committed by missions or the negative effects of their work do

---

is spiritual because it belongs to God and done before him, *coram Deo*. For matters of convenience, the
two terms are used here without suggesting any incipient dualism.
not constitute a ground for the church to retreat from either its evangelistic or social and political responsibility, as some might argue. The negative result that missions might produce is a challenge to the church to constantly reflect critically on its life and witness in the world, especially on its political stance.

Thus when I say that political action is a part of mission I am assuming a broader understanding of mission. It is not mainly socio-political transformation, as is the tendency of the conciliar movement to maintain. Nor is it primarily evangelism, as the evangelical movement tends to think. Mission embraces both of them. These two are both distinct and integrally related.

**Significant Terms Defined**

When we try to relate political action and mission, political action must take a certain meaning; it is not just any political action. It is beyond the intention of this study to discuss in detail what constitutes good political action or to present a Christian political theory. I certainly do not mean partisan politics, although there is no absolute non-partisanship and Christians, as citizens, may actually engage in partisan politics. Political action, as I use it, is not an attempt to gain power for partisan interests. Essentially, it is an action for justice and righteousness and against evil. Justice and righteousness are complicated concepts, and it is not my intention to write a treatise on these. I simply note that an action for justice and righteousness is an action in behalf of persons and groups that are victims of injustice, the disenfranchised, and the poor whose poverty is due to unjust and debilitating structures. Its aim is to release people from any form of bondage, political bondage in particular, which keeps them from realizing God’s design for life and
community. So far as is possible, this action uses every legal means available in a modern democratic society; or, if such means are denied, it nevertheless pursues change in a non-violent although equally radical manner. It involves responsible and objective examination of the situation that needs changing, a task that involves analyzing the factors underlying it and unmasking its subtle manifestations. In this study, I will call this kind of political action as it relates to mission missio politica oecumenica. I will use this term throughout to distinguish it from just any political activity.

Thus, by missio politica oecumenica I mean political action, as I have defined it, in relation to mission. Any political action may be considered as missio politica oecumenica when it tries to transform a situation that affects the mission of the church. Again, this does not suggest that missio politica oecumenica is only interested in the welfare and interests of the church, for the mission of the church involves the welfare and interests of society as well. Political action apart from mission, like partisan politics, cannot be said to be missio politica oecumenica. This requires us now to define mission. But before this, one more clarification must be made.

From the foregoing, it should be stressed that missio politica oecumenica as a concept refers to principled engagement with political issues as they impinge on the life and witness of the church. This takes two forms: praxis and reflection. Praxis is actual participation in any emancipating or transforming activities. Reflection is critical reflection on political issues. Praxis and reflection are inter-related and support each other. This concept will also inform the basic structure of this study. The first part will deal with the actual engagement with political issues by Johannes Verkuyl, that is, his
own engagement in *missio politica oecumenica*. The second part is a missiological reflection on that engagement. Now the notion of “mission” must be clarified.

Mission is the redeeming act of the triune God towards peoples and the whole creation in which the church is called to participate. The view of mission proposed here is broader than either the conciliar or evangelical understanding; it consists of four aspects: *kerygma, koinonia, diakonia, and missio politica oecumenica*, or evangelism, church planting, social service, and action for justice and righteousness, respectively. Mission is usually understood as happening overseas but, in view of the current state of affairs that views mission as being to and from six continents, this distinction is becoming blurred. The distinction is not a matter of principle but of scope, as D. Bosch explains.18 The development in the understanding with regard to the distinction between home and foreign missions is acknowledged, but my orientation here is towards foreign missions by virtue of the nature of our subject. Thus *missio politica oecumenica* in relation to mission does not mean political action in Western churches or that Christian nationals should do in and in behalf of their home country, but rather the action foreign missions should do in and in behalf of their host countries, or what Western churches can do for the non-Western world. This is not to suggest that domestic political action is outside the range of mission. Our definition is simply dictated by the nature of our subject. Thus, if we may re-state our question more specifically, it is this: is political action a part of foreign or global mission? Or, in other words, do foreign missions and overseas churches have any right to be involved in the politics of other countries?

Clarification must also be made regarding the singular term “mission” and the plural

---

“missions.” The first refers to the one mission of God, the *missio Dei*, and the second refers to the various activities of the church in its participation in the *missio Dei*. The four aspects of mission mentioned above can be called missions. In addition, missions can also mean mission bodies.

*Why Johannes Verkuyl?*

I will develop my thesis by drawing from the life, career, and thought of Johannes Verkuyl (1908-2001). He was a missionary to Indonesia for almost 25 years (1939-1963), doing all the duties normally called traditional mission: itinerant evangelism, religious dialoguing, church planting and developing, teaching catechism and seminary classes, discipling, leading Bible studies, preaching, writing literature, pastoral counseling, supervising various ministries, deputizing for the mission, and so on. He was so effective in all these ministries that his friends and colleagues describe him as “a faithful servant of the gospel”¹⁹ and “above all a witness of Jesus Christ.”²⁰

But that is just one aspect of the career of this servant of God. While serving as a missionary, Verkuyl got involved in the decolonization of the Dutch-Indies (Indonesia), a ministry he called *missio politica oecumenica*. And even after the nation had become independent, he continued to contribute in the process of nation building, for which President Suharto awarded him in 1976 a state honor called *Jasapratama*, the only foreign Christian missionary to receive this award.²¹ It is not easy to gauge exactly the

---


extent and magnitude of Verkuyl's involvement in the political dimension of mission. J. M. van der Linde's statement that *missio politica oecumenica* is the central theme of Verkuyl's life is not entirely correct, according to Verkuyl himself. Nevertheless, Verkuyl admitted that he "had placed great emphasis on this point [*missio politica oecumenica*] because it has too often been neglected and avoided."\(^{22}\) When he returned to the Netherlands, he took up various positions until he retired as professor of missiology at the Free University in Amsterdam in 1978. Being general secretary of the Netherlands Missionary Council (NZR) and chair of Inter-Church Coordinating Committee for development Projects (ICCO) ushered him into the wider needs of the *oecumene* and thus into broader and deeper social and political involvement. *Missio politica oecumenica* is no doubt a significant aspect of Verkuyl's career. As R. Recker comments, "Verkuyl reveals a Christianly-sensitive social and ethical awareness which causes him to stand in the forefront of the battle for justice and human compassion."\(^{23}\)

The combination of Verkuyl's evangelistic zeal and political activism is one reason why his life and thought can be drawn upon to develop my thesis on mission and political action. As D. Bosch says, "He combines sensitive understanding of the 'others' (in their socio-political situations) with an unflinching loyalty to the gospel."\(^{24}\) While W. Saayman comments that "Verkuyl's passionate commitment to the gospel and to the


freedom and justice proclaimed by it becomes that much easier to understand”\textsuperscript{25} in the context of his missionary work and traumatic experience with the decolonization process in Indonesia. It is this rare combination of evangelistic zeal and political activism that makes Verkuyl’s life interesting for the kind of study we attempt here.

If political action is not only an ethical issue, but missiological as well, another reason for my focus on Verkuyl has to do with the kind of missiology that his missionary career produced. Due to the enormous amount of literature he wrote, he is reckoned as a major missiologist in the twentieth century. The \textit{festschrift} \textit{Zending op weg naar de toekomst}, written on the occasion of his retirement from the Free University, is a clear testimony of his abiding legacy in missiology. He wrote sixty-six books and hundreds of articles in various areas including missiology, evangelism, ethics, apologetics, dogmatics, and theology of religions. In these works the political aspect is usually present. His magnum opus, \textit{Contemporary Missiology} (Dutch original: \textit{Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap}), for instance, is the only formal missiology that gives room for political action as part of the communication of the gospel of the kingdom of God. It also deals with issues not normally discussed in other missiologies, such as ideologies and Third World theologies, which critically reflect on their socio-political contexts. While he includes a separate section on \textit{missio political oecumenica} and deals with issues of an essentially political character, the political dimension infuses almost every aspect of his missiology. In this view, mission has four essential aspects and one of them is \textit{missio politica oecumenica}. He integrates well this aspect of mission with the other three aspects so well that his missiology is significant for the question raised in this study.

The last reason for choosing Verkuyl is that his life and thought hold the promise of bringing together the ecumenicals and the evangelicals for the missionary calling of the church. While he came from a rather conservative Reformed background and had an impressive evangelistic record, he was at home in the ecumenical movement. Thus, Verkuyl is a concrete example who demonstrates that theological conservatism and evangelistic zeal are not incompatible with participation in the conciliar movement. In the first place, he never thought of the movement in the same way that conservative evangelicals think of it. He worked with Christians from various Christian traditions and was gracious in extending fellowship to anyone. He wrote on the polarization of the ecumenicals and evangelicals and argued that the differences between them are unnecessary. But the central reason why Verkuyl holds promise for possible unity of the ecumenicals and evangelicals in mission is his missiology itself, which presents in an integral way the concerns of the two movements, which hitherto have been divided. His life and thought provide important insights for the churches’ common missionary tasks.

**Methodology, Structure, and Sources**

This study will follow both a historical and a systematic analysis. Any missiology is shaped by one’s own Christian tradition, missionary experience, and historical contexts. Verkuyl’s is no exception, indeed more so in view of the fact that he was fond of saying that there is no such thing as theologia perennis. This implies that the church is always in contact in any age with all its peculiar needs and that it keeps on drawing from the inexhaustible riches of the gospel in its interaction with the world. For him, the church must constantly ask “what time is it in the history of mission?” I will follow this
principle in noting the time in which he lived and the view of *missio politica oecumenica* that he developed.

This study consists of two parts. Part 1 is a historical analysis of his principled engagement as a missionary with political issues like colonialism, religious freedom, and ideologies. This engagement is called *missio politica oecumenica*. It begins with his family and church background in the Netherlands from which he inherited the neo-Calvinist vision of the universal lordship of Christ in church and society (chapter 2). It continues through his involvement in the decolonization of Indonesia and then in nation building (chapter 3). It concludes with his post-Indonesia ministry as a mission executive of the NZR and ICCO, in which he engaged in global development projects and campaigned for peace and justice for other peoples and nations (chapter 4). The purpose of this first part is to provide an example of a missionary who combined evangelism and political action in his service, and thus developed a missiology that takes into account the political dimension of mission.

Usually, historical analysis takes into account the intellectual development of the subject. In the case of Verkuyl, his thought developed in terms of the issues with which he grappled as he watched the clock of history. His intellectual development attempted to expand and deepen what he called the *cantus firmus* of the gospel, as he critically reflected on secular and religious issues. In spite of his disavowal of *theologia perennis*, however, he remained throughout his life faithful to the core of the Reformed faith learned in early childhood. So, Bosch comments that Verkuyl “hardly breaks any new ground; he stays, by and large, within the framework of orthodox Reformed thinking. He
remains essentially a disciple of J. H. Bavinck and H. Kraemer.\textsuperscript{26} His Indonesian
colleagues at the seminary in Jakarta also described him as a consistent person.\textsuperscript{27}

For the first part of the study, the main source is Verkuyl’s memoirs, \textit{Gedenken en}
\textit{verwachten}. It must be noted that the book published in 1983 is a self-reflection from the
point of view of his later, more mature thoughts. As such, it reflects on the deeper
significance of certain experiences of which Verkuyl himself only became aware later.
No doubt the book is a good source of information regarding his Christian upbringing and
experiences both in his home country and overseas. There may be a disadvantage to
relying mainly on an account by the subject himself, but this may still be better than
picturing him through alien lenses. To be sure, during Verkuyl’s life he was attacked
especially by those who were disadvantaged by his actions. Also, some anecdotes and
episodes from \textit{Gedenken} are found and expanded elsewhere in his other works. I will
also refer to extra-Verkuyl resources, mainly historical studies, to gain further
information on the relevant periods and to provide sources for further study. Since he
also produced a good amount of literature, this part of my study will also provide
information regarding the context in which he was writing on issues that engaged his
attention.

Part 2 will systematically develop the thesis proposed above, emphasizing his
missiology in its political dimension. A general course in missiology would cover all or
some of the following usual \textit{loci}: the current missionary context, biblical foundations,
history of missions or history of missiology, the goals of missions, ways and means or missionary practice and strategy, and pressing issues such as world religions and religious pluralism, evangelism and social action, racial relations, and ecumenics or unity in mission. Verkuyl’s *Contemporary Missiology* covers, aside from these mentioned, prolegomena, the communication of the gospel of the messianic kingdom in the (context of the) relation between churches and the Jews, motives for fulfilling the missionary tasks, the study of the churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, a survey of ecumenical organizations and theological developments in the same continents, missions in all six continents and the call to mutual assistance among churches, a study and evaluation of—in a concluding section—*missio politica oecumenica*, and an epilogue.

What I do in chapters 5 and 6 is select several missiological loci and develop them in their political dimensions. This serves as a basis for *missio politica oecumenica* as a distinct and integral aspect of mission.

Chapter 5 serves as a prolegomena to Verkuyl’s missiology, presenting the usage of *missio politica oecumenica*, its elements, and its relation to *missio Dei* and *missio ecclesiarum*. It notes the precedence of political action in the history of mission and considers the subject in historical missiology. Chapter 6 is a review of Verkuyl’s theology of mission in its political dimension, a missiology that provides a basis for the

---

28 My translation from the Dutch chapter title, which reads “De Communicatie van het Evangelie van het Messianse Rijk in de Relatie tussen de Kerken en het Joodse Volk,” *Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap*, 7. What Verkuyl addresses is the way the communication of the gospel to the Jews should be done in the context of the long years of anti-Semitic attitude of churches to the Jews. D. Cooper’s translation does not make sense, “The Communication of the Gospel to the Church and the Jewish People,” *Contemporary Missiology*, vii.

church’s *missio politica oecumenica*. The goal here is not simply to construct a certain theology for social and political transformation, but to look at the whole breadth of Verkuyl’s missiology in its political dimension in order to demonstrate that *missio politica oecumenica* is an integral part of mission. This is not solely a matter of missiology functioning as a systematic and critical reflection on *missio politica oecumenica*, but as a reflection on the whole spectrum of missionary activities to see whether these are sensitive to political realities, aside from bringing people to God and the church in the spiritual realm. By doing this I place political action within mission, not as something good outside mission, as McGavran argues. Thus, while Verkuyl wrote a small, separate section on *missio politica oecumenica*, this foundational concept is actually found in most missiological loci he developed, and this is what I intend to extract in order to develop a missiology that serves as a basis for the church’s pursuit of justice and righteousness.

Thus, in dealing with biblical foundations, one must not simply pick a few verses that speak directly of mission, but rather bring out the political aspect of the whole doctrinal scheme of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation and their implications for mission. We will see that Christian ethics and a theology of history provide the basis for political action in mission. The goal of mission is understood as consisting of repentance, faith in Christ, and membership in the church. For Verkuyl, these remain valid goals, but should be seen not only in their personal dimension but in their wider social and political aspects, which is also true for the other loci. This is not to suggest that *missio political oecumenica* exhausts the mission of the church. Rather, it is one of

---

30 Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, p. 5.
the tasks of the church alongside evangelism, church planting, and social service. All of these can be examined in their political dimensions without denying their evangelical meanings.

Chapter 7 will deal with three tasks of missio politica oecumenica: critical reflection on ideologies, the promotion of religious freedom, and the transformation of society. I will examine how the issues involved in these tasks affect mission and thus the missionary significance of these political tasks. Chapter 8 will deal with the question of how a political stance affects mission. Here we will look at the experiences of China, Indonesia, and South Africa as case studies on the wisdom and folly of missions in the political realm in order to inform and guide churches in their present participation in missio politica oecumenica. As Verkuyl declares, “The ambivalence of the relation between mission and colonialism can and should teach us much today about how to discharge our own missio politica oecumenica.”

Finally, the epilogue will present a summary statement of the argument presented in the previous chapters.

The main sources for part 2 are general works like Contemporary Missiology (Dutch original: Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap), Inleiding in de Evangelistiek (1978), Inti Iman Kristen (Dutch original: De kern van het christelijk geloof), the six-volume series of Christian ethics published in Indonesian, and works on specific topics. Some chapters or smaller sections of these books were republished, rewritten, and expanded in other articles and books, and they will also be sources for this section.

---

31 Verkuyl, Contemporary Missiology, p. 396.
Many of Verkuyl's works are published in more than one language, although the original is usually in Dutch. When a book or article is published in multiple languages, English and/or Indonesian is referred to, but, at times, references in Dutch are cited for the sake of those who would examine the sources in that language. Since differences exist in Indonesian spelling between the older works and more recent editions, Indonesian sources are cited without regard to the spelling changes.

**Verkuyl in Scholarship and the Limits of the Study**

To date, Verkuyl is more frequently quoted than studied. Scholarship on his life and thought is just beginning. A doctoral dissertation on Verkuyl's *theologia religionum* is being written for the Free University. There are also two theses that devote one or two chapters to Verkuyl.\(^{32}\) There are numerous reviews of his major works. Articles in the festschrift *Zending op weg naar de toekomst* review and develop certain aspects of his thought; some of them are critical, especially his view on world religions.\(^{33}\) The articles in *In Memoriam Prof. Dr. Verkuyl*, published jointly by three institutions he served in Indonesia, are merely memorial reflections of his life and thought and much of them is based on *Gedenken*. Thus, there has not been much scholarship on Verkuyl, and even less on his view of *missio politica oecumenica*. The article by van der Linde in *Zending*

---


op weg naar de toekomst is an exception. It considers missio politica oecumenica as the central theme in Verkuyl’s life and thought.

This low level academic interest as yet does not indicate Verkuyl’s meager influence on a number of major missiologists in North America. Charles van Engen and Orlando Costas were students of Verkuyl and they acknowledge their intellectual debt to him. Van Engen quotes Verkuyl profusely in his dissertation on the ecclesiology of church growth and in subsequent works.  

34 And so does D. Bosch in some of his works.  

Costas, a Baptist clergymen, dedicated one of his major works to Verkuyl, his “wise pastor and teacher,” and his missiology is basically Verkuylian. Arthur F. Glasser made no secret of his admiration for Verkuyl. He quoted Verkuyl that the kingdom of God is “the hub around which all of mission work revolves,” and this became the all-embracing theme of his major work on biblical theology of mission. This list could be


expanded with references to other continents, but these sufficiently show that Verkuyl is a figure to reckon with in the world of missiological scholarship.

This study will not discuss Verkuyl’s political theory, socio-political thought, or jurisprudence on church and state. He did write significant books on these topics as part of his six-volume series on Christian ethics, written in Indonesian, and it is possible to derive a political theory and a systematic socio-political thought from this work and other writings. I will still make use of these sources, but will focus on the ethical aspects of state and political processes, as these provide a basis for possible action in society. After all, he was not really a political theorist, nor did he pretend to be, but rather was most significant as a missiologist.

The study is also limited to conciliar and evangelical discussions. It must be acknowledged that the Catholic Church has much to say and is very concerned about the issue before us. In fact, the church has had a long tradition of Christian engagement in society and a well developed socio-political thought. But, as Gerald H. Anderson

---


points out, Verkuyl's *Contemporary Missiology* fails to sufficiently discuss and interact with Catholic missiology. This supposed failure explains the limit of our study.

Furthermore, this study will not present the socio-political thought of the ecumenical movement or the evangelical movement. There have been studies on these topics, especially that of the ecumenical movement. These studies will surely be beneficial for our study, as they were for Verkuyl. These studies are basically ethical and historical in approach, however, rather than missiological. This makes our study unique.

There is one study we need to mention here, since it deals with *missio politica oecumenica*. It is written by the Finnish missiologist, S. Teinonen, and is entitled *Missio Politica Oecumenica: A Contribution to the Study of the Theology of Ecumenical Work in*


---


International Politics. In this book, Teinonen investigates the ecumenical theology of international affairs as it is reflected in the documents of the conferences which have dealt with political questions. This explicit intention makes our own study different from his. While Teinonen rightly thinks that his study belongs to missiology in that “the political work of the churches is done in a field from which the Church does not originate but to which it is sent,” it does not deal with the interaction of missio politica oecumenica with other aspects of mission, namely, evangelism, church planting, and social service. This study will be referenced again later, but is mentioned here as part of the survey of literature in the field and to place this study in the general context of current scholarship.

---

PART ONE

MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA
IN THE LIFE AND CAREER OF VERKUYL
CHAPTER TWO

FORMATIVE YEARS AND EARLY INFLUENCES
SEEDS OF MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA

The intention of this chapter is to demonstrate that early in life Verkuyl understood the gospel to have socio-political dimensions. This is not something that he discovered later in the course of his involvement in political issues, but it was a part of the legacy that he inherited from his family and church, a legacy that would be further enriched by people of his own tradition as they engaged with the times. We will briefly present Verkuyl’s background: his family, church, and early education, the influence of the Christian Student Movement in the Netherlands, the people that influenced him, and early pastoral experience. In all these, he inherited a gospel and an understanding of the church that addressed the micro-structure as well as the macro-structure, the personal as well as the socio-political and the global dimensions of life. All these are the seeds that eventually grew into firm convictions regarding missio politica oecumenica.

The Faith of the Family: Piety and Politics

Verkuyl’s knowledge of his family ancestry went as far as three generations back. His clan came from the area of Heusden and Altena, which lie between the Waal and the Bergse Maas in the southern part of Gorinchem in the province of Brabant. In that old region is a small village called Genderen, which Verkuyl considered to be the cradle of his ancestry. Some families from his clan immigrated to North America and others to Haarlemmermeer. The inhabitants of Heusden and Altena formed a Protestant enclave in the predominantly Roman Catholic Brabant. The Protestant congregation belonged to the
Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (NHK), which until the beginning of the nineteenth century was part of the state church. The paternalistic regime of King Willem I and the old Reformed confessions of the sixteenth century played significant roles in the state church.¹

The Afscheiding of 1834, the secession of some congregations from the NHK, was a turning point in the lives of many families in the small village of Genderen. The most prominent figures in this secessionist movement were Hendrik P. Scholte and Hendrik de Cock. Scholte was a pastor in Genderen, Doeveren, and Gansoyen. He studied theology in Leiden and had close contact with the Reveil, an intellectual and literary movement concerned about orthodoxy and associated with Isaac Da Costa and Willem Bilderdijk, among others. Scholte showed sympathy for De Cock when the latter, having attacked the liberal tendencies in the state church, was suspended from the ministry, resulting in the secession of his congregation and the emergence of the free Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland (CGKN). Scholte led the secessionist movement in the south, and De Cock led in the north. The tension between the state church people and the seceders reached hostile proportions. Verkuyl’s great grandfather, Arie Verkuyl, a member of the secessionist movement, was drawn into the conflict. When the seceders were denied use of the state church facilities, Arie offered his barn to be used for religious functions, for which he was punished with imprisonment in a NHK church tower. Such non-state church functions were prohibited by the government and attempts at “illegal” gathering were quickly dissipated by the police. Later in a letter from Laurens Pennings, the author of the children’s books on the Boer War in South

¹ Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1983), 10.
Africa, young Jo was told about his great grandfather’s audience with King Willem II, to whom he appealed that restrictions on the seceders be lifted. A parallel incident took place three generations later when missionary Verkuyl was to find himself in the presence of Queen Wilhelmina, appealing that the Indonesian Republic be recognized. Political activism run deep in the clan.

While great grandfather Arie was closely associated with the Afscheiding of 1834, Verkuyl’s grandfather Peter, son of Arie, was identified with the Doleantie group, whose prominent leader was Abraham Kuyper. The Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) was established in 1886 as a result of the Doleantie conflict in the congregation in Amsterdam. The NGK and the older CGKN merged to form the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) in 1892. The church in Nieuwe Vennep where Verkuyl grew up had a relationship with the Doleantie group going back to 1887. In the course of time, Peter Verkuyl was to become an enthusiastic follower of Kuyper. The influence of both the Afscheiding and Doleantie was quite prominent in the Verkuyl family, and with neo-Calvinism, created some of the basic foundations for Verkuyl’s life and thought.

---


3 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, p. 12. For more information on the secessionist movements in this period, see B. H. Wabeke, Dutch Emigration to North America 1624-1860 (NY: The Netherlands Information Bureau, 1944), 84-112; J. D. Bratt, Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a
The emphasis on personal piety and commitment to Christ and the desire for a free church in a free state were a decisive legacy that Verkuyl received from the Afscheiding, aside from the core biblical message of the contrast (tegenstelling) of sin and grace, which he understood in a classical Reformed manner. The Afscheiding piety of Verkuyl’s family, however, never considered the separation of churches as an ideal state. His home created in young Verkuyl the “ecumenical” desire for the day when the Hervormde Kerk and other Reformed churches would come together as one church. He was not totally uncritical of Kuyper’s neo-Calvinism, but Verkuyl was impressed at a young age by the movement’s engagement with culture and its views on the implications of the liberating lordship of Christ in all areas of life. All these lessons during the formative years would play a significant part later in his career. But the story of his childhood is incomplete without knowledge of his immediate family – his home, where real life was played out. This was even more decisive than the influences of the Afscheiding and neo-Calvinism.

The one person who decisively shaped Verkuyl’s life was his mother, Evertje Streefkerk. This is not to say that his father, Coenraad Maarten, did not give him


4 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 13, 14; Hans Verkuyl, “Sambutan Keharga Prof. Dr. Johannes Verkuyl,” in In Memoriam Prof. Dr. J. Verkuyl, ed. B. B. Tambunan and C. Sihotang (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 13. For the theocratic vision of Calvinism and the Re-evil and Neo-Calvinism in particular, see J. Bolt, “The Background and Context of Van Ruler’s Theocentric (Theocratic Vision),” in Calvinist Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics: Essays Toward a Public Theology by Arnold A. van Ruler, trans J. Bolt (The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), xvii-xxix. Verkuyl was a contemporary of van Ruler and both lived in the same context, thus Bolt’s sketch of the cultural background of van Ruler may inform us of Verkuyl’s background as well. Cf. G. C. Berkouwer, A Half Century, trans. L. Smedes (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 205, in which he says, “this passionate call to world-concern brings Van Ruler into the spirit of Moltmann and of J. Verkuyl.”
important lessons in life. A farmer (boer) and a typical neo-Calvinist, as Verkuyl described him, the senior Verkuyl was an exemplary, hard working man. Coenraad Maarten's deep involvement in Christian education at a time when it required a great sacrifice and his services for church and community were for Verkuyl more eloquent than words. But his mother, Evertje, always had Verkuyl's affection. He dedicated his dissertation to her alone because, as he testifies, "she taught me that knowledge without love is worthless and that the only purpose of knowledge has to do with fruitful loving service for people." Evertje was an orphan who was cared for by a stepmother. She was sickly for most of her childhood and for that reason did not have a chance to go to school. But what she lacked in formal education, she possessed in character and wisdom. At a time when women had limited opportunities for self-expression, Evertje exerted a lasting influence by her love and patience, a "decisive and abiding influence" on the whole Verkuyl household, including her short-tempered husband. She died some months after Verkuyl and his family left for missionary service in Indonesia and although it must have been painful for Verkuyl to miss the funeral, he was comforted by the fact that his being in a foreign country as a servant of the gospel was a fulfillment of his mother's dream. Verkuyl recalled his mother's great love for world missions, and how she would come home from church meetings, telling him about the missionaries she met. She taught young Verkuyl to pray for them. Often the Verkuyl family would have missionaries

---

3 Verkuyl, Gedenkene en verwachten, 13. “Zie het was die mij liet zien dat kennis zonder liefde waardeloos is en dat kennis slechts ten doel heft de liefdedienst onder mensen vruchbaar te maken.” My translation.

6 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 13.
visiting on their farm. Thus, even at an early age, Verkuyl had developed a profound concern for God’s global interests.\(^7\)

Verkuyl’s conscious spiritual journey began as a young, teenage boy. His church and family offered much that was beneficial for his life—catechism, youth ministry, family devotions, and Christian education. Like most young people growing up in Christian homes, he knew a lot about the Christian faith, and he was grateful for this kind of upbringing. It was not until his turbulent teenage years that he experienced some kind of conversion. He related two experiences that made the word of God so meaningful to him. The first was when he felt some sort of uncontrollable chaos (\emph{afgrond}) in his heart. The second was an incident in which he saw a dead man in a ditch, a sight that gripped his heart with fear and hopelessness. It was in those situations that the familiar message of sin and grace and forgiveness struck him in a powerful way, which apparently became a daily meditation for him. As he put it later, “repentance does not only happen once and for all, but is an ongoing experience that should happen everyday until death.”\(^8\) The reality of human sin and of forgiveness in Christ was to become his deepest motivation for service in the kingdom of God. \emph{Christus Victor}, the one who overcomes sin, death, and hopelessness, was to become the main theme of his preaching. Verkuyl never abandoned—even for a moment and even if under pressure to do so—these formative convictions, and later he would expand them from their micro-structural dimensions (personal) to the macro-structural (socio-political) as well.\(^9\)

---


Early Lessons in Social Dynamics

Verkuyl obtained his first insights into the dynamics of society during his childhood. Life in the village, including the wonders of nature, was fascinating to him. He appreciated the transparent relationships among village people. He recalled that everybody knew everybody and their family connections. But that transparency did not mean perfect harmony. In fact, the community was quite fragmented, especially by the dividing lines that ran between the farm owners and peasants (boeren en arbeiders). The peasants’ condition was pitiable, and the richer farm owners were unaware of it most of the time. The relationship, however, between these two groups was more patriarchal than hostile, for the children of both groups could still work and play together. Verkuyl remembered the times when he worked on the farm while home for vacation, laboring together with his brothers and peasants’ children. Attending secondary school during that time could alienate one from the village children who did not have the same privilege. By working on the farm and playing with them, he showed his solidarity with the poor peasants’ children, who, after some time, did not consider him a transient guest, but someone who was one of them. For Verkuyl, this early and conscious engagement with society was both fun and fulfilling.\textsuperscript{10}

Events of national significance also caught Verkuyl’s attention. His childhood years overlapped with the years when the emancipation of Calvinistische Volksdeel (CVD) was tenaciously expressed. Then there was the Antirevoluionaire Partij (ARP), making a headway in Dutch politics, the Christelijke Boeren- en Tuindersbond (CBTP),

\textsuperscript{10} Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 17-18, 27.
and the rise of the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond (CNV), a trade union for the
peasants. The rise of the Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij (SDAP), which
addressed various socio-political issues, also caught Verkuyl's attention. Some members
of the SDAP he met were dedicated Christians and were later counted among his good
friends. Meanwhile, across the neighboring nations the Great War (1914-1918) was
raging. Verkuyl was six years when the war broke out. He was not old enough to
understand the geo-politics of the period, but incidents of a nasty war—some of which
disturbed the rustic life in his own land—were enough to terrify him and make him anti-
militarist. The slogan "no more war" (nooit meer oorlog) started to resonate in his young
heart.\textsuperscript{11}

The opportunity to gain a higher education had social significance for Verkuyl; it
was a lever of social emancipation (een hefboom geweest in een emancipatieproces).
During those years there was little room for social mobilization; farmer's children would
most likely inherit their parent's occupation. For a big family, a limited land posed a
serious problem and pushed people to emigrate, like three of the Verkuyl siblings, to seek
better economic opportunities. Verkuyl and his brother Arie, having shown no
inclination for farm work, were encouraged by their father to try to pursue higher
education. Whereas secondary school education—a ticket to university education—had
been an almost exclusive privilege of the rich, it was at that time slowly becoming a
means of emancipation for the less privileged. Later in life, this experience stimulated
Verkuyl to help people from undeveloped countries find ways to achieve social
emancipation through education. In Indonesia, he noted that Christian education was a

\textsuperscript{11}Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 20-21.
form of Christian influence in former colonies, and he pressed for development of Christian institutions of higher learning in developing nations.\textsuperscript{12}

In secondary school, he proved himself more than capable of high school education (gymnasium) and thus moved to a special program called the Dalton system, in which a student was given the special task of working on various subjects and presenting papers similar to those written at universities. But, aside from the academic challenge secondary education provided, it shaped Verkuyl through its emphasis on the importance of men and women working together in society. The healthy relationship initiated in school between young men and women, their working together in youth camps, and the roles women played later in the student movement, Nederlandse Christen Studenten Vereniging (NCSV), prepared the way for cooperation of men and women in society. Relations of men and women were meant not only for intimacy, marriage, and to build a family; increasing number of young people found creative ways to work together for society. Indeed, for Verkuyl life could be richer and deeper when men and women considered one another as fellow workers in building up society rather than as sexual objects.\textsuperscript{13}

Secondary school was also a time of preparation for engagement with society. In some sense, for Verkuyl it could not be otherwise. The atmosphere of the time made him and other young people restless: "restless about the threat of another world war, restless


\textsuperscript{13} Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 22, 25, 26, 52.
about the terrible bickering in the churches, restless about the lack of vision during the last phase of colonialism, restless about the lack of unity of churches, restless about the questions of war and freedom for all."\textsuperscript{14} The young people listened intently to older people like J. C. Brussaard and N. Stufkens, who saw the turbulence coming and who called them to an adventure with the living God and to live before him in the light of his promises and claims.

All these opportunities and experiences made secondary school not only a place to acquire knowledge and emancipate oneself from possible poverty, but also as a time when one was given a fundamental orientation in life (orientatiecentrum), was introduced to what it meant for humans to be creatures of God. A person is called not simply to develop oneself, but to do so as a partner of God in fulfilling his purposes. The turning from orientation of self to nature and history in the context of a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ was essential to obtaining knowledge, insight, and skills. He had heard this idea earlier in life and had seen it practiced among his kinsfolk in his hometown. But now in his secondary school years, it was given a more systematic expression, most notably by Brussaard, a disciple of Herman Bavinck.

\textit{The NCSV Influences: Church Unity and Mission}

The years at the Free University were a time of living "in the shadows of tomorrow" (schaduwen van morgen), so Verkuyl described.\textsuperscript{15} The explosion of catastrophes in Europe was anticipated. In this very uncertain and desperate condition,

\textsuperscript{14} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 27.

\textsuperscript{15} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 31.
student organizations played an important role in the cultivation of friendship and reflection on current events. As a *rector corporis* at the Free, Verkuyl had many contacts with groups, leaders, and important events on campus. For Verkuyl, the Free student body was a venue to reflect on political questions, especially the rise of National Socialism. One of the first professors at the Free to analyze both fascism and communism was A. Anema, who helped Verkuyl organize a congress on the rise of the National Socialism.\(^\ast\)

NCSV was the most important Christian student movement. Verkuyl had contact with the NCSV as early as secondary school, when he attended its camps and met some of its leaders. One of those leaders was Nico Stuikens, the secretary of the NCSV, whom Verkuyl met in one of the NCSV-sponsored camps. Stuikens, a physically handicapped person, was a voracious reader with a theological, philosophical, and social orientation. He was acquainted with H. Kutter and L. Ragaz and introduced K. Barth to the Netherlands. What impressed Verkuyl more was that Stuikens was the first to cross the boundary between the church and the SDAP, of which Stuikens was a member, with the gospel. When Stuikens died, Verkuyl wrote a tribute to him which he entitled "The Man who Crossed the Demarcation Line." This demarcation line manifested itself in the alienation of the labor class from the gospel of Christ. Verkuyl was impressed by Stuikens’ preaching, which he never mixed with any ideology; instead, he preached messages that directly originated from the heart of the gospel. When Verkuyl was at a crossroad regarding which university to attend, Stuikens presented with him the disadvantages of attending a state university and the benefits of attending the Free

\(^{16}\) Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 31, 32.
University. According to Stufkens, at the Free, unlike in the state universities, the Bible was respected as it should be and broad ecumenical relations could be maintained.\footnote{Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 28, 29.}

In its early years, the NCSV was not so popular in Reformed churches. In fact, the Synod of Leeuwarden of 1920, Verkuyl noted, warned its young people against membership in the movement. But H. Bavinck, himself an ex-NCSV member, spoke against such warning. Bavinck made a significant contribution in the formative years of the movement. There was little doubt that the NCSV fulfilled needs in the student world that the churches had hitherto neglected. The NCSV that Verkuyl knew focused its ministry on Bible studies and was Christo-centric in its orientation, which helped train students in Christo-centric thinking and living. Also, much attention was given to the important socio-political questions. Various political inclinations were present among students and these were fully recognized and accepted in the movement. Stufkens and many others, for instance, were members of the socialist SDAP. Others belonged to the ARP, the Christelijke Historische Unie (CHU), and the Nationaal Socialistische Beweging (NSB), which Verkuyl later opposed as associated with National Socialism in Germany.\footnote{Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 36-37.}

The NCSV was Verkuyl’s first ecumenical training school. The seeds of ecumenism were first planted in the heart of Verkuyl around the time in secondary school. But even before this, from his childhood years, as we have noted above, he was made conscious of and expressed dissatisfaction over the distance between churches. He was surprised that there were no dialogical relations between them. He was disgusted with
unnecessary and protracted quarrels in churches, like the one that took place in the Synod of Assen of 1926. Meeting with young people in NCSV camps—from churches and traditions other than his own—was a sort of ecumenical turning point.\textsuperscript{19} During the time at the Free he met figures like F. Miller, W. A Visser’t Hooft, H. Lilje, and P. Maury, among others, who later became pioneers of the WCC. Some of them, like Visser’t Hooft and H. Kraemer, made an unforgettable impression on Verkuyl regarding their spiritual experience. Encounters with such leaders, as well as with students from different traditions, helped Verkuyl grow in the common understanding of the Christian faith. It gave him a desire for ecumenical solidarity with all Christians. Furthermore, it led him out of the oppressive ecclesio-centricism, the attitude that the pure faith and revelation could only be found in one’s own church. The most influential person in this regard was the current general secretary of the NCSV, H. Rutgers, who was profoundly rooted and grounded in classical tradition and who in the spirit of \textit{Calvinus oecumenicus} felt a deep unity with all people from different traditions. The NCSV made even clearer to Verkuyl the vision of the \textit{una sancta catholica ecclesia},\textsuperscript{20} which he initially saw in his secondary school years.

Not only was the NCSV ecumenically orientated, it was also very mission directed. It had no place for provincialism or the nationalizing of Christianity. Although there was a clear intention to evangelize the students in the Netherlands, the call for world evangelism was equally emphasized. Verkuyl met not only the Western leaders of the movement but its Asians as well, like Bishop Azariah (India), Dr. Mulia (Indonesia),

\textsuperscript{19} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 28.

\textsuperscript{20} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 36-38, 40.
Dr. T. Z. Koo and Prof. Chao (China), from whom he heard not only about the needs of their churches but also about the national aspirations of their peoples. But the NCSV was not merely an information center about world missions; it was also actually a mission agency. It sent out the van Doorns to Batavia (now known as Jakarta) to work among students, which led to the formation of the Java-Christen Studenten Vereniging (JCSV), which later became the national Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia (GMKI).  

*Intellectual Influences: Brussaard, Barth, and Noordmans*

Verkuyl enjoyed the intellectual freedom at the Free University. He was not hesitant to use modern critical methods in biblical studies—an attitude reflective of his stance vis-à-vis the Assen Synod controversy—as long as these methods were guided by piety and commitment to the church and world. Thus G. C. Alders, who was negative about historical critical approaches to the Old Testament, did not impress Verkuyl. However, he did like the other Old Testament professor, C. Van Gelderen, for his rare combination of scholarship, piety, and the human touch he displayed. He had much respect for New Testament professor F. W. Grosheide, not only for his enormous knowledge in his field, but also for his evangelistic zeal and warm relation with students. The dogmatics and ethics professor Valentijn Hepp, successor of H. Bavinck, was too scholastic and theoretical, in Verkuyl’s view, and his lectures did not impress heart and mind. In ethics, Verkuyl was almost completely self-taught; he wrote more than six volumes of ethics for Indonesia without the benefit of Hepp’s past lectures. Verkuyl and

---

other students disliked the proud church history professor H. H. Kuyper, son of Abraham Kuyper, and resented his uncritical opinion about the rise of the Wodin cult in Nazi Germany.\textsuperscript{22}

J. C. Brussaard provided the basic theological-ethical orientation that was decisive for Verkuyl’s career and intellectual development. Like his mentor Herman Bavinck, Brussaard possessed a profound interest in theological and philosophical movements of the time, aside from literature and Bible knowledge. Through Brussaard, Verkuyl was introduced to and was impressed by the works of Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, the two Bluhmards, Zundel, and Barth, among others. A significant influence of Brussaard on Verkuyl was related to the theological disputes surrounding the Geelkerken question and the notorious Synod of Assen in 1926.\textsuperscript{23} Verkuyl was so upset about the entire proceeding of the useless disputes that he was inclined to take a route other than theology. Brussaard’s visionary advice prevailed on him from taking such course. Verkuyl considered it a blessing to be taught by Brussaard, particularly on how to live a Christo-centric life and to avoid irrelevant disputes. When Verkuyl was studying at the Free University, he had hoped that Brussaard would replace H. Bavinck as the dogmatics professor. But because at that time Brussaard had not obtained the doctor’s degree, Hepp was appointed instead. Hepp was a good scholar, but he did not have the erudition, the ecumenical orientation, and the depth and breadth of Bavinck’s knowledge that Brussaard

\textsuperscript{22} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 41-45.

\textsuperscript{23} The disputed question was whether the Bible reads literally or symbolically. The Assen synod took a strict literal interpretation of the disputed texts. Brussaard addresses the topic in his book, \textit{Gereformeerde beschouwing over schriftezag} (Utrecht: G. J. A. Ruys, 1919) and G. C. Berkouwer comments on the issue in his \textit{Holy Scripture} (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), 180-181 and \textit{A Half Century of Theology}, 224-225.
had. It can be confidently asserted that Brussaard’s influence on Verkuyl set the theological direction that he took in the course of his ministry and intellectual development.\textsuperscript{24}

The “shadow of tomorrow” drove Verkuyl to engage the events surrounding the rise of National Socialism in Germany, Stalinism in Russia, and Fascism in Italy. In this context, he developed a great interest in Barth. In reading Barth’s commentary on Romans, Verkuyl saw him as someone who understood the problems facing the current generation and who saw human life in light of the judgment and salvation of the living God. Barth’s theology created a furor in the Netherlands, but Verkuyl was very impressed by Barth’s proclamation of the transcendent God and Christ, who favors humanity with his grace and who is at the center of the vision of human life. Verkuyl saw in Barth an essential corrective to the anthropocentric tendencies of Schleiermacher, Troeltsch, Feuerbach, and Marx; to the sterile scholasticism of people like Hepp; and to the ideological interests of Christian organizations. He admired Barth for his courage to apply the historical-critical approach to biblical sources while at the same time submitting himself to the “substantial authority” (\textit{materiele gezag}, as Berkouwer calls it) rather than to the form of the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{25}

Verkuyl, however, was not an uncritical fan of Barth. He thought Barth’s critique of general revelation was grossly unfair; that Barth was mistaken in taking divine revelation in creation for some sort of Roman Catholic natural theology. One of Barth’s serious weaknesses, according to Verkuyl, was that “he turned a blind eye to what Calvin

\textsuperscript{24} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 24, 25, 44.

\textsuperscript{25} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 31, 45-46.
and all the other Reformers called *general revelation.*"26 Here Verkuyl followed Herman Bavinck and J. H. Bavinck, both of whom found a ground for God’s general revelation in Romans 1, but who also emphasized that humans are by nature inclined to suppress God’s truth displayed in creation by their unrighteousness. Verkuyl noted, however, that Barth later modified his position in the direction of Calvin’s view of the seed of religiosity, the *sensus divinitatis.* Moreover, Barth’s critique of Christian organizations was for Verkuyl quite extreme. Verkuyl’s objection to Barth was not whether there were Christian organizations, but that they were not radically Christian enough. Thus, for Verkuyl, organizations needed constant renewal. While he learned from Barth about the sovereignty of God’s Word in changing situations, Verkuyl thought that this principle should also apply to political movements and convictions. For Verkuyl, there was no unconditional bond to an ideology or political program, but only faith-decisions made before the face of God.27

O. Noordmans was another theologian that caught Verkuyl’s interest. One of the most prominent Dutch theologians, he was neither a disciple of Barth nor influenced by him. Verkuyl had an opportunity to read his works, one of which was about predestination and election. Since his childhood, Verkuyl had had some difficulties understanding the usual representation of the doctrine of election as if God’s pleasure was limited to a select group. Noordmans helped him understand that election was the

---


heart of the church, because in it God in Jesus Christ has freely given his love for the sake of depraved humanity. God’s electing does not limit his love to a few. For Noordmans, the doctrine of predestination and election was not a deterrent to believing, as is often implied in dogmatics, but the Bible clearly taught that election in Christ is liberating and that the most depraved person may be forgiven in life and death through faith. Moreover, Noordmans helped Verkuyl to listen “to the grand melody of sin and grace” from Augustine to Barth in the history of theology. Verkuyl once wrote about Noordmans’ Geestelijke perspectieven, and a discussion ensued on it in the student paper of the Free University. Many of the themes developed in Noordmans’ works resonated in later theologies like those of Barth, Berkouwer, and Miskotte. Verkuyl was very pleased that Noordmans was considered in ecumenical circles as one of the doctores ecclesiae and that his works were widely read both by Reformed and Roman Catholic theologians.  

Other influences during his time at the Free University included K. Heim, S. De Graaf, and J. J. Buskes. Heim, a physicist and theologian, shaped apologetics in Verkuyl. The relation between faith and physical sciences was Heim’s special interest, and he greatly helped those struggling in that area. Apologetics later proved beneficial when Verkuyl was requested to teach the subject at the main seminary in Indonesia. By De Graaf’s preaching and teaching, Verkuyl claimed he received the pure Reformed religion. Verkuyl was also attracted by De Graaf’s views on the question of war. De Graaf’s preaching was attentive to the modern context as well as to the text. Buskes was another preacher that Verkuyl highly admired, and perhaps more than anyone else he influenced.

---

28 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 47, 48.
him on socio-political questions. Verkuyl described him thus: "In his preaching there was striking interaction between text and context. He was the most sensitive theologian, a man who knew world events thoroughly and with his whole soul engaged took a position on the socio-political questions of the day."

Verkuyl took part in a discussion with a group of Marxists in which he followed Buskes’ debate with people like A. J. Koejemans. Both Verkuyl and Buskes were together involved in the Indonesian question, the New Guinea problem, and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Until Buskes’ death, they remained close friends. Apparently Buskes and Barth were also close friends, as indicated by their exchange of letters over a period of time. Buskes’ wife gave Verkuyl the letters Barth wrote to Buskes when the latter died.

*Pastoral Engagement with Church and Society*

In 1932, Verkuyl accepted a call to a Reformed pastorate in Laren and married his childhood friend, Rie van den Heuvel. In Laren he met various people and ministered in different ways and situations. Aside from the usual duties of a pastor, he taught catechism, was involved in youth work and spiritual formation, pastoral work among the sick in the sanatoria, and among the unemployed in camps. He interacted with the Roman Catholics, ministered to homosexuals, and engaged in an evangelistic dialogue with followers of other religions. The time in Laren was a learning experience for him, as he struggled through failures and challenges of the pastoral work. But the lessons hitherto gained guided him through the complexity of the ministry situation. Like his favorite pastors,

---


De Graaf and Buskes, he preached the message of sin and grace, repentance and transformation, human misery and God’s liberating mercy in its fullness, all touching three dimensions of reality: the inner human struggles, the socio-political structures of society, and the broad issues related to world religions, ideologies, and the whole of cosmos.  

From high school through his Free University years, Verkuyl was already very sensitive to political developments in Europe. The Netherlands, however, seemed unaffected, and the general public was largely unsuspecting and indifferent regarding the looming developments. Verkuyl was one of the prescient few who could read the signs of the times. During his time in Laren, he saw his fears coming to realization. Verkuyl saw the publication of the Zwart Front and the increasing number of followers of the National-socialist NSB with their boisterous appearance as indications of a coming danger. He wasted no time and mustered enough courage to speak against the NSB and National Socialism, an action that created a backlash from the local NSB. At one time, Verkuyl received an anonymous letter warning him of a transfer of power in the Netherlands similar to what took place in Germany in 1933, and that he and the mayor would be the first to be hanged in front of the town hall. Around the same time, Verkuyl came in contact with the Pfarrernotbund, pastors who resisted the Hitler-appointed Bishop Muller. These pastors were expelled from their positions and consequently lost their means of support. Verkuyl requested his classis to help them and was annoyed when his request was ignored. It was then that he realized that the main reason for the disregard of the plight of the German pastors was due to the subtle influence of National

---

31 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 52, 60.
Socialism among his fellow church leaders. In a pastors’ conference, Dr. W. van der Vaart Smit spread propaganda asserting that the German hegemony was an irresistible reality, and that all vigilance and resistance against it were futile. This Gottingen Reformed pastor also spoke in the conference. Verkuyl describes him as a person who “had bowed down to the ‘Baal’ of National Socialism.” In another related development, Verkuyl requested the Minister of the Interior not to send the Jews back to Germany, which he called “the mouth of the monster” (de kaken van het monster). He could not understand the government’s decision to keep the “legal” refugees and send the others away, since they all were targets of Nazi atrocities.  

Meanwhile, the climate in the GKN deteriorated further, following the Geelkeerken affair and due to the anti-ecumenical spirit of K. Schilder. The mishandling of the church discipline of Dr. Geelkeerkern led Dr. Smelik and Dr. J. J. Buskes, among others, to form the Hersteld Verband, a group of churches with an ecumenical direction and openness to engaging the world. Brussaard prevailed on Verkuyl to stay in the GKN and to collaborate with the churches with ecumenical orientation. In this way, he could keep his contact with ecumenical figures like Kraemer and Visser’t Hooft, among others.  

K. Schilder, meanwhile, led a counter-ecumenical movement. Verkuyl had great respect for Schilder, especially for his resistance to National Socialism. But Verkuyl was in complete disagreement with regard to Schilder’s view of the church. According to Schilder, the church of Jesus Christ in each place and in each country had

---

32 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 61, 62. On the NSB in the Netherlands, see H. Dam, De NSB en de kerken: De opstelling van de Nationaal Socialiste Beweging in Nederland ten opzichte van het Christendom en met name de Gereformeerde Kerken 1931-1940 (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1986).

33 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 62.
only one address, so that one may not speak of a plurality of churches in loco. Thus, he struggled with the idea of church pluriformity. He believed that there was only one form of church in loco, and so denied all other forms. Schilder did not make a good impression, due to his fierce polemic and his damning of people who did not agree with him.

In hindsight, Verkuyl’s pastoral experience in Laren was an essential preparation for the tasks he assumed in the coming years, especially as professor at the Free University. For him, the interaction of theory and praxis must be clearly emphasized and taught. He considered every situation and experience a leerschool, be that in his small-town church in Laren, or when engaging socio-political issues, or later as we shall see in the dusty villages of Indonesia, or in gloomy Japanese concentration camps. The church, according to him, has no need for droogzwemmers (literally, swimmers on dry ground, or mere theoreticians), but hands-on teachers and preachers who are immersed in the concrete realities of the congregation and society. Incidentally, his successor at the Free University, A. Wessels, takes issue with Verkuyl’s notion of droogzwemmer by saying that lack of missionary experience disqualifies just about everyone and that he got the impression that only people like Verkuyl had been issued the authentic “fishing license” (cf. Matthew 4:19).

---


35 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 64.

the church, Wessels’ reaction to droogzwenmer is uncalled for. On biblical and historical grounds, one can make a good case for Verkuyl’s view. His principle of theory and praxis does not intend to exclude or exalt anyone. While it might create in some people the effect of feeling inferior to those with substantial experience, a more appropriate reaction is to heed the advice. Theological education would fare better with teachers who are both rooted in theory and practice than with solely arm-chair theologians.

**Conclusion**

The background and early years of Verkuyl contained the seeds that would later grow into mature convictions for missio politica oecumenica. His family and church brought him up in a piety that acknowledged God’s lordship over culture and society. This basic religious orientation would develop further under the influence of people like Brussaard, Stufkens, and others he met in the NCSV, all of whom were sensitive to the issues that faced not only the churches but nations as well. In the fellowship of the student movement, he became more conscious of the oneness of the church and its global calling to proclaim the promises and the demands of the gospel. His theological orientation was fundamentally Reformed, inherited through Brussaard, a disciple of H. Bavinck, and Noordmans. He learned integration of text and context, both the biblical and the current historical contexts, from Reformed preachers like De Graaf and Buskes. He appreciated the Swiss theologian K. Barth for his vision of a sovereign God in history, but found problematic his negative view of general revelation and historical movements, which for Verkuyl seemed extreme. Verkuyl’s first pastorate, marked among other
things by the turbulence of the times, viz., rise of National Socialism and ecumenical setbacks, was first in a series of what he called *leerschool*, which would prepare him for some greater task ahead. His idea of *leerschool* involves the importance of both theory and praxis, reflection and pastoral action, which for him are inseparable. *Missio politica oecumenica* can be considered a form of the principle of theory and praxis.
CHAPTER THREE

MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA IN INDONESIA

Verkuyl went to Indonesia as a missionary and involved himself in the nationalist movements in the country. For him these two—being a missionary and a political activist—are not incompatible. He is an example of a missionary who considered his participation in political emancipation of the people he came to serve as a part of his missionary calling. His Reformed heritage now comes into a concrete expression in overseas service in what he called missio politica oecumenica. This chapter will outline his political activities in Indonesia while serving as a missionary, thus giving a concrete example of how missions can take up political concerns of a host country. The common accusation leveled against Verkuyl and other like minded missionaries is this: what right does missions have to meddle in a host country’s politics? It is a very sensitive question that is still raised every time missionaries get entangled in political problems of their host country. Essentially, this is the question with which missio politica oecumenica is concerned.

Much of this chapter is set in the context of the Indonesian nationalist movement during the period of 1945-1949, in which the Dutch attempted to re-occupy the newly proclaimed Republic of Indonesia, leading to the bloodiest war, the so-called Revolution, in the history of the country. There have been a number of studies on the development of Indonesian nationalism and on the Revolution in particular.¹ Many of the studies on the

¹ Considered classic and one of the best in English is G. M. Kahin, Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1952); a work which supplements Kahin within a more limited period and scope is B. R. O’G. Anderson, Java in a Time of Revolution (Ithaca, NY: Cornell
relation of missions and Indonesian nationalism are focused on the pre-Revolution period, providing the background of the period of revolution, which is the setting of this chapter.²

A study that deals particularly with the subject of the relation of Protestant missions and Indonesian nationalism during this period is Tan Tiat Han’s dissertation entitled “The Attitude of Dutch Protestant Missions toward Indonesian Nationalism 1945-1949.”³

Tan’s study is significant in that it is a sustained historical analysis of the subject of the relation of Dutch Protestant missions and Indonesian nationalism, which is not covered in previous studies. It devotes the first part to H. Kraemer’s conception on the missionary


task and his influence on missionaries, both Hervormd, which he was, and Gereformeerd, of which Verkuyl was. The rationale for this extended treatment of Kraemer is Tan’s conclusion that the development of the missionary attitude towards the Indonesian nationalistic movement in the period of 1945-1949 cannot be adequately appreciated without the background of Kraemer’s thinking on the subject. One of the major figures that Tan discusses is Verkuyl, who was very influenced by Kraemer especially on the Indonesian question. However, Tan’s study, written in 1967, did not have the benefit of Verkuyl’s later works on the subject, especially his autobiography, *Gedenken en verwachten* (1983), of which a major part is devoted to his involvement in Indonesian nationalism during our period. This present chapter covers the same subject, the relation of Dutch Protestant missions and Indonesian nationalism, but focuses on an individual missionary whose role in that period is by no means insignificant. The significance of this chapter is that it will show, by drawing upon Verkuyl’s example, how missionary work takes political action as part of its task. It can be said that one cannot adequately appreciate his missiology without understanding his political sensitivity, which was encouraged by his neo-Calvinist orientation, and which led him to unhesitating involvement in those critical years in Indonesia. Thus, this chapter will also serve as the background for Verkuyl’s missiology.

One final note on Tan’s study must be mentioned before proceeding. Tan made a remark that while Verkuyl and fellow Gereformeerde missionary van den Brink deplored the shortsighted policy of the Dutch government vis-à-vis Indonesia, it was unfortunate

---

4 Literature by Verkuyl available to Tan were the following: *De achtergrond van het Indonesische vraagstuk* (The Hague: D. A. Daamen’s Uitgeversmij, 1946); “De politieke situatie op Java,” *Verslag van de zendingsstoedag, belegd door generale zendingstoezetteren* (The Hague, 1946); letter to Kraemer, Djakarta, February 14, 1946; letter to sympathizers of his political study group, Djakarta, January 1, 1946; “Het diepeste geheim van Kraemer’s Leven,” *De Heerbaan*, XIX (1966): 3-5.
that they wrote down their opinions on this important matter only after the war. "The ex-post-facto nature," Tan says, "of the publication of these opinions rendered them useless."5 The comment is rather off the mark. In the first place, to which war is Tan referring? The Japanese War that ended in 1945, or the Dutch-Indonesian War, or the Revolution, ending in 1949? Verkuyl's *De achtergrond van het Indonesische vraagstuk*, which is Tan's major source, and which stirred much controversy in the Netherlands, was published in 1946 at the height of the revolution. If there was a delay, it was because Verkuyl was busy expressing his opinions verbally in public, both in Indonesia and the Netherlands. Thus, even if his opinions were not written at all, it would not be proper to say they were useless. But, having said this, there is no doubt that Tan's study provides valuable background information for much of Verkuyl's activities and thoughts during the period.

*Hearing the Cry for National Independence*

While a pastor at Laren, Verkuyl received an invitation to work as a missionary in Nederlandse-Indies, the colonial name of Indonesia. It had been clear to him that he and his wife wanted to serve in that Southeast Asian archipelago, but, true to his conviction, he felt that prior experience in a homeland pastorate was essential. Meanwhile, he received a request to serve as a chaplain to the growing Asian student population in the Netherlands, which he accepted, first ministering part-time (1935-1936) and then full-time (1937-1939). The experience with the Asian students proved to be another turning point in his life and thought. It was an important preparation for ministry in Asia, not

---

only in evangelistic work, but also in social and political spheres as well. In several
groups, conferences, and informal meetings, he had the privilege of meeting members of
the Asian intelligentsia from various cultural and religious backgrounds who shared
similar nationalist aspirations.\textsuperscript{6}

Understandably, Verkuyl had special interest in the Indonesian students. One of
the groups he met was Perhimpunan Indonesia (PI, Indonesian Union). It was founded in
1908 as a \textit{contactorgaan} for Indonesian students, and in 1922 it became a political
organization whose aim was to work for the independence and sovereignty of their land.
Verkuyl met almost all the leaders of this group, some of whom were socialist-
democratic oriented like those from the SDAP, and others who were inclined towards
Moscow and Eastern European ideology. At this time, he was already wary of the
Marxist element in the group, but he nevertheless tried to forge genuine, deep, and long-
lasting relationships with many of them, regardless of their political orientation and in
spite of their suspicion of his presence among them.

Another significant group that Verkuyl came in contact with was the Indonesische
Christen-Jongeren (ICJ), later renamed Persekutuan Kristen Indonesia (PERKI,
Fellowship of Indonesian Christians), which was founded in 1930 by S. Nimpuno, P.
Tindas, and T. S. G. Mulia at Hardenbrock castle, then the headquarters of the NCSV.
These figures, together with other Christian students, would later play significant roles in
church and nation building in their homeland. Aside from being a social and spiritual
base (\textit{ankerplaats} and \textit{oefenplaats}) for Christian Indonesians, PERKI created an
opportunity in the midst of political tension and ferment for the members to express their

\textsuperscript{6} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 65.
aspirations, differences of opinions, and their various socio-political orientations within the context of their fellowship as believers in Christ. On many occasions, Verkuyl would recall and commend in public the positive contributions of the Christian Indonesians from PERKI in building up the church and the Republic of Indonesia, thus refuting a popular notion that Christian intellectuals were colonial lackeys.

From these groups and encounters, Verkuyl heard clearly the cry for national self-determination. There was a growing non-cooperation movement to which many Indonesian students belonged. Many of them were beginning to realize that the supposed reforms begun in the ethical colonial policy of the previous century could not curb the excesses and abuses of the colonial system. This led to the recognition that the only option for them to take was independence from alien rule. This view was gaining moral support among missionaries, most notably H. Kraemer. In 1935, Verkuyl heard Kraemer address a student conference on the topic “Mission between Imperialism and National Expression,” in which he made an incisive and prophetic analysis of Western imperialism and colonialism as practiced in many places and gave guidelines for the stance missions might be called to take in the context of the conflict between imperialism and the desire for national self-expression. Kraemer’s stance was essentially in favor of national emancipation, a posture that would enable indigenous Christianity to have a more secure position in an anticipated independent nation. It was his conviction that missions should encourage indigenous Christians to support and participate in the nationalist movements, so that they would not to be seen as an arm of colonialism and be alienated from the

---

mainstream national life.\(^8\) This required, among other things, ecclesiastical independence. For this reason, Kraemer campaigned for the independence of churches in Indonesia long before the proclamation of independence of the republic. These thoughts impressed Verkuyl and influenced the direction of his missionary career. As he later testified, "The meeting with Indonesian students in a period when the work of mission had to be done in the context of the conflict between Western imperialism and national self-expression had a deep and decisive influence on my life."\(^9\) Verkuyl would later hear and see more colonial abuse and repression in Indonesia, but even as chaplain to the Asian students in the Netherlands, it was clear to him that part of his task was to address the main issue of the day, i.e., the colonial question. In a brochure of the committee on student mission, he wrote that the relation between the Netherlands and Indonesia must be a relation between two sovereign states which met in the course of history, but which now must learn to serve each other instead of one dominating the other.

Within that frame of mind, Verkuyl did not hesitate to support the petition initiated by Sutardjo. A member of Volksraad, Sutardjo pled in that body that it should be converted from an advisory organ into a full-pledged parliament with authority to legislate and to supervise the affairs of the state and to which the governor general and the government of Netherlands Indies would be responsible. This was still a moderate proposition, although no doubt a transition to full independence was in view. In the

---


course of the campaign for the petition, Verkuyl met important Indonesian figures like Palar, another member of the Volksraad, Sujono, who later took part in the exiled Dutch government in London, and Sutomo, who was the leader of Partai Indonesia Raya (PARINDRA). In 1938, the petition was rejected by the Dutch parliament. Verkuyl’s support of the Sutardjo petition signaled the start of his lifetime commitment to what he called *missio politica oecumenica*.\(^{10}\)

**Face to Face with Political Reality**

Verkuyl and his family arrived in the Dutch Indies in early 1940. The political reality in the colony did not surprise him, as he was aware of it through his association with Indonesian students in the Netherlands. What was striking to him, however, was the apparent ignorance of many Dutch regarding the growing nationalist movement. In the early days from Verkuyl’s arrival in Indonesia, M. H. Thamrin, a member of the opposition group in the Volksraad and suspected of being in contact with the Japanese, was subjected to a house search. He died in custody, an event which left many people suspicious. On a visit with a Dutch family, Verkuyl made an informal remark that Thamrin’s death would shake the foundations of colonial rule. His friend dismissed this assessment and said, “nobody knew the man.” When thousands turned up for the funeral, Verkuyl realized the enormous distance between the Dutch and the growing people’s movement.\(^{11}\)

---

\(^{10}\) Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 73-74.

\(^{11}\) Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 83.
It was Thamrin who asked the government to use the term “Indonesian” rather than the derogatory “inlander” (native) and “Indonesia” rather than “Nederlands-Indie” (Dutch Indies\(^{12}\)) in official documents. The motion was vetoed in the Volksraad, together with two other motions: the Sutardjo motion, which called for Indies citizenship, and the Wiwoho motion for more autonomy. The latter asked for the development of Indonesia in the direction of democratic parliamentarism and expanded ministerial responsibility, similar to the Sutardjo petition of 1936. This is the so-called Thamrin-Sutardjo-Wiwoho three-motion proposal. More attempts by Indonesian leaders at effecting reforms were rebuffed, leaving the Dutch with very few Indonesian friends at the start of the Second World War. The growing frustration Verkuyl sensed among the Indonesians prodded him towards deeper involvement in *missio politica oecumenica*. In 1946, at the height of the Dutch-Indonesian conflict, Verkuyl wrote an article arguing that the rejection of these petitions for reforms created a chasm between the Dutch and the Indonesians that could no longer be bridged, and that the only option open to the Dutch was to recognize the nationalist aspirations of the Indonesians.\(^{13}\)

Meanwhile, Verkuyl was assigned to serve with the Reformed churches in Banyumas. The churches in that area, aside from conducting evangelism and church planting, administered various medical and social services. In those days, Javanese Christians held the view that evangelism was primary (*hoofddienst*) while social services

\(^{12}\) There is a clear indication that Verkuyl himself did not like the term “Dutch Indies” but this term will be used in this study when referring to the archipelago still under the Dutch rule, i.e., until 1945, although Indonesia was not completely independent until 1949.

\(^{13}\) Verkuyl, *Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme*, 61-62; *Gedenken en verwachten*, 101. The article was published as *De achtergrond van het Indonesische vraagstuk*. 
were secondary (*hulpdiensten*).\(^{14}\) This view, for Verkuyl, was biblically inaccurate. Long before there was a debate on the proper relation between evangelism and social action, he was already convinced that both belong to the gospel, both are aspects of mission, and thus both are essential. With regard to medical services, Verkuyl thought that these must include both primary health care and curative medicine. He asserted that, in the total approach of health care, the fight against the root causes of poverty and malnutrition must receive serious attention. This does not mean, however, that curative medicine is less important. Structures and programs, according to him, must be in place to ensure that both the long term and immediate needs of people are taken care of.\(^ {15}\)

All through his ministry as a missionary, Verkuyl never showed a paternalistic attitude and was humble enough to recognize the gifts of national leadership. The Javanese Reformed churches were already established since 1932, and the nationals held the leadership of the church and its missionary outreach. According to Reformed polity, a congregation gathered around the Word and sacraments constitutes the church in a locality and is served and supported by its duly constituted officials and members. On the basis of this standard, the Dutch missionaries served as teachers or advisors, not as supervisors. But Verkuyl never considered himself as an advisor to these more capable, older, and experienced national workers. He felt more like he was their disciple, an assistant to them, listening to and learning from them. Even in the matter of training church members, he recognized that the national pastors were more gifted than the

---

\(^{14}\) Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 86.

\(^{15}\) Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 95, 96.
foreigners. This lack of a condescending attitude is significant in relation to his political involvement, for he listened sympathetically to the views and insights of nationals, not just on ecclesiastical affairs, but also on political issues. His political conviction in those days was formed, to a large extent, by this sympathetic listening to his Indonesian colleagues.

Thus, while doing missionary tasks, he was brought face to face with political reality, which he could not ignore. From the start of his ministry with the Asians, he realized that the problem of colonialism must be addressed in missionary work. How could it be otherwise when the problem preoccupied the minds of even the Christian nationals? The first Christian youth meeting he attended as a missionary was held in Purwokerto. He was asked to speak on the topic “parliamentary democracy” with the motto “Indonesia ber-parlemen” (parliamentary Indonesia). In view of the consistent refusal of the Netherlands to honor any petition for reform, one can imagine how sensitive the topic was—to make a case for it could be considered subversive. Indeed, after the meeting, Verkuyl was called by the regent of Banyumas who, although trying to appear friendly, warned him not to meddle in politics. He was put under surveillance, but nothing intimidated and deterred him from pursuing the vision of a free Indonesia in partnership with the nationals. In that youth meeting, he gave reasons why Christians should pursue parliamentary democracy: fascism and National Socialism in Europe could never be alternatives, nor could the aristocratic-hierarchical system of colonialism. The first two must be avoided; the last, dismantled.  

---

16 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 87, 88.
17 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 100.
In the midst of the political ferment, Verkuyl participated in two critical meetings. The first was the national conference of the Student Christian Movement- Java (CSV-Java) in Kaliurang in November 1940. The theme of this conference was *toekomstverwachting* (the hope of the future). There he met key Christian leaders, one of whom was the chair of the conference, J. Leimena, who would later become a national figure. In this conference, the willingness of the Christian students to take the load of responsibility for the future of the church and the nation made an impact on Verkuyl. In the midst of upheaval, the joy and hope they exhibited was truly impressive for Verkuyl.

The second meeting was the conference of the Nederlands-Indische Zendingsbond (NIZB) in Solo in 1941. Verkuyl noted that the NIZB had always been like a union of missionaries, but he noticed that this conference was different, because its theme was sensitive to political issues and because of the attendance of key nationals. This conference discussed and anticipated the attitude and role of the church in the political arena. The participants resolved that they would work for gradual transfer of sovereignty, which they conveyed in an official letter to Dutch Prime Minister Gerbrandy, whose government was in exile in London. The chair, T. S. G. Mulia, was a remarkable man who was concerned about national education and economy. At that time, Mulia was also vice-chair of the Volksraad. In Mulia's life and work, Verkuyl comments, one could see a reflection of responsible Christian leadership so necessary in Indonesia in the following years.18 Amir Sjarifuddin was another personality that impressed Verkuyl in

---

18 Both Johannes Leimena (1905-1977) and Todung Sutan Gunung Mulia (1896-1966) were in the war cabinet of Sukarno as minister of health and minister of education and culture, respectively. Both were pioneers of influential CSV-Java and of the Council of Indonesian Churches and involved in various church and national leadership. Both were close and influential to Verkuyl. For Verkuyl's memory of Leimena, see his "In Memoriam dr. Johannes Leimena," *Trouw* (March 30, 1977); "Kort levensbericht over dr. Johannes Leimena, medebouwer van de staat en oecumene in Indonesie," *Wereld en Zending* 4 (1977): 329-336; *Gedenken*, 221-224. See also R. Z. Leirissa, "Biografi Dr. J. Leimena," in *Kewarganegaraan yang...*
the conference. Sjarifuddin will be discussed more later in connection with the failed communist coup d'état in 1948, but here it is sufficient to take note of his stance on the problem at hand, that is, the idea that calling for nation-building belonged both to Christians and non-Christians. In his view, it was not wise to form Christian confessional political parties like those in the Netherlands; rather, he preferred that Christians should join secular parties and influence them with Christian values. For his part, Verkuyl stressed that politics for Indonesian Christians in the current dispensation were not to be taken as a mere hobby or point of personal interest, but rather to be obeyed as a demand by the head of the church, Jesus Christ. Thus, he suggested that older pastors should provide foundational biblical principles regarding political matters. He also emphasized that attention must also be given to social and economic problems which, given the current reality, were more important than the problem of power.19

The significance of the meetings lies in the time of their convening and the anticipatory nature of the proceedings. They were conducted at a time when Indonesians perceived significant changes both inside and outside their country. The Christian leaders anticipated that these changes would bring a situation where they could seize

---

19 Verkuyl, Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme, pp. 77-78; Ngelow, Kekristenan dan Nasionalisme, 169-171; Gedenken en verwachten, 102-103; A. G. Hoekema, Berpikir dalam Keseimbangan, 214. For report of the discussion on the theme of the Solo conference, see "Voor de derde sectie sprak Mr. Soewidji, over: 'de roeping der Kerken op politik terrain',' De Opwekker 86 (1941): 639-642.
some opportunities to realize their national aspirations for a free church in a free nation. It was a critical moment in their history but, as the Chinese proverb goes, crisis is a combination of dangers and opportunities. With the Netherlands itself under German occupation, Japanese power coming, and nationalist movements on the rise in many parts of Asia, these meetings could not help but be pregnant with hope and fears and, at the same time, anticipation of the role of Christians in the future. In the anticipated future, national churches would bear the burden of bringing the gospel to their people. Foreign missions would still be welcome, but they would not operate separately and would have to be integrated in the work of the Indonesian churches and their activities under national leadership. The old paternalistic patterns, which reflected the colonial superiority complex, were no longer compatible with national freedom. As anticipated in those pre-independence meetings, the new independent churches now faced great challenges in the midst of the nation building that was going on in many Asian states. These two conferences were the last of their kind to be held in the colonial period, and thus, in some sense marked the end of ecclesiastical colonialism. The next meetings were held under the auspices of the Indonesian National Council of Churches (PGI) in an atmosphere of freedom following the Indonesian Revolution of 1945-1949.

_The Verkuyl Group in Japanese Concentration Camp_

Meanwhile, the Japanese occupied the Dutch Indies in early 1942, a most dramatic and tragic period leading to the Revolution of 1945-1949. All Dutch nationals, including Verkuyl and his family, were interned in concentration camps. For Verkuyl,
the more than three years in the camps were another learning experience (*leerschool*) as he met fellow inmates of different backgrounds and faced completely different pastoral and missionary challenges. The miserable camp life did not dampen his spirit for the work of the kingdom. Hunger, humiliation, sickness, and even death now became common experiences. Faithful to his calling as a clergyman, he found opportunities for pastoral and missionary work in such trying circumstances. The time was propitious in that life in the camp became a sort of sounding board (*resonantiebodem*) in which more profound and long repressed questions now came to the fore and a quest for life’s anchor and certainty in the midst of despair was the spirit’s preoccupation. The fellowship between the Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy was a good opportunity for mutual understanding. Verkuyl discharged his usual duties of preaching and teaching, and provided critically needed for courses and lectures on various topics. His books like *Aku Pertjaja*\(^2\) (I Believe) and *Pandangan Dostojewski Tentang Manusia*\(^2\) (Dostoevsky’s View of Humanity) were the products of teaching and lecturing he did during the time in the camp. He also gave lectures on various religions, which also found their way in various books he later published. Among these, his dissertation on religious freedom is noteworthy.\(^2\)

While doing all these missionary tasks, he was also involved in political discussion regarding Dutch-Indonesian relations and the role of the churches in education.

---


\(^2\) Trans. G. Siagaan (Jakarta: BPK, 1954); *Dostojewski's visie op de mens* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1980).

and nation-building after the war. Within the camp, there were groups representing various streams of opinion with respect to anticipated post-war Dutch-Indonesian relationships. There were the extreme rightists and leftists; the former expected the resumption of the Dutch rule as usual, while the latter advocated complete Indonesian independence. The Verkuyl group (the name obviously indicates his prominence) represented a moderate position. The group’s draft program envisioned a larger measure of autonomy (meedere zelfstandigheid) for Indonesia, which was to be granted within the framework of the Dutch kingdom. According to the draft, many tasks belong to the Imperial Cabinet and Imperial Council. These tasks include the conduct of international and internal policy, the promotion of all imperial interests, the prevention, and adjudication of all conflicts and issues between the Dutch kingdom and its parts, between the parts mutually and between the central organs of any part of the kingdom. With respect to the extreme positions, the proposed draft was moderate enough that the group thought it would be acceptable to Holland, although many of them were still not very optimistic. In view of the circumstances obtaining at the time, the group agreed that it should be taken as provisional, to be revised in the light of new events. The drafters assumed that Dutch rule would resume after the war; no one suspected that the independence of Indonesia would be proclaimed soon after the Japanese capitulation. In the light of the unexpected developments, Verkuyl and his group changed their position to one of recognizing the independence of the republic.  

In addition to the political sphere, the draft program also bears suggestions in the religious-cultural and socio-economic spheres. It insists on freedom of conscience and

---

worship based on a genuine Christian concern for human rights and a conviction that Christianity was the fountain, not only of spiritual good, but also of moral virtues. The social paragraph contains many attractive features which were commonplace in progressive Western countries, but not in Asia. Besides legal provisions against child labor and for sickness and accident insurance, there were provisions for preventive as well as curative health measures. The economic measures reflect an awareness of the pre-war predominance of alien interests and insist that foreign capital be given opportunity based on the possible benefit for Indonesian society, not on the profit motive. It urges the formation of indigenous and domestic capital without hurting the attraction of foreign capital.

The draft program was sent to sympathizers in Holland, together with a cover letter signed by Verkuyl indicating the Indonesian people’s loss of confidence in Dutch power and integrity on the one hand and the longing for freedom on the other hand. In order to counter misconceptions in the Netherlands, the group explained that these sentiments were not just a result of Japanese instigation but had been brewing for many years and spreading all over the archipelago. Hence, the group could declare with conviction that any solution of the conflict that did not take these sentiments into consideration would be a false solution. Overall, the Verkuyl group’s proposed measures were progressive in that they stressed the necessity for charting a new course which would take into account the desires of the Indonesian people, but was moderate in that its point of departure was still the kingdom.²⁵

On August 15, 1945, news reached Indonesia of the Japanese capitulation that followed the dropping of atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Verkuyl had mixed emotions about the liberation. On the one hand, the end of the war meant that he and his family could be reunited. On the other hand, there was the frightening thought that the dropping of atomic bombs was not really necessary at a time when the Japanese were ready to surrender. Verkuyl thought that it was a superfluous show of power intended to intimidate Russia. He expressed his fear thus: “I believe that our ‘liberation’ on 14/15 August was at the same time the beginning of the period of the weapons of mass destruction...the superfluous and demonic onset of atomic weapons.” On the Sunday following the liberation, at the ecumenical Lord’s Supper, he made a promise to consecrate his life to the Lord for the abolition of such weapons. He continued to fulfill that pledge when, years later, nuclear weapons would become a problem that would threaten the very existence of life.

Lobbying for the Republic

When the Dutch authorities left the Indies in the wake of Japanese invasion, Indonesian leaders considered the Dutch colonial rule over, and so proclaimed independence when the Japanese capitulated. The Dutch, however, had a different view of their absence from the Indies during the Japanese occupation. They not only refused to recognize the newly proclaimed Republic of Indonesia, but also attempted to re-

---

occupy it.\textsuperscript{27} As a result, the period between 1945 through 1949 was the bloodiest and most chaotic period in the history of Indonesia (\textit{de periode van het gezagsvacuum}).\textsuperscript{28} This period is also known as the Indonesian Revolution. It was also the time that leaders from both parties tried in vain to negotiate for some amicable solution to the Indonesian problem (\textit{Indonesische vraagstuk}). The first of the negotiations was between Republican Prime Minister Sjahrrir and Lt. Gov. Van Mook in March 1946. They agreed that the Republic would take Java and Sumatra, while the rest of the archipelago would remain under Dutch rule. They proposed that Indonesia would be a federal union of states, the Republic being one of the states, and that all would be linked to the Netherlands in a political union (\textit{staatsverband}). This compromise proposal, albeit moderate, was turned down in the discussions at the Hoge Veluwe the following month, which proved tragic for both sides.\textsuperscript{29} The Hoge Veluwe debacle was featured prominently in the discussion between Verkuyl and interim Prime Minister Schermerhorn and Minister of the Colonies Logemann, when Verkuyl was on a short visit to Holland the following summer to lobby for the Republic.

In the midst of this crisis, Verkuyl, together with fellow progressive missionaries, seized the opportunity to engage in what he called \textit{dienst der verzoening}, the ministry of reconciliation between the Dutch and the Republic. He also called this ministry \textit{missio politica oecumenica} or political \textit{diakonia}, to which in certain situations the Christian

\textsuperscript{27} Henceforth “Republic,” which refers to the nation of Indonesia proclaimed independent by Sukarno in 1945. Since the Republic did not cover the Indonesian archipelago as we know it now until 1949, it would be more accurate to use “Republic” before that year rather than “Indonesia.” Thus, “Republicans,” as opposed to Dutch colonialists, refers to the leaders and supporters of the Republic. Similarly, “Revolution” is in uppercase to refer to the Indonesian Revolution of 1945-49.

\textsuperscript{28} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten} 128-131.

\textsuperscript{29} Anthony Reid, \textit{The Indonesian Nationalism}, 105-106.
missionary may be called. For him, the situation in Indonesia did not just happen suddenly; it represented a long history of failures on the part of the Dutch to truly promote the welfare of the Indies and meet the nationalist aspirations. According to Verkuyl, that history created socio-psychological problems which were more serious than economic problems. On the part of the colonizers, he cited the following dominant social-psychological factors: superiority complex, inability and unwillingness to understand their subjects, which was rooted in lack of concern and resulted in ignorance. On the part of the colonized, grudges, mistrust, and exasperation were dominant. The socio-psychological relations between the Dutch and the Indonesians were at the core of the colonial problem, which ignited the fire of nationalism and eventually led to the collapse of the colonial rule. According to Verkuyl, a political solution was required to remove these factors and establish good relations between the two peoples: dismantle the colonial structure, or, in other words, recognize the sovereignty of the Indonesian Republic. Not that the economic factors were not important, but, for him, the economic reforms could be put in place only when the colonial structure was gone.\textsuperscript{30} As he put it, “However you look at it, the colonial caste system is a form of political drainage in which the interests of the colonizers always have priority over those of the colonized.”\textsuperscript{31} The colonial political drainage had to be abolished in order for cordial relations to follow. This fact motivated Verkuyl to engage in the ministry of reconciliation, or missio politica.

\textsuperscript{30} Verkuyl, Erika Kristen: Ras, Bangsa, Gereja dan Negara, II/3 (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1989), 45-50; Runtuhkan Tembok Pemisah, trans. M. H. Simanungkalit (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1974), 53-62; Break Down the Walls (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 64-70; cf. Gedenken, 133.

The objective of this ministry was not to persuade the Indonesians to give the Dutch another chance, but to convince the Dutch that winds of change had brought a new and different reality into which the old colonial relations would not fit.

Motivated by this ministry of reconciliation, Verkuyl embarked on a mission to the Netherlands in the summer of 1946, which was at the height of Dutch-Indonesian conflict. This visit was actually at the request of the juridical advisor of Lieutenant General Van Mook, F. M. van Asbeck, who, together with Kraemer, extended friendship and support during Verkuyl’s chaplainship in Leiden. Van Asbeck stated the purpose of Verkuyl’s short “diplomatic” visit in general terms: to convince the political parties, especially the opposition ARP and CHU, to help find solutions to the conflict and to deal with it as a matter of domestic party politics rather than as an international problem. Van Asbeck knew that Verkuyl had much contact with groups in the Netherlands, not to mention that he was the representative of the Reformed mission in Indonesia. This caused him to hope that Verkuyl would exercise his influence to move them to cooperate in finding an amicable solution. The visit proved to be busy with discussions, interviews, and speaking engagements. His audience included influential people and top officials: Queen Wilhelmina, Prime Minister W. Schermerhorn and Minister of the Colonies J. H. A. Logemann, Jan Schouten of the ARP and H. W. Tilanus of the CHU, business executive C. Gerretson, ex-Prime Minister P. S. Gerbrandy, pastors, and leaders of mission agencies. In all these encounters Verkuyl not only stated the position of the Indonesian leaders as clearly as possible, but he also tried to defend it. The proceedings of the meetings are noteworthy and it would be good to highlight some of the significant points.
The meeting with her majesty, as Verkuyl described it, gripped him very much (mi'j zeer aangreep). He was excited about this meeting, not simply because of with whom he was meeting, but because Indonesian leaders felt that the queen had greater personal influence than what was derived from her formal, constitutional position. They did not realize, however, that the queen would act more along the line of her constitutional position as a monarch (constitutioneel monarch) rather than by her personal influence, which meant she could not do anything about the Indonesian problem except to leave the matter in the hands of the government.\textsuperscript{32} Of course, Verkuyl knew about the limitations of the Dutch monarchy, but still he tried hard to convince the queen to adopt her own position along the lines of her radio address of December 6, 1942. Verkuyl, like many Indonesians, adored the queen and was hoping that she could sway public opinion more in favor of the Republic. It is quite interesting that Verkuyl even made an unsolicited remark that Indonesians deeply respected the House of Orange, and that for them King Willem was a symbol of freedom from imperialism and a champion of the rights of the weak and the poor.\textsuperscript{33} It is as if he was reminding the queen of the very foundations on which the Dutch nation rested, the same foundations that now should justify the Indonesian cause.

The meeting with the queen revolved around her radio address of December 6, 1942. Apparently, the queen knew about the low enthusiasm her address received in

\textsuperscript{32} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 136. Cf. P. S. Gerbrandy, \textit{Indonesia} (Hutchinson & Co, 1950), 59, in which he comments on the nature and purpose of the Queen's broadcast on December 6, 1942. He writes about post-war intentions of the Netherlands for the colonies and then says, "We, therefore, decided to invite the Queen to give the world a royal message, which would indicate general hopes and intentions, though this, of course, could not have more legal significance than a Speech from the Throne. In accordance with the Constitutional usage the Cabinet were responsible for the contents of the message."

\textsuperscript{33} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 136.
Indonesia, and she now asked Verkuyl why this was so. He explained that Indonesian leaders were not sure about what the fulfillment of her promises would concretely imply politically, socially, and economically in the post-war context. It was not a problem of cognition on the part of the Indonesians, but rather a profound socio-psychological problem of mistrust and suspicion of the Dutch. In the address, the queen announced, among other things, that after the war she had intended “to create the occasion for a joint consultation about the structure of the kingdom and its parts in order to adapt it to the changed circumstances.”

She anticipated that the recommendations of such a conference “will be directed towards a commonwealth in which the Netherlands, Indonesia, Surinam, and Curacao will participate, with complete self-reliance and freedom of conduct for each part regarding its internal affairs, but with the readiness to render mutual assistance.” The fact that the queen promised these things did make an impression, but the Indonesian people expected more. They expected concrete official actions such as that which Syarifuddin expressed to Verkuyl: that any negotiations must be conducted at the highest level and that the aim of such negotiations should be a treaty of mutual assistance between two sovereign states, which means that the Dutch government must recognize the Indonesian Republic first of all. This is the same position Verkuyl presented to the Queen.

---


36 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 135.
The Dutch government, however, had different ideas about how the queen’s promises should be put into effect. Verkuyl’s meeting with the interim Prime Minister Schermerhorn and Minister of the Colonies Logemann revealed that the government had a different scenario. Both these officials were very discouraged over the failure of the controversial Hoge Veluwe conference, which was held two months prior to Verkuyl’s audience with the queen. It must be remembered that Sjahrrir, then premier of the Republic, and Lieutenant General van Mook made this compromise proposal, which they presented to the government in Holland for approval. The conference broke down before it could reach any decision, because the proposed compromise was perceived by the Dutch government as a liability and unpopular in the coming first post-war elections. For Verkuyl, it was a serious blow to a possible union between the Netherlands and Indonesia.37

Schermerhorn and Logemann expressed to Verkuyl the difference in the stand of the Dutch government vis-à-vis the Sjahrrir-van Mook proposal. According to them, the Dutch government was ready to recognize the Republic’s authority over Java, but not over Sumatra. It was not ready to make a concession that the Republic be involved in setting up a federal structure for Borneo and the Great East. The two officials were concerned about possible political repercussions of such concession. For them, there were difficulties in forcing an agreement on an international problem, such as Van Mook did,

37 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 136-137. Schermerhorn was appointed by Queen Wilhelmina to form a provisional cabinet following the end of the Second World War. He was a member of Liberal Democratic Party (later merged with the Labor Party), active in the Resistance, opposed to religiously based political parties, and more sympathetic to Indonesian nationalist aspirations than most political leaders. His Labor party lost in the 1946 elections and then he was appointed chair of the commission-general which negotiated the Linggajati Agreement on November 12, 1946. See Johan G. Westra, Confessional Political Parties in the Netherlands, 1813-1946 (Ph.D diss., University of Michigan, 1972), 349-364; Anthony Reid, The Indonesian National, 105-106.
at a time when the elections were imminent. They feared that this might lead to the
greater influence of the Katholieke Volks Partij (KVP). The two thought that the
growing Catholic influence in the Netherlands and conceding to Sukarno would be
perceived as a liability to the Dutch cause and might lead to further polarization of
relations in the Dutch government.\textsuperscript{38}

The Indonesians, however, were concerned that a federation of purely Dutch
design would be perceived as a form of neo-colonialism. Verkuyl explained to
Schermerhorn and Logemann that the Republican unitarian movement was even stronger
in East Indonesia than the Dutch presumed. He cited a number of eastern figures, like S.
Ratulangi, who were also advocates of united state. They also deserved a hearing and
honor for their long struggle in the pre-war period. According to Verkuyl, the federal
structure proposed by the Dutch should, at the most, only be transitory and must be
supported by the Republic while it sought for a more appropriate and permanent structure.
The decisive factor was not what the Netherlands thought and constructed for the colony,
he emphasized, but what the Indonesian people determined to be viable for their national
life. Furthermore, Verkuyl explained to the two officials that the Republic was a political
and social-psychological reality that must be recognized, although its technical and
administrative infrastructure had yet to be put in place. In terms of Syarifuddin’s
principle of mutual assistance between two sovereign states, this means the Dutch
government could not but recognize and accept that reality, and at the same time help
build up its technical and administrative infrastructure for the sake of cordial future
relations. On the question regarding Sukarno, who was much vilified in Holland,

\textsuperscript{38} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 137. Cf. J. P. M. de Vetten, “Schermerhorn en de
Verkuyl realized that the Indonesian leader was a controversial figure during the crisis because of all the perceived ambiguities of his actions. Verkuyl was aware of the danger that this figure might pose to the proper functioning of a constitutional state, since Sukarno had collaborated with the Japanese and was thought to have been influenced by their fascist tendencies. At the same time, he recognized that the de facto president had much to contribute positively with his desire for a united Indonesian state from Sabang to Merauke. Verkuyl argued that it would be unrealistic to alienate Sukarno; he was a temporary symbol of the Republic and should be accepted as such. Verkuyl argued that the best representatives of the Republic demanded recognition of the state with or without Sukarno, and that it was the Indonesian people who should decide the future of Sukarno, not the ex-colonizers.39

The meeting with the ARP leadership was more tense than the previous one had been. Verkuyl reacted quite strongly to Schouten’s principle that “power is power and a rebel is a rebel,” implying that the Netherlands was the power and therefore was always right, and that the Republic was the rebel and therefore must be crushed. Verkuyl thought this to be too simplistic. Revolution, he argued, is not the same as rebellion, and there are different kinds of revolutions. Power, he explained, is not always right, as Schouten would imply. Power is laid by God into human hands. As the exercise of power always comprises justice and injustice, so does a revolution; it can also be a matter of obedience and disobedience. While a revolution could be an invasion of the existing order and, as such, a breach of justice, Verkuyl argued that behind many revolutions is a

deep craving for justice. For him, the problem was far more complex than Schouten understood. It is a problem that touches on fundamental principles, and therefore must be viewed theologically. Thus, Verkuyl explained that the proclamation of the Republic could not be viewed simply as a product of Japanese manipulation, or the desire of a few adventurous natives, as many like Schouten alleged, but as consensus populi, which developed not just recently, but through many years. For Verkuyl, the ARP stance to repress the Republic first and then offer to negotiate was not only immoral but was, in fact, also impossible. Not only did Schouten have no sense of reality and speak only in terms of crude principles (beginselen), he also looked at the Indonesian question from the perspective of opposition tactics in domestic politics. He warned that the ARP was in the opposition and thus thought it must oppose everything that comes from the ruling parties. Nothing annoyed Verkuyl more than the fact that de-colonization became a divisive political issue and was not approached by all parties together.\(^40\)

Verkuyl evaluated this dialogue with Schouten as going nowhere (geen land te bezeilen). Schouten even expressed that Verkuyl was too stupid and naïve to understand politics and considered Verkuyl's views and action as incompatible with party discipline. Verkuyl found this charge strange, as if he were a party member and subject to party discipline. Moreover, Verkuyl was accused of pursuing a political career, which was even more strange, since he was a theologian holding so unpopular a political position. Other ARP leaders were more sympathetic, while the CHU leader Tilanus's knowledge of the matter was so minimal that he took no informed position.\(^41\)

\(^{40}\) Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 139-140, 144.

\(^{41}\) Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 140, 141.
If Schouten was mainly concerned about his party's political interests, C. Gerretson cared more about Dutch transnational business interests like the Shell Company in Indonesia. It was dreadful for Verkuyl to hear Gerretson's remark that the independence of Indonesia merely marked the changing of the guards in the government and that "once we had the power, we will buy off Sukarno" (zitten we daar eenmaal, dan kopen wij Sukarno om). P. S. Gerbrandy, on the other hand, was still reeling from a political setback when Verkuyl talked to him. Verkuyl remembered this man who, while prime minister in exile, ignored a resolution from the missionary conference of the NIZB in 1940 calling for the gradual transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia. Verkuyl, a participant of the aforementioned conference, sent a follow up letter to him in 1941, complaining that he did not make any concessions to the wishes of the loyal and moderate Indonesians, who were in principle supported by the Allies, and were in line with the principles of the Atlantic Charter. While Gerbrandy was no supporter of the hard-liner Colijn and was against the government of Schermerhorn, he now appeared to be an advocate of Rijkseenheid-ideologie (unity of the [Dutch] empire). Gerbrandy thought Gerretson to be too opportunist and cynical, Verkuyl's stance unacceptable, and the United States' involvement in the Indonesian problem vexing.

Two meetings with ecclesiastical groups are noteworthy. The first was the pastors' conference in Rotterdam, which both Verkuyl and J. H. Bavinck addressed. In

---

42 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 141.
43 Verkuyl, Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme, 78.
this meeting, Verkuyl pointed out the profound difference between the vision of Abraham Kuyper and that of Colijn on the Indonesian question. According to Verkuyl, Kuyper was the first to oppose the idea of Rijkseenheid in the ARP’s Ons Program of 1903 and proposed that the aim of colonial rule must be the independence of the colonies. But over against this Kuyperian principle, Colijn developed the ideology of Rijkseenheid. Verkuyl lamented that the Reformed community had swung back and forth between these two conflicting visions and that it was no longer time to vacillate, but to choose. J. H. Bavinck’s address was similar, although less confrontational, as was more characteristic of his personality. Incidentally, although uninvited, Schouten appeared at the meeting and again scolded Verkuyl. It was comforting for Verkuyl, however, that the conference helped the pastors to become more aware of the problem.45

Verkuyl also met with the mission leadership of not only his own mission, Zending van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, but also of the Nederlandse Zendingsraad and the German Rheinische and Swiss Basler Mission. About this meeting, what was striking for Verkuyl was that the leaders agreed with him, but they felt that it should not be made public for fear of possible loss of support at the home front. While the sentiment may be understandable, Verkuyl thought that a clear stance on the Indonesian question would, in the long run, strengthen the integrity of the Dutch missions, or any mission for that matter, rather than undermine them. The value of this stance served him well when he received the task of preparing conference on the relation of

45 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 142-144.
Dutch missions and Indonesian churches in the anticipated post-colonial era. The conference took place at Kwitang in May 1947.\(^{46}\)

Finally, Verkuyl reiterated his position in other forums, including a lecture at the Institute for the Tropics in Amsterdam, an article about the impasse of the negotiations published in *Vrije Nederland*, and a pamphlet entitled *De achtergrond van het Indonesische vraagstuk*.\(^{47}\) For all these efforts he suffered the brunt of opposition from his own circle (*Ik kreeg daarover weer de wind van voren in mijn eigen kring*). The *De achtergrond* set loose a storm of criticism from people with whom he had deep ties, especially from GKN people. The daily newspaper *Trouw* thought that he needed to be silenced. Surprisingly, however, people who read these writings years later found Verkuyl's position to be really modest (*gematigd*).\(^{48}\)

---

**Laying the Groundwork for Human Rights especially Religious Freedom**

Upon returning from that short visit to the Netherlands, he was appointed by the Verkuyl Group as representative to a conference in Pangkalpinang. This conference was composed of representatives from the minorities in Indonesia, and was held on October 1-12, 1946, under the auspices of H. J. van Mook. The aim of the conference was to listen to the wishes of the minorities regarding the future structure in Indonesia. The conference formed a cross-section of minorities from various groups: Indo-European, Chinese, Arabic (Muslim), Christians, and business people, all of whose fate was closely

\(^{46}\) Verkuyl, *Ketegangan, 77; Gedenken en verwachten*, 143, 156-158.

\(^{47}\) Also in Verkuyl, *Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme, 57-62; cf. A. G. Berpikir dalam Keseimbangan*, 243-244.

\(^{48}\) Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 144, 145.
woven with the future of Indonesia. In the conference, Verkuyl requested attention to the two aspects of the mandate of the conference. First, he expressed that the formation of the union between the Netherlands and its colonies should not be the emphasis. Although a union might be formed, the right of Indonesia to step aside from the union must be recognized, because it was probable that such a union would turn out to be artificial and would not rest on the consensus of the overwhelming majority of the Indonesian people.  

Secondly, Verkuyl stressed that, in the negotiations, the fundamental rights must be secured in the plan or blueprint for the future (blauwdruk voor de toekomst). Some of these rights were religious freedom, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly. A motion regarding this proposal was accepted practically by all, including the Muslim representatives. Following the conference, the matter of inserting fundamental rights into the blueprint of the developing states had been Verkuyl’s pre-occupation. It was his firm conviction that contact with the independence movements must always press for including fundamental rights in the constitutions of young states. Verkuyl clarifies the task of Christians in contact with independence movements:

The task of Christians in meeting with [leaders of] independence movements is not to applaud uncritically or to issue a blank check to any movement that claims to be an independence movement, but to ask in these encounters the questions regarding the goals to which they aspire and the plans and ways they intend to realize fundamental rights.  

Verkuyl was aware that simply laying these rights down in the constitution would not

\[49\] Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 146.

\[50\] Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 173. “De taak van christenen in contacten met bevrijdingsbewegingen is niet om kritiekloos te applaudisseren en blanco crediet te geven aan iedere beweging die zich als bevrijdingsbeweging aandient, maar om in contact met zulke bewegingen de vraag te stellen welke doeleinden die bewegingen voor ogen staan, welke blauwdruk ze willen verwerkelijken en op welke wijze ze de fundamentele rechten willen realiseren.” My translation.
guarantee that these rights would always be observed. For him, these rights must grow in the consciousness of the people. Nevertheless, it was essential that fundamental rights be secured in the constitution. Otherwise, there would be no judicial framework in which people’s consciousness of these rights could develop, not to mention the high possibility of these young states succumbing to totalitarianism on the right or left. 51

Thus, Verkuyl appreciated Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, both leading figures in the nationalist movement and proclaimers of Indonesian independence, for securing fundamental rights. Sukarno, in spite of his many weaknesses, must be credited for being the architect of Pancasila, or the five principles of the Indonesian state. The first sila, or principle, is the recognition of divinity (erkennen van het goddelijke) in life and society, the interpretation of which is left to the conviction of the main religious communities. This principle not only prevented Indonesia from the extreme tendencies of certain groups making the nation either an Islamic or communist state, but it also guaranteed religious freedom. For Verkuyl, the grounding of the Republic in Pancasila is no small achievement of Sukarno. As he put it, “it is significant that Sukarno in this formulation secured on the one hand religious freedom and on the other recognized the meaning of the religious dimension of life and society within the Republic.” 52 On the other hand,

51 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 146-147; Enkele aspecten van het probleem der godsdienstvrijheid in betrekking tot de plaats en arbeid van de christelijke kerken in Azie (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1948), 316-317.

52 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 164. My translation. Het is van grote betekenis dat Sukarno, die met deze neiging telkens weer...werd geconfronteerd, in deze formulering enerzijds de vrijheid van godsdienst vastgelegd wilde zien en anderzijds de betekenis van de religieuze dimensie voor het leven en samenleven binnen het huis van de Republiek erkende. Cf. Verkuyl, Indonesie onze meest nabije naaste in Azie (Kampen: Kok, 1974), 15-20; Contemporary Missiology, 383-385; Ngelow, Kekristianan dan Nasionalisme, 46-48; E. Darmaputra, Pancasila: Identitas dan Modernitas (Jakarta: BPK, 1997), 104-117. See also Sukarno, Toward Freedom and Dignity of Man, a collection of five speeches on Pancasila (Jakarta: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1961); Lahirnya Pancasila (Jakarta: Pustaka Universitas, 1982). There are many studies on Sukarno, one which Verkuyl cited is Bernhard Dahri, Soekarno en de strijd om
Hatta, although a committed Muslim, stood wholeheartedly behind *Pancasila* and pleaded for religious freedom and plurality (*veelvormigheid*) in the religious realm.\(^{53}\)

Meanwhile, in 1948, Verkuyl was awarded the doctoral degree for a dissertation entitled *Enkele aspecten van het probleem der godsdienstvrijheid in Azie* in which, among other things, he writes about the acceptance or insertion of religious freedom in the constitution of Indonesia. The writing of the dissertation was for him a part of *missio politica oecumenica*.\(^{54}\) J. H. Bavinck, under whose supervision he wrote the dissertation, understood the good intention of Verkuyl's study and encouraged him to apply his dissertation’s theme in the context of nation-building in Indonesia.\(^{55}\) Bavinck's comment reflects a definite relationship between gospel communication and action for freedom and justice.

Verkuyl’s dissertation complements the book by M. Searle Bates, *Religious Liberty: An Inquiry*, by providing the religious-historical aspect of the problem in various major religious traditions (chapters I-V) and its Christian theological foundation (chapter VII), two aspects of the question that Bates’ book does not deal with.\(^{56}\) In addition to these dimensions, Verkuyl’s study includes a short overview of the struggle for religious

---


\(^{54}\) Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 173.

\(^{55}\) Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 172-173.

freedom in Western theology (chapter VI) and a religious-historical analysis of freedom of religion in Indonesia (chapter VIII).\textsuperscript{57} Aside from the perceived neglect of a subject, that is of utmost importance both for the mission and for the study of East Asian religions, Verkuyl was motivated to write on it because of the alarming threats posed by totalitarian states to religious liberty. The question that occupied his mind in this study was: "Why should the Christian church plead for religious freedom and why should it raise the question for its sake and others?"\textsuperscript{58} It was his conviction that every generation must struggle anew for the most fundamental human rights and freedoms, and that it is the task of all to recognize the religious situation in building up constitutional states.\textsuperscript{59} His study influenced the thinking on religious freedom in the following years in Indonesia, as church leaders and Christian politicians struggled with the question of how this freedom could be firmly grounded in the constitution.\textsuperscript{60} That Indonesia did not slide into becoming an Islamic state or a completely secular state was due in part to the efforts of Verkuyl and

\textsuperscript{57} Chapter 8 of Enkele Aspecten is published in English as “Indonesia and Religious Liberty,” International Review of Mission 38 (1949): 312-323.

\textsuperscript{58} Verkuyl, Gedachten en verwachten, 171. My translation. Waarom moet de christelijke kerk pleiten voor het vrijlaten van de strijd der geesten en waarom moet ze de vrijheid die ze voor zichzelf eist ook voor anderen vragen? Cf. Enkele aspecten, 265-269


some other Christian leaders in those formative years when the country was trying to
define its identity.

In Indonesia, just like in the West, notes Verkuyl, it would involve many factors
and movements before fundamental freedoms could be achieved.\textsuperscript{61} It is a joint task of
jurists, social scientists, and theologians, of Christians and non-Christians. From among
his friends and colleagues, he mentioned in particular Christian national leaders like J.
Leimena and A. M. Tambunan, who stimulated him to deepen his understanding on the
subject. Friends like O. Notohamidjojo, W. J. Rumambi, and J. C. Simorangkir were
committed to give attention both in their writings and in their parliamentary work to the
question of human rights and freedoms.\textsuperscript{62} And later Yap Thiam Hien, from within the
circle of the Indonesian Council of Churches, laid emphasis on the relationship between
religious liberty and other freedoms. He was also a member of the International
Organization of Jurists and the Commission for International Affairs of the WCC and, in
those arenas gave intensive attention to the same emphases at the international level. For
Verkuyl, the joint pursuit with these people and others was a beneficial exercise (\textit{nuttige
\oe fening}) and a preparation for his further involvement in independence movements in

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{61} Verkuyl in \textit{Enkele aspecten} chapter 6 discusses the factors and movements that finally achieved
freedom of religion in the Western world. Chapter 8 is a historical and religious analysis or religious
freedom in Indonesia.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{62} O. Notohamidjojo (1915-1985) was the first president of Christian University in Indonesia and a
prominent lay theologian influenced by Verkuyl. Notohamidjojo together with Verkuyl, Rumambi, and
Simorangkir published an "experimental" book in political ethics entitled \textit{Iman Kristen dan Politik} (Jakarta:
BPK Gunung Mulia, 1952). This symposium book was originally written in Dutch and published in 1948
and, according to Verkuyl, "the first book to offer discussion material to preachers, catechizers, training
leaders, and politicians for further reflection on the \textit{missio politica oecumenica}," \textit{Contemporary Missiology},
398-399. For biographical notes on Notohamidjojo, see \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 252; \textit{Contemporary
Missiology}, 268; also \textit{Vrije Universiteit Jaarboek 1971-1972}, 334-339, on the occasion of his being
awarded the honorary doctorate in the University. For more on Notohamidjojo and Rumambi, see A. G.
Hoekema, \textit{Berpikir dalam Keseimbangan}, 267-269 and 275-276, respectively.
other parts of the world, especially when he was connected with the WCC Program to Combat Racism (PCR) and worked with the Dutch-based Inter-church Coordinating Committee for Development Projects (ICCO). 63

**Minister of the Word of God and Non-Partisan Politics**

"I would rather remain a minister of the Word of God because in that function I can do more of abiding value than in a temporary political function in a transitory situation."64 Thus Verkuyl expressed himself to van Mook, who asked him to fill in the position of deputy director of the department of social affairs during the transition period, when a federal structure of government was being attempted for Indonesia. Verkuyl’s words may explain the whole rationale for his involvement in political issues at that critical moment. Verkuyl saw a ministry of principled reconciliation based on the word of the God as most essential at that important juncture, thereby laying a strong foundation for the future of the nation. He believed he could best do that by refusing to identify himself with any of the parties. He was definite about his identity and calling, wanting to avoid anything that would compromise them or that could be misconstrued as having "a political axe to grind," as Scholten accused him of.65

This is not to say that Verkuyl believed that government or political office is less important; true to basic Reformed conviction, he believed that government authorities

---


were ministers of God. Nor was he content with merely verbal proclamation, which can easily lead to ecclesiastical verbalism. Nor did he think that ordained ministers or missionaries were not supposed to meddle in politics. He thought the reasons for van Mook's offer were legitimate. Van Mook felt he trusted missionaries more than the arrogant newcomers who were almost completely ignorant of the Indonesian situation, for the former came to the land not out of self-interest, but on behalf of the people. The lieutenant governor-general even gave as precedence the case of the Rev. A. S. Talma in the Netherlands who, although a minister of the word, helped lay the foundation for social legislation. The same pattern, van Mook felt, would work in Indonesia if the matter was entrusted to a theologian and minister like Verkuyli.66

Verkuyli's non-partisan attitude was again tested when President Sukarno himself extended a special invitation to him to accompany him on a journey throughout the territory of the Republic. The plan, which Sukarno himself made, would give Verkuyli an opportunity to speak to the people, to plead for an end to the conflict, and to show that not all the Dutch had an imperialistic attitude. This offer, too, was turned down. In the first place, Verkuyli explained that the purpose of his visit to Jogjakarta, the capital of the Republic where Sukarno held his office, was to meet church leadership and to encourage them to restore and keep the relationship with all churches regardless of their location within the new political boundaries. At the height of the conflict, new political boundaries, or demarcation line, had been drawn between the territories under the control of the Dutch-Indies rule and those under the authority of the Republic. People like Basuki Probowinoto, a leading churchman of the Reformed churches in Java, pointed out

66 Verkuyli, Gedenken en verwachten, 148-150.
the need to restore the relations between churches, regardless of the political conflict, especially between Dutch churches and the churches within the territory of the Republic. Delay would only strengthen the impression that church relations were dependent on colonial relations. Verkuyl was very impressed by Probowinoto’s insight that church relations must not be limited by any demarcation line, but must be developed independent of the line, out of a deeper bond and motives—this should be communicated clearly to the church and the world. To present and explain this to churches was the intention of Verkuyl in his visit to Jogjakarta along with T. B. W. G. Gramberg.67

Furthermore, Verkuyl expressed to Sukarno that, if he were to accept the offer to go with him on the proposed journey, he was afraid it would undermine (verminderen) his constructive efforts in reconciliation. Verkuyl’s reasons must have been similar to the answer he gave to van Mook earlier when the latter offered him a government job: he was a minister of the word and, as such, would be more effective in his “political” role if he would not identify himself with what might be construed as partisan politics. Verkuyl nevertheless promised Sukarno that he would continue the task of reconciling the Dutch and the Republic and help in the transfer of sovereignty.68

While in Jogjakarta, Verkuyl also received an invitation to attend a meeting of the board of the Indonesian Christian Party (PARKINDO). For him, it was a memorable meeting, under the able leadership of Mr. Simorangkir. Almost all the officials of the party were present, including Dr. Leimena, who at that time held a cabinet post in the Republic as a minister of health, and Dr. A. M. Tambunan, the chair of the transition parliament (KNIP), and who in the pre-war years was deputy consul of missions. The

67 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 151-152,153.
68 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 153.
representatives from the Protestant regions of Indonesia who were in the capital were also in attendance. The meeting extended two requests to Verkuyl. First, it asked him to make an appeal to the WCC, whose formation was underway, through its leaders like W. Visser’t Hooft and William Paton, to do everything possible to enable negotiations to continue and to prevent military actions. Secondly, it asked Verkuyl to persuade its Dutch counterpart, the ARP leadership, to exchange ideas with their fellow-believers from the Republic. The board of PARKINDO was shocked by the fact that confessional parties in the Netherlands like the ARP and the CHU opposed any negotiations. When they heard that ARP J. Schouten of the ARP and J. A. H. J. S. Bruins were in Jakarta, they extended an invitation to them to come in Jogjakarta, with safe passage assured. Unfortunately, when Verkuyl brought the request to Schouten and Bruins in Jakarta, both ignored it. Schouten, with his hard line stance that gezag is gezag en een rebel is een rebel would have nothing to do with the “rebels,” while Bruins did not trust the Indonesians enough for his safety. Verkuyl thought that both of them remained blinded by Dutch nationalistic feelings and listened to the military advisers of the lieutenant-general rather than to the voices of their fellow Christians in Jogjakarta. For him, it was a dark page in the history of mutual relations, a great loss of opportunity for peace and reconciliation, from which both sides suffered.69

---
69 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 155-156.
Peace-making in the Midst of Hostilities

Negotiations continued between the Republic of Indonesia and the Netherlands. After the Hoge Veluwe debacle, the Republic and the Netherlands entered into another negotiation in November 1946 that culminated in the signing of the Linggadjati Agreement in March of the following year. Among other things, the Agreement provided recognition by the Dutch of the Republic's de facto authority over Java, Madura, and Sumatra, and the agreement by both parties to create a federal United States of Indonesia (USI) by January 1, 1949, in which the Republic would be one of the states and the Dutch queen would be the symbolic head of a Dutch-Indonesian union of sovereign states. This treaty was short-lived. M. C. Ricklefs gives reasons for the failure of Linggadjati, saying, "Both sides distrusted each other deeply and in both countries ratification of the agreement provoked bitter political controversies over the concessions which had been made." On July 20, 1947, the Dutch launched their first "police action," which is a Dutch euphemism for military attack. It plunged the Dutch into a deep diplomatic crisis. The "Indonesian question" became an international problem; the UN now would have to intervene.

In October, a UN Good Offices Committee with American, Australian, and Belgian representatives was formed to assist Dutch-Republican negotiations for a new ceasefire. In January 1948, with the Renville Agreement inked, both sides called a

---

70 See pp. 73-78 above. Cf. Reid, The Indonesian National, 106; Leifer, Indonesia's Foreign Policy, 11; Ricklefs, A History of Modern Indonesia, 223.

ceasefire along the so-called van Mook line, a unilateral demarcation line earlier
announced by van Mook. The signing of the agreement was perceived by the
Indonesians as a disadvantage to their interests and created a political backlash that led to
the fall of the co-signatory, then premier Amir Syarifuddin.

Meanwhile, leftist elements consolidated their forces following the sudden arrival
of the communist leader Musso. They assumed that negotiations with the Dutch were
hopeless and thus threw their lot with the Russians. They attempted a coup d’etat in
Madiun, which was quickly crushed by the Republic. The Communists’ defeat further
strengthened US support of the Indonesian cause, for it was in line with the American
global strategy to contain communist influence. The Dutch were encouraged to launch
another “police action” on December 18, 1948, for several reasons, including violations
of the Renville from both sides, irreconcilable differences on what to make of the
transition to independence, and the more conservative outcome of the July 1948 Dutch
elections. Despite the appearance of an easy victory, the action achieved the very
opposite of what the Dutch intended. It was a fatal diplomatic defeat for the Dutch, as
the UN and the USA exerted all sorts of pressures, which forced the Netherlands to
abandon its ambition of reoccupying Indonesia. The so-called Van Royen-Roem
agreement effected a ceasefire, and Sukarno, Hatta, and other Republican leaders were
allowed to re-assume their posts undisturbed. From August 23 to November 2, 1949, a
Round Table conference was held at The Hague. This provided for, among other things,
the recognition of the federal Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI)
comprising all the states created by the Dutch except Irian Jaya, now Papua Barat, a
certain union of RUSI and the Netherlands, the queen as symbolic head of the union, and
Dutch investments in Indonesia. In December 1949, the Netherlands formally transferred sovereignty to federal RUSI. Since union sentiments were stronger than the suspect Dutch-conceived federalism, it survived only for a few weeks. RUSI became the united Republic of Indonesia.

This brief historical outline is meant to provide us with the context for Verkuyl’s activities during the Indonesian Revolution. The Hoge Veluwe conference in the Netherlands had failed before his short “diplomatic” visit to that country in 1946. As I have noted, the outcome of that conference was brought up in his meeting with the Dutch officials. He and his family had been on furlough in the Netherlands for barely two months when the first “police action” happened, following the failure of the Linggadjati Agreement. When back in Indonesia, Verkuyl enjoyed safe passage on either side of the van Mook demarcation line, enabling him to visit Sukarno and church leaders in Jogjakarta. For him, as for many Indonesians, the communist Madiun affair, in which some Christians, notably his friend Syarifuddin, were involved, was a distressing event.

The day the second “police action” was launched, the last Advent Sunday before Christmas, Verkuyl was to lead a service for a radio broadcast. He chose two texts, one from the Song of Zechariah, Luke 1: 79, and another from Romans 3: 15-17. The Lukan passage states that the child of Bethlehem will “guide our feet into the path of peace,”

---

while Paul says in the second passage that the sinfulness of humanity manifests itself in, among other things, not knowing the way of peace. Verkuyl declared that that day was a black day \textit{(een dies ater)} and pleaded on the basis of the readings for a reverse to the dead-end path of violence and counter-violence. High Commissioner Beel and General Spoor, who both engineered the police action, heard Verkuyl’s radio broadcast and considered ceasing the military operation, but they dared not for fear of a possible misunderstanding. Verkuyl was so concerned about the thousands of people from both the Indonesian and the Dutch sides who would fall, and who in fact did fall as victims of such reckless action. He had much contact with Dutch military personnel in Jakarta and sought them outside their camps, against the advice of some.\textsuperscript{73} During this time, most top leaders of the Republic were held captive on the island of Bangka. However, Leimena was still in the capital Jogyakarta. Having consulted with him, Verkuyl requested a Dutch official, P. J. Koets, to bring Leimena to Jakarta, so that the latter could attempt another negotiation to solve the problems created by the second “police action.” All this took place and led to the signing of the Van Royen-Roem ceasefire agreement, culminating at the Round Table conference in The Hague that finally agreed on the transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia.\textsuperscript{74}

Meanwhile, in 1961, a dispute between Indonesia and the Netherlands erupted again, this time over the status of Irian Jaya or Papua Barat, a huge territory left unresolved in the Round Table conference. The dispute resulted in a break of diplomatic ties between the two countries and led to serious tension that drove many Dutch from the

\textsuperscript{73} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 184-185.

\textsuperscript{74} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 186; cf. Homan, “The Netherlands, the United States,” 136-137.
country. Verkuyl and his family decided to stay. He said, "We have never considered leaving because we have always believed that the relationship of churches should not undulate with the relationship between nations, just as was the case in the lives of many missionaries in the history of world mission." This was another opportunity to exercise *missio politica oecumenica*. During those tense years, Verkuyl and others from missionary circles tried to convince Dutch public opinion that the government should end the conflict by transferring sovereignty of the disputed territory to Indonesia, which did take place in 1963.

**Grappling with Communism**

Frustration of nationalist aspirations breeds discontent and radicalism. This is no less true of Indonesia during the period of nationalism in the twentieth century. One of the radical movements that took advantage of this public frustration (*teleurstelling*) was the communist movement. In 1935, when Verkuyl was a chaplain to Asian students, one of the groups he was involved in was the student organization Perhimpunan Indonesia (PI). Its early beginnings indicate that communist leaders like Musso and Semaun tried to monopolize power in the group. Hatta and company set it on a more nationalistic and non-communistic course, but, because of its independence objective, it was banned and some of its leaders, including the moderate ones like Hatta, were imprisoned for being...

---

75 Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 187. We hebben er echter nooit over gedacht om ook te vertrekken, omdat wij altijd van oordeel waren dat de relaties tussen kerken niet mogen op een neer golvend met de relaties tussen landen zoals dat in het leven van zovele *missionaries* het geval was in de geschiedenis van de wereldzending. My translation.

suspected communists. It was easy in those days, as Radius Prawiro noted, to label any
effort that challenged Dutch political and economic interests as communist.\textsuperscript{77} When
Verkuyl was a chaplain in Holland, PI was an underground secret organization, which
made his presence among the members very suspect. Later developments show some
degree of polarization within the group between those oriented to parliamentary socialism
and those who were oriented to Moscow and the East European system.\textsuperscript{78}

The second time Verkuyl was confronted with the communist menace was when
communists tried unsuccessfully to seize political power in Indonesia from the young,
struggling Republic, which was still at a deadlock with the Dutch at the height of the
Revolution. There was enormous indignation from the Republicans over this
opportunist treachery and manipulation. This \textit{coup d'etat}, which came to be known as
the Madiun Affair, was especially important for Verkuyl because some Christians with
leftist sympathies were involved in it. One of them was his friend, Amir Syarifuddin,
who was also among the many casualties.

I have mentioned this Batak Christian in connection to the 1941 Nederlands
Indische Zendingsbond (NIZB) conference in Karangpandan, where Verkuyl first met
him. He was among the people who had influenced and convinced Verkuyl with regard
to the position the Dutch should take towards the newly proclaimed Republic. He was
minister of defense and later premier during the Revolution. The unpopular Renville

\textsuperscript{77} R. Prawiro, “Sekali Lagi: Mengenal dan Mengenang Dr. J. Verkuyl Lebih Lanjut,” in \textit{In
Memoriam Prof. Dr. J. Verkuyl}, ed. B. B. Tambunan and C. Sihotang (Jakarta: BPK Gunaung Mulia, 2001),
59.

\textsuperscript{78} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 66-67.
Agreement, which he signed, led to his fall from premiership. Verkuyl had a long talk with him before the Madium Affair. He warned Syarifuddin that he might become a victim of a communist power game, which might actually cause damage to the Republic. Verkuyl expressed regrets about the break between him and Sjahrrir, which led to the schism in the socialist movement. He told him that Sjahrrir had made the right choice—democratic socialism—over against both the totalitarianism of fascism and the totalitarianism of communism. He pointed out to Syarifuddin that what he heard about Karl Barth’s soft attitude to communism was mistaken. Barth, explained Verkuyl, was writing in and for a society which was generally and fiercely anti-communist and for which the ideology was not a current dangerous temptation, unlike in Indonesia. Verkuyl sensed that Muso played on the vanity of this brilliant young man and others and seduced him into new possibilities for the exercise of power. Although Syarifuddin ignored the warning, Verkuyl never thought that he ever renounced the Christian faith. Verkuyl wrote many more anecdotes to prove that Syarifuddin was a brother in the faith.  

It was clear to Verkuyl that communist leaders tried to manipulate and infiltrate people and movements with the intention of establishing their global hegemony. Christians involved in national emancipation, he warned, would do well to be thoroughly aware of the real goals and intentions of world communism, so that they would avoid being manipulated and taken advantage of, and thus fail to provide their people and national leaders with proper guidance. Those Indonesians who studied and trained in

---

communism in the Netherlands had underestimated the influence of the nationalist leaders and misunderstood their own people’s consciousness and aspirations. There was a better alternative than either colonialism or communism, and they should have realized this had they kept abreast of what was going on with their people and country.

According to Verkuyl, there is also a lesson to authorities, that is, when the ruling parties neglect and fail to negotiate with leaders of the independence movement at the right time, a situation is created which might radicalize moderate leaders of independence movements, a situation which eventually leads to an unexpected order. A good example of this is China. Verkuyl wrote four books on communism, addressing these important lessons and the continuing threat Marxism-Leninism posed to many countries. These lessons may also apply in the context of other ideologies with totalitarian designs. Verkuyl advises that Christians and churches should stay vigilant against ideologies and movements similar to communism.

Post-War Missio Politica Oecumenica in Writing and Teaching

After the Dutch-Indonesian war and the eventual transfer of sovereignty, the new nation and churches embarked on nation and church building. National church and mission leaders started implementing what they had envisioned while the war was still

---

80 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 179-180; cf. Indijl dan Komunisme, 85; Evangelie en communisme, 81.

81 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 295, 321, 332. Aside from those cited above Verkuyl wrote De geest van communisme en kapitalisme en het evangelie van Christus (Delft: van Keulen, 1950), IT: Komunisme dan Kapitalisme ditindau dari sudut Indijl Kristus (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1956); Christianity and Communism in Asia, trans. J. D. Gort (Johannesburg, 1968); Voorbereiding voor de dialoog over het evangelie en de ideologie van het marxistische-leninisme (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1976); and De kernbegrippen van het marxisme-leninisme. Met een proeve tot evangelisch commentaar (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1982).
raging and when many of them where in concentration camps. Verkuyl, as one of those involved in planning for the future, was busy helping establish the Christian Publishing Company (Badan Penerbit Kristen, now BPK Gunung Mulia) which was founded in 1950.\textsuperscript{82} He started teaching part-time at Jakarta Theological Seminary (STT-Jakarta) during the Dutch-Indonesian war, and then full-time for eight years after the war, becoming professor of Christian ethics from 1954-1962.\textsuperscript{83} He was concurrently lecturing in philosophy and Christian social ethics at the Christian University of Indonesia (UKI), founded in 1953. He took part in several commissions and departments of the Council of Churches of Indonesia, viz., Communications, Evangelism, Theological Education, and Church and Society.\textsuperscript{84} These then were the three major ministries and institutions that Verkuyl served in Indonesia after the war and until he returned to the Netherlands: literature production with BPK Gunung Mulia, theological education at Jakarta Theological Seminary, and ecumenical work with the Council of Churches in Indonesia (DGI, founded in 1950 and renamed PGI, Communion of Churches, in 1984). These are the institutions that held an official farewell reception in his honor in 1973, ten years after


\textsuperscript{83} For his reflection on his teaching ministry at Jakarta Theological Seminary, see Verkuyl, “Beberapa Buah Pikiran Perihal Partisipasi Saya Dalam Pendidikan Teologia di STT Jakarta Tahun 1946-1963,” in Tabah Melangkah, ed. S. W. Wahono, et al. (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1984), 319-326; also in Gedenken en verwachten, 216-219.

\textsuperscript{84} For his reflection on his participation in the Council of Churches in Indonesia, see Verkuyl, “Hubungan dan Kerja Sama dengan Dewan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia,” in Gerakan Oikoumene: Tegar Mekar di Bumi Pancasila, ed. J. M. Pattiasina and W. Sairin (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1997), 35-42. This is Indonesian translation of Gedenken en verwachten, ch. 13, by B. A. Scheuders.
he left for home and retired from missionary work in Indonesia, and the same institutions, together with his receiving church, Java Christian Church-Jakarta (GKJ), which conducted a joint memorial service in Jakarta when he died in 2001.

The thrust of this section is to present Verkuyl’s post-war ministry of *missio politica oecumenica* in Indonesia. It is quite obvious that the forms of *missio politica oecumenica* in a time of revolution are different from those after the revolution. We shall see that Verkuyl’s ministry in the political sphere did not cease with the end of political upheavals, it only took different forms, such as writing and teaching, and ecumenical work.

Writing and teaching were intertwined in Verkuyl’s career; what he taught, he wrote and published. He considered the combination of teaching and writing as a wonderful gift God had given him. Here I shall look at the books he wrote, which reflect what he taught. It can be said that his most important contribution as a missionary in post-war Indonesia is the significant number of books and articles he published. As Latuihamallo states, “For many churches in Indonesia the person of Professor Verkuyl is closely connected with the production of theological literature.” The Verkuyl corpus has been a subject of attention for those interested in the life and career of the man.

---

85 For some unknown reason Verkuyl was not given proper farewell when he went home in the Netherlands in 1963 and retired from service in Indonesia. Only 10 years after a farewell was conducted, in which three national leaders each representing BPK, STT Jakarta, and DGI gave speeches on his contributions in these three institutions and Indonesia in general. Cf. H. A. van Dop, “Dibina untuk Membina: Sketsa Perjalanan Hidup Johannes Verkuyl 1908-2001,” in In Memoriam, 47.


general, there are at least three essays published about his written works. J. M. van der Linde’s essay, after presenting the dominant theological themes of creation and sin, redemption and grace, Jesus Christ the Pantocrator, and the kingdom of God in Verkuyl corpus, asks whether it is not legitimate to say that his specific contribution in church, mission, and missiology is the promotion in both a broad and narrow sense of missio politica oecumenica. With the survey of relevant literature, Van der Linde demonstrates that Verkuyl’s calling to missio politica oecumenica is the firmament or overarching framework (spanningsboog) into which all that Verkuyl expressed can be placed.88 While Verkuyl himself did not fully agree with van der Linde’s analysis, he did admit that he gave the theme, and that considering his experience and perception it had received inadequate attention.89 The weakness of van der Linde’s conclusion lies in his misreading Verkuyl by identifying missio politica oecumenica with “the communication of the total gospel and the total law of God in word and deed to the whole humanity,” to quote Verkuyl from Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap (p. 19).90 In the context of this quote, Verkuyl is speaking about the mission of the church, of which missio politica oecumenica is just an aspect. Thus, it would not be accurate to say that missio politica oecumenica is the overarching theme of all that Verkuyl thought. It is rather Christ the Pantocrator, or the kingdom of God, or the total gospel and total law which is the all-embracing framework, and missio politica oecumenica, according to Verkuyl’s view.


finds its root in this all-embracing framework and can hardly be a translation of it, as van der Linde incorrectly assumes.

Moreover, Verkuyl wrote many other things that can hardly be placed under *missio politica oecumenica*. For instance, Latuihamallo’s essay presents the significance of Verkuyl’s books for theology in Indonesia, seeing them as an initial contribution to the needs of the churches in the current dispensation in order to stimulate critical theological thinking and Christian vigilance. \(^{91}\) Latuihamallo correctly observes that Verkuyl perceives the comprehensiveness of the missionary calling; as the gospel is intended for the world and humanity, so do the missionary implications cover the total existence of humanity, society, and world in all aspects. Here we see that *missio politica oecumenica* is just an aspect, although no doubt a major part, of what Verkuyl wrote.

The last essay to be mentioned here is a memorial article by J. Aritonang and R. Borrong that surveys some select works of Verkuyl in ethics and a few in other areas, and gives the general character of his whole literature. It notes the extensive breadth of the literature, which covers all sorts of topics in the areas of ethics, mission and missiology, ecumenics, apologetics, comparative and theology of religions, Christianity and ideologies, dogmatics and catechetics, exegesis, homiletics, cults, sects and secular movements, spirituality, and a host of memorial articles in honor of his friends and significant persons. This indicates the encyclopedic nature of Verkuyl’s mind, as

---

Aritonang and Borrong remark,\textsuperscript{92} and that he had other concerns besides \textit{missio politica oecumenica}.

Unlike the above essays, this section is limited to Verkuyl’s literature written during the period following the war from 1950 until 1963, when he retired from missionary work in Indonesia. And since I am dealing with his political activities while serving as a missionary in that country, I will examine that corpus of literature in terms of \textit{missio politica oecumenica} in order to show his continuing political involvement, through literature, in the post-war period.

After the war, churches felt they should give attention to various needs facing them, many of which they already anticipated before independence. These included not only ecclesiastical and pastoral needs, but the need to realize their calling in the midst of ongoing nation-building. During this period, Verkuyl wrote 21 books addressing these perceived needs.\textsuperscript{93} While not all the books he wrote dealt with strictly political issues, even some of those not directly related bring out some implications and applications in the political sphere. Thus, for analytical purposes, I will distinguish three basic categories: (1) non-ethical non-political writings, (2) ethical writings that deal directly

\textsuperscript{92} J. Aritonang and R. Borrong, “Beberapa Catatan atas Karya-karya Tulis Prof. Dr. J. Verkuyl,” in \textit{In Memoriam}, 91, 96.

\textsuperscript{93} Due to numerous works Verkuyl wrote there seems to be difficulty in counting them. For the books he wrote in and for Indonesia Van der Linde counted 35 (“Johannes Verkuyl: zendeling,” 14), Simandjuntak counted 40 just for the books he wrote in Jakarta (A. Simandjuntak, “Johannes Verkuyl, Sahabat, Pengarang dan Pejuang,” in \textit{In Memoriam}, 69), while Latuhamallo counted 32 (“De Betekenis voor de theologie,” 22) for books published by BPK Gunung Mulia. My count of 21 is for the books he wrote in the thirteen-year period following the war, all translated in Indonesian and published by BPK Gunung Mulia. Only two were published in both Indonesian and Dutch in the same year during our period: \textit{De geest van Communisme en Kapitalisme en het evangelie van Christus/Komunisme dan Kapitalisme ditinjau dari sudut Indyl Kristus} (1950) and \textit{Zijn alle godsdiensten gelijk?/Samakah Senua Agama} (1953). \textit{Pandangan Dostojewski tentang Manusia} (1954) was published in Dutch much later in 1980.
with political issues, and (3) ethical writings that deal directly with issues other than political, but nonetheless usually touch on the political aspect of the issues.  

We start with the non-ethical, non-political writings. Under this category are dogmatic-catechetical books, like Aku Pertjaja (Credo, 1954); comparative religious studies like Samakah Semua Agama? (Are all Religions the Same? 1953), Apakah Beda Geradja Rum-Katolik dan Reformasi[?] (Are the Roman-Catholic Church and the Reformed [Churches] Different? third printing, 1960), and Geradja dan Bidat-bidat (Church and Cults, 1962);\(^4\) exegetical-homiletical books like Tafsiran Indjil Jahja (Commentary on the Gospel of John, 1954), and Komentar Hari Natal dari Sorga (Commentary on Christmas from Heaven, 1960). He also wrote an apologetics, Fragmenta Apologetika (1963) and a literary criticism, Pandangan Dostojewski tentang Manusia (1954), about the Russian novelist’s view of humanity based on some of his  

\(^{4}\) Cf. van der Linde, “Johannes Verkuyl: zendeling,” 14-20 and Latuhamallo, “De betekenis voor de theologie,” 22-31. Van der Linde’s classification begins with the books that deal with foundational theological themes, followed by missionary and missiological works, and finally works about and for Indonesia. It is interesting to note that Verkuyl’s Evangelisatie onder de hooree standen en meer ontwikkeld (1935) is for van der Linde a seminal work that laid the foundation for missio politica oecumenica in later works that include among other things his magnum opus Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap (1975). De boodschap der bevrijding in deze tijd (1970), and Jesus Christus, De bevrijder en de voortgaande bevrijdingen van mensen en samenlevingen (1973). Latuhamallo’s classification consists of three parts: systematic, ecumenical, and missiological works.  

Verkuyl also taught comparative and theology of religions at Jakarta Theological Seminary beside Christian ethics. The former may be more in line with his academic interest, at least, initially than with the latter. He wrote his dissertation, Enkele aspecten van het problem der godsdienstvrede in the area. His Samakah Semua Agama? was based on the dissertation. Except for these two works he did not write on the major religions until much later when he published Met Moslems in gesprek over het Evangelie (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1985) and works on more recent religious movements: Antroposofie en het Evangelie van het Jezus Christus (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1986) and De New Age Beweging: kernbegrippen, beoordeling, uitdaging (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989). He did intend to write on Islam during our period but was inhibited by the current sensitive religious situation that banned two good books on Islam: H. Kraemer, Agama Islam (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1958); and F. L. Bakker, Tuhan Yesus dalam Agama Islam (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1958). Nevertheless, his lecture notes on Islam received published responses from two Muslim scholars: O. Hashem, Djawabun Lengkap kepada Pendeta Dr. J. Verkuyl (Bandung: C. V. Pelita, 1969); and S. Gazzalba, Djawab atas Kritik Kristen terhadap Islam (no bibliographic information). Cf. Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 216-217; “Beberapa Buah Pikiran,” 322-323; Aritonang and Borrong, “Beberapa Catatan,” 103-104; Wessels, “Memorial Address,” 15-16.
novels. The main purpose of this corpus is to state the Christian faith as clearly and simply as possible and to evaluate other faiths and religious movements in light of it. There is a clear intention for evangelism, that is, to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to non-Christians and non-Reformed Christians and to invite a faith response, while, at the same time, to educate Christians about their faith, and thus to strengthen and equip them to share it.

For instance, the idea of writing the catechetical *Aku Percaya* emerged in order to meet the need of many Christians who were rather ignorant of their faith and also to answer the questions of many interested non-Christians about the Christian faith.\(^{96}\) *Samakah Semua Agama?*, in view of the religious pluralist context in Indonesia, starts from the assumption of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and argues that churches are called to be witnesses of the crucified, risen, and reigning Jesus Christ.\(^{97}\) The book on the difference between the Roman Catholic and the Reformed Churches (*Apakah Beda Geradja Rum-Katolik dan Reformasi?*) was intended not only for Catholics and Protestants, but also for non-Christians.\(^{98}\) A similar evangelistic intention would also be true with *Geradja dan Bidat-bidat* (Church and the Cults) and *Fragmenta Apologetika*.\(^{99}\) This last work includes an apologetic to challenges posed by Marxist-Leninist atheism, which is for him a pseudo-religious ideology, and by religious nationalism, which is to be distinguished from the healthy national self-expression that Verkuyl himself promoted.

---

\(^{96}\) Verkuyl, *Inti iman Kristen*, vol. 1 (Salatiga: Lembaga Studi dan Pengembangan GKJ), ix.

\(^{97}\) Verkuyl, *Samakah Semua Agama*, 3-6.


and defended for Indonesia and later for other countries like in Africa. This book can thus be placed among his ethical writings of a political nature, but, since the apologetic genre takes a multi-disciplinary approach, especially a philosophical approach, I have placed it here.

Works in ethics comprise a major block of Verkuyl’s corpus written in Indonesia, which is not surprising in view of his main teaching assignment in the seminary. This block can be sub-divided into two groups: ethical writings that deal directly with political issues and ethical writings that deal with issues other than political ones but nonetheless touch indirectly on the political aspect of the issues. These could also be called cultural writings, although Verkuyl’s definition of culture in a general sense includes political culture. The most popular and the most significant of his works is the six-volume series Etika Kristen, which has two major parts: part I, which is volume 1, Bagian Umum (General Introduction, 1956), and then part II, which consists of 5 volumes: Sosial-Ekonomi (Social-Economy, 1957), Seksual [dan Keluarga] (Sexuality and Family, 1957), Ras, Bangsa, Geredja dan Negara (Race, Nation, Church and State, 1958), Kebudayaan (Culture, 1960), and Kapita Selektta (1961). The last volume in the series, according to Verkuyl, is supposed to be the first in the second part, but he wrote on other topics first as they came to him. This supposed structure of the series is logical, given the fact that this last volume, Kapita Selektta, is about the first table of the Decalogue and two other commandments not dealt with in the previous volumes: on murder and giving false testimony. This shows, as he himself expressed, that the whole series is intended as an

---

100 Verkuyl, Fragmenta Apologetika, 57-59. 185-203.

exposition of the Decalogue. Thus, the fifth and seventh commandments (on honoring parents and adultery) are discussed in *Etika Seksui dan Keluarga* (II/2); the eighth (on stealing) in *Sosial-Ekonomi* (II/1); and the tenth (on coveting) in the *Bagian Umum* (General Introduction, I/1). \(^{102}\)

All the ethical writings of Verkuyl can be called, in general, a Christian ethics of culture, including the ethical writings that deal directly with political issues, as well as those that discuss other issues. His general definition of culture includes the totality of all that humans made and thought, which includes gender roles, marriage and family, agriculture, industry, economy, church and state, and so on. All these are cultural issues and are discussed in the six-volume series and in other books, indicating that the whole corpus is ethical in nature. He did write a separate book on culture, *Etika Kristen dan Kebudayaan* (Culture, II/4), which addresses issues considered cultural in a special sense: science and technology, arts, and leisure. \(^{103}\) Aside from the six-volume series he also wrote on more specific topics like calling and vocation, traditional and social dancing, movies and theaters, and food, religion and power. \(^{104}\) These works could have very well been included in either the volume on culture, *Etika Kristen dan Kebudayaan*, or other volumes in the series. But these minor works were intended for lay readership, mainly for young people and parents, unlike the six volumes which were written mainly for seminary students and church leaders.


\(^{103}\) Verkuyl, *Etika: Kebudayaan*, 11, 55.

As for his ethical writings that deal directly with political issues, there are three: the two volumes from the six-volume series on social-economy and political ethics and *Komunisme dan Kapitalisme Ditindjau dari Sudut Indjil Kristus* (1950), a study of the two ideologies in the light of the gospel. Some material from this book was incorporated into the two volumes of the series. However, it should be noted that *Komunisme dan Kapitalisme* is dialogical and evangelistic in intent and purpose, as many of his works are. I consider this book as a political-ethical writing because ideologies are political by nature. With these works, Verkuyl strives toward realizing what he thought to be an aspect of *missio politica oecumenica*, that is, underscoring the importance of social and political ethics in theological education especially in developing countries and spelling out the political dimension in preaching, catechesis, and training work.\(^{105}\) Therefore, these political-ethical writings should be seen as initial efforts at meeting the need to educate the churches in the political realm.

The rest of his ethical writings are not political in intent but address political aspects of issues at certain points. These comprise the third group of Verkuyl’s corpus. For instance, on marriage and family, he mentions legal prohibitions on interracial marriage in South Africa, the United States, and other countries. For him, there should be no fundamental objections to that kind of marriage. He spends a chapter on the role of the state in marriage and family, advocating that the state should honor and respect Christian principles in its jurisprudence.\(^{106}\) Or again, on the question of food, in his exposition of the Temptation of Jesus (Mat. 4), Verkuyl corrects the view that says food

---

\(^{105}\) Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 398; *Inleiding in de nieuwere*, 537-538.

\(^{106}\) Verkuyl, *Etika: Seksuil*, 43-46; 118-122. In Indonesia marriage is regulated along religious lines and any marriage is sanctioned by the state.
is altogether insignificant for Jesus—the implication sometimes drawn from the words “man shall not live by bread alone.” In the temptations, he sees Satan as trying to prevent Jesus from taking up the cross that would settle the problem of sin. This is essentially the significance of the temptations. On the particular temptation of turning stones to bread, Satan is, according to Verkuyl, isolating the need for bread from the rest of human predicaments, basically the problem of sin which manifests itself in the socio-economic injustice that causes hunger and poverty. In other words, there is poverty and hunger precisely because many think that humans shall live by bread alone. If people live on bread alone, or material things in general, they, as sinful as they are, would be greedy and unfair, not only in personal relationships, but in commerce and trade relations, not only within a society, but among nations as well. That is why humans also live on God’s word of forgiveness and justice to eradicate social and political problems. 107 This is vintage Verkuyl; he was able to draw upon the wider aspects of an otherwise familiar theme.

There are other indications of the social and political character of Verkuyl’s third group of ethical writings. One has to do with his view of Christian ethics in general, and the other with the context in which he was writing. Christian ethics attempts, as all his writings do, to answer the basic question: what must we do? For Verkuyl, the answer to that question comes from biblical revelation, the sole source and basis of Christian ethics. It makes use of church documents and traditions and interacts with religious, ideological, and philosophical views in the light of revelation. This is basically his approach in treating every question and every issue he deals with in his books. For him, this makes Christian ethics a branch of dogmatics, although for practical purposes it needs to be

treated as a separate field. Its purpose is to provide Christians and the public a systematic
guide for seeking the will of God on all questions facing human life on the basis of
biblical revelation. These questions are not simply personal; in fact, he rejects the usual
division of Christian ethics into personal ethics and social ethics, because, for him, all
ethics are of a social nature since human life is always set in a three dimensional
relationship in which we find God, the human being, and society. This does not mean
that there is no personal application of ethics; it is just that any application is always set
in the context of relationships. This view of human nature as being essentially communal,
and of Christian ethics as being by implication social, is a clear indication of how
Verkuyl’s ethical writings also present the wider social and political aspects of any issue.
This is also the reason why he constantly interacted with ideologies and worldviews,
because these do influence and shape human life in society.

The context in which Verkuyl was writing is also an indication that his ethical
writings were intended not just for the development of personal virtues. In view of the
recent emancipation from colonial rule and of the still struggling nation, these writings
should be seen as efforts at contributing to nation-building in Indonesia, in particular.
They are attempts at giving Christian foundations to a nation. A nation, of course, is more
than a political concept. It is essentially tied up with culture in a more general sense,
which includes the economy, marriage and family, church (religions) and state, or, in
other words, the same issues that Verkuyl discusses in his books on ethics. While some
of the issues may not be strictly political, all of them should be seen with the building of
a righteous, just, and prosperous nation in view. It is in this sense that his writing
ministry is in some ways a form of *missio politica oecumenica*, for participation in nation-building is a positive aspect of it.

That this is the case is shown by the needs of Indonesia as Verkuyl perceived them and as that prompted him to write about helping churches participate in the divine calling of nation-building. We have mentioned that Christian ethics deals with the basic question: what must we do? That question is not an abstract, theoretical question formulated in a vacuum. Christian ethics indeed provides basic foundations for seeking an answer to the basic question. But Christian ethics is contextually sensitive; the question “what must we do?” is not an abstract scholastic question but is raised in the context of problems and changing situations.\(^{108}\) He says in the introduction to the first volume of his ethics series, “precisely at this time Indonesia in its present history is experiencing a time full of questions and problems to the extent that we hear everywhere the question: what must we do?”\(^{109}\) It is for this question of national import that he wrote his ethics, not for questions of merely personal concern. Furthermore, he notes in *Etika Kristen: Kebudayaan* (on culture) that Indonesia was not free from the cultural crisis (or cultural revolution) going on all over the world, in which traditional values and norms were being replaced by various alien cultures and ideologies, leaving many in society confused and lost in orientation, or simply swallowed up in the process. Verkuyl asserted that the church is in the middle of the crisis and that God is calling her to cultural


responsibilities for his sake. Thus his ethical writings, not just the strictly political ones, can be seen as a response to that divine call to nation-building.

Before leaving this section on Verkuyl’s literature ministry during this period, a final comment should be made. Much of his writings during this period became the basis for later works and further reflection. The book, Komunisme dan Kapitalisme, is the initial basis for three more books on communism and for the evaluation of ideologies: Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap (Contemporary Missiology, 1975), De boodschap der bevrijding in deze tijd (The Message of Liberation in our Age, 1970), and Ideologies and their Functions (1968). The first part of his Ras, Bangsa, Geredja dan Negara (Race, Nation, and Church and State) developed into Breek de muren af (Break Down the Walls, 1969), a book on racial justice, and a large portion of it was incorporated into Bestrijding van het racisme en de kerken in Nederland (Combating Racism and the Churches in the Netherlands, 1972), Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme dan Kolonialisme Barat dan Zending pada masa Politik Kolonial Etis (The Tension Between Imperialism and Western Colonialism and Mission during the Period of Ethical Colonial Policy, 1993), and into an article presented to the United Nations. The second part of the same book on political ethics is also found in Verantwoorde Revolutie: Over middelen en doeleinden in de strijd om transformatie van het samenlevingen (Responsible Revolution: On the Means and Goals in the Struggle for the Transformation of Societies, 1968). His earlier volume on social-economy is the basis for his Onderweg naar een wereldsamenleving (Toward a World Community, 1971).

---


111 This work is also an expansion of his earlier work, De achtergrond van het indonesische vraagstuk.
This demonstrates, significantly, that his earlier works written during his post-war ministry in Indonesia were crucial for later writings. After service in Indonesia, he wrote more on social and political issues than on any other topic. In religion, he only wrote two: *Met Moslems in Gesprek over het Evangelie* (Dialogue with Muslims on the Gospel, 1985) and *Antroposofie en het Evangelie van het Christus* (Anthroposophy and the Gospel of Christ, 1986). In dogmatics, he developed his previous *Aku Percaya* (I Believe) into a lengthy *De Kern van het Christelijk Geloof* (The Core of the Christian Faith, 1993). Considering the amount of work he devoted to social and political problems, it seems clear that his mind remained sensitive to socio-political issues and that his earlier works in Indonesia had become initial material for later works as he grappled with the issues facing the churches and newly independent nations. Thus, this is one more significant thing about Verkuyl’s written works in Indonesia, aside from those mentioned by van der Linden and Latuihamallo. Not only do they make an initial contribution to the development of theology in the country and meet the needs of struggling churches and the new nation, but they also laid the foundation for missiological reflection in later years.

**Missio Politica Oecumenica and Missionary Work**

Verkuyl’s political activities did not distract him from his missionary tasks. He came to Indonesia as a missionary and, true to his conviction that the struggle for justice was just one, although essential, aspect of mission, he did not neglect his other missionary duties, especially evangelism and church planting, while engaged in political issues. He was very impressed by the regular evangelists’ prayer fellowship that he attended, which included prayer for the needs of other nations. He was involved in inter-
religious dialogue, which he called “round-table discussion,” after the pattern set by the Methodist missionary Stanley Jones in India. On this, he believed that these inter-faith encounters must be done at every level, not just among top religious leaders, and that the aims of these encounters should be the sharing of the deepest religious experiences, as well as articulating the core differences between Christianity and other religions. Thus, unlike the current views on dialogue, he insisted on the missionary or evangelistic aspect of dialogue. In his autobiography, he mentions many evangelistic activities he was involved in as a missionary, although he was quite silent about the actual results of these activities. However, there is one story in the concluding chapter of Gedenken en verwachten, in which he relates how he was able to lead many people to Christ, thus illustrating the significance of a network of relations in the communication of the gospel. There is no doubt that he was “a tremendously effective evangelist,” as Wessels testified. He was, as Mulder said, “above all a witness of Jesus Christ.” The people he converted to the Christian faith and discipled were numerous, his friends would recall. He conducted religious dialogue, as was his custom since the Laren pastorate, not only with ordinary people but also with national political leaders like Sukarno, Hatta, and Islamic scholars like Haji Agus Salim. But aside from bringing people to faith in


114 Wessels, “Memorial Address,” 19.


Christ, he was also leading them to the baptismal font and the Lord’s Table and nurturing them to serve the Lord. Verkuyl does not furnish us with stories of how many people he led to the church, but he testifies, “Often in my life I have learned that the faith-life of people who come to believe needs the support of church-life, and the churches also need their enthusiasm.”

In Verkuyl’s missionary career, it is clear that evangelism and church planting and political action are not incompatible. He did not struggle with whether his political activities were crossing the boundaries of his being a missionary. He did not think that one was more important than the other, for both are aspects of the kingdom of God. Within the kingdom, one aspect does not disadvantage the other. Although he did not define the relationship between the two, except to say that they are both aspects of the kingdom, it can be said that he was so effective as an evangelist because he knew how to show love to the people he came to serve. This was a love that included political involvement. As Garret Paul says, no love is genuine without political involvement.

This means that, in practice, political involvement can aid missions. As he expressed to the mission leaders in Holland, supporting the nationalist aspirations of the Indonesians would save the integrity of the churches and missions.

**Conclusion**

Verkuyl lived at a time when Indonesia was at a critical stage in its history. He was fortunate to live in such a time, for he sensed a calling to engage in *missio politica*

---


oeconomic; the crisis required of him this kind of obedient response. He did not miss the voice of the One who called him to obedience in his specific place and time. What can be learned from the experience of Verkuyl regarding missio politica oecumenica?

First, missio politica oecumenica involves showing solidarity with people clamoring for social and political reforms or, if consistently unheeded, for complete emancipation and radical change. This solidarity involves a more objective and critical study of the prevailing situation, listening with sympathy to the cry of the disadvantaged, and helping them to seek alternatives that are more compatible with divine principles and sensitive to national aspirations. It means convincing alien authority that winds of change now make the old system obsolete and that it should restrain itself from aborting the birth of a new era. Verkuyl’s support for reforms as well as his encouragement to Christian nationalists to work for parliamentary Indonesia marked his initial engagement in missio politica oecumenica. The colonial era has passed, but the lessons gained from his experience in Indonesia as a missionary can be a useful guide and inspiration for the present generation of missionaries to seek new and appropriate forms of missio politica oecumenica for the sake of the people they have come to serve.

Second, missio politica oecumenica takes the form of peace-making, a ministry of reconciliation to prevent or end hostilities. For Verkuyl this means lobbying for the recognition of the independence of Indonesia and appealing against further aggression from both sides. Peace-making involves representing the aspirations of the people to authorities, convincing the warring parties to come to the negotiating table, and to influencing them to take the route of peaceful means rather than of violence and counter-violence.
Third, *missio politica oecumenica* means promoting human rights, especially freedom of religion, making sure that these rights are a part of the fundamental laws of emerging nations, and that they are safeguarded and respected in government policies and actions. For this reason, Verkuyl wrote his dissertation on religious freedom in Asia, which is based on his active role in the securing of human rights in the constitution of emerging nations, which further motivated him to constantly call for the protection of these rights. In view of the current depressing state of human rights and religious freedom in many countries, much of his thought on *missio politica oecumenica* is related to this problem.

Fourth, *missio politica oecumenica* deals with ideologies. This is one of the important aspects of *missio politica oecumenica*. It involves persuading the nationalist leaders that pseudo-religious and totalitarian ideologies like communism are not an option for a healthy nation and in many cases tend to violate fundamental human rights including religious freedom. This means responsible and critical study of ideologies and warning the church and nation of their dangers. Verkuyl’s encounter with the communist movement in Indonesia both before and after the war urged him to write books on the ideology.

Fifth, *missio politica oecumenica* offers a positive contribution to nation-building. Much of nation-building takes place following a country’s declaration of independence, and Verkuyl worked indefatigably for establishing and strengthening Christian institutions and the nation from his base in the Netherlands. But even before the independence and prior to his retirement from Indonesia, Verkuyl had already made positive contributions to nation-building. The endless consultations and planning for the
future and the stream of literature that flowed from his pen are all positive ways that he
built up the church and nation.

Verkuyl’s experience indicates that there is more than one way to obey the Lord
in the political realm and one should remain rooted in the gospel and sensitive to the
signs of the times. The examples given here are not meant to be a blueprint for every
kind of situation. As he would always say, every generation of Christians has to reflect
and act on what form of obedience is demanded of them in the context in which they live.
The church should always ask the question, “What time is it?”
CHAPTER FOUR

LATER MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA FOR OTHER NATIONS

Verkuyl retired from missionary work in Indonesia in 1963 and soon thereafter assumed his work as a general secretary of the Dutch Missionary Council (NZR) until 1968. From 1965 through 1973 he was chair of the Inter-Church Coordinating Committee for Development (ICCO). He was also called to the theological faculty of the Free University, first as adjunct professor (*extraordinary*) in 1965 and then full professor (*ordinary*) in missiology and evangelism in 1968 through 1978. Working with the NZR and the ICCO ushered him into a wider network of Dutch and international ecumenical relations. This means *contact*, Verkuyl’s favorite word.¹ There was the immediate *contact* with the NZR staff, who came from churches and organizations related to the NZR. He had to relate with NZR member mission boards, mission boards from other European countries, diaconal organizations, and similar bodies in America, Asia, and Latin America. This also gave him opportunity to maintain his relationship with Indonesian churches. Also, he had regular contact with the WCC and, in particular, its Division of World Mission and Evangelism (DWME), Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service (DCARWS), and met the illustrious secretaries of these divisions, Lesslie Newbigin and Lesslie Cook. He also took part in the nineteenth

¹ Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, passim. His usage of the word carries more than the usual English sense of occasional meeting or acquaintance. More often than not *contact* is associated with fellowship in ministry and signifies participation (*deelname*), partnership (*deelgenootschap*), cooperation (*samenwerking*), or simply friendship (*vriendschap*), or relations, all of which are essentially what fellowship involves. There are also what he called *missionaire contacts*, *pastorale contacten* with various people and other forms of *contact* with churches and institutions.
meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC.\(^2\) In spite of his regret that the general secretary of the NZR was not sitting in the DWME, his meetings with people like Newbigin were memorable. Contact with the wider *oecumene* came through a regular stream of visitors from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and in turn through his visits to these continents as well. One of the significant exchanges of visits took place between him and anti-apartheid Afrikaner C. F. Byers Naude.

This section will again focus on examining the political perspective of his work, this time as a mission executive. It must be clarified that his political involvement does not exhaust his ministry during this period, for he was as attentive to other aspects of the communication of the gospel of the kingdom, namely, evangelism, church planting and fellowship, and diaconal service. A cursory view of his career as executive, however, will reveal that he was profoundly engaged with social and political issues. Through the meetings he attended and the people he met, he was confronted with global needs, especially those in developing countries. Whereas before he was mainly concerned about the welfare of one country, this time his vision was focused on the whole inhabited world, the *oecumene*. His attention was directed to the struggling nations and on the churches in those nations. I will discuss in this chapter, among other things, the ecumenical conferences he attended, how these further deepen his views on the socio-political significance of the churches; the development projects in many developing countries for which he helped raise funds; his militant protest against apartheid in South Africa, the

---

\(^2\) See his report on the meeting, "Enkele notities over de bijeenkomst van het Centrale Comite van de Wereldraad van Kerken (8-17 februari 1966, Geneve)" *Gereformeerde Weekblad* (8 April 1966): 293-294; (15 April 1966): 300-3001; (22 April 1966): 308-309; and (13 May 1966): 333. In this report he pays tribute to the outgoing General Secretary W. A. Visser’s Hooft and introduces the incoming Eugene Carson Blake. He also makes remarks on, among other things, the theme of the meeting, "the ecumenical way." Cf. *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches Minutes and Reports*, Geneva, Switzerland, February 8th to 17th 1966 (Geneva: WCC, 1966), 89-92.
Vietnam War, and any use of weapons of mass destruction; and his human rights advocacy for some countries. It must be stressed that all of these were undergirded by his conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord, in whom peoples from all nations must believe. During this period, his activities in *missio politica oecumenica* took global form and were an integral part of the gospel of the kingdom of God that churches are called to proclaim to the entire world.

*In Ecumenical Circuit*

As general secretary of a missionary council, Verkuyl had the duty and privilege of attending national, regional, and international ecumenical meetings. He took part in those meetings as a partner in the *oeicumene*, not as an ecumenical tourist. His aim was not simply to fulfill official duties, but to learn and to reflect further on the calling of church in the world. Thus, those ecumenical encounters have special bearing on his missiology. The first meeting he attended was the world mission conference of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC, held in Mexico City in 1963. En route he had to fulfill another invitation to attend the triennial general conference of the US National Council of Churches in Philadelphia. During this visit to the United States, President John F. Kennedy was murdered. He also noticed the unfortunate polarization between the ecumenicals and the evangelicals. In Mexico City, he was confronted with yet another reality, but the mission conference was nevertheless remarkable for him.³ It was the seventh world missionary conference since the Edinburgh Conference of 1910, and this conference formally integrated the IMC into the WCC. In

---
Mexico, the traditional Western mission dominance was being replaced with the new 
“mission in six continents” concept, that is, every continent is the home base and mission 
field and, consequently, this concept should be embodied in organizational structures, 
reflections, and strategies. He himself made contributions to developing this new 
concept.4 A symposium book, Gods initiatief and en ons mandaat: De betekenis van de 
wereldzendersconferentie in Mexico City, by Verkuyl, Dutch colleagues, and Latin 
American friends reflects on the mandate expressed in the conference.5 One of the topics 
addressed in Mexico City was the witness to people in a secularized world. 

Secularization was seen as an ambivalent process with different aspects, including the 
political problem of people struggling from tyrannies of unjust social orders. The 
question posed was “What is the form and content of the salvation which Christ offers 
men (sic) in the secular world?” which also became the theme of the following 
conference held in Bangkok in 1973, “Salvation Today.” This preliminary discussion in 
Mexico led to a debate by correspondence between M. M. Thomas from India and H. 
Berkhof from the Netherlands, which was published with responses, including 
Verkuyl’s.6 The problem of secularization and secularism, including its political 

---


dimension, became a subject of his missiological reflection in later years; it was the topic for his inaugural address as professor at the Free University in 1965 and one which he would always address in meetings.

In a consultation held by the European Conference of Churches on September 27-30, 1965, on the relation between the European churches and churches in other continents, he was impressed by the emphasis made by the speakers that it was unreal for the European churches to think constantly along the line of an exodus motif; what must be stressed was the service motif. The exodus motif was more relevant for the developing countries, while the service motif, for Europe. In this consultation and interaction with European colleagues, it became clear that the churches were called to press their governments for more aid to the developing countries and to teach them to do it with purer motives, such as justice, mercy, and peace. These views on economic development and relations between rich and poor countries would guide Verkuyl as chair of the ICCO and become themes in subsequent works as well as future discussions in the WCC.

---

Verkuyl, De taak der missiologie en der missionaire methodiek in het tijdperk van saecularisatie en saecularisme (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1965).

In his capacity as representative of the NZR, he should have been in section II of the WCC General Assembly in Uppsala in 1968, which discussed renewal in mission, but was placed instead in the section IV, which discussed justice and peace in international relations. He did not think that it was inappropriate for him to be a part of the section on international affairs, since, for him, international affairs were within the scope of *Missio Dei*. The Uppsala Assembly is generally known and criticized for its pre-occupation with the revolutionary ferment of the time. Some of the items on the assembly agenda—war and peace, human rights, the relations between majority and minority groups in younger nations, and race relations, among other things, were the issues that he noted as deserving urgent attention.\(^9\) He could sense the global tensions that filled the conference.

Statements on racism had not been as profoundly piercing and concrete as that those from Uppsala with the gripping and challenging addresses of African-American writer James Baldwin and British Permanent Representative at the United Nations, Lord Caradon. He was pleased that the assembly went beyond ecclesiastical verbalism by making operational some ecumenical initiatives, like the program to combat racism.\(^10\) The same was true for the problem of underdevelopment and socio-economic liberation with respect to the relations of poor and rich countries, which provided the impetus for the founding of the Commission on the Churches’ Participation in Development (CCPD). He was frustrated that a similar action was not taken about the problems of militarism and the nuclear arms race. Nevertheless, Uppsala must be credited with having started the discussion of the problem. He remembered meeting some American recruits who fled


\(^10\) Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls*, 11-12, 81-82; *Runtuhan Tembok*, 11-12, 86-87.
to Sweden because they refused to be accomplices in the genocide in Vietnam. His
dialogue with Joseph Hromadka enhanced his view of communism. He recalled
Hromadka making remarks that he used to think that the atheism of communism was only
for pragmatic reason, but, after he witnessed the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the
Russians, he realized that he was wrong and that atheism was in fact the source of
everything that was wrong in communism and its totalitarian tendencies.\footnote{Verkuyl,
*Gedenken en verwachten*, 261-263; "Algemene indrukken van de vierde algemene
vergadering van de wereldraad van kerken in Uppsala, juli 1968," *De Heerbaan* (1968):
241-249.}

Evidently, with all these contacts, Verkuyl was comfortable with the ecumenical
movement and different church traditions, although he came from a rather conservative
church background. He shared the general churchmanship orientation in Europe, in
which polarization of ecumenicals and evangelicals did not exist as it did in the USA, like
a two-party system, as he would say. Based on his conviction that every evangelical is
ecumenical and every ecumenical is evangelical, it can be said that Verkuyl wore neither
of these labels in a strict sense. Rather, he would most likely say he was an ecumenical
evangelical or vice versa. Until the last phase of his life, he was trying to convince these
two movements to transcend their differences, which came into sharp conflict in the
United States especially following the provocative statements from WCC Uppsala 1968
and DWME Bangkok 1973.\footnote{Verkuyl, "‘Evangelicals’ en ‘ecumenicals’: een cri de coeur,” in *Heil voor deze wereld: Studies
aangeboden aan prof. dr. A. G. Honig, jr.* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1984), 49-60; "Greetings from a Dutch
Churchman," in *The Work of an Evangelist*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications,
1984), xxii; "Mission in the 1990s," 56; "Ter gedachtenis aan prof. dr. David Bosch (1929-1992)," *Wereld
en Zending* 21/3(1992): 5; "Missiologie en missionaire praxis," *Wereld en Zending* 23/4 (1994): 22.} He thought the tensions between them were unfortunate
and the differences that divided them, unnecessary. The discussion on his major
missiological work at the Overseas Ministries Study Center (OMSC) in Ventnor, USA,
was, however, most gratifying to him. On that occasion prominent ecumenical and evangelical missiologists discussed his book openly and plainly, and he met a good number of them who were of the same mind. Further developments in the evangelical movement, he observed, were encouraging, and efforts at breaking the polarization were not hopeless. For Verkuyl, the emergence of the so called “radical evangelicals,” some of whom he met on this last visit in the USA, and the evangelical consultation on the church’s social and political responsibility in Grand Rapids in June 1982, were positive signs of reorientation in mission. The issues raised by these recent developments were given attention in the WCC and the DWME, particularly in the document, “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation,” in whose holistic spirit, Verkuyl suggests, the mission of churches should proceed.\textsuperscript{13} The \textit{Una Sancta} that he experienced during the NCSV years in the university remained a vision he pursued until his death.

Verkuyl’s vision for \textit{Una Sancta} did not exclude the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). In the Netherlands, and more so in Indonesia, where the relations between representatives of Protestant \textit{zending} and Roman Catholic \textit{missie} were on the whole marked by rivalry, he exerted efforts for mutual understanding between the two. Again, some of his experience had contributed to this attitude. In the Japanese camps where Verkuyl was interned, the contact and fellowship between the Roman Catholics and Protestants became an obvious and natural affair. He remembered an experience with the apostolic prefect of Purwokerto, in which both of them agreed to lead alternately the evening meditation and prayer in a \textit{broederschool}. For Verkuyl, it was a prime experience that led gradually to the formation of friendship that went on during the

\textsuperscript{13} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 244, 308, 311, 320. Cf. 310.
internment and beyond.¹⁴ Years thereafter, he would relate the participation of the RCC in a fund raising project called “Kom over de brug” in 1972. A related remarkable event was a joint service held at the conclusion of the fund campaign in the Domkerk in Utrecht, which was led by Verkuyl and Cardinal B. J. Alfrink. It was a remarkable occasion for relations of the Roman Catholics and the Protestants in the country. The two communions have come a long way as reflected in these pleasantries: Alfrink making remarks about the bishop of Utrecht standing at the pulpit of Domkerk exactly on the same date in 1672 and Verkuyl about Gijsbertus Voetius’ prediction that the French (Roman Catholic) occupation of Holland was temporary. Verkuyl made the following reflection on that event:

Now the archbishop of Utrecht, the cardinal, stood freely at the pulpit and it was the privilege and joy of the Protestant minister to exhort together with him the people to generosity and joint responsibility for the whole church and the whole world. It is as it were a reflection of that we hope for: the one holy [catholic church] for the whole world.¹⁵

Verkuyl also had a part in joint efforts in missiological studies between the RCC and the Protestants, which were later initiated in the Netherlands. These efforts included the founding of Inter-universitair Instituut voor Missiologie en Oecumenica (IIMO) in 1969 and the fusion of the Catholic journal Het Missiewerk and the Protestant De

¹⁴ Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 112.

¹⁵ Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 268. “Nu stond de aartsbisschop van Utrecht, de kardinaal, vrijwillig op die kansel en het was de protestantse evangeldienaar een voorrecht en vreugde om samen met hem mensen aan te sporen tot offerwaardigheid en medeverantwoordelijkheid voor heel de kerk en heel de wereld. Het was a.h.w. een luchtspiegel van datgene waarop wij hopen: de “Una Sancta” voor de gehele wereld.” My translation.
Heerbaan to become Wereld en Zending in 1972. He was secretary of the first executive committee of IIMO, while he served on the editorial committee of Wereld en Zending.¹⁶

Verkuyl would quickly clarify, however, that fellowship and cooperation with RCC people did not lead, at least as far as he was concerned, to ecumenical triumphalism that ignores the deep differences that separate the two communions. Despite the many contacts between the WCC and the RCC during and after Vatican II, he predicted that the trend in the Vatican in the 1990s would continue in the direction of counter-reformation rather than co-reformation. Yet, Christians’ attitude should not be ecumenical defeatism that focuses merely on what separates the two, fearing everything that threatens the status quo. While he encouraged further official contacts with the RCC, Protestants should strengthen relations with those groups in the RCC that are moving in the direction of co-reformation.¹⁷

Advocating for World Diaconate

In 1964, the NZR distributed a pamphlet calling for support for churches in other countries, including those without historic ties with the churches in the Netherlands. This was in view of the ecumenical initiatives mentioned above, in order to give concrete push


¹⁷ Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 113, 276-277; “Mission in the 1980s,” 94; “Mission in the 1990s,” 58. While he welcomed positive developments following the Vatican II, his attitude towards the RCC did not change considerably from the time he wrote Apakah Beda Gereja Rum-Katolik dan Reformasi [?] (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, third edition, 1960), in which he presents the differences between the RCC and the Protestant churches.
for the worldwide tasks of meeting the pressing needs in poorer countries. The result of this call for world diaconate was a series of fundraising projects launched in the Netherlands. The “Brood voor het hart” was a fund raiser for Christian literature work in developing countries. The purpose was not only to produce Christian literature, but also to train nationals to write on subjects relevant to the context of their churches, not only on personal problems but on social and political ones as well. Due to Verkuyl’s experience in literature work in Indonesia, he was named to the management committee of the Christian Literature Fund (CLF). 18 “Kom over de brug,” which was held twice, in 1968 and then 1972, and in which the Roman Catholic Church took part, was the biggest fund raising campaign ever launched in the Netherlands for various Third World development projects. He also took part in the action “Unie School en Evangelie,” aimed at providing more resources for the development of Christian education in countries where conditions made it difficult for such endeavor. 19

From 1965 until 1973, Verkuyl was chair of the ICCO, an implementing body of the Joint Financing Program (JFP) set up by the Dutch government to finance developments projects in developing countries. Patterned after a similar scheme in Germany, the idea was that the Dutch government, under certain conditions, would add 75% to the funds raised by private agencies for select projects. For Verkuyl, the JFP was a corrective to the tendency of the government to give emphasis on the more developed

---


of the developing nations. One significant advantage of the JFP was that it directly involved people and organizations in both receiving and giving lands. Another advantage was that the role of the non-government organizations (NGOs) and voluntary organizations was highly valued in those lands.\textsuperscript{20} However, Verkuyl still raised some questions regarding the future of the JFP, such as:

Is it not desirable to abandon the condition whereby requests are made exclusively for capital-investment subsidies? Would it not be better to supplement those requests with requests for human-investment subsidies, namely, for projects and programmes for which in the initial period there is a need of a number of experts to pass on know-how?

How can the role of the non-governmental organizations and projects be better and more thoroughly integrated into the total development planning of the various countries so that these private projects will fill in the many gaps and merge into the total process of directed modernization of societies?\textsuperscript{21}

Beyond the problem of underdevelopment, he also understood the structural changes that need to take place in developing lands, in the rich nations, and in international relations, a fact that people like J. Tinbergen, coordinator of JFP, had long recognized.\textsuperscript{22}

After he retired from service in Indonesia, Verkuyl made three visits to the country to take part in various meetings that dealt with diaconal issues. On his first visit, he took part in an Indonesian Council of Churches (DGI)-sponsored consultation on evangelism and diaconate in Sukabumi in 1967. The consultation discussed and mapped out a response to problems and the situation created by the attempted communist coup in 1965: concerning political prisoners, the mass movements into the churches, and the


\textsuperscript{21} Verkuyl, "The Participation of the Dutch," 128.

\textsuperscript{22} Verkuyl, review of \textit{Naa een rechtvaardiger internationale orde} (R. I. O.) by Prof. Dr. Jan Tinbergen, \textit{Wereld en Zending} 8 (1979): 186-188.
threatened position of the Chinese minority. In 1971, on the second visit, Verkuyl attended the seventh general assembly of the DGI, which tackled themes such as joint action for mission and the task of churches in development and emancipation of rural areas and people groups. Following the assembly, a tripartite cooperation between the DGI Development Center, the ICCO, and the WCC Committee for the Participation of Churches in Development (CPCD) was formed. His third and last visit in 1973 was under the auspices of the Free University, and its intention was to discuss possible partnership and cooperation in tertiary education with Indonesian counterparts. Since the beginning of his tenure with the NZR, there had been discussion on the support for Christian universities in Indonesia and other developing countries. Believing in the emancipating role of education, he also helped raise funds for the expansion and physical development of these universities.

Campaigning against Apartheid

Verkuyl’s interest in racial problems did not begin in the 1960’s, when he met the illustrious South African Zachariah Keodereleng Matthews and Afrikaner C. F. Beyers

---


Naude. As a young child, he devoured books on the farmers (*boers*) and the Boer War written by Laurens Penning, who had family ties with his mother. The emancipation of the *boers* impressed him profoundly with its most celebrated heroes, Paul Kruger and Gerrit Maritz. But as Verkuyl grew older, he began to wonder why the *boers* gave no support for the emancipation of the black people who were more oppressed than the *boers* had been. When he was in middle school, he read about the struggles of Mahatma Gandhi in Durban and later developed a great admiration for Albert Luthuli, leader of the African National Congress (ANC) and the first African to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent resistance to apartheid.26 These initial impressions of racial relations were definitely formative, but later experiences were to become more decisive for his commitment against apartheid.

In 1939 Verkuyl attended the World Conference of Christian Youth in Amsterdam. At that time, he was the chaplain to Asian students in the Netherlands. It was a very tense period in history. A war between Japan and China was on going. In Germany, the persecution of the Jews was in full swing. The flow of world events was rushing in, culminating in the outbreak of the Second World War. The 1500 participants representing 68 countries, many of which were still under colonial rule and struggling against it, sensed something of the collective guilt and the fault that lay in the lives of countries and races. An unexpected incident happened in the communion service at the end of the World Conference. Verkuyl recalls vividly that moment,

All at once, ignoring the planned liturgy, a Chinese student, whose country had already been invaded by Japan, stood up in his pew. I can still recall his words accurately, as he translated our feelings for us. He said, 'I drink from this cup

---

26 Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 283; *Break Down the Walls*, 96; *Breek de muren af*, 97; *Runtuhan Tembok*, 113-114.
because I believe that the blood of Jesus Christ ... was spilled as atonement for my sins and the sins of my people. For He who died for us is risen from the dead.’ Then he looked to a Japanese student sitting across from him and said to him, ‘I would hate you with all my heart if I did not know that Jesus died for your sins and the sins of your people.’ With this, he reached his cup out and handed it to the Japanese student, and said, ‘Take this, drink it, remember and believe that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for a complete remission of all our sins.’

It was a very meaningful and decisive moment for Verkuyl. As he puts it,

I realized at that moment, for the first time really, that the reconciliation and pardon given us in Jesus Christ applies not only to our private sins, but to our collective sins and to the sinful structures that shape injustice between nations and races. There, for the first time, I realized that what Jesus Christ did for us has cosmic dimensions, that it touches the whole ecumenical family of nations.

What happened at the Lord’s table in Amsterdam in 1939 took on even deeper meaning as Verkuyl worked as chaplain among Asian students and began to feel the hurt, the suffering, the guilt that his country’s colonial practices had injected into race relations, and as he later went through the years of imprisonment and witnessed the hostilities between the Netherlands and Indonesia. His many more personal contacts with people in the following years would deepen and broaden his awareness of the racial problem in its global dimensions. The most meaningful contacts were those with Z. K. Matthews and C. F. Beyers Naude.

Calling him “my dear Bantu friend,” Verkuyl, then general secretary of the NZR, often met with Matthews when the latter worked in Geneva as African secretary of the WCC’s Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee, and World Service. Matthews is often mentioned in Verkuyl’s works in connection with Matthews’ pioneering role in ecumenical relations, in the African quest for self-expression, and in the relations

---

27 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 153; Runtuikan Tembok, 173; Gedenken en verwachten, 80.

28 Verkuyl, Breek Down the Walls, 153; Runtuikan Tembok, 173-174.
between church and society.\textsuperscript{29} Verkuyl wrote a short sketch of the life and career of this remarkable man,\textsuperscript{30} and dedicated \textit{Break Down the Walls} to him with this citation:

To the memory of Zachariah Keodereleg Matthews, who, from his homeland in Fort Hare, South Africa, as servant of the universal church while in Geneva, and as ambassador to the United Nations from Botswana until the day of his death in May, 1968 gave his life to the ministry of reconciliation between the races of men.\textsuperscript{31}

C. F. Beyers Naude also impressed Verkuyl for his role in the anti-apartheid movement. Verkuyl wrote an article about Beyers Naude in a book in honor of J. J. Buskes,\textsuperscript{32} one of the preachers Verkuyl admired during his student years at the Free University. In 1965, still largely unknown in the Netherlands, Beyers Naude visited the country for the first time in his capacity as director of the Christian Institute for South Africa (CISA). Founded in 1963, CISA was a multiracial and ecumenical organization that worked for change in societal structures and served as a bridge between the large groups of independent churches. The purpose of Beyers Naude’s visit was to present a request to the Christian public for a number of projects for two thousand independent

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{29} Verkuyl, \textit{Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingwetenschap}, 117, 336-339, 340, 389-390, 538; \textit{Contemporary Missiology}, 85, 246-249, 250, 284, 398; \textit{Break Down the Walls}, 147, 154; \textit{Runtuhan Tembok}, 152-154, 173; \textit{Breek de muren af}, 131, 146.


\textsuperscript{31} Verkuyl, \textit{Break Down the Walls}, 4.

\end{footnotes}
\end{footnotesize}
churches. Verkuyl tried to help solicit funds for these projects among the member churches and affiliated organizations of the NZR. The same need was communicated to the general public through articles written by Verkuyl and Ben van Kaam in *Trouw*, which attempted to gain the attention of the Dutch churches for the struggle for racial justice in South Africa. In 1969, Beyers Naude was visiting again, and this time Verkuyl met him in a group of black and white Christians that discussed the question of possible non-violent means to prevent violent revolution in South Africa. Verkuyl was impressed by the role way played by Beyers Naude as a confident and informal pivot of the discussion.

The Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) of 1968 in Lunteren, the Netherlands, was Verkuyl’s first direct confrontation with the apartheid system. Two of the major Reformed churches in South Africa, the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) and the Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika (GKZA), were RES members and were represented in the Synod of 1968. The other Reformed church, the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk (NHK), was not a RES member, which together with the NGK, withdrew its membership in the WCC following the Cottesloe Consultation in 1960. The GKZA was never a member of the WCC. As a response to the crisis precipitated by the Sharpeville massacre, WCC and South African member churches at Cottesloe issued a statement on race relations which was rejected by the NGK and the NHK. Verkuyl notes that it was in that context of ecumenical crisis that the RES Synod at Lunteren took on special significance.

---

33 For this appeal for help, see Verkuyl, “Brug in Zuid-Afrika tussen christenen van alle rassen,” with Ben van Kaam, *Trouw* (November 30, 1965); “Help ons, zeiden Bantoes tot blanke medechristenen,” *Trouw* (December 1, 1965).

34 Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 284.
for the South African Reformed churches, that were being increasingly isolated due to the apartheid issue.  

Verkuyl was in the midst of the controversy of the synod in Lunteren, enabling him to give an eye-witness account of what happened there. The synod was presented with two reports, and one of them, written by Verkuyl and R. J. van der Veen, was defeated by a vote of 30 to 16, rendering it a minority report. The majority report was accepted after segments of the minority report were incorporated. Verkuyl interpreted both reports as opposed to apartheid in principle and practice, which was also the perception of some of the South African press. The only difference between the two, he claimed, “lay in the measure of concreteness: the minority report condemned apartheid explicitly and the majority report made its criticism implicitly.” He believed that the implicitness of the majority was interpreted by supporters of apartheid as a silent endorsement of the system. This untoward incident had already been anticipated by Verkuyl and his friends, and was precisely the reason why they felt the report should be as concrete as it ought to be. As he describes it, “What the writers of the minority report feared, however, has happened. Delegates from South Africa gave interviews to the press and wrote articles in which they enthusiastically hailed the report for its refusal to make a

---


36 Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls*, 132-139; *Breek de muren af*, 112-123.

judgment on apartheid. Their enthusiasm, however, can be supported only with falsehoods.  

From Verkuyl’s account, it can be gathered that the most critical question that preoccupied the synod was how to express the synod’s opposition to apartheid. The two reports, to be clear, do not represent two different positions. In fact, Verkuyl believed that what is expressed by the Cottesloe consultation (1960), by the WCC Uppsala Assembly (1968), and in the 1968 “Message to the People of South Africa” by the South African Council of Churches (SACC), is all summed up in both reports of the RES in 1968. They only differ in the tone of language and in the level of courage in exposing concrete problems. The writers of the minority report were convinced that the church should proclaim and apply the word of God concretely in real situations. Thus, their report does not hesitate to deny directly the claims of racial differences rooted in divine creation ordinances, and, following the prophets, to proclaim that apartheid is injustice and sin. It does not mince its words in presenting the frightening situations and increasing tensions between races in countries represented by the member churches. It not only criticizes the ideology and practice of apartheid in South Africa, but it cites specific laws that institutionalized racism in that country.

Moreover, three concrete items are discussed in the minority report: 1) Gericke’s defense of apartheid before the World Court in 1963, at which Gericke tried to use the

---

38 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 138, cf. 133; Breek de muren af, 113, 121-122; Runtuukkan Tembok, 148-150.

39 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 139.

40 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 134-135; Breek de muren af, 116-117; Runtuukkan Tembok, 140.
RES, inappropriately, to defend his government’s apartheid policy; 2) the speech of Toivo, the leader of the South-West African independence movement (SWAPO), before the supreme tribunal of Pretoria; and 3) the naming of churches in connection with the racial problems in their countries. To those who criticized bringing the Gericke affair into the report, Verkuyl had this to say: “...his appearance before the Court was a public affair, and it had to be dealt with publicly at the synod whose authority was misrepresented to defend views and practices for which the synod had no intention whatsoever of accepting responsibility.” On Toivo’s speech, it seems that a question was raised in the synod on the violent route SWAPO had taken, asserting that the minority report had allegedly given a platform to a “terrorist and a Communist.” Verkuyl responded that SWAPO’s decision to take the route of violent resistance was not a question the RES faced in that assembly. Rather, the point was that Gericke gave his testimony at the World Court, which justified Toivo’s complaint that he and his fellow South-West Africans were deprived of political rights. Against the allegation that Toiva was a terrorist and Communist, Verkuyl pointed out that Toiva was a Lutheran Christian. He adds, “What we must ask ourselves is why is it that some Christians are driven by despair into terrorism and Communism. Could it be that some Christians in our world are in fact leading others, men like Toivo, into temptation?”41 Finally, the question of naming churches for racial problems in their countries stirred up suspicion among the South African delegates that this was done as a springboard for an attack on South Africa.

41 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 137; ox Breek de muren af, 120.
Verkuyl commented that everybody was defensive of his own country and none of them thought they were merely trying to indict South Africa.\textsuperscript{42}

In 1970, Verkuyl visited South Africa at the invitation of the SACC to give support to "A Message to the People of South Africa," which was prepared in 1968 by the theological commission of the council. An earlier invitation from the GKZA was extended to him to give lectures at the university in Potchefstroom. The invitation was retracted when Verkuyl refused to break his friendship with Beyers Naude, a condition of the church, which was conveyed by a well known member of the Broederbond. His answer shows not only his usual playfulness with words, but where his sympathies lay: "I answered that I have no relationship with the Broederbond and I that do not intend to break my brotherhood [friendship] with Beyers."\textsuperscript{43} The Broederbond was a secret society organized in 1918 aimed at creating a separate African nation incarnating Western-Christian culture. For a time, Beyers Naude himself was a member of this Nazi-like society.

In the spring of 1970, Verkuyl visited South Africa. The visit created memorable impressions. Being a guest of the Council of Churches and the Christian Institute gave him opportunities to meet with various kinds of people and churches. Due to his public support of "A Message to the People of South Africa," doors were opened to him, even among non-Christian communities. For him, the "Message" set the conflict between the Christian gospel and the ideology of apartheid in a new and more decisive context, that is,

\textsuperscript{42} Verkuyl, \textit{Break Down the Walls}, 138; or \textit{Breek de muren af}, 121.

\textsuperscript{43} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 285. Ik antwoorde, dat ik met de Broederbond geen enkel contact wilde en dat ik er niet aan dacht de broederband met Beyers te verbreken. My translation.
in a theological context. One can understand this view when it is realized that apartheid was rooted in a nationalistic ideology that falsely exploited the name of Christianity. It was a pseudo-gospel.

A question was raised on the propriety of his coming at the invitation of the Council of Churches. By accepting the invitation of the Council of Churches, many feared that he was closing any contact with the three powerful, white Dutch (or Afrikaner) Reformed churches (DRCs). He denied this by saying that both those who supported and those who opposed apartheid gave positive and negative coverage of his actions and addresses. He claimed that there were people, pastors, theologians, and university professors from the DRCs who had problems with apartheid and he insisted that dialogue with the leadership of these churches should continue. In fact, he thought there was an advantage to coming under the auspices of the Council of Churches, for he could fulfill other requests to speak and discuss the issues without compromising himself, since everybody knew clearly what he came and stood for. Thus, there were confrontations, like that with Gericke and others in Stellenbosch, but there was also a gratifying reception among critical student groups.

There was an attempt to trap him and force him to compromise himself in a radio interview with J. D. Vorster. The trap consisted of secret minutes presented to him by Vorster, allegedly from a group led by Beyers Naude, regarding a violent conspiracy planned against South Africa. Verkuyl was asked whether he would deny this charge.

---

44 Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls*, 139-140; *Breek de muren af*, 122-123. The complete text of the "Message" in *Break Down the Walls*, 140 -145; *Breek de muren af*, 124-130.

He realized that it was a trap and that, if not careful with his answer, he would land Beyers Naude in prison. Instead, he countered, "I call you, Dr. Gericke, to be a witness. Yesterday you told me that you are convinced that Beyers Naude and company strive for radical change in South Africa by non-violent means, not violent ones." Gericke confirmed the statement. Then Verkuyl turned to Vorster and declared that the accusation in connection with the secret minutes was completely false. The interview was heard all over the land and many black people read it in stenciled form. Verkuyl also spent a day with groups that were working for fundamental change (groepen die strijven naar fundamentele verandering) and that never before had assembled together.

The most moving experience for him, however, was his visits to the colored churches in Paarl and Alexandra in which he, with pastors A. Boesak and S. Buti respectively, served the Lord's Supper and preached the word. For hours after the services, he would listen to these oppressed people of God, to their cries and search for comfort, answers, and hope. Whatever can be said of that visit, it surely undermined the apartheid system in South Africa.

Verkuyl's contact with that country continued. He helped established Kairos, an organization that aimed at supporting anti-apartheid movements. He wrote papers for the Unit on Apartheid of the United Nations and on the WCC Program to Combat Racism

---

46 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 286-287. For the complete transcript of the radio interview, see Die Gereformeerde Kerken en gerechtigheid in volkereverhoudings, ed. M. v. Tonder (Suid-Afrikaanse Uitsaalkorporasie, 1970).

47 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 287-288; “Inleiding,” in Om het zwarte te zeggen: een bundel opstellen over centrale thema's in de zwarte theologies, ed. A. Boesak (Kampen: I. H. Kok, 1976), 5; cf. Break Down the Walls, 149-150; Runtulikan Tembok, 154-155.

(PCR) for the churches in the Netherlands. He gave interviews and addresses in various forums. He wrote an open letter to Premier Botha, and exchanged correspondence with significant people. He supervised and influenced dissertations by South African students, especially those dealing with churches and the problem of apartheid, most notably ones by J. C. Adonis and A. Boesak. After that visit in 1970, he was no longer granted a visa for further visits. But South Africa remained on his daily agenda. He was declared persona non-grata, but surely not for most South African people.

Meanwhile, he promoted similar campaigns against apartheid in other African nations. He called on the churches in Europe and North America to heed the appeal from the African churches to persuade their governments and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to cut economic and military relations with the apartheid governments in

---

49 Verkuyl, "Christianity and Apartheid," trans. J. D. Gort, in Notes and Documents United Nations Unit on Apartheid (July 1970), "The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the Ideology and Practice of Apartheid," trans. J. D. Gort, in Notes and Documents (February 1971). The former article is also published as part of chapter 2 of Breek de muren af, 15-45, or Break Down the Walls, pp. 21-55, or Runtuuhan Tembok, pp. 20-57. The latter is published in Reformed and Presbyterian World 31(1970-1971): 291-301; in French in Groupe de l'Apartheid des Nations Unies (1971); and as part of chapter 5 of Break Down the Walls, 95-151, Breek de muren af, 96-130, and Runtuuhan Tembok, 113-161. The WCC Program to Combat Racism created controversy that Verkuyl deemed it necessary to introduce the Program in an article "Enkele notities over de achtergrond, het ontstaan en de taak van het Programme tot Bestrijding van het Racisme van de Wereldraad van Kerken," Wereld en Zending 1 (1972): 241-250, a supplementary to previous works Breek de muren af and Bestrijding van het racisme en de kerken in Nederland: Het Programme van de Wereldraad van Kerken (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1972). It is also noteworthy that Verkuyl’s earliest known thoughts on race relations are contained in a book published (1959) for Indonesian churches, Etiqa Kristen: Ras, Bangsa, 15-64, which became a basis for later works on the problem of apartheid.

50 J. C. Adonis wrote Die afgebreekte skeidsmuur weer opgebou: die verstregelings van die sendingsbeleid van die Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika met die praktyk en ideologie van die Apartheid in historiese perspektief (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982) under the supervision of Verkuyl, whose Breek de muren af was an “eye opener” to Adonis, in “voorwoord” to Die afgebreekte [n. p.]; cf. Wessels, “Memorial Address,” 5-6. Boesak was not a student of Verkuyl but testified that his “dissertation gives evidence of the influence you [Verkuyl] have had on my thinking,” in A. Boesak, Farewell to Innocence: A Social-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Black Power (Kampen: Kok, 1976), 8. See Verkuyl, “Rondom de promotie dr. Allan Audrey [sic] Boesak in Kampen,” Gereformeerde Weekblad (July 1976): 323-325 for his review of Farewell to Innocence.

51 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 289-291.
South Africa, Namibia, Rhodesia, and Mozambique. He did not think that it was wise for churches to encourage violent means with alien support from Cuba and Russia in the decolonization process in Namibia, but rather to seek justice and non-violent means to achieve peace and reconciliation for all those involved. He believed that the Rhodesian issue was a global concern, just like the South African problem, that required the attention of all, the oppressors and the oppressed, the British government and the United Nations, the guerilla fighters and the churches of Jesus Christ.

*Other Political Involvement*

*Campaigning for Peace*

In 1967, Verkuyl helped found and, until 1978, was the first chair of the Gereformeerde Vredesberaad (GVB) of the GKN. The aim of this peace initiative was to stimulate participation of the GKN in the discussion and action around the question regarding war and peace during the period of the proliferation of weapons and methods of mass destruction and global arms trade. Not long before the founding of the GVB, the ecumenical Interkerkelijke Vredesberaad (IKV) was started, but within the GKN, churches’ participation in ecumenical reflection on peace was still very weak. The intention of the GVB was to influence and intensify the participation of the GKN.

---

52 Verkuyl, “Geen tweede, ‘vietnam’: het appel van de afrikaanse kerken op de kerken in west-europa en de v.s.” *Voorlopig* 5, 10 (1973): 289-293. The appeal was issued by a committee of the All Africa Conference of Church meeting on April 3-12, 1973 in Tananarive, Madagascar.


54 Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls*, 161; *Runtuukan Tembok*, 163-164.

churches in the IKV. The GVB was integrated into the IKV and later disbanded when
the integration was completed.

Verkuyl’s peace initiatives can be traced to his childhood, as earlier noted, when
he heard frightening stories of the conduct of the First World War going on across
Europe. Later, he realized that moral limits were violated when, in spite of the fact that
the capitation of the Japanese was in the offing, bombs were still dropped on Hiroshima
and Nagasaki. That experience moved him to make a vow to God that he would devote
his life for the eradication of nuclear weapons.56 Another significant event was when he
was involved in the section of Uppsala 1968 on peace and justice. Until his retirement
years, Verkuyl continued to address the problem of war and peace in various forums. His
purpose was not to give a dogmatic presentation on the issue, but to help Christians and
churches to think through the problem as they seek to obey God on such questions.57 His
peace campaign rested on a conviction that possession and use of weapons of mass
destruction was demonic.58 For him, even the casuistic view of these weapons is
impermissible and illegitimate. In his view, this is not a military-strategic question, but a
moral one. No end can justify it, not even for reasons of national security
(veiligheidsystemen), or the idea of limited nuclear war (beperkte nucleaire oorlog) as
proposed by US President Reagan.59

57 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 124-126, 318, 322.
59 Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 292-293, 322; see 312-313, “Mission in the 1990s,” 56, on
Verkuyl’s observation and comments regarding the growing rapprochement between the traditional pacifist
churches and the other conservative churches in the United States.
Lobbying for Political Prisoners and Former KNIL Members

In 1971, a consultation was held in Driebergen between the Indonesian Council of Churches (DGI) and the Netherlands Council of Churches (NRK). Verkuyl was named chair of a workgroup by the NRK and, as such, had to implement the resolutions of the consultation together with the parallel workgroups of the DGI and the Roman Catholic Episcopate. The resolutions concerned the political prisoners, the former members of the Royal Dutch Indies Army (KNIL), and the criteria for developing cooperation. The problem of political prisoners in Indonesia had occupied the attention of many in the Netherlands and other countries. Following the aborted communist coup of 1965, thousands of people had been detained without the benefit of due process. Among them was the internationally known writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer. On his visit to Indonesia in 1973, Verkuyl sought an audience with the chief of the armed forces, General Sumitro, and brought up three aspects of the problem: security, legal constraints, and humanitarian issues. It is interesting how he approached the general. He said that there was a verse in the Bible that he could never forget when he thought of the political prisoners on the island of Buru. He quoted Heb. 13:3, which reads, “Think of the prisoners as if you yourself were a fellow prisoner.” Surprised to hear this verse, and moved by the situation Verkuyl presented, Sumitro promised that he would soon visit the island and do all he could to remove the stumbling block to resolving the problem. Unfortunately, Sumitro was asked to retire early because his efforts were perceived to be exceeding government expectations. Nevertheless, Verkuyl believed that the start of the process of releasing political prisoners was undoubtedly due to Sumitro’s efforts. He kept on lobbying for the prisoners by corresponding with Sumitro’s successor, Admiral Sudomo, until there was
satisfactory action on the problem. Then Verkuyl worked on behalf of ex-prisoners and their families with relevant agencies and in cooperation with the DGI and Dr. Yap Thiam Hien, who was then a member of the International Organization of Jurists and the Commission for International Affairs of the WCC.\(^\text{60}\)

One of the problems created by the Dutch departure from Indonesia was the status of the former members of the Royal Dutch Indies Army (KNIL). These professional soldiers, mainly from the Moluccan islands in the eastern part of Indonesia, fought faithfully alongside the Dutch in several wars, including the world war. After the transfer of sovereignty from the Dutch Indies to the Republic of Indonesia, tension arose between the unionists and the federalists. The Round Table Conference of 1949, which agreed on the independence of Indonesia, stipulates that the Republic shall be a federal union of states to be called the Republic of United States of Indonesia (RUSI). As soon as the Dutch left, however, the Republic changed from a federal union to a united state. Refusing to come under the united Republic, the Mollucans, predominantly Christians, proclaimed their own independence on April 25, 1950, and called their territory Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS), with the capital in the city of Ambon. The RMS was easily crushed by the Indonesian army, and before the end of the year, it became a part of Indonesia. Former KNIL members and their families were allowed to migrate to the Netherlands. Efforts to integrate them into Dutch society have been unsuccessful, and they have attempted to force the Dutch government to recognize their political aspirations.

---

and to change its policy toward Indonesia. South Moluccan frustration led to violent outburst in the Netherlands in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{61}

The Moluccan problem was on the agenda of the consultation between the DGI and the Netherlands Council of Churches in Driebergen in 1971, and Verkuyl brought up the consultation proposals with some government officials and relevant agencies during his third visit to Indonesia in 1973. He had always been of the opinion that that there were only two alternatives: either the ex-KNIL living in the Netherlands should return to Indonesia and drop their plans for independence, or they should integrate into Dutch society as an ethnic minority and try to preserve their own identity. Fortunately, there were some colleagues who were less preoccupied with finding a political solution to the dispute and more directed to the exercise of a pastoral approach. For Verkuyl both approaches, the pastoral and political, were necessary for the removal of this sore spot in the relationship between Netherlands and Indonesia.\textsuperscript{62}

\textit{Participating in Church-Israel Discussion}

In later years, Verkuyl served as advisor to the Deputaatschap voor Kerk en Israel of the GKN. During German hegemony, he was drawn into resistance against national socialism and aided the persecuted Jews in Germany. During the internment years in Japanese camps, he had opportunities to engage in dialogue with Jewish prisoners, some of whom received the message of God's peace in Christ. In the Netherlands, he was involved in providing assistance to the Russian Jews. These experiences prompted him


\textsuperscript{62} Verkuyl, \textit{Indonesie: onze meest nabije}, 86-91.
to write considerably on the communication of the gospel of the kingdom as it relates to the relationship between the churches and Israel.\textsuperscript{63} His interest in church-Israel relations, however, was not simply evangelistic. He was also very concerned about developments in the Middle East, especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He understood well the desire of the Jews for safety, since they endured the traumatic Holocaust and other forms of anti-Zionism. But at the same time, he realized the legitimacy of the claims of the Palestinians who knew no other homeland except Palestine. He was aware of despondent voices that judged every effort for reconciliation or co-existence futile. But, for him, what many thought impossible was actually the only possible solution to the hopelessness.\textsuperscript{64}

Protesting American Intervention in Vietnam

Verkuyl was not against war in principle. However, the war caused by American intervention in Vietnam was, for him, shameful and shameless (beschamende en schaamteloze). He found it strange that the USA did not treat Ho Chi Minh in the way it engaged communist Joseph Tito of Yugoslavia; that it failed to understand that the primary motive of the Vietnamese leader, at least initially, was independence and the integrity of his country; that it helped the communists to thrive by its support of the corrupt and unpopular government of Ngo Dinh Diem of the South; and that its military


policy in the country was driving Vietnam into a situation exactly the opposite of what it intended to prevent, that is, a Southeast Asian nation oriented to Moscow. For him, the starting point of the US policy was faulty, that is, that Hanoi was under the directives of Beijing. Nothing is farther from than the truth. For centuries, Vietnam had been occupied by the Chinese and, having freed itself from the occupation in the 13th century, was thus not keen to be under Chinese hegemony again. What was troubling for Verkuyl was the fact that the US anti-communist rhetoric was diverting attention from the real problem and solution. For him, it was unfortunate that a so-called “Christian world power” would export a war with all its sophisticated weapons of mass destruction against simple peasants.65

With this perception, he sought public avenues to address the problem of the Vietnam War. He collaborated on a report for the ARP which was generally accepted and was read in the parliament. Since then, he wrote a number of articles about the problem.66 On May 27, 1967, he was asked to address one of the largest anti-Vietnam War demonstrations in Europe. That protest rally gave an important boost to anti-war movements in the USA already underway under the leadership of Father Berrigan and the civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. He cautioned, however, against certain cliché-reactions like the protest rallies that anti-Americanism promoted. He also feared that people would forget that there was another America that did not identify with the official policy and yet had conscientious objection to certain political resistance. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, Verkuyl wrote an article warning against a new cycle of violations


of human rights that a monopoly of power could produce, such as the ascent to power of
the communist party in Vietnam. He called on the same people who protested against the
scandalous atrocities of the American troops in Vietnam to warn the communist
government in Vietnam against violation of human rights. He suggested support for the
Buddhist monks and other religious groups that had suffered serious blows from the
hands of the communists.\(^67\)

Promoting Human Rights in Taiwan

Verkuyl was a member of a group from the Free University that studied the
relationship between China and Taiwan, following the United Nations’ allocation to the
government in Beijing the representation of China, as well as the first visit of an
American president to the People’s Republic.\(^68\) The study group attempted to sketch a
historical background that would throw light on the various points of view on the
problem. It was not its intention to suggest solutions, but to look at the problem from the
viewpoint of universal human rights. These human rights are articulated in the Universal
Declaration on Human Rights by the United Nations and are asserted in the official WCC
Uppsala Report, from which Verkuyl and his group approached the problem. In
particular, the group called special attention to two fundamental rights: first, the right of
self-determination for all peoples and the rights of minorities and majorities in relation to
this right, and second, the right of freedom of religion. With regard to the first, the group
suggested that compromises must be sought that would take into account various interests,

\(^{67}\) Verkuyl, *Gedenken en verwachten*, 281; cf. “Overwegingen bij het naspel van de oorlog in

\(^{68}\) For the result of the study, see Verkuyl, et al., “The Problem of Taiwan,” *Lutheran World* 20
(1973): 167-176; also in Dutch, “Het probleem Taiwan. Geschiedenis, achtergronden en standpunten,”
and that a UN-supervised referendum might be one way out of the impasse. In any case, the voice of the Taiwanese people, not just the alien nationalists and communists, must be sought and listened to, as the British Council of Churches stated in its report. In the midst of discussion on the right of self-determination, people tend to ignore another basic human right, that is, the right to freedom of religion. Verkuyl’s group worried that China’s dismal record on religious freedom might influence the situation in Taiwan. It wished to apply the WCC principles on human rights, but clarified that “a missio politica oecumenica worthy of that name may never tolerate—in the interest of commerce, the unity of the Chinese People’s Republic or national and international concerns—a future for Taiwan in which it would be exposed to the same lack of religious freedom which still exists in China.”

Ecumenical Work and Mission

It is clear that Verkuyl, being involved in the ecumenical movement, was heavily engaged in political issues during his post-Indonesia ministry. There are many indications, however, that he did not lose sight of evangelism while engaged in political problems. First, every time he wrote about a political issue that was also an ecumenical issue, he would approach it not only biblically, but also evangelistically. For instance, liberation and emancipation were for him both spiritual and political deliverance: from sin and death, and from oppression and underdevelopment. Similarly, he believed that changes in racial relations “can begin only as people and groups are personally and structurally converted to obedience to God’s Gospel and God’s Law.” Here he speaks of


70 Cf. Aritonang and Borrong, “Beberapa Catatan,” 100.
personal and social-structural conversion. In other words, he would address a political issue in both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

Secondly, by his political activities he was trying, albeit indirectly, to safeguard the integrity of the churches and missions, which he viewed as essential to gospel proclamation to the nations. Safeguarding the integrity of the churches and missions was a part of the motivation for *missio politica oecumenica* in Indonesia, as we have seen, and now it became the same motivation for Verkuyl’s ecumenical work. Churches were always put at a disadvantage whenever they were perceived to be identified with Western powers, such as with the USA, that was regarded as a Christian nation and yet exported war in Vietnam, and with the Netherlands, to which the Moluccan Christian rebels showed more loyalty than to the Indonesian Republic. Verkuyl tried to grapple with current political ideologies and called the churches to do the same, because it is always dangerous for the churches to be identified with any ideology. Not only are ideologies incompatible in many respects with Christianity, but, more often than not, they are associated with Western powers. By their uncritical stance on ideologies, churches may be unwittingly espousing a certain ideology and thus their gospel proclamation might be misconstrued as propaganda. He advocated human rights for all, because no religion can flourish when these rights are not in place. He fought against apartheid, because it is essentially a contradiction of the message of the gospel that churches are called to proclaim. In the context of apartheid in South Africa, one cannot proclaim the gospel and leave apartheid unchallenged. Therefore, in his political efforts, Verkuyl showed concern not only for the people whom the churches are called to serve, but also for the churches and their missionary tasks.
Thus, even when Verkuyl was grappling with political issues, he was not marginalizing evangelism, for both missio politica oecumenica and kerygma, together with koinonia and diakonia, are aspects of the missio Dei. In this connection, to show that polarization between the ecumenicals and the evangelicals was unnecessary, he provided clear biblical and missiological perspectives on issues raised by the two groups. By this effort, he was trying to convince the two groups that the concerns of both of them are legitimate and they should not play one against the other. This is one more indication that he never marginalized evangelism and church planting and never thought that his pre-occupation with political problems was diminishing those other tasks of the church.

Verkuyl was definitely at home in the ecumenical movement. This, too, has missionary significance. It involves what I would call his koinonic personality, which embraces and engages every one in fellowship. Perhaps this aspect of his life and ministry will be remembered more than anything else. His students, colleagues, and friends, either Christian or non-Christian, describe him as a person of big stature and an even bigger heart.\(^71\) For Verkuyl, this friendship has missionary implications. As he testified,

My experience also taught me that having sincere friendships is the deepest medium in the communication of the gospel. If we are true companions along the life path of others, we learn the ‘language of the heart’, in which the exchange of our deepest convictions is no longer forced but quite natural.\(^72\)

**Conclusion**

\(^71\) Calvin College Chaplain Dale Cooper, interview by author, March 2003, Grand Rapids, MI. This aspect of Verkuyl’s life is prominent in the memorial addresses for him in In Memoriam. Cf. Wessels, “Memorial Address,” 19.

The period of Verkuyl's post-Indonesia ministry was a critical time in history. It was a revolutionary time when many newly emerged nations were seeking their own identities and clamoring for a new international order, free of imperialism and neo-colonialism. The time was one of striving for liberation from the poverty and underdevelopment that colonial rule left behind. Communism was rising, racial tensions were widespread, and the nuclear arms race threatened the very existence of life on earth. Liberation theology in Latin America made much of the Third World conscious of its place in world history. The Vietnam War was out of control; student radicalism shook campuses and governments; and the church was torn between the so-called ecumenicals and evangelicals. The ecumenicals were concerned about the economically and politically disenfranchised nations, while the evangelicals were concerned about the spiritually lost billions. The church was polarized, and the general tendency was to opt for one stance over against the other. This was the kind of world, or the state of the oecumene, to which Verkuyl was called as a mission executive. As in Indonesia, this too required sensitivity to the times and listening to the word of God for appropriate obedience.

As Verkuyl met various people from different regions of the world in the course of his ecumenical ministry, he was confronted with the greater needs of the world, especially those in the newly independent countries. Verkuyl thought that the issues raised by the ecumenical movement, especially in Uppsala in 1968 and Bangkok in 1973, in spite of the controversy they created, were legitimate and deserved urgent attention. He amplified some of those issues and reflected on them in the light of the promises and demands of the gospel. From the ecumenical meetings he attended, he became
increasingly aware of the polarization of ecumenicals and evangelicals, but he also felt gratified that there were signs of rapprochement between the two groups. Although he was aware that there were doctrinal differences between the Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church, and that the Catholic Church tended toward counter-reformation, he did not think that the Catholic Church was excluded from the church *Una Sancta*.

*Missio politica oecumenica* during this post-Indonesia ministry took several forms. He launched development projects in poor countries and raised funds for them. These projects were not simply intended to provide a livelihood to people, but to empower them for the renewal of their communities. He spoke and wrote against apartheid, and supported movements in and outside the Netherlands for its abolition. Moreover, he initiated a program that would educate churches in the Netherlands regarding justice and peace. In this connection, he opposed the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the West, protested against the war in Vietnam, and participated in the discussion regarding Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He continued his political involvement in Indonesia by lobbying for political prisoners and for the former Indonesian members of the royal Dutch army. He was part of a study that reviewed the relationship between China and Taiwan and appealed to the United Nations that human rights must be respected in those two lands as well as in other countries.

While he was heavily involved in the *oecumene*, he never lost sight of the church and its mission, including its evangelistic task. All his activities were dedicated to the welfare of the nations and the churches. All these efforts were meant to bring the kingdom of God into expression in every area of human life. All of them shaped his missiology.
PART TWO

MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA
IN THE THOUGHT OF VERKUYL
CHAPTER FIVE

POLITICAL ACTION IN MISSION AND MISSIOLOGY

The second major part of our study is a reflection on mission with political action as a distinct and integral aspect of it. By this, I do not intend a study in political ethics, or in political theology. Generally, political ethics deal with the government of human society by the State. Christian political ethics, as Verkuyl defines it, is simply the articulation of the confession “Jesus is Lord” in its political dimensions.¹ Political theology, on the other hand, as used in the theologies of Metz and Moltmann, refers to a theological methodology which relates theologizing to the political character of the society; it analyzes society and churches by the methods of social sciences in the light of biblical revelation. While these two theological disciplines can be useful in missiology and carry implications for missions, they do not deal directly with missiological issues, such as questions related to evangelism and church planting. My goal is to articulate a missiology that will serve as the basis for this distinct and integral task of the church’s mission called missio politica oecumenica, defined as the church’s participation in the struggle for justice and righteousness and against evil.² I will accomplish this by outlining a theology of mission in its political dimension (chapter 6), presenting three select tasks of missio politica oecumenica and their implications for mission (chapter 7), and by reviewing the political stance of churches and missions in three select countries and how


² Verkuyl, “My Pilgrimage,” 150; *Gedenken en verwachten*, 326; *Contemporary Missiology*, 406; *Inleiding in de nieuwe Zendingswetenschap*, 552.
the stance affected the life and witness of the churches in those countries (chapter 8). All
these are meant to demonstrate that missio politica oecumenica is a distinct and integral
aspect of mission and that political issues and action have significance for mission.

The present chapter serves as a prolegomena to Verkuyl’s missiology, in which I
shall discuss preliminary questions regarding the usage of the term missio politica
oecumenica, its elements and relation to missio Dei, missio ecclesiarum and missio
hominum. Based on these concepts of mission, I will define what Verkuyl means by
missiology. All this will further clarify what is meant by the term and its place in mission
and missiological reflection. I will examine the political role of some missionaries in the
past and try to locate some earlier antecedents of political action in missiology,
particularly in the writings of G. Voetius and J. H. Bavinck. All this will indicate that
political action is an as aspect of mission both in reflection and in practice.

**Missio Politica Oecumenica: Some Usage**

It is a bit strange that only in the last part of Verkuyl’s *Contemporary Missiology*,
or the Dutch *Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap*, does he devote a chapter
section to “Missio Politica Oecumenica.” This creates the impression that the idea is
almost an afterthought or a postscript of his formal missiology. But this impression would
be difficult to maintain. In the first place, at least as far as *Contemporary Missiology* is
concerned, the term *missio politica oecumenica* appears many times elsewhere. *Missio
politica oecumenica* is referred to as a study of the ideology and practice of apartheid in
connection with South African missiology.³ By implication, any similar study involving

---
³ Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 84; *Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap*, 116.
ideologies, or critical reflection on any political issue, in general, can be considered *missio politica oecumenica*. Thus, any critical evaluation of ideologies, such as Missiology's chapter 14, is a form of *missio politica oecumenica*. In "The Goal of Mission," chapter 7 of *Inleiding*, *missio politica oecumenica* is one of the inclusive goals of mission that involves improving the macrostructures of society. In the chapter "Ways and Means" of the same work, Verkuyl suggests some means of contributing to justice, which is the praxis of *missio politica oecumenica*.

Then, separate material on the subject appears at the end of Missiology and as a part of the chapter on ideologies. This essay seems out of place here, since *missio politica oecumenica* is a broader task than critically evaluating of ideologies; yet, the matter of ideologies is just one of the issues that *missio politica oecumenica* tackles. The essay could have been one full-length chapter, developing further the previous idea that it is one of the inclusive goals and means of mission. Nevertheless, with the appearance of the term elsewhere in Missiology, one can hardly conclude that it is merely an afterthought or a postscript of his missiology.

In the second place, Verkuyl has other terms for *missio politica oecumenica*. Sometimes he calls it ministry of reconciliation (*dienst verzoening*), as he did during the time of the conflict between the Netherlands and Indonesia following World War II. In contexts where poverty and underdevelopment in the Third World are perceived to be

---


problems of structural injustice, he calls it political diaconate\(^7\)

In the third place, even if he does not use the term, it is clear that he is referring to

*missio politica oecumenica* or, at least, to some aspect of it. For instance, in the prolegomena of *Missiology*, his idea of *missio hominum* in connection with *missio Dei* implies *missio politica oecumenica*; in this regard, *missio politica oecumenica* is the church’s participation in *missio hominum* insofar as *missio hominum* reflects the redemptive aim of *missio Dei*.\(^8\)

**Elements of Missio Política Oecumenica**

From the foregoing, it is clear that Verkuyl uses the term *missio politica oecumenica* in various ways, but that it refers to certain activities and thus represents a distinct task of the church. Specific forms of *missio politica oecumenica* are determined by the kind of problems or issues to be resolved or evaluated and by their contexts. There is no pre-designed blueprint for this task. *Missio politica oecumenica*, however, has fundamental elements that should guide churches and missions in formulating a course of action in a given situation. These elements will be examined in this section, beginning with the biblical foundations for political action through its ecumenical aspect.\(^9\)

First, *missio politica oecumenica* is based on redemptive history, since it has political dimensions. The fact that revelation was mediated through peoples, cultures,

---


\(^8\) *Contemporary Missiology*, 4-5.

and history shows that it has a political aspect. Redemptive history is played out on a stage where the main characters have had to deal with political powers and forces. The vision of the kingdom of God in both the Old Testament and New Testament anticipates the coming of the King in history who is going to conquer human hearts and the world. The universal lordship and authority of Christ and its confession by the church have a political connotation; at times the confession is understood as a political statement. Throughout church history, Verkuyl claims, various Christian traditions have developed different views on how church, state and society should be related. The political dimension of biblical revelation has become prominent recently in the works of people like J. Moltmann, J. B. Metz, and those from the Third World churches. From this awareness of the political dimension of divine revelation grows a conviction on the part of the church that God remains active in liberating work among the peoples and that Jesus Christ subjects and judges history under his liberating authority. This redemptive history serves as the basis for Christian political ethics, which provides guidance for political action.\(^\text{10}\)

The ongoing redeeming activity of God in history is another impetus for political engagement. Church history and history of missions, in particular, inform us of the political role of missionaries. Especially in the age of colonialism, the relations between missions and the colonial authorities were, however, ambivalent. Their role was not always favorable, but there are many good examples of missionaries who contributed positively to nationalist movements, nation building, and justice where they served. As Verkuyl would say, "the ambivalence of the relation between mission and colonialism

\(^{10}\) Cf. Verkuyl, Etika: Ras, Bangsa, 78-94.
can and should teach us much about how to discharge our own *missio politica oecumenica.*"\(^{11}\) Indeed, the missionaries who engaged in political problems had their own Christian justification for such action, which was not officially stated in their mission's charter. Their commendable contributions, too, should encourage the churches in their ongoing political engagement.

The political aspect of the redemptive drama and history of mission serves as a general justification for *missio politica oecumenica.* However, when the church and society come face to face with a concrete unjust situation, the church has to do more careful and thoughtful reflection on a given situation. This is why Verkuyl has a biblical and theological basis for every issue with which he dealt. Thus, the second element of *missio politica oecumenica* involves discerning the will of God in the face of the particular situations that confront the church and peoples. However, this requires not only biblical and theological reflection, but also historical and socio-political analysis of the situation. Verkuyl emphasized this kind of analysis for discerning the will of God.\(^{12}\) Thus, aside from a biblical-theological treatment of an issue, he would present a social science analysis of it. Because significant issues develop historically and are rooted in macro-structures of society, this kind of analysis is needed. Biblical reflection and historical and socio-political analysis interact with each other. The results of socio-political analysis inform biblical reflection on the actual state of affairs, on which biblical reflection provides light and guidance for the situation. With respect to the problems facing

---


churches and peoples, Verkuyl says, “a thorough analysis of a local situation is necessary in order to adequately discern the will of God”\textsuperscript{13}

Furthermore, self-reflection may at times be necessary, especially for missionaries, in order to test one’s own presuppositions and worldviews against the results of biblical reflection and historical and socio-political analysis. Alien presuppositions and worldviews reflect certain ideologies that usually prohibit proper understanding of a host society. This is why Verkuyl suggests that, in critically examining political ideologies in the light of the gospel, we deal not only with explicitly anti-Christian ideologies like Marxism and Leninism, but also with Western ideologies that may have unwittingly been imported with the cultural baggage of missionaries, resulting in distortion of the gospel and its proclamation. This ideological self-examination will aid foreign personnel in better identifying themselves with the communities they serve, which is very important in overseas service.\textsuperscript{14}

After reflection and analysis comes actual engagement, which goes beyond what Verkuyl calls “ecclesiastical verbalism” and stands in contrast with deliberative ethics, like those of Reinhold Niebuhr. This engagement may be called “praxis,” and it is the third element of \textit{missio politica oecumenica}. The type of praxis churches may engage in depends on the social-political analysis and biblical-theological reflection on the situation. Even effective examples from the past cannot automatically serve as a blueprint for every situation. For Verkuyl, there is no place for a prescriptive and legalistic method in discharging \textit{missio politica oecumenica}.

\textsuperscript{13} Verkuyl, \textit{Contemporary Missiology}, 397.

Churches, however, need not wait for a crisis before they act. Verkuyl suggests sustained and regular programs that would prepare churches for their social and political duties. He suggests a different direction and emphasis in historiography and theological education in order to balance their colonial and overly Western orientation.

Historiography must take into account the significant contributions of non-Western people in the missionary movement and the peculiar national and socio-political problems they faced. This is not to suggest that Western historiography be discarded, but to supplement it with non-Western scholarship. Non-Western missiologies may also be useful in this regard, as these are attempts to communicate the deeper aspects of the gospel relevant to their contexts. Moreover, theological education must underscore the importance of social ethics and the political dimension in preaching, catechesis, and training. In addition, funds must be made available for training social and political ethicists, journalists, political scientists, and sociologists in and for the developing countries so that these people can make their own proper contributions to the missio politica oecumenica.

The mission of the church in the political realm is ecumenical. This is the fourth element of missio politica oecumenica. The word oecumenica suggests that missio politica oecumenica is a joint venture of churches toward the whole inhabited world, the oecumene. The fellowship of churches, according to Verkuyl, is and must be a

---


hermeneutical fellowship, in which together churches learn what believers from all continents discover from the Bible, especially disenfranchised people like women and victims of racial injustice.\(^{18}\) One way of partnership between non-Western churches and Western missions is in the area of study and consultation on how to carry out missionary work in areas which, because of the oppressive hand of totalitarian ideology and of other various political circumstances, are now isolated.

*Missio politica oecumenica* involves the “people of God” globally, which includes not just the Protestants, but Roman Catholics as well, although it does not mean, as we have noted, that one overlooks the differences that still divide the two major communions. It means that the impact of political action is greater when all Christian communities work together than if they work separately. Thus Verkuyl says,

*A missio politica oecumenica* may never be the product of an ecclesiastical get-together, or of one confessional family of churches, or of a Geneva without Rome, or of a Rome without Geneva. Designing a *missio politica* demands an ecumenical context within which to work if it is to become anything more than the latest expression of ecclesiastical tribalism.\(^{19}\)

Underlying *missio politica oecumenica* is the conviction that there is only one church or one people of God that is sent into the word.

In this regard, organizations like the WCC’s Committee for International Affairs (CCIA) and the WCC-Roman Catholic Committee on Society Development and Peace (SODEPAX) play a crucial role in *missio politica oecumenica*. The increasingly important role Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans play in the CCIA and the growing consensus between Protestants and Roman Catholics in SODEPAX are for Verkuyl

\(^{18}\) Verkuyl, *Inti Iman* 1, 33-34; *De kern van het christelijk*, 34.

encouraging signs. Regional consultations among Christians who deal with concrete needs, problems, and conflicts are highly desirable. These are more focused and can take more immediate actions than global conferences. However, international bodies like the CCIA and SODEPAX remain indispensable, for they develop structures by which local peoples in certain regions can be assisted in countering inhuman conditions.

Finally, although every situation is unique to some degree, there are regular or recurrent problems about which churches and missions must always be vigilant. These problems include pseudo-ideologies, declining human rights, especially religious freedom, and a decadent society that breeds political crisis. Not only are these problems political, they involve certain missiological issues that need to be addressed. These are three problems that *missio politica oecumenica* must deal with, not only for the problems they create in society but also for their effect on mission.

In conclusion, one may not say that *missio politica oecumenica* is essentially a secular activity. Since this is an aspect of the communication of the gospel, it would be more accurate to call it a mission in the secular realm. It is, in a sense, spiritual for it has something to do with the experience of God in historical context or, as Verkuyl would always stress, with obedience to God as Christians engage the political realm, which tends to subvert the divine order in creation and redemption.\(^2^0\) This does not mean, however, that churches simply attend to their usual evangelistic and pastoral tasks, hoping that such activities will lead to transformation of society. These tasks are vital to the church, and they do not preclude engaging in the political realm and vice-versa. The activities related to *missio politica oecumenica* are peculiar to its nature, that is, they are

---

\(^2^0\) Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 396; *Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap*, 534; "*Missio Politica*," 399-400.
political and they are meant to effect political change according to God’s purposes in creation.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Missio Politica Oecumenica: Its Relation to Missio Dei, Missio Ecclesiarum and Missio Hominum}

What is the place of political action in mission? To answer this question we need to look at Verkuyl’s concepts of \textit{missio Dei}, \textit{missio ecclesiarum}, and \textit{missio hominum}.\textsuperscript{22} His missiology deals with all three of these, and, though distinct, they are inseparable and related. The \textit{missio Dei} is the work of the triune God in saving humanity and the world, as revealed in redemptive history in the Bible. \textit{Missio ecclesiarum} is the participation of the church as the body of Christ in \textit{missio Dei}. As \textit{missio Dei} has four dimensions, so does \textit{missio ecclesiarum}, for the tasks of the church, including \textit{missio politica oecumenica}, simply reflect or manifest what God is doing in the world in bringing the kingdom to all realms of life.\textsuperscript{23} These four dimensions—\textit{kerygma}, \textit{diakonia}, \textit{koinonia}, and \textit{missio politica oecumenica}—are united and inter-related, although distinct, in the


\textsuperscript{22} The singular \textit{missio Dei} can take the plural form, viz., \textit{missiones Dei} and may refer to \textit{missiones ecclesiarum}, and \textit{missiones hominum} as the various means or types under one \textit{missio Dei}. This means that the other \textit{missios} also can take a plural from. We use the singular form to emphasize the unity and integration of all types or means in one particular \textit{missio}. Cf. \textit{Contemporary Missiology}, 3.

\textsuperscript{23} Verkuyl does not make a distinction between the visible church as an organism and as an institution as L. Berkhof does. Verkuyl would not deny such a distinction but would not think that \textit{missio politica oecumenica} is something that only non-office bearing members do while the other tasks are reserved to the church as an institution. There are certain aspects of \textit{missio politica oecumenica} that the institutional church can do like providing biblical and theological insights on certain issues. But even in direct political actions officials of institutional church and, as we will note, missionaries can take part. He would agree with Berkhof that political organizations are manifestations of the kingdom of God, but he would differ with Berkhof, or at least more explicit than Berkhof, in saying that all the other tasks of the church are manifestations of the kingdom and therefore all of them including \textit{missio politica oecumenica} constitute \textit{missio ecclesiarum}. Cf. L. Berkhof, \textit{Systematic Theology} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953, 567, 569.)
one mission of communicating the gospel of the kingdom. Verkuyl maintains the
distinctiveness of each of the dimensions, as well as their inseparableness, for there has
been a tendency in some ecumenical circles to confuse these and in some evangelical
circles to separate these completely, particularly the political dimension from the
traditional tasks of the church. It is important to note also that Verkuyl defines *kerygma*,
*diakonia*, and *koinonia* in conservative evangelical terms, but also brings out their
political dimension, giving *missio politica oecumenica* its missiologica! foundation.

*Missio hominum* refers to all works of justice done in service to society as
inspired, led and directed by Jesus or his Spirit. This, too, is a manifestation of *missio Dei*,
indicating that the church can and may participate in *missio hominum*. It does not matter
who initiates and organizes it, although churches may do so and may also encourage
people to join in. In any case, when the churches participate in *missio hominum*, they are
engaged in *missio politica oecumenica*. In this connection, *missio politica oecumenica*
may be defined as the churches’ participation in *missio hominum*, insofar as that *missio
hominum* expresses *missio Dei*. We present Verkuyl’s view of mission in the following
summary statements:

1. *Missio Dei (MD) = missio ecclesiarum + missio hominum*

2. *Missio Ecclesiarum (ME) = kerygma + diakonia + koinonia + missio politica o.*

3. *Missio Hominum (MH) = works of justice in society*

4. *Missio Politica Oecumenica (MPO) = church participation in MH*

---

To clarify, in and by itself *missio hominum* is not *missio politica oecumenica* (cf. 3). *Missio politica oecumenica* is the church's participation in the *missio hominum* (4), in which case, *missio politica oecumenica* becomes a part (the fourth dimension) of the mission of the church (2). *Missio politica oecumenica* is primarily an ecclesiological concern, and is not simply socio-ethical insofar as it is related to the church's mission. Nor is *missio hominum* exhaustive of *missio ecclesiaram*. *Missio hominum* is only one of the tasks the church may do. And *missio hominum* is not identified with just any movement or event that takes place in history; it must be, by definition, a movement for justice, or as Verkuyl would say, "as long as it counters any type of evil and is purposely performed in ways that help and heal, [it] is connected either knowingly or unknowingly with the *missio Dei* in the world."  

The significance of this view can be seen against a background in which *missio Dei* tends to be identified almost completely with historical processes or movements, and the church's mission with participation in such movements. Or in other words, using our terms here, *missio Dei* becomes solely *missio hominum*, and *missio ecclesiaram* consists of participation in *missio hominum*. Verkuyl clearly rejects this tendency. He does the

---


same thing with the tendency that denies missio hominum, and thus excludes the political dimension, or missio politica oecumenica, from missio Dei and missio ecclesiarum.\textsuperscript{27}

The inter-relationship of missio Dei, missio ecclesiarum, and missio hominum makes missio politica oecumenica an integral part of mission, for this last one is related to all the first three. This also shows that missio politica oecumenica is not merely a peripheral concern, but an essential element that informs Verkuyl’s whole understanding of mission. This does not mean that everything belonging to mission is political, but it does mean that everything has a political dimension, since the whole of human reality does. The political dimension does not exhaust “the total content of God’s promises and demands, but it is a part of them,”\textsuperscript{28} Verkuyl clarifies. It does not mean that everything that the church does is political, but it does mean that, in cases where suffering has to do with injustice, the church can draw without hesitation from the political dimension of her faith. Missio politica oecumenica is not everything, but neither is it marginal. As Verkuyl puts it, “we may never emphasize macrostructures at the expense of the inclusive goals [kerygma, diakonia, koinonia]... [and] the improvement of macrostructures must never become the deepest and ultimate goal of mission. It is, however, a constituent


\textsuperscript{28} Verkuyl, Contemporary Missiology: 395; Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap, 533.
element within the ultimate goal" of *missio Dei*, which is "the bringing of the kingdom of
God to expression and restoring his liberating domain of authority."

Thus, within the framework of the kingdom of God and the *missio Dei*, *missio politica oecumenica* is not something alien to mission, not a practical implication, or a
result, or a kind of pre-evangelistic means to mission understood as evangelism, church
planting, and social service. It is in itself a mission within the all-inclusive mission of
God in history in redeeming people and the whole created order.

**Missiology: Towards Reformation of Church and Society**

Accordingly, Verkuyl's understanding of missiology is as broad as his
understanding of mission. For him, missiology is the study of *missio Dei*, *missio
ecclesiarum*, and *missio hominum*. Missiology is a theological discipline, Trinitarian in
its orientation and with *missio Dei* as its central theme. Based on *missio Dei* and biblical
standards, it examines critically the presuppositions, motives, structures, methods,
patterns of cooperation, and leadership the churches bring to their mandate. One aspect of
this mandate is *missio politica oecumenica*, which is the churches' participation in *missio
hominum*. Thus, as a theological discipline, missiology critically reflects not only on
*missio ecclesiarum*, but also on *missio hominum*. This means that it examines not only
activities related to evangelism and church planting but also those related to transforming
society. The Reformed principle of *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est* applies
also to the *missiones ecclesiarum*, since are an aspect of the life of the church that needs
reforming. Since *missio politica oecumenica* is an aspect of mission, for Verkuyl,

---

29 Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 197; *Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap*, 269.
missiology functions as a theological discipline that provides foundations and guidance for the transformation of society. It follows the principle of *societas semper reformanda est.*

Missiology with respect to *missio politica oecumenica* is not simply concerned with whether or not political activities promote justice, but it examines the other tasks of the church, such as evangelism, church planting, and social service and assesses them in terms of not only their vertical dimension but also their horizontal implications. This is indicated by Verkuyl when he speaks about examining not only the methods but also the structures of the congregations; the relations between Western churches and those in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; the nature of the *missiones ecclesiae* today; and the plans for future projects in the light of God’s word. He suggests this examination in view of the Reformed principles of *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est* and *societas semper reformanda est.* Thus, missiology as a whole is a critical reflection on all the aspects of the church’s tasks with a view of reforming both churches and societies.

*History of Mission and Political Action*

Most Christians and churches are not aware that some of the great and better-known missionary pioneers who planted and established churches in the non-Western world were also very involved, in varying degrees and taking different approaches, with political problems in their fields. History testifies that there is a long tradition of

---

30 Verkuyl, “Missiologie en missionaire praxis,” 15; Contemporary Missiology, 5; cf. 3-4; *Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap,* 20; cf. 8-19.

31 Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology,* 5.
missionary political involvement. This is not to mention many Christian leaders who fought for justice and righteousness in their own countries.

In the 16th century some Catholic missionaries denounced the harsh realities under which the American Indians were forced to live. Among them were two Dominicans, Antonio Montesinos (d. 1545) and Bartolome de Las Casas (1474-1566), who is better known as an apostle to the American Indians. Verkuyl notes that de las Casas ran directly counter to the spirit of Spanish imperialism when he rose to defend the rights of the Indians. Not only did de las Casas give up his vast landholding, but he also condemned the whole *encomienda* system, which was similar to forced labor, and declared that such action was not a question of personal morality, but racial and social justice.\(^\text{32}\) He wrote several books chronicling the abuses of the Spanish *conquistadores*\(^\text{33}\) and defending the Indians.\(^\text{34}\) Montesinos, on the other hand, denounced the settlers from the pulpit of the cathedral of Santo Domingo for their ill-treatment of the Indians: “Are they not men?...You are in a state of mortal sin... because of the cruelty and the tyranny you are inflicting on these innocent victims.”\(^\text{35}\)

---


\(^{33}\) B. de Las Casas, *The Spanish Colony* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1966), a reprint of the 1583 English translation of *Brevisima relacion de la Destrucyion de Las Indias occidentales* (1539).


In the early modern missionary movement, we mention a number of missionaries who worked in Africa. Johannes T. van der Kemp (1747-1851), a missionary pioneer among the Xhosa and Khoikhoi peoples of South Africa, struggled against the colonists in the Cape in defense of political rights and social equality for all races. Thomas F. Buxton (1786-1844) campaigned against slavery in Africa and worked for the rights of the aborigines. By his efforts, he influenced the more well-known missionaries like David Livingstone (1813-1873) and Henry Venn (1796-1873), who is considered the champion of indigenous church principles. Of Livingstone, A. F. Walls has this to say:

“Livingstone is a pioneer of modern independent Africa ... His confidence never wavered in African capacities and in the common humanity of African and European ... His later career was dominated by the desire to root alien oppression out of Africa.”

Verkuyl is a bit critical of Livingstone for weaving genuine missionary motives with commercial interests but, with Walls, appreciates him for pleading for a legitimate commerce devoid of any ignominious slave traffic.

---


40 Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology* 170; *Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap*, 236; Inleiding in de eenvangeliestiek, 185.

and sometime London Missionary Society superintendent in the Cape of Good Hope, was a pioneer of the anti-racial discrimination movement in South Africa.\textsuperscript{42} J. H. Oldham (1874-1969), missionary statesman and a pioneer of the modern ecumenical movement, spent a good deal of his time and energy challenging the British government against its forced labor policy in Kenya, lobbying for public education in the British colonies, and campaigning against racial discrimination in South Africa, on which he wrote an influential book, \textit{Christianity and the Race Question}. Verkuyl cites Oldham in his book on racial justice, \textit{Breek de muren af!}, and commends him for his efforts to awaken the church to the economic, social, and political nature of the race question.\textsuperscript{43} Oldham also advocated missionary participation in indigenous nationalism and in solving social problems, as well as cooperation with native governments in establishing an educational system able to withstand the disintegrating effects of Western civilization.\textsuperscript{44}

In Asia, William Carey (1761-1834), considered the father of modern Protestant missions, was, according to Verkuyl, completely engaged in the war against slavery and did not shrink from the fight against the basic structures of colonialism, although this fact is unbeknown to many.\textsuperscript{45} Belgian priest Frederic Lebbe (1877-1940) defended the Chinese Christians’ rights to their own nationalism and church leadership, and Dutch


Jesuit Franciscus G. Josephus van Lith (1863-1926) worked in Java on the education of native clergy and fought the Dutch colonials for equal representation of natives in the Volksraad.\textsuperscript{46} Verkuyl cites van Lith as one of the missionaries, along with the Jesuit D. M. G. Koch and H. Kraemer, who best understood the nationalist drive for self-expression and whose service to the cause was the most pure.\textsuperscript{47} Among the Dutch Protestant missionaries, H. Kraemer is outstanding in this matter. About him Verkuyl wrote at length in some of his works. Other missionaries during Verkuyl’s time who spoke for national self-expression were the biblical scholar E. A. A. Vreede, C. L. van Doorn, pioneer of Christian Student Movement in Indonesia, H. Bergema, F. L. Bakker, A. Pos, J. H. Bavinck, N. Adriani, the father and son Kruyt, and B. Schuurman.\textsuperscript{48} J. van den Berg describes J. H. Bavinck’s role during the conflict between the Netherlands and the new Republic of Indonesia (1945-1949): “Bavinck’s wisdom and tact contributed to bridging the gap between those whose knowledge of Indonesian life led them to a more progressive stance, and those who still thought in categories that were to be invalidated by the winds of change.”\textsuperscript{49}

Much of these missionaries’ contributions in political affairs was limited. This is a perception that frequently triggers the criticism that nineteenth-century missionaries did nothing about the political macrostructures. The criticism neither matches the history


\textsuperscript{48} Verkuyl, \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 142, 143; \textit{Etika:Ras, Bangsa}, 52.

presented here, nor is it fair, according to Verkuyl. While they worked on a small scale among rather small social groupings, usually among the intelligentsia, they did what they could with their meager skills and the undeveloped knowledge they had in sociology and politics. Their most critical contribution, according to Verkuyl, is that they laid the groundwork for what would later be incorporated into the macrostructures of those lands. He cites the testimony of people like Nehru, Sukarno, Nyerere, and even those from China, who confessed that missionary efforts in education, health care, and in other areas did much to insure that such concerns would later become part of the macro-structural programs. By 20th century standards, the 19th century missionaries’ contributions in transforming macro-structures may be seen as insignificant. But with all the democratic provisions in place at present, Verkuyl would say that there is no reason why missions and churches cannot still be involved in political change. 50

To conclude this historical note, more names can be added to this list, even from the time preceding de las Casas and through the 20th century. It is not our intention to be exhaustive here. The political engagement of the missionary movement occupies a significant place in the history of missions, and deserves more attention than it receives at present. For those who are aware of this Christian tradition, the recent debate on the relation between mission and political action is not only strange, but also puzzling, especially if this tends to polarize Christians. During the time of the missionaries mentioned, and certainly in the mind of Verkuyl, it hardly occurred to them whether such political actions were a part of their calling. Officially, of course, such actions were not stated as part of their responsibilities—something that has nowadays become a

50 Verkuyl, Contemporary Missiology, 196; Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap, 268.
convenient alibi for non-involvement—and yet, when they were face-to-face with
suffering, even that which was related to political structures, such official distinction and
limitation did not matter much. What mattered more was love, “against such thing(s)
there is no law” or policy (Gal. 5:23). Verkuyl is fond of saying that where love for God
and people is evident, there God is at work, there the kingdom of God is visible.

Reformed Missiological Antecedents in Missio Politica Oecumenica

The Finnish Seppo Teinonen was the first known missiologist to have used or,
most likely, coined the term missio politica oecumenica. In 1961, he published a book
that carries a title by that term.51 The book traces the development of the ecumenical
theology of the cooperation of the churches in international affairs and evaluates some of
its main problems encountered in this endeavor. It presents the changes that affected the
general ecumenical theology and the specific problems related to the churches’ political
action. One of its conclusions is that missio politica oecumenica is seen more and more as
a dimension which has its place alongside the kerygma, the diakonia, and the koinonia of
the church.52 What is not clear in the ecumenical theology, and thus in Teinonen’s study,
is how these three aspects of mission are understood and related. It is clear that these
three are interpreted in terms of the political dimension. In some ways, as we shall see,
Verkuyl is doing a similar thing, looking at the other aspects of mission in terms of the
political dimension, but he never loses their vertical aspect, which in the conciliar
understanding tends to be vague. In this sense, Verkuyl’s understanding of mission is

51 S. A. Teinonen, Missio Politica Oecumenica: A Contribution to the Study of the Theology of

52 Teinonen, Missio Politica Oecumenica, 67.
much broader than that of either the conciliar or evangelical movements. Nevertheless, it is most likely that Verkuyl took the term from Teinonen, since he testified in his *Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap* published in 1976 that Teinonen was the first person to write on the subject of *missio politica oecumenica*. There is no evidence that others except Verkuyl used the term.\(^{53}\)

While Verkuyl would agree with Teinonen that *missio politica oecumenica* is a dimension that penetrates the whole mission of the Church, he makes it clear that it is also a specific task of the church, both distinct and alongside the other tasks of *kerygma*, *diakonia*, and *koinonia*. His view of the *missio politica oecumenica* in its relation to mission follows two Reformed mission theologians: Gisbertus Voetius and J. H. Bavinck.

*Missio politica* (without *oeumenica*) appears in the writings of the Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676), and is perhaps the first time this phrase is used in the context of the missionary calling of the church. Jongeneel notes that Voetius uses the term in connection with the question of who has the authority to send missionaries. Voetius denies Grotius' view that the magistracy has the right to call and send missionaries, although he does grant the magistracy a supportive role with respect to missionary work. More directly relevant to our theme, Voetius was the first Protestant theologian of mission that gave careful thought to the political dimension of mission and Verkuyl took this into consideration.\(^{54}\) In his *Politica Ecclesiastica*, Voetius sets forth a seven-fold goal for mission, of which the last two can be considered *missio politica oecumenica*. He says

---


of the last two that a mission has the goal of persuading princes and magistrates to set their subjects free (*liberatio*) or at least lighten (*levamen*) their difficulties and burdens and to eliminate (*remotio*) all obstacles that hinder the church’s or churches’ outreach (*propagatio*). He adds that all these can take the form of a written petition, admonition or apology. This aspect of mission makes Voetius’ vision of mission broad indeed, which precedes, as Jongeneel concludes, something like what we now call liberation theology, or what Bosch considers an early expression of *missio Dei*.

J. H. Bavinck (1895-1964) follows closely Voetius’ missiology. Verkuyl notes, however, that Bavinck, more than anyone else, emphasized the close connection between the goals of conversion, church planting, and the glorification and the manifestation of divine grace, the last being the final and highest goal of mission. Regarding their relation, Verkuyl quotes Bavinck: “It must be emphasized, however, that these three purposes are not distinct and separate but they are in fact three aspects of a single purpose of God: the coming and the extension of the kingdom of God.”

---

55 The five other goals of Voetius for missions are 1) the conversion of unbelievers, heretics and schismatics (*conversio*) and the planting, gathering and establishing of the church or churches (*plantatio, collectio et constitutio ecclesiae aut ecclesiarum*); 2) the regathering (*recollectio*) of churches scattered either because of persecution or internal collapse; 3) the reformation of one or more of the following deformations of church life: doctrine, life or discipline; 4) the reunification (*redunxia*) and incorporation (*syncretismus*) of divided or separated churches; and 5) the financial support of oppressed, persecuted, plundered, scattered or impoverished churches; in J. Jongeneel, “The Missiology of Gisbertus Voetius: The First Comprehensive Protestant Theology of Missions,” trans. J. Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 26 (1991): 63-64. Voetius works, *Selectae disputationes* and *Politica ecclesiastica* contain lengthy passages on missions. Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 256-257.


57 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 257.

58 Cf. Jongeneel, “The Missiology of Voetius,” 63-68, which restricts the discussion on Voetius’ understanding of the goal of mission to these three subgoals.

vision of mission, Bavinck closely followed Voetius' theocentric point of departure or, in more recent terms, missio Dei. This kingdom perspective allows for the pursuit of justice, and Bavinck is no less explicit than either Voetius or Verkuyl on the church's political role as it impinges on mission. Bavinck, however, does not make political action a distinct goal for mission, unlike Voetius or Verkuyl, but he does include it as part of the church's threefold aim for mission. On problems that are deemed political, Bavinck says,

The Church's task is to proclaim the principles which of themselves will awaken conscience and make an end to what has oppressed society for centuries... What we have been saying implies that although the church is an entirely different community than a nation or tribe, it is still never free of its important responsibility to society. By its whole attitude, by what it does within its own walls, it exercises an immeasurable influence upon the entire social order. And when the time is right the Church will sometimes need to testify forcefully against certain national sins, which distort the entire life of the society.

It is the Voetius-Bavinck line of thought—the three fold aim of mission as together expressing the glory and the kingdom of God—that Verkuyl follows and develops in his missiology. The idea of political action as part of mission finds some precedence in the missiologies of Voetius and Bavinck, but it is more pronounced in Verkuyl's.

**Conclusion**

Verkuyl used the phrase "missio politica oecumenica" in various ways, but it refers to certain activities, like dealing with ideologies, participating in the ministry of

---


reconciliation, or participation in *missio hominum*. It finds its justification in biblical revelation that has political dimensions, requires ecumenical participation by different Christian communions, and involves socio-political analysis informed by biblical reflection. Although related, *missio politica oecumenica* and *missio hominum* are distinct; the former is an aspect of the mission of the church and the churches’ participation in the latter. As an aspect of the mission of the church, *missio politica oecumenica* is related to *missio Dei*, which is God’s redeeming activity in the world that includes works of justice and righteousness.

Missiology is a theological discipline which studies *missio Dei, missio ecclesiarum, and missio hominum*; the last two express the first. *Missio ecclesiarum* includes *missio politica oecumenica*. Based on the revealed salvific activities of God or *missio Dei*, missiology functions as a critical discipline that examines the thought and practices of the churches in mission. It also probes socio-political movements and issues to determine in terms of *missio Dei* the appropriateness of churches’ and missions’ stance towards them, and it provides guidance for churches in their political role. Missiology, as a theological discipline, critically reflects on the churches’ tasks in terms of not only their vertical dimension but also their horizontal dimension. It has both the continuing renewal of churches and the transformation of societies in view. In various ways, political action was practiced by some missionaries in the past, and it has antecedents in the missiologies of Voetius and Bavinck.
CHAPTER SIX

THEOLOGY OF MISSION IN ITS POLITICAL DIMENSION

Since, for Verkuyl, mission includes *missio politica oecumenica*, the aim of this chapter is to examine biblical and theological foundations for mission in its political dimension. These foundations will include Christian ethics and theology of history. Christian ethics and theology of history are not normally included in the theology of mission. But these are missiological because they refer to fundamental aspects of mission. For instance, as we shall see, Verkuyl defined Christian ethics as gospel and law as inseparable and constituting the message of the church’s proclamation. Regarding theology of history, one’s view of history determines whether churches should engage in present historical movements, or whether their mission includes political engagement. Thus, theology of history evaluates views regarding the relationship of mission and history. Then, I examine the usual missiological *loeci* of the goal and tasks of mission in both their vertical and horizontal dimensions. This also belongs to biblical and theological foundations, but unlike the discussion on Christian ethics and theology of history, this section examines specific missiological themes such as the kingdom of God, conversion, and church. Seen in their political dimensions, the goal and tasks of mission, together with Christian ethics and a theology of history constitute a missiology that serves as a basis for political action that is as an aspect of mission. At the outset, I offer a note regarding the kinds, nature, and approach of biblical and theological foundations.
Biblical and Theological Foundations
for Missio Politica Oecumenica

Biblical and theological foundations for the worldwide mission of the church always form part of formal missiology, and often they are treated first. Until recently, proof-texting was quite a common approach to providing the biblical validity for mission. With the influence of a biblical theological approach, the trend has changed from this older approach to looking at the whole Bible as a missionary book. D. Bosch, one of the more recent missiologists who has made use of biblical theology in missiology, commended Verkuyl’s approach in Contemporary Theology. The chapter on “Biblical Foundation” is placed after several introductory chapters that deal with the history of mission. For Bosch, this is commendable, since one cannot simply assume a common understanding of mission between missiologists and their readers. Then Bosch adds, “I would, in fact, have preferred to go beyond Verkuyl: the section on the ‘biblical foundations of mission’ should be preceded not only by a survey of the study of the subject of missiology but also by an overview of the ways in which the Church, down through the centuries, has understood her missionary responsibility.”¹ The rationale for this is expressed thus, “It is only after having engaged in the exercise of looking closely at the different ways in which the Church, during various stages of her history, has interpreted a specific issue that we begin to understand the relativity of our approach.”²

At this point, two comments on Bosch must be made. Even if one cannot assume that there is common understanding of mission, one is bound to provide a working


definition of mission at the beginning to guide the readers. This is what Verkuyl does in the first chapter of Contemporary Theology. In fact, this is also what Bosch himself does when he defines mission as “the totality of the task God has sent his Church to do in the world.” Indeed, a general definition of mission must be stated at the outset. Secondly, Bosch was aware that Verkuyl includes a survey of the ways in which churches have understood mission down through the centuries. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of Contemporary Missiology present how the churches historically have understood missionary motives and what the goal of mission should be, as well as the ways they have fulfilled the missionary task. These chapters are positioned after the section on biblical foundations, not before it, as Bosch would have preferred. But the positioning of these chapters would not matter for Verkuyl. The intention of Bosch in presenting the different ways in which the church has interpreted its mission before providing the biblical foundations is “to understand the relativity of our own approach.” Verkuyl was not very concerned about the relative nature of approaches to the Bible. His main concern was that the Bible must be approached in its totality when reflecting on the mission of the church. If this is done, the order assigned the chapters in question is correct, or at least is immaterial. At any rate, Bosch had respected Verkuyl highly also for the biblical theological approach he took in his missiology. In the end, however, the more critical issue is not the location of the biblical foundations for missiology, but whether these foundations are able to sustain the whole range of reality which the gospel of salvation in Christ embraces.

---


For purposes of brevity, I will not present the main theological doctrines in their wider missiological dimensions, although at certain points this will come out in the discussion. Also, I have already noted in a previous chapter the political dimensions of biblical revelation. It is in our discussion of the goal and tasks of mission that I present certain biblical themes in their political dimensions. Before doing so, I offer a general note on the kinds, nature, and approach of Verkuyl's biblical and theological foundations and his views on the universality of Christian ethics and history as these relate to mission.

Kinds, Nature, and Approach of Biblical and Theological Foundation

A biblical foundation for mission is defined by the aspect of mission being given a biblical basis: the rationale (why), the message (what), or the practice (how) of mission. We can distinguish a number of biblical foundations for mission from the works of Verkuyl. The first is a general biblical foundation, which mainly gives a rationale for the worldwide mission mandate. Literature on this general biblical basis includes chapter 4 of Contemporary Missiology; the first section of his volume of messages on world mission, world diaconate, and cooperation in development work,⁵ and the section on the missionary task of the church in his dogmatics.⁶ Even this general foundation for the divine mandate contains an implicit political dimension. Verkuyl presents four motifs in Old Testament for the global mandate: the universal motif, which emphasizes the nations, not just Israel and individuals; the motif of rescue and liberation, which encompasses not

---


just personal but social and political dimensions as well; the missionary motif, that shows
that Israel’s election is for service to the nations; and the motif of antagonism, which
means that mission is to wage “war against every form of opposition to God’s intentions
wherever it be found, whether in churches, the world of nations, or one’s self.”7 The
book of Jonah is a favorite missionary text, and yet Verkuyl does not ignore the political
implications of Niniveh’s conversion. In the New Testament, this general biblical
foundation remains the same: the universality of God’s salvation and the mandate that it
carried to all nations. Here again we can find elements of *missio politica oecumenica*.
For instance, the all-embracing kingdom of God and its accompanying signs, the relation
of Jesus and the Gentiles and what this means for racial relations, the relation of Jesus to
the poor and its implication for economic justice, and so on, all point to comprehensive
salvation.8 What Verkuyl wished to highlight here is that the mission mandate
encompasses all nations and societies. By nations and societies, he does not mean just
individuals within nations and societies, but nations and societies as social and political
entities. In this sense, mission means crossing not only geographic, but also ideological,
cultural, religious, and political frontiers.

The second kind of biblical foundation for mission involves the specific goals and
tasks of evangelism, diaconate, and church planting or development. Again, as we shall
see later, these tasks include political dimensions while maintaining their basic personal
and spiritual character. This kind of biblical basis for mission consists of these three

---

7 Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 95.

8 Verkuyl, *Khoebah-Khoebah*, 61-68; *Contemporary Missiology*, 92-95, 96-100, 102-104; *Inleiding
in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap*, 124-130, 131-138, 140-143.
tasks plus *missio politica oecumenica* as based on the first three in their horizontal dimensions.

The third kind of biblical foundation for mission is found in more specific material on racial justice, transformation, and liberation, about which Verkuyl has written at length. Within the perspective of the *missio Dei* and the kingdom of God, these are tasks of *missio politica oecumenica*, which is an aspect of mission. In this connection, biblical revelation is seen not only in its political dimension, but familiar doctrines are seen in their horizontal aspects. Thus, for instance, sin, guilt, and conversion are not only personal, but collective, institutional, and structural as well, while judgment and redemption also assume horizontal dimensions. Christian hope does not consist only of personal bliss in heaven, but also of the coming of the new earth and the new heaven. Here, mission means working for a more just and righteous society that reflects the fuller character of redemption and of the hope toward which history is moving. In other words, these are biblical foundations for *missio politica oecumenica*.

The biblical and theological foundations provided by Verkuyl for global mission are also apologetic in nature. They defend the missionary enterprise against challenges posed to it. Following World War II, the *raison d'etre* of mission has increasingly been questioned and challenged. The inability of the church to adjust to the radical changes and challenges taking place, especially in newly independent nations, has led some to think of the irrelevance of missionary approaches, if not, of mission itself. Secularizing

---

movements offer seemingly attractive and fulfilling human life on earth, usually without reference to the divine order. The search for a better life is not purely individual and psychological; there is a political dimension to this search expressed in terms of demands for socio-economic emancipation. This political dimension is quite apparent in the revolutionary situation in most Third World societies which, still reeling from the colonial rule, continue to struggle against every vestige of imperialism and what they perceive to be cultural and economic colonialism. Ideologies were capturing the imagination of former colonies. Communism poses a great threat to Christianity, and the promise of capitalism and development has not brought the expected prosperity, resulting in more progressive or leftist thinking in theology, the most prominent of which is liberation theology in Latin America.\(^{10}\)

These challenges raise the question of the relevance of the church and mission understood mainly as evangelism and planting churches. The traditional Christendom reading of the Bible has faltered in the face of modern anti-missionary sentiments. But, for Verkuyl, this does not mean that the new age does not need the gospel anymore, nor that mission has become redundant. The message of the gospel, he insists, must be brought in every age. However, this does not mean mere repetition of previous interpretations and proclamation. For him, every new situation requires the church to

read the Bible afresh and seek what God may be saying to the current ferment. This is required because the gospel far surpasses anyone’s ability to comprehend it fully; there is no such thing as *theologia perennis*, as he would say. In addition, every age has its own peculiar needs and questions, which the multi-faceted gospel can meet. The church, he suggests, must constantly ask the question, “What day or time is it in the history of mission?” This is no time to abandon mission, but to rethink missionary tasks and to recover other facets of the gospel in order to face and deal with current challenges and needs.\(^{11}\) For this reason, Verkuyl appreciates theological reflection from the non-Western world and devotes a whole chapter in *Contemporary Missiology* to these theologies, although he is not necessarily in full agreement with them. There are some benefits that Western theologians can gain from their non-Western counterparts, especially in connection to mission. These non-Western theologies are very important attempts by churches at presenting and responding to the gospel in ways appropriate to their contexts.\(^ {12}\) Thus missiology in general is apologetic in nature in the sense that it interacts with the challenges that arise from the church’s context. As apologetic, it brings in insights from theology, philosophy, history, and other disciplines.

Verkuyl discards the proof-text method and the kerygmatic approach. The former does not consider the structure of the whole biblical message, while the latter tends to

---


crop the biblical data. He favors the more recent biblical-theological scholarship, which reads the text in context and pays attention to the basic structure of the biblical message, that is, creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Thus, Verkuyl usually looks at the relevant texts from the Old Testament through the New Testament, considers the biblical message in all its nuances as it relates to the mission mandate, and then draws implications for the present situation.\(^{13}\) This is especially true for more specific issues. For instance, on racial justice, he would read Old Testament texts about creation, fall, Israel's election, and the blessing for the nations, and so on. Then he would consider the New Testament texts about redemption in Christ, the doctrine of the church, the work of the Spirit, and so on. All these basic biblical doctrines are seen in the light of problems in racial relations and from the perspective of the mission mandate of the church. The same would be true for subjects like transformation and liberation. The implication of this biblical approach for \textit{missio politica oecumenica} should now be apparent. Mission, in general, can no longer be based on some isolated verses picked up from the New Testament, like Matthew 28, the book of Acts, and certain Pauline texts. Nor does \textit{missio politica oecumenica}, in particular, find support only in some Old Testament prophetic texts, but biblical support for mission in general has this essential political aspect.

Mission, \textit{missio politica oecumenica}, and related political issues are rooted or implied in all Christian doctrines.

Christian ethics also serves as a theological foundation for mission and *missio politica oecumenica*. For Verkuyl, at the core of the issues facing developing nations are ethical issues, and therefore, ethics is an important ally of missiology, being a theological discipline that deals with non-Western issues. Christian ethics is essentially not personal, but rather social, in that human life is set in relationships with God, community, and other individuals. As we have seen, his ethical writings were meant to meet the needs not only of emerging churches, but of a newly independent nation. His Christian ethics, therefore, are intended for Christians and non-Christians alike, since the latter, in particular, are invited to consider the truth and the wisdom they bear, especially in the areas of social and political affairs.\(^{14}\)

This universal application of Christian ethics raises the question of the grounding of ethics. There are two main schools of thought on the question of grounding of ethics; one is natural law ethics, and the other, divine command ethics. Verkuyl rejected natural law ethics—dominant in the Roman Catholic Church and thought to be a more appropriate basis for a universal application of Christian ethics—in favor of divine law ethics. The rightness or wrongness of certain behavior is to be determined by reason (natural law) or whether it is commanded or prohibited by God (divine law). One Indonesian ethicist that takes issue with Verkuyl on the question of ethical grounding is Eka Darmaputra. Darmaputra argues against the view of Verkuyl, saying that Christian

---

ethics is not simply a matter of quoting the Bible to support certain ethical principles. Instead, it is analyzing a problem as thoroughly and objectively as possible and using objective reason that permits outcomes to be understood and accepted by all. For Darmaputra, outcomes can be accepted by all not because they constitute Christian truth, but rather, because they can be rationally understood by all. Christian ethics, to be considered ethics, must carry truth that is valid for everybody and can be accepted by everybody. Christian ethics will go hand in hand with other religious ethics, as well as with the ethics of other philosophical traditions, if the core of the Christian faith is rationally intelligible.¹⁵

How would Verkuyl respond to Darmaputra’s proposal? First of all, he would say that objective and rational analysis is useful. Christian ethics must always be ready to study deeply new situations that need ethical evaluation. Thus, he would not hesitate to use the tools of social science, nor be against formal philosophical ethics that provide accurate definitions, concepts, and answers to basic questions relevant for ethical inquiry. For him, however, neither rational analysis informed by social analysis nor formal philosophy can provide the source of ethical knowledge. Reason cannot be trusted fully because it is tainted by sin, and formal philosophy serves only as an empty cup that needs to be filled with divine revelation. Non-Christian religions and philosophical traditions,

¹⁵ E. Darmaputra, Etki Sederhana Untuk Semua: Perkenalan Pertama (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 96-99. This approach which he calls cultural analysis is discussed and applied in his published dissertation Pancasila: Identitas dan Modernitas (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1987). Darmaputra is mentioned by Verkuyl as a promising theologian attempting theologia in loco, in Contemporary Missiology, 272. For a mediating position, see J. L. Ch. Abineno, Sekitar Etki dan Soal-Soal Etics (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996), 13.
although they may contain some elements of truth and although Christian ethics must be ready to interact with them, cannot be taken as equal to biblical revelation.\textsuperscript{16}

Is Verkuyl's Christian ethics then sectarian? Darmaputra wrongly assumes that whenever one grounds his or her Christian ethics on the Bible and Christian doctrines, then that ethics is bound to limit itself to Christians. Verkuyl denies this assumption and demonstrates that biblically-based ethics need not be sectarian. Here we need to examine his Christian ethics with special attention to its ground and universality. This subject is particularly important because it is related to our question regarding the relationship between mission and \textit{missio politica oecumenica}. It is here that we again see further legitimacy for Christian political action. This matter becomes more pressing in view of the current discussion on the place and role of religion in the public square, particularly of religiously based morality in public life. Missiologically, some Christians think that the church is called only to proclaim the gospel, and when people have believed and become church members, then they are taught Christian ethics. They can then influence society with their good personal behavior. Christians who hold this view would be hesitant to join the discussion in the public square. For them, the mission of the church is evangelism. This view seems more consistent with Christologically and soteriologically based ethics, but it tends to separate the gospel and the law.

Verkuyl would not disagree that Christians need to be taught ethics. But his position should be distinguished from the preceding. His position is that Christian ethics, defined as the gospel and law in their totality, and which cannot be separated although distinct, is the subject of the church's proclamation. One cannot proclaim God's

\textsuperscript{16} Verkuyl, \textit{Etiqa: Bagian Umum}, 9-12, 70.
promises (gospel) without its demands (law), and vice-versa. It is in this totality of the gospel and law that one finds a rationale for *missio politica oecumenica*. As he stated years later,

Both the *missio Dei* and the *missiones ecclesiarum* attuned to it always have had and will continue to have a political dimension. Indeed, churches are under mandate to proclaim and show the totality of God’s gospel and law to all mankind. And this totality includes the [...] all-embracing mandate of *missio politica oecumenica*.  

Thus, Christian ethics proclaims truth that is for non-Christians as well Christians. Christians accept both the gospel and the law and they are mandated to proclaim both to others, which implies that the law, not only the gospel, is intended for non-Christians as well.

It cannot be overemphasized that for Verkuyl the sole ground and source for Christian ethics is the self-revelation of the triune God. By this revelation, he not only refers to its legal and ethical elements, but even to its Christological and soteriological elements that constitute the ground of Christian ethics. The Word-made-flesh is the basis on which Christian ethics is built.  

Thus, he discusses at great length what new life in Christ means and involves. The law in a general sense consists of the norms of the new life in Christ or the law reveals what the new life involves. The source of the new life is justification by faith in Christ. As one cannot be justified by trying to meet the demands of the law, one cannot meet the

---


requirements of the law without being justified. In Christian ethics one cannot separate gospel and law.

This seems to accentuate the problem posed by people like Darmaputra, namely that Christian ethics like that Verkuyl is sectarian and therefore cannot provide a basis for public action. The question now is, if people reject the gospel and thereby possess no power to do the law, would one then say that there is no ground or that it is futile for Christians to engage the public sphere? Verkuyl would answer this challenge by saying that the ground of Christian ethics does not lie in a human decision to accept or reject the gospel, or in one’s ability or inability to keep the law. It is the word of God that is the ground, and he insists that it must be the source of Christian ethics. Even if people do not believe in the gospel, it does not mean that they are free from the demands of the law. The law is required of anyone, regardless of her attitude toward the gospel. This is why the church need not wait until the world has become Christian before she confronts it with the demands of the law. Reacting to Barth’s tendency to confuse the gospel and law, he says, “the demands of the law remain valid, although people might reject the gospel. And the threat of the law remains valid even if people would refuse to live by faith.”

The reality in the world is indeed far from the Christian ethical ideal, but again, this does not negate the validity and the universality of Christian ethics. It does challenge Christians to influence the world toward what God intends it to be. This does not imply

---

19 Verkuyl, Etika: Bagian Umum, 139-283; 165; Chotbah di Bukit, 33-94.

that Christians quote the Bible every time they enter the public square. We need to make a distinction between biblically-based ethics and quoting the Bible in the public square to make public influence Christian. The two are different and the first does not entail the second, if the second is taken as a form of public action. There are many modes of public action, and some of those that do not use direct biblical quotes may not necessarily be unchristian.

In this connection, Verkuyl suggests that Christians exercise their being the light and salt of the world especially at a time when there has been much discussion on and striving for common and universal ethics (*etika umum*) that would be acceptable to everyone in every place. Here he made a distinction between Christian ethics and common public ethics and raised the question of whether it is possible to formulate common public ethics if the word of God is the only source that can be used in Christian ethics. He recognized that there have been efforts in history to formulate ethics for all races and nations: by the Stoics and Greek philosophers; by social and political philosophers like Hugo Grotius, Hobbes, Hume, and Rousseau, and more recently by the United Nations, especially in the Declaration of Human Rights. In the midst of globalization, the search for universal ethics becomes all the more urgent. Thus, by the existence of these common efforts, he thought there was a possibility, or at least striving, for some universal ethics in which Christians should never default their role as the salt and light of the world. Indeed, Verkuyl noted, the gospel and the law have had greater influence in the laws and jurisprudence of nations than is usually imagined. There is no place for a sense of futility in public engagement. The Christian influence evident in
history should encourage churches not to default their place in the public square. From this, we gather that Verkuyl does not suggest that Christians impose their ethics on the public; what he says is simply that they must influence it with the word of God, being salt and light with their ethics.

To take an example, consider the matter of international relations. These relations are governed by international laws based on jurisprudence and ethics. The interest of Christians in international law is the ethical aspect of jurisprudence and laws. The search for universal ethics on which to base international laws has been a long standing pursuit by the community of nations. Here again, Verkuyl insists that the divine law and the gospel should be the basis for universal ethics against vague natural law and the supposed points of similarity among religions and ideologies. He says, “Christian churches have a calling to proclaim the laws and the gospel of God as clearly as possible even in the context of international relations.” It is only in this way that the need for an international ethos can be met. This may sound problematic, if not foolish, to the modern world. But, quoting from R. Niehbur, Verkuyl thinks that the foolishness of recognizing the laws of God may be the only wisdom there is for international relations. Moreover, through the gospel there is always the possibility for the reconciliation and peace that nations strive for, while at the same time the recognition of sin’s impact in international relations prevents people from succumbing to the illusion of utopianism. In practical terms, this means that churches should formulate principles or draft declarations on the

---


basis of the law and the gospel, such as those made by committees under the auspices of the WCC. Verkuyl clarifies that the principles are not to be taken as identical with the word of God, but that they do reflect what Christians believe to be important based on the word of God for international relations.\textsuperscript{23}

If churches would like to have a profound and meaningful influence in the community of nations and cultures, they need to do two things. One, churches must remain close to the word of God and observe the commands of Jesus faithfully and never compromise them in their life and witness. In other words, they can influence the struggle for common ethics with Christian ethics if they themselves observe it. Second, such endeavor must be an ecumenical project. Verkuyl was convinced that the impact of Christian ethics in efforts to search for universal ethics would be much greater if Christians and churches across traditions would think and work together. For this, he suggests an ecumenical ethics, not just ecumenical theology, drawn from across traditions. The love and demands of the Lord in different and changing situations are too profound and broad to be understood by only one Christian tradition. Ecumenical ethics is the churches’ contribution to the formation of moral standards and norms throughout the world.\textsuperscript{24}

To conclude, both Darmaputra and Verkuyl have the same goal, that is, to come up with a universal ethics. But Darmaputra has wrongly assumed that if ethics is biblically-based it becomes sectarian. For Verkuyl, this is not the case. I have made a

\textsuperscript{23} Verkuyl, \textit{Etika: Ras, Bangsa}, 269-275.

distinction in Verkuyl’s ethical system between biblically grounded ethics and the practice of ethically influencing the world without necessarily quoting from the Bible. And I have also noted that Verkuyl himself made a distinction between Christian ethics and universal ethics, which is a goal of public pursuit. Darmaputra has missed these distinctions or confused them.

Moreover, Christians should not simply strive for their ethics to be rationally acceptable and to exist alongside other religious ethical systems. One has to recognize that the reality is pluralist and, therefore, one needs public ethics acceptable to all. All religious communities should contribute in the search for this kind of ethics. In a religious pluralist society like Indonesia, one wonders if a rationally formulated system can successfully attract a hearing. Muslims quote from their Qur’an, and the Hindus from their Gita. Why should Christians not quote from their Bible? In fact, this is what is happening in Indonesia every time there is an inter-religious forum. It could be that Darmaputra’s project of ethics based on critical cultural and rational analysis runs counter to his avowed goal of a pluralist universal ethics.

_A View of History and Mission and Political Action_

A theology of history informs one’s view of mission; different theories of history inevitably develop different understandings of the churches’ mission. Two groups can

---

25 By “history” we mean historical process or events past and present and not as an academic discipline. Related to history is the world, in which history takes place. By “world” we mean the created order consisting of fallen humanity and the results of his work. By virtue of its being created the world is good, but it is also evil because of the pervasive influence of sin on it. A related and relevant subject is the relation of eschatology and mission on which Verkuyl mentioned only in passing. For this, see J. A. De Jong, _As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640-1810_ (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1970) cited in Verkuyl, _Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap_ , 42, 121.
be distinguished on this question of history. The first group holds a pessimistic and dark view of history and looks at the world like a sinking ship, whose crew's only duty or mission is to call people to leave the ship and jump onto the lifeboats. The net effect of this attitude results in great optimism about evangelism and avoidance of any attempt at reforming the world and human conditions. The second sees history as redemptive, in which people can recover their true humanity and shalom in the world through the historical process. We have seen this attitude in people like Hockendijk and the trend in conciliar statements from Uppsala 1968 and Bangkok 1973. A similar radical idea animates other movements and schools of thought. We see at once that the question has a bearing on mission, not just on the public role of the churches. Verkuyl gives brief critical comments on this subject in the light of his understanding of history and the world. I will not attempt to present a view of history from which to evaluate his comments. I will analyze Verkuyl's understanding of history and, in its light, his critique of other views of history that have special bearing on mission. This will provide yet another theological foundation for mission with political action as an integral component.

The first thing to note about Verkuyl's view of history is that he presents it under the doctrine of God's preservation and government of creation (Gods voortdurende zorg en beleid in de schepping) in his dogmatic book, De kern van het christelijk geloof. The significance of its location is immediately apparent when seen against the tendency to view history as salvific, or to place it under the doctrine of salvation. History in this context reflects God's preservation and government of creation. To be sure, salvation is historical, but history is not necessarily redemptive. He does not identify history with the missio Dei or kingdom of God. World history with all its social, political, and cultural
developments is not the unfolding of salvation and Christians do not recognize their mission only in the context of historical processes. History is not necessarily a realization of the divine salvific plan; it only shows God’s preservation and government of creation, although many times we do not understand the reasons behind history. The good things that happen in the world and in history may be a part of God’s preserving and governing acts, but they do not constitute salvation. Verkuyl would say, however, that salvation may include or involve socio-political transformation, but he would not say that socio-political transformation or any historical project would lead to salvation in the sense that it would put people right with God (justification).

The main reason for this view is that, for Verkuyl, history is a mixture of good and evil. It is a story of human decisions and actions; a story of God’s giving gifts and opportunities to humanity and how humanity uses and misuses these gifts and opportunities. History is the blossoming of God’s gifts, but also the outworking of human chronique scandaleuse. Thus, not all that happens in the world is according to God’s will, and humans are responsible for what happens in history. This is why Verkuyl thinks that the word “providence” (voorzienigheid) is inappropriate when it comes to describing God’s relationship with history and the world. Among other things, providence does not for him reflect an accurate and complete situation as described in the Heidelberg Catechism. The Catechism on Q.27 states, “God’s providence is His almighty and ever present power, [1] whereby... health and sickness, riches and poverty,[3] indeed, all things, come not by chance[4] but by His fatherly hand[5].” For him, this is not necessarily the case. Poverty in particular is a despicable injustice, a result of mismanagement and selfish stewardship for which humans alone, not God, are
responsible. This catechetical teaching has been used throughout history to justify injustice and to encourage people to passively accept their fate. In the midst of economic and social suffering God indeed upholds his people, but with regards to injustice that causes suffering, it is not God who is responsible. Thus, not everything that takes place in history is God’s act, and thus one must be careful not to quickly identify a historical project with the kingdom of God. History is not merely a record of unhindered progress of salvation history; there is also the element of the unholy and the wicked, against which God acts as both Judge and Liberator. Commenting on those who express confidence in secularization, he says, “If we simply identify ourselves with the secular movements in the world, we will find ourselves again and again in a new form of paganism.”

Yet, for Verkuyl, God is involved at every moment in history and the world at every level of reality, human, national, and international. Humanity is not the ruler and lord of history, but God is, being God the Creator. His preservation and governing of the world does not invalidate human responsibility. While not all that happens in the world is according to his will and while humans are responsible, God is fulfilling his redemptive purposes for human life and the world. This we call missio Dei. His liberating activity can be discerned in history and at times is expressed in the form of missio hominum. For this redemptive work in history, he has enjoined his people to be his co-workers. This partnership between God and the church is what we call mission.

---


In light of this view of history, Verkuyl would be critical of either those who would abandon history to its course because they think it is too evil, or those who tend to identify historical processes with the kingdom and engage them. There are serious implications for mission from either side, but we want to focus our attention on the second. Here we shall briefly cite examples of the tendency that identifies a historical movement or project with the kingdom of God.

On one side of this tendency are those that tend to identify Western progress with the kingdom of God. For Verkuyl, the Social Gospel movement is too optimistic about ongoing progress, which it identifies with the kingdom of God. Actually it is no less than an expression of the American way of life, more rooted in the Enlightenment than in the gospel. H. E. Fosdick, for instance, viewed history as a progressive manifestation of the purposes of God. By this tendency, the Social Gospel disregards almost completely the eschatological dimension of the kingdom and overlooks the micro-structural evils in the individuals at work in the macro-structures.29 Another example is A. A. van Ruler, who is critical of history, Western history, in particular. And yet, according to Verkuyl, van Ruler commits a similar tendency as the Social Gospel when it deemed European and American cultures to be the expression of the kingdom of God, “the bed on which the stream of world history will flow forward.”30 The same optimism underlay the

---


Christianizing motif based on *Volksideologie* (national ideology) of the German missions in the late nineteenth and twentieth century.\(^{31}\)

The tendency to identify Western progress with the kingdom of God undoubtedly influenced Western missionary thinking and practice. Indeed it did, at least until recently. History informs us that one of the conscious goals pursued by missions has been the Christianization of non-Western cultures and societies. Underlying the project is an implicit or explicit assumption that Western progress is an expression of the kingdom. That these attempts at Christianization have brought blessings in the non-Western world cannot be denied. Evils were exposed and non-Christian values were replaced by Christian values, the same values that spurred nationalism and led eventually to independence of the colonies. Even to this day, we see the Christianizing influence of missions on culture and society in many parts of the world.

But Verkuyl, while recognizing these benefits, was also critical of the Christianizing efforts of missions. In the first place, he is doubtful whether there is such a thing as Christian culture on earth. What Western Christians call Christian culture is in fact Western culture, and what is called Christianization is Westernization. The effects of this are oftentimes difficult to accept. Missionaries tended to be paternalistic and so slow in accepting the nationalist aspirations of the colonized peoples. Reality indicates that Westernization or Western modernization cannot be the standard for peoples in the non-Western societies. The two world wars led to disillusionment of the Western vision. The increasing pluralism and globalization militate against Westernization. From the

---

perspective of the coming kingdom of God, according to Verkuyl, such attempts at Christianization “are seen for what they really are, a complete and total compromise.”

Currently, in view of the apparent clash of civilizations, nobody is talking about Christianizing culture anymore. Such an idea is fraught with dangers and may be counter-productive for mission.

The other tendency that identifies historical process with the kingdom is liberation theology. It rejects almost anything of Western civilization and tries to find the kingdom of God in the liberating history of the poor and the underprivileged. Verkuyl agrees with J. M. Bonino and O. Costas on the danger of the tendency to identify revelation or the kingdom of God with praxis that is taking place in behalf of the poor. Of Bonino he says,

Bonino, who himself is a liberation theologian... warned against making history a norm of revelation. He believes that at times liberation theologians have fallen prey to the danger of too facilely identifying the direct revelation of God in history with specific revolutionary events... The church is prophetic only as long as she continues to use salvation history as the criterion and the prophetic witness of the Apostles as the norm for all her own utterances.

On the other hand, Costas, another evangelical with liberation sympathies, warns liberation theologians of the danger of situational hermeneutics and a new Pelagianism which threatens to erase the line of demarcation between humanistic messianism and messianic humanism. Although Alves, in particular, makes a distinction between humanistic messianism and messianic humanism, these two tend to be confused in liberation theology. According to Alves, humanistic messianism is manifestly influenced by Marxism and identifies a revolutionary movement with salvation. Within this

---

32 Verkuyl, Contemporary Missiology, 194; Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingsswetenschap, 265.

perspective humanization is a human task. Messianic humanism, on the other hand, aligns itself with the goals and means of Jesus the Messiah in the noble quest for humanization. Within the framework of the latter, humanization is a gift of God, a divine project, guaranteed by his mighty acts among the people of Israel and through Jesus Christ. Verkuyl would agree with this distinction and thus would not dismiss liberation theology completely as many conservative evangelicals like P. Wagner would.

It is obvious that, for liberationists, mission is liberation of the poor and the oppressed, and the churches’ task is to participate in the liberating process taking place in history, called praxis. In that liberating flow of historical reality, where the poor are increasingly conscious of their power, the kingdom of God is manifest. Verkuyl would have much more sympathy for the liberation aspirations of the poor and oppressed than any other project. As long as the vertical dimension of liberation is not set aside, the liberation movement for him may be considered a movement of the kingdom. In his review of Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation by J. M. Bonino, an evangelical liberation theologian, Verkuyl concludes that the theological concepts of liberation theology do not pretend to be all-embracing; that liberation theologians are aware that the message of liberation of Jesus Christ is not limited to the social-economic ethics and to the evils of economic exploitation and social discrimination; that all of them wrote and


spoke regarding the deeper dimensions of the liberation in Christ; and thus liberation theology must not be confused with Christian Marxist-Leninism. Its starting point is faith in Jesus Christ, and it is basically a reflection of that faith by Christians in the midst of their struggle for justice. If this is true, then liberation theology, at least as expounded by Bonino, is comparable with Verkuyl’s earlier works on liberation, in which he presents the theme in both its spiritual and socio-political dimensions.\(^{37}\) It would not be completely untrue if Verkuyl were called a liberation theologian or liberation missiologist, as we shall see later.\(^{38}\)

To conclude this section, how one views history and the world will determine the scope of mission and what tasks it takes. For Verkuyl, history is the arena in which missio Dei takes place and in which he enjoins his people to participate. This missio Dei and the mission of the church have four aspects, to which now we turn.

**The Goal and Aspects of Mission in its Political Dimension**

The goal of mission and what it involves is another *locus* in formal missiology. It is important to discuss this matter because any given understanding of it underlies any discussion of strategy. But especially in connection with missio *politica oecumenica*, the evangelicals are hesitant to affirm the political role churches might play because they do

---


\(^{38}\) Cf. A. Wessels, “Memorial Address,” 10, in which the writer comments that Verkuyl was a liberation theologian *avant la lettre.*
not see much theological support for such a role and how that role relates to their understanding of mission and the church. For them there is not enough basis for political action in ecclesiology and missiology. Within the conciliar movement, the usual goal and tasks of mission are given new names and understandings, like humanization, sidestepping the themes of conversion, repentance, fellowship of the church, and evangelism and church growth. This section will demonstrate that there is enough theological support for the political role of the church in mission. I will do this by looking at the usual tasks of evangelism, church planting, and service within the purview of the kingdom of God, which embraces the whole breadth and depth of human life, including both the vertical and horizontal dimensions. The point is that all these tasks should be seen in such a way that provides a basis for yet another distinct task of mission, that is, missio politica oecumenica, without suggesting that every task of the church is political. Evangelism, church planting, and service, even if seen in their horizontal dimensions, retain their usual vertical dimension and remain distinct tasks of the church. In this way, the polarization between evangelism and social-political action is not necessary, but the two should be seen as integral aspects of the mission of God and therefore of the church.

The Goal of Mission

For Verkuyl, the ultimate goal of missio Dei and missio ecclesiarum is the kingdom of God, which is the new order of affairs begun in Christ and which will be completed by him. It involves the restoration not only of the human relation to God (conversion and repentance), but also of relationships between sexes, generations, races,
and even between humans and nature (fellowship and justice and righteousness).\textsuperscript{39} The future nature of the kingdom and its provisional present reality summon us to hope in the triumph of God in history and to participate in his ongoing saving action. For this participation, the church has four inclusive goals and tasks, all reflecting the liberating acts of God in history: the personal and spiritual conversion of people, the formation of the believers into the fellowship of the church, the preparation and sending of his people for service into the world, and working for justice and righteousness in society. These are all essential and none may be neglected. None of these tasks, however, is the kingdom and thus none of them can be the supreme goal of mission. But every one of these is an aspect of the kingdom, and all together constitute God’s work of bringing the kingdom to expression.

With the kingdom of God in view, Verkuyl reviews the goals and practices of mission over the years and concludes that any of these is just an aspect of the kingdom of God. He lists seven, but these can be grouped into four, which may correspond to the four inclusive goals and tasks of mission he proposes. All this indicates that he does not deny any of these, at least in principle; yet he thinks that if any of these is taken as the exclusive goal of mission, then that would make mission very narrow indeed because it represents only one aspect of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{40} All of these complement one another since they are all integrated. Moreover, not only are the aspects of mission distinct and


\textsuperscript{40} Verkuyl, Daar en nu, 13-23.
complementary, they are cross-dimensional, which means each of them has in fact both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Here we shall look at the horizontal dimensions of otherwise supposed vertical aspects of mission.

*Proclamation and Conversion*

Proclamation of the gospel that leads to personal conversion may not be neglected. This thought of Verkuyl cannot be emphasized too much. He says, “proclamation is essential because at the root of all human and societal problems is the mutilated and broken communication with God and the need for God...The most inhuman thing that one could do to a person or a society is not to tell the story of Jesus and its interpretation.”

Sounding like a strong evangelical voice, he even castigates those who would look beyond proclamation to other dimensions and end up with a false kingdom without Jesus.

And yet, any suggestion of a purely personal conversion must be dispelled. Conversion within the perspective of the kingdom of God is for Verkuyl much broader than the Pietists and the conservatives think it is. The thought of a Jesus without the kingdom is as narrow as the thought of a kingdom without Jesus.

---


the kingdom, conversion involves a total re-orientation of one’s thinking, will, and
emotions and results in a new style of living and new conduct. This is essentially what
metanoia means, and it embraces all of one’s life, including his life in society. A pietistic
separation between personal conversion and participation in the life of society runs
contrary to the gospel truth that Christ is Lord of all the earth. This means, as he puts it,
“that Christ’s disciples stand with both feet in a cold, hard, tough world and continually
re-orient themselves to persons and structures within that real world.”

This view of conversion requires the church not only to be concerned about personal sins but about
collective, institutional, and structural sins as well. The Bible has as much to say about
the latter sins and divine judgment on them as on the former.

The proclamation of the gospel is one of the inclusive goals of the church’s
mission and is carried out by all means available: kerygma and martyria, apologia, and
more recently, dialogia. There is no doubt that Verkuyl sees all of these as evangelistic
means intended to lead people to repentance. But even in these means, the vertical is
combined with the horizontal aspect. He insists on saying that the subject of
proclamation and witness is not only the promises of the gospel, but its demands as well.
Based on the biblical and theological foundations we have outlined above, the demands
are not purely personal, but they touch on every human relationship with God,

affirmation and fulfillment of our true humanity including legitimate human quests for truth, freedom,
unity, justice, and peace. In this sense it is correct to say that salvation is “humanization.”


Verkuyl, “Societas Semper Reformanda,” in *Vocation and Victory*, ed. J. W. Winterhager and
*Rondom het Woord* 2, 10 (1968): 189-191; Zorgt de wereld voor de agenda,” *Rondom het Woord* 2, 10
(1968): 197-198; *Responsible Revolution*, 30, 40-43; Inti Iman 1, 154-155; De kern van het christelijk, 23-
124; *Etika Kristen: Bagian Umum*, 43-44; *Message of Liberation*, 39-45; *De boodschap der bevrijding,
individuals, and community. The gospel is also addressed to rulers, authorities, and political groups. The apologetic aspect of evangelism will take up challenges not only of a psychological and philosophical nature but a political one as well, like those posed by ideologies and totalitarian states.

Dialogue has become a controversial issue in mission. It has fallen into disrepute among both evangelicals and ecumenicals. The former think that it is no more than an exchange of religious beliefs, which comes to nothing, while for the latter it is an insincere camouflage for evangelism. There are moderate positions that embrace both the elements of mutual religious understanding and openness for conversion. Verkuyl’s would be considered in this category as he calls for “mutual missionary dialogue.”

He makes no apology for his view that dialogue aims at leading people to personal faith in Christ. For him, the elements of kerygma, martyria, and apologia may never be absent from dialogue. And yet, even with this evangelistic thrust of dialogue Verkuyl would

---


46 Verkuyl, “Het gesprek in de communicatie van het Evangelie,” Gereformeerde Weekblad (April 29, 1977): 275-276; “Vernieuwing in het apostolaat,” Rondom het Woord, 2, 10 (1968): 192-193; Inleiding in de evangelistiek, 119-124; “My Pilgrimage,” 151; Contemporary Missiology, 364-365; Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingstechniek, 490-491; “Over ontwikkelen in de theologie religiën,” Wereld en Zending 4:1 (1975): 73-77; “Toward a Universal Theology of Religion,” 139; “Contra de twee kerntheses van Knitter’s theologia religionum,” Wereld en Zending 15:2 (1986): 113-120; Gedenken en verwachten, 90, in which Verkuyl comments that round-table inter-religious discussions must not only between religious leaders but must also be done at local and regional levels. Dialogue for him must be sharing of the deepest experiences from heart to heart and, at the same time, the core difference between Christianity and other religions must be laid open as a mutual challenge to people to choose. Cf. G. H. Anderson, review of Contemporary Missiology by J. Verkuyl, Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research 3 (1979), 176, in which Anderson makes comment about Verkuyl’s denial of the view that the goal or purpose of dialogue with Jews is different from that of mission to people of other faiths. For Anderson there is a blurring of the distinction between dialogue and mission in this view of Verkuyl, which needs clarification, “so as to avoid misunderstanding among Jews and other non-Christians who already suspect that dialogue is the new name for evangelism in Christian mission.” I do not think Verkuyl commits confusion of the two concepts in his view. He would simply say that, in reference to the fear of Anderson, the Jews’ and non-Christians’ suspicion is not completely untrue; dialogue has missionary intention.
not dismiss its political significance. In dialogue, not only are religious convictions and experience shared, but also political aspirations as well, especially when it is realized that religions and religious communities have socio-political meanings. One kind of dialogue that he recognized and endorsed is dialogue for cooperation among religious traditions with the purpose of bringing “the strength of each tradition to bear on the pressing problems of our time...to end human suffering, advance racial justice, heal the broken relationships between groups, attend to the needs of the environment, and strive for peace.”47

To conclude, the great efforts of the Pietists in missionary work are indeed admirable and must continue. But as a stated goal, it must be admitted that saving souls alone is narrow. In practice, we see in history that Pietists have done a lot more than “saving souls.” Verkuyl notes this when he notes that early Pietism gave rise to many institutions of mercy. The Hutterites stimulated social and educational activities, and the Student Volunteer Movement, a pioneer of the modern ecumenical movement, made great strides in similar areas that influenced the macro-structures of developing nations.

We can add to these examples individual missionaries coming from the pietistic tradition, whom God used to combat social ills like slavery, and to encourage nationalism in areas where they worked. This shows that the mission of the church is in fact broader than the Pietists realize, and personal piety is no doubt an essential impetus for recognizing the broader needs of people and society. Pietism and political activism are not incompatible.

Church Planting and Church Growth

There are two missionary ecclesiologies that developed in recent years that dominated the Christian communities in the 1960s. One is represented by J. C. Hoekendijk for the conciliar movement and the other by D. McGavran for the evangelical movement. In the first chapter, we have described the debate that ensued as a result of their influence. Here we shall consider Verkuyl’s assessment of these two schools of thought in order to show that, for him, they are not mutually exclusive.

The Dutch missiologist Hoekendijk proposed an almost complete reversal of the relationship between church and world, from God-church-world to God-world-church, from a traditional view in which the apostolate is the function of the church to a view that the church is a function of the apostolate. This means that the church’s only nature and value is functional—only in terms of its participation in the apostolate that God is carrying out in history. The substance of the apostolate, according to him, is setting up the signs of the kingdom of God like shalom, which is carried out in the oikoumene. He says, “the church is only the church to the extent she lets herself be used as a part of God’s dealings with the oikoumene…”

Hoekendijk tends to identify missio hominum completely with missio Dei, and all that churches do is participate in the missio hominum, in movements for shalom, which renders evangelism and church planting, the other tasks of missio ecclesiarum, irrelevant.

As far as this goes within the context of missio Dei, Verkuyl might have no serious

---


49 Hoekendijk, The Church Inside Out, 40.
objection. But there are implicit ecclesiological issues involved. The church in the
traditional sense has almost no place; ecclesiology does not fit in this kingdom-
apostolate-oikoumene scheme. Not only is there a tendency to deprive the church of its
essential position, but it is denied the opportunity to invite people to become part of the
church. This is a reductionist missiology based on a weak ecclesiology. As Verkuyl puts
it,

The Church...is not a goal in and of itself; but neither is it— as some at present
would seem to imply—a contemptible entity that should feel ashamed of its
calling and seek its redemption in self-destruction...It makes no biblical sense
whatever to deny, as many do, that the upbuilding of the Church everywhere in
the world is a proper concern of the proclamation of the good news of the Gospel;
and it is high time for a forthright repudiation of such nonsense.50

The kingdom-oriented mission takes, according to Verkuyl, the forming of a
church as an essential aspect of mission, for this belongs to the heart of the gospel of the
kingdom, the gospel of love, reconciliation, and fellowship between God and us and
between people. Neither mission nor evangelism can take place without forming a
worshipping and serving community. In this view, the church is the fellowship of God's
people who believe in the Messiah; the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, whose
head is Christ. Its essential marks are the preaching of the word and the administration of
the sacraments to the believers with the goal of fulfilling their calling to realize the divine
purposes for humanity and the rest of creation. This calling includes what Hoekendijk
proposes, but is not limited to that. Verkuyl is affirming a familiar ecclesiology and

50 Verkuyl, "The Biblical Notion of Kingdom," 73. Cf. Contemporary Missiology, 201; Inleiding
in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap, 275; "My Pilgrimage," 154. The controversy on the status and nature
of the church with respect to the world is summarized in Bosch, Transforming Mission, 381-389;
missiology, and their strategic implications are clear.\footnote{Verkuyl, The Message of Liberation, 95-103; De boodschap der bevrijding, 115-124. "Evangelisatie en de aansluiting aan kerkelijke gemeenschappen," Gereformeerd Weekblad (19 March 1976): 236-237. For Verkuyl’s systematic ecclesiology see De kern van het christelijk, pp. 365-416; Aku Percaya, 198-214.} Here there is an unambiguous affirmation of church planting and all related activities. This is in line with the Reformed missiology of Voetius and Bavinck, which Verkuyl claims to have inherited and adopted. For Verkuyl, the Three-Self Formula of H. Venn and R. Anderson is a constant reminder to the church of the indispensability of this task, and the Church Growth Movement is a reminder of the obligation for numerical growth.\footnote{Some of the literature that show Verkuyl’s abiding concern for world mission including church planting and growth: De Onvoltooide taak der wereldzending (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1978); in abridged form in Euntes 13:2 (1980): 82-89; an excerpt in Gereformeerd Weekblad (9 May 1975): 297-298; and the complete text in English in Occasional Essays 6: 1, 2 (1979): 38-95. The articles “Het voorstel tot een ‘moratorium’ van de Lusaka conferentie (AACC 8-21 May 1974),” Gereformeerd Weekblad (25 October 1974): 93-94 and “Correspondence,” (between Verkuyl and E. Castro), International Review of Mission 64 (1975): 307 indicate Verkuyl’s irritation and frustration with regards to the moratorium debate in the CWME.} And yet again, if taken as an exclusive goal, church planting and growth makes mission narrow indeed. A brief look at McGavran’s view is in order.

The basic objection of Verkuyl to the Church Growth Movement is not that it emphasizes numerical growth, but that numerical growth has become the standard by which any activity may be judged and to which it should be subordinated. Thus, the churches’ involvement in socio-political activities, like the struggle against apartheid or poverty, is misplaced, thinks McGavran, because it is unclear how these contribute to the numerical growth of the church.\footnote{Verkuyl, Contemporary Missiology, 189-192; Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap, 259-263. Cf. R. Greenway, review of Contemporary Missiology by J. Verkuyl, Westminster Theological Journal 42 (1979-80): 451, in which Greenway comments that Verkuyl fails to do enough justice to the church growth school. McGavran, says Greenway, shows more concern for matters of mercy and relief, justice and human development, and reconciliation between races, than Verkuyl gives him credit for. This may be true but the more basic question, however, is whether McGavran would think these other concerns} Other gospel values might have been sacrificed by
uncritical use of the numerical standard. Churches might be compromising racial
harmony and church unity, for instance, by the use of the Church Growth strategy called
the "homogenous unit principle," or church planting along ethnic lines, for their desire
for numerical growth. The fear is that the principle might actually deepen, perpetuate, or
rationalize racist and ethnic divisions in churches and societies, like those of many
African states and, to some degree, of North America, where racial and ethnic relations
have become problematic. For Verkuyl, the only standard that churches may use without
denying the numerical goals is the gospel itself. Justice, for instance, is very much an
aspect of the gospel and promoting it is a form of witness to that gospel. As he puts it,

If Bonhoeffer had inquired whether his political pronouncements would help or
hinder the numerical growth of the church... Or, if Dr. Beyers Naude and his
colleagues... simply reckoned the effect of their witness in terms of quantitative
church growth, they would keep silent. But because they dare to speak, they
vitaly increase the qualitative dimension of the church's existence."

In relation to the kingdom of God, the church cannot just be concerned about its
own welfare and numerical growth. The kingdom is much broader in scope and authority
than the church is; it is an all-embracing reality which has cosmic proportions and
signifies the consummation of history. These two, although distinct, are inseparable. On
the one hand, being the first fruit or the early harvest of the kingdom, the church finds its
true status, integrity, and dignity within the kingdom. On the other hand, precisely

as part of the mission of the church as Verkuyl does. The following comment from McGavran indicates
that he would not: "Johannes Verkuyl defines mission as the 'salvific activities of the Father, Son, and Holy
Spirit throughout the world, geared to bringing the kingdom of God into existence.' Any such wide
definition which includes everything done by God and mortals toward a better world necessarily creates a
theology of mission which touches on every good thing God and mortals do toward bettering the human
lot. We are friendly toward every good thing people do, but we refuse to call all of them Christian
mission," my emphasis, in D. McGavran and A. F. Glasser, Contemporary Theologies of Mission (Grand
Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1983), 29. McGavran's view is an example of insidious dualism, calling
improving human lot good and yet it is not a part of church's mission.

54 Verkuyl, Contemporary Missiology, 191; cf. 68-69, 192.
because the church is in the kingdom, the kingdom is unthinkable without the church. This is not to say that the kingdom cannot exist without the church, nor does it mean an identification of the kingdom with the institutional church as the Roman Catholics of years past were inclined to think. Rather, the church serves the kingdom. It manifests more clearly to the world the rulership and the love of Christ. Thus, for Verkuyl, growth and expansion of the church should not be viewed as ends, but as means to be used for the service of the kingdom. To serve the kingdom is to serve its wider interests, which cover personal life, the church, society, and the created order. As the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, the church is to serve, even if this service might not result in numerical growth. 55 Within this view, the political actions of people like Bonhoeffer and Naude might not necessarily lead to numerical growth, but nevertheless enhance the qualitative dimension of the church’s witness to the gospel. Their actions were still very much part of the mission of the church, since justice and righteousness are an aspect of the gospel to which those actions give witness.

To conclude, the two concerns represented by Hoekendijk and McGavran are not to be seen as mutually exclusive; both are essential aspects of the church in its relation to the world. Both have to recover a fuller ecclesiology. Hoekendijk must recover a view of the church’s unique status before God, while McGavran needs a posture of the church toward the world in all its aspects. Verkuyl’s ecclesiology embraces both, affirming the identity of the church as God’s unique people—one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—and, precisely because of this identity, it is sent into the world for the sake of the world, serving grace and justice. Missiology, according to Verkuyl, must always save a proper

55 Verkuyl, “The Biblical Notion of Kingdom,” 73; Daar en nu, 31-33.
spot for ecclesiology. And instead of bickering over the question of strategic priorities, churches should engage in studies on how they may contribute to the advancement of the kingdom of God.\footnote{Verkuyl, “Evangelisatie en de behoefte aan aanvullende kerksstructuren,” Gereformeerde Weekblad (26 March 1976): 241-242; “Aктивирование национальных гимназий с помощью анализа,” Gereformeerde Weekblad (5 March 1976): 219-220. For a survey and review of the discussion on missionary ecclesiology, see J. H. Kromminga, All One Body We: The Doctrine of the Church in Ecumenical Perspective (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1970), 151-189; J. Bolt and R. Muller, “Does the Church Today Need a New ‘Mission Paradigm’?,” Calvin Theological Journal 31 (1996): 196-208; and more recently J. Bolt, “Evangelical Ecclesiology: No Longer Oxymoron? A Review Article” Calvin Theological Journal 39 (2004): 400-411. These authors take a similar position to Verkuyl’s that the church must be careful not lose its true character and identity as it engages the world and history. The traditional Constantinian ecclesiology does not hamper mission; similarly for Verkuyl, the traditional tasks of evangelism and church planting do not hinder political action, and vice versa.}

**Diaconate: Local, National, and International**

Throughout its history, the church has provided social, educational, and medical services. Until now, these activities are taken for granted as activities that the church may do,\footnote{For a fuller discussion on the diaconal ministries of the church, see Daar en nu, 56-123.} although again there is hardly a consensus regarding how they are related to mission. For Verkuyl, *diakonia* is not a marginal concern, or some optional implication of the supposed more essential tasks of the church. From the beginning, diaconal ministries are not simply auxiliary or secondary to mission, or a means to evangelism, but are an essential aspect of the communication of the gospel of the kingdom. This aspect of mission is rooted right in the gospel itself, in Christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. Jesus is the *Christos diakonos*, Verkuyl was fond of saying, the Christ whose lasting symbols for the salvation he brings are not just the bread and the empty tomb but the towel and the washtub as well. Preaching from 2 Cor. 9: 1-15, Verkuyl said God himself was a donor who gave the most wonderful gift he could ever give, and
that was his Son. The gift had a name, his name was Jesus Christ. Although *diakonia* is meant to relieve the suffering of people, it can be a form of witness to the gospel by which people respond to the love of God and give thanks to him (2 Cor. 9: 12, 13). Christ represents the Good Samaritan, the neighbor to the victim of violence and oppression (Luk. 10: 29-37). He is the *Goel*, the kinsman redeemer who defends the rights of the poor like Lazarus (Luk. 16: 19:31). His messiahship, culminating at the cross, is defined in terms of his service to people (Mark 10: 45), his miracles being the beacons and the signs of the kingdom.⁵⁸ These are just a few texts that Verkuyl used to support the diaconal character and tasks of churches, applying them not only at the local church level, but also at the national and international levels.

The social and political changes in the early twentieth century, especially in those areas previously called mission fields, prompted the churches to broaden the scope of their diaconal task, this time understood as transformation of socio-economic and political structures. Verkuyl explains this challenge in terms of the exodus motif for the developing countries. The independence that these countries had achieved from colonial rule, from the bondage in Egypt, so to speak, only signaled the start of a rough journey through the wilderness towards more stable, just, and prosperous societies. They were in search of a true cultural identity, a new humanity in a new society, and a just and respectable position in the world community and the international economic order.

---

Churches in these countries, Verkuyl believes, are called to assist in this search towards a state in which these countries live according to God's purposes.  

But churches abroad, too, have a responsibility in this search. Verkuyl called on the churches to call their governments to recognize the service motif that should govern their relations to the developing countries. Rich countries are called to use their power to serve the interests of justice and love for the sake of the poor countries, not to misuse or abuse it again as in the colonial days. They are not to exploit and manipulate them for their own selfish interests, so that newly independent countries struggling to survive can develop themselves and, together with all other countries, help build a responsible world worthy to live in, a new social and economic order.

Based on the standard of service motif and following the discussion on economic development in the ecumenical movement, Verkuyl suggested an examination of the motives for development aid pouring into the Third World. He was aware that the concept of development was falling into disrepute with Third World economists, which led to a more radical concept of liberation. We will not go into the details of the debate, but it will suffice to say that there was a perception from the Third World that the promise of development was not fulfilled; it only created a new elite, entrenched their countries in deeper poverty and their economies in dependency. According to them, what was needed was not development, at least in Western terms, but liberation. Verkuyl had no objection to development aid from Western countries, as long as it was not linked to military and economic interests of the donor countries. The ecumenical movement continued to use the word "development," but defined the goals of their programs

---

59 Verkuyl, Khotbah-khotbah, 130-134; Onderweg naar een, 15-33.
through the Commission of Churches for Participation in Development (CCPD) as stimulating social justice, self-confidence, and respect in finding resources and opportunities that would lead to self-reliance. Through these programs, together with the plans of the Program to Combat Racism churches could help create an emancipating and liberating condition. Verkuyl followed the discussion on economic international relations, and his theological reflections on *diakonia*, as considered above, would always carry implications not just for congregational and national *diakonia* but world *diakonia* (*werelddiakonaat*) as well.\(^6\)

To conclude, the problem of underdevelopment in the Third World is a complicated one for which there is no easy answer. We need not review the different theories of development and under-development proposed through the years. Verkuyl is inclined to accept Third World perspectives on the problem, for instance from economist S. Parmar from India. Whether the Third World view is correct may be debatable. One thing is clear for Verkuyl: the problem of poverty remains to be tackled by both poor and rich countries on the standard of exodus and service motifs, respectively. Churches from both sides have crucial roles in poverty alleviation. While churches continue to give a cup of cold water to the thirsty or relief to the suffering, they must come to realize that there are deeper roots of poverty and underdevelopment that extend not just into one

\(^6\) Verkuyl, *Khobah-khobah*, 135-141; *Onderweg naar een wereldsamenleving* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1971), 57-71, 80-84, 99-107; *Duur en nu*, 35-40; *Etkar: Sosial-Ekonomi*, 157-160; *Responsible Revolution*, 46-47; *Bestrijding van het racisme en de kerken in Nederland: Het programma van de Wereldraad van Kerken* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1972), 48-53. Cf. C. H. Koetsier, “Menswaardige ontwikkeling,” in *Zending op weg*, 178-189, refers to Verkuyl’s proposition 12 for *misso politica oecumenica* and presents the ecumenical contribution in economic development debate and with special attention to the contribution of S. Parmar, who thinks that Western development aid would not solve the problem of underdevelopment in the Third World countries. What is needed according to Parmar, which Koetsier agrees and Verkuyl follows, is economic justice which requires creating international structures that would allow for more distribution of economic benefits to the poor.
country but into the entire international economic order. For Verkuyl, the root problem of poverty is injustice and therefore the diaconate “has to be actively engaged in the attempt to change unjust situations… that the diaconate must not only be an instrument of compassion, important as it is, but also an agent of justice,”\textsuperscript{61} both at national and international levels. In other words, *diakonia* has to take a political character and may be called political diaconate.

The fourth and last aspect of mission for Verkuyl is *missio politica oecumenica*, the goal of which is a more just and prosperous society. It overlaps to a large extent with the diaconal aspect of mission, especially if we speak of the diaconate at national and international levels or socio-economic development, which requires transformation of the international economic order. *Missio politica oecumenica*, like *diakonia*, is a horizontal dimension of mission. But it is rooted as much in the will of God for humanity and the world as the other tasks of mission. Relating it to conversion, repentance, and participation in church life, *missio politica oecumenica* is the horizontal implication of those supposedly personal and spiritual experiences. Thus, in that sense, it has a vertical or spiritual aspect. Engagement in the political process can be as much a spiritual activity as evangelism, for instance, without suggesting that one can replace evangelism with political action.

\textsuperscript{61} Verkuyl, “The Role of the Diaconate in Urban Mission,” in *Disicipling the City*, ed. R. Greenway (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 212; cf; “Het gelui van de noodkloken uit Azic
Conclusion

*Missio politica oecumenica* has persuasive biblical and theological support. The whole biblical revelation and the familiar doctrines of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation have horizontal aspects. The needs and issues that the Bible deals with are not just those that refer to the interior life of a person but also those that concern nations and societies. Christian ethics, defined as gospel and law, God’s promises and demands, provide a basis for the public role of Christians. But since it is also for non-Christians, Christian ethics can be a message of the church’s proclamation, making it an aspect of mission. A view of history and how God works in history determines the scope of mission and what its tasks involve. History is a mixture of good and evil, nevertheless, God is working out his redemptive purposes in history, in which he enjoins his people to participate. Within the purview of the kingdom of God, the vertical tasks of evangelism and church planting bear horizontal implications. These tasks, seen in both their vertical and horizontal dimensions, provide a basis for another distinct task of mission, that is, *missio politica oecumenica*. Thus, *missio politica oecumenica* has a vertical aspect since it is rooted in the vertical dimension of salvation. This is not to suggest that everything that the church does is political. All aspects of mission are inclusive and cross-dimensional, but each one retains its distinctiveness.

---

CHAPTER SEVEN

MISSIO POLITICA OECUMENICA: THREE TASKS

If the kingdom of God is the goal of mission, as Verkuyl maintains, mission cannot but have a comprehensive scope. Within the context of the kingdom, the tasks of mission have both vertical and horizontal dimensions. We have seen that proclamation, church planting and growth, and the diaconate have both vertical and horizontal dimensions. These distinct aspects of mission retain their basic vertical orientation, but their horizontal dimension provides a basis for missio politica oecumenica. Missio politica oecumenica also has a vertical dimension rooted in conversion, which involves participation in the life of the church, including its worship. These four goals of mission are cross-dimensional, or as Verkuyl would say, inclusive, since all have both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

While missio politica oecumenica has a vertical dimension, it is consciously a political aspect of mission. Its methodologies are political, not evangelistic in the sense that individual evangelism would lead to transformed societies. There is a mistaken tendency to equate evangelism with political action. It implies that by doing evangelism, churches have already done their political duty, since it is hoped that their efforts will lead to transformed society. Another tendency is to equate political action with evangelism, believing that action towards humanity will accomplish God’s redemptive purposes. But missio politica oecumenica is a political act and deals with essentially political issues and problems. Its aim is a more just and prosperous society. Missio politica oecumenica is an integral aspect of mission because political issues and problems
have missionary significance. The significance of something, by definition, is its importance because of the effect it has on another thing. In our case, the missionary significance of any political matter is the important effect it has on mission. Thus, when we engage in political action as *missio politica oecumenica*, we are also engaged in mission. The missionary significance of this engagement is another reason for participating in political action, but this engagement is only possible when political action is seen in the context of mission.

In this chapter, we shall discuss three select tasks or actions of *missio politica oecumenica*: critical evaluation of ideologies, promotion of religious freedom as a human right, and transformation of a decadent society. These are all political issues, and dealing with any of them is a political act. But as we shall see, these political issues are also missiological issues for they affect mission. Thus, dealing with them has missionary significance. This presentation will show that one cannot really separate a political act from mission, since political issues have missionary significance.

**Critical Reflection of Ideologies**

Critical reflection on ideologies is a form of *missio politica oecumenica*. Verkuyl’s short article on *missio politica oecumenica* is the concluding section of his chapter on ideologies, which suggests that Christian faith and political involvement must deal with ideologies. In that same article on *missio politica oecumenica* and other writings, Verkul advises that churches learn from the past relations between mission and colonialism and be ever vigilant to the ungodly ideologies that underlie new forms of
colonialism. Verkuyl calls not only for “deeper attention to the communication of the gospel through churches living in the context of state-ideologies,” but also for “what can be done to promote a just, participatory, and sustainable society as the embodiment of God’s call to justice in different nations and areas.”

Ideologies are basically a political matter and thus dealing with them is a political act, or, for Christians, a missio politica oecumenica. But they do have a religious aspect and have a significant impact on mission and the context of mission. In this chapter, bearing in mind that missio politica oecumenica is a distinct and integral part of mission, we are interested in how ideologies and dealing with them impacts certain aspects of mission. Ideologies do affect the whole process of gospel communication, and this alone is enough reason for churches and missions to pay attention to them. After a brief note on the nature of ideologies and the missionary significance of the issue, we shall review Marxism-Leninism and apartheid, as examples of ideologies that pose challenges to the gospel and the life and witness of the churches.

The Nature of Ideologies

Ideologies defined. It is not easy to define the term “ideology.” Verkuyl, like many people, uses the term in more ways than one, although he has a basic definition of

---


it. Following A. Dumas, Verkuyl defines ideologies as blueprints for the future made by certain ideologues or elites within a community to move the masses. They contain a number of elements: a historical view of the present decadence, an envisioned future, and strategies that would bridge the gap between the present and the future. They bear a strong collective stamp, the masses being the artisans of the new society, led by a certain group perceived to be the articulator of their aspirations. Without the support of the masses, no ideology can realize its proposed blueprint. Because this definition is so basic, Verkuyl at times uses the term in a way that is beyond what his basic definition carries. His definition apparently fits more with a situation undergoing a political ferment or radical changes. This is especially true when Verkuyl relates the rise of ideologies to secularization, which tends to displace or disorient societies culturally and economically. Ideologies are either a by-product of secularization or the impetus for secularization; Verkuyl sees communism as the most secularizing ideology. In any case, they instigate people to move to a situation that is perceived to be better than the past and the present. However, there are also ideologies that do not try to transform the present, but preserve the status quo. Usually, these are called reactionary ideologies. The ideology of apartheid

---


---

is a good example, and Verkuyl wrote much about it. If this is the case, then the meaning of ideologies should be broader than what Verkuyl defines it to be.

One may make a distinction, from Verkuyl’s use of “ideologies,” between informal and formal ideologies. An example of an informal ideology, which Verkuyl simply calls “ideology,” would be imperialism. But imperialism is not really a neat, tight system that is usually associated with formal ideology. To be sure, there are imperialistic ideologies like colonialism and apartheid, but imperialism in itself is more of an attitude, a desire of one group to subjugate another. Racism is another example of an imperialistic attitude, but based on race. This too may be considered an informal ideology, since it is a form of imperialism. To be clear, Verkuyl never explicitly states that racism is an ideology, and rightly so since, like imperialism, it is more of a personal and collective attitude, although he cites racial ideologies like apartheid in South Africa, National Socialism in Germany, and anti-Semitism. These racial ideologies may be called formal ideologies. At any rate, once these informal ideologies or attitudes are formalized or institutionalized, we have what we may call formal ideologies like colonialism and apartheid, which Verkuyl also simply calls “ideologies.” Thus, we can say that colonialism is institutionalized or formalized imperialism, while apartheid is institutionalized or formalized racism. Imperialism may take other forms, and these too are ideologies for Verkuyl. Examples of other forms of imperialism would be communism and neo-colonialism, which are institutionalized ideologies in certain

---


6 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 56-58, 96-97; Runtuhan Tembok, 58-60, 113-14.
political and social structures and economic and cultural relations, respectively. Verkuyl sometimes calls ideologies what others call theories of political economy, like Marxism-Leninism, liberal capitalism, or democratic socialism. I will not discuss the strict or the more academic explanation of ideologies in general and each of the ideologies Verkuyl reviews in particular, let alone the debate surrounding this matter. I will define some of these ideologies as necessary. My point here is simply to indicate that Verkuyl uses the term in a rather loose manner. Thus, when I use the term “ideologies,” I mean it in a loose sense, corresponding to Verkuyl’s usage, as opposed to his more explicit definition. The goal, therefore, is to examine ideologies in the light of the promise and demands of the gospel.

*Benign character of ideologies.* Moreover, from Verkuyl’s materials, we can make another distinction between those considered benign or good ideologies, and those viewed pejoratively. This valuation depends on certain criteria; certainly for Verkuyl, these would either be biblical principles for state and society or compatible with such principles. There are certain ideologies that can be considered benign and serve good functions. In the middle of the twentieth century, when many young states were emerging, ideologies claim at least to offer direction and solutions to many social, economic, and political challenges facing the young states in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The disorientation confronting these states makes understandable the search for a symbolic framework (*modus vivendi*) within which to establish goals, work out the administrative details, and respond to political problems. An example of this would be

---

7 Many missiologists, including D. Bosch, D. McGavran, and C. van Engen never dealt with the problem of ideologies. Harvie Conn uses the term but never defines it and assumes a certain understanding among his readers, in *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and Mission in Trialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Books, 1984), *passim.*
African socialism in Tanzania and Zambia. An ideology can be acceptable as long as it is not ethnically or racially based (like German National Socialism), does not turn out to be pseudo-religious, and truly expresses the aspirations of a pluralist society for political and economic justice. A good example of this kind of ideology would be the Indonesian platform of Pancasila. Nationalism or national self-expression, undergirded by political ideologies, according to Verkuyl, is as important and as natural as human life going through the maturing process. The desire for liberation from colonialism and to secure a national identity and to place the nation socially, economically, culturally, and politically in the community of nations is not incompatible with Christianity.⁸

_Pseudo-religious character of ideologies._ Verkuyl's stress is on the negative aspect of ideologies, or their pejorative sense, for they usually take on a pseudo-religious nature. They are not simply and purely political. The leader, the land, one's race, or class becomes an idol that confuses the true worship of God. Ideologies tend to take over and to occupy the place of religion. They tend toward reshaping the whole of mankind and society. They employ all kinds of techniques to mesmerize the people and crush the opposition. They control every aspect of individual and corporate life.

Pseudo-religious ideologies demand of men [and women] and societies a loyalty which only the living God deserves. They develop their own cultus-object, creed, dogma, standards or morality, and forms of worship. Pseudo-religious ideologies are always in a tug-of-war with the gospel.⁹

Verkuyl cites a number of traits of pseudo-religious ideologies, which we need not mention. We shall see these traits in our actual review of communism, which is the best example of pseudo-religious ideology. This pseudo-religious character of ideologies

---

⁸ Verkuyl, _Etika: Ras, Bangsa_, 129-131; _Contemporary Missiology_, 376; _The Message of Liberation_, 90.

⁹ Verkuyl, _The Message of Liberation_, 91; cf. _Amanat Pembebasan_, 92; _Etika: Ras, Bangsa_, 134.
implies that, when churches and missions work for a just society, they simultaneously lead people from false ideological worship to true worship of God.

_Ideological character of religion_. This idea still reflects the pejorative sense of ideologies, but it describes religions rather than ideologies. “Religions are not ideologies, and when they are so transformed, they no longer function as religions,” thus comments Verkuyl.\(^{10}\) Not only can ideologies take on a pseudo-religious nature, but religions tend to take on a political-ideological character. When a religion is put in the service of, or becomes a spokesperson for, certain ideological interests, then it functions as an ideology. This is most apparent in countries where religion is identified with the state. Religious nationalism is prevalent in most of Asia; political struggle is waged in the name of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism.\(^{11}\) To convert to another faith is tantamount to betraying one’s national heritage. Political rulers always appeal to their state religion to keep a mantle of legitimacy, especially when that legitimacy is threatened. In many cases, people of minority religions have suffered due to religious nationalism. The implication for Christian missions is quite clear: missions in certain situations cannot simply address religious questions without touching on their political aspect, in particular religious and human rights.

Christianity is no exception to religion taking on ideological functions. History gives ample evidence of Christianity becoming a tool of colonial and imperialistic interests. Roman Catholic hierarchies have lent support to the semi-fascist

\(^{10}\) Verkuyl, _Contemporary Missiology_, 381.

dictatorship in some Latin American and Asian countries; the Three-Self churches have provided legitimacy for the communist rule in China; the Dutch Reformed churches provided theological justification for apartheid policy of South Africa; and many American churches and missions rationalize their nation’s unpopular foreign policy. We can add more to this list, but it is enough to prove that Christianity has been tainted with political and ideological interests, although it must not be forgotten that, in some cases and in varying degrees, it resisted those same interests. This implies for missions that they should constantly do self-examination and self-criticism on whether they serve the kingdom of God or their own homeland’s government and society.

_Ideologies and Mission_

Verkuyl insists that churches and missions deal with ideologies, because they not only affect people’s lives but gospel proclamation as well. Ideologies challenge churches and missions to re-discover the fuller dimensions of the gospel and to examine what the church’s mission really is and what the character of its missionary practices is. The restrictive and totalitarian character of ideologies raises the problem of human rights, among which religious freedom is the most relevant for the missionary interests of churches. Ideologies also pose a challenge to the unity of churches, since one reason for disunity is the unrecognized ideological difference among churches. Let us now reflect on some of the challenges that ideologies pose to churches and missions.

_Ideologies and the gospel._ Ideologies affect the communication and the reception of the gospel. If we recognize that ideologies tend to reshape the whole life and mind of humanity and that they are a mixture of truth and lies, at times clothed with scientific
trappings, they can indeed affect the way people look at reality. When an ideology is formed in the mind of people, it serves as a cognitive grid, as social psychology would inform us, through which everything is processed, and that includes the way people receive information or messages. The ideological grid may be an obstacle to understanding, or it may produce a distortion of the gospel. Churches are not exempted from the distorting influence of ideologies; they too at times tend to adjust the gospel message with the prevailing ideology, especially if they are allied with the ruling party. This is why Verkuyl suggests that churches should constantly detect and critically examine ideologies in the states and societies where they are located. The challenge to churches and missions is, according to Verkuyl, to engage these ideologies in theological reflection and dialogue and to discover the broader and deeper aspects of the gospel as it responds to the challenges posed by the ideologies. Our critical review of Marxism-Leninism and apartheid are good examples of how to do this task.

_Ideologies and missions._ It has become a persistent perception, admittedly not without reasons, that missions have been used as tools of the colonialism of the past and the imperialism of the present. This perception is usually borne by the ideological structure prevailing in a society once occupied by a colonial power with whom churches are perceived to have had some relations. While this is more so in communist countries, it also exists in countries where anti-Western sentiments run high, which makes it difficult to hear the gospel. So, missions would do well to try to overcome this impression by critically examining its political and ideological loyalties. To do so, they

---

12 Verkuyl, _The Message of Liberation_, 91; _Amanat Pembebasan_, 91-92; cf. _Fragmenta Apologetika_, 185-204.

13 Verkuyl, _The Message of Liberation_, 92-94.
constantly reflect on their message, principles and practice, and determine whether they are ideologically tainted. As Verkuyl suggests, "we should honestly take into account the extent to which our own interpretation of the gospel, missionary praxis, and missiology may have been influenced, however unconsciously, by certain ideologies."14 His concern is not only possible distortion of the gospel message, but the target people’s perception about mission and missionaries, due to some missionaries’ reckless political indiscretion. In some cases, it may be in the interest of the gospel to criticize some elements of Western culture and foreign policy, if only to show that Christianity is not a Western religion and a bearer of a certain Western ideology.

_Ideologies and unity of churches_. The pursuit of unity among churches is considered a part of the mission of the church, not only because unity has an evangelistic implication—that the world may believe that the Father has sent the Son (John 17: 23)—but because it expresses the _koinonia_ that Verkuyl thinks is an aspect of the communication of the kingdom. One factor contributing to the disunity of churches that may not be recognized is the different and possibly conflicting ideologies of countries from where churches come. Church leaders unwittingly carry the ideologies of their countries, and these are reflected in their reactions to certain political questions. When the ideologies represented happen to be incompatible, disunity ensues. This is implied in the following Verkuyl quotation:

Now the ecumenical fellowship is being threatened by ideological bloc-forming. Ecumenical alliance—indeed, the communion of saints itself—demands that Christians slash right through this bloc-forming and embrace each other in a mutual regard for one another’s situation.15

---


15 Verkuyl, _Contemporary Missiology_, 392.
This insightful statement should cause churches and missions to reflect upon themselves as they consider their relations to other Christian communions in the light of their ideological biases. If Verkuyl is right, the division of Christianity into, for instance, ecumenical and evangelical factions has to do with differing ideological perception, not only with doctrinal differences. To clarify, creeds and confessions are not ideologies, and churches are not a part of a state’s ideological apparatus. But as we have noted from Verkuyl, religions are not ideologies, but they can be transformed by them. Likewise, creeds and confessions are not ideologies, but they can be misinterpreted and applied inappropriately by churches and the government in order to buttress a certain ideology or to tear down another. The attitude of churches to apartheid in South Africa is the best example of this. This problem implies that churches should not only critically examine themselves, but that they also must try to understand and embrace other Christians coming from countries with different ideologies.

*Political dialogue as mission.* A note on political dialogue is in order before we conclude this section as a transition to our review of communism and apartheid. The common kind of dialogue is religious dialogue, and even this is now falling into disrepute due to different and conflicting understandings of its purpose. As we have seen in chapter 6, Verkuyl insists that Christians should not forget that religious dialogue has a missionary intention in the sense that it may lead (not force) people to faith in Christ and, at the same time, does not close the possibility that dialogue with other religions would lead to a common quest for justice and peace. Thus even religious dialogue has a political dimension, which of course for him is still a part of mission.
With regard to ideological dialogue, the primary objective is a common search for a better society and a brighter future. This common search is certainly political. But, for Verkuyl, it is also missionary, not only because a search for a better society is an aspect of mission, but because it is also a search for truth about reality and human life. In short, from a Christian perspective, it is a search for the truth of the gospel. Indeed, Christian-Marxist dialogue following the Second World War has affected theological thinking, especially in the area of social ethics, and Verkuyl puts a lot of weight on this dialogue. For him, these theological developments have practical missiological implications. He suggests that considerable attention must be given to apologetics and to social and political ethics in the theological education curriculum. He wishes that the education of Christian professionals would be comprehensive enough to include the vision of God, world, humanity, and history. He is afraid that scholars from Asia and Africa are schooled in modern methods but without reference to a total and comprehensive vision. The purpose of this kind of training is not only to prepare Christians for more responsible participation in society, but also for meaningful dialogue with ideologies, which may lead them to the further and deeper truth of the gospel.\(^\text{16}\)

To conclude, churches and missions should pay attention to ideologies’ pseudo-religious character, their inseparability from religion, and the effects they have not only on societies but on missions as well. Verkuyl notes that missiologists have traditionally restricted their efforts to the area of theology of religions. He thinks that a theology of ideologies, if we may use this phrase—the examination of human ideologies by the standard of the gospel—has scarcely begun. We shall now turn our attention to

Verkuyl's examination of two important ideologies: communism and apartheid. Since ideologies are basically political in nature, critically examining them or engaging in political dialogue about them is an important means of *missio politica oecumenica*.

*Marxism-Leninism: A Pseudo-Religion*

One essential task of churches and missions is the proclamation of the gospel. With respect to the problem of ideologies, evangelical proclamation involves cleansing the gospel of ideological interests and recovering its deeper and broader aspects. One way to do this is to engage in dialogue with ideologies. The main objective of dialogue is the search for truth, truth of the gospel and the truth about ideologies. In Verkuyl's review of communism, he tries not only to unmask the real character of the ideology, but also to reflect on the gospel in view of the challenges it poses to Christianity.\(^\text{17}\) This is the main focus of this section.

*Two-fold aim of Christian-Marxist dialogue.* The truth of the gospel is not something that only the Marxists need; Christians need the deeper and richer truth of the gospel and this comes about partly by way of dialogue with the Marxists. Verkuyl wrote books on Marxism-Leninism to prepare Christians for this kind of dialogue with this two-

---

\(^{17}\) Marxism-Leninism and apartheid are chosen for consideration here because Verkuyl has written on these two more than any other ideology. Liberal capitalism is an important ideology, at least for him, but he did not write as much on it as communism and apartheid. Primarily he warns about the dangers of liberal capitalism that tends towards mammonism, or consumerism. Right from the start he clarifies that the choice before the churches is not between communism and liberal capitalism but between any of these two and the kingdom of God. Both ideologies are humanist; both can be opposed to the demands of God, being both based on materialism. Thus, he makes clear that to reject one ideology does not mean acceptance of the other. A critique of one can be a critique of the other for one exposes the excesses of the other. It may be a positive aspect of either one of them that it has some elements of truth and values and each points out the weaknesses of the other, in Verkuyl, *Komunisme dan Kapitalisme diindijau dari sudut Indjil Kristus*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1956), 8-9; 157, 165; cf. *Etika Kristen: Sosial-Ekonomi*, trans. G. M. A. Nainggolan (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1965), 98-100; *Etika: Ras, Bangsa*, 130-131.
fold intention in mind. He pleads for an attitude of honest dialogue between Christians and Marxist-Leninists, for which preparation (voorbereiding) is desirable and necessary in order to know what the other believes and what changes have taken place in the movement. According to Verkuyl, honest dialogue between Christians and Marxist-Leninists requires, as in any religious dialogue, that differences should not be camouflaged, but must be openly acknowledged in order to highlight mutual challenge, which might lead to self-critical reflection. The purpose of such dialogue on the part of Christians is to listen to the call of Jesus for more righteousness (betere gerechtigheid).

With some alteration of Matthew 5:20, paraphrased as “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Marxists, Leninists, and Maoists, you cannot enter the kingdom of God,” Verkuyl follows the Latin American theologian J. M. Bonino when he poses the challenge to Christians to recover their transforming inheritance. He also challenges the

---

18 Verkuyl, Voorbereiding voor de dialoog over het Evangelie en de ideologie van het marxistisch-leninisme (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1976); De kernbegrippen van het marxisme-leninisme. Met een proeve tot evangelisch commentaar (Kampen: Kok, 1982). The latter is a more extensive treatment of Marxism-Leninism than the former, with the addition of more theme, notably the theory of surplus value, alienation, and Lenin’s theory of imperialism. Verkuyl’s purpose for this latter work is to give a broader and deeper account of the ideology on the basis of the selected official works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. He tries to provide deeper and more thorough knowledge of the subject for the increasing number of those in the Netherlands who are engaged in dialogue with the Marxists. In the 1960s Christian-Marxist dialogue flourished, while the 1970s saw the emergence of totalitarian states of the Left (communist) and Right (fascist and neo-Nazi). It was in this context that Verkuyl wrote with conviction that Christians should dismiss any suggestion that the only alternative is either the Left or the Right front. Earlier than these two volumes is Verkuyl, De geest van communisme en kapitalisme en het evangelie van Christus (Delft: Van Keulen, 1950); IT: Komunisme dan Kapitalisme Ditinjaui dari Sudut Indjil Kristus (first edition, 1950), which was written during the heyday of communism in Asia and other parts of the world and intended for the younger churches in newly emerging nations in Asia, which were needing directions in social and political economy against the threat of the widening grasp of communism. Also taped lectures on communism at Calvin Theological Seminary, December 1978.

19 Verkuyl, Voorbereiding voor de dialoog, 15, 79-80; De kernbegrippen van het marxisme, 25-126. Cf. Jose M. Bonino, Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 104, in which Verkuyl quotes Bonino, “There is a Marxist way of understanding Christianity, as there is a Christian way to see Marxism. But in order for these mutual challenges to be really fruitful, neither should try to reduce the other to a simple ‘misunderstanding’.” Translation from the original text.
Marxists-Leninists to realize that their understanding of revolution is not revolutionary enough. Both Christianity and Marxism-Leninism are to be judged in the light of God’s promises and demands.\textsuperscript{20} Here we shall first present Verkuyl’s critique of Marxism-Leninism in the light of the gospel, and then note some elements of truth in it that Christianity might consider as it tries to discover unfamiliar, transforming facets of the gospel. In keeping with our theme, Verkuyl’s review of Marxism will hopefully clear the ground for both the hearing of the gospel and the deepening of our understanding of the gospel.

\textit{Atheistic Character of Marxist-Leninist Ideology.} For Verkuyl, the root of all communist ideology is its denial of the existence of God. Any critique or dialogue regarding the core doctrines of Marxism-Leninism must start from the recognition of their atheistic basis and starting point.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, for Verkuyl, dialectical and historical materialism, the key doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, amounts to a denial of God the creator and leads to deification of matter and restriction of the vision of created reality. Dialectical materialism, Marxism’s ontology, sees the material world alone as real, in which a successive and progressive struggle of opposites takes place. Historical materialism takes the fundamental determinants of the course of history and progress to


be the development of the forces of production and the changing production relations. Class struggle is the expression of this dialectical and historical materialism, which will eventually lead to the emancipation and dictatorship of the proletariat. For Verkuyl, this is a tightly knit view of history that does not allow for a sovereign God, and its eschatology sets the goal of history in the hands of the proletariat. The collective, socialist state is enthroned, and it becomes the idol to which everything is sacrificed. The ideas of responsibility to God and humanity and of stewardship are, according to Verkuyl,

missing.\textsuperscript{22}

The denial of the existence of God in Marxism-Leninism, for Verkuyl, leads to the denial of humanity as created in the divine image. Humanity is not responsible to any god. Humanity is the highest being, not God. Thus, communist anthropology, as Marx described it, is a combination of naturalism and humanism. Naturalism is the view that humanity is a part and parcel of nature through evolution. Humanism is the view that humanity rules nature by its work and technology. But the Marxist-Leninist brand of humanism is proletarian humanism, in which work is the essence of humanity in communism, “the work that humanity makes for humanity. For from work and through work are all things and for work and the worker is the honor forever.”\textsuperscript{23} Man is good


\textsuperscript{23} Verkuyl, \textit{De kernbegrippen van he marxisme}, 194; \textit{Voorbereiding voor de diaoog}, 108. “Het is de arbeid die de mens tot mens maakt. Uit de arbeid en door de arbeid zijn alle dingen, aan de arbeid en de arbeider zij de heerlijkheid tot in eeuwigheid.” My translation
according to Marx. Evil lies in society when private possession of the means of production exists.24

Alienation generally means the estrangement of the worker from his true being, family, colleagues, and work as a result of unmeaningful and unnatural work. Marx gave this concept socio-economic connotations. For Marx, alienation is a consequence of monotonous specialization, the rigid division of labor, and the private ownership of the means of production. Going a step further from Feuerbach, who postulated that humanity is the god that humanity actually worships in religion and that this religious self-alienation is the source of every kind of self-alienation, Marx argued that religious alienation is caused by private possession of the means of production. Religious alienation arises from economic alienation, which is at the same time an illusory control of nature. For Verkuyl, this is a lie. In societies possessing other economic systems, such as archaic tribal society, there are always particular forms of religious self-expression. There is no such thing as a religionless tribe. While it is true that humanity is alienated and that there are various forms of alienation, the causes of alienation are much deeper than what Marx and Engels indicated and analyzed.25

The Communist critique of religion is actually a discourse on human nature. In Marxism, one trait of human life is self-consciousness and the person’s ability to objectify himself in culture, including religion. We have noted that Marx moved beyond Feuerbach with regard to religion. He agreed with Feuerbach that religion or god is reification of the essential predicates of human existence such as reason, feeling, and love.


Within this scheme, theology is essentially anthropology. But Marx radicalized this concept. Verkuyl notes from Marx's *Die Heilige Familie* that it is man, state, or society that produces religion. Religion is the projection in fantasy of a humanity that finds no fulfillment in this world. It is the sigh of the oppressed class, a protest against oppression and at the same time an adaptation to it. It is the opium, or liquor, as Lenin puts it, of the people to ease their pain and transcend their existence. With such a scornful view of religion, Verkuyl warns that one of the aims of communism is to get rid of religion, although for some tactical purposes it allows religion to operate and, in some cases, makes use of it.²⁶

In this connection, moral values are basically social phenomena determined historically. They do not originate from a god who commands, nor do they reflect natural or universal laws discerned by reason. In Marxist thought, they are subject to change depending on the forms of social organization and the economic systems. Thus, there are differences between primitive, feudal, bourgeois and socialist morality. In a capitalistic society, bourgeois moral values are dominant and imposed on the lower class in order to secure the position of the ruling class. Sometimes these values are given divine sanction, so that their observance may become more compelling. The role of religion or the church is crucial in this function. The communists campaign for the abolition of bourgeois moral values, asserting that only actions that advance the interests of the proletariat are considered ethical.²⁷

---


Communism as religion. The atheistic character of Marxism-Leninism led Verkuyl to conclude that communism is not just a social system or a critique of capitalist political economy. For him, communism is a religion and it attacks traditional religion precisely because it is itself a religion, an atheistic religion. Verkuyl lists some of the items in communism that parallel Judeo-Christian religion. The idea of a chosen race is reserved for the proletariat. Sin is found in the capitalist mode and means of production, not in the human heart. The Day of Judgment prophesied by the prophets in the Old Testament is the collapse of capitalist society in the future. Communism as a religion promises a kind of salvation, which is the emancipation of all in a classless society where the means of production are shared collectively, Marx’s ‘kingdom of God.’ Members of the proletariat are the agents of this salvation; they are the artisans of the kingdom, the creators of the new humanity. They determine and embody what is moral. Because Marxism is a religion, it has its form of worship, too. Marx, Lenin, and Mao are revered in communist meetings. The writings of this trio are considered the word of god; the shorter and simpler versions function like catechisms. The sickle and hammer are the symbols of this religion. Communist gatherings have all the appearance of a religious rite. Visiting the tomb of Lenin is no different from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Mecca. Communism is a comprehensive worldview that attempts to meet all the needs and questions of human life. It demands the full allegiance that only God deserves.28

Challenges to Christianity. As severe as Verkuyl’s critique may be, he does not hesitate to point out the positive elements in Marxism. As Wessels puts it, “It would be a grave injustice to view him as some obscure or rabid anti-Marxist, which he definitely

---

was not.” Verkuyl believes that Marxism has opened our eyes to the harsh realities faced by the working class. It exposes the excesses of liberal capitalism; in fact, he claims that communism is a judgment on the “sins” of the capitalist world. One may not deny that Marxism reverberates with compassion for the poor, oppressed, and the powerless, and that Marx himself lived a sacrificial life consistent with his convictions. Verkuyl often speaks of elements of truth (waarheidselementen), or truth and falsity (waardheid en onwaarheid) in the ideology. A question may be raised whether it is right to acknowledge some elements of truth, at least for Christians, in a thought system that is basically atheistic. One might argue that every element in that ideology is coherent with its basic framework and cannot be isolated. Whatever the case, Verkuyl considers these “elements of truth” as explications of the emergence of communism and at the same time challenges (uitdagingen) to Christians and the churches.

For all the weaknesses of Marxist theory of surplus value (meerwaardetheorie, Mehrwert), Verkuyl claims that one cannot deny that it calls us to something never before given enough attention, namely, that labor is not rewarded just compensation. It serves as a corrective to the actual practice of appropriating surplus value in any economic system, be it liberal capitalism, democratic socialism, or communism. With

---


30 Verkuyl, Komunisme dan Kapitalisme, 94-96, De kernbegrippen van het marxisme, 168.


32 Verkuyl, De kernbegrippen van het marxisme, 146, 151-157; Komunisme dan Kapitalisme, 96, 173-182; cf. Etika: Sosial Ekonomi, 53-54. What concerns Verkuyl with regards to compensation is that this matter, and the whole question of social economy, is addressed as simply an economic problem. For him it is also a religious-ethical question: “het is ook een religieus-ethisch vraagstuk. Het raakt niet alleen
regard to alienation, Marx and Engels rightly noted the lack of true community in social-economic relations, the legalism and mammonism of the circulation of money and goods. They raised a question, by their critique of the capitalist economy, about the way this problem can be corrected.\footnote{Verkuyl, De kernbegrippen van het marxisme, 165.} This poses, according to Verkuyl, a challenge to give attention to the community of production between employers and workers and to the building up of responsible production, distribution, and consumption as well.\footnote{Verkuyl, De kernbegrippen van het marxisme, 168-172; Komunisme dan Kapitalisme, 97.} Historical materialism, in spite of its one-sided practical outworking, cannot but force admission that the economy and matter are an important factors in history long ignored by Christians and the church until the time of Marx. Verkuyl quotes Barth on this: “The emergence of historical materialism and economic determinism reminds the church and theology of a debt that has not been paid.”\footnote{Cited in Verkuyl, De kernbegrippen van het marxisme, 142 and Voorbereiding voor de dialoog, 98. “De opkomst van dit historisch materialisme en economisch determinisme herinnert kerk en theologie aan schulden die nog lang niet vereffend zijn.” My translation.}

The doctrine of class struggle is, for Verkuyl, a dangerous teaching, and yet he understands that it arose from a consciousness of the wide gap between classes, which before God should not be and yet, those who are supposed to be sensitive to it remain indifferent. When the church becomes an accomplice of the state and the ruling class and forgets it prophetic and priestly roles, the Marxist critique that religion is an opiate of the masses is true. There are many instances in history in which this is the case, but Verkuyl gives as an example the Russian Orthodox Church, which behaved more like a prostitute
to the Tsars than as a priestly-prophetic people of God.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, not only for its pseudo-religious nature that churches and missions should be concerned about communism but it also raises legitimate questions that churches and missions should reflect in their theology and practice.

\textit{Apartheid: A Denial of the Gospel}

As we have indicated above, we need to make a distinction between racism and apartheid. These are closely related in the sense that the latter is a type and a concrete institution of the former. We have suggested above that racism is an informal ideology, while apartheid is a formal one. Verkuyl defines racism as the pride and feeling of superiority that one group or race has in reference to other racial groups, causing it to discriminate against or cut off members of another race. This attitude finds concrete expression in the structures and policies of racist or apartheid society.\textsuperscript{37} Racism, therefore, is a more general concept than apartheid. This is evident when we examine the context in which Verkuyl mentions racism. For him, racism is an aspect of imperialism and the international economic order: Western whites subjugating non-whites and rich and poor countries distinguished along racial lines. Not only is this true on the global scale, but also within countries. Thus, following the lead of ecumenical pioneer J. H. Oldham, Verkuyl thinks that the race question is not simply a matter of race, but a


complex set of economic, social, and political structures that have poisoned the relationship between races. This implies that one cannot simply deal with the problem of racism on the personal level, important as that may be, but must also deal with it on the macro-structural and international socio-economic level.

Whether it is racism or apartheid, it is a denial of the gospel, the message of grace and the reconciliation of humanity in Christ. Since racism is a general concept, covering not only racial but also national and international socio-economic issues as discussed in previous chapter, this section will focus on the institutionalized form of racism known as apartheid. It will subject it to the light of the promise and demands of the gospel. In one sense, apartheid parallels Marxism-Leninism as a formal ideology. But they are also quite different: Marxism-Leninism denies being a religion, although it could be seen as one, while apartheid claims to be compatible with biblical revelation, even when all indications point to its denial of the gospel of Christ.

The whole biblical drama of creation, redemption, and consummation does not allow any place for dividing humanity based on racial differences. There are Christological, ecclesiological, pneumatological, and eschatological bases, to name some, for the unity of humanity. These all are familiar themes with implications for racial relations between peoples and nations, and we do not have space to discuss all of them here. Our interest is on two themes that do not receive as much attention as the others in theology: the unity of humankind and solidarity in sin and guilt.

---

The unity of humankind. The biblical creation account reveals that the human family is in principle one. The beginning of the human race is revealed in the story of ha-adam, the human. Unlike other racial and tribal myths that tell us of the original ancestors of a certain tribe or nation, and which tend to make people feel more superior than others, the Genesis story is an account of the creation of humanity, not of superhuman ancestors of a tribe. Neither is it about the origin of Israel. “Adam” means “man” or “human;” it is never used in Genesis 1 and 2 as a personal name, but as a species of a name: ha-Adam.³⁹

That humanity was formed out of the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7) shows that humanity shares material substance with other creatures and exists in mutual relation with the rest of the created order. The breath of life that God breathed into him (Gen 2:7) is that which makes a person human, distinguishes him from all other creatures, and puts him in relation to God.⁴⁰ These are all important truths for the church’s engagement with the entirety of human reality, which includes the political dimension. Also, these truths must not be ignored in anthropological studies. As fundamental as these truths are, one may not forget another truth that is equally fundamental, namely the unity of mankind or humanity. Verkuyl expresses it thus: “The unity of the human species is the point of departure for everything the Scriptures tell us about man.”⁴¹ The unity of mankind is declared by Paul to the Greeks in the Areopagus: “God has made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). It is the assumption Paul makes


⁴⁰ Verkuyl, *Inti Iman 1*, 111-113; *De kern van het christelijk*, 91-92.

when he speaks about the first and second Adam and the spread of sin and the intention of salvation (Rom. 5:12-21). Herman Bavinck affirms the unity of humanity as “the foundation of religion and morality. The solidarity of the human family, redemption in Christ, the universality of God, the catholicity of the church, the law of love—these are all rooted in the unity of mankind.” Physiological, sociological, and psychological anthropologies all depart from this starting point of the unity of the human race.

This does not mean that there is no diversity within humanity. There are at least two different kinds of diversities that Verkuyl reviews: sexual distinctions and racial or ethnic variations. For Verkuyl, there is a difference between the two kinds. The former is a creational given, the latter arose out of a number of factors, none of which is a creational given. Neither sexual nor racial or ethnic distinctions deny the fundamental truth of the unity of humanity. The problem is that apartheid believes that racial distinctions are creational givens, based on its reading of Genesis 9 and 10, which we will now review.

Verkuyl strongly insists that racial or ethnic variations are not creational givens, unlike sexual differences. These racial variations are more of the effects of climate, a milieu, history, culture, or social circumstances. All these are evolutionary factors that led to minor or limited differences in genetic or biological make up of the races. What peoples have in common, however, remains far greater than their differences. The

---


44 Verkuyl, *Etika: Ras, Bangsa*, 16-17; *Break Down the Walls*, 15-19; cf. “Enkele aanvullende notities,” 139-140. The “evolutionary factors” is not to be taken in strict Darwinian sense. Verkuyl is
“table of nations” in Genesis 10 is usually used to support the view that racial variations are divinely created. His reading of the texts is that, while there are variations among races, these are not part of the created order. For this, Verkuyl finds support from G. von Rad and K. Barth. For Von Rad, in particular, Genesis 10 actually underscores once more the unity and universality of the human family, but now lets us see the fullness of variety in which the unity expresses itself.

The significance of this reading of Gen. 10 is seen in a context where the reality of racial variations is perceived to be a part of creation order, and so is used to justify racial segregation. But racial segregation is not the intent of the passage, Verkuyl points out. Instead, it simply presents the presence of different peoples as a matter of fact that should move us to grateful awareness of how the one human family manifests itself in countless, changing variations. The diversity does not diminish the unity of mankind; in fact, diversity enhances unity, as different peoples work together and contribute something to the unity. He uses Paul’s description of the supposed unity of the church: the human body consisting of different members. Furthermore, for him, attempts at classifying peculiar traits and differences among peoples are misplaced; for the most part, they are unfounded generalizations, which only serve in most cases to legitimize the superiority of one race over others.45

If Genesis 10 is used to deny the fundamental unity of humanity, Genesis 9:24-27 is employed to deny not only the unity, but also the equality of all peoples. The “Ham

---

45 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 25-29; “Enkele aanvullende notities,” 140-141.
Nonsense,” as Verkuyl calls it, takes Genesis 9 to support a view, traced back to the 18th century, that the Negroid peoples were the descendants of Ham, who are “burdened with a crippling inherited handicap and ordained by God to a status of subjection.” The text says that Canaan, a descendant of Ham, would be a slave, and so is used as a basis for slavery of the black race. This view begs the question. To identify the black race with the cursed Canaanites of Genesis 9 is a serious misconception, because the Canaanites do not belong to a supposed Hamitic race. Hamitic is not even a race, but refers to a language. Hamites are a Semitic race like the Israelites and other Middle Eastern peoples. Thus, it is difficult to find racial overtones in Genesis 9. For Verkuyl, this interpretation is a pseudotheology that distorts the message of the Bible. Canaan, according to him, is being punished for his own sins because he behaved in the same way that Ham did toward Noah. The punishment, however, is not permanent, considering the promise God made to Abraham that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3) The redemptive history shows us that Canaanites have been a part of God’s people and even of genealogy of Jesus. Even if one takes Canaan as representing a group, the Canaanites, it does not make sense for only his descendants to be punished, since evidently Ham has more than one son (cf. Gen. 10). The more reasonable reading of the text is that the Canaanites involved in the curse are those that Israel encountered as adversaries in the land of Canaan. They are not victims of an inherited curse, and just like any other people, they suffer for their own sins and may experience forgiveness and conversion.46

Solidarity in sin and guilt. The universality of sin and guilt is a common theme in Christian theology. The spread of sin throughout the whole of humanity is one more

---

46 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 32-35.
indication of the unity of humankind. Verkuyl speaks of solidarity in guilt
(*verbondenheid in schuld*), which binds every person and every group with the rest of
sinful humanity in all time (cf. Gen.11). Since Adam represents the whole of humanity,
we are all in him and he in us. In corporate life, every person represents all and all
represent every person. Every person shares in the guilt of the rest of the group.
Collective guilt is the term Verkuyl uses to refer to a situation in which we inherit guilt
(*erfschuldig*) not only from Adam, but from one another as well. This inheritance of sin
and guilt is not apparent in Genesis 2 and 3, but it is difficult to deny it in the rest of the
Bible, especially in the Old Testament. Several Old Testament psalms speak of inherited
sin and generational sins (Pss. 32, 51, 102, 130). Similarly, the prophets cry out against
personal as well as generational sins. The apostle Paul declares that we are all heirs of
the burden of sin and guilt by virtue of the unity of humanity (Rom. 1-5; Eph.).47

Most, if not all, Christians accept the universality of sin and guilt, although most
will see it manifested mainly in personal and individual terms rather than its socio-
political, collective and structural aspects. In the thought of Verkuyl, the nature of sin
and its manifestations can be both personal and social or structural-institutional. For him,
sin is essentially opposition to, or rejection of, love of God and love of neighbor. The
sins mentioned in the Bible are simply its variations, and they can be both personal and
social and political. Hatred of others is personal, but it can also be expressed in policies
and structures, in which case it is called racism, social injustice, anti-Semitism,
colonialism, imperialism, and so on. Sin is often expressed in terms of commission and
omission. Again, both of these can have a personal as well as a collective aspect. Many

---

47 Verkuyl, *Inti Iman I*, 143-149; *De kern van het christelijk*, 115-120; *Break Down the Walls*, 35-
39; *Eitka: Ras dan Bangsa*, 26-28; *Eitka: Unum*, 43-44.
Christians would deny that they have ever committed collective sins. For Verkuyl, the sins of omission, like the neglect of and indifference to racial problems, are equally serious transgressions that are hardly recognized by many churches. The evil from which we pray to be delivered by God either comes from within oneself or from demonic forces that influence and shape communities and nations. A recent theological statement that may lead us to deeper consciousness of structural and racial sins is the recognition that sin is not only something that we do, but also something of which we are a victim.\footnote{Verkuyl, De kern van het christelijk, 121-128; Inti Iman I, 151-161.}

We end this section by addressing one more theme: the significance of apartheid for missions. Before we do that, we would be remiss not take note of the good news that God has dealt decisively with the problems of racism and apartheid. His purpose abides, that is, to restore the unity of humanity, and he has fulfilled that in the death and resurrection of Christ. The election of Israel, the initial step of that reconciling work, is not meant to favor one nation over the rest; it is for the sake of all nations that election has been conceived. Israel is chosen as \textit{pars pro toto}. The same is true with the church. It is the avant-garde of the integration of peoples and nations in Christ.\footnote{Verkuyl, Runtuikan Tembok, passim; Break Down the Walls, passim; Eitka: Ras, Bangsa, 30-38; cf. The Message of Liberation, 93-94.}

\textit{Apartheid and missions.} Non-white churches were planted by white churches. One reason for white missionary efforts was to provide a venue for the non-white sector of the population to worship and to keep them away from the white churches. An example of this is when, as we have noted above, people accompanied by blacks were asked to leave white church services, or when blacks were denied communion. This manifestation of apartheid is usually called ecclesiastical apartheid. Verkuyl did not
discuss this kind of apartheid much, although he was aware of it, as is shown by his statement that the separation of races was visible in the churches. This separation of churches along racial lines is particularly true in the case of the NGK and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC), which are “mother” and “daughter” churches, respectively.\textsuperscript{50}

The motivation for forming black and colored churches in South Africa goes against the essential unity of the church and the gospel message that in Christ racial differences do not matter (cf. Gal. 3: 28). Apartheid churches are closed to people of other races in principle and practice. This is not the same as the situation in which churches are planted in areas of certain ethnic groups. It has been a customary missionary practice to plant churches along ethnic lines. This is especially true in Indonesia, where we see ethnically based churches like the Lutheran Batak Church or the Reformed Torajanese Church. History shows how missionaries made use of anthropological and cultural factors that resulted in formation of ethnic churches. There are also socio-psychological factors involved in cases such as those in urban areas, where people from a certain tribal group would naturally seek out church fellowship of the same or similar tribal groups. These are all understandable and in many cases sanctioned, as long as these ethnic churches are made conscious of the one holy catholic church of which they are a part. Verkuyl agrees with Visser’t Hooft’s view that these ethnic churches can be justified on pastoral grounds, as long as ethnic churches are not closed to people of other races and strive for the establishment of supra-ethnic or supra-racial churches. It is imperative, then, that ethnically identifiable churches learn to live

\textsuperscript{50} Verkuyl, \textit{Break Down the Walls}, 116.
consciously in ecumenical inter-dependence with churches of other races. In fact, this ecumenical inter-dependence is already happening all over the world.  

_Promotion of Religious Freedom_

Verkuyl suggests that "one task of _missio politica oecumenica_ is to aid in the struggle for recognition of freedom of religion as part of man’s basic human rights." The state of religious freedom is alarming, but this is just a symptom of a more serious disregard of other fundamental human rights. For Verkuyl, the fundamental human rights, of which religious freedom is one, are all inseparable, inclusive, and inter-related. One cannot address the problem of religious freedom without touching the other rights, as some did in the past. Nor can one divorce the quest for the other rights from religious freedom, as is the tendency in the present. Verkuyl says, "In the _missio politica oecumenica_, solidarity requires that we identify with the victims of racial, social, and political oppression but also with victims of totalitarian systems which muzzle a person’s right to worship freely." Indeed, totalitarian systems, with their justifying ideologies, have a lot to do with violation of human rights and restriction of religious freedom. We

---

51 Verkuyl, _Break Down the Walls_, 91-93; _Runtuhan Tembok_, 96-98; _Etika: Ras, Bangsa_, 61-64.


54 Verkuyl, _Contemporary Missiology_, 401; cf. _Etika: Ras Bangsa_, 57-60, 103; "Over de theologische fundering van de mensenrechten," 245; _Enkele aspecten van het probleem_, 14; "Mission in the 1990s," 56.

55 Verkuyl, _The Message of Liberation_, 93; _Etika: Ras, Bangsa_, 136-140; cf. _Break Down the Walls_, 9, 21, 64-68; _Runtuhan Tembok_, 10, 20, 66-70.
see this in China, North Korea, and in many countries of the world. Having said this, our focus here is on religious freedom, for this directly concerns churches and missions. Yet this is not to suggest that other human rights are of no interest and value. To be sure, the struggle for religious freedom is not just for Christianity, but for other religions as well.

*The State of the Freedom*

There have been numerous declarations and statutes respecting human rights and religious freedom coming both from ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical groups. Christian lobby groups in particular have exerted significant influence on the formulation of basic human rights and, in particular, religious freedom. One such group was the Commission on International Affairs of the WCC. The Commission, under the able leadership of O. Frederick Nolde, was deeply involved in the formulation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and in the struggle to integrate religious liberty into the constitutions of the emerging and independent states in Asia and Africa. The United Nations General Assembly in 1948 declared that,

---


57 Verkuyl, *Het Moslems in gesprek*, p. 140, in which Verkuyl fights for the rights of the minority groups, especially the Muslims, in Western nations, even while he insists for the intrinsic role of witness in dialogue.

58 Verkuyl cites a festschrift article of Karl Mirbt for Adolf von Harnack in 1921, mentioning no fewer than 85 treaties in the 18th and 19th centuries between European powers and states in Asia and Africa to insure religious freedom. The ecumenical Oxford Conference in 1937, the IMC Tambaran Conference in 1938, the US Joint Committee (1942-1944) appointed by the Foreign Missions Conference of North America and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, all called for religious liberty. And then after the Second World War national council of churches and lobby groups worked hard to secure this freedom in the constitutions of the young states. In *Enkele aspecten van het probleem*, 7-13.
Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance (Art. 18).  

The conference of the representatives of the minority groups in Indonesia, held in October 1946 and attended by Verkuyl, adopted the following statement from the US Joint Committee of 1944. It is more explicit than the UN declaration in stating that engaging in mission may be a part of religious liberty.  

Religious liberty shall be interpreted to include freedom to worship according to conscience and to bring up children in the faith of their parents, freedom for the individual to change his religion, to preach, educate, publish and carry on missionary activities and freedom to organize with others and to acquire and hold property for these purposes.  

However, Verkuyl deplored the fact that in more recent years the interest to promote and defend this right and freedom was declining. This is seen in totalitarian systems, such as that in China, and in religious fundamentalist movements, such as those in some Islamic countries. In spite of all the declarations and treaties, there is less activity in pursuit of universal religious liberty than in the years following the Second World War. Moreover, people and governments tend to separate religious rights from other rights. Many countries ignore violation of human rights for the sake of national and commercial interests. He reminds us that all human rights are inseparable, indivisible, and inclusive. One cannot pursue one freedom at the expense or the neglect of another.  

---


Religious Freedom and Mission

In spite of the current sad state of affairs of religious liberty, Verkuyl declares that the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God is not dependent on the observance of religious liberty by the state. Religious freedom, like any other human right, is not something that a government grants or withholds. It is inherent in humanity as created in the image of God. Mission, on the other hand, is a calling from God and is protected by God-given freedom of religion. There are times when that freedom is stifled, but that has not hindered the progress of the gospel. The history of mission is replete with stories of martyrdom, persecution, and ostracism, and the church has advanced despite all such experiences. This shows that the church’s proclamation is not a privilege given by the state to the church.

Nevertheless, Verkuyl insists that religious liberty must be promoted and protected by law and observed by everyone: government, church, and individuals. This is so because “the realization of the human rights is at one and the same time a goal of, and an important aid to, the communication of the Gospel of the kingdom among all nations.” It is a goal because participation in the struggle against injustice and for righteousness or missio politica oecumenica is one of the dimensions of the communication of the kingdom of God. God’s kingdom has to do with justice, and one way to manifest justice is by promoting and protecting human rights. The realization of religious freedom is also an aid to the communication of the gospel. As an aid, human

---

62 Verkuyl, “Over de theologische fundering van mensenrechten,” 246; Etika: Ras, Bangsa, 98.

rights and particularly religious liberty constitute a significant, though not essential, 
precondition for unrestricted witness and mission. The need to create this precondition is 
compelling.

What the world stands in need of today is an open, receptive and active 
evangelical-ecumenical Christianity, which seeks by all legitimate means to 
influence the creation of adequate room for the untrammeled advance of the 
Gospel of the Kingdom among all peoples, sufficient space for mission in, to and 
from all six continents.  

***Intolerance with the Gospel and Tolerance in Mission***

Verkuyl makes clear that the recognition of religious freedom does not imply or 
depend on religious relativism, indifferentism, *laissez faire* liberalism, romantic 
enthusiasm, or evolutionism. Nor can churches accept it on the basis of syncretism, 
agnosticism, or skepticism. The Christian faith rejects these modern and post-modern 
grounds for religious liberty. Religious freedom rests rather on God’s *tolerantia* and 
sapientia, on divine tolerance and wisdom. Verkuyl attempts to show in his dissertation 
that whoever accepts Christ’s absolute claims and significance must give full space to 
religious freedom. The absoluteness of God’s revelation in Christ is not incompatible 
with religious freedom, and can only be accepted in the freedom of personal choice. 
Christ does not use force and he persuades us by the Holy Spirit. God is tolerant and 
patient with us. Fanaticism and coercion are contrary to the gospel; they belong to the 
devil and quasi-religious ideologies. Verkuyl puts it this way: in terms of the 
absoluteness of biblical revelation, Christians can be “intolerant.” But in terms of the 
means of communicating the gospel, one can be tolerant. Intolerance in missionary

---

64 Verkuyl, “The Biblical Notion of the Kingdom,” 81.
practice is fanaticism, while tolerance in the Christian message only fosters pluralist
tendency and is a "kiss of betrayal on Christ."\textsuperscript{65}

\textit{Transformation of Society}

The biblical and theological foundations for mission and the vertical and
horizontal dimensions of the tasks of mission that we have considered provide us enough
ground for public action. But especially in a society going through revolutionary changes
and requiring a change of government, what course of action can churches take? This is
a sensitive question among Christians, often divisive and not unrelated to certain
missionary interests. Not only during the period of nationalist movements, but even at
present there are still many societies of this kind in the Third World where missionaries
are still active. This remains a controversial issue.

\textit{Christian Political Ethics}

A number of public theologies proposed over the years attempt to articulate the
church's stance on political ferment. Verkuyl critically assesses them and suggests why a
theology of transformation or responsible revolution is the most appropriate course of
action in a society undergoing radical changes. A certain Christian political ethics
underlies any public theology and provides a biblical view of the state and its relation to
the church. Verkuyl wrote a book on Christian political ethics, \textit{Etika Kristen: Ras},

\textsuperscript{65} Verkuyl, Gedenken en verwachten, 171-172; \textit{Etika Kristen: Ras, Bangsa}, 104-106; \textit{Enkele aspecten}, 265-269.
Bangsa, Gereja dan Negara.\textsuperscript{66} It is important to analyze briefly his political ethics as we consider his theology of transformation. He draws from this earlier work on ethics and, together with the insights of Metz and Moltmann, this constitutes the main source for his theology of transformation. All these indeed agree with his broader theological orientation concerning the vertical and horizontal dimensions of revelation and redemption. Theology of transformation and the means for implementing change must consider the practical implications of political ethics in a situation that requires radical change. Thus, Christian political ethics is basic to any discussion on socio-political opportunities for churches. One’s understanding of the state and its relationship to the church will determine one’s attitude to the state, as well as to possible alternatives in the context of political ferment. We can assume that his or her political ethics allow for the churches’ participation in promoting transforming alternatives. This is the rationale for a brief discussion of his political ethics before we consider his theology of transformation and what it involves in practical terms. Since the transformation of society is a form of missio politica oecumenica, which we have shown to be a task of mission, we consider the transformation of society to be a part of mission, or a missionary task. This section is a bridge to the next chapter, in which we will review cases of the political stances of missionaries and how these affected the life and witness of churches in the countries where those missionaries served.

The first element of Verkuyl’s political ethics we consider is the Trinitarian origin and source of state power and authority. God the Father, creator and sustainer of creation,

\textsuperscript{66} The book has two major parts: the problem of racial relations (racial ethics) and political ethics. It is from the second part that we draw Verkuyl’s political ethics. This is not to suggest that racial ethics is not a branch of political ethics. It is not clear why the author presented racial ethics first when it could have been a special topic in political ethics. Nevertheless we will have an occasion to discuss his racial ethics in connection to the problem of apartheid.
established the state to prevent the chaos brought about by sin. In the Old Testament, we see God actively putting rulers on the throne and bringing them down. Romans 13 tells us that the magistrate is a minister of God whose authority comes from God and to whom all people should submit. Verkuyl apparently was aware that this text had been used to support governments, regardless of their misuse or abuse of power and authority. He says that the passage does not address the problem of misuse or abuse of authority, but that it presents the state in more positive terms and states the purposes for which God institutes it. In that light, rebellion against state authority is a rebellion against God. But it does not say anything about rebellion in the context of injustice committed by the state. According to Verkuyl, the main intent of the apostle Paul is to prevent Christians from committing anarchy and to remind them that the confession “Jesus is Lord” does not mean that they can ignore human authorities. Jesus is Lord indeed by virtue of his death and resurrection and has been given absolute authority over all other authorities. This renders the latter relative and their existence derived from his absolute authority. With regard to the Holy Spirit, Verkuyl, based on 1Tim 2: 1-4, interestingly presents the role of authorities in the spread of the gospel. Christians are admonished to pray for kings and rulers so that by the Holy Spirit they may be able to do their work of ensuring peace and order, which is necessary for the spread of the gospel. The Trinitarian ground of the authority of the state does not mean, however, that authorities are always faithful to divine purposes. On the contrary, they often violate the divine ordinances and oppose God’s purposes. Revelation 13 testifies to the demonic forces at work in the institutions of the state. Political ethics should recognize that the state always treads in between these two images of the state presented in Romans 13 and Revelation 13.67

67 Verkuyl, Etiqa: Ras, Bangsa, 78-94.
Another significant element in Verkuyl’s political ethics concerns the functions given to the state. For him, authority, justice, and love are the functions of the state. They are all derived from God and comprise the purpose for which the state was instituted. Whereas in political theories, love is not usually a part of a state function, he believes that it is a function of the state, aside from authority and justice. Authority is necessary in order for the state to function as a state. It is significant to note that for him authority must be exercised for the interests of the other functions of the state: justice and love. It is not self-serving. Otherwise, the state sets itself in a self-destructive course. By justice, the state’s authority insures that every citizen gets what she deserves (distributive justice) and creates and protects conditions for the flourishing of society in all spheres of life (creative justice). By justice, the state also protects fundamental human rights. These rights are not granted by the state, but are inherent in humanity as created in the image of God. Love is a positive element of justice; it shows the government what justice is. This may sound novel indeed, but the idea of love or mercy is relevant in the context of suffering caused by calamities or poverty that cannot easily be traced to injustice. These three (authority, justice, and love) are for Verkuyl inseparable, and they form a unity. They are also the standards by which the state is tested.68

Political ethics also examines forms of government and determines which one best reflects the ethical principles of statesmanship. For Verkuyl, no form of government can fully guarantee that authority will not be misused and that justice will always be served. Reality tells us that, even in a democracy, abuse of power and injustice can happen. Reality, however, does not free us from examining which form of government

---

best serves the divine purposes. There are certain forms that, by their very nature, are not
suitable to serve the interests of justice and love. Oligarchy, dictatorship, and
totalitarianism are forms that fall under this category. One example of dictatorship is the
so-called people’s democracy such as found in China. Although it is called democracy, it
is no democracy at all. It is ruled by one party, the Communist party, and cannot be
opposed by anyone. The parliament is merely an advisory body without legislative
authority. It cannot take action on the collective dictatorship of the party leadership.

Human rights are recognized, but only within the bounds of interests of the ruling party.
We need not discuss these forms in detail, except to say that rulers tend to misuse their
power and become oligarchic, dictatorial, or totalitarian. On the other hand, people can
be anarchic. So, Verkuyl thinks that parliamentary democracy may be a suitable form of
government for containing the egoistic tendencies of rulers and to prevent public anarchy.
Essentially, a democracy is rule by the people, which is delegated to the people’s
representatives, assembled in a parliament, to whom a government is accountable.
People are free to choose their representatives, and their rights are guaranteed and
protected, including the right to express their grievances and oppose their government
based on current laws. We need not go into the details of the outworking of a
parliamentary system or representative government, but here we see how the
countervailing interests of rulers and people can be expressed in ways that will serve the
common good. Here is also a hint of the possibility for change available to people when
their society undergoes a critical situation.

---

69 Verkuyl, Etika: Ras, Bangsa, 117-120.
70 Verkuyl, Etika: Ras, Bangsa, 124-129.
Not every democracy serves the interests of justice and love. In particular, Verkuyl criticizes liberal democracy because it tends to limit itself to implementing laws and ends up like a police officer protecting the rights of the rich. In a liberal democracy, according to him, love for all groups and love in distributive justice is absent. Because liberal democracy is not inclined to interfere in socio-economic affairs, little is done for the poor sector of society. All are left on their own. Political democracy must go hand in hand with economic, cultural, and social democracy, as many people in the West now realize. In this light, we see the wisdom of Verkuyl’s idea of love as a function of the state.\footnote{Verkuyl, \textit{Etika: Ras, Bangsa}, 127-128; cf. \textit{Etika: Sosial Ekonomi}, 148-154.}

For Verkuyl, democracy provides greater possibilities for realizing the functions of authority, justice, and love than other forms of government. In actual practice, democratic governments can deteriorate and may not work as effectively as they should. The alternative is not to resort to dictatorship or to undemocratic forms, but to maintain and renew democracy. This depends on the people’s vigilance and responsible participation in the democratic process. This requires education not only about civic duties, but also regarding rights and privileges of the people. They must be aware of the current issues, compare various views on those issues, and be able to form their opinions. This exercise is important if they want to avoid being swayed by propaganda and prevent a possible unpopular government.\footnote{Verkuyl, \textit{Etika: Ras, Bangsa}, 129-135.}

The matter of church and state relations is also a subject for political ethics, and it usually arises when churches weigh their options in critical situations. First of all, we
note from Verkuyl’s political ethics that both the church and the state are created by God and that both are under and subject to the kingdom of God. As ministers appointed by God, both accomplish the purposes for which they were instituted. They have different natures and functions; nevertheless, they have responsibilities to each other. History tells us that there were times when the state exercised supremacy over the church and vice-versa. Such is not the case at present, and the separation of the church and state is the most popular and acceptable relationship. For Verkuyl, none of these, including separation of church and state as understood by liberal democracy, is the kind of relationship the Bible presents to us. Following Calvin’s view, Verkuyl envisions a free church in a free state. This means letting the church be church and the state remain state, according to the divine ordinances for each of them. One is not subject to the other, but they live side by side in the spirit of cooperation. While they do not interfere in each other’s affairs, they do have responsibilities to each in keeping with their nature and functions.⁷³

When the church is faithful to its nature and calling, it remains in the world but is not of the world and cannot help but address political issues. The church has a prophetic ministry to proclaim the law and the gospel. If that is done faithfully, society and state are confronted with the demands of the Lord for justice and righteousness. Verkuyl clarifies: “The church of Jesus Christ did not receive a calling to make political proclamation. But if the church faithfully proclaims the whole counsel of God, then its proclamation will also touch on political life and governments.”⁷⁴ This is so because, as


we will remember, revelation has a political aspect. But the subject of proclamation is not just about the law; it is also the gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation. There are times when the church is called to a ministry of reconciliation between groups and nations. It acts as a priest and pastor not only to its members, but also to government officials and other influential people. It solicits advice from scholars and thinkers on possible courses of action in certain situations and evaluates them in the light biblical principles. In catechism classes, lessons in political ethics may not be ignored in order to prepare young people for their future duties in society and state.\textsuperscript{75}

Any social-and political action is a matter of public concern. The church reflects on the socio-political ferment in the light of the word of God and assesses the possibilities for people’s and churches’ actions based on Christian political ethics. This is basically what we mean by public theology. For societies undergoing ferment or upheaval, Verkuyl suggests a theology of transformation. The critique Verkuyl made of other public theologies is based on certain criteria, such as whether they encourage and advance transformation and renewal of society, whether such theologies have been utilized to support oppressive governments, and whether their means and ends are compatible with biblical principles. For this he made use of Metz’s and Moltmann’s public theologies and was influenced by a number of theologians from the Third World. His political ethics clearly allow for the transformation of society, which serves also as a basis for assessing other public theologies. We now turn to Verkuyl’s critique of public

\textsuperscript{75} Verkuyl, \textit{Etika: Ras, Bangsa}, 253-259.
theologies that, in his opinion, do not meet the challenges of societies that need
transformation nor reflect the biblical vision of a just and righteous society.

Critique of Public Theologies

First of all, he rejects two extreme positions: the theology of counter-revolution
and the theology of violent revolution. The first is too compromising, as it supports even
an unjust status quo and resists any effort to renew society. It rests on a false ideology
that exalts authority over everything else and justifies action to crush any challenge to
authority, even if that authority has become corrupt. This stance is influenced by an
unchristian ideology that refuses to test the government’s use of force by the standards of
justice, love, and mercy, and instead demands blind obedience to everything the
government demands. Such a compromising attitude may lead to radicalizing of society,
which might eventually lead to the emergence of a state founded on atheistic and
unchristian ideology, as in the case of Russia and China. For the same reason, the
churches have to resist being identified with such a stance, for if they do not, they usually
suffer, history tells us, in the new order.\textsuperscript{76}

The second extreme is a theology of violent revolution. This is not an option for
Christians either, for there is too little discriminating judgment given to means and ends
in the midst of revolutionary chaos. It gives a priori legitimacy to the use of violence or
self-justifying violence. There are some specimens of theology of revolution, such as
those espoused by French neo-Marxist G. Sorel, who influenced German-American H.

\textsuperscript{76} Verkuyl, \textit{Responsible Revolution}, 20-23, 33; \textit{Verantwoorde revolutie}, 23-26. Verkuyl’s example
of counter-revolutionary theology in Cuba is based on L. Dewart, \textit{Christianity and Revolution: The Lesson
Marcuse. We will not go into the details of their views, but Verkuyl relies mainly on H. Arendt’s critique of revolution.77

In between these two extreme positions is a theology of status quo or restoration theology, of which there are three models: the natural law of the Roman Catholic Church, the two-kingdom theology of the Lutheran, and the doctrine of creation ordinances by the Reformed. According to Verkuyl, any of these of models, including the Reformed, is inadequate to meet the challenges of the time; none of them is capable of providing a guide for the kind of renewal required by the current ferment. With the natural law model, the RCC has through the centuries officially defended the existing orders and sought to preserve intact the bond between the state and the church. This could be the reason for the counter-revolutionary attitude of the church, although Vatican II has provided cues for more progressivism; liberation theology often refers back to Vatican II for its orthodoxy.78

The Lutheran two-kingdom theology makes a clear distinction between the spiritual and the socio-political, a separation that can lead to conservatism in matters of church and state. Some elements of this dichotomy can be used and, in fact, have been used, to justify unchristian ideologies such as National Socialism in Germany, or to rationalize policies such as the failed reconciliation efforts between West Germany and Poland. Some Lutherans in South Africa also appealed to this theology for their silence on apartheid.79

---


Verkuyl’s criticism of the Reformed creation ordinances position is directed primarily at G. van Prinsterer, the father of Anti-Revolutionary Party, with the latter’s slogan “It is written. It is historical.” There is no problem with the first part of that slogan, but the “historical” past tends to be taken as normative, so much so that the “written,” as J. J. Buskes and K. Barth comment, becomes muted to address the present. A. Kuyper was more critical of society than van Prinsterer was, but many of Kuyper’s ideas, Verkuyl notes, were expressions of a theology of restoration and status quo: “his thoughts on race questions, the relationship between cultures, the problem of the division of powers and wealth are stamped more by conservatism and romanticism than by evangelical depth.”

This view of Kuyper is supported by O. Noordmans’ critique of Kuyper’s idea of Europeans as “the best race” and its implicit anti-Semitism. Verkuyl believed the same doctrine of creation ordinances that led Kuyper to strange racist and anti-Semitic expressions was used by some theologians in the churches in South Africa to justify apartheid.

Pietism is hardly considered a theology for anything involving socio-political amelioration, but for all its quietism or avoidance of the questions, it is in itself a political stance, as Verkuyl suggests. It may have been the influence behind the theology of counterrevolution and, in varying degrees, other theologies we have cited above. But unlike them, pietism simply refuses to deal with “worldly” issues and concentrates on spiritual matters. In effect, this attitude is a private and thus unofficial agreement with the powers of the world. Many of the brutal powers that have emerged in history were

---

80 Responsible Revolution, 28; Verantwoorde revolutie, 34.

81 Responsible Revolution, 23-29; Verantwoorde revolutie, 27-37.
glad for the “partnership” of the churches in that they kept them in the spiritual arena. Verkuyl cites a number of his encounters with people like Billy Graham, who shares the opinion of political leaders that churches and theologians have no political competence, and therefore should refrain from publicly commenting on matters involving state policies. Verkuyl finds this opinion indefensible biblically and historically.²

*Toward a Theology of Transformation*

For a society undergoing critical moments, a theology of transformation best depicts the image of renewal or change in line with the Reformation adage: *societas semper reformanda est*, based on the vision of God’s promises and demands. The theology of counter-revolution cannot achieve this vision; for according to a theology that resists any change, transformation cannot possibly take place. A theology of revolution, espousing self-justifying violence, cannot achieve the vision either, for the outcome of the revolution is not clear and may be worse than the old order. The theologies of restoration of the Lutherans and the Reformed, at least those of G. van Prinsterer and A. Kuyper, are ambiguous; they can either justify the status quo or challenge it. For Verkuyl, transformation avoids the extreme tendencies of theologies of status quo, counter-revolution, and violent revolution, as well as the ambiguities of restoration theology. This does not mean that a theology of transformation is less revolutionary; in fact, the other name for transformation is responsible revolution.

A theology of transformation rests on biblical insights that take seriously the horizontal dimension of revelation, aside from the usual vertical aspect. We have cited

these above, and there is no need to rehearse them again here. Sin and judgment, redemption and conversion, and the anticipation of the new heaven and earth all go beyond the personal and vertical dimension to the macro-structural dimension and have become sources for transformation. Our focus, instead, is on the means to achieve social and political transformation.

As Verkuyl observed to be true on many continents, the question that always comes up in a revolutionary situation is the one regarding resistance to unjust governments and whether violence is ever justified. For him, self-justifying violence is no option for Christians. He does recognize that violence can be a last resort if everything else has failed and the situation has become unbearable. As legitimate as this question of violence may be, the primary question in many cases is:

...how the need for change, transformation, or radical shift in course can be introduced in a society that is hardly conscious of the need or even the possibility of transformation, and of what means are most appropriate for bringing such societies into movement in the direction of renewal.\(^8^3\)

In other words, how can societies be transformed in such a way that bloody revolutions can be avoided? Verkuyl does not quickly dismiss the means offered by a democratic system. They are non-violent means in that they are constitutionally provided and guaranteed in states that claim to be democratic but that have become unjust and oppressive. Verkuyl always appeals to the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of people, including Christians, in modern democratic societies and encourages any movement for transformation to make use of these democratic provisions. We have seen these provisions in his political ethics. In this connection, one cannot construct a non-committal stance towards modern governments based on the example of the apostle Paul,

\(^8^3\) Verkuyl, Responsible Revolution, 46.
when he did not challenge Roman power. Paul's situation was different from the present. By God's providence over history, rights and privileges are now provided for people. These rights and privileges are guaranteed by universal principles and promulgated by the United Nations. They enable people to participate responsibly in establishing a society they desire. Thus, Verkuyl would advocate transformation within legal or constitutional means.  

Transformation of society requires that people be conscious of their own situation and that they understand the structures that shape their lives. For the kind of society envisioned, responsible political education of people is critical, and it is sometimes called conscientization or consciousness-raising. For this consciousness to develop, a society needs thinkers, intellectuals, or leaders who devote themselves to educational work among the masses. This is not merely formal or theoretical education. As in many Latin American countries, these "educators" also form cadres and train leaders for labor unions and political parties. This kind of education can also be done through mass media. From a Christian perspective, mass media has a heavenly calling to open people's eyes in serving the cause of justice and truth. Only with a properly informed public, conscious of their real situation and willing to take responsible actions, can democratic processes be sustained. Verkuyl suggests revitalizing parliamentary democracy through education and responsible journalism in order to avoid democracy becoming weak, stagnant, and eventually overtaken by totalitarian governments of the left and right.  

---

84 Verkuyl, Etika: Ras, Bangsa, 125-127, 234.

85 Verkuyl, Responsible Revolution, 47, 49-51, 65; Etika: Ras, Bangsa, 131-135.
The battle is not only in the public mind. When unpopular rulers ignore, or worse, become oppressive, the struggle is elevated to direct actions, of which Verkuyl cites three forms: public demonstrations, or what is now called “parliament of the streets,” non-violent resistance, and general strikes. In the period of “Red scare tactics,” these were automatically mislabeled “communist,” but for Verkuyl, they are legitimate means of opposition, although the motives behind any action need to be critically examined.

Public demonstrations or protest movements have an effective role in changing policies and structures, such as the protest in 1848 led by G. van Prinsterer for freedom of Dutch education. In particular, Verkuyl observes that youth unrest and student rebellion can lead either to destruction or renewal, depending on whether the older generation comprehends the deeper motives of the movement and decides to work with the young for genuine renewal. Non-violent resistance finds justification in the examples of the biblical prophets and apostles and in the lives of many Christians, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the well-known modern examples. A general strike can also be an effective option against any unbearable denial or violation of people’s rights.86

There is no guarantee that transforming actions will bring the kind of society people desire. In some cases, the oppressive rule becomes more entrenched and the situation more urgent. Sometimes, this worse scenario is used as an argument against any form of action involving radical change. Verkuyl would dismiss this defeatist attitude. In a situation where government and society become worse, one cannot avoid entertaining the possibility of violent action as an option. He is very hesitant to suggest this course of action: “non-violence obviously is of a piece with the Spirit of Jesus

---

86 Verkuyl, Responsible Revolution, 51-60; Etika: Ras. Bangsa, 226-227.
While he recognizes that violence can be counter-productive, he observes that recent Roman Catholic statements do not endorse violent revolution, but neither do they rule it out absolutely. Protestant ecumenical statements are more encouraging of this option in intolerable situations. The WCC and the Vatican through SODEPAX agree that at least they can no longer ignore the questions and criticisms raised by the proponents of violent revolution.

In this connection, Verkuyl proposes what he calls the “principle of justified revolution,” which may involve violent overthrow of the government. This principle does not merely rest on the present intolerable situation and the failure of all legal means, but also on a prospect for a better future, i.e., a more just and democratic order. Questions regarding the possible kind of future leadership and whether or not there is popular support for revolution must not be ignored. In most cases the question “what are the possibilities for more just government?” is more pressing than the circumstances that might lead to violent revolution. Without a positive answer to this question, Verkuyl views revolution as irresponsible and a reckless, mad adventure doomed to bring misery to countless innocent people.

It is here that Christians and the churches have a significant and strategic role. They cannot simply default on their part in *missio hominum* if this revolution manifests *missio Dei* in history. Verkuyl suggests some tasks for Christians before, during, and after the revolution. Before the revolution Christians should continually ask about the goals and the possibilities of achieving such goals, as well about guarantees that such a

---

87 Verkuyl, *Responsible Revolution*, 60.

movement will not lead to another tyranny and chaos. It must be clear to many that the revolution is driven by authentic love for God and people, which are the messianic signs by which the kingdom is made visible. During the revolution the role of Christians is most difficult, and yet, for Verkuyl, this is not the time to suspend the proclamation of ethical principles for statehood and nationhood if Christians and churches want to maintain their influence in the coming order. Their task is “to de-ideologize the revolution” and to keep reminding the revolutionary leaders that their ultimate task is not just to remove the enemy, but to organize for peace and reconciliation with justice. The churches’ function is to press for the fundamental rights and democratic liberties with which the revolution was concerned from the beginning.89

The foregoing only serves as a guide for action. It must be remembered that every situation is unique and every generation must reflect carefully on its situation and seek appropriate ways to fulfill its task of transformation. What Verkuyl teaches on transformation is that God desires more than personal conversion, that there are more options and possibilities available to Christians and churches than usually thought, and that they should be open to socio-political movements. Transformation of society is a long process; it cannot be achieved overnight. Thus, it requires long-term and regular preparation and training of people. As a task of missio politica oecumenica, churches have the responsibility to teach their members responsible citizenship, which includes lessons about principles and possibilities for transformation toward a more just and righteous society. At times, a critical situation may arise that needs immediate response. If there is long term and regular teaching of church members, they will not simply be

89 Verkuyl, Responsible Revolution, 61-66; Etika: Ras, Bangsa, 235-236.
caught up in the maelstrom of events, but will be able to make a more principled response in a situation that most likely has developed over a period of time. In other words, Christians and churches should learn to read the signs of the times of their society.

Conclusion

Missio politica oecumenica is a political act and deals with essentially political issues and problems. Its aim is a more just and prosperous society. But how does missio politica oecumenica function in mission? We have noted, first of all, that political issues or problems have missionary significance in that they affect missions. Dealing with them, therefore, is not only a political action, but missionary action as well. Missio politica oecumenica functions in three areas: critical evaluation of ideologies, promotion of religious freedom, and transformation of society. The problems of ideologies, declining religious freedom, and societies that need transformation are political issues, but they affect mission and therefore, dealing with them is part of mission.

The problem of ideologies is a major issue that Verkuyl tackles in his missiology. An ideology underlies imperialism and totalitarianism; it not only controls people’s lives but it also affects the communication of the gospel. Communism, in spite its critique of religion, is in itself a form of religion. Apartheid is given Christian legitimation, and yet it runs counter to the evangelical message of reconciliation. Ideological false claims must be unmasked through dialogue with them, but at the same time they challenge churches to search for the deeper meaning of the Christian faith.

Promoting human rights and, in particular, religious freedom, is a task of missio politica oecumenica. Although missions are not dependent on religious freedom,
churches and missions must attend to the problem of declining religious freedom, not only for their own sake, but also for the sake of other religious communities.

Transformation of society is a non-violent, albeit radical, way of changing a decadent society. There are many possible theological resources and practical courses of action available for transformation. Principled transformation requires an enlightened public, and churches have the role of educating their members on responsible participation in society. This, too, is a task of missio politica oecumenica since the churches’ and missions’ stance in political ferment and participation in a revolutionary situation determines the standing Christianity will have in the coming order. This is the reason why churches and missions cannot default on their place in the political process. That this is the case will become more concrete when we present three case studies in the next chapter that show how the stances of churches and missions in China, Indonesia, and South Africa affected the standing of Christianity in those countries.
CHAPTER EIGHT

MISSIONARY SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL STANCE:
THREE CASE STUDIES

The political stance of churches and missions does have missionary significance. The significance may not necessarily be in the number of conversions or churches planted but, as we will see, in the position or relationship of the churches vis-à-vis a new political order, which affects the life and witness of the churches. In this chapter, we will examine the critical events or period in the history of three countries where missions have worked, the churches’ and missions’ stance towards that critical period, and how that stance affected the relationship between the churches and the ensuing new order and, as a result, the life and mission of churches. There may be disagreement regarding the relationship between evangelism/church planting and political action, but one thing can hardly be denied: the context, especially a politically sensitive one, and the stance of missions towards that context will have an effect on missions. To a certain extent, the question of how a political action enhances or hinders the other aspects of mission can only be answered by history. And the lessons from the missionary significance of a past political stance should guide churches and missions for their future missio politica oecumenica. In this matter of missionary significance of a political action, we see in practice the integral nature of missio politica oecumenica with the other aspects of mission.
Some Preliminary Notes

Imperialism, Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism, and Apartheid: Some Definitions

We are dealing here with how churches and missions in the past dealt with the problem of imperialism and its forms of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and apartheid. Thus, it would be proper to define these terms. Imperialism, according to Verkuyl, is the attempt of one state to use local people or people of another state as instruments for the former’s interests or goals. Colonialism and apartheid are its more explicit institutionalized forms. Colonialism is the brutal expansion—by direct conquest, penetration, subjection, or exploitation—beyond natural or treaty-formed boundaries. Apartheid, on the other hand, is imperialism on the basis of race. It refers to structures and policies that formally separate one people or race from another within a defined territory. Verkuyl speaks of both capitalist neo-colonialism, as in Latin America, and communist neo-colonialism, as in eastern European states. Neo-colonialism is mainly an economic reality, in which “the larger portion of the economic affairs of a country is in the hands of foreigners, stimulated and managed by outside interests.”

Ambivalence of Missions-Colonialism Relations

One of the difficulties that missionaries face is the present perception that missions are tools of imperialism. While not entirely correct, this perception was formed by an awareness of history in which mission and colonial powers worked in tandem, in many cases supporting each other. The relations between missions and colonialism have been a significant aspect of mission studies, much of which depict the relations as

---

1 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 75; cf. Runtuhan Tembok, 78; Breuk de muren af, 63.
ambivalent. On the one hand, it cannot be denied that missions were allies of colonial powers and profited from colonial rule, and thus were perceived to be arm of colonial expansion. Verkuyl admits that there were imperialist motives present in the work of missions throughout history, and he gives a short general summary. China is a good example of a mission field in which there were inappropriate relations between missions and colonial rule, which we shall later examine. On the other hand, missions took a critical attitude towards colonial practice and worked for the emancipation of the colonized people. This too can hardly be denied. We have cited a number of missionaries of this kind in chapter five. On several occasions, missionaries protested colonial policies and sided with the natives. In addition, many missionaries contributed consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, to developing nationalist spirit in the colonies. This is particularly true during the period of colonial ethical policy, begun in the early 19th century, in which colonial rule was more "benevolent." Missionaries cooperated with their governments to raise the level of education, which ignited and further developed the nationalist spirit. The problem, however, was that in many occasions, missionaries did not know what to do with the nationalism they helped ignite.

---


4 Verkuyl, Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme, 62-75; Spanning tussen westers imperialisme, 199-209; Etika: Ras, Bangsa, 49; cf. Contemporary Missiology, 168-170.
in their fields. At any rate, it cannot be denied that missionaries helped ignite the
nationalist flame by the message and education they brought with them. While there are
other sources outside the circle of missionaries, Verkuyl emphasized “that thousands of
missionaries assisted in giving this (nationalist) spirit definite shape and form.” For the
contribution of missionaries to nationalism, we shall discuss the case of Indonesia.

The colonial period is past, but imperialism from time to time appears in some
other forms, apartheid being the most vicious. In the case of South Africa, which we
shall discuss, the role of churches was critical in dismantling the apartheid system that
they themselves had supported and perpetuated. In wider international relations, neo-
colonialism is a subtle form of imperialism, controlling the trade and the mind. At least,
this is how the Third World people perceive global relations of nations. This, too, poses
a challenge to the church. Verkuyl’s historical analyses of the colonial experience of
China, Indonesia, South Africa and the churches’ and missions’ stance toward
colonialism and nationalism are intended to provide some lessons for the present and
future missio politica oecumenica. To some extent, the churches’ and missions’ stance
during the critical years of these countries influenced the ensuing church-state relations in
the new order and thus the life and witness of the churches. Verkuyl warns the present
and future generations to be ever vigilant to imperialism’s more subtle forms, not only

---
5 Verkuyl, Contemporary Missiology, 170; Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingssystemen, 237-
238. Cf. Bosch, Transforming Mission, 302-312. Both Verkuyl and Bosch are critical of ethical colonial
policy, but the latter is less satisfied with the anti-colonial efforts of missionaries. Bosch concludes, “The
problem was that, even where they launched stringent criticisms against the colonial administration, they
never really doubted the legitimacy of colonialism; they assumed, virtually without question, that
colonialism was an inexorable force and that all they were required to do was somehow to try to tame it,”
312. This perception does not hold true for Verkuyl and some who worked in Indonesia. While Verkuyl is
more generous in his assessment of missionaries’ role during the period of ethical colonial policy he was
clear, as we have seen from his experience that colonialism must go.
because it is a mixture of good and evil, but also because the churches' identity and integrity are at stake, and these are essential for their life and witness.  

**China: Missions and Imperialism**

China is a classic example of a country where foreign missions are perceived to be the tool of imperialism, and as a result the churches have suffered tremendously. While the perception is ideologically biased, it is not entirely untrue. We need to trace, however, the origins of this perception to understand why the churches go through such a hard time under the communist rule. Questions have been raised whether the state of affairs under which the churches now exist could have been avoided, had the churches and missions acted prudently and responsibly.  

From the historical analysis given by Verkuyl, the answer would be affirmative and the challenge now is to learn from the mistakes of the past.

**The Sin of Commission: Taking Advantage of Colonial Booty**

The accusation that missions were lackeys of imperialism traces its origin to the height of missions in China in the early twentieth century. It is an unfortunate accusation, since missions and imperialism are contradictory movement; the former is called to serve, while the latter demands to be served. Yet it cannot be denied that there

---

6 Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls*, 73; *Etika: Ras, Bangsa*, 49; *Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme*, 80-81; *Spanning tussen westers imperialisme*, 212-213.

were times when some missions compromised their true identity and integrity when they took a share of the colonial booty and, as a result, came under suspicion. For many years, every time China lost in war, the Chinese were offended and humiliated by one-sided port treaties forced upon them by the Western powers. Some of these treaties contained provisions which guaranteed for the missions biased and unfair rights and privileges, such as property acquisition rights and extra-territorial rights that exempted missionaries and Christians from due process under Chinese courts. We need not go into the details of this history; this is fairly documented in the works cited above. It will suffice to say that the conscience of Western missions will always be haunted by their inappropriate liaison with colonial rulers and the advantages they took out of unjust treaties. Their reactionary stance towards the Opium War (1830-60) and Boxer Rebellion (1900) is indeed a blot in the conscience of mission.8

The Sin of Omission: The Incomplete Christian Revolution

China could have been more democratic, if not for the fatal mistakes of Western colonial powers, and it could have been significantly Christian, or at least, less anti-Christian than it is now, if missions and Christians created a critical distance with foreign powers and responsibly aided national reconstruction. Feeling secure with the patronage of colonial rule, China missions failed to seize the opportune moments, the kairos, so to speak, and let the course of history pass them by. Verkuyl notes that communism was preceded by the most massive Christian movement ever done in history. It was not Marxist-Leninism that first developed the consciousness that the feudal and aristocratic

---

8 Verkuyl, Indjil dan Komunisme, 143-144; Evangelie en communisme, 139.
society must be radically changed; it was the Christian religion. Since the middle of the 19th century China was ripe for revolution; everyone believed that revolution would and must happen. But the questions were: what foundational concepts should guide the process of change and what kind of people should take central leadership? If we follow history, according to Verkuyl, we find a situation in which those who held leadership roles in the revolutionary period of China were people who had been influenced by the Christian religion. But churches and missions missed the opportunity to provide Christian foundations for the envisioned society and failed to prepare Christians leaders who might have taken key roles in it. Various mistakes of Western powers, combined with local forces were directly responsible for the radicalization of national leadership that eventually fell into the hands of the rising educated elite associated with growing communist movement. Indirectly, missions and churches failed to recognize and complete the revolutions that started as Christian and that could have taken history in another direction.  

There were two critical social revolutions in the history of China that, according to Verkuyl, churches and missions failed to consummate to secure a more favorable future. The first was the T’aiping Rebellion (1851-1864). It was led by a Christian convert who claimed to have received a divine mandate to change society, to help establish on earth a sort of heavenly kingdom of great peace (t’ai ping t’ien-kwo). For Verkuyl, this rebellion was not merely another agrarian rebellion, which was quite common in China in those days, but was an attempt to give a Christian form to a protest. It was essentially an attempt to establish a theocracy. It proceeded with progressive

---

moral and social regulations such as land distribution, prohibition of slavery, of
prostitution, of opium and alcohol, of marriage of minors, and so on. If this movement
had been allowed to continue, there was high possibility, Verkuyl believes, that the whole
society would be penetrated with Christian values. Unfortunately, Western powers
helped the corrupt and decadent Manchu dynasty crush the rebellion in order to protect
their extra-territorial rights and privileges— the dynasty being the patron of such rights
and privileges.\(^{10}\) Apparently, churches and missions kept quiet about the whole affair.
Verkuyl expresses so poignantly his thought on this missed opportunity,

The agrarian revolution, which after many years Mao Tse-tung took over, was a
continuation of what the T‘aiping rebellion started, but without the Christian-
Protestant foundations that supposed to play a significant role in that rebellion.
The ideological provisions for Mao’s revolution were not obtained from
Protestantism, but rather from Marxist -Leninism. The unbelief of atheists who
search for a future without God oftentimes in history is tied to the weakness of
faith of Christians, who received the Lord, but without his kingdom and without
radical critique of the world by that kingdom.\(^{11}\)

The T‘aiping Rebellion was not the only change that took place under Christian
influence. In 1911 the Manchu dynasty finally collapsed and the people responsible for
this change were taught by Dr. Sun Yat Sen, considered to be the father of the Chinese
Republic. This change, too, Verkuyl notes, could not have proceeded without the
Christian influence, but this change, too, came short of paving a way for a society built
on Christian principles and values. Again, Western imperialism and Christians’

---

*Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam, 1904), 554-560.

diselenggarakan oleh Mao-Tse Tung, sampai taraf tertentu merupakan kelandjutan dari apa yang dimulai
dengan pemberontakan T‘aiping, tapi tanpa dasar-2 Kristen-Protestan yang melakukan peranan dalam
pemberontakan T‘aiping itu. Perbekaan ideologis dan juga materiil dari revolusi yang kemudian dipimpin
oleh Mao-Tse Tung itu tidaklah dipermasalahkan dari Protestantisme, melainkan dari Leninisme Marxis.
Kekafiran kaum atheis yang menjaring hari-depan tanpa Tuhan kerapkali dalam sedjarah bertalian dengan
kelemahan iman umat Kristen yang sering menerima Tuhan, tapi tanpa KerajaanNya dan tanpa kritik
negligence were both part of the failure. Verkuyl provides a historical analysis of this aborted Christian change by looking at the life and career of Sun Yat Sen.

A relative of one of the leaders of the T’ai ping movement, Sun Yat Sen furiously critiqued Manchu dynasty since his youth. He entered a missionary school in Hawaii and while in medical school was converted and baptized into the Christian faith. What attracted him most to Christianity was not merely the basic message of forgiveness, but its advocacy of the demands of justice and brotherhood. Within this view, he formed a radical critique of the Manchu feudal society and was convinced that it was not enough to pinpoint the problems in the structure of society, but to change the structure as well. He started political study groups in key cities, for which he was thrown into exile in foreign countries, most notably Japan, where he learned its modernization program. After the collapse of Manchu dynasty in 1911, his followers offered him the presidency of the young Chinese Republic based in Nanking.\(^\text{12}\)

There were high hopes from the missions that in the process of change, following Sun Yat Sen’s assumption of power, the Christian religion would take a leading role. It was at a time when the Christian religion had massive influence among the people. Many from among the leaders of Kuomintang (Sun Yat Sen’s party) were Christians and educated in mission schools. In many places, people viewed the Kuomintang revolution as a Christian movement. In many provinces, Christian schools not only were recognized by the government, but feudal indoctrination based on Confucian teachings was banned in Chinese schools. Not that everything traditional was to be discarded but, for the sake of preserving the best of the Chinese tradition and to protect the new nation, the new

leadership wished to adopt new spiritual and moral values in place of the old feudal and autocratic ones. An indication of the Christian influence was a prayer request made in 1913 by the Republican central government addressed only to the churches, not to other religious groups, for the protection of the young republic. There was even an attempt, which for Verkuyl may be misguided, to declare the Christian religion as the state religion. All this goes to show the widespread Christian presence in the new dispensation.

In spite of all this, however, the Kuomintang government failed to achieve the kind of society it dreamed of. The old social and economic problems continued to plague the country, with biased colonial port treaties still in place. Old habits die hard, and new self-serving interests from among Kuomintang party members would crop up. Warlords were the effective rulers, oftentimes manipulated from behind by colonial powers including Japan. This state of affairs remained unchanged, but was made worse by the authoritarian and feudalistic nature Chiang Kai-Shek.13

Faced with all these problems, Sun Yat Sen launched his program and reforms in bureaucracy, agriculture, and politics. He surely needed directions to guide him in building up his nation. It is ironic that in spite of the widespread influence of the Christian religion, Sun Yat Sen sought alliance and advice from communist leader Borodin. The Chinese leader never embraced the communist ideology, but he saw that the Russian people struggled against the same problems that his people wished to eradicate. He was not so encouraged to seek aid from the West, whose ideals he agreed with in many ways but whose powers abroad were not ready to give up the extra-

territorial rights they were perpetuating in port treaties, something that scandalized him. In a sense Western imperialism pushed him in the direction he took, which perhaps is understandable. But it was a political blunder that later history exposed. Communism was not a benign movement that Sun Yat Sen thought it was, and Borodin was no magnanimous person working merely for the interests of the Chinese people.\textsuperscript{14}

The political alliance with Communists, if anything, indicates from a missionary perspective a certain failure by Christians and missions in China. It should not have happened, given Sun Yat Sen's Christian background and the massive influence of Christianity. Verkuyl asks, "Could it be that the weakness of the missions and the churches at that time was caused by lack of (Christian) advisors educated and trained to think through the problem of modernizing an old feudal society?"\textsuperscript{15} It is plausible that this lack was due to the fact that social and political life was not given enough value and attention. The kind of Christianity that missions brought, according to Verkuyl, was "so burdened with excessive pietistic legacy or too oriented on micro-structural (personal) improvement, and then, because inhibited by colonial situation, it was unable to change the macro-structures up to its roots."\textsuperscript{16} Christianity had already made many significant inroads into the life of the Chinese, but its representatives failed to give young


intellectuals the tools to analyze their society, including the necessary insights and programs to change that society in its socio-economic and political aspects.\(^\text{17}\)

**Churches and Missions under Communist Rule**

Verkuyl notes that the United States did not recognize Chinese communist government *de jure*, but only *de facto*, and as a result China closed itself to the West,\(^\text{18}\) including foreign missions as well, and the churches cut ties with missions and churches abroad,\(^\text{19}\) although one may argue that it was the atheistic ideology of China that determined its religious policies rather than its reaction to US foreign policy. However, when one examines the problem, it is quite clear that political forces played an important role in the sad fate of churches and foreign missions in China.

Here we see the missionary significance or implication of the advent of the Communist rule. For the sake of their continuous existence, the church leaders realized that they should accept the new reality and learn to live and work in the new situation in which they found themselves. Whether the churches liked it or not, they had to deal with the new order. Their beliefs, programs, and mission would now have to be formulated

---

\(^{17}\) Verkuyl, *Indjil dan Komunisme*, 38, 145-146; *Evangelie en communisme*, 42, 141-142. Cf. Charles C. West, *Outside the Camp*, 40-41, in which West comments, “Christian mission exploded the standards of an old society with their message and its consequences in their actions. But when real political chaos set in these missions lost their way. No Christian adviser was on hand to help Sun Yat Sen with his politics. He finally found a Communist one. There were far too few Christian action movements for building a new society. Land reform, building of industry, family loyalty versus state loyalty- these and many other questions were left to non-Christian thinkers and leaders. Also, Lesslie Newbigin, “Mission to Six Continents,” in *A History of Ecumenical Movement 1948-1968*, ed., H. E. Fey (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 173, in which the author says, “Perhaps the most searching questions arise from the fact, generally accepted, that the communist government in China has been able to accomplish many of the reforms for which missions were the early advocates but which they were not strong enough to complete.”

\(^{18}\) Verkuyl, *Indjil dan Komunisme*, 115; *Evangelie en communisme*, 111.

\(^{19}\) Verkuyl, *Indjil dan Komunisme*, 117; *Evangelie en communisme*, 113.
along the lines of the state ideology and programs to be finally approved by the state. Although officially there is religious freedom in China, in reality, religion is highly controlled to the extent that churches are part of the Communist apparatus. The influence of Communism in China on the churches and mission was so comprehensive and pervasive, that it affected vast areas of ecclesiastical life. Here we shall discuss two: missions and ecumenical relations.

The first victim of the Communist rule in China was foreign missions. A mass exodus of missionaries, hitherto unknown in history, took place. Government pressures and restrictions made it almost impossible to do what the missions came to do. They were identified with the number one enemy of the state, i.e., the USA, where around half of the missionaries came from. But more than this, their presence became increasingly an embarrassment and disadvantage to the Chinese Christians and churches. Government propaganda machinery made anti-Western imperialism and anti-foreign missions synonymous with patriotism. Not only their faith, but the Chinese Christians’ sense of patriotism was tested as well. This is most apparent during the Korean War, which strengthen the solidarity of the nation against what was viewed as American aggression.²⁰

Chinese church leaders who still played important roles in missions and churches were mocked for their cooperation with the paternalistic “running dogs of imperialism.” The embarrassment forced the churches to cut their ties with churches and missions abroad. The Christian Manifesto of 1950 drafted by church leaders declares that all forms of relation between churches and foreign missions must be cut and that churches

---

are now responsible to define and determine their position in the new China. The main
task of the churches and organizations is defined as follows:

to give thoroughgoing support to the “Common Political Platform,” and under the
leadership of the government oppose imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic
capitalism, and take part in the effort to build and independent, democratic,
peaceable, unified, and powerful New China.21

The goal was to rid themselves of imperialistic influences, take effective measures to
cultivate a patriotic and democratic spirit, and to promote autonomy, self-support, and
self-propagation. In this connection, they should, within the shortest possible time, work
out concrete plans for “self-reliance and rejuvenation, and should lay emphasis upon a
deeper understanding of the nature of Christianity…”22

To implement this new program, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)
replaced the old National Council of Churches, which was more of a cooperative body
for Western missions rather than a council of churches. The TSPM, formed by church
leaders under the auspices of Prime Minister Chou En-Lai, adopted the well known three-
selves principles (self-governing, self-support, self-propagating) of R. Anderson and H.
Venn, but for different reasons, in keeping with the clear intention to cut ties with church
institutions abroad. At face value, there seems to be no problem with the self-principles,
especially in view of the tendencies of dependence and paternalism in the fields. The
TSPM leaders explained that, by forming a new national body, they did not intend to
severe spiritual ties with the churches abroad, but that they considered the Movement to
be in a better position to assist churches in carrying out their tasks in a new situation

21 Verkuyl, Indjil dan Komunisme, 118; cf. Evangelie en communisme, 114; cited in Wallace C.
Merwin and Francis P. Jones, eds., Documents of the Three-Self Movement (New York: National Council
of Churches – USA, 1963), 20.

22 Verkuyl, Indjil dan Komunisme, 118; cf. Evangelie en communisme, 114; cited in Documents of
the Three-Self, 20.
without imperialist control. But if one reckons with the time and condition in which these principles were being applied, with a sponsoring government that is in the first place officially hostile to foreign missions, or with the expressed intentions that are obviously not ecclesiastical, then one may conclude that TSPM initiatives are politically or ideologically motivated. The Movement was not really meant to make churches independent and self-reliant, but to make them beholden to the communist state. Verkuyl clarifies that the original three self-principles are not ends but means to promote the growth of local churches, and that they are not meant to deny interdependence from all churches in Christ. He believes that the TSPM agenda are a clear distortion or a misuse of the original intention of Anderson and Venn.23

Communism and the Unity of the Church

Local churches are all part of the one body of Christ, who is the head. As a church is joined to Christ, then it is by him and for him joined to all churches in heaven and on earth. Nowhere, however, has a government treated the churches in such a way that it broke the essential unity and fellowship of churches as in Communist China. As we have seen, as soon as it assumed power, the state jettisoned all forms of relationship between the national churches and foreign missions. Church leaders under pressure from the government founded the TSPM and disbanded the National Christian Council. They hoped with this new body, old squabbles between the modernists and the fundamentalists could be overcome and a new form of unity suitable for the new dispensation could be forged. But because it was clear, or so it was perceived, that the TSPM was established

23 Verkuyl, Indjil dan Komunisme, 122-123; Evangelie en communisme, 118-119; Contemporary Missiology, 188.
to serve the interests of the new regime rather than fulfill the calling of the church, the desired unity fell through the cracks. The Movement received various kinds of reaction: from whole-hearted welcome to conditional or hesitant acceptance (evangelicals led by Marcus Cheng) to outright rejection (Pietistic groups like Little Flock of Wang-ming Dao and the True Jesus Church of Paul Wei). Whereas before, the usual consideration for unity or disunity was doctrinal, now, under the Communist rule, it was political. The doctrinal issues were sidestepped, at least, for the time being.

The saddest feature of church relations, for Verkuyl a gloomy chapter of the history of the Chinese church, was the public denunciation meetings, whose objective was to cleanse Christian leadership that was known to have association with foreign missions of its imperialist elements. As Chou En-Lai decreed the meetings were meant to conform churches to the new situation. Christian leaders were forced to confess in public that they had committed “sins” of being consciously or unconsciously imperialist and anti-Communist agents and then pledge to serve as instruments of new patriotic education. If a person was not willing to do this public self-denunciation, he would be denounced by somebody else, usually by a close friend or colleague.24 One can imagine the fatal effect of this exercise on the fellowship of the believers and churches and their relationship with sponsoring churches abroad. There were things confessed that were understandable, like paternalistic relations between Chinese Christians and missionaries and the lack of sensitivity of foreign missions to patriotic aspirations of the people. On the other hand, there were many things said due simply to tremendous psychological

---

pressure that did not reflect reality at all. In either case, these denunciation meetings created deep wounds in the hearts of both the accused and the accuser.

In the course of time, however, due to the influence of the TSPM and some pressure from the government, some encouraging signs had developed in the ecumenical relations of churches. Christian denominations in big cities made a decision for joint services or joint use of church facilities. When the government confiscated many church facilities for use as factories, those churches that were allowed to function opened their facilities to other groups. Oftentimes, in some cities, denominations set aside their differences and conducted joint services. In this way, as Verkuyl noted, a sense of unity among the Protestant Christians was strengthened.\(^{25}\) It is usually the case that when people face severe challenges they come together to face the challenges. This is no less true with churches.

Meanwhile, all this created reactions from Western churches, which at times were highly emotional. There was more or less agreement regarding the analysis of the situation, but evaluation differed significantly depending on one’s political and theological outlook.\(^{26}\) Verkuyl’s assessment of the various positions reflects his attitude to the problem. He was not ready to say that the TSPM leaders were traitors of Christ, as some were prone to do, like ex-China Inland Mission missionary Leslie Lyall, who wrote

\(^{25}\) Verkuyl, *Indijl dan Komunisme*, 133.

\(^{26}\) One can only make a general categorization of the reactions to the Chinese churches in the early years of the Communist rule; the situation was much more complicated than any of the reactions could assume. Verkuyl himself does not make a categorization. Although he leans more to one position, his is neither of those he cites. For a general categorization see Philip I. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China’s United Front* (Marykaoli, NY: 1988), 3-16.
that the *Christian Manifesto* was a manifesto of betrayal.\textsuperscript{27} Verkuyl viewed people who appealed for understanding for the movement (TSPM) and for the churches in China as showing more Christian charity than the first group. These people were not uncritical of the movement, but they were trying to understand the motives and the backgrounds of the actions of the TSPM leaders. Due to their desire to save the church from the total destruction by the communist state, particularly at the time of the Korean War, these TSPM leaders felt compelled to help the churches become independent from too paternalistic missions and recognized the more positive elements in the new order than in the old Kuomintang regime. Nevertheless, they did not deny that they were going through tough times, which they hoped would soon be over. For this, Verkuyl suggested, all that churches outside could do was to pray.\textsuperscript{28}


Indonesia: Missions and Nationalism

On the relationship between missions and nationalism in Indonesia, it would be difficult to make generalizations. We need to make initial considerations. We need first to distinguish the relevant periods. During the period of colonial ethical policy in the 19th century until the 1920s, there were already signs of national awakening. In general, missions during this period were of the opinion that, with the ethical policy in place, the Indies would be better off under the Dutch rule. In the 1920s, a group of missionaries emerged who understood and expressed sympathy for the national aspirations of the people and tried to help churches face the challenge. We should also distinguish between individual missionaries in the field and mission bodies in the Netherlands. By the time of the outbreak of the Dutch-Indonesia Revolution of 1945-1949, the majority of the missionaries in the field supported the independence of Indonesia and many of them campaigned against Dutch re-occupation. But this is not the case with the mission bodies in the Netherlands, which took the line of the confessional political parties closely associated with them. All the political parties were against the independence of Indonesia.

There are many other factors that contributed to the rise of nationalism in Indonesia, but the involvement of Christians and the eventual support of missionaries helped in preventing the country from becoming officially Islamic or Communist, and in

---


30 Ngelow, Kekristenan dan Nasionalisme, 51.
securing for Christianity an influential, though minority, position. Even today, one can still hear the usual unflattering comments regarding the association of colonialism and Christianity in Indonesia. Such comments cannot be dismissed easily, but they are not completely true either. Here we shall analyze from Verkuyl’s perspective the development of nationalism from the time of the ethical colonial policy in the 19th century, through the winds of change in the colonies, to the eventual recognition and support of the change by missions in the 20th century. The value of this presentation will be apparent when seen in contrast to China. Whereas in China, improper relations between missions and colonialism have created a difficult situation for the churches under the communist rule, in Indonesia, the support of missions and churches to nationalist movements and their role in nation-building have spared the country from becoming an anti-Christian state, thus saving Christianity from certain difficulties. While it is true that there have been restrictions and persecutions of Christians in Indonesia, with Pancasila, such things are not a matter of state policies, unlike in China.

The Inconsistencies of Ethical Colonial Policy

In the 19th century, there emerged an ethical consciousness in the minds of European thinkers with respect to the treatment of the colonies. It originated in England and the names of W. Pitt, E. Burke, T. Macaulay, T. Munro, and the missionary A. Duff are always associated with the development of ethical colonial policy. For them, the aim of colonial rule should not be limited to the economic interests of the “mother” country,
but the colonies should be developed by means ranging from trusteeship and mandate to granting complete independence. They all denounced colonial despotism and agreed that the colonial rule needed to do better than had been. The idea reached the Netherlands, and some of the key ARP leaders were among the early proponents of ethical colonial policy. G. Groen van Prinsterer and A. Kuyper, founders of ARP, were influenced by E. Burke. Others like L. W. C. Keuchenuis, M. van Openhemert, E. van Souterwoude, and A. F. de Savorin Lohman protested against exploitation of the colonies, particularly the practice of *cultuurstelsel* (forced cultivation begun in 1830). In the following century critical voices helped punctuate a sense of moral obligation to the colonies. Most notable was E. D. Dekker (pseudonym Multatuli), who wrote *Max Havelaar*, a best seller denouncing Dutch paternalistic practices. C. T. van de Putte and J. H. Abendanon’s "Een Eereschuld" (A debt of honor) and P. Bronshoofst’s "De Ethische Koers in de Koloniale Politiek" (The ethical trend in colonial policy) stirred up the conscience.\(^{32}\)

Taking a closer look at Dutch ethical policy, Verkuyl noted that Kuyper affirmed the principle of moral obligation towards the colonies. The ARP leader declares in *Ons Program* (1878) that exploitation, whether by the state or by private enterprise, must give way to a policy of moral responsibility, which would mean teaching the natives in moral principles, governing them to their best advantage, and preparing them for autonomy. Kuyper made clear that the Indies were not a possession of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, but that they were its responsibility. This responsibility was to be defined in terms of guardianship, with the aim of assisting them on the way to emancipation and independence. With this view, Kuyper tried to rationalize state control of private capital.

\(^{32}\) Verkuyl, *Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme*, 30-33; *Spanning tussen westers imperialisme*, 176-179.
that tended to create monopolies. He expressed his vehement opposition to the programs of the conservatives and liberals in the government. Both groups were basically exploitative of the colonies, the difference being that the first wished state control of the exploitation for the benefit of the Dutch Kingdom, while the second let private capital freely do the business.\footnote{Kuyper, \textit{Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme}, pp. 35-37; \textit{Spanning tussen westers imperialisme}, 181-182. Cf. McKendree R. Langley, "Emancipation and Apologetics: The Formation of Abraham Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands, 1872-1880" (Ph.D diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1995), 138-143.}

Kuyper also laid down his principles with respect to religion. He believed that the colonial power had no missionary duty, except to insure a situation in which the missionary work may be done unhindered. For him, the state cannot enforce the practice of religion based on a certain institutionalized theocratic vision, but has the obligation to remove obstacles to the growth of the gospel and to provide subsidies for the social services conducted by the missions or the natives. For their part, missions, Kuyper believed, belonged to churches, not interest groups of individuals, and must aim to establish independent churches that, in their dependence on God, develop themselves to be independent of the mother churches. In this way, Kuyper, Kuyper believed, had given an important encouragement and prospect in determining the position of independent churches in the anticipated independent nation.\footnote{Kuyper, \textit{Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme}, 37-38; \textit{Spanning tussen westers imperialisme}, 183-184.}

It is clear from Kuyper that part of the ethical policy is the idea of independence or emancipation from colonial rule. Nationalism, by implication, is not incompatible with the ethical policy. It is with respect to nationalism, however, that certain
inconsistencies in the implementation of ethical policy became apparent. Verkuyl noted that in the Kuyper-Idenburg correspondence it was clear that the aim of independence for the Indies as a principle in ethical colonial policy was shelved. The attitude shown in the letters assumed a popular mind-set that, without the colonies, the Netherlands would lose its esteem and influence in the community of nations—since colonies served as a sort of status symbol for the European powers. What impressed Verkuyl in the correspondence was that the (Dutch) nationalistic character of Kuyper prevailed more than the principles he espoused. Furthermore, the ambiguous understanding given to the concept “guardianship,” because of its vagueness, became a hollow concept that might lead to paternalistic and despotic interpretations. Many questions remained unanswered, such as regarding the duration of guardianship and the criteria to determine whether guardianship had already completed its course.  

Thus, while it is officially provided in the ARP program of government, the independence of the colonies was never taken seriously. This is evident in the governor-generalship of A. W. F. Idenburg. A close associate of Kuyper, Idenburg was a key player in the implementation of the ethical policy. During his term in the Indies, government services were indeed intensified and expanded in three areas: education, irrigation, and immigration. He was responsible for the imposition of Pax Neerlandica, a pacification program, following the conquest of the outer islands, which intended to bring the whole archipelago under one administrative control. Pacification aims may be incompatible with independence aspirations and the reason why Idenburg had no

---

35 Verkuyl, Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme, 39-40; Spanning tussen westers imperialisme, 184.
sympathy for nationalist groups. As long as these did not aspire for independence, he would show more understanding of national awakening than most of the European elite in the colony did, who thought that nationalist groups and organizations were nothing but purveyors of anarchy and chaos. Thus, Idenburg showed a more hard-line stance towards nationalist groups like Indische Partij, which was working towards independence, than towards the moderate ones like Sarekat Islam.\textsuperscript{36}

Hendrik Colijn was another significant figure during the period of ethical colonial policy. Although never appointed governor-general to the Indies, he had much influence in the archipelago, being twice prime minister of the Netherlands (1925-26, 1933-36). He was minister of defense (1911-13) and eventually took over from Kuyper the ARP leadership. He had lived in the Indies as a businessman and as an adjutant to Governor-general Van Heutsz (1904-09). Like Idenburg who succeeded Van Heutsz, Colijn’s task as adjutant was to execute the requirements of \textit{Pax Neerlandica}. This he did by compelling native rulers to sign what was called \textit{korte en/of lange verklaring} so that they came under the central authority of Dutch government. As prime minister, he expanded social services in the Indies, but did nothing to oppose heavy sanctions on erring contract laborers or lighten taxes on oil exports. In this, he was no different from Idenburg.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36} Verkuyl, \textit{Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme}, 41-46, 48; \textit{Spanning tussen westers imperialisme}, 185-188, 190. Some of the important movements during the period: \textit{Boedi Oetomo} (1908) was a Javanese cultural revival movement, \textit{Sarekat Islam} (1912) was initially a group to protect the interests of the Muslim batik traders against the Chinese and later became a movement to promote Islamic consciousness in society, and the \textit{Indische Partij} (1911), led by Indo-European E. F. E. Dekker (a relative of E. D. Dekker or Mutatuli) and Tjipto Mangunkusumo and Süwardi Surjaningrat, promoted nationalism and called for independence.

\textsuperscript{37} Verkuyl, \textit{Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme}, 49, 55-56; \textit{Spanning tussen westers imperialisme}, 190-195; \textit{Gedenken en verwachten}, 75-76.
Under the influence of Van Heutsz and F. C. Gerretson, Colijn’s program for the colonies veered fundamentally from what Kuyper laid out in the *Ons Program* of 1878. Article XX of the ARP principles of 1938 marked the change. Colijn explained the change in his book, *Saevis tranquillus in undis*, which is based on his earlier article, “Koloniale vraagstukken van heden en morgen” (1928). Reversing Kuyper’s view, Colijn thought that overseas territories were a part of or possessions of the indivisible kingdom of the Netherlands. He did not believe that the Indies would ever become one nation given the multiplicity of different ethnic groups. It comes as no surprise then that he looked with contempt on the nationalist movements as rag-tag bands, which were no match to the firmly rooted Dutch power. He denied the idea of guardianship, especially if it implied a certain timetable. Instead, the Indies would remain a satellite country or a protectorate of the kingdom of the Netherlands. In order to achieve this program, he proposed two changes in colonial administration: to trivialize Volksraad (a representative forum formed in 1918) or, if at all possible, abolish it, and in its place, decentralize state government by setting up administration led by local rulers, all under Dutch authority. Verkuyl interpreted Colijn’s trivialization of the Volksraad as an effort to abort that body from becoming a full representative parliament, while decentralization of government was nothing more than the old tactic of ‘*devide et impera,*’ intended to keep the monopoly of power by the ‘*moederland*’ and the governor-general.\(^{38}\)

It cannot be denied that the ethical policy, together with *Pax Neerlandica*, brought more widespread social benefits in the colony. Aside from this, missionary expansion in

\(^{38}\) Verkuyl, *Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme*, 50-54; *Spanning tussen westers imperialisme*, 191-192; *Gedenken en verwachten*, 76-77.
the outer islands took place without much difficulty. But the economic structure was unchanged; it remained an economy of plunder, which benefited the Dutch, their privileged collaborators, and a few Chinese. Such economy subsisted on cheap labor. Idenburg himself realized the ambivalence of the implementation of the ethical policy, as reflected in his letters to Kuyper. He had a profound sense that, after the period of cultuurstelsel, a new direction of colonialism must introduce changes in economic and political structures, or risk irreversibly losing the trust of the Javanese. Moreover, as we have noted, there were never serious initiatives to implement the independence aim of the ethical policy; the idea of guardianship and trusteeship was a camouflage to extend colonial rule indefinitely. Every effort to realize the nationalist aspirations of the people was severely undercut. For Verkuyl, Idenburg and Colijn and the whole generation they represented were “full of the spirit of economic and ethical imperialism that did not understand enough that ethical imperialism contained in itself contradictions that could only be obliterated by removing colonialism itself.”

Colonialism: Ignoring the Winds of Change

In spite of the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the practice of ethical policy, Verkuyl believed that the moral ideas formulated by European thinkers laid down the

---

39 Ngelow, Kekristenan dan Nasionalisme, 40-42.

groundwork for the ethical policy that started the trend towards political, cultural, and economic self-expression within the colonies. In some ways, the ethical policy started winds of change that fanned the nationalist spirit. The liberal and humanistic spirit of the West made its way in the colonies. Better and more opportunities for higher education produced the intelligentsia that eventually led nationalist movements. Both academic and ecclesiastical contacts with nationals from other colonies made this group aware of the political aspirations in those colonies. They were aware of the independence movements in neighboring lands of China, India, and the Philippines as well as on the continents of Africa and Latin America. Developments in international jurisprudence strengthened the nationalist resolve. For instance, the Atlantic Charter of 1941 states that the governments of the United States of America and the United Kingdom “respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.”

All these made the colony more aware of their unfair situation and gave them courage to participate in the emergence of a new world by freeing their own people from the aging colonial order.

Unfortunately, the Dutch government ignored or resisted the winds of change, which developed into tropical storms that eventually blew the colonial structure away. Verkuyl analyzed the background of the Indonesian problem, which was the tragic impasse between the newly proclaimed Republic and the returning Dutch colonial rule following the capitulation of the Japanese in 1945. In his article “De achtergrond van het Indonesische vraagstuk” (1946), the period of 1935-1942 was the period of resistance to

---

the winds of change, during which all petitions for reforms by national leaders were rejected by the Dutch government, creating an unbridgeable chasm between representatives of the Dutch government and Indonesian national movement. The rejected petitions sponsored by Sutardjo (1936), Wiwoho (1940), and Thamrin (1941), among others, have been cited in chapter three. By the time Queen Wilhelmina announced on December 6, 1942, her intentions regarding post-war relations with the colonies, Indonesian nationalist moderates were already too sceptical and frustrated with the Dutch to take them seriously. The nationalist moderates like those from GAPI (a federation of Indonesian political parties) insisted that, unless there was concrete legislation from the Dutch government for the implementation of the royal intentions, nobody would believe in any proposal for a commonwealth or federation. Some of them, like R. A. A. Soejono, expressed fears that failure to materialize a federation might lead to more radical options that would want to sever any ties with the Dutch. Verkuyl regretted that these moderate voices were not heard. He summarizes his view of that frustrating period:

In those years it was clear that the colonial phase, even the ethical colonial policy, was no longer appropriate with the times, that a new age had broken through, an age in which relationship between the Dutch and the Indies could no longer be based on one power imposing itself on another, but rather on voluntary mutual cooperation and cultural relations. But it was the weakness of those decisive years that the government leaders (and many political parties\textsuperscript{42}) had no ability, will, and creativity needed to find, in cooperation with the nationalist leaders, political forms in which the new age can be realized. That this would bring disaster had already been predicted, but nobody listened to the warning signs.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42} Verkuyl meant political parties in the Netherlands, not Indonesian political parties.
\textsuperscript{43} Verkuyl, \textit{Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme}, 61-62. "Di dalam tahun-tahun itu menjadi sangat jelas bahwa fase penjajahan sudah lama tidak sesuai lagi dengan zaman, tetapi juga sudah jelas bahwa fase etis-[J]atriarchal sedang dalam perjalanan menjadi tidak sesuai dengan zaman, dan bahwa suatu fase yang baruupun sedang meretas jalannya, fase yang di dalamnya hubungan Belanda dan Hindia tidak lagi didasarkan pada pelaksanaan kekuasaan satu pihak ke atas pihak yang lain, melainkan didasarkan pada kerjasama sukarela dan hubungan kebudayaan. Tetapi adalah kekurangan yang besar di dalam tahun-tahun
The mistrust and frustrations in the years before the Second World War explain the tragedy of the Dutch-Indonesian Revolution of 1945-1949. When the Dutch tried to negotiate for some sort of relations with the newly proclaimed Republic of Indonesia following the capitulation of the Japanese, it was already too late. Verkuyl and others who understood and had sympathy for the nationalist cause thought that the Dutch had missed an important opportunity. For Verkuyl, the Indonesian Republic was a fact to be accepted and the conflict between the Republic and the Netherlands signaled the need to participate in the ministry of reconciliation, in what he called *missio politica oecumenica.*

*Missions: Proclaiming the Good News of National Self-Expression*

In this period of the politics of emancipation and increasing national self-expression, Christian missions performed an important prophetic and priestly role. In the 1920s, a new breed of missionaries emerged who were sensitive of and eventually supported the nationalist aspirations in their fields. Among these missionaries, the most prominent was H. Kraemer. A member of Hervormd mission, he influenced a generation of missionaries in the matter of relating missions and nationalism, including the more conservative Gereformeerde, of which Verkuyl was a member. Kraemer no doubt is a

---


major figure in the history of missions and to describe even one aspect of his entire career would require lengthy study. He had significant and groundbreaking contributions in Indonesia. His areas of expertise were history of religions and linguistics. Verkuyl was attracted to Kraemer because of the way he integrated faith and obedience, missiology and missionary practice, and ecumenical insight and ecumenical conduct.46

One of Kraemer’s groundbreaking contributions is the message to missions that irreversible winds of change had come in the colony and that it would be for the future benefit of Christianity if they encouraged and supported Christians to participate in the mainstream national movement. Verkuyl described Kraemer’s supposed position of missionaries as that of prophetic criticism and priestly service. By prophetic criticism, Kraemer “exposed the underlying motives of imperialism, namely, the urge to use other peoples for the sake of the great colonial powers.”47 Kraemer particularly chastised De Kat Angelino and his allies for misunderstanding the power and the right of nationalism, as well as failing to realize that there were many nationalist leaders who at the beginning cooperated with the Dutch-Indies government, but later became non-cooperators because


47 Verkuyl, Contemporary Missiology, 46.
they did not achieve any progress in their struggle for reforms.\textsuperscript{48} De Kat Angelino, a brilliant paternalistic apologist of ethical colonial politics, advanced an idea that synthesis of East and West would only be possible through the expert leadership and effective service of the Westerners to the Eastern natives. For Kraemer, it should be the other way around, although he was not unaware and uncritical of some contradictory aspects of the nationalist groups. Verkuyl was impressed by Kramer's clarity on the issue, which since the start of the ethical policy had been expressed with ambiguity and hesitation. For Kramer, colonial authority must recognize and steadfastly adhere to the avowed goal of independence, which meant that it "must give elbow room to those forces and people who eventually would sit in positions of responsibility after independence had come."\textsuperscript{49} By implication, missionaries must also resist all colonial tendencies to perpetually subjugate peoples.

Verkuyl understood Kraemer's idea of priestly service to be the positive contribution of missions in the drive for national self-expression. For Kraemer, it was the duty of missionaries to show critical solidarity and support for national self-expression in all areas of national life: politics, social, cultural, and spiritual aspects. He showed deep interest and sympathetic understanding of the earlier cultural and religious movements like Boedi Oetomo, Sarekat Islam, Taman Siswa, among others. He offered his service at times when the colonial government tried to improve the situation of the natives. He took part in the Round Table Conference of 1949 that eventually recognized the Indonesian


Republic. Above all, he made efforts to prepare the Indonesian churches to become independent for their mission in the coming independent nation.50

Verkuyl made clear that Kraemer had no romantic notions of nationalism and nationalist groups. Kraemer knew the depravity of the human heart, recognizing that nationalist leaders like Sukarno could be as abusive and opportunistic as any colonial master. Nevertheless, this reality did not lead him to cynicism or defeatism and realized at the same time that two-sided calling of prophetic criticism and priestly service was as much needed in the coming new dispensation as in the old. The reason Kraemer gave for his abiding faith and hope was that this calling was founded in the kingdom of God and that the church should be loyal and obedient to the Lord and his kingdom.51

It would be misleading, however, if Kramer were thought to be the only player among missionaries for the struggle against colonialism. There were others who played significant roles in their own ways. E. A. A. Vreede, with his dissertation on "Nationalisme als zedelijk probleem," (Nationalism as a Moral Problem) provided a biblical perspective of nationalism and colonialism. During the years 1935-1937, H. Bergema wrote a series of articles in Anti-Revolutionaire Staatkunde, in which he


51 Verkuyl, Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme, 67; Spanning tussen westers imperialisme, 203. For more of Kraemer’s assessment of colonialism and nationalism see, ‘The Missionary Implications of the End of Western Colonialism and the Collapse of Western Christendom,’ The Student World 53 (1960): 193-206, in which he warns of colonialism, be it Western or Eastern, in different forms, but especially economic colonialism. He also warns of nationalism that is religiously-based in a review of E. A. A. Vreede, Het nationalsme als zedelijk vraagstuk (Amsterdam, 1932), in De Opwekker 77, 78 (1932): 388-340; also in The Christian Message in Non-Christian World (New York: IMC, 1947), 29, 30, 46, 242. Cf. Jongeneel, “Christianity and the –isms,” 34, 35, in which Jongeneel concludes that Kraemer’s “biblical realism has not allowed him to give ultimate authority to the awakening of nationalism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (versus imperialism and colonialism) and that in the post-colonial period the Third World churches in general and the Asian churches in particular should be aware not only of the danger of syncretism but also of the danger of ‘ideologizing’ the gospel at a national level.”
depicted a balanced and yet sympathetic picture for de-colonization. He appreciated the many welfare services during the ethical policy period, but pointed out that the sons and daughters of Indonesia wished to handle these services and lead in the affairs of their country. This wish must be understood by the colonial power. Another example, C. L. Van Doorn, not only showed sympathy for anti-colonial nationalism even before Kraemer did, but he had gone so far as to propose concrete suggestions for transfer of responsibility. These were published in a series of articles in *Eltheto* in 1934 and 1935 with title “Overdracht van de Verantwoordelijkheid.” Other missionaries sympathetic to the nationalist cause were F. L. Bakker, A. Pos, J. H. Bavinck, N. Adriani, the father and son Kruyt, and B. Schuurman.52

Did these missionaries, having nationalist sympathies, take part in organized politics in Indonesia and join political parties? There was indeed a Christian party, Christelijke Ethische Partij (CEP), which later became Christelijke Staatkundige Partij (CSP) during the colonial ethical period in Indonesia. Some missionaries were members of this party, but most were not. Verkuyl gave two reasons for the insignificant influence of CEP/CSP. In the first place, Kraemer, who believed that missionaries may not join any political party in a colonial situation, influenced many of them. Their position, Kraemer suggested, should be supra-national, as is the kingdom of God, which does not mean a-national or anti-national. He did encourage the formation of a post-colonial Indonesian Christian party like Partai Kristen Indonesia (PARKINDO), although he

---

himself belonged to a non-confessional party in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{53} Kraemer's negative attitude towards partisan politics was also, to a large extent, related to the character of CEP/CSP itself, which brings us to the second reason.

In the second place, CEP/CSP, Verkuyl noted, was afflicted with self-destructive ambivalence, with the conservative Right being more dominant. The majority of its membership was orientated towards the Dutch-kingdom perspective, with Indonesia as part of the kingdom, and only a minority towards Indonesian independence. Rather than the original Kuyperian principle, the predominant Colijn line and strong paternalism among members made CEP/CSP very unpopular to both missionaries and Christian nationalists. Furthermore, this same party opposed Soetardjo petition of 1936, which triggered more radical nationalist sentiments. Some Indonesian Christians remained members of the party, like T. S. G. Mulia, who was for some time vice-chair of Volksraad. But with encouragement from missionaries like Kraemer, these Indonesian Christians formed Christian PARKINDO, which had clear nationalist platform.\textsuperscript{54}

At this point, a brief note on the role and attitude of the Indonesian churches during the period of ethical policy is in order. Verkuyl noted that one does not deal only with political colonialism, but ecclesiastical colonialism as well. The break with ecclesiastical colonialism happened with the enthusiastic cooperation of missions, even before the political break had occurred.\textsuperscript{55} Kraemer played a key role in this regard. Since


\textsuperscript{54} Verkuyl, \textit{Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme}, 72-75; \textit{Spanning tussen westers imperialisme}, 207-209.

\textsuperscript{55} Verkuyl, \textit{Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme}, 76-77; \textit{Spanning tussen westers imperialisme}, 209-210. For a critique of this supposed enthusiastic support of missions for ecclesiastical independence, see J. A. Aritonang, "Introduction," to \textit{Ketegangan Antara Imperialisme}, 10, in which he says that except...
the 1920s, churches had been becoming independent in a number of areas in Indonesia.

In 1947, the Kwitang Conference was held, representing both Western missions and
Indonesian churches. This conference presupposed a post-colonial situation and mapped
out relations between independent churches and missions in an anticipated independent
country. For Verkuyl, this period of Indonesian church history prior to national
independence was significant, for churches, being now independent of Western missions,
felt free to support the national independence movement, which they did after the Second
World War. This ecclesiastical independence was also decisive in the missionaries’
attitude towards nationalism and the independence of Indonesia, for if they had to respect
national ecclesiastical independence, it would only be logical to accept the nationalist
aspirations of their people. For them, an independent nation, rather than a colony, was
more compatible with ecclesiastical independence.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{South Africa: Dutch Reformed Churches and Apartheid}

South Africa presents yet another case regarding churches’ relationship to a
national problem. The Dutch Reformed churches (DRCs), in particular, were a part of
the problem, having supported apartheid. But they were also part of the solution, for they
held in their hands a key to its abolition. The case of South Africa is different from China
and Indonesia. Whereas in China and Indonesia, the churches faced imperialism in the

\textsuperscript{56} Verkuyl, \textit{Ke tegangan Antara Imperialisme}, 75-77; \textit{Spanning tussen westers imperialisme},
209-211. For the relationship between ecclesiastical independence and political independence, see Ngelow,
form of colonialism, in South Africa, there was the additional issue of the DRCs, which were closely allied with the government and embodied the imperialistic reality with which the rest of society had to contend.

A great deal of literature has been written on church and racial relations in South Africa, covering almost every possible aspect of the problem and approaching it from different perspectives. Here we shall look at the problem of apartheid from a missiological perspective, examining how it distorts the gospel of reconciliation and disrupts the essential unity of the church. We shall see how the DRCs embodied apartheid in their legitimation of it and in their resistance to its abolition. We shall also look at Verkuyl’s campaign to have the DRCs become part of the process of dismantling apartheid, due to their political influence and dwindling support for apartheid within their ranks.

_A Christian Legitimation of Racial Segregation_

One of the aspects of apartheid is its Christian legitimation, a fact that makes it all the more repugnant to many Christians and on which Verkuyl was concerned. As he puts it,

...what I am interested in is the theological-ethical dimensions of the race question, and I want therefore to concentrate on the fact that in the background of

---

the politics of apartheid lies an ideology which, though whitewashed with the phrase "Christian-national," is not only in treacherous tension with the Gospel, but contradicts wholesale the message of the Bible on race relations. \(^{58}\)

Thus, Verkuyl traced the "Christian" origins of the idea of racial segregation. From the beginning, the Afrikaner Brotherhood (Broederbond, organized in 1919) and its National Party (formed in 1948), which institutionalized separate development, saw themselves as having a mission to build a nation incarnating the Western-Christian culture to which God has given, by divine commission, a dominating role to play in history. This sense of divine mission dominated the speeches of political leaders. For instance, H. Verwoerd, one time prime minister of South Africa and architect of apartheid, declared, "For what purpose and reason should whites have been led (by God) to the Southern region of Africa 300 years ago? ...The purpose is this, that we should form the bulwark for Western civilization in Africa." \(^{59}\) This civilization limited to the whites was one side of the project and it was.

The other aspect was a separate indigenous "development" for the non-white sector of the population (eiesoortige ontwikkeling), which was to be carried out through guardianship by the whites and whose real intention, according to Verkuyl, was the creation of a racial caste system. \(^{60}\) What is striking about the whole apartheid project was the divine legitimation given to it. For instance, regarding Verwoerd, Verkuyl comments, "Everywhere in his speeches one finds this pseudo-dogma of white supremacy and this

---

\(^{58}\) Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 97; cf. Breek de muren af, 97-98; Runtuhan Tembok, 115.

\(^{59}\) Cited in Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 104-105; cf. Breek de muren af, 101-102; Runtuhan Tembok, 120; "The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid," 295.

smug faith that the maintenance of a white monopolistic superstructure is a divine
calling.” 61 If one looks at the vision that guided the Broederbond, one is struck by how
the ideology and nationalism always tend to control its avowedly Christian dimensions,
rather than the other way around. The Christian-national ideology, when truly exposed,
was none other than white supremacy that is precisely calculated to prevent other races
from taking significant roles in the life of the nation. 62

Die Ossewabrandwag (formed 1939) was even more notorious, and was closely
associated with the Broederbond. This organization had Nazi sympathies and was
opposed to any resistance against Hitler. It is a fact that Die Ossewabrandwag was the
semi-military arm of the Broederbond. It, too, sported some Christian-national insignia.
From the document of 1944, described as the Basic Principle adopted by the Great
Council of the Ossewabrandwag, reveals an explicit national-socialistic ideology that
claims to be Christian, and requires participation of churches. Among other things, it
declares that

Non-whites will be restricted to non-white areas, for the advance of racial purity
and the racially pure development of all segments of the society ...

Afrikaner-hood accepts its responsibility to lead the “Christian-national
development” of South Africa in association with those Western Cultural Forces
and the related white peoples whose interests are parallel to our own, particularly
in the New Europe!

61 Verkuyl, “The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid,” 295; cf. Break Down the Walls, 105;
Runtuken Tembok, 120.
62 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, pp. 98, 105; Runtuken Tembok, 116, 120. For studies on the
Broederbond and its Christian legitimation, see Cecil Mzingisi Ngcokovane, “Religious and Moral
Legitimations of Apartheid in Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, Nationalist Party, and Broederbond”
(Ph.D diss., Emory University, 1986); Charles Bloomberg, Christian-Nationalism and the Rise of the
related interest is J. Alton Templin, Ideology on a Frontier: The Theological Foundation of Afrikaner
The Christian-national development of our own people, and of both the colored and naturals [blacks] who live within our borders, shall be secured in full cooperation with recognized Christian churches, by outlawing all provocative propaganda, racial mixing and race hatred, by control of all the propaganda media, and by a thorough reforming of the schools along Christian-national lines, for all segments of the population.\textsuperscript{63}

Not all members of the Broederbond and the National Party were adherents of German National Socialism, but it cannot be denied that Ossewabrandwag’s ideology was Nazistic, as in the above declarations, and played a definite role in South African society.\textsuperscript{64}

The apartheid system rested on a pseudo-Christian ideology which identified separate development with the will of God and so was given a sort of biblical and theological justification by the churches. In this matter, the Dutch Reformed churches (DRCs)\textsuperscript{65} willingly participated. In 1950, the DRCs held a consultation and issued the following declaration:

God has willed races and nations to live separate from one another, each with its own language, with its own culture, etc., and for this reason the segregation of races within the life of the Christian Church as well as public life which leaves the races intact is not only permissible, but is a Christian duty.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{63} Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 101; Breek de muren af, 100.

\textsuperscript{64} Verkuyl, “The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid,” 293; Break Down the Walls, 102; Breek de muren af, 100-101; Runtuhan Tembok, 118. Cf. Sipo E. Mzimela, Apartheid: South African Nazism (New York: NY: Vantage Press, 1983).

\textsuperscript{65} This refers to the three major Dutch Reformed churches in South Africa: Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK), Nederduits Hervormde Kerk (NHK) and Gereformeerde Kerk of South Africa (GKSA). None of them at that time affiliated with the South African Council of Churches.

This declaration encouraged much theological reflection along this line. Certain theologians emphasized the differences of the races more than the unity of the human race, reconciliation in Christ, and restoration of the human fellowship. The story of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11 was interpreted as the basis for the division of the people into separated communities. Paul’s speech to the Athenians, which carries the statement that God “defined the borders of their habitation” (Acts 17:26), was another passage read through the spectacles of apartheid. There were also biblical justifications for specific aspects of apartheid, s when Genesis 13 is cited as biblical precedence for territorial apartheid. 67 Another example given by Verkuyl is a paper written by J. H. Coetzee entitled “The South African Concept of Homeland in the Context of Separate Development.” Verkuyl notes, “Coetzee uses semantics to locate the origin of the word gebied (territory) in the word gebod (commandment), and uses this semantic oddity to argue that separate reservations are really a response to a divine calling.” 68 Verkuyl refutes this racist reading of the Bible.

Apartheid and Ecumenical Relations

It would be inaccurate to say, however, that the DRCs simply provided theological justification for apartheid. They were also critical of some of its practices, one of which is the migratory labor, described as one of the most inhuman practices of apartheid. Thousands of Bantus (native Africans) worked in the cities and lived separate

---

67 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 106-107, 110; Runtuikan Tembok, 121-122, 125; “The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid,” 296-297.

68 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 111; cf. Runtuikan Tembok, 126.
from their families, who were kept in the reservations. The unacceptable moral and social problems this policy created are well documented, and need not be mentioned here. DRCs protested this practice, which for Verkuyl was commendable. But for him, the protest did not make sense unless the whole system of apartheid was dismantled. The problem with selective criticism, according to Verkuyl, is that any protest or criticism against any of the practices of apartheid could be ignored and were in fact ignored because the whole system of apartheid was assumed fundamentally. He says, “Protests against the inevitable evil effects of the system are futile unless they are part of a protest against the entire apartheid system, of which migratory labor is only one of the most scandalous and tragic symptoms.”

Another criticism made by a group led by Hugo du Plessis is that the policy of separate development was not being implemented consistently enough and its practical implications were not being accepted. This group, like the National Party, advocated complete and consistent separation to establish several independent states and separate economies. But unlike the National Party, Du Plessis and company were impatient with the slow development or lack of development of the other groups and thought therefore that the entire system of apartheid should be scrapped.

The different views and oftentimes conflicting reactions to apartheid in South Africa not only polarized society, it severely divided the churches as well. The three

---

69 Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls*, 121; *Runtuhkan Tembok*, 135. Compare this to Verkuyl’s view of ethical colonial policy in Indonesia, that cosmetic reforms here and there were meaningless unless the whole colonial rule was removed.

70 Verkuyl, *Break Down the Walls*, 127; *Breek de muren af*, 107; *Runtuhkan Tembok*, 141.
DRCs consistently rejected declarations critical of the system of apartheid. The Cottesloe Consultation of December 1960, held under the auspices of the WCC following the Sharpeville massacre, resulted in the resignation of memberships of NGK and GKN from the WCC. Although the statement issued by Cottesloe was moderate, in that it only demands remedies and declares the unjustifiability of certain practices of apartheid without attacking the system itself, the three Dutch synods rejected it. The Reformed Ecumenical Synod (now Reformed Ecumenical Council) of 1968 in Lunteren, in which Verkuyl participated, has been discussed at length in chapter 4. There is no need to repeat what has been said, except to note the controversy with regards to the two reports. The minority report, which Verkuyl helped draft, condemned apartheid explicitly, while the majority, implicitly. The majority report, however, was maliciously interpreted in public as a victory for apartheid. In the same year, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) issued the “A Message to the People of South Africa,” in which it sets the Christian gospel in conflict with the pseudo-Christian apartheid. The WCC supported it, while South African churches were aloof in the face of state intimidation. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches’ (WARC) meeting in Kenya in 1970 expressed concern over the GKSA support of apartheid. GKSA was the only one from

---

71 Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 128-146; Breek de muren af, 107-130; Runtuikan Tembok, 142-152. Cf. “The Pastoral Letter of the Roman Catholic Bishops of 1952,” in Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 128.

72 See Leslie Hewson, ed., Cottesloe Consultation. The Report of the Consultation among South African Member Churches of the WCC, December 7-14, 1960 at Cottesloe, Johannesburg [no publication information].


among the three Dutch churches that retained membership in WARC. The GKSA
delelges expressed fear regarding the report, but agreed that WARC hold consultation,
which the GKSA moderator J. S. Gereicke opposed on the ground that WARC and the
DRCs were clearly in disagreement on the issue.

_Dutch Churches: Key to Abolition of Apartheid_

At the time Verkuyl was writing in early 1970s, apartheid was still well
entrenched in South Africa. Thus, here we are not looking at history, but Verkuyl’s
proposed scenario of how apartheid could be dismantled. Basically, he encouraged anti-
apartheid churches and ecumenical bodies to give up on the DRCs, advising that the
dialogue with them must be pursued to the end. He was convinced that it would be
wrong to write off the NGK in particular. In spite of their collaboration with the
apartheid government and heretical justification of the apartheid, the DRCs held
considerable political clout that could tilt the balance in the struggle against apartheid.
With James Baldwin, an African American novelist, Verkuyl believed that the NGK in
particular had in their “hands the keys which would open the doors of structural change
in that country. If this church changes, the basis of the practice of apartheid will fall
away and work can begin on the road which will lead to the building of a society in
which all groups participate in the central exercise of power.”

Not only the political significance of the DRCs should be considered, but as
Verkuyl observed, there were encouraging signs in these churches that favored dialogue
and working with them. Not all DRC theologians and church leaders agreed with the

---

75 Verkuyl, “The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid,” 300.
official position of their churches. There was a growing insurgency among ecclesiastical leaders. Not only those who had been banned, like Beyers Naude, but clergymen in still “good standing” were beginning to question the system. The executive committee of the synod of the NGK formed a commission composed of conservatives and progressives to prepare a report on the principles and attitudes of the white NGK respecting racial matters. This decision, Verkuyl comments, pointed to new stirrings within the old static point of view. When J. D. Vorster, moderator of NGK, announced that on scriptural grounds his church would not “budge an inch” from its position on apartheid, many influential theologians from the same church were outraged and raised voices of protest. The shame and embarrassment caused by the bigotry and abuse shown by some church leaders served only to awaken the conscience of other fellow leaders that apartheid must be eradicated. This was the case in December 1970 when a German guest, along with his black colleague, was requested to leave a church service. The NGK showed signs of shaking from within on its position on apartheid and Verkuyl saw this as an opportunity to deal with its leadership. For him it was not time to deepen the divide but to reach out, for only in unity could churches strike a fatal blow to apartheid.

Furthermore, the so-called daughter churches were beginning to assume a much more independent stance vis-à-vis the “mother church,” as is shown in the gathering of the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC), which adopted all the anti-

---

76 Cf. Willem Saayman, “Rebels and Prophets: Afrikaners Against the System,” in Resistance and Hope, ed. C. Villa-Vicencio and J. W. DeGruchy (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1985). This is an interesting analysis of different groups in South Africa and their religious and political temperaments, concluding rather pessimistically that the emerging alliance at the time would not realize Beyer Naude’s hopes announced in 1977 that the Afrikaner rebels would confront and decisively change the apartheid system, 58-59.

77 Verkuyl, “The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid,” 297-299.
apartheid resolutions of the 1968 Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Moreover, although
directed paternalistically and financially, the influential so-called separatist independent
churches were showing greater unity, to the consternation of the mother churches.\textsuperscript{78}

For all these developments, Verkuyl insisted that dialogue with the DRCs must
continue. He recognized the necessity of a multiple approach to awaken public
conscience and press for change;\textsuperscript{79} on the floor of the UN General Assembly, by
boycotting South African teams, through the forum gatherings of Organization of African
Unity (OAU), All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC),\textsuperscript{80} and the WCC,\textsuperscript{81} and efforts
by organizations like the Institute for Race Relations (formed 1922), Christian Institute of
South Africa (established 1963), of which Beyers Naude was the director, the Study
Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPRO-CAS), and University Christian
Movement (UCM), which is associated with World Federation of Christian Students
(WFCS). All of these could contribute to effecting radical transformation of South Africa,

\textsuperscript{78} Verkuyl, "The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid," 298-299.

\textsuperscript{79} Verkuyl, "The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid," 300.

\textsuperscript{80} For political activities of the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), see Verkuyl,
Contemporary Missiology, 251-253; "Geen tweede, ‘Vietnam’," Voorlopig 5, 10 (1973): 289-293 in which
Verkuyl presents and comments on the letter of the AACC from its meetings on April 3-12 1973 to the
churches in Western Europe and the United States of America appealing against the economic and military
involvement of their countries in South Africa. See also related document, "Statement of the Reverend
Canon Burgess Carr, General Secretary, All Africa Conference of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya," at a hearing
before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, Ninety-

\textsuperscript{81} For the actions of the WCC on racism, see Verkuyl, Break Down the Walls, 80-90; Breuk de
muren af, 70-79; Runtukkan Tembok, pp. 84-94; Bestrijding van het racisme en de kerken in Nederland:
Het programma van de wereldraad van kerken (Kampen: J. H Kok, 1972), 34-36, 40-41. See also Ans J.
van der Bent, ed., World Council of Churches `Statements and Actions on Racism 1948-1979 (Geneva:
WCC Programme to Combat Racism, 1980); Pauline Webb, ed., A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the
World Council of Churches in South Africa (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994); Zolile Mbali, The
Churches and Racism: A Black South African Perspective (of the WCC Program to Combat Racism)
but Verkuyl appealed earnestly to all concerned not to abandon talks with the DRCs, “even if only on a basis of ‘hope against hope’.”\textsuperscript{82}

\textit{Conclusion}

The three case studies presented show that there is a link between the political stance of missions and churches to the political situation and the life and mission of the churches. In the case of China, due to the convenience that imperialism brought to missions, the latter became incapable of providing prophetic critique of the imperialistic practice. They failed to prepare the nationalist Christians to build a society founded on Christian principles and values that could have prevented an anti-Christian government assuming power. The result of that supposed political “non-involvement” was devastating to churches and missions. The China case is an argument against a political liaison between missions and an unpopular government, as well as revealing the problem with non-involvement in political ferment. In the case of Indonesia, the support of Christians and missions for nationalism and independence of the country spared it from becoming an Islamic or communist state. Thus, in the Pancasila state of Indonesia, Christianity is one of the official recognized religions and, although a minority, has a strong and influential position in society. In the case of South Africa, churches, especially the Dutch Reformed churches held political power that could dismantle the apartheid structure. At stake here was the recovery of the very gospel of love and

reconciliation that DRCs had distorted in their theological support of apartheid and the
restoration of unity with other churches, which had been disrupted by their sustained
resistance to transformation of society.

While *missio politica oecumenica* may not lead to conversion or numerical church
growth, our case studies show that it may create a favorable situation for the churches and
missions. Both non-involvement and inappropriate relations between churches/missions
and powers-that-be may destroy that possibility. Any political stance does influence the
fate of churches in a certain place. The question is not whether or not to be involved.
The question is what kind of involvement. For this question, our case studies have given
us some clues on which actions to avoid and which to consider.

Having said all this, it is not even the ensuing fate of Christianity that should
motivate missions and churches to participate in *missio politica oecumenica*. The future
of the church is secured by the promised of the Messiah that the gates of hell shall not
prevail against it. Rather, *missio politica oecumenica*’s conscious intention is for sake of
the people and society, not for the churches. This does not mean that churches and
missions can be less serious when a situation requires *missio politica oecumenica*. This
political aspect of mission is a matter of obedience and the glory of kingdom of God
exhibited among all peoples is at stake. All of this motivates the churches to engage the
political realm, and our case studies simply give us some guidance in that engagement.
Whatever positive contribution *missio politica oecumenica* has for mission is to be
considered a gift of God for the churches.
EPILOGUE

This study has examined the relationship between evangelism and socio-political action. The problem that prompted this study is the tension between the ecumenical-conciliar movement and the evangelical movement, especially in the 1960s and 1970s following the political statements from the WCC General Assembly in Uppsala in 1968 and the CWME Conference in Bangkok in 1973. In the perception of the evangelicals, the conciliar movement has marginalized what they believe mission to be, that is, evangelism and church planting. In spite of the healthy interaction that ensued as a result of the tension and some signs of rapprochement in the understanding of mission, the two movements remain as far apart as before and apparently there is no change in the practice of mission from either side.

Our reflection on the question of the relationship between evangelism and church planting and social-political action is drawn from the life and thought of Johannes Verkuyl (1908-2001). He was sent as a missionary to Indonesia by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, a conservative denomination and offshoot of the Afscheiding and Doleantie movements, whose prominent leaders included A. Kuyper and H. Bavinck. As a missionary, he engaged in various missionary activities that included, among other things, evangelism and church planting. But he came to the field at a time when movements for political reforms and independence were beginning to shake the foundations of colonial rule. Mainly influenced by H. Kramer and to some degree by J. H. Bavinck, both of whom he called his gurus, he did not hesitate to side with the aspirations of the people he came to serve and he gave them unflinching support until the
nation became fully independent in 1949. The compatibility of missionary work and political activism in Verkuyl’s life and missiology is valuable for understanding the relationship between evangelism and political action. There are other missionaries who involved themselves in social emancipation in one form or another, but Verkuyl embodied in his life and thought the concerns of both the conciliar and the evangelical movements.

Verkuyl called his involvement in the decolonization process of Indonesia *missio politica oecumenica*. That involvement was the start of a lifelong struggle for the welfare of poor countries and significantly shaped his missiology. The concern for the political welfare of the nations was not something he first learned in the mission field. He grew up with a piety that was not only inner-directed, but that faced outward as well. It focused on the lordship of Christ in every realm of life, including the political. In school, especially at the Free University, he came under the influence of Stuikens, Brussaard, and Noordmans, and the preaching of de Graaf and Buskes, which integrated the text and the context, left an indelible impression. Barth was an emerging figure in the theological world at the time, and it is not surprising that the Swiss theologian attracted Verkuyl’s attention and influenced him, especially on the sovereignty of God in history. From early years in his hometown, Nieuwe Vennep, through university years during the upheavals in Europe, he developed sensitivity to political events and issues. This sensitivity, combined with a vision of the sovereignty of God in history and his first pastoral experience, formed the foundations for *missio politica oecumenica*.

It did not take much for Verkuyl to support the nationalist aspirations of the Indonesians. The theological orientation he carried to Indonesia helped him to do so, and
with that orientation, he did not feel that his political involvement was incompatible with being a missionary. It can be said that *missio politica oecumenica* is simply a way of realizing overseas the Reformed vision of the sovereignty of Christ in every realm of life, in micro-structures (personal) as well as in macro-structures (socio-political), in local as well as in the global level, in the church as well as in society. He expressed *missio politica oecumenica* on the mission field by his solidarity with the Indonesian people’s impetus for reforms, if not independence; by his efforts at principled reconciliation between conflicting parties, trying to convince the colonial authorities that winds of change had made colonial rule passé; and by helping prepare the foundations for an independent, just, and democratic nation based on the principles of the inviolability of human rights, rule of law, and economic policies that would create equal opportunities. He did all this with a deep awareness that he was a minister of the word and that these activities constituted his prophetic and priestly service to the people he was called to serve. For the same reason, he refused to do or accept anything that might be misconstrued as partisan politics, which would jeopardize his greater aim of laying the foundations for principled reconciliation and nation-building based on the word of God.

Verkuyl’s experience in Indonesia was decisive for his later career and for the shape of his formal missiology. When he retired from Indonesia, he served as a mission executive and became involved with the ecumenical movement. In this capacity and through his ecumenical encounters he came in contact with the needs of other nations. *Missio politica oecumenica* would now be exercised not just for one country but for the greater *oecumene*. His political sensitivity was sharpened and his insights were deepened as he raised funds for struggling nations, campaigned against apartheid in South Africa,
protested against use of weapons of mass destruction, in Vietnam in particular, and advocated for respect of human rights in some countries. During this time, he was also very prolific writer, writing on almost any issue or problem he encountered and developing further the works he had written in Indonesia. His writings indicate that he never abandoned his concerns for mission, even while heavily engaged in global political issues. No doubt, he had the political and economic interests of the nations in mind, but he never compromised the church or the gospel. When he wrote, he shed biblical light on issues in such a way that the broader and deeper aspects of the gospel come to the fore. He was concerned about the threats of ideologies, the problems of declining human rights and religious freedom, among other things, because these have an impact on the mission of the churches and dealing with them has missionary significance.

The formal missiology of Verkuyl, as reflected in Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingswetenschap (1976), was shaped by his missionary experience in Indonesia and his ministry with the ecumenical movement. It is quite unique, in that it is the only formal missiology since the time of Voetius and J. H. Bavinck that included political action as an aspect of mission. In this missiology, missio politica oecumenica is distinct and is one of the inclusive goals of mission, alongside kerygma, koinonia, and diakonia. This political aspect of mission is exercised in specific, uses prescribed means, and is guided by responsible study of political issues and situations. Missio politica oecumenica is not just any political action. In order to qualify as an aspect of mission, or in order to be called missio politica oecumenica, political action must reflect the missio Dei, whose goal is the kingdom of God. The missio Dei is the redeeming act of the triune God towards people and the whole creation, in which the church is called to participate. Part
of the redeeming act of God is the work of justice and liberation on behalf of the
disenfranchised. Within the context of *missio Dei* and the kingdom of God, *missio
politica oecumenica*, as all the rest of *missiones ecclesiarum*, is indeed a distinct and
integral aspect of mission.

Based on these affirmations, we proceeded to examine Verkuyl’s missiology as
the basis for *missio politica oecumenica*. His goal was not simply to offer a theology of
political action, useful as that might be. To be sure, Verkuyl has provided biblical
foundations for *missio politica oecumenica*; generally, he saw the basis for political
action as the whole biblical revelation and the whole drama of creation, fall, redemption,
and consummation in their political or horizontal dimensions. These biblical foundations
can be used for political action apart from mission, in which case we would have political
theology, not missiology.

We have demonstrated that *missio politica oecumenica* is an aspect of mission.
This yields missiology that shows that political action is an aspect of mission. Thus, our
reflection is on mission in its political dimension, or on political action as a distinct and
integral aspect of mission. In order to do this, we looked at the usual loci of missiology
in their political dimensions. The history of missions tells us that there were missionaries
who took part in the emancipation of their host people in one way or another, although
such actions were not specified in their mission statement. The missiologies of Voetius
and J. H. Bavinck include reflection on the political responsibilities of missions to
varying degrees. The biblical foundations for the global missionary mandate encompass
not just individuals but nations, not just personal needs but socio-political issues as well,
not just crossing geographic borders but also ideological, cultural, religious, and political
frontiers. The usual goals of conversion and church planting have both vertical and horizontal dimensions, indicating that *missio politica oecumenica* as a horizontal aspect of mission is rooted in vertical dimension of salvation. Moreover, the content of Christian ethics is gospel and law, with which Christians should try to influence public ethics since it applies to both Christian and non-Christians alike. Christian ethics understood as gospel and law is itself the message of proclamation to all. History is the arena in which *missio Dei* takes place, and one’s view of what God is doing in history determines the scope of mission and what tasks it takes.

The political implications of conversion and participation in the church’s life make *missio politica oecumenica* an aspect of mission. The horizontal dimensions of proclamation and church planting serve as a basis for *missio political oecumenica*. But since these usual goals are basically vertical aspects of mission, we conclude that *missio politica oecumenica* also possesses a vertical aspect. Because it is a part of mission *missio politica oecumenica* is not purely a horizontal matter; it is rooted in conversion and the nature of the church as understood in the ecumenical creeds. This is the reason why Verkuyl declares with full conviction that the gospel must be preached, because for him at the heart of all the problems of humanity is sin. For the same reason, he does not compromise the church as the fellowship of those who believe in the crucified and risen Christ, even while he encourages the church to become involved in the world as it struggles for justice and righteousness. This explains the distinction he maintains between *missio hominum* and *missio politica oecumenica*. *Missio hominum* alone, although it may be an aspect of *missio Dei*, is not *missio politica oecumenica*. *Missio politica oecumenica* is the church’s participation in the *missio hominum* insofar as *missio*
hominum reflects the values of the kingdom of God. But for the church to be able to participate in the missio hominum it must not only recognize the kingdom values present in the missio hominum, but it must also be aware of its nature and identity as the church whose Savior and Lord is Jesus Christ.

The vertical aspect of missio politica oecumenica must remain intact if it is to be considered an aspect of the missio Dei. This vertical aspect makes missio politica oecumenica one with evangelism and church planting; these are all-inclusive and integral aspects of mission, since all of them have both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Thus, the evangelical-ecumenical debate regarding what constitutes mission and which should have a priority is really an exercise in futility. All these aspects embrace one another in harmonious relationship, although some Christians try to separate them or put one over the others.

The integralness of missio politica oecumenica with mission is shown in the way it serves mission. Clearly, missio politica oecumenica is basically political in nature and its methodologies are political. Missio politica oecumenica is an aspect of mission, but it is a political aspect rooted in the vertical dimension of salvation. Its vertical rootage does not make it non-political. It is political because it deals with political issues and problems and makes use of political methodologies. As the political aspect of mission, it serves mission in the sense that the political problems and issues with which it deals affect mission and have missionary significance. We have seen the effects on missions of ideologies, the violation of human rights and declining religious freedom, and the political ferment that requires transformation of society. Ideologies tend to demand worship that is due to God; we have seen this in communism. They influence religious
communities, including churches, in order to serve their own interests. They adversely affect the reception of the gospel in a context in which people are brainwashed and where missions are perceived as tools of imperialism. Ideologies are a political matter, and yet they affect the religious realm tremendously, which is of particular interest to missions. They also challenge Christians to reflect on issues raised, and thus may pave the way for more profound and a broader understanding of the gospel. This is why dealing with them is a form of missio politica oecumenica and has significant missionary implications. This is also true with the decline of religious freedom, which is not unrelated to the problem of ideologies.

Churches’ and missions’ attitude to political ferment that requires transformation has an effect upon the status or position of Christianity in the order resulting from that transformation. Also this shows the missionary significance of political problems and political action. China is a negative example for missio politica oecumenica. Missions and churches in China neglected their prophetic and priestly roles, thus contributing to communist rule unfriendly to religions, including Christianity; churches and missions suffered severely as a result. The support of missions for the independence of Indonesia is a more positive example. In this largely Islamic country, Christianity has considerable influence due to the participation of Christians and missionaries in nationalist movements. Isolated pockets of persecution against Christians remain, but in a Pancasila state these are not officially sanctioned.

The problem of apartheid in South Africa has also missionary significance precisely because churches, especially the Dutch Reformed churches, were directly involved in the perpetuation of apartheid. In this case, it was be difficult for churches
that sponsor apartheid to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation without distorting it. It was also difficult to realize the unity of the church in a situation where certain people, on the basis of color of their skin, are driven away from the church. This was a serious problem in mission and yet it was a problem that required a political solution and needed to be solved by political means. The Dutch churches, which had considerable political influence, helped dismantle apartheid to the same degree that they supported it.

The missionary significance of political issues and political action indicates that churches and missions should engage in *missio politica oecumenica*. It is an essential part of fulfilling the other aspects of mission. However, it does not necessarily result in more conversions or the numerical growth of churches. *Missio politica oecumenica* definitely is not antagonistic to conversion and church growth. It does not compromise the true identity of the church in its involvement in the world, but rather helps create a better society in which every person and every group can realize God’s purposes for them and can better respond to his grace and glory. It demonstrates vividly God’s justice and love and therefore the gospel. Thus, *missio politica oecumenica* is an essential and integral aspect of true mission.
APPENDIX

PROPOSITIONS

The thesis of this study is that political action, called *missio politica oecumenica*, defined as the pursuit of justice and countering evil, is a distinct and integral part of mission, alongside *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia*. This is demonstrated from the life and missiology of Johannes Verkuyl (1908-201).

FROM DISSERTATION:

1. Early in life and career Verkuyl understood the gospel to have both personal and social dimensions through the influence of Reformed piety and neo-Calvinism he came to know in his family, church, and the Free University in Amsterdam.

2. With the Reformed vision of the lordship of Christ in every realm of life and the gospel message of sin and grace, it was not difficult for Verkuyl to be involved in the decolonization of Indonesia, in which he served as a missionary. His calling as an ordained evangelist and being involved in the political problems of the Indonesian people were not incompatible.

3. In the ecumenical movement in which he participated, he was confronted with global needs, for which he advocated peace and development for the developing and newly independent nations and against war and injustice, while at the same time concerned about the growth of churches in those nations.

4. The inter-relationship of *missio Dei*, *missio ecclesiarum*, and *missio hominum* makes *missio politica oecumenica* an integral aspect of mission, not merely a result or practical implication of mission.

5. Missiology as a critical theological discipline has as its aims the renewal of churches and the transformation of societies for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

6. There is a long tradition of political action in the history of missions that is oftentimes overlooked.

7. Political action has antecedents in the missiologies of G. Voetius (1589-1676) and J. H. Bavinck (1895-1964).

8. *Missio politica oecumenica* as a distinct and integral task of mission is rooted in missiology in its political dimension, not just in political ethics or political theology.
9. Mission is rooted in the whole biblical drama of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. *Missio politica oecumenica* is rooted in the same drama in its political dimension.

10. The church as salt and light tries to influence the search for universal public ethics with Christian ethics, consisting of the gospel and law, which is also the message of the church’s proclamation.

11. A theology of history has implications for the nature and scope of mission.

12. The usual missionary tasks and goals of proclamation and conversion, church planting and church growth, and social services have both vertical and horizontal dimensions, providing *missio politica oecumenica* missiological foundations.

13. Political issues are missiological issues in that they affect the life and mission of churches. Dealing with these issues is both political and missionary act. Some of these issues are totalitarian ideologies, violation of human rights and religious freedom, and decadent societies.

14. The political stance churches and missions commit has missionary significance.

15. China could have been more tolerant to churches and foreign missions had they distanced themselves from colonial rulers and helped in national reconstruction.

16. Christianity in Indonesia enjoys official recognition and significant influence due to the participation of churches and mission in the nationalist movement.

17. Dutch Reformed churches in South Africa held the key to abolition of apartheid and therefore to reconciliation and unity of churches in that country.

FROM COURSE WORK

1. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) was syncretistic in missionary practice but not in theology. His dialogue on the Chinese concept of the Lord of Heaven can be considered an example of cross-cultural scholastic apologetics.

2. Chinese metaphysics did not constitute a seminal idea for G. W. Leibniz (1646-1716), as some argue but, on the contrary, he interpreted it in terms of his pre-defined metaphysics, thus as a result, mistaking Chinese concepts of *Li, T’ai Ch’i*, or *Ch’i* for the Christian God.

3. Doing good in the midst of suffering and persecution is a form of Christian witness in I Peter.
4. Calvin (1509-1564) was uncompromising about his view of the church and yet hoped for the reformation of the Roman Catholic Church that would lead to a reunion.

5. The revisionist pluralism of Keith Ward commits similar weaknesses as the hard pluralism of John Hick does. Logically, there is no consistent pluralist position.

6. Kant’s critique (exposition) of the church is not necessarily incompatible with orthodox ecclesiology; it is rather incompatible with current church practice devoid of moral meaning.

7. Public covenanting with God—professing the consent of our hearts to the covenant—is central to the ecclesiology of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758).
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books by Verkuyl (arranged chronologically)


Gods kerstgeschenk aan de wereld. Baarn: Bosch & Keuning [n.d.].


Articles by Verkuyl (arranged chronologically)

“Voor de derde sectie sprak Mr. Soewidji, over: ‘de roeping der Kerken op politiek terrain’.” De Opwekker 86 (1941): 639-642.


“Drie artikelen over de wereldzendersconferentie in Mexico City.” Trouw (December 1963).


“Zending, de jonge kerken en de oecumene.” Schering en Inslag (1964).


“De plaats en de functie van particuliere projecten in het totaal van het ontwikkelingsproces in de ontwikkelingslanden.” Documentatie ARJOS (October 1964) and Regelrech (February 1965).

“Het kind van Bethleem en de verhouding tussen de rijke en de arme landen.” De Open Deur (Kerstnummer 1964).


“Oecumene, zending, missionering.” Rerum ecclesiae (January 1965).


“Help ons, zeiden Bantoes tot blanke medechristenen.” Trouw (December 1, 1965).

“Een woord van dank aan de directie en redactie van Trouw en de puzzelaars, die bijdroegen voor ‘Brood voor het hart’.” Trouw (December 30, 1965).


“Dr. Moelia.” Ad Varvas (Januari 1966).


“Sleun aan christelijk onderwijs in de ontwikkelingslanden.” Propagandablad voor de aktie ‘Schoolslag’ [n.d.].

“Assistentie bij de vervulling van de missionaire en diakonale taak in Azie, Afrika en Latijns Amerika.” In gestencild verslag van het Christelijk Paedagogisch Studiecentrum, [n.d.].

“Wat verkondigt de kerk aan de wereld.” Gestencild t.b.v. Evangelisatiecentrum van de Gereformeerde Kerken [n.d.].


“Dr. Hatta.” De Tussentijd (September 1966).


“Pinksteren, Azie en de wereld.” De Open Deur (February 13, 1967).

“Indonesia op zoek naar houvast.” Hervormd Nederland (March 1967).


“Moegelijkheden en moeilijkheden in de samenwerking tussen Missie en Zending.” Missie Integraal 7 (1967).

“Er zijn voor de anderen.” Jong Gereformeerd (September 1967).


"Bijdrage aan rapport Ontwikkelingspolitiek." *College van Advies van de Anti-Revolutionaire Partij* 28 (September 1968).


“Stanley Jones, missionaire globetrotter.” Trouw (June 4, 1969).


“Nederland en Indonesie, elkanders meest-nabije naasten.” Trouw (September 12, 1972).

Wereld en Zending 1 (1972): 316-319


“Dr. Hendrik Kraemer.” *Onze Vacatures* (January 1, 1974).


“Wat moet onze houding zijn tegenover de Republiek Zuid-Afrika?” *Blikopener* (December 1974).


“Het zoeken naar de will van God in de vragen van deze tijd.” Gereformeerd Weekblad (October 24, 1975): 77-78; (October 31, 1975): 81-82.


Secondary Sources


Boland, B. J. *Zending, wat denkt gij van Indie?* Amsterdam: [n.p.], 1946.


Boyle, Samuel. The Church in Red China Leans to One Side. Hong Kong, 1950.


Cooper, Dale, chaplain of Calvin College. Interview by the author, March 2003. Grand Rapids, MI.


Gazalba, S. Djawab atas Kritik Kristen terhadap Islam. [No bibliographic information].


_____.


____. "Verkuyl is altijd consequent gebleven." *Vandaar* (March 2001).


_____.


———. *Het modernisme in Nederland.* Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1922.


Verdoorn, J. A. *De Zending en het Indonesische Nationalisme.* Amsterdam, 1945.


