

## Religion and development; Transforming relations between Indonesian and Dutch churches

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(provisional draft; not to be quoted)

*To begin with...*

... some preliminary remarks about the concerns prompting this paper. This is relevant, because the purpose of the conference seems somewhat opaque: Is it intended to articulate and strengthen a certain – ‘confessional’ – *political* agenda concerning the domains of religion and development in the Netherlands? There are indications that this may well be the case. Many of the people invited have an administrative and/or political background. Some of their daily concerns are likely to touch on problems of administering new relations between religion and development. After all, the Dutch government is invading domains of religion with unprecedented force. Or is the conference intended to be an academic meeting? That is: Do we primarily aim at understanding, unhindered by currently politically correct a priori? There are indications that this, too, may be the case. As I see it, both dimensions manifest themselves, the political and the analytical. So it is better to be open about this. The two have always been uneasy, often dissimulating and mutually cheating partners. My hope is that openness will help make this conference a memorable event. Maybe. That is why I start with my own moral and political concerns in this context. I am worried about the impact of current Dutch development discourse on how the newborn *Protestantse Kerk in Nederland* (PKN, the Dutch Protestant Church)<sup>1</sup> handles its international relations. Development discourse transforms ideas, changes agendas, and thus affects partners, including those in Indonesia, in profound ways. I believe that current development discourse has become more harmful than beneficial, in the Netherlands as well as overseas, causing problems rather than providing solutions.

Two specific events must be mentioned right away. These Dutch events greatly transformed the international relations of the protestant church in the Netherlands (PKN):

The first was the destruction of a major Dutch religious institution operating in the international arena: i.e. the mission of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church). This destruction, gradually initiated in the late 1980s, has had great impact on the nature of international church relations, especially those with Indonesia. Relations were either thoroughly transformed, or curtailed, or even discontinued. Moreover, in the context of the recent fusion new concerns came to dominate the discourse of the PKN.

The second crucial event I want to mention took place in 2006. The international section of the central offices of the church has to a large extent fused with ICCO. ICCO is a relatively large NGO, almost totally government funded and controlled. As a result the *modus operandi* and perspectives of the church transformed even more incisively.

These two events constitute the starting point for my reflections. I want not only to understand what happened, but also what factors and processes shaped these, in my view, most unfortunate events.

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<sup>1</sup> Two large Calvinistic denominations and one smaller Lutheran denomination fused to form the PKN in May, 2004.

Up to halfway the 1980s I was an ICCO board member, had been for some fifteen years. During that time and later still I was on the board of several protestant missionary agencies. I took part in some of the long-term processes which led to the two events just mentioned. Much of my academic work aimed at gaining a critical understanding of how the domains of mission and development transformed over the last decades. My main goal here reflects this: I am engaged in an effort to come to grips with these transformations and the emergence of the grave problems we face today. What has happened over time and why? How can we gain insight into the factors and processes that have led to these tragic and almost suicidal current events? I feel that the very authenticity of my own church is at stake. But there is more. The recent transformations in the Dutch institutional landscape have great impact on the nature of the collaboration with churches and other institutions overseas. As a result, their effects enter the life-worlds of our partners overseas in fundamental ways as well.

The present paper contains primarily a number of loosely interrelated sketches. I have been struggling with the question what events to choose, and where to look. For an understanding of transforming relations between Dutch and Indonesian churches I must look at both the Indonesian and the Dutch setting. The histories of churches here and there are connected, to be sure. But the dynamics of each also take place in semi-autonomous settings. There is interdependence, but only to a certain degree. Understanding the socio-genesis of the problems we are now confronting becomes a bit of a puzzle. We must look at different sides and at different histories at the same time.

I shall look at long-term transformations of relations between Dutch and Indonesian churches. I want to understand some of the factors that have led to the articulation of the predicaments just mentioned. These historical notes will for that reason also touch on some thematic issues concerning the relationship between religion and development. I shall make an effort to come to grips with these two topics – religion and development – in an integrated way also. At least to present a few tentative sketches here.

This paper is a kind of interim report. It reflects the current state of my understanding as ‘archeologist’ of the problems mentioned in the beginning. The paper arises from my currently preparing and writing of a book on these very topics. For that study I collaborate with Indonesian colleagues from the research institute Percik, in Salatiga, Central Java. My work in the European anthropological network (Eidos) continues to guide my questioning as well. In Eidos we are engaged in no less than suggesting a new anthropological analytical perspective on the study of international development practices (for a recent example see the Introduction to a special issue of the *Oxford Development Studies* 2006 by D. Lewis and D. Mosse). At the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, I was fortunate to study missionary relations between churches and practices of development with a number of colleagues. We have taken some steps, but still are only beginning to address the two concepts in an integrated way (Ph. Quarles van Ufford and J.M. Schoffeleers 1988; Van Harskamp *et al.* 2004). Below, I try to take one or two more steps, especially by defining ‘development’ as being part and parcel of a relatively new Western civil religion that is increasingly manifesting itself in recent years.

I beg my colleagues from abroad to be patient with me as I write about the Dutch. I need this to gain understanding of transforming Dutch–Indonesian church relations. As I see it now, it would be a fundamental mistake to see the Dutch as instrumental to solving problems elsewhere in the world. That would be an unacceptable, political assumption. ‘We’, the Dutch, are very much part of global problems of development. It is therefore vital to ‘disturb the peace’ some, also in Amsterdam. Development problems involve global relations in which a critical study of what happens in the West is unavoidable. By the same token, any effort to understand transforming protestant international relations with Indonesian partners must include critical analysis of what happens in the Netherlands.

## Introduction

In this paper I focus on two topics. First, I try to gain some insight into the interrelations between religion and development. The study of each of the two domains have until quite recently been rather segregated from each other. Conventional thought distinguished the comparative study of religion from development studies. While economists, political scientists and anthropologists defined the study of development primarily as a political and as an economic domain, the study of religion was left to others. This ‘mental and intellectual apartheid’ has proven quite harmful to all. Integrated approaches to economics, politics, and religion as proposed in the past by for instance Weber, Mauss and Durkheim have been lost. We are paying a rather high price for this.

Secondly, I attempt to link the concepts of religion and development to an analysis of the long-term history of relations between Dutch and Indonesian churches. This requires that I analyse the struggles and issues involved in the transforming discourses that give direction and legitimacy to the international relations between these churches. In this way I hope to bring together the historical and analytical dimensions of this essay.

### A. Interrelations between religion and development

While some (e.g. Douglas 1982; Quarles van Ufford and Schoffeleers 1988; A. van Harskamp, O. Salemink and Ananta Kumar Giri 2002) have explicitly made a plea in the past to study development as (‘secular’) religion’ this call is not (yet) heeded. There is still a need to heed the call to further elaborate notions of civil religion which was first introduced in a still rather generalising way by Bellah (1967). In a recent volume on religion in the public domain (Van de Donk *et al.* 2006) issues related to international relations and to the development scene are blatantly absent). Recent efforts to link development practices to religion as undertaken by former Dutch minister Van Ardenne primarily ask what contributions different religions may provide to ‘development’. This minister has as it were started to buy up religions for high developmental purposes. The relation to religion is defined by ‘developers’ in instrumental ways. The issue is what role religion – if any – may play in the context of for instance sustainable development. Or: What role can religions play in governmental policies aimed at the strengthening of social integration, the strengthening the fabric of society, the creation of social order? Former World Bank president James Wolfensohn made many a plea to open up the World Bank to religions. Each time the view of religion is an instrumentalist view. Development agencies, governments wish to put religion to use,, professing that religion is so important for their goals etc. The notions of development itself, development’s very dynamics and characteristics, remain beyond reflection. In many efforts to open up new linkages between ‘development’ and ‘religion’, the goals and policies of development are the base line. At stake is what kind of contribution others, such as religions, may make to it; as if development’s own secular ‘sermon on the mount’ – lately its millennium goals – embody privileged and almost sacred insights in the human condition, in the nature of the global problems. What we hear time and again is that development’s policies and modes of operation can be trusted and deserve our faithful allegiance. What is needed – we hear – is the political will, and first of all the money; a few extra billions here and there will ‘do’ it. We are confronted with a continuous stream of promises about professional expertise and technical competence in how ‘to do’ it. Jeffrey Sachs provides a very clear example of this. Bono is followed by other aspiring pop stars, in politics and in the media. Is theirs a genuine contribution? Concerns arise too. (for example, see Wedel 2006

for a highly sceptical analysis of some of the earlier activities of Sachs and the his ‘consultants group’ in Russia in the early 1990s.)

What is striking is the endless production of well-nigh sacrosanct mantras on this and that. We are faced with nothing less than a new, global, quasi-religious discourse, the constitution of a secular religion which claims a privileged (quasi-)sacred status in understanding the nature of the global human situation, its predicaments; the roads to a better future, and what is in store for us, i.e. ultimate ‘development’ when all is achieved. I feel that it may be very important to conceive of the relationship between religion and development in a way totally different from current more instrumental approaches. Another view is most urgent.

It is vital to look for a comprehensive perspective of the dynamics of development and of religion and the linkages between them. We need to look for common characteristics as well as differences. In this essay I make an effort to overcome the artificial segregation of the two concepts. Vrije Universiteit anthropologist M.G. Bax has made a very important contribution in this search. He articulated the concept of the ‘*religious regime*’ (e.g. Bax 1988). In the concept the two dimension are there: religious meaning is articulated in settings in which there are struggles for power are being waged too. Bax suggests that the study of religious elites – local, regional and international – provides a good point of entry for a fuller understanding of the interactions between politics/development on the one hand and of religion on the other (Bax 1988; see also Douglas 1982). Bax insights are highly relevant for our purposes too.

Another debate emerged about deep-seated notions of modern history as a process of secularisation and ‘disenchantment’. The Weberian view that processes of modernisation inexorably lead to diminished roles of religion is no longer taken for granted. Van Harskamp (2000, 2005) greatly added to our insights regarding the Dutch religious scene (see also James Kennedy 1995; 2005 and Erik Sengers 2005). The debate is important for me as it takes issue with older and widely shared assumptions of a gradual disappearance of religion and of the primacy of secular or of the ‘instrumental’. Increasingly those assumptions prove too limited in their primarily Western-European scope. It just is not true as far as most other parts of the world are concerned. So the Dutch scene as an essentially secularised one is an exception. But is it? Are the Dutch as secular as all that? Van Harskamp takes some steps in the debate by suggesting that notions of nihilism make for a new quasi religion in our modern situation. Perhaps we may go a little further.

I owe quite a lot to the reading of two recent books about the modern history of the interactions between European religions and modern politics. In a way Michael Burleigh (2006) explodes the distinction between religion and politics. While Bax analysed the interactions between the religious and the secular dimension in the operations of religious elites, Burleigh makes a distinction which in his view is much more important. In his view, modern history from the French revolution onwards is one in which there is a constant battle between religions, established religions as well as political movements. Fascism, communism, or the human rights movement rooted in French definitions of civil society, all these must be regarded as much as a religion as the Catholic Church to which he himself belongs. In the battles of European history Burleigh distinguishes ‘transcendent’ and ‘immanent’ religions. This means that he takes the view that all movements share a very important characteristic, namely religion. But they differ in the nature of their discourse. While some, such as Christianity and Islam, present a discourse that allows for notions of transcendence, for a God, other religions operate on the basis of essentially immanent discourse. Burleigh refers to Eric Voegelin and others who, as early as the 1930s, studied religions in terms of this distinction. Burleigh does away with the conventional distinction between politics–modernity–development–economics on the one hand and religion on the other. His subsequent studies of modern European history so lead to some spectacular insights. In its modern history Europe is depicted as the battleground of a great number of religions or quasi religions, old and new, which interact and often bloodily compete with one

another. Religious wars were not done away with by the Westphalian Peace in 1648. They just went on and on; only the nature of the discourses changed over time.

All religions, whether immanent or transcendent, deal with questions such as: Where do we come from? How can we understand our past? What constitutes the core of our histories? What constitutes evil in our lives and societies? What is suffering, how does it come about? In what ways should we define legitimate responsibility? How must we handle problems of suffering and evil? Where lies our destiny, what may we expect in the course of human history? How shall we define human fulfilment or redemption?

Various other scholars are working along similar lines. Recently Kunneman (2006) mentioned the importance of focusing on the here and now as a domain of the transcendent. Kunneman thus goes even further than Burleigh. Kumar Giri (2002) has written some remarkable studies on modern Indian politics, also 'exploding' the notion of a 'secular' as opposed to a 'religious' discourse in India. Giri (2003) discusses the distinction between the immanent and the transcendent in the domains of development practice. An earlier most enlightening study is provided by Ron Inden (1998) who analyses different ways in which 'God' has been embodied in modern Indian political discourses, both secular (!) and religious.

## B. Interrelations between the Dutch and the Indonesian church

Preoccupation with events occurring in the Netherlands is rather new for me, and somewhat strange for an anthropologist interested in issues of development. Is it not self-evident that development problems should lead us to focus on countries 'over there', for instance on Indonesia? I feel however that the Western practice of hiding or even ignoring Western institutional and political interests, hopes, commitments, views and debates from our studies of the Third World is very artificial. It is also harmful. Insight into what is happening 'at home' must be linked to our studies of other cultures. Too often there has been a tendency to 'orientalise' development, to divorce the study of development issues from what is going on 'over here'.

Where does all this lead me? How shall I arrange my story?

I will analyse international relations between churches in Indonesia and the Netherlands over a longer period of time. I start at a moment at which some deep-rooted paradigms concerning Dutch–Indonesian relations were shattered: the era of Proklamasi. I first present two brief stories in which the first contours of the interaction between religion and development emerge: the asking and granting of forgiveness of what happened after Indonesia declared its independence.

The almost religious ceremony recounted in the first story took place in a meeting between the Indonesian and Dutch ministers of foreign relations in Jakarta on 16 August 2006. The second story contrasts this to some remarks of a highly placed member of the church of Central Java who said that the Dutch church, 'the mother out of whom his church was born' had become a total stranger. The two stories are indications that a neat distinguishing between the religious and the political is quite biased.

Below I will show that the religious and political dimensions in Dutch–Indonesian relations interacted in incisive ways at the time of the Proclamation of Independence. These were times of a choice between either a paradigmatic shift in almost all aspects of the relations, or of restoration, i.e. a church politics in which the continuity of the relations was stressed.

What happened in that brief span between 1944 and 1948 was of the greatest importance. Choices made right then would have long-term consequences for the nature of the relations between the churches. These analyses will indicate how the political and the religious dimensions interacted in different ways. I shall argue that at that time two different agendas were constituted. The first, operative in the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk after 1947, I shall term the Oegstgeest model; the second, implemented by the Gereformeerde Kerk will be referred to as the

‘confessional’ model. I will try to sketch these two ideal types of legitimacy by which Indonesian–Dutch relations between churches were defined.

This leads me to comment on the emergence of a new, much more secular civil religion within the Gereformeerde Kerk, radically transforming its relations with its Indonesian partner churches. I shall argue that new development discourse concepts were taken over. This led to a new discourse about international relations which was given direction from new perspectives, and in full confrontation with the agenda of missionary relations operative in ‘Oegstgeest’.

All models of international relations as these emerged over time were shattered by the end of the 1980s and 1990s. I will discuss these recent events. In the end I shall make some remarks on the consequences of all this on the relations with Indonesian churches. I suggest that those events indicate that part of what has been happening immediately after 1945 is taking place again. The preoccupation of the Dutch church with its current more immanent vocabulary of modern management comes at great cost, which a church leadership finds entirely acceptable. Part of the price paid is the collapse of meaningful relations of partnerships with churches in Indonesia. A new confessional model asserts itself. This model propagates a religious discourse of professionalism, of the primacy of Dutch responsibility and of religious ‘purity’. The terrible price paid by others is that Oegstgeest as an agenda and *modus operandi* has been destroyed and that the Indonesians are again the objects of our so-called good intentions, the religious offensives they have seen before. My own church has become quite crazy. Yet it may be that the asking of forgiveness by the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs (first story, below) becomes a beacon of hope, an example to be given full attention. Now, alas, the Dutch seem totally lost in a fenced-in, quasi-religious moral reserve of development.

## **Coping with crisis: Two stories of Dutch–Indonesian relations**

### A. Relations between the two governments

16 August 2005 is a crucial day in the official relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands. On the eve of the official Indonesian commemoration of Independence (17 August 1945), Dr Ben Bot, Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs, presented a speech on behalf of the Dutch government. The date was symbolic. And the words spoken fully befitted the momentous occasion. Indonesian minister of Foreign Affairs Dr N. Hassan Wirajuda made this clear when he welcomed his Dutch colleague. He directly addressed the open wound in the relationship between the two governments:

The bottom-line issue was: Can independence be declared by a subject people? Can that declaration be valid without the consent of the administering power? The conventional wisdom of that time, especially among Western powers was; No it cannot be done. The Netherlands could not have taken a different view. But we Indonesians insisted: Yes, we can! And we fought a revolutionary war to prove it. Fortunately for us, the verdict of historic events upheld our position.

He added a great many concrete items which could be jointly taken up by the two countries, yes even in the domain of ‘development cooperation’, that reserve of good intentions that had come to block sour relations between the two countries in the early nineties.

Dr Bot’s speech was of equal stature. He acknowledged that relations with Indonesia were not just ‘external’ far-away issues for the Dutch. Not at all. At stake were also, and perhaps primarily, the moral and political views of the Dutch about themselves; he touched upon deep-seated notions of Dutch authenticity, on Dutch moral and political taboos in their dealing with their own history and their role in Indonesia. By redefining the international relations with the Indonesian government the minister transformed Dutch authenticity, the official views of

themselves, in important and highly painful matters: young Dutch military men sent to Indonesia by their government to fight a war and perhaps to kill and be killed. people losing their way of life, their livelihoods, sense of responsibility and so on. How to cope for instance with the loss of long-cherished Dutch moral agendas of a Dutch civilising mission in Indonesia, encompassing a wide range of notions: cultural, economic, religious etc.? Minister Bot said:

This is the first time since Indonesia declared its independence that a member of the Dutch government will attend the celebrations. Through my presence the Dutch government expresses its political and moral acceptance of the Proklamasi, the date the Republic of Indonesia declared independence.

These words were the keynote for an almost ritual transformation of Dutch relations with Indonesia and in the Dutch moral dealing with themselves and their own history. The Dutch government openly endorsed the Indonesian political view of its own history. Once the Dutch minister admitted that Indonesia legitimately gained independence on the day of president Sukarno's proclamation, a great many events of great and often tragic importance in Indonesian and Dutch history appeared in a new perspective. This applied especially to the period of 1945-1949, a time of war, not 'police action' as it was called then, a time of many tragic deaths and great devastation. Dr Bot made clear what he meant, when he chose to add the adjective 'moral' in the lines quoted above. He said:

In retrospect, it is clear that its large-scale deployment of military forces put the Netherlands on the wrong side of history. The fact that military action was taken and that many people on both sides lost their lives or were wounded is a harsh and bitter reality especially for you.... I wish to wish to express my profound regret for all that suffering.... Ladies and gentlemen, the Republic of Indonesia is an important partner for the Netherlands.

It was as if he could say these words because he had saved the Dutch from themselves in a deep manner. Now he was ready to become a partner again. Momentous indeed. More than sixty years had passed before the Dutch were able to heal the wounds in their own history and so gain a new authentic relationship with themselves. As a result they had become ready again for the future and for entering a mature international partnership. The Dutch government had done its homework, at last.

## B. Relations between an Indonesian and a Dutch church

On May 1 2004 three Dutch protestant churches, the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* and the *Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk* fused. A new church was born: the *Protestantse Kerk van Nederland* (PKN). The unification of the three Dutch churches had taken a long time, almost fifty years since a group of 18 pastors and theologians put it on the ecclesiastical agenda. It was of great historical significance not only for the three churches themselves. The unification of the three churches also affected its international relations, e.g. partner churches overseas and the ecumenical community worldwide. Accordingly, invitations to take part in the celebrations were also sent to far-away partners.

Early March 2007 I met a member of the synod board of the Gereja Kristen Jawa (GKJ), the (protestant) Church of Central Java. I asked him concerning the GKJ's present views of the PKN. I have known his church for a long time by now. I had written a book about the history of the relations between the GKJ and the mission of the Gereformeerde Kerken up to the 1970s, adding some more studies on various issues involving the GKJ in the various local settings in Java. At present I am engaged in a study programme of the research institute Percik in Salatiga concerning

local religion in Central Java, together with Indonesian colleagues. We carry out research about the relations between various religious communities in Java.

On this occasion however we discussed the official, institutional views of the GKJ. Relations with the Dutch gereformeerde mission had been very intimate. The history of the linkages between the two had begun in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1933 the GKJ officially became independent. The relations between the two gained an intensity and pervasiveness unequalled in the wider Western protestant missionary engagements in Indonesia. Metaphors that were coined to describe the relationship signalled the undoubted bonds and intimacy as between mother and daughter, elder and younger, brother and sister, etc. The metaphors hinted at kinship ties which made separation almost inconceivable whatever happened. Yet despite all good intentions mother and daughter had become strangers, the Javanese church leader said.

The GKJ declined to attend the celebrations of unification of the three churches in the Netherlands in 2004. No delegates were sent. This was a deliberate political decision. The synod of GKJ even refused to give an official authorisation to attend the ceremonies to two of its own church leaders who happened to be in the Netherlands at the time. The Indonesian church stayed away from the celebrations surrounding the birth of the new PKN. The member of the GKJ synod board was quite clear. He represented a new generation. The past was now over and done.

How can we understand this shocking separation between the Indonesian and the Dutch church? What had happened to make a 'daughter' reject her 'mother'; what led an *adik* or younger brother to denying respect for his *kakak*, older brother? What had happened to the relationship? How come that there was no future anymore?

In the next section I turn to a time of crisis in the overall relations between the two churches. I shall argue that the way in which especially the Dutch Gereformeerde kerken decided to respond constituted the core of the problem and the root cause of a long-term process of gradual disintegration of the ties, of conflict, and ultimately of 'separation'.

### **III. The churches' initial responses: the Kwitang conference in Jakarta 1947, and the gereformeerde synod of Eindhoven, 1948**

The period immediately following Sukarno's 'Proklamasi' in 1945 was crucial in the shaping of inter-church relations for a very long time to come. In a few months after Proklamasi the changed agenda for the Dutch churches and mission agencies imposed itself on the missionaries returning to the Netherlands straight from the Japanese camps. The turmoil of revolution was evident in Indonesian decisions. There was no time for extended reflection. All actors had to rely on deep-seated gut feelings. Churches were caught in a pressure cooker. The explosive situation deeply affected Dutch core notions of their own identity and of their role in Indonesia. The encompassing revolution forced the Dutch not only to re-consider the question of colonial legitimacies. At stake for the churches was their legitimate role in Indonesia. What to do in a highly chaotic situation? Established definitions of Dutch authenticity were shaken. But there was the need to act, no time to think. Uncertain not only about what was happening in Indonesia but also about themselves, the returning missionaries had to make up their minds.

Minister Bot acknowledged this very point of lacking time to think and act responsibly about 'everything' in his speech in Jakarta in 2006. As he said, 'it is only when one stands on the summit of the mountain that one can see what would have been the simplest and shortest way up.' The minister acknowledged that mistakes were made by the Dutch authorities at the time of the Proklamasi, and that because of this the dynamics of Indonesian–Dutch relations had turned sour for six decades. Not even billions of development aid could change that. The Dutch

apparently needed a long and painful period of climbing the high mountain of history towards a more mature understanding. It led to much harm in domains and sectors of bilateral relations. Still, this being said, much can be restored.

How did the missionary agencies and the Dutch churches respond? For them the time of proklamasi in 1945 was equally decisive. And, as I shall describe in this section, the representatives of Dutch churches and mission rose much more to the occasion than the government did. From the start there was a new and keen awareness that history had changed dramatically also for the churches. For the Dutch missionaries the initial situation of 1945 was different from that of the Dutch and the colonial government. Why? Two elements must be mentioned. First, the camps had meant almost total isolation for more than three years. Three years of confinement had for many become also a space for critical reflection. Some of the camps turned into a kind of ‘Sint Michielsgestel in the tropics’.<sup>2</sup> In the Japanese camps the Dutch were now confronted with a rather new experience: that of their own marginality and powerlessness. Missionaries were totally cut off from their Indonesian constituencies. These had to continue in new ways, whatever these might be. But the religious and financial tutelage of the Dutch had been stopped. All knew that things would not be the same in the churches when – or if – they returned. The camps thus also provided an opportunity for pondering the dimensions of this marginality, for tasting the bitterness of being dispensable. Whatever would happen in the war: things surely would never be the same again. The missionaries in the Japanese camps had virtually no access to information. There was no glorious Indonesian ‘London’-type broadcast for clandestine listeners to keep up their morale. Many used the camps as space for reflection. Living in this ‘desert’ equipped many of the returning missionaries with a willingness to take part in the shaping of a new future, whatever that might imply.

In 1945 Indonesian churches and local protestant missionary agencies felt the urgency of the need to deal with the consequences of the Proklamasi. They were met in Jakarta by a few officials quickly sent from Europe. An important actor was J.C. Hoekendijk who came to Jakarta from London. W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, one of the inspiring initiators of the emerging World Council of Churches, was already aware that the churches had to forge new, more equitable ecumenical relations. He gave Hoekendijk the task to assist the representatives of missionary agencies, churches, and the Mission Consulate – before and shortly after the War the agency mediating between the colonial administration and private mission agencies and churches – as these sought to define new perspectives and mechanisms. The need was surely there, but what should be the response?

During the war Christian communities in Indonesia had experienced incisive transformations. Before 1945 the Japanese occupiers in various parts of Indonesia had required new consultative bodies from the Christian communities. These bodies were quickly transformed into Indonesian nationalist Christian centres. They were especially active in Sulawesi and Java. Two new regional councils of churches were established in 1945. A new Indonesian church leadership thus manifested itself at the nationalist centres in Jakarta. In many parts of the country there was a call to Indonesianise church governance. While the Indonesian leaders were open to relations with Dutch churches still, the roles of neither the Indonesians nor the Dutch could not be the same anymore. How to engage in revolutionary politics and yet build new linkages with the churches of a political foe about to wage war on you?

It is remarkable how many of the Dutch missionaries rose to the occasion almost immediately after returning from the camps. They proved to have been quick learners. Many of the returning missionaries accepted the important fact that a restoration of old relations was out of the question, that a new era had started, that the revolution was there to stay, also in the Indonesian churches. Already in 1945 J.A. Verdoorn published a book about the Indonesian revolution. S.C.

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<sup>2</sup> St Michielsgestel is the name of a German camp in the Netherlands where political hostages were imprisoned during World War II. These hostages made use of the prison space for intensively reconsidering the political landscape as well as seeking new political options and entering into initial political negotiations.

Graaf van Randwijck and M. de Niet must be mentioned. They both played a key role as mission consul in the old setting, managing relations with the colonial government. Now they acknowledged that a totally new situation had come about and acted accordingly and creatively. Van Randwijck was sent to Holland to do much-needed 'missionary work' there by helping to set up new, post-colonial, missionary institutions in the largest protestant church, the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk. There were numerous others who made important contributions such as J.C. Hoekendijk, B. Boland, and F.L. Bakker and J.H. Bavinck. There were many more.

Things changed very rapidly. Immediately after the war most representatives of Indonesian and Dutch agencies made intensive efforts to see if it was possible still to define new common ground. They agreed to meet quickly for negotiating the new contours of post-Proklamasi relationships. In 1947, representatives of Indonesian newly formed councils of churches and Dutch missionaries met in the Kwitang church in Jakarta. They quickly reached a far-reaching agreement on May 24. A declaration was signed: the Kwitang Agreement, signed by the chairmen of the two delegations. Much had changed.

The resolutions stated that henceforth Indonesian churches would be responsible for all missionary work in Indonesia. The theological legitimacy of Dutch mission and the roles of the Dutch were redefined. The latter were allowed to provide 'assistance' only. All agreed that Dutch responsibility had to be terminated, but that this would also open the door to new inter-church relations. Ties were not to be cut altogether.

For several reasons the Agreement was a remarkable achievement. There was, first, the remarkable courage of Indonesian church leaders. They took great risks in conferring with the Dutch and seeking new common ground with representatives of Dutch mission while a revolutionary war against the Dutch government was being waged and many people died. It was still quite uncertain how their fellow Indonesians in the nationalist movement would react. The Indonesian church leaders convening at Kwitang ran the serious risk of being accused of being 'masuk belanda', 'friend of the Dutch', traitor. There was a lot of suspicion *vis à vis* Christians among fellow Indonesians, be these communists, Muslims, or nationalists. During the Japanese occupation such suspicion had led to many atrocities and killings, even though large groups of Christians took part in the armed struggle and incurred heavy casualties – many northern Sulawesi (Minahasan) freedom fighters died. The new leadership of the Indonesian churches displayed both courage and statemanship.

Secondly, the Dutch missionaries, just coming out of the camps and perhaps because of that, also played a courageous role. By acknowledging quickly that the situation in which Dutch mission found itself had changed dramatically, they distanced themselves from the Dutch government. In addition to that they were willing to do something even more difficult. They were prepared to redefine their own authenticity as Christians and willing to review their understanding of the legitimacy of their own role and presence in Indonesia. They were able and willing to do something much harder than criticising other actors: ready to part with their own often high-sounding cultural and religious ideals. They acknowledged that these ideals were something to be put aside and that theirs was now a marginal role. As far as the Dutch are concerned I find this the most remarkable accomplishment.

Acceptance of their drastically redefined role would be indispensable and the key to a new future. The learning process, begun in the Japanese camps, rendered them ready to step back in favour of a new era in the relations between the churches in Indonesia and Holland. In spite of the outcome the Dutch missionaries need not apologise to the Indonesian churches for the stance they took. Nor did these men and women get in the way of the Indonesians as these sought to open up new relationships at a time of war.

However, theirs was a marginal role also as representatives of their own Dutch constituencies. The Dutch missionaries attending Kwitang were not mandated to conclude formal agreements with their Indonesian counterparts. The representatives had to take the Kwitang Agreement back home for authorisation.

Van Randwijck had taken up these tasks in the Netherlands. In the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, too, much had changed. Representatives of the Hervormde Synod were sent to Indonesia in 1948 to be present at a major meeting of the synod of the Protestantse Kerk van Indonesia, the official government-related church. The unity of Indonesian churches and the primacy of Indonesian responsibility was fully endorsed by these representatives from the Netherlands. Dutch tutelage was officially ended while the war was still being waged. The Hervormde constituency acted accordingly. In the small town of Oegstgeest, near Leiden, a new missionary council was set up in 1947.<sup>3</sup> Van Randwijck became general secretary and took up the task of re-shaping mission, implementing Kwitang guidelines.

The gereformeerde home front, however, took a totally different view of Proklamsi and of the Kwitang Agreement. There was a general feeling that the *gereformeerde* missionaries had gone too far. The gereformeerde community in the Netherlands objected to Proklamsi after 1945 and supported the Dutch government policies in restoring the old order. Because the mostly gereformeerde ARP (Anti-Revolutionary Party) opposed Sukarno there was no felt need for the church to declare its views concerning the wider political struggles going on. The majority of the gereformeerde church was very much opposed to independence, yet it did not speak out on this issue. The gereformeerde synod considered loss of formal full missionary responsibility in Java to be the heart of the matter. It soon became quite clear to the missionaries in Indonesia that very likely the gereformeerde kerken would officially reject the Kwitang Agreement. A very sensitive situation thus arose. While accepting seemed a bridge too far, outright rejection might well endanger any further collaboration between the churches. What to do?

Much depended on the new Indonesian church leaders. A key role was played during and after the war by a charismatic pastor of a local Javanese parish in Jakarta still in his twenties: the Reverend B. Probowinoto. During the war he became an active nationalist, co-founding the Indonesian Christian Party *Parkindo* in 1945. In that year too he had been one of the founders the *Dewan Permoesyawaratan Gereja-Gereja di Pulau Jawa*, the council representing Javanese churches. This council had acted as co-convenor also at Kwitang. The gereformeerde synod, facing a most sensitive decision, asked Probowinoto to cross the battle lines in Java in 1948 and to fly to the Netherlands in order to take part in the deliberations at the synod. After some hesitation Probowinoto accepted the invitation. At the synod his role would prove to be a vital one.

Probowinoto presented a major speech at the synod. He provided the synod with an overview of the transformations after Dutch surrender in 1942. He made it clear that now the Javanese church wished to take responsibility for its own affairs. He defended the Kwitang Agreement and urged synod to comply (*Akta synode Eindhoven* 1948, art. 108). His advocacy failed. For the gereformeerde church it was not possible to give up the very notion of its 'missionary responsibility' in Java. It was impossible because this would contradict the very identity of the church. The responsibility of the church towards its mission in Java sprang directly from God's calling to the gereformeerde church itself. Accepting the Kwitang Agreement would mean that the gereformeerde church would stop being a church, that is, called by the Lord to be responsible in Java. Thus any reformulation of the relationship between the two churches in terms of provision of assistance would be a stab in the heart. It would cease to be a church, for the mission of the church and the *Missio Dei* cannot be separated. To do so would be fatal.

Yet at the end of the the synod deliberations Probowinoto surprisingly stated that he would accept a sharing of responsibility with the gereformeerde kerk for all mission work in Central Java. Probowinoto accepted official gereformeerde views. He accepted a new model of collaboration underpinning the ongoing theological legitimacy of Dutch responsibility. For many in Central Java this came as a shock as Probowinoto had been one of the very protagonists of the new agenda of Indonesianising of the church.

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<sup>3</sup> Called *Raad voor de Zending van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*.

Much later, in the 1980s, I had long conversations with Probowinoto. I was preparing an essay in honour of this great and deeply tragic man (Ph. Quarles van Ufford 1987). I asked him what had happened during the synod of Eindhoven in 1948. His almost total turn-about remained puzzling. He then told me how many a senior theologian, his former teachers, now high officials in the Dutch church, had come to see him privately, often to his room in the night. They had explained time and again that the issue the synod was facing was not political at all. The synod should be distinguished from the ARP, the political party which very much opposed Indonesian independence. The anti-Proklamasi attitude of the gereformeerde constituency was not the point at all. The issue was of the highest theological and ecclesiological importance. These theologians went out of their way to explain to Probowinoto that the life of the church as church was very much at stake. The continuity of the gereformeerde kerk itself now depended on his role at the synod. If it could no longer be a missionary church Gods mission itself would be discontinued. Indeed. They begged him not to 'kill' his 'mother church'.

Probowinoto told me that quite a few staunch, proud and prominent theologians had burst into tears in his room at nights. In the end young pastor Probowinoto acquiesced. He had also been told subtly that substantial financial contributions for missionary work in Central Java had been collected even during the war years and waited to be spent. And as he said, many Javanese, too, had been told by church leaders to wait, because after the war the Dutch would bring again a lot of manga, the sweet and tasty fruit. In one of the last sessions of the Eindhoven synod Probowinoto complied.

The Dutch missionaries who had been at Kwitang kept silent during the official meetings at Eindhoven. It was said that J.H. Bavinck shed silent tears. The Dutch gereformeerde missionaries did not stand up against their synod. They complied and held their peace. After Kwitang they did not 'cry out' against official Dutch views in the church, for instance by openly supporting Probowinoto when he had given his first speech. A policy of missionary restoration had won the day. A new agenda was born in which 'continuity' was proclaimed. Yet however much remained the same, continuity was out of the question in view of the vastly altered circumstances of the Christian communities in Java. But the transformations would remain hidden from official scrutiny for some time. As we shall see.

#### **IV. After Proklamasi: Two new Dutch protestant missionary agendas**

Dutch protestant churches and missionary agencies responded to Proklamasi and its manifold consequences. During a very short critical period two new paradigms of Dutch mission emerged. Each gave rise to definitions of Dutch protestant missionary authenticity; both responded explicitly to the transforming Indonesian revolutionary political scene and to the demands by Indonesian churches. The paradigms provided a specific definition of the authenticity of the Dutch church and of the nature of the relations between the Dutch and Indonesia churches. Shaped in the course of the 1940s, they would define legitimacy for a long time to come.

##### **A. The 'Oegstgeest model'**

The Missionary Council of the Dutch Reformed Church was created in 1947. A great number of formerly independently operating private missionary agencies active in various parts of Indonesia entered into a new missionary church structure of the Nederlandse Hervormde kerk. The concept of *Raad*, council, meant that the new body was given wide discretion and autonomy. It articulated its own views and was directly responsible for international relations. It was not directed by the centre of the church, the synod. The Council also maintained direct relations with the local congregations of the Dutch church. Through these networks they could provide

information concerning the work in Indonesia to all those who had supported the work in the past and all other church members. The Council could also directly request financial support from church members. In almost all congregations committees for the support of missionary work were set up.

The decentralised working structure of the Council allowed the mission to gain an *intermediate* position between the Dutch and the Indonesian scenes. Very wide personal networks between Indonesians and the Dutch were a fertile soil on which to act as broker between the Dutch and Indonesian church scenes. It reported yearly to the Dutch synod. Accordingly, the new Council was relatively free also to define new missionary roles in the international relations, especially in its efforts to give new direction to partnerships with the Indonesian churches, including the new Indonesian regional councils and, after 1951, with the National Council of Churches in Indonesia (DGI).

In summary form, I mention some of the major constitutive issues in the emerging Oegstgeest agenda.

*Oegstgeest.* The new missionary agency initiated a set of views in which a fundamental transformation of missionary engagement emerged as a consequence of reflections about Proklamasi. The major actors acknowledged that continuity with views and practices emerging from a colonial past was out of the question. Over time new contours became visible. These emerged from very conscious efforts to acknowledge the political transformations in relations with Indonesia. The churches could not isolate themselves from these. Especially not as long as the war was between the two countries continued. The need for a new beginning in the relations with Indonesian churches was most evident. But how?

*Church and government.* Van Randwijck assigned high priority to a rethinking of the relationship between the two churches and their governments. Close, too close, relationships and ties between the two had now become very problematic. For the Hervormde Kerk it was vital, he said, to re-assert its own specific ecclesiastical responsibilities. The breaking of ties was now a first priority and necessary as entry point for the relationships between the churches. These ties were not only of a political nature. Van Randwijck had also very much the financial ties and dependencies on the government in mind. All these ties had to be fundamentally reassessed as a consequence of Proklamasi.

The transformations allowed the church to articulate a more 'prophetic' role in its dealings with the Dutch government. That role could only gain substance when the government was kept at a distance. The church had to draw inspiration from its own spiritual resources and get out of the centres of power. Out in the 'desert' perhaps the church could again learn how to be obedient to its Lord. In the international missionary setting a new concept of mission was coined in 1947 which stressed this point: 'mission in obedience'. The newly articulated prophetic dimension expressed now first of all a willingness to be modest and accept a marginal role in Dutch Indonesian relations in the future. It would become perhaps clear later what this new agenda would lead to in concrete terms. The prophetic role was not stressed to underpin supposedly urgent new views of substantive Dutch responsibility. Dutch responsibility meant Dutch tutelage and control. There had been far too much of that in the past.

In various publications Van Randwijck stressed also that the accepting of subsidies from the Dutch government for any kind of missionary work was now totally out of the question. Such subsidies would indeed be no less than the restoration of a bygone past. The colonial government had subsidized all kinds of 'religio-secular' institutions in Indonesia, schools, medical facilities etc. Van Randwijck stressed the prime responsibility of the Indonesian government in Indonesian affairs. The Dutch government had to step back. Any meddling would indeed be artificial and detrimental to new partnerships between churches. As former mission consul, Van Randwijck had gained in-depth knowledge of and experience with the forces operating in the mediating

between the colonial government and churches. Now he stressed that mission had to change, really change.

*Partnership instead of responsibility.* The search for new partnerships between Dutch and Indonesian churches implied that the Dutch were willing to confront their own past. New roles had to be acquired, not so much expressive of their own high ideals and goals, culturally or even religiously. Instead, the hard work of learning modesty and marginality had to be engaged in. For the Dutch, with their long history of high-sounding ethical views this would be a very difficult task. Yet, 'Oegstgeest's' acceptance of the conclusions and recommendations of Kwitang implied that a new beginning was made. Mission implied vulnerability and a deep sense of the constraints posed upon the Dutch by their own historicity. During Proklamasi that very Dutch historicity had become a major stumbling block for new, more balanced inter-church relations. As early as in 1945, in an afterword in his doctoral dissertation, missionary J.C. Hoekendijk had coined the concept of 'experimentation'. What the Dutch churches needed was to learn and to acknowledge that after 1945 they had ceased to be the legitimate source of new views and policies in their dealings with Indonesian churches. They had first of all to learn a new mentality, new views of themselves and perhaps a new role in their dealing with the Indonesian churches. They had perhaps to learn this the hard way: in listening rather than pontificating, learning to be open, confronting all this with honest self-perception. Perhaps the hardest of all would be learning to be marginal and modest and not seek the new hegemonies of the weak: the construction of new post-colonial ethical 'pyramids of sacrifice' to borrow the title from a book by Peter Berger commenting early on incipient 'development speak'. The concept of a new substantive Dutch missionary 'responsibility' after Proklamasi was seen very much as a dangerous temptation.

#### B. The confessional model: Some notes on gereformeerde mission in Java 1948-1970

Another vital line is needed for the 'archeology', the digging for the major causes of the great problems the PKN is confronting AD 2007. All my remarks are intended to contribute to such understanding. What happened in Eindhoven in the Netherlands had a deep impact on the church of Central Java. The politics of restoration between the gereformeerde mission and the Javanese church of central Java was not primarily a continuation with the past. In other publications I have analysed how the international set up and collaboration already from the start lost legitimacy and over the years eroded further and further until it collapsed at the end of the 1960s. I wish to raise two questions concerning that period:

1. Why did the policy of restored co-responsibility between the churches collapse? In what ways did the very implementation of official missionary policy also engender the seeds of its own destruction, and in the end also to a very painful divorce between the two churches?

2. How to assess two responses at that time to this crisis which was articulated step by step in the fifties and sixties? I pay attention to two kinds of responses to the deep, not-so-hidden crisis, first by missionary J.Verkuijl, and a few years later by D.C.Mulder. In sketching these responses, I will indicate the first emerging contours of a new 'civil religion of development' within the missionary discourse concerning the international relations between Indonesian and Dutch churches.

The collapse of shared missionary responsibility in Central Java: 1948- 1970

Eindhoven had allowed the gereformeerde kerk to uphold the illusion of a continued identity of the Dutch church in its international relations. The illusion was no less than an intensive effort to save notions of religious truth and dogma from historical transformation. As a cognitive dogmatic engagement, mission as it were stepped outside of history. It focused on abstracted notions: religious truth as identity. As truth about Gods mission was to be defined by the synod, and of course by representatives (*deputaten*) from the faculty of theology of the Vrije Universiteit, any tainting of this truth by the Indonesian context had been resisted. Truth as revealed in the Dutch gereformeerde synod had to be implemented impeccably in the confines of the Javanese church, its purity defended. Isolation from alternative views was necessary and an acceptable price to pay. The implementation of official views meant that any tainting of the purity of gereformeerde identity had to be resisted. Isolation was not a liability but an asset. The implementation of the official views shared again by the two churches – willed by the Lord himself – was not up for debate or adaptation in the relations between the centres of missionary work and the Javanese scene.

In a number of publications I analysed the new structures of shared responsibility. At the central levels things were fine at the start. Probowinoto kept his promise made in 1948. He was able to convince most leaders of his church to agree to the new missionary collaboration. The synod of the Javanese church went along. Only the Yogyakarta churches continued their resistance.

After 1950 a most intensive and wide-ranging effort was made in setting up a dual administration for the daily routines of shared responsibility. From a great many regional centres of the church official policies entered all local arenas of church life. This structure allowed a continued Dutch theological input into almost all activities of the church down to the local level, the congregations. Their Javanese counterparts contributed knowledge of the local scene and set up highly personalised networks of clients for the implementation of official policies. Long before any notions of ‘participation in decision making’ were coined, a – to my knowledge – unparalleled effort was made to implement a missionary policy process right from the (church) centre down to the smallest village domains. Each regional centre had access to the two churches for direct negotiation to obtain financial means. Long before notions of ‘effectiveness’ and the like had become a cult such as more recently in development cooperation, here we already discern an intensive, and in a way most impressive effort to implement a set of clear agreed-upon policies, to set up a shared administration in Java, to fuse external expertise to local knowledge. All this in a total context of international agreements and the sharing of responsibility.

Much time, energy and generously allocated financial resources was invested to make the restored collaboration a success. Intensive and genuine friendships between Dutch and Javanese theologians became the high-quality lubricant to operate the administrative machinery of joint mission. In the new context all was done to make this work: the Dutch were fluent not only in Bahasa Indonesia but also in Javanese; they all stayed for many years. The waste of short missions was avoided. Centres of intensive friendship and unparalleled trust between the ‘pairs of friends’ and their families in all regions flourished. Commitment was almost total.

Why then did all these investments in shared responsibility already contain the very seeds of its own demise and in the end collapse?

The case is most important for many reasons. Much can be learned from a close study of the history of this intensive and almost paradigmatic experiment in international collaboration. I do not know of an equally intensive experiment in integrated international cooperation. I have learned quite a lot from studying this case which ended so tragically. This learning process is the more important as right now history seems to be repeating itself almost forty years later.

The downfall of the restored collaboration, gradually unfolding, and for some time actively ignored by the leadership of the two churches, is related to the fact that *missionary policy itself was strangely totalising in its unilateral demands on the Javanese*. The notions of authenticity of the Javanese church derived from definitions of truth and relevance made elsewhere. The church was truly

‘planted’ by outsiders. And its leaders were allowed to collaborate in the planting, the pruning and the fertilising of it all. ‘Pure’ (and foreign) notions of Christian identity invaded all walks of the life of the Christian community. Implementation had to be impeccable. Right down to the peasants in local congregations, a set of comprehensive views concerning the appropriate ways of a Christian religion and of a Christian life-style was to be implemented. Participation was framed in these hierarchically structured notions of legitimacy. Compromise, reconsideration, lack of consistency or ineffectiveness were regarded as illegitimate. This of course could not work. But how did the Javanese believers respond to the demands exacted by the official leadership?

In many of the local churches, church members went ‘underground’. In some local scenes I even came across the concept of a *gereja gelap*, an underground church, a kind of Christian *zamiꞑdat* within the church itself. A certain ecclesiastical schizophrenia resulted from the active segmenting and isolating of official discourse from the daily walks of life in the church. Often local church members and informal local leaders quite self-consciously marginalised their own officials (as well as the Dutch) from any insight into their situation. A series of rather effective sets of counteroffensives actually *split* the church into different and segregated domains, the one official and the rest a series of different local alternatives. Through these often rather effective policies of marginalisation local church leaders at the regional centres remained ignorant and could pretend to cling to the orthodoxies as formulated from above. Much of local non-compliance or outright sabotage of their official views was well hidden from them. So notions of purity could be upheld while non-compliance became another routine of the day. Increasingly it became important for the church leadership to join this very defensive game of ordinary church members and pretend not to see, not to know.

In spite of this pragmatic tolerance the gap within the Javanese church widened. As official images of policy processes became increasingly virtual, the centres became increasingly marginal. Local support for a Javanese leadership withered away and the Javanese church leaders lost legitimacy. The gap led to a very lopsided financial dependency on Dutch resources. At the end of the 1960s Dutch mission often contributed up to ninety per cent of regional budgets of international collaboration. The steady loss of legitimacy of Javanese church leadership thus resulted from their very collaborating with the Dutch in this framework and this in turn forced them to collaborate still more, and so on. The very notion of shared responsibility of Javanese and Dutch partners proved to be a dangerous illusion. Collapse was inevitable.

The collapse of gereformeerde missiology and practice in Central Java was officially acknowledged by the Dutch gereformeerde mission at the end of the 1960s. Financial ties were cut unilaterally. For those Javanese who had been collaborating with the Dutch this unilateral step by the gereformeerde mission had extremely serious consequences. Now that even the benign veil of religious legitimacy of Dutch orthodoxy that covered operations in the corridors of power of the church was taken away, who and what could defend the Javanese church leaders against the deep anger and frustration of others within the church who had been living ‘apart’ and segregated. Their lot was most tragic. In a regional case study ‘Murder in the Cathedral’ (Ph. Quarles van Ufford 2002) I have described how high waves of anger were unleashed against these church leaders who suddenly were depicted as ‘collaborators’. The ‘Eindhoven model’ had totally collapsed. Restoration had proven to be a costly illusion.

In 1970 in Kopeng, a mountain resort high on the slopes of the Merbabu volcano, just north of Salatiga, the small city where the central offices of the Javanese church are located, a new agreement was signed between the Dutch and the Javanese church. The ‘army of gereformeerde orthodoxy’ as it were surrendered. It was evident that the restoration aimed at in Eindhoven had failed. Although again the Dutch did not acknowledge so much defeat now they ‘agreed’ to withdraw their forces of ‘mission’ and the moneys that came with it. No more ‘shared responsibility’ for the gereformeerde churches in Java. But what instead? Would there be a future

for mission beyond this most tragic collapse of a truly encompassing discourse of the churches' 'international relations?

## **PART II. HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF? THE BEGINNINGS OF A NEW CIVIL RELIGION IN THE PROTESTANT CHURCH OF THE NETHERLANDS**

The middle of the 1960s was another crucial historical period in the relations between Indonesian and Dutch churches. In a rather short span of time a new crisis erupted. For various and quite different reasons the reshaping of agendas and practices of Indonesian– Dutch church relations became an important issue again. Time past and time future were in conflict again as previous notions of a legitimate order collapsed, both in Indonesia and in the Netherlands; in national politics as well as in the churches in the two countries. Radical changes in the two countries happened to coincide. The situation in the years 1964-1968 was in this respect quite similar to the crisis in the relations earlier on in 1945 after Proklamasi.

Again two Dutch responses emerged, each redefining post-1945 missionary agendas. Both responses transformed views of past practice. The confessional (gereformeerde) agenda changed much more spectacularly than the Oegstgeest model. Oegstgeest did not experience crises within the operations of the Indonesian partners as serious as those confronted by the gereformeerde mission. Of course, the events in Indonesian society at large were shocking for all, and the economic crisis, the mass killings in various parts of the country and the collapse of the Indonesian political landscape affected relations with the Dutch as well.

The point is, as I see it, that the transformations in Dutch society, far more than in Indonesia shaped the search for agendas of international relations. What happened in the Netherlands? What happened was the decline and fall of the 'pillars', radically altering the the Dutch political landscape and Dutch society as a whole, including missionary preoccupations in the middle of the 1960s. Dutch society had long been characterized by the co-existence of a number of catholic, protestant and socialist minorities next to a more liberal rather diffuse elite. This had led to a number of strongly integrated, rather self-sustained part societies, each engaged in political and religious/ideological emancipation. Suddenly this pillarised structure of Dutch society began to crumble (see e.g. Kennedy 1995). Each pillar, the comprehensive articulating of a totality of interests – religious, political, educational, and economic – had been a formidable tool in the struggle for emancipation. Each of these pillars amounted to indomitable, well-integrated politico-religious power machines operating in relative isolation from each other. Religious identity and the churches had been major tools in this quest for political power.

From 1958 until 1972 these religious minorities had uninterruptedly been in government. They were not a minority any more. The need for further emancipation diminished. D.C. Kuiper, one of the foremost students of the gereformeerde 'minority' at that time, explained to me in a conversation that the elite in the gereformeerde pillar began to think that the pillar had become a liability rather than an asset. The need for a further oiling of the religio-political emancipation machine of the gereformeerde sub-society thus disappeared. The goals had been achieved. Emancipation was attained, hence the need for the encompassing discourse of the Dutch protestant confessional model greatly diminished. The theological, political and cultural views, as much as religious gereformeerde identity, its dogmas in the Netherlands, and also the specific legitimations for mission, its definitions of responsibility lost their urgency and appeal. 'Confession' as a comprehensive system of beliefs and all kinds of political action transformed. The superstructure of ideology, religious dogma, and views of how to achieve emancipation as defined by the Abraham of the gereformeerde people a hundred years ago, the great Abraham Kuyper (see Koch 2005), began to fall apart.

There is more. Further integration in wider Dutch political structures and in society called for a new openness of mind and new agendas, the need to break through the long-cherished splendid

isolation. These attitudes were clearly in contradiction to those held in the past. The need for intensive re-orientation concerning all the options for the future arose. 'Modernisation' and the search for all that came with it now became a new, equally fiercely held dogma about to penetrate and permeate all spheres of life. The foundations of a certain authoritarianism were to disappear, hierarchical modes of thought in the church as well as in the other institutions were to be transformed. If renewal was to be all embracing, what would the implications be for existing international relations?

The thoroughgoing re-orientation within the Netherlands exerted itself in forceful ways on the shaping of a new international agenda too. The long-held notions of the missionary legitimacy of 'shared responsibility' suddenly lost their appeal. Around the middle of the 1960s Javanese church leaders were with shocking suddenness apprised of the new gereformeerde convictions. And again these were unilaterally imposed on the Javanese church. The Dutch priorities and legitimations transformed. The conventions of mission as defined in the past was over, or so the Dutch declared at the end of the 1960s.

And what about the Javanese? Above, I mentioned at what cost the Javanese church continued its relations with its (increasingly estranged) 'mother'. The issues involved had been consistently ignored in the past. Surely, most gereformeerde missionaries were aware of the deeply problematic consequences of the earlier paradigm of shared missionary responsibility. Already before the war the missionary F.L. Bakker – a courageous exception – had explicitly written about these problems, calling for an adequate response. But all to no avail. Apparently time and again the very powerful constraints put upon the missionary agenda by Dutch political-religious, confessional interests had been too vital. These views were so strong in the confessional model as to make it almost impossible for the Dutch to allow for much reflexion. Insight into what happened in Java came second. Notions of 'Responsibility', i.e. the essence of Dutch self-perception, could not allow space for the 'impurity of learning'. Learning processes could not be permitted to contradict notions of the vocation of the church. A long history of indeed actively ignoring of vital problems in the missionary field had resulted from this strong and repeatedly reasserted confessional agenda.

But what about the future? I shall argue that at the very moment that the older confessional model was de-legitimised, the seeds for a new model were being sown. *Development* provided the linguistic space for the articulation of a much more immanent discourse. As a confessional orthodoxy, 'development' allowed for new definitions of Western, or even gereformeerde, even hervormde 'responsibility'. While almost everything would change, in a certain way there was continuity too. Deep structures of 'responsibility' were being redefined and thus restored. The 1974 editions of the Dutch dictionary *Van Daele* elegantly reflects this curious mixture of transformation and continuity. The dictionary does not provide a description of the meaning of 'development' as a domain of global issues. This concept is not yet present in 1974. The dictionary does however refer the reader to another concept: 'development cooperation'. Thus development cooperation precedes the defining of development itself. Again Western involvements and interventions are the vital starting point for understanding of what development on a global scale, also in Indonesia. Thus the confessional model of religious and political views is re-affirmed, but no longer defined as an encompassing model of *religious and political truths*. Slowly, gradually, such legitimation is left behind. What arises is a new confessional model, no less ethnocentric and Dutch than the one that preceded it. From this point onwards we must see development as an immanent religion, as a new confessional orthodoxy defining *morals and interventions on a global scale*.

#### Emergent civil religion in the 1960 and the incapacity to acknowledge historic guilt; Some additional comments on mission

The sixties constituted a time of crisis, a moment of sudden discontinuity between time past and time future. A deep cultural crisis manifested itself in the relations between the older and the

younger generations. This was a widespread European phenomenon. The capacity to bring about meaningful linkages between successive generations was lost. A crisis long in the making suddenly manifested itself in various ways. This cultural and historical collapse also affected the perceptions about international relations. A most incisive tendency to celebrate discontinuity made itself felt. A general feeling manifested itself that everything had to be new, that consequently the past was more of a liability, something to be discarded. This climate also deeply affected churches' view of the past, including the missionary relations with partners in Indonesia.

But I have the strong impression that what happened – again – was most of all a crisis in the Dutch perceptions of themselves. Their own notions of authenticity – of the Dutch in general, or of the churches in particular – were at stake. This crisis, or rather collapse of Dutch notions of themselves was much more forceful in the shaping of new agenda's in the domains of international relations than any new insight, any learning process, into for instance the specific consequences of international policies. Partners overseas proved to be – again – of secondary importance in the shaping of agenda's in international affairs.

I have the feeling that we must acknowledge a certain *pathology* in our responses to the crisis. There was a tendency to respond in extreme ways. Extreme in two different ways: first in the wiping away of any insight in the past when considering options for the future. And second the pathology manifested itself in the belief that it would be possible to start again as if from a clean slate. The sixties constituted as it were a 'zero moment', an imploded moment, from which it was best to flee. To flee for instance in the future; or to blacken any notion about past experiences. It was a time in which the cultural capacity to meaningfully linking past experiences and agenda's for the future collapsed.

The Dutch as much as other Europeans were collectively and inexorably confronting guilt which had remained stored away for quite of bit of time. The Dutch were confronted rather suddenly with their rather widespread passivity in the times of deportation and extermination of the Jews during the war. Historians such as J. Presser L de Jong started to write the history of holocaust in the sixties. This was rather shocking. Moreover some stories about the atrocities committed by the Dutch in war in Indonesia after started to emerge too. This also led to much confusion, shame and anger. In a way at a moment when a relatively prosperous society was rebuilt, urgent and rather awkward questions about the Dutch themselves were raised. Their role in two wars in Europa and in Asia was taken issue with at the time again.

But there was another dimension to it. The silence of an older generation, its inability to meaningfully communicate about all this with their own children became a problem too. The sixties is also a time when as it were long silences collapsed and the 'trust' between the generations crumbled. Indeed this led to a widespread cultural pathology not only in the Netherlands but in more widely in Western Europe too. Cherished notions of Dutch authenticity were lost.

Alexander and Margaretha Mitscherlich, two German psychiatrists, have written some books in the sixties in which they analysed the cultural trauma's and bloody wounds which pervaded the relations between the older and the younger generations in Germany. They spoke of a "Vaterlose Gesellschaft", a society without fathers, in which the young were left by their parents in the confronting of a tremendous guilt accumulated in the past. The fathers, whose roles in all this remained hidden to the young in the silence between the generation did not take responsibility for acknowledging their roles and responsibilities in the past. They kept their minds and mouths shut and went on with their businesses of the future. The Mitscherlich's coined another concept for indicating the disastrous consequences of this sustained silence. They said that as a result all suffered from an "Unfähigkeit Zu Trauern", that is from the incapacity to mourn the past and seek redemption from it. The young being taught only the general insights

into the guilt, about the killings and destruction perpetrated, were left bewildered. In their personal relationships with the elder generation most of the young were tied to the past for which they could not atone; for deeds which they could not acknowledge, for a guilt that remained abstracted and general only. In the sixties it became very clear that the younger generation had been left alone by their parents. The burden proved far too heavy and the young almost collapsed, because it had not been able to come to terms with the past. Then they started to respond in extreme ways to the intolerable and frightful silences. This was a pathological response to a deeply pathological situation. It resulted in a flight into new agenda's. According to the Mitscherlich's the need of whole nations of a psychiatrist's couch became quite apparent in the sixties.

This also led to discontinuities also in Dutch views of international relations. Almost all of a sudden the notion of development manifested itself and spread like fire in Dutch politics. All kinds of new definitions of global "responsibility" were coined. It may be well to try and understand the articulation of these new views also in the wider Dutch context of a deep and rather pathological crisis of authenticity in which the Dutch suddenly found themselves too. It is said often that 'development has no history' Perhaps we must understand this observation in the perspective outlined here. The remark is quite pertinent. The new concept of development constituted indeed a break with the past. Do the new development agenda's perhaps also primarily reflect first of all a deep unwillingness to confront the past. Is a discontinuity with the past not precisely an appealing characteristic of the very concept of development? Is the concept itself perhaps not expressive precisely also of a deep culturally embedded incapacity to acknowledge guilt in the sixties, and come to terms oneself? In short, the fleeing into new agenda's of (inter) national relations is a remarkable characteristic of that decade.

These observations may help us to come to terms with a most remarkable phenomenon in our history. In the sixties we see also the emergence of a great number new international agenda's in the churches. The concept of "development" was avidly embraced by the churches too. And the sudden demise of the established bonds with old and trusted partners is also absolutely astonishing. It all happened in a few years. It was as if the missionary landscape of the gereformeerde churches, for instance, had been hit by a tornado. Suddenly deeply embedded missionary traditions suddenly collapsed. We must – I feel – interpret these transformations also as expressions of a deep Dutch cultural and ecclesiastical crisis. The past was suddenly over here too. In the dealing with its past as well as its future there sudden rather extreme views came forward. It indicates a certain widespread pathology among the Dutch at that time.

The sudden change in the policies of gereformeerde mission took place without any sort of acknowledgment of its own guilt concerning its past relations with the Javanese church. On the contrary, the defining of new views were also proclaimed to be in the best interests of the Javanese partner church. (See for an elaboration of the issue for instance: Ph. Quarles van Ufford 1996). In the numerous books of the gereformeerde missiologist Verkuyl, written in the sixties, there is also a rather remarkable silence about past missionary gereformeerde practices is striking. The acknowledging of mistakes is loudly lacking in the almost manic formulating of all kinds of new responsibilities. Verkuyl focuses on new political tasks and agenda's, on the breaking up of old orthodoxies. But there is an evident weakness in the lack of reflexive responsibility for his own past. In this way he is very much a child of the sixties too.

But as the Mitscherlich's explained to us: such a the lacking of reflexivity is not a step forward. It is perhaps first of all the beginning of the making of the same kinds of mistakes all over again later. It seems as if the churches need a few more decades to climb the high mountain towards a full historical understanding of the relations with the Indonesians than the Dutch government.

And perhaps all the good intentions formulated in the sixties are a formidable handicap which only slow the climbing of that mountain towards a mature insights.

### **PART THREE: RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN INDONESIAN AND DUTCH CHURCHES**

#### **Some tentative conclusions**

##### 1. Models and agendas

The two different protestant agendas articulated shortly after Proklamasi, have predominated the domains of mission and the international relations of the churches up to the present day. This does not mean that nothing has changed since Kwitang 1947 and Eindhoven (1948). Of course not. We can, however, discern two sets of assumptions over a long period of time, which assert themselves even through times of deep transformation. Transformation and continuity may be interrelated in unsuspected ways as we argued above. Thus in my view it is important to distinguish between two quite different 'ideal types' of missionary engagement. I use the term in a Weberian sense. Ideal types are heuristic tools for the analysis for long trajectories of change.

A major characteristic is the following: each arises in the confrontation with a different historical processes.

a. the Oegstgeest model arises from the confrontation primarily with the issues of political decolonisation of Indonesia. It is concerned with an effort to come to terms with Proklamasi. It involves the painful process of acknowledgment on the part of a colonial elite that now, all of a sudden, the Dutch have become marginal and perhaps even irrelevant in the Indonesian scene. What is at the heart of the model is the acknowledgment of loss and marginalisation. The "Oegstgeest" response aims at overcoming past assumptions of hierarchy – political, missionary, ecclesiastical. The stress on the concept of partnership between the Dutch and Indonesian churches reflects the effort to redefine the bonds of between the churches, be these financial, confessional, political, administrative. It is the Dutch who must transform, not the Indonesians. The model acknowledges that now for the Dutch the future is very uncertain. Yet by accepting notions of a new marginality an effort is made to open up some new modes of collaboration. The concept of 'partnership in obedience' reflects this new agenda. Humility is stressed as against a past in which Dutch missions were much more in (eclipsing) control. Reflexion now comes first, the 'experience of the desert' as it were, before any new substantive powerful agenda arises in a legitimate way and new actions can be undertaken. Perhaps we can say that religious dimensions of faith are stressed, not of action. It is best for the church precisely *not* to be 'in action' ("kerk in actie") now.

b. The confessional model, prevalent in the Gereformeerde Church is articulated in the confrontation with quite a different history. It is not the international scene but Dutch history which is relevant for an understanding of gereformeerde missiology. The confessional model of mission arises from the political emancipation of a Dutch orthodox political minority in the Netherlands. Indonesian churches are incorporated in that Dutch history. The agenda is not confronting problems, connected to a loss of power. What is at stake instead is the achieving of it. While the Oegstgeest model is about loss and reflexive, the confessional model is active and offensive.

The nature of ecclesiastical responsibilities in Indonesia neatly mirrored the core of the religious legitimations of this emancipatory movement until the 1960s. As we argued there was 'crisis'

precisely because emancipation had become a success in the Netherlands. The much more turbulent times of Proklamasi, just after the war, did not have a similar impact. The sixties constituted a time of crisis not because power had been lost, but precisely because it had been grasped. The struggle for power and emancipation had come to an end. For that reason established definitions of gereformeerd authenticity now became a liability. Consequently the missionary discourse started to crumble. The sudden disruption of the ties between the Javanese and the Gereformeerde churches at the end of the sixties was a consequence of the success of Dutch emancipation. The gereformeerd had to re-invent themselves.

What was needed were new foundations, the invention of a new historical context for defining for a new missionary discourse. The notion of international development served these needs quite well. While much changed as a result, perhaps even more remained the same. Again the religious and the political dimensions were fused in offensive ways with the defining of Dutch interventions and responsibilities coming first. A more reflexive attitude was clearly lacking in the transformation. The Dutch kept the initiative as it were even when they headed in a different direction. The writings of Verkuijl provided a whole range of new offensive religious legitimations to the new political responsibilities.

## 2. Development as a continuation of the confessional model: the contours of a new civil religion within the church itself

In 1962 mr Blaisse, a catholic member of parliament raised the question if it is not possible for the Dutch government to subsidise missionary activities in the Third World. His questions to the catholic minister of Foreign Affairs, Luns, were seconded by ms Rutgers, member of parliament for the (mostly) gereformeerd political party ARP. These questions gave rise to intensive debates in the political domain. It was something out of ordinary for the Dutch in the post colonial international arena. Intensive discussion of the new proposals took place, in politics as well as in missionary domains. In Oegstgeest, the general secretary van Randwijck comes forward as a opponent of the idea (cf Van Randwijck 1963). He had already give much attention to very clearly defining and distinguishing of the specific and distinctive responsibilities of the churches as well and governments – the western as well as the Indonesian government - in the international domains (Van Randwijck 1960, elaborated further in 1963). He made it clear that in his view the continuation in the international arena of a colonial policy of subsidizing missionary policies and institutions in Indonesia would be a grave mistake. The Indonesian churches now had to link up primarily with their own governments. It would be – he felt- a serious mistake for western missions to interfere directly in those internal Indonesian relations. There was in his view no legitimate role for the Dutch government in internal Indonesian affairs. That would lead to a dangerous mix of all sorts of responsibilities. Its consequences would be quite unforeseeable. Were the Dutch not still trying to come to terms with the consequences of process of decolonization?

His views clearly reflected the agenda outlined in Kwitang and endorsed by the Missionary Council of the Nederlandse Hervormde kerk. Moreover, this church took a very critical stance of the policy of the minister of Foreign Affairs, Luns, in dealing with the last little jewel in the Dutch colonial crown. In the issue of the sovereignty over Irian Jaya, or Western Nieuw Guinea, the Hervormde Kerk supported the views of the Indonesian Council of Churches (cf. Van de Wal 2006). Clearly Kwitang re-asserted itself, as the suggestion made to the Dutch government to subsidise missionary programmes would result in the Dutch interfering again in the internal affairs of Indonesia.

Yet, the greatly increased political power of the catholic and gereformeerd minorities manifested itself in this debate. After a great many deliberations a compromise was reached also with “Oegstgeest”. The government set aside some money , for purposes carefully defined. Perhaps the fact that van Randwijck was retiring not much later played a role too. The initial outlines were clear: the Dutch government would only provide relatively small amounts of additional funding ( co-financing). In 1964 ICCO and Cebemo two small brokering agencies between missions and the government set up office.

Yet, it constituted a major step as it allowed the confessional model to continue in new ways. But comprehensive and confessional it was as not only missionary agencies would take a seat in the boards of the two co-financing agencies. All sorts of Christian organisations , of employers, labour unions, Christian education, etc. took a seat in the board, representing a wide array of Dutch Christian society itself . Verkuijl a driving force in the setting up of the programme became the first chairman of ICCO . He clearly provided the religious underpinnings of a new much more international confessional perspective.

It is quite important to note the principled views of van Randwijck in the early sixties. Did he foresee what would happen in the longer run? He had gained direct experience like few others in the linking of the agenda 's of missions and churches on the one hand and the colonial administration on the other. He could not have been naïve in this respect. I have the greatest admiration for his principled far sightedness and caution. He was a visionary as well as an experienced manager of church- government relations, critically reflexive of the role of the Dutch in the Indonesian contexts. His views have a lasting relevance. He is surely one of the greatest at this time in these domains of Dutch- Indonesian relations.

For Van Randwijck the notions of the fundamental marginality of the churches in their dealings with the government were a stepping stone. I suggest that his views are presently of the greatest importance again, as we now witness the crumbling of this second wave of a developmental confessional engagement in the international arena's.

In the beginning of this essay I mentioned that I would try to understand the historical processes which led to two major events in the recent history of protestant mission and its relations with Indonesian churches. The two are the destruction of Oegstgeest as a missionary model. The second is the fusion in 2006 of ICCO , now a large government funded NGO with parts of the international section of the central offices of the protestant church. I shall briefly comment on the two events. Each of the two is dramatic. Each arise arises from the gradual emergence of a new much more secular confessional model within the church since the sixties A new civil religion made itself felt with a apparently irresistible idols.

So far I have stressed the early articulation of this new emerging agenda. I have the feeling that in the years 1945- 1970 the foundations were laid for a new discourse, a new civil religion which would be as closed and destructive we mentioned in the beginning: the context of the demise of a colonial hegemonic order. It seems to me that now we are confronting a very similar situation: the end of a second wave of western expansion, - the developmentql era , of a second quest for the pre-dominance of Dutch/ western views over and against other perspectives.

The two events which I shall shortly comment upon are indicative of the crumbling again of this new secular confessional model in the international arena. These are small events but perhaps indicative of a much wider crumbling that is taken home again also to the Dutch themselves. The two affairs are :

## The destruction of Oegstgeest

In April 2007 I had a conversation with the former Chairperson of the missionary council of the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk in Oegstgeest, ms Margrietha Jongeneel-Touw. I had asked her if she could explain to me some of the backgrounds of the demise of Oegstgeest. Why had almost all secretaries lost their jobs; why had their way of conducting international partner relations been terminated. How would it be possible to understand that instead a large, quite hierarchical centralised body had taken over its operations; why partner relations with Indonesian churches had to a large extent been discontinued almost etc. It was a conversation which reminded me of another one I mentioned above: the questioning of Probowinoto about the 1948 Eindhoven synod.

The answers she gave me were quite similar. As representative of the relatively autonomous missionary council she had been confronted time and again with decisions already taken, an unwillingness to listen to the pro' and con's of the "Council"'s conducting of its international affairs. Mission had been confronted with a stubborn wall of silence, and an unwillingness to open up for debate. Clearly the international agenda was of secondary relevance when confronted with the self interest of achieving one unified church structure. Management consultants' professional advice was taken very seriously. Or so it appeared. As Mrs Jongeneel told her saddening story of knocking on closed doors, I had the feeling that I had heard it before. Specific internal church agenda's, now of unification, unwilling to acknowledge any sort of specificity and diversity of the backgrounds of the mission's partner churches overseas. The closing of the ears comes at regular intervals. Dutch interests, now of church unification, as defined by the central authorities of the churches, are defended to the detriment of the agenda's of partner churches. There is – again- no space for their points of view; neither for the histories of partnership with Indonesian churches, which started since 1947. In the planning for the future the past was again regarded as a rather irrelevant issue.

Mrs Jongeneel-Touw wrote some elaborate incisive policy papers, mentioned in the references. In these papers she provided vital information about the history and modus operandi of Oegstgeest. The papers indicate indeed a clear continuity of practices of partnership. These policy papers were to be discussed in the context of planning for the future of a unified church. She explained to me how the writing of the papers proved to be totally irrelevant for determining the future of international relations. All of a sudden it seemed that 'Oegstgeest' had become part of a past which was over. Nobody at the central offices showed much interest. Unification clearly meant the closing of doors and windows on the world. It was as if a choice was made in which these goals of unification were in contradiction with the rich traditions and meaningful partnerships. It is astonishing how irrelevant all this had become. Did the new civil religion require the 'wisdom' of celebrating the views of management advisors. A strange obsession came forward with notions of centralising control and the reorganising of the church as a businesslike strategic alliance. You want unification, don't you. Well you can not have an omelette without breaking the eggs, or can you? These very strange and as it were cultic events warrant a much more detailed analysis than can be presented here. May these remarks suffice to indicate that major problems were created.

## A protestant church on its way to becoming a largely government funded and government controlled "NGO" in its international relations

The agenda of the meeting of the synod of the Protestantse Kerk van Nederland (PKN) on Thursday morning 16 November 2006 contained a most important issue. On the table was a proposal to fundamentally reshape (once again) the *modus operandi* of the church's international

relations. This was not just a technical affair, not just a 'managerial' decision. Much more is at stake now. The restructuring aimed a total re-definition of the nature of the church's international mission. It called for much more wide ranging transformations as a result: a redefining of the ecclesiology, and consequently its international missionary engagement, the nature of its relations with partners overseas. The church's very own identity was at stake in a broad sense. Another watershed.

The item was presented as a more or less technical decision: a matter of considering a number of costs and benefits, of improving the professionalism and expertise of the church, a modernizing of its organization of foreign relations.

The 'tone' of the proposal was celebratory: the moderamen presented a historical narrative in which the linkages were stressed with the 'visionary engagement' of Johannes Verkuyl in the sixties. Like Moses before him he had led his people out of Egypt. It was as if an old promise was now on the verge of being fulfilled; the promised land could be seen from the high mountain at the borders of the Sinai desert. Indeed I have been listening to such stories, for instance hearing a representative of the central church authorities explaining which we "the Oegstgeest flock" should keep up good spirits and good faith. In his exhortations he was making use of the exodus motif. He said that when leaving Oegstgeest we should understand that we now going to the promised land. We should put our trust in that. He said some more things too awkward to mention. He did not seem to realise that he had just declared Oegstgeest to be understood now as Egypt, the land of the Pharaoh, of enslavement. Quite a unification process indeed.

The swallowing of the church's international relations by a closely governmentally controlled agency, ICCO, and tightly Dutch controlled modus operandi cannot be presented as a befitting achievement, a kind of new crowing of a ecumenical tradition. In practical terms all this implies that large parts of the church's international relations are incisively being redefined. It must fit the most curious and ossified routines now established by ICCO, governed and controlled as it is by a most remarkable range of minute and myriad criteria and controls set by the minister of development cooperation. The church will now start to shoot seriously at the targets set in an military in this totally bureaucratized world which we call development cooperation. After the destruction of Oegstgeest, may be the central offices of the church are serious in the destroying of its central offices. I

In Indonesia I came across many church leaders who have expressed their deep frustration too. In the beginning I told a little story of a church which had refused to take part in any celebration of the fusion of the Dutch churches. But a lot of money is involved. Quite a lot now. And as Probawinoto explained to me too: the Javanese are very fond of manga. These are sweet.

But then history will repeat itself. The know how to deal with the Dutch shooting at targets. The history of the Javanese church is indicative of this. The shooting back can be heard in some quarters still. A tragedy is in the making again. We seem unable to learn from experience. In 2005 the minister of Foreign Affairs Bot was way ahead of the Dutch churches.

A Dutch theologian recently remarked to me when I told him of my concerns: "yes, indeed the situation is now quite hopeless. But that is not something we have to worry about". These remarks remind me of a few sentences written by Vaclav Havel in the early eighties in an essay called "The Politics of Hope". He wrote of his experiences in still communist Czechoslovakia. He said that as we are marching on we will go from defeat to defeat, yet we march on because after the last defeat victory is ours. I still try to understand his remarks. Maybe we shall learn to

understand what hope means. May be it is quite opposed to our good intentions. We may still need to try and climb the high mountain to a more mature understanding of which the Dutch minister Bernard Bot spoke on August 16 2005 in Jakarta. We may be grateful for his words too.

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