

Religion and Politics:

The political involvement of an FBO in a field of tension

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March 2018

Table of Content

1. Introduction	4
1.1 The Foundation INLIA	5
1.2 The Tension	7
1.3 Methodology	8
1.4 Definitions	10
1.4.1. The Topic of Religion	10
1.4.2 FBO	11
1.4.3 Secularisation	12
2. Dutch Policies Regarding Asylum Seekers	15
2.1 Migrant, Asylum Seeker or Refugee	15
2.2 The Procedure	16
2.3 Local versus National	18
2.4 Conclusion	20
3. The Biblical Tension	23
3.1 Christianity and Politics	23
3.2 Politics in the Bible	25
3.3 Hospitality in the Bible	27
3.4 Fear for Polarisation	29
3.5 Conclusion	30
4. The Case of INLIA	31
4.1 INLIA as a lobbyist	32
4.2 Political Involvement in Practise	34
4.2.1 The interviewees	35
4.2.2 Mrs. Brouwer	38
4.2.3 Mr. Wolters	39

4.2.4 Mr. Verbeek and Mrs. van Beek	41
4.2.5 Mr. Verhoeven, Mr. van Dam and Mr. Schouten	43
4.2.6 Mr. de Leeuw	45
4.2.7 Mrs. Groen	46
4.3 Nuclear Weapons in the Netherlands and the Fear for Polarisation	46
4.4 Secularisation	48
4.4 Conclusion	48
5. Conclusion	51
Bibliography	55
Appendix I: The Charter of Groningen, 1988	59
Appendix II: Interview Questions	61

1. Introduction

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Mat 25:40, King James Version)

From a churchly perspective, it seems to be obvious: we cannot let anyone live on the street. Yet when looking at procedures regarding asylum seekers in the Netherlands, it happens too often that these people actually do find themselves living exactly there. And when they come to the Netherlands, they seem to be spit out by society, claiming that these people are looking for luck, for money: that they should have stayed in their home countries.

Although not all church leaders might agree, many do think that asylum seekers should be treated better. When asylum seekers do not know what to do anymore, it happens that they end up on the church's doorstep. Some of these church representatives came together and decided they wanted to help these people, but they needed more expertise. This resulted in the foundation of the Faith-Based Organisation (FBO) INLIA. The name INLIA stands for International Network of Local Initiatives with/for Asylum seekers. INLIA is a Dutch network of churches that helps refugees in need. The bureau is located in the city of Groningen, because the Charter-text that was signed by these churches was set up in Groningen.

Starting 1 March, 2017, I interned at the bureau of INLIA. I was part of the Public Relations department. Through this function, I encountered many people that are involved with the refugees and churches. I went to the regional assemblies, and I helped organising the Inspiration and Expertise day on 8 April 2017. Already early on in the internship it became clear that INLIA is operating in a field of tension. Where the first quote heard often was Matthew 25:40, with which this paper opened, it was often soon followed by Romans 13:1: *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”* It seems to create a tension that the people of the church want to help those in need, yet they also have to obey to politics. Often, INLIA has to work around this fine line. They want to fill in where the government lacks in their opinion.

If the bureau of INLIA was not connected to the churches, it seems that they would be more politically involved. However, it is the case that INLIA sometimes gets politically involved through for instance lobbying. This might create a tension with the churchly network, because they do not always agree with the political involvement of INLIA. For the research, I have looked at the tension that arises, and evaluate the way INLIA deals with this tension. The central question for this thesis is *How does an FBO/church deal with the tensions that arise between religion and politics regarding asylum seekers in the Netherlands?* For this research I

have interviewed representatives of the churchly network to hear their opinion in how far INLIA should be involved politically.

Each chapter and subtext deals with its own sub-question, that together will provide an answer to the central question. The structure of the thesis will start off with the policies regarding asylum seekers in the Netherlands to give an overview of these as well as where INLIA finds the policies are lacking. Chapter Two therefore gives answer to the question *What are the policies regarding refugees in the Netherlands and where do the local and national governments disagree on them?* Then, the biblical tension will be discussed in order to know exactly what it is as well as the discussion existent around this topic, to show in how far this tension can be felt within churches in general and then the Dutch churches in particular. This chapter gives answer to the question *How is the tension between hospitality and political involvement visible in the Bible?* The last section will deal with the findings of my interviews and the way INLIA has dealt with these tensions. The leading questions here are *How are churches/churchly organisations politically involved?* and *How is the tension between religion and politics felt within the field of refugees?* The thesis will end with a conclusion putting these questions together to answer the main question.

1.1 The Foundation INLIA

The situation of refugees and those seeking asylum in Europe is alarming. There is a general tendency for European governments to close the borders and to stop the influx of the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers. All sorts of legislative and bureaucratic measures are being taken at national and regional levels. Increasingly the refugee concept and the Geneva Refugee Conventions of 1951 and 1967 are being interpreted in a restrictive way. As local churches, parishes, faith communities and basic groups we feel that our moral responsibility calls us to act in this situation. Refugees and those seeking asylum make it clear to us how much violence and injustice there is in the world. To avoid the burden and sorrow connected with giving protection to refugees means refusing to regard this violence and injustice as a common problem. Our faith that God wants the oneness of humankind, urges us to reject this refusal and take sides with refugees and asylum seekers. Charter of Groningen, 1988

The Charter of Groningen opens with the text above, and can be found in its entirety in Appendix I. This Charter is the foundational text of INLIA. INLIA profiles itself as a foundation that has two central goals: providing help to asylum seekers in need and advising the network of predominantly Christian churches how to do this. Almost 600 churches are connected to the network of INLIA, as well as multiple private benefactors. The majority of these churches are Protestant, but almost all strands of Christianity are represented, like for

instance the Quakers, the Russian Orthodox church, the Protestant Churches of the Netherlands (PKN) and Catholics. Although the name suggests that there is an international network present, in practise the active network of INLIA is within the Netherlands. There are however still ties with churches in for instance England and Germany ('Wat Is INLIA', 2017). This makes that they did not change the name, as there is still an international aspect to it.

Since 2015, INLIA also started the Bed-Bath-Bread+ (BBB+) in Groningen. Because of the expertise present within the bureau, the municipality asked INLIA to arrange this. The BBB means very sober shelter for asylum seekers that do not have a right to governmental shelter anymore. Unique for the BBB concept in Groningen is that INLIA has added the "+", which stands for Begeleiding (guidance). This guidance concept is based on the "Transit House" project, in which INLIA together with Kerk In Actie¹ developed a method on perspective for asylum seekers. When people end up in the BBB, it is not meant to be the final destination. Rather, it should be a place where you can develop perspective with the help of INLIA. From the beginning, the inhabitants need to sign a contract in which they state that they will fully cooperate in developing perspective. This perspective can be another procedure in the Netherlands, or relocation to the country of origin or a third country (Stichting INLIA, "Dossier Bed-Bad-Brood", 2017). For this department, INLIA has a lot of social workers employed.

Starting in 2016, INLIA also organised the pilot project Halfway House in Eelde. This is a house in which people with a residential permit will learn to participate and integrate. In 2015 and 2016, there was a kind of "bottleneck" effect within the governmental shelters for asylum seekers (AZCs: asielzoekerscentra). There was a large influx of asylum seekers, but there were not enough residences to house the people with a resident permit. This means that the permit holders were taking up space in AZCs while the new refugees could not enter them. As a solution, they started the Halfway House. Here, the permit holders would start their integration already, as well as learning how to participate in Dutch society. This pilot project will last for two years (Stichting INLIA, "Eindelijk Een Nieuw Begin", 2017). This shows the wide range of aspects in which INLIA participates.

In this thesis, the distinction is made between INLIA as an organisation and the bureau of INLIA. With the bureau, I refer to the physical office of INLIA in Groningen, where the

¹ Kerk in Action stands for Church in Action is the rescue service of the Protestant Churches of the Netherlands, the PKN. Through the inspiration of Jesus Christ they want to share in what they have been given. They partake in different projects, among which the Transit House project.

jurists, social workers and other experts are situated. When referring to INLIA in general, I mean the Foundation INLIA, of which the network of churches are a part.

1.2 The Tension

The idea of this tension is not just taken out of thin air. The first regional assembly I went to, for the region of Drenthe, was shortly before the Dutch elections. From the representatives of the churches it became obvious that there were certain things that were better left unspoken. This was mainly concerning the Partij Voor de Vrijheid (PVV), the extreme right-wing populist party. This party is strongly against refugees and particularly Muslims. Although none of the people in the room would ever agree with such a party, they expressed a fear to talk about politics with their fellow church-goers. They were afraid of polarisation. Some felt that believing in Jesus and voting PVV should not go together, but they dare not say so. They are afraid that it would cause conflict, that it would lose them even more members in a time where church attendance is declining steadily. Next to this, they seemed to feel that it was not the task of the church to express any political agenda.

In this same assembly, people referred back to the discussion around nuclear weapons. This had caused polarisation within the churches, something that they did not want to see repeated. In academic discourse, this is also the example used most concerning the tension between the church and political involvement, which will be further elaborated in Chapter Three. During the assembly it became clear that most people felt that people and churches were allowed to have their own opinion on politics, but that it was better left unspoken. It almost seemed that they thought the church should not have any political involvement. However, they were all also people who felt that the refugees were/are treated unjustly and people that want to do something about that. That seems to create a tension as well.

But besides not talking about it, INLIA often also experiences a tension in regards to acting politically. Often within Christianity people seem to hold the view that politics is not something the church should be involved in. This creates a tension when it comes to asylum seekers, because it is also said in the Bible, in Mat 25 for instance, that one should be kind towards strangers, and when looking at Dutch politics, the majority is not kind.

At the next regional assembly, in Utrecht, we saw the exact opposite of this. This assembly was already after the elections. Concerning the BBB shelters, there had been a discussion between the municipalities and the government concerning finances. These talks were cut off very suddenly. This will be elaborated in Chapter Two. One of the people at the assembly asked what INLIA was doing now the elections were over. He hoped that they would

be lobbying for the topic, as to get it back on the agenda as soon as possible. These people were not in any way afraid of the political involvement and actually wanted INLIA to pursue these political goals. This shows that there is a divide within the church when it comes to political involvement of the church or at least churchly organisations.

1.3 Methodology

There has been a lot of research concerning the secularisation of the West. Within this trend, people have often looked at the changing role of religion. Where at first the central idea was that religion would disappear completely, now an idea begins to emerge that religion is not so much disappearing as it is transforming and reappearing (Quack in Zuckerman & Shook, 2017, p. 27-28). This transformed form of religion has played a significant role in the public domain. While this thesis primarily focuses on the Netherlands, this holds true for the entire West. Although before the Enlightenment religion has had major influences on politics, if not participated in politics completely, there now often seems to be a divide between church and state. This division can also be found in the Bible. This division has become more important after the Protestant Reformation, as Luther was specifically adamant in his idea that the state was an higher authority appointed by God and that one should never try to start a revolution (Schreuder in Laeyendecker & Schreuder 1985, p. 36-39). With this development, question remains if religion, specifically Christianity, should be politically involved and if so, how.

This thesis aims to show an example of how a Faith Based Organisation is politically involved and how this is dealt with. Specifically in regard to the network of churches connected to INLIA, it will be examined how they deal with this tension. It aims to show the opinions of the network in regard to the political involvement of INLIA as well as the way the employees of INLIA feel that the way they work can be reconciled with the Bible and specifically Romans 13. The backbone of the research is created through a literature study and observations in daily life within INLIA, whereas the main chapter of the thesis, Chapter 4, will consist of the results of semi-structured interviews.

The study presented in this paper has been conducted over the course of four months, namely from March 1 2017 until June 30 2017. Over these four months, I interned at INLIA where I did numerous things, one of which was attending regional assemblies. These assemblies became part of the fieldwork as interesting things were mentioned there, showing the tension that is discussed in this thesis. Next to this, the information of the interviews are also added upon by information gathered and heard throughout the bureau. Whenever relevant topics were addressed, I would take notes in order to not forget them but also for me to base

my interview questions upon. Some urgent questions were of course posed as soon as they hit me, but with others I waited until I could ask them in interviews specifically. Some information was therefore also readdressed in the interviews.

The interviews conducted with the representatives of the churches were semi-structured and recorded. I held nine interviews that lasted between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours. There were some standard questions that I asked all interviewees. These can be found in Appendix II. For the most part, the questions were focussed on my research, by first sketching the person and their religious background followed by their stance on religious political involvement. I ended each interview with asking about their knowledge concerning INLIA's political involvement and their opinion on that. I compared the different answers given. It provided me with examples from the field as to how one can help refugees through religion or religious organisations.

The literature used to create a framework for the thesis was mostly accessed through the resources of the University of Groningen or through the resources of INLIA. Different books and chapters were used in order to sketch the situation of religion and political involvement in the Netherlands. Next to that the website of INLIA and that of official governmental institutions have been used excessively. The former in order to sketch INLIA not just through the knowledge that I gained through my internship but also backing up the information through official publications, and the latter has mostly been used in order to sketch the current situation regarding asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Asylum seekers are the main focus of INLIA, and this is also the political field where they feel the tension between religion and politics so strongly. The websites are used to sketch out the problems that INLIA has with the policies.

The thesis started as an idea concerning the field of tension between Romans 13 and Matthew 25, an idea that is prevalent within the bureau of INLIA. The main book that supports this idea is *Religie en Politiek: Verkenning op een Spanningsveld*, edited by Laeyendecker and Schreuder in 1985. This book and its different chapters keep coming back within the thesis. However, this also already shows the problem of the earth of the literature that this thesis also wants to address. The book is quite dated, but there has rarely been done more research towards the topic, at least not which I could easily access. This shows that there is a gap to be filled. This gap is interesting as religion in the public domain is a much talked about subject, but in regard to politics in the Bible it seems like there is very little research.

1.4 Definitions

There are certain topics that this thesis deals with, and many of them are taken for granted. However, I want to address some of these here. Primarily, I want to define what I consider religion in the first place. I also want to introduce what an FBO is exactly, and how INLIA is one. These topics need to be defined because they are often mentioned as if everyone knows what they mean, but I want to be as clear as possible and describe what *I* mean with these terms in the context of this thesis.

1.4.1. The Topic of Religion

Religion is a much-used word that everyone knows and has an idea about. But what do we define as religion? Merriam-Webster defines *religion* as follows: (1): *the service and worship of a God or the supernatural* (2): *commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance* (“Religion”, 2017). However, the fine lines are not as clear. As Horton (1960, p. 201-202) describes, there are multiple ways of defining or purposely not defining religion. Because religion is such a broad concept, in every definition there seem to be border cases which one would describe as religion but does not fit within the given definition. Horton gives the example of Nadel’s description, in which he says that the word religion is one of the words that has such an intuitive meaning that we should not try to define it, because “we must not risk omitting anything that might be relevant” (p. 201). Horton understands this kind of explanation but also says that it is not enough. Religion is about social relations. It is not just believing in spirits or a God, but it is about the way society is built up. Horton agrees most with Tylor’s definition of religion, being the belief in spirits (p. 204), although Tyler is contested much also. It is however no surprise then that Merriam-Webster had a similar definition.

Defining religion is not easy to do and there is high controversy surrounding the different definitions. In *A Dictionary of Philosophy of Religion*, three different approaches to the definition of religion are described. Where the initial way to define religion was to state it is the belief in a God, it is now popular to define religion through examples, by naming the different big traditions like Christianity and Islam. By only stating the belief in God, one can neglect already some of the big traditions as some strands of Buddhism are nontheistic (Taliaferro and Marty 2010, p. 196). As an alternative definition, Taliaferro and Marty give the following:

A religion is a body of teachings and prescribed practices about an ultimate, sacred reality or state of being that calls for reverence or awe, that guides its practitioners into what it describes as a saving, illumination, or emancipatory relationship to this

reality through a personally transformative life of prayer, ritualized meditations, and/or moral practices like repentance and moral and personal regeneration. (p. 196-7)

For this thesis, it is good to keep these definitions in mind. Although Christianity is a religion according to all of them, religion is not easily defined and a lot can fall within the parameters.

When talking about religion in this thesis, it will be in these terms. It will focus on the belief in something spiritual, but the most important aspect of religion, specifically in this context, is faith. To have faith in someone or something, to believe in the best of people. Not everyone at INLIA is strictly religious in the sense of believing in something spiritual, but everyone is religious as they have faith. Faith in our director, faith in the stranger.

1.4.2 FBO

As has been mentioned before, INLIA is an FBO. For this thesis, people need to have an understanding of what an FBO is.

Religion is a subject that is often overlooked by many studies. When it comes to developmental studies, there is not much difference. Many consider Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) when looking at civil society organisations and fail to acknowledge the role of faith (Clarke 2006, p. 835-36). Because of the separation of church and state, which will be explained in the following section, FBOs are usually also non-governmental. They do not receive financial support from the government, so they rely on donors (Clarke 2006, p. 845). This is also the case for INLIA. They exist through donations from the network of churches, and they do not want to be dependent on the government in any way. This is because they find the government lacking in certain aspects and want to fill this gap without intervention of the state.

The question is however, what makes an organisation specifically faith-based? In *Praxis Community Projects*, Lant (2017) describes this organisation, *Praxis*, which is secular. However, it was funded by the inheritance of a clergyman in the United Reform Church. It was a reverend who founded Praxis, and the office was located above a United Reform Church. The decision was consciously made to make it a secular organisation. Being aligned to a specific faith can narrow the demographic of the people that approach the organisation. That can pose a problem, but also be something positive. Having a faith can also make it easier for people to take the step to approach the organisation. Funding can also be different, as FBOs can almost always rely on the churches connected to their faith. But it also is the case that there can be a stigma towards faith, which makes some organisation feel like they have to distance themselves

from it (p. 53-9). In the end, it is mostly what people choose that makes the organisation either an FBO or an NGO, not if they are religious.

INLIA is an FBO that specifically does not want to evangelise. Although they act from a biblical point of view, they do not feel the need to convert the people that they help. Religion is for them an internal factor that might aid people in doing the right thing. It does however not prioritise religion. This can also be seen in the fact that not all employees are religious. Having a religious background is no must when working at INLIA. An open mindset, however, is.

1.4.3 Secularisation

Besides knowing what an FBO is, it is also and maybe even more important to know the circumstances that INLIA is working in. The current world is highly influenced by at least the idea of secularisation and the way it has or has not manifested in the world. Throughout the academic discourse, there has been a lot of developments considering the subject of secularisation.

Within the term “secularisation” the word “secular” is present. This can however have multiple meanings. Ager and Ager (2017) describe the meanings as follows:

First, it may refer to a constitutional or organizational arrangement that seeks to limit religious expression or sentiment from public places- whether these be the courtroom, the conference hall or the community meeting- on basis of not wishing to privilege one religious group over another (or over non-religious persons). Second, it may refer to a society, community or organization within which there is little religious belief or practice. These both are distinct from a third notion: the secular as a context of understanding that reflects the development in Western thought ‘which takes us from a society in which it is virtually impossible not to believe in God to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility amongst others (p. 39).

In this paragraph it can be seen that these meanings are close together but not entirely the same. When talking about the secularisation thesis, all three meanings should be held into consideration.

The term secularisation specifically was given to us by Max Weber in the 1930s, but only gained importance towards the end of the 1950s (Swatos & Christiano 1999, p. 209-10). The original theory was that the world would become a more secular place and eventually religion would disappear completely, leading to a religionless society. The influence of religion was, according to the thesis, dramatically declining. Modernity was seen as something that could not combine with religious ideas. However, soon people started to go against this thesis. Although in most of the Western world there is a separation between church and state, religion still plays an important role in people’s private lives and in aspects of the public domain

(Swatos & Christiano 1999, p. 211-5). Many theories now say that instead of declining, religion is actually gaining importance and changing (Quack 2017, p. 27-8). The idea of secularisation remains a topic of debate in academic society.

Peter Berger (1999) is one of the scholars who has seen both sides of the debate. He contributed work to the body of work considered to be the secularisation theory, but he changed his stance. Although there are exceptions, he shows that religion is not declining, but more evolving. In some cases, religion seems to reject the secular world, whereas in others it seems to be adapting to it. Examples of rejection can be found in religious subcultures, that seem to be minimising the outside influences, like for instance the Amish in the US. Often, these kind of religious movements are seen as fundamentalism. There are however also exceptions, most prominently Western Europe. Here the old theory on secularisation seems to hold (p. 1-10). Considering that the Netherland is part of this area, INLIA operates in an environment where secularisation can still be felt.

The prominent idea was for a while that religion was disappearing from the playing field in its entirety, retracting from public life and eventually die out entirely. However, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the debate has recently changed towards one where religion is in fact gaining importance and prominence in the world. This is both positively and negatively: it is used as a medium for peace and tolerance, but also for violence and terrorism. Especially within the context of refugees, this distinction is important. People classify it as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ religion, where ‘bad’ religion might sometimes be the reason for people to flee a country or be prosecuted, but ‘good’ religion can be the source of support for the refugees, in for instance the form of an FBO. It is however questionable if one can put it so easily (Mavelli & Wilson 2017, p. 5).

Part of the idea of secularisation is the separation of church and state. This is something that also plays an important role for FBOs. In most Western countries, this separation is present. Some scholars argue that this can be linked back to the Treaty of Westphalia. Here, for the first time, one can see the modern, sovereign state. The influence of the Catholic is argued to be taken away here, whilst also introducing religious tolerance throughout Europe (Wilson 2012, p. 1787-90). This nearly coincided with the Enlightenment, which introduced an even more secular version of the state where there would be a formal separation between religion and the state. Religion was to be practised in the private rather than the public sphere (Chow 2012, p. 1470-2). This separation, which is still largely in place, is something to be considered for this thesis as well.

There are several ways in which the separation between the religious and the secular can be controlled and enforced in a social context. In their chapter in *The Refugee Crisis and Religion*, Ager and Ager (2017) describe the ways of *Privatisation*, *Marginalisation*, and *Instrumentalization*. The process of *privatisation* is when religion is almost banished from the public and it therefore becomes part of the private domain. In many Western countries, religion has disappeared from the public domain, and the secular has become the norm in for instance governmental organisations, resulting in a clear divide between church and state. With *marginalisation*, religion is almost side-lined. The role of faith-based actors seems to be diminished in some cases, and in others people do not seem to make use of the resources available. In humanitarian context, opportunities have often been missed in regard to the use of civil society because of the religious reasons. When it comes to *instrumentalization*, religious resources can be utilised but also exploited. In this way the resources are used to benefit the secular agenda without taking the religious commitments into account (p. 41-4).

2. Dutch Policies Regarding Asylum Seekers

When it comes to policies about asylum seekers, the Netherlands seem to have one of the toughest policies of the European Union. In 2016, a report appeared from the Wetenschappelijke Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC). They compared different European countries and looked at the admission policy of these countries. In the Netherlands, a relatively high percentage of asylum seekers gets a residential permit. However, this is not due to loose policies in any way, but to the contrary it is because of a strict admission policy. Asylum seekers who do not stand a chance are rarely admitted in the first place. This results in a relatively high percentage of asylum seekers actually ending up with a permit (Bolwijn, 2016). However, when looking at the policies, they are extremely strict. This chapter aims to show this and answer the question *What are the policies regarding refugees in the Netherlands and where do the local and national government disagree on them?*

2.1 Migrant, Asylum Seeker or Refugee

Within the current discourse around the influx of people into the European Union, the labels migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are often used interchangeably. In an article in the Guardian, Alan Travis (2015) sheds light on the differences. He says that the terms “migrants” and “refugees” are primarily used, whereas “asylum seekers” is used less. However, in Dutch media it seems to be the case that the terms “refugees” and “asylum seekers” are used almost interchangeably. Nevertheless, his definitions still hold truth even in the Dutch context. He states that the term “migrant” is the broadest of them all, referring to people that are moving from one country to another to live there for more than a year. The people that do this in order to gain a better life or a better job are often referred to as economic migrants. If at the same time these people are also fleeing for other reasons, they can also be refugees.

Although there mostly is a profound overlap, there is a difference between an asylum seeker and a refugee. When one enters a country and applies for asylum or sanctuary, one is considered to be an asylum seeker. This status one holds until a decision has been reached about their application. However, at that point it will be tested if one is also a refugee. This is according to the Convention Related to the Status of Refugees. According to this Convention, one is a refugee when they are at a reasonable risk of being prosecuted in their own country for things like their sexuality, religion or political preference (VWN 2017). One is also a refugee when fleeing from a war and being in considerable danger (COA 2017). According to the 1951 Convention refugees are not allowed to be expelled or returned to places where their freedom

or lives are under threat. Once recognised as a refugee, one should receive a residence permit (Travis 2015). After applying for asylum, it is up to the Immigration and Naturalisation Services (IND) to decide whether they agree that someone is a refugee or not and whether they are allowed a residence permit. This goes according to the asylum procedure explained in the following section.

2.2 The Procedure

When someone enters the Netherlands and they want to apply for asylum, most people have to go to Ter Apel in Groningen. Only in a few cases will the procedure take place elsewhere. In Ter Apel an asylum complex is situated where the registration takes place. Here, one's personal information will be registered, pictures will be taken as well as fingerprints. During the registration one will also possibly be interviewed about the travel here, previous asylum applications and the whereabouts of one's family. Identity papers are authenticated and the stories are confirmed. One will also receive a Foreign Nationals Identity Document Type W² (IND 2017). All of this will be done as quickly as possible.

After this, a reporting interview will follow. Here, one will be asked about their identity and origin. In this part it sometimes becomes clear that another country is responsible for one's asylum procedure, for instance when one has applied for asylum already elsewhere in the European Union. This will start a Dublin procedure, which will send this person back to the country responsible for the asylum procedure. If this is not the case and the Netherlands are in fact responsible for the asylum procedure, the person will move into the next phase of reception. The person will be moved to another AZC, where they can rest for a bit in a period called the Rest and Preparation Period. Here one's health is examined, which can have an influence on the interviews.³ In this time one can talk with a lawyer and is put in contact with VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, the Dutch Council for Refugees (IND 2017). The person from VluchtelingenWerk will aid an asylum seeker during the procedure, giving them all the relevant and necessary information.

The official procedure starts on the day of one's first appointment at the IND. This is the beginning of the eight-day General Asylum Procedure. In these eight days one will have two interviews and some conversations with a lawyer. The IND decides in this period if one

² This is the standard type of document that one receives as a way to identify oneself. It is specifically for people without a passport who are waiting on a answer to their asylum application. When one has to be deported eventually, but cannot at this moment because of for instance illness, one receives a document type W2.

³ Illness can provide extra reason for granting a permit.

receives a temporary residence permit, if they need more time, or if they initially reject it. When one receives a rejection, the lawyer can send the IND a viewpoint why one disagrees with the rejection. After considering this, there are three options: the decision changes, they need more time, or they reject it again. When people receive a rejection they can appeal against the decision in court. When for some reason the application is extended, one goes to the Extended Asylum Procedure (IND 2017).

When one's application is rejected, one receives 28 days to leave the country. After these 28 days one will be placed out of the shelter. If one does not leave in time there will be consequences, like involuntary deportation or detention. The DT&V, the Repatriation and Departure Service, will help the person to arrange their departure. This is one of the points where INLIA struggles with the policies, because they have seen many cases where it was simply impossible to leave within these days, or there were still possibilities for a next procedure. When these people do not have the right to shelter anymore, they end up on the streets. To solve this problem, the BBB-concept was created. However, as will be explained in the following section, this is not the final solution, at least not in the way it is done now.

When someone is rejected, they can also try to apply for a second or successive procedure. In order to apply for this, there needs to be new information or a change in situation (IND 2016). However, it has been known that the IND is extremely tough in their examination of this. An example of this can be found on the website of INLIA (2017), where a judge decided that the IND had to look at a case concerning conversion to Christianity.⁴ The person had already applied for asylum because of this conversion before, but he was trying to prove that the conversion was true. Because the reason for application was the same, the IND barely acknowledged the request and declined it. However, the judge said that they had to examine the evidence given more thoroughly before coming to a conclusion. This does not mean that the IND has to give this person a residence permit, but it does mean that they have to take it into consideration again. This is another problem that INLIA encounters, which is that a judge can say that the IND needs to look at something again, but they cannot give someone a residence permit. In the end, only the IND can do that, unless the Minister for Migration uses his "discretionary authority", which rarely happens. The Minister for Migration is also very closely linked to the IND and would rarely go against them.

⁴ Conversion is something that is difficult to prove. Often, when one comes from an Islamic country, they cannot return if they have converted to Christianity because their lives will be in danger there. The IND often sees conversions as an attempt to create a reason for granting a permit and is highly skeptical towards conversion.

The website of the IND makes it sound like the asylum procedures are easily dealt with and do not take too much time. However, it is the case that quite often they will not be able to finish the procedure in those eight days. In 2015, the asylum procedures took so long that Joël Voordewind, part of the Tweede Kamer, said that the IND did not have the capacity to deal with the great inflow of refugees at that point and that it truly created a problem. The procedures took too long and this resulted in trouble in the AZCs and even a suicide (Sneijder 2016). It feels as if closing the procedure after eight days is more of an exception rather than the rule.

Since 2016, the numbers of asylum applications in the Netherlands have dropped. In 2015, there were 59,330 applications in total, whereas this number dropped by 43% in 2016, to 33,670 (Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, 2017, p. 21). This was because of the great influx of Syrian refugees in 2015. When this influx ended, the amount of asylum seekers that entered the Netherlands dropped significantly.

2.3 Local versus National

The recognised asylum seeker that is allowed to stay in our country meets two radically different governments. The first is called 'municipality': she has a visiting address and a human face, is usually helpful, often has your best interest at heart, grants you housing, and tries to let you 'participate' through helping you go to school or get a job. The other is called 'state': he is an inhospitable, surly and impersonal power, who hides behind unreadable websites and threat post, who once on ideological grounds decided that from day one in our country you have to arrange your own things and pay, to burden you with increments and loans, whereupon within months you drown in debts and accompanying stress and misery. (Kuijper, 2017)

As illustrated in the quote above, the local municipalities do not always agree on the policies instituted by the national government and can appear vastly different from the state. This becomes evident when looking at the policies concerning the rejected asylum seekers. As has been explained before, INLIA has arranged the BBB shelter in Groningen. The idea of the Bed-Bath-Bread shelter was first done on a national level. However, the Minister for Migration, Dijkhoff, stopped the conversations about them between the government and the municipalities, because they could not come to an agreement. When he cut off the conversations, he also retracted the financial aid that was given to the municipalities to arrange these shelters. That did however not mean the end of the BBB. In fact, many municipalities continued to arrange these shelters (Pelgrim 2016). Groningen is an example of that, as well as Utrecht and many others.

Dijkhoff and the municipalities could not agree for several reasons. The first reason was that the way Dijkhoff envisioned the shelters was not humane enough for the

municipalities. Although the shelters are meant to be sober, the municipalities did want to ensure that the people could still live. The next reason was that Dijkhoff wanted the shelters to only be for the people who signed an agreement that they would fully cooperate in the process of deportation. According to the municipalities, this ‘paper truth’ in which the government lives is not possible. Not all people in these shelters can or will sign such an agreement (Pelgrim 2016). This can for instance be seen if one looks at the BBB in Groningen. Not all people end up leaving the country. In fact, many can still start a new procedure. Others do not have the right to governmental shelter but are in the Netherlands legally. These people also need shelter, but they cannot sign an agreement that they will cooperate for their deportation if they feel that they still stand a chance to get a residential permit. This is why the agreement they have to sign in the BBB in Groningen is one that says they will cooperate in building perspective, which does not necessarily mean deportation.

Another problem for the municipalities is also that when these people do not have shelter, they will still be here. The homeless people on the streets will end up in their municipalities. Therefore, the municipalities benefit most from these shelters. The public order is at risk when people live in the streets (Pelgrim 2016). When people do not have food or shelter, they will try to acquire this in any way possible. By not providing these kinds of shelters, one increases the possibility of these people becoming criminals.

In Groningen the municipality made it very clear that they would go against the policies of the national government. The first location of the BBB in Groningen is the former Formula 1 hotel, which is not big enough, so as a temporary solution they also now have a boat. As a real solution, they have started the plans for building a new complex next to the existing building of the Formula 1. According to the local authorities, it is no possibility for these people to sleep on the streets. Not only from the human rights perspective, but also from the perspective of public order. Alderman Schroor of the D66 party describes it as follows: “Because who in the Netherlands wants people without perspective, money and prospect, and sometimes also traumatised, to just walk around in society. That is not a desirable image.” (NOS 2017). Here one can see that although INLIA might be operating against the national government, it is in fact cooperating with the local government.

The same happened in 2003 when the national government suggested an amnesty for asylum seekers that had been in the Netherlands for a longer period of time⁵. This policy was

⁵ This amnesty called the “Generaal Pardon” was being considered because there were a lot of people who had been in the Netherlands for a very long time, but they did not receive any permit. As a solution, they decided not to look at the individual cases but as a collective group, and whoever fit the criteria would receive amnesty.

so restricted that barely anyone would profit from it. When for instance looking at the people in the municipality of Utrecht, 200 people were in procedure and had been in the Netherlands for more than five years. However, with the strict rules suggested by the government, less than ten people were eligible for the amnesty (INLIA/VON 2003, p. 17). The municipalities protested the rules of the amnesty, as they believed it would not bring any solution to the problems that were present. Already then the same issues were mentioned as in the BBB discussion. When these people do not get a resident permit, but also cannot be deported, they have nowhere to go but the street. Here, they will most certainly pose a problem (INLIA/VON 2003, p. 23). This is also an example of the lobby of INLIA, and will be further elaborated in Chapter four.

When this problem was at hand, INLIA cooperated with the Vluchtelingen Organisaties Nederland (VON, Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands) in order to better the situation and get a better deal for the amnesty. Together with the VON they published the booklet *;Zonder pardon?* (Without Pardon/Amnesty) with as subtitle “Response to the amnesty of the minister of Foreign affairs and Integration for long-term asylum seekers in the Netherlands”, in which they explained the impossibility of the suggested policy. This is another example where they are aiding the local municipalities by going against the national government.

This cooperation between INLIA and municipalities can also be seen in the LOGO municipalities⁶. These municipalities cooperate with each other in order to look at the policies regarding shelter and deportation, and how they can work together to better the situation. This cooperation aims to make sure the shelter that is arranged by one municipality is not better than one arranged by another, but they also try to change the policies on a national level through for instance letters to the Minister of Justice (LOGO 2015). The chairman of LOGO is John van Tilborg, the director of INLIA. More people who work for INLIA are also part of the LOGO board. Although LOGO is separated from INLIA and the religious perspective, it is a way in which INLIA provides aid to local governments in order to better the situation for refugees.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to answer the question *What are the policies regarding refugees in the Netherlands and where do the local and national government disagree on them?*. The procedure that asylum seekers go through was described elaborately. Although there are strict

⁶ The LOGO municipalities are a group of municipalities that cooperate on the subject of refuge and return policies of the Netherlands. They share information and discuss about these policies, trying to equalise the policies specific to the municipalities.

rules to the procedure, there are many options through which it can take much longer than eight days before there is a final decision. The second procedure often takes much longer, and people need to be available to assess it, so it can also take a while before the procedure can even be started.

This chapter also aimed to show that the local and national government are not on the same line when it comes to refugee policies. The municipalities specifically see the problems right in front of them and are afraid that when people are living on the streets, it will be a nuisance to others. The national government sees not giving shelter as a motivator for people to leave the country. In many cases however, these people do not leave and they remain a problem for the locality. Therefore, the municipality prefers to have a shelter like the BBB in order to have an overview of the people in their city and to be able to help them gain perspective.

3. The Biblical Tension

As has been mentioned before, there seems to be a tension in the Bible regarding political involvement of Christian organisations and churches. Certainly in the last centuries, the secular state has gained a lot of importance. Specifically in the Netherlands, pillarisation has led to a firm separation between church and state, but also between the different denominations of religion. The government, as a secular power, is completely separated from religion. The most obvious way in which religion can be seen to be present in politics is through different political parties with a religious background, like for instance the ChristenUnie or the Christen-Democratische Appèl, the CDA. In this way, religion can still find itself in the political debate, but the institution itself is secular.

This chapter aims to show the tension that is felt by the people at INLIA. Therefore this chapter will look at the specific Bible verses mentioned, namely Romans 13 and Matthew 25, as well as the broader context of this tension in Christianity in general and in the Bible specifically. This will be done through highlighting biblical passages on politics and hospitality, and how they might sometimes contradict each other. The question answered in this chapter is *How is the tension between hospitality and political involvement visible in the Bible?*

3.1 Christianity and Politics

When talking about religion and political involvement, lobbying is not the first thing people think about. Often, they would rather think about either religious political parties, or religious extremism in order to achieve a political goal. However, Faith-Based Organisations can have influences in a more subtle manner.

In the past, religion and politics have been more closely involved. Christendom has dominated European politics for a long time (Zuckerman & Shook 2017, p. 7), but religion has been said to be declining steadily in Europe. In fact, according to Zuckerman and Shook (2017), more than half the people in Europe consider themselves nonreligious now. Looking at the numbers of the Netherlands specifically, a hundred years ago 10 percent of the people claimed to be unaffiliated to any religion. Nowadays, that is over 40 percent. And counting both atheists and agnostics, it is more than half (p. 9). For a while, it has been thought that secularisation would continue and that religion would disappear completely. The secularisation theory took the idea that religion was disappearing from a lot of spheres and shrinking in the others. This even led to scholars deeming contemporary religion an obsolete subject, leaving the subject to

historians. However, although many Western countries implemented political secularisms in their policies and constitutions, religion does not seem to be disappearing completely. In some places it is transforming, and in others it vanished but returned (Quack 2017, p. 27-28). This transformation can also be seen in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, religion and politics have been closely related. In the beginning of the 20th century, the Netherlands was divided in so-called pillars. This pillarisation (*verzuiling*) meant that the population was divided according to their ideology, albeit religious or nonreligious, like for instance the Roman-Catholic, Protestant and Socialist pillars. Different institutions would take an ideology as a basis, like schools, associations and for instance broadcast corporations. Also, many political parties were linked to the different pillars. However, when after the Second World War the de-pillarisation (*ontzuiling*) started, this left religion in a more vulnerable, less powerful place. Laeyendecker describes this in the introduction to the book *Religie en Politiek: Verkenning op een Spanningsveld* (1985, p. 11-27). This book title even says that religion and politics are on a field of tension.

In the second chapter of the book *Religie en Politiek: Verkenning op een Spanningsveld* (1985), Schreuder describes the changing relationship between Christianity and politics in particular. He first describes this relationship for Catholicism, about which he says that in the past, it has been heavily politically involved. Where the Pope now only has power in the church, he used to have political power. The papacy owned land, and they were involved in earthly matters. In current days, the political involvement is a lot less. The essay is quite dated, from 1985, but it seems to still hold truth that Catholicism currently is mostly obedient towards the state. Holding true to the idea of Romans 13 that the state is appointed authority by God, there is a mild obedient ethos towards state and government. However, that does not mean that they take everything the state does for granted (p. 33-6). In conclusion, Catholicism is usually extremely pragmatic.

In the continued part on Lutheranism, it is said that the Lutherans value Romans 13 even stronger. According to their ideology, there is a separation between the realm of God and that of the earth. These realms are not to be mixed. Luther specifically referred to Romans 13 in this aspect. Things like the crusades were not done according to Luther. However, that does not mean that the two realms are not connected at all. In fact, according to Luther, the state is also of godly origin, and God controls both realms, the Godly with his right hand, with his left the state. Even though this almost sacralises the state, Luther does find that many leaders are bad. However, he does not say that one should do anything about it in physical terms. One should not fight the leader or try to start a revolution, one should be passive and pray (p.36-9).

Therefore, Lutheranism is particularly persistent in taking Romans 13 as a verse of primary importance.

Calvinism holds a similar ideology but with a different twist. Calvin also found that Romans 13 was of primary importance, and that one should listen to the state. Revolution is in no way allowed. However, Calvin found that there should be a way in which the government could be held accountable for its actions. In a certain way, he proposed something like a constitution that would allow the people to check and steer the government if necessary, and possibly even replace it. In practise this often means that there is more political involvement from Calvinists. Where they see wrongs, they want to make it right. They try to fight against oppression and abuse of power (p. 39-41). This shows that although the ideology of Calvin can seem very similar to that of Luther, it has a built in failsafe that ensures the position of the people and defending them against oppression. Many religions in the Netherlands are derived from Calvinist Protestantism.⁷

3.2 Politics in the Bible

As mentioned before, there seems to be a tension present in the Bible regarding political involvement. Often, it is difficult to listen to every part of the Bible at the same time. It also remains a problem that not everyone interprets the Bible in the same way. In this section, I would like to point out some Bible verses that refer to the obedience towards higher powers, and in the following section passages will be shown where hospitality is key. Romans 13 is not the only Bible verse that says one should listen to higher authorities, although it does seem to be the most prominent one.

Romans 13 has been mentioned briefly, but only the first verse. I would like to elaborate this verse. In Romans 13:1-7 it says:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues:

⁷ For instance the Dutch Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

This is the leading text regarding the authority of the state. In it, it is clearly mentioned that the power of the state is ordained by God. For Christians, this means that the authority of the state is legitimate and not to be questioned. In some dominations more than others do they feel like they should not be involved politically at all. Specifically in Lutheranism, as described before, this is of primary importance. One should listen to their state even if they disagree with what they do, and revolution is completely out of order.

In Keener's commentary on Romans (2011, p. 154), he explains how it is clear that although Paul is saying that Christians should listen to their government, and that the government is just in punishing those who deserve punishment, the Christians do not have to obey their government unconditionally. As a general rule, he did expect Christians to be model citizens, but they should not unquestioningly obey the government, and he for instance warned against patriotic empire cults. It seemed like Paul expected the Christians to evangelise and to seek justice, but within the limits of the government. Keener however does point out that resources were very different then, than they are nowadays.

What specifically comes back within the Lutheran idea is that there are two realms: that of God and that of the earth. This is reflected in Matthew 22:17-21:

Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

In this passage Jesus makes it clear that stately matters are of no concern to him. This should be left to the political leader, not the religious leader. In this passage, there is a clear division between the heavenly and the earthly. This text cannot only be found in Matthew but also in Mark and in Luke, where, in very similar words, he tells the same story. The main idea remains that what is of the state should be rendered that of the state, and that of God should be rendered that of God. These things must remain separate. In John 18:36, it is said by Jesus that "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." In this sentence Jesus stresses the separation of the realms. Here the idea also comes back that one should not protest against the state. Although not always adhered through time, the idea is

prevalent in the New Testament that one should not use violence against the authorities, nor at all.

However, it needs to be addressed that after Romans 13:1-7, it continues with the following three verses:

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)

Not every government preaches love. However, from this passage it becomes clear that love is in fact fulfilling the law. There seems to be a contradiction here, which already makes it difficult to assess what is more important, love or the higher authority. This already creates a tension, which will be further elaborated in the following section.

Already in the first few centuries after Christ walked the earth, the ambivalence was felt by the Christians, because in the fourth century there was already quite an overlap between religion and politics. When listening to Paul, they should be subject to governing authorities. This was however interpreted in different ways. This could be seen as that the government was itself divine, or that there was an opposition between religion and the state. In the Book of Revelation, the Roman Empire was seen as the anti-Christ, which should be resisted (Chidester 2001, p. 101-2). This shows that there have always been different approaches to the passages giving in this subtext.

3.3 Hospitality in the Bible

The tension that is created here has to do with the notion of hospitality. When on the one hand it is strongly suggested that one should listen to their government and that through resisting power one resists God, it is very difficult on the other hand to listen to the passages that one needs to be kind and loving towards the stranger. This is difficult because, as explained in the chapter on policies, the Dutch government is not very loving towards the stranger. The full verse of Matthew 25:34-40 is as follows:

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we

thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Before this, the people have been separated into the people that have helped the King, and people that have not. When something like the Bed-Bath-Bread arrangement is rejected by the government, because to them it seems better to let people live on the street as a stimulus to leave the country, it clashes with this notion of hospitality. These people are not clothed, not fed, not welcomed, they do not even receive shelter. The question then is, what is more important? This notion of hospitality, or the notion of the state as a higher power? Here, the national government might be separated from the local.

This notion of hospitality is not just present in the New Testament. Also in the Old Testament it is already said that “Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Ex 23:9) This notion of having been a stranger keeps coming back throughout the Old Testament. In Leviticus it comes back again: “And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” (Lev 19:33-34). This can be interpreted as that one should treat strangers as equals, as someone who was born within one’s midst. One should be loving towards these people, because at one point the people of Israel were also strangers in a foreign land, and they wanted kindness. This kindness should also be given to refugees, because at one point the people of Israel were also refugees.

This same idea comes back as a commandment in Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 10:18-19, it says: “He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” In this passage it is said as a commandment that one should care for the stranger and give him food and shelter. This idea of course returns in the New Testament in for instance Matthew.

When looking at the idea of hospitality in the Bible, the policies regarding refugees should be easy. However, the state is not a Biblical institution, but a secular one. This is where the tension arises clearly. In some denominations more than others, the people want to listen to their government as a higher authority. However, they also want to be hospitable to the stranger. Most religious people I have heard, no matter what religion, say that their religion primarily preaches love. But how do you act upon that love, when the state does not allow you to? Within

Christianity, it seems that there are quite some groups like INLIA that want to do something. They do not want to overthrow the government or start a revolution, but they do want to aid to change. The way they do this and the opinions on that by the representatives of the network of churches will be explained in the following chapter.

3.4 Fear for Polarisation

When it comes to expressing political views, it seems that many church leaders fear to talk about them because they are afraid it will lead to polarisation. This idea was already mentioned in one of the first regional assemblies, where they specifically referred to the 1980s where there arose a conflict concerning the ownership of nuclear weapons. This is confirmed by Schreuder (1985, p. 55-6), who describes how the Calvinist church was openly against the ownership and thus use of nuclear weapons, as the only church that dared to speak out. In the previous pages he describes how churches have learned from the past. The non-involvement of the Lutheran church in the Third Reich has been a sore spot to them. This transformed the Lutheran church in Germany as they now felt they had an obligation to have critical opinions about politics. However, there still is a fear towards polarisation within the church, so it often happens that the church in general, not just the Lutheran church, will express themselves mildly, take the middle road. They try to maintain the peace within their walls, at least (p. 52-5). It is this fear that was pointed out within the assembly. Especially because the older churches within the Netherlands are emptying, they do not want to risk losing more people over such a conflict.

Such a conflict has also been prevalent in the Dutch Christian churches. In the 1980s, the Dutch churches were very outspoken in their opinions on nuclear weapons. For instance the 'Synode van de Gereformeerde kerken' (The Synod of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands) admonished the government to not place nuclear weapons. Such outspoken statements caused upheaval within the churches between advocates and adversaries. This resulted in the church almost breaking apart (Kuitert 1985, 174-5). In *Volk Gods in een westerse democratie* (1989) it becomes apparent that different people associated with different denominations of churches have wide-spread ideas on political involvement. Some feel that there are limited topics on which the church should give its opinions, others think that the church should withhold their opinions about politics completely. Whenever they feel that they should withhold their opinions, this is either because of the feeling that it is not the place for a church as an institution to say something or because they are afraid it will lead to polarisation among the people.

3.5 Conclusion

In the beginning of the chapter it has become clear that Christianity has had a changing relationship with politics. It also differs between the different denominations like Lutheranism, Calvinism or Catholicism. Where Catholicism has always been more involved with politics and even now is still quite pragmatic towards it, Lutheranism has been more held back. The director of INLIA told me that this is also the case because Luther himself would not have survived without the aid of his patrons. Therefore, the idea of listening to one's superiors might be more prevalent in that denomination. Calvinism seems to take the middle road and finds that the government should be listened to, but also be held accountable for their actions.

The other sections of this chapter have aimed to answer the question *How is the tension between hospitality and political involvement visible in the Bible?* through looking at different Bible verses. Hospitality seems to be of great importance in Christianity in general, especially towards the stranger or the refugee as the Israelites were refugees once as well. However, there are also passages that imply that one has to listen to their governments, and these should also not be ignored. This indeed creates a tension where people need to weigh out their options when they want to help someone even though it goes against policies of the government. In the following chapter, examples can be found of people who deliberate these options in their daily lives.

4. The Case of INLIA

Before starting the formal part of this chapter, I would like to sketch INLIA as a workplace. I spent four months in the organisation, and already the first month it started to feel like home. Although INLIA is very professional in what they do, they are extremely informal in their ways of doing things. After two introductory sessions/interviews I got the news that I was accepted as an intern for INLIA. On my first day I was introduced to the several departments of the foundation, as well as one of the other locations, namely the Formula 1 hotel in which the BBB was located. The plan was for me to see more locations, but there was a recent death in the BBB which meant a lot of work, so that was postponed.

From the beginning, there was a lot of trust and respect. Although I do not identify as religious, I was fully accepted within the group. Not all my colleagues were religious. In fact, of the people I worked most with, few seemed to be religious. And everyone was open minded. It was beautiful to see everyone working together, no matter their gender, religion or sexual orientation. People were very open towards another and everyone seemed to have a passion for the work that they do. That was what I noticed most of all. The quote of Matthew 25:40 might be vastly Christian, but everyone seemed to feel the same. We need to be open to the stranger, we need to help those in need. And everyone loved to help. A jurist told me how he loves the work that he does and the diversity of it. He also stressed the point that the job is not easy, and sometimes the results are extremely saddening. But sadly, that is part of the job.

Our director often said that INLIA has been working on its own abolition since the day it was established. There is a shared sense of sadness within the company that it is still necessary for a foundation such as INLIA to exist. This is also part of the reason why INLIA is politically involved. They help the churches where they can, but they want more humane laws towards asylum seekers. Through lobbying, they hope to achieve this one day. When that day comes, the asylum seekers do not need to come to the church for help anymore, and then INLIA should be redundant. Although the people at INLIA do not want to lose their jobs, they would love to see this day come.

Within this chapter, I would like to show how INLIA is politically involved, but also how churches in general can be involved and speak their minds. Here, I want to show that churches are indeed sometimes acting in a field of tension, but examples will be shown that that does not limit them in many cases. This chapter goes into the question of *How are churches/churchly organisations politically involved?* and *How is the tension between religion and politics felt within the field of refugees?*

4.1 INLIA as a lobbyist

We shall continue to point out to local, national and international councils and federations of churches what we see their responsibility as being in matters and problems relating to refugees and asylum seekers, and shall urge the councils and federations to meet their responsibilities within their own means and possibilities.

Charter of Groningen, 1988

One of the tasks that INLIA has is lobbying. Besides helping people with individual cases, they find it important to aid the government. The lobbying that they do is not necessarily lobbying for refugees, they like to consider it more to be lobbying for a better society. As can be seen in the quote above, in the Charter of Groningen it says that the churches shall continue to point out the responsibility of the government regarding the situation of refugees and asylum seekers.

In many cases, INLIA does not lobby on its own. In fact, it is often within a combined coalition in which they approach certain problems. Examples of these coalitions are “Coalitie Geen Kind in de Cel” and “Coalitie Geen Kind op Straat”. They have also teamed up with several humanitarian organisations to fight for an elaborated amnesty policy in 2003, safe passages for refugees in 2015 and to stop deporting fragile people to Afghanistan in 2017. These are only a few of the lobby projects they have been involved in.

The coalition described in 2.3 on the general amnesty is one of the coalitions which has had a huge influence on the asylum policy of the Netherlands. In their booklet *;Zonder pardon?* INLIA, together with VON expressed their concerns about the amnesty policy that was being drafted by the Dutch government. As said before, this was in cooperation with several municipalities that felt the same concern. This amnesty policy was supposed to grant people that had applied for asylum before or on 27 May 1998 and had not received an answer to their application yet an amnesty, allowing them to stay in the Netherlands (INLIA/VON 2003). This amnesty was planned to solve the problem of long staying asylum seekers in the Netherlands.

The main concern was that because of several clauses, an extremely big part of the asylum seekers that had been in the Netherlands for a very long time were not eligible for the amnesty. This was because of reasons like that they were not officially in their first procedure anymore, or did not receive official governmental shelter, or that they had entered the country before a set date, but the asylum procedure had not started yet. These kind of superficial reasons made it so that they were not allowed to stay in the Netherlands. In the booklet, they opt for a broader amnesty (INLIA/VON 2003). Although it took a while, in 2007 there has been a “Generaal Pardon”, general amnesty, where the date was made into 1 April 2001, and one did

not have to be in their first procedure: however, they needed to have been in the Netherlands continuously since their application and they needed to retract all other procedures.

The first coalition mentioned, “Coalitie Geen Kind in de Cel”, stands for no child in a cell. This coalition was supported by INLIA, but also for instance Amnesty International, Defence for Children, Kerk in Actie and many others. This coalition was started in 2006 because families *with* children ended up in “vreemdelingenbewaring”, aliens preservation or immigrants detention, sometimes even for months after their asylum procedure had finished. People end up in this detention when they have to be deported. However, in 2008, a law was passed so that these families were not allowed to be held for longer than 14 days. Then, the coalition focused on single minors that were placed in this kind of detention. One facility in Zwaag was known to be extremely inhumane, and after the lobby of the coalition, this facility was closed. The lobby continued with reports concerning the harmfulness of detention of minors, which in 2011 resulted in the abolishment of the preservation of single minors. Since 2013, they have tried with several publications to show the severity of the effects on minors in preservation, hoping to abolish the preservation of families with children as well. For this, they published a booklet with stories of families in detention, with the title “Dad, have we done something wrong?” (Coalitie Geen Kind in de Cel, 2017).

Another such coalition in which INLIA participated is “Coalitie Geen Kind op Straat”, which stands for no child on the street. This coalition is a continuation of the previously mentioned coalition Geen Kind in de Cel. Not all, but multiple of the organisations of the first coalition also participated in this one. This coalition lobbied for new laws concerning children without shelter. When families’ asylum application has been rejected, they have a certain amount of time to leave the country. After this time passes, they do not have the right for shelter anymore. When this happens to a family, they are kicked out of the shelter they live in, resulting in the need to sleep in the street, children included. Through different manifestations the coalition tried to get attention for the problem at a national and international level. This worked, as the Council of Europe has decided in 2009 already that the Netherlands has been violating the rights of children. Since the summer of 2011, the Netherlands have opened so called family locations where families would end up when their right to shelter was revoked. Then, in 2012, the European Social Charter looked if the Netherlands had listened to the decision of 2009. Here, they decided that they did so but not fully, because some families were not eligible for these shelters and there were still children living on the streets. In their decision of this, the European Social Charter had received a document from the coalition, aiding in their decision.

INLIA lobbies themselves, but what they also do is advising. There have been cases known, which cannot be elaborated here, where the director of INLIA has had significant influences on a bigger lobby. When they come to him for advice, he helps people in their efforts.

4.2 Political Involvement in Practise

INLIA is a great example of how an FBO can be involved politically on a somewhat larger scale. However, INLIA does not only exist as the office in Groningen: it is much bigger, with the network of churches that belongs to it. Individual churches as well as individual people make a statement as well by helping refugees in need. On a smaller scale, they do what they deem necessary even if it is not what is wanted by the government. They fill the holes that are left by the policies. In my last few weeks at INLIA, I visited several people that were part of the network of INLIA and who had done work with refugees. I asked them many questions, which were centred around the question of the tension between listening to higher authorities and doing what is, according to all of them, right. I also asked questions concerning their experiences working with refugees and the way people from the church reacted to that.

The interviewees were chosen with several criteria. First and foremost, I looked at the attendees of the regional assemblies. For these interviews, it was necessary that the people I would interview would be people that were in fact actively involved with INLIA. The attendees of the assemblies were usually representatives of the different churches connected to INLIA. Some were for instance deacon at their church, some just active members. Others were not connected to a church necessarily, but they were active in other aspects with refugees and therefore encountered INLIA in their work. I also wanted the people to be spread out over the country. To have a group that was representative of the network, it needed to be people from different sides of the country, as INLIA is a national organisation. When looking at the questions specifically, it needed to be people that were at least partially active when it comes to refugees. In order to find out if these people felt the tension that is felt at the office of INLIA, they also needed to work at least partly at such a field of tension. Therefore, another criterion was that the interviewees worked with and had affinities with refugees.

Combining these factors, I sent out emails to fifteen people, as I wanted to interview around ten people and this would leave room for people to not respond. The amount of interviews was based on two reasons: in the limit of this research, I could not include a lot more, and because I had to travel throughout the country to visit the interviewees. As I did not receive replies from all people, I ended up holding nine interviews that lasted between 45

minutes and 1.5 hours. I compared and contrasted the different interviews. I looked at the way the interviews went, both asking some general questions that were answered by everyone and specific questions in relation to the information given during the interview itself. In the analysis, I put together the information from different people whose interview went in similar directions.

There was a great variety between the interviewees. The general feeling of all interviews was that all these people felt that there was a tension between Romans 13 and Matthew 25, but that Christians do have a certain obligations towards refugees and that some lines may be crossed in order to achieve this. However, there were different nuances between the different people and a great amount of stories were told that are certainly of relevance to distinguish the answers even more. There was one person from Friesland that I interviewed that was actually not a practising Christian at all, but she was connected to INLIA through Amnesty International and later Stichting Noodopvang Fryslân. Because there are multiple such organisations that also have their connections with INLIA, it was interesting to also see it from the perspective of one of these.

4.2.1 The interviewees

The first person I interviewed was Mr. Verhoeven⁸. He is part of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in Drenthe. His church is a Charter-church, which means that they have signed the Charter of Groningen. He is part of the Diaconal Platform from his hometown. As there is a AZC there, he is quite actively involved with refugees. There is a language café where refugees can come to learn Dutch but also where they can ask questions. The Diaconal Platform was already helping others, like for instance the poor, but when the AZC came they felt the need to help the refugees too. Mr. Verhoeven places his reasons for helping others in his belief: not just because he feels the need to help them, but also because when you are brought up in a church it is just part of what you do.

The second person I interviewed was Mr. Verbeek. He is part of the Protestant Church in his town in Drenthe, connected to the PKN, the Protestant Churches in the Netherlands. He has been very active in regards to INLIA. He was the chairman of the local deacon and one of their points of attention were refugees. With that, they signed the Charter of Groningen. Soon

⁸ All names are anonymised.

thereafter they started to provide church asylum⁹, and they were one of the local churches that participated in the tent camp at Dwingeloo, which will be further described later. Mr. Verbeek has also been part of the board of INLIA, and is now part of the financial advice-commission. For him, helping refugees is something he barely needs to think about. If you try to be Christian then you look at the people next to you. You help where you can. It is not like it is something assigned, but it is something that is just normal to do. His motives are therefore Christian-based.

The third person I interviewed was Mr. van Dam. He has always been part of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands¹⁰, which is now a PKN-church, in Groningen. In the 90s there had been church asylum in his church, but he only got more involved with refugees more recently. The deacon helps refugees where possible, but the population of the church is ageing, which makes it difficult. They do have a project where they make soup every first Wednesday of the month, where everyone that lives in the same neighbourhood is welcome. The deacon mostly helps through money. Mr. van Dam helps refugees for different motives. He is socially inclined to do so but he also does it for religious motives. He is however very clear that he would help people regardless of his faith.

My fourth interviewee was Mr. Schouten. He is a pastoral worker for a parish in Utrecht. He is a Catholic and part of a Charter-church. For a while there was an emergency shelter close to his parish, and the interest in refugees flourished. The parish became quite active, and they offered a place where the refugees could come and have coffee and be away from all the business in the shelter. They did that together with the Protestant church. They also offered some language courses but that did not go as smoothly. However, when the shelter was moved to a different part of the city 2.5 month later, the interest faded again. Mr. Schouten himself still has some contact with refugees and still helps where possible. His motives for this are certainly Christian, and he mentioned Matthew 25 specifically.

My fifth interviewee was Mrs. Brouwer. She is not part of a church, although she sometimes does attend one. She lives in a rural village in Friesland, and she is connected to INLIA through multiple ways. She has expertise on Romania at Amnesty International, which is how she first encountered John van Tilborg. Now, she sometimes translates for INLIA when

⁹ Within the Netherlands in the 1990s there has been a tradition of church asylum, where churches offer their space in order to house refugees that are going to be detained or deported. This is a safe-haven where they are less likely to be taken.

¹⁰ In the Second World War, in 1944, there has been a schism within this church. The people that stayed with how it was are now called synodal, whereas the other part of the schism is now called liberated. Sometimes, the liberated faction is also referred to as Article 31.

necessary and she is part of a workgroup for refugees in Friesland called Noodopvang Fryslân. The workgroup can be seen as a sort of think tank where everyone's aim is the wellness of all refugees. She is extremely active when it comes to working with refugees, as she has her own fund to help refugees, she still counsels refugees and she even has taken several refugees into her home. Although she is not part of a church, she encounters the church a lot in her work, and they are the main donors to her fund.

The sixth person I interviewed was Mr. Wolters. He is part of the Protestant church in Drenthe. He is the chairman of the College of Deacons. His church recently voted if they would (re-)sign the Charter of Groningen. The College has contacts with a Foundation called 'Present for Refugees' because there is an AZC in the vicinity. Although he does not often directly encounter refugees, he cares about refugees and their well being and acts upon that within the College. He does this because he feels like we should look after our fellow human beings. Attention should be given to the subject of refugees from a Christian point of view.

The seventh person I interviewed was Mrs. van Beek. She is part of the PKN but also a friend of the Remonstrants. She encountered refugees throughout her life. She aided when there was church asylum in the neighbourhood, and she has taught at secondary schools where she has encountered and helped many refugees. She has also been part of the board of INLIA. She said that religion is the basis of ethics, and therefore religion should be an aiding factor when it comes to refugees.

My eighth interviewee was Mr. de Leeuw, who, just like Mr. Verbeek, is part of INLIA's financial advice-commission. Originally, he was part of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, but when he married his wife he became Dutch Reformed. Now, he is happy that they all came together in the PKN. He is from the province of Noord-Holland. Since 1993, he has worked with INLIA. A case of a Kurdish girl came on his path and he continued to work with refugees until quite recently. Now he still has three contacts for whom he does things. He says that it is in his reformed upbringing, that helping people comes natural. When it came unto his path, he did not hesitate to help.

My last interviewee was Mrs. Groen, who lives at the edge of the province of Utrecht. She is also part of a PKN-congregation. In her city, they have a Network for Newcomers. It started as a churchly organisation, but it has become a stand-alone foundation. Mrs. Groen is one of the coordinators at the network, and she is also part of a workgroup for Amnesty International. For the network, she arranges the language courses. She also helps refugees when she comes across them in her work as a deacon. She does this work out of her faith, even though the network is not a part of the church anymore.

4.2.2 Mrs. Brouwer

Mrs. Brouwer is an interesting person to start with more elaborately because of her less-religious background. She told me that her grandparents were gravely reformed, after which her father renounced faith. She was not raised with the Bible and actually saw that as a pity, because she came to study languages and cultures later, and the Bible was of pivotal importance to understand those. Therefore, she had to go back and study up on it. Because of her interest in Romania, she went to an Russian Orthodox church for a while, but at the point of our interview she did not go to church anymore.

When it comes to refugees, she has a lot of experience. She has worked with refugees for the past 42 years. She started in 1975 at Amnesty International at the Refugee Secretariat. Everyone that came to the Netherlands and wanted to work with refugees came there, and she coordinated that group for a short while. After that she always continued to counsel refugees. In this work she often encountered the church. As she also provided legal aid for refugees, she sometimes had clients that ended up in church asylum, and as mentioned before, the churches are the prime benefactors to her fund. The fund is meant to support refugees with financial aid where the government and VluchtelingenWerk will not do it. Examples of this are for instance official, sworn translations, study books or medicines. Mostly, they are things which are needed quite quickly for which the refugees do not have any savings.

When I asked about the churches in her region, and if they ever speak up about certain issues, Mrs. Brouwer was strongly positive about it. She said that it was great when she had a certain case, the church in the neighbourhood would positively speak about it. And as the refugee issue is not always seen in a very positive light, this made her job a lot easier sometimes. The churches also mean more to her than the government, as they are much more humane towards others. Where the government is strict in their rules, no matter the case, the church first looks at the humane aspect of it. She gave the example of a person who just came into the country to be united with their family. The diabetes medication was frozen during the flight, so not usable anymore. According to the government, these medicines could not be given until this person was officially insured, which would still take a couple of days. Thanks to the churches and the Mrs. Brouwer's fund, the person received their medication.

She can feel that the church is an ally in these kinds of cases. From other parties where you would expect it from, she does not receive the expected funds. She for instance approached Humanitas to ask if they would be willing to help her with funds, but up until the point of the interview they had only been evasive. The church on the other hand is always

helpful. Mrs. Brouwer said that if she walks down the street in her village and she comes across the treasurer of the local deacon, he always asks if she still has enough money. And if she does not, she should always warn him. The advantage of living in a rural area is that the local churches often have land, and therefore money.

Mrs. Brouwer does feel like there is a difference between urban and rural churches. In rural areas, there is much more social control, which means that people see everything that happens. That also means that when something happens, it is close to them. The people are confronted with the issues, and when it lays on their doorstep they are more willing to help. In urban areas people are less likely to notice the issues around them. Mrs. Brouwer also noticed that in the rural areas the church is still really relevant, and that the church is a social institution. And you also notice it with other things. For instance, she was housing a group of refugees for a couple of months, and everyone in the village knew. Although what she was doing was technically illegal, even the local police officer did not say anything. In fact, he even came around with some money and said ‘you know who it’s for’. There is a lot of openness and it seems that it is partly because of the attitude of the churches.

When talking about the tension that the churches were operating on, she understood that in some cases there might be a tension. She however does strongly feel the same about the Universal Declaration for Human Rights as the people at INLIA feel about Matthew 25. Not all refugees are nice people, but that does not mean we cannot or should not help them. When looking at what you believe in, you will find things where you disagree with your government. And when necessary, you should be able to go against it. This is the case for her, but she feels like it should be no different for a church.

4.2.3 Mr. Wolters

The tension between Matthew 25 and Romans 13 was most felt by Mr. Wolters. As said in a previous section, Mr. Wolters’ church recently voted to re-sign the Charter of Groningen¹¹. Before doing so, they have had some fierce discussions in the church council. They mostly were deliberating to re-sign because they feel that no refugee should be on the street. He here specifically referred to the policy that once it is decided by the IND that an asylum seeker needs to leave the country, they get 28 days to leave. That is too little to obtain any papers usually, and arranging your papers and tickets to leave the country does become much more difficult

¹¹ There is some debate as to if a church can revoke their signature from the Charter once they have signed it. This church however felt the need to, and has since felt like they were not part of the Charter. Recently, partly due to Mr. Wolters, they have wanted to re-sign it.

when you do not have a place to sleep. As a church on its own, they cannot do much about it so they would benefit from being part of INLIA.

There was however a part of the council that was opposed to the idea of signing the Charter. They agreed that we cannot leave people out on the street, and they do want to help refugees, but they had trouble with a specific part of the Charter. In paragraph 3 of the Charter it says:

When we have good reason to assume that a refugee or asylum seeker, threatened with deportation, is not being given humanitarian treatment, or that decisions are being taken that may seriously affect the quality of his or her existence, we pledge ourselves to take in and protect him or her until a solution has been found that is acceptable to all parties concerned. We will not avoid open confrontation with our governments or direct action of solidarity and protest when in our opinion the situation requires it (Charter of Groningen, 1988).

The problem the council faced was in the words *we will not avoid open confrontation with our governments*. Here, they felt that it went against Romans 13 too much. Limits should be set on both sides. We have the assignment to take a stance and stand for something, but there should be a limit when it comes to laws. They should not be ignored or broken.

In the Netherlands, we have the right to revolt and therefore we would also actively participate in that, but not if it breaks the law, according to Mr. Wolters. Members of his church even did so, when they went to the police station with an asylum seeker who had to obtain a stamp every week. The bigger the group supporting the person, the more obvious the protest becomes. In these kind of ways we can revolt, but it should be within the rules. INLIA arranging the BBB is a borderline case, as they are still working with the local government but actually going against the national government. Because of these reasons, some members of the council decided to abstain from voting. This did mean that they accepted the proposal without counter votes.

When it comes to speaking up about certain issues, Mr. Wolters did feel like it is the church's place to speak up. When it comes to social concerns, the church should let its voice be heard, even if some of the churchgoers disagree with the stance taken by the church. The church should not be afraid to lose members. His church tries to speak out about certain topics, but it is difficult to be heard. Here I feel the difference returns between rural and more urban areas. Although Mr. Wolters is not from the Randstad, he is still from a more urban area than Mrs. Brouwer. In his city, the church is not heard as much as in the village of Mrs. Brouwer.

4.2.4 Mr. Verbeek and Mrs. van Beek

In the interview with Mr. Verbeek a clear example came to the forefront about strong political action executed by churches. In 1997, INLIA cooperated with the churches in Beilen and surroundings to set up a camp in the forests of Dwingeloo. This was because of a campaign by the Raad van Kerken (Council of Churches) for a more humane and just asylum policy, held between 1996-1998. The camp was meant specifically for so-called “TOV-ers”, “technisch onverwijderbare vreemdelingen”, foreigners that are technically non-removable. These are usually people that cannot obtain any papers anymore and can therefore never return to their original country. In 1997, these were mostly Chinese people, to whom their government would not grant any papers, or Palestinians that were not recognised by Libanon as their citizens.

Mr. Verbeek became the coordinator of this camp. Around 20 people were staying in this camp for six weeks. Among them were children, parents and elderly people. The aim of the camp was to make the issue of asylum seekers that were placed on the street visible. It received quite some attention. On the opening day CNN was present and a lot of cameras. It sparked a debate. Some people saw it as if the church would allow anyone to come to the Netherlands, but that was not what was meant. And the statement was heard and had some positive effects as well. The people were of course housed for a while, which meant that they did not have to sleep in the streets anymore. This also gave a period of rest for these people, which meant they could look at other options.

The municipalities started to change their opinions too. According to Mr. Verbeek, the LOGO-municipalities started around that time. The municipalities had probably always thought that these people would be a problem for public security, but no one ever said it. We were the first to say it out loud. The government’s first reaction was to say “Let’s send the ME¹² to them.”. And another group actually came to the camp with the intention to fight. Many things happened in those six weeks, but it led to something.

Mr. Verbeek was really positive about these kind of actions. Church asylum was also something he admired. Overall, he found that churches should try to be present by doing things rather than saying things. He does not want to read in the papers that the church has a certain opinion, he rather read that they have done things in order to make a problem visible. It also seems to lead to less resistance. When a church does something for a vulnerable group, it seems that no one principally said no. Not everyone was happy with it, but when the church takes a certain position and just says things, it usually leads to more resistance. And of course, when

¹² The Dutch equivalent of a SWAT-team or Mobile Unit

the church does something like building a camp or providing asylum there are people that say “What about Romans 13?”. But Mr. Verbeek calls that ‘selectively shopping in the Bible’.

One of these actions could also be lobbying, although that could better be done by an organised group like INLIA, Mr. Verbeek says. You need specialists in order to have an effect. Not just any person can do it. You need to have the connections and the skill. But when you have access to such specialist, then lobbying should indeed be done. He specifically referred to John van Tilborg as a specialist, and as someone who can indeed make a difference. And what he does, is not going against the government but aiding it, influencing it. The same goes with church asylum or the camp. It seems like you might be going against a government, but in fact it is influencing the government. Whenever a church provides asylum, the first thing they do is to call the police. They are open and honest about what they are doing, and in that way you do not go against the higher authorities.

Mrs. van Beek felt similarly to Mr. Verbeek. A church can speak against unjustness, but doing might be better than speaking. When the government crosses the borders of humanity within their policies, we should not ignore our conscience. Religion, if anything, is the ground of our ethics. Romans 13 should be looked at in the time it was written. We should look at it from our time, put it in our context.

At the end of our interview, Mrs. van Beek mentioned two passages in the Bible:

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8)

and

I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.

Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps. (Psalms 85:8-13)

In both of these there is an important message. In the first, it is said that there is one thing that the Lord wants of us above all and that is to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly. This seems to go above all else. In the second, the same seems to be said. We need to be righteous, peaceful. This goes before all else. In these passages it becomes clear, religion or faith is love. Above anything, it preaches love. And that is something that came back in most of my interviews.

4.2.5 Mr. Verhoeven, Mr. van Dam and Mr. Schouten

In my interviews with Mr. Verhoeven, Mr. van Dam and Mr. Schouten I encountered various ways in which the church can work with refugees and make problems known in the area. All three of them mentioned religion as a reason for working with refugees, as a motivation to help others. However, they were all also clear that they would be helping others regardless of their religion.¹³

Especially when an issue comes close, the church starts to work with it. Mr. Verhoeven's church participates in a language café, and he told me that they did so because the AZC came in his town. The Diaconal Platform was helping poor people already, and others that needed help, so when refugees came to the city, they could not be left out. The same happened in Utrecht with Mr. Schouten. When the emergency shelter was set up close to the church, the interest sparked and the churchgoers started to help. However, when the shelter was moved to a different place, the interest also lowered again. Of course, the people from the shelter went to places that were closer by the new location, and few of the church went to the new shelter. About this phenomenon, INLIA's director once said: "Churches are sleeping guard dogs." When something happens close by, they react immediately, but it needs to be close in order to spark an interest.

When it comes to the tension with politics, Mr. Verhoeven mentioned that it is mostly difficult when you encounter a case and you disagree with the choices made by the IND. He mentioned an example of someone who has been in the Netherlands for over 15 years and still did not have a residential permit. These people are in constant limbo, and there needs to be an end to it. He is happy that there is a thing like INLIA, to which he can call for help. He feels like you can cross some lines if there is still hope, but it needs to be for the good of everyone. At INLIA, people can often get an indication if there is still something to be done. And he feels that when INLIA says something, it is usually based in fact and well thought-out. Sometimes the church makes statements that we need to do something, but if they have not thought about the consequences well enough, it might lead to problems.

¹³ Mr. van Dam elaborated on more reasons why he helps people, no matter where they come from or what they believe. After the schism in the Reformed Dutch churches, his father came back to the Netherlands after having been in a German deathcamp. His parents, so Mr. van Dam's grandparents, had chosen to be liberated, and told him he was too. When he looked at the definition, he wanted to stay what he was, so synodal. This caused an outrage in Mr. van Dam's family, and he has never truly felt accepted by his grandparents. Another reason were the books of Jan Mens about the Great Depression. In these, the church would feed people, but only if they were of the same religion. Both these things made Mr. van Dam feel like it should never be so that we are only kind to our own people, to people of the same faith. Therefore Matthew 25 speaks very strongly to him. One should be kind to all.

When it comes to listening to the government, Mr. Verhoeven also made the appropriate comment that we have it easy here in the Netherlands. If we want to listen to Romans 13, we live in a good country to do so. In fact, we can probably listen to the government 99% of the time without scraping our conscience one bit. In other countries however, it is much more difficult. When in another situation, Mr. Verhoeven said he would not know if he would listen to the government just because it says so in the Bible. Most likely not. But when it comes to refugee policies in the Netherlands, a lot can still be better. And as Christians, they have a special obligation towards refugees.

Mr. van Dam had helped when his church provided church asylum, but has only become the INLIA representative of his congregation more recently. He finds it important to help people in need. Searching for help considering refugees is relatively easy, as he is from Groningen. He knows John very well. The local deacon helps refugees when needed, but they mostly do so with money as the churches there are ageing rapidly. As said previously, in his congregation they make soup once a month, where everyone in the neighbourhood is welcome. They also help poor people where they can, and it is often the case that they are former refugees. These people often stay within poverty at least for a while. He gave an example of a Russian lady who had nothing. As deacon he could help her to buy something. What she wanted most was a closet, so they bought one for her. They are small gestures that help people tremendously.

After the emergency shelter closed, Mr. Schouten kept contact with the refugees as one of the few people of his parish. Just like the other two gentlemen in this section, he felt the need to help these people and he actually regrets that his church is not as active anymore. When it comes to texts like Matthew 25, it speaks to him strongly. But when he talks about it with his colleagues and he says he might want to preach about it in church, his colleagues seem hesitant. In Utrecht, it is a difficult subject and his colleagues prefer not to speak about it too much. When it comes to Matthew 25, they feel like a summary will suffice. Mr. Schouten feels differently about that. He feels like it is important to do justly towards everyone, and therefore he remains active with refugees whenever he can. He feels like Romans 13 does not need to be taken too literally, referring to a commentary on Paul that he could not have known the Roman Emperors as they were beasts. People should look critically at their leaders.

All three have had encounters where someone asked if the people they were helping were Christians, and all three agreed that that is not the point. Most of the time, they do not even know if the people they are helping are of any belief. Sometimes they find out, especially in the times of the Ramadan, but it does not matter. And in regards to the lobby, they all wish

that more could be done but at least they feel like the lobby of INLIA does not go against Romans 13 at all.

4.2.6 Mr. de Leeuw

Mr. de Leeuw came in contact with INLIA in 1993. He was known to be very cooperative and VluchtelingenWerk asked him to help with a Kurdish girl. He took her in for a while, because she was being threatened by her brothers. When it became known that her brothers were also coming to the Netherlands, Mr. de Leeuw let her stay at his daughter's house. When the girl had a phone conversation with a brother, Mr. de Leeuw's daughter was smart enough to tape the phone call. After the translation it became obvious that the girl had been threatened and there was a case to go to the police. When Mr. de Leeuw encountered John van Tilborg at a meeting about refugees around the same time, he told about the case. Since then, he cooperated with INLIA.

In 1989, workgroup was established in the province after the Catholic church had asked, "What if an asylum seeker stands at the church's doorstep? What do we do?" The workgroup consisted of people from the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Catholic church. Mr. de Leeuw was part of this group at the end, when they concluded that when there is someone on your doorstep, you provide asylum but you do report it to the police. Practically there was no difference between the denominations, it just had to happen.

In his town in Noord-Holland, there used to be a refugee-workgroup. Recently, this has been disbanded as the municipality started to work with VluchtelingenWerk. When the workgroup was still there, Mr. de Leeuw often cooperated with them and they always knew where to find him. Just like with the Kurdish girl, he was willing to take in two Somali guys until they would have their own place. Nowadays, he does not work with refugees that frequently anymore, but he still has contacts with three people whom he helps whenever it is necessary.

Mr. de Leeuw says that he thinks his reformed upbringing is something that makes him open to helping others. Throughout the different interviews I have, this seems to be the case that especially the people with the reformed upbringing feel like the helping stems from it, whereas the others refer to faith or their humanity as a reason for helping others. Of course, the one does not exclude the other.

4.2.7 Mrs. Groen

Mrs. Groen is one of the most active of the interviewees. She was a primary school teacher and when she stopped doing that she became a coordinator of the language department of the Network for Newcomers in her town. She was already part of the deacon that set up this network, took a couple of steps back for a while and then returned when she retired. The network is not officially part of the church anymore, but Mrs. Groen's reasons for doing this are still religious motives.

The language classes they are giving now are called 'Beter Nederlands', which means 'Better Dutch'. For now, they are only for women as many of them are not allowed to have classes together with men for religious reasons. They are however looking to broaden it and open a language house, and they then also want to teach men and children. Approximately 20 to 25 women join each week for the classes.

Mrs. Groen is also part of a workgroup for Amnesty International, and in this function she has also found her church to be very open and cooperative. Her town is close to the Bible Belt however, and not all churches surrounding hers are as welcoming. She mostly notices that the people from those churches are very inward looking. The church is their security, and we look out for each other but not outsiders. It is a different attitude. In her church, she is always welcome to talk about Amnesty and come around with for instance a petition. In other churches, she can sometimes sell postcards or do something that is more easily accessible.

Because she is also part of Amnesty, she does not have strong feelings towards Romans 13. If anything, we have to look at the current times. And she does not believe that a dictatorship or a regime like in Syria is appointed by God. She interprets the passage as that governments an sich are instituted by God, but not specific governments. There should be a government and something that watches over the people, but not a government that turns themselves against their own people. Matthew 25 speak more to her. One should listen to their governments, but only if it can be reconciled with your humane conscience.

Her church is often heard at least on a local scale. Whenever the municipality has talks about the social domain, the churches are also invited to come and talk. Here, you can also see that the other churches are less concerned about others. The more conservative churches do not participate in such evenings.

4.3 Nuclear Weapons in the Netherlands and the Fear for Polarisation

As I have mentioned in 3.4, during the 1980s there was a moment when the church was very clear about their opinion on nuclear weapons. I wanted to feel how my interviewees felt about

such a thing, when the church was being so outspoken. I asked people if they recalled a moment where the church had been strongly opinionated, but when they did not come with this example I did ask them about this specifically. This led to some interesting conversations, as most did like the idea of the church being so outspoken, and Mrs. Groen even participated in the protests against the nuclear weapons.

Mr. Verhoeven did remember the discussion that was sparked around the nuclear weapons. He thinks it is good that the church spoke up in those times, that they took a stance. Even if you are wrong sometimes, it is good to be heard. When I asked about the polarisation, he said that churches in his area do have the tendency to keep certain topics under wraps. Not talking about it makes that people think it is alright this way. Referring back to refugees specifically, people think it is okay that all the refugees stay in Italy or Greece, even though it is causing trouble. But when we do not talk about it, the issue does not become visible.

Mr. de Leeuw's children went to the protests in the 80s. As he wanted to know what his children got involved in, he went with them. It was almost like a party, he described. He thought it was good in those days that the church took a stance. People are so afraid of making political statements, but that should be possible. It does not say in Roman 13 that we cannot speak against the government. The same goes for him with what INLIA does. It does not go against the government, it does not break rules. They only talk against them. When someone sees something unjust, they want to speak about it. That does not mean you do not recognise the authority.

As said before, Mrs. Groen participated in the protest surrounding the nuclear weapons. She liked it, and also thought it was admirable how the churches acted then. In those days, she wore a button with her standpoint even to church, and the people in the church were sometimes quite hesitant about it. Mrs. Groen said that you should make clear what you stand for, also as a church, but you should not push people away by saying it too overpowering. But that does not mean you should reconsider your opinion because people might dislike yours.

When referring to the nuclear discussion to Mr. Schouten, he said he remembered it and thought it was good that the church said something, but the mood is currently so different. A lot of people are in a good place and are less inclined to fight together for a common goal. Individualism makes it that people do not look at others that have it worse than them. People do not stand for each other anymore like they used to.

4.4 Secularisation

During the interviews, I did not specifically ask about the effects of secularisation on the work of my interviewees. However, throughout the interviews secularisation seemed to play an underlying role sometimes. When talking about Ager and Ager's (2017) theories on *Privatisation*, *Marginalisation*, and *Instrumentalization*, I felt that all three were present in many of the cases.

Of course, when talking about church and state and how they should be separated, privatisation plays a role. In my interviews however I did feel like most people were not necessarily against this form of secularisation. They do want to express their religion as they please, but most were also at least partially for the idea of a separation between church and state. In fact, some even saw the church as one of the organisations that could in part hold the state responsible for their actions. Through the lobby of for instance INLIA, the church can play a role in politics without actually participating in it. However, it seems that because of privatisation, less people are going to the church as well and the decline in church attendance was felt by multiple of my interviewees.

To me it seemed like religion has been marginalised in many of the cases discussed. There are heaps of opportunities where the church can help more than they already have done. As could be seen in the example of Mrs. Brouwer, the church can be a great ally when refugees are concerned, most certainly in rural areas. It seems to me that these resources are not used nearly enough. In cases like that of Mr. Verbeek, it can be seen how religious people can make a real change. With the camp, they did something that could not have been easily done by someone else. They made use of the resources available in order to change the policies towards refugees for the better. The possibilities are there, but because the role of the church in Western societies is marginalised, it does not happen. I feel like that happened in the case of Mr. Schouten. When the emergency shelter moved farther away from the church, the input of the church started to decline. However, no attempts were made to get them involved either. The resources are there, but secular organisations seem to lack the initiative to ask for it.

It can also be seen in these cases how religion has been instrumentalised. A very striking example for me was when Mrs. Groen told me about her language classes. The initiative was religious, but it was taken over by a secular organisation. To me this is a classic example of instrumentalization. Another example is the way VluchtelingenWerk uses the church sometimes. In Mr. de Leeuw's case it can be seen that they like to reach out whenever they find it necessary, but they are only using the religious institution as a resource rather than judging it on face value and keeping the faith behind it in mind.

Overall, it seemed that my interviewees did not have a lot of trouble with secularisation except for the fact that their churches are emptying. They would prefer to have more people in the church, especially younger people, because that would also give them more possibilities to help others. The older people are, the less help they can give as their health will sometimes not allow them to do as much as they want to.

4.5 Conclusion

The conclusion of the interviews for me was, shortly, that talking against the government is not necessarily disobeying the government, and Romans 13 and Matthew 25 might clash sometimes, but the friction should not mean that we cannot do anything. The questions I answered in this chapter were *How are churches/churchly organisations politically involved?* and *How is the tension between religion and politics felt within the field of refugees?*. Throughout this chapter, several examples have been shown in which the church has been politically involved one way or another. Although the churches might not lobby, the people I interviewed were mostly strongly pro-lobbying.

All people felt the tension up to a certain extent, but they were also quite open about it. The tension is there, but something should be done. And for all, Matthew 25 seemed to come before any other verse. When looking at what was said in chapter two, it does not come as a surprise however. Most Protestants in the Netherlands have their roots in Calvinism, and that goes for most of my interviewees as well. Therefore, it makes sense that they feel like the government also has a certain obligation towards their people and when they do not act so, they can be held accountable for that.

The church can express themselves through different means. In the past, they have spoken out about certain topics and made their stance clear. In the current times, it seems that this might not always have the same effect anymore. The people in my interviews have showed me that there are other ways in which the church can still make issues known and help on a local scale. On a national scale, INLIA might be the perfect organisation to try and bring about change. However, all the people in my interviews would aid them in their efforts wherever they can.

5. Conclusion

The main question that I have answered in this thesis is *How does an FBO/church deal with the tensions that arise between religion and politics regarding asylum seekers in the Netherlands?*. Over the previous four chapters, it has been shown that an FBO like INLIA works in a field of tension, but that that does not necessarily limit them in their workings. Similarly, a church can also still act in certain ways without feeling limited by their options because of the policies of the government. There is most certainly a tension to be felt, but it is possible to work around it.

In Chapter Two, it has been shown that the policies regarding asylum seekers in the Netherlands can be really tough. Throughout the chapters, it could be seen that this clashed with at least part of the Bible and therefore also with the opinions of my interviewees. Without a question every single interviewee felt like the Netherlands could do more for refugees, and they all at least try to make their lives a little bit easier, in any way possible. Some found that this should be the task of the church in general, others took it upon themselves as an individual and personal task.

Although Romans 13 is an important Bible verse and often quoted within INLIA, they do not seem to be limited by it. The definition of this verse can be open to interpretation and not only at the office of INLIA but also within the network, it is often interpreted as that we need to obey the government up to a certain extent, but we can also aid them and give them a push in the right direction when needed. Lobbying or protesting is not against the law in the Netherlands, and therefore one is not disobeying the higher authorities when they do this. However, there are people that feel like a church should not openly confront the government. Although it is stated in the Charter of Groningen that INLIA would not hesitate to do this, it does not seem like this will happen any time soon. This is however one of the things that does causes tension.

For an FBO like INLIA it is good to have support in the local government like they do. This makes people more open about going against the national government. To have an authority by your side makes the fight easier. It also makes people less hesitant when looking at Romans 13. There is still an authority on your side, therefore it is not going against the authority. For instance the LOGO municipalities are therefore a great ally to INLIA.

The churches themselves can mostly do things on a local level. They need a bigger organisation like INLIA with the right expertise to do the work on a more national level. Locally however they can make quite the difference. As could be seen in the interview with

Mrs. Brouwer, the church in a rural area can still have a great influence on the people. Whenever they speak positively about certain issues, this makes people more willing to take these issues on. They are also a helpful benefactor when it comes to money, as they are willing to donate to Mrs. Brouwer's fund for refugees.

Although the churches might not have the funds or options to work on a national scale (except, perhaps, the PKN), they can still make a big difference on a local scale. Without going against the authorities, they can help by providing language classes, or a safe place to drink coffee and calm down, or somewhere they can eat every once in a while, or a place people can go to when they really need something. This makes a huge difference for the people directly.

The results of this thesis might not be very surprising as most Protestants in the Netherlands have their roots in Calvinism. Calvinists appear to be open toward protest and opt for something like a constitution in order to keep the government in its place. This is also reflected at INLIA and within the interviews I have done, as most people agreed that the government should be held accountable for their actions and when they cross the borders of humanity, they may be scolded for it.

It can be concluded that there is definitely a certain kind of tension within the Bible regarding politics and hospitality. This however does not need to limit an organisation like INLIA in their quest to a refugee-friendlier environment. Although they need to be watchful concerning action against the government, they have found a way in which they can still adhere to the Bible and help refugees. Not only does INLIA aid them, but they also inspire others, churchly or not, to help refugees to the best of their abilities. The church can be a great starting point and inspiration concerning this topic.

Whether someone bases their ethic on the Bible or on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there are certain basic needs that everyone should have access to. When one bases their ethics in either of these, the Bed Bath Bread arrangement seems to be the lowest standard that everyone needs to have access to. The government may definitely be pointed towards this.

It needs to be noted that the people that I interviewed were all people that were active in one way or another with refugees and frequented the regional assemblies. This was because these people would have the most interesting stories and would feel the tension one way or another. However, as they did work with refugees, this means that they were already willing to cross some lines. This does make this research limited in the sense that there were no people who felt that the government needs to be obeyed entirely, nor were there people that were

opposed to INLIA. Within the group of potential interviewees, I could not find any example of someone that would be thoroughly against this. In the scope of this project, that would not have been achievable. It would however be interesting to further this research in that aspect. My resources came from INLIA, so there will be some bias in my work. As I have chosen my interviewees from the network of INLIA, the people were biased as well. Also in this sense, a further, broader research would be interesting. In that case however a questionnaire might be more appropriate than interviews.

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Appendix I: The Charter of Groningen, 1988

1.

The situation of refugees and those seeking asylum in Europe is alarming. There is a general tendency for European governments to close the borders and to stop the influx of the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers. All sorts of legislative and bureaucratic measures are being taken at national and regional levels. Increasingly the refugee concept and the Geneva Refugee Conventions of 1951 and 1967 are being interpreted in a restrictive way.

As local churches, parishes, faith communities and basic groups we feel that our moral responsibility calls us to act in this situation. Refugees and those seeking asylum make it clear to us how much violence and injustice there is in the world. To avoid the burden and sorrow connected with giving protection to refugees means refusing to regard this violence and injustice as a common problem. Our faith that God wants the oneness of humankind, urges us to reject this refusal and take sides with refugees and asylum seekers.

2.

Taking sides means to us in the first place that in local cooperation we wish to make efforts, to the best of our abilities, to receive and support refugees and asylum seekers. In addition it means that we must continue pressing our governments that their asylum policies be not conceived only in terms of national or European interest, but rather that they need to reflect a broadminded interpretation of the international conventions of refugees and human rights. We pledge ourselves to urge our countries to participate in sharing the international burden in a way that corresponds to the European position in the world and its responsibility resulting from this position.

3.

When we have good reason to assume that a refugee or asylum seeker, threatened with deportation, is not being given humanitarian treatment, or that decisions are being taken that may seriously affect the quality of his or her existence, we pledge ourselves to take in and protect him or her until a solution has been found that is acceptable to all parties concerned. We will not avoid open confrontation with our governments or direct action of solidarity and protest when in our opinion the situation requires it.

4.

We shall continue to point out to local, national and international councils and federations of churches what we see their responsibility as being in matters and problems relating to refugees and asylum seekers, and shall urge the councils and federations to meet their responsibilities within their own means and possibilities.

5.

Regarding ourselves as partners in a covenant of local faith communities and other groups that take sides with refugees and asylum seekers, we promise each other support and solidarity, and we endeavour to encourage many other churches, faith communities and basic groups to also join us as partners in this covenant.

Appendix II: Interview Questions

Introductory questions:

What is your name?

Which church/organisation do you belong to and how is this connected to INLIA?

How active do you consider yourself to be in the church?

What work do you do with refugees?

What are your motivations to work with refugees?

Specific questions:

Do you see a tension between Mat 25 and Rom 13?

Does the church have a role in speaking up within society about social issues?

Have you seen the church being active in social issues, and if so, how and where?

Do you see a fear of polarisation within the church?

What do you think about INLIA's lobby work?