

# CHECK *HIM* OUT!

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*The Dutch YOUTH FOR CHRIST in the 1970s:  
Religious Organization or Youth Culture?*

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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On a sunny day in 1968, a cargo bike mounted with a cage stood in the middle of a busy square in a Dutch city. In the cage sat someone with a stencil machine. As a crowd of people gathered around the bike, the person in the cage shoved a stencil through the bars, stating: "Do you also feel trapped now and then? Jesus makes you free!" In another Dutch city, a group of youngsters walked through the streets with a yellow-painted guitar cabinet, yelling that they had the unique cheese of Holland. When they sliced open the cheese, it proved to be full of holes. "Why is this cheese so unique? Because it resembles humanity. From outside it looks pretty, but the inside is filled with holes!"<sup>1</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s such young people who spread the word of Jesus Christ could be found all over the Netherlands. It is fascinating to see how they spread a Christian message by contemporary means and in ordinary language and how this combination appealed to a broad young audience. In a time which is often regarded to have been increasingly atheistic and individualistic, it seems religion was still 'hot and happening'. The 'renewed' Christian message was often best conveyed by Evangelical groups. After the Second World War, such groups arose all over the United States. There they developed new means to actively spread the Gospel by deploying modern-day technologies and by interacting with modern society. These groups gave rise to the notion of an Evangelical Movement, which soon spread all over the world. One of these organizations, the first to specifically focus on spreading the Gospel amongst the youth, was Youth for Christ.

Youth for Christ was a parachurch organization which came from America to the Netherlands. It originated from a series of local youth rallies during the Second World War in the United States. These meetings were set up by fundamentalist ministers throughout the country as alternatives to the worldly and 'cheap' forms of entertainment frequented by teenagers and young service

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<sup>1</sup> Personal account of Hans Eschbach, in: Edward de Kam and Neeltje Rietveld-de Jong, *Rock Roll. In beweging voor Jezus en jongeren* (Amsterdam, 2011) 48.

men and women who were off duty. The programs were lighthearted, with easy-listening gospel songs and testimonies by entertainers, athletes, businessmen, and military heroes. They featured short sermons that were tailored for the young generation and which addressed their concerns and problems. The style of these programs, sometimes described as 'Evangelical vaudeville', caught the attention of a young audience and showed that traditional Christianity did not need to be dull and stale.<sup>2</sup> The successes in America stimulated the young Youth for Christ organization to send a team to Europe in March 1946. Their intention was to reach the masses. And they seemed to be able to do so: at the final rally in the Netherlands in 1946, no less than 3,500 youngsters showed up.<sup>3</sup>

The Dutch department of Youth for Christ was established in 1947 and in the 1950s deployed the methods of its American counterpart: rallies and evangelism. When the American group returned home, they did not, however, leave behind clear guidelines for the newly established Dutch organization. And while in 1947 an international Youth for Christ congress in Birmingham formulated a statement of faith, an official method was not worked out. The Dutch organization constantly tried to balance its work between pure evangelism with a call to conversion and a deepening of the faith by Bible study and discipleship.<sup>4</sup> In the 1950s the organization searched for new methods. In the colder months the regular rallies continued to be held, while in the summer outdoor meetings were organized. Slowly the emphasis shifted from rally to Bible study and prayer. However, these methods lost their progressive tone over the years and with that, they also lost their popularity. In the 1960s things started to change. Again, America offered a new method. New teams were sent to Europe, but this time they did not consist of preaching men but of singing teenagers. Inspired by the Americans, the Dutch Youth for Christ changed its game. Under the leadership of George Brucks the organization became popular

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<sup>2</sup> Hans Krabbendam, 'The American Impact', in: J.L. Krabbendam, C.A. van Minnen and G. Scott-Smith, *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations, 1609-2009* (Amsterdam, 2009) 1027-1038, 1029.

<sup>33</sup> De Kam, *Rock&Roll*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, 30.

again.<sup>5</sup> It no longer invited young people to come to the organization, but instead set out to approach them. It started deploying young people themselves to promote intimate contact and it wanted to engage the youth in an active conversation about the faith. Instead of the regular rallies, coffee bars were organized throughout the country and in the mid-1970s there were no less than 100 coffee bars attracting young people through short, diversified programs, an intimate atmosphere, and personal peer-to-peer conversations. 'De Lindenhorst' in Driebergen became the center of action with a staff of 25 permanent employees and another 25 diaconal workers who lived and worked at the Lindenhorst.<sup>6</sup> The annual budget of Youth for Christ grew from several thousand guilders to several million. The organization got a lot of attention from the media and it opened its own bookstore. In 1976 George Brucks was appointed director of Youth for Christ Europe and was succeeded as director of the Dutch department by the reformed pastor Pieter Boomsma.<sup>7</sup> Due to its interactive and dynamic approach and by deploying youngsters to do the work, Youth for Christ experienced a blooming period during the 1970s.<sup>8</sup>

Although the Dutch Youth for Christ experienced its heyday in the 1970s, the organization still exists today. Moreover, Evangelicalism is also still popular, especially amongst young people. This is illustrated by the popularity of, for example, the Pentecostal Conference of Opwekking ('Awakening'), which attracted around 50,000 people this year, or the Youth Day of the Evangelische Omroep (Evangelical Broadcasting Company, EO), where 30,000 young people were present. It seems Youth for Christ had set the stage in the Netherlands for this resurgence.

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<sup>5</sup> George Brucks became president of Youth for Christ NL in 1965. He came from Canada to Europe in 1951 to work with fugitives. Eventually, he ended up in the Netherlands, married and settled in Doorn. There he came in contact with Youth for Christ, but focused on European mission. After fifteen years of working for the European Evangelical Mission, he became president of Youth for Christ. De Kam, *Rock&Roll*, 44.

<sup>6</sup> Sipke van der Land, *Wat bezielt ze? Het handboek van sekten, stille krachten, bewegingen* (Kampen, 1980) 296.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, 297.

<sup>8</sup> De Kam, *Rock&Roll*, 43.

## **1.1 Research outline**

Fascinated by this combination of religion and culture, I am interested in finding out what, exactly, Youth for Christ had to offer the Dutch youth. The question central to this research is: to what extent did the Dutch Youth for Christ combine Evangelical religion with youth culture in the 1970s? Sub questions in this research are: what did the organization bring to the stage and was this more about religion or culture, and about meaning or belonging? In this way, this research tries to illustrate what made Youth for Christ so popular in the 1970s and why Evangelicalism is still so popular amongst young people today.

To show how Youth for Christ combined Evangelical religion with youth culture, this research consists of two parts. In the first part the question to what extent Youth for Christ can be positioned within the wider Evangelical Movement is answered. In this way, it focuses on Evangelical religion. The Evangelical Movement will be used as a working concept to gauge Youth for Christ's beliefs and methods. Positioning Youth for Christ within the Evangelical Movement is necessary to obtain insight into its religious message. This first part will formulate four different characteristics of the movement and investigates whether Youth for Christ shares these characteristics. In this way, it will be possible to find out to what extent it was an Evangelical organization that offered the Dutch youth a new religious meaning.

The second part of this research is aimed at finding out to what extent Youth for Christ adapted to youth culture. Again, working concepts will be formulated. Youth culture will be examined in two ways: by its style and by its reception in the media. In this way, Youth for Christ's methods will be tested to see if the organization offered something other than just a religious message and if it created a specific culture, a way of belonging.

A consideration has to be made in relation to the methodology of testing Youth for Christ with working concepts of the Evangelical Movement and youth culture. In defining working concepts there is always a risk of overestimating certain aspects while neglecting others. Moreover, regarding both the Evangelical Movement and youth cultures in general, theories and opinions diverge. But as the working concepts in this research are no more than a means



to gain better insight into the combination of religion and youth culture rather than to explicitly define Youth for Christ as Evangelical Movement or as youth culture, these discussions will not be addressed.

Not only concerning the methodology, but also concerning the use of primary sources a consideration should be made. Unfortunately, not much of the material used and published by Youth for Christ in the 1970s has been preserved. Especially visual material proved extremely hard to come by. Most of this research is therefore based on Youth for Christ's monthly magazine *Aktie*. The image of Youth for Christ was primarily determined by this magazine, which in the first years – 1952-1964 – was published under the name *Jeugd in Actie* (Youth in Action). In these first years, it was a liaison for employees and sympathizers of the organization. But in 1965 it was transformed into a new youth evangelization magazine, which not only addressed the organization's own people, but especially focused on outsiders and unchurched youth. It consisted mostly of interviews, reports, Bible studies and other edifying articles. Before the mid-1970s, it was decorated with black and white drawings and posters. From 1977 onwards, the lay-out looks a lot more modern and appealing as color was used and photographs were added. These photos especially depicted youth gatherings (on the streets or at festivals and events) or showed artists and musicians. Regarding the articles after 1977, it seems the edifying ones decreased as input of youngsters themselves increased.

Besides focusing on the presentation by Youth for Christ itself, this research also looks into the reception of the organization. Especially in the first part on Evangelical religion, the reaction of the Dutch Protestant churches will be considered. Due to the diversity of Protestant churches in the Netherlands, again the primary sources limited the scope of this research. The reactions of Dutch Protestant churches have been extracted from the digital archive *Digibron*, the digital center of information for the Reformed denomination. This made it possible to search for articles which specifically discussed Youth for Christ, instead of reading every Protestant magazine published in the 1970s. The following primary sources have been used: *Criterion*, an education magazine of

the Vereniging tot Bevordering van Schoolonderwijs op Gereformeerde grondslag (Association for Promotion of School Education on Reformed Foundation, VBSO); *Daniël*, the youth magazine of the Jeugdbond Gereformeerde Gemeenten (Youth Federation of Reformed Congregations); *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, a weekly magazine for the members of the Reformed Federation within the Dutch Reformed Church; *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, a national daily paper of orthodox reformed character; *De Saambinder*, a weekly paper of the ecclesiastical body of the Reformed Federation; and *De Waarheidsvriend*, a weekly magazine of the Reformed Federation within the Dutch Protestant Church (PKN).<sup>9</sup> This research thus addresses the reaction of the various Reformed congregations in general, as they all had a Calvinist theology. As will be described in the first part, this Calvinistic outlook is most interesting when looking at the relation between Dutch churches and Youth for Christ. Therefore, this research will not elaborate on the variety of Dutch Protestant churches or distinguish between the slightly differentiating ideas and views of these various churches.

The same approach has been used to examine the reaction of the 'secular' media in chapter three. The digital newspaper archive of the *Koninklijke Bibliotheek* (National Library of the Netherlands, KB)<sup>10</sup> has been searched for articles about Youth for Christ. Again, one must consider that this research does not encompass an in-depth examination of all Dutch newspapers existing in the 1970s. Moreover, this research addresses 'the media' in general, but it does not examine other forms of media like television and radio. Media is only used as a working concept to see how Youth for Christ interacted with 'secular' or hegemonic society. The following regional newspapers, found in the KB archive, have been used: *Eindhovens Dagblad*, *Friese Koerier*, *Haagse Courant*, *Haarlems Dagblad*, and *Limburgsch Dagblad*. Furthermore, the archive of Youth for Christ provided two other regional newspapers and two national newspapers: *Haagse Courant*, *Haarlems Dagblad* and *Centraal Weekblad*, *Trouw* (resp.).

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<sup>9</sup> 'Digibron. Kenniscentrum Gereformeerde Gezindte', accessed 26 June 2012, [http://www.digibron.nl/search/sources\\_info.jsp](http://www.digibron.nl/search/sources_info.jsp).

<sup>10</sup> 'KB Krantencatalogus', accessed 26 June 2012, <http://www.kb.nl/krantencatalogus/krantencatalogus.html>.

Consequently, in the use of both Protestant and 'secular' (news)paper sources, a certain incompleteness can unfortunately not be excluded.

## 1.2 Positioning the research

This research can be positioned within the wider scholastic field of youth and religion, or even culture and religion. According to Carole M. Cusack, the 21<sup>st</sup> century saw an increase in research on the ways in which young people engage with religion and spirituality. She distinguished three trends:

[F]irst, there has been a shift away from focusing on the formal processes of young people's religious socialization and a realization that youth exercise considerable agency in their construction of personal and group identities; second, the 1970s and 1980s assumption that religion was in decline in developed countries and was of little interest to young adults has been challenged by the growth of a myriad spiritualities and identity-conferring subcultural groups [...]; and third, there is an increased acceptance that youth is less a uniform stage that all humans beings undergo, and is more intimately connected to the specific historical, geographical, economic and social context in which it is experienced.<sup>11</sup>

The research field seems to be dominated by several issues, concerning the revision of the secularization thesis, identity, spirituality and popular culture. For example, Sylvia Collins-Mayo and Pink Dandelion's edited volume *Religion and Youth* (2010), consisting of thirty essays, investigates the beliefs and practices of teenagers with religious identifications like Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Wiccan and addresses youth spiritual experiences like clubbing, pilgrimages to Lourdes, and shamanic workshops in Brazil.<sup>12</sup> This volume presents an overview of surveys of youth religiosity conducted in Britain and the United States and focuses on religious and spiritual resources to construct and express religious identity. Moreover, the volume discusses methodological issues of how to

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<sup>11</sup> Carole M. Cusack, 'Some Recent Trends in the Study of Religion and Youth', *Journal of Religious History* 35 (2011) 409-418, 409.

<sup>12</sup> Idem, 416.

conduct research into youth religiosity.<sup>13</sup> It addresses the issues of religious identity, (alternative) spirituality and popular culture. The essays, however, focus on youth and religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and are based on sociological methods. The scholars focus their methodological issues on interacting with youth in order to discover their religious and spiritual beliefs.<sup>14</sup>

Other works in the field bear the same context and methods. Philip Hughes' *Putting Life Together: Findings from Australian Youth Spirituality Research* (2007) and Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Webber's *The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia* (2007) both examine the same survey data of a sociological research conducted from 2002 to 2006. Hughes' focuses on the relation between spirituality and enjoyment while Mason *et al.* reject consumerist explanations and relations.<sup>15</sup>

The focus in the field of youth and religion thus seems to be at providing "strong evidence for the revised secularization thesis, where the outcome of the retreat of institutional Christianity is a deregulated religious market in which a multitude of choices are available for contemporary Western people."<sup>16</sup> In effect, the focus shifted away from Christianity and towards a panoply of spiritualities and to popular culture as religion. Lynn Scofield Clark's *From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media and the Supernatural* (2003), for example, studies the interest in the supernatural in television programs and films like 'Charmed' and the 'X-Files'. Rupert Till's work *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* (2010) states that contemporary popular music can be compared to cultic behavior. He tries to

show how popular music mixes, confuses and plays with imaginary and traditions that are traditionally regarded as either sacred or profane [...] and now are drenched with meaning, belief, faith worship and ritual, and thus presented here as religious.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Vermeer, review of *Religion and youth*, by S. Collins-Mayo and P. Dandelion (eds.), *Journal of Empirical Theology* 24 (2011) 123-134, 133.

<sup>14</sup> Cusack, 'Some Recent Trends', 417.

<sup>15</sup> Idem, 412.

<sup>16</sup> Idem, 418.

<sup>17</sup> Vaughan S. Roberst, review of *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music*, by Rupert Till, *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 26 (2011) 508-509, 508.

Till identifies aspects of popular music as new religious movements, replacing the old, traditional ones in a postmodern era.<sup>18</sup>

This shifting relationship between religion and popular culture can also be found in Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan's edited volume *Religion and Popular Culture in America* (2000). They divided their study in four categories: religion in popular culture, popular culture in religion, popular culture as religion and religion and popular culture in dialogue. The essays address diverse topics like Madonna videos, rap music, Christmas television specials and sports as popular religion.<sup>19</sup>

It seems that the recent developments in the field of youth and religion focus on contemporary issues of spirituality, studied through the eyes of young people themselves. Most of this research seems to address the situation in the United States, some expanding it to Britain. Little research has yet been done on these issues in a historical perspective and little research offers a detailed view of particular countries in Western Europe. Some research does position the theme of religion and youth culture in a more historical context, like Larry Eskridge's article. He describes the rise and growth of the American Jesus People movement in the 1960s and argues that this movement, which combined evangelical religion with youth culture, gave an impulse to the development of an evangelical youth culture in the 1970s and 1980s. He states that the movement allowed youth to "tiptoe successfully through the adolescent mine fields of culture and identity."<sup>20</sup>

Although there are only a few, studies in the field of religion and youth in the Netherlands are not non-existent. However, all studies in this field seem to focus, on the one hand, on traditional Christianity and, on the other hand, on New Age spirituality. Little research truly focuses on religion and youth culture. One of the few studies that does is Johan Roeland *et al.*'s "'Can we dance in this place?'" , an historical account of the EO Youth Day, a Dutch Christian mass

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<sup>18</sup> Idem, 509.

<sup>19</sup> R. Marie Griffith, review of *Religion and Popular Culture in America*, by Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan (eds.), *The Journal of Religion* 81 (2001) 521-523.

<sup>20</sup> Larry Eskridge, "'One Way": Billy Graham, the Jesus Generation, and the Idea of an Evangelical Youth Culture", *Church History* 67 (1998) 83-106, 106.

event. This study compares the first versions of the EO Youth Day in the 1970s with more recent ones to show “the internal dynamics within the evangelical movement, moving from a world-avoiding pietism to an expressive world-affirming style.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, it argues that within this development “an essential aspect [...] is the acceptance of ‘secular’ popular culture.”<sup>22</sup>

This current research contributes to the field of religion and youth by providing an historical context and by illustrating the importance of detailed case studies per country. Especially considering the strong focus on contemporary situations in the current growing body of sociological research, it is interesting to take the historical context into account. Moreover, this research provides another perspective by taking the point of view of a religious movement instead of the perspective of young people themselves. The relation between religion and youth is not an one-way street in which young people just choose from a religious market. This research argues that, following J. Roeland *et al.*, religious currents or organizations actively adapt to youth culture. Moreover, most research in the field of youth and religion seems to focus on religion as identity constructor and seems to neglect the fact that youth culture may also construct or change the identity of the religious currents or organizations. In combining the religious message with adaptation to youth culture, this research tries to provide a detailed account of the two-way street of the combination of religion and youth. This was the case in the past, it is the case in the present, and it probably will be so in the future.

As Youth for Christ tried to show young people in an increasingly individualistic and atheistic society that God was not yet dead, this research shows that God, perhaps, will never die. Religion seems to be perfectly capable of adjusting to changes in society. And as thousands of young people still gather each year at

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<sup>21</sup> Johan Roeland, Miranda Klaver, Marten van der Meulen, Remco van Mulligen, Hijme Stoffels and Peter Versteeg, “Can we dance in this place?: Body Practices and Forms of Embodiment in Four Decades of Dutch Evangelical Youth Events”, *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27 (2012) 241-256, 254.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

mass festivals to celebrate their personal relationship with God, their enthusiasm and devotion will make any pop artist jealous.

So light up the fire,  
Let the flame burn,  
Open the door,  
Let Jesus return.  
Take seeds of His Spirit,  
Let the fruit grow,  
Tell the people of Jesus,  
Let His love show.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 'Light up the fire', revival song, *Aktie 9* (1976) no. 11.





# II. YOUTH FOR CHRIST AND THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT

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## **2.1 Introduction**

Youth for Christ is said to be part of the Evangelical Movement. This is a Christian revival movement which came into being in the second half of the twentieth century. Various groups, organizations, churches and beliefs can be gathered under the umbrella of the Evangelical Movement. Because of this diversity within the movement, it is interesting to take a closer look at the specific position of Youth for Christ and to wonder why this organization is said to be part of it. The question that this chapter will try to answer is: to what extent can Youth for Christ be positioned within the wider Evangelical Movement? In this way, it will be possible to determine to what extent it was an Evangelical organization that offered the Dutch youth a new religious message. Throughout this chapter it is evident that it is not that easy to designate Youth for Christ only as an Evangelical organization and that its popularity cannot only be attributed to a new set of beliefs.

The first part of this chapter will define a working concept of the movement, resulting in a number of characteristics. The second part of this chapter will elaborate on these characteristics by looking first at their manifestations in the wider Evangelical Movement. Second, these characteristics will be traced in Youth for Christ. In this way, this chapter hopes to contribute to a positioning of Youth for Christ within the wider Dutch Evangelical Movement.

## **2.2 The Evangelical Movement as working concept**

The Evangelical Movement originated in the United States in the 1940s. After the Second World War increased mobility, the communications revolution, and the revival of missionary impulses enabled American religion to flourish in an unprecedented number of places in the world, including in the Netherlands, both within the churches and outside. Three stages have been distinguished in the spread of Evangelicalism in the Netherlands. During the pioneering phase,

between 1945 and 1965, young believers and youngsters outside the churches were mobilized, causing both liberal and traditional theologians to get somewhat agitated. Although the Dutch already discovered American religious events in the mid-nineteenth century, and started borrowing practical aspects from American Protestants, such as temperance campaigns, gospel songs, and means to stimulate attention for the inner working of the Holy Spirit, it was not until this first phase that American spiritual injections became structural and changed the Dutch religious scene. During the second phase, from 1965 until 1990, these skills were used in efforts to counter secularizing trends both within and outside the churches. Since 1990, it appears that a new phase has begun in which established churches accept this American influence without hesitation.<sup>24</sup> Another way to characterize these three stages is that the first offered spiritual renewal through the Evangelical Movement, the second saw a growth in self-awareness of the Evangelical Movement, and the third phase was characterized by reflection of the Evangelical Movement on its position in Dutch society.<sup>25</sup>

It is hard to designate the Evangelical Movement as a working concept because it was more of an umbrella for all kinds of Evangelical organizations, groups, and currents within Protestant churches. Although a clear profile of the Evangelical Movement is thus impossible to provide, some beliefs are common to the groups associated with it. In doctrinal terms, contemporary Evangelicals can be identified by their adherence to (1) the belief that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, (2) belief in the divinity of Christ, and (3) belief in the efficacy of Christ's life, death, and physical resurrection for the salvation of the human soul. Behaviorally, Evangelicals are typically characterized by an individual and experiential orientation toward spiritual salvation and religiosity in general and

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<sup>24</sup>Hans Krabbendam, 'The American Impact on Dutch Religion', in: J.L. Krabbendam, C.A. van Minnen and G. Scott-Smith, *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations, 1609-2009* (Amsterdam, 2009) 1027-1038, 1028.

<sup>25</sup> Pieter R. Boersema, 'The Evangelical Movement in the Netherlands. New wine in new wineskins?', in: Erik Sengers (ed.), *The Dutch and their gods: secularization and transformation of religion in the Netherlands since 1950* (Hilversum, 2005) 163-179, 165.

by the conviction of the necessity of actively attempting to proselytize all nonbelievers to the tenets of the Evangelical belief system.<sup>26</sup>

The first affirmation – belief that the Bible is God’s inerrant word – reflects the Evangelical’s position concerning the confession of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible, as well as its inerrancy and infallibility. Verbal inspiration means the belief that it is not just the thoughts of the biblical writers that are inspired, but the actual words written in the text. Plenary inspiration entails the belief that Scripture is fully inspired by God, thus all Scripture must be considered the word of God. Although all Evangelical organizations and currents adhere to these principles, to some extent there does exist controversy and diversity regarding the degree in which they believe in, especially, the inerrancy of the Bible.<sup>27</sup>

The second affirmation – belief in the divinity of Christ – refers to traditional Trinitarian and Christological formulations. This means that Evangelicals are ‘Christocentric’ in their theological orientation, making Jesus Christ the central object of their doctrines. The third belief – in the efficacy of Christ’s life, death and resurrection – can be seen as a ‘substitutionary’ or ‘satisfaction theory’ which emphasizes atonement. It interprets Christ’s death and resurrection principally in terms of a sacrifice. The sacrifice had to be offered in order to placate God’s wrath. Evangelicals in general understand God as a God of justice whose wrath cannot be minimized.<sup>28</sup>

Besides these core affirmations and beliefs, most people in the Evangelical Movement have some other understandings and viewpoints in common. They affirm the Bible’s importance to a Christian way of life. They prioritize the experiential dimension of becoming and being a Christian over the sacraments, the ministry, and ecclesiastical structures. They emphasize

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<sup>26</sup> James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism. Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1984) 7.

<sup>27</sup> Mark Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement. Growth, Impact, Controversy, Dialog* (Minneapolis, 1988) 205.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem*, 206-240.

evangelism and foreign mission and understand Christian ethics in terms of laws provided by God.<sup>29</sup>

Because these beliefs are common to all Evangelicals and because they are older than the Evangelical Movement itself, it is not useful to use these beliefs as criteria to test the extent to which Youth for Christ fitted within the movement. Moreover, it is probably not even interesting, because this was not the significant message the organization had to offer. On the contrary, if only these beliefs were used as working concept, this research would end here. Like all Evangelical organizations, Youth for Christ had its own statement of faith to which all its members were suppose to adhere:

#### STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible and authoritative Word of God.
3. We believe in the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
4. We believe that the salvation of lost and sinful people is by the grace of God through faith and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus and that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost: they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in Christ.<sup>30</sup>

This statement instantly shows that Youth for Christ's beliefs coincided with the general beliefs of the Evangelical Movement. But how may we develop a working concept then? Pieter Boersema offers a solution. He suggested a working

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<sup>29</sup> Idem, 295-296.

<sup>30</sup> Statement of Faith as formulated at the international assembly of 1947. Website Youth for Christ International, accessed 29 May 2012, <http://www.yfci.org/about/statement-of-faith/>.

definition of the Evangelical Movement which includes the characteristics already described above:

A movement in Protestant circles where people feel drawn to testify in word and deed about a personal conversion, in which Jesus Christ occupies a central place, for whom the Bible is the most important guidebook for their life, and for whom the work of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. This definition indicates that evangelicalism is a 'religious perception' with a strongly personal and individual interpretation. It is a movement in which members originally from the more traditional Protestant churches talk about a new spiritual experience. The Holy Spirit thus becomes a reality which changes their spiritual as well as their daily life.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, Boersema describes the Evangelic Movement as performing four different 'tasks'. First of all, it can be characterized as a protest movement against an increasingly individual and atheistic society. It interpreted all kinds of social phenomena as consequences of the process of secularization. Such phenomena included abortion, euthanasia and the diminishing position of marriage in society. Second, it was a revitalizing movement within Christianity. This means that in the Evangelical Movement, traditional Christian values were interpreted anew. Together with the first characteristic, this suggests that the new religious movement was a reaction to an existing situation. Third, it was a conversion movement which addressed people with the message of spiritual liberation through Jesus Christ, including those who were outside the traditional churches. Fourth, it was a care movement to which people were attracted because of the care that the local congregation offered its members.<sup>32</sup>

Besides offering a description of general characteristics of groups within the Evangelical Movement, Boersema also tries to simplify the diversities in the movement. For this, he divides the movement into three groups. The *conservative* group wants to hold on to older values and often longs to return to the founding period when differences between 'us and them' were clear, as were the necessary codes of conduct. He characterizes the second group by the

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<sup>31</sup> Boersema, 'The Evangelical Movement in the Netherlands', 163.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, 170.

term *assimilative* behavior. Members of this group adapt to changes in society as long as these are not in clear conflict with God's Word. Their codes of conduct can change over the years and the necessary biblical interpretation may change as well. In other words, this group modifies its position. The third group is designated the *transformational* group by Boersema. The people in this group believe that renewal does not come from 'selected' appropriation of changes in society, but that it comes from a renewed study of the Bible in search of an adequate response to cultural changes. In this way, the Bible has to be contextualized to fit the time.<sup>33</sup>

By using these characteristics that Boersema attributes to the Evangelical Movement as criteria, it becomes easier to position Youth for Christ within this wider movement. Therefore, the following section consists of four parts. These parts will focus on the extent to which Youth for Christ can be regarded as a (1) protest movement, (2) revitalizing movement, (3) conversion movement, and (4) care movement. Each part will first address the Evangelical Movement in general. Second, each part will position Youth for Christ and will see if the organization's behavior fitted within the conservative, assimilative or transformational group.

## **2.3 Positioning Youth for Christ**

### **2.3.1 Protest movement**

According to Boersema, the Evangelical Movement was a protest movement as it protested against an increasingly individualistic and atheistic society. In this light, the movement clearly had its roots in the traditions of Christian Fundamentalism, a current that had already opposed modern society by urging a return to the Gospel.<sup>34</sup> Compared to the posture connoted by the term

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> The term 'Fundamentalism' was first coined with reference to a movement within American Protestantism. Its birth as a distinct movement is often dated to the appearance of a series of tracts on *The Fundamentals* (1910-1915), distributed free to every minister in the United States in an effort to counter the growth of unbelief and affirm evangelical doctrine. However, the main planks of the fundamentalist platform – the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, the

fundamentalists, however, the Evangelical Movement intended a more constructive and less defensive stance. These Evangelicals did not see themselves as defenders of the fundamentals of faith over those of culture. Rather, in the face of theological liberalism and cultural decay, they intended to maintain the fundamental Gospel principles while engaging with modern society to influence and transform it.<sup>35</sup> Although supportive of the efforts of the Fundamentalists to defy the modernization and destruction of the world as it emerged after the Second World War, these more moderate Evangelicals sharply criticized the manner in which Fundamentalist activities were carried out. The Evangelicals channeled most of their energy into the reconstruction of a strong Christian subculture. Most of all, they tried to reestablish a stable foundation of popular support through evangelism, happily deploying the new technologies brought about by that same modernizing world. Religious radio programs such as the 'Back to Bible Hour', 'The Hour of Decision' and religious radio stations such as WMBI and KUCA proliferated in the American post-war period. On television, Evangelical programs such as 'Youth on the March', 'Sermons from Science' and 'Man to Man', also began around this time. Youth Evangelical organizations like Youth for Christ, but also the Miracle Book Club and the American Soul Clinic, which provided alternative forms of teenage entertainment, became popular at this time.<sup>36</sup> Enjoying a central place within the mainstream of American culture in the 1950s and maintaining this position through the 1960s, Evangelicalism started to show clear signs of a resurgence by the early 1970s. Beginning with the rise of the Jesus People during the last years of the Vietnam war, the resurgence peaked in 1976 with the media spectacle of the born-again movement, the election of the Evangelical Jimmy Carter to the presidency, and the designation of the national bicentennial as the Year of the Evangelical.<sup>37</sup> Even

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deity of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the substitutionary understanding of atonement, and Christ's resurrection and bodily Second Coming – had all already been expressed by a conference in 1895. The legacy has been a tendency within much North American Evangelicalism to disparage Evangelicals who do not hold dispensationalist views (seeing periods in history in which God relates to human beings in different ways under different Biblical covenants), and to treat such matters as being of the essence of faith. Tim Grass, *Modern Church History* (London, 2008) 206.

<sup>35</sup> Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement*, 97.

<sup>36</sup> Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*, 44.

<sup>37</sup> Idem, 46.

today, Evangelicalism in America has a large population of committed followers, and it is still attracting more and more young people. This ever-growing population of people aged between 15 and 35 are just as obsessed with Christ and as they are with culture as a means to an Evangelical end.<sup>38</sup>

### *Youth for Christ as protest movement*

Youth for Christ also protested against modern changes in society, convinced that youngsters could not find happiness in such a world. The organization offered the deliberate choice for God as the only possible way to become happy. It focused on the dangers that society posed, especially to youngsters. It saw young people as western souls seeking spiritual experience, but feared this might lead them to New Age spirituality. Youth for Christ seemed to be afraid that young seekers would end up in a tangle of exotic religiosity, theosophy, mysteries, rites, symbols and white and black magic.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Youth for Christ also protested against other youth groups like rockers and hippies. Especially punk was fiercely criticized. Punk proved to the organization that the end of the 1970s brought a post-Christian era because the music and style of Punk were destructive, aggressive and nihilistic. However, this decay could help Christian youngsters to take a stand in life. It should make them realize what their position was. Whereas young Christians used to be unsure as to whether they could attend, for example, a concert of the Birds (the music was supposedly fine, but it should be assumed that drugs were used), Youth of Christ was very clear in what was and was not allowed. Punk was simply wrong.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See for example: Lauren Sandler, *Righteous. Dispatches from the Evangelical Youth Movement* (New York, 2006). She talks about the 'Disciple Generation' in which "young Evangelicals connect, organize, and reside within a movement that manifests itself both in an intimate grassroots setting and in super-sized stadium events. The protest culture of the 1960s has been both resurrected and subverted in every rock-festival activist and road-trip missionary; their hipster home Bible studies and My Space forums operate as modern-day consciousness groups. They have infused youth culture with meaning and dissent, built international communities, and imagined their destiny." 5.

<sup>39</sup> Sipke van der Land, 'De rare kuren van de jeugdkultuur', in: Jan van Capelleveen, Hans Eschbach (e.a.), *De Story van Youth For Christ* (Kampen 1977) 58-76, 68.

<sup>40</sup> Hans Dickhof, 'Punk: recht toe, recht aan', *Aktie* 11 (1978) no. 4, 20-22.



As youth organization, Youth for Christ focused on social problems present in the lives of young people. And sometimes these seemed very insignificant. For example, one article in *Aktie* dealt with 'six social diseases':

Pimples, fatness, inferiority, shyness, ugliness and blabbermouth. These are six well-known diseases. Although usually nobody regards these as illnesses, a special *Aktie* research has proven that they are indeed reaching epidemic proportions. One of the conclusions of the report is: We are especially worried with how we look, which causes the problems of self-esteem to become 'social diseases'. The treatment of those are not dependent on doctors or medicines, but on you, the patient, and your willingness to cure yourself.<sup>41</sup>

Another development within society against which Youth for Christ protested was the growth of New Age spirituality. 'Saviors' like Mister Moon (United Family), Guru Maharaj II (Divine Light Mission), Guru Prabhupada (Hare Krishna), Bahauallah (Bahai) and Joseph Smith (Mormons) all gathered (relative small) groups of followers in the Netherlands of the 1970s. Youth for Christ told its young members that such movements were dangerous, that they used sudden conversions to fill one's emptiness caused by education and lack of self-confidence. The only solution was offered by Christianity:

Actually, you are a jalopy if you make an unhealthy decision by lack of confidence. [...] You only have to obey, you will become frenetic and fanatical. They [those false saviors] will put you in a corner. You will be trapped in their webs. They will spin their webs around you causing you to suffocate. The Christian faith is different. It is a shame if you were never taught so, or understood so. But it is the truth. Jesus Christ did not come upon this earth just to give you some advice or dictate His rules. He knew you were unable to save yourself and that you needed something more. He sacrificed Himself to save you. He died at the cross for your sins and failures. And He arose again as winner of all evil and death. If you are with Him, you are saved. All you need is one prayer. Very

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<sup>41</sup> 'Zes sociale ziektes', *Aktie* 11 (1977) no. 1, 22-23. This and all the following citations from primary sources are my own translations. The original citations, in Dutch, are given in the appendix.

honest and personal. That is why the Christian Faith is so relaxed, free, happy and healthy. It will make you human again.<sup>42</sup>

Youth for Christ thus opposed secular society which more and more emphasized individual choice, also in religion. However, just like the wider Evangelical Movement, Youth for Christ used the modern technologies to oppose the society that made these technologies accessible. In this way, the organization was very specific in its protest. It seems the organization only protested against aspects of society that were in opposition to the Bible and to which the Bible could offer young people a solution. A striking example of this is the fact that the organization itself never took a political stance and that it emphasized its aim to refrain from social criticism.<sup>43</sup>

Youth for Christ can be positioned within the Evangelical Movement as a protest movement. It opposed secular society, especially regarding problems that it posed in young people's lives. In this way, the organization targeted specific elements of secular society which could attract young people to its own Christian message. Moreover, it seems that Youth for Christ in its protest can be ranged in what Boersema called the assimilative group of the Evangelical Movement, as it modified its position within society. The organization adapted to changes in society, e.g. the use of modern technologies, as long as these were not in clear conflict with the Bible. Furthermore, it interpreted the Bible as offering solutions to problems that modern society posed in young people's lives.

### **2.3.2 Revitalizing movement**

The second characteristic Boersema offered of the Evangelical Movement was that of a revitalizing movement. Together with its role as a protest movement, this constituted the Movement's 'reactionary élan'. Whereas as a protest movement, the Evangelical Movement opposed secular society, as a revitalizing

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<sup>42</sup> Sipke van der Land, 'Ze willen je allemaal bekeren', *Aktie 9* (1975), 3-5.

<sup>43</sup> *Haarlems Dagblad*, 18-11-1981 in: *YFC Knipselkrant* (December 1981) 13.

movement it interpreted Christian values anew. This is most evident in its relation with Protestant churches.

The Christian values adhered to by the Evangelical Movement were indebted to older Protestant traditions, such as the first wave of Evangelical Protestantism, which can be situated in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain. This first wave is sometimes regarded as a modification of the Puritan tradition and became a revival searching for a 'religion of the heart'.<sup>44</sup> Although there is much discussion about the origins and dogmas of this first Evangelical revival, Mark Noll offers an useful point of view:

Evangelicalism grew out of earlier forms of heart-felt British Protestantism and was stimulated by contact with heart-felt continental Pietism. It was grounded religiously in the innovative preaching of justifying faith. It was promoted and maintained by the effective exertion of capable spiritual leaders. It offered a compelling picture of divine fellowship with God for believers as individuals and in groups. It represented a shift in religiosity away from the inherited established churches toward spiritual communities constructed by believers themselves. It featured a form of conversion as much focused on personal experience, as much convinced of the plasticity of human nature and much preoccupied with claims of certainty as any manifestation of the Enlightenment. And because its spirituality was adjusted to an opening world of commerce, communications and empire, that spirituality effectively resolved the psychological dilemmas created by this open world.<sup>45</sup>

New forms of this heart-felt Protestantism, such as Methodism, soon travelled to America where during the first Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s many people converted to Evangelicalism. The 1790s and 1800s experienced a second Great Awakening. While this second revival was more widespread than the first one, it followed a similar pattern of itinerant preachers calling for immediate response to the Gospel.<sup>46</sup> Revivalism became the dominant form of American religious expression, with its non-hierarchical ethos and emphasis on individualism and on the authority of universal human experience.<sup>47</sup> This

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<sup>44</sup> Grass, *Modern Church History*, 86.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Noll as quoted in Grass, *Modern Church History*, 87.

<sup>46</sup> Idem, 208.

<sup>47</sup> Idem, 210.

development was facilitated by the Evangelical modifications to Calvinist theology which allowed greater scope for human agency in the spiritual realm.<sup>48</sup>

These older revivalist traditions influenced the American Evangelical Movement of the post-war period. These 'renewed' Christian values also reached the Netherlands as the Evangelical Movement took root here in the 1960s. The movement was able to market its revivalist ideas and managed to juxtapose its including and exciting new form of religion against the established churches. All kinds of organizations gradually contributed to an emerging Evangelical network that circulated ideas and personnel. They collectively challenged the traditional institutions and equipped their supporters with skills and knowledge to create an alternative. These parachurch organizations were a real innovation. The flow of American resources was channeled by new communication initiatives. Among these was the publishing firm Gideon, which translated a large selection of American authors into Dutch. Another key player in the formation of a Dutch Evangelical Movement was the *Evangelische Omroep* (Evangelical Broadcasting Company), founded in 1967.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, in 1973 the Evangelische Zendings Alliantie (Evangelical Mission Alliance) was established to coordinate the activities of the various missions. In 1979 the Dutch department of the international Evangelical Alliance was founded to stimulate and guide the work of Evangelical groups and movements in the Netherlands.<sup>50</sup>

During this period the Evangelical Movement began to appear more in public. Its message was no longer only sent to the individual, but to society at large. It was the time of the 'One Way Day' demonstrations, organized by the non-profit organization *Opwekking* ('Awakening'). By coming out into the open, the self-awareness of Evangelicals became stronger. In 1972, 4,000 young people gathered for the 'One Way Day' demonstrations; in 1973 this number grew to

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<sup>48</sup> The most significant modifications regarded the freedom the will, and the distinction between natural and moral inability to turn to God. Evangelicals argued that sinners were in the latter condition, whereas traditionally Calvinists had tended to assume the former. Other revivalist ideas asserted human capability to respond to God which was unacceptable to more traditional Calvinists and introduced a more rational understanding of God, as "moral governor of the universe". Idem, 203.

<sup>49</sup> Idem, 1035.

<sup>50</sup> Hans Eschbach (ed.), *Vurig Verlangen. Evangelische vernieuwing in de traditionele kerken* (Zoetermeer, 1996) 56.

8,000; and in 1976 a total of 15,000 people attended the demonstration.<sup>51</sup> Other groups and organizations belonging to this Evangelical Movement which came from America to the Netherlands were, for example, Campus Crusade for Christ, the Navigators and the Jesus People.<sup>52</sup>

### *Youth for Christ as revitalizing movement*

As we saw, Youth for Christ adhered to the same revivalist and Evangelical beliefs as the Evangelical Movement in general. Its revitalizing élan can best be traced in its ambiguous relationship with the Dutch Protestant churches. As it was a parachurch organization, it aimed at building a bridge between, on the one hand, youth and, on the other, the churches in which young people no longer felt welcome or comprehended. Unlike other groups within the Evangelical Movement, like the Jesus People or the Pentecostal churches, the organization did not want to establish its own religious community. The organization wanted to reach both youths within the Protestant churches and those who did not belong to a church. But while Youth for Christ wanted to work with the churches, the churches themselves were often very critical of the organization's activities. Already at the start of Youth for Christ in the Netherlands, articles that sharply condemned its methods appeared in various church magazines. Youth for Christ was criticized for downgrading the gospel with worldly music, while the personal call to conversion was psychologically considered irresponsible. Youth for Christ

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<sup>51</sup> Boersema, 'The Evangelical Movement in the Netherlands', 167.

<sup>52</sup> Campus Crusade for Christ originated of 1951. A Dutch division was founded in 1968. The organization focused on personal evangelical work amongst students and teenagers through Bible study. The Navigators started already in America in 1933. It encouraged young people to use the Bible as a compass in their lives and it developed study material for this. In 1972 the Navigators also began to focus on teenagers under the name 'Captain's Club'. These local clubs were run by young people who just started working or were still in school. The Jesus People, also known as Jesus Movement, was an American youth movement which mixed countercultural styles with traditional American evangelicalism. The movement consisted of hippies who countered a long tradition of fundamentalist taboos against worldly entertainment by legitimizing cultural elements like long hair, beards, informality in dress and worship, and rock music. During the first years of the 1970s, the movement also spread in the Netherlands, again combining evangelicalism and popular culture. The movement partly dissolved in the Netherlands. See: Sipke van der Land, *Wat bezielt ze? Het handboek van sekten, stille krachten, bewegingen* (Kampen, 1980) 355-346.

was said to only appeal to emotions.<sup>53</sup> By focusing on the discussion between Youth for Christ and the Protestant churches, it becomes evident to what extent the organization interpreted Christian values anew.

Although Youth for Christ tried to work towards the churches, bringing converted youth in contact with them, it was aware of the often closed and elitist attitude of these churches. Moreover, the organization was aware of the fact that young people did not feel at home in church. One article in *Aktie* addressed the question whether church and youth really fitted together? Four young people were given the opportunity to express their opinions regarding the church. They were all church members. It seems that in their opinion, the church consisted mostly of elderly members who only gathered to talk about rules and synods. One boy stated:

Look, we are young and prefer to play guitar and dance around. With older people that is different. But if you are really interested and take your time to talk to them, you will see they that have the same faith and are just as happy as we are.<sup>54</sup>

While this boy seemed quite positive about the church, a girl stated that:

It is too vast, that institution with its rules and synods. I believe they are doing the wrong things. All those papers and long meetings about what to accept or not to accept in the world – it all makes no difference. [...] No, people in church need to become aware of their faith for God to be number one in their lives. You have to start at the core and then God will teach you – through the Bible and the Holy Spirit – how to live your life. That cannot be arranged from above by church meetings.<sup>55</sup>

While these were the opinions of young church members themselves, another article in the same magazine – a themed issue on 'The Church' – elaborated on the opinion of Youth for Christ about the church. In this article, Youth for Christ stated that the perfect church did not exist (in the same sense as it stated that

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<sup>53</sup> Jan van Capelleveen, 'Hoe onstuimig het in Nederland begon', in: Jan van Capelleveen, Hans Eschbach (e.a.), *De Story van Youth For Christ* (Kampen, 1977) 7-13, 9.

<sup>54</sup> 'Dat instituut met al die regeltjes en synodes.', *Aktie* 11 (1978) no. 8, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, 9.

the perfect Christian did not exist). But either way, the organization still thought it was important to go to church, as long as young people were willing to actively engage with it:

In the church of Jesus it is not about people who only express their wishes, but about participants. Just as God wants to work with you, he also wants to work with others. And he does not need spectators; on the contrary, he needs people who are willing to actively deploy themselves for a better church.<sup>56</sup>

Although Youth for Christ claimed to be a bridge between youth and the churches from the very beginning, it never really seemed able to close the gap between its organization and the church, and between youth and the church. With the new direction the organization took after 1965, things slowly seemed to change and co-operation with the churches grew. George Brucks, the director at the time, ordered his employees to be part of, and participate in, a church, and he himself often gave sermons in different churches. Moreover, young converts were frequently asked to testify their faith in church. However, even this new approach of the organization was not always a success. As late as 1972, a Dutch pastor was threatened with death by his own congregation because he wanted to offer two young people the opportunity to give their testimonies in his church. Elders, deacons and other church members were furious and refused to come. But in general, from the 1970s onwards Protestant churches grew more positive regarding the work of Youth for Christ. Especially regarding the churches' own youth work, which tended to evolve into social criticism or change into amusement clubs, Youth for Christ was seen as an example of Evangelical youth work with a proper emphasis on the Bible and prayer. The successes of Youth for Christ proved that youths were indeed still interested in the Christian faith.<sup>57</sup>

But even as the situation slowly began to change, Youth for Christ felt the need to constantly repeat its message of being a bridge between youth and the churches. On Reformation Day in 1981, on which the organization celebrated its

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<sup>56</sup> Arnold van Heusden, 'De ideale kerk bestaat niet', *Aktie* 11 (1978) no. 8, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Land, *Wat bezielt ze?*, 298.

35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Youth for Christ again asked the churches to collaborate with it. The organization formulated nine theses which it attached (with an obvious reference to Luther) to various church buildings all over the country.<sup>58</sup> In these theses Youth for Christ called upon the churches to work together. It pointed to the advice and material it could provide and it argued that the churches needed to continuously adapt themselves to changes in society:

1. A church that does not recruit, is likely to die
2. The best news is often poorly brought
3. Evangelizing is never cheap
4. If one thing is needed, it is authenticity
5. To become an adult, you need a 'nest'
6. If churches take the youth into account, that 'sleeping giant' will awake
7. To follow Jesus in this world is not to search for an emergency exit
8. In God's World there is proper work for everybody
9. Christendom without unity is like a safety net with holes<sup>59</sup>

The bridge function Youth for Christ wanted to play seems to have been twofold. First, the organization saw itself as deploying the right methods to reach out to disappointed youth within and without the churches. This can be seen as 'recruiting' young people, something the churches apparently seemed to neglect. After young people had chosen the right path of Jesus Christ, Youth for Christ offered them the necessary care and tried to stimulate them to become an active church member. Thus, it seemed Youth for Christ wanted to be the bridge young people would take to 'walk into church'. Second, Youth for Christ seemed to create a link between church and society. Apparently it wanted to prove to the churches that they needed to adapt themselves to modern society by deploying new methods and by taking a stance within Dutch culture at large.

Point 8 of the theses indicates such a view, as it addressed the problem of the growing youth unemployment of the time and put this problem in a spiritual

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<sup>58</sup> *Centraal Weekblad*, 11-11-1981 in: *YFC Knipselkrant* (December 1981) 11. Reformation Day (31 October) is a Protestant memorial day to commemorate Luther who on 31 October 1517 published his 95 theses against the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>59</sup> *Trouw*, 2-11-1981, in: *YFC Knipselkrant* (December 1981) 10.



context. Youth for Christ wondered whether it needed to change the concept of the coffee bar into a center for unemployed youngsters who could gather there during the day.<sup>60</sup> And as it emphasized its own constant changes and adaptations, the organization urged the churches to do the same. However, its call was never fully recognized and acknowledged. The nine theses, for example, met with harsh criticism. One Reformed church member expressed amazement that Youth for Christ dared to imitate Martin Luther. Moreover, he stated that the organization should have written such theses for itself, not for the church:

There is only need for authenticity within Youth for Christ, where young people are pushed into a den without any space for evangelical freedom. If a church could only survive by the evangelical urge Youth for Christ describes, it would long be gone.<sup>61</sup>

Most of the negative reactions of churches towards Youth for Christ seem to be ones of outrage, showing that churches were puzzled by the work and evangelical methods of the organization. But such critiques were not just directed at Youth for Christ. It reflected the general critique of the churches concerning the groups and organizations within the Evangelical Movement. They were thought to be misleading, posing a threat to the youth:

In this world there are all kinds of 'spirits' claiming to provide medicine against all our illnesses. And they constitute a large threat to the young person who experiences this cold world. [...] Under different names, these spirits try to distract them from the truth as given by Christ. Pentecostal groups, Youth for Christ, Jesus Revolution, Jesus Movement, Jesus People, are all names of spirits we now have to deal with. It is necessary to be concerned with these groups as we want to preserve the sobriety of the Bible.<sup>62</sup>

It is striking that the churches deployed the same language as Youth for Christ used to expose the threats of New Age spirituality. It seems the 1970s were an auspicious time in which all kinds of religious groups claimed to have the answer

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> *Trouw*, 10-11-81, in: *YFC Knipselkrant* (December 1981) 10.

<sup>62</sup> 'Vreemde Geesten', *Daniël*, 10-11-1972, 7.

of how to deal with such an individualizing society. Even around 1982, when the relation between Youth for Christ and local churches had stabilized, people were still suspicious of the organization.

Although Youth for Christ adhered to the same general beliefs as the wider Evangelical Movement, its relationship with the established Dutch Protestant churches makes clear that its message was not focused on re-interpreting Christian values. Rather, it focused on new methods to reach young people and bring them back to church. In this way, the organization cannot really be seen as a revitalizing movement and therefore had an ambiguous relation with both the Evangelical Movement and the Protestant churches. It seems the organization was more concerned with a method than a message. Although Youth for Christ adhered to the Christian values as they were reinterpreted by the Evangelical Movement, it did not actively renew values itself. One might argue that Youth for Christ intentionally did not do this, in an attempt to strengthen its cooperation with the established Dutch Protestant churches. The emphasis on an evangelical method does, however, contribute to the 'revolutionary élan' of Youth for Christ, as it reacted to an existing situation in these churches. Compared to the Evangelical Movement in general, Youth for Christ's 'revolutionary élan' seems to have been a moderate version. Youth for Christ adapted itself to the Dutch ecclesiastical scene, something that supports the argument that the organization's behavior fits within the assimilative group.

### **2.3.3 Conversion movement**

The third characterization of Boersema was that the Evangelical Movement was a conversion movement which addressed people with the message of spiritual liberation through Jesus Christ, including those who were outside the traditional churches. Evangelical organizations, groups and parishes all emphasized the need of conversion to become a born-again Christian, which was seen as the first step for entering these communities.

The stress on conversion seems to be an effect of a more remonstrant attitude of the Evangelical Movement. Earlier forms of Evangelicalism, such as Methodism, had already emphasized experience and conversion. Likewise, the Evangelical Movement took a more anti-Calvinist stance by allowing greater scope for human agency in the spiritual realm.<sup>63</sup> Whereas Calvinism had no place for human agency and said that salvation was only given by God's grace – one's salvation was predestined and could not be affected by human actions – the Evangelical Movement was more indebted to an Arminian heritage. Arminianism was originally a movement within the seventeenth-century Dutch Reformed Church, named after its leader James Arminius. This current taught that God's selection of human beings to salvation was based on God's foreknowledge of a person's perseverance in faith, that regeneration must precede salvation, and that grace brings a believer to perfection.<sup>64</sup> In other words, this movement had more place for human agency. It combined the rejection of universal salvation with an insistence that salvation must be appropriated through personal decision.<sup>65</sup> The Evangelical Movement thus incorporated this belief in human agency for obtaining salvation by emphasizing the need of experiencing the faith through conversion.

The Dutch established churches showed mixed reactions to these eruptions of spiritual renewal of the Evangelical Movement. Initially they were curious, giving Evangelical groups the benefit of the doubt, until they presented themselves as competitors to the church by baptizing adults (many of whom had been baptized as children) and by sharing the sacraments. Many churches saw the evangelical operations as a return to old (and abandoned) certainties and they disagreed with its emphasis on human agency and the resulting focus on conversion.<sup>66</sup>

Youth for Christ was definitely a conversion movement although its parachurch character might have given the organization a more moderate point

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<sup>63</sup> Grass, 208.

<sup>64</sup> Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement*, 241.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Krabbendam, 'The American Impact on Dutch Religion', 1035.

of view. This, however, also affected its relationship with the Dutch Protestant churches which held on to their more Calvinist attitudes.

### *Youth for Christ as conversion movement*

Being a conversion movement seems to have been the main characteristic of Youth for Christ in the 1970s. It emphasized conversion as a way to liberate young people. Moreover, young people themselves had the task of spreading the Gospel. Every activity, gathering and get-together revolved around conversion. The organization employed the method of the 'altar-call' already in the first rallies and still used it in later festivals and manifestations. This method of 'invitation' invited young people at the end of every sermon and gathering to deliberately choose for Christ. This 'altar-call' corresponded to the conversion call of the Salvation Army, which in turn was copied from the Methodists in Britain. Youth for Christ asked the attending youth to raise their hands during prayer as a sign of their choice for Jesus Christ before coming forward to the stage. Moreover, the method of enabling personal peer-to-peer conversations in coffee bars and on camps, was supposed to lead youth to choose Jesus Christ. This shows that the organization seemed to regard the fourth point of its statement of faith as its main principle:

4. We believe that the salvation of lost and sinful people is by the grace of God through faith and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus and that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.<sup>67</sup>

Through believing in Jesus Christ – proven by conversion – youth would regenerate and obtain salvation, something most essential to the organization.

Once converted it became the 'born-again' Christian's responsibility to bring others to the faith. The urge to convert people was not only aimed at the members' own society, but at the entire world. Accordingly, mission was an integral part of the organization. At the time, mission in countries where

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<sup>67</sup> Statement of Faith as formulated at the international assembly of 1947. Website Youth for Christ International, accessed on 29 May 2012, <http://www.yfci.org/about/statement-of-faith/>.

Christianity was under pressure or forbidden – such as communistic Eastern Europe – was considered especially important. Furthermore, a missionary attitude at home was equally emphasized, as already evident in the peer-to-peer conversions. For example, spreading the Gospel in school was a hot topic. Youth for Christ offered youngsters hints on how to deploy a Christian attitude in school and how to spread God's Word there. For adopting a Christian attitude, one could find the means in Bible passages:

“Rejoice in the Lord always” (Ph. 4:4), “In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Ph. 4:6), “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord, and not for men” (Col. 3:23) or “The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs, 1:7).<sup>68</sup>

Youth for Christ developed several methods to spread the Gospel in schools: it had an information dossier for lectures, youngsters could invite ‘Op Vrije Voeten’ (‘On Free Feet’, Youth for Christ’s own theater), they could put up posters to invite people to coffee bars or order extra issues of the organization’s magazine *Aktie* to hand out.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, young people volunteered in coffee bars to talk to peers who had doubts about God and they went out on the streets to spread the Gospel. The organization made clear that becoming a Christian meant making a deliberate choice for Jesus Christ and his way, which eventually would help one to overcome one’s problems.

As a conversion movement, Youth for Christ emphasized conversion over the Bible. Although the Bible was seen as the inspired, infallible and authoritative Word of God, it seems that it was hardly used in attempts to bring young people to faith. For this Youth for Christ mostly used the promise that conversion would make them happy. After young people made the decision for Jesus, however, the Bible did seem to gain importance. Bible study was one of the standard elements in Youth for Christ’s magazine, its manifestations and summer camps. Besides the experience of God in the inner life, the Bible was seen as the ultimate proof

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Tien tips voor een christelijke houding op school’, *Aktie* 8 (1975) no. 2, 21.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Tien tips hoe je op school het evangelie kunt doorgeven’, *Aktie* 8 (1975) no. 2, 21.

of God. But Bible study was dominated by the concept of the Bible as a guideline or handbook. Given that the organization opposed contemporary society, the Bible was considered to be a guide for changing society as well as one's life. The Bible offered a solution to all the problems in young persons' lives. And that solution was losing oneself in Jesus Christ: "Whoever seeks to save his life loses it, but whoever loses his life preserves it" (Luke 17:33). It was important that youngsters also exposed their feelings to God, so he could teach them how to handle those. If they did, their faith would become a unity of reason and feeling.<sup>70</sup> Fear, insecurity and other problems young people had to deal with, were thus addressed and solutions were offered by the Bible.

The established churches could not understand Youth for Christ's urge for conversion and rejected its 'invitation' or 'altar-call'. Some churches refused to lend their buildings for Youth for Christ meetings as they did not appreciate the use of raising hands and other methods of conversion.<sup>71</sup> They regarded the sudden conversion as negative and misleading:

Do not be ready to take one's medicine, in nervous emotion, to instantly be saved, and even to testify to it at once in a room of the Salvation Army, or at Evangelical meetings, or at a rally of Youth for Christ. No! We should not let such important matters be forced upon us. These are concerns of eternity. And therefore should be well-grounded. The discovery of the murderer on the cross we should get to know by religious experience. And the true experience is only grounded in God's Word and a fruit of the application of the Holy Spirit.<sup>72</sup>

This shows that although not all churches rejected a (moderate) focus on experience, the suddenness of conversion was seen as Biblically ungrounded.

Another related point of critique regarded the way in which Youth for Christ employed the Bible and that the organization made the Bible of secondary

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<sup>70</sup> Ida Koelstra, 'Mag ik ook eens down zijn?', *Aktie* 8 (1975) no. 3, 8-9.

<sup>71</sup> Land, *Wat bezielt ze?*, 293. See also different church magazines: 'Youth-for-Christ is nieuw Methodisme', *Reformatorsch Dagblad*, 28-09-1973, 2; 'Nieuws van de vereniging', *Criterion*, 1-10-1973, 22-25; 'Youth for Christ', *Daniël*, 21-12-1973, 3-5.

<sup>72</sup> 'De Triumf der Genade', *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, 11-03-1961, 2.

importance to conversion. This was seen as a 'loose and ordinary activity'. One Reformed minister said that:

It seems as if it is only a practical guide with useful tips for our questions and problems. This corresponds to the lack of structural Bible study within the wider Evangelical Movement, especially in the Netherlands. This is reflected in many Evangelical sermons.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, the same writer criticized Youth for Christ's vision of Jesus Christ:

The movement emphasizes the human nature of Jesus Christ which shows a lack of dignity. In an ordinary manner they write about him using repugnant words. It is commonplace in Evangelical spheres to talk about Jesus as a friend who supports you. Furthermore, he is often only seen as a human example instead of being regarded as an deity.<sup>74</sup>

In general, the traditional Protestant churches thus had reservations about Youth for Christ's "evangelizing amongst tourists". They questioned the effectiveness of the manifestations and did not believe that "the end justifies wrong means" under every circumstance.<sup>75</sup> But during the 1970s the attitude of many local churches grew more positive and they started working with Youth for Christ more often, especially on a local level. On the other hand, people who were critical of Youth for Christ and possible co-operation, kept fearing the organization's superficial use of the Bible, its remonstrant attitude and Evangelical methods like the 'altar-call'.<sup>76</sup>

Youth for Christ can thus be perfectly positioned within the wider Evangelical Movement as a conversion movement. Not one single gathering was concluded

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<sup>73</sup> J.M.D. de Heer, *De evangelische beweging* (Houten, 2009) 34.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> 'Toeristische evangelisatie in Zeeland', *Reformatorsch Dagblad*, 23-06-1971, 2.

<sup>76</sup> See articles: 'Scherpe discussie over Hervormde Jeugdraad', *De Waarheidsvriend*, 19-06-1975, 3; 'De kerk en de jeugd', *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, 21-06-1975, 4-5; 'Jeugdraad Zuid-Holland voor toenadering Youth for Christ', *Reformatorsch Dagblad*, 26-07-1975, 2; 'De wacht bij de belijdenis', *De Waarheidsvriend*, 21-10-1976, 2-3; 'Opwekkingsbewegingen onvoldoende diepgang', *Reformatorsch Dagblad*, 3-11-1978, 14.

without an 'invitation' to choose Jesus Christ. However, the organization did not go as far as to baptize youth that responded to these 'altar-calls'. It seems its parachurch character again caused Youth for Christ to take a moderate point of view. Although the Dutch Protestant churches criticized its emphasis on conversion, making the Bible of minor importance, the organization did try to give young people enough opportunities to study the Bible and emphasize the need to strengthen their faith. As other Evangelical groups decided to create their own communities because the churches rejected their Arminian attitude, Youth for Christ seemed to adapt itself to the Dutch ecclesiastical situation by constantly searching for close association with the churches. As a conversion movement – with emphasis on conversion over Bible study – Youth for Christ's behavior is harder to read. The established churches seemed to think that the organization was too transformational as they criticized the way in which the organization contextualized the Bible to fit the time. But Youth for Christ itself seemed to think that it did something else. From the organization's perspective, it seems more appropriate to call it assimilative or even conservative behavior. On the one hand, its behavior can be seen as assimilative because the organization did not believe its 'altar-call' to be in clear conflict with God's Word and again emphasized the need of Bible study to grow in one's faith and to take one's place in society. On the other hand, its behavior can be regarded as conservative because Youth for Christ's focus on conversion points at the longing to return to the founding period of Christianity when differences between 'us and them' were clear: only after converting, one belonged to the group of saved Christians.

#### **2.3.4 Care movement**

The fourth characteristic Boersema used to describe the Evangelical Movement was its 'task' as a care movement to which people were attracted because of the care that the local congregation offered its members. Organizations and groups of the Evangelical Movement acknowledged the lack of care in modern society. The Jesus People, for example, criticized the established churches for failing to



accomplish their caring task.<sup>77</sup> Youth for Christ not only shared this point of view, it also offered young people various places where they could receive such care.

### *Youth for Christ as care movement*

Youth for Christ provided for various locations where young people could gather and receive specific or general care, both at a local and at a national level. In the 1970s, one of the most prominent meeting places was the coffee bar. The idea of local coffee bars originated from the first organized summer coffee bar in 1967. Youth for Christ put up a big tent in a meadow and placed tables, chairs, a little bar and a stage in it. A group of employees went into the streets to invite young people to come. At night, these youngsters could drink coffee and play music. Christian youngsters sat at the tables challenging their peers to talk about their faith.<sup>78</sup> After a few years of successful summer bars, coffee bars started mushrooming all over the Netherlands. Enthusiastic youngsters refurbished old buildings to start their own coffee bar where people could listen to music, discuss the faith, drink coffee and come to God. In 1969 in Utrecht, for example, a young man rebuilt an old boat which became the coffee bar *Kruis of Munt* ('Heads or Tails') at the Muntkade. And when in 1974 the old farm 'n *Dikken* was opened, it was already the twenty-fifth coffee bar in the Netherlands. It is interesting to note that the coffee bar was an invention of the Dutch Youth for Christ. Such bars did not become popular in the United States and were neither exploited as Evangelical gathering places by Youth for Christ departments in other countries.<sup>79</sup> Besides being places for entertainment, the coffee bars were also places where young people could receive information on the Christian faith and where they could talk about their problems. To this mean, they were easily accessible and provided peer-to-peer assistance. A former drug addict told his encounters at the coffee bar in *Aktie*:

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<sup>77</sup> Land, *Wat bezielt ze?*, 323.

<sup>78</sup> De Kam, *Rock & Roll*, 45.

<sup>79</sup> Idem, 53.

A flyer of Youth for Christ in Dordrecht drew my attention to very different people. Pleasant talking over a cup of coffee, said that flyer. I thought I would go there. They will not bite me. At the coffee bar I talked to a boy of the music group who told me about God. I was fed up with my life and decided this was the only way to be saved. After a couple of weeks I returned to that coffee bar. There I met a friend who also used drugs but who was now completely clean. That night we talked about God and about how He can save you. At a certain moment we went outside and walked to a park where we prayed together. That night I came to faith.<sup>80</sup>

Another way Youth for Christ combined entertainment and care was in its camps. While it started organizing camps in the very first years of its existence, it was not until the beginning of the 1970s that these summer camps really became popular. No less than 100 camps were organized each summer, at home and abroad. They were promoted as holidays where young people would make new friends. Besides the fact that these holidays were organized for fun and relaxation, there also was time to discuss the more serious business of discussing the Christian faith:

Being on holiday. That is the best way to characterize the camps which Youth for Christ organizes this year at home and abroad. A holiday where you are not on your own, but where you are with folk of your own age. People who you don't know yet, but who soon become your friends. A holiday with a lot of fun and recreation, but also with time to search for answers to problems which you encounter every day. That we open the Bible for these answers, is a matter of course. Exactly this combination makes a Youth for Christ camp a unique holiday. The options are numerous this year. You can choose from 44 different camps: from a wagon ride in Drenthe, a fishing camp in Ireland, walking across the Veluwe to canoeing in Bretagne.<sup>81</sup>

Besides these places where one could receive general, spiritual care, focusing on taking care of one's faith, Youth for Christ also developed institutions for more practical problems. The best example of this is the opening of a shelter in Utrecht for junks, drunks and other traumatized youth. The organization tried to rehabilitate these lost juveniles by getting them acquainted with God. The same

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<sup>80</sup> 'Interview met Gerrit Kok', *Aktie 9* (December, 1975), no. 6, 10.

<sup>81</sup> 'Vakantie 1976 met Youth for Christ', *Aktie 9* (1975) no. 7, 11.

boy who told about his experiences at the coffee bar also ended up in this shelter:

I know only few people who stop using drugs, although every user knows he is heading towards a dead end. I believe the only way to rehabilitate is to start believing in Jesus Christ and in God's Love. You don't need drugs to become happy. Actually, there should be more shelters like this.<sup>82</sup>

At first, this shelter was run by volunteers. There was space for ten guests, who could stay for a maximum of three weeks. Eventually, a few churches in the area took over the financial business and later the work was accommodated in an independent trust. Youth for Christ started realizing it needed professionals and the organization opened two more centers. This made it possible to divide the work into crisis intervention, treatment and supervised living within a community. In 1982 the work was made independent in the organization Timon.<sup>83</sup>

The caring character of Youth for Christ was not without effect on the Dutch Protestant churches. Its work amongst youth evoked heated discussions about the churches' own youth work. Although they might have questioned the goals of the organization, it seems that the churches realized that Youth for Christ was doing a better job than their own organization, the *Landelijk Centrum voor Gereformeerd Jeugdwerk* (National Center for Reformed Youth Work, LCGJ). People who wanted a rapprochement to Youth for Christ praised its ability to reach the youth and seemed jealous of its successes. People within the churches who did not want more co-operation, said that Youth for Christ was still more an Evangelical organization than a youth work institution.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> 'Interview met Gerrit Kok', 10.

<sup>83</sup> De Kam, *Rock&Roll*, 67.

<sup>84</sup> See articles: 'De Kerk moet zich naar haar jongeren wenden', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 17-01-1972, 2; 'In het LCJG gaat het om evangelie', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 18-03-1972, 2; 'Kerkelijke hulpverlening drugsverslaafden', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 14-04-1975, 8; 'De Kerk en de jeugd', *Gereformeerd Weekblad*, 21-06-1975, 4-5; 'Jeugdraad Zuid-Holland voor toenadering Youth for Christ', *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 26-07-1975, 2; 'Onze jongeren', *De Saambinder*, 27-05-1976, 4-5.

As a care movement, Youth for Christ can be positioned within the wider Evangelical Movement. The organization addressed all kinds of problems in young people's lives, from more general issues to very concrete problems like drug addiction. Moreover, it established various places where young people could receive the care they needed. The fact that even the Dutch Protestant churches acknowledged these activities, although they might not always have agreed on the goal and methods, supports this conclusion. Regarding the position of Youth for Christ within one of the behavioral groups Boersema described, the organization as care movement can again be placed in the assimilative group. It adapted its position and work to modern society by seizing upon contemporary problems, like drug addiction. Still using the Bible as starting point, Youth for Christ provided care in new ways and new places.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has revolved around the question to what extent Youth for Christ can be positioned within the Evangelical Movement. To answer this question, this chapter has given a rough sketch of the Evangelical Movement in general and has formulated a working concept of the movement. By using the four characteristics that Boersema defined of the Evangelical Movement in general, Youth for Christ has been tested as (1) a protest movement, (2) a revitalizing movement, (3) a conversion movement, and (4) a care movement. In each case, special attention was given to positioning Youth for Christ's behavior within the conservative, assimilative or transformational groups.

First, Youth for Christ can be positioned within the Evangelical Movement as a protest movement. The organization opposed elements of secular society, especially problems that manifested themselves in young people's lives. In this way, the organization targeted specific elements of secular society which could attract young people to its own Christian message. This contributed to the image that Youth for Christ's behavior fits within the assimilative group of the Evangelical Movement as it modified its position within society. The organization adapted to changes in society, e.g. the use of modern technologies,

as long as these were not in clear conflict with the Bible. Furthermore, it interpreted the Bible as offering solutions to problems in young people's lives.

Second, Youth for Christ cannot be unambiguously positioned within the Evangelical Movement as a revitalizing movement. Its relationship with the established Dutch Protestant churches made clear that its message was not focused on re-interpreting Christian values. Rather, it focused on new methods to reach young people and bring them back to church. It seems that the organization was more concerned with a method than a message. This can be regarded as a means to strengthen its cooperation with the established Dutch Protestant churches. Moreover, it testifies to the organization's assimilative behavior as Youth for Christ adapted itself to the Dutch ecclesiastical scene.

Third, Youth for Christ can be perfectly positioned within the Evangelical Movement as conversion movement. It focused on conversion by means of an 'invitation' or 'altar-call' with which every gathering was concluded. However, it seems its parachurch character caused Youth for Christ to take a moderate point of view. Although the Dutch Protestant churches criticized its emphasis on conversion, making the Bible of minor importance, the organization did try to give young people enough opportunities to study the Bible and emphasize the need to strengthen their faith. As other Evangelical groups decided to create their own communities because the churches rejected their Arminian attitude, Youth for Christ seemed to adapt itself to the Dutch ecclesiastical situation by constantly searching for close association with the churches. Its behavior as conversion movement is not as clear as with the first two characteristics. From the established churches' point of view, the organization could be seen as transformational, as it contextualized the Bible too much. From Youth for Christ's point of view, however, its behavior can be placed somewhere in between conservative and assimilative. It can be seen as conservative because its focus on conversion points at the longing to return to the founding period of Christianity when differences between 'us and them' were clear: only after converting, one belonged to the group of saved Christians. On the other hand, its behavior can be regarded as assimilative because Youth for Christ thought its 'altar-call' not to

be in conflict with God's Word and because the organization emphasized the need of Bible study to grow in one's faith.

Fourth, Youth for Christ can also be positioned within the Evangelical Movement as a care movement. It addressed all kind of problems in young people's lives and established various places where youngsters could receive care. For more general, spiritual care young people could go to coffee bars or could go on holidays. For more specific care youngsters could go to Youth for Christ's shelter. Even the established churches acknowledged this caring task. Again, this characteristic places the organization in the *assimilative* group as Youth for Christ adapted its position and work to modern society by seizing upon contemporary problems, like drug addiction. Still using the Bible as a starting point, Youth for Christ provided care in new ways and places.

It is evident that Youth for Christ can be seen as part of the Evangelical Movement. As a protest, conversion and care movement, the organization focused on the same tasks as the Evangelical Movement. Only as a revitalizing movement, Youth for Christ does not fit within this characterization. But it is also evident that Youth for Christ took a moderate stance in all these 'tasks'. In its assimilative behavior it seems not only to have adapted to modern society, but also to the Dutch ecclesiastical scene. Besides spreading an evangelical message with emphasis on experience, Youth for Christ seems to have focused on gathering youth to guide them into the churches again. Youth for Christ thus emphasized a specific method. Accordingly, it set itself apart from more radical groups within the Evangelical Movement, like for example the Jesus People. As a parachurch organization, Youth for Christ seems to have aimed at contributing to a religious group identity, a focus on belonging, instead of providing a new, radical, religious message or a new Christian meaning. Moreover, this chapter has already shown that although Youth for Christ adhered to the general evangelical message, it also aimed at constituting a specific religious culture in co-operation with the established Dutch Protestant churches. Furthermore, it is evident that the assimilative aspect of the organization is one of its most

important characteristics. The way Youth for Christ adapted itself to secular society and to the Dutch ecclesiastical situation seems to have been a major actor for gaining popularity. The next chapter will explore this notion of assimilating to culture even further and will see to what extent Youth for Christ was more a youth culture than a religious organization.





# III. YOUTH FOR CHRIST AND YOUTH CULTURE

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## 3.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter revolved around Youth for Christ as part of the Evangelical Movement, this chapter focuses on Youth for Christ as a youth culture. It seeks to answer the question to what extent Youth for Christ adapted to youth culture. This is interesting because the previous chapter has shown that the organization offered the Dutch youth more than just a religious message. This chapter thus tries to see what it additionally offered by focusing on the possible creation of a culture, of a way of belonging.

This chapter is divided in two parts, in both of which Youth for Christ will be tested as a youth culture. The first part will focus on style. It defines style as consisting of image, attitude and slang and will trace these aspects in Youth for Christ, to see if they tell us something about the organization's values and beliefs. The second part will focus on media, to see whether secular society saw Youth for Christ as a youth culture.

## 3.2 Style

### 3.2.1 Style as working concept

Youth cultures are first and foremost distinguished by their outer appearances. Subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s, like hippies, punkers, beatniks and disco, attracted attention by their outfits and hairdos. All the clothes, jewelry, objects, but also music, that were adopted by people of a particular subculture, were part of such a youth culture's style. Members of a youth culture were proud of their culture and developed their own style, even lifestyle, to propagate their culture. Kitty de Leeuw argues that this is why style is of the utmost importance for a youth culture. Style points to the values, norms, beliefs and identity of its members. De Leeuw distinguishes three elements of style: image, attitude and slang. With image she means the outer appearance of members consisting of

their clothes, hair-dress, make-up, jewelry and other accessories and objects. She describes attitude as a characteristic gesture or a certain way of walking. By slang, De Leeuw means a certain way of talking or a particular form of speech.<sup>85</sup>

In addition to being a description of the outer appearances of a particular youth culture, style also includes values, beliefs and even identity. In this way, style addresses the 'inner' appearances of youth cultures as well. Dick Hebdige argues that youth cultures pose a challenge to hegemonic society through their style. Moreover, subcultures use style to define themselves against other social groups (parents, teachers, police, 'respectable' youth etc.) and other subcultures.<sup>86</sup> According to Hebdige, style in subculture is 'pregnant' with significance. With this he means that subcultures 'take' objects of hegemonic society, transform their meanings and then use them to go 'against nature'. As such, they are gestures or movements towards "a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, and which contradicts the myth of consensus."<sup>87</sup> In other words, Hebdige sees youth cultures as countercultures. Moreover, he sees style thus as a sign which contains hidden messages in code which can be discerned so their meaning can be traced.

Style can thus be used as a working concept to (1) define a particular youth culture as such and (2) trace their values, beliefs and opposition to hegemonic society. It can also be used as a working thesis for Evangelical youth movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As these movements started deploying modern media to spread their message, they also seemed to be creating their own style. One perfect example of this is the Jesus Movement, also known as the Jesus People.<sup>88</sup>

This movement of hippies, peace activists and their sympathizers obtained high visibility in the United States of the 1970s through their style. The movement produced a stream of buttons, patches, rings, key cords, bumper

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<sup>85</sup> Kitty de Leeuw, 'Jongeren (sub)culturen als sociaal verschijnsel', in: Kitty de Leeuw, Sjouk Hoitsma, Ingrid de Jager and Peter Schonewille (ed.), *Jong! Jongerencultuur en stijl in Nederland 1950-2000* (Zwolle, 2000) 8-17, 12.

<sup>86</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York, 1979) 73.

<sup>87</sup> Idem, 18.

<sup>88</sup> This movement has already briefly been described in the previous chapter.

stickers and T-shirts. Especially the WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) logo and the fish icon were perfect to reproduce on jewelry and clothes.<sup>89</sup> But besides the fact that its style constituted an image of the Jesus Movement as a youth culture, it also pointed at the beliefs and messages that existed within the movement. Jo Spaans, for example, has argued that these commodities encouraged the wearers to live their lives according to the example of Jesus, while they were also meant as testimony to one's faith. So, according to Spaans, clothes and jewelry bearing religious motives were a perfect aid to evangelization for especially the more Evangelical groups. They were cheap to produce and fitted perfectly with the clothing style of the youth. Spaans argues that in marketing these objects, it was constantly emphasized that the more outstanding clothes could only be worn by people who had the courage to show their deviant opinion. This need to testify was supposed to exist among the users, but it was also encouraged by marketing slogans.<sup>90</sup> Hence, the style of the Jesus Movement expressed its conviction that young Christians had to be willing to testify to their faith. Moreover, the movement changed the 'secular' meaning of modern commodities to spread an Evangelical message.

This example shows how style can be used to characterize a youth culture and to trace its beliefs and meanings. In this way, style will here be used to test Youth for Christ as a youth culture. By using the three distinctions made by De Leeuw (image, attitude and slang), Youth for Christ's style will be described. Image, however, includes not only outer appearance, but also music and books. Furthermore, by using Hebdige's notion that style is 'pregnant' with significance, the concept of style will be used to trace Youth for Christ's values and beliefs.

### **3.2.2 Style of Youth for Christ**

#### **3.2.2.1 Image**

At first sight it does not seem as if Youth for Christ wanted people to show off their Christian faith through their outer appearance. The organization emphasized that one could only show one's Christian way of life by actions, not

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<sup>89</sup> Spaans, 'Democratisering van het religieus accessoire', 41.

<sup>90</sup> Idem, 49.

through image. One article in Youth for Christ's magazine *Aktie* makes clear that it derived this point of view from the Bible:

Jesus said: Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven (Matthew 6:1). In Jesus' time, you could not yet buy stickers in Jerusalem for your helmet, diary or car. But there were already religious freaks: the Pharisees. They did not let a chance go by to show the people how super religious they were (Matthew 23:1-5). Now, it is not God's intention that you hide your faith and just join the mass of people. No, in fact, Jesus said we should be 'the light of the world' (Matthew 5:14). Jesus does not talk about flashing neon lights but says: 'Let your light shine so other people can see how you live as a Christian, so they thank the Father in heaven'. Being a 'light of Christ' means to help your mother do the dishes, to talk to the chick with the pimples, to visit the old man in the rest home.<sup>91</sup>

This is one of only a few articles in which these particular ideas on outer appearances are expressed. Throughout the rest of the magazine, however, articles, advertisements and reports say something else. They demonstrate that Youth for Christ applauded a Christian visibility indeed.

### *Music*

Music is probably the most important cultural characteristic of Youth for Christ and its members. The organization's image seems to have been mostly associated with singing and guitar playing youngsters. Besides making music, listening to music of Christian artists was also encouraged by Youth for Christ. Already at the end of the 1950s, the organization realized that music could play an important role in reaching out to the youth, to ensure that Jesus' way of living was incorporated in the lives of young people. When Youth for Christ noticed that it had to change its approach at the end of the 1960s, music was one of the most characteristic renewals. At the first Dutch rallies, some people spoke scornfully about a 'jazz-gospel' or 'American cocktail', but the effect on young people seems to have been great. They were attracted by the compelling tunes

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<sup>91</sup> *Aktie* 11 (1978) no. 4, 13.

and accessible chorus. The demand for Christian music outside the gatherings increased and modern revival songs were composed. In *Jeugd in Actie* (the predecessor of *Aktie*) these records were discussed and praised, and this development can be seen as the beginning of gospel in the Netherlands.<sup>92</sup>

The list of Christian artists promoted by Youth for Christ seems to have grown endlessly during the 1960s and especially the 1970s. Christian groups like the *Edwin Hawking Singers* and *Les Humphries Singers*, whose goal it was to spread the gospel, gained popularity in these years. They were promoted by Youth for Christ in advertisements and interviews. Already in the early 1960s, Youth for Christ also started gathering their own bands and groups. *Teen Teams* came from America to travel across the Netherlands. These groups of singing youngsters, diverse in their skin color and background, visited high schools to sing, make music and discuss the Gospel. At this time, the *Teen Teams* were part of a completely new approach chosen by Youth for Christ. Instead of inviting young people to come to their rallies, the organization itself approached them. It mobilized young people who were to create equal contacts with their peers, in order to get those youngsters actively involved in a conversation about the faith. Youth for Christ came to believe that youth evangelization could best be done by young people themselves. The organization tried to find and train them and let them do the actual work.<sup>93</sup> Eventually, in 1969, Youth for Christ compiled the first Dutch *Teen Teams* to visit its coffee bars during the summer. Youth for Christ Europe also composed international groups named *Carpenter's Tools*, later renamed *Oasis*. These groups of young artists traveled a year through different countries to perform in coffee bars and at schools.<sup>94</sup> These music teams were promoted by Youth for Christ as 'friendly people making friendly music' which could be placed between rock and soft-pop. *Aktie* advertised their records, asked new people to join and published interviews with them. Moreover, these music teams were seen as a modern way of mission. *Oasis*, for example, travelled in a big blue van through Europe, its members wore modern blue jeans and spread

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<sup>92</sup> Edward de Kam and Neeltje Rietveld-de Jong, *Rock&Roll. In beweging voor Jezus en jongeren* (Amsterdam 2011) 35.

<sup>93</sup> Idem, 45.

<sup>94</sup> Idem, 54.

the Gospel by means of music and lyrics. They quit their jobs for a year to play in churches, coffee bars, gatherings, etc. The slogan "Do you speak music? Let's talk!" was used by Youth for Christ to recruit new band members. There were some criteria for becoming a member: youngsters were required to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and were to have a strong wish to spread His message. Moreover, members had to be able to easily make contact with others and had to be flexible in adjusting to different countries and cultures. No less important were their musical talent, experience and knowledge of different European languages and cultures.<sup>95</sup>

Youth for Christ not only promoted its own bands and groups, but also an endless list of Christian artists. International gospel singers like George Harrison, Johnny Halliday, Barry Ryan and Paul Stookey got a fair share of attention. Again, their records were discussed, interviews were published and these artists played at Evangelical youth festivals. One example of a popular Christian artist, whose records were praised in *Aktie*, was Adrian Snell. He was born in London in 1954 and his music was an expression of his Christian way of life. His background consisted of classical music, rock and jazz. As musician and singer he knew how to incorporate all these different styles in his music and he succeeded in creating a special unity. Critics labeled his music as 'peaceful', with 'rare harmonic improvisations' and as 'respectful and inspired'. He would often perform on MayDay festivals and in 1977, for example, he performed the Passion – the story of the suffering and resurrection of Christ. *Aktie* promoted this performance as containing an important message combined with high quality music.<sup>96</sup>

Many of these artists had only converted to Christianity in the 1970s. Singers like Cliff Richard, Johnny Cash and later even Bob Dylan became proud Christians and seemed perfect artists to promote amongst the youth. An article in *Aktie* of 1977, for example, discussed the attitude of the then 'profane' Bob Dylan. As he was already very popular, probably also among Christians, the magazine stated that even though Dylan asked questions about the supernatural and tried to find answers, they "as Christians" did not always agree with him.

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<sup>95</sup> Advertisement, *Aktie* 9 (1976) no. 7, 16.

<sup>96</sup> 'Adrian Snell', *Aktie* 10 (1977) no. 11, 11.

But, the magazine did not want to defend or attack him. "At least" he thought about life and God.<sup>97</sup> When it became known in December 1979 that Bob Dylan had become a Christian, the happiness of the editorial office was limitless:

Is it not terrific that when people seek the truth they always end up with the God of the Bible. It does not matter how long it may take and how many roads there may be, eventually they find that one way. Think of all the people in your personal life and of all those famous people who became Christians. Would so many artists convert because God wants to use them in our music (youth) culture to alert others of the Gospel?<sup>98</sup>

But not only international artists converted to Christianity, the Netherlands also had its very own 'born again' Christians: Elly and Rikkert Zuiderveld. This duo of hippie-like figures converted to Christianity in 1976. Before, they had already made music, and they had been experimenting with New Age spirituality and techniques like astrology, theosophy, anthroposophy and Tarot cards. However, eventually they found the answer in the way of Jesus Christ. Their music now carried a Christian message, while their hippie look stayed the same – long hair, long skirts and bandanas.<sup>99</sup>

Youth for Christ not only promoted Christian music through advertisements and articles, but even had its own music department. With the name 'MayDay Music' the organization tried to bring Christian music under the attention of the Dutch public. The record label issued records, organized tours, etc. The organization also had its own Youth for Christ book and record store in Driebergen. In that store not only records of Christian bands like Oasis, The Advocates or Parchment, were sold but also the Youth for Christ Song Book – "177 new songs including guitar finger arrangements."<sup>100</sup> In March 1976 *Aktie* got its own record rubric. Under the name 'Subjektief' ('Subjective') – "because you cannot argue about taste" – new records were introduced each month and one was chosen as record of the month.<sup>101</sup> But Youth for Christ was not the only

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<sup>97</sup> "Bob Dylan", *Aktie* 10 (1977) no. 10, 15.

<sup>98</sup> 'Feiten over Dylan', *Aktie* 13 (1979) no. 6, 24.

<sup>99</sup> 'Elly en Rikkert: of ze nou boeh roepen of halleluja...!', *Aktie* 10 (1976) no. 2, 12.

<sup>100</sup> Advertisement, *Aktie* 11 (1978) no. 8.

<sup>101</sup> *Aktie* 9 (1976) no.9, 17.

organization acknowledging the importance of music. Other Christian record stores also advertised in the magazine, like Pilgrim Records, Knotters Platenclub and Reli-disq. These were Christian record and book clubs selling cheap records, cassettes and books. Moreover, Christian broadcasters like the *Evangelische Omroep* (Evangelical Broadcast) and the NCRV (*Nederlandse Christelijke Radio Vereniging* – Dutch Christian Radio Association) advertised their programs in *Aktie*. The NCRV, for example, promoted their radio show ‘Happy Sound’, a Saturday morning show of an hour filled with gospels in the most various versions. However, these organizations all made clear that only listening to Christian music was not enough: if youngsters understood the message, they had to do something with it; they had to live with the Bible as a guide and they had to experience the Biblical message.<sup>102</sup>

This ‘musical image’ of Youth for Christ – both in making music and listening to it – was most visible at its mass manifestations. These Evangelical festivals attracted a host of young people. On Ascension Day 1973, Youth for Christ organized its first ‘convention’: MayDay. It was a day of meetings, music, lectures and spiritual edification. After a few years, already 7,500 youths attended this festival.<sup>103</sup> Another national event that started in 1973 was Samensmeden (‘Welding together’), four days between Christmas and New Year where Youth for Christ members could come together for edification. No less than 1,000 youths from all over the country gathered to sing, pray, talk, make new friends and meet old ones again. Initially, this convention was meant to be for volunteers of all kinds of Youth for Christ work, but other people involved in youth evangelization were welcome as well.<sup>104</sup>

*Aktie* magazine makes it strikingly clear that Youth for Christ not only promoted its own events, but was also keen on promoting all kinds of Evangelical events. It advertised the annual edition of the English Greenbelt festival, “a festival to the glory of God”. At this event youngsters could encounter Christian artists, music from classical to rock, dance and drama workshops, seminars and

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<sup>102</sup> Advertisement NCRV, *Aktie* 10 (1976) no. 1, 20.

<sup>103</sup> Kam, *Rock&Roll*, 64.

<sup>104</sup> Advertisement Samensmeden, *Aktie* 12 (1978) no. 6, 22.



teach-ins, late night films, worship services and breaking of bread and a Festival village with arts and crafts displays and shops.<sup>105</sup> Another annual event, but Dutch, was the One Way Day of the organization Opwekking ('Awakening') in Utrecht. This also was a day of singing, testimony and gathering for 'Jesus youth'. Besides the fun element, it also had a serious program of preaching and Bible study. In 1979, for example, one could listen to Fred Lemon, a former criminal who converted to Christianity after three angels had visited him in prison. Or one could attend a musical composed by the One Way Day choir (consisting of 700 people). In the evening, people could wonder around the Evangelical Market with over 70 stands.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, the festivals or events of the EO were also promoted, like the EO-Landendag ('Country Day'), the EO-Familiedag ('Family Day') and the EO-Jongerendag ('Youth Day'). Eventually, in 1978 Youth for Christ organized its very own gospel music festival following the example of the English Greenbelt. This Kamperland Muziekfestival was a weekend filled with music, camping, markets, movies, Bible study, night coffee bars, theater, sailing, traditional games, lectures etc.<sup>107</sup> At the first edition, it welcomed 1,500 visitors.

It is evident that music constituted an important part of Youth for Christ's image and that the organization utilized music as a means to spread an Evangelical message. Through music, Youth for Christ adapted itself to youth culture. Music also reflects the organization's beliefs and values. Youth for Christ not only transformed modern 'secular' music into modern 'spiritual' music, it also opposed (and transformed) traditional church music.

Already in the period after the Second World War the development of Evangelical songs took off. In the wake of secular trends (such as pop), songs were developed which dovetailed with the tradition of the 'spirituals'. These songs could be 'groovy' and could be 'slow'. Short 'hallelujah choirs' which could be repeated endlessly existed. There were 'Bible songs', based on short passages. And there were more stretched, strophic songs which fitted in the

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<sup>105</sup> Advertisement Greenbelt '78, *Aktie* 12 (1978) no. 10.

<sup>106</sup> Advertisement One Way Day 1979, *Aktie* 13 (1979) no. 4, 19.

<sup>107</sup> *Aktie* 11 (1978) nr. 11.

hymnal tradition. In the 1970s, the tempo was raised. The Canadian couple Merv and Merla Watson brought quite a few Jewish-like songs to the Netherlands and together with the Australian couple Dave and Dale Garret, they introduced songs of praise and veneration. These were 'vertical' songs which had to be directed at God.<sup>108</sup> Eventually, the term 'praise' was used to refer to this style of music. The genre commercialized and was used for entertainment purposes as such revival songs were launched on records. Most of the Evangelical songs were characterized by musical and textual simplicity and straightforwardness. A spiritual experience was formulated, a tune was made up and the song was ready for publishing. The songs were recognizable, easy and had a high emotional density. The songs were also 'direct' because God and man were addressed in plain language. However, not all revival songs were that 'simple'. Adrian Snell's work, for example, was of a high quality and complexity. Gospel turned into a professional music genre. Little gospel material came from the Netherlands, most of it originated in England or the United States.<sup>109</sup> Youth for Christ took part in the development of this music genre and also other Evangelical movements, organizations and parishes started using this genre for worshipping God and spreading their messages.

The traditional Dutch Protestant churches criticized this kind of music. Within the churches, people only knew the psalms on whole notes while the new, popular songs were in three-quarter time. When, in later years, modern music genres like pop, beat, soul and hard-rock were used, the churches increased their criticism. The church authorities did not understand the lifestyle of this new generation and held on to a more narrow sense of religious music and songs.<sup>110</sup> The Protestant churches often saw Youth for Christ's music as part of a wave of 'American religiosity' that swept through the Netherlands:

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<sup>108</sup> C.R. van Setten, 'Op hoge toon. De liederen cultuur van de evangelische beweging' in: Hans Eschbach (ed.), *Vurig Verlangen. Evangelische vernieuwing in de traditionele kerken* (Zoetermeer, 1996) 114-133, 117.

<sup>109</sup> Idem, 118.

<sup>110</sup> Sipke van der Land, *Wat bezielt ze? Het handboek van sekten, stille krachten, bewegingen* (Kampen, 1980) 293.

It is the atmosphere of religious pop music, of a kind of revival mentality, which comes across as religious kitsch. People are not critical enough of the content of such songs, as long as it has a catchy melody.<sup>111</sup>

The use of music thus contributes to the argument that Youth for Christ adapted to the notion of youth culture by means of style. First, it seems that music constituted an important part of the organization's image. Second, Youth for Christ transformed modern 'secular' music as well as traditional Protestant church music. However, Youth for Christ did not seem to be very critical of the music it recommended. The organization made use of all kinds of styles ranging from hard rock to pop and gospel. The only thing the different music styles had in common was the Christian message they held. Because Youth for Christ used so many different music styles, it is difficult to consider a specific musical style as part of Youth for Christ's image. It seemed that the organization used music, regardless of style, as an evangelical method. Music thus contributes to the idea of Youth for Christ as an Evangelical organization rather than that it characterizes Youth for Christ as a youth culture.

### *The Bible and other books*

Like music, Kitty de Leeuw also does not mention literature as a category that defines the image of youth cultures. In the case of Youth for Christ, however, books are just as characteristic of the organization's style as is music. Books, and especially of course the Bible, were used as ways to spread an Evangelical message and express a Christian way of life. Carrying a Bible on top of schoolbooks can be seen as a testimony to one's faith. Moreover, the Bible was the starting point of conversation with classmates and friends about one's faith. Photographs in *Aktie* showed groups of young people talking, having the Bible in front of them, next to pen and paper. To help them along, the magazine started publishing a new series in 1975: 'Bible study'. On the basis of a specific Bible fragment, a variety of issues were addressed. Readers could even cut these passages out to collect the whole series. The assignment was to read the

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<sup>111</sup> 'De wacht bij de belijdenis', *De Waarheidsvriend*, 21-10-1976, 2-3.

fragment at least two or three times, preferably in one's own Bible, underlining the parts one considered striking. The larger assignment that would follow this Bible study was talking about one's faith with others.<sup>112</sup>

New versions of the Bible were promoted whenever they came out and the Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap (Dutch Bible Society) had a fixed advertisement in every issue of *Aktie*. But the Bible was not only a means to testify one's faith, it was also used as a guide in dealing with everyday problems. And what issue was more pressing in youngster's lives than sex? Sexuality was often addressed and Bible fragments were used to argue against sex before marriage and as guides for dealing with love. Several issues of *Aktie* even had love as main theme. And love between a boy and a girl was not a bad thing, as long as it did not lead to (the idol of) sex. The Book of Canticles, for example, was explained as a poem about a permissible, passionate love.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, not only the Bible was used in dealing with sexuality and love, the list of books dealing with those issues was inexhaustible and these books were promoted by Youth for Christ. The organization argued that according to the Bible, sexuality was a gift from God. But in the handbooks about sex of the 1970s, God hardly played any role. And Youth for Christ was convinced that the more 'godless' books were published, the more misunderstanding about sexuality arose. But the organization was very content with the "good, biblically grounded books" that still existed. Examples were *Dat gaat toch alleen ons beiden aan?* (Doesn't that only regards the two of us?) in which the author discussed intercourse before marriage, or *Ik ben niet meer 'zo'* (I'm not like 'that' anymore), a testimony of the formerly gay Johan van der Sluis, who eventually married and had two children, after being liberated by Jesus Christ. David Wilkerson's *Handboek voor Jezusmensen* (Guidebook for Jesus people) dealt with issues like sexuality, venereal diseases, love, masturbation, and also drug abuse, explaining those as tricks of the devil.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> 'Bijbelstudie', *Aktie* 9 (1975) no. 3, 14-15.

<sup>113</sup> 'Het geheim van de liefde', *Aktie* 10 (1977) no. 10, 12.

<sup>114</sup> Advertisement Gideon, *Aktie* 10 (1976) no. 1, 21.

Youth for Christ did not only have its own bookstore in Utrecht, but its magazine *Aktie* also included advertisements of other Christian bookstores and publishing houses in the Netherlands, such as Kok Kampen. One publisher that had a fixed spot in the magazine was Gideon, which promoted itself as publishing contemporary Evangelical books almost for free, taking into account the small amount of money young people had to spend. It was important that readers should also be able to pass these books “full of good news” on to others, which again points to the function of books as a means to testify to one’s faith. The endless list of Christian books dealt with a variety of topics: from sexuality to drugs and from Christians in America to mission in Africa. Biographies of converted artists, like Johnny Cash, were popular, but also biographies of clergy were sold, like the story of vicar Slomp who fought against the Nazi terror in the Netherlands during the Second World War.<sup>115</sup>

Books and especially the Bible were thus, just as music, a means of testifying to one’s faith. This meant they were highly visible objects in the culture of Youth for Christ. Carrying the Bible in plain sight was encouraged by the organization and executed by its members. In this way, Christian books and the Bible became part of Youth for Christ’s image. For the most part, the books were guides on how to obtain and maintain a Christian lifestyle in a secularizing world. In this way, books carried a specific set of meanings and values. This, however, cannot be regarded as a transformation of books as used in hegemonic society. Especially in the 1970s, due to the popularity of New Age spirituality, a whole range of handbooks was published. The fact that Youth for Christ, however, also promoted the Bible as a guide for young people’s lives, does seem to be a transformation of and an opposition to hegemonic culture: Dutch Protestant culture.

Although the Dutch Protestant churches and Youth for Christ both saw the Bible as the infallible and authoritative word of God, taking the Bible as a handbook for every-day life provoked criticism from the churches. This criticism

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<sup>115</sup> Idem, 25.

coincided with the more general critiques about the remonstrant character of Youth for Christ.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, churches seemed to fear the 'loose' way in which Youth for Christ discussed Bible passages. This was not only the case for the organization itself, but also for the material it used. David Wilkerson's book *The Cross and the Switchblade*, for example, also met with harsh criticism. This account of the American Evangelical Wilkerson who converted the teenage-gangster Nicky Cruz, could not count on much sympathy:

Not once did he literally cite the Bible. He based his story on personal biographies and other stories taken from life. The most edifying elements were his statement 'Jesus loves you' and his warning that no human being is able to cope with the influence of sin and injustice on their own.<sup>117</sup>

The fact that Youth for Christ used the Bible as compass was often seen as superficial and too general:

The exemplification with Bible passages is often too superficial and without much direction because there are no references to certain issues of the confessions. [...] The material that is used as tool for the study of the Bible has to be a mirror image of Scripture and composed by people who are worthy of passing on God's grace. Moreover, these people have to know the value of God's Word for one's personal life, as fruit of the Holy Spirit.<sup>118</sup>

Although some church members could also take a more positive stand towards Youth for Christ's use of the Bible and its Bible studies, it seems that they all still thought it to be too simple. As one article in a Reformed daily paper stated: "The Youth for Christ Bible studies contain some good things. It mentions sin, conversion, the significance of Jesus as only way to bring man to God and to repair the broken relationship."<sup>119</sup> However, the same article also said that this was still too straightforward as these studies did not address further spiritual

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<sup>116</sup> For details about these criticisms see chapter I.

<sup>117</sup> 'Teen Challenge helpt jongeren die aan de naald zijn', *Reformatorsch Dagblad*, 25-08-1977, 2.

<sup>118</sup> 'Allerlei Bijbelkringen', *Daniël*, 14-07-1978, 9.

<sup>119</sup> 'Opwekkingsbewegingen onvoldoende diepgang', *Reformatorsch Dagblad*, 3-11-1978, 14

growth. It was only about getting to know God and starting a new life while a previous life was hardly mentioned.<sup>120</sup>

Considering the way books and the Bible constituted a large part of the image of Youth for Christ and the fact that these commodities were not used in the traditional way, it is possible to argue that Youth for Christ adapted itself to a particular youth culture. However, more than with music, it is necessary to remark that books and the Bible were mainly used to oppose the traditional Protestant culture, not secular society in general.

### *Fashion and objects*

Fashion and related objects seems to have contained the most significance for the image of youth cultures such as described by De Leeuw and Hebdige. And although Spaans also addressed these commodities for her description of the Jesus Movement, they seem to bear less importance for the image of Youth for Christ. Its magazine *Aktie*, for example, hardly advertized any of these commodities. The few objects that can be seen as part of an image, other than music and books, were stickers and diaries. The stickers, with the text 'Want ik schaam mij het evangelie niet' ('For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ', Rom. 1:16), were made by Youth for Christ and offered in different sizes.<sup>121</sup> The organization Jong&Vrij (Young&Free) promoted its diary in *Aktie*, which included a daily Bible passage, information about Christian music, comic strips and more. "A complete diary, in a colorful cover for only 7,50 guilders!"<sup>122</sup>

Judging by the photographs of Youth for Christ members and of Evangelical festivals, the Evangelical youth in the Netherlands of the 1960s and 1970s did not seem to have a particular fashion style. Their clothes did not testify to their Christian belief, and can probably only be characterized as 'normal' and perhaps even a bit conservative. Blue jeans, flower prints and big glasses seem to have been the standard. In general, not a lot of skin was shown, but then again,

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Advertisement 'Stickers, stickers, stickers', *Aktie* 10 (1976) no. 4.

<sup>122</sup> Advertisement Jong&Vrij, *Aktie* 10 (1977) no. 11, 28.

it also does not seem as if bare skin was frowned upon. Especially photographs of festivals and summer camps show youngsters in shorts and T-shirts. The lack of use of clothing and other fashion items as elements of style does not mean, however, that Youth for Christ was unaware of the opportunities such commodities had for expressing and spreading its Evangelical message. Photographs of the One Way Day demonstrations, for example, show youngsters dressed in printed T-shirts with the name of Jesus and the One Way sign (a finger pointing upwards and a cross).<sup>123</sup> At such manifestations, clothes thus seem to have been used as a way to testify to one's faith. Moreover, Youth for Christ was well aware of the fact that other Evangelical youth movements did develop their own fashion style. An article in *Aktie* of 1979 pointed out that the Jesus-revolution was over by then: "the times of beautifully dressed young Christians wearing T-shirts with all kinds of slogans to tell you Jesus is the only way, are over."<sup>124</sup>

In general it thus seems that fashion and related objects were not necessarily part of Youth for Christ's image. Moreover, Dutch Protestant churches did not seem to have been critical of the way its members dressed. But the fact that Youth for Christ did not promote a specific fashion style may very well count for something. At a time when groups expressed themselves through their clothes, jewelry and hairdos, it can be argued that the organization set itself apart from such groups by not wearing the same 'screaming' fashion. As Youth for Christ was critical of other youth cultures, such as punk, the fact that the organization did not develop its own fashion corresponds with its conviction that one was not to show its Christian faith through outer appearances but through actions.

It is also possible that Youth for Christ did not promote a certain dress code to prevent becoming a closed-off group. As it emphasized that outer appearances did not matter for a Christian way of life, it would indeed seem strange and even counterproductive to promote a certain fashion style. Now,

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<sup>123</sup> Opwekking kalender 1973, archive Opwekking.

<sup>124</sup> Willem Molemaker, 'Meer dan een kreet!', *Aktie* 12 (1979) no. 9, 22-24.



without its own fashion, the organization could continue its attempts to reach out to all youths.

Fashion was thus not part of Youth for Christ's image and this seems to have been a deliberate choice. This does, however, devalue the argument that Youth for Christ adapted itself to youth culture. By contrast, it enhances the argument that Youth for Christ was merely an Evangelical movement which tried to reach out to all youth by means of modern technologies.

### **3.2.2.2 Attitude and slang**

While image is one aspect of a youth culture's style, attitude is a second. De Leeuw described attitude as a set of characteristic moves, such as a particular way of walking or a hand gesture. A third element is slang. This can be characterized as a specific way of speech or language variant.<sup>125</sup> However, it is hard to tell from pictures and magazine articles whether people moved in a certain way and even harder to state whether they had their own slang. It is possible, though, to extract from such sources a more general attitude, certain gestures Youth for Christ members often used and a specific attitude in life. And with such a way of life or view of life comes a specific way of talking about life or describing it. This may not contribute to the 'narrow' sense of style as defined by De Leeuw and Hebdige, but it can reveal if, in a broader sense, a certain lifestyle was developed by Youth for Christ.

Youth for Christ described its own view of life as a mentality. The organization wanted to spread the news of Jesus to all youth regardless of their background. According to Youth for Christ, many of these young people were 'visibly broken', 'tortured' and 'damaged' by society. The organization wanted to bring them into contact with Christ by changing their mentality: "A method you can learn in half an hour. Mentality, that is a different story. Namely the story of the apostles. It is about inner compassion, involvement, about love."<sup>126</sup> To reach

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<sup>125</sup> Leeuw, 'Jongeren (sub)culturen als sociaal verschijnsel', 12.

<sup>126</sup> Jaap Zijlstra, 'De vernieuwer George Brucks', in: Jan van Capelleveen, Hans Eschbach (e.a.), *De Story van Youth For Christ* (Kampen 1977) 45-57, 52.

young people, the organization used the language and sounds of the newest generation, addressing them in their own words. One might say it was productive for Youth for Christ to not develop its own slang, as its message had to be comprehensible for all young people. Just like not developing a distinct fashion, not developing its own slang also kept the organization accessible.

Regarding attitude as outer appearance, as specific gestures or behavior, some things do seem characteristic of Youth for Christ. Youngsters were never represented alone: in photographs they were always with a group, and of course the Evangelical festivals also provided such a group feeling. It was always about doing things together, varying from holidays to Bible study. Also, an attitude was often linked to music: singing and playing guitar can almost be regarded as characteristic moves. Especially as music was seen as way to evangelize, youngsters could be found on the streets spreading their message. In this relation between evangelizing and music, happiness was the keyword. In photographs, young people seem to be having fun, they were laughing, looked happy and enjoyed themselves. Also in coffee bars, where people had an open attitude, trying to discuss the faith with everyone who walked through the door, happiness was key. This attitude was part of their new way of life: "often very pietistic, sometimes very sentimental, now and then even compelling and pushy, but mostly childishly simple and happy."<sup>127</sup>

Eventually, it was all about one's inner life. To be happy inside (which one could only be by acknowledging God en Jesus' way of life) meant also to look happy from the outside. This may have been the most important way of testifying to one's faith. Attitude as well as slang seemed to have been about true happiness and openness and the will to spread Jesus' message. However, it was hard to find Jesus as a youngster in the 1960s and 1970s, with a lot of pitfalls on the way. So Youth for Christ also promoted actions that were meant to help young people in their daily lives, whether they were Christians already or not.

It seems evident that attitude and language had a lot to do with happiness, love, a personal relationship with God, Jesus Christ and the guidance

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<sup>127</sup> Sipke van der Land, 'De rare kuren van de jeugdkultuur', in: Jan van Capelleveen, Hans Eschbach (e.a.), *De Story van Youth For Christ* (Kampen 1977) 58-76, 69.

of the Bible. Besides the experience of God in the inner soul, reflected in outer happiness, the Bible was the ultimate proof of God. But of course young people had to deal with all kinds of problems in their everyday lives, so they were not always happy and having fun. And Youth for Christ tried to address these negative feelings of young people as well, pointing to Jesus Christ and the Bible as possible solutions. One could be down, but had to learn how to deal with such feelings without losing oneself in self-pity or overconfidence:

The art of living is an art in itself. You have to learn how to deal with yourself, with your own feelings and moods. If you can do this in an appreciated manner, you will prevent seeing yourself as a victim of the circumstances. By a wrong kind of fatalism or self-pity a lot of people end up in a whirlpool of feelings and emotions in which they eventually will disappear. The deepest salvation the Bible talks about, is the salvation of your sinful self. Of your self-pity and overestimation. That is why it is good to lose yourself in Jesus Christ.<sup>128</sup>

Although Youth for Christ promoted a Christian, happy attitude in life and its vocabulary consisted mostly of words and sentences such as love, friendship, and happiness, the concepts of attitude and slang as elements of youth culture, as used by De Leeuw, cannot be found in Youth for Christ. This does not support the argument that Youth for Christ adapted to or even constituted a specific youth culture. On the contrary, it shows that Youth for Christ only used technologies common in the culture of all young people of the 1970s as a means to reach out to an audience as broad as possible.

Youth for Christ did develop its own style. The organization and its members could be recognized by their taste in music and books and by their Christian attitude in life. Although style can be used as working concept to describe Youth for Christ's visibility and trace its values and beliefs, it is not an argument for designating the organization as a particular youth culture. At first, music and books seemed to support this assumption, but fashion, objects, attitude and

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<sup>128</sup> Ida Koelstra, 'Mag ik ook eens down zijn?', *Aktie* 8 (1975) no. 3, 8-9.

slang did not. The fact that Youth for Christ not only promoted its own commodities but also those of other Evangelical organizations, shows that its style must be considered as part of the broader style of the Evangelical Movement in general. Moreover, Youth for Christ made clever use of elements of youth culture in general, given its aim to reach out to as many young people as possible. However, its style does show that Youth for Christ – and perhaps therefore the Evangelical Movement in general – positioned itself against the hegemonic Dutch Protestant culture, by deliberately using commodities from hegemonic ‘secular’ society. And although it is clear that the churches were often very critical of Youth for Christ’s style, the question remains how ‘secular’ society coped with this Evangelical organization.

### **3.3 Media**

#### **3.3.1 Media as working concept**

A particular youth culture is not only defined as such by its style, but by the way it is viewed by society and the way in which it is portrayed in the media as well. Dick Hebdige argues that youth cultures oppose hegemonic society. He emphasizes that these “violations of the authorized codes through which the social world is organized and experienced have considerable power to provoke and disturb.”<sup>129</sup> In other words, the style of youth cultures provokes a response from hegemonic society. According to Hebdige, youth cultures are often and significantly defined as ‘unnatural’. Moreover, he argues that language used in media regarding youth cultures “would suggest anxieties concerning the sacred distinction between nature and culture.”<sup>130</sup> Besides focusing on the language used in hegemonic society to characterize a youth culture, Hebdige also casts media as the number one actor in incorporating youth cultures in society. He argues that first of all the emergence of a subculture is invariably accompanied by a wave of hysteria in the press. And that this hysteria is typically ambivalent:

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<sup>129</sup> Hebdige, *Subculture*, 91.

<sup>130</sup> Idem, 92.

It fluctuates between dread and fascination, outrage and amusement. Style in particular provokes a double response: it is alternately celebrated (on the fashion page) and ridiculed or reviled (in those articles which define subcultures as social problems).<sup>131</sup>

Second, media incorporates a youth culture within the dominant culture through the continual process of recuperation. By this Hebdige means that a youth culture eventually merges within society, from which it in part emanated, as a diverting spectacle: as 'folk devil', as other, as enemy.<sup>132</sup> In other words, the media portrays a youth culture as the deviant other, but as such it will fuse with society again as it loses its spectacular character. Hebdige distinguishes two forms in which this incorporation can take place. The first is the 'commodity form' in which subcultural signs (dress, music etc.) are converted into mass-produced objects. The second is the 'ideological form' in which dominant groups (police, media, judiciary) 'label' and re-define deviant behavior.<sup>133</sup> In the end, Hebdige argues, youth cultural styles may begin by issuing symbolic challenges to society, but they inevitably end by establishing new sets of conventions: by creating new commodities, new industries or rejuvenating old ones.<sup>134</sup>

The role of media regarding youth cultures can thus be used as working concept to (1) trace the way the media designated and described such cultures and (2) to see if and how such cultures were incorporated into hegemonic society. When using this working concept on Youth for Christ, it is possible to find out whether the media regarded the organization as youth culture and if the organization could be, or even actually was in some ways, incorporated into hegemonic society. However, to do this it is necessary to broaden the concepts Hebdige used. He focused especially on the way styles of youth cultures were displayed in the media. For testing the way in which Youth for Christ adapted to youth culture, it is productive to trace how the organization in general was addressed in the media. Was it seen by society as youth culture or as something else? The criterion of reception in the media thus represents the other side of

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<sup>131</sup> *Idem*, 93.

<sup>132</sup> *Idem*, 94.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Idem*, 96.

style. In other words, by focusing on style one addresses the question whether Youth for Christ adapted to youth culture from within the organization; by focusing, one addresses it from outside of the organization.

Media as used here, are the 'secular' media, not those of the Dutch Protestant churches. Their reactions have been addressed in the previous chapter and in the section on style in this chapter. The following section thus focuses on society in general and whether or not it regarded Youth for Christ as a youth culture.

### **3.3.2 Youth for Christ in the media**

From Dutch newspapers it becomes evident that the media mostly paid attention to the activities of Youth for Christ at a local level during the 1970s. Moreover, the connection with the American Youth for Christ was emphasized. In general, newspapers took an objective or even positive stand in their coverage of such events. For example, the *Friese Koerier*, the daily paper for the province of Friesland, reported the coming of American *Teen Teams* to the Netherlands in 1967:

The team is made up of six musically talented youngsters (four boys and two girls), of whom several have won talent shows and music competitions in America. Under expert guidance they have created a repertoire of 50 songs: gospel songs, negro spirituals and folksongs. They play and sing at an exceptional high level.<sup>135</sup>

Other manifestations such as MayDay, the summer coffee bars and Kamperland Muziek Festival were all reported on in local newspapers. Moreover, concerts of American Evangelical pop artists, like Cliff Richard, were a source of media attention.<sup>136</sup>

During the first years of the 1970s, Youth for Christ seems to get little attention in the national press, but its activities were mentioned in local newspapers. The language used by the media to describe Youth for Christ was

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<sup>135</sup> 'Tienerteam uit Amerika dag in Heerenveen', *Friese Koerier*, 13-10-1967, 3.

<sup>136</sup> See for example: 'Cliff zingt gospels', *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 09-09-1975, 11; 'Muziekfestival Youth for Christ', *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 25-02-1978, 23; 'Zomerkoffiebar Youth for Christ', *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 18-07-1978.

neutral, most of the time only referring to its interdenominational character. It seemed the media regarded Youth for Christ as just another religious organization, which happened to attract a broad audience to its modern manifestations and festivals. At the end of the 1970s, however, things started to change. The media started to devote a lot of attention to sectarian and cultic movements and their dangers: isolation, brainwashing and exorcism. In 1979 Youth for Christ fell victim to this media hysteria as well. For the first time it seemed the media reflected worries about the compelling religious message of Youth for Christ. It was criticized for its "arrogant, pedantic impression" and for constituting a "black market focused on victims of psychological and social factors". Furthermore, it was accused of "narrowing the faith" and reproached for a "lack of self-criticism."<sup>137</sup>

The discussion in the media revolving around Youth for Christ as cult started when the Dutch parliament decided to open an inquiry into the cults present in the Netherlands. A commission was established that had the task to research to what extent such cults engaged in therapies and healing. Its terms of reference were two-fold: on the one hand, the commission had to give special attention to the concerns of the people who were the goal of such activities and on the other hand, the focus had to be at the assistance given by spiritual healthcare. The aim of the commission was to make a deliberate judgment about what the governmental policy for dealing with this kind of organizations and groups should be. At first, the commission formulated a list of specific and diverse groups that were to be discussed. Besides groups like the Scientology Church, United Family, Children of God, Transcendental Meditation and the Jesus People, Youth for Christ was up for inquiry. Later, the commission decided to abandon such a list and focused on cults in general instead.<sup>138</sup> However, for Youth for Christ it already seemed to be too late since the debates had already started. Pieter Boomsma, the director of Youth for Christ at that time, was furious about the fact that the media accused him of being a cult leader. He

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<sup>137</sup> 'Youth for Christ: een gezonde, krachtige zwarte handel', *Jeugdwerk NU* 11 (July 1979) 12-15, 13.

<sup>138</sup> *Trouw*, 27-06-1980, in: *Youth for Christ Knipselkrant* (December 1980).

agreed with an inquiry into organizations like Scientology Church, United Family and Transcendental Meditation and he compared those with groups like Children of God and Jesus People. However, he emphasized that Youth for Christ was not such a sectarian group.<sup>139</sup>

In this light of cults and spiritual healing, the discussion about Youth for Christ centered around its activities of 'curing' homosexuality. This attention was raised by stories of young people struggling with their homosexuality who were told in Youth for Christ circles that they could be cured through conversion and prayer. The rumor that such youngsters were relentlessly expelled when therapies did not seem to work, aroused public indignation.<sup>140</sup> Youth were said to be given the advice to turn to the bureau Evangelical Aid to Homosexuals in Amsterdam or they were sent to the farm 'De Schuilplaats' ('The Shelter') on the Veluwe. Some of these experiences became public, which testified to the rumor that Youth For Christ used methods such as deprivation of liberty, faith healing and exorcisms for curing homosexuals. The Dutch Society for Integration of Homosexuality COC started a campaign against this 'medieval Evangelical charlatany'.<sup>141</sup>

This heated discussion resulted in a debate about Youth for Christ's membership of the *Nederlandse Federatie Jeugd en Jongeren Werk* (Dutch Federation for Youth Work, NFJJW).<sup>142</sup> A memorandum within the federation stated that an organization like Youth for Christ, which said its aim was to evangelize amongst the youth, should be equated with a religious denomination which provides catechesis or other forms of religious education. In the media, this aim and the actual work done by Youth for Christ led to the question of what the organization was exactly: youth work, church or cult? One newspaper article stated that just because Youth for Christ only emphasized the element of

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<sup>139</sup> Idem.

<sup>140</sup> 'Youth for Christ op de schopstoel', *Haagse Courant*, 17-12-1980, 4.

<sup>141</sup> 'Youth for Christ schopt de flikkers de tempel uit', *Jeugdwerk Nu* 11 (November 1979) 6-8, 6.

<sup>142</sup> The federation consisted of several national organizations and coordinating groups like national organizations of volunteers, provincial service agencies, regional agencies and local youth institutions. Youth for Christ became a member at the end of the 1970s. The question if the organization belonged within the federation was hardly raised. 'Youth for Christ op de schopstoel', *Haagse Courant*, 17-12-1980, 4.



Evangelicalism, it could not be considered a true church. Moreover, the article emphasized Youth for Christ's own argument that it committed youth from all denominations and therefore could not be called a church. In short, the article concluded that Youth for Christ belonged nowhere: it was neither a church nor a youth work organization.<sup>143</sup>

Besides the questioning of Youth for Christ's youth work, the alleged discrimination of homosexuals also cumulated in a political discussion about the financing of the organization by local authorities. Leading plaintiff COC regretted the fact that Youth for Christ received financial support. It accused Youth for Christ of discriminating against homosexuals as the organization excluded them of administrative functions.<sup>144</sup>

This media hysteria thus revolved around two larger issues in society which came together in the debates about Youth for Christ: cults and homosexuality. This resulted in a far more hostile language regarding Youth for Christ. The organization was often described in the media as a religious cult and compared with groups like Children of God. Sensational articles told stories of young people who had to undergo brainwashing and exorcisms. In all this tumult, Youth for Christ was no longer seen as just another religious organization, but as a dangerous one:

The Evangelical youth: they are cheerful and well-adapted to the times. The stiff and old-fashioned characteristics of the traditional churches are not to be found here. The arrogant moralism so much the more. Shall we designate it as diabolic work?<sup>145</sup>

Media as working concept was used here to (1) trace the way the media designated and described such cultures and (2) to see if and how such cultures were incorporated into hegemonic society. Regarding the description of Youth for Christ in the media, it has become evident that two stages can be distinguished. At the beginning of the 1970s, Youth for Christ had the image of being a religious organization which made clever use of modern technologies to

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<sup>143</sup> 'Youth for Christ schopt de flickers de temple uit', *Jeugdwerk NU*, 6.

<sup>144</sup> 'YfC krijgt toch subsidie', *Eindhovens Dagblad*, 11-03-1981.

<sup>145</sup> 'Schijn van blijdschap verhuult moralistisch gedram', *De Waarheid*, 17-06-1985, 7.

spread its Evangelical message. At the end of the era however, this 'innocent' image had changed into a deviant one. The language used to describe Youth for Christ shows that the media regarded the organization as the enemy or the devilish other. Due to the general hysteria concerning cults and Youth for Christ's vision on homosexuality, the organization was equated with groups like Jesus People, Children of God and Scientology Church. There was hardly any mention of its activities outside curing homosexuality anymore, a fact that contributes to the idea that Youth for Christ was not seen as youth culture but as dangerous organization. Moreover, there was no question of incorporation into hegemonic society. Youth for Christ's opinions regarding homosexuality were denounced by hegemonic society, and its general Evangelical message seems to have been repudiated.

The use of media as working concept to determine to what extent Youth for Christ adapted to youth culture, does not provide a clear picture. Youth for Christ was not portrayed as a youth culture, but the language used to describe the organization and the hysteria of the media do seem to coincide with the notions Hebdige used to describe youth cultures. But is interesting that the media used such language to describe Youth for Christ not as a youth culture, but as a sect. On the other hand, although Youth for Christ provoked discussion in society and the media, eventually it was not incorporated into society, the way youth cultures usually do according to Hebdige. It seems that in the end, the media just saw Youth for Christ as a religious organization that got caught in a more general media hysteria. Eventually, the attention for the organization waned, without having changed Youth for Christ itself and without having brought about changes in hegemonic society.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter revolved around the question to what extent Youth for Christ adapted itself to constituting a particular youth culture to see if it offered something more than a religious message. For this a working concept of youth cultures was defined on the basis of the concepts of De Leeuw and Hebdige. The first part of this chapter focused on style as test to (1) define a particular youth

culture as such and (2) to trace their values, beliefs and opposition to hegemonic society. Style was divided in three elements: image, attitude and slang.

Regarding the image of Youth for Christ various aspects have been addressed: music, books, and fashion and related objects. By considering to what extent these elements can be seen as constituting a specific image, it is clear that, in the case of Youth for Christ, image is an ambiguous concept. Although music and books, especially the Bible, were part of Youth for Christ's image, these commodities also showed that Youth for Christ regarded them more as Evangelical means than as part of its style. As methods, on the other hand, they were identified as part of the organization's style by other groups and subcultures, especially by the Dutch Protestant churches. Furthermore, fashion was deliberately not part of Youth for Christ's image, which supports the argument that Youth for Christ was merely an Evangelical movement which tried to reach out to all youth by means of modern technologies.

Second, the lack of attitude and slang in the organization's style also contributes to the idea that Youth for Christ did not adapt to a specific youth culture. This also supports the idea that Youth for Christ only used technologies common in the culture of young people of the 1970s as means to reach out to an audience as broad as possible.

Testing Youth for Christ against the working concept of style has thus shown that Youth for Christ adapted to youth cultures only to a certain extent. Its style can be seen as an implicit effect of its use of modern technologies to reach out to as many young people as possible. However, its style does show that Youth for Christ – and perhaps therefore the Evangelical Movement in general – positioned itself against hegemonic Dutch Protestant culture, for which it deliberately used commodities from the hegemonic 'secular' society. The organization might not have regarded this as the creation of a specific style, but the reaction of the churches showed that such a style was present.

The second part of this chapter focused on media to gauge whether Youth for Christ adapted to a specific youth culture. The working concept was used to (1) trace the way the media designated and described such cultures and

(2) see if and how such cultures were incorporated into hegemonic society. But also this working concept did not offer a clear conclusion. It showed that in the first years of the 1970s, Youth for Christ had the image of being a religious organization which made clever use of modern technologies to spread its Evangelical message. At the end of the era, however, this 'innocent' image changed into an image of deviant other. The language used to describe Youth for Christ showed that the media started to regard the organization as enemy and devilish other in the late 1970s. One might argue that it was indeed a matter of hysteria on the part of the media. Although Hebdige's notions of language and hysteria are applicable to some extent, his notion of incorporation into hegemonic society is not applicable at all. Youth for Christ's opinions regarding homosexuality were denounced and its Evangelical message was repudiated. In the end, it appears that the media saw Youth for Christ as a religious organization and not as a youth culture.

Regarding these difficulties in defining Youth for Christ as a youth culture, it is evident that Youth for Christ did not constitute a specific youth culture. Its style and the reaction of the media show that the organization shared some characteristics of youth culture, but it seemed to lack the radicalism that truly substitutes a youth culture. Youth for Christ did use elements of youth culture, which bear a sense of belonging to a specific youth culture, but the organization always emphasized the need of adhering to its religious message for one to become part of this culture. Adhering to the religious message of Youth for Christ was the requirement for belonging to the culture of the organization, the sharing of other elements of youth culture was less so.

## IV. CONCLUSION

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This research was conducted out of a fascination with the interrelation between religion and culture. The premise that God did not die in the 1970s and that, presumably, He never will, underlies this research. This thesis questioned to what extent the Dutch Youth for Christ combined Evangelical religion with youth culture in the 1970s. Sub questions in this research were what the organization brought to the stage and whether it was more about religion or culture, and about meaning or belonging? Moreover, this research has tried to hint at the factors that made Youth for Christ popular back then and that cause the continuing popularity of why Evangelicalism amongst young people today.

The first part of this research has shown that Youth for Christ can be positioned within the wider Evangelical Movement as it met the criteria of being a protest movement, a conversion movement and a care movement. The criterion of a revitalizing movement, however, was only met to a certain extent. Moreover, it was made clear that Youth for Christ took a moderate stance in each of these 'tasks'. In its assimilative behavior it seems not only to have adapted to modern society, but also to the Dutch ecclesiastical scene. The organization was not eager to spread an extremely religious or radical Evangelical message, but rather to have focused on gathering youth to guide them into the churches again. Youth for Christ thus utilized a specific, evangelical, method. Accordingly, it set itself apart from more radical groups within the Evangelical Movement, like for example the Jesus People. As a parachurch organization, Youth for Christ seems to have aimed at contributing to a religious group identity, a focus on belonging, instead of providing youth with a new, radical, religious message or new Christian meaning. Furthermore, this first part of the thesis showed that although Youth for Christ adhered to the general Evangelical values, it also aimed at constituting a specific religious culture in co-operation with the established Dutch Protestant churches. Furthermore, it is evident that the assimilative aspect of the organization is one of its most important characteristics. The way Youth

for Christ adapted itself to secular society and to the Dutch ecclesiastical situation seems to have been a major actor for gaining popularity.

The second part of this research showed that Youth for Christ cannot be seen as just a particular youth culture. Although the organization constituted its own image, the lack of attitude and slang in the organization's style demonstrated that Youth for Christ did not adapt to a specific youth culture. On the contrary, it supports the argument that Youth for Christ only used technologies common in the culture of young people of the 1970s as a means to reach out to as broad an audience as possible.

However, its style does indicate that Youth for Christ positioned itself against the hegemonic Dutch Protestant culture, for which it deliberately used commodities from the hegemonic 'secular' society. This element was already traced in the first part of this research where it was shown that Youth for Christ as revitalizing movement opposed the traditional churches. In this way, its use of style contributed to its religious message. Moreover, the reaction of the 'secular' media did not strengthen the image of Youth for Christ as a youth culture. In the end, the media saw Youth for Christ as a religious organization which was caught in a broader media hysteria and whose beliefs were never incorporated into society at large. Overall, Youth for Christ's style and the reaction of the media show that the organization had some characteristics of a youth culture, but it lacked the rebellious and radical character inherent to a real youth culture. Youth for Christ used elements of youth culture which bared a sense of belonging within a specific youth culture, but the organization emphasized the need of adhering to its religious message for one to become part of this culture.

It is evident that what Youth for Christ offered the Dutch youth cannot be found within one of the two extremes of Evangelical religion and youth culture, but that it exists somewhere in between. The organization's religious message seems to have been of greater significance than the role it played as a youth culture. In this way, it seems Youth for Christ offered meaning rather than belonging. However, as the organization made use of modern technologies and youth

cultural elements, the notion of belonging cannot be neglected altogether. Although the organization may never have intended to create a youth culture, its use of various commodities does give it an image of a youth subculture. Thus, Youth for Christ combined a significant Evangelical message with youth culture because it turned out to be a fruitful combination. The organization thus gave its religious message a new, modern-day look.

This adaptation in itself can be seen as modern and can therefore be considered one of the reasons why the organization became popular. However, throughout this research another characteristic has become evident: Youth for Christ's lack of radicalism. As part of the Evangelical Movement, the organization took a moderate stance and can even be defined as assimilative. In comparison to youth cultures, the organization also seemed to lack rebellion. Combined with the assimilative behavior traced in the first part of this research, it is plausible that Youth for Christ adapted both its message and its method to the Dutch scene. It seems that a radical stance turned out not to be suitable for reaching out to Dutch youth. It would be interesting to conduct further research into Dutch society in the 1970s in combination with the moderate point of view of Youth for Christ, or the Evangelical Movement in general. However, for this research it is sufficient to state that Youth for Christ held a moderate position, as this proves that religion is in many ways suitable for adjustment to changes in society, even if these changes at first sight appear incompatible with religion.

This research has only touched upon a few elements of the Dutch Youth for Christ. It would be interesting to take this research as a starting point for further exploration of Youth for Christ in the Netherlands. The reception of Youth for Christ by young people themselves, for example, has been neglected here. Research into this reception will add to the ideas about the organization's popularity as put forward in this research. Moreover, it would then be very interesting to see to what kind of people Youth for Christ really appealed. Were they young people who had been raised as Christians, were they still attending church, or were they never religious before they converted? It would be

interesting to conduct interviews with former Youth for Christ members. Or, given that the organization used modern technologies and media, the contemporary scholar can use these technologies and media as source material. Many manifestations were recorded on photographs and/or videotape, providing contemporary scholars with an interesting database. When scholars make use of this wide range of sources, including material other than written texts, more interesting information can be found.

This thesis aimed at contributing to the field of religion and youth by providing a historical context and focusing on a case studies. It has tried to show that the relation between religion and youth is a two-way street in which both youth culture and religious culture adapt themselves to dominant values as well as changes in society at a given time. In this way, studying the diverse religious movements is important, because they can offer young people various meanings in life and can provide them with a sense of belonging. This has relevance today, with the rise of Christian and Islamic fundamentalist groups that gain popularity amongst the youth. It is important to investigate in what ways such radical groups came into being and why they gain so much popularity. By constantly searching for the specific historical, geographical and economical contexts, we will, step by step, be able to grasp the variety of aspects involved. This will eventually lead us to a better understanding these movements and we might be able to deal with them in an appropriate manner.



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Zes sociale ziektes: puistjes, dik, minderwaardigheid, verlegenheid, lelijkheid en flapuit. Hier zijn kenmerken van zes wijd en zijd bekende kwalen beschreven. Hoewel niemand normaal gesproken aan ze denkt als ziekten, heeft een speciaal Aktie-onderzoek uitgewezen dat ze epidemische proporties bereiken. Een van de conclusies uit het rapport luidt: "We maken ons bijzonder druk over hoe we er tegenover elkaar uitzien, zodat de problemen rond de eigenwaarde tot 'sociale ziektes' worden. De behandeling hangt niet zozeer af van doktoren of van medicijnen, maar van jou, de patiënt, en jouw bereidheid om jezelf te genezen.

Je zou er geen respect voor moeten hebben. Het zijn laaiende bewegingen, plotselinge bekingen die leegte vullen achtergelaten door opvoeding, door gebrek aan zelfvertrouwen. Eigenlijk ben je dan een kneusje dat door gebrek aan zelfvertrouwen tenslotte een ongegronde en ongezonde keus doet. Het komt er altijd op neer dat je jezelf moet verlossen. Je moet slechts gehoorzamen, je wordt er krampachtig en fanatiek van. Gevaarlijk: ze drijven je in het nauw. Het zijn spinnenwebben waar je in vliegt. Je wordt steeds verder ingesponnen tot je er niet meer uit kunt. En dan stik je. Het christelijk geloof zit anders in elkaar. Het is zonde als ze je dat nooit goed hebben geleerd, en als je dat nooit goed hebt begrepen. Maar het zit zo. Jezus Christus is niet gekomen om je goeie raad te geven en eisen aan je te stellen. Hij wist dat je jezelf niet kon verlossen, maar dat er een diepere ingreep nodig was. Hij offerde zichzelf op om je te verlossen. Aan dat kruis stierf hij voor je zonde en schuld en mislukkingen. En Hij stond op als de overwinnaar van het kwaad en de dood. Als je bij Hem hoort, ben je verlost. Hij heeft alles volbracht. Er is maar een gebed voor nodig. Heel eerlijk en heel persoonlijk. Daarom is het christelijk geloof zo ontspannen en vrij en blij en gezond, als het goed is. Daar word je weer mens van.

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Kees: kijk, wij zijn jong en doen niets liever dan klappen en gitaar spelen en op de banken staan. Maar bij ouderen is dat anders. Als je echt interesse in ze toont en je neemt de tijd om met ze te praten, dan merk je dat ze hetzelfde geloof hebben en even blij zijn als wij. Lidy: het is zo log, dat instituut met al die regeltjes en synodes. Ik geloof ook, dat ze bezig zijn met de verkeerde dingen. Al die moeizame synodestukken en ellenlange vergaderingen over wat we wel en niet moeten accepteren in de wereld – het helpt allemaal niets. Ze zitten dan dagenlang te praten en dan zijn ze er nog niet uit. Nee, de mensen in de kerk moeten bewust gemaakt worden van hun geloof, zodat God nummer 1 wordt in hun leven, zodat ze daaruit gaan leven en elkaar daarbij helpen. Je moet bij de kern beginnen: en dan leert God je wel door de Bijbel en de Heilige Geest wat je doen en laten moet. Dat kun je niet van bovenaf regelen door kerkelijke vergaderingen.

Als je gaat praten over de ideale kerk, blijken er plotseling toch veel mensen in Sinterklaas te geloven. Ze maken lange lijsten van dingen die er in de kerk zouden moeten zijn, en die hen zelf vaak liefst niet al teveel moeten kosten. Hier heb je er een. Het probleem van die verlanglijstjes is dat ze misschien wel opgaan als je zes bent, maar als je onderdeel uitmaakt van een samenleving, dan kun je niet alles krijgen wat je hebben wilt en vaak gaat het kado dat de een krijgt ten koste van de ander. Denk maar aan de pacifistische discussies rond het klappertjespistool dat je jongste broertje kreeg op 5 december. Nog weer andere benaderen de kerk met de grote mensen houding van het boodschappenlijstje. Ze zetten er allerlei dingen op die fijn en nodig zijn en gaan dan winkelen om te kijken waar ze ze kunnen vinden. Als dat jouw houding is, zul je waarschijnlijk tot de ontdekking komen dat de meeste artikelen die zoekt duur, schaars of helemaal niet te krijgen zijn. De ideale kerk bestaat niet, net zomin als jij ooit een ideale christen zult worden. Misschien lijkt dat een negatieve benadering, maar het is de werkelijkheid waar je mee moet leven. In de kerk van Jezus gaat het ook niet om mensen die verlanglijstjes schrijven, maar om deelnemers. Net als god met jou wil doorgaan, wil Hij ook met anderen doorgaan en wat Hij nodig heeft, zijn geen toeschouwers, maar mensen die zich actief willen inzetten.

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1. Een kerk die niet werft, loopt kans dat ze sterft
2. Het beste nieuws wordt vaak slecht gebracht
3. Evangeliseren is nooit goedkoop
4. Als er aan één ding behoefte bestaat, is het echtheid
5. Om volwassen te worden, heb je een 'nest' nodig
6. Als jongeren in de kerk gaan meetellen, wordt die 'slapende reus' wakker
7. Jezus volgen in deze wereld, is niet het zoeken naar een nooduitgang
8. In Gods wereld is voor iedereen passende arbeid
9. De christenheid zonder eenheid is als een vangzuil met gaten

### **Page 33**

Hoe durven ze zich in navolging van Luther te begeven? Juist een organisatie als YFC zou stellingen voor zichzelf moeten schrijven. Er bestaat behoefte aan echtheid binnen YFC, waar jonge mensen onverantwoord in een kader gedrongen worden waarin geen ruimte bestaat voor evangelische bevrijding. Als een kerk het alleen zou moeten hebben van een evangelisatiedrang zoals YFC die verwoordt, dan was zij allang roemloos ten onder gegaan.

En in deze wereld staan allerlei geesten op die verkondigen dat bij hen het medicijn te vinden is tegen alle kwalen waaraan we lijden. En zij vormen voor de jonge mens, die de huiver van deze verkilde wereld ervaart, een grote bedreiging. [...] Nu onder deze, dan weer onder een andere naam pogen deze geesten af te leiden van de waarheid zoals die in Christus is. Pinkstergroepen, Youth for Christ, Jesus Revolution, Jesus Movement, Jesus People zijn wat namen van de geesten waar wij nu mee te maken hebben. Het is noodzaak ons met deze sekten bezig te houden opdat wij bij de nuchterheid van de Bijbel bewaard mogen blijven.

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1. Laat je leiden door het voorbeeld van Jezus Christus (Filippenzen 2 vers 5).
2. Verblijd je in de Heer, altijd (Filippenzen 4 vers 4).
3. Maak je geen zorgen, maar laat je wensen door gebed en smeking met dankzegging bekend worden bij God (Filippenzen 4 vers 6).
4. Je vriendelijkheid zij alle mensen bekend (Fil. 4:5).
5. Verdraag elkaar en vergeef elkaar, als iemand over een ander te klagen heeft. Vergeef zoals de Heer je vergeven heeft

(Kolossenzen 3:13). 6 Doe je werk met plezier als was het voor de Heer en niet voor mensen (Kol. 3:23). 7 Streef naar gerechtigheid, vroomheid, geloof, liefde, volharding en vriendelijkheid (1 Timotheus 6:11). 8 Ware kennis ontspringt aan ontzag voor de Heer (Spreuken 1:7). 9 Vertrouw op de Heer met heel je hart, steun niet op eigen inzicht. Waarheen je ook op weg bent, het gaat erom, Hem erin te kennen (Spreuken 3:5,6). 1. Doe je best en wees niet lui. Dien de Heer met een vurig hart (Romeinen 12:11). P.s. Troost je met de gedachte dat God je Zijn Heilige Geest belooft. In eigen kracht zou je er immers niets van terecht brengen!

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Stap hier niet, zo luchtig en vluchtig, overheen, zoals velen doen. Even op het zondaarsbankje, in zenuwachtige ontroering, en dan gered, om terstond daarvan zelfs getuigenis af te leggen in een zaal van het leger des heils, of op evangelisatiebijeenkomsten, of in een rally van 'Youth for Christ'. Neen! Wij moeten ons zulke gewichtige zaken niet door mensen op laten dringen. Het zijn eeuwigheidsbelangen. En dus moet het gefundeerd zijn. De ontdekking van de moordenaar aan het kruis moeten wij, in meerdere of mindere mate, bevindelijk leren kennen. En de echte bevinding is alleen in Gods Woord gegrond, en een vrucht van de toepassing, van de applicatie van de Heilige Geest.

Over het algemeen is er een losse, haast alledaagse omgang met de Bijbel. Het lijkt vooral een praktisch handboek te zijn met waardevolle tips over onze vragen en problemen. Hiermee hangt samen het gebrek aan systematische Bijbelstudie binnen de evangelische beweging – zeker in Nederland. Dit klinkt door in veel evangelische toespraken. [...] Veel nadruk ligt er op de menselijke natuur van Jezus wat duidt op weinig eerbied. Op een alledaagse manier wordt er over Hem geschreven met bewoordingen die soms tegen de borst stuiten. Vrij algemeen is het in evangelische kringen om over Jezus te spreken als een 'vriend de me steunt'. Daarnaast wordt Hij vaak als een voorbeeld gezien.

### **Page 42**

Door een folderactie van YFC in Dordrecht kwam ik in aanraking met heel andere mensen. Gezellig praten bij een bak koffie, stond er op die folder. Ik dacht: laat ik daar maar eens naartoe gaan. Ze zullen me niet bijten. Daar heb ik met een jongen van een



muziekgroep gepraat, die me vertelde van God. Ik had er de balen van zo verder te leven als ik tot nu toe geleefd had en concludeerde dat dit de enige manier was om gered te worden. Na een paar weken ben ik weer terug gegaan naar die koffiebar. Daar zag ik een vriend die ook gebruikt had, maar er nu helemaal vanaf was. Samen hebben we die avond veel gepraat over God, en hoe Hij je kan redden. Op een gegeven moment zijn we die koffiebar uitgegaan en naar een park gelopen waar we samen gebeden hebben. Die avond ben ik tot geloof gekomen. Eerder die avond had ik wel wat 'shots' genomen, maar de stonedheid was zo goed als weg. Ik voelde me helemaal bevrijd. De heroïne die ik nog bij me had hebben we toen samen in de lucht verstrooid..

Tot slot wil ik je nog dit vertellen: ik ken maar heel weinig mensen die van de drugs afkomen, hoewel iedere gebruiker weet dat hij op een doodlopend spoor zit. Ik geloof dat de enige manier om er van af te komen is: Ga geloven in Jezus Christus en in de Liefde van God die er voor iedereen is. Pepmiddelen zijn overbodig om gelukkig te worden. Ja, eigenlijk zouden er meer van dit soort 'gastvrije huizen' moeten zijn.

Vakantie vieren. Zo kun je de kampen die YFC dit jaar in binnen- en buitenland organiseert het beste typeren. Een vakantie die je niet alleen viert, maar met lui van je eigen leeftijd. Mensen, die je nu nog niet kent, maar waar je gauw vrienden mee wordt. Een vakantie met veel plezier en ontspanning, maar ook: samen serieus bezig zijn, samen zoeken naar antwoorden op vragen waar je tegenaan loopt. Dat we daarbij de bijbel open doen, is voor YFC een vanzelfsprekende zaak. Juist deze combinatie maakt een YFC –kamp tot een unieke vakantie. Echt vakantie vieren dus. De keus is dit jaar groot. Je kunt kiezen uit 44 kampen: van een huifkarrentocht door Drenthe tot een viskamp in Ierland en van een voettocht over de Veluwe tot een kanokamp in Bretagne. Keuze genoeg dus.

## **Page 52**

Jezus zei: Maak geen show van je geloof om op te vallen bij de mensen. Reken erop, dat je dan geen loon ontvangt bij je hemelse Vader. (Mattheus 6:1). In die tijd kon je in Jeruzalem nog geen stickers kopen om op je helm, je agenda of je auto te plakken. Maar godsdienst-freaks had je in die tijd wel, de Farizeeers. Ze lieten geen kans voorbijgaan om aan de mensen te tonen hoe super-gelovig ze wel waren. (Mattheus 23:1-5). Nu is het Gods bedoeling niet, dat je verstoppertje speelt met je geloof of zoveel mogelijk meedoet met de massa. Nee, in feite zei Jezus dat we 'het licht der wereld' zijn.

(Mattheus 5:14). Jezus heeft het hier niet over aan- en uitflitsend neonlicht: 'Laat je licht zo schijnen, dat de andere mensen zien hoe jij als christen leeft, zodat ze de Vader in de hemel ervoor danken'. (Mattheus 5:14) Een 'licht van Christus' zijn, betekent onder andere dat je je moeder helpt met afwassen. Dat je dagelijks een babbel maakt met dat grietje met die pukkels. Dat je dat ouwe mannetje in dat rusthuis eens opzoekt. Dat je niet altijd in de hoogste versnelling rijdt.

### **Page 55**

Wat is het grandioos dat als mensen oprecht en consequent de waarheid zoeken ze klaarblijkelijk altijd bij de God van de Bijbel uitkomen. Hoe lang het ook mag duren, en hoeveel wegen er ook mogen zijn, uiteindelijk komen ze op die ene weg. Denk maar eens aan die mensen die je persoonlijk kent, en ook al die luitjes van naam die christen werden: Cliff Richard, Johnny Cash, Arlo Guthrie (zoon van Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan's leermeester), Noel Paul Stookey, Pat Boone, Leon Patillo (ex-Santana), mensen van Earth, Wind and Fire, Elly en Rikkert en vele vele anderen. Zouden er zoveel musici tot geloof komen omdat God hen in onze muziek (jeugd-) cultuur wil gebruiken om anderen te attenderen op het evangelie?

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Via het medium, maar niet alleen op deze wijze, en daarom stellen we het nu ruimer dan de omroep, komt momenteel een golf van wat ik zou willen noemen 'amerikaanse religiositeit' over ons heen. Het is de sfeer van de religieuze popmuziek, van een bepaald soort opwekkingsmentaliteit, waarvan we vaak moeten zeggen, dat het bij ons overkomt als godsdienstige 'kitsch'. [...] En als nu ergens mensen weinig kritisch zijn dan is het bij de inhoud van het lied, als namelijk de melodie maar aanspreekt.

### **Page 62**

Eerlijk gezegd heb ik hem niet één keer de bijbel letterlijk horen citeren. Hij baseerde zijn toespraak op zijn persoonlijke biografie en andere 'uit het leven gegrepen' verhalen. Gelijkenissen van eigen fabrikaat. De meest stichtelijke elementen waren zijn uitspraak: "Jezus houdt van je" en zijn waarschuwing dat geen mens in eigen kracht is opgewassen tegen de invloed van zonde en ongerechtigheid.

De toelichting op de Bijbelgedeelten is vaak oppervlakkig en weinig sturend, omdat er niet verwezen wordt, naar bepaalde zaken in de belijdenisgeschriften. [...] Het materiaal dat dient als hulpmiddel bij de bestudering van de Bijbel moet Schriftgetrouw zijn en samengesteld door mensen die door Gods genade iets mogen doorgeven van de schatten van Gods Woord en van de waarde daarvan voor het persoonlijk leven, als vrucht van de Heilige Geest.

### **Page 67**

Levenskunst is een kunst apart. Je zult moeten leren hoe je omgaat met jezelf, met je eigen gevoelens en stemmingen. Als je het kunt op een erkennende manier, dan zul je ontdekken dat je er mee voorkomt, dat je jezelf gaat zien als een slachtoffer van de omstandigheden. Door een verkeerd soort fatalisme of zelfmedelijden komen veel mensen terecht in een draaikolk van gevoelens en emoties, waarin ze steeds verder wegzakken. De diepste verlossing waar de bijbel het over heeft, is de verlossing van je zondige zelf. Van je zelfmedelijden en zelfoverschatting. Daarom is het een goede zaak je leven te verliezen aan Jezus Christus.

### **Page 70**

Het enkele jaren geleden opgerichte comité 'Heerenveen Waarheen', waarin vertegenwoordigers samenwerken van een groot aantal plaatselijke kerken, introduceert op 23 november in het Posthuis te Heerenveen een Amerikaans tienerteam, dat momenteel drie maanden in ons land verblijft. De actie staat onder auspiciën van Youth for Christ-Nederland. Het team wordt gevormd door zes muzikaal zeer begaafde jongelui (vier jongens en twee meisjes), van wie verschillende in Amerika talentenjachten en muziekwedstrijden hebben gewonnen. Onder deskundige leiding hebben ze een repertoire opgebouwd van 50 liederen: gospelsongs, negro spirituals en folksongs. Ze spelen en zingen op uitzonderlijk hoog niveau. Gesprek en discussie zullen tijdens het optreden een belangrijke plaats krijgen in het programma. Het team hoopt in Heerenveen ook een aantal scholen te bezoeken.

### **Page 73**

De evangelische jongeren: ze zijn opgewekt en gaan mee met hun tijd. De stijfheid en het ouderwetse van de traditionele kerken zie je bij hen niet terug. Het arrogante moralisme daarvan des te meer. Zullen we het op duivelswerk houden?