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“Can we dance in this place?”: Body Practices and Forms of Embodiment in Four Decades of Dutch Evangelical Youth Events

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ABSTRACT *This article describes the developments of the EO Youth Day, a Dutch Christian mass event that attracts thousands of young people every year. It is argued that in the course of time, the EO Youth Day has changed from a modest and sober event characterized by a Calvinist outlook to an expressive ‘hip’ event with an evangelical swing. This change becomes especially visible when the first versions of the EO Youth Day in the 1970s are compared with more recent ones—a comparison we shall make in this article. Central to this change is the way the body is addressed and referred to in what we call the ‘forms of embodiment’ offered at the EO Youth Day. Evidence for this is provided by an explorative empirical study of four EO Youth Days—those organized in 1977, 1987, 1999, and 2008.*

Introduction

In recent decades, sociological and historical studies of religion in North-Western Europe have either focused on religion vanishing in this area (Brown; Bruce; Van Rooden, *Religieuze, “Oral”*) or on the rise of New Age spirituality (Campbell; Heelas, *“Revolution”, Spiritualities*; Heelas and Houtman; Houtman and Aupers; Houtman, Heelas and Aupers). There are, however, other stories to tell about the religious landscapes there. These stories address the changing face of ‘traditional’ religion in this part of the world, including the changing face of Protestantism.

Protestantism has lost much of its former appeal in North-Western Europe, yet it still manages to retain a considerable minority of believers (cf. Norris and Inglehart). Rather than passively leaning back to watch Protestantism being swept away by secularization forces, the remaining faithful give shape to initiatives that breathe new life into this religious current. One such initiative is the EO Youth Day: a religious mass event in the Netherlands which is organized by the *Eoangelische Omroep* (or Evangelical Broadcasting Company—henceforth referred to as EO) and which brings ten thousand young people together in a football stadium every year. This event offers concerts by well-known names in the reli-pop scene, popular speakers, and a highly professional worship band. Supplemented by a professional light and sound system, a large stage, dancers, big screens, an atmospheric stadium, and the large number of young people, the EO Youth Day gives shape to an effervescent religiosity in a truly Durkheimian sense, which is often seen as the ultimate evidence of religion’s ongoing vitality

in Dutch society, not least because it is broadcast on Dutch television and radio and on the Internet.

For sociologists of religion, the EO Youth Day would be worth studying for this vitality alone. After all, even in a modern, secularized country such as the Netherlands, religion apparently manages to mobilize and commit thousands of young people. But there is another reason that makes this event a particularly informative case: it represents one of the most decisive changes that have taken place in Dutch Protestantism in recent decades: the change from a modest and sober Protestantism with a Calvinist outlook to an expressive and 'hip' Protestantism with an evangelical swing. This change becomes especially visible when we compare the first versions of the EO Youth Day in the 1970s with more recent ones, which we shall do in this article. Central to this change is the way the body is addressed and referred to in what we call the 'forms of embodiment' offered at the EO Youth Day. Evidence for this is provided by an explorative empirical study of four occasions when the EO Youth Day took place: in 1977, 1987, 1999, and 2008. Our results will be presented below, preceded by a short introduction to the EO. In the final section, we offer our main conclusions and explore avenues for future research. In the following section, we shall discuss our theoretical starting-points and research questions.

Religion and the Body: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

The body has recently become a central interest in the social scientific study of religion. The discipline thus presents a correction of its cerebrally oriented history in which religion was conceived as a system of beliefs and conceptions (Asad). By neglecting the body, the discipline has followed the modern Cartesian dualism which divides mind and body, spirit and materiality, and which prioritizes mind over body and spirit over materiality. However, there is now a consensus that religion is essentially an embodied phenomenon that cannot be reduced to thought or discourse (cf. Meyer and Verrips).

The recent social scientific attention to the body reflects a wider concern with the body in the postmodern world, where the body's expressive and sacred qualities have been discovered. The pivotal moment of this 'turn to the body' has undoubtedly been the 1960s, when—in reaction to a modern ethos of disciplining the body (cf. Brown)—a new attentiveness to the body emerged (inspired by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romanticism). Since then, the body has increasingly been understood as a source of pleasure, a locus of self-expression, and the subject of authentic knowledge of oneself, the other, and the world (cf. Taylor, *Sources, Secular*).

The social scientific turn to the body also reflects the wider concern with the body in contemporary religion (cf. Mellor and Shilling, *Re-forming, "Body"*). Two relatively new and successful religious strands stand out most in this respect: holistic spirituality and charismatic Christianity. Despite being different in many respects, both forms of religiosity perceive the body as an important locus of knowledge, being embedded in a deeper reality in which the spiritual and the material are linked. For charismatic Christianity,

the embodied self is the locus of sacredness; for holistic spirituality, the embodied self is sacred in itself.

These developments give way to new theoretical conceptions of the body. There is a general consensus that people as human beings exist in the world as body-subjects (rather than as disembodied subjects) that interact with other body-subjects and material things. Secondly, it is acknowledged that religion is not different from other human practices and spheres and is also subjected to the logic of embodiment and materiality. In other words, the body matters in religion (cf. Mellor and Shilling, *Re-forming*; Meyer).

In this contribution, we link these trends with research which we relate to the sociological-historical notion of 'change' we introduced earlier. During the preparation of the present study, and in the light of the unique material available to us, we were convinced that the body forms an excellent starting-point for describing the changes which are exemplified by the EO Youth Day. We also hypothesized that these changes could be explained by efforts to regain the body, which has for a long time—given the influence of powerful Calvinist bodily regimes—been primarily addressed as an object of discipline. Therefore, the main question we wanted to answer was: how has the body been addressed and acted out in the history of the EO Youth Day?

To answer this question, we analyzed 16 hours of digitalized video material of four EO Youth Days from different decades: 1977, 1987, 1999, and 2008. Our aim was to explore historical developments in body practices and 'forms of embodiments' (Mellor and Shilling, "Body") offered at the EO Youth Days under study. The notion of 'body practice' refers to what the body does and how the body acts. 'Forms of embodiment' refer to the objects that stimulate the body (cf. Keane, "Subjects", *Christian*; Meyer); the spaces that organize the body (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga); the expressions that represent and direct the body (cf. Keane, "Religious", *Christian*); and the organized and ritualized practices that address the body (cf. Bourdieu; Csordas). Our analysis involved the comparison of four aspects of embodiment—both on stage and in the audience: movements and gestures (*what do bodies do?*), life-style signs (*what do bodies wear?*), words (*how are bodies addressed—urged on, directed, talked to—and represented—portrayed, talked about, discussed?*), and settings (*how does the spatial-material ambience affect bodies?*).

While a rich source of information and a good entry point to the EO Youth Day, the data we used have limitations for the kind of study we proposed. Most importantly, the phenomenon under study is seen through the selective lens of the camera operator and the editors of the video material. However, we frequently verified our observations by turning to other sources (Internet pages and newspaper articles in particular), conversations with former EO staff members, and previous research we had conducted at the EO Youth Day. All the authors—who have backgrounds in history, anthropology, sociology, and theology and who represent different generations—have, either recently or some time ago, researched Dutch evangelicalism in general and EO Youth Days in particular (see e.g. Klaver; Roeland, "Acceptation", *Selfation*; Roeland et al.; Stoffels, *Wandelen, Leeuw*, "Standvastig", "De oecumene"; Van Mulligen, "De EO"; Versteeg). Still, the problem of the lens restricts the conclusions we can

draw from our explorative research. Further research that includes the filming and editing processes as well as the stories of both producers and consumers of the EO Youth Day is therefore needed, in order to arrive at a more balanced conception of (the history of) this event.

The EO: A Short History

The EO was founded in 1965, resulting from an initiative by a group of evangelists and preachers, most of them members of evangelical and Baptist churches (the so-called 'free groups'), who were concerned about processes of liberalization and secularization in the Dutch broadcasting system and in the wider Dutch society (McLeod; Kennedy). Realizing that the support of these marginal groups was not enough to safeguard a place for the EO in the public broadcasting system, the founders contacted influential Reformed leaders who joined their initiative.¹ The EO started broadcasting in 1970, delivering a fairly traditional, conservative Reformed message and thus catering for the majority of its members (two thirds of these consisted of Protestants from various Reformed churches). Being an antithetical (to what was perceived to be a modern, secular culture), reactionary organization in its first years of existence, the EO transformed into a modern and professional evangelical organization during the 1980s and 1990s. Its spectacular growth surprised numerous critics: by 1999, it had become the largest broadcasting company in the Netherlands, with over 600,000 members at that time.

Since its early days, the EO has played a dominant role in the formation of a new evangelical-Reformed sub-culture and network (Stoffels, *Wandelen, Leeuw*), also by expanding its activities beyond broadcasting activities—a process that started under the leadership of Bert Dorenbos (the EO's CEO between 1974 and 1987). The EO was involved in the foundation of a creationist evangelical college, which was established in 1977, and the creation of a Christian political party, the *Reformatorsche Politieke Federatie* (Reformed Political Federation), which entered the Dutch parliament in 1981 (Van Mulligen, "Tussen"). Further, close ties were established between the EO and other evangelical organizations, such as the Navigators student movement, Youth for Christ, and Campus Crusade for Christ (Van Mulligen, "De EO"). By organizing family days, praise meetings, programs for children and youth, youth meetings, and all kinds of other activities and by publishing youth, children's, and women's magazines, the EO facilitated and stimulated a unique interdenominational network of orthodox Protestant and evangelical believers.

However, Dorenbos's most successful idea was the organization of the EO Youth Day. The first Youth Day took place in 1975 in the city of Groningen and attracted about 3,000 young people, which was a satisfactory turnout for a first event, but nothing compared to the number of visitors 10 (25,000) or 20 (50,000) years later. The first Youth Days were very similar to the traditional Reformed rallies, which had attracted hundreds or even thousands of young people in the first half of the twentieth century, and the rallies that the Dutch branch of Youth for Christ organized in the 1950s and 1960s (Krabbendam). Today, however, the EO Youth Day is radically different from these earlier rallies, as it has become a spectacular and 'hip' evangelical event. In this article, we trace this historical

development. We shall argue in particular that changes in the way the body is addressed and presented are central to this development.

Results of our Data Analysis

Material and Spatial Dimensions

One of the most profound changes that can be observed in four decades of EO Youth Days is related to the material setting and the spatial dimensions of this event, in particular to the venue in which this event takes place and the properties of the stage. In 1977, the EO Youth Day took place in a light exhibition hall. The hall had a functional layout: benches were placed so that attendees could hear the speeches delivered on the stage, with listening the main activity at that Youth Day. The stage with the lectern served the preaching of the word. There was hardly any effort to create a particular atmosphere, except for some flowers. However, apart from speeches, there was also music, but the music seemed to serve the preaching, in that it was interpreted in another form to get the message across. This is clearly expressed by one of the speakers who referred to the closing song (by folk singers Elly and Rikkert) as ‘the central message of that day’.

The hall and the stage were thus designed to fit the preaching—in spoken and sung words. They created, in truly Protestant vein, “an auditorium for hearing the word” (Morgan 91). It was much the same in 1987, although a remarkable element was added to the stage that year: the catwalk, which granted those on stage greater mobility for their performance. The catwalk remained in 1999, but the whole setting was very different from the previous Youth Days, not least because that year, the Youth Day took place in the Amsterdam ArenA, which is a big football stadium. Its black walls, big screens, and large stage with catwalk made the Youth Day resemble an outdoor pop festival. This impression was reinforced by the musical acts. The opening tune, the Arrival of the Queen of Sheba from Handel’s Solomon—rendered with synthesizers and a heavy beat, which imitated the popular trance style of the 1990s—sounded very contemporary, as did the pop-rock by the Dutch artist Ralph van Manen, the hip-hop of the South-African formation ‘MIC’, and the swinging black gospel by Ron Kenoly. While the message was still important in these acts, their musical performance moved beyond the traditional style of preaching a message. ‘MIC’, for instance, performed a real hip-hop show, making use of all the available amenities and techniques (stage, catwalk, lights, sound equipment), which included not only dancing on the stage, but also appeals to the audience to move with and enjoy the music.

The Youth Day in 1999 showed that in the course of the 1990s, the EO Youth Day had transformed from a traditional rally to a pop concert-like spectacle—a trend that developed further in the new century, when this event became even more spectacular. In 2008, the event took place in a darkened stadium, creating the intimacy and excitement of the concerts of famous artists and bands in big stadiums. Large screens behind the stage offered all sorts of visual stimuli that, together with an impressive light show and sound equipment, evoked an immersive sensation. The empty space (without chairs) immediately before the stage invited the audience to move and dance to the music. The big podium still

functioned as a stage for the speakers, but the time of their performance was reduced to exactly 15 minutes—a striking difference to the lengthy sermons of 1977. Instead, a range of acts appeared on the stage: praise and worship, performed by singers and accompanied by a band and dancers; lively performances by several famous reli-pop bands (the melodic rock band ‘Delirious?’ from Britain; the rock band ‘Starfield’ from Canada; and the eclectic formation ‘Spacifix’ from New Zealand); drama and a lot of entertainment.

In 2008, the EO Youth Day thus differed from its predecessor in 1977 in many respects. In the space of 30 years, the venue had changed from a predominantly functional place of preaching—the most central practice of the first EO Youth Days—to an atmospheric space that facilitates a ‘spectacle’ (Debord): an impressive audio-visual show that added to the construction of a multi-sensational, immersive ‘goose bumps’ experience. The stage had changed from an unobtrusive centre meant to facilitate the performance of the speakers, the musical ensemble, and the gospel acts to the multi-media and dynamic centre of this spectacle. Both stage and space thus added to the change in communicative style: the change to a more spectacular, entertaining, and experiential mediation of the message. While in earlier versions of the EO Youth Day the venue was designed for didactic preaching *and* (on the part of the audience) attentive, disciplined listening to what was said and sung, in later versions, the venue was designed to allow immersion in an embodied experience, which is, both for those on the stage and for the audience, *signified* in terms of ‘being touched by God’ (cf. Roeland, *Selfation*).

Movements and Gestures

Four decades of EO Youth Day also show a change in movements and gestures, both by those on the stage and by the audience. Starting with those who perform on stage, one can observe a general trend towards more movement, with a greater intensity of expression and a wider scale, involving multiple stages and screens. This seems to have occurred gradually over the period 1977–2008, although the biggest change took place in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, when the EO Youth Day transformed from a preaching-centred event, featuring a somewhat *static* stage, into a spectacular event that contains *lively* and *active* stage performances.

A prime example of this is the transformation of the choir (which supports the communal singing) that can be observed over the decades. At the first EO Youth Day, the choir was arranged in a traditional choir setting. They sang with fixed microphones, without much expressive movement. Sometimes they raised their hands, but there was no explicit choreography, let alone any dancing. This is in sharp contrast with 2008. By that time, the choir had become part of a big podium act which also involved visual spectacles and dancers. The opening act of the 2008 Youth Day is most illustrative. Multiple screens displayed fiery yellow and orange forms, lighting up behind a solitary dancer in the dark, who moved and danced in front of the screens. Suddenly the colours changed to blue and white and, while the choir was singing ‘hallelujah’, a woman clothed in white robes descended from above. When the ‘angel’ touched the ground, heavy basses filled the space. A female singer started to sing while the dancers formed a circle around her. They kneeled to the ground and with their arms

raised, they moved upwards as if they sang their praises to the 'angel'. A few minutes later, a male singer clapped his hands and said in a loud voice: "Are you ready to worship your King Jesus?" The worship leader and the other choir members then began to dance and—using wireless microphones—moved across the stage, giving the public visual and verbal cues to join the singing and dancing by clapping their hands or shouting evocative words, such as "You are today's creation of God—make yourself heard!". Thus, while the choir still supported the communal singing in 2008, the manner in which it performed this duty had changed dramatically.

A similar development of increased activity and expressiveness can be observed in the audience. The visitors of the EO Youth Days generally participate in three kinds of organized activities: prayer and worship, concerts by artists, and speeches by preachers, special guests, and the host. Each of these activities presupposes scripted acts and behaviour on the part of the audience. During the Youth Day of 1977, the public did not need any instructions for these scripts: having been raised in a traditional Reformed milieu, people knew how to behave. During prayers, all the heads bent down, eyes were closed, and hands were folded. People remained seated throughout the day, even during the concerts of the British Christian group 'Nutshell' and the Dutch folksingers and converted Christians Elly and Rickert; no one was standing or dancing. While the preachers spoke, everyone listened attentively, some were taking notes. The enthusiasm of one of the preachers' sermons did not seem to inspire the audience to react in any way—at least not visibly.

Ten years later, in 1987, a change in behaviour occurred during and just after the performance of singer Charlotte Höglund. Until her appearance the audience was as static as it had been in earlier years, but after her concert, people spontaneously started shouting 'we want more!', until she finally returned. 'This is a special moment', host Jan van den Bosch commented: for the first time in the history of the EO Youth Days, the audience took charge. People were still seated during the speeches and the concerts, but seemed to be more responsive to appeals from the stage. Van den Bosch asked, "May this Love last for a long time, what do you think?", which people hesitantly applauded after a few seconds. When Höglund asked the audience to stand up and wave and when the American evangelist Floyd McClung asked "do you love Jesus?", the audience reacted. Artists and speakers started to address the audience and the audience itself became more expressive, in contrast to the more disciplined attitude of merely listening that had characterized the Youth Day in 1977.

The EO Youth Day in 1987 thus showed two remarkable changes: a more assertive public and artists, speakers, and a host who invited the audience to interact with them. Both phenomena returned on a much larger scale in the later versions of the EO Youth Day. In 1999, it was clear that the audience acted independently of the scripted behaviour: they were talking, looking around or—aware of the presence of cameras—waving during prayers, behaviour that would have been inconceivable earlier. Further, contrary to the Youth Days in 1977 and 1987, the postures of those who participated in prayers were no longer uniform. The devout prayer pose was still present, but some people were more casual, sitting down or standing, with some raising their hands in the air.

At some moments, the organizers of the EO Youth Day clearly displayed dissatisfaction with the audience's assertiveness and made frantic attempts

to control the public. A particularly memorable moment was the concert by Ralph van Manen in 1999. Long rows of chairs then still occupied the whole floor of the stadium, reflecting the expectations of the organizers that the EO Youth Day was primarily a seated event. However, when van Manen came to the stage, several young people left their chairs and ran towards the podium. After van Manen's act, presenter Bert van Leeuwen had a difficult time directing the public back to their seats so that they could listen to the sermon that followed—which could apparently only be done being seated. While specific instructions as to how to behave had been unnecessary during earlier EO Youth Days, in 1999, the presenter went to great lengths to calm the moving crowd down:

Now you all have to sit down and I'm very serious about it! Everybody standing here has to return to their seats! And be quick 'cause something very important is coming now! Please sit down, guys, you can do the wave later on, but now you have to listen for a while! It'll only be 15 minutes!

Apart from a more assertive public, the EO Youth Day in 1988 showed the beginning of another crucial development: a change in the interaction between those on stage and the audience. Höglund's modest appeal to people to stand up and wave pales into insignificance when compared to the evocative and dynamic calls artists made later, just as the public's engagement differs greatly. A particularly remarkable moment was singer Ron Kenoly's show at the EO Youth Day in 1999. Halfway through one of his songs, he said to the audience: "I notice that some want to dance. Can we dance in this place? I might be thrown out of your country, but I encourage you to dance." As the song continued, Kenoly was not satisfied, so he stopped and said: "I see that some of you have never danced. I can see it on your face, you don't dance in your church. But this is not your church! I will teach you: there is a right way to dance and a wrong way to do it. Hop kick, hop kick." His invitation was infectious, judging by the public's reaction.

The 1990s were a pivotal moment in the evolution of the EO Youth Day. By 2008, the requests for silence and attention and the directive control of the organizers were virtually gone. However, other requests became common. For example, one of the preachers at the Youth Day in 2008 asked the audience to kneel during his prayer (which is unusual in the Reformed culture). Presenter Manuel Venderbos made a similar request when he invited everyone to hold hands during prayer. Further, both artists and the members of the worship team invited the audience to clap their hands, dance, and raise their hands during their show or during worship. This reveals an important trend: movement and active behaviour, such as dancing, talking, and chatting have long been understood to be barriers to the core of what is happening at the EO Youth Days. In other words, in earlier versions, movement and acting needed to be controlled for the message to be communicated effectively. However, at the Youth Day in 2008, movement and acting were not only an essential part of the performance of the people on stage, when they communicated their message, but also an essential part of the reception of the message on the part of the public. After all, the audience was often called upon and stimulated to participate expressively in what happened on stage.

Words, Speeches, and Sermons

Given the above, we may conclude that the disciplined body of the earlier versions of the EO Youth Day has increasingly given way to a body that functions as a vehicle of expression. A similar conclusion can be drawn from our analysis of the discourse—the speeches, sermons, and other forms of verbal communication—to which we will now turn.

The early days of the EO youth events displayed a strong discourse and rhetoric which were antithetical to modern culture and society, with the body being central to this discourse. In 1977, the speeches provided a direct commentary of how society was viewed from a conservative Protestant perspective. The speakers warned the young people against the evils of the world. Sharp demarcation lines were drawn between two exclusive domains: *“They will say that when you use cannabis, you can handle your sorrows, [...] but I tell you, in the name of freedom, young people are ruined by the time they are only 20 years old.”* The bodies and minds of young people were considered to be in great danger and to be easily led astray by the temptations of the Devil. The listeners were warned about the danger of losing control over their bodies, either through drugs, free sex or through the invasion of spiritual powers if they practised yoga or Transcendental Meditation. The body was primarily presented as being under attack by external dangers. But the overall message boiled down to the need of cleansing one’s inside, which was only possible through personal acceptance of Jesus as the Saviour. The overall negative assessment of somatic experiences revealed an implicit understanding that the objectified body was in danger of losing control. The construction of external threats and internal mess was conveyed in the very concrete and personified image of evil—the Devil. One of the preachers explicitly referred to the ‘Devil being a dealer from the beginning’, always deceiving and destroying the good God did in this world.

This antithetical sentiment was still present in 1987. Two girls were interviewed on stage to tell the audience how their lives had been affected by their ‘involvement in the occult’ until they came to know Jesus. What seemed innocent pursuits, such as listening to rock music and playing cards, evolved to them taking part in séances, having out-of-body experiences, consulting spirits, and having a fascination with death. The girls’ conversion accounts stressed how they had lost control over their lives, how they lived in fear and with suicidal thoughts, and how they regained control after having surrendered to Jesus.

The theme of the Youth Day in 1987 centred on love and the two speeches that day stressed the Christian ideal of sex being restricted to marriage as ‘a proven no to guarantee a successful marriage’. AIDS—the disease which had only recently been discovered—was apparently too sensitive to mention, as it was only hinted at in the statement that ‘sexual relationships with different persons can cause a lethal disease’ and in a critical comment on the public campaign for contraceptives, which pointed out that ‘it informs you how to have different sexual partners without getting a disease’. Moreover, ‘love calls for commitment and an act of will, the use of one’s mind, and tapping into the source of love: God’. While both speakers addressed this theme, the second speaker of the day, Floyd McClung—then the director of Youth with a Mission in the Netherlands—introduced a new discourse. While he stressed that love was more than feelings, he stated that many young people suffered from a deficit of

love, which was caused by painful relationships with their parents and a lack of love within the churches.

McClung's approach was new in two respects. Firstly, it was no longer the Devil who was blamed for leading the young people astray, but the lack of loving relationships, which caused them to look for love elsewhere: "When you are hurt [...] you will face a lot of temptation and pressure to find it outside yourself." Pain and sorrow were, in other words, framed as originating from inner deficits rather than from external (evil) threats. Secondly, McClung's message was marked by him paying positive attention to the emotional well-being of his listeners. His emphasis on the love and grace of God introduced a therapeutic discourse of the body, as he acknowledged the inner emotional needs of his listeners as well as God's desire to heal the broken and damaged inner lives of his children. The body emerged here as a locus of God's presence and indwelling.

McClung's speech displayed signs of the emerging 'therapeutic' shift in evangelicalism (cf. Hunter): the shift from a discourse on the threatened body in need of discipline to a discourse on the body as a locus of God's presence, which needs to be nurtured rather than disciplined. Although the threatened body did not completely disappear, it was framed differently, as the speech on the prodigal son by Kees Kraayenoord in 2008 indicated. His message showed a remarkable continuity with the sermons of 1977: the far and strange land of the youngest son was filled with desires that related to the body: drugs, pills, free sex, food, and alcohol. Interestingly, this speech reduced evil to excessive bodily desires, which leaves no ground for the Devil. Moreover, while Kraayenoord showed an ongoing preoccupation with the need for disciplining the body, he relativized this by stressing the acceptance and love of God.

McClung not only introduced a new therapeutic repertoire that 'rehabilitated' the body, but also introduced a new style of presentation, to which the body was central. Whereas other speakers used a directive, didactic, and indeed 'preachy', authoritative style, McClung positioned himself empathically next to his listeners rather than above them. This style became the standard for the speeches of future EO Youth Days. As the Youth Day transformed from a conventional rally into a spectacular event, the organizers realized that the format of the traditional sermon had become problematic.

Ironically, Kenoly's statement at the Youth Day in 1999, which was mentioned earlier, that 'this is not your church', highlighted that the traditional sermon had gradually become 'out of place' in the emerging festive format—not only because of its paternalistic tone, but also because of its less than exciting style. Another speech that day, delivered by the young evangelist Peter Scheele, showed the effective use of a style that appealed to the senses and evokes emotions. Looking young, 'hip', and energetic, Scheele used moving images to illustrate how 'the eyes of the Lord behold the whole earth'. More importantly, Scheele himself embodied his message by using informal language and supporting it with bodily gestures and the volume and tone of his voice. Scheele's intended message—'more commitment to God results in more power from God'—concurred with him being a role model for such an identification, which showed that being a Christian can be 'hip', fun, exciting, dynamic, and 'cool'. The intense bodily engagement of the speaker conveyed a persuasive message as it mobilized the bodies and the senses of the listeners.

Another trend in the style of preaching was that speeches intensified and became short performances like one-act plays. The boundaries between acting and preaching became blurred, which is most visible in the story of the prodigal son, as told by Kees Kraayenoord at the Youth Day in 1999: it was initially preached by him standing in a garbage truck.

Dress, Style, and Self-presentation

EO Youth Days are *styled* events. This is particularly the case in the later versions of this event. Style matters in all aspects, including the design of the stage, the rapidly changing images which are projected on the large screens behind the stage, and the style of the music featured at this mass event. Style matters in particular with respect to the dress, make-up, haircut, and presentation of the performers. Those who were on stage during the EO Youth Day in 2008 were in all aspects young, 'hip', and stylish: their dress was up-to-date in line with the prevailing fashion, which had been much less the case previously. In 1977, for instance, the speakers' attire (shirt, jacket, blue-black-white diagonally striped tie in one case, brown check shirt combined with a green vest in another case) and haircut were, given the dress code of the time, correct and conventional. References to the style of the hippies—more glamorous clothes combined with platform shoes—and to the neo-Romantic look or the upcoming punk look—all popular in the 1970s—were almost completely absent. Thus the singer of one of the bands featured at the Youth Day in 1977, 'Nutshell', who combined his longish hair and untidy beard with a brilliant blue skate-shirt *avant la lettre*, was clearly an exception, just as the few fashion-conscious people in the audience were. The same applies to the Youth Day in 1987. The presenter's correct trousers, grey-red sweater, which he wore with a white and red striped shirt and a red tie, and one of the speakers' blue check woollen sweater with shirt and tie and their 'proper' haircuts stood in sharp contrast to the rough jeans, spiky or bleached wild tangles of hair and garish dress, which were characteristic of the popular styles of punk, pop, glam, new wave, and disco of the time, although some people in the audience wore fashionable dress. However, they were the exceptions. Similarly, the blue-grey tones in which the presenter and the choir were dressed at the Youth Day in 1999 were considered to be informal, but appropriate, especially compared to the dress styles popular in the 1990s, such as the anti-fashion of grunge and the sporty fashion inspired by hip hop and other dance cultures.

If alternative styles were present at all, they were expressed by a small number of individuals in the crowd or by the artists who performed on stage at the EO Youth Day (e.g. the singer of 'Nutshell'). 'MIC', one of the bands who played in 1999, was thus one of the first at the EO Youth Day that truly embraced a contemporary 'hip' style. The band members wore brightly coloured, fluorescent rain jackets and track pants, complete with sunglasses, earrings, and conspicuous sport shoes, reflecting a style which was popular in the club and hip hop scenes.

While MIC's style was very progressive in EO circles, the EO became more attentive to contemporary and 'hip' styles in the new millennium and the presentation and appearance of the Youth Day became more stylish. The Day in 2008 illustrated this very well. Presenter Manuel Venderbosch wore a 'hip'

green sports jacket and a black and white *kefiah* (the so-called Palestinian shawl), which he combined with white jeans and black and white check sneakers. The reporter who presented short talks and impressions of the EO Youth Day on the big screens inside the stadium and on television wore worn-out jeans and a pink shirt. The dancers on stage featured the postmodern style which is characteristic of 'scripted style surfing': they wore tight shirts, shabby three-quarter length street-style trousers, and sneakers and they seemed to embody the default option of trendy dress today (sexy, 'cool', and rebellious), but they differed in the specific combinations of colours and micro-styles, suggesting personality and uniqueness in the choice of style and dress. The artists expressed an 'alt.rock' look (in the case of 'Starfield'), a well-dressed 'hip' look (in the case of 'Delirious?') or a somewhat extravagant eclecticism (as in the case of 'Spacifix').

One may conclude from this that the 'world-affirming attitude' which is characteristic of contemporary evangelicalism and which Shibley discussed with respect to dimensions such as ethics, life-style, and cultural participation also applies to Dutch evangelicalism with regard to dress. A 'cool' outfit and a 'hip' look have become central to the EO's presentation and image. As such, contemporary evangelicalism as embodied by the EO represents a break with a past when dress needed to be unobtrusive and correct.

This is also reflected in the dress styles of the young visitors of the EO Youth Day today. They hardly differ from their non-religious contemporaries, in that 'hip' also dominates among evangelical young people, as do more 'freaky', conspicuous, and alternative styles. Thus the visitor to the Youth Day in 2008 might have come across a heavily made-up girl in a brilliant pink panty hose and a faded shirt with 'free hugs' painted on it, with the bleached haircut of the 1980s, or a boy with heavily made up eyes in a black and white check jacket, wearing an old felt hat.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion to be drawn from our analysis is that, within four decades, the EO Youth Day changed from a conventional and modest Reformed event into a multi-sensational evangelical spectacle, which is, we assert, a change that touches (most literally) on the body and the way the body is addressed. This change comprises a number of aspects which involve changes in the material and spatial settings, in movements and gestures, in discourse (both regarding content and performance), and in style (dress and self-presentation). Thus, the *space* in which the EO Youth Day takes place has changed from an 'auditorium for hearing the word' to a multi-media stadium. The *stage* has changed from a somewhat extensive pulpit to the dynamic centre of a spectacle. Moreover, the stage has undergone a change in *movement*. While the earlier versions of the EO Youth Day offered a rather static stage, the stage is full of movement in the later versions: not only full of movement by dancers and actors, but also full of movement by presenters, speakers, the choir, and the artists. A similar development has taken place among the audience. While there was only moderate action in the audience during the earlier versions of the Youth Day, which embodied the sober *habitus* of attentive, disciplined, and seated

listening typical of the Reformed, the audience later began to display more movement: bodily actions such as waving, dancing, clapping, jumping, raising hands, hugging, and walking became part of the young visitors' expressive repertoire of participation.

We also discussed changes in the way the body is addressed and represented by words. By studying the contents of speeches, we noted the difference in the way the body was portrayed in earlier and later versions of the EO Youth Day. We contrasted the discourse on the threatened body—the body in constant danger of being affected by evil forces—with the therapeutic discourse on the body as the locus of God's presence. We also observed the performative qualities of the spoken word, concluding that a change has taken place from sober and authoritative preaching to empathetic, informal, and exciting performative delivery of the message.

Finally, we discussed the dress of those on stage and of individual visitors to the EO Youth Day. The main change we observed is a change from the body as appropriately dressed to the body as the locus of 'hip' self-expression. In some respects, the changes in dress display a wider change—that the EO Youth Day has become 'hip' and contemporary and an event that matches successful 'secular' youth events (Duits).

On a more abstract level, the change we indicated above may well be perceived as a change in—what Birgit Meyer calls—“the practice of religious mediation” (710). Jeremy Stolow reminds us that “‘religion’ can only be manifested through some process of mediation” (125). He continues (*ibid*):

Throughout history, in myriad forms, communication with and about 'the sacred' has always been enacted through written texts, ritual gestures, images and icons, architecture, music, incense, special garments, saintly relics and other objects of veneration, markings upon flesh, wagging tongues and other body parts. It is only through such media that it is at all possible to proclaim one's faith, mark one's affiliation, receive spiritual gifts, or participate in any of the countless idioms for making the sacred present to mind and body.

'Making the sacred present' is undoubtedly one of the core concerns of the EO Youth Day, but Stolow's list of 'media' should, in the context of the EO Youth Day, include stadium atmosphere, pop and rock music, audience participation, the visual spectacle, and loud sounds. After all, the practice of mediation offered at the EO Youth Day is spectacular, shaped in accordance with contemporary pop culture formats and idioms.

The change from a modest to a spectacular Youth Day, as discussed above, can thus be re-framed as a change in the religious practice of mediation. The earlier versions of the Youth Day offered a Reformed practice of mediation: a sober, didactic, primarily verbal mediation, which mainly addressed the ear (and to a far lesser degree the other senses, which were 'tuned down', to use a phrase from Meyer 716) and required disciplined, attentive listening on the part of the participants. Later versions, on the other hand, offered an expressive evangelical practice of mediation: a spectacular, experiential, multi-media mediation, which addressed a broader sensorium (not only the ear, but also the eye and the sensing body) and invited expressive participation on the part of the attendees.

In short, the changing practice of mediation we have observed in four decades of EO Youth Day events is a replacement of one particular set of forms of embodiment (a modest Reformed one) with another set (an expressive evangelical one)—a development that may be considered to be the evangelical trajectory of ‘the turn to the body’ discussed earlier. Further, this replacement charts two profound interrelated developments in Dutch Protestantism (see Klaver; Roeland, *Selfation*; Stoffels, *Wandelen, Leeuw* for a more detailed analysis of these developments). Firstly, it demonstrates the internal dynamics within the evangelical movement, moving from a world-avoiding pietism to an expressive world-affirming style. Secondly, it reveals the absorption of evangelical elements in the Reformed tradition, often described by the term ‘evangelicalization’. An essential aspect of both developments is the acceptance of ‘secular’ popular culture and its respective forms of embodiment.

On a more speculative note, we suggest that the EO Youth Day is not only an expression of these wider developments, but also a catalytic power. In other words, it might well be the case that the EO has contributed to these wider developments, not least by organizing the Youth Days, which have, after all, been excellent opportunities to introduce new forms of embodiment. With performances like Kenoly’s and his offer, ‘I will teach you how to dance’, the audience is taught to behave in new ways. This is what Mellor and Shilling (“Body”) call ‘body pedagogics’. Since 1975, the EO Youth Day has probably been one of the most influential teaching events for the body, in particular for young people who were raised with Reformed body regimes, but further research that addresses the EO’s broader societal impact is needed to find evidence for this claim.

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NOTE

1. Dutch Reformed Protestantism comprises of a variety of denominations. Generally speaking, two main strands can be distinguished: the more liberal Dutch Reformed tradition and the more orthodox Reformed Calvinist tradition. The latter shares an orthodox theological basis with evangelical groups. Since it is the orthodox Reformed Calvinist strand in particular that has been active in the EO, we use 'Reformed' to refer to this tradition.

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