

THE JESUS REVOLUTION

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by

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## THE JESUS REVOLUTION

The 1960s were a period of social uprising, protests, the Vietnam conflict, and moral decline. Oftentimes, people do not consider the fact that a great revival evolved during this period. Nevertheless, not long after the Beatles landed in New York, God landed in California. The “Jesus Revolution”<sup>1</sup> swept the United States and world when the Holy Spirit touched the lives of youth in California and the West Coast. The movement eventually swept across the world as people began seeking a closer relationship with God. Supporters and skeptics have debated this movement, but it continues to influence present-day Christian culture in many areas, including worship, theology, and evangelistic methodology. The purpose of this paper is to examine these influences by investigating the beginnings, beliefs, and central players of the Jesus Revolution and their impact on the contemporary church.

### **The Beginnings**

The Jesus Revolution is not rooted in precise locations or individuals but in various independent street ministries in California that reached out to drug addicts and social outcasts. In 1967, the Holy Spirit moved through these small local ministries in order to affect a generation and impact society. However, because of the individuals involved and their resemblance to certain aspects of the secular counter-culture, some

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<sup>1</sup>James Drane, *A New American Reformation* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1973), 108. The movement can be classified as the Jesus Revolution, Jesus Movement, Jesus People, and the Jesus People Movement.

question the movement's validity. Instead of viewing it as a revival, many view it as merely a "cultural drift" consisting of "carrying organizations" such as communes and coffee houses.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the Jesus Movement's early converts came from the flower children and disenfranchised youth protesting the social ills of the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> American youth found themselves fighting the Vietnam conflict, racism, environmental devastation, and other problems, and as a result, they perceived traditional authorities as the cause.

Consequently, trust in traditional authority, including organized churches, all but vanished, leaving them void of meaning beyond that of a personal experience. In the tumultuous social context of the 1960s, youth sought instant peace and immediate love in their lives.<sup>4</sup> This endeavor brought about new techniques of drug-induced psychology to reach higher states of spiritual awareness and meaning.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, while many teenagers began experimenting with Native American and Eastern religions in order to experience a more intimate relationship with a supernatural power, many others found hope and love in "the simple message of the Gospel and teachings of Christ."<sup>6</sup>

Many of the people who joined the movement came from middle to upper class families; however, of these, several were from broken or divided homes. Due to their

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<sup>2</sup>Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., *One Way: The Jesus Movement and Its Meaning* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 57.

<sup>3</sup>Larry Graybill, "The Jesus Movement: Its Common Tenets and Its Word to Brethren," *Brethren Life and Thought* 17 (1972): 149.

<sup>4</sup>Erling Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion: The Jesus Revival in America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1972), 48-50.

<sup>5</sup>Joyce Milton, *The Road to Malpsychia* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), 165-204.

<sup>6</sup>Ronald M. Enroth, Edward E. Ericson, Jr., and C. Breckinridge Peters, *The Jesus People:*

economic status, these individuals had both the resources and time to experiment with a different counter-culture and the longing to find the stability and love that they lacked in their homes.<sup>7</sup> Those who joined referred to themselves as “Jesus People,” although the media referred to them as “Jesus Freaks.” While many early converts were former drug addicts, not all members came from the drug-infested streets. Yet, on the whole, the movement maintained a close relationship with the drug culture due to its active street ministries.<sup>8</sup>

The movement began in a coffee house located in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, California. In 1967, former drug addicts opened it as a ministry for people who struggled with illegal substances and others who walked the streets of the city. Over the next two years, this ministry reached over fifty thousand youth.<sup>9</sup>

The Jesus People were witnesses to the fire of God as His Gospel was broadened from the streets of California, to college and high school campuses<sup>10</sup> due in part to the evangelism of its members and two evangelistic organizations: Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and Campus Crusade for Christ, which was founded by Bill Bright. Members of the Jesus Revolution found themselves attracted to the evangelistic ideals of these two organizations and to their non-denominational stances. During the 1970s, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and the Jesus People were united in reaching the lost

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*Old-Time Religion in the Age of Aquarius* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 225-27.

<sup>7</sup>Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 62.

<sup>8</sup>Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 109.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Jacob, *Pop Goes Jesus* (New York: Morehouse-Barlow, 1972), 7-9. Asbury College in Willmore, Kentucky was a significant place of revival.

and worshiping God on college campuses. Inter-Varsity was more intellectual in its method and style while Campus Crusade was more aggressive in its evangelistic techniques.

In 1972, Campus Crusade for Christ held a “camp meeting” in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, Texas. Here, they offered attendees evangelism classes during the day and Christian rock concerts at night. The schedule for the final night included an eight-hour concert in which the participants, a majority of whom came from the Jesus Movement, filled the stadium shouting praises and slogans to Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

Campus Crusade gave birth, albeit inadvertently, to an outgoing and outspoken evangelical group called the Christian World Liberation Front, started by Jack Sparks. Sparks, his wife, and three other couples offered a Christian response to far-left groups in Berkeley, California such as the Third World Liberation Front and the Berkeley Liberation Movement. Using the name of Campus Crusade for Christ, the couples preached and witnessed to students on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley and renamed themselves the Christian World Liberation Front. They used printed materials such as tracts, newspapers, and comic books; they also witnessed to youth gathering at secular rallies. The Christian World Liberation Front was the first organization identified by the media as Jesus People and Jesus Freaks.<sup>12</sup>

Over the years, the Jesus Movement grew rapidly, with hundreds of youth joining between 1970 and 1972. According to estimates of those within the movement,

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<sup>11</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 113-16.

<sup>12</sup>Enroth, *The Jesus People*, 102-14 and Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 53.

membership exceeded 300,000 members in 1972.<sup>13</sup> Several media outlets ran stories about the group, including *Time*, *Look*, *Life*, NBC, and CBS. Some members compared the rapid spread of the movement to the First Great Awakening in the Colonies.<sup>14</sup>

A positive result of the movement was the rapid growth it experienced. Unlike many social movements of the time, the Jesus Movement was not a highly organized, engineered creation of man. It began and spread as a “grassroots outburst.”<sup>15</sup> However, there were few trained leaders, culminating in a lack of deep theological training and discipleship that caused many new converts to fall away. Duane Pederson attempted to rectify this problem by encouraging new converts to (1) join and actively participate in a Bible study group and (2) to pray regularly with a fellowship group.<sup>16</sup> In the end, however, hundreds of thousands joined the movement from all ages and lifestyles.

### **The Beliefs**

There are no core doctrinal beliefs of the Jesus Movement. However, five primary doctrines underscore the movement. The Jesus People believed in a “Simple Gospel” and a high view of the Scriptures, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the imminent return of Christ, the imitation of Christ, and a counter-culture lifestyle. While different subgroups of the Awakening differ in their specific interpretations, these five doctrines were virtually universally followed.

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<sup>13</sup>Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 63.

<sup>14</sup>Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 112.

<sup>15</sup>Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 63-64.

<sup>16</sup>Pat King, *The Jesus People are Coming* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1971), 25.

## The Simple Gospel

The Jesus People viewed the Scriptures in the same manner as many conservative Christians, accepting it as the inerrant, infallible, inspired word of God.<sup>17</sup> When others disagree with them, the Jesus People argue that “if there is one error, there are millions.” Their interpretation of the Scriptures is based less on a deep theological study or biblical exegesis and more on reconciling the Scriptures with personal experience, even if the resulting beliefs are superficial and easily refuted.<sup>18</sup> For individuals of the movement, it is a personal experience that “continues to verify Jesus, the Bible, and the simple Gospel.”<sup>19</sup> Despite the lack of formal training, many of those enraptured with the movement possessed a solid grasp of basic theology, creating a fertile ground optimal for cultivating greater knowledge and a deeper understanding of theology, God, and Christian life.<sup>20</sup>

The “Simple Gospel” concept refers to the idea that “every person is a sinner and needs to be born again by accepting Christ and knowing him in a personal relationship,”<sup>21</sup> while rejecting human reason and church history.<sup>22</sup> Instead, the Scriptures are accepted as the only true source of knowledge and wisdom about Christ

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<sup>17</sup>The term “conservative” refers to the view to which many Protestant Christians adhere. The most well known group would be that of the Fundamentalists.

<sup>18</sup>Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 71-72.

<sup>19</sup>Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 151.

<sup>20</sup>Ruben Ortega, *The Jesus People Speak Out* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1972). This information is based on interviews recorded throughout the book. Basic theology consists of theology such as God created the world, Jesus died, was buried, resurrected, ascended to heaven, and will come again.

<sup>21</sup>Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 150.

<sup>22</sup>Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 118.

and his teachings.<sup>23</sup> The “Simple Gospel” doctrine provides the Jesus People something they lacked at home in that it provides freedom from guilt and loneliness and gives the believer a purpose and value and shows them love.<sup>24</sup>

### **Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

Members of the Jesus Movement believe in the charismatic gifts of healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy, and miracles, but they lack a rich understanding of the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup> One of the leaders of this awakening, Bob Owen, acknowledges that “there is so much we ought to know about Him.” However, he offers little teaching to resolve this pneumatological pitfall.<sup>26</sup> Instead, he states that the Holy Spirit is a member of the Trinity, fully God, and referred to by various titles throughout the Scriptures. In his attempt to delineate between the works of the Spirit, Owen asserts that the Spirit reveals sin, shows man his need for salvation, empowers believers for evangelism, and causes men to glorify Jesus. He opines that when a believer receives the Holy Spirit, he is “fully turned on to Jesus.”<sup>27</sup> While Jesus People believe in spiritual gifts, it is the “outsiders [who] seem to place a more primary importance upon these phenomena than do the Jesus People themselves.” The Jesus People believe that the spiritual gifts are a “fringe benefit” rather than a determining factor of salvation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 149-50. Jesus People base this reasoning on their understanding of 1 Cor 1:19-21.

<sup>24</sup>Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 71.

<sup>25</sup>Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 127-28.

<sup>26</sup>Bob Owen, *Jesus is Alive and Well* (Pasadena: Compass Press, 1972), 49.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 47-49.

<sup>28</sup>Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 152-53.

## The Second Coming of Christ<sup>29</sup>

Eschatology is a favorite topic of the Jesus People. While many could not outline specifics about the Second Coming of Christ and the tribulation, nearly all would testify that Jesus was coming back at any moment.<sup>30</sup> Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, serves as their primary source of teaching regarding the end times, finding itself next to and almost equal to the Scriptures in most communes and homes influenced by the movement.<sup>31</sup> The Jesus People hold to a pre-millennial eschatology and believe that they are living in the days immediate preceding the rapture.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, Jesus People believe the purpose of evangelism is to save as many souls as possible before time runs out. Ortega records the views of three individuals regarding the mission of the Jesus Movement. (1) Sheila states, "the goal of this Movement is to reach the whole world for Christ."<sup>33</sup> (2) Alicia tells the interviewer, "I want to tell, at least let everybody know about Christ, you know, so that they can choose for themselves."<sup>34</sup> (3) Nick opines, "My goal is, like I said before, to get 49,152 dedicated Christians, taking those people with willing hearts; teaching them and guiding

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<sup>29</sup>This theological statement was not widely held as the Jesus Movement referred to the Second Coming of Christ as the "Imminent Return of Christ" because of their understanding of the time of Christ's return.

<sup>30</sup>Harold S. Moyer, "The Jesus Revolution," *Brethren Life and Thought* 17 (1972): 173.

<sup>31</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 89.

<sup>32</sup>Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 74.

<sup>33</sup>Ortega, *The Jesus People Speak Out*, 11.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

them in the way of the Lord.”<sup>35</sup> Their zeal for evangelism, according to Harold Moyer, puts “more conventional Christians to shame.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Imitating Christ**

Communal living often characterized the Jesus Movement. Based on their understanding of the book of Acts, and their rejection of traditional authority, Jesus People believe that the best way to live as Christ lived is to live in communal homes. Each home, or commune, is uniquely organized, depending on the leadership, members, and specific doctrines that are practiced.<sup>37</sup> While many are open, democratic, and involved in the community, some are autocratic, authoritarian, and isolationistic. Each is different based upon the needs and gifts of the people.

The most radical commune is the Children of God, in which the word of the elders is not questioned. Instead, absolute loyalty and submission are required, immoral acts are rejected, and the decisions of the elders are final. Furthermore, the Children of God teach that they are the true children of God, and the teaching of the elders is equivalent to the Scriptures.<sup>38</sup>

However, most communes were the opposite of the Children of God. They resembled a seminary more than a strict cult and ministered in the community. Although they believed that they should remain separate from the world, they still interacted with

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>36</sup>Moyer, “The Jesus Revolution,” 173.

<sup>37</sup>Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 155.

<sup>38</sup>Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 130-31. In its truest form, this is a cult. A problem with this type of life is that it destroys much of the personal evangelistic zeal that the Jesus Movement promoted.

the world in order to proclaim and share the love of Jesus with whomever they encountered.<sup>39</sup>

Roger Palms, in an attempt to discredit the ministry of the Jesus People, states that their youth ignore social ills except to use them as a “launching pad” for witnessing, claiming that all the ills are caused by sin and that Jesus alone is the solution.<sup>40</sup> Despite his efforts, intense investigations reveal that these youth spent a lot of time visiting inmates, feeding the hungry, and doing what they could to help the environment. While members of the Jesus Movement evangelize aggressively, they do not forsake individual needs in order to preach the Gospel.<sup>41</sup>

### **Counter-Cultural Lifestyle**

Analysts often describe the communal life as counter-cultural due to its independence from traditional authority. Some Christians who participate in communes reject much of the assistance and teachings of the world while many completely reject the world, depending on reading the Scriptures, Bible studies, prayer, and the spiritual leaders of the communes for guidance. Overall, commune members depend on each other for their daily needs. Though some who enter the communal lifestyle depict a negative experience,<sup>42</sup> most members find the lifestyle enriching and necessary.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>40</sup>Roger C. Palms, *The Jesus Kids* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971), 68.

<sup>41</sup>Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 152.

<sup>42</sup>Lowell D. Streiker, *The Jesus Trip: Advent of the Jesus Freaks* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 69-74.

<sup>43</sup>Ortega, *The Jesus People Speak Out*. Based on interviews recorded throughout the book.

## Central Figures

### Tony and Susan Alamo

Tony and Susan Alamo both came from Jewish families and eventually confessed Jesus as their Messiah and Savior in the mid-1960s. Prior to his conversion Tony enjoyed a successful career in rock music as a record promoter in California.<sup>44</sup> According to Tony's testimony, while attending a meeting with music business partners, Jesus appeared to him and instructed him to tell the others in the meeting that He was coming back soon, an event reminiscent of Paul's experience in Acts. It is here that Tony became a Christian. Susan had been a Christian for many years, claiming that she received the "baptism of the Spirit" and the gift of tongues. Both Tony and Susan were initially associated with the Pentecostal movement in the area, a movement that readily accepted the gift of tongues and other charismatic expressions.<sup>45</sup>

Following Tony's conversion, the couple began a street ministry in 1967, aggressively evangelizing passers-by and sharing the Gospel with anyone willing to listen. Due to complaints from neighbors about the noise and rough clientele, the Alamos moved until they finally settled on a ranch near Saugus, California in 1968. Located in an abandoned restaurant, Tony and Susan established a commune for their followers, naming it the Christian Foundation.<sup>46</sup> Residents lived in houses surrounding the complex rather than in a single home as with many communes, although worship services and

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<sup>44</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 60-61.

<sup>45</sup>Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 25. Arthur Blessitt also claims that Jesus appeared to him as He did to the Apostle Paul.

<sup>46</sup>Richard John Neuhaus, "In Defense of the Unlikable," *First Things* 71 (1997): 59. The Alamos opened similar communes in Arkansas and New York.

teaching were held in the old restaurant that was converted into the worship center and dining hall. The Alamos, however, did not reside in the commune, but chose to remain in their home in Studio City, California and drove to the Foundation when necessary.<sup>47</sup>

Funding for the Foundation's establishment came from the non-denominational Full Gospel Businessmen's Association. By 1973, the Foundation received approximately fifteen thousand dollars each month in donations. Despite the large monthly revenue, the Alamos reported that finances, although always enough, remained very tenuous throughout the year.

Worship in the Foundation revolved around Gospel music, conversions in light of the pending judgment of all sinners, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Worship services were held once every night and twice on Sunday. During the services, Susan Alamo preached while Tony handled the business affairs and announcements.<sup>48</sup>

Life on the commune revolved around the Alamos and their doctrines. Residents agreed to follow strict social rules at the risk of excommunication and expulsion. The rules included men and women living apart. Drugs, drinking, social dancing, and physical contact apart from large group settings were strictly forbidden; although smoking was allowed. Marriage must be preceded by a "ninety-day period of total separation for prayer and fasting" by the couple, after which, the Alamos must approve the marriage. New residents spent the first week reading the Scriptures in order

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<sup>47</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 64, 83-84.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 61.

to become “grounded,” after which, they began assisting with the daily chores of gardening, street evangelism, and driving vehicles.<sup>49</sup>

Tony and Susan Alamo taught their followers to employ aggressive evangelistic techniques in their street evangelism. The young evangelists passed out tracts expressing the imminent return of Christ and judgment for sin. As a result of their assertiveness, Foundation members have a reputation of “accosting tourists” with a harsh message that the end of the world is at hand and that people must repent or die. Furthermore, others report Alamo’s followers harassed passers-by with “turn or burn” street preaching.<sup>50</sup> Although the Foundation members served as the primary laborers and evangelists for the commune, the Alamos dictated all finances, discipline, and leadership roles.<sup>51</sup> As part of the outreach, members invited others to visit the Foundation, receive a free meal, and worship God. Once there, evangelism became more “harsh and polemical” during conversations with anyone asking about God. Certain techniques focused primarily on God’s judgment and repentance from sin to be forgiven. Grace, love, and mercy received little attention.<sup>52</sup>

### **Arthur Blessitt**

Arthur Blessitt was a Southern Baptist preacher who moved from his home in Mississippi to Southern California in the late 1960s after he claimed that Jesus appeared

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 83-85.

<sup>50</sup>Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 20-25.

<sup>51</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 83-84.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 61.

to him in a vision.<sup>53</sup> There, he opened a coffeehouse called “His Place” on Sunset Strip in West Hollywood. From this location, Blessitt reached out to runaways in an attempt to share Christ and encourage them to return home. Nevertheless, local nightclub owners in the area protested Blessitt’s ministry, which led to battles with landlords over renting facilities. The coffeehouse frequently moved until Blessitt could no longer find a place willing to rent to him. In response to his enemies, Blessitt chained himself to a large wooden cross and walked up and down Sunset Strip until a landlord opened the doors to his ministry. This tactic brought Blessitt great fame and name recognition.

He became known for his use of imagery and quick, short phrases to attract people to his message. Two of his most famous images are responses to the social culture of the Vietnam era. In response to the peace movement, Blessitt placed a cross on top of the peace symbol to show that Christ alone brings true peace. After the civil rights movement, he began using a clinch fist raised into the air; Blessitt created a white hand with the index finger pointing upward with the phrase “One Way!” underneath and a small cross located next to the index finger.<sup>54</sup> Regarding short phrases, Blessitt was known for using the phrase “turn on to Jesus” to reach lost souls.<sup>55</sup> An example of imagery mixed with slogans is Blessitt’s mode of transportation: a black paneled pickup truck with the phrase “Sin is a No No” spray-painted in red on the side.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 25.

<sup>54</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 62-63.

<sup>55</sup>Jacob, *Pop Goes Jesus*, 19.

<sup>56</sup>King, *The Jesus People are Coming*, 8.

From his small coffeehouse and street ministry on Sunset Strip, Blessitt reported leading ten thousand converts to Christ. Such a number does not seem unreasonable, considering his use of midnight services, Christian street cheers, magnanimous conflicts with night club owners and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and eye-catching imagery. Nevertheless, Blessitt moved his ministry from West Hollywood to Times Square in New York City in 1970 and eventually began his cross-carrying ministry around the world by leading marches across England, Scotland, and Ireland. In 1972, Blessitt became active in the presidential primary, recruiting young people to follow candidates and demand they profess or deny Christianity.<sup>57</sup>

Arthur Blessitt's reputation in California and New York stemmed from his colorful evangelistic techniques and his responses to those who opposed him. Ronald Enroth records that people viewed Blessitt as "egotistical" and self-righteous. This perception stemmed from many of his battles with the law and nightclub owners in California. Blessitt believed that the sinful, secular world was out to get him and prevent him from evangelizing. He claimed they sought to "rid themselves of the nuisance" called Christianity.<sup>58</sup>

Today, Blessitt continues to carry his wooden cross around the world, sharing the Gospel with millions. His journey earned him numerous Guinness world records and, according to his website, has taken him around the world one and a half times at the equator.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 95-96.

<sup>58</sup>Enroth, *The Jesus People*, 11, 70.

<sup>59</sup>Arthur Blessitt, "Arthur Blessitt: The Man Who Carried The Cross Around The World To

## Hal Lindsey

Texas native Hal Lindsey “personifies the ‘Jesus is coming soon’ fervor” of the Jesus Revolution, due in large part to his monumental book *The Late Great Planet Earth* and his apocalyptic preaching during the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>60</sup> Unlike Blessitt and the Alamos, Lindsey did not come from a strong religious background. Raised in Texas, he served in the United States Coast Guard and as a Mississippi River boat pilot, during which, he became known around New Orleans for his wild parties. Lindsey was saved at the age of twenty-six and attended Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas. The instruction that he received at seminary accounts for the majority of his theological training. After completing seminary, Lindsey moved to Southern California and began teaching about the coming apocalypse and the imminent return of Christ.

In the late 1960s, Hal Lindsey opened a communal home near the campus of the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) that he called “J. C. Light and Power Company.” It was operated more like a dormitory than a communal village, as done at Tony and Susan Alamo’s Christian Foundation. The single-building commune housed about forty-five residents, half of whom attended UCLA.<sup>61</sup>

The casual, carefree lifestyle within the J. C. Light commune is different from the rigid, disciplined structure employed at the Christian Foundation. While the Alamos required residents to assist with serving others, those living in the Lindsey-run commune revealed residents living individually “on his or her own separate Jesus-and-me trip” with

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Every Nation,” [on-line]; accessed 8 January 2007; available from <http://www.blessitt.com>; Internet.

<sup>60</sup>Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 73.

<sup>61</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 90-91.

little regard for the community of neighbors. Lowell Streiker reports that residents raided the kitchen at night, leaving no food for breakfast, made promises that were never kept, and had a lack of discipline for breaking the rules.<sup>62</sup> Many of the residents were selfish rather than servants (Matt 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:25-27).

The lack of structure and discipline, however, did not prevent the residence from dressing up the area to appear Christian, civil, and cultured. Residents greeted each other with “soft smiles,” well-crafted Jesus posters that decorated the walls, and conspicuous Bibles that were located in various “neat rooms” throughout the building. Furthermore, Bible studies on Tuesday and Wednesday night attracted several hundred listeners, many of who attended no other church services. Nevertheless, many who lived there report experiencing a definite conversion to Christianity.<sup>63</sup>

The Bible studies were frequently led by Lindsey, where he espoused his doomsday eschatology and encouraged people to accept Christ before the imminent rapture and coming tribulation. Both Lindsey and his followers focused on the details of current events in light of prophecy. While their conclusions often associated them with the Republican Party, J. C. Light members rejected both the conservative and liberal political wings because they believed both were a potential tool of the antichrist in order to establish his one-world government. During the teaching sessions, Lindsey’s “hip” style, appealing vision of the future, and down-to-earth demeanor created an “apocalyptic happiness” of anticipating the rapture and a willing to face persecution in light of a pre-tribulation eschatology. Although his teaching style attracted many followers, Lindsey’s

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<sup>62</sup>Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 70.

<sup>63</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 90-92.

questionable scholarship and exegesis are “casual and selective.”<sup>64</sup> Despite the belief that culture should not influence interpretation, a view professed by many Jesus People, Lindsey’s hermeneutic applied modern culture to prophecy. According to Streiker, Lindsey proclaims that every event in history is fulfilled prophecy. This included the Arab-Israeli conflict, air pollution, California earthquakes, and X-rated movies.<sup>65</sup>

Along with the lack of proper exegetical methodology, Lindsey was also known to put new Christians in full-time ministry positions. New converts in J. C. Light and Power Company were put into full-time ministry leadership as soon as three months after salvation.<sup>66</sup> Such urgency in placing new Christians into ministry goes against Paul’s warning to Timothy not to rush new Christians into such positions (1 Tim 3:6).

### **Linda Meissner**

Linda Meissner is considered “one of the most effective organizers in the movement” because of her ability to gather and organize large crowds for marches and other events throughout the country. Meissner’s work in evangelism began with her service as a foreign missionary, after which, she moved to New York City to work with David Wilkerson’s Teen Challenge ministry. In 1967, while praying on a rooftop for the youth whom she served in Teen Challenge, Meissner claimed she saw a vision of kids with the Scriptures marching in Seattle, Washington. Meissner left Teen Challenge in the summer of 1968 and moved to Seattle in order to achieve her vision.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 89-92.

<sup>65</sup>Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 73.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 75.

Soon after arriving in Seattle, Meissner opened a coffee shop called “The Catacombs” that quickly began receiving around two thousand youth each week.<sup>67</sup> One year later, in 1969, she opened a second coffeehouse called “The Eleventh Hour” where Gospel rock and jeans were the norm.<sup>68</sup> During this period, she started publishing an underground newspaper called *Agapé*.

The evangelistic methods employed by Meissner, though not as feral as those used by Blessitt, were known for their ability to attract attention. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, Meissner organized multiple Jesus People parades in Seattle and led many youth to invade rock concerts in order to share Gospel tracts. In 1970, she rented a small airplane and dropped ten thousand copies of *Agapé* on the crowd for them to read. However, because her organizational skills and aggressive evangelism, the Jesus Movement suffered a setback in 1971 when Meissner joined the Children of God.<sup>69</sup>

Linda Meissner, as with Lindsey, was a strong proponent of the imminent return of Christ and cataclysmic eschatology. She often taught that the Six-Day War would usher in the battle of Armageddon and that God’s final judgment of the world was very near.<sup>70</sup> Along with her end-times theology, she also incorporated Pentecostal teachings regarding the Holy Spirit, teaching her followers about Holy Spirit baptism and the gifts of healing, tongues, and miracles.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 62.

<sup>68</sup>King, *The Jesus People are Coming*, 13.

<sup>69</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 62.

<sup>70</sup>Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 123.

<sup>71</sup>Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 52.

## Duane Pederson

Duane Pederson influenced the Jesus Movement using the printing press. Described as a handsome man with a shy demeanor whose appearance was a “cross between Billy Graham and Paul Newman,”<sup>72</sup> his first venture into ministry began when he chose to attend an Assembly of God college, from which he was eventually expelled for cheating on his tests. After failing out of Bible college, Pederson moved to Southern California in the late 1960s and opened a coffeehouse called the “Jesus People House.” From this locale, he offered numerous Bible studies, sold Jesus posters, and shared the Gospel with drug addicts, runaway youth, and others willing to listen to his message.<sup>73</sup>

During his time and study, Pederson become influenced by the parable of the four soils (Matt 13:3-23; Mark 4:3-20; Luke 8:4-15) and chose to make reaching as many people with the Gospel his primary mission.<sup>74</sup> His newfound vision prompted him to analyze various evangelistic techniques employed by his contemporaries, leading to the conclusion that the printed press, an underground newspaper, should be the method he would use to reach people. Pederson began publishing the *Hollywood Free Press* in 1969. The publication, designed more as a large Gospel tract than an actual newspaper, offered directories of movement coffeehouses, “Jesus raps,” testimonials from converts, and many cartoons.

The *Free Press* eventually reached one million copies, a goal Pederson claims he promised God he would reach. He financed the paper through donations and

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<sup>72</sup>Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 43. Duane Pederson worked as a nightclub magician before beginning his ministry as a street evangelist and newspaper publisher.

<sup>73</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 61.

<sup>74</sup>Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 45.

subscriptions, though he and his followers gave away most of the copies while street preaching. Much of the ministry work done by Pederson involved coordinating with others in the movement, including Meissner and Blessitt to preach to groups, on the street, and handing out Gospel tracts. The influence of Pederson's underground paper is seen in that Pederson coined the term "Jesus People" in the *Free Press*, a title adopted by those actively involved with the movement.<sup>75</sup>

### **Present Day Impact**

Although the Jesus Revolution ended in the 1970s, its effects are felt even today. The Jesus People longed for a music that touched them emotionally and, although the lyrics of the old church hymns were often readily accepted, the traditional orchestration lacked the desired impact. Recalling their emotional response to secular rock music, the Jesus People created Christian rock, or 'God rock,' by performing traditional hymns in a rock style or by composing their own works. Secular artists were not blind to the popularity of Christian rock and capitalized on this new genre. As a result, many songs and musical productions arose, including Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit in the Sky" and *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, a rock opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice.<sup>76</sup>

This new musical form led to the popularity of such evangelistic Christian rock bands as Petra, one of the longest and most successful Christian rock bands. Petra was formed in 1972 by Bob Hartman and continued to record and tour until their retirement in

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<sup>75</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 61.

<sup>76</sup>Jacob, *Pop Goes Jesus*, 49-50.

December 2005.<sup>77</sup> Today, Christian artists such as Disciple, Kutless, Skillet, and those within the contemporary Christian music genre can credit much of their success to the Jesus Revolution.

Another prominent influence of the Jesus Movement was the marketing and promotion of Jesus. Bumper stickers, posters, clothing, and other products were developed with various slogans such as “Smile, God Loves You,” “Honk If You Love Jesus,” and “Christ is the Answer.”<sup>78</sup> Secular companies commercialized Jesus using everything from the Jesus watch to Jesus Christ bikinis.<sup>79</sup> Today, Christian stores such as LifeWay offer products commercializing Jesus from t-shirts with ‘Christianized’ remakes of pop culture icons to “Scripture Mints.” Many churches today offer contemporary services using choruses and live bands rather than hymns and organs, which is a derivative of the worship styles employed by the Jesus People.

Even the simplistic view of the Gospel permeates modern Christianity. Just as the Christian World Liberation Front paraphrased the Scriptures into the common street language of the day,<sup>80</sup> today, leaders such as Eugene H. Peterson, author of *The Message*, paraphrase it into common, spoken English. In addition, most conservative Christians believe the Scriptures should be taken at face value and not overanalyzed nor highly allegorized. Such a literal understanding stems from the “Simple Gospel” faith of the

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<sup>77</sup> Petra, “Petra Retires-Christian Rock Pioneers Say Goodbye After 33 Strong Years,” [online]; accessed 15 April 2006; available from <http://www.petraband.com/jekyllandhyde/news.html>; Internet.

<sup>78</sup>Moyer, 170.

<sup>79</sup>Enroth, *The Jesus People*, 154.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 103.

Jesus Revolution. The Jesus People believed they required no special training to understand the Scriptures, but preferred to let God teach them from their own reading. Inspired by the Jesus Revolution concept of avoiding outside influences in biblical interpretation, modern hermeneutics believes “that to insure we hear God’s voice rather than our culture’s voice or our own biases, we need to interpret the Scriptures in a systematic and careful fashion.”<sup>81</sup>

The Jesus Movement impacted evangelism in more subtle fashion than it did music and culture, in that the apocalyptic focus and the aggressive street-preaching mindsets are still evidenced today. Those living in the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a rapid decline in morals and ethics. Leaders like Meissner and Lindsey understood this cultural decline as a sign of the end times predicted in the Olivet Discourse. Therefore, much of the Jesus Movement evangelism focused on saving people before time expires.

At present, television networks such as Daystar, led by Marcus Lamb, Trinity Broadcasting Network, led by Paul Crouch, and Christian Broadcasting Network, led by Pat Robertson, preach the same imminent return theology. Though based on the Scriptures,<sup>82</sup> the concept that is taught is that those who are alive shall be the generation that experiences the rapture. Great emphasis is placed on the need to share the Gospel before Christ comes and the tribulation begins. The success of the Left Behind series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, although fictional, shows their view of the shortness of

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<sup>81</sup>William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard, Jr, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1993), 19.

<sup>82</sup>Jesus warned his disciples numerous times that his return would be quick, would come at a time they least expect, and that he will return soon (Matt 24:27, 43; Luke 12:39; 17:24; 1 Thess 4:17).

time before Christ returns.<sup>83</sup> Such a critical view stems from the impact of the eschatological doctrines that influenced the evangelism of the Jesus People.

When it comes to the aggressive evangelism and street preaching, the Jesus Revolution fostered a mindset of reaching the masses rather than one soul at a time. While some Jesus People spent time with individuals, the lack of discipleship and the focus on reaching as many as possible led to the modern approach of evangelism. Using television, radio, and the Internet, evangelists focused more on reaching as many as possible and less on teaching one person at a time how to live as a Christian.

Robert Coleman states that this method of reaching the masses is contrary to the method taught and used by the Master, Christ Jesus. He goes on to say, “we should not expect a great number to begin with, nor should we desire it. The best work is always done with a few. Better to give a year or so to one or two people who learn what it means to conquer for Christ than to spend a lifetime with a congregation just keeping the program going.”<sup>84</sup> Ministries and churches, influenced by the broad approach used by the Jesus People, spend much time teaching about how to reach the masses through preaching and effective presentation development. However, less time is spent training others one-on-one, following the pattern given by Paul (2 Tim 2:2) and lived by Christ.

### **Conclusion**

The Jesus Revolution provides present day Christians the opportunity to examine a recent conversion to God. Scholars, skeptics, and supporters debate whether

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<sup>83</sup>Beverly Rykerd, “Left Behind Series Sells 50 Millionth Copy,” [on-line]; accessed 9 January 2007; available from <http://www.leftbehind.com/channelnews.asp?channelID=17&pageid=447>; Internet. As of January 2002, the series sold fifty million copies worldwide.

<sup>84</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 101.

this movement qualifies as an awakening or simply a religious version of the counter-cultural revolution that occurred in the 1960s. Some believe the Jesus Movement is primarily a youthful rebellion<sup>85</sup> and a shallow fad.<sup>86</sup> One noted scholar described it as nothing more than a youth culture-based movement similar to Christian monasticism, tantric beliefs, and bhaktic Hinduism.<sup>87</sup>

W. Fred Graham's analysis of the Jesus People, based primarily on conversations with his own students, led him to believe that the movement was a reaction to the mechanized world combined with a desire for personal meaning and value. He concludes that the Jesus Movement is nothing more than a version of secular existentialism.<sup>88</sup> However, the editors of *The Christian Century*, although they believed the movement was one more fad in "an ever chanting cafeteria table of religious offerings," remained open to a movement of God in the Jesus Revolution.<sup>89</sup>

Supporters of the movement, however, dispute those who reject the Jesus Revolution as a genuine revival created by the Holy Spirit. In 1972, Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, said the Jesus Movement is "an entirely sincere, pretty emotional but sincere ecstatic revival of religion. It is religion, and it really is a devotion to Jesus." Evangelist Billy Graham, speaking to a congress on evangelism in Amsterdam in 1971 said, "[the Jesus Movement] is a genuine spiritual experience" from which

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<sup>85</sup>Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 148.

<sup>86</sup>Palms, *The Jesus Kids*, 70.

<sup>87</sup>Ellwood, *One Way*, 59.

<sup>88</sup>W. Fred Graham, "Technology, Technique, and the Jesus Movement," *The Christian Century* (1973): 509-10.

<sup>89</sup>"Now That Jesus is 'In' Again," *The Christian Century*, June 23, 1971, 767.

“scores of young evangelists are emerging.”<sup>90</sup> Graham went so far as to publish an apologetic treatise supporting the movement intended to help parents understand the Jesus People and to help those involved with the Jesus Movement have a greater understanding of the Scriptures. In his work, Graham tells parents, “one thing is certain: Jesus Christ can no longer be ignored!”<sup>91</sup>

While the world turned its eyes to John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City to see the Beatles visit America for the first time, they were unaware that God would land in California and change the world. The Jesus Revolution provides scholars and Christians the opportunity to study revivals in modern society. Seminary students can partake of the benefits of the revival and learn how God moves today. Duane Pederson appropriately describes the awakening that provides this opportunity as “a spontaneous work of God among the youth of America-and sprang up, seemingly by itself, in all the corners of the country-at the same time. It is clearly directed by the Holy Spirit. Unquestionably, the leader is Jesus Christ.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Jacob, *Pop Goes Jesus*, 27-28.

<sup>91</sup>Billy Graham, *The Jesus Generation* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1971), 12.

<sup>92</sup>Duane Pederson, *Jesus People* (Pasadena: Compass Press, 1971), 1.

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