

THE JESUS REVOLUTION

by

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THE JESUS REVOLUTION

The 1960s was a period of social uprising, protests, and moral decline, conditions not often seen as ideal for the birth of an awakening with global impact. Nevertheless, not long after the Beatles landed in New York, God landed in California. The “Jesus Revolution”¹ swept across the United States and world when the Holy Spirit touched the lives of youth in California and the West Coast as they began seeking a closer relationship with God. Supporters and skeptics have debated the validity and impact of the Movement, but its influence is evident in contemporary 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’s origins are difficult to pinpoint because it arose from “virtually simultaneous outbreaks” throughout California between 1967 and 1968,² especially through various independent street ministries that reached out to drug addicts and social outcasts. However, because of the individuals involved and their resemblance

¹James 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.

²Alvin L. Reid, “The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism Among Southern Baptists” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX, 1991), 11.

to certain aspects of the secular counter-culture, some question the Movement's validity: instead of viewing it as a revival, some perceive it as merely a "cultural drift" consisting of "carrying organizations" such as communes and coffee houses.³

Many of the Jesus Movement's early converts came from the flower children and disenfranchised youth protesting the social ills of the 1960s.⁴ American youth found themselves fighting the Vietnam conflict, racism, environmental devastation, and other problems, and as a result, they believed traditional authorities were 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 spite of or as a result of the tumultuous social upheaval of the 1960s, youth sought instant peace and immediate love in their lives,⁵ including the development of new techniques of drug-induced psychology to reach higher states of spiritual awareness and meaning.⁶ 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."⁷

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

³Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., *One Way: The Jesus Movement and Its Meaning* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 57.

⁴Larry Graybill, "The Jesus Movement: Its Common Tenets and Its Word to Brethren," *Brethren Life and Thought* 17 (1972): 149.

⁵Erling Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion: The Jesus Revival in America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1972), 48-50.

⁶Joyce Milton, *The Road to Malpsychia* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), 165-204.

⁷Ronald M. Enroth, Edward E. Ericson, Jr., and C. Breckinridge Peters, *The Jesus People: Old-Time Religion in the Age of Aquarius* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 225-27.

their economic status, these individuals had both the resources and time to experiment with counter-culture and the longing to find the stability and love that they lacked in their homes.⁸ Those who joined the Movement referred to themselves as “Jesus People,” although the media often referred to them as “Jesus Freaks.” While many early converts were 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.⁹

One of the earliest appearances of the Jesus Revolution was in a coffee house located in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, California. In 1967, former drug addicts, led by Ted Wise, 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.¹⁰

The Jesus People were witnesses to the fire of God as his Gospel spread from the streets of California to college and high school campuses¹¹ due in large part to the evangelism of its members and two evangelistic organizations: Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and Bill Bright’s Campus Crusade for Christ. Members of the Jesus Revolution found themselves attracted to the evangelistic ideals of these and similar organizations as well as to their non-denominational stances. Despite their similarities, some subtle differences developed in the two organizations: Inter-Varsity was more

⁸Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 62.

⁹Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 109.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 111.

¹¹Michael Jacob, *Pop Goes Jesus* (New York: Morehouse-Barlow, 1972), 7-9. Asbury College in Willmore, Kentucky was a significant place of revival.

intellectual in its method and style while Campus Crusade emphasized aggressive evangelistic techniques rather than academic study.

In 1972, Campus Crusade held a “camp meeting” in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, Texas where 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.¹²

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 at the University of California at Berkeley, later changing their name to 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 Front was the first organization identified by the media as Jesus People and Jesus Freaks.¹³

Over the years, the Jesus Movement grew rapidly throughout the nation, with hundreds of youth joining between 1970 and 1972. According to estimates made by those within the Movement, membership exceeded 300,000 members in 1972.¹⁴ Several

¹²Ellwood, *One Way*, 113-16.

¹³Enroth, *The Jesus People*, 102-14 and Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 53.

¹⁴Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 63.

media outlets ran stories about the group's popularity and growth, including *Time*, *Look*, *Life*, NBC, and CBS. Some members compared the rapid spread of the movement to that of the First Great Awakening under the leadership of powerful evangelists Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Gilbert Tennent.¹⁵

A positive result of the Movement was its rapid growth. 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."¹⁶ As a result, there were few trained leaders, culminating in a lack of deep theological training and discipleship which resulted in many new converts falling away. Duane Pederson attempted to rectify this problem by encouraging new converts (1) to join and actively participate in a Bible study group and (2) to pray regularly with a fellowship group.¹⁷ In the end, however, hundreds of thousands from all ages, races, and economic strata joined the Jesus Movement.

Core Beliefs

Five doctrines underscore the Jesus Movement. The Jesus People believed in a "Simple Gospel," gifts of the Holy Spirit, the imminent return of Christ, imitating Christ, and a counter-culture lifestyle. Although different subgroups within the Awakening differed in regards to their specific interpretations of Scripture, these five doctrines were virtually universally followed. Thus, this report will focus more the similarities and less on the subtle differences in specific doctrines.

¹⁵Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 112.

¹⁶Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 63-64.

¹⁷Pat King, *The Jesus People are Coming* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1971), 25.

The Simple Gospel

The Jesus People viewed Scripture in the same manner as many Christians do today: it as the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God.¹⁸ When others disagree with them, the Jesus People argued that “if there is one error, there are millions.” Their interpretation of Scripture was based less on deep theological study or biblical exegesis and more on reconciling it with personal experience, even if the resulting beliefs were superficial and easily refuted.¹⁹ For many individuals of the Movement, it was personal experience that “continues to verify Jesus, the Bible, and the simple Gospel.”²⁰ 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.²¹

The “Simple Gospel” concept referred to the idea that “every person is a sinner and needs to be born again by accepting Christ,”²² while rejecting human reason and church history.²³ Instead, Scripture was accepted as the only source of knowledge and wisdom about Christ and his teachings.²⁴ The “Simple Gospel” doctrine provided the

¹⁸The term “conservative” refers to the view to which many Protestant Christians adhere. The most well known group would be that of the Fundamentalists.

¹⁹Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 71-72.

²⁰Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 151.

²¹Ruben 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.

²²Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 150.

²³Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 118.

²⁴Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 149-50. Jesus People base this reasoning on their understanding of 1 Cor 1:19-21.

Jesus People something they lacked at home with its emphasis on freedom from guilt and loneliness, its ability to give the believer a sense of purpose and value, and its focus on God's love for man and, thus, man's love for each other.²⁵

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Members of the Jesus Movement believed in the charismatic gifts of healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy, and miracles, but they lacked a thorough understanding of the doctrine the Holy Spirit.²⁶ One of the leaders of this awakening, Bob Owen, acknowledged that “there is so much we ought to know about Him.” However, he offered little teaching to resolve this pneumatological pitfall.²⁷ Instead, he stated only that the Holy Spirit is a member of the Trinity, fully God, and referred to by various titles throughout Scripture. In his attempt to delineate between the works of the Spirit, Owen asserted that the Spirit reveals sin, shows man his need for salvation, empowers believers for evangelism, and causes men to glorify Jesus. He opined that when a believer received the Holy Spirit, he was “fully turned on to Jesus.”²⁸ While Jesus People believed in spiritual gifts, it was the “outsiders [who] seem to place a more primary importance upon these phenomena than do the Jesus People themselves.” Jesus People believed that the spiritual gifts were a “fringe benefit” given to believers rather than a determining factor of salvation.²⁹

²⁵Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 71.

²⁶Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 127-28.

²⁷Bob Owen, *Jesus is Alive and Well* (Pasadena: Compass Press, 1972), 49.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 47-49.

²⁹Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 152-53.

The Second Coming of Christ³⁰

Eschatology was a favorite topic of the Movement. While many were not able to outline specifics about the Second Coming of Christ and the Tribulation, nearly all testified that Jesus was coming back at any moment.³¹ Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, served as their primary source of eschatological teaching, finding itself next to and almost equal to Scripture in many communes and homes influenced by the Movement.³² Jesus People held to a pre-millennial eschatology and believed that they were living in the days immediately preceding the rapture.³³

Furthermore, Jesus People believed the purpose of evangelism was to save as many souls as possible before time runs out. Ortega recorded the views of three individuals: (1) Sheila stated, "the goal of this Movement is to reach the whole world for Christ;"³⁴ (2) Alicia said, "I want to tell, at least let everybody know about Christ, you know, so that they can choose for themselves;" (3) Nick sated, "My goal is, like I said before, to get 49,152 dedicated Christians, taking those people with willing hearts; teaching them and guiding them in the way of the Lord."³⁵ Their zeal for evangelism put "more conventional Christians to shame."³⁶

³⁰This 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.

³¹Harold S. Moyer, "The Jesus Revolution," *Brethren Life and Thought* 17 (1972): 173.

³²Ellwood, *One Way*, 89.

³³Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 74.

³⁴Ortega, *The Jesus People Speak Out*, 11.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 20.

³⁶Moyer, "The Jesus Revolution," 173.

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 believed that the best way to live as Christ did was to live in communal homes. Each home, or commune, was uniquely organized, depending on the leadership, members, and specific doctrines emphasized.³⁷ While many were open, democratic, and involved in the community, some communes adopted an autocratic, authoritarian, and isolationistic system of government. Each was different based upon the needs and gifts of the people.

The most radical commune was the Children of God, in which the word of the elders was not questioned. Instead, absolute loyalty and submission were required, immoral acts were rejected, and the decisions of the elders were final. Furthermore, the Children of God taught that they were the true children of God, and that the teaching of the elders is equivalent to Scripture.³⁸

However, most communes were the opposite of the Children of God, resembling 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 the world in order to proclaim and share the love of Jesus with whomever they encountered.³⁹

³⁷Graybill, "The Jesus Movement," 155.

³⁸Drane, *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.

³⁹Ibid., 131.

Roger Palms, in an attempt to discredit the ministry of the Jesus People, stated that their youth ignored 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 was the solution.⁴⁰ Despite his efforts, investigation reveals that these youth spent much time visiting inmates, feeding the hungry, and doing what they could to help the environment. While members of the Jesus Movement evangelized aggressively, they did not forsake individual needs in order to preach the Gospel.⁴¹

Counter-Cultural Lifestyle

Analysts often describe the communal life as counter-cultural due to its independence from traditional authority. Some Christians who participated in communes rejected much of the assistance and teachings of the world while many completely rejected the world, depending solely on Bible studies, prayer, and the spiritual leaders of the communes for guidance. Despite the differences that existed among various communes, those living in nearly every Jesus Movement commune depended upon each other for their daily needs rather than upon outside entities such as the government to provide for them. Reports of those who joined the communes reflected the variety of experiences: some recalled having negative experiences,⁴² yet many more found the lifestyle enriching and necessary to a successful Christian life amidst turbulent times.⁴³

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

⁴¹Graybill, “The Jesus Movement,” 152.

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

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

Central Figures

Because of the multifaceted nature of the Movement, identifying the central leaders is a matter of interpretation. Though some consensus exists regarding a few individuals such as Arthur Blessitt, Duane Pederson, and Linda Meissner, the extent to which others influenced the Movement is debated. Thus, this paper will examine the three mentioned above along with other less prominent individuals that some scholars have considered to be primary influencers and leaders of the Movement.

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.⁴⁴ 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. Due to their backgrounds, Tony and Susan initially associated with the Pentecostal movement in the area because of their acceptance of the gift of tongues and other charismatic expressions.⁴⁵

Following Tony's conversion, the couple began a street ministry in 1967, aggressively evangelizing passers-by and sharing the Gospel with anyone willing to

⁴⁴Ellwood, *One Way*, 60-61.

⁴⁵Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 25. Arthur Blessitt also claims that Jesus appeared to him as he did to the Apostle Paul.

listen. Due to complaints from neighbors about the noise and rough clientele, the Alamos constantly 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.”⁴⁶ Residents lived in houses surrounding the complex rather than in a single home as with many communes; worship services and 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.⁴⁷

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

Worship in the Foundation revolved around Gospel music, conversions motive by the pending judgment of sinners, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Worship services were held once every night and twice on Sunday, during which, Susan Alamo preached while Tony handled the business affairs and announcements.⁴⁸

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, which included men and women living apart. Drugs, drinking, social dancing,

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

⁴⁷Ellwood, *One Way*, 64, 83-84.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 61.

and physical contact apart from large group settings were strictly forbidden, although smoking was allowed. Before marrying, a couple was required to undergo a “ninety-day period of total separation for prayer and fasting,” after which, the Alamos approved the marriage. Before new residents were permitted to participate in daily chores such as gardening and street evangelism, the Alamos required them to spend the first week reading Scripture in order to become “grounded.”⁴⁹

Tony and Susan Alamo taught their followers to employ aggressive evangelistic techniques in their street evangelism. Evangelism for the Alamo followers meant passing out tracts and preaching God’s judgment on sin and the imminent return of Christ. As a result of their assertiveness, Foundation members gained 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, some reported that the Alamo disciples harassed passers-by with “turn or burn” street preaching.⁵⁰ Although the Foundation members served as the primary laborers and evangelists for the commune, the Alamos dictated all finances, discipline, and leadership roles. 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. As with street preaching, evangelism within the commune focused primarily on God’s judgment and the need to repent from sin to be forgiven; grace, love, and mercy received little attention.⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid., 83-85.

⁵⁰Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 20-25.

⁵¹Ellwood, *One Way*, 61, 83-84.

Since the Movement, Tony Alamo has faced numerous legal troubles, gained an even more cultish reputation, and practiced problematic hermeneutics leading to questionable theology. The Southern Poverty Law Center, “a small civil rights law firm . . . internationally known for its tolerance education programs, its legal victories against white supremacists and its tracking of hate groups,”⁵² classifies Tony Alamo Christian Ministries as a cult and hate group, especially for its anti-Catholic and anti-homosexual activities.⁵³ While this classification is not surprising considering the ministry’s evangelical background, it underscores a larger problem with Tony’s recent history.

Tony “was convicted of tax-related charges” in 1994 for which he served four years in prison and owed \$7.9 million in back taxes. In September 2008, Arkansas state police raided his ministry headquarters in Fouke, Arkansas and the Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested Tony in Flagstaff, Arizona “on charges of violating the Mann Act, usually used in interstate prostitution cases” for transporting minors “across state lines for sexual purposes.”⁵⁴

The actions for which he was arrested stem from Tony’s flawed hermeneutics and questionable theology. According to Tony, Scripture depicts marriages of young teenage girls and, thus, concludes, “In the Bible it happened. . . . We don’t do it, even

⁵²Southern Poverty Law Center, “About the Southern Poverty Law Center: Advocates for Justice and Equality,” [on-line]; accessed 17 November 2008; available from <http://www.splcenter.org/center/about.jsp>; Internet.

⁵³Susy Buchanan, “The Ravening Wolf: Catholic-Hating Organization Reemerges,” [on-line]; accessed 17 November 2008; available from <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?pid=1423>; Internet.

⁵⁴Associated Press, “Arrested Evangelist Tony Alamo Says Sex With Teen Girls is OK, Will Be Extradited,” [on-line]; accessed 26 September 2008; available from <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,428321,00.html>; Internet.

though I believe it's OK.” He advocates the doctrine that minors should be permitted to marry and engage in sexual activity when they reach the age of puberty because such activity occurred in Scripture.⁵⁵

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 to him in a vision.⁵⁶ There, he opened a coffeehouse called “His Place” on Sunset Strip in West Hollywood, from which, 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 the availability of facilities to rent. The coffeehouse frequently moved until Blessitt could no longer find a place willing to rent to him. In response to his critics, Blessitt chained himself to a large wooden cross and walked up and down Sunset Strip until a landlord opened the doors to Blessitt’s ministry. This tactic brought him much fame and name recognition.

Blessitt became known for his use of imagery and quick, short phrases to attract people to his message. Two of his most famous images were 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 clinched fist raised into the air; Blessitt began using a hand with the index finger pointing upward with the phrase “One Way!”

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 25.

underneath and a small cross located next to the index finger.⁵⁷ Regarding short phrases, Blessitt was known for using catch phrases such as “turn on to Jesus” to reach lost souls.⁵⁸ An example of imagery mixed with slogans is Blessitt’s preferred mode of transportation: a black paneled pickup truck with the sentence “Sin is a No No” spray-painted in red on the side.⁵⁹

From his small coffeehouse and street ministry on Sunset Strip, Blessitt reported leading over 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, confrontations with the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, and eye-catching imagery. Despite the apparent success, 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 trail candidates and demand that they either profess or deny Christianity.⁶⁰

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 recorded that people viewed Blessitt as “egotistical” and self-righteous, likely stemming from his many battles with the law and nightclub owners in California.

⁵⁷Ellwood, *One Way*, 62-63.

⁵⁸Jacob, *Pop Goes Jesus*, 19.

⁵⁹King, *The Jesus People are Coming*, 8.

⁶⁰Ellwood, *One Way*, 95-96.

Blessitt believed that the secular world was out to get him and prevent him from evangelizing, claiming that they wanted to “rid themselves of the [Christian] nuisance.”⁶¹

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 has taken him around the world one and a half times at the equator.⁶² Today, Blessitt serves as pastor of missions and outreach at Heritage Christian Center in Denver, Colorado and has authored an evangelism guide, *Give Me A “J”!*, that is based on his six decades in evangelistic ministry, that teaches believers how to share the Gospel and disciple believers.⁶³

Lonnie and Connie Frisbee

The participation of the Frisbees in the Movement begins in 1967 with Lonnie, who at the age of nineteen, moved into Ted Wise’s “House of Acts” commune in Mill Valley, California. Lonnie had been seeking “an environment of Christian fellowship and teaching” after a life of drugs and association with the hippies in San Francisco when he found the House of Acts. As a member of the family, Lonnie participated in evangelistic preaching ministries up and down the California coast when he met Connie, whom he married in 1968.⁶⁴

⁶¹Enroth, *The Jesus People*, 11, 70.

⁶²Arthur Blessitt, “Arthur Blessitt: The Man Who Carried The Cross Around The World To Every Nation,” [on-line]; accessed 8 January 2007; available from <http://www.blessitt.com>; Internet.

⁶³Arthur Blessitt, *Give Me A “J”!: Special TBN Edition* (Denver: Legacy, 2006), 120, 197, back cover.

⁶⁴Edward E. Plowman, *The Jesus Movement in America: Accounts of Christian Revolutionaries in Action* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1971), 44-45. This book was originally published under the title *The Underground Church: Accounts of Christian Revolutionaries in America* (Pyramid Books, 1971).

Soon after they wed, the Frisbees left the House of Acts, moved to Southern California, and joined Calvary Chapel, led by Chuck Smith.⁶⁵ Influenced by Wise, they founded the “House of Miracles” coffee house and patterned its ministry and worship after its sponsor, Calvary Chapel.⁶⁶ Despite their friendship and mutual desire to reach the hippies, Lonnie and Smith differed on some theological issues, especially emotional excesses and the charismatic practices of being slain in the Spirit and speaking in tongues.⁶⁷

Hal Lindsey

Texas native Hal Lindsey “personifies the ‘Jesus is coming soon’ fever” 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.⁶⁸ 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 worked 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. 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 Scripture, with a strong emphasis on eschatology.

⁶⁵Ibid., 45.

⁶⁶Alvin L. Reid, “The Effect of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism in the Southern Baptist Convention,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 30 (January 1995): 41-42.

⁶⁷Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 94.

⁶⁸Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 73.

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 like Tony and Susan Alamo’s Christian Foundation. The single-building commune housed about forty-five residents, half of whom attended UCLA.⁶⁹

The casual, carefree lifestyle within the J. C. Light commune differed 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 talked about residents living individually “on his or her own separate Jesus-and-me trip” with little regard for the community or neighbors. Lowell Streiker reported that residents raided the kitchen at night, left no food for breakfast, made promises that were never kept, and that there was a lack of discipline for breaking the rules;⁷⁰ many of the residents were selfish rather than servants.

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 decorated the walls, and conspicuous Bibles were located in various “neat rooms” throughout the building. Bible studies on Tuesday and Wednesday night attracted several hundred listeners, many of whom attended no other church services. Despite the lack of local church participation, many living in J. C. Light reported experiencing a definite conversion to Christianity.⁷¹

⁶⁹Ellwood, *One Way*, 90-91.

⁷⁰Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 70.

⁷¹Ellwood, *One Way*, 90-92.

The Bible studies were frequently led by Lindsey, where he espoused his doomsday eschatology and encouraged people to accept Christ before the 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 that he could use 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 based on a pre-tribulation eschatology. Despite the large following, Lindsey's questionable scholarship and exegesis were "casual and selective."⁷² On the one hand, he taught that culture should not influence interpretation, a view professed by many Jesus People, yet on the other hand, Lindsey's hermeneutic applied modern culture to prophecy. According to Streiker, Lindsey proclaimed that every event in history fulfilled prophecy including the increasing Arab-Israeli conflict, air pollution, California earthquakes, and X-rated movies.⁷³

Along with the lack of proper exegetical methodology, Lindsey was also known to put new Christians in full-time ministry positions before they gained the most basic understanding of Christian doctrine, often as soon as three months after salvation,⁷⁴ regardless of Paul's instructions to the contrary (1 Tim 3:6).

⁷²Ibid., 89-92.

⁷³Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 73.

⁷⁴Ibid., 75.

Linda Meissner

Linda Meissner was 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 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 Bibles marching in Seattle, Washington. She left Teen Challenge in the summer of 1968 and moved to Seattle in order to fulfill her vision.

Soon after arriving in Seattle, Meissner opened a coffee shop called “The Catacombs” that quickly began receiving around two thousand youth each week.⁷⁵ One year later, in 1969, she opened a second coffee house called “The Eleventh Hour” where Gospel rock and jeans were the norm.⁷⁶ With the rapid success of the coffee houses, Meissner started publishing an underground newspaper called *Agapé* to help spread the growth of the Movement further.

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 distribute Gospel tracts; in 1970, she rented a small airplane and dropped ten thousand copies of *Agapé* on the crowd. However, because her organizational skills and aggressive evangelism, Meissner’s

⁷⁵Ellwood, *One Way*, 62.

⁷⁶King, *The Jesus People are Coming*, 13.

decision to join the Children of God cult in 1971 served as a major setback for the rest of the Jesus Movement.⁷⁷

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.⁷⁸ Additionally, she also incorporated Pentecostal doctrines on the Holy Spirit, teaching her followers about Holy Spirit baptism and the gifts of healing, tongues, and miracles.⁷⁹

Duane Pederson

Duane Pederson could be considered the Benjamin Franklin of the Jesus Movement because his primary influence was through the use of the printing press. Described as a handsome man with a shy demeanor whose appearance was a “cross between Billy Graham and Paul Newman,”⁸⁰ 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 coffee house 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 on the street willing to listen.⁸¹

⁷⁷Ellwood, *One Way*, 62.

⁷⁸Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 123.

⁷⁹Jorstad, *That New-Time Religion*, 52.

⁸⁰Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 43. Duane Pederson worked as a nightclub magician before beginning his ministry as a street evangelist and newspaper publisher.

⁸¹Ellwood, *One Way*, 61.

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.⁸² His newfound vision prompted him to analyze various evangelistic techniques employed by his Jesus Movement contemporaries, leading to the conclusion that an underground newspaper should be the method he would use to reach people. Pederson began publishing the *Hollywood Free Press* in 1969⁸³ with financial assistance from Hollywood Presbyterian Church.⁸⁴ The publication, designed more as a large Gospel tract than an actual newspaper, offered directories of movement coffee houses, “Jesus raps,” testimonials from converts, and many cartoons.

The *Free Press* eventually reached one million copies in circulation, a goal Pederson claimed he promised God that he would reach. He financed the paper through donations and subscriptions, though he and his followers often gave away most of the copies while preaching on the streets. Much of the evangelistic work done by Pederson involved coordinating efforts with others in the Jesus Movement, including Meissner and Blessitt, in order to preach to people on the street, speak to various groups, and hand out Gospel tracts and newspapers. The influence of Pederson’s underground paper is most prominently seen in the phrase, “Jesus People,” which he coined in the *Free Press*; the title was quickly adopted by those involved with the Movement.⁸⁵

⁸²Streiker, *The Jesus Trip*, 45.

⁸³Ellwood, *One Way*, 61.

⁸⁴Reid, “The Effect of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism in the Southern Baptist Convention,” 41.

⁸⁵Ellwood, *One Way*, 61.

Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel⁸⁶

Chuck Smith spent seventeen years serving as pastor in churches affiliated with the “charismatic Foursquare denomination,” which he eventually left due to theological differences in doctrine and ecclesiology.⁸⁷ Known as a “dynamic Bible teacher with a rousing tenor voice,”⁸⁸ in 1965 Smith was called by Calvary Chapel, located in Santa Ana, California, to serve as their pastor, a position he continues to serve in today.⁸⁹

In the mid- to late-1960’s, almost immediately after accepting his call at Calvary, Smith initiated a ministry intended to reach out to the hippies in the area, a plan considered controversial in that era. As part of his evangelistic vision, he started Maranatha! Music in order to record and produce “the hippies’ Jesus-inspired folk songs”⁹⁰ and sponsored the Frisbee’s House of Miracles. According to Smith, the success of the Jesus Revolution is due to his preaching on *agape* love in the two and a

⁸⁶Reid, “The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism Among Southern Baptists,” 18. Reid considers Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel one of the primary leaders of the Jesus Revolution. However, Smith and the Chapel served more as a model, inspiration, and source of funds than a leading organization. Furthermore, those participating in the Movement rarely write about or give extensive reference to Smith or his church. Therefore, this paper does not consider them as major leaders in the Movement. Nevertheless, due to the subjective nature of who one considers a major leader and because Reid declares him as such, Smith the Chapel are included in this report along with actual leaders.

⁸⁷John Petrakis, “Day of Reckoning: Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel Face an Uncertain Future,” *Christianity Today*, March, 2007, 52.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸⁹Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, “CCCM: Chuck Smith,” [on-line]; accessed 17 November 2008; available from <http://www.calvarychapelcostamesa.com/pages/aboutus/chucksmith.htm>; Internet.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 52-53. While Petrakis credits Smith with starting Maranatha! Music, Alvin Reid states that Danny Flanders founded the organization. See Reid, “The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism Among Southern Baptists,” 20.

half years immediately preceding the Movement.⁹¹ However, such a claim is difficult to verify or sustain due to the nature of the Movement's beginnings.

Jack Sparks

During the 1960s, Jack Sparks, professor of statistics at Penn State before moving to the University of California at Berkeley, started the Christian World Liberation Front (CWLF) in Berkeley. Sparks' vision for the Front was that it was to be "modeled greatly after the radical left but based on a Christian witness."⁹² Founded in 1969,⁹³ the CWLF published an underground paper, *Right On*, which used counter-culture language with an evangelistic message to reach a wider audience.⁹⁴ As the organization grew, it attracted members from other organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ and ex-cult members. Between 1973 and 1975, the CWLF split into two independent organizations: the Berkeley Christian Coalition⁹⁵ and the Spiritual Counterfeits Project.⁹⁶ Along with the Front, Sparks opened a commune in his Berkeley home which led to the founding of about thirty-two other communes in the Bay Area that housed approximately six hundred Jesus People combined.⁹⁷

⁹¹Reid, "The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism Among Southern Baptists," 14.

⁹²Reid, "The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism Among Southern Baptists," 16.

⁹³John A. Saliba, "The Christian Response to the New Religions: A Critical Look at the Spiritual Counterfeits Project," *ournal of Ecumenical Studies* 18 (Summer 1981): 453.

⁹⁴Reid, "The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism Among Southern Baptists," 16.

⁹⁵Saliba, "The Christian Response to the New Religions," 453.

⁹⁶Spiritual Counterfeits Project, "A Brief History of SCP," [on-line]; accessed 17 November 2008; available from <http://www.scp-inc.org/information/history.php>; Internet.

⁹⁷Reid, "The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism Among Southern Baptists," 16.

Don Williams and Hollywood Presbyterian Church

Don Williams served as College Minister at Hollywood Presbyterian Church when a young pregnant woman named Cheryl visited the church. She led Williams on a tour of the streets of Los Angeles, especially around the area of Sunset Strip and Hollywood Boulevard, not far from the church, and introduced him to the street culture that the church had overlooked or ignored. Inspired to reach these forgotten youth, Williams convinced the church to sponsor a coffee house he called the “Salt Company.” This soon led to the formation of the Salt Company music group, which “became a dominant group on the West Coast.”⁹⁸ Additionally, the church helped finance Duane Pederson’s *Free Press* newspaper ministry.

Ted Wise

The Movement’s primary leader in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco,⁹⁹ Ted Wise’s history is one of drug abuse, especially LSD, heroine, and other forms of speed. In the early 1960s, Wise’s wife, also a drug addict despite her Christian upbringing, went to First Baptist Church in Mill Valley, California, while high on acid and fearing divorce was imminent, and asked the church to pray for her husband. Such an endeavor proved fruitful when, in 1966, after a bad LSD trip, Wise opened the Bible and was subsequently converted.

Wise immediately began evangelizing and quickly saw fruit when three of his childhood friends—Danny Sands, Jim Dopp, and Steve O’Shea—were saved. The four

⁹⁸Ibid., 14-15.

⁹⁹Ibid., 12.

soon opened “The Living Room” coffee house in Haight-Ashbury and later a commune they called the “House of Acts.” The evangelistic zeal of these ministries led to the salvation of hundreds of lost souls, possibly thousands, and produced many other coffee houses and communes in the Bay Area and throughout the nation, including the Frisbee’s House of Miracles.¹⁰⁰

Birth of Jesus Music

The Movement gave rise to a new form of music known as “Jesus music,” “Jesus rock,” or “God rock.” Jesus People longed for a music that touched them emotionally and, although the lyrics of the old church hymns were generally accepted, the traditional instrumentation lacked the desired impact. Recalling their emotional response to secular rock music, the Jesus People created their own form of Christian folk and rock music, often by performing traditional hymns in a rock style or by composing their own works. Secular artists were not immune 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.¹⁰¹

It is difficult to identify a specific group of leaders in the musical arena of the Movement since communes often developed their own bands whose popularity was more or less widespread; some remained a local success while others, such as Don Williams’

¹⁰⁰Plowman, *The Jesus Movement in America*, 43-44. Alvin Reid refers to Jim Dopp as “Jim Doop” and Steve O’Shea as “Steve Heefner” in his dissertation. The names used by Plowman are used here as his work was composed during the height of the Movement. See Reid, “The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism Among Southern Baptists,” 12

¹⁰¹Jacob, *Pop Goes Jesus*, 49-50.

Salt Company, experienced a much wider prominence. Alvin Reid highlights musicians such as Larry Norman, Chuck Girard, Gene Cotton, and Rod Turner as some of the more influential musicians.¹⁰² The birth of Maranatha! Music also opened the door for many others to contribute their rendition of Jesus music to the Movement.

In 2004 or 2005, many of the leading Jesus music performers reunited to remember the Movement and their participation in its music. Participants included 2nd Chapter of Acts, Paul Clark, Terry Clark, Jamie Owens Collins, Andrae Crouch, John Fischer, Chuck Girard, Annie Herring, Honeytree, Love Song, Darrell Mansfield, Randy Matthews, Barry McGuire, Randy Stonehill, and Matthew Ward. According to the film, these musicians continue to work in the contemporary Christian music industry.¹⁰³

Present Day Impact

Musical Impact

Although the Jesus Revolution ended in the early 1970s, its effects are observed in music, pop culture, theology, evangelism, and ecclesiology. The success of the Jesus music threw open the door to contemporary Christian music cracked opened by the First Great Awakening. Maranatha! Music “shepherds the ‘Jesus Music’ of today by serving the church with the song of faith . . . [and is b]est known for the Praise Series, Praise Band Series, and Top 25 Series; Maranatha! Music has sold more than 30 million records worldwide.”¹⁰⁴ The success of Maranatha! Music make possible the rise of other

¹⁰²Reid, “The Impact of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism Among Southern Baptists,” 19.

¹⁰³*First Love: A Historic Gathering of Jesus Music Pioneers*, DVD, dir. Steve Greisen, 211 min. (Monument, CO: Reel Productions, 2005).

¹⁰⁴Maranatha! Music, “About Maranatha! Music,” [on-line]; accessed 17 November 2008; available from <http://www.maranathamusic.com/about/>; Internet.

well-known contemporary praise bands and artists such as Passion Band, Hillsong, and Travis Cottrell.

The Jesus music led to the popularity of such evangelistic Christian rock bands as Petra, one of the longest and most successful Christian rock bands.¹⁰⁵ Today, Christian artists such as Disciple, Kutless, Skillet, Chris Tomlin, Casting Crowns, and others within the contemporary Christian music genre can credit much of their success to the popularity of Jesus music.

Impact on Pop Culture

Another prominent influence of the Jesus Movement was the marketing and promotion of Jesus in pop culture: 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.”¹⁰⁶ Secular companies commercialized Jesus using everything from the Jesus watch to Jesus Christ bikinis.¹⁰⁷ Today, Christian retailers such as LifeWay offer products commercializing Jesus from t-shirts with ‘Christianized’ remakes of pop culture icons to “Scripture Mints.” Also, secular pop culture incorporated Jesus into its life, albeit not with evangelistic intentions, as seen with the recent popularity of the “Jesus is my homeboy” t-shirts and the use of the song “Shout to the Lord” on the television program, *American Idol*.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵Petra, “Petra Retires-Christian Rock Pioneers Say Goodbye After 33 Strong Years,” [on-line]; accessed 15 April 2006; available from <http://www.petraband.com/jekyllandhyde/news.html>; Internet.

¹⁰⁶Moyer, “The Jesus Revolution,” 170.

¹⁰⁷Enroth, *The Jesus People*, 154.

¹⁰⁸John L. Rothra, “American Idol Gives Back, But Takes Away,” [on-line]; accessed 17

Theological Impact

Even the simplistic view of the Gospel permeates modern Christianity. Just as the Christian World Liberation Front paraphrased Scripture into the common street language of the day,¹⁰⁹ today, theologians such as Eugene H. Peterson continue to offer a simplified rendition of Scripture with his popular paraphrase, *The Message*. Furthermore, the success of the New International Version and the development of other dynamically equivalent translations such as the New Living Translation, Good News Bible, and Holman Christian Standard can trace their roots to the Movement's emphasis on the simple Gospel.

The Jesus People believed that no special training was necessary to understand Scripture, preferring instead to let God teach them from their own reading. However, this has resulted in a laity that continues to dwell on theological milk while remaining ignorant of the meat (Heb 5:12-14). In addition to simplifying Scripture, many conservative Christians emphasize a literal interpretation over a more allegorized method popular during the Middle Ages, a view that stems directly from the "Simple Gospel" faith of the Jesus Revolution. William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr. show evidence of the Jesus Revolution's impact on modern theology when they state the goal of hermeneutics is "to insure we hear God's voice rather than our culture's voice or our own biases."¹¹⁰

November 2008; available from <http://www.jrothraministries.com/2008/04/09/american-idol-gives-back-but-takes-away/>; Internet.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 103.

¹¹⁰William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard, Jr, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1993), 19.

Impact on Evangelism

The Jesus Movement's impact on evangelism is more subtle than its influence on music and culture, seen especially in the continued eschatological emphasis in much preaching and evangelism today. Those living in the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a rapid decline in morals and ethics, which leaders like Meissner and Lindsey interpreted as a sign of the end times predicted in the Olivet Discourse. As a result, much of the evangelism of the Jesus Movement focused on saving people before time expires.

Currently, 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 more than on the history,¹¹¹ the concept taught resembles that of the Movement: those who are alive today are the generation that will experience the rapture. As such, much emphasis is placed on the need to share the Gospel before Christ comes and the tribulation begins. Additionally, the success of the Left Behind series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins¹¹² evidences the influence of the Jesus Revolution's stress on the Second Coming in evangelistic endeavors.

When it comes to aggressive evangelism and street preaching, the Jesus Movement fostered a mindset of mass evangelism over personal evangelism. Although some involved in the movement attempted to spend time with individuals, the lack of discipleship and the emphasis on reaching as many as possible led to the modern

¹¹¹Jesus 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).

¹¹²Beverly 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.

approach of evangelism. Using television, radio, and the Internet, evangelists today focus more on reaching the masses and spend less time focusing on personal evangelism and individual discipleship.

According to Robert Coleman, mass evangelism is counter to the method taught by Christ Jesus when he says, “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.”¹¹³ Ministries and churches, influenced by the broad approach used by the Jesus People, spend much time teaching about how to reach large numbers 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.

Ecclesiastical Impact

The Jesus Movement gave rise to two seemingly disparate ecclesiastical concepts: the “seeker service” and the Emergent Church. Additionally, the Movement gave birth to or rapid rise of multiple para-church organizations. The seeker service is commonly associated with Bill Hybels and Willow Creek Community Church in the Chicago, Illinois area. Willow Creek rose out of a youth Bible study in the early 1970s led by Hybels and others, all of whom came directly out of or were directly influenced by the Jesus Revolution. In accordance with the Movement’s philosophy, they adapted the study into a worship service whose music, message, and methods were geared toward

¹¹³Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 101.

evangelizing the unchurched youth counter-culture. Within this group, they “found a receptive audience for the message about a bearded rebel from two thousand years ago.”¹¹⁴ Willow Creek remains one of the most influential churches in recent history in regards to how church is done.¹¹⁵

Along with the Willow Creek seeker service model, the Jesus Movement indirectly gave rise to the Emergent church, primarily through Willow Creek’s model. According to Jason Byassee, “many of the Emergent’s leaders . . . got their start in the Willow Creek-inspired Leadership Network, which they found to be a sort of factory geared to church growth rather than anything more authentically communal.”¹¹⁶ While a direct relationship may not exist between the Jesus Revolution and the Emergent Church, the Emergent’s emphasis on community, authenticity, and adaptation to a new culture resembles the communalism, theology, and counter-culture appeals used thirty years ago.

Para-church organizations developed and flourished as a result of the Jesus Revolution. Some of the more orthodox included Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade for Christ, the Navigators, Young Life, Youth for Christ, and Teen Challenge.¹¹⁷ However, a few “aberrant groups” also rose: the Children of God; The Way, International; the Tony Alamo Foundation;¹¹⁸ and a group known as “The Walk,”

¹¹⁴G. A. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Services: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 31, 33.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹¹⁶Jason Byassee, “Emerging Model: A Visit to Jacob's Well,” *The Christian Century*, 19 September 2006, 21.

¹¹⁷Richard N. Ostling, “Jesus People Revisited,” *International Review of Mission* 63 (April 1974): 233.

¹¹⁸Reid, “The Effect of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism in the Southern Baptist

who “increasingly emphasiz[ed] secret rites and writings and direct revelations to its leaders, while scorning other Jesus groups and Evangelicals for their lack of purity.”¹¹⁹

Of these groups, the most notorious was the Children of God. Their cultic practices “have similar unchallenged authority residing in their prophet ‘Moses’ (David Berg). Berg, who is never seen by members, has lately wandered off into odd erotic pamphleteering and predictions of doom to coincide with the appearance of the Comet Kohoutek.”¹²⁰

Conclusion

The Jesus Revolution provides present day Christians the opportunity to examine a recent movement of God. Scholars, skeptics, and supporters debate whether this movement qualifies as an awakening or is simply a religious version of the counter-cultural revolution of the 1960s. Some believe the Jesus Movement is primarily a youthful rebellion¹²¹ and a shallow fad.¹²² One noted scholar described it as nothing more than a youth culture-based movement similar to Christian monasticism, tantric beliefs, and bhaktic Hinduism.¹²³

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

Convention,” 42.

¹¹⁹Ostling, “Jesus People Revisited,” 234.

¹²⁰Ibid., 234.

¹²¹Drane, *A New American Reformation*, 148.

¹²²Palms, *The Jesus Kids*, 70.

¹²³Ellwood, *One Way*, 59.

to the mechanized world combined with a desire for personal meaning and value. He concluded that the Jesus Movement is nothing more than a version of secular existentialism.¹²⁴ Additionally, while the editors of *The Christian Century*, remained open to the idea of the Movement being a genuine awakening, believed it was one more fad in “an ever chanting cafeteria table of religious offerings.”¹²⁵

James Richardson and Rex Davis, though, offer what may be considered a more balanced, albeit seemingly secularized, analysis. They believe that the Jesus Movement groups are, overall, in line with conservative fundamental Christianity in that they were Trinitarian, Christ centered, and inerrantists, but then added that, like most fundamentalist, they were “sexist,” “elitist,” “anti-intellectual,” and hermeneutically “simplistic.” Furthermore, they claimed that the youth who joined were looking for “‘order’ and an ethic” not found in the relativism of counter-culture life. Along with the similarities, they also noted several deviations from traditional orthodoxy: communal living, charismatic and Pentecostal participation, and a de-emphasis on key doctrines such as hell and the virgin birth.¹²⁶

Supporters of the movement, however, reject critics and claim that that the Jesus Revolution is a genuine revival created by the Holy Spirit. In 1972, Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, said the Jesus Movement was “an entirely sincere, pretty emotional but sincere ecstatic revival of religion. It is religion, and it really is a

¹²⁴W. Fred Graham, “Technology, Technique, and the Jesus Movement,” *The Christian Century*, 2 May 1973, 509-10.

¹²⁵“Now That Jesus is ‘In’ Again,” *The Christian Century*, 23 June 1971, 767.

¹²⁶James T. Richardson and Rex Davis, “Experiential Fundamentalism: Revisions of Orthodoxy in the Jesus Movement,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 (Summer 1983): 398-401.

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 “scores of young evangelists are emerging.”¹²⁷ Graham went so far as to publish an apologetic treatise supporting the Movement to accomplish two goals: (1) to help parents understand the Jesus People and (2) to help those involved with the Jesus Movement have a greater understanding of Scripture. In his work, Graham reminds parents who remained skeptical regarding the spiritual validity of the Movement, “one thing is certain: Jesus Christ can no longer be ignored!”¹²⁸

Whether one accepts or rejects the validity of the Jesus Movement’s status as a genuine awakening, it is difficult to dispute its impact around the world. By the mid-1970’s, the Movement had reached places such as Lancaster, Pennsylvania,¹²⁹ Asbury College in Kentucky,¹³⁰ and Buffalo, New York.¹³¹ In 1974, just following what seemed to be the end of the Movement, Richard Ostling stated:

Jesus houses, communes, and coffeehouses are still around. The most recent directory compiled by Moishe Rosen of “Jews for Jesus” lists 260 groups in the US and Canada and 16 overseas, some with such intriguing names as the Forever Family and Empty Tomb Inc. In addition, 59 Jesus newspapers are listed, including *New Improved Truth* and *Free Slave*. Rosen says that this is only part of the Jesus groups in operation. Some have not come to his attention; others do not want to be listed because they fear itinerant “rip-offs.” Nor does the directory take into account the growth of traditional evangelical youth groups affiliated with Inter-Varsity

¹²⁷Jacob, *Pop Goes Jesus*, 27-28.

¹²⁸Billy Graham, *The Jesus Generation* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1971), 12.

¹²⁹Bill Longenecker, “Evaluation of the Jesus Movement in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 17 (Summer 1972): .

¹³⁰Reid, “The Effect of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism in the Southern Baptist Convention,” 44.

¹³¹Ostling, “Jesus People Revisited,” 232-33.

Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade, the Navigators, Young Life, Youth for Christ, Teen Challenge, and the like.¹³²

Additionally, many Jesus People became missionaries, spreading the Movement overseas as far as Copenhagen, Denmark and Sydney, Australia.¹³³

Duane Pederson appropriately described the Jesus Revolution 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.”¹³⁴ While the world turned its eyes to John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City to see the Beatles visit America, they were unaware that God would land in California and change the world. The Jesus Revolution provides scholars the opportunity to study revivals in modern society, especially considering the many similarities between the culture of the 1960s and that of today.

¹³²Ibid., 233.

¹³³Ibid., 233.

¹³⁴Duane Pederson, *Jesus People* (Pasadena: Compass Press, 1971), 1.

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