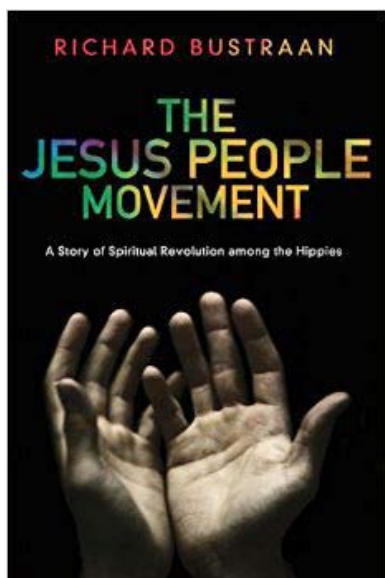


Reviews

Hippiedom and the American religious landscape

Richard Bustraan: **The Jesus People Movement: A Story of Spiritual Revolution among the Hippies** (Eugene, Oregon, Pickwick Publications, 2014), 238 pp.



Hippiedom and Pentecostalism do not, at first glance, have much in common. But according to Richard Bustraan's book *The Jesus People Movement: A Story of Spiritual Revolution among the Hippies*, Christianity in America is influenced by the hippiedom that changed the religious milieu of the 60s and 70s. The book analyses the Jesus People Movement (JPM) from the point of

view of an American Pentecostal historiography, in which the movement, and its aftermath, has left a legacy which presents 'a microcosm of the global trend of hybridizations in Pentecostalism' (p. 208). He offers a critical and fresh view of the JPM, as well as describing where the movement is situated in the context of American society. In the introduction Bustraan states that the JPM was a 'religious movement among White American youth in which the participants wed certain values of the 1960s American counterculture, namely hippiedom, together with values of Christianity, namely Pentecostalism. The JPM was not homogeneous ... neither did it emerge from a single location. Instead it would be more accurately described as a heterogeneous family or collection of smaller movements' (p. xvii).

Bustraan is a minister and charity director at the Calvary Chapel in Birmingham, England. The book is a revised version of his PhD thesis, *Upon your Sons and Daughters: An Analysis of the Pentecostalism within the Jesus People Movement and its Aftermath*, which was presented at the University of Birmingham in 2011. The book is divided into six chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 give a historical overview of American society and how the JPM fits into this context. Chapter 3 deals with

important organisations and individuals that, in some way, have influenced the JPM. Chapters 4 and 5 give a brief overview of how sociological and theological identities can be ascribed to the individuals that were members of the JPM. Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter, where Bustraan summarises the book and gives some insight on future research of the field.

The Jesus People Movement was influenced by many religious traditions; mostly TM, ISKCON, Shamanism and Zen Buddhism. Books about hallucinogenic drugs, such as Carlos Castaneda's book *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968), also played a vital role in the movement in its early days. The use of psychedelic drugs meant that the hippies stood out, in the American context, from other Christian churches and organisations. Christians would occasionally describe hippies as the kinds of people who would tell you 'that God does exist, that ... [they] saw him sitting in a tree' (p. 18). But 'hippiedom was an eclectic and existential phenomenon ... shaped by each person's own interpretations of what it meant to be a hippie' (p.14). It is hard to separate hippiedom from the JPM, because of the level of integration of both the groups with each other. People that were involved in the JPM did not have any theological texts of their own to

consult, but instead often referred to other Christian, mainly Pentecostal, theological works. For instance, Daniel Wilkerson's book *The Cross and the Switchblade* (1962) was one of the primary sources of Pentecostal teachings during this period, which were at the same time also being implemented into the teachings of the JPM. The beliefs and rituals of the JPM can be seen to fit into a conservative evangelical and fundamentalist context, as well as within Pentecostalism. The greater flexibility of the JPM's faith in the Holy Spirit leads to a more tolerant view of their personal experiences of the Holy Spirit than do the classical core beliefs of Pentecostalism.

The movement was mostly composed of young adults between the ages of 13–30, and they were often from white, middle-class, well-educated and wealthy families. Bustraan describes the members of the JPM as 'not racist ... but the hippie movement was predominantly a white American youth movement' (pp. 15–16). The movement did not have a single leader, but rather was divided into many different organisations which each had leaders of their own. This led the JPM to reach beyond the American continent as far as Australia, Europe and the Scandinavian countries, where they would travel, preach and play Christian music. One of the main points that Bustraan argues for is that the JPM has influenced Christian society in America through the use of music and music festivals which furthermore provided the JPM with a place for recruitment. Recruitment would also often take place around campuses, and almost 10 per cent of the freshmen students at UC Berkeley were affiliated, in some way, with the JPM. The students would not always be full-time JPM practitioners; many of them would participate only during weekends and holidays and especially during

the festivals, which meant that they were often called 'weekend hippies'. The music festival 'Explo '72', which was held on June 12–17 1972, was one of the biggest gatherings of the JPM; about 80,000 members attended daily and on the final day over 200,000 members gathered. The festival was mainly funded and organised by Campus Crusader for Christ, a conservative evangelical organisation, evidence that the JPM had a successful relationship with other religious organisations; relationships such as these often benefited both organizations.

There are, however, three weaknesses with the book. Firstly, one can see that the book has been adapted from Bustraan's thesis, because of the minor errors in the text. Errors include instances in which the author is repeating what has already been stated, and therefore the text is in places somewhat repetitive. Secondly, the abbreviations of the different names, works and organisations are extensive. Although there is a list of abbreviations at the beginning, there are ten different abbreviations that start with the letter C (for example), so that one is likely to easily misunderstand and forget the referents of these abbreviations by the time one is half-way through the book. Thirdly, the theme and framework of Chapter 3 is simply a long list of information about organisations and individuals who have been in contact with, or involved in, the JPM. In my opinion Chapter 3 should have been reworked and integrated into Chapter 2 and 4, especially into Chapter 4.

The book, with its extensive research, sheds light on a movement that has affected the American Christian landscape and continues to do so. Hippiedom and the JPM influenced many people during the 60s, 70s and even 80s but have since then disappeared, both from the religious landscape and the media. I find the book interesting as a case

study of how the JPM emerged onto, evolved in and disappeared from the American religious landscape. The Jesus People Movement had affected and influenced American society, but has subsequently been all but forgotten and overlooked in the academic field of contemporary religion.

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