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Popular Culture

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Pentecostalism and Popular Culture in Britain and America from the Early Twentieth Century to the 1970s

Randall Stephens

‘Christian pop music’, a British Assemblies of God youth worker observed in 1970, ‘can serve a dual purpose. It can be a preliminary attraction to the outsider who has no interest in the Gospel as such. He may begin to discuss Christian things if we play him a Christian pop record.’ Christian music, so said the writer, was certainly better than the LSD-pushing songs blaring from teenagers’ radios and turntables. Maybe as important for this youth leader, sanctified pop music, like that which teen idol and rock pioneer Cliff Richard now played, could ‘hold young people’s interest at a time when they might easily have gone outside the church for their entertainment’.¹ This observation well illustrates something basic about the relationship between American and British pentecostalism and pop culture.

The faithful have long been hot and cold when it comes to popular culture. They adopted revved-up music or sponsored flashy TV ministries to serve the needs of missions or evangelism. They produced newspapers, tracts, and magazines that catered to a regular folk readership. At the same time, they shunned much they deemed sinful and worldly. And that could be quite a lot. Since the early 1900s believers thundered in their denunciations of bawdy popular entertainments and the lascivious cultures around them. Like their holiness and higher-life forbearers they remained vigilant against the wiles of the devil, whether that be in the form of Sunday newspapers, immodest clothes and flashy jewellery, sporting events, the theatre, indulging in drink or oyster suppers, and so on. And, still, pentecostals knew that little was as effective in promoting the gospel as popular entertainment and mass media. With the

¹ Andrew Parfitt, ‘Pop and the Gospel’, *Redemption Tidings*, 23 April 1970, 5.

emergence of the pentecostal-influenced Jesus People in the late 1960s and early 1970s, those within the movement, broadly construed, found new ways to interact with and reshape popular culture for their own ends.²

But just what is popular culture in this context? The term might seem so nebulous that it defies any easy definition. But, for my purposes here, it might be best to think of it as relating to: ephemeral cultural expressions (radio, television programmes, pop music, or literature that appeals to the masses); and presentation or performance styles that have a common touch, or at least are intended for widespread consumption. Cultural studies scholar John Storey and others have pointed to one standard definition as ‘the culture which is left over after we have decided what is high culture’. This usually indicates ‘inferior culture’.³ Pentecostals in America and the UK, bolstered by a spirit of plain folk populism, turned this pejorative definition on its head, embracing the commonplace to reach the largest possible audience. They shared with Fundamentalists a desire to save the lost by using almost any means available. In the early twentieth century Billy Sunday declared, ‘I’d stand on my head in a mud puddle if I thought it would help me win souls to Christ.’⁴ Pentecostals likely would have nodded in agreement.

They looked back with some degree of pride on the common, simple roots of their movement. Its strongest point of origin was the 1906 Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles. Led by a travelling African-American holiness preacher William J. Seymour, the revival attracted participants who claimed to experience the same gifts of the Spirit that they had read about in the Book of Acts. Initiates spoke in strange tongues and claimed to play musical instruments that they had never taken up before. The meetings in a former barn and tombstone shop were anything but tame. Those who took part shouted hallelujahs, jumped, danced, and fell to the dusty floor. Prophecy concerning the return of Jesus and the fiery end of the world inspired the Azusa faithful and has been central to pentecostalism from these early days and even up to the present in both the United States and Great Britain. In the second issue of the mission’s hastily put together newspaper, Seymour proclaimed: ‘Awake! Awake! There is but time to dress and be ready for the cry will soon go forth, “The Bridegroom cometh.”’⁵

² Jim Cullen, ‘Introduction: The Worldwide Web of Popular Culture’, in Jim Cullen (ed.), *Popular Culture in American History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 3–4; LeRoy Ashby, *With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture since 1830* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2006). Terry Ray Clark, ‘Introduction: What Is Religion? What Is Popular Culture? How Are They Related?’, in Terry Ray Clark and Dan W. Clanton (eds), *Understanding Religion and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 7–8.

³ John Storey (ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 5.

⁴ Billy Sunday quoted in *Chicago Magazine*, March 1955, 42.

⁵ *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 18 April 1906, sec. II, 1. *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 19 April 1906, part II, 4. Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street* (1925; South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, Inc., 1980), 48. Seymour quote from: ‘The Pentecostal Baptism Restored’, *Apostolic Faith*, October 1906, 1.

Dozens of holiness newspapers from the states and beyond began to print reports of the meeting and of the second-coming message. Pentecostals eagerly used the latest print and later radio and television technologies to spread the news of the so-called 'latter rain'. The extensive secular and religious press coverage of Azusa gave some readers a clearer picture of what they hoped to experience. As one convert from North Carolina wrote in 1908:

In the Fall of 1906 I began to read how the power was falling in California and people were speaking in tongues and the sick were being healed... My heart began to leap within me; I realized that this was what I needed; so I began to see how clear the word of God taught it [and] I began to ask the dear Lord to give me this wonderful blessing.⁶

The revival created a surprisingly large stir in California and well beyond. News of the West Coast 'Pentecost' blazed across the country and even overseas. Some participants who had made the Azusa pilgrimage now took the message back to churches in America and England, recreating the Azusa baptism.

Anglican minister A. A. Boddy, a restless visionary from Sunderland in north-east England, marvelled at the remarkable mixing of the races reported at Azusa. Even 'preachers of the Southern States were willing and eager to go over to those negro people at Los Angeles and have fellowship with them', he announced.⁷ Boddy visited the most important centres of the new movement in the USA and became one of the leading figures of European Pentecostalism. His newspaper, *Confidence*, was widely read in America. Boddy's All Saints' parish hall became a hub for the movement in Britain.⁸ In the coming decades pentecostal groups, drawing from the labouring classes, made headway in the mining and shipping country of the north-east, along with Sheffield, Bournemouth, Birmingham, the London area, and Northern Ireland.⁹

The numbers remained relative small in the UK. But pentecostalism, and the related Charismatic movement, would become the fastest-growing branch of world Christianity, numbering some 500 million adherents by the end of the century.¹⁰ Few religious movements won such devoted followers and

⁶ M. H. Alexander, 'Pasley, N. C., March 19, 1908', *Bridegroom's Messenger*, 15 April 1908, 3.

⁷ A. A. Boddy, 'The Southern States', *Confidence*, September 1912, 209.

⁸ Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 144; W. J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 184–5; Neil Hudson, 'The Development of British Pentecostalism', in William Kay and Anne Dyer (eds), *European Pentecostalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 41–60.

⁹ William K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks of Britain: New Ways of Being Church* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2007), 9. Gilbert W. Kirby, '300 Years After: The Pentecostal Churches', *Crusade*, September 1962, 11–13.

¹⁰ 'Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals', 5 October 2006, <<http://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/spirit-and-power/>> (accessed 30 December 2010).

spawned so many scornful detractors as pentecostalism did. Believers claimed to have direct encounters with God. Adherents shrugged off religious convention, professed to heal the sick, foresee the future, and, in some rare cases in the upcountry and mountains of the American South, handle deadly snakes like others handled a belt or a rope.¹¹

Generalizations about pentecostalism and related movements, especially when comparing adherents in one country to those in another, are difficult. Some speak in tongues; others do not. Many emphasize the imminent return of Jesus; some are not so concerned with the second advent. There are Unitarian and Trinitarian believers. There are some who have thought that their small band of adherents held a monopoly on truth. And then there are others with a more ecumenical cast. Added to that, stalwarts have often been at each other's throats. The various camps of pentecostals have fought one another with an internecine fury matched by Stalinists and Trotskyites.

Still, some generalizations apply to the movement as a whole in both America and in Britain. Put simply, pentecostals believe in the wonder-working power of the Holy Spirit. They have held that the same gifts that the apostles received in the first century—speaking in tongues, healing the sick, reading the signs of the times—are available now. Pentecostals—members of the Assemblies of God, Elim Pentecostal Church, the Church of God in Christ, the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, and hundreds of independent bodies—proclaim that God empowers them to work his will in these last days. White groups have tended to place a heavier stress on premillennialism. But that theme is consistent around the globe. In 2006 the Pew Research Center conducted a ten-country survey of believers. (The United States was included. Great Britain was not.) The resulting report found that adherents 'stand out, especially compared with nonrenewalist Christians, for their views on eschatology, or "the end times"'. The study concluded that:

In six countries, at least half of pentecostals believe that Jesus will return to earth during their lifetime. And the vast majority of pentecostals (more than 80% in each country) believe in 'the rapture of the Church', the teaching that before the world comes to an end the faithful will be rescued and taken up to heaven. This belief is less common (though still widely shared) among charismatics, who in turn tend to express higher levels of belief in the rapture than do other Christians.¹²

¹¹ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*; Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1987); Randall J. Stephens, *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); and Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997). Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹² 'Spirit and Power'. Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

Within the whole, however, there has been some variation. Hence, African-American groups have focused slightly more on matters of social concern, and less on end-times speculation.¹³ For instance, in 1973 the African-American Church of God in Christ's manual called for abolition of capital punishment and supported social equality for all, regardless of 'race, creed, or national origins'. At the same time the denomination also championed the prohibition of alcohol and a ban of legalized gambling.¹⁴ Such bans are commonplace. For instance, the Pew Poll from 2006 found that:

In many of the 10 countries surveyed, large majorities of the general population hold quite conservative positions on several social and moral issues. But even in these generally conservative countries, pentecostals often stand out for their traditional views on a wide range of social and moral issues, from homosexuality to extra-marital sex to alcohol consumption. Majorities of pentecostals in nine countries (all except the U.S.), for example, say that drinking alcohol can never be justified. In six of the 10 countries, majorities of pentecostals say the same thing about divorce.¹⁵

Even if North American believers were somewhat reluctant to say that drinking 'can never be justified', they still held firm against casual drinking and many other behaviours or pastimes they deemed sinful.

Many adherents in the USA and the UK shunned popular amusements and so-called worldly pleasures with an intensity matched only by Fundamentalists.¹⁶ With ironclad authority they forbade dancing, smoking, drinking, bobbed hair on women, and luxurious attire. Through most of the twentieth century, members of the Elim Church in Britain maintained a hard line on tobacco and alcohol. They denounced these with ferocity, thinking they blunted moral sensibilities. Much of pop culture struck them as irredeemable and worldly as well. In the 1920s Elimites so disapproved of the cinema that they condemned religious films as well. An adherent in the early 1940s used an exacting moral calculus when considering any popular amusement: 'Does it take the keen edge off my spirituality? Could my spare time, energy, money be used for something higher?'¹⁷ In the 1960s and 1970s adherents in Britain

¹³ David Edwin Harrell, Jr, *White Sects and Black Men in the Recent South* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), 95–6.

¹⁴ Quoted in David D. Daniels, III, "Doing All the Good We Can": The Political Witness of African American Holiness and Pentecostal Churches in the Post-Civil Rights Era', in R. Drew Smith (ed.), *New Day Begun: African American Churches and Civic Culture in Post-Civil Rights America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁵ 'Spirit and Power'.

¹⁶ Horton Davies, *Christian Deviations: Essays in Defence of the Christian Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1954). Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942), 164, 165.

¹⁷ Bryan R. Wilson, *Sects and Society: A Sociological Study of the Elim Tabernacle, Christian Science, and Christadelphians* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961), 80–1; *Elim Evangel*, 22 (1941), 235 and 251, as quoted in Wilson, *Sects and Society*, 81. See also, Wacker,

worried about the influence of television as they lamented the moral decline of the era. As the century came to a close, though, many British pentecostals had relaxed their strict stand on leisure activities and alcohol.¹⁸

For adherents on both sides of the Atlantic there were clear reasons to embrace, or sanctify, some forms of entertainment—sports, television, radio, and other mass media—while also remaining steadfastly opposed to other pastimes, behaviours, or venues—cinemas, dance halls and dancing, smoking and drinking, and bars and pubs. Pentecostals were quite willing, albeit sometimes only after a long period of time, to accept new forms of popular music, or to use recent technologies to spread their Holy Ghost religion. As historian Edith Blumhofer astutely observes, the movement is ‘an audience-conscious popular expression of Christianity’ and ‘has adapted itself to the themes and styles running through American popular culture’. In its most recent iteration the Assemblies of God, in Blumhofer’s reckoning, sanitized secular pop culture for its evangelistic purposes. Leaders of the fold, she notes, ‘marketed everything from Christian rock and soap operas to Christian exercise videos, sex manuals, and diet programs’.¹⁹

A lively style of music, in particular, would set pentecostals off from numerous other protestants. Many pentecostals would have likely agreed with evangelical composer Phil Kerr about the use of peppy tunes with rousing lyrics. By the late 1950s Kerr had written over 3,000 choruses and 200 hymns, and pushed against what he viewed as the prudish sense of propriety of other conservatives. Using new music seemed completely reasonable to him. It would only amount to ‘a sincere effort to capture the attention of otherwise unreached multitudes and to focus attention upon Christ’, he observed in 1957. He then drove his point home by calling on the apostle Paul for support: ‘To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some’ (1 Corinthians 9:22). Some, in a typical Fundamentalist church might object to ‘rhythmic music’ along with religious films and even the applause by which a congregation might thank a gospel quartet. That was foolish, he figured. ‘Whatever the bait is used’, he said, returning to a New Testament metaphor, ‘it becomes the fisherman’s responsibility to capture the prospect’s attention and then by some means to transfer that attention to Christ.’²⁰

And yet there were clear limits to the kinds of activities or behaviours that were suitable for stalwarts. Not everything could be ‘sanitized’. The

Heaven Below, 128–30; and William K. Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain* (Waynesboro, GA: Pater-noster Press, 2000), 169–80.

¹⁸ Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, 187–8. E. S. Ramsay, ‘Teen Topics: Moral Standards’, *Redemption Tidings*, 21 January 1981, 15.

¹⁹ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 254–5.

²⁰ Phil Kerr, ‘Is Showmanship Legitimate?’ *King’s Business*, May 1957, 14, 16.

pentecostal movement, which emerged as it did in the late Victorian age, long bore the stamp of its founding era. Teetotalism, for instance, has remained a consistent, defining feature since 1906. Likewise, places that have long been associated directly with sin or actions that pentecostals thought damaging to the body and/or made individuals bad witnesses remained taboo. Standard condemnations of alcohol, Sabbath desecration, gambling, theatre attendance, dancing, extravagant dress, and even more remained. Believers turned to New Testament verses like 1 Corinthians 3:16–17: ‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.’ As such, there remained much in society that looked hopelessly wicked to them.

What do the many prohibitions of pentecostals tell us about their relationship to the cultures around them? Certainly, this range of taboos marked these believers off from other religious groups. Even Baptists would not have preached against wearing watches, ties, short-sleeved shirts, or the drinking of Coca-Cola. Most of the saints could find numerous Bible verses from the Old and New Testaments to support their denunciations. Margaret Bendroth and Betty A. Deberg note that Fundamentalists maintained gender boundaries through the enforcement of moral codes. The same is largely true of pentecostals in Britain and America. Writes Bendroth: ‘women’s dress was another source of alarm. Here fundamentalists charged even well-meaning Christian women with sexual weakness and alarming naiveté.’ Accordingly, Fundamentalists’ ‘attitudes toward women thus combined a measure of scorn with the distinct sense of longing and regret...’ Pentecostals in both the USA and Britain did make more room for women in roles of leadership. Yet prohibitions of dress, behaviour, and more tended to target the ubiquitous, dreaded ‘loose woman’.²¹

Beyond the gendered dimensions, popular amusements or time and money spent on drink or tobacco pulled believers away from the church. For the faithful, frivolous pastimes and bad habits competed against the holy life. Hence, in 1961 the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God stated with horror, ‘Americans spent about twice as much in 1960 on smoking as they gave to their churches.’²² An Atlanta-based pentecostal paper took this logic one step further. With a Screwtape twist the editor offered up ‘A Message from the Devil’ in 1967: ‘I am so happy that you can play’, the imagined devil wrote, ‘but cannot pray; you know the names of movie stars, but cannot name

²¹ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 70, 71; and Betty A. Deberg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 109–11.

²² Thomas Zimmerman, ‘Assemblies of God Ministers Letter’, 17 March 1961 (Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, Springfield, Missouri), 1.

the Books of the Bible; you can find Amos and Andy on the radio, but would have trouble locating Amos and Andrew in the Bible. You know the score at the ball game but not what the score is in God's Word.' From this vantage point, pop culture crowded out God.²³ What Blumhofer calls an 'ethic of separation' also led stalwarts to denounce their cultured despisers. Mainline Protestants, or the Anglican establishment, lacked the zeal necessary for true faith. They were, in the eyes of numerous pentecostals, lifeless, cold, or even devilish.²⁴

Similarly, believers distinguished themselves from other Christians in their worship and in the styles of music they played. High-energy church and revival services and the kind of revved-up music Phil Kerr supported have marked pentecostals from one generation to the next in Britain and America. They borrowed the melodies and structures of popular songs. Oftentimes, guitars, drums, and pianos accompanied their worship tunes. Even in the early twentieth century stalwarts liked to compare their spirit-filled churches with the lifeless drudgery of mainline congregations. As one early convert from Florida put it: 'Compared with [the pentecostal revival], any meeting of Baptists is as the silence of death.'²⁵

Emotional services and spirited singing became a part of north-east England meetings as they did at others taking place in the USA. In May 1913 a reporter from the *Daily Mirror* wrote of the religious excitement underway in Sunderland, which A. A. Boddy oversaw. The description closely paralleled similar reports from Azusa Street in Los Angeles. During a time of prayer, wrote the correspondent, 'many people cried aloud at the top of their voices. One woman uttered piercing shrieks and another gave vent to hysterical laughter, whilst the man was continually jumping on his feet, clapping his hands and waving a white handkerchief.' The din reached such a pitch that Boddy, in frustration, asked the congregation to pray silently. There were others like the Welsh pastor and founder of Elim Pentecostal Church, George Jeffreys, who aimed for more sedate forms of worship that would appeal to a different constituency.²⁶ More often than not British pentecostals, similar to the Salvation Army, sang catchy worship songs that followed popular tastes. A leading voice of the mid-century movement, Donald Gee, observed: 'One of the distinctive features of a British Pentecostal meeting will be the singing of many choruses, most of them bright and catchy, expressing the joy of

²³ 'A Message from the Devil', *Bridegroom's Messenger*, January 1967, 3.

²⁴ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 97–9.

²⁵ 'Letter of a Baptist Preacher to His Wife Describing a Pentecostal Meeting at Durant, Fla.', *Evening Light and Church of God Evangel*, 1 July 1910, 2.

²⁶ 'Revival Fervour', *Daily Mirror*, 13 May 1913, 15.

salvation and others very sweet and beautiful, full of worship and all about the Lord Jesus.²⁷

In June 1958, *Life* magazine ran a cover story on what its editors called a ‘third force in Christendom’. One of the contributors reported that not all third-force Christians were rowdy, chandelier-swinging bible-thumpers. Still, the reporter ventured, ‘Swingy hymns and passionate preaching stir up the congregation’s emotions, and worshipers respond with hand clapping, arm-waving, loud singing, dancing in the aisles, shouted “amens”.’²⁸ Several years later an Assemblies of God revival in New Mexico followed a fairly typical pattern. The pastor breathlessly described the meeting: ‘Many were “slain” under the power of God. There was dancing and shouting as healings took place. A little girl who had been born with the rupture was completely healed.’²⁹ That lively worship style, informed by popular culture, thought *Life* magazine’s writers, greatly aided the growth of the movement in the USA.

The numeric strength of pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement in the United States, not to mention the heavy concentration of denominations and churches in the American South, far outmatched the relatively small movement in England. Religious studies scholar William Kay estimates that there might have been around 800 to 900 pentecostal congregations in the UK in 1950, containing roughly 40,000 believers in all.³⁰ In the middle of the century, British pentecostalism was largely white, remaining so until Caribbean and African immigrants changed the movement’s complexion in the coming decades. A sampling of two of the largest denominations in the states in 1950 reveals a very different picture. For that same period, the white Assemblies of God in America reported approximately 318,000 members, while the black Church of God in Christ claimed around 316,000 members.³¹ Initiates liked to say that rapid church growth proved that the ancient faith from the Book of Acts was being restored.

For all the talk about a pure, first-century faith, the old-time religion proved remarkably new-fangled.³² And though critics like H. L. Mencken and others

²⁷ Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 36–9. Quote from Donald Gee, *Upon All Flesh: A Pentecostal World Tour* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub. House, 1935), 10.

²⁸ ‘Gospel-Singing, Doomsday-Predaching Sects Emerge as a Mighty Movement in World Religion’, *Life*, 9 June 1958, 122.

²⁹ Albert Snell, ‘Grants, N. Mex.’, *Pentecostal Evangel*, 7 January 1962, 26.

³⁰ British estimates for 1975 to 1992: Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 46, 48; William Kay, email to the author, 19 March 2014.

³¹ The ten largest American denominations in 1950–1 had a combined total of 1,098,780 members. George F. Ketcham (ed.), *Yearbook of American Churches* (New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1951), 235, 238.

³² Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 126–7.

painted believers as a primitive tribe of holy rollers, pentecostals adopted a malleable faith, took up the latest technology, and were more than willing to use new idioms and tactics to reach the broadest audience. Historian Grant Wacker explores these and other themes in his authoritative 2001 survey of the early movement, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*. Pentecostals were shrewd and pragmatic when it came to living out their faith from day to day. Devotees were ‘remarkably willing to work within the social and cultural expectations of the day’, Wacker argues.³³ Another historian calls them ‘plainfolk modernists’.³⁴

An example drawn from mid-century America is illustrative. Ground-breaking rocker Elvis Presley is the most well-known American linked to a speaking-in-tongues church, the First Assembly of God in Memphis.³⁵ Elvis long held to a holiness code of personal behaviour, circumscribed as it was. Even while performing under the neon glare of Las Vegas in spring 1956 Elvis did not drink, smoke, or gamble. His pastor back in Memphis spoke fondly of Elvis’ clean living. Even Elvis’ shocking stage antics owed something to his church background. In 1957 when a reporter in California asked why Elvis gyrated as he did, the King said that he did not really think about his movements. ‘I just sing like they do back home’, he said nonchalantly. ‘When I was younger, I always liked spiritual quartets and they sing like that.’³⁶ He was referring to the white Blackwood Brothers and the Stamps Quartet and black vocal groups, all regular performers in Memphis churches he attended. (Elvis drew heavily on black singing and showmanship and succeeded, in Jim Crow America, in ways that were impossible for African-American entertainers.) Lively black and white services opened the teenage Elvis’ mind to novel music and performance styles. In 1956, as his career took flight, he recalled one such pentecostal group, ‘the leader wuz a preacher—and they cut up all over the place, jumpin’ on the piano, movin’ every which way. The audience liked ’em. I guess I learned from them singers.’³⁷

Pentecostal quartets and soloists did much the same for Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, Tammy Wynette, and other pioneers of pop and rock ’n’ roll who had pentecostal backgrounds. Wynette compared the fussy Baptists with her penecostal church in her autobiography. Unlike the typical Baptist

³³ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 13, 14, 86, 99.

³⁴ Roger G. Robins, A. J. Tomlinson: *Plainfolk Modernist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5. David Martin, ‘Pentecostalism: An Alternative Form of Modernity and Modernization?’, in Peter L. Berger (ed.), *Global Pentecostalism in the 21st Century* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 42.

³⁵ Van K. Brock, ‘Assemblies of God: Elvis and Pentecostalism’, *Bulletin of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and Religion*, 3 (June 1979), 9–15; Peter Guralnick, *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1994), 17, 67, 75.

³⁶ Dolores Diamond interview with Elvis Presley, ‘Presley’, *Dig Magazine*, June 1958, 8, 10.

³⁷ Newspapers clippings at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, Springfield, Missouri.

minister, her Church of God preacher ‘would let you bring in guitars and play rockin’ gospel more like black gospel music’.³⁸ Little Richard, a Seventh-day Adventist, enjoyed going to pentecostal services most. He styled himself after Brother Joe May, a singing evangelist, known as the Thunderbolt of the Middle West.³⁹ Much of this ferment occurred in the American South because that region was so instrumental in the growth of sanctified music, Southern gospel, and rock and roll. But similar developments occurred outside of the region, or spread from the South into the North and West.

This degree of pop cultural innovation, not to mention the intersection of pop culture and religion, did not exist in Britain. And in the 1950s in particular, as the musician and critic Bob Stanley suggests, Britain had not developed the extensive entertainment, film, and music scenes that now thrived on America soil. ‘Britain and America were two very different worlds in the early 50s’, observes Stanley, ‘with two very different pop cultures. . . . Bombed-out Britain, at the turn of the 50s, looked to America for inspiration, and to Hollywood and Broadway for entertainment.’⁴⁰

American pentecostals willingness to couch their message in the language and style of popular culture or to innovate or borrow from the mass culture around them might also have something to do with the relationship between church and state. Disestablishment in an official sense was complete by the 1830s. Holdouts included Connecticut (where the religious establishment was ended in 1818), New Hampshire (1819), and Massachusetts (1833). In such an environment, hot protestant denominations in the Baptist, holiness, and pentecostal moulds reaped the rewards of church growth and greater membership. That was especially true in the twentieth century. By contrast, some argue that the continued restriction of the so-called free market of religion in Europe impeded such growth. One could add that it likely also limited the drive to use whatever means necessary to gain more and more converts. Fewer were willing to, or able to, to paraphrase Billy Sunday, stand on their heads ‘in a mud puddle’ to win converts or draw attention to their message.⁴¹

Regardless of the reason for the difference between the American and the British scene, pentecostals across the Atlantic would not have the same level of influence on the larger culture. (Though, oddly enough, Southern rockers with pentecostal roots like Little Richard, Elvis, Johnny Cash, and Jerry Lee Lewis would exercise an enormous influence on the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and

³⁸ Tammy Wynette with Joan Dew, *Stand by Your Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 23–4.

³⁹ Charles White, *The Life and Times of Little Richard: The Quasar of Rock* (New York: De Capo Press, 1994), 16, 17.

⁴⁰ Bob Stanley, *Yeah Yeah Yeah: The Story of Modern Pop* (London: Faber & Faber, 2013), xvii.

⁴¹ Thomas Banchoff, *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 41–2; R. Stephen Warner, *A Church of Our Own: Disestablishment and Diversity in American Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 27–9.

other British invasion bands.) Why didn't pentecostalism in the UK influence pop culture in similar ways? Perhaps it had to do with the small size and relative isolation of the British movement. It may also have been the greater stigma attached to the speaking-in-tongues faith in a society that painted believers as bizarre at best, psychotic at worst. The American South, the seedbed of early rock and roll, by contrast, harboured a significant portion of pentecostals. And, to some degree, the Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ, or Pentecostal Holiness Church had slowly become less and less outsider faiths. According to one observer of British pentecostalism, the more established churches in Britain denounced the movement, 'making the Pentecostals defensive...', the more Pentecostals, in turn, purposefully isolated themselves from 'the surrounding religious and social culture'.⁴²

Still, the innovative, even modern aspects of pentecostalism in relationship to pop culture is apparent in both countries. All through the twentieth century pentecostals and fundamentalists broke new ground in their use of mass culture, and skilfully employed the newest mediums of print, radio, and television. In 1947 one British pentecostal preacher rhapsodized about the glories of radio technology. A listener of one of his sermons proclaimed 'the anointing can go over the air!' Gospel broadcasts, he wrote, would soon reach radios on the 'coast of China, to many millions who own radio sets in Japan, to the three million who own them in India, and to the nine hundred thousands who have short-wave sets in Russia'.⁴³ It is little wonder then that British adherents marvelled at the possibilities of media evangelism in the States.

Sister Aimee Semple McPherson's radio station, KFSG, was one of the first in the USA. Like others, she used up-to-date advertising techniques and eagerly embraced a host of novelties to spread the 'good news'. It is hardly surprising that journalists would target pentecostals later charismatics as vulgar and crassly commercial peddlers of divinity. The eager embrace of new technology, the stage antics of ministers, and the gullibility of average believers struck cynical reporters and critics as especially bizarre. For instance, in 1926, a writer in the *New Republic* said that Sister Aimee's audience:

combines mental mediaevalism with an astonishing up-to-dateness in the physical realm. It is always first to adopt new inventions... It utilizes the breathtaking new marvels of the radio in order to hear ancient doctrines expounded by persons whose minds are closed to everything this side of Dec. 31, 1858, and it

⁴² William K. Kay, *Pentecostalism* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 94.

⁴³ Stanley Howard Frodsham, 'International Radio Ministry', *Pentecost*, 1 (September 1947), 7 and 8. 'North America: USA', *Pentecost*, 1 (September 1947), 15; John C. Broger, 'Prayer Builds a Radio Station', and 'The London Crusader Choir', *Pentecost*, 14 (December 1950), 1–2, 3; 'Elim News: Overwhelming Response to Broadcast', *Pentecost*, 23 (March 1953), 14; 'Pentecostal World Radio Evangelism', *Pentecost*, 61 (September–November 1962), 10 and 13; 'B.B. C. Broadcast', *Pentecost* (June–August 1963), 13; Douglas S. Quay, 'News of Pentecostal World Radio', *Pentecost*, 68 (June–August 1964), 13.

sees nothing incongruous in joining (over the radio) in a moment of silent prayer-silent, that is, except for the hum of the B-battery eliminator.⁴⁴

While radio and mass culture were used to great effect in the United States, the same did not occur for pentecostals in Britain. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), organized in 1926, favoured inoffensive, mild, predominantly Anglican and some Roman Catholic broadcasting for religious programmes. Nonconformists were featured as well. Emotional preaching and hard-sell evangelism were certainly off limits. William Kay describes the combination of worship and educational programming that was the hallmark of the BBC. Yet, says Kay, pentecostals 'were never part of any of this'. The BBC's tight control of content contrasted sharply with the relatively free market of American radio and television. In the USA after 1960 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) made it even easier for Evangelicals and pentecostals to buy airtime on television and radio stations. This change in policy favoured conservative protestants, who had honed their talents for creative fund-raising that went far beyond what the mainline could do.⁴⁵ At best, British pentecostals could have church services aired over the BBC. But even this did not take place until 1952.⁴⁶ The successful televangelism and healing campaigns of Oral Roberts, Kathryn Kuhlman, and later American pentecostal and charismatic celebrities could not be replicated in Britain. The British inability to harness mass culture in the same way that their American brethren did might account for the much smaller growth of the movement in the UK. Kay observes: 'benefiting from the large American population and its real prosperity, American Pentecostal denominations grew fastest'. They could buy a 'printing press and set up a publishing house; [they] could also invest in radio programs and advertise through them...'⁴⁷

Surely pentecostalism thrives in a deregulated religious marketplace. In that sense, broadcasting does come into play. So do other factors, like a strong tradition of nonconformity, disestablishment (as in the case of the United States), and strong leadership. In some ways, according to David Martin, an open religious marketplace helps explain successes in Latin America and Africa, and, by extension, one might add, failures in Britain.⁴⁸ Pentecostalism remains strong in Sweden and is second in that country only to the state Lutheran Church. A Norwegian scholar of the movement, Nils Bloch-Hoell,

⁴⁴ Bruce Blivin, 'Sister Aimee', *New Republic*, 3 November 1926, 289.

⁴⁵ Jonathan L. Walton, *Watch This! The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 23; Bob Lochte, *Christian Radio: The Growth of a Mainstream Broadcasting Force* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2006), 22–5.

⁴⁶ Kay, *Pentecostalism*, 156–8, quote at 157. Kenneth M. Wolfe, *The Churches and the British Broadcasting Corporation, 1922–1956: The Politics of Broadcast Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 5, 19, 550.

⁴⁷ Kay, *Pentecostalism*, 158.

⁴⁸ Martin, 'Pentecostalism', 42.

even argued, with some overstatement, that in the 1950s Sweden was ‘the most Pentecostalist country in the world’. That might be the result of the influence, and longevity, of early leaders. According to one student of the movement, this growth largely slowed down by 1970. Yet clearly that initial growth, whether in Sweden or the USA, did not occur in Britain.⁴⁹

In some other ways pentecostals and neo-pentecostals in Britain and the USA engaged pop culture in a similar fashion. In the late 1960s and early 1970s evangelicals and pentecostals in both nations began to adopt the dress, style, and music of the counter-culture, baptizing it for evangelistic purposes. First taking root in California, Christian rock thrived among a born-again hippie fringe and neo-pentecostal groups. In 1967, the year in which San Francisco hippies promoted the Summer of Love, a group of young enthusiasts who fused pentecostal ideas about the spirit with the counter-culture, set up a storefront mission in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. They named it the **living room**.⁵⁰ would be the heart of a new Jesus freak community that would soon spread across the rest of United States and would also take root overseas.

Two years earlier and over 400 miles to the south, Chuck Smith, a former pentecostal pastor, took charge of the non-denominational Costa Mesa Calvary Chapel. The church served as a centre for street Christians and blasted the new Christian rock during worship services.⁵¹ Calvary ministered to burn-outs and street kids, who were inspired by a house band called Love Song. Other early Jesus rockers included the pentecostal and end-times popularizer Larry Norman, who attended Calvary Chapel. Norman signed with Capitol Records for his 1969 *Upon This Rock* album. Christian labels like Maranatha and Zondervan Records chalked up early successes with the increasingly popular music. Already famous, or somewhat famous, performers like Barry McGuire, Andraé Crouch, and the English heartthrob Cliff Richard became key artists of the first generation. The music ran the gamut from plaintive folk to soft rock; noodly acid to fuzzed-out garage; Byrds-style country to Beatlesque, harmony-rich music. What might be called Jesus fever extended well beyond the walls of churches such as Calvary Chapel.⁵² A large-scale concert in Dallas, Texas, in 1972, called Godstock by some, showcased the talents and

⁴⁹ Ivar Lundgren, ‘Lewis Pethrus and the Swedish Pentecostal Movement’, in Paul Elbert (ed.), *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M. Ervin* (Eugene, OR: Wipe & Stock, 2007), 158–72. Nils Bloch-Hoell quoted in Jan-Åke Alvarsson, ‘The Development of Pentecostalism in Scandinavian Countries’, in Kay and Dyer (eds), *European Pentecostalism*, 38.

⁵⁰ David Stowe, *No Sympathy for the Devil: Christian Pop Music and the Transformation of American Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 6, 26.

⁵¹ Larry Eskridge, *God’s Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 218–20.

⁵² Paul Baker, *Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979), 23–9.

personalities of the new subgenre. Headliners included Andraé Crouch, Larry Norman, Children of Truth, Johnny Cash, and Kris Kristofferson. Billy Graham and Bill Bright preached at Explo 72, giving the event an Evangelical stamp of approval.⁵³

Female performers at Explo 72 and within the world of Christian rock were in the distinct minority, though Nancy Hennigbaum, who performed as Honeytree, and the band 2nd Chapter of Acts gained a large following. Historian Larry Eskridge remarks that it is likely that ‘male participation in the movement was particularly strong overall in terms of percentage as compared with many traditional Christian settings’. There is some evidence to suggest that women were given roles of authority within Jesus People communities. Yet in many ways believers continued to promote the traditional gender roles of evangelical communities.⁵⁴

In both America and England, evangelicals weighed the new against the old, adopting innovations or new social relations when it best suited their goals. In 1960s England, evangelicals of various stripes had toyed with pop and folk music. Outfits like the Envoys, the Brian Gilbert Group, and Cliff Richard fused pop and gospel. One of the most successful acts was the Salvation Army’s Joy Strings, led by Joy Webb. The group, which performed decked out in Sally Ann gear, scored a record contract with EMI and made TV appearances. They even achieved chart success, channelling beat groups and Peter, Paul, and Mary.⁵⁵

In both America and England enthusiasts marketed the Jesus revolution with a barrage of records, T-shirts, bumper stickers, tracts about the end times illustrated with hippie graphics and wavy fonts, and Haight Ashbury-styled posters. Such efforts helped Christian pop and rock music rank as one of the most profitable entertainment industries in America. By the 1990s it had become nearly a billion-dollar industry.⁵⁶ The hippie preacher, Arthur Blessitt, with a special flare for publicity, proved critical to the growth of the movement in both countries. On his travels he sold copies of his *Life’s*

⁵³ ‘Rallying for Jesus: 80,000 Jam Dallas for a Crusade called Explo ’72’, *Life*, 30 June 1972, 40, 41. See Graham’s form letter summing up the event: ‘Dear Friend’, November 1971, ‘Jesus Movement’, G. Archer Weniger Collection, Bob Jones University. Larry Eskridge, ‘“One Way”: Billy Graham, the Jesus Generation, and the Idea of an Evangelical Youth Culture’, *Church History*, 67:1 (March 1998), 83–106.

⁵⁴ Lynne M. Isaacson, ‘Delicate Balance: Rearticulating Gender Ideology and Rules for Sexuality in a Jesus People Communal Movement’, PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1996. Eskridge, *God’s Forever Family*, esp. 99, 110, 296–7, quote at 286.

⁵⁵ ‘Putting It on Record’, *Crusade*, July 1965, 18–9. ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, *Crusade*, May 1965, 14–15.

⁵⁶ Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 248–56. Jay R. Howard and John M. Streck, *Apostles of Rock: The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music* (Louisville, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 150, 199.

Greatest Trip book, which included a chapter titled ‘Naturally Stoned on Jesus’, for 40p. The so-called ‘Minister of Sunset Strip’ had become famous for carrying a twelve-foot cross around the world and for a ballyhooed campaign in England in 1971. The *Daily Mirror* reported in jest that ‘Suddenly, Jesus Christ Is More Popular than the Beatles’.⁵⁷ The selling of the faith was in line with pentecostal tradition, which had long blurred the lines between evangelism and marketing. In the UK, some critical voices within the Church of England thought the new ‘pop Jesus’ looked like a tactless, consumer-driven phenomenon. (Such disparaging commentary paralleled criticism of pentecostal radio and television personalities.)⁵⁸ Certainly, Jesus People thrived under the glaring lights of publicity.

By the early 1970s Jesus festivals were grabbing headlines in England, as they had in America, and Jesus People communes were cropping up around London. The 1972 London Festival for Jesus gathered roughly 20,000 in Trafalgar Square. Concert goers heard bands play Jesus rock and folk music and listened to an array of sermons. One regular 1970s Jesus rock outdoor celebration would come to be known as the Greenbelt Festival, which attracted between 20,000 and 30,000 attendees and would eventually be broadcast by BBC 1. Drawing on such successes Larry Norman, Randy Stonehill, and other major American acts toured the UK.⁵⁹ *Buzz* magazine, a British-based youth fanzine, covered Norman’s shows and catered to the growing market for Christian rock and pop music in the UK from the early 1970s onwards. With editorial offices in New Malden, Surrey, it featured secular and religious record and film reviews alongside essays on ethics and news about the growing Charismatic movement. The magazine was decked out with flashy graphics and Day-Glo colours. It was also chock-full of advertisements for Christian colleges, new records by bearded and sweater-wearing Christian rock celebrities, and announcements for Billy Graham crusades and rock fests. The publication, with an early Christian hipster readership, bore a striking resemblance to *Cornerstone* magazine, the Jesus People publication from Chicago, or the *Wittenburg Door*, the satirical Christian counter-cultural zine from Dallas.⁶⁰

A transatlantic religious reawakening also found expression with top-selling records and on increasingly popular FM radio, far outside the Jesus People

⁵⁷ ‘Naturally Stoned’, *Church Times*, 5 November 1971, 5; John Smith, ‘Are You Listening John Lennon?’ *Daily Mirror*, 1 September 1971, 14–15; and ‘John Penrose, Turn on to Jesus’, *Daily Mirror*, 3 September 1971, 5.

⁵⁸ Geoffrey Corry, *Jesus Bubble or Jesus Revolution: The Growth of Jesus Communes in Britain and Ireland* (London: British Council of Churches Youth Department, 1973), 35–7.

⁵⁹ Dorothy I. Smith, ‘Better than Pop’, *Redemption Tidings*, 28 October 1971, 24. ‘Thousands Join “London Festival for Jesus”’, *Catholic Herald*, 8 September 1972. Eskridge, *God’s Forever Family*, 202–5. Ronald M. Enroth, Edward E. Ericson, and C. Breckinridge Peters, *The Story of the Jesus People: A Factual Survey* (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1972), 3–6.

⁶⁰ Corry, *Jesus Bubble or Jesus Revolution*, 35. Steve Bruce, *Firm in the Faith* (Brookfield, VT: Gower, 1984), 129–33. *Buzz* magazine’s circulation would reach 30,000 by 1981. D. W. Bebbington,

realm. A kind of Jesus or spirit fever hit the pop charts in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with hits like Billy Preston's 'That's the Way God Planned It' (1969); Harry Nilsson's 'I Guess the Lord Must Be in New York City' (1969); Norman Greenbaum's 'Spirit in the Sky' (1969); the Doobie Brothers' 'Jesus Is Just Alright' (1972); and George Harrison's 'My Sweet Lord' (1970). In 1971 the latter—gospel-tinged and with its alternating refrains of 'hallelujah' and 'hare Krishna'—became the biggest-selling single of an increasingly post-Christian Britain. Added to all the Jesus and divinity peddling on pop radio, hit musicals like *Godspell* (1971) and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), by the British team of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, made Christianity the subject of Broadway fanfare.⁶¹

What accounts for the surge in Jesus' popularity, the pentecostal surge, and the rise of God rock? Why were youngsters turned on to the pop and counter-cultural Christ in 1969 and 1970 in unimaginable ways? In 1972 a *U.S. News and World Report* journalist speculated that, 'Hippies began reading the Bible in large numbers. Suddenly the Bible is better than drugs. Suddenly it was hip to be holy. It was hip to get high on Jesus.'⁶² Jesus freaks cast a suspicious eye on institutional churches, just as hippies had been suspicious of the government and institutions in general. They formed house churches, with acoustic guitars, bongos, and hirsute chorus leaders to guide them in their worship music. Jesus for them was a way of life. He was personal. They were 'turned on' by Jesus. In the middle of the 1970s novelist Tom Wolfe spoofed the evangelical explosion of the decade. Wolfe scoffed:

Today it is precisely the most rational, intellectual, secularized, modernized, updated, relevant religions—all the brave, forward-looking ethical culture, Unitarian, and Swedenborgian movements of only yesterday—that are finished, gasping, breathing their last. What the Urban Young People want from religion is a little *Hallelujah!* . . . and *talking in tongues!* . . . *Praise God!* . . . The Easter Christians still usually control the main Sunday-morning service—but the Charismatics take over on Sunday evening and do the holy roll.⁶³

Wolfe satirized so-called 'holy rollers' as backward and hopelessly regressive. But he could have added that the unconventional element or the innovativeness of pentecostal-inspired Jesus People also helped explain the movement's remarkable growth.

Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 263.

⁶¹ 'The Jesus People', in Gerald S. Snyder (ed.), *The Religious Reawakening in America* (Washington, DC: US News and World Report, 1972), 39–40. Stowe, *No Sympathy for the Devil*, 56.

⁶² 'The Jesus People', 26.

⁶³ Tom Wolfe, 'The "Me" Decade and the Third Great Awakening', in Tom Wolfe (ed.), *The Purple Decades* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1982), 282–3.

This counter-cultural Christianity and the Jesus rock explosion also owed something to the baby boom generation in America and Britain. Pentecostals and evangelicals in general in the 1960s increasingly worried that the generation gap was making it impossible to reach youth. Historian Thomas E. Bergler wrote,

The sixties first revealed what would be the consequences of various Christian approaches to youth culture. Some ways of managing juvenilization were nimble enough to adapt the seismic shifts of the sixties; others were overly dependent upon the old era that was rapidly disappearing. The times revealed who would be the winners and losers when it came to motivating teenage religious commitment in the decades to come.⁶⁴

The spirit-filled language of pentecostalism was especially appealing to baby boomers. And pentecostalism and the charismatic movement proved critical to Christian rock, the Jesus People movement, and Christian consumerism. There is little doubt that pentecostalism, the religion of spirit abundance, had an enormous influence on the Jesus movement and helped usher in Jesus rock.⁶⁵ An Anglican observer of the American scene in 1971 saw the matter clearly enough: ‘The Jesus Cult may be in line with the Pentecostalist experience, which has a stronghold in the United States and is in some danger, so observers say, of becoming respectable . . .’ But he went on to clarify: ‘You can call the Jesus movement—its music, rhythm, and its eagerness to be “out there with Jesus”—a rebellion against established religion.’⁶⁶ For their part, traditional pentecostals in Britain acknowledged the American origins of the Jesus movement. Many welcomed it, though a few cautioned against its freewheeling, anti-institutional, and anti-dogmatic character. Jesus People, in British pentecostal eyes, mostly seemed to be revitalizing the church, using pop music to good effect, and speaking the language of youth.⁶⁷

Leading lights of the Jesus movement in California, like Chuck Smith, came out of traditional pentecostal churches, yet bristled at the conformity and traditional limits of established denominations. Likewise, musicians looked back to the early church as a romantic or sentimental model of community and belief. The long-haired saint of Calvary Chapel, a converted hippie named Lonnie Frisbee, foregrounded pentecostal practice at his services. That was the

⁶⁴ Thomas E. Bergler, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 176, quote at 177.

⁶⁵ ‘Spirit and Power’. ‘Gifts of the Spirit’, *Church Times*, 19 May 1972, 11. Hudson, ‘The Development’, 54.

⁶⁶ ‘New Movement in US’, *Church Times*, 3 September 1971, 4. Stephen Hunt, ‘The Radical Kingdom of the Jesus Fellowship’, *Pneuma*, 20:1 (1998), 21–42.

⁶⁷ ‘The Nationwide Festival of Light’, *Proclaimer* (January–March 1972), 6–7; E. J. Lipton, ‘The “Jesus People”: An Assessment of their Modern Movement’, *Redemption Tidings*, 14 October 1971, 3.

norm among Jesus People, in fact. Most memorably, Frisbee painted a cross on a deerskin cape he owned. He would occasionally drape the totem over tongues-speaking believers as he prayed for them.⁶⁸ A *Time* magazine journalist detected this Holy Ghost emphasis: ‘The Jesus revolution[’s]. . . strong Pentecostalism emphasizes such esoteric spiritual gifts as speaking in tongues and healing by faith. For many, there exists a firm conviction that Jesus’ Second Coming is literally at hand.’⁶⁹ That was the same conclusion that the staff of the California-based Collegiate Encounter with Christ came to after interviewing dozens of Jesus People from Mississippi, California, Illinois, Washington, Oregon, New York, and elsewhere. The author of the published interviews observed: ‘If the Jesus Movement could be tagged with a denominational label, without doubt, it would have to fall under the category of Pentecostal—those who seek to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ He figured that 85 to 95 per cent of those he and his colleagues spoke to ‘were associated in some way with the pentecostals’.⁷⁰

The neo-pentecostal millenarianism, and obsession with the rapture, so pervaded the Jesus movement that some observers thought it was at the core of the group’s identity. Early Jesus rockers like Larry Norman sang about the return of Jesus. Apocalyptic guru Hal Lindsey’s 1970 *Late Great Planet Earth* book—the bestselling non-fiction title of the decade—informed the views of Jesus rock groups. Accordingly, the voice of English Evangelical moderation and orthodoxy John Stott criticized the Jesus People’s millennial obsession. They championed a dangerous ‘world-denying pessimism’, he feared, however wrapped up in modern garb.⁷¹

That focus was certainly in line with pentecostalism, whose adherents had been warning ‘Jesus is coming!’ since the early twentieth century. The spirit-driven Jesus People movement also reveals other links to pop culture and pentecostalism, which deserve special attention in conclusion. Through much of the twentieth century believers have distinguished themselves for their willingness to incorporate new or popular styles of music and worship while vehemently condemning secular pop culture as at best diversionary and at worst satanic. They also embraced mass media in ways that few other protestants would dare to do. It is certainly true that British pentecostal churches failed to grow the same rate as those in the United States did. But that may have actually had something to do with limits in their ability to use mass media. Limited in their outreach on radio and television, and stifled by religious and

⁶⁸ R. G. Robins, *Pentecostalism in America* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2010), 96–9. Eskridge, *God’s Forever Family*, 76–80.

⁶⁹ ‘The New Rebel Cry: Jesus Is Coming!’ *Time*, 21 June 1971, 59.

⁷⁰ Ruben Ortega, *The Jesus People Speak Out!* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1972), 38.

⁷¹ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (London: Falcon Books, 1975), 16.

cultural pressures, British pentecostals remained relatively small until the 1970s and 1980s. On both sides of the Atlantic, though, it is clear that pentecostals, charismatics, and neo-pentecostals were not encumbered by the same traditions and sensibilities that mainline protestants were. As a result, stalwarts in the two countries interacted in fascinating ways with and against popular culture.