

Spring 5-1-2008

Hark the BattleCry: The American Evangelical Alternative to Secular Youth Culture

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Hark the BattleCry: The American Evangelical Alternative to Secular Youth Culture



An Honors Thesis presented by
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To

The Department of Religious Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirement for
Honors in the Major Field

Connecticut College
New London, Connecticut
May 2008

Acknowledgments

Having embarked upon and completed this journey, I feel as though I should thank a number of people who have influenced my life in more ways than one. First and foremost, I thank my Mom, Maria. Without her endless determination and undying love, I never would have never been afforded the opportunities I have enjoyed throughout my life. It was her strength of faith, which was imparted upon me, that sparked and kindled my interest in the field of Religious Studies. Secondly, I thank my advisor, Professor Gene Gallagher. His consistent challenges and simultaneous confidence in everything I do have made me a better student and person. Additionally, I thank Professor Brandon Daniel-Hughes. His Christian Tradition course drew me to the Religious Studies major, his class on Religion and the Discontents of Modernity made me think I was crazy for having decided upon the RS major, and his enlightening Evangelicalisms seminar provided me with the questions that I attempt to answer herein. Gallagher and Daniel-Hughes continue to inspire me. You do too, Mom.

Finally, I thank my friends. I love you all and thank you for putting up with me when I spent days and nights in the basement of the library. Your continuous support through the best and worst has propelled me forward and through this my final year at Connecticut College. I will miss your conversation, your company, and your laughter. Oh, the places we'll go! Let's move some mountains.

Pa' Abby



¹

Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

-- Mark 10:14

¹ Image retrieved from http://www.youarelovedchildcare.com/jesus_w_children_600.jpg

Introduction

American Evangelical Christians believe that young people in the United States of America are contributing to the degeneration of the country's moral fiber. Although the young people of America are not necessarily the cause of that moral downfall, they are certainly the most malleable and thus, potentially affected by numerous influences that guide them toward certain vices that have become so common within American society. Consequently, Evangelical Christians have taken it upon themselves to right the wrongs of secular society by appealing to the young people of America, who hold the potential for moral change and social impact. Their cumulative efforts constitute the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement. Youth Movements are characterized by a number of different specifications. Members can range in numbers from a few hundred, to a few hundred thousand, conglomerating around a specific cause, be it social, religious, countercultural, or otherwise. "Young people spontaneously may initiate their own movements for change, or youth movements may be sponsored by adults to supplement the activities of larger social and political movements."² Although young people ages thirteen to twenty-five make up the majority of those who participate in the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement, for the most part, it is coordinated and run by middle aged Evangelicals whose mission it is to guide young people towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Teenagers and young adults are then mobilized for a particular cause, be it moral and upright living, Christian leadership and further evangelism, or international missionary work. Thus, the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement, in its American manifestation, is a means by which young people can be saved and mobilized in a life for and with Jesus

² *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1st Edition, s.v. "Youth Movement"

Christ. In Evangelical Christian parlance, they constitute an army of Christian souls. The American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement, therefore, is a multifaceted endeavor that simultaneously acts as a vehicle for conversion of non-Evangelical Christians and an avenue wherein young Evangelicals may feel confirmed in their faith and beliefs; a faith that steers them away from facets of popular culture. The various mediums utilized within the movement to appeal to young people are as numerous as they are distinct. From ‘Holy Hip-Hop’ to ‘Jesus Camps’, rallies to Leadership Academies, the Evangelical community has effectively created a parallel youth culture to that of secular American society. Evangelicals have thought of every way possible to attract young people, Christian or “unreached,” in order to encourage and facilitate conversion and subsequent salvation.

Evangelical camps, retreats, and music festivals are some of the tools by which the Evangelical community continues to build its ‘army’ of Christian warriors. All over America, Evangelical Christians organize elaborate extravaganzas in order to achieve one thing: the conversion and commitment to Jesus of hundreds of unsaved souls. Interestingly, the American socio-cultural arena has allowed for the Evangelical movement to prosper:

Like nothing else, shared culture is an opportunity for people to connect and gain one another’s trust. Culture – your favorite music, sport, pastime, style, you name it – presents an opening for evangelism. Once bonds are forged over a beloved band or football team, then the Evangelical “message” can work its way into a relationship. It’s what an Evangelical novelist I know calls being “sneaky deep.” Once the message is heard, a world opens in which God’s love, as well as your cultural predilections, provide spiritual isolation from the secular world. It’s hard to imagine an aspect of secular culture lacking a Christian counterpart: one can choose from Christian hip-hop ministries, Christian military intelligence classes, or Christian diet groups in this mirror society.³

³ Lauren Sandler, *Righteous: Dispatches from the Evangelical Youth Movement* (New York, NY, Viking Penguin), 15

Whether a young person is interested in a summertime sleep-away camp, a rock concert or an upstanding Halloween activity, the Evangelical Christian community has the proper, Christian alternative. By providing young Evangelicals with Christian substitutes for otherwise secular activities, children of all ages are afforded the opportunity to feel vindicated in their religious tendencies and less ostracized with regard to the periodic negative social repercussions of their religious affiliation. Hence, this “mirror society” is the vehicle by which young Evangelicals are converted and commissioned in such a way that they do not feel as though they are missing out on secular life, and so find themselves further justified in their faith.

Conversion, a “change in direction or motivation,”⁴ is the defining characteristic of Evangelical Christianity. In Hebrew, it means to regret evil, and in Greek, to change ones mind. Through the phenomenon of conversion, Evangelicals denounce evil in an effort to become closer to Jesus Christ; the New Testament indicates that conversion allows someone to obtain eternal life in and through Jesus Christ and his sacrifice. Through this “new birth”, Christians renounce darkness and begin their journey with God towards everlasting life.

Evangelical Christianity holds conversion and evangelism as essential pillars of faith. Believing that teenage and young adult years are filled with potential, Evangelicals target malleable young people with their strategic conversion tactics. Although the Evangelical tradition is proud of the fact that it supports a variety of worship methods, conversion replaces any form of sacramental progression essentially by becoming a one-

⁴ *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, s.v. “Conversion”

step process towards a solid relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, which leads to salvation and eternal life.

Consequently, Evangelicals have pinpointed a crucial aspect of young life: the search for truth and identity. What is it that makes some young people so ready and willing to accept Jesus Christ? Jim Smith, Youth Pastor at the Pleasant Valley Community of Prayer and Praise in Groton, Connecticut indicates that “kids are looking for who they are,” and God, as preached by the greater Evangelical Christian community, is present to help in the search. Evangelicals have clearly picked up on the great potential of young people and capitalized on it. Through the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement in its various manifestations, Evangelicals have developed, maintained, and helped to express an identity that is simultaneously true to Evangelical Christianity and divorced from secular peers. The formation of self, characterized by any number of identifiers, can be expressed in a number of ways, as is indicated here: “[I]dentity is often expressed in very visible forms. In language, in dress, in *choice of activities* – all of these are ways in which a person can tell others “who I am.”⁵ Thus, young evangelicals are able to develop a sense of identity through a myriad of avenues during the teenage years.

Adolescence is one of the greatest developmental stages of young life, both socially and physically. Many western psychologists believe that the teenage years are “a time of potential crisis brought on by the uncertainties of the physical and social transitions between the life stages.”⁶ In this period of time, young men and women attempt to find “who they are” by aligning themselves with some aspect of the greater society. “In part because of the importance of social acceptance during adolescence,

⁵ Kay Deaux, *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, Oxford University Press, s.v. Identity

⁶ Mary Bucholtz, *Youth and Cultural Practice*. Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol. 31, (2002), 528. Annual Reviews. JSTOR 04/04/08

friendship networks during this period often are organized into relatively rigid cliques that differ in social status within the school setting. The existence of these cliques seems to reflect adolescents' need to establish a sense of identity; belonging to a group is one way to solve the problem of "who am I."⁷ Whether teenagers follow in the footsteps of their parents, albeit with certain disdain, or stray from the path that was laid out by mother and father, they participate in a collective search for individual identity. In other words, adolescents attempt to find their identity by defining themselves according to a particular aspect of the greater social framework, in such a way that their acquired identity provides them with a social network and a feeling of belonging. Thus, Evangelical adults have formed the greater Youth Movement in such a way that it appeals to young people, regardless of creed, by bringing them together to form a collective unit in the search for individual identity.

The *Encyclopedia of Psychology* contends that

[I]n part because of the importance of social acceptance, children's conformity to their peers peaks during early adolescence. Most policy concern has focused on how this peer conformity can create problems for adolescents, and about how "good" children can be corrupted by the negative influences of peers [...] However, although pressure from peers to engage in misconduct does increase during adolescence, most researchers do not accept the simplistic view that peer groups are mostly a bad influence during this period. More often than not, adolescents agree more with their parents' view on "major" issues such as morality, the importance of education, politics, and religion.⁸

The role of parents, pastors, and facilitators within the Evangelical Christian Movement is of monumental importance to the developmental potential of young people within the movement itself. Mary Bucholtz indicates that "[t]he role of adults in the process of socialization is unquestionably a central element in the understanding of youth, yet the study of how adults guide adolescents into full cultural membership obscures the more

⁷ *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, Oxford University Press, 2000, s.v. Adolescence: Social Patterns, Achievements, and Problems

⁸ *Ibid.*, 48

informal ways in which young people socialize themselves and one another as they enter adolescence.”⁹ Thus, it is important to both analyze the effects of the ECYM on the young people who participate in it, but also the bonds made between the participants, because they work equally to mold the lives of young Christians. While adult Evangelical Christians provide opportunities through which young people might draw together and form a particular identity (such as rallies and concerts), the ‘informal’ means by which young people come together display a teen-agency in the search for identity.

By filling various needs that exist in the lives of many young Evangelicals, the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement makes youth culture accessible to those who would otherwise be unable to participate in secular activities; a choice which is usually made by parents or guardians. Through regional ministries, such as the one represented by the Pleasant Valley Youth Ministry in Southeastern Connecticut, young Christians receive counseling regarding educational choices, family and friends from pastors and youth leaders. Additionally, regional ministries present young Christians with a link to the greater Youth Movement by providing them with the avenues necessary to attend such events as BattleCry and the TeenMania Honor Academy. Through various “critical cultural practices”¹⁰ such as rallies and other social activities, teenagers learn who they are and begin to display personal agency.

Through TeenMania events such as Acquire the Fire and BattleCry, Christian Camps and Leadership Academies, regional youth ministries, and Christian colleges, Evangelicals have marked their territory: the souls of young people in America. The youth movement is itself marked by determined militancy and clear goals, masked by an

⁹ Mary Bucholtz, *Youth and Cultural Practice*, 529

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 531

alluring accessibility that is unparalleled in any other religious tradition. As the words of scripture travel through the new mediums, young people become and remain attracted to the Word of God in such a way that it affects them in daily life. Consequently, young evangelicals might pursue various avenues of leadership, and with the increasing political mobilization of young Evangelicals in the United States, it is of paramount importance to consider that the entire Evangelical Christian Youth Movement has the potential to affect this country in a permanent fashion in the near future.

Throughout the rest of this composition we shall traverse through the world of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement by analyzing the various methods employed by the Evangelical community to reach young people in the United States. Christian equivalents to secular concerts and rallies, popular music, camps and leadership academies, and institutions of higher education are the vehicles by which Evangelicals reach the “unreachable,” so converting them, and secure young Christians in their belief system.

Chapter One:

American Evangelicalism and the Christian Youth Movement



11

All Evangelicals are united on four basic tenets. They believe that:

- (1) the Bible [is] authoritative and reliable;
- (2) eternal salvation [is] possible only by regeneration (being “born again”), involving personal trust in Christ and his atoning work;
- (3) a spiritually transformed life is marked by moral conduct and personal devotion, such as Bible reading and prayer; and
- (4) zeal for evangelism and missions.¹²

Although Evangelicals might value each tenet in markedly different proportions, the fact remains that all Evangelicals consciously or subconsciously live by these tenets as closely as they do Scripture. These four tenets are further expressed in the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement.

The social and political atmosphere in the United States has formed both the Evangelical tradition and the Christians who affiliate themselves with it. Numerous sub-groups and sub-species have come to fall under the umbrella of Evangelicalism in such a way that the term simultaneously unites and excludes. As with any religious movement, related discontents can help to mold a movement as much as positive responses. Thus, as Evangelicalism has developed throughout the decades, it has come to the attention of influential evangelicals that the youth of America are prime candidates for conversion. That, as we have seen, is a central tenet of the Evangelical tradition.

¹¹ Bumper Sticker image retrieved from <http://www.cafepress.com/stickem2.85489844>

¹² *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd Edition, s.v. “Evangelical and Fundamental Christianity”

Evangelicals will go to any ends to gain converts and save souls – such that this particular religious community has established an entire culture that mirrors that of secular American youth culture so as to attract malleable and available young people. The youth culture can be traced back to one of the figureheads of the Evangelical tradition: Billy Graham. Graham put it eloquently when he said: “We used every modern means to catch the attention of the unconverted – and then we punched them right between the eyes with the gospel.”¹³

Widely recognized throughout the world as both a religious, social, and political leader, Billy Graham has served the Evangelical community in innumerable ways. Graham’s evangelical life of proselytizing began when he acted as a “traveling evangelist for Youth for Christ International (YFC).”¹⁴ From there, Graham would become the protagonist of the Jesus Movement, an ancestor of what currently serves as the American Evangelical Youth Culture. Billy Graham recognized that “[a]dolescence and young adulthood is the life stage when religious conversion is most likely to take place.”¹⁵ From the outset, Graham expressed the “uncanny ability to harness popular forces and movements for the furtherance of [his] mission.”¹⁶ Events such as Explo ’72, the Evangelical Christian counterpart to its musical contemporary, Woodstock, were marketed to young Christians across the United States who were interested in expressing themselves musically through an avenue that would be approved by God. Billy

¹³ William Martin, *A Prophet With Honor: The Billy Graham Story*, (Harper Perennials), 1991, 90-94

¹⁴ Larry Eskridge; “One Way”: Billy Graham, the Jesus Generation, and the Idea of an Evangelical Youth Culture; *Church History*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Mar., 1998), 85

¹⁵ Christian Smith, Melinda Lundquist Denton, Robert Faris, Mark Regnerus. Mapping American Adolescent Religious Participation, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 41, No. 4, (Dec. 2002), 597

¹⁶ Ibid.

Graham's Chicago Crusade, featuring both musical and non-musical guests, was a precursor to events such as Acquire the Fire and BattleCry.

With the emergence of Campus Crusade for Christ – an offshoot of Youth for Christ International – Billy Graham and his Evangelical brethren were able to reach an age group that was ripe for conversion. Explo '72, an event orchestrated and held by Campus Crusade for Christ for young Americans, was a huge success. An event that would later be referred to as “Godstock,”¹⁷ this festival of music and ministry would become the gold standard to which other Evangelical music events would be compared. Unfortunately, after Explo '72, the American Evangelical Youth Movement remained largely dormant until resurgence in the 1990s, with few exceptions.



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Billy Graham effectively made Evangelical Christianity both attractive and inclusive. According to numerous textual and physical sources on the subject, the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement has always been “geared to the times. Perhaps the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement achieved success because Billy Graham, as the figurehead of the movement, supported young people *in their youth*, as

¹⁷ Eskridge, “One Way”, 105

¹⁸ Image of Billy Graham retrieved from

http://www.constitutioncenter.org/timeline/flash/assets/asset_upload_file188_12278.jpg

opposed to making them change for Christ. Graham indicated that Jesus loved everyone, regardless of social status or taste in music. He stated that one “could be a hippie and a Christian,”¹⁹ which of course, many teenagers in the 1970s could sympathize with. In other words, Billy Graham appealed to the American teenager’s quest for identity. Through Graham and the movement that he fostered, Evangelical Christianity became so accessible that it seemed to barely change the lives of those who affiliated with it. Instead, the faith molded itself to the daily lives of thousands of Christians, thus making it easy for religion to become a part of a young identity, not a catalyst that could potentially change it. Furthermore, by making Christianity more compatible with young life, Graham virtually erased the transition between secular and religious life.

For great numbers of evangelical youth caught in the gap between the allures of the larger youth culture and the strictures and loyalties of their evangelical families, a ringing condemnation of the Jesus Movement from the likes of Billy Graham might have removed the middle grounds that allowed them to tiptoe successfully through the adolescent mine fields of culture and identity.²⁰

Indeed, Billy Graham paved the way for a movement that would continue to alter the fabric of the American Evangelicalism. Furthermore, Billy Graham currently stands as an icon of Americanism. His method of grooming the Evangelical Youth Movement, along with his persuasive and inspired preaching has thrust him into a political spotlight that is both enviable and daunting. Graham has counseled many politicians and presidents, and his persona has become synonymous with religiopolitical Americanism. The tie between Evangelical Christianity and Americanism became apparent during and after World War II, while Dwight D. Eisenhower was in office. In a cultural atmosphere where Evangelicalism was growing more politically inclined, and the Religious Right

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Eskridge, “One Way”, 106

was forming slowly and beginning to show signs of power – it is no wonder why Evangelical Christianity has become as American as picnics and presidents.

American Evangelicals, through their belief system, have noted a fatal flaw in the youth culture of the United States – the growing immorality of an entire generation. Because the vices of immorality tend to be more attractive than the conservatism of morality, Evangelicals find the need to reach the “unreachable” in ways that are both accessible and alluring. Consequently, Evangelicals have created various avenues through which young people might become attracted to Christianity. Through this “mirror-society,” Evangelicals hope to make young Christians feel comfortable in their particular social and religious inclinations, thus propelling young Evangelicals to attract their friends, in an attempt to encourage conversion.



History of Evangelical Youth Culture

Evangelicals have taken it upon themselves to ameliorate the malady of immorality that plagues young non-Christian Americans by adopting the daunting task of making moral those they perceive to be an inherently immoral. The Evangelical community will stop at no end and employs a militant set of tactics as befits the self-styled army in order to achieve its goal of bringing American youth to Christianity. The current social manifestation of Evangelical Christianity is uniquely capable of marketing

²¹ Image retrieved from <http://www.bumpertalk.com/bt/images/items/BA044A.jpg>

to young people regardless of age, ethnicity or tax bracket. According to a recent article in *The Atlantic Monthly*

American evangelicalism today is flexible, user-friendly, and market-driven. It has its core convictions: that a personal encounter with the risen Christ is necessary for salvation, and that the Greek and Hebrew scriptures offer a wholly trustworthy guide to God's will for humankind. But given those core convictions, this religious tradition seeks above all to *be relevant, to be engaged, to reach sinners regardless of their culture, their ethnic background, or their politics.*²²

Angsty teenagers all over the United States share similar experiences in the formative years between childhood and adulthood. Events such as learning how to drive, going to a rock concert for the first time, and the inevitable social awkwardness contribute to the quest for identity that is unique to this particular life stage. Teens have adapted to the awkwardness surrounding these years in a number of different ways. Some play sports, others find themselves to be artistically inclined, and still others affiliate themselves with a higher power: God. The American Evangelical Youth Movement was initiated by a number of young Evangelical ministers and businessmen, all of whom had picked up on the fact that teenagers were searching for was any avenue in which to fit in. At its inception, it became apparent that “the formula for a successful young people’s ministry [included] rallies, banquets, conferences, retreats, and radio programs – events that teenagers would get excited about and share with their friends”²³.

²² Walter Russell Mead; “Born Again” – “The Agenda”, *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 2008, 24 (my emphasis added)

²³ Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, (New York, Oxford University Press 1997), 163



Youth for Christ

One of the most influential and best-organized Evangelical Christian groups is Youth for Christ, International. Their Statement of Faith espouses many of the same beliefs that the overall Evangelical Christian community does.

- 1.) We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- 2.) We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 3.) We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
- 4.) We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
- 5.) We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
- 6.) We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
- 7.) We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in Christ.²⁵

Although YFC is an Evangelical Christian group that does not affiliate itself with any particular denomination, it represents one of the most important aspects of the mobilized “New Evangelicalism” that was made popular by Billy Graham.²⁶

It is said that YFC “had no founder; it had an explosion.”²⁷ This non-denominational detonation occurred in 1944 in order to bring together numerous people

²⁴ Image retrieved from <http://www.s-yfc.org/images/youth.jpg> (04/29/08)

²⁵ Our Statement of Faith, Youth for Christ, <http://www.yfc.net/Brix?pageID=12791>

²⁶ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 176

that were spreading the Word of God at a time when the world was thirsting for it. As World War II was devastating communities of Christians and other religious people worldwide, YFC was working to link together those with the common purpose of evangelizing and spreading the hope of Christianity.

Youth for Christ, International truly broke the ground for the present day Evangelical Christian Youth Movement by designing “their rallies to appeal to youth: the pace of Saturday night meetings were all tailored to youth tastes.”²⁸ Emerging when the United States was suffering through and recovering from World War II, YFC and the ensuing Youth Movement helped heal the wounds exacted by war. Young Americans who became a part of Youth for Christ aligned their firm religious beliefs to Americanism and patriotism, as the movement was accessible both at home and abroad. Founded by Fundamentalist Christian businessmen with an interest in evangelism, YFC sought two things: public respect and an overall American spiritual awakening.²⁹ They intended to realize these two goals by appealing to the youth of America.

Jack Wyrzten, founder of YFC was determined to spread the Christian Word and founded Youth for Christ, International. By keying into the mentality of young Christians, Wyrzten was able to pinpoint a particular aspect that was missing from many young people’s lives. A businessman at heart, Wyrzten was a born-again Christian, and as any good Evangelical would do, began to evangelize by employing the use of his jazz band. His faith, message and following soon grew, to the point that young Christians in

²⁷Bruce Shelley, *The rise of evangelical youth movements*, Fides et historia: official publication of the Conference on Faith and History, 48

²⁸ Ibid., page 59

²⁹ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 174

the United States felt they were able to “praise both God and country”³⁰ through the blossoming Evangelical Youth Movement. Although he did not plant the original seed for the movement itself, Billy Graham is certainly one of the protagonists of Youth for Christ. Graham “sought to preserve [the orthodoxy of Evangelical/Fundamentalist Christianity] while engaging with modern American life; [he] wanted an orthodoxy that could reach the masses.”³¹ Billy Graham could see that the way to gain more converts and thus, save more souls, was through the hearts of American teenagers and young adults. By utilizing the tools that Evangelicals believed were being used by immoral avenues of American youth culture, Evangelical Christianity began to appear more accessible, such that young people and potential converts would become more interested in the Lord and His message. As Joel Carpenter argues,

From a fundamentalist perspective, the [Youth for Christ] rally leaders were borrowing from the very dens of the devil – Hollywood and Radio City – to accomplish the Lord’s purposes.³²

By costuming God’s message in ways that seemed hip and cool, Evangelicals were able to market Jesus to those who might otherwise find reasons to stray away from him.

For decades, American Evangelicals have had a keen sense of what teenagers (and other youth) really need. The Youth Movement itself espouses a firm belief in the importance of remaining current. In a time when the United States was suffering through the hardship of World War II, the burgeoning Evangelical Youth Movement provided patriotism and encouragement. During and after the war, as juvenile delinquency rose in the United States, Evangelicals helped to form Christian Recreational Centers and “Teen Canteens.” As young Americans yearned for acceptance or support, the Youth

³⁰ Ibid. 166

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. 162

Movement would answer with everything they needed, simultaneously ensuring the integrity of their moral fiber. Thus,

[t]he Youth for Christ movement was a part of this rising concern about young people set in the context of an increase in public religiosity, a revival of American civic faith, and worries about the nation's moral fitness to cope with its challenges.³³

As the American Evangelical Youth Movement grew, it would gain increasing respect in the public eye. With increasing public respect, the movement would secure legitimacy within the greater Evangelical community and beyond. With growing authority, more potential converts would become attracted to the new face of an old religious tradition, thus achieving the ultimate goal of saving souls in Jesus Christ.

Campus Crusade for Christ

Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) is the collegiate manifestation of YFC, and is the group responsible for one of the first “day-long music festival[s]”³⁴ now common to the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement. Campus Crusade promotes a similar Statement of Faith³⁵ to YFC, although it goes more specifically into particular aspects of Evangelical theology. Founded at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1951 by Bill and Vonette Bright, Campus Crusade for Christ intends to promote evangelism and discipleship, encouraging members to bring their friends to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Within the first decade of existence, CCC went from being a purely evangelistic endeavor to a full lay ministry. Currently, Campus Crusade for Christ acts in various ways to promote Christian living and evangelism all over the world. By facilitating mission trips and charitable actions, CCC has spread its base among 190 countries.

³³ Ibid. 168

³⁴ Eskridge; “One Way”, 102

³⁵ Appendix 1

Youth for Christ and Campus Crusade for Christ can both be considered early manifestations of institutions created to facilitate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, while encouraging members to draw others into the Christian faith. Both YFC and CCC currently act more as international youth groups than evangelistic ministries. It is important to note however, that YFC and CCC are the historical antecedents to institutions such as TeenMania, which is a current representative of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement.

Chapter Two:

*“Enough is enough”³⁶
Contemporary manifestations of the ECYM*



The United States of America has become a veritable battleground. American Evangelicals have declared a war against the immoral tendencies of young Americans and the greater youth culture that supports it. They counter the degeneration of youth culture with corporations like Teen Mania, an umbrella institution that is responsible for guiding the youth of America back towards ‘truth’ and morality. TeenMania is responsible for Acquire the Fire rally/concert events such as BattleCry, which was started in 2005, the Honor Academy, Global Expeditions (missionary trips), and Extreme Camps.³⁷ The figureheads of TeenMania have covered every necessary aspect of American youth culture to appeal to young Christians, in an attempt to fulfill the ultimate goal of helping young people achieve salvation through Jesus Christ. The BattleCry movement, along with its brother and sister institutions under TeenMania, market to a wide array of Christians and non-Christians alike, in the hopes of igniting some sort of faith-based reaction in anyone who might be ready to accept Jesus Christ.

BattleCry: an Evangelical Alternative to the VANS Warped Tour

The “mirror society” created by the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement simultaneously mimics and rejects the negative aspects of popular culture. The

³⁶ Quoted from a BattleCry Rally attendee, in reference to the idea that society is corrupted and destructive

³⁷ TeenMania Website, <http://www.teenmania.org/corporate/index.cfm>

Evangelical Christian Youth Movement, then, is both a reflection of an emergent American Youth Culture, and a rejection of it.³⁸ One such aspect of popular youth culture is manifested in an annual touring spectacle of punk rock bands and pro-skateboarders. With over one hundred stops, the VANS Warped Tour is a staple of the American teenage summer. Young people throughout the country flock to stadiums, fields and parking lots to hear their favorite secular (and a handful of non-secular) bands and watch pro-skateboarders risk their lives on the half-pipe. At first glance, the Warped Tour might seem like a mobile Mecca, traveling from city to city in order to fill youthful punk fans with the euphoria that results from standing under a blazing sun all day long, screaming their lungs out, inspiring a collective effervescence all its own. Although this may not sound necessarily appealing to anyone over the age of twenty-five, the day-long event continues to draw impressive numbers to each installment every weekend of every summer. Although the Warped Tour might seem like a fun time, for Evangelicals it serves as a prime example of the American tendency towards sex, drugs and rock & roll.

Consequently, the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement has needed to come up with an alternative for this cultural spectacle. BattleCry and the Cornerstone Music Festival are manifestations of this response. Examining the homepage of the BattleCry website in the Spring of 2007, while their East Coast Stadium Event was taking place in Baltimore, Maryland, a blog continuously displayed the excited and almost frantic words of BattleCry-goers who are blogging from a kiosk at the event. A worship blog – a blog of elation and salvation. In a blog entitled ‘Hey All’, Alex says that BattleCry is “totally amazing”, that it “rocks” and then exclaims “Praise God!”³⁹ Those

³⁸ Shelley, *The rise of evangelical youth movements*, 59

³⁹ <http://battlecry.com/index.php>

who are not in attendance are immediately informed that they are missing out – both through the blog and other testimonies. For example:

BattleCry is Amazing!!!! I am having the time of my life and the Holy Spirit is totally here!!! Hope you're feeling it too.⁴⁰

A website podcast boasts a live videofeed, which broadcasts a prominent Evangelical speaker preaching to thousands of eager teenagers, encouraging them to truly contemplate their personal relationships with God. Thus, the technological aspects of the BattleCry website are designed in such a manner that they are appealing and accessible to the Christian youth.⁴¹

“How do we reach unreached kids?”⁴² Sound the BattleCry

Like numerous other branches of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement, TeenMania supports an active website which is designed both to attract young people and provide them with any necessary information they might need in their quest for self and salvation. Each sub-division of the TeenMania website (i.e. BattleCry, Extreme Camps, Global Expeditions, and the Honor Academy) is technologically advanced and in tune with what teenagers and young adults look for in an online resource. Evangelical ministries employ the use of aesthetically pleasing graphics in an attempt to attract and maintain the potential believers by piquing their interest and making them feel comfortable in a familiar online environment. By clearly and efficiently delineating the goals of a particular ministry in an eye-catching, yet simple, format, Evangelicals increase the chances that someone will sign up to be saved.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 05/07

⁴¹ Research conducted in the Spring of 2007

⁴² Shelley, *The rise of evangelical youth movements*, 55

Additionally, TeenMania is portrayed on popular Internet video sites, such as YouTube, in videos that illuminate the attractive aspects of the Honor Academy. The TeenMania video portrays the testimonies of a number of HA alumni who use pejorative phrases such as “I didn’t want to be just another normal kid” and “living outside the box” to guide questioning young Christians away from secular life and towards the Honor Academy.⁴³

The BattleCry website indicates that there exists a clear problem in today’s society: the American media have seduced and enslaved⁴⁴ young people, and it is up to the Evangelical Community to take action against the monster that is popular culture. According to a May 2006 article in Truthdig, an online newsletter, the founders and proponents of BattleCry foster an “insistence that the Bible be read literally and obeyed as the inerrant word of God. [...] Ron Luce, founder and president of TeenMania, leads youth to say in prayer, “I will keep my eyes on the battle, submitting to Your code even when I don’t understand [...]”⁴⁵ In the subsection entitled ‘Magnitude of the Crisis’, the BattleCry website indicates that in order to combat the deviant forces of American culture (the enemy), they must “use [its] tools.” The website features a virtual call to arms for young people across the country to take up their weapons of truth against the forces of evil in the United States. It claims that

A stealthy enemy has infiltrated our country and is preying upon the hearts and minds of 33 million American teens. Corporations, media conglomerates, and purveyors of popular culture have spent billions to seduce and enslave our youth. So far, the enemy is winning. But there is plenty we can do. We need to take action. We need to answer the Battle Cry.⁴⁶

⁴³ TeenMania Honor Academy, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtEkD91h4Vw> (03/04/08)

⁴⁴ BattleCry Website, <http://www.battlecry.org>

⁴⁵ Sunara Taylor, Truthdig, http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/20060511_battle_cry_theocracy/ (04/29/08)

⁴⁶ The Crisis, BattleCry Website, <http://battlecry.com/crisis.php>

The BattleCry movement highlights four basic efforts to which all members should subscribe: Awareness and Education, Training and Discipleship, Evangelism and Growth, and Community and Support. Each of these specific areas serves as a plan by which to combat the existing youth culture in the United States. Warning against the dangers of sexual seduction and enticement on the Internet, the A & E section indicates that the national media should consider the moral degeneration of young people in America to be headline news every day. By using radio, television, and various forms of print media, BattleCry cautions against the dangers of youth culture in an effort to save the souls of young Americans. Through ‘Training and Discipleship’, the website encourages young people to “save their friends”, thus increasing membership and expanding the movement as a whole. Insofar as training is concerned, TeenMania encourages participation in the Honor Academy, a leadership school in Texas that provides young people with both mental and physical tools by which to lead others to salvation. According to the BattleCry website, the “world offers attractive distractions” to young people, in the form of sexually explicit photography and advertising. TeenMania hopes to steer teenagers and young adults away from this particular aspect of society by providing them with praise and alternate avenues of recreation. Through events such as BattleCry, TeenMania hopes to attract the “unchurched” or anyone who might be interested in Christianity, even if it is just for the music and camaraderie. “Music and video are the language of the generation,”⁴⁷ so it is clear as to why teenagers are attracted to TeenMania – they speak the same language. TeenMania, while catering to the needs

⁴⁷ Ibid.

of teenagers and young adults, also challenges teens to “live passionately for Christ.”⁴⁸ By providing a solid network of local, regional, and national aspects of youth ministry, BattleCry affords young people and their pastors with the opportunity to exist within a youth culture that is parallel and striving to be equal to the alluring, yet sinful, American youth culture.

“My BattleCry” is an area of the website of the same name that serves as a parallel to the popular, yet “heathen” MySpace. Upon agreeing to the ‘Teen Bill of Rights,’⁴⁹ one is asked some personal information, and then required to declare their personal battle cry before a personal profile is accessible to others. The webpage is then customizable with different backgrounds, pictures and fonts – all in the hopes of providing young people with the proper avenue by which to share their religious experiences. By creating a Christian alternative to social networking websites such as MySpace and FaceBook, young Christians are afforded the opportunity to not feel left out of internet culture, and can even hope to attract their curious, secular friends.

Events such as BattleCry are especially effective in attracting and converting potential young Christians. These rally/concerts are geographically and theologically accessible to young people throughout the continental United States. Young evangelicals who have been born into and bred in the tradition are accustomed to attending such events and are thus likely to draw secular friends into rallies and concerts. Secular friends then feel comfortable in attending such events because they are offered increasingly popular music, food, and fun. During events, BattleCry leaders place a specific emphasis on the guilt young people should feel due to their immoral actions, but

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Appendix 2

assure them reconciliation in the Lord. Due to the majority of young people committing their lives and intentions to Jesus Christ, a form of groupthink is established and a collective group becomes enthused in the Lord. Such a collective experience can cause people to act differently than they normally would, thus inciting some retrospective feeling of the sacred, or inspiring an enhanced morality. In studying the religious patterns of Australian societies, Emile Durkheim, sociologist of religion, posited in his *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*

The human voice is not sufficient for the task; it is reinforced by means of artificial processes: boomerangs are beaten against each other; bull-roarers are whirled. It is probably that these instruments, the use of which is so general in the Australian religious ceremonies, are used primarily to express in a more adequate fashion the agitation felt. But while they express it they also strengthen it. This effervescence often reaches such a point that it causes unheard-of actions. The passions released are of such impetuosity that they can be restrained by nothing. They are so far removed from their ordinary conditions of life, and they are so thoroughly conscious of it, that they feel they must set themselves outside of and above their ordinary morals.⁵⁰

The American Evangelical Christian Youth movement employs the use of collective effervescence in many aspects. Concerts and rallies such as BattleCry unite a group of culturally diverse young people under the common cause of Christianity, guide them through a collective experience that simultaneously challenges and strengthens their faith, and ejects them into a world that is ignorant to their particular experience and agenda.

Collective effervescence simply describes how teenagers across the country are bonding together after attending rallies and concerts in the name of God. TeenMania and BattleCry have been able to incite a passionate display of faith from Christian teenagers and young adults, in such a way that these young people mobilize and take action for what they believe. BattleCry events have spawned a nationwide feeling of collective

⁵⁰ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (The Free Press, New York, NY. USA), 1915. 247

effervescence among young evangelical Christians that is being utilized to further spread the message of truth, morality, and pure living in cities that are separated by miles of American countryside.

Chapter Three:

“Why Should the Devil have All the Good Music?”⁵¹



52

Gone are the days when Michael W. Smith and Amy Grant were considered the first family of Evangelical Christian music. Although both artists continue to enjoy a high level of success, theirs pales in comparison to the overall success of contemporary Evangelical Christian music. Currently, all genres of music are represented in Christian culture. Hardcore Rock and Hip-Hop artists, Ska Bands and Christian Folk Singers, though intrinsically different as artists, may hold their love for Jesus Christ in common. The genres all bond together in an attempt to reach a vast array of teenagers and young adults who might be interested in the message of salvation the music aims to portray.

⁵¹ *Why Should the Devil have All the Good Music?*, Documentary (2006)

⁵² Retrieved from <http://i.realone.com/assets/rn/img/5/0/5/6/11196505.jpg>

“The power of the Holy Spirit travels through the Truth”⁵³

The popular “devil horns”, a gesticulation performed by raising the index and pinky finger in rhythm with music, is not welcome within the world of Christian Rock. Tears and tongues have replaced the horns under the tents of the Cornerstone Christian Rock Festival. The face of Christian praise has changed. At first glance, Cornerstone might seem similar to a cult-like gathering; one enthusiast⁵⁴ even referred to the music festival as comparable to the Jim Jones cult. Although there is no mystery punch of which to speak, it is not immediately clear upon hearing hardcore Christian music that under the white tents of Cornerstone, devout Christians praising their Lord can be found. By providing interested concertgoers with a day of music and activities, followed by an evening of snacks and prayer, Cornerstone communicates the Christian message in such a way that it will be readily accepted by young people that show even the slightest intent.

The Christian Rock movement is one that simultaneously appeals to music enthusiasts, and meek, lonely outsiders who are looking for a place to belong. The music associated with festivals such as Cornerstone is as varied as the people underneath the tents. Where does the music come from, however? Are these twenty-something band leaders just writing songs to appeal to a growing group of young religious people, or are the lyrics ghostwritten by something or someone more powerful? Members of the band Cool Hand Luke, who draw their name from a 1967 film that comments on a non-conformist mentality, feel as though it is their duty to perform this music, and believe that they are simply vehicles for the music that God has written. Many contend, however, that the success these bands enjoy is in part due to divine inspiration and also to human

⁵³ Vickie Hunter and Heather Whinna. *Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?* DVD. Blank Stare Films, 2006.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

creativity. One person in *Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?*, a documentary that chronicles the events of the Cornerstone Music Festival, is even quoted as saying “Christian music is the product of Jesus living inside of you.”⁵⁵ Cool Hand Luke is part of an array of Evangelical Christian performers who see themselves as the vehicles by which the message of the Lord can be propagated. Consequently, these bands might serve to attract more converts. After all, the church has been utilizing music for centuries to inspire, condemn and celebrate. Many of the bands featured in *Why Should the Devil have All the Good Music?* iterate that they are not trying to outright preach to people, but that they intend to spread the Good Word through their music.

One of the most interesting aspects of this documentary is the fact that some of the bands that participate in the Cornerstone Festival actually enjoy success within the secular music scene. Having attended an MxPx concert years ago, it was never apparent that their grungy and jarring music was divinely inspired. Other popular bands, such as the New England favorites, Guster, also shape lyrics in such a way that the unassuming ear would never catch the Bible verses and implicit conversionary tactics. This is not to say that there are bands that are trying to subliminally convert young people to Christianity. However, their subtlety speaks to the dedication required by true Christians to extricate a message from the music, and adds to the potential interest in Christianity that listeners might experience. When successful Christian rock bands attempt to make the crossover into the world of secular music, they find little to no room for their talent in the industry. Thus, these bands experience somewhat of an identity crisis, and often either abandon their religious ways or revert to the comfort of the Christian Rock arena. However, the melding of the mirror society of the Evangelical Christian Youth

⁵⁵ Hunter and Whinna. *Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?*

Movement and the greater social culture as a whole only serves to further vindicate young Christians in their participation within the ECYM by allowing them to listen to bands like Third Day, a popular Christian rock band, with their secular friends.

Perhaps Christian Rock and Christian Rock festivals were created as a reaction to the perceived perversion of Rock and Roll to begin with. One of the more prominent personalities of the Cornerstone documentary, a middle-aged woman who seems to be familiar with the music scene, speaks to the hidden messages in classic songs such as Led Zeppelin's *Stairway to Heaven*. This woman claims Led Zeppelin's music is influenced and written by demons. She asserts that it is considered a sin to listen to secular music⁵⁶. However, these Christian Rock bands are more than just reactions to secular music culture, they are mirror images of them in a religious arena. Consequently, young Christians no longer find it absolutely necessary to pursue secular music avenues as they are no longer the indispensable option. Many Christian media stores even post signs that say "If you like Green Day, try _____", in an effort to draw parallels between the music of the secular and religious world. This only furthers the idea that Evangelical Christians have created a parallel universe in which conversionary tactics are propagated and completed.

Christian Rock bands are consistently faced with the issue of what message to align themselves with: whether it is the message of love and peace in Christ, or militancy and work for Christ. Mostly, the message is dependent upon the style or genre of music to which the band pertains. However, a number of "screamo" bands promote love and faith although their style might be jarring. The contradiction that exists between metal and Christianity has become blurred with the existence and success of bands such as

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Living Sacrifice – who claim that they are simply promoting a message through good music. Yet, making it big in Christian Rock is not always good enough. Members of “The Blamed” feel that Christian Rock is often second rate, and that religious conviction should not influence the quality of the music produced.⁵⁷ Many of these Christian Rock bands share the view that artists such as Britney Spears influence young people across America, and her influence is both immoral and wrong. Thus it is up to those who identify as Christian Rock bands to create and perform music that stands up to the caliber of popular music, so as to appeal to a wider array of people and thus, attract more converts. Some artists even see ‘crossing over’ as a positive thing, so that successful secular bands might use their widespread popularity to minister to a larger community. Where many of these bands run into trouble however, is their repertoire. In a world that is permeated with such negative influences, it is impossible to always sing about positive messages.

Music is one of the greatest socializing factors in the life of a teenager and thus, it is of paramount importance to consider the influence of music in regards to the American Evangelical Youth Movement. Currently, countless Christian Rock bands exist in the industry, a number of which have enjoyed some success on secular pop radio. Bands such as ‘Third Day’ have produced many albums, all of them inspired by the Word of God. Songs like Third Day’s “I will hold my head high” demonstrate lyrics that might counsel a young Christian in a time of need:

Sometimes the night starts closing in
And I've lost my way home again
I'm running out of places I can turn
Enemies on every side
Not a friend around for miles
That's the time it really starts to hurt

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Beat me up and drag me down
I'll never be afraid

I will hold my head high
Lift my hands to the sky
Rise above all who try to bring me down
I will hold my head high⁵⁸

Additionally, songs like “You are mine” might at first seem like a teenage love song. But the lyrics all reflect some aspect of a relationship with God.

It doesn't take much
For my heart to break
And you have done it
For what's seems the millionth time

Whenever I hear
Of your saving grace
And how you gave your life
In exchange for mine

Sometimes I wonder why you even love me
And why you ever chose to call me child
Then I remember
It's by your sacrifice
I can say that
I am yours and you are mine⁵⁹

In the case of this particular song, it becomes clear that non-religious teenagers could just as easily be attracted to those lyrics as any Christian. Many young evangelicals enjoy music by bands like Third Day or Living Sacrifice, a heavy metal Christian band.

As with any youth movement, something will inevitably become more trendy than that which was popular five minutes beforehand, and those who are left behind are no longer considered part of the “in” crowd. Thus, as progressive young Christians striate from those who see themselves as more conservative, the movement must present itself in such a way that is attractive to potential subscribers – hence the consumerization of the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement.

⁵⁸ Third Day Lyrics, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/thirdday/iwillholdmyheadhigh.html>

⁵⁹ Third Day, You are Mine Lyrics, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/thirdday/youaremine.html>

The organization of the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement has been likened to that of the Germans in the Second World War by *The Atlantic Monthly*⁶⁰. The subculture is so organized and methodical in its ways, and clear about its goals, that those who do not agree with or ascribe to said goals might shun the movement entirely. MTV has even conducted number of pieces on events such as Cornerstone and have spoken to the extensive organization that is apparent in the success of the event itself. ShoutLife, a Christian blog website points to the growing influence of God in society by asking

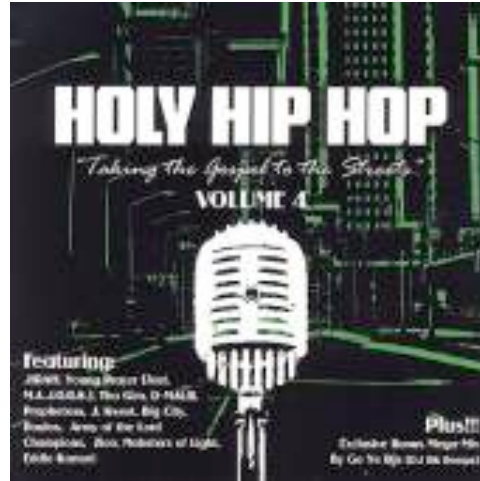
*What if the world was bigger than advertised? What if there were more to life than consumption, conformity, and the frantic maintenance of a frightened mediocrity-including the religious sort? Even more to the point, what if God were bigger than advertised? And what if it turned out that lots of people were asking these questions?*⁶¹

Thus, events like BattleCry and Cornerstone exist to provide vindication for young evangelicals who might feel excluded from secular youth culture. Through adult leaders and enthusiastic young people, more converts are attracted to the American Evangelical Youth Movement, thus expanding the base of the faithful and the social power of Evangelicalism.

⁶⁰ Mead; “Born Again” – “The Agenda”, *The Atlantic Monthly*

⁶¹ ShoutLife, www.shoutlife.com

Holy Hip Hop



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Another artistic avenue explored by Evangelicals is that of Christian Hip Hop. Across the United States, urban artists are busting a rhyme for Jesus. Holy Hip-Hop, as the genre has come to be called, might seem like a contradiction in terms. Hip-Hop in its secular form has become synonymous with “gangsta rap”, which includes sexual and violent imagery, and thus stands in clear conflict with the values of the Evangelical Christianity. Starting in the late 1970s in urban sectors of various major U.S. cities, Hip-Hop was born as a reaction to conventional forms of popular music. As time progressed, urban culture became the major inspiration for the musical genre, thus propelling Hip-Hop into the mainstream for its hard-hitting lyrics over catchy beats. Consequently, certain negative aspects of urban culture fell under the spotlight of the Hip-Hop genre, drawing with it a negative connotation for all urban music in general. However, members and fans of Holy Hip-Hop are quick to indicate that their particular brand of music is a form of praise used to highlight the positive in society and the love of the Lord, as is evidenced in the following excerpt from the Holy Hip-Hop website:

⁶² CD Universe,
<http://www.cduniverse.com/search/xx/music/pid/7294854/a/Holy+Hip+Hop+Taking+The+Gospel+To+The+Streets+Vol+4.htm>, (04/03/08)

Hip Hop can be Holy to serve Our Master, Jesus Christ. Music is neither good nor bad in itself but it depends on what the purpose of it is for by the individual. How it's used determines its value; whether it's used for God or whether it's used for Satan. The word "Holy" in the Bible means to "separate or set apart for God's use or for special use." Hip Hop is a music genre. It has no "intrinsic" qualities of good or bad. You and I both know that the words to songs carry the major part of their value. [...]It's not the music that's the enemy. It's the presentation of the fruit. If the masses are continually fed "sour lemons" then the demand for lemons will continue because it's what they are "used" to and have become dependent on. If you turn those same sour lemons into "lemonade" (pressed and sweetened by the Word of GOD), then the masses will gain a new taste and this is what the enemy fears. GOD has made Hip Hop Holy! Now use it to establish His Kingdom in the Earth and win them back one at a time – James 5:20 – Amen.⁶³

By employing the use of a familiar form of music, Evangelical rap artists are able to entice young people interested in Hip-Hop might be inspired by the Word of God. Holy Hip Hop in this sense serves to both attract converts and steer sinners away from the vices that plague their daily lives, especially in urban areas that can be rife with temptations. Vices such as drugs, alcohol, and pre-marital sex are all accessible on a daily basis, and although secular Hip-Hop endorses such indulgences, Holy Hip Hop guides young people away from such heathenish indulgences. Groups such as California's 'Catch2' hope that their message will help other Christians be 'Ready' (title of one of their songs) to see the face of the Lord.

That I might be ready.
Ready for what?
To see His face.
Bowed down on my knees, thanking Him for His grace.
For taking my place, pleading my case, and putting a smile on my face.
And helping me run this race.⁶⁴

By encouraging humility in the event of an awesome experience such as coming face to face with God, 'Ready' strengthens teenagers at any time that they might feel like they are not strong enough to continue.

⁶³ Holy Hip Hop, <http://www.holyhiphop.com/streetgospel101.html>

⁶⁴ The Christian Examiner,

http://www.christianexaminer.com/Articles/Articles%20Feb05/Art_Feb05_07.html, April 15, 2008

Conclusions

Evangelicals hope that young people all across the United States will sing the lyrics to Third Day's "Livin' for Jesus" on a daily basis: "Well that's alright, I'm just fine. Done made up my mind that I'm livin' for Jesus."⁶⁵ Evangelical musicians, be they rockers, rappers, or any others have the unique ability to reach young people in a way that pastors and parents do not. Music provides an avenue by which to reach young people that few others have the ability to traverse. Consequently, the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement incorporates "mirror" musicians to help young Christians feel vindicated in their religious beliefs – after all, these Christian musicians are just as cool as their secular counterparts. When young Evangelicals feel comfortable with themselves and their choice in music, they are more likely to show their friends the new CD they just purchased, and a new Christian is born.

⁶⁵ Third Day Lyrics, <http://www.christianrocklyrics.com/thirdday/livinforjesus.php>

Chapter Four:

Camps, Recreation, and Extra-Academic Institutions

In addition to concerts and rallies, young American Evangelicals participate in other aspects of the Christian Youth Movement. Camps and leadership academies complete the process of Evangelical socialization initiated by parents and church families. By providing outlets for socialization and opportunities for professional advancement, Evangelicals have effectively enveloped young people in a youth culture that simultaneously provides and excludes.

*Jesus Camp*⁶⁶

Perhaps one of the most controversial documentary films to have debuted in the last decade, *Jesus Camp* chronicles the events of Becky Fischer's "Kids on Fire Summer Camp." The film focuses on three children who enroll in the camp. The most striking of the three children is a young boy named Levi. One of the first glimpses of this surprisingly eloquent child occurs within a few minutes of the onset of the film. Fischer meets Levi in a rather awkward encounter in a hallway. Here Levi admits that he was saved at the age of five, after realizing that he "wanted more out of life." It is obvious throughout the entirety of the film that Ms. Fischer believes that the youth of America is crucial to the success and perpetuation of the Evangelical tradition –she places a great emphasis on political rhetoric, saying that the separation between church and state can only be narrowed by a generation of strong-minded, politically aware young Evangelicals. A Pentecostal children's pastor, Fischer argues that if young Muslims are

⁶⁶ *Jesus Camp: The Movie*, www.jesuscampthemovie.com, (2006)

being indoctrinated into a militaristic religious environment in the Middle East, then it is only logical that Evangelical Christians train their youth in an attempt to one-up them. Fischer's rationale is not uncommon within the Evangelical community. As was evidenced at the Pleasant Valley Community of Prayer and Praise in Groton, Connecticut⁶⁷, members of the Evangelical youth are considered an 'army' that must be trained to convert others and spread the Word of the Lord. Members of the Evangelical Youth must "take up the sword"⁶⁸ of Evangelicalism and spread the news as far and wide as possible. *Jesus Camp's* Becky Fischer mentions that children are 'usable', and that they present clean slates upon which religious values may be etched. The more heavily these children are indoctrinated, the more likely they are to perpetuate the Evangelical tradition and simultaneously save more souls.

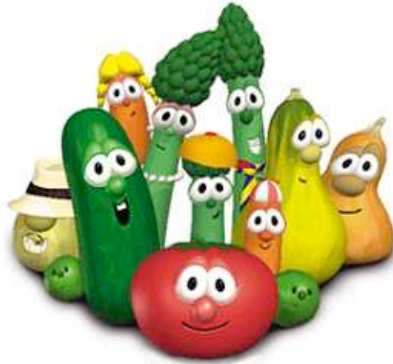
If Evangelical children are to act as members of God's earthly army, then the camps they might attend are essentially religious boot camps. In *Jesus Camp*, children such as Levi, Rachael, and Tory are taught to regurgitate information until they are old enough to understand it, at which point they begin to proselytize to others. At one point in the film, while professing God's word on the streets of Washington, D.C., the children ask themselves if others think they might be selling something – the reality is that they are. These young Evangelicals are trained to do so – to peddle their beliefs to others in the hopes that they will subscribe to the Evangelical tradition, and thus become saved.

Evangelical children in America are attending camps in which they are taught Scripture in the same breath as anti-abortionism, and to love their neighbor but to spite those who act against Jesus Christ. Many of these young men and women are home

⁶⁷ First visit to Pleasant Valley Community of Prayer and Praise, Spring 2007

⁶⁸ Jim Smith, Youth Pastor, Pleasant Valley Community of Prayer and Praise (Spring 2007)

schooled by their Evangelical parents, watch Evangelical cartoons such as the popular Veggie Tales, and spend every waking moment living and learning within their religious tradition.



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The success of “Jesus Camps”, as they have come to be termed, can be measured in a number of ways. Evangelical camps throughout the United States contribute to the success of the youth movement by proselytizing to children that will then be able to act as missionary workers, and thus draw many other souls to the Evangelical cause. Many children who have been brought up in conservative Evangelical families tend to lack participation in a lot of events and activities that have come to define the American upbringing. Summers away at sleep-away camps can be considered one of the most influential times in a child’s life; helping to raise self-esteem, cultivate independence and friendships that may last a lifetime. “Jesus Camps” provide an Evangelical alternative in which families can participate with their children, and know that Christian morals and values and Evangelical political rhetoric are being imparted upon their offspring. While secular children all over the country attend sleep-away camps with log cabins and bonfires, Evangelical children attend mirror camps with the same log cabins – the main difference being the presumed presence of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the children

⁶⁹ Image retrieved from <http://www.schwimmerlegal.com/images/veggietales.jpg>

who attend “Jesus Camps”, though they might at first glance seem irrational and fanatical, are actually just like other children their age: energetic, hormonal, and searching for their individual identity within the greater American Society. “Jesus Camps”, therefore, proselytize to the Youth of America while simultaneously providing a cultural and social identity for Evangelical youth, in which they do not feel as though they are absentees of the socializing events that truly define an American upbringing.

Hell House

Halloween is a holiday that is representative of the young American upbringing. While many children are running around in witch and devil costumes begging for candy and other treats, Evangelicals at Trinity Church outside of Dallas, Texas host a haunted house that expects to attract over thirteen thousand Christians every year. This is not a classic haunted house with ghosts and goblins. Instead the Hell House is filled with scenes of terror such as rape, abortion, and other acts that are seen as immoral by the greater Evangelical community. Although from an outside perspective it might seem that Hell House employs scare tactics to convert young people, it should be made clear that the people attending the function at Trinity Church are already rather strong in their beliefs. HellHouse simply verifies the reasons why they continue to remain in their faith and evangelize to others.

TeenMania Honor Academy

After summer camp is over, and Halloween has lost its allure, leadership academies are an attractive opportunity for socially involved young Christians. The TeenMania Honor Academy in Garden Valley, Texas is a leadership institution that is

designed for young Christians, ages eighteen to twenty-four, who find themselves in a transitional point of life. The Honor Academy's individual website itself clearly delineates the agenda it supports. Its core values revolve around Faith, Integrity, Relationships, Vision, and Excellence. Through faith in God and strength of character, the Honor Academy helps 'interns' to forge lifelong relationships in and through Jesus Christ. By encouraging interns to strive for excellence, TeenMania contributes to the overall potential of young Evangelical Christians to achieve anything they can conceive, be it a college degree or a legislative career. According to a number of parents, the TeenMania Honor Academy prepares students who find themselves at the crucial point between high school and college to live according to "God's plan" and to face the American "culture of today."⁷⁰ According to one parent, "leaders are not born, they are made" – and the Honor Academy helps to form the Christian leaders of the future.

TeenMania's Honor Academy espouses that idea that it is teaching young people how to think, and not what to think.⁷¹ Through such courses as 'Character Development', 'World View', and gender specific 'Growth Groups', interns are taught to be "Christ-like" in their character and worldly outlook. The website indicates that "The Honor Academy is designed to cultivate and develop your leadership potential while preparing you to impact today's world for Christ. All curriculum is designed to give you a balanced, strategic approach for developing leadership skills and godly character. In classes you will be taught how to think rather than what to think."⁷² By educating young people in a specific way, the Honor Academy hopes to provide young people with the

⁷⁰ Teen Mania Honor Academy Video, YouTube, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=KtEkD9lh4Vw> (4/25/08)

⁷¹ Classes, Teen Mania Honor Academy, <http://www.honoracademy.com/classes.php>

⁷² Ibid.

resource by which they might become educated in the correct way – such that they might grow to lead Christians successfully in the coming decades.

The Honor Academy works similarly to other extra-academic institutions that are meant to supplement institutionalized education. In other words, Teen Mania’s Honor Academy exists as a “mirror” institution to Duke University’s Talent Identification Program (TIP), whose website denotes: “Since 1980, the Duke Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP) has been a world leader in identifying academically talented students and providing innovative programs to support the development of their optimal potential.”⁷³ TIP Programs are designed to train high school students to think in a particular way, such that they are able to provide insight into social and political issues, in the hopes of changing the world for the better. The Teen Mania Honor Academy completes the same task, from an Evangelical Christian perspective.

Teen Mania Extreme Camps

TeenMania hosts its yearly Extreme Camp on the TM campus in Garden Valley, Texas. The Extreme Camps, TeenMania’s newest endeavor, are marketed to Christian teens and young adults by providing them with the proper avenues by which to worship the Lord and simultaneously express themselves. Much like any other summer camp, TeenMania’s camp offers games of soccer and volleyball, with variations of other popular games such as “human foosball.” The camp also draws a number of popular Christian bands to perform while camp is in session, which appeals to those Christians who are interested in the musical aspects of the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement. Furthermore, influential Christian speakers pay visit to the TeenMania Extreme Camp in

⁷³ Duke University, Talent Identification Program, www.tip.duke.edu

an effort to keep the attendees mindful of the true reason they are attending camp – to learn to live by and through the words of scripture and the tenets of Evangelical Christianity. True to its name, the Extreme Camps encourage young Evangelicals to live their lives in an ‘extreme’ way for Jesus Christ. By entertaining and provoking young Christians, Teen Mania, through the Extreme Camps, hopes to inspire these young people to evangelize their faith to the ends of the Earth.

Global Expeditions

Evangelization and mission trips are one of the most important aspects of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement. Americans are consistently concerned with foreign issues of human interest. Evangelicals play off of this trend and compound it with religious evangelism and missionary work. The Youth Movement, therefore, guides young people towards an interest in evangelism through institutions like TeenMania. Global Expeditions’ very “heartbeat”⁷⁴ is to “provoke” young people to spread the love and message of Jesus Christ to the “ends of the earth.”

Mission trips travel to such countries as Argentina, Cambodia, El Salvador, Madagascar, Romania, and Jamaica. Each particular location spotlights a particular mission. For example, mission trips to Ethiopia simultaneously focus on evangelism and “Aid and Comfort.” The “cause” in Madagascar is to “Provide” a Godly course for the island nation that has not yet seen the influence of western culture. In Honduras, TeenMania espouses a starkly different mission: that of “Crusade.” According to the Global Expeditions website, Honduras suffers from the malady of outdated Catholicism

⁷⁴ TeenMania, Global Expeditions, Mission Statement, <http://www.globalexpeditions.com/about.php?show=MissionStatement>

that is virtually holding the population of the country prisoner. Young Evangelicals can then help to spread the influence of a grace-based faith in a country that could use all the help it can get.

Teen Mania Global Expeditions are different from other aspects of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement in that the GE's are geared towards young Christians who are both strong in their faith and determined to actively spread it all over the world. By bringing together young people of a similar age group and religious tendency, Global Expeditions provide an early avenue for young Christian leaders to gain experience in the realm of missionary work and evangelism.

Conclusions

The preceding aspects of the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement work in concordance with concerts and rallies, but point to a very different Evangelical purpose: that of future insurance in the perpetuation of Evangelical Christianity in the United States. That is to say, camps and leadership academies are intended to train the leaders of tomorrow according to a clearly Christian worldview. As Evangelical Christians take the spotlight in current and future elections, it is clear that graduates of TeenMania's Honor Academy, for example, will enjoy powerful positions in Congress and beyond.

Chapter Five:

Evangelical Secondary Education

Evangelicals are more concerned each day with the state of education in the United States. David Sikkink writes that “[E]vangelicals are fomenting a culture war over the direction of public schools at least on schooling issues, and their moral absolutism makes them fervent and uncompromising in their efforts to bring religion back into schools through political means.”⁷⁵ Evangelical families are no doubt upset about the fact that prayer has been completely removed from public learning institutions, and certainly outraged about the fact that some are removing the words “under God” from their recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance. Thus, Evangelical parents may choose to home school their children for a number of different reasons: a smaller classroom environment, a specific slant on a given curriculum. Essentially, however, the basic philosophy behind many Evangelical parents home schooling their children is that they would prefer to keep secular ideologies out of the minds of their children. For whatever reason, be it religious or political, these parents believe that home schooling is the best option for their children.

However, perhaps the foremost problem that Evangelicals find with public education is that it does nothing to ameliorate the sexual corruption of American Youth. To compare, Muslim families in the United States are also faced with the task of educating their children in an atmosphere that they deem to be both intellectually stimulating and properly aligned with their particular faith. The plight of American Muslim families is highlighted in a recent New York Times article:

⁷⁵ Smith, 130

Across the United States, Muslims who find that a public school education clashes with their religious or cultural traditions have turned to home schooling. That choice is intended partly as a way to build a solid Muslim identity away from the prejudices that their children, boys and girls alike, can face in schoolyards. But in some cases, [...] the intent is also to isolate their adolescent and teenage daughters from the corrupting influences that they see in much of American life.⁷⁶

The majority of Evangelical parents are one hundred percent familiar with the curriculum at local public schools and remain cognizant of the potentially corrupt mentality that would be imparted upon their impressionable children. What are Evangelical parents to do when their children are learning about sexual intercourse and other “morally deviant” acts in elementary school? Among many Evangelicals, the only answer they see fit is home-schooling. According to a statistic in *Jesus Camp*, seventy-five percent of home-schooled, American children are being raised in an Evangelical household.⁷⁷ That is to say, of the 1.1 million home-schooled children in the United States,⁷⁸ 825,000 of them are Evangelical Christians. In the documentary *Friends of God*,⁷⁹ written and directed by Alexandra Pelosi, a family of twelve (husband, wife, and ten children) that strikes the viewer visually due to its number – indicates that all ten of the children (and one on the way) have been and are intended to be home-schooled. The education of a child is a full-time job, and Evangelicals take this job very seriously. Many Evangelical parents would rather sacrifice their own time and money, in exchange for the proper education and moral guidance of their offspring.

A problem arises, however, when Evangelicals attempt to reconcile home-schooling and societal integration. What happens when these children become teenagers,

⁷⁶ Neil MacFarquhar, *Resolute or Fearful, Many Muslims Turn to Home Schooling*: National Report, *New York Times*, 3/26/08

⁷⁷ Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, *Jesus Camp*. DVD. Magnolia Pictures. USA, 2006.

⁷⁸ National Center for Education Statistics 2003,
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2004115>

⁷⁹ Pelosi, Alexandra. *Friends of God – A Roadtrip with Alexandra Pelosi*. DVD. HBO Documentaries, 2006.

pubescent and awkward, who then must transition into a college lifestyle, having never really experienced any social situations outside the family or church? There are a number of options for such students, one of which is to pursue admission at the relatively young yet vibrant Patrick Henry College in Purcellville, Virginia. The Patrick Henry homepage⁸⁰ flaunts a seemingly diverse group of hopeful looking students who seem elated at having walked out of the halls of the school with an evangelical higher education, a college diploma, and the thought that some day they might change the world for the better. Jim Smith, Youth Pastor at the Pleasant Valley Community of Prayer and Praise indicates that young people should strive for acceptance at a college that provides the opportunity for students to transition into the world while simultaneously strengthening their religious beliefs. The freshman year at Patrick Henry assists students in transitioning from a world where their parents encouraged academic rigor to one where they must propel themselves. All of a sudden, these home-schooled children must balance scheduled courses and extracurricular ambitions – not to mention new faces, roommates and the other intricacies inherent to the freshman year. Although drinking is demonized and smoking sinful, students at PHC deal with their fair share of worldly issues that pertain to young adults all over the world.

Arguably, many if not all children who are home-schooled are removed, to some extent, from the greater society. Whether in terms of social skills or number/quality of friendships, home-schooled children do suffer at the hands of the alternative form of education. Sikkink's article points to the inherent problems of home-schooling, and reveals testimony from an Evangelical church-woman:

Kids are going to go out in the world sometime. You can't totally shelter them from everything. I am not against home schooling – and my kids are talking

⁸⁰ Patrick Henry College, www.phc.edu

about doing that – but we’re separating [from the world]. Kids eventually are going to get out there.⁸¹

Although there are internal divisions within the Evangelical community in regards to the theories behind home-schooling, there is no doubt that those who support it believe that they are only strengthening the mental and moral fiber of young people who are meant to be perpetually militant in the ways of Evangelicalism, and further lead the United States down the right path into the twenty-first century.

After some Evangelical parents home-school their children, they are faced with the decision of whether to send their carefully guarded and trained children to college. Patrick Henry College in Purcellville, Virginia, established in 2000, provides the Evangelical educational alternative to liberal arts colleges and other such institutions of higher education. PHC is one of the most prominent Christian liberal arts colleges in the country. President Graham Walker describes the school as a “classical Christian liberal arts college”⁸² where every student receives an invaluable education while affirming Christian beliefs and ethics. Patrick Henry College has as its mission the training of educated and moral human beings who will remain loyal to their Christian faith. The PHC vision indicates the desire to “aid in the transformation of American society.”⁸³ Christian young adults from all across the country apply to PHC in the hopes that they will gain more than knowledge from the Christian liberal arts experience while concomitantly strengthening their faith. All students at Patrick Henry must be willing to abide by the Biblical Worldview that the college espouses.⁸⁴ PHC espouses virtually all

⁸¹ Smith, 133

⁸² <http://www.phc.edu/about/PresidentsGreeting.asp>

⁸³ <http://www.phc.edu/about/mission.asp>

⁸⁴ <http://www.phc.edu/about/BiblicalWorldview.asp>

standard Evangelical opinions on everything from education to marriage, salvation to sanctification, in the hopes of appealing to a wide array of Christians.

In accordance with the militancy of the “Disciple Generation”⁸⁵, the curriculum at Patrick Henry exemplifies a similar inclination, as is illustrated here:

Like many Christian colleges, Patrick Henry hadn’t quite figured out what to do with the heretical liberal arts. If founder Michael Farris had been teaching Freedom’s Foundations, for example, the class would have sounded very different. Farris viewed curriculum much as a general might view a battle plan. He wanted his students to study Kant in the same way the army wanted soldiers to study a map of Baghdad and learn a few words of Arabic. *Knowing the enemy would make them better soldiers and ultimately win more converts to the American way.* There was neither truth nor beauty to be found in Kant, Nietzsche, or most of the philosophers taught at Patrick Henry. They were the equivalent of bombed-out cities crawling with insurgents, or giant oil spills: messes left behind that had to be mopped up before they spread any farther.⁸⁶

That passage not only illustrates the militancy of the Evangelical Youth Movement as is exemplified on Christian college campuses, but it also points to the idea that Christianity is equal to if not synonymous with Americanism in the minds of Evangelical Christians.

An interesting point to consider is how Patrick Henry might appeal to would-be applicants from various places in the United States. The school offers a beautiful campus, a safe environment, and a solid liberal arts education. Dorm life is very safe and conservative, and women’s dorms are kept locked at all times for maximum security. Similar to any other college in the United States, students can get involved in Drama and Student Government, Athletics and Debate Team – all in an effort to forge friendships that will last a lifetime. Surely, applicants to PHC are heavily encouraged by their Christian parents to apply to such a God-loving and morally upright institution. It is the hope of many parents and students alike that the friendships formed at Patrick Henry College will bloom into relationships that might lead to marriage and subsequent

⁸⁵ Term coined by Lauren Sandler, *Righteous: Dispatches from the Evangelical Youth Movement*

⁸⁶ Hanna Rosin, *God’s Harvard*, (Orlando, FL, Harcourt, Inc.), 108

procreation. In other words, although there is no doubt that PHC is an excellent academic institution – one of the hidden, yet extremely important possibilities it offers to applicants is that of Evangelical wedding bells. If any percentage of PHC students decides to marry, then the Evangelical community as a whole prospers as it, and its worldview, are perpetuated. Thus, Patrick Henry College is yet another manifestation of the “mirror universe” Evangelicals have created within the United States. Since young Evangelicals who apply to colleges might be apprehensive about applying to secular liberal arts colleges in the northeast – where men and women share bathrooms and locker rooms and can stay awake till all hours of the night – Patrick Henry offers a Christian alternative to the college experience, thus including thousands of young evangelicals into the greatest rite of passage in the American experience.

“God’s Harvard”

Beleaguered by modernity in many established institutions, evangelicals built alternative institutions designed to insulate themselves from modernity’s corrosive effects. Independent congregations came into existence, as did separate mission organizations and publishing firms for evangelical books, tracts, and Sunday School material. And, of course, schools from first grade through college were established[.]⁸⁷

There are no fraternities or sororities here... no keg parties or otherwise socially deviant behavior. Drinking and smoking are heavily frowned upon at Patrick Henry College, a school that stands at the most conservative wing of the American Evangelical Youth movement. No, Evangelical Christian colleges all over the country offer a much more simple, more pure way of life to their students.

⁸⁷ Phillip E. Hammond, *On Maintaining Plausibility: The Worldview of Evangelical College Students*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Sep., 1984), 226

Patrick Henry College boasts “For Christ & For Liberty” on its homepage. According to Hanna Rosin, many Evangelical students who earn perfect scores on the SAT are rejecting the coquetting of Ivy League schools for ones such as Patrick Henry.⁸⁸ PHC offers Evangelical Students the training they might need to convert others and to help indicate to the masses the importance of Christianity within American society. Furthermore, as Evangelical youth become more politically inclined, students at Patrick Henry begin to strive for seats in congress and positions at the Department of State.

Patrick Henry also offers Teen Leadership Camps in the summers, similar to TeenMania’s Honor Academy and Duke University’s TIP. Ranging from Music Camps to College Prep, Patrick Henry is one of the many umbrella institutions that offer a teen camp. On its website, Patrick Henry is quick to point out that the camp is intended for teenagers who subscribe to the worldview held at PHC. Anyone who does not abide by this worldview and the attached Honor Code will be expelled immediately from the Teen Camp.

Every sub-camp of the PHC Teen Leadership Camp is geared towards worldly young evangelicals who seek to make an impact in their environment in a very specific way. For example, the Music Camp is intended for students who would like to become more musically inclined so as to “worship and serve the Lord” better⁸⁹, while the ‘Roots of Leadership’ camp prepares campers to be the evangelical leaders of the future.

Campers are quoted on the website, saying things such as:

“Teen Camps ARE AMAZING! I've been going to them for 3 years, and I absolutely love them! I've met amazing people who are some of my best friends now and I also have grown immensely academically and most importantly, in my walk with Christ.”⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Hanna Rosin, *God’s Harvard*, 9

⁸⁹ 2007 PHC Teen Leadership Camps, <http://www.phc.edu/teencamps/camps.asp>

⁹⁰ Brittany Thomas, PHC Summer Camper, Ibid.

Thus, PHC contributes to the American Evangelical Parallel Youth Culture that affects teenagers and college age students by serving as an equivalent institution to other teen camps (such as YMCA Summer Camps) and small, liberal arts colleges, respectively. Institutions such as Patrick Henry College serve as both comforting support systems and legitimating authorities in the Evangelical quest for acceptance and widespread acknowledgement.

Chapter Six:

Youth Ministry in Southeastern Connecticut



Figure 1 - Pastor Jim Smith and young members of the PVCPP, courtesy of Jim Smith

A leader forms a friendship with a teenager, on campus, at a ball game, at the local MacDonald's, or wherever youth hang out. Friendship gives the leader the right to be heard.⁹¹

Jim Smith is the Youth Pastor of the Pleasant Valley Community of Prayer and Praise, a non-denominational Evangelical Church in Groton, Connecticut⁹². Raised a Baptist, Pastor Jim felt a call to the ministry at the age of sixteen. However, upon informing his mother of the calling he had felt, she immediately turned him off his initial inclinations. She indicated to Jim that ministry provided insufficient means by which to live; and money talks. As a result, Jim Smith pursued a career in nuclear chemistry. He

⁹¹ Shelley, *The rise of evangelical youth movements*, 52

⁹² I had the great opportunity of meeting with and interviewing Pastor Jim on February 26, 2008. The following information was gleaned from our conversation that day, as well as subsequent e-mail correspondence.

was trained in the Navy, which eventually brought him to southeastern Connecticut in 1982. Upon his arrival to the area, Pastor Jim sought a Baptist church where he could feel at home. At the time, Pleasant Valley was the only Southern Baptist church in New England, and Jim felt led there. As the church grew in numbers and away from the Southern Baptist tradition, it became apparent within the community that a full-time Youth Pastor was of the essence for Pleasant Valley. After some careful thought and immense amounts of prayer, Jim fulfilled his calling in the fall of 1999 by becoming the Youth Pastor at PVCPP.

When asked about the decision to become a part of the Evangelical Christian ministry, Jim Smith highlighted the importance of a hearing and paying attention to a ‘call’. According to Jim, not everyone is equipped with the talents necessary to run a ministry. Many people find that they get burned out going to retreats, concerts and other such events with teens and pre-teens. Jim Smith, however, was called by God to help young people through their formative years. Smith “believes in kids” and in their potential for godliness and leadership throughout the overall community. Additionally, Smith illustrated that young people in this particular age group are malleable, and simultaneously express the need for positive and Godly influence in their lives. Having received God’s call to youth ministry, Jim highlights the need for his particular ministry within the overall American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement. “America at large is doing a lousy job of instilling moral values into teenagers,” and it is up to Evangelical Christians involved in the ministry and the movement overall to rectify this malady.



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Pleasant Valley Community of Prayer and Praise is more than well equipped to cater to Christians of any age. The youth ministry itself is broken up into three separate groups, all of which harbor very different yet specific motivations: JV Ignite (Middle School ministry), Ignite (High School ministry), and the Young Adult ministry. Each aspect of the Pleasant Valley Youth Ministry fills a particular need for the young people involved in it. At first glance, the PVCPP youth program seems much like Christian counseling, in that Pastor Jim and his staff cater to the emotional, spiritual, athletic/recreational and academic needs of young people. Those involved with the youth ministry would call it much more than just a counseling program, however. JV Ignite, the middle school ministry, caters to the needs of eleven to thirteen year olds. Pastor Jim indicated the importance of providing a positive role model for children of this age, because this particular age group struggles with identity and association more than any other. The boys and girls in JV Ignite are split up in their meetings – a tactic that makes it much simpler to preach and talk to the awkward and angsty youngsters.

Ignite, the high school ministry, is Jim’s favorite aspect of the PVCPP Youth Ministry. “High schoolers think they know everything”, said Smith “which is part of what makes this job so fun!” Ranging from ages fourteen to eighteen, high schoolers

⁹³ Symbol for Pleasant Valley Youth Ministry, www.pvcpp.org

face endless amounts of difficult decisions on a daily basis. More often than not, these young people might gravitate towards destructive decisions that are inherent to the process of growing up. The youth ministry at PVCPP provides the guiding force that should steer high school kids away from these young choices. Although the ministry frowns upon pre-marital sex, alcohol and drug abuse, it became clear that students are never rejected for their decisions, but rather informed of God's love and forgiveness – two qualities which teenagers yearn for). The youth ministry then serves as a force that helps teenagers make better life choices that would otherwise go unnoticed without a positive influence such as a youth pastor or other young role models.

The final aspect of the youth ministry at Pleasant Valley accommodates the needs of young adults in the area. In regards to young people who face the decision of whether or not to go to college, or what college to attend, Pastor Jim encourages them to “seek God and find what he has for them.” By working alongside parents and other members of the community, Smith works with kids and parents in order to guide them towards where they feel led. Jim indicated that Christian students have the option of going to a Christian or a secular school. Clearly there are pros and cons to both. Non-Christian schools obviously espouse a very secular worldview, although according to an article on the Christian Evangelical worldview,⁹⁴ it has been noted that Christian students at secular schools actually become stronger in their faith because they need to battle with the discontents associated with their faith. Smith emphasizes that all his students should “know what they believe” and “separate what a professor wants from what they believe.” The bottom line, Smith indicates, is that students employ the use of their “muscle of

⁹⁴ Hammond, *On Maintaining Plausibility: The Worldview of Evangelical College Students*

choice”⁹⁵ in regards to any life choices they might have to make. Clearly, only faith, prayer, and active participation in ministry can strengthen that specific muscle.

“People don’t need to be talked into the Bible... We’re just going to have fun!” The American Evangelical Youth Movement is one that spans from grassroots to Godstock. At Pleasant Valley, young people attend church every Sunday, a Teen Worship service on Thursdays, and Wednesday night Bible Study. Sundays offer the nuts and bolts of the Christian faith, Thursdays include a more “hip” way of worship for young people, and Wednesday nights feature small group work and more personal time with Pastor Jim and the Lord. Young people may choose any or all of the events offered at PVCPP, although it is encouraged that the faith be more than just something they “do”, but part of who they are. Additionally, Smith points to the importance of perspective. In other words, he wants young Christians at PVCPP to know that they are part of a greater movement than themselves. He encourages participation in events such as OverTime, part of Word of Life ministries. OverTime brings young Christians from southeastern Connecticut together for free food, bowling/activities and faith. Additionally, OverTime serves as an outreach program, wherein kids can bring their friends who are either Christian, open to faith, or seeking anything to hang out and learn about God. Jim indicates that it is important for these young Christians to grasp that they are part of a greater Youth Movement because it puts the entire cause in a wider perspective. In an effort to supplement the regional and national experience, PVCPP funds a trip to Amherst, MA every September for the students to attend Acquire the Fire, a national event similar to BattleCry that hosts Christian bands and important speakers. Smith

⁹⁵ Term coined by one of the members of the youth ministry of PVCPP, as indicated by Jim Smith

illustrated that Christian kids, like other kids, just want to hear good music... with a tonal emphasis on the *good*.

The priorities of the American Evangelical Christian Movement are 1) to encourage conversion (or a “moment” in which to be “born again”), 2) to aid in the search for identity, and 3) to provide young people with the ample avenues for creative worship. The conversion experience is one that is symbolic of the Evangelical tradition as a whole. In speaking about conversion, Smith indicated that it is his job to incite young people to make the choice to follow God – but this choice is not one that should be made in an emotional or irrational state. Rather, young people should feel led and overcome by the Lord, thus leading them down the path towards conversion. The ways in which Smith and the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement can assist in the journey towards this moment is through creative worship events such as OverTime, Acquire the Fire, and outreach aspects of Youth Ministry. By keeping young people interested and intrigued (with concerts, popular Christian music, summer camps and retreats), they are more likely to maintain a constant dialogue and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The responsibility then lies on people like Jim Smith to remain accessible to young Christians. Smith chooses to employ the use of FaceBook to remain in contact with young people he preaches to on a weekly or daily basis. Additionally, weekly e-mails to young kids and their parents point to upcoming events of interest to PVCPP Youth. Clearly, remaining current is extremely vital to the success of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement.



Figure 2 - Jim Smith mentoring a member of the PVCPP Youth Ministry, courtesy of Jim Smith

Jim Smith heavily supports the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Smith indicates the importance of “relationship over religion.” This personal relationship promoted by the Evangelical Christian Youth Movement encourages young people to find who they are with Jesus Christ. “Kids are looking for who they are”, said Smith, and God will help in the search.

During my visit to PVCPP in the Spring of 2007, Youth Pastor Jim Smith displayed and waved a large sword that was intended to indicate the necessary militancy of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement. When recently prodded about the apparent militancy of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement, Smith had the following to say. According to the pastor, there are three ways living as a Christian, all of which were originally indicated by the Lord, Himself: performing as an athlete, acting as a member of a family, and fighting as a soldier for Christ. The athlete is

determined and sets goals, much like any Christian should in his or her faith. The family member recognizes the importance of others, and how the individual experience affects the community at large. The soldier is skilled, trained and dedicated to a particular cause – such as serving the Lord or helping to convert others. In this respect, Smith posits, “Christianity needs to be more ‘militant’.” Although Smith negates the idea that the Youth Movement features indoctrination of any sort, he agrees that Christians should become more militant in their worship.

“Unless we help Christianity rise [in the United States], we will not have the country that was intended for us by the signers of the Declaration of Independence.” Christianity has been inextricably linked to the very existence of the United States since its formative days. One way to help Christianity “rise” in the United States (although it is the most populous religion in the country and the world) is by encouraging young people to take part in the political process. Every election since that of John F. Kennedy in 1960 has featured religious affiliation in the spotlight. As young Christians become young adults, their political engagement inches closer to the limelight. Smith can be quoted as saying “Sure, I would love to see Christians in every realm of life... from art to politics.” Nevertheless, the ultimate goal for Evangelical Christians in the United States is to keep a good set of morals in the Oval Office. Thus, the PVCPP Youth Ministry endorses leadership academies such as TeenMania Honor Academy and its affiliated ministries.

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Connecticut College, 2/26/08

InterVarsity at Connecticut College is very different from other colleges’ IV. On a given Tuesday evening there are about ten people in attendance. The circle of Christian students and faculty began by addressing a particular question that had been posed by a

member of their group: “Where have you seen God today, and where have you missed Him?”

After going around the circle addressing the posed question with answers such as “I saw God in the sunrise, I missed him when I was frustrated with my Organic Chemistry homework.”, a senior member of IV opened with a prayer. At this point in the evening, I felt as though I was at an underground society meeting at Connecticut College. These ten people clearly harbored a secret, but it wasn’t time to share it yet.

InterVarsity, like many aspects of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement is specifically geared towards the needs of those who subscribe to it. That is to say, at least in this installation of IV at CC, the group can provide counseling and camaraderie for those who need it. In sharing experiences in which students “missed God,” the group realized that many of them were experiencing similar frustrations, which then led to lapses in faith.

Overall, this particular meeting made it clear to me that, at least at Connecticut College, the purpose of Intersity is to maintain some sort of contact with Jesus Christ in every day life, such that, amid the hectic college lifestyle students lead at CC, the Lord might still have influence in daily occurrences and decisions. The secret was eventually revealed: God is in every moment of every day, in the positive and the negative, available to help all of His children through the day.



⁹⁶ Image retrieved from http://www.ivcfnynj.org/images/tag_line.jpg (04/29/08)

Conclusion

Young Evangelicals and many other American teenagers can no longer escape the far-reaching grasps of the American Evangelical Christian Youth Movement. Evangelicals have made sure that every form of media has been covered in an effort to “provide an outlet for millions of young Christians to express their faith and still rock.”⁹⁷ Figureheads of the Evangelical tradition currently grace the covers of Rolling Stone magazine, the headlines on the evening news, and CNN NewsFeeds all over the world. Evangelicalism is blossoming in a fashion similar to the explosion of a hydrogen bomb, wiping out the sinners who stand in its way. By empowering young Christians through faith, Evangelicals are training young Christians in such a way that they look forward to possibilities of political power so as to further propagate the religious tradition with which they affiliate.

As “outreach” events enjoy a high level of success, Evangelical Christianity has become one of the fastest growing religious movements in the United States to date. Part of this phenomenon can be attributed to the wild success of the Evangelical Youth Movement, which is enhanced and perpetuated through various forms of ministry, including camps and music festivals. Supplemented by online ministry manifest in MySpace and FaceBook, the Youth Movement draws in a large number of fervent young converts who will lead the Evangelical movement as a whole into and through a successful twenty-first century.

Evangelicals have shaped a parallel universe to American popular culture marketed towards young people between the ages of thirteen and twenty-five by way of mediums such as music, recreation and technology. Furthermore, Evangelicals employ

⁹⁷ NightLine: Online, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=IZyDHdeLoI0> (04/29/08)

the use of culture and media to encourage young Christians to reject the secular and immoral forms of media that bombard them every day. The success Evangelicalism will enjoy in the coming century will be attributed to the varying levels of religious affiliation that members may align themselves with. As young people search for a solid core of friends and their individuality, Evangelicals are able to harness the interest of potential converts in a way that provides a sense of community and a distinct identity in the Lord.

As a result, it is important for Americans to keep mindful of the potential power of young Evangelicals. Through the continued success of the Evangelical Youth Movement, Evangelical Christians are ensuring that their foot is in the door to every influential political office, where they will make their collective voice be heard. In the mid-twentieth century, individuals such as Billy Graham effectively opened doors for the blossoming Evangelical Christian movement.

[...]Politicians saw Graham either as a kindred spirit or as someone with whom it would be prudent to identify. Approximately one-third of all senators and one-fourth of House members asked for a special allocation of seats for crusade services, and scores of congressmen attended the Capitol rally [in 1952].

During these [five] weeks, Graham also met two men who would become close and controversial friends, Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson[.] With the help of such allies, Graham got permission to hold prayer sessions at the Pentagon each noon throughout the crusade. [...]This attention and encouragement apparently convinced Graham that *he and his supporters had considerable political clout*. Late in 1951, he had expressed the opinion, foreshadowing later predictions by the Religious Right, that “the Christian people of America will not sit idly by during the 1952 presidential campaign. [They] are going to vote as a bloc for the man with the strongest moral and spiritual platform, regardless of his views on other matters. I believe we can hold the balance of power.” This bloc, he suggested, would put forth a coordinated effort in which church members would follow “the instructions of their religious leaders.”⁹⁸

Currently, young Evangelicals join GreenPeace and PETA on the streets of Washington, D.C. and other major U.S. cities, in order to lobby for their individual and collective needs and concerns.

⁹⁸William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, (Broadway Books, 2005), 31

At this point, it is clear that the Youth Movement is achieving the goals it set out to accomplish. The Evangelical Christian Youth Movement both attracts potential converts to Jesus Christ and salvation by appearing accessible and affable – making sure to proselytize and save – and provides a sense of community and vindication of identity for young Evangelicals that have been raised within the tradition. As with any religious, social, or political movement however, there do exist associated discontents. Some would consider the Youth Movement a method by which to seduce and indoctrinate the youth of America, with Evangelical Colleges and leadership acting as evidence for those who chose to perceive programming institutions. With other such avenues such as Christian Dating websites and Christian blogs, it seems as though Evangelicals have created an entire parallel universe that exists in a mirror world to that of secular society. Through this “mirror society”, young Evangelicals are afforded the opportunity to exist within it alone. However, it is unjust to draw conclusions of intent from an outsider’s perspective. If the broadcast objective of Evangelical Christians is, in fact, to save the souls of young people who are falling into the grips of immorality, we must hold them at their word. One thing is for certain: at this moment, hundreds of thousands of young Christians throughout the United States are rejecting MTV and choosing Christ, ready to fight for their souls and those of others, armed with a BattleCry.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ NightLine: Online, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=IZyDHdeLoI0> (04/29/08)

Appendices

I

Campus Crusade for Christ: Statement of Faith

1. There is one true God, eternally existing in three persons -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -
- each of whom possesses equally all the attributes of Deity and the characteristics of personality. Jesus Christ is God, the living Word, who became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. Hence, He is perfect Deity and true humanity united in one person forever.
2. He lived a sinless life and voluntarily atoned for the sins of men by dying on the cross as their substitute, thus satisfying divine justice and accomplishing salvation for all who trust in Him alone.
3. He rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He lived and died. He ascended bodily into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Father, where He, the only mediator between God and man, continually makes intercession for His own.
4. Man was originally created in the image of God. He sinned by disobeying God; thus, he was alienated from his Creator. That historic fall brought all mankind under divine condemnation.
5. Man's nature is corrupted, and he is thus totally unable to please God. Every man is in need of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.
6. The salvation of man is wholly a work of God's free grace and is not the work, in whole or in part, of human works or goodness or religious ceremony. God imputes His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justified them in His sight.
7. It is the privilege of all who are born again of the Spirit to be assured of their salvation from the very moment in which they trust Christ as their Savior. This assurance is not based upon any kind of human merit, but is produced by the witness of the Holy Spirit, who confirms in the believer the testimony of God in His written word.
8. The Holy Spirit has come into the world to reveal and glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to men. He convicts and draws sinners to Christ, imparts new life to them, continually indwells them from the moment of spiritual birth and seals them until the day of redemption. His fullness, power and control are appropriated in the believer's life by faith.
9. Every believer is called to live so in the power of the indwelling Spirit that he will not fulfill the lust of the flesh but will bear fruit to the glory of God.
10. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body, which is composed of all men, living and dead, who have been joined to Him through saving faith. God admonishes His people to assemble together regularly for worship, for participation in ordinances, for edification through the Scriptures and for mutual encouragement.
11. At physical death the believer enters immediately into eternal, conscious fellowship with the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his body to everlasting glory and blessing.
12. At physical death the unbeliever enters immediately into eternal, conscious separation from the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his body to everlasting judgment and condemnation.
13. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth -- personally, visibly and bodily -- to

consummate history and the eternal plan of God.

14. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to disciple men of every nation. The fulfillment of that Great Commission requires that all worldly and personal ambitions be subordinated to a total commitment to "Him who loved us and gave Himself for us."

BattleCry, Teen Bill of Rights

We, a new generation of young Americans, in order to protect the heritage of our forefathers and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and generations to come, do affirm and pledge this declaration:

When character and morality are uncommon qualities,

When corporations and marketers seek to profit from our destruction,

When pop culture icons do not represent our values,

When Judeo-Christian beliefs are labeled as intolerant,

When activists seek to remove God from our schools,

When truth is deemed relative and unknowable,

It is necessary for us, the emerging generation of young Americans, to stand for what is right and reclaim the values that have made our nation great. We call our nation to a higher standard, a lifestyle based

not on convenience, but on character,

not on what is easy, but on what is excellent,

not on what feels good, but on what is good,

not on popularity, but on principle,

not on what is tempting, but on what is true.

We, as young Americans, assert our right to determine our future and the future of our great nation. We hold these truths as our God-given rights, and we embrace them with our hearts and our lives:

We recognize that God, our Creator, is the source of all truth.

We will live with honor, always striving to do the right thing, even when it is unpopular. We will be honest and truthful in matters large and small, regardless of the consequences.

We will take responsibility for our actions, and not point to governments, schools, celebrities, parents, or friends to justify our wrong decisions.

We recognize that we are responsible for our mistakes. We will pursue purity throughout our lives.

We will not be seduced by a fabricated idea of sex and love.

We will save our bodies and hearts for our future spouses, and once married we commit

to pursue faithful and enduring relationships.

We will see through the lies of drugs and alcohol and refuse to let any chemical influence our thinking or destroy our lives.

We will respect the authorities placed in our lives, even though some may not live as honorably as they should.

We will honor our parents, teachers, and other leaders.

We will reach out with compassion to the hurting and less fortunate, both in our society and around the world.

We refuse to be absorbed with our own comforts and desires.

We recognize the value of each life, whether born or unborn, and we seek to protect those who are unable to protect themselves.

We will do our best to represent and communicate our Creator to our peers, leaders, and society as a whole.

We will work to see that every person has the opportunity to see and hear about the true nature of our God.

In signing, we commit to pursue a life that exemplifies these standards.

We refuse to sit idly by and witness the destruction of our generation.

With God's help, we envision a bright and prosperous future for the nation we love.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Teen Bill of Rights, BattleCry, http://battlecry.com/teen_bor.php

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Interviews

Special Thanks to Jim Smith at the Pleasant Valley Community of Prayer and Praise for allowing me to interview him with prodding questions that would make any Christian pray for salvation.