

## A Revival of Religion

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Chowan Chaplain

Fourteen thousand attend a Youth for Christ-sponsored Faith Festival in an Evansville, Indiana, stadium, featuring folk singer Gene Cotten, black soul songster Jim Bolden, and Pat Boone . . . 3,000 teen-agers pay \$2.00 each, filling the Hollywood Palladium to hear rock, folk, and soul tunes, with the theme "pure Jesus" . . . 3,000 mostly "street types" gather in a Stanford University amphitheatre for a five-hour "Sweet Jesus Roll Away the Stone (or Rock) Concert" . . . Young people from four Grand Rapids (Michigan) Christian Reformed churches raise \$1,000 a month to place sixty-second Gospel "spots" daily on the city's three major rock stations.

These—and similar phenomena—are being assessed as indicative of a new religious mood; as a "revival" of religion which promises to sweep the country. Its subjects and chief promoters are adolescents, most of whom would profess—at best—a very marginal relationship to any "established" church. Its gospel is "joy," "ecstasy," "freedom to live": a gospel which is related—however vaguely—to the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Its major medium of communication is "pop" music.

The so-called "establishment" has taken note of this new religious mood within the youth culture, and has done so with varied response. NBC-TV's "First Tuesday," a documentary-type program, devoted a large segment of a recent program to the "Children of God," an adolescent community headquartered in Texas, but with "branches" in at least three or four major cities in the country. The February 9 issue of *Look* introduced most of its readers to the "Jesus Movement," centered in southern California. *Billboard* and *Variety* have predicted that the drug and sex themes—dominant on the pop music scene during the decade of the 60s—will be replaced during the coming decade by religious themes: especially songs about Jesus.

On the other hand, a recent convention of National Religious

Broadcasters heard much debate over the propriety of rock music as a vehicle for communicating the Gospel. Some owners of radio stations dedicated to the proclamation of the Christian message are reported to have contended that such music was too "suggestive"; "desecrating"; and tending to dwell too much upon individual experience, to the exclusion of sound doctrine. Many churches have probably remained "turned off" to most of the new sounds in music for similar reasons.

But the sounds are there; religious-sounding lyrics are there. Among the top tunes in 1969 and 1970 were at least two with strikingly evangelical lyrics: "O Happy Day" and "Spirit in the Sky." Who would have thought that a folk-and-ballad singer like Judy Collins could turn a two-hundred-year-old hymn into a best-seller—a feat she has accomplished with her rendition of "Amazing Grace"? Who would have thought that the composers of a rock opera, based upon the Passion Narrative in the Gospels, would be able to sell Broadway and movie rights to their musical score? Such is the case with "Jesus Christ, Superstar." The over-30 generation may find it difficult to imagine former Beatle, George Harrison, singing about "My Sweet Lord," or Bob Dylan singing praise to the Creator and lamenting man's disregard for the spiritual—as he does in a recent album entitled "New Morning."

Moreover, there is a kind of missionary zeal identified with many who have been caught up in the new religious sounds. Conversions are reported at religious rock festivals. It isn't uncommon for "name" talents to make open confession of their religious commitment. A forty-voice gospel choir—organized by students in a Detroit high school—reportedly outdraws the regular school choir at concerts. According to *Christianity Today*, entire rock groups have deserted the drug circuit and have dedicated their lives and music to Jesus. There are increasing indications (as with the "Children of God" and the "Jesus Movement") that youth are "turning off" hard drugs as they "turn on" to Jesus.

Does all of this trend towards a concern with religious themes portend a genuine revival? A spiritual awakening among the youth? Or, is it merely a "fad," a "kick," which has been—and will continue to be—promoted to the hilt simply because it is profitable to do so? What about the charge of doctrinal shallowness among the devotees of religious rock?

In a succeeding article I shall attempt to address the questions just raised, with some words of caution for both the traditionalist and for youth. Meanwhile (for my over-30 associates): It might be wise to start "taking stock of Jesus rock." It's liable to be around for some time to come.

## The Chowanian Salutes . . .



GRADY  
NUTT

for a  
meaningful  
Religious  
Emphasis  
Week

## Private Colleges Need Help

Private colleges, most of them church-related, are in deep financial trouble. They need help.

This is recognized as a widespread condition. In fact, some 20 states have already instituted programs aimed at helping the private colleges to meet their financial crisis brought on by dwindling private gifts and the great increase in operating costs due to inflation of the economy.

Because of the increased costs, most private colleges have been forced to raise tuition rates and increase their fee charges to the extent that they are no longer nearly competitive with public, tax-supported institutions.

Chowan College is an excellent example of this. The cost of attending Chowan College is greater than it is for North Carolina residents to attend any of our own state institutions. The same thing is true of most other private colleges. This places a severe strain on the recruiting and admissions offices at the private schools. Consequently, most private colleges this year have empty dormitory rooms.

At the same time, tax-supported institutions are flooded with applications and need additional facilities.

It has been suggested, with considerable merit, that the North Carolina Legislature set up a system of tuition grants to private colleges from state funds to help equalize the financial situation of the private colleges, which admittedly have an important place in our total scheme of education. They should not be forced to price themselves out of reach of the students they seek to serve.

The presidents of the alumni associations of 41 private colleges and universities have petitioned Gov. Bob Scott to support such a program.

It is argued that it would be much better to place the vacant dormitory rooms at private institutions financially within reach of the students than it would to construct additional dormitory facilities at state schools—a position which appears logical.

But one major state university official has said he believes such a program should be one for the federal government rather than for the state. Of course, he has made application to the Legislature for huge sums for his own institution and he wants these approved—regardless of the plight of private colleges.

But, already 20 states have inaugurated such plans. Besides, we know that it is an unhealthy thing for our country to turn to Washington for the solution to every need. We also know that when tax money goes all the way to Washington only a small portion of it ever gets back down to where the real need lies.

We have been to Washington for too many things already. It is time that the state and the local governments accepted responsibility and did the job which needs to be done, rather than relying on the federal government and at the same time turning over to Washington control of state and local affairs.

—Ahoskie Herald

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