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BOOK REVIEW

Laurie, Greg, and Ellen S. Vaughn. *Jesus Revolution: How God Transformed an Unlikely Generation and How He Can Do It Again Today*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018, 272 pp. \$9.43.

Reviewed by H. L. “Scooter” Ward Jr. Scooter is the associate pastor and music minister at Community Church of Santa Rosa Beach located in northwest Florida. He also serves as the president of the South Walton Ministry Association, a Kingdom-oriented, Christian cooperative of participating churches and parachurch organizations. He earned a B.A. in Theology from Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham, Alabama, and received his commission as an officer in the United States Air Force where he served on active duty for nearly ten years as an air battle manager on the E-3 Sentry (AWACS). A decorated combat veteran, Scooter also received an M.A. in Christian Studies and an M.Div. from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Georgia. He received a Doctor of Worship Studies degree from the School of Music and Worship at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. Scooter and his wife, Amy, have been married for

seventeen years and currently reside in Freeport, Florida. They both enjoy spending time with family, playing card games, swimming, and walking. When the opportunity presents itself, Scooter loves performing with his big band, *Cloud 9 Orchestra*, where he creatively shares the Gospel through music in patriotic and Christmas outreach events. He also leads two ukulele orchestras weekly at his church, and they perform monthly as an outreach ministry to two local memory care facilities.

In *Jesus Revolution*, authors Greg Laurie and Ellen Vaughn offer an insightful memoir on the Jesus Movement, noting the many ways in which God worked through a generation of young people from the late 1960s into the early 1970s to bring about a great spiritual awakening amidst a troubled and divided nation of America. “Christians who’d lost their ‘first love’ for Christ caught a fresh wind of the Spirit and were renewed and invigorated in their faith” (16). The most prevalent influence of this movement is that it “changed the face of worship in many churches for decades to come” (16). The authors identify striking similarities between the young Boomers and Millennials, highlighting the potential for another spiritual awakening led by the modern-day youth, who are “hungry for authenticity, a sense of community, and real care for people who are needy and marginalized” (17). The authors propose that another spiritual awakening can happen again through the transforming power of God at work in and through His people.

In his firsthand account of the Jesus Revolution, Laurie describes it as a transformation that began within each heart through the power of the Gospel and was fanned into flame by the movement of the Holy Spirit across the nation. “Revival, after all, is not about human plans, programs, campaigns, or particular denominational movements. It comes from the real revolution that only God can bring” (23). Rooted in the Word of God and a healthy local church, the authors clarify that the Jesus Revolution is not just a period in history: “It is also the process of an ongoing relationship with God. . . . But this book is also about the ongoing revolution over the long run, how the wheel of faith turns in all of our lives, and the surprising ways in which God can make it new and fresh” (24-25).

The first several chapters of the book describe the cultural landscape

that young Boomers experienced. The political discourse of the day was shaped more by image than by substance, as the realities of the Vietnam War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy were aired on the new medium of television. A continual exposure to the atrocities of war, infidelity of elected officials, racial injustice, and threat of nuclear annihilation gave way to a cultural upheaval that led countless Boomer youth to rebel against the Establishment and express their disdain through music, drugs, and sex. This hippie revolution explored the limits of mind, body, and spirit in its attempts to placate the emptiness of life. This period of darkness proved a ripe environment for the hope of the Gospel to spread like wildfire:

For uncountable numbers of baby boomers, the Jesus Revolution was a pivot point, and everything was different afterward. Many became pastors, lay leaders, missionaries, parachurch volunteers, and powerful influences for Jesus in their communities. Many went on to birth all kinds of strong, steady ministries to help people in need and bring glory to Jesus Christ. The sustainable legacy of the Jesus Revolution—something we can all learn from—is the lives of those for whom it wasn't just a golden '70s experience that passed, but an ongoing reality rooted in the Word of God and in a healthy local church (136-137).

Throughout the book the authors underscore that the impact of the movement was proportionate to its connection to the local church, God's ordained instrument to spread the Gospel to all nations.

In addition to the problems outside the church, there were challenges to overcome as the hippies found Jesus and started attending churches. When the long-haired, barefoot Christians showed up *en masse* and in casual clothing, many strait-laced churchgoers found it difficult to embrace these so-called "Christian hippies," as was the case for Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California. Pastor Chuck Smith, who led Greg Laurie to the Lord, was a prominent pastor who had to gently shepherd his flock to embrace this newest generation of believers. The simple, clear message given in the power of the Holy Spirit changed hearts, and He was just getting started.

Several key music groups birthed a fresh, new form of spiritual songs that became a “passionate vehicle for communicating their own experience of God’s love and reality” (131). Greg recalls, “It surely was not perfect, but the people loved and accepted each other” (148). Calvary Chapel went from rituals and playing religion to becoming more like Christ and growing in a relationship with Him.

Although there were pockets of churches that followed Smith’s example, it took the influential role of Billy Graham to substantiate the significance of this Jesus Revolution in the mainstream of conservative Christians. Graham outlined several characteristics between this Jesus Movement and the early church experience in the book of Acts. He notes it was centered on Jesus, Bible-based, and focused on an experience with Jesus Christ, not simply head knowledge. It also placed an emphasis on the Holy Spirit and Christian discipleship, which transformed the lives of the young people. It crossed racial and cultural divides with an evangelical fervor and a focus on the second coming of Christ. “If the Jesus Movement started as a spontaneous movement among hippies, Billy Graham helped to shape its second wave as traditionally conservative Christians got on board. The clearest manifestation of that was Explo ’72, a gathering of about eighty thousand young people in Dallas in August of that year” (167). Organized by Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ, this “religious Woodstock” was the largest camp meeting to take place in the United States up to that time, as recorded by the *New York Times*. The event concluded with a memorable moment as the stadium was covered in darkness. Billy Graham and Bill Bright began lighting candles one by one, then on to others who lit their neighbors’ candles until the entire stadium was aglow with thousands of candles. It remains a vivid memory in the minds of all who experienced it. The spiritual momentum that followed Explo ’72 led Greg Laurie and many of his hippie brothers and sisters to birth wonderful ministries for the Kingdom of God.

The late 1970s marked another cultural shift as “the pendulum of history had swung from the anti-materialistic, communal revolution of the flower people to a more consumer-centered, individualistic selfie default that seems to have reigned ever since” (197). Greg shared his personal struggles as he continued serving the Lord in ministry and growing in his

personal faith. He candidly shares the pain of losing his son, Christopher. Greg turned to his former pastor Chuck Smith for a word of counsel for going through hard times. Chuck said, “I don’t know why. But what I do know is that God is good and God loves me and God is working on His perfect plan in my life. So, I’m just content with that” (224). Greg was able to move forward in simple trust.

The final chapters of the book draw similarities between the Jesus Revolution and the Great Awakening. The authors affirm that “chaos and desperation are far more likely to lead to revival than comfort and complacency” (227). These awakenings or revolutions came about solely by the will of God and the power of His Spirit—“God grants revival” (232). The book concludes by proposing what another Jesus Revolution would look like today, sharing what always takes place in a revival—no matter the time period: God comes down to make His presence known, His Word pierces human hearts, love fills the community, joy is experienced, and the lost are drawn to the Savior. “We pray for revival today as a means of the extended glory of God, now and in eternity to come” (247). A present-day, Jesus Revolution is only a prayer away.