

The Stylish Tillich: Jay Bakker and Revolution Church
Plínio Degoes Jr., Esq., Ph.D.

In terms of secular media, Jay Bakker - son of 1980s television evangelists Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker and pastor of Revolution Church in Williamsburg, Brooklyn - is without a doubt one of the most interviewed Christian figures of the last decade. He has been featured in the following programs and publications among many others:

- Larry King invited him as a guest on both *Larry King Live* on CNN and the *Larry King Now* program on Ora TV
- CNN host Don Lemon interviewed Bakker on *The Joy Behar Show*
- The Sundance Channel released a six-episode mini-series about his life and religious beliefs called *One Punk Under God*
- *Rolling Stone* featured an article about Bakker, "Son of a Preacher Man"
- *The New York Times Magazine* included an article about him, "The Punk-Christian Son of a Preacher Man," and then another one, "God Loves Jay Bakker"
- The NPR show *All Things Considered* interviewed him for the segment "Son of Jimmy and Tammy Faye Finds his Own 'Grace'"
- *Time Magazine* organized a Q&A with him, "From Jim and Tammy Faye to Evangelical Punk Preaching"
- The article "Love, love, love, Says the Son of a Preacher Man" was published in *The Economist*

Despite his ubiquity in comparison to most pastors, academics have not comprehensively addressed Bakker's ideas as expressed in his books and sermons. The failure on the part of academics to study Bakker may stem from the fact that he is a pop culture figure as opposed to a

theologian. Furthermore, as discussed herein, most of his ideas appear to stem directly from Tillich such that he is not proposing anything new as far as innovative readings of Scripture. Even in areas where he is faced with issues Tillich did not discuss, Bakker does not present a new vision. For example, Bakker advocates for gay marriage and what he describes as a more inclusive church but theological arguments for or against gay marriage have been debated by numerous scholars and these debates are not reiterated in this article. Tillich has inspired advocates of Queer Theology, as evidenced by Pastor Jeff Hood's *The Courage to Be Queer*, named after Tillich's *The Courage to Be* (12), and Richard Cleaver's *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation Theology*, which opens with a quote from Tillich's *Systematic Theology* (1, 13).

Bakker is an interesting example of what may be termed "hipster Christianity." I argue herein that an analysis of Bakker's ideas helps advance the debate with regards to a Biblical theology of clothing because his theology reinforces his style of dress. Researching fashion is important as items of clothing can comprise signifiers of particular worldviews. Hipocrisy can arise when the *message* of a speaker contradicts the *meaning* of his style, such as when a pastor rails against greed while wearing a suit costing tens of thousands of dollars. Conversely, the message can be reinforced by style. Style is inseparable from message.

Herein, I argue that Bakker's subcultural fashion actually signifies the same values that he ascribes to theologically. Analyzing this phenomenon will help us differentiate between Emerging Church figures and other pastors who embrace subcultural styles with specific signifiers but preach a message inconsistent with the meaning of that style, and figures who preach a message consistent with the meaning of their fashion. Put simply, studying Jay Bakker helps us understand when being a *Jesus freak* is merely a marketing ploy meant to attract young people and when it is something much more profound.

This article is organized into three parts. The first part presents a brief overview of Jay Bakker's life and theology as expressed in his books and sermons, particularly the influence of Paul Tillich on his thought. The second part of this article discusses criticisms leveled at Jay Bakker by the religious community, particularly with regards to his fashionable manner of dress. The third part proposes that Bakker's affinity for Tillich helped him craft a message wherein the meaning of Bakker's style reinforces that message. I conclude that Bakker has adapted Tillich's message to the twenty-first century using fashion as a means of communication.

Jay Bakker: Fashionable Rebel Pastor

The married couple of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker started a Christian puppet show in the sixties and worked their way into television, leading to slowly increasing levels of fame as Jim Bakker became host of the evangelical program *700 Club*, established Praise the Lord Ministries and the Trinity Broadcasting Network television station, then built the expansive Heritage USA religious theme park, hosted a number of other televangelist programs, and became a regular guest of presidents at the White House (Bakker, *Son of a Preacher Man*, 6, 7, 11, 18). Despite projecting wholesomeness, Jimmy and Tammy Faye suffered difficulties in their relationship including marital affairs, drug addiction, accusations of rape, and charges of fraud, resulting in other televangelists such as Pat Robertson, Jimmy Swaggart, and Jerry Falwell railing against the Bakker family and Falwell ousting the Bakkers from their role at Praise the Lord Ministries (24, 27, 31, 35, 37, 38, 50). Jim Bakker was sentenced to jailtime for fraud and Jay Bakker, one of Jim's children with Tammy Faye, grew up visiting his father in prison, bonding with outcast youths drawn to musical fashion-oriented subcultures as his parents grew further apart and Tammy Faye left Jim for another man (60, 72, 76-77, 88). Jay felt that members of the Christian Right, Falwell in particular, had acted to betray his father (121).

As a rebellious youth, Jay was sent to a Christian boarding school where he met more Christians who gravitated towards musical fashion-oriented subcultures, helping grow a subculture-oriented ministry called Revolution appealing to hippies and punks (136, 137, 140, 150). The name "Revolution" was intended to imply a continuation of the hippie ministries of the seventies, the Lonnie Frisbee and Cavalry Chapel brand of Christianity (180-181). Jay developed a drinking problem, however, and received constant support from a close friend who taught him about the concept of Grace as discussed in Colossians 1:20, Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 3:22-25, describing the effect the discovery of this concept worked over his life as transformative (158, 159, 160). His discovery of Grace helped him stop drinking, seek work at a ministry for the homeless in Atlanta, and earn his ordination from the American Evangelistic Association (164, 169, 188).

He begins preparing himself to pursue his own career as a pastor. He takes a trip to Cavalry Chapel, hoping to renew his faith at the location where the Jesus People movement began, but finds a formal church with strict ushers as opposed to a countercultural ministry (193-195). After concluding that the radical spirit of the sixties and seventies had, in his opinion, faded, he gravitates back to Revolution and started his own chapter in Atlanta's Little Five Points neighborhood with the goal of establishing a church with a coffee shop, music shows, skate park, and music store (205). As shown in the 2006 six-part documentary mini-series about him, *One Punk Under God*, Jay moves this first chapter of Revolution Church in Atlanta, based out of a bar, away from the positions held by a major conservative donor towards a gay-affirming position and, consequently, loses funding for his ministry, and ends up moving to New York and opening a Revolution Church NYC. Jay's NYC Church tends to attract evangelicals searching for a less strict set of rules and is still active (Cimino 75).

Eventually, Jay Bakker begins to divulge his own ideas with regards to his faith. In 2011, Jay published *Fall to Grace: A Revolution of God, Self, and Society* wherein he espouses his belief in universal salvation. He analyzes Paul's letters with an emphasis on Galatians, Ephesians and Romans and concludes that portions of Scripture such as Romans 3:22-24, Romans 10:4, and Ephesians 2:8-9 lead him to believe that "*Grace* literally means 'unmerited favor'" and that "we receive salvation as a gift from God" which is not earned, and that Paul's message "wasn't about guilt and punishment" but "acceptance; it was about forgiveness" (xi, 15, 16, 17). Jay views Paul's letters as especially important because Paul was the most prolific contributor to the New Testament and wrote during a period chronologically nearer Christ's crucifixion (34). God is a compassionate *Abba*, a Greek term for "*Daddy*," representing a shift in the relationship between worshippers and God "from judgement to love" (69, 75, 88-89). For Jay, writing from the perspective of a Christian claiming that homosexuality is not a sin, discussing Paul's relationship to religious laws, such as circumcision, is intended to draw a parallel between the reaction of early Christians to certain religious laws and the opposition of some Churches to same-sex relationships today. He argues that universal salvation implies that churches should not condemn particular behaviors but should focus on developing relationships with God.

His view of sin reflects this discarding of strict rules. Sin, for Bakker, is not an offense against God but a "self-inflicted wound" God wants to protect his children from, and that Paul's definition of Grace "invalidates all religious law," as we are not to live in "fearful obedience where man tries his damndest not to sin" but to view religious rules as a "curse" because if laws could save Man there was no need for Jesus to have sacrificed himself (18, 35, 45, 49, 56). Sin does not condemn anyone to Hell but is separation from God, carrying its own punishment as we hurt ourselves and others we care about (112-113, 131). Only faith in Christ, not any set of rules,

can save souls. Faith based on gratefulness for God's love will produce a deeper freedom than sin could ever provide, a freedom based on a Holy Spirit that produces joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, love, selflessness, the ability to measure the effects of one's actions and self-control (132-133, 134-135). As would be expected from the son of a family plagued by personal scandals, he preaches healing and compassionate restoration as opposed to judgement with regards to those who sin (137, 141, 152). If sin is separation from God harming the sinner, the objective of a believer is not to condemn the sinner but to help the sinner develop a closer relationship to God and find his own path.

Jay's vision as to whether the Bible contains any historical truth is unclear. He certainly does not seem committed to the existence of Heaven and does not believe in Hell. The ability to act compassionately is a side-effect of a relationship with God, evidence that one is dedicated to building a Kingdom of God on Earth based on "[h]armony in the church and in the broader world," "in the here and now" by living a peaceful, joyous life (155, 156). It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Bakker describes thethanatology theologian Peter Rollins as "my good friend" (157). Bakker claims that internal contradictions in the Bible should lead to a general focus on Grace (174). He argues that prohibitions on homosexual conduct should not be followed for the following reasons: most Christians do not and should not follow the entirety of the laws contained in the Old Testament; the Greek words *malakois* and *arsenokoitai* used by Paul to describe homosexuality actually describe male prostitutes and their patrons; discussions of same-sex conduct in the Bible are described within the context of "immoderate indulgence" of sexual desires or rape as opposed to committed relationships; and the modern concept of gay women and men did not exist at the time the Bible was written (171, 172, 173). His main argument, however, is that the Bible prescribes love free from rules limiting its reach, a view

which appears to embrace the sexual revolution or, at the very least, does not reject the sexual revolution of the sixties and seventies.

In fact, much of his vision seems to stem from the sixties and seventies. He admits that he was influenced by the Jesus People movement, and embraces a subcultural punk persona with his numerous tattoos covering his arms, hoping that a new, more tolerant society will emerge in the United States. A new sort of individual, the "risen man," is required to fulfill the promise of the Christian faith, a believer who is not trying to earn his way into Heaven and is not filled with pride or obligation but is possessed with genuine compassion for others, able to see every person as part of Christ's body and live in peace with all persons (116, 118, 129). Bakker claims that in Galatians 3:26-29 "Paul wipes away not just differences of ethnicity or religion ('no longer Jew or Gentile'), but all the categories that separate us: gender, class, status, 'slave or free, male or female'" (95). He opposes separation by "economics, race, nationality, or sexual preference" and encourages Christians to break boundaries and associate with anyone without regard for the judgement of others, putting aside what he views as selfishness, a desire for success and recognition (96, 107, 114-115).

Jay concludes *Fall to Grace* with a final paragraph summarizing his entire argument by referring to Paul Tillich, citing Tillich's 1948 *The Shaking of the Foundations*:

The theologian Paul Tillich compares grace to 'a wave of light that breaks into our darkness.' He writes that 'it is as though a voice were saying: You are accepted. *You are accepted*, accepted by that which greater than you.' He goes on to write, 'After such an experience we may not be better than before. But everything is transformed...And nothing is demanded of this experience, no religious or moral intellectual presupposition, nothing but acceptance.' (189)

Jay's podcast of his sermons includes a recent a sermon wherein Jay simply read Tillich's essay "You Are Accepted" contained in *The Shaking of the Foundations* and then, the following week, discussed his understanding of that essay. In that essay, Tillich discusses the "all-determining

facts of our life: the abounding of sin and the greater abounding of grace," arguing that "sin does *not* mean an immoral act" and that "it is arrogant and erroneous to divide men by calling some 'sinners' and others 'righteous'" because "*sin is separation*" (Tillich 194, 195). Tillich goes on to argue that "grace occurs in spite of separation and estrangement," working as an acceptance, forgiveness (197). Overcoming self-contempt and truly loving oneself as an accepted person, for Tillich, implies treating others with greater care - in fact, grace "is able to overcome the tragic separation of the sexes, of the generations, of the nations, of the races..." (198-199). Bakker's view of sin as separation, his belief that grace is forgiveness healing this estrangement, and that ethical behavior - as well as an ability to see beyond nationalism, racism, and sexism - will arise from this healing through grace are all clearly derived from Tillich.

While *Fall to Grace* deploys Tillich's concept of grace, Jay's more recent 2013 *Faith, Doubt and other Lines I've Crossed: Walking With the Unknown God* reiterates the same view of grace but also discusses Tillich's view of idolatry. *Faith, Doubt* cites Tillich frequently. The book is short, 190 pages, double-spaced, but it refers to Tillich on nine separate occasions. Jay refers to Tillich's books *Dynamics of Faith*, *The Courage to Be*, *Systematic Theology*, and *The New Being*, as well as an article Tillich wrote for *World Christian Education* titled "The Church and Contemporary Culture" and a dialogue between Professor D. Mackenzie Brown and Tillich titled "Ultimate Concern - Tillich in Dialogue" - in other words, Jay Bakker is very familiar with much of Tillich's work and has gone out of his way to investigate Tillich's views. Idolatry for Jay involves excessive certainty. He begins the first chapter citing *The New Being* to effect that love is the meeting between the infinite and finite and then proceeds to argue that shopping and sports are modern forms of idolatry, but that "true idolatry" is the "I-think-my-God-is-*the*-God idolatry," indicating that religion without love can be a form of idolatry, echoing the Tillichean

concept of a God above God (Bakker, *Faith, Doubt* 3, 4). Jay once again relies on Paul's Gospels, describing how in Acts 17:22-23 Paul arrived in Athens and saw many idols and proclaimed that he would be teaching about an unknown God who does not live in material things and how in 1 Corinthians 13:1-2 Paul expresses that all attributes normally ascribed to gods mean nothing without love, leading Jay to conclude Paul was speaking of a God that "cannot be known" (11-12, 14-15).

Jay relies on Tillich to support the proposition that love creates something new out of destruction, that God is love itself, and cites *Dynamics of Faith* to the effect that doubt is part of faith, and also paraphrases *The Courage to Be* stating "[t]heologian Paul Tillich says that doubt should not be a threat to the spiritual life" but "is an important element of spiritual life" and that "fanaticism and pharisaism are the symptoms of repressed doubt" (17, 19, 25, 26). Jay believes that Christians have turned the Bible itself into an idol, claiming that it provides all answers, and Jesus came to tell the world that "the God who demanded sacrifice was an idol" (34-35, 59). One of the consequences of worshipping a false idol is believing in notions of Hell which can keep people from acting to rectify injustices in this life, whereas Jay claims Tillich understood that God is present in everyday interactions and not in theology, summarizing part of *Systematic Theology* by stating that "Paul Tillich says when we can conceive God, God ceases to be God" (70, 132, 175). Jay borrows heavily from Tillich's idea that being itself must be the ultimate concern and that anything finite raised to the level of an ultimate concern is a form idolatry (182-183, 184).

Criticism of Jay Bakker

All of the criticism leveled at Jay Bakker charges that he is simply capitulating to the culture. Dr. Ray Pritchard, for example, serves as president of Keep Believing Ministries, which

focuses on Biblical education, and accused Bakker of cowardice for going with the flow on his blog in an article titled "Jay Bakker's Strange Religion," discussing Bakker's position on gay marriage: "It takes courage to swim upstream with the Lord when the world entices you to go with the flow. " Pritchard and others seem to claim that Bakker's views are the product of attempting to merge the Christian faith with a secular, sometimes anti-Christian mainstream. Apprising Ministries describes itself on its website as "[r]ooted in classic, historic, orthodox Christian theology" ("About AM"). Pastor Ken Silva, president of Apprising Ministries, has written numerous articles criticizing Bakker, calling Bakker an "apostate," part of a "neo-liberal cult" which denies the validity of the atonement because they see God as too loving to demand sacrifice (Silva, "Pro-Homosexual Pastor Jay Bakker Denies Jesus's Atonement"). Jay Bakker mentioned in an interview, when asked about Ken Silva, that Silva was interested in attention and was hard to speak with, leading Silva to respond by claiming that Bakker is part of an Emerging Church movement dedicated to a "'big tent' postmodern version of Progressive Christianity" comprised of universalists and designed for "pouty postmodern people-pleasers" but which "isn't at all even close to the Gospel" (Silva, "Jay Bakker Critiques Ken Silva at Religion Dispatches"). Pastor Khad Young was influenced by Jay Bakker to start a similar sort of ministry and Silva attacked Young and Bakker as free love, no rules types: "these 'out'laws actually end up as 'no' laws because their gospel-less message over-emphasizes the grace of God, thereby neglecting the conviction of sin, which then ends up in an antinomianism" (Silva, "Outlaw Preachers Khad Young and Jay Bakker Don't Love Enough").

In terms of criticizing Bakker for his fashion, the most interesting critique comes from author Brett McCracken in his book *Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide*. McCracken also criticizes Bakker as one figure among others who are part of the Emerging

Church movement. McCracken defines "hipster Christianity" as a form of Christianity dedicated to being fashionable in contrast to forms of Christianity which eschew pride (McCracken 12-13). McCracken defines a "hipster" as a stylish young person dedicated to contrarian attitudes, to bucking norms to illustrate autonomy, similar to the dandies of previous centuries, a population of fashionistas likely to thrive in urban areas where a variety of cultures, traditions, and religions meet, as they do today in Williamsburg in Brooklyn (22, 26, 35, 45, 62, 63).

McCracken lists Bakker as one of the figureheads of Hipster Christianity, describing him as "a heavily tattooed, well-dressed hipster with a pierced lip" who generated a "faith that is aggressively counter to nearly everything he experienced as a child" while describing Jay's life story, pro-gay rights positions, and skepticism of the Church (101-102). McCracken classifies Jay Bakker as part of an Emerging Church he identifies as being marked by the following characteristics: a rejection of modernism and all "-isms"; opposition to the relationship between political and economic power brokers and religion; a focus on Jesus himself as opposed to the Church; emphasizing dialogue as opposed to apologetics; valuing the process of discussion; a rejection of binary concepts; and a focus on praxis (135-142). According to McCracken, the problem with these ideas is that they reduce Scripture to a medium for conversation, and tend to gravitate towards what the culture feels is relevant and rebellious because a rebellious faith is easier to market, so shock value tends to become a consideration as Christianity becomes a form of entertainment without an immutable core (143-145, 188). Furthermore, the individualism emphasized in these forms of Christianity fails to condemn the worship of the self: "We have moved from a collective Christianity to one of personal preference," where "individualism no longer seems to Christians like the cancer it is," and "[w]e must resist our culture, our technologies, even our instincts that all seemingly push us toward individualism" (192).

McCracken identifies a series of problems with fashionable Christianity: alienation from others deemed unhip; competition with others as far as stylishness; pride and vanity in dress; a focus on the material world; an unhealthy acceptance of sin as drawing distinct lines in terms of behavior becomes impermissible; a reduction of the complexity of persons to how they present themselves visually; and an ideal of rebellion for the sake of affectation (193-200).

McCracken's criticism of Jay Bakker as part of hipster Christianity boils down to the following conclusions he draws from 1 Tim. 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 3-4:

A recurring theme in these Scriptures about clothing is that Christians should keep it nondescript and avoid opulence or overly ostentatious appearances. This creates definite friction between a Christian and a hipster visual style - the latter of which is typically quite ostentatious and intentionally attention-grabbing (202).

Put simply, the fashionable nature of Jay Bakker and similarly stylish pastors is sinful and should not be considered acceptable in Christian churches. As discussed below, however, Bakker's embrace of Tillich's concepts of "the courage to be oneself" and the ideology embodied in hipster fashion work together to transform the question regarding whether hipster fashionistas are worshippers of the self into a complex query.

Fashionistas for Tillich

The topic of Christian fashion has produced interesting works. In the article "Reveal or Conceal: American Religious Discourse with Fashion," Professor of Merchandising, Apparel and Textiles at the University of Kentucky Susan O. Michelman claims that a backlash against immodest dress has developed within the religious community in the United States, claiming that she believes "we are witnessing the ascendance and assertion of religious views on fashion and the body" (79). Michelman identifies a trend in American religious culture wherein modest prom dresses and other clothes are making a comeback within the evangelical community (84-85). Certainly, there are a number of guides for young women to dress modestly, as illustrated by

Colleen Hammond's Catholic guide *Dressing with Dignity*, the back cover promising purchasers that the guide will "awaken chivalry in men" and help women "dress in an attractive, dignified and classy manner." As indicated by the word "chivalry," there is an element of gender-focused tradition and manners in the ideal of modest dress. Scriptures such as 1 Tim. 2:9-10 and 1 Pet. 3:3-4 are frequently the basis for this notion that women bear responsibility for the sinful thoughts of men, and should police their own clothing for sexual suggestiveness. Victorian theologian Charles Ellicot viewed 1 Tim. 2:9-10 very differently from contemporary evangelical readers, claiming that the admonition against flashy dress was meant to address clothing during worship and not "ordinary dress in the world" ("I TIMOTHY II" 3: 187).

Fashion is a common topic for Christians. Despite the fact that fashion-oriented musical subcultural styles are quite clearly an important subject as far as Christianity in the 21st century, very few academics have asked the essential question: what do these styles mean? Fashion-oriented musical subcultures can be defined as diffuse, leaderless or informally organized groups sharing values in opposition to what is viewed as the dominant culture, these musical subcultures frequently identifying as representing the marginalized (Haenfler 16-17). Thus, subculturists are "semiotic warriors" to some degree, building an alternative value system, often as prefigurative politics challenging "hegemonic masculinity" not only expressed as heteronormativity and male dominance over women but the desire for power via material wealth and race-based privilege (Haenfler 45, 52, 75, 78, 87-89).

Sociologist Dick Hebdige's 1979 *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* is the classic work on fashion-oriented musical subcultures such as punks or hippies and their adherents. Hebdige asserts that, in subcultural fashion, "objects become signs of forbidden identity" as ideology is transmitted via visual cues working "*beneath* consciousness" in the "profoundly superficial level

of appearances" such that subculturists reject the mainstream "maps" determining natural/unnatural as determined by "*dominant* ideologies" communicated by dominant fashions (3, 11, 14, 15, 17). According to Hebdige, who focuses on British fashion-oriented musical subcultures, race relations are key to understanding these subcultural styles because they revolve around the clash between white and black identities, and were sometimes formed as a white cooptation of a black culture viewed as less emasculated, freer, more flamboyant (29, 44, 47, 53-54, 73). Even the British racist skinhead scene developed out of the Jamaican skinhead scene (55-56). Black cultural styles determined much of the content giving rise to subcultures as white versions of a culture viewed as marginalized.

Subculture studies is not comprised of a proven set of facts but is a field rife with debate. A debate persists, for example, as to whether predominantly white subculturists simply loot from black culture, as suggested by the essays in the collection edited by Greg Tate *Everything But the Burden: What White People are Taking from Black Culture*, or whether subcultures can provide a space for cross-racial alliances, empathy, and new perspectives as members of dominant cultures suddenly view themselves through the lenses of marginalized cultures, as suggested by Kimberly Chabot Davis in *Beyond the White Negro: Empathy and Anti-Racist Reading*. Similar debates exist within the field with regards to sexuality, nationalism and a number of other topics. In terms of sexuality, some subcultures gravitated towards a "sexually ambiguous image," challenging "class and gender stereotypes," as "make-up for both boys and girls was worn to be seen" and "overt displays of heterosexual interest were generally regarded with contempt" (Haenfler 60, 89, 107, 108). David Bowie, for example, was notorious for presenting an image free from classification by gender, and his listeners frequently emulated his style by wearing make-up. Similarly, queer punk became a genre of its own.

Class is another major theme, fashion-oriented musical subcultures launching manifestos intentionally written in unrefined working class dialects (111). Tattoos reflect a practice once left to criminals and the marginalized poor, the homeless, but were incorporated into many of these subcultures. The adoption of lower-class fashions becomes a celebration of that class as participants reject forms of consumption viewed as cementing hierarchy (7, 8). Lower class elements in subcultures work as a celebration of the perceived virtues of that class in comparison to more privileged classes.

Subcultures reflecting these values in different patterns exist all over the world. As far as hipsters, the trend is significant in scope. Hipsterism is a global trend, hipsters emerging in places like Lima, Peru (Clayton 25-28). Hipsters are "feminized (skinny, fashion-y, coiffed)" (Baumgardner 95). However, as evidenced by Jay Bakker, they adopt aspects of previous subcultures such as tattoos celebrating working class culture and musical forms derived from marginalized cultures such as African-American music. Jay Bakker specifically self-identifies as a "punk," a subculture which "reproduced the entire sartorial history of post-war working class youth cultures in 'cut up' form," the awkward combination of rock and reggae, and which was dedicated to *bricolage*, the combination of dissonant elements with a specific purpose, "a desire not only to erode racial and gender boundaries but also chronological sequence by mixing up details from different periods" (Hebdige 26, 27, 102-104, 123). History itself is a product of the dominant culture and should be questioned, made fluid. An African-American teen in skinny jeans wearing a pink Lynyrd Skynyrd Confederate flag t-shirt and a nineteenth century Victorian bowler hat while sporting Asian-themed tattoos and hip hop jewelry is representative of the sort of clash represented by hipsters, the deconstruction of nation, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and culture (particularly the history constructed by that culture). McCracken also

identifies the tendency of hipsters to mix fashions from different periods into a meaningless visual stew as "[h]ipster logic (being totally unique and style setting) almost precludes any sort of coherent, stable classification" (McCracken 48, 52). As discussed below, these are characteristics Tillich ascribes to modern art generally.

The absorption of fashionable musical subcultural styles by Christianity began in the sixties. The Jesus People came out of the Sixties and the "summer of love" in the Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco, led by figures such as Lonnie Frisbee, a Pentecostal pastor with long hair and beard who regularly consumed LSD and spent part of his youth in communes with nudists who engaged in orgies and studied non-Christian religions (Frisbee, 13, 27, 41-43, 44, 46). The Jesus People began in the context of a post-nationalist (peace movement), post-hetero-normative (gay movement), post-racial (Civil Rights movement), and even post-Christian (New Age) locale known for fashion-oriented musical subculturists who adopted visual signifiers to represent this prefigurative politics, i.e. beards and long hair to symbolize anti-materialist/anti-capitalist positions and items from Native American and other non-western cultures and religions to symbolize post-racialism and post-Christian attitudes (47). Frisbee was ultimately shunned by the Pentecostal community because of his homosexuality but he manifested opposition to gays or "freaks" as he called them and ACLU lawyers and liberal judges (55, 124). Frisbee preached in informal settings and used Christian versions of hippie rock n' roll to attract crowds, setting up the template for others to follow.

This template for cool Christianity became predominant in many Christian communities. As Lauren Sandler noted in *Righteous: Dispatches from the Evangelical Youth Movement*, evangelicals adopted and developed the model of the Sixties counterculture to spread a historical-grammatical reading of the Bible in subsequent decades, leading to Rock for Life

concerts for example (Sandler 13-15, 25). Sandler interviewed conservative evangelical subculturists with tattoos and then studied Jay Bakker, concluding that Jay is a follower of Jim Wallis and *Sojourners* as a result of the fact Jay was carrying a crumpled copy of the magazine in his back pocket (108, 109). Sandler then describes Ryan Dobson, son of Focus on the Family's James Dobson, an aggressively conservative, tattooed preacher, who, like Bakker, looks like he should be drinking espressos in Williamsburg (121). According to Sandler, the conservative "hip" Christian model is more common than the progressive model represented by Jay (109).

As discussed above, the signifiers of most fashion-oriented musical subcultures are complex in nature, often adopted in contradictory bits and pieces, but in their majority lean towards the generation of a post-racial, post-classist, and post-heteronormative identity. As far as "hipsters," specifically, the desire for a non-particularistic identity results in the adoption of homosexual and feminine fashion (tight skinny jeans, carefully crafted hair, jewelry) merged with working class style (trucker hats, flannels, tattoos) and accessories predominantly associated with non-European populations (Native American sweaters, Buddhist prayer beads, hip hop tennis shoes). Would Tillich have objected to the visual clash behind hipster style? This article argues that this style of dress matches Tillich's theological views.

In the first place, Tillich did not possess a negative view of self-love as long as it was balanced with a sense of communal responsibility. For Tillich, sin was not defined by wrongful acts but by a separation from the Ground of Being which could only be overcome by grace, understood as a courageous self-acceptance ("You Are Accepted" 195, 196-197). Thus, "self-love" is not the cause of sin, which is actually caused by a "mixture of selfishness and self-hate," but is self-acceptance leading to the ability to "overcome the tragic separation of the sexes, of the generations, of the nations, of the races, and even the utter strangeness between man and nature"

(198, 201, 202). Grace is the "courage to be" wherein the self is affirmed as a being despite elements of non-being within itself, forces preventing self-affirmation, including: an existential anxiety about death; webs of causality and, therefore, the absence of free will; the emptiness or meaninglessness of life; as well as self-rejection and self condemnation (*The Courage to Be* 5, 31, 34, 41, 42, 43, 48-49, 50-51). Selfishness is therefore distinct from self-affirmation.

In fact, for Tillich, self-affirmation through grace involved affirmation of the "individualized self" as a "unique, unrepeatable, and irreplaceable individual," what Tillich terms "the courage to be as oneself" (80). True, it also involves the "courage to be as a part," implying the affirmation of the self as part of a larger community, of the self as a social being defined, interacting with, and even controlled by the outside world and possessing responsibilities with regards to members of the community (82-83). The absence of "the courage to be as oneself" lead to the horrors of collectivism and conformity, while the absence of "the courage to be as a part" lead to the loss of the world in infinite despair, the very truth of "ultimate responsibility" disappearing in a formless sea of selfish anxiety (142, 160). The Ground of Being is the "God above God" which can bring together the "courage to be as a part," the understanding that we are part of the world and a product of it, with the "courage to be as oneself," the understanding that we exist as unique beings apart from the world and can choose to affect the world as separate entities (172). The Ground of Being unites Being and Non-Being and transcends both. Existential self-love, swallowed by meaninglessness, must combine with concrete communal ritual in order to create a centered existence.

The God above God is man's ultimate concern, comprised of concrete elements keeping faith from becoming too abstract for a "being-to-being relationship" to exist, as well as abstract elements which imply transcendence with regards to finitude ("God" 11). The pendulum can

swing too far towards the concrete, towards "the courage to be as a part," and then wordly concerns such as work, pleasure, specific persons, science, money and the nation, for example, become synonymous with God ("Our Ultimate Concern" 36-37). Idolatry occurs when symbols of the Holy become identical with the Holy itself, such as when "holy objects, holy books, holy doctrines, holy rites" become gods to be worshipped and therefore become victims of "demonization" ("The Nature of Religious Language" 50, 56). Demonization and idolatry occur where anything maintaining a subject-object relationship to the individual is elevated to man's ultimate concern, including "nation, success, a God, or the God of the Bible," tendencies which lead to collectivistic mentalities which fail to respect man's inherent dignity (*Dynamics of Faith* 13, 18, 19, 50-51). Simultaneously, the affirmation of "the courage to be as oneself," best exemplified by Existentialist thinkers, can lead to "annihilating openness, of infinite, formless space," leading to despair and extreme loneliness (*The Courage to Be* 58). As such, faith should be a "centered act" wherein individualism and collectivism are surpassed through a balancing act (*Dynamics of Faith* 4 -9).

Tillich's Existentialist Christianity, labeling the despair and doubt of thinkers like Sartre and Camus essential elements of the balancing act of non-idolatrous faith, leads to an interesting view of the arts and culture. Tillich viewed Existentialism as having produced "the great art, literature, and philosophy of the 20th century," discussing Sartre and Camus (*The Courage to Be* 132). As far as visual arts, expressionism and surrealism reflect the "courage to be as oneself" in that they disrupt reality:

The category of substance is lost: solid objects are twisted like ropes; the causal interdependence of things is disregarded; things appear in complete contingency; temporal sequences are without significance, it does not matter whether an event happened before or after another event; the spatial dimensions are reduced or dissolved into a horrifying infinity (135).

Thus, Tillich viewed modern art as a perfect expression of the "courage to be as oneself" (136). It is worthwhile for our purposes to note the specific aspects of modern art Tillich finds to be worthwhile:

- the disruption of categories
- the lack of logic and form
- the lack of temporal order.

These are aspects of the hipster style of fashion:

- the disruption of gender, race, class, and national categories
- the blending of different styles in a bricolage without logic
- the clash of time periods as far as items of clothing

Put simply, it is clear that the hipster style of dress in its affirmation of individualism affirms precisely the "courage to be as oneself" as defined by Tillich, much as the art praised by him did as well. As such, it repels collectivism and embraces the despair of a formless cosmopolitan void fearlessly in much the same colorful fashion that modern art does. If the merger of existential meaninglessness in the form of art reflecting the shaking of foundations with concrete religious practice is the recipe for a centered faith, then certainly Christian hipsters like Jay Bakker would represent the ideal Tillicheans - they merge a style reflecting the disruption of categories and certitudes with Christian worship.

Tillich often stated that Picasso's "Guernica" was religious in nature as it addressed meaninglessness, and, as Tillich believed that a child-like style of painting contained a certain honesty, the formless style was an implicit prayer reflecting exasperation at man's degradation by the idols of war ("Protestantism and Artistic Style" 68; Price 480, 481, 482). Speaking of style, Tillich wrote: "The deciphering of style is an art in itself and, like every art, is a matter of

daring and risk" ("Protestantism and Artistic Style" 70). Hipsters measure their fashion precisely by the level of daring and risk implied. Furthermore, "[t]he expressive element in a style implies a radical transformation of the ordinarily encountered reality by using elements of it in a way which does not exist in the ordinarily encountered reality" (74). Obviously, this taking objects out of the context could be viewed as the defining characteristic of the "post-everything" mentality of hipsterism.

Scholars have suggested that Tillich was interested in bridging the gap between religion and culture, embracing a critical dialogue between the two in order to derive a history of man's grappling with his ultimate concern (Re Manning 8, 9, 15). The same call could be directed towards fashion as a creative form of expression. Fashion has not only a well-established interaction with other forms of art but has been mobilized to divulge particular forms of art across broader segments of the population (Geczy and Karaminas 1-2). Tillich's vision for art is perfectly represented in the creative deconstruction embodied by hipster fashionistas.

Tillich's ontological approach and writing style combined to inject elements of his own psychology into his writings. Tillich was introduced to Expressionist painting by his friend Eckart von Sydow (Pauck and Pauck 75). Tillich soon fell in love with Van Gogh, Munch, and Cézanne, concluding that style or form warped and sometimes disregarded revealed the true essence of a transcendental reality (76-78). His own apartment was an avant-garde creation, bright with experimental furniture, each room comprising a theme, new paintings decorating the walls, the perfect abode to contemplate existence after a night of drinking, dancing, and womanizing (103-104). Tillich's cosmopolitan, artistic, Bohemian life itself resembles the lives of the many young urbanites drawn to Jay Bakker's message and style.

Conclusion

As far as the Emerging Church, the relationship of pastors to fashion can be understood as following different strains. A number of sources are available for academics interested in the history and ideas of the Emerging Church movement (Carson; Henard and Greenway; Gibbs and Bolger). Hip, controversial pastor Mark Driscoll describes these movements as united by accepting a postmodern and pluralistic context wherein the church is marginalized in culture and pastors are local missionaries blending ancient and pop styles with a "glocal" (global and local) world view ("A Pastoral Perspective on the Emergent Church"). Driscoll relates that during a conversation with Pastor Ed Stetzer, a fellow at Wheaton College, they agreed that the movement could be subdivided into Relevants, Reconstructionists, and Revisionists. The Relevants do not believe churches should change doctrines but should change the presentation of the church to attract younger people. Reconstructionists view the decline of Christianity as caused by the current practices of worship and seek to change the structure of services by, for example, worshipping in homes or creating intentional communities. Finally, Revisionists are theological liberals who believe Christian ideals should more closely match politically progressive views. Elsewhere, Driscoll describes the divisions in the Emerging Church as between the following categories: Emerging Evangelicals who seek to make church hip to those raised in a cool-obsessed culture); House Church Evangelicals who believe in worshipping in homes and informal locations; Emerging Reformers, conservative in terms of gender roles and theology, they embrace a charismatic method of worship; and Emergent Liberals focused on creating a new form of Christianity acceptable to the culture ("Navigating the Emerging Church Highway").

Some figures, such as Jay Bakker, represent a different blend of fashion and faith. As far as their fashion, they wear what is essentially modern art, a mash of styles that comprises a visual representation of meaninglessness, of the destruction of categories, the shaking of the foundations. At the same time as they embrace this meaningless of categories, they embrace the meaningfulness of concrete, ritual practices in the form of religious services. The Scriptures are addressed. Prayer is performed. Despite the lack of a formal building, the overall worship structure of a Church and concomitant history and symbols are maintained. An awareness of formlessness coexists with communal forms, both transcended by the presence of an ultimate concern - not the Church, but the God above God. Studies of twenty-first century Christian figures fail to take into account this Tillichean version.

This article argued that Jay Bakker is attempting to build a contemporary Church dedicated to Tillich's thought. In the first place, this article discussed the direct influence of Tillich on Jay Bakker's own ideas. Secondly, this article suggested how Jay Bakker's fashion actually reinforces this Tillichean vision. Furthermore, this article indicated that the rift between Jay Bakker and his critics may, in fact, comprise a rift between a Tillichean point of view and a non-Tillichean understanding of Christianity. As far as unique, ostentatious fashion in Christianity, self-affirmation and individualization as the "courage to be as oneself" was an essential element of the centered act of faith for Tillich and implied a move away from idolatry of one's race, gender, nation, and other particularistic categories towards a unique being comprised of the meaningless collage exemplified by modern art married to concrete communities giving rise to the "courage to be as a part." For Christians who do not agree with a Tillichean interpretation, however, this focus on self-affirmation and embrace of meaninglessness within faith may appear too open-ended, distant from the truth of the Gospel,

self-indulgent. As such, Jay Bakker's critics might be viewed as critics of Tillich's view of the Christian faith.

The precise contours of the relationship between Jay Bakker's ideas and his Church to Tillich have to be studied in greater detail. This article simply sought to start the debate by suggesting that there may be more to hipster Christianity than meets the eye. The assumption that the colorful surface of hipster preaching is mere surface without implications must be addressed. In fact, the meaning of their styles is speaking to their audience, whether they realize that this is the case or not. Their style is preaching right alongside them. A comprehensive study is needed to measure the full impact Tillich's ideas have produced in the Emerging Church movement.

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