



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Something is happening among today's youth. Hungry for reality and starved for love in an impersonal world, hundreds of thousands of them are "turning on" to Jesus.

Home Missions magazine, publication of the traditionally conservative Southern Baptist Convention, said in a shocking article:

"The Jesus Movement is sweeping the country, from the Pacific to the Atlantic. It's real. So real you run out of adjectives . . . It's a religious phenomenon, striking suddenly with a mysterious, charismatic simplicity. And it scares you, because you can't understand it or explain it. It stomps out rationality."

This so-called movement is raging across the nation like a wind-driven brush fire, jumping theological and denominational fences like they didn't even exist. It's breaking out in homes, night clubs, rock festivals and, yes, even in churches. Look at those kids grooving on Jesus in Oregon. Look at the tears running down the faces of those California hippies, those crowds jabbing their "one way" fingers skyward in Tennessee and the raptured expression on a sea of faces in New Jersey as kids sway in unison and sing "Hal-lay-lu-ya."

Last month in a Christian commune in Long Beach, California, I listened to a group of long-haired, bearded ex-hippies rap about Jesus.

"Wow! Jesus loves you. It's outta sight. Oh, wow! Praise the Lord."

Thursday I got off the plane in Norfolk and 30 minutes later was sitting crosslegged on the floor of the pastor's study in the plush Calvin Presbyterian Church. Packed in around me were fresh-scrubbed teenagers with Bibles in their laps using the same vocabulary as the bearded ones in California: "Wow, man, Jesus is really heavy. He's the greatest."

Sunday in Melbourne I sat in church and listened as a beautiful, blonde teenager, dressed in sloppy sweatshirt and barefeet, prayed audibly through a tear-choked voice:

"Heavenly Daddy, please teach my mother and daddy to love each other like Jesus loves them. . ."

Religious leaders say that every other revival

movement in history has had a recognized leader — but this one has none. Ask the kids who started it and they reply seriously:

"The Holy Spirit."

And who leads it?

"Jesus Christ," they reply.

The movement is filled with unrestrained excitement and characterized by outbursts of joy. In many areas, the charismatic "gifts of the Spirit" are much in evidence. Writing in a tabloid newspaper called "Truth" (one of more than 30 such papers that have sprung up among today's Jesus people — some of which have a circulation in excess of 200,000), a young girl from Spokane describes what took place at a Jesus Festival:

"As the rock band began to play 'Jesus Is Just All Right' everyone jumped to their feet, clapping and dancing around. I couldn't believe it. I got so excited I was jumping up and down on the bleachers like some kind of nut and tossing papers in the air. It was really beautiful."

It's this kind of behavior that has caused some of the over-30s to call it cheap emotionalism.

"It's okay at a ball game, but not at church," one robed minister said.

When the Jesus Movement broke out in Rye, New York, Life magazine reported parents said they wished their kids would go back to drugs rather than cluttering up the houses with Bibles and religious books.

Regardless of objections, however, something stupendous is in the making. Last spring ex all-pro football player, Bill Glass, walked on the stage of the dignified, formal First Baptist Church of Nashville, Tennessee, and stood before three thousand kids like a cheerleader, giving out with a Jesus yell.

"Give me a J; give me an E; give me an S; give me a U; give me an S."

The resulting roar almost ripped the stained glass windows from their frames.

Watch out, adults, you're about to be run over by a revolution!