

Lonnie Frisbee

The problem of Charismatic hypocrisy

Introduction

We have seen it so many times: AA Allen drunk and stupefied in a hotel room the night before he preaches in a 'revival'. Paul Cain, a practising homosexual and alcoholic during the height of his fame in the Signs and Wonders Movement heyday. Bob Jones guilty of sexual abuse and fornication at the height of the Kansas City Prophets fiasco. Todd Bentley, guilty of adultery and violence at the height of the 'Lakeland Revival'. Yet all these were (and, by many, still are) admired as great prophets in Charismatic / Pentecostal circles.

Lonnie Frisbee is the archetypical example of this kind of charade but he was more powerful than all of them. Though unknown to most evangelicals, he was a founding 'prophet' of the early Charismatic Movement, the face of the Jesus Movement revival, the instigator of the Signs and Wonders Movement and the catalyst for the initial growth of both Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel and Wimber's Vineyard churches. As such he deserves some attention.

Despite being highly significant in the development of so many Charismatic institutions, he has been carefully edited out of Charismatic history and the records of both Calvary Chapel churches and the Vineyard Movement. My edition (1988) of the *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* has no dedicated article on him, neither is Frisbee mentioned in the articles on 'Calvary Chapel' or 'Vineyard Churches'.

The great problem with Frisbee was that, despite his massive success in evangelism and church planting, and despite his dramatic power in Charismatic gifts, Frisbee was not only a practising homosexual at the time, but he was also very influenced by the occult. It was said that he, '*partied on Saturday night and preached on Sunday morning*'.¹ After several years, his blatant existence as a homosexual forced churches to expel him so that he went into semi-obscurity until he died of AIDS.

Yet even those who expelled him applauded his great power in evangelism and healing and continued to affirm that his gifts were from God, despite the obvious sin present at the time. As with other sinning Charismatic prophets, he was likened to Samson as having power from God despite his iniquity.

This raises the question: can a genuine man of God exercise gifts of the Spirit, or power in evangelism, and at the same time be guilty of gross public sin? Put starkly like that most would deny that it is possible; and yet very many Charismatic apologists continually defend a sinning 'prophet' as being a man of God.

I will examine Lonnie Frisbee and see what we can discover.

¹ David Di Sabatino; *The Life and Death of a Hippy Preacher*, (documentary film).

The great problem studying Frisbee

Researching this has been difficult. This is partly because of his being edited out of Charismatic history; as a result there has been no definitive, objective biography written. Then we have the various testimonies of friends, relatives, film-makers, converts, disciples, journalists and enemies. While these can be informative, there is a great deal of confusion about key issues; indeed some testimonies are contradictory. What's worse is that Frisbee even contradicted himself.

Then there is his recent authorised, ghost-written autobiography of his early life up to the end of his work with Chuck Smith. While he claims to be honest and open in this, warts and all, in fact it is a highly glamorised, discreet, homage to himself that ignores massively important factors. For example, Frisbee makes no mention in this story of his blatant homosexuality. We know from others, including his wife that he was engaged in homosexual activity since the age of 15 and that he was known as a homosexual in the period of working in Calvary Chapel; Frisbee mentions none of this.

His autobiography was written in the period of his life, a few years before he died, when he was very bitter about the way he had been treated by church leaders. It appears to me that his book was written to paint a glorified picture of himself to offset the actions of those leaders. I also have fears that not everything written here is true, or perhaps things have been exaggerated over time. It wouldn't be the first time that a Pentecostal wrote about miracles that were fraudulent.

Then there is the problem of his powerful activity. If the stories promoted by his followers and by himself are true, then Frisbee has to be one of the greatest and most powerful evangelists and miracle workers that the world has ever known. I doubt that anyone could match his claimed exploits. Yet the Christian world at large knows nothing about him.

Frisbee claims responsibility for many thousands of conversions during the Jesus People revival. It is unquestionable that he kick-started both the Calvary Chapel and Vineyard denominations, two of the biggest in the world, comprising hundreds of churches, many of which Frisbee started. He converted a number of men who went on themselves to lead very large church denominations, such as Greg Laurie. He went on numerous world missionary campaigns where he continued to do great things. He claims to have brought healing to numerous people. There are many testimonies about his power and at least one example of a woman being healed from blindness in South Africa appears to be very credible; it was even a major news headline. His ability to slay people in the Spirit is proverbial and appears to even outweigh his mentor Kathryn Kuhlman.

Yet Frisbee died of AIDS which he presumably contracted by homosexual activity. What on earth are we to make of all this?

When I started writing this paper I was ready to dismiss him as a charlatan sinner that could not even be saved. However, the more I studied him, the more complex I saw that this man was. The only thing I can do in this analysis is to summarise the facts. I can say that his ministry is full of errors because that is a fact; but can I say that he was not a believer? I cannot judge his heart.

For those who would immediately appeal to this text:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals [lit. 'effeminate'], nor sodomites. 1 Cor 6:9

It is clear that homosexuals cannot be in the kingdom; but then neither are those who gossip, lie, slander, backbite, manifest anger and wrath, sneer, hate, and so on – and the church is full of such folk. We are all sinners to some degree and yet God will save those who trust in Christ. There are no homosexuals or gossips, or slanderers, or liars in heaven because God cleans us out before we get there (1 Thess 3:13). If this were not true none of us would have any hope. Our sins are in the old nature, and that is removed when Christ returns and transforms us to be like himself.

So how does this apply? Those who sin habitually cannot be saved because there is no work of grace in them. Those who are dominated by sin and never stop being slaves to it cannot be saved because Jesus' work in us removes the domination of sin. Therefore, a closeted homosexual that never repents, never mourns for sin and continues to practice homosexual liaisons cannot be a true Christian.

But what of a reformed homosexual that affirms that this is a sin but occasionally lapsed into this sin. This is what Frisbee claims; he preached against homosexuality but clearly struggled with it.

Now I do not know how many times he lapsed or for how long (except for one case). Neither can I be sure that claims of his sin are true; Frisbee affirms that many people lied about him.

All I can do is present the facts and say that I cannot state what his spiritual condition was; only God can do that. What I can affirm with certainty is that his ministry was full of errors.

A brief life history [1949-1993]

Dysfunctional childhood

Santa Ana

Lonnie Frisbee was born in Santa Ana, California on 6 June 1949 and was raised in a turbulent dysfunctional home. He was born with a clubbed foot, which eventually required major surgeries. This led to him being severely bullied and abused at school.²

Lonnie's father, Ray Frisbee, was a full-blooded, Cherokee & Choctaw, Native American Indian, who was a womaniser and a violent alcoholic. His mother was Janette Frisbee née Ashley. His blood-father severely abused his mother and smashed up the house in fits of drunkenness. Lonnie says that his first memory is of his mother being beaten up by his dad.³ Lonnie had also been harshly treated, even being savagely beaten aged three.⁴

Ray Frisbee ran off with another woman, called Velma Graham, leaving Janette with three babies. Curiously, Janette found Velma's husband, Lyle, and they fell in love and married. This brought two more siblings into the family, stepbrothers for Lonnie. Lyle, filled with

² Frisbee, Lonnie, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p17-19.

³ Ibid., p17.

⁴ Ibid., p20.

hate for Ray Frisbee, raised Janette's children in complete rejection and with severely strict discipline, they were not even allowed to eat with their parent's. Lonnie grew up hating both his natural father and his stepfather.

His mother and brother affirm that Lonnie was raped at the age of eight by a 17-year old male baby-sitter; this obviously deeply impacted his later confused sexuality. Lonnie confirms this in his autobiography.⁵ Despite reporting the incident, no one believed him and the assaults continued for two years. Much later, a psychologist told Lonnie that this experience '*broke the foundations of his life*'; whatever that means.

One of his escapes to solace was through Christian summer camps that had been established by Bible teacher Dr William Ore. Camp Seely was based in the Crestline area of Southern California and Lonnie's grandmother helped pay the fee, which he attended for four years.⁶ Here he met Bible teachers, counsellors and missionaries that deeply impacted his life, as well as the communal meals with good food⁷ and singalongs. Young Lonnie did not want to go back home.

Costa Mesa

At some point, probably early 1960s, the family moved from Orange to Costa Mesa, South Orange County, California. Here he attended The Central Bible Church under Pastor Gabler, which may have been Baptist, Frisbee doesn't tell us; however he does say that he was heavily involved in the choir and church activities, including a type of catechism. This continued until he started Junior High School.

As a child he was interested in art; some of his paintings were exhibited, even in the press. During the period when he attended Corona Del Mar High School he went to a live recording of a famous television show called 'Shebang' aged 16. A producer spotted his talent for dancing and signed him up and he became a regular dancer on the show for 18 months (daily, after school) where he met many famous 60s pop stars, including a 19-year old Cher. At 16 he was driving his own car.⁸

He became part of the 60s drug culture as a teenager aged 16, though he was too busy to do drugs while working on Shebang. At 15, witnesses say that he entered the local gay scene. Frisbee simply affirms that in the early 60s he dropped out of church attendance and started taking drugs. He was involved in the drug scene at Laguna Beach and mixed with a drug cult called 'Mystic Arts'.⁹ He was evangelical regarding LSD and gave much away to turn hundreds of people on. It was at this point that he also became a nudist vegetarian and participated in orgies. Later he also partook of Marijuana, hash, magic mushrooms and Peyote. He does note in his autobiography that drugs ruined the lives of many people.

Becoming a hippie

Aged 17 he became a hippie in San Francisco in late 1966, having won a scholarship¹⁰ to the prestigious Academy of Art. He began as a clean-cut American kid when he first arrived, but soon abandoned that appearance. He moved to Haight-Ashbury (the area adjacent to these crossroads), renting a small apartment off Masonic Street, which became the

⁵ Ibid., p25-26.

⁶ Ibid., p30-31.

⁷ At home he ate out of tins.

⁸ Frisbee, Lonnie, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p38-40.

⁹ Ibid., p41.

¹⁰ The Julius David Epstein scholarship. Aged 15 Frisbee had been put into the School of Art and Design in Laguna Beach for a year and a half, at weekends and nights.

epicentre of the world-wide hippie movement, the flower power generation. He grew his hair and beard long and wore Indian guru-type clothes and sandals. At this time he described himself as a *'nudist-vegetarian hippie'*.¹¹

He immersed himself in the drug and occult scene, taking LSD regularly and often reading the Bible whilst tripping. He occasionally hitch-hiked back to Southern California and led friends to get naked and stoned at Tahquitz Canyon near Palm Springs; he says that they would seek God.¹² On one journey at Tahquitz Canyon he led a group of friends to be baptised in a waterfall whilst the whole group was stoned.¹³

In a later LSD trip in 1967, aged 18, in the same Tahquitz Canyon, Frisbee saw a vision of himself preaching in front of thousands of people who were then baptised in the ocean.¹⁴ He felt the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon him and heard God's voice call him into evangelistic ministry. He says that he came back from that trip a changed person.¹⁵ His new visionary Christianity separated him from family and friends, who considered him mad. Frisbee immediately began preaching the Gospel on beaches and wherever young people were. He states that a hundred people would be converted every night. Soon he oversaw thousands on the beach at Corona Del Mar in mass baptisms (there is some film of some of these).

Conversion

We must pause here because this is confusing. Frisbee himself strongly affirms that he was converted as a child aged eight in a Pentecostal church, taken by his grandmother Naomi.¹⁶ He apparently went forward at an evangelistic puppet show in Union Hall, Orange, California.

Many others affirm that he was converted in 1967 while tripping on LSD. Frisbee's own story is confusing as his description of his 'calling' in Tahquitz Canyon includes calling on God to see if he was real,¹⁷ which implies that he did not know God at that time; he also said that he was seeking for God on LSD trips before that time. Furthermore, he admitted to someone else that he could cause mystical manifestations before he became a believer (see section on occultism). We cannot resolve this contradiction. However, Frisbee said, *'I see my heritage among the Pentecostals ... in the Spirit ... I was born again at the age of eight years old'. ... I'm Pentecostal because I waited on God, and the power and anointing of the Spirit fell on me'*.¹⁸ This was two weeks before he was molested.

While in San Francisco he centred upon UFOs and practised hypnotism and spoke generally about the occult and mysticism. Since he admittedly became a nudist, occultist, and drug taker at this time, while others affirm that he was also homosexual, it appears unlikely that his earlier conversion was genuine. Some sources say that at some point he became a Christian convert through the witnessing of *'some brothers from "The House of Acts"'* mission. However, Frisbee also states that his conversion was the result of *'an*

¹¹ Testimony given at Wimber's church Mother's Day.

¹² Frisbee, Lonnie, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p49.

¹³ Testimony of his school-friend who was there, Judy Meston. Galatiansfour, blogspot; 'Lonnie Frisbee, the Jesus Movement and the early years of Calvary Chapel', 30 June 2010.

¹⁴ Frisbee, Lonnie, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p50.

¹⁵ Ibid., p51.

¹⁶ Ibid., p27ff. NB also p69.

¹⁷ Frisbee screamed, 'Jesus, if you are really real – reveal yourself to me'. Ibid., p50.

¹⁸ Ibid., p28.

inspired acid [LSD] trip while naked in Tahquitz Canyon;¹⁹ the history is somewhat confused at this point.

My own view is that he was being prepared by his church attendance as a child but not saved. Despite his assiduous attendance and commitment, on balance it seems that he was not actually converted as a child. This is common amongst believers and is true of myself.

Novato

At this point, aged about 18, Frisbee admits that his doctrine was confused, affirming that it was a mixture of '*Christianity and Rainbow*'.²⁰ His early fellowship was anything but conventional. He met Ted Weiss, a sail maker and artist, who was part of a mission in Haight-Ashbury, that also had a farm in Novato about 29 miles north of San Francisco where four families lived. Frisbee was invited to join them and felt more at home in the Novato commune than anywhere he had ever been.²¹ David Wilkerson came to the commune to make a documentary, '*The Runaway Generation*', in which Frisbee appears. This turned out to be a negative portrayal.

He left the Art Academy and travelled to join the Novato commune which he renamed 'The House of Acts'. Aged 18 Frisbee went into full-time ministry.²² . With the help of his new friends in 1967, mostly Ted Weiss, Frisbee rented a place for mission in the streets which was called 'The Living Room', meeting in a coffee-house in Haight-Ashbury – an hour drive from the ranch. The editor of 'Christianity Today, Ed Plowman, supported this mission consisting of five people working during weekdays which evangelised and fed kids: '*soup, soap and the Gospel*'. The women at the ranch would take throwaway supermarket food and make soup and fresh bread. This ministry continued for 18 months.²³

Various people came to this mission including a mocking Charles Manson – who even at that time declared that he was Jesus one minute, then the devil the next. Frisbee stated that he was obnoxious.

On one occasion Frisbee met a Pentecostal couple evangelising and joined them. After he preached on Market Street the old man said to him, '*Son, you are an evangelist*'. This was the first time anyone formally called him an evangelist and Frisbee didn't even know what the word meant at the time.²⁴

It was while in Novato that he married his girlfriend Connie Bremmer in April 1968. He had witnessed to her in one of his trips to Tahquitz Canyon and brought her to Christ while she was tripping on LSD – which has to raise suspicions. Frisbee took her to Novato. It seems that this was an odd relationship and she later stated that they only lived together for a year in Novato in the communal house.

The Pentecostal blessing

Missing family and friends, Frisbee began to take month long trips to Southern California where he preached on beaches. He boldly tells us that, '*I could draw a crowd of people if I just*

¹⁹ Galatiansfour, blogspot; 'Lonnie Frisbee, the Jesus Movement and the early years of Calvary Chapel', 30 June 2010.

²⁰ Frisbee, Lonnie, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p52. Rainbow was a local cult.

²¹ Ibid., p54.

²² Ibid., p57.

²³ Ibid., p65.

²⁴ Ibid., p64.

opened my mouth'. Thus he led people to Christ at Newport pier, college campuses and other places.²⁵

At Huntington Beach, south of LA, Frisbee teamed up with another mission affiliated to Teen Challenge led by a character called Bob. Frisbee stayed with Bob while preaching even though his parents lived nearby in Newport Beach. Here he heard Bob pray in tongues and confusingly Frisbee affirms that he had never heard this before, even though he earlier quotes Pentecostals speaking in tongues. He appears to draw a difference between the shrill shrieks of Pentecostals and praying in a 'tongues' language.²⁶ Bob offered to take Frisbee to Fullerton Four Square Church to meet Pastor Chuck Cruise to get filled with the Spirit.

At this point, probably 1968-9, he received the baptism in the Spirit from a visiting 'crazed' Pentecostal evangelist. This occurred at Fullerton Foursquare Church when Frisbee went forward at a meeting. The sweating evangelist slapped his hands on Lonnie's forehead, then screamed and shouted, *'Whooo, Thank you Jesus'*. Frisbee states, *'When he laid his hands on my head – heaven came down! It wasn't a light fluffy experience. It was heavy oil – it was a heavy oil experience. The power of the Spirit started coming down through him as an instrument of ministry, and the power of God filled my whole body with about ten thousand volts of electricity.'*²⁷

Regarding his understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit, he claims that he gained this from Kathryn Kuhlman. Kuhlman was a huge influence on him and his posthumous autobiography was dedicated to her, not Chuck Smith.

After his baptism in the Spirit his ministry was magnified: *'I led a lot of people to the Lord before I was baptised in the Holy Spirit, but after I was baptised, I was able to lead hundreds to Christ.'*²⁸

After two years in Novato, Lonnie and Connie left so that he could pursue 24-hour evangelism. It was around this time that Frisbee would hike-hike to Southern California in order to meet people and witness to them.

With Chuck Smith in Orange County

On one hitch-hiking trip Frisbee was picked up by John Nicholson, who was dating the daughter of Chuck Smith. At this time Smith had wanted to meet a Hippie and Frisbee was invited home. Thus Frisbee met Chuck Smith, who was building a church in Costa Mesa when Frisbee was brought to dinner in 1968. Shortly afterwards, Frisbee was invited to help with evangelism and he and his wife were allowed to stay at the Smith's home. Thus Frisbee left Novato; however, Connie deeply resented this move. Smith became a father-figure to Frisbee (as did Wimber later) and Frisbee was eventually formally ordained by Smith in 1971.

Frisbee joined the emerging Calvary Chapel, which had about 80 members at that time, and Smith was enamoured by Frisbee's charisma. He became a leading member and was put in charge of the Costa Mesa rehabilitation house called, 'The House of Miracles', (along with John Higgins) which immediately gained 35 new converts and became a commune.

²⁵ Frisbee, Lonnie, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p66.

²⁶ Ibid., p67-68 cf. p27.

²⁷ Ibid., p70-71.

²⁸ Ibid., p71.

Lonnie and John also began open-air preaching and evangelising to local youths in what was the early days of the Jesus People Movement.

Frisbee's Wednesday night Bible study began to attract thousands of people and he became Calvary Chapel's star evangelist. More communes were opened up as converts became evangelists spreading the word. Teenagers were being converted on the beaches, in meetings, in restaurants, at concerts; indeed everywhere; at one point they were baptising 500 people every month. Soon Calvary Chapel had over a thousand people at each of several meetings (Smith eventually preached at three services each Sunday morning). Contemporary Christian Music was birthed in this heady community, producing musicians like Keith Green and Larry Norman.

Aged 20, Frisbee was formally commissioned as an evangelist and Youth Pastor or Youth Director.²⁹ The huge numbers of baptisms attracted media attention and Frisbee was mentioned in articles, news reports, TV and radio; including Time Magazine. During this period Frisbee's mother was saved at one of his meetings. Pyramid Films made a documentary involving Frisbee called *'The Jesus People'*, which can be found on YouTube.

In 1971 Calvary had Bible studies operating in four major high schools. Frisbee led one, with Ray Rent of Bethesda Fellowship, at Harbour High School that had 150 kids that he led to Christ. At these 'the power' would come upon them and all the children would fall on the ground.³⁰ One person who fell down, got saved and baptised in the Spirit was Greg Laurie, who had been mocking Frisbee before he fell.

Also in this time Frisbee travelled to the Shrine Auditorium in LA to see Kathryn Kuhlman, each month, year after year. He was deeply impacted by Kuhlman's ministry, which would have a lasting effect on him; especially fostering a desire to perform healings: *'This unusual and unique woman taught me about the Holy Spirit, and she is my absolute hero of the faith'*.³¹ In 1971 Frisbee appeared on Kuhlman's television *'I believe in miracles'* show with Chuck Smith and Duane Pederson; the extract can be seen on YouTube. Then aged 62, Kuhlman blessed and laid hands on Frisbee.³²

Frisbee also believed that he had an 'anointing' on his life from Pentecostal Aimee Semple McPherson,³³ partly via Kuhlman and partly through Smith, who had been a member of

²⁹ 'I was the ruling, reigning, glorified youth director at Calvary Chapel ... multitudes of people that burned incense at my altar'. Lonnie Frisbee, with Roger Sachs; *'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution'*, Freedom Pub. (2012), p137, 139-140 also p85.

³⁰ Ibid., p122.

³¹ Ibid., p95.

³² Ibid., p97.

³³ Aimee Semple McPherson [1890-1944]. Founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel [ICFG] and Angelus Temple LA. Extremely famous Pentecostal evangelist and healer, initially working in tent crusades, though her life was marred by scandals. She divorced her second husband. In 1919 she was ordained by the Assemblies of God as an evangelist; she left them in 1922. She was also accredited with the Methodists and Baptists. With her attractive appearance and personality, she pursued an ecumenical vision, appealing to many churches. In the 1920s she began publishing books that were popular and became known as 'sister'. The Angelus Temple in LA was built in 1925 birthing the ICFG. [The 'Foursquare Gospel' = Christ as Saviour, Baptiser in the Spirit, Healer and King.] She became the first woman to operate a radio station. She campaigned for various civil issues. In 1926 she disappeared and was feared dead until she was found in Mexico claiming to have been kidnapped. Rumours spread of her really having an affair with a former employee (a film was made of this). She stood trial for obstruction of justice and perjury and was ridiculed in the press. Eventually the charges were dropped. In the 30s she had a nervous breakdown and remarried in 1931. She penned numerous hymns and songs and published hymnbooks. She died of an accidental overdose of a prescribed medicine. Her funeral was one of the largest in LA's history. Clearly a gifted woman and hard worker, she is the epitome of the Pentecostal female leader.

her church. Influenced by these he began to call out healings and had some minor successes;³⁴ he also got involved in exorcisms, some of which were extreme.

Frisbee's Pentecostal style, however, caused friction with Smith. In reality Frisbee's focus upon evangelism and miracles, with no concentration upon doctrinal development, led to problems. However, Smith centred upon teaching and Frisbee was brought into the main church where he ministered to hippies and young people; his hippie appearance helped make a point of contact. Here Frisbee initiated 'Afterglows', tarrying meetings which gave the platform to him for transferring power. Later Wimber's meetings would centre upon such meetings when people '*did the stuff*' (open the meeting up for power encounters).

The Jesus People Movement

At this time the Jesus People³⁵ Movement revival broke out in America, with California being one of its epicentres. Frisbee saw many converts, especially after walking along the beach. The House of Miracles developed into 19 communal houses that later moved to Oregon (Shiloh Youth Revival Centres). This was the largest of the Jesus People communes with 100,000 members and 175 commune houses across the States. From 1968-1971 Frisbee thus became a prominent leader in the Jesus Movement revival.

The Jesus People revival started as a genuine move of God to convert large numbers of young people, many of whom would later become church leaders and missionaries.³⁶ In recent times many of these folk have turned to Calvinism for answers, their previous Arminian theology having left them cold. The effects of this move of God briefly touched the UK and I was converted in 1971 in the midst of it at college (though I did not know that at the time). We saw many converts in those days. As in many other historical movements, it gradually spiralled out of control into fanaticism, sins, errors and cults (such as 'The Children of God' under 'Moses' David Berg) and dissipated. However, hundreds of thousands of young people were genuinely converted and stand to this day.

As a leader in this well publicised movement Frisbee came to prominence, even appearing with Kathryn Kuhlman on television. Life, Newsweek, Rolling Stone and Time magazine made the movement major news. Frisbee became the archetypal poster boy with his long hair and beard, claiming to want to look like Jesus.

This revival was primarily responsible for building up Calvary Chapel churches with Frisbee being the main evangelist that brought them in. It also spurred on many other ministries, churches and organisations, such as Campus Crusade for Christ.

With Bob Mumford and Derek Prince

During the Jesus People revival Frisbee was able to study at the Melodyland School of the Bible in Anaheim, California (opposite Disneyland) where he felt close to his professor, Bob Mumford.

After about four years, in 1971, Frisbee separated from Smith due to theological differences, chiefly Frisbee's Pentecostalism; Frisbee was centring on gifts of power. Connie was also suffering in a loveless marriage and was lonely due to Frisbee's absences and she was about to leave him. Smith had told her that she had to get used to the fact that for Frisbee, God was his first priority, his ministry second and she was a pale third.

³⁴ Though some were significant. One of his first was a girl being healed of multiple warts on her feet – but she brought all the warts that had fell off into her shoe to Frisbee to see. This is better than modern Charismatics can do.

³⁵ Also 'Jesus Freak'.

³⁶ One of the most famous in America is Greg Laurie, mentored by Frisbee for five years.

Frisbee then sought help from Bob Mumford about his marital problems. Mumford said that Smith was wrong and that Frisbee needed to sort out his marriage. Mumford was in the process of relocating to Florida at this time, so Mumford offered Frisbee a job with him if he spent a year on sabbatical fixing his marriage.³⁷ Frisbee left California to move in with the Fort Lauderdale Five (the Shepherding Movement) and initially stepped down from all ministry, taking a job in construction.

Ironically, the only apartment Frisbee could rent was owned by Derek Prince, who helped them when they were broke. Chuck Smith had previously warned Frisbee that Derek Prince was a false prophet centred upon deliverance ministry and at first Frisbee was wary, even condemning Prince in preaching saying that he, '*hated and despised Derek Prince*'.³⁸ After meeting Prince, however, Frisbee declared that Prince was not only a good man but one of the best church leaders he had ever met.

Some sources say that after the first year in Florida Frisbee moved back to California alone; yet Frisbee himself says that he spent five and a half years with Mumford,³⁹ mostly living in an apartment owned by Derek Prince. Frisbee also states that upon leaving Florida, he drove back to California with his wife.⁴⁰ He states that Mumford was very upset when he left.⁴¹

Sadly, perhaps in 1973, his wife Connie had an affair with a friend (one source says a pastor) and they divorced. A source says that this was in a Vineyard Church in Denver,⁴² however, this is a mistake. Frisbee mentioned his divorce in a sermon at the Vineyard Church in Denver at a later point but the affair must have been in Florida if it was 1973. In his autobiography Frisbee mentions this after he returned to Smith.⁴³ I cannot properly resolve the confusion. What Frisbee does say is that although the person was a church member, he was in open adultery with Connie for a year (while still living with Frisbee) until she had another affair. The man came to Frisbee and they bonded, whereupon Frisbee baptised him in Santa Cruz.⁴⁴ Thus Frisbee affirms that the affair was in California, not Florida. Yet later he implies it was in Florida.⁴⁵ This sort of confusion is typical of Frisbee's life and he did not take the trouble to sort plain facts and dates out in his autobiography.

Back with Chuck Smith

Though Frisbee loved both Mumford and Prince, he said that 'Heavy Shepherding' teaching, '*almost did me in*'... *it was absolutely one of the most difficult periods of my life*'.⁴⁶ This is what happens with authoritarian leadership. In Florida he had laid down his ministry and became very submissive to his elders, gradually being abused.

³⁷ OC [Orange County] Weekly, 'The First Jesus Freak', Matt Coker, 3 March 2005. Lonnie Frisbee, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p137.

³⁸ Lonnie Frisbee, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p139-140.

³⁹ Ibid., p141, 195.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p180.

⁴¹ Ibid., p196.

⁴² Benevolent Baptist, wordpress.com, 'The forgotten Hippy: Remembering Lonnie Frisbee and the Jesus Movement', 12 March 2013.

⁴³ Lonnie Frisbee, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p192.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p193.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p195.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p145.

On his return to California, his appearance was now smarter, with close cropped hair and trimmed beard plus a suit and Smith simply took him back on board as an evangelist.⁴⁷ This must have been in the late 70s, about 1977.

In 1978 Smith sent Frisbee on a world-wide missionary tour visiting South Africa (where he ministered to other groups connected to the Jesus People revival), Israel and Europe.

His autobiography mentions that at one point he was living in Brea (p148) and at another that he inherited a small house in '*the heart of Santa Ana*' (p153). It is impossible to say when he lived at these places in California.

With John Wimber

In May 1980 Frisbee was invited by John Wimber to join the Yorba Linda branch of the Calvary Chapel denomination after Wimber had met Frisbee at a conference.⁴⁸ Wimber had been interested in miracles but had been told that these were no longer part of Christianity. With Frisbee's arrival signs and wonders began to appear as people fell over during his preaching. Meetings were said to look like a battlefield with bodies all over the floor, shaking and speaking in tongues. One witness states:

He went like this with his hand, and I was part of that group that everybody just went over. The whole group, we couldn't get up. It was like dominoes. It wasn't like people knocked me over either, you just felt that 'whoosh' of the Spirit. Everybody just went down.⁴⁹

Wimber called this his first power encounter. Carol Wimber affirmed this was, '*the watershed experience that launched us into what is today called power evangelism*'.⁵⁰ As a result church growth expanded dramatically and this launched the Vineyard Church Movement.⁵¹

Due to the weird phenomena initiated by Frisbee, Wimber was summoned before the church elders to explain what happened. Before he finished his defence, Frisbee burst into the room, walked up to the angriest elder and screamed, '*You need to have the experience of God*'. The elder shook uncontrollably, fell to the floor and rolled around.

It seems that the unbiblical characteristic prayer and song of the Vineyard Movement, '*Come Holy Spirit*', was coined by Frisbee. This prayer launched the first mass falling down at Vineyard. After this Wimber became more centred upon miracles, which eventually led to his distancing from Smith. Wimber then dropped the name 'Calvary Chapel' and sought to join the growing Vineyard Church led by Kenn Gulliksen. Gulliksen not only agreed but turned the movement over to Wimber. Note that Wimber gained a church movement based upon the work of others.

Frisbee and Wimber began to travel the world with Frisbee being in great demand. Many healings are said to have occurred and Wimber began developing his '*Signs and Wonders Theology*', which would captivate the Charismatic Movement in Britain after about 1986.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p191, 195.

⁴⁸ 'John and I met three years ago at a pastor's conference and the Lord told us that he was going to join us together but it has taken three years.' Frisbee; Sabatino film.

⁴⁹ A Vineyard leader speaking on the Sabatino film.

⁵⁰ Carol Wimber, 'A hunger for God', in Kevin Springer, *Power Encounters*, Harper & Row (1988), p12.

⁵¹ With Wimber and Kenn Gulliksen.

Eventually it surfaced that Frisbee was involved in a sixth-month long homosexual affair. When Wimber found out and confronted him, he agreed to leave the church. As with Calvary Chapel, Frisbee's name was edited out of the official church history.

Obscurity

The period between Frisbee leaving The Vineyard and his death is very murky; though it is said that he sported a preacher's collar for a time and became very bitter about his previous colleagues, calling them 'bozos';⁵² however, others say that he forgave them after he contracted AIDS. Certainly his influence has been ignored considering he is responsible for the growth of two of the biggest US church denominations and ignited the career of many church leaders.

All I can say for certain is that he preached in various places at some points; in one speech that appears on YouTube he states that he was preaching for the first time in eight years. What he did in those eight years is hard to say.

Death

Eventually, in 1993, Frisbee contracted AIDS and died from complications aged 43. His funeral was at the Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, California (the church of liberal Robert Schuller).

Taken advantage of

Later in life Frisbee complained about the way he had been constantly used by church leaders and neglected in many ways. Indeed, he became very bitter about this and castigated the ministers he had worked with the most. Some of the language he used in these complaints is inappropriate and this lack of grace alone raises questions about his spiritual condition.

Frisbee believed that ministers just wanted to use his gifts and ability in evangelism and power but sideline him otherwise due to his bohemian effervescent personality. For some time with Smith, Frisbee was the most prominent leader responsible for bringing in huge numbers of converts and new members, yet others were given full-time church jobs and not him. He says, *'In the height of the revival my wife and I were on food stamps! The church paid me \$25 a week, which for a married couple made us eligible for public assistance. It produced a growing resentment and wound in my life.'*⁵³

With Wimber, Frisbee had again been responsible for the explosion in growth and the ability to *'do the stuff'* (as Wimber called it), but had not been given proper recognition.

In both cases, the church denominations that owed their initial growth to Frisbee wrote him out of their history due to embarrassment about his homosexuality. In some of the written records on Vineyard's origins, such as Wimber's books, Frisbee is just referred to as, *'a young man'* or *'a young evangelist'*.

⁵² 'Bozo' = a stupid or insignificant person. His brother affirmed that he was very bitter towards those who had rejected him. He said that Lonnie suffered from unforgiveness and that his bitterness even manifested itself in his preaching. Friend John Ruttkay averred, 'He blamed his dad, blamed his step-dad, blamed Chuck Smith and then John Wimber'. Sabatino film.

⁵³ Lonnie Frisbee, with Roger Sachs; *'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution'*, Freedom Pub. (2012), p135.

On the question of his homosexuality, one has to lay some blame with the pastors. Better care and checks should have been made before catapulting him into positions of authority leading meetings and becoming a youth pastor. Apart from that, there should have been much more love evidenced to help Frisbee when his leanings were known – instead he was just got rid of. Smith's own son (a church leader in his own right) has gone on public record saying that his dad let Frisbee down.

In addition there is filmed testimony of Frisbee complaining about the way pastor's used him. Smith made him a pastor and Frisbee affirmed that he hated doing this job. He complained (rightly) that he was not a pastor but an evangelist and should have been used according to his gift. Sadly this is very common in Charismatic circles; there are many men pastoring churches that have no gift whatsoever to do this job. There are also so-called apostles pastoring churches, or multiple churches, who also are completely useless at shepherding, and care little for people's lives, but they were originally good evangelists. All of this just speaks about the meddling of men in the churches and the severe lack of wisdom in leadership today. No wonder people like Frisbee got confused, dejected and wasted.

Frisbee stated that all his life he was looking for a father-figure to guide him. He was actually a man in great need of help and all the father-figures in his life used him and let him down. His story is rather sad and pathetic.

Character

It is difficult to get to know a person from second-hand anecdotes and a few films. It is safer to draw out conclusions from his autobiography but supply extra evidence from trusted sources where the autobiography is silent or confused.

Revelling

Numerous sources, even sympathetic ones, accuse Frisbee of partying on Saturday night but preaching Sunday morning. Of course, he doesn't mention this at all in his autobiography, which appears to be somewhat of a whitewash; unless everything said by others (including his friends) is a lie. Revelling is living in the flesh; drunken partying and pleasing oneself, which the Bible condemns (Gal 5:21; 1 Pt 4:3).

Exactly what sort of partying Frisbee did is not specified, but homosexual behaviour is implied. His wife specifically accused him of attending late-night Gay bars while they were married.⁵⁴ Someone could say that these accusations are lies, but Frisbee admitted a six-month long homosexual relationship, at the height of his power and influence, to John Wimber, which terminated his effective ministry.

We do not know the extent of this partying, whether it was habitual or an occasional lapse; whether it continued for months or years. Clearly this is very serious.

Language

Swearing

One thing that concerns me greatly is to see Frisbee use low-level swear words in his autobiography. While some may dismiss this as not serious, I find it hard to believe that a truly godly man could use such words. What is more concerning is that this is not only

⁵⁴ Connie Bremer-Murray, Special Features section, David Di Sabatino; *The Life and Death of a Hippy Preacher*, (documentary film).

words deliberately put into print, but his speech has been ghost-edited by someone else. Thus it seems apparent that this language is already toned down.

This poor use of language gives me pause. It may well harbinge other problems.

Blasphemy

Then there are occasions where he uses what can only be called low-level blasphemous turns of phrase. Again a godly man would not allow himself to put such words into print even if he had said them previously. On one occasion he invoked 'the mother of God'.⁵⁵

Arrogance

Some of his speech is downright arrogant hubris. For example:

- *'I was the ruling, reigning, glorified youth director at Calvary Chapel ... multitudes of people that burned incense at my altar'*.⁵⁶
- *'Everyday there were miracles'*.⁵⁷
- *'Multitudes of people that burned incense at my altar.'*⁵⁸
- *'I could draw a crowd of people if I just opened my mouth'*.⁵⁹

Doctrinal naivety

Reading Frisbee's own story reveals some startling doctrinal ignorance and credulity. Despite years involved in Pentecostalism, he did not even understand Pentecostal doctrine properly, let alone evangelical theology. I also find it odd that years after witnessing successfully to people he affirmed that he did not know what the word 'evangelist' meant.

One would find it a wasted effort to try to find any understanding of important doctrinal issues in Frisbee, such as: the Trinity, the Person of Christ, the decrees of God, justification by faith, or sanctification (both legally and progressively⁶⁰); however there is much talk about the Holy Spirit. This central focus upon the Holy Spirit is contrary to the Spirit's ministry, which is to glorify Christ (Jn 16:14).

Marriage

Frisbee, sadly considering his own background, seriously neglected his wife, though he affirms his love for her. His zeal for evangelism led him to virtually ignore her. He took no heed to her feelings when he moved to join Smith and bamboozled her to relocate away from a place where she felt safe and secure (she had been a runaway before marriage). He later made her move away from her home to Florida, which eventually broke the marriage.

He should have seen that she was vulnerable, insecure and from a dysfunctional background, needing much care. However, many Hippies of the time were equally chauvinistic, leaving trails of destruction behind them. Frisbee behaved more like a Hippie than a believer.

⁵⁵ Lonnie Frisbee, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p170.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p137, 139-140 also p85.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p122.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p139.

⁵⁹ Frisbee, Lonnie, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p66.

⁶⁰ Legal or definitive sanctification is the past tense of the doctrine (1 Cor 6:11); progressive sanctification is the present tense (Heb 2:11, 10:14). The future tense is a glorified body at the coming of Christ (1 Thess 3:13).

Drugs

It seems pretty clear that getting stoned on LSD and Marijuana played a significant part in Frisbee's conversion and subsequent activities. Filmmaker David Di Sabatino says,

One of the ironic twists of the 60s was that many openly stated that drugs, LSD in particular, played a large part of their experience in Christian salvation.⁶¹

Early Hippie Christians Steve and Sandy Heefner exemplify this:

I took my LSD, laid down on the floor a couple of hours and when I could get up, I got up as a Christian. It's just that simple.⁶²

At which point in his life Frisbee stopped taking drugs is hard to pinpoint. It certainly continued after his conversion as his wife explained when she describes an LSD session they had together.⁶³

Homosexuality

In church circles Frisbee's sexuality was an open secret, yet many people did not know about it. Chuck Smith Junior told Wimber about it over lunch asking how he could reconcile homosexuality with ministry. When confronted by Wimber, Frisbee admitted that he had been in a six-month relationship with a man and agreed to leave. Thus there is no doubt; Frisbee was a practising homosexual at the time of his ministry in the Vineyard.

David Di Sabatino made a film about Frisbee⁶⁴ and affirmed that Frisbee admitted his homosexuality '*way back*'; certainly to the age of 15 when he joined the Gay underground scene in Laguna Beach. Even his family did not know this. Frisbee had been a homosexual before joining with Chuck Smith but hid it from his testimony after being shunned when he admitted that he had left a homosexual lifestyle.

When he got married his wife Connie was concerned that his homosexual leanings would compromise their marriage; indeed he admitted that he was Gay. In the end, the marriage was unromantic and somewhat of a shell, though Frisbee affirmed a love for Connie. They only lived together for a year. At the end of their marriage, Connie learned that he had been spending late nights in a Gay bar.

It appears that Frisbee had continued in a homosexual lifestyle, despite periods of abstinence, which is what killed him. Kenn Gulliksen said, '*That's one area of his life that never got – it was never broken. He was never free of it and it remained hidden away and would manifest itself very secretly, very privately. He had a long-term relationship with someone at Camp Pendleton – an officer*'.⁶⁵ Bob Fulton (a Vineyard spokesman) said that Lonnie was '*a practising homosexual*'.⁶⁶

Yet there are many who try to defend him saying that he condemned homosexuality as a sin (which he did in public) and that he had left this lifestyle. However, even his friends that defend him admit that he certainly lapsed into homosexual behaviour from time to time. Yet the testimonies of many appear to show that he never broke with his homosexuality and that it dominated his life. He was homosexual before and after his

⁶¹ David Di Sabatino; The Life and Death of a Hippie Preacher, (documentary film).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Connie Bremer-Murray, Special Features section, David Di Sabatino; The Life and Death of a Hippie Preacher, (documentary film).

⁶⁴ Frisbee: The Life and Death of a Hippie Preacher.

⁶⁵ Sabatino film.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

conversion. He was homosexual during his power ministry and after he was forced to leave the Vineyard.

He died of a disease that is closely associated with homosexual behaviour.

Ministry

On the basis of listening to what we have of Frisbee preaching, plus testimonies from others we can draw out the following characteristics of his ministry.

Preaching style

Frisbee was clearly not intellectual and no teacher; nor would he have claimed to be. His speaking style was slow and ponderous but somewhat attractive. His Gospel preaching was typical of the Arminian – Pentecostal type of the time and not innovative. However, he occasionally had some interesting observations, or turn of phrase, that were novel. There was no way in which his preaching could be called powerful, dramatic, interesting or ‘on fire’.

Power

Yet it seems that Frisbee could be powerful when he stopped preaching and demanded that people react to the Spirit, such as a command to speak in tongues. When he felt that the power was upon him he could be very dramatic and it was common for people to collapse simply as he raised his hand or walked by.

Thus there were two types of people in Frisbee. The usual, non-distinctive, not very special preacher that said very little that was enlightening. Then there was the Pentecostal firebrand that could make people fall over in hordes and throw people against the wall.

Evangelism

Then again there was his evangelism. In his heyday he was able to reach out to the young and disenfranchised (remember this was during the Vietnam protest movement) and speak their language and be accepted because he looked as much of a Hippie as they did. This winsomeness and approachability led huge numbers to follow him and make confessions of faith.

Problems

The lack of doctrinal understanding is worrying in a man who is in a position of great leadership. None of the Biblical tests of an elder seem to have been applied to him before he was raised up. He had not departed from sin. He had not fathered a family faithfully. He had neglected his wife. His marriage was broken. He was not able to teach. He was not held in good esteem by outsiders. He should never have been a church leader.

This is a case where the ability to perform mystical and occult phenomena is held as a good reason to put a man in charge.

Sin

He believed that God told him that sin did not impact his ministry. He describes a conversation with God where the Lord is supposed to say, if he sins, it doesn't matter; if he is in rebellion to God his ministry will continue '*no matter what*'.⁶⁷ This is plain heresy. Sin

⁶⁷ Ibid., p197.

does matter and any church leader committing sin must be disciplined. Ministry is ruined by sin. A bad root cannot produce good fruit.

Errors

Frisbee was essentially a Pentecostal and so was affected by all the heresies centred in this movement. To avoid a lengthy theological discussion, I will simply list some of Frisbee's errors.

- Wesleyan Arminian Gospel (typical of Pentecostalism).
- The invitation system in evangelism (common in Pentecostalism but derived from Charles Finney).
- Pentecostal errors: a mystical baptism in the Spirit 'second blessing' experience; gibberish as the gift of tongues, tarrying meetings ('Afterglow'), being slain in the Spirit, transference of power by laying on of hands, treating the Holy Spirit as an object or force to be thrown around, sacramentalism and so on.
- He believed in bloodline curses that could affect believers.⁶⁸
- Sheer confusion about sanctification.
- Accepted women in church leadership.⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that his two major influences were women (Aimee Semple McPherson and Kathryn Kuhlman, both of whom were caught up in fleshly controversies).
- Failure to understand or teach about the importance and priority of family.
- Unforgiveness.
- Ecumenism. Frisbee worked with Roman Catholics at their request and even led meetings where Roman priests served Mass.⁷⁰
- Had a weird notion about failure. After describing how he forcibly tried to heal a man in a café and hurt the man's head, failing to bring any healing, leading Frisbee to run away, he says, '*You fail your way into God. You fail your way into the Kingdom of God*'.⁷¹ He is really describing mistakes. Frisbee's early attempts to heal met with many failures. He also had many wrong visions, such as the time he was certain that he would take over Oral Robert's ministry when he died; which is a failure to hear from God correctly. He is saying that you try and try again and eventually get it right. This is not how NT ministry worked.
- Relied constantly upon coincidences to confirm Gods will. If doors opened, then that was God. This is extremely foolish and immature. Open doors are just opportunities to be accepted or denied on the basis of truth and God's will. They do not represent an automatic guarantee of the right thing. It seems to me that the devil manipulated Frisbee's circumstances on many occasions, pretending to be an angel of light.

Deliverance ministry

Though not famed for this, Frisbee himself spends a considerable time in his autobiography talking about exorcisms. While he states that there are dangers with this, he seems to have been very involved with it. He also got involved with some pretty extreme examples of demon-possessed people. I have only known people confront extreme demonised cases when the leader was already compromised by Pentecostal/occultic teachings.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p149.

⁶⁹ Lonnie Frisbee, with Roger Sachs; 'Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution', Freedom Pub. (2012), p97.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p152.

⁷¹ Ibid., p181.

It is my experience that people who focus upon demons find demons. Most church leaders go through their whole life and never confront a demon in a person. That there are times when an evangelist will confront demonised people is without question since this occurred many times in the NT. What is vital to be clear on is that it is unbelievers that need to be freed from demon possession, not believers. There is no NT ministry of delivering believers from demons, let alone multiple demons over multiple sessions. The anecdotes of deliverance sessions are typical of Pentecostal stories seen before.

I also find it somewhat unnerving that Frisbee commanded demons to, '*Get the hell out!*'. This is a fleshly turn of phrase at the very best and really is characteristic of someone not broken. It is concerning that he even said this, but more concerning that demons supposedly took any notice and did leave the person.

I find Frisbee's stories of deliverance uncomfortable and they raise questions. Were the confrontations with demons due to demonic activity being exposed by his supposed Charismatic power or was it that his power was occultic and this encouraged a demonic response? I also cannot balance Frisbee's earlier savage criticism of Derek Prince for his deliverance teaching and ministry and then doing exactly the same thing after he became Prince's friend.

Another concern is the sheer number of people that committed suicide around Frisbee, including a flat-mate at one time. This appears to be, at least, unusual; but it may speak of a general occult involvement – suicide is a common by-product of occultism. My concern with Pentecostal demonology and exorcism is that it is similar to many forms of occult religion and has no place in traditional evangelical Christian church life. If these exorcisms were really occult behaviour, it could explain the number of suicides, which even Frisbee thought was strange.

Occultism

One question that we cannot answer is, how much occultism had Lonnie absorbed by the heathen traditions of his Native American Indian father? These tribesmen were steeped in the Shamanism and witch-doctor religious occultism that began to creep into evangelical churches with people like Lonnie. Was there a connection? We cannot say.

Mysticism

Frisbee's power experiences are frequently averred to be proof of the power of the Holy Spirit in a believer. Yet on one occasion Frisbee admitted to someone that he had been able to do mystical things (such as make people fall over) before he ever became a Christian when he was into the occult and flying saucers.⁷² In fact, he used to say that he thought that Jesus came to earth from a UFO.

His chief ability to be considered as spiritual power was the typical Pentecostal sign of making people fall over (being 'slain in the Spirit'). When 'the power' was on Frisbee he could do this randomly without prayer or action; people walking past him would simply fall over. This phenomenon is typical of occult and mystical groups, as we have explained many times. It has nothing to do with Biblical ministry and is not a Scriptural sign of *charisma*.⁷³

It is also said by his friends that when he was normal he was goofy, silly, and could do nothing powerful; but when the power came upon him he was bold, authoritative and

⁷² Frisbee admitted that: 'even before he became a Christian he could make such things happen', John Gunstone Ed. 'Meeting John Wimber', p55.

⁷³ Charisma is the Greek word for a spiritual gift, e.g. 1 Cor 1:7.

dispensed power and even healing. This also is typical of many occultists, shaman types and mystics. William Branham could also do no miracles unless his 'angel' (i.e. demon) was with him. Benny Hinn has explained that when the power comes upon him at home his children become frightened of him (what a foul thing to boast about!). Hinn then can do the sorts of things that Frisbee did years before him.

With Frisbee people did not just fall backwards. I have personally heard Wimber talk about the early days (though he did not mention Frisbee) and explained how people would be thrown many yards in the air to be slammed against a wall. This sort of violent action has nothing to do with genuine Christian ministry, to say nothing of the implication of throwing the Spirit around to hit a person some distance away.

As with all such Pentecostal phenomena, this is based in occult methodology not Bible teaching.

Anointing oil

In his testimony he explains how he copied the Old Covenant anointing oil (which men are forbidden to do by God) to use to aid his growing Pentecostal ministry. He describes how he made it. Oddly he also explains that he was reading a lot of Edgar Cayce⁷⁴ at the time who explained how he used witch hazel, so Frisbee added witch hazel to his special oil. This mixture is a corruption of the Old Covenant anointing oil. He poured this profusely upon people to aid the baptism in the Spirit.

At best this is sacramentalism. At worst it is witchcraft. It is also completely unbiblical.

Fetishism

Frisbee believed that a deer-skinned coat on which he'd painted an image of Jesus' face (itself unbiblical) could summon the Holy Spirit and heal and convert people. He'd drape it over teenagers to bring down the Spirit's power.⁷⁵ This is pure witchcraft.

I got a deerskin to be my mantle and I painted a picture of Jesus on it and wore it like a cape. So when I would pray for people and the Spirit of God would come on 'em, I'd take off my cape and throw the mantle over the top of them.⁷⁶

He began to use this in Vineyard meetings:

John would speak and Lonnie would minister. They were the dynamic duo. Lonnie got up there and he'd wave his leather coat and the power of God would come and people would be falling over these old pews in Baptist churches. And Lonnie would start climbing over the pews and start laying hands on people saying, 'Speak in tongues! Speak in tongues.' And he'd hit them in the forehead and they'd instantly begin to speak in tongues.⁷⁷

Transference of power

This is very common in occult circles, such as when a Hindu guru lays hands on a disciple and they completely change, manifesting various forms of odd behaviour (such as screaming, crying, leaping, roaring, falling over etc.). This is actually the imparting of demonic forces into a submitted personality; it has been around for thousands of years and appears in all sorts of occult religion, not just Hinduism.

⁷⁴ Edgar Cayce [1877-1945] was an American occultist and author.

⁷⁵ OC Weekly, 'The First Jesus Freak', Matt Coker, 3 March 2005.

⁷⁶ David Di Sabatino; *The Life and Death of a Hippy Preacher*, (documentary film).

⁷⁷ Vineyard leader in Sabatino film.

We see this very clearly in Pentecostalism and Charismania; it is just pagan occultism warmed up and this began to cross over into evangelical churches in the early Charismatic Movement around the time of Frisbee's early ministry. Kathryn Kuhlman was one key, widely accepted proponent and she laid hands on Frisbee for power. In fact Frisbee was completely enamoured by Kuhlman and dedicated his autobiography to her.

One of the problems with this sort of power is that it touches non-Christians as well as Christians. How can the grace of God affect scoffing unbelievers? The Foreword in Frisbee's autobiography demonstrates one such occurrence where mocking teenagers began to shake and then prayed in tongues on Frisbee's command without any repentance or faith (p5). This sort of power is simply age-old occultism.

Bad testimonies by followers of Frisbee

See the video at YouTube, 'The Lonnie Frisbee mantle by Jeff Jansen'.

Larsen describes being in a meeting with Wimber and Frisbee in New York. He explains how Frisbee was able to minister Toronto Blessing-type mystical experiences even then;⁷⁸ in fact, these are typical oriental mystical and occult phenomena.

For example Jansen explains that a group of drug-addicted men on the platform were jumping in synchronised piston-like movements about eight inches in the air. However, they were not bending their knees at all. This is physically impossible and typical of occult phenomena. Jansen then explains how, on Frisbee's instruction, he raised his hands and felt like he had plugged into a thousand volts of electricity. He affirmed that he shook for months afterwards.

These are not a Biblical experience but are common in the occult.

A number of people witness about receiving the mantle of Lonnie Frisbee so that they can move in power. See for example: YouTube '*SHATTER! – Lonnie Frisbee Mantle Part 1 – Keith Luker*'. Luker explains that he shook with the 'power of the Holy Spirit' whenever he walked past a wooden easel made by Frisbee. This is pure sacramentalism and / or suggestibility and no different from the people that fainted in the Middle Ages when they touched a Roman Catholic relic.

Mentors

- An unknown Pentecostal evangelist who brought him into the baptism of the Spirit and empowered him.
- Oral Roberts. Frisbee was initially convinced that he would take on Robert's ministry after he died.⁷⁹
- Kathryn Kuhlman, who taught him how to operate in the Spirit.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Making people fall down, cry, scream, jump in the air etc.

⁷⁹ Roberts [1918-2009] is America's most prominent Pentecostal healing evangelist. He was initially a pastor in the Pentecostal Holiness church between 1936-1947. He launched his own ministry in 1947 in Oklahoma, also publishing his first book (of 88) on healing, a magazine and doing radio broadcasts. He then toured America with the biggest tent ever used to preach the gospel, holding 12,500 people. He became the leader in the Healing Revival that spread from the late 1940s to the late 50s. He led many ecumenical crusades, which revitalised Pentecostalism. He also became a leading figure for the Charismatic Movement, as well as influencing the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship (1951). He launched a national weekly television programme in 1955, setting a trend for the future. He became internationally famous with millions of books in circulation, plus magazines and newspaper columns. He even instituted the Oral Roberts University in 1965 plus a medical research centre in 1981.

- Chuck Smith.⁸¹
- Bob Mumford, whom Frisbee stated that he loved and was inspired by his anointing.⁸²
- Derek Prince, who Frisbee stated was his lifelong mentor.⁸³
- John Wimber.⁸⁴

Sound believers would identify all of the above as seriously deceived leaders who brought corruption into the church. These brought in: authoritarianism and spiritual abuse, spiritual corruption, false teaching, ecumenism, radical Pentecostal errors, eastern mysticism and occultism.

⁸⁰ Kuhlman [1907-1976] was a famous Pentecostal (originally Baptist) church pastor who led huge public healing meetings and pioneered healing on radio and television. She began her ministry aged 16 before completing a full education. She really set the scene for modern Charismatic healing meetings and her style (such as using emotional backing music to heighten feeling, the word of knowledge to identify healing, and making people fall over backwards) has been much copied. Benny Hinn claims to have been empowered by visiting her tomb. In fact, when Christian leaders (such as Kurt Koch) and doctors tested her best examples of healing, they found no proof of any organic improvement at all. Furthermore, famous witches testified that she was powerful in their skills. At best, Kuhlman appears to have been able to manipulate emotions and harness hypnotism without any knowledge about what she was doing. At worst, she was a devilish deceiver. By Biblical definition she was an adulterer, marrying an evangelist who left his wife for her.

⁸¹ Smith [1927--2013] founder of Calvary Chapel churches., that has over 1,000 affiliated churches worldwide. He began as a Pentecostal and served as the campaign manager and worship director for Paul Cain in the late 1950s. He then served as a non-denominational pastor in Corona, California, before moving to Calvary Chapel in 1965 in Costa Mesa. Initially this church had 25 people. In 1968 he brought in Lonnie Frisbee, who became a key leader in the Jesus People revival, which added thousands to Smith's membership. It's current membership is 35,000.

⁸² Mumford was the key leader in the Fort Lauderdale Five group, later known as the Shepherding Movement, with Derek Prince, Don Basham, Charles Simpson and Ern Baxter. The group was formally named, 'the Holy Spirit Teaching Mission', but this was later changed to 'Christian Growth Ministries' in 1972; its magazine was *New Wine*. This emphasised some of Watchman Nee's teachings on authority and seconded Juan Carlos Ortiz and his views on discipleship. It became guilty of 'heavy shepherding', exercising authoritarian control over church members and legalism, demanding full submission in all aspects of life. Eventually, the sheer number of abuses and scandals led to its demise; but for several years it was internationally famous and drew many supporters (and much money). It also led to a growing ecumenism with Rome, based upon Charismatic ideas. In Britain the counterpart was the Restoration Movement, where Mumford did preach a few times at Bible Weeks and initially had formal oversight. After the dissolution of Christian Growth Ministries about 1986, Mumford established 'Lifechangers Inc.' in California.

⁸³ Prince [1915-2003] was an important member of the Shepherding Movement and one with an intellectual university background. Originally he had served in the army and various pastorates world-wide. Later he established his own ministry, which had a heavy focus upon deliverance ministry to Christians (exorcism). With the Fort Lauderdale brethren he emphasised authoritarianism, legalism, tithing and fasting; however, he renounced this in 1984 after the movement was scandalised. He later concentrated upon Messianic Christianity, centring God's purpose on fleshly Israel and had a prominent radio ministry. Considered by Charismatics to be one of the few Charismatic intellectual teachers, his ministry is severely compromised and deceived.

⁸⁴ Wimber [1934-1997]. Originally a Quaker, after his supposed conversion, he was initially a pastor of a Society of Friends church for five years. He then (1975) lectured on church growth at Fuller Evangelistic Association and Fuller Theological Seminary with C Peter Wagner, before becoming the leader of the Vineyard Movement, centred in Anaheim in 1977, which established the Signs and Wonders (third wave) of Charismania. He is guilty of introducing various corrupt elements into the church, such as: superstitions, occult practices, an eastern oriental paradigm (i.e. mysticism), elements of witchcraft, as well as ecumenism with Rome. He was seen by many British leaders (such as Terry Virgo who later organised his UK conferences) as a safe kind of Pentecostal without their errors. In fact he introduced worse errors.

Famous disciples

- Greg Laurie: pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, California (based on a group started by Frisbee and originally the first pilot daughter church of Calvary Chapel). This is now one of the ten largest churches in America.
- Danny Lehman: Mission Director of YWAM in Honolulu.
- Mike Macintosh: pastor of Horizon Christian Fellowship in San Diego.
- Chuck Girard. Pioneer of Christian Contemporary Music and founding member of Love Song, the first Christian rock band to become popular in the USA.
- Jill Austin. Prophet and founder of Master Potter Ministries.

Missionary tours

It is very difficult to properly catalogue these tours as so little information is given. This is my best attempt. There were many of these since Frisbee claims he visited Israel 12 times⁸⁵ and did 12 tours to Scandinavia.⁸⁶

- ‘Many’ world-wide mission tours while based at Calvary Chapel. There were tours with Danny Lehman for example.⁸⁷
- ‘Several’ mission tours while working with Bob Mumford and others.⁸⁸
- Foreign mission to Europe with Kenn Gulliksen, founder of the Vineyard Churches. He says that he visited Europe for the first time on this tour;⁸⁹ yet he affirms elsewhere that he visited Denmark while at Calvary Chapel.
- Mission tours while working with Wimber.

Conclusion

The bad sources of Wimber’s Third Wave⁹⁰

It is worth considering that John Wimber’s Signs and Wonders Movement falls roughly into two halves before his death. The first part was definitely instigated and developed by the power that Lonnie Frisbee manifested. This is what got the Vineyard Movement off the ground in a big way. Frisbee at that time was a homosexual drug abuser deeply influenced by Latter Rain Pentecostal doctrines.

After waning somewhat in the late 80s, Wimber’s movement was given a shot in the arm by his meeting with Paul Cain. This propelled the movement in a prophetic, revivalist direction. At the time Cain was a practising homosexual and alcoholic and also a proponent of Latter Rain and manifest Sons of God theology.

⁸⁵ Lonnie Frisbee, with Roger Sachs; ‘Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution’, Freedom Pub. (2012), p200.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p143.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p130, 143.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p143.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p127.

⁹⁰ First Wave = Pentecostalism. Second Wave = the Charismatic Movement. Third Wave = the Signs and Wonders Movement.

Thus the two instigators of the prime direction of the Signs and Wonders Movement under Wimber were homosexual addicts and the underlying theology was Latter Rain and worse.

What we don't see

Apart from the many troubling things about the life of Frisbee, what we constantly fail to see is any conviction of sin about homosexuality, drug taking, mysticism, ignoring his wife, nudism and so on. Where is the repentance from sin?

Neither do we see, in the many homages to Frisbee by Charismatics, a centring upon Christ; rather we see a centring upon the supposed power of the Holy Spirit. Conversion for Frisbee, is an experience to be sought rather than the truth to be believed and a person to submit to as Lord.

Nor do we see any kind of mature thinking, sound doctrine, or clear theological understanding. Frisbee's preaching was intellectually immature. There was little that was edifying in his messages. His attraction was in his manifestations of power.

Though there is film of him quoting Scripture with Kathryn Kuhlman, there seems to be a distinct lack of Bible teaching in his life and ministry. Bible verses are points on which to hang preaching for an experience for him. There is no doctrinal understanding, no wisdom and no growth in sanctification.

Then where is the new life? Frisbee appears to have continued to the end as he was at the beginning, a homosexual sinner. Where is the evidence of a new life with the old cast away and dead?

What we do see

Added to all this are the many erroneous Pentecostal heresies that he taught vividly: baptism in the Spirit as a second blessing mystical experience; being slain the Spirit; transferable anointing, gibberish tongue speaking; treating the Holy Spirit as an object or force to be thrown around, sacramentalism and so on.

Conclusion

It is impossible to come to any other conclusion. Bad roots produce bad fruit. Frisbee's gifting and power in mystical things cannot be the fruit of the Holy Spirit but are the occult deviations of someone very confused, even if he claims to have loved Jesus.

Frisbee is not the first person in history to possess power to manipulate people, even to good effects, and yet be in the throes of deep deception and a false work. He will not be the last.

Lessons to learn

The biggest lesson is not to centre upon experiences but upon the person of Christ. Experiences can be fake, hysteria, suggestibility or have occult roots. Many non-Christians can get people to fall over: stage illusionists, hypnotists, shamans, witch-doctors, Indian gurus, and so on. Derren Brown got one person out of nowhere and taught him how to become a Pentecostal healer who could perform to strangers on the street and to church audiences, making them shake, fall over, have burning sensations and gain pain relief. Such things are no proof of godly ministry.

There is no proof that making a person fall over is a gift from God and Scripture never shows godly men acting this way. Falling backwards is, however, a common feature of occult religions and hypnotism.

Mysticism is not Christianity.

A person can be very sincere and yet be sincerely wrong.

Test a man before putting him into some kind of church leadership.

Do not pressurise a man with his ministry responsibilities to the extent that he damages his marriage.

In conclusion, all we can say about Lonnie Frisbee is that his life is a sad and tragic tale. Whether he was truly a believer is impossible to say; God is merciful and patient with all of our sins. Who are we to say that Frisbee was a worse sinner than us?

What we can say is that Frisbee's character was deeply flawed. His teaching was abysmal and unbiblical. He was unqualified to be a pastor (indeed, he would agree with that). His claim to fame is his gifting in evangelism, but that was chiefly being in the right place at the right time; God was reaching out to thousands in a genuine work; Frisbee's Gospel was not Scriptural, being based upon will power. Frisbee was not noteworthy for bringing thousands to Christ after he left Wimber. Frisbee is mainly famous today for his ability to manifest Pentecostal power; however, there are serious problems with this as we have discussed.

It is a disgrace that huge church organisations that developed as a result of Frisbee's work have edited him out of their histories due to embarrassment. They need to come clean and acknowledge Frisbee's ministry; but they also need to acknowledge the problems that this entails.

It is interesting that Frisbee's autobiography is called, 'Not by might, nor by power' when the whole book is about Frisbee moving in Pentecostal power. The sad thing is that the basis of a good work is truth above all else. Only that which is based on God's word will stand the divine test. Frisbee's ministry was not based on truth.

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Appendix One

Timeline for Lonnie Frisbee

This is the best approximation I can put together based upon the sketchy and sometimes contradictory or confusing testimonies.

1949 – Born. Father abandons the family.

1949 - Raised by his single mother who later remarried. Lonnie did not get on well with his stepfather.

1957 – Raped by a 17-year old male babysitter aged 8. He continued to be abused for some time.

1964 – Joined the Gay underground scene in Laguna Beach aged 15.

1965 – Joined the television show Shebang for 18 months aged 16. Enters drug scene.

1967 – Gained a scholarship to the Art Academy in San Francisco, leaves home.

1967 - Joined the California Hippie and drug culture in San Francisco. Described himself as a 'nudist-vegetarian hippie'. He also centred upon UFOs, practised hypnotism and spoke about the occult and mysticism. Often read the Bible whilst tripping. On one trip to Tahquitz Canyon he led a group of friends to be baptised in a waterfall whilst the whole group was stoned.

1967 – At some point he was converted, partly through the witnessing of some people, partly as a result of a naked LSD trip in Tahquitz Canyon. Joined a community called 'The Living Room' in Haight-Ashbury. In one LSD trip in the same Tahquitz Canyon, Frisbee saw a vision of himself preaching in front of thousands of people.

1967 – He left the Art Academy and moved to Novato to join a commune he called 'The House of Acts', where he married his girlfriend Connie. At some point he is baptised in the Spirit by the laying on of hands of a visiting evangelist in a Pentecostal church.

1968-71 Jesus People revival begins. Thousands of young people converted. Frisbee becomes a de facto leader and gains much publicity.

1968 – Hitch-hiked preaching the Gospel. Fortuitously met Chuck Smith via Smith's daughter's boyfriend, who picked him up. Joined with the Calvary Chapel church. Led the 'House of Miracles' commune and led a Wednesday night Bible Study that attracted thousands.

1971 – Ordained by Chuck Smith. Growing differences between Smith and Frisbee over Pentecostal manifestations and emphasis. Told to stop making people fall over or he get fired.

? The House of Miracles developed into 19 communal homes that moved to Oregon (Shiloh Youth Revival Centres).

? Appeared on television with Kathryn Kuhlman.

1971 - Separated from Smith and relocated to join the Fort Lauderdale Five, particularly Bob Mumford.

1973 - Frisbee spends a sabbatical year trying to fix his marriage but she has an affair with his pastor and they divorce. He spends 5½ years with Bob Mumford and Derek Prince. At some point he goes on a world-wide missionary tour.

c. 1977 - Frisbee returns to California. His appearance is now much smarter.

1977 – Meets John Wimber at a pastor’s conference. They believed God was bringing them together for ministry.

1978 – Suffers rejection and initially considers leaving the ministry (*‘for the third time’*) but is encouraged by God to continue.⁹¹ Goes on world-wide missionary ministry to South Africa, Israel, Egypt and Europe.

1980 - Invited by John Wimber to join the Yorba Linda branch of the Calvary Chapel denomination after Wimber had met Frisbee at a conference. Frisbee brings mystical phenomena, which are interpreted as Biblical Signs and Wonders. Many sources say that this was in 1980. Wimber says it was 1979⁹² but his wife Carol said that it was in 1981.⁹³ However, Vineyard pastor John White said that it was 1978.⁹⁴ Hank Hanegraaff points out a number of discrepancies in these accounts. Frisbee’s testimony at the first meeting at Wimber’s church was that it was 12 years after Haight-Ashbury (1967) i.e. 1979. Then he says 11 years (i.e. 1980) and then he says that he was 31 at the time (i.e. 1980). The consensus is that it was 1980.

1980? At some point Wimber separates from Smith and joins the Vineyard Church led by Kenn Gulliksen, which Wimber takes over.

? Wimber and Frisbee travel the world ministering in places like South Africa.

? Wimber discovers Frisbee’s homosexuality and Frisbee leaves the church.

? Frisbee dons a dog collar and preaches in various places.

1993 – Died of AIDS aged 43. Funeral at the Crystal Cathedral.

⁹¹ Lonnie Frisbee, with Roger Sachs; ‘Not by might nor by power: the Jesus Revolution’, Freedom Pub. (2012), p196-7.

⁹² John Wimber & Kevin Springer; Power Evangelism, Harper & Row (1986), p24-25.

⁹³ Carol Wimber, ‘A hunger for God’, in Kevin Springer, Power Encounters, Harper & Row (1988), p12.

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Appendix Two

Testing genuine ministry

It is very difficult when you examine people like Frisbee. On paper you can write him off as an unrepentant sinner steeped in mysticism; yet when you listen to him and watch him speak, one warms to him and appreciates his concern for young people. His passion for Jesus may not be spiritual but it is heart-felt and sincere. He speaks more warmly, and with great affection, about Jesus than many dour evangelicals.

When you see people who claim to love Jesus as much as Frisbee seems to, it is very hard to be forced to dismiss them as heretics. Such love, such passion, such self-sacrifice, is hard to ignore.

Yet throughout history there have been many leaders who have shown a love for God, have cried in worship, have given up their lives for Jesus, have sacrificed everything – and yet history shows that they were deceived heretics. What then is the test of truth?

It is not emotionalism. Crying as one worships God is insufficient, whether sincere or false. Showing a great passion for God is also not a suitable test; even the heathen can demonstrate that. Sacrificing everything and even becoming an ascetic is no proof either; many of the great historical heretics did that. Serving the church and having a heart for the lost is no proof either; many heretics have done this.

The only sure test of a man's ministry is the Bible; only God's word can be used to test whether a person is true or not. To test a ministry we must have an absolute; something sure and certain. We cannot trust our feelings or even our mental faculties; we must have an absolute rule to judge people by. That rule is Scripture. Only the Bible is secure enough for us to measure a man.

Is this testing acceptable? It is not only acceptable it is demanded by God.

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isa 8:20

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Matt 7:15-23

Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? Lk 12:57

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Acts 17:11

Prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Rm 12:2

He who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 1 Cor 2:15

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 Jn 4:1

You have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars. Rev 2:2

This is just a selection of verses that we could have chosen.

Thus all leaders, preacher, teachers, counsellors etc. must be tested against God's word to see if they are of the truth or not. Ministry that does not stand the test must be dismissed and the sheep warned of false ministry.

In the case of Frisbee, there is no doubt that he does not meet the test of God's word. His character is at fault and he remained in sin, or at least he lapsed grossly. His doctrines are at fault and contain many errors. His practices were at fault, being mysticism and occult works based upon hypnotism and suggestibility and not the work of God's Spirit. His church associations fail Scriptural tests. His mentors also fail the test of God's word.

No matter how much we may warm to his passion for Christ and his desire to evangelise, it is not possible to endorse Frisbee's ministry, as everything about him is so unbiblical. The flock must be warned about this man, and the false works that he helped to build up.

The fact that Frisbee initiated the Signs and Wonders Movement is just one reason for us to identify that movement as false.

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