

STRAIGHTWAY

"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" [Mark 1:18].

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"THE UNBELIEVABLE DR. BILLY GRAHAM"

by Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, Founder & President
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It is almost unbelievable to believe what Billy Graham has finally brought into his neo-Christianity since the beginning of his worldwide evangelistic crusades and ministry about fifty years ago. If you wait long enough you will finally see all the growth of an apostate Christianity, and those realities are now emerging from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's main spokesman and preacher.

Better Thoughts of Graham

This writer does not claim to know who is saved, and I do not believe that I know the motive of any human heart except my own. I know that I am saved because I have followed a biblical revelation of how to get saved, and I have endured in the Christian Faith for exactly fifty years. As far as the motives of my own heart, I am trusting Jesus Christ for that as well. God has left all of us in somewhat of a bind in only judg-

ing people by the "fruit of their doings," and the Bible declares "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). My own personal stand against the ministry of Billy Graham has been an endeavor to be both militant and magnificent. I have always had better thoughts of him in the hope of putting the right construction on his teaching, messages, and interviews, although I have believed he has contributed to the apostasy since the 1950's. But I never thought he would say some of the things he is saying now. Therefore, I have arrived at this conclusion with as honorable a heart as I can. At this point, I will not be shocked in the future at whatever departure he will make to the end of his days among us.

Another New Teaching of Billy Graham

On May 31, 1997, there was a seven-minute television interview

between Robert Schuller and Billy Graham in Southern California. The entire interview was sparked by the question of Dr. Schuller to Billy Graham, as follows: "Tell me, what do you think is the future of Christianity?"

Billy Graham's answer is quite staggering in his appraisal of the future of Christianity. The following quotation came towards the end of this interview.

Well, Christianity and being a true believer—you know, I think there's the Body of Christ. This comes from all the Christian groups around the world, outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the Body of Christ. And I don't think that we're going to see a great sweeping revival, that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time. I think James answered that, the Apostle James in the first council in Jerusalem, when

he said that God's purpose for this age is to call out a people for his name. And that's what God is doing today, He's calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think they are saved, and that they're going to be with us in heaven.

Schuller responds with surprise as if this was new. "What, what I hear you saying that it's possible for Jesus Christ to come into human hearts and soul and life, even if they've been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you're saying?"

Graham responds in somewhat a way that makes this kind of presentation his personal subjective belief, not using Scripture.

Yes, it is, because I believe that. I've met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations, that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible, and never heard of Jesus, but they've believed in their hearts that there was a God, and they've

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tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived.

Once again, Schuller responds with surprise, and even trips over his tongue for a moment, yet face shining with evident delight. He says: "I'm thrilled to hear you say this. There's a wideness in God's mercy."

Graham finalizes the interview on this subject with clear confirmation of what was understood by Schuller.

There is. There definitely is.

Two Former Observations Made

We must carefully read and conclude certain observations from this startling presentation of what Billy Graham says, "I believe."

Before proceeding into the quotations themselves, we must establish a change from some former views of Graham, while observing the deepening of other things he has touched on before which we now understand why he said them.

First, he has changed in his belief that we are in a revival or an awakening in the world. Addressing a luncheon at the New York Overseas Press Club in 1976, Graham said that he had found evidence that the United States had entered into the "fourth Great Awakening" of the Christian witness. Later this message was presented in *Decision* magazine under the title of "The Shaping of America," and for the American bicentennial year. The three historic "Awakenings" to which he referred are the following:

1. The Great Awakening of 1734-1742, in which God used Jonathan

Edwards and George Whitefield.

2. The Great Awakening which came through the revivals of 1800-1801 in Virginia and Kentucky.

3. The Great Awakening of 1857-1864 which followed the launching of the Fulton Street prayer meetings in New York City and during the Civil War.

Graham repeatedly spoke in the 1970s of this Fourth Great Awakening which had been established comparable to the other Three. He included the upsurge of church budgets, church attendance and religion in the news. He included the universities and the professional football and baseball teams and their prayer meetings as well as professional golf tours with religious emphases.

However, in the above quotation, now, Graham rejects the belief that we are in a revival, but rather clearly states: "I don't think that we're going to see a great sweeping revival,..." What caused him to change his appraisal of the idea of the Fourth Great Awakening in his earlier position?

Second, however, there were other words Graham initiated some years ago that even some of his friends did not appreciate, but he has held to since then. We are now beginning to understand what he meant in his earlier ideas.

In *McCall's* magazine, January, 1978, Billy Graham has an article entitled "I Can't Play God Anymore." There are four areas in this article which carry the implication that Graham believes in some kind of *universalism* in his teachings of salvation. Graham confesses in this

article that he has taken a more modest view of his own role in God's plan for man. "I used to play God," he acknowledged, "but I can't do that any more."⁽¹⁾

His words concerned his position on communism, heathenism, Judaism, and Roman Catholicism. These are seen in the following quotations in that article.

Communism

I've lost some of the rigidity I once had. I took as my text for the trip (to Hungary) a quote from Paul's letter to the Corinthians: 'I became all things to all men, in order to save some at any cost.' I take that to mean I should adapt myself to different social conditions. In fact, I find that every country I go into these days has some form of socialism, including the United States.⁽²⁾

Heathenism

I used to believe that pagans in far-off countries are lost—were going to hell—if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. I no longer believe that. I believe that there are other ways of recognizing the existence of God—through nature, for instance—and plenty of other opportunities, therefore, of saying 'yes' to God.⁽³⁾

Judaism

Like most Christian Fundamentalists, Graham once

believed that Jews, too, were lost if they did not convert to Christianity. Today Graham is willing to leave that up to God. 'God does the saving,' Graham asserts. 'I'm told to preach Christ as the only way of salvation. But it is God who is going to do the judging, not Billy Graham.'⁽⁴⁾

Roman Catholicism

I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics, for instance. They believe in the Virgin Birth, and so do I. They believe in the blood atonement of the cross, and so do I. They believe in the Resurrection of Jesus, and the coming judgment of God, and so do I. We only differ on some matters of later church tradition.⁽⁵⁾

Compassion In Spite of Untruth

When Billy Graham first gave these remarks in 1978, we never dreamed that some twenty years later he would finally give an explanation such as we now see and hear on television in the Schuller-Graham interview. Twenty years have given him much time for much thought, and in a seven-minute television interview it climbs up out of his heart through his esophagus to blurt-ing out a denial of redemption and salvation through a personal trust in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, now we are given the explanation of his twenty-year old affinities with the unsaved of earth. This is the world's reputed to be "greatest

evangelist” since the days of Paul. So, most of the earth does not have to be evangelized: those who are heathen, Jews, communists, or Roman Catholics. In the present interview he adds “the Muslim world,” “the Buddhist world,” and “tribal situations” in “various parts of the world.” Who are left to be evangelized then?

So now we must acknowledge: we are not in a “sweeping revival” around the world, as formerly believed; and, “universalism” has been opened by the evangelist for the world through thoughts of Christ without knowing his name or His Word for faith and redemption.

Ten Enquiries in Response

First, the Body of Christ is thought of as all-inclusive of those who have not even heard the Gospel, the name of Jesus, or the preaching of the Word of God. A person may love Christ whether he is conscious of it or not and be a member of the Body of Christ. The sin of the world is “they believed not on me” (John 16:9); the Word of God says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Read carefully, “none other name under heaven,” whether it be communist, heathen, Jew, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, or tribe.

Second, where would we go in the Holy Scriptures to possibly find a passage that the Body of Christ “comes from all the Christian groups around the world, outside the Christian groups”? There is no such concept in the Word of God. It is not

possible to be a member of a Body composed of a Christian group outside a Christian group. Graham does not define “groups.” The Bible makes it clear: there are the children of God, through the Lord Jesus; and there are the children of the Devil, who have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. There are no other kinds of people on the face of the earth. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father”; no one can believe in the true God and not know or deny the Son (I John 22-23).

Third, Graham speaks of the possibility of one loving Christ and knowing Christ without any consciousness of it; “they’re members of the Body of Christ.” That is sheer nonsense; it is against Scripture and reason. You cannot love anybody you do not know.

John gives in his First Epistle nine times, “Hereby we know” (I John 2:3, 5, 18; 3:14, 16, 19, 24; 4:2, 6). This “knowing,” evidently, is a “knowing” from the native “light” which Graham speaks of that people have apart from the Gospel. Jesus, only, is the Light of the World. Prevenient grace is not the Light of the world, and neither is human conscience.

Fourth, according to Graham, he interprets the Apostle James as meaning what Graham means, rather than Graham learning from James. James is speaking of a calling out a people to be the church (“the called out ones”). This is exactly opposite to what Graham says. Graham has conceived of a concept of a person being a Christian without Christ, prior to the “calling out” to which the Apostle James refers. James did not

believe they were Christians in a false religion. It is clear: "James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:13-14). Graham is confused: he believes that the people to which James refers were already Christians before they were called out; James reveals that they are only Christians after they have been called out and had come out into the Body of Christ, the Church ("the called out ones").

Fifth, in identifying the Muslim world and the Buddhist world and the "tribal situations," Graham declares that a person may be a member of the Body of Christ while he is yet in a false religion. Of course, he includes they are in the Body of Christ when they are "called out." But it is unreasonable to think that a person could be in the Body of Christ both before they are called out of a false religion as well as being in that Body after they have been called out. The Word of God simply does not give us this in its teachings. The Old and New Testaments have already taken a stand against all pagan and heathen religions, and communism and Romanism both have pagan concepts in them. Holy Ghost conviction is the ground upon which the sinner is saved. It is clear that while that work of the Holy Ghost is passed through with Godly sorrow and repentance, there is not way a person can be baptized into the Body of Christ.

Sixth, according to Graham a person may be saved without actually believing on the name of the

Lord Jesus. He speaks of some native "light" that these people have for God to save them without the name of the Lord Jesus. This simply sounds like the old "spark of divinity" which was presented in another kind of "universalism" which the liberals, the modernists, birthed in early America, called unitarianism and universalism. Some of the cults also believe this. The Bible still declares: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Man cannot have it both ways.

Seventh, Graham equates, evidently, election of the Elect "because they've been called by God." I know of no other way to take his quotation. Once again, confusion comes because there is no human responsibility to such an Elect. We must hold fast the biblical truth that all Elect were born in sin. If we eliminate this truth, we shall eliminate any responsible burden to the sinners of this world to accept and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ of historic Christianity. The more amazing thing about it, this is being taught by a world evangelist. From every consideration Graham's concept is that the Elect can be saved before they are saved.

Eighth, Graham simply responds to Schuller as proof of his concepts, "Yes, it is, because I believe that." His own judgment is that though people are in "darkness," without "exposure to the Bible," Jesus Christ can come into "human hearts and souls and life." Companion to this assumption Graham speaks of people who have "believed in their hearts that there was a God, and

they've tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived, and because of their "trying to live such a life" that they are Christians in the Body of Christ. What is this strange, but old, word of a person "trying to live" a Christian life? It's works again, legalistic works.

Ninth, in agreement with Robert Schuller, Billy Graham has accepted "God's mercy" as the basis of man's salvation. If that is true, no one is lost: God has been merciful to the whole world in all of history. But we are not saved by "mercy"; we are only spared, through the goodness of God, by mercy. And this mercy and goodness must lead us to repentance and personal faith in the Lord Jesus as Savior, or we are lost (Romans 2:4). Mercy has been used before for a universalism-salvation. When universalism was first taught in America, it openly refused to be identified with the orthodox and fundamental Gospel. Billy Graham commenced being identified with fundamentalism, moved to neo-evangelicalism, and now is confusing his generation with a "mercy" redemption because man tries "to live such a life," as a Christian.

Tenth, a conclusion is finally drawn from the Graham concepts: that a person can be a Christian without a Bible or biblical evangelism. We are reminded of Dr. Graham's favorite invitation at the end of his messages: "You who may be in the second balcony of this stadium, come down for a few minutes and pray this prayer and go back with friends and finish your evening." He always encourages them to go

back to their own denomination, and more referral cards are designated for Roman Catholics than any other denomination dealt with in his crusades.

Thus, Graham has amassed a final resumé of an ecumenical hodgepodge that has no separation from the world, the religions of the world, the evil forces of the world, and no false doctrine of the world. There are statements in this interview that are not only contradictory within themselves, but grammatically cancel the sense of the first clauses.

A Parallel Spirit

From another section of theological spectrum is the position of the late Dr. Donald G. Barnhouse. He speaks of an emphasis upon "the Holy Spirit" that can also be traced to heathen religions. In describing Dr. Samuel N. Shoemaker's book, *With the Holy Spirit and With Fire*, Dr. Barnhouse calls some parts of the book "horrid." However, Dr. Barnhouse does speak of the Holy Spirit in all religions. In this particular concept, even paganism is believed to possess the presence of the Holy Spirit, and Dr. Barnhouse expresses preference for "a person who embraces an erroneous belief rather than no belief at all." This teaching is parallel to the tone and mood of Dr. Graham's television interview. The following quotation suffices on this point in Dr. Barnhouse's appraisal of Dr. Shoemaker's book

The Holy Spirit is found in some measure in every

religion, and we must make common cause with Him there...One hears of a resurgence of some of the ancient Eastern faiths. I think we should rejoice in it. Blank unbelief is not such good soil for Christian sowing as loyalty to what truth one knows...It must be the hope of all Christians that any experience of God's Spirit will eventually lead to faith in Christ. But I firmly believe that this will more likely take place through another faith than in a vacuum.

Looking Back and On

In my unpretentious book, **Rome: Crusade or Crucible?**, in dealing with the ecumenical movement, the charismatics, and Roman Catholicism, I reach a summary in Chapter Five that the paths of contemporary institutional Christianity are leading the world, as follows:

1. Moving Back to Rome: Through Ten Influences
2. Moving Towards A Final World Religion
3. Moving Through Diverging Theological Views of the Atonement
4. Moving With the Inventions of New Atonement Apostate Theories
5. Identified as Neo-Christian Universalism
6. In Seven Kinds of Universalism
 - a. Historic Universalism
 - b. Roman Catholic Universalism
 - c. Delayed Universalism
 - d. Reversed Universalism
 - e. Ecumenical Universalism

- f. Assumed Universalism
- g. Unseparated Universalism

I do not believe that error, false teachings, conspiratorial powers or any other force in the universe can destroy Christianity, God's Word, God's Gospel, God's Truth, or God's people. However, this does not mean that the world, in its last days, will be easy. The Christians are presently in their greatest trial of all of history. We must be wise as serpents, harmless as doves. When we say "it is almost unbelievable" in the matter of Dr. Billy Graham, it indicates our compassion for him. We can hardly believe it of an otherwise respectable man. We are glad to have this compassion, but we are constrained by something higher in our lives: salvation by grace through the Blood of Jesus as revealed through God's Holy Word, the Bible. But undoubtedly, one of our burdens which will constantly nag us until we see Jesus face to face is that while we seek, with all our hearts, to be magnificent, we shall often believe and weep that we are too militant. Yet, that dichotomy must be; that burden must be borne!

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