

STRAIGHTWAY

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

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Witness Outreach of Foundations Bible College
P.O. Box 1166 · Dunn, North Carolina 28335

VOLUME 26

MARCH/APRIL 1998

NUMBER 2

Dr. Billy Graham's Universalism: Again and Again

Dr. O. Talmadge Spence

A number of years ago, in Oklahoma City, each night I would leave my motel to travel the only route I knew from my motel to a Bible Conference Center. And each night I saw, blaring forth from the dazzling neon lights of a local nightclub marquee, an announcement of the return of a cheap stripper, saying: "Wanda is Back! Wanda is Back!"

Without entering into the den of iniquity, any passerby could easily conclude an entire story from these three words, "Wanda is Back!" Wanda, evidently, had been there before; she had enjoyed a successful engagement and parade of her visible pornography and nudity. She had left but was remembered, and by popular demand, "Wanda was coming back!" It could be easily surmised that this second engagement, or was it the third or fourth? would break all former records and add to both the former viewings and persistent imaginations of her past performances. All were invited back to extend their own sinful memories into deeper experiences of evil, as well as entice new members to her audience. The "double" or "triple" feature of Wanda would carry the spectator down into deeper despair.

Patience and Impatience

In our time, true Christians have often been patient with the

neo-Christian world or a particular neo-evangelical or neo-pentecostal personality. However, to be patient too long could bring deception to the heart and confusion to the spiritual mind. If we fundamentalists react too quickly against a popular preacher and his neo-ideas, we are considered unloving and legalistic. However, if we are genuinely patient with a popular personality who supports the apostasy, that same crowd watching us will turn on us and concede us to a compromise or inconsistency. I have often been amazed at this duplicity of the apostates, but nevertheless, that is their practice. Fundamentalists cannot please them. Can you imagine why they would be against both our patience and impatience? It is because in their own position of compromise, nothing we do, as fundamentalists, can satisfy them in their own position.

It really is not possible to satisfy these inequities, so the biblical, separatist fundamentalist simply returns to his walk and ministry with the Lord in the Light of the Holy Scriptures. An excellent example of this was given recently by Dr. J. B. Williams in his article, ably written, correcting Dr. Billy Graham's recent reaction to the death of our esteemed Dr. Bob Jones, Jr., Chancellor, Bob Jones University. Dr. Williams simply outlined that Billy Graham was not as close a friend to Dr. Jones as his public article, upon Dr. Jones' death, so beautifully falsified the facts. I had read those letters myself and believed the same conclusions of Dr. Williams.

In looking back over the ministry of Dr. Graham, there are certain untruths that keep coming back again and again in Graham's ministry. As a minister myself, I was careful to seek an appraisal of the life and ministry of Billy Graham that I could not only live with all my days on earth, but also meet the Lord Jesus with at the Bema Judgment in heaven. I sincerely hoped for Billy Graham in patience. It was in the year of 1957 that I began to contemplate the possibility of Billy Graham being off on the wrong track, unwise as a novice to his national prominence. I was not a part of the "lunatic fringe" as both the charismatics and the neo-evangelicals say. Two things had happened by then which stirred my soul to concern for him, but I had not junked him to oblivion.

The Committee, the Platform, and the Interpreter's Bible

In those days I noted he had indeed changed his position from his former identity with fundamentalists, which he had so earnestly requested from a number of the fundamentalists, to a sponsoring committee including liberals. He had been dissuaded from the sponsorship with the fundamentalists, to which he had formerly made known, and now had deliberately embraced the sponsorship of the enemy.

Secondly, the liberals and later the Romanists were seen regularly on Billy Graham's platform and pulpit when he preached his evangelistic messages to the lost sinners. This, in turn, began to identify the "converts" in the mass evangelistic call to "decision" as these converts were sent back to their former churches. It has been clearly recorded that of those who signed the cards a majority were sent back to the Roman Catholic Church.

Thirdly, Billy Graham began to endorse publications like *The Interpreter's Bible*, a new commentary that was dedicated to the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which speaks lightly of the Deity of the Lord Jesus and the Virgin Birth.

It took all three of these observations to converge into my conscience and heart before I saw that Billy Graham was not just on "the wrong track," but obviously ministering the Word of God "with the wrong crowd." He had, by this time, made it clear that his evangelistic methodology would include enemies of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus as helping him to lead the lost to Christ and His Word. This had never been deliberately practiced since the Reformation. By 1960, my prayers for Billy Graham had changed to prayers of great concern, being against his friends and helpers to the Gospel. If the Committee, the Platform, the Endorsements, and the Roman Catholic acknowledgments have any meaning, rising up out of church history and the true revivals of the past of historic Christianity, we must then search out what is wrong, what is erroneous, what is an "awakening," what is "decision," what is "commitment," what is this matter of evangelism's converts who are sent back to an apostate church?

A Ministry of Concern and An Honorable Stand

As my own ministry developed after 1957, at rare but appropriate times, believing I was led of the Holy Spirit, I would include in my preaching and teaching my concerns for Dr. Billy Graham, as well as the growing neo-pentecostal heresy. I had come to believe, through patience and love, that we were not watching a biblical revival as a result of a scriptural separation from error and apostasy, but that we were witnessing a religious "awakening," a Roman Catholic "renewal," and a "charismatic fever of fanaticism." I served for nine years as a member of the administration and faculty of an independent seminary, 100 years old this year, not owned by any denomination. I was fired because of my stand there in these matters. I did not leave angry; I left with a broken heart for a thousand family acquaintances since childhood and a thousand students I taught through those nine years. Of course, out of it God led us to be founder and president of Foundations Bible College and Ministries.

However, it is very important to my heart and conscience that I make it clear that all through these years I was endeavoring to be both magnificent and militant for my Lord. I would not live for a definition of separation that only speaks of my separation from an apostasy; it is first a separation unto the Lordship of the Lord Jesus. Then, after that, I am militant against the apostates. As fundamentalists, we must remember we cannot build anything for Christ on what is wrong with things, with the world, with apostates; we must always keep in mind, we can only build a ministry for Christ on what is right, what is biblically sound, and what is scripturally true. We are really not to be mad in our fight; and, we must not then cancel that anger by being suave, and change if we were wrong. The consistency is to be patient without compromise, while being strong without radicalism. It is a blessed paradox: not either/or; but both/and. The neo-evangelicals and charismatics say we, as fundamentalists, have no love. They are wrong; evidently, they speak from their own compromise of love. Some fundamentalists have proof they love, and are patient. This is what distinguishes us as puritans first, in the sovereignty of God in our birthright; then, when God makes it clear, line upon line, we make an exodus and become a pilgrim in the earth and in our ministry. We, as fundamentalists, do not know who is saved nor the motive of a man. Some are late coming to the full truth and an understanding of this neo-crowd. That is why they deserve our patience, and then our final stand, too. I trust that my readers understand my train of thought here; you may have a danger with me by misjudging what I am really saying in my articles.

Four Other Influences Upon Billy Graham

We must not be too quick to judge before its time; but the time comes when we must judge or compromise. For my own full heart of hopeful inquiry to this international evangelist, we can expect Dr. Billy Graham to die before too long, as I will, if Jesus does not come first.

After my earlier observation of the year of 1957 in my own deliberations of the Billy Graham ministry, I then marked it with four other intervening ministries.

First, was the 1942 organization of the National Association of Evangelicals. We may now look back and see its pursuit, also, in the precincts of fellowship with the apostasy.

Second, was the 1947 organization of Fuller Theological Seminary, its rejection and public television debate of Edward J. Carnell with Karl Barth, denying the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, as well as the Seminary's turning into a museum of contemporary, Charismatic memorabilia. That

is a long way from the stately and biblical claim of twenty-eight scholars of the greatest scholarship since the Reformation. It is now believed that the second president of Fuller Seminary committed suicide. That was Edward J. Carnell.

Third, was the beginning of the fortnightly *Christianity Today* which did set forth, around the world, the compromising voice of the Neo-Evangelicals, as they did dialogue the enemies of the Christian faith. This was indeed an extension of the two former entities we have mentioned.

Fourth, the ongoing methodological evangelism of compromise by Dr. Billy Graham. Of course, he was very prominently involved in all three of the previous organizations and entities. He was a member of the boards and/or committees from time to time.

Seven Final Insights of the Graham Ministry

As I mentioned earlier, Dr. Graham and I could die soon. I said that not in a bad sense, but because we could be at the end of our ministries. He will probably not change in anything that he has been committed to across his years, as I will probably not change either.

The irony of all of these observations, however, is that as we have followed Dr. Graham across his years, we, as fundamentalists, followed the things which now have been completely overshadowed by his theological views. In my previous article in *Straightway*, September, 1997, Volume 25, Number 9, I readily admitted that what Graham now espouses is almost “unbelievable.” In other words, we have been following him in his fellowship-compromise, his Romanist-fellowship, his liberal-sponsorships, his “bedfellows.” They were all true indexes to his *direction* in his ministry. That still stands against him.

But for years we have heard over and over again that “Billy Graham preaches a Bible, Gospel Message.” Now he adds indexes to his very *message* in his ministry. His message now stands as a fallacy. We must, adequately and accurately, review his preaching and teaching. This is the greatest judgment against any minister of Christianity anywhere in the world. This is the test; this is the final test! What does he really believe?

Hell

Seven things have finally appeared from what Billy Graham believes and has now preached:

The first concerns his definition of “hell.” He has made the burning of hell as representative of the burning lusts and desires of sinners. Statements

he has made earlier in his preaching imply, along with this same principle, that hell is, therefore, not eternal. This tendency marks his God as Love, but is incomplete in that God is also Light and the Final Judge. The Loving Father will also be the Judging God!

We must also consider his article back in the *McCall's Magazine*, January, 1978, entitled "I Can't Play God Any More." The four subjects concerned: Communism, Heathenism, Judaism, and Roman Catholicism.

Communism

The second concern is Communism. He states: "I have lost some of the rigidity I once had." He used this statement to conclude from his crusade to Hungary, that he was to be "all things to all men, in order to save some at any cost." I know of no commentary that would interpret that passage to compromise in a definition of an evil system or a practicing of fellowship in any definition or context of sin.

Heathenism

The third concern is Heathenism. He used to believe they would go 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."

Judaism

The fourth concern is Judaism. Graham is willing to leave the matter of the salvation of the Jews up to God. This seems to be that he does not believe the Word of God which clearly reveals this matter. Graham reiterates: "God does the saving. I'm told to preach Christ as the only way to salvation. But it is God who is going to do the judging, not Billy Graham." He fails to see that the very statement "Christ as the only way to salvation" precludes his right to make the concluding statement.

Roman Catholicism

The fifth concern is Roman Catholicism. The extended quotation stands as: "I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of the 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." To Martin Luther it was "some matters" of much truth lacking in Romanism.

All of these quotations have been carefully monitored in my heart. I believe I have given them accurately, and I note my information accordingly (James Michael Beam, "I Can't Play God Any More," *McCall's*, January, 1978, page 100.) I followed up the reading of this article by sending Dr. Billy Graham a letter and received a response from Grady Wilson, his associate, that the article was "substantially true." If it was not true, a Bible preacher would have to go to his grave denouncing these items if he believed it otherwise. I want to even acknowledge a phrase in one of the four that is marginal to his belief: he implies that some of these words "seems to him" as such. Yet, he rejects what he used to believe by the statement, "I have lost some of the rigidity I once had." In these two statements we see the way he manages to slide into other new beliefs. If the Communists are not lost; if the heathen, as well as the Jews, have other light; and if Romanism is not an apostasy, church history past has been a Christian farce and falsehood.

We may hold these strange changes and beliefs, but the heart of man goes on in life, goes further with what it believes, no matter how we may keep our heart from other conclusions. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." It is simply the fact of man's heart; finally, he will reveal all that he thinks if given the appropriate platform to society. Whatever we preach or teach falsely will come back again and again.

However, we must now acknowledge a dangerous surprise in Graham's development of his evangelistic theology. I continue to be amazed how he has gone year after year down into such a dangerous change or reinterpretation of things, which we did not see earlier in the messages he gave, particularly before the wrong kind of people like the news media, the liberals, the political ear, but most frequently outside his actual evangelistic pulpit. These appear when he is dealing with the broad perspective of politics, public liberals, and those who would need his truth prominently spoken the most.

Universalism

The sixth concern is Universalism. 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. Robert Schuller, to 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 is once again repeated in this issue of *Straightway*, as follows:

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,...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" (*Straightway*, September, 1997. The entire article may be received from the author upon request).

Global, Universal Man

The seventh concern is the Universal Man. What has happened, evidently, has been that across the years of the Billy Graham evangelistic crusades, since the early 1950s, he has met so many people, of so many political and religious backgrounds, that he has been caught in the universal, twentieth-century language of the conditions of men's souls in the light of an overwhelming need of this poor world. I would like to think that he has come to this universal conclusion of the needs of the world, and that he has fallen prey to salvation by *the love of God* instead of by *the grace of God*.

Universal Church and World Leaders

Finally, Graham's concession is made. On the television broadcast of February 6, 1998, on "Larry King Live," Billy Graham once again appeared before the world audience, outside of his pulpit. I desire only to give a resumé of that interview; it was consistent with the other six instances and subjects we have already given. He acknowledges, as being Christians, the leaders of the Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox Churches; he acknowledges that the alleged sexual sins of President Clinton do not affect his ability to fulfill his office as a president, whether he sinned those sins or not. That would have to include both the sin itself and lying about it. In his reminiscent journey through other presidents with whom he was personal friends, he gave the same acknowledgment of their character and his respect for their character and administration, including President John F. Kennedy, and he emphasized his closeness with President L. B. Johnson. Other names were included with admirable acknowledgment in the precincts of the social, political, and religious areas without a moral or spiritual criticism of any kind. In Dr. Billy Graham's new book, he indicates that President Clinton made a big impression on him during the Oklahoma City bombing

tragedy. He said that "... Seldom have I seen anyone express so movingly and sincerely a genuine sense of compassion and sympathy to those who were hurting. I felt that he, not I, was the real pastor that day."

Personal Judgment of Self to Judge Another

This has been the consistent attitude of Billy Graham, and increasingly so, since his rise to stardom as a national and international evangelist. I cannot find but now and then anyone who really dislikes him, to say nothing of accusing him; and only among the fundamentalists who have taken a biblical stand against him do I hear judgment of him at all. I do not hear any word against Billy Graham by the general Christian denominational leaders. Of course, we continue to hear the neo-voices of Christian movements stating that fundamentalists should know that they should not judge. However, the inconsistency of that often used statement does not seem to include them as judges of the fundamentalists.

I want to volitionally go to my grave refusing to state that I know who is saved or that I know the motive of any man's heart. God has placed all of us in an awkward state of tension, declaring to us that we must judge only by the Old Testament "deeds of his doings" or as revealed in the New Testament by "the fruit" of a man's life. I believe fruit includes orthodoxy and orthopraxy. No man has ever lived without judging people and things. Even those that say they do not judge another are not telling the truth. We are called upon by the Word of God to judge in those things and persons what we have judged in our own selves (Matthew 7:1-5), so that our judgment will not be a contradiction to our own life, thus falling into condemnation of God. Also, we are called upon to "judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

From this latter judgment, all of us, as called ministers of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, must make some decision about his "deeds" and his "fruit." I believe it is necessary now for me to become fully responsible as a minister of the gospel to my generation and the Billy Graham ministries. It is only one voice crying in the wilderness, but nevertheless I believe I have endeavored to patiently and objectively pursue this appraisal since the 1950s. I do not know how much more error it will take, like the growing error of Billy Graham, for Christians to see there is an apostasy in this world. It is not successful crusades, awakenings, kinds of evangelism, but wherever these errors and apostates gather on these platforms, we should judge it. These television interviews and these travels into universal world settings are forgetting the singular Cross of Calvary and the only one revelation on earth for the salvation of men. That salvation is based upon the Bible, the

infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word of God.

The Lie of Universalism

I cannot think of a greater lie than Universalism. It brings everybody to heaven by their works; it denounces men as sinners; it seems, only seems, to save the world through love, while rejecting the only truth on this earth to really save us, the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! If no one is lost; no one can be saved. If everyone is saved who loves their own god in their own way, then, according to the Holy Scriptures, hell would be the reward of the universalist's own salvation. The original, first heresy that came to the American Colonies consisted of a very similar theology: "The Universal Fatherhood of God; and the Universal Brotherhood of Man." In all of the writings of our Puritan Fathers, scholars, all, there could be no acceptance of this contradiction of the Word of God. Whereas, in the case of Billy Graham, it appears that he came to his Universalism, not by scholarship or theology, but by visiting too many people which demanded another explanation for their need than the Cross of Jesus and God's evangelism that declares all men are lost. Dr. Billy Graham, the world's reputed greatest evangelist has lost the truth he came to preach. America began with this, her first apostasy, with universalism and the unitarian as enemy-doctrine and enemy-pulpit. We have returned, full-circle, to this very same denial of the depravity of all men and the need of the Blood of Jesus with man's erroneous own claim of saving himself. Some are saying to the media that they believe Billy Graham will go down in history greater than the Apostle Paul and Martin Luther. However, it appears his reputed greatest asset now becomes his greatest liability.

I have received more communications in recent weeks inquiring of this final development of Dr. Billy Graham's upsurge of strange doctrine than any single article I have written before in our *Straightway*. The next largest proliferation of inquiries was over the "Promise Keepers," which also paves the way for Universalism.

In the case of our Graham article, Christians are inquiring; missionaries are inquiring; educational leaders are inquiring; and young students in seminary studies are inquiring, too.

One missionary inquired who was a convert under Billy Graham's ministry. He wanted more assured information of the integrity of our investigation and accuracy of our quotations. He alluded to the fact that Dr. Spence could have been too apologetic in his past position and implied that, possibly, I needed more research. I could not believe that the Lord desired me to respond to him. The dear young missionary never thought,

evidently, for one moment, that he should have telephoned Billy Graham, his own evangelist, and inquired of him directly. If no telephone contact could be made, he should have come home from the mission field in desperation and gone directly to Billy Graham, if it took weeks, and wept before his face and pled to the man who is allegedly spoken of as saying such things. Whatever it takes, such a missionary must prove his point and place with it all before I will give up forty years of prayerfully not following a world leader who has step by step come to a very strange voice in a last day world! I do not doubt my young missionary friend as a Christian and his motive. I simply believe that those who were genuinely saved under the Billy Graham ministry have now a responsibility to the world of a judgment that heretofore they may have thought they did not have to make. I had rather for them defend Graham's message instead of myself. But the Billy Graham evangelistic theological ball is now in their own court. I wonder what they will do with it. The world has given too much aura to one man.