

# 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 28

SEPTEMBER 2000

NUMBER 8

### The Crossover: A Growing Trend in Christianity

By Dr. H. T. Spence, President

Throughout the recent decades of American Christianity, there has been a growing trend of what has come to be known as the crossover. Not exclusive to our generation, this subtle tactic of the crossover has appeared at critical seasons throughout history. However, it has been the contemporary crossover that has grown into a subtle yet powerful trend seeking to pull down the public testimony of true Christianity.

#### Definitions Given

The terms *trend* and *crossover* should first be clearly defined. A *trend* refers to the general course or drifting of a thing or matter. It is the fashion found at any given time in a generation; it is what is in style or in vogue at a given time. Often these trends are birthed by

specific individuals, or trend-setters, who then attract a powerful following. Trends have frequently changed the course of history or altered the flow of a movement, whether that movement was of God or of the world. A trend can be a very powerful, influential entity in a generation, turning a segment of people as if turning the flow of a river.

The term *crossover* in its simplistic understanding is a bridge or other structure for crossing a river, highway, etc. As a prominent term in today's music industry, however, crossover is defined as the act of crossing over to a different style, usually with the intention of broadening one's commercial appeal to a wider audience. The term crossover

may identify the act of crossing over in doctrinal identification also with the intention of broadening one's appeal to a wider, religious audience. A crossover is basically a compromising of two distinct points of view, philosophies, or characters.

### **The Crossover's Appearance in the World Today**

Three contemporary religious forces can serve to illustrate the powerful trend of crossovers. One example is the 14<sup>th</sup> Dali Lama Tenzin Gyatso, who is the Buddhist head of state and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. Due to the Chinese communist takeover of Tibet in 1959, the Dali Lama presently is in exile in India still with a world following of Tibetans and global Buddhists. He has been the key man to westernize Buddhism by making it more religiously palatable to western thinking. Because of the stark contrast between Western and Eastern forms of thought, there has been the growing ecumenical trend to make these philosophies more

compatible. This trend has necessitated a crossover from one or both forms of thought. While Western thought is leaving its linear reasoning based on absolutes in order to become more accommodating with the changing world view, the oriental mind likewise has come to realize that it will have to adjust its content in order to live and survive in a growing ecumenical world. Therefore, that which was hard for the Western world to assimilate from Buddhism, the Dali Lama has endeavored to accommodate in Western terms, modifying the esoteric concepts of Buddhism. He has truly popularized this ancient, eastern religion to Western man, thus opening the New Age Movement philosophy to the Western world. The Dali Lama's visits to the Vatican in recent years, his audiences with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and his popularized writings on Buddhism have all been the attempts to cross over and make his audience broader to achieve acceptance. His terminology has become more palatable to the style and vogue of Western thought.

Yet from an evangelical perspective, Neo-Evangelicals sought to bridge the doctrinal gap with the Liberals, particularly those in the Neo-Orthodox camp in the 1940s. When such men left Fundamentalism they began using the terminology of the Neo-Orthodox theologians, quoting from such men as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Rudolph Bultmann, C.H. Dodd, William Barclay, and a host of others. The Neo-Evangelicalists

## **STRAIGHTWAY**

**Published 10 months of the year**

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made themselves “at home” with the style of these existentialists, believing such a style gave them a greater aura of intellectualism to place them in league with European theologians. Their strategy was clear and to the point: use the existentialist’s style and terminology in order to place their new movement in a broader community of acceptance. To the Neo-Evangelicalists, the existential theologians were the “heavy-weights” of the theological world, and they wanted their writings to be more accepted in the broader audience of theological thought. However, many Neo-Evangelicals were drawn into the vortex of existential theology and lost their identification as evangelicals. What few absolutes they had were forfeited in order that they might be accepted by a broader audience of theology.

A third classic example of the crossover tactic has been in the ministry of Billy Graham. Even from his early years as an evangelist, in order to broaden his appeal and ministry, he has often crossed over to the world’s music and contemporary lingo in order to bring the world’s crowd to his crusades. In the early 1970s, he went so far as to put on a hippie wig and dress up as a hippie in order to mingle among the attendees of a large rock festival in Florida. He adopted an old pragmatic philosophy: “Become one of them to win them.” He began to use their style of life and music in order to bridge any gap between God and the world. For years Mr. Graham has promoted the world’s

music, from rock to rap, as a drawing appeal to his contemporary. His son Franklin Graham has taken the tactic of the crossover and deepened his pervasiveness in it. After using another style for a period of time, it is inevitable that the other style will finally become the standard style and identification of the individual, even if he merely started out with the intent of appealing to the other side. Truly the crossover has been part of the warp and woof of Neo-Evangelicalism since its inception.

### **Dr. Bob Jones Jr.’s Warning**

In *Cornbread and Caviar*, Dr. Bob Jones, Jr. gave these words in his introduction to the book:

*I wished to recount certain facts which demonstrate how New Evangelicalism infiltrates or-ganizations and institutions and destroys them, and I felt it im-perative to show how New Evangelicalism can emasculate the ministry of a preacher. I know today that biblical Christians are not nearly as aware as they ought to be of how vicious and dangerous is this insidious movement, and God’s people need to be alerted to its methods and purposes. I have tried to indicate by several definite examples that its talk of love is phony and dishonest. In fact, New Evangelicalism is a state of mind as well as a religious “position.” It is really a halfway house to total unbelief, and no New Eoangelical can dwell there permanently. He will either be forced back to biblical Truth or go further into infidelity.*

*Modern Liberalism (and that is what New Evangelicalism really is) is a step on the way to a complete surrender of the scriptural Faith. It is as great a peril to effective Christian service as is avowed modernism, agnosticism, or atheism. The compromiser hates those who stand for the biblical obedience which the New Evangelicals have abandoned. Where Fundamentalists are faithful and consistent, they are a rebuke to the conscience of compromisers. In retaliation, New Evangelicals seek even more and more the fellowship of unbelief and go further and further towards serving its cause.*

When the crossover begins both in the heart and in the actions of the compromiser, Dr. Bob makes clear the inevitable: the individual will seek "more and more the fellowship of unbelief and go further and further towards serving its cause."

### **The Crossover in Music**

In recent decades one of the most critical and delicate areas in which a crossover has been more evident is in the context of music. Though the contemporary sound may be traced back much further, it was during the 1960s and 1970s that many crossovers and changes took place in American Gospel music. Within these twenty years our country was bombarded with a new type of Christianity that was being commercially promoted through its acceptable music. In this marketable music, worldliness was becoming an increased trait.

ThurLOW Spurr, Kurt Kaizer, Ralph Carmichael, O. D. Hall, Jr., and eventually Bill Gaither — these Gospel music innovators were stepping forward to make Christianity more acceptable to the world by inculcating the world's sound. Some men tried to restrain this move by confronting these prominent musicians about their obvious changes. But such noble hearts were met with a variety of responses from the innovators. ThurLOW Spurr's response to his turn-around popularity was, "Well, thank God things have changed! Most people have discovered that music (that is, musical notes and rhythms) is only the vehicle to convey a message. The vehicle can change . . . and God help us, if it doesn't." Bill Gaither confronted his critics in 1970 with the response, "The message may stay the same but the wrapping of it doesn't." Paul Johnson, one of the great contemporary writers of the 1970s said the following:

*Today the church faces a world that is not the least bit interested in hearing us defend our sacred cows. It is interested however, in hearing a solution to the crises it faces in the realm of personal identity, economy, ecology, ethics, guilt, hope for the world's future . . . all of which have profound solutions in the Person of Jesus Christ.*

Johnson desired to draw the fire away from the changes taking place in Evangelical music by bringing other subject matters to the forefront, those that the socialists were dealing with.

Ralph Carmichael was the man who revolutionized the Evangelical world into accepting rock music on a national scale through the films of Billy Graham (beginning in 1967). He told his critics that philosophically, music was "amoral" and could not be categorized as either "good" or "bad"; he believed the problem was how the artist was using the music. He further stated the following:

*I feel I must write in whatever idiom will be the most effective for Jesus' sake. Our message stands the same, but the vernacular communication tools must change in order to stay relevant.*

Despite strong attacks upon these innovators, time has shown the weakening of the critics and the full acceptance of the contemporary sound.

Ralph Carmichael, who has been married and divorced several times, is still in the mainstream of the CCM influence and is making influential inroads into the more conservative Christian camps. Through his seminars and music schools, Carmichael has endeavored to convince the churches of America to allow their musicians the freedom to experiment with all forms of music.

Others have aided Carmichael's presupposition of secularizing Christian music. O. D. Hall, Jr., a past innovator of CCM and minister of music at Van Nuys Baptist Church in California, stated in the early 1980s that "the wall

between secular and sacred music is breaking down, along with a removal of the traditional church mold. This is good for the Church." While experimenting with eclectic musical sounds twenty years ago, Bill Gaither, the award-winning gospel songwriter, stated, "I see music going in all different directions. I believe that, as members of the body of Christ, we have to prepare ourselves to not get uptight about this."

### **The Crossover of Amy Grant**

The Dove and Grammy Award-winning Amy Grant is a CCM personality who has been a leader in innovation since her early music career. She became the first CCM artist to cross from the so-called Christian side to the pop side, landing "Find a Way" on *Billboard's* top 40. Even as early as 1979, in her release of "My Father's Eyes" she was shown on the album cover with her blouse's top buttons undone and a seductive look on her face.

Making a crossover in music necessitates the writing and singing of so-called Christian songs that could be used in a double context. A classic example is Grant's song "Baby, Baby." She has stated in periodical interviews that she was thinking of her little baby in the writing of the song, but the crowd that listens has another thing in mind. Her songs become more philosophical than religious, and her husband Gary Chapman has been a strong influence in her crossover career.

*Rolling Stone* magazine several

years ago wrote of her attendance to a nudist colony in Europe. Although there was a furor over this un-Christian lifestyle, within a few months her popularity returned among her CCM followers. Yet, through the incident she picked up quite a few admirers from the secular rock world. By writing her music with the overt style of the secular, she was able to make the crossover as an artist into the secular field. She is a professing Christian who is an entertainer, rather than a Christian entertainer. This change also happened with others such as The Statler Brothers and the Oak Ridge Quartet.

### **The Temptation of the Crossover**

The crossover trend is a powerful enticement, especially in our generation. With the pressures coming upon us as Fundamentalists to gain more followers, to build the bigger churches, to keep our academic halls filled, and to become more accepted by the lucrative crowd and the media, there is always the temptation to cross over to the other side in our style of living, our style of worship, and even our style of music. Of course, it would also be very easy to simply follow those who are the trendsetters in Christianity or seek the aid of those who are in the mainstream of what is in trend, in vogue, and in fashion in the worship and music industry. To do so would truly broaden the appeal to a wider audience. Some might say, "We need to go where the fish are," or "We have got to change and become more acceptable if we are going to survive in the days ahead." There are always decep-

tive reasonings that will quickly come to our heart to entice us to the crossover.

The Fundamentalists' temptation of the present is not so much the crossover to the world or even to liberalism. But our temptation will be to make the crossover into Neo-Evangelicalism. After all, the members of this movement were our brothers at one time, though disorderly. We were one before the split. Their men have succeeded in building edifices, in accruing money, and in composing acceptable popular music. They are the acknowledged mainstream of evangelical Christianity in America and throughout the world. Their prime spokesmen, such as Billy Graham, are at the top of the list for the most admired individuals in America. Suppose we simply cross over in a few things and take advantage of these trendsetters and see if they will work for us?

Yes, there is the temptation to write the music as they do, to make the preaching more palatable to the carnal man as they do, to "preach Christ" without a stand as they do. Once an individual or a church sets the crossover in motion, the tendency will be to take advantage of it again and again. The results will speak for themselves: the end will justify the means. Add a little bit of soft syncopation here, sprinkle some dissonance there, write a few breaks in the rhythmic pattern, and you have a hit on your hands. Even the Neo-Evangelical radio stations will be calling and lauding the accomplishment and

will begin buying the music. It has the appearance of their music; it has that Charismatic sound; and, success will laud the crossover. Then a few will cry for the musical trendsetters to step forward and train them in the crossover. The music will become so appealing and desirable that if we can not write it ourselves, we will hire those outside the camp to compose and perform our music. They may be Charismatic or any other brand of the Christian spectrum, but they are (so we will begin to reason) the more talented writers and musicians in the kind of music we are now looking for. After all, these outsiders know what the people want; their success has proven this to be true. In the end, when the crossover has performed its duty, we will be more accepted simply because we crossed over to be like them in style.

Then, slowly but surely, the tragedy will be manifested. It will become evident that while we were trying to become more like them in our worship and music, we will have lost our identity as God's chosen in the earth. The distinctives that made us great in our precious Lord will be gone. Our worship, our music, our dress, our manner of living, as well as our failures and calamities will be no different from those whom we secretly longed to emulate and join. Our musicians will play like them because we trained them so. Our vocalists will have the same soft, ethereal sound as they do, because we trained them so. Our composers will compose with the same surrealistic, modern musical

chordality, with wandering, pretty melodies that have no strength and no conviction, because we trained them so. The sad day will finally come when the line of distinction will be erased between the Fundamentalists and the Neo-Evangelicalists; the crossover will have succeeded. What we thought was exciting and innovative, a novelty to us as Fundamentalists, will become the razor to cut away our Nazarite vow of heart and life before God. Why? It is because the trendsetters trained us so.

### Conclusion

Is the above scenario one of impossibility, possibility, or probability? Will music become Fundamentalism's crossover bridge to Neo-Evangelicalism? Only God knows what is the end of the Fundamentalist movement. But His people must be on guard for any dangerous trends and trendsetters making their way into the Body of Christ. Some will try to convince the Lord's people not be concerned or afraid of the changes—it is time for a breath of fresh air and fresh innovations to come to our churches, even if we have to cross over the line which our forefathers drew on the battlefield in order to get it. We must *not* give ear to the trendsetters and their line of reasoning. Our churches do not need champagne music or the eclectic sounds to "liven up" the services. It is not the synthetic remedy of the Charismatics we need. Dare we fall on our knees, and in desperation of heart cry out to God for an awakening to righteousness and for a revival in communion with God? Such a

genuine move of God will pull us back from the border of the world, its sound, and its desired acceptability. The crossover to Neo-Evangelicalism is not what we need. There is no hope to be found there. The crossing that we need to make is over the Jordan River that leads into the Promised Land of spirituality

and holiness of heart (Hebrews 4).

May God save us from falling into the belief that the grass is greener on the other side of evangelicalism. We as Fundamentalists have had a noble birth; let us not leave it, but pray for revival within it.

## **The Test of Obedience and Character**

(Taken from *The Quest for Christian Purity*  
by Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, Founder)

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, . . . Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 13:1-3).

In this test, we see the possibility of a false prophet with a “sign” or a “wonder” actually coming to pass. This same thing will be reenacted during the Tribulation Period under the “signs” and “miracles” of the work of the False Prophet, or second “beast coming up out of the earth” (Rev. 13:11-15). Like those times in Deuteronomy, this flight of false efforts will be used to “deceive”; to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. No mere sign, howsoever great it may be presented, is the final proof of spiritual things or a spiritual truth. We must give the miracle this test. God often permits such false prophets to flourish to see if WE will obey—to see if our character will discern. This is certainly a part of our quest for Christian Purity!



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Dr. Dennis L. Lowry

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### **Wednesday, October 4th**

7:00 PM	Dr. Peacock	"The Apostasy Defined"
8:00 PM	Dr. Spence	"A Militant Stand in Days of Apostasy"

### **Thursday, October 5th**

9:00 AM	Dr. Lowry	"Praying With All Prayer"
10:00 AM	Dr. Peacock	"Magnificence in Days of Apostasy"
7:00 PM	Dr. Colas	"Amsterdam 2000: A Voice of Neo-Christianity"
8:00 PM	Rev. Wade	"Overcoming in Days of Apostasy"

### **Friday, October 6th**

9:00 AM	Dr. Lowry	"Prayer For Utterance"
10:00 AM	Dr. Colas	"Fundamentalist in Days of Apostasy"
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