

PART I

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# Billy Graham: The Mouthpiece of New Evangelicism

By John Ashbrook

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Let's go back to Dr. Ockenga. In his press release of December 8, 1957, Dr. Ockenga outlined the "organization front" which would win the respect of liberalism and defeat the grungy forces of fundamentalism. This chapter will deal with the sixth aspect of the organizational front. That aspect is not a school or a movement, but a person. Dr. Ockenga phrased it thus:

*"... sixth, there is the appearance of an evangelist, Billy Graham, who on the mass level is the spokesman of the convictions and ideals of the New Evangelicism."*

I have frequently disagreed with Dr. Ockenga in his convictions, but I cannot disagree with his statement identifying Billy Graham as the mouthpiece of new evangelicalism on the mass level.

## **Billy by a Nose**

The two most recognizable religious figures of the last forty years have been Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II. At times there have been short challenges from men such as Oral Roberts and Jerry Falwell, but coming down the stretch all the contenders have fallen behind. My guess would be that it is Billy Graham by a nose over John Paul II as the world's best known religious figure. Graham has been invited to the White House more than any other clergyman in recent history. He has been confidante, advisor, dinner guest or golf partner for all the U.S. Presidents from Harry Truman to George Bush--a record that even the Pope cannot match. When the media seek religious opinions on the issues of the day, Billy Graham is never missed.

Every fundamental pastor has faced the fame of Billy Graham. Newcomers attracted to the church ask the pastor, "What do you think of Billy Graham?" Woe to the pastor who has a negative hint in his answer. If he dares to question the famous evangelist's associations, positions or policies, he is immediately dismissed as unloving and non-evangelistic. Many fundamental churches would be twice their size if they only went along with Billy Graham. Graham's conduct has become the popular norm for evangelicalism, more valued than what the Bible says.

I do not want to belabor what everyone already knows about Billy Graham. When he burst upon the national scene in the late 1940's he held positions which would have been shared by Bible believers in every denomination. He believed in an inerrant Scripture, the lost condition of all men, the necessity of salvation through the blood of Christ and the eternal destiny of man in either heaven or hell. He would have shared a desire to be separate from the world, a hatred for the liberalism which had robbed modernistic churches of the gospel, a clear perception of Roman Catholicism as a false religious system, a non-charismatic orientation and a recognition of atheistic communism as one of the shrewdest works of the devil.

It would be my observation that, in every one of these areas, Billy Graham has moved from orthodoxy to accommodation. The neutralist penchant to be accepted by the world has led to an accommodation to the world's view in every area.

### **Salvation without the Savior?**

*McCall's* for January 1978, carried a five-page interview and story on Billy Graham titled, "I Can't Play God Any More." The theme of the article was to show that Graham no longer held to his dogmatic (Biblical) convictions of the past. For instance, Graham is quoted as saying:

*"I used to believe that pagans in far-off countries were lost--were going to hell--if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. I no longer believe that."*

That statement makes one recall that Jesus said, "I am the way ... no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The words of Peter also come to mind:

*"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).*

The Bible believer immediately recognizes that here is a broad accommodation to the thinking of the natural man's belief that Jesus Christ is not the only way.

Graham is also quoted in the same article as saying:

*"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."*

This matter is explicitly dealt with in Romans 1 where God explains that man should see God in the creation about him. However, Romans explains that because of man's depraved heart, he does not give that glory to God, but to images made like men, birds, beasts and creeping things. Men like to believe that there are "plenty of other opportunities," but God simply says to go and give the gospel to every creature.

### **What not to do at the Synagogue**

In the same article Graham explains another accommodation made to the Jewish community. The article states as follows:

*"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. ... Billy is particularly opposed to evangelical groups such as 'Jews for Jesus' who have made Jews the special target of their proselytizing efforts. ... 'If a person wants to convert to Christianity, that is his own freewill decision,' Billy declares. ... 'I would never go after someone just because he is a Jew, which is why I have never supported the Jewish missions.'"*

Peter and Paul were never ready to make such an accommodation. It was to a Jewish audience that Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." It was Paul's custom in almost every city on his missionary journeys to go straight to the synagogue that he might preach the gospel to his brethren, the Jews. It was to a Jewish audience that Paul preached the following:

*"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."*

Scripture obviously teaches that Judaism is not enough. Men must come to Christ. Obviously Peter and Paul did not receive honors from the Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai B'rith and

the National Conference of Christians and Jews as Billy Graham has done.

### **Church Tradition**

I will have more to say later on about Billy's accommodation to Roman Catholicism. However, in the *McCall's* article Graham stated:

*"I am far more tolerant of other kinds of Christians than I once was. My contact with Catholic, Lutheran and other leaders--people far removed from my own Southern Baptist tradition--has helped me, hopefully, to move in the right direction. 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 Resurrection of Jesus and the coming judgment of God, and so do I. We only differ on some matters of later church tradition."*

This is high sounding dialogue. It makes the reformation seem like a mistake. That "later church tradition" adds a pope, the hocus pocus of the mass and the necessity of works for salvation. It obscures the fact that salvation is by grace alone and not by works of righteousness which we have done. It is true that Christianity shares certain points of doctrine with many of the "isms," but that does not mean that we identify with those who deny the essence of salvation through a crucified Saviour.

*Christianity Today* for May 21, 1982, reported on a visit of Graham to apostate Harvard University where he received a very good reaction from the students. Reporter Tom Minnery said the following:

*"In fact, if there was a reason for Graham's success with the Harvard students, it was his forthright admission that he does not have all the answers, and for his gentle approach to the Gospel, minus the fire and damnation."*

The reporter further explained that Graham said he is still on a personal pilgrimage and "the more I learn, the less dogmatic I become on some topics." Probably all of us need to be less dogmatic about our personal feelings, but God never gives us the privilege of being less dogmatic about doctrine. What God says is true, and we dare not accommodate it to what the world thinks.

A Religious News Service dispatch from Urbana, Illinois, about 1976, read as follows:

*"Billy Graham, the evangelist, urged here that evangelicals 'accept unity in diversity' and avoid divisiveness over such matters as Biblical inerrancy, charismatic phenomena, and political activism."*

An inerrant Biblical authority is the bedrock of faith. When men stray from that authority, they soon have no authority at all.

### **Endorsing Oral**

To the best of my knowledge Graham is non-charismatic himself. However, by taking a neutralist stand on the charismatic issue, he signals to all his followers that the excesses of the charismatic movement are perfectly normal for the believer. He has appeared on TV specials with Oral Roberts and on the campus of Oral's university. There has never been a word of protest or warning about Roberts' wild visions, faith healing and shameless money-raising schemes. At Graham's International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists, common called Amsterdam '83, two of the main speakers were Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho of Korea and Dr. Pat Robertson of the U.S.A. Both, of course, are outspoken charismatics. Obviously, they see no need to warn young evangelists about the dangers of charismatism.

### **Catering to Kathryn**

The Billy Graham Center on the campus of Wheaton College is an extension of Billy's ministry. When it was revealed in 1977 that the Graham organization had amassed \$23,000,000 in holdings, one of the reasons given was that some of the money would be used for the center on the Wheaton Campus. The fall 1987 edition of *In Form* (Bulletin of Wheaton College) advertised that there would be a month-long exhibit at the Billy Graham Center titled "Ministry of Kathryn Kuhlman Exhibit." Kathryn Kuhlman was a self-proclaimed prophetess, charismatic, and healer in the Aimee Semple McPherson mold. Her prime territory for ministry was in the area of western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio where I have spent my ministry. Since I have observed her unscriptural excesses firsthand I found it hard to believe that some Bible believers would honor her ministry. Again we see the neutralist principle of accommodation to please all men.

### **A Shoehorn for Elvis**

When anyone begins to accommodate all the people of the world, open worldliness must follow. Even so, it was shocking to read in the newspapers that Graham expected to see Elvis Presley in heaven. The San Francisco *Chronicle* for October 8, 1977, quoted an Associated Press dispatch from Charlotte as follows:

*"Evangelist Billy Graham says he thinks he will see Elvis Presley in heaven and is 'pretty sure' he will die within the next tens years. 'I never met him (Presley) but I believe I will see him in heaven because Elvis Presley was very deeply religious, especially in the last two or three years,' Graham said."*

Shoehorning Elvis into heaven seems to be a rather tough assignment, especially since it is predicated on being "very deeply religious" instead of repenting of sin and casting all on Jesus Christ.

More such unbelievable worldliness came out of Amsterdam '83. *Foundation Magazine*, Vol. IV, Issue IV, 1983, gave quotations from the Rev. Michael Green, an Englishman, who was both a main speaker and a workshop leader:

*"Don't talk about new birth, talk about liberation. ... Identify with and befriend secular society. Become one with them. Read their materials. Get out of our Christian ghetto mentality..." Green criticized the evangelist who 'never reads a modern novel ... who never goes to a modern play or sees a thoughtful modern film.'"*

He then went on to advise the evangelists to attend the world's movies. This is standard new evangelical thinking. *Christianity Today* has a movie column like the secular papers where it reviews current films. When Billy Graham attended Wheaton College in the early 1940's, every student was required to sign a pledge not to attend the movies. It is also standard new evangelical procedure to water down the wording of the Bible to appease modern man. To eliminate the new birth and the blood and hell to please man is to betray the God who saved us.

### **A Star on the Sidewalk**

Hollywood has been the fountainhead of the filthy motion picture industry. On October 14, 1989, our local paper, *The News-Herald*, carried the following story:

*"The world's best-known evangelist tomorrow will have his name and the likeness of an old-fashioned radio microphone engraved on the 1900th star along the Hollywood Walk of Fame."*

Apparently, this dubious honor by the most worldly of the world bothered Billy a bit, for the story continues as follows:

*"I'm not sure a clergyman belongs in that group of entertainers,' Graham said sheepishly, noting that his star will be near those honoring Wayne Newton, Buster Crabbe, John Travolta, Judy Holliday, Julie Andrews, Olivia Newton-John and Greta Garbo. ... 'A star was offered to me 30 years ago,' he said, 'and I said, 'No then. But I've changed my views.'"*

I do not know all the celebrities mentioned in the above quote, but I do know that they were stars of worldliness and not of godliness. On first thought it would seem surprising that the Hollywood crowd would want a preacher's star in its crown. The newspaper went on to quote on that:

*"I doubt there is anyone in Hollywood who has been seen, heard or enjoyed by more people than Billy Graham,' said Johnny Grant, Hollywood's honorary mayor and chairman of the Walk of Fame Committee. Grant said that the committee voted unanimously to give Graham the honor after he was nominated last year by friends who paid the \$4,800 fee."*

This is the way the accommodation game is played. I won't protest your filth if you don't protest my star.

### **A Love Fest with Apostates**

There is another area of accommodation which cries to be mentioned here--that is Billy Graham's relationship to the apostate National and World Council of Churches. These two organizations are the official organizations of apostasy on national and world levels. While there are born again believers in some of the churches, they are surely not evident in the leadership. If the command of God to "Come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord" applies to any two groups at all, they are surely these two groups. However, since Dr. Graham accepted apostates on the crusade level and shared his platform with them, he cannot refuse fellowship with them on an organizational level. There is enough evidence in this area that it would take a doctoral thesis to collect and analyze it. In an effort to be brief I will quote only Graham's own words about it.

Shortly after Amsterdam '83, a World Council of Churches Assembly took place on the campus of the University of British Columbia at Vancouver. Billy Graham had been invited by Dr. Philip Potter, the General Secretary of the Council, to attend and speak. Foundation Magazine Volume IV, Issue IV for 1983 records that he was unable to attend and sent the following syrupy telegram to his apostate friends:

*"Dear Philip: Your gracious and generous invitation to speak twice in Vancouver was deeply appreciated. Thank you for seeing my representatives, Dr. Smyth and Dr. Haraszti. They impressed me with the importance of the opportunities which you offered me and also conveyed your personal greetings. I have tried to juggle my schedule, but it is just too heavy at this late date for me to make the drastic changes that would be necessary for me to be in Vancouver. This will be only the second general assembly of the WCC that I have had to miss. I will certainly miss seeing you and many other old friends and fellowshiping with those from all over the world. We have had 4,000 delegates coming to Amsterdam and have had to turn away 2,000 applications. There seems to be a growing grass roots desire for renewal within the church and emphasis on evangelism and service. It is my prayer that Vancouver and Amsterdam will both experience pentecostal blessings that could possibly bring the extension of the kingdom of God, in a world so filled with danger. May God grant you personally his wisdom as you lead this Sixth Assembly. Signed, Billy Graham."*

Instead of sending such a telegram Dr. Graham would have done well to have sent the words of a faithful prophet addressed to another apostate in 1 Kings 13: "I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: For so was it charged me by the word of the Lord..." Those words were less syrupy but far more pleasing in God's sight. Most

prophetic scholars would agree that the WCC is busy building a church for the kingdom of Antichrist, not the kingdom of God.

The *Christian News* for September 9, 1991, reported that Billy Graham visited the National Council of Churches Interchurch Center in New York and met privately with National Council of Churches General Secretary Rev. Joan Campbell. On this occasion he said that he had "no problem in fellowshipping with anybody who calls Jesus Christ Lord." That sounds pious and Scriptural until one realizes most National Council of Churches personnel will say, "Jesus is Lord," without believing in His deity.

### **From Orthodoxy to Accommodation**

Early in this chapter I suggested that Billy Graham had made a pilgrimage from orthodoxy to accommodation. We have seen accommodation of the gospel to the views of the unsaved man, accommodation to the Christ-rejecting Jewish community, accommodation to Roman Catholicism, accommodation to intellectualism at Harvard, accommodation on the issue of inerrancy, accommodation to the wild extremes of charismaticism, accommodation to worldliness, accommodation to the cesspool of Hollywood, accommodation to the primary organizations of apostasy. How can this be explained? Would not any professed servant of the Lord be embarrassed by such accommodation?

Any young pastor faces a decision early in his ministry. Is he to fix his eye on the Christ for whom he ministers, or the crowd to whom he ministers? A faithful pastor will come to the conclusion that he must fix his eye on Christ, not the crowd. It is a serious charge, but the evidence in this chapter would seem to show that Billy Graham has fixed his eye on the other alternative. He has chosen to accommodate the crowd.

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## PART II

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### GRAHAM AT HARVARD PRAISES DALAILAMA

—When Dr. Billy Graham spoke at Harvard last month at the behest of its homosexual Chaplain Peter Gomes, he maintained that the way to God is through Jesus Christ but expressed tolerance for other religions (10/2/99 *H. Times*). He lauded the Buddhist Dalai Lama for his peace efforts and emphasized the similarities between the Christian and Islamic scriptures. This is a serious, grievous error.

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