

# Billy Graham's Catholic Connection

By John Ashbrook



As I picked up the *Lake County News Herald* for February 9, 1984 my eye was arrested by a headline which stated: "Graham's Help on Vatican Ties." The article proved to be an Associated Press release which said.-

*A spokesman for Billy Graham confirms that the evangelist played a behind-the-scenes role in President Reagan's decision to establish formal diplomatic relations with the Vatican, a newspaper reported Yesterday*

*Early in 1983, Graham was asked by the president and adviser William Clark to make informal, private inquiries among evangelical Protestant leaders about likely response to such an action, said Donald Bialy, media director for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in Minneapolis.*

*A copy of the seven-page letter that the Baptist evangelist sent to Clark was obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times, which quoted Graham as saying, 'If anyone can do it and get away with it, it is Mr. Reagan.'*

*Generally moderate evangelicals were described by Graham as presenting few problems, especially if the point were made that the Pope was being recognized as a political head and not in his religious capacity.*

Since the birth of new evangelicalism in 1948, fundamentalists and new evangelicals had not agreed on many things. But, both groups had always stood in opposition to formal diplomatic relations with the Vatican. In reacting to the President's request, Mr. Graham might have become a spokesman for millions of Bible-believers by expressing solid opposition to Mr. Reagan's proposed move. Instead, he chose to be an accomplice in a national crime. How did it happen that Mr. Moderate Evangelical was willing to encourage the President to compromise the principle of separation of church and state by establishing diplomatic relations with the head of a church?

## **The Course of Compromise**

Some years ago I heard a preacher say that “compromise always takes a man further than he intends to go.” (If I could remember who the preacher was I would be glad to give him credit.) Billy Graham is a good example of that statement. I have to believe that he never intended to make the compromises with Roman Catholicism which he has today.

### **“No?” in 1950**

In 1950 Dr. Robert Ketcham of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches came across a newspaper article indicating that Graham expected Catholics and Jews to cooperate in a revival in Oregon and another which reported that Graham had turned over decision cards to Roman Catholic churches. Ketcham promptly sent a letter of inquiry to Billy himself. His letter brought him a strong rebuke from Graham’s executive secretary, Jerry Bevan. Part of Bevan’s reply was as follows:

*For example, you asked if Billy Graham had invited Roman Catholics and Jews to cooperate in the evangelistic meetings. Such a thought, even if the reporter did suggest it as having come from Mr. Graham, seems ridiculous to me. Surely you must know that it is not true... Further that you should give any credence to the idea that Mr. Graham would ever turn over any decision cards to the Roman Catholic Church seems inconceivable.*

### **Miasma in Milwaukee**

What Jerry Bevan termed “inconceivable” in 1950 has become standard practice in every Graham crusade for the past dozen years or more. In September of 1979, *The Christian Courier* of Milwaukee, Wisconsin published the following report on the recent Milwaukee Crusade:

*Sister Maureen Hopkins, Director of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission of the Milwaukee Roman Catholic Archdiocese, and a liaison member of the Crusade committee, reported that 120 people have volunteered within the Catholic community to help her with the task of contacting each of the 3,500 inquiries. Sr. Maureen received the names and telephone numbers from the Crusade Committee, based upon the inquirers indication of leaving a Catholic background on his inquiry card... All 7,500 were immediately invited to a Eucharistic celebration which was held on August 16 at St. Theresa’s Church in Milwaukee. The mass was attended by more than 400 people. The primary purpose for the mass was to remind the inquirers that their commitments to Christ should be nurtured within the sacramental framework of the church.*

*Christianity Today* for September 7, 1979 pointed out that Graham had sent a team member almost a year before the Crusade to conduct a seminar on the

working of the Crusade for Milwaukee priests and lay workers. It is a tragedy that 3500 decision cards were turned over to the Roman Catholic Church, but, it is a worse tragedy when you realize that it did not "happen," It was planned by the world's best-known evangelist.

## **Ecumenism In England**

Ten years later Billy Graham went to London for his Mission '89 Crusade. *Foundation Magazine* for November-December 1989 carried the following quotation from Cardinal Basil Hume, written in April of 1989, two months before the Crusade:

*We are, as the Catholic Church in this country, working as closely as we can with Billy Graham in his Mission '89...The view I take is that I believe the grace of God is at work in the Mission and, if it helps people return to their own churches, then that is good*

Rev. Michael Seed, Ecumenical Advisor to Cardinal Hume, wrote further in recruiting Catholics to take part in the Billy Graham Group Leaders Training Courses:

*The idea behind this is that those who come forward for counselling during a Mission evening in June, if they are Roman Catholic, will be directed to a Roman Catholic 'nurture-group' under Roman Catholic counselors in their home area. If certain people present themselves for counselling at a Mission and have no church roots at all then they are asked 'which church brought you' and asked to contact that church...*

*The Cardinal has already sent greeting to Dr. Graham and will be meeting Dr. Graham before the Mission. We know Dr. Graham to be a truly ecumenical evangelist*

Later on in July, 1989 the Rev. Seed wrote the following:

*Dr. Graham called on Cardinal Hume the day before his Mission on June 13th and the Cardinal attended with myself, the Mission at Earls Court on Monday, June 26th...*

*Some 2100 Catholics 'went forward' at Missions evenings in London which was excellent - from nearly all our Parishes in Westminster... Billy Graham has helped our Church greatly and many have 'renewed' their faith under his great ministry.*

## **Consigning Babes to Darkness**

I presume that Dr. Graham's organization would consider this a triumph of evangelism. To any Bible believer, that it is a great triumph of compromise. It seems fair to assume that those Catholic people chose to attend a Protestant

crusade because their hearts were hungry. They were not satisfied with the mass, the intercession of Mary and the good works of being faithful Catholics. Catholicism had not satisfied their hearts. I assume that they heard the Bible message that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ and that it is found there because he finished the work of salvation on the cross with his own blood, Salvation therefore, is all of God and all of grace without the necessity of the mass, Mary, the priest, or good works. If they cast their anchor of faith in this Bible message, they became new babes in Christ. How criminal to turn new babes back to the care of those who had kept them in the bondage of darkness up to that hour! As stated earlier, compromise always takes a man further than he intends to go.

Evidence could be collected from newspapers reporting the Graham crusade converts and listing thousands of cards returned to Catholic churches. Let me give one more bit of clear evidence:

Billy Graham held his Capitol District Crusade, April 22-29 at the Knickerbocker Arena in Albany, New York. According to *Foundation* for January-February, 1990, the organ of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, *The Evangelist*, for November 2, 1989, the following occurred:

*About 20, 000 persons are busy making ready for Billy Graham's 1990 Capitol District Crusade, including representatives from 18 Protestant denominations in the area and a delegation of top Catholic officials appointed by Bishop Howard J Hubbard.*

*The Graham Crusade, scheduled for April 22-29 at the Knickerbocker Arena in Albany, comes in response to a request made by Bishop Hubbard and other religious leaders, who three years ago, ormally invited the world renowned evangelist to preach here. There are nine Catholics on the SO-person executive committee set up to direct the Crusade... Diocesan officials view the Graham Crusade. as 'a tool for evangelization,' explained an executive committee member, Rev. James Kane, director of the diocesan ecumenical commission...*

*As for the specific dogmatic content of Mr. Graham's sermons, Father Kane said, "there is nothing that Catholics should feet uncomfortable with or be leery of." He said the evangelists emphasis on the Gospel and on the importance of the individuals personal relationship with Christ is consistent with Catholic teaching.*

*However, he added, "we would, of course, emphasize the importance of the Eucharist and the Mass, the sacraments, and the importance of the structure and organization of the Church and its bishops and the pope".*

## **Smiling Cardinals**

Compromise always takes a man further than he wants to go. This is the present pattern.

We have a crusade invited to town by the Catholic Bishop, a crusade with Catholic members on the executive committee, a crusade with Catholic counselors guiding inquirers and a crusade which turns over thousands of contacts to the Roman Catholic Church. Why would the Catholic authorities join forces with a Protestant evangelist? If you read the quotations carefully you read that "Billy Graham has helped our church greatly." You read that, in Graham's preaching, "there is nothing that Catholics should feel uncomfortable with or be leery of." You read that the local priests view the crusade as "a tool for evangelization." Compromise always waters down the message. In Dr. Graham's early crusades Catholics got saved, forsook the fellowship of the Roman Church and moved to churches where they were taught the truth. No more. Everyone from the priest to the cardinal smiles happily as converts return to the mother church "renewed."

## **Move Two Spaces**

In my boyhood one of the favorite games we children played was called, "Uncle Wiggly." Uncle Wiggly was an elderly rabbit who moved from the word, "Go," to the safety of his rabbit hole. There were many dangers along the way. To a child it was a thrilling game. To an adult it was a tedious maze of small steps from "Go" to "Home." How did Billy Graham get from his "No" of 1950 in regard to Catholicism to his "Yes" of 1990? The answer is by a maze of small steps or compromises.

## **Tolerance**

The year 1957 saw the infamous New York Crusade, sponsored by the Protestant Council of New York. The *New York Times* carried an electrifying statement of Dr. Graham's: "If the Pope asked me to preach the Gospel in the Vatican I would go." A few days before the New York Crusade opened, a Catholic paper published an article warning Catholics to stay away from the Crusade. The cozy relationship had not yet developed. This prompted Billy to speak these weakening words as reported in *Newsweek* for May 6, 1957:

*I have many friends among Catholic priests, and a number of New York Catholic leaders have written me stating that they believe New York needs a spiritual awakening, and have promised me their prayers and interest even though they could not officially support the meetings, The Catholic Church has always been as friendly and as tolerant as their church law will allow them toward our crusades.*

I recall an evangelist of yesteryear, Martin Luther by name, who had great meetings on the subject of justification by faith. It seems that the Pope and his cohorts failed to demonstrate their friendly tolerant interest and prayers.

Also in 1957, the *San Francisco News* for September 21, 1957 quoted a private interview with Dr. Graham in which he stated that "Anyone who

makes a decision at our meetings is seen later and referred to a local clergyman, Protestant, Catholic or Jewish.”

## **Billy and the Archbishop**

New warmth sprang into this strange relationship in 1964 when Graham spent forty-five minutes with Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston. Cushing stated that he was 100% for Billy. The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* for October 8, 1964 reported Cushing’s words:

*I have never known a religious crusade that was more effective than Dr. Graham’s. I have never heard the slightest criticism of anything he has ever said from a Catholic source.*

Graham returned the favor by saying: “I feel much closer to Roman Catholic tradition than to some of the more liberal Protestants.”

## **Some Matters of Tradition**

I wonder if Billy stopped to think that “Catholic tradition’ includes the mass, purgatory, veneration of saints, the apocrypha, the immaculate conception, the celibacy of the priests and the confessional. Graham followers would be quick to remind me that “He didn’t mean those.” I know he didn’t, He was using the popular communist and National Council of Churches technique of dialogue, which emphasizes only the places you agree and compromises the rest. Graham readily admitted this in an article in *Eternity* for November, 1958 when he said as follows:

*I do not believe that the ground of our fellowship is to be the inerrancy of the Scriptures but, rather the ground of our fellowship is to be the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ*

Do you see what that means? It clearly states that Graham will fellowship with Catholics on the basis of the deity of Jesus Christ; and, by choosing that as the basis, he will exclude all that the inerrant Scriptures say about Catholic heresies, past and present. That is a pious sounding sentence which is really devious, devilish, cleverness. Graham defends compromise with a Bible doctrine while he sweeps away contention about deliberate disobedience to the Word of God.

I cannot help but wonder if Billy Graham has forgotten the Council of Trent. That council opposed every fundamental doctrine of the Reformation. It placed Scripture and tradition on equal footing and made it possible to drag in medieval rubbish with the same veneration as John 3:16. It affirmed transubstantiation and the mass. It taught that justification is by faith and works. It insisted upon the seven sacraments of Rome and put the imprimatur on purgatory and the selling of indulgences. In short, it established as official Roman Catholic truth all that Bible-believing Christians oppose. Can you

lightly dismiss all of this heresy as “some matters of later church tradition”? Billy may not have strained at a gnat, but he certainly swallowed the camel.

## **“Christian Brothers”**

Then there was the step taken on November 21, 1967. That was the night that a Catholic college, Belmont Abbey in North Carolina, doctored Mr. Graham with all honorary degree, For centuries colleges have attracted friends and built loyalty by conferring honorary sheepskins. However, Roman Catholic institutions have been notably parsimonious about skinning sheep in honor of those who preach salvation by grace. Graham spoke about the shaking in the world today and stated, “One good thing has come out of this religious shaking, We can meet and talk together as Christian brothers. We could not do this ten years ago,” Thus, in an almost casual way, he accepted the assembled priests, nuns and Catholic layfolk as “Christian brothers.” In commenting on things which have not changed, Graham made this unbelievable statement, as reported by the *Gastonia Gazette* for November 22, 1967:

*Finally, the way of salvation has not changed. I know how the ending of the book will be. The gospel that built this school and the gospel that brings me here tonight is still the way to salvation.*

Does Billy Graham really not know the difference between the gospel of God’s grace which saves souls and the Roman system which built Belmont Abbey College and peopled it with priests? Either he is ignorant of the difference, or else he is willing to sell the truth for the pottage of ecumenical popularity

## **Bishop Sheen and Mother Teresa**

In 1977 Dr. Graham took several giant steps on the way from “No” to “Yes” by holding a crusade on the campus of Notre Dame University. *Christianity Today*, which sits on the stool in Graharn’s corner, reported in its issue for June 3, 1977:

*Would Billy Graham conduct a crusade at the Vatican? If a place were made available and Christian leaders in Rome wanted him to, he might.*

*No campaign in Catholicism’s capital is on the Evangelist’s calendar now, but his five-day crusade last month on the Notre Dame University Campus proved he is not afraid to go deep into Roman Catholic territory. It also showed that many elements in the once hostile Catholic community are now receptive to Graham’s type of ministry.*

Later in the same article *Christianity Today* said the following:

*Graham’s sermons were of the type that audiences around the world have heard, with only a few more references to such Catholics as Bishop Fulton*

*Sheen and Mother Teresa of Calcutta,*

Bishop Sheen was an impressive speaker and Mother Teresa is a compassionate woman. However, are they proper illustrations when preaching the gospel of grace? Apparently, to Graham, with a Catholic audience the end justifies the means.

## **The Price of Peace**

What has made the Catholic community hostile to the gospel as preached by faithful preachers through the years? The gospel declares that the work of Jesus Christ on the cross is finished and sufficient. Roman Catholicism is built on the premise that salvation must be completed week by week through the mass, which is unscriptural hocus pocus. It teaches that salvation can be attained only through the works of the church and the intercession of Mary and the saints. The hostility has been furthered by the fact that faithful evangelists have always sought to deliver their converts from the system which held them bound and to introduce them to a church which would nurture them in Scriptures. How could the "once-hostile" community be made more "receptive"? Obviously two notes would have to be dropped: (1) The evangelist would have to minimize his emphasis on the sufficient work of Christ and (2) The evangelist would have to be content to leave his converts in the care of Rome for nourishment. Of course, it would help if the evangelist were to refer to notable priests and nuns, still in the bosom of the Roman Church, as fine examples of what a Christian should be. Billy Graham has apparently made these adjustments,

## **The Pope - Our Moral Leader**

Who could have foreseen that a prominent Southern Baptist evangelist would ever commend the Pope? On the eve of the Papal visit to the United States in 1979, The Religious News Service produced a September 27, 1979 dispatch which quoted Graham as follows:

*The visit of Pope Paul II to the United States is an event of great significance not only for Roman Catholics, but for all Americans - as well as the world... In the short time he has been Pope, John Paul II has become the moral leader of the world. My prayers and the prayer of countless other Protestants will be with him as he makes his journey.*

Mr. Graham, I resent that. I am a part of this world, and the Pope does not happen to be my moral leader. I did not pray for the success of his visit.

*Christianity Today* for July 17, 1981 published an interview with Billy Graham under the title, "Candid Conversation with the Evangelist." Replying to a question about the most significant changes on the church scene in the past twenty-five years, Graham said the following-



*Third is the new understanding between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Twenty-five years ago we could hardly speak with each other openly, In our Crusades today, thousands of Catholics feel free to attend. I have preached in Roman Catholic schools, and have even received honorary doctorates from them. this could not have happened 25 years ago.*

I agree with that last sentence. It could not have happened 25 years ago, and it should not happen now.

## **Did Billy Kiss the Ring?**

Of course, Billy's steps had to lead to the last one - the step to the Vatican itself for an interview with the Pope, The same issue of *Christianity Today* went on to interview Graham about his first (1981) visit to the Pope. Graham said the following:

*I spent about a half-hour with the Pope in very private, intimate conversation. He was extremely warm and interested in our work... We discussed the Christian faith, both our agreements and some of our differences. ..*

*When I was at the Vatican I spoke at a vesper service at the North American College, which is a seminary for students from North America. I understand I was the first Protestant to speak there. It was a very inspirational and Christocentric service, with much contemporary music.*

This was not Dr. Graham's last visit to the Pope. According to a Religious News Service release in the *Los Angeles Times* of January 20, 1990, Billy Graham and the Pope met at the Vatican January 10-13, 1990 for a series of discussions on Eastern Europe and relations between Catholics and evangelicals around the world, What compromises were a part of that conversation none of us know,

Yes, compromise always takes a man further than he wants to go. I am sure that Billy Graham began his evangelistic career with a sincere desire to lead men to Jesus Christ and to see them nurtured in Bible-believing churches. I am sure that he had no desire to send his converts back to the priests, no desire to erase the Reformation, no desire to kiss the papal ring or extend diplomatic recognition to the Vatican. But, when a man takes the course of neutralism and begins to sell his principles for the pottage of popularity, his course is always along a primrose path which leads downward,

## **Follow the Leader?**

If you are reading this book as a follower of Billy Graham, you are angry with me for saying what I have said. I have tried to give you the facts. But, angry or not, stop right here and ask yourself some questions. Is Billy Graham leading you where you want to go? Are you ready to recognize Roman Catholicism as simply another Christian denomination? Do you believe that priests, nuns and

the Pope are "Christian brethren"? Are you willing to lead Catholic friends to Christ and send them back to the darkness from which they came? If you are not ready to make those concessions, then you should turn from following a leader who has made them.

## **Jesus Paid it All**

You may be reading this book as an unsaved person. Let me point you to a Bible verse:

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;- Titus 3:5*

That verse points the difference between the gospel of Christ and the teaching of Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that salvation is something a man must earn by the works of the church. The Bible teaches that salvation was purchased by a Saviour who paid it all with His blood. Since Jesus paid it all, you can't earn it by confession, the mass, penance or intercession of the saints, Christ died to save you. Rest your case on His mercy and you will begin to see in yourself the washing of the new birth and the changes which the Holy Spirit brings.

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## **More information on Billy Graham, his apostacy and his organization:**

The Laodicean Gospel Of Billy Graham In His Own Words In Interview With False Teacher Robert Schuller

Why We Cannot Support The Billy Graham Crusade

Are Billy and Franklin Graham Leading Souls to Heaven, or Hell?

More proof that Billy Graham is a Mason

Billy Graham and His Friends - Who Gets The Decision Cards?

Billy Graham, Catholicism and Apostasy

Billy Graham - Ally of Rome By Ian Paisley

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BILLY GRAHAM HAS BEEN COMPROMISED FOR YEARS

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Watch And Listen As Billy Graham In His Own Words Shows Steady Slide Into

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Wolves in Costume: Billy Graham

Billy Graham, Catholicism, and Apostasy

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