

What's Wrong with Billy?

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Recently the undersigned was given a pamphlet by a friend entitled “Billy Graham, A Critique.” The pamphlet (thirty-eight pages in length) was written by the Rev. Robert Dunzweiler, who is professor of Systematic Theology at Faith Theological Seminary. Dunzweiler is a fundamentalist. Faith Seminary is a conservative-fundamentalistic seminary located in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania.

It is noteworthy and somewhat strange that a man like Dunzweiler criticizes Billy Graham. Are not both men fundamentalists in their theological position? Graham has expressed publicly his faith in all the cardinal fundamentalist doctrines, e.g. verbal inspiration, the deity of Christ, His blood atonement, salvation by faith, New Testament soul-winning, and the premillennial return of Christ. Surely in view of this Graham is a fundamentalist; yet, Rev. Dunzweiler writes in the concluding paragraph of his “Critique”: “In obedience to the Word of God, we have felt it necessary to withhold support and cooperation from the ministry of Billy Graham.” Even more strange it is that an avowed fundamentalist (as Dunzweiler is) condemns Graham when we consider that so very many who go under the name Reformed see no wrong in Billy and praise him and his evangelism to the sky!

There are three main areas in which Graham has been criticized, writes Dunzweiler. These he proceeds to treat in the main section of his pamphlet and all three are found to be valid criticisms by Dunzweiler. These criticisms are: 1) Billy Graham is sponsored by liberals, modernists, and unbelievers; 2) The Billy Graham Crusade committees send converts (Graham prefers the term inquirers) back to the church of their choice — whether that church be Protestant, Jewish, liberal, conservative, or Roman Catholic; 3) Billy Graham never warns the people of God against unbelief or apostasy in the church. Because point one above is true Billy must needs keep silent in this area.

These three points are treated one by one by Dunzweiler. He points out in re: the fact that Billy is supported by modernists that in his early ministry (the early fifties) this was not the case. Billy, in a letter to Dr. John R. Rice dated May 10, 1952, stated: “Contrary to any rumors . . . we have never had a modernist on our Executive Committee . . . I do not think you will find any man who has sat under my ministry in any of these campaigns who would testify that I ever pulled a punch.” Rice in a 1951 edition of the magazine, the *Sword of the Lord*, defended Graham against these charges; but a few years later things were different. The same John R. Rice in the same magazine, *Sword of the Lord*, in the April 18, 1957 issue, writes: “. . . we think he (Billy Graham) is wrong when he goes against the plain commands of the Bible in yoking up with unbelievers.” This was in reference to the New York Crusade (1957) which was sponsored by the New York Council of Churches, an organization dominated by liberals and modernists. We can agree with Dunzweiler on this point.

We also agree that Billy is to be criticized for sending converts (inquirers) to the church of their choice. Graham openly admits to this policy. It is interesting to note in this connection that most of the cards of inquirers of the New York Crusade went to modernistic churches with Norman Vincent Peale’s church, The Marble Collegiate Church, receiving the greatest number. Second to the Marble Collegiate Church was Riverside Church, an extremely liberal church founded by the late Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick with Rockefeller money.

Finally, there can be no doubt that Billy never warns against unbelief and apostasy in the church. For him to do so would be highly unethical because modernists support and sponsor his crusades. Hence, William Ward Ayer writes; “Billy spreads himself too thin; he tries not to offend anybody in any way.”

This is what is wrong with Billy. Dunzweiler is correct, but only in as far as he goes. He really misses the point! He does so because he himself preaches the same erroneous message Graham preaches. Rev. Dunzweiler says on page 5 of his pamphlet: “First of all. I think that Billy Graham preaches the simple Gospel of salvation . . . he does preach the simple Gospel ...” This is simply not true; here Dunzweiler makes a big mistake! Graham is an out and out Arminian. He teaches that God loves everyone, that God doesn’t want anyone to go to hell, and he (Billy) begs and pleads with people to accept Jesus and be saved. Christ is presented as a mere beggar who wants to save everyone, but cannot unless they themselves believe.

This is what is fundamentally wrong with Billy Graham; let’s not be afraid to say so! It is not at all strange that Billy can flirt with liberals for it can be shown historically that Arminianism always leads to modernism. Ultimately there is little difference between the two. Both are a fundamental denial of the Christ of the Scriptures. We can be encouraged that Dunzweiler condemns Graham, but we wish he would do so on doctrinal grounds. These are after all the basis. Graham’s wrong methods and practices stem from his wrong doctrinal basis. What is wrong with Billy is that he substitutes for the truth of God’s Word a wicked caricature.

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