

CO-OPERATION IN EVANGELISM

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When Billy Graham's Mission England (ME) was launched in 1982, there arose the vexing question of co-operation in evangelism. On what basis was this co-operation to be? With whom? With evangelicals only? Or, with all professing Christians including ecumenicals, liberals, Roman Catholics and charismatics?

On what doctrines was this evangelism to be based? On baptism by immersion for believers? Or on the emphasis of the Holy Spirit and charismatic gifts? On the fact that salvation is in Christ and not in the sacraments of the Church? On the basis that the Word of God is the only and final authority for faith? Or on the basis of personal experience?

In which activity was this co-operation to be? In worship? In witness?

Generally speaking, up to sixty years ago, only evangelicals evangelised which included personal testimony. In 1951, Billy Graham said, "We do not condone or have fellowship with any form of modernism". On that basis, his early crusades took place.

But liberal Christianity rose and declined but its effects lasted. Liberalism did not adhere to the Scriptures but broadened beliefs some of which cast doubts on Biblical truth as well as a lessening of moral principles and decency.

In the 1960s we went to a young peoples meeting on Saturday evenings with over 200 teenagers. We would sing a hymn, have a Bible reading from the Authorised Version and a prayer followed by an in-depth Bible study. We all made notes and had our Bibles open. With our drink at the end of the meeting, we were talking to each other about the Study and, going home on the bus, we still had our Bibles open and were talking about the Lord. The boys wore suits and ties or some other smart outfit and the girls wore respectable dresses, no make up or high heels. We did not sing silly worship songs or jingles. We did not want to go to the cinema let alone a nightclub. Nor did we gyrate to pop music. We were not fanatics or Bible punchers or indoctrinated. We loved the Lord and enjoyed His Word.

On Sundays, we were in our churches. There were no generation gaps. There were no personal experiences, clapping, lifted hands, speaking in gibberish or silly worship songs and nothing modern. We were reverent and all that we did sought to glorify the Lord Jesus.

Oh, that those days could return. Most Sunday nights someone was saved.

But today, we have liberalism and modernism which includes false doctrines and the lessening of morality. Some Pentecostals and charismatics teach that unless you speak in tongues you have not been baptised in the Holy Spirit. That is contrary to Romans 8. 9. Many churches today have pop-style song and dance and other aspects of worldliness, that is to say things of the world, that which is secular.

We are to separate from false and misleading teaching is the message of Romans 16.17. Those who teach such things are to be rebuked (1 Timothy 1.3). Unsound teaching is unhealthy and debilitating. It weakens true teaching just as sound doctrine can strengthen and be spiritually healthy and profitable.

2 John 7 to 11 tells us not to welcome or dally with any who do not teach the truth, else we share in their wickedness.

Therefore, there must be limits to co-operation. Truth must take preference over both togetherness

and ecumenicalism. The Christian is neither a product of ecclesiastical rites nor of human thought and certainly not of denominational doctrine.

It is the truth that should bring us together.

We do not love the Lord or others, if we tone down or dilute the Gospel or the Bible. Paul said in Ephesians 4 15, "We are to speak the truth in love". We do not love the Gospel if we co-operate with those who reduce or alter it or make Christianity modern or liberal.

If Bible truth states that we should stay out of any venture with which we cannot justify our involvement. Others will plead that as Christians we must work together in love. Surely true love is following what God says in His Word not what ME, Billy Graham, ecumenicals, liberals, charismatics, Arthur Wallis, David Pawson or Fred Smith says.

In Galatians 1, Paul puts a Divine ban on any who preach another gospel or alter or vary the Gospel in any way. There are those who say that the Full Gospel is not only being saved but being charismatic having had the second blessing, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, usually evidence by speaking in tongues. That is so wrong, so very wrong. As it has been said, "Christianity is Christ, plus nothing!".

Some in Galatia preached the gospel but added other matters which they claimed was essential, including circumcision. The gospel is Christ and Christ only. Colossians 1 states that in all things Christ must have the pre-eminence.

In Philippians 1, we read that some were preaching Christ out of envy. There are preachers who preach in rivalry and others who preach in goodwill. Some preach to draw attention to themselves and from such we should turn away. Some preach as if they are door-to-door salesmen. Some do so to gain a personal following. Preaching about self is egotistical and condemned in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 4. 6)

When it comes to preaching, ministry and public speaking we are not to preach self, but Christ and Him crucified.

1 John 2.1 5 tells us not to love the world or the things in the world. If we love the things of the world, the love of God the Father is not in us. The things of the world are lust and pride.

Pop music and dance, current cinema and television, the standards of the world are all examples of lust. Lust does not only refer to sexual desire and voyeurism, but the lust of the eyes which means seeing something you want.

The preaching of the Gospel and Bible Study needs to be clear and distinct as well as unambiguous and which affirms Biblical truth and shows up error. Going off at a tangent to talk about self is not only wrong but can be a serious hindrance.

Evangelism is serious. People's salvation may depend on it. If our Gospel is hid, it is hid to those who are lost, wrote the apostle Paul.

Co-operation in evangelism leads us to refer to Amos 3.3, "Can two people walk together unless they are agreed?".

The Christian is to keep and obey the words of the Lord (John 12. 48; John 14. 24) not the words of Billy Graham, the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Bob Main, John Wember, Terry Virgo or George Delaney.

Evangelism is not entertainment. Life, death, heaven and hell are not subjects for entertainment or entertainers such as a Christian pop group or rock band, a Christian ventriloquist or a Christian dance group of pretty girls.

It is being true to the Word of God and living the Christian life that pleases God. We are not to add to the gospel or the Bible or take away from it. This is a stern warning in the book of Revelation (22.18). But the standards and delights of this present world have both a great attraction and pull which are generally evil. People prefer darkness to light because their deed are evil (John 3. 19).

But in doctrine and practice we are to have all things in common and those things agree with Scripture.

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