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Preserving American Jewish History

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 21, Folder 11, Graham, Billy, Undated.

In light of the confusion which has unfortunately surrounded my recent trip to the Soviet Union, I welcome the opportunity to clarify my views and to report on what actually took place there.

My mission to Moscow was three-fold:

First, since my primary calling is that of evangelist, I went to Moscow to preach the Gospel, to testify to the values and ideals of the Bible in that Communist nation which I believe desperately needs to hear the Word of the Lord in the face of the USSR's campaign of atheism;

Second, I went in response to an invitation to speak my conscience and my deep concern over the threat to human survival and the sacred value of human life at the World Conference of Religious Workers for Saving the Sacred Gift of Life.

Third, I went in order to testify where possible to my commitments to religious liberty and freedom of conscience which are central to the Baptist way of life.

I sincerely believe that I realized the first two purposes that I set out to achieve. With regard to the issue of freedom of conscience, I wish to make clear that perhaps the most valuable parts of my visit to Russia were my several hours of meeting with leading Soviet officials. During those intense discussions, I communicated to them my deep concern over reports of repression of religious liberty, the denial of human rights, the freedom to leave the country, and the campaigns of religious bigotry, including anti-Semitism. We had full and frank discussions of these vital problems and I feel satisfied that my words had some impact on the people with whom I spoke. Since these concerns are tied in the state of detente between the USSR and the United States, it will be some time before we will be able to see what fruits might emerge from these meetings.

Also
Call Tw. Wilson's secretary in Montreal and dictate this from me
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Jack Kofoed Says

Religious Struggles Show Failure of Faith

KILLINGS HAVE been rampant in Ireland. Innocent men, women and children have been blown to bits by bombs, blinded, crippled for life. Men have been murdered in alleys and in their homes. Hatred of the British is given as a reason for all the violence.

Nonsense! The base root is religious hatred, and when civilians are killed in Ulster, they're listed as Catholics and Protestants. Not British haters or British lovers. Not North of Ireland or South. Catholics and Protestants! That's the name of the bloody game.

The provisional branch of the Irish Republican Army is militant Catholic, the Ulster Defense Association militant Protestant. This hatred and distrust has lasted for centuries. It looks as though it will exist for time out of mind, because love is not likely to find a place in so bitter a religious war.

This sad theme doesn't run through the Irish skein alone, but in many lands and religions. There must be reasons why these religions have failed to accomplish what must have been the original plan. That they have fallen short is evinced by the terror that is part of living in many places.

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TWO INCIDENTS that made news point toward at least one cause for this failure:

First, several Boston College professors demanded the removal of the president of the school for teaching that

people of other faiths than the Catholic could be "saved."

And second, the secretary of the Council of Christian Churches, in scoring Brotherhood Week, said: "The New Testament does not teach the universal fatherhood of God, and the universal brotherhood of man. God is the father only of those who have been redeemed through a personal faith in Jesus Christ."

Once upon a time, theologians argued bitterly as to how many angels could dance upon the point of a pin. Obviously, today's gentlemen are no farther advanced spiritually or intellectually.

Why can't we all accept the idea that we are travelers to eternity, that a God tremendous enough to create the universe is not concerned with sect and dogma?

Why should one individual feel he is omniscient enough to say he knows what the Great Plan is, when we are all insects crawling in the dust?

I envision the God that the secretary of the Council of Christian Churches and the professors of Boston College talk about as being more interested in morality and decency, honesty and kindness than in what church his children belong to.

One thing is sure: The bigotry these men voice in the public prints can only do the cause of religion harm.

These professors at Boston College and the Council of Christian Churches together with Billy Graham and all Christian Evangelists imply that close to three billion people are doomed to go to Hell.

Salvation, they contend is reserved for the minority who accept Jesus as being divine.

Is it any wonder that the world is in a state of turmoil when representatives of a religion based on a false premise have the unmitigated gall to champion such a ridiculous point of view?

New Theories Expand Theology

By **SYDNEY J. HARRIS**
Publishers-Hall Syndicate

ONE of the main reasons for the shriveling of orthodox religion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the expansion of astronomy and astrophysics. The more we learned about "the starry vault," the less consequential our own earth seemed to be.

In the infinite reaches of space, our earth was relegated to a speck of dust revolving around a third-rate star in an obscure corner of a minor galaxy no different from millions of others like it.

To believe that this speck of dust was singled out by God's eye, was marked out for the incarnation, the redemption, and all the rest of the theological dogmas, required a leap of faith that only the most resolute could make.

It seemed wildly anthropocentric—almost paranoid, in fact—to imagine



Harris

that our microscopic orb, tucked away like a grain of sand in the vast pocket of the universe, was the focus of divine attention, not merely in Old Testament terms, but even more startlingly in the appearance of His son, transforming the ancient covenant into a new promise.

But science has always turned out to be a two-edged sword: it cuts back to excise out the errors and superstitions of the past; it also cuts forward into the future, to reassess and rectify its own theories and judgments and calculus of probabilities. Now, what astronomy did to shatter theology, mathematics is beginning to restore on a different scale.

It now seems not merely possible, but highly probable, that there exist many earths in the universe that have given birth to life and that carry cultures and technologies comparable to, and perhaps superior to, our own.

On a purely statistical basis, using the latest mathematical calculations based on astronomical research, it is more scientific than less to assert: the high probability that creatures "formed in the image of God" inhabit thousands,

or millions, of orbs with the same life-sustaining properties as our earth.

Rather than crushing orthodox theology to an insignificant pulp, this vista expands it far beyond its small terrestrial origins. It means, if true, that we are part of a vast symphony of life echoing throughout the cosmos: not a tiny, unique, unrepeatable phenomenon, but an element in an integrated scheme of creation, extending through the breadth of time and space.

Our "religion," hitherto, may not have been too big for us; it may have been too small. Some of this was suggested years ago by that extraordinary scientist-priest, Chardin, in the notebooks he considered too "revolutionary" for publication. He may well prove to be the prophet of our century.

We have not yet, in our childishness, even attained a world religion; it is too much to expect us to accept a cosmic one as yet. But it may be that science, in its holy quest for truth, can open up more doors to cosmic reality than the blind worshipers of a cultic god could even begin to pray for.

THE STORY OF THE JEWS since the Dispersion is one of the epics of European history. Driven from their natural home by the Roman capture of Jerusalem (70 A.D.), and scattered by flight and trade among all the nations and to all the continents; persecuted and decimated by the adherents of the great religions—Christianity and Mohammedanism—which had been born of their scriptures and their memories; barred by the feudal system from owning land, and by the guilds from taking part in industry; shut up within congested ghettos and narrowing pursuits; mobbed by the people and robbed by the kings; building with their finance and trade the towns and cities indispensable to civilization; outcast and excommunicated, insulted and injured; yet, without any political structure, without any legal compulsion to social unity, without even a common language, this wonderful people has maintained itself in body and soul, has preserved its racial and cultural integrity, has guarded with jealous love its oldest rituals and traditions, has patiently and resolutely awaited the day of its deliverance, and has emerged greater in number than ever before, renowned in every field for the contributions of its geniuses, and triumphantly restored after two thousand years of wandering, to its ancient and unforgotten home. What drama could rival the grandeur of these sufferings, the variety of these scenes, and the glory and justice of this fulfillment? What fiction could match the romance of this reality?

From "The Story of Philosophy" by Will Durant

Religion

Billy Graham's Mission Improbable

Across the U.S.S.R. the evangelist preaches "peace with God"

Wiping flowing tears from his cheeks with a handkerchief, the pastor of Leningrad's lone Baptist church looked down at his packed congregation last week as he welcomed the evening's special preacher. "We know what difficulties you faced in coming here, Billy Graham," said Piotr Konovalchik. "We rejoice that you are with us tonight." Many young women in the choir, clad in orange dresses and white headbands, wept along with him. As Graham quietly thanked Konovalchik, a clergyman who had come from Moscow strode to the pulpit to offer a prayer: "You shed your blood for Russia too, O Lord. We pray that a surge of revival may start in this house of ours."

It was the emotional high point of the first leg of the American evangelist's most improbable mission since he went on the road for God 39 years ago: his first evangelistic tour of the Soviet Union, a country zealously committed to the extirpation of all belief. Commented Graham en route to Leningrad: "I look on it as remarkable that I am here at all, preaching." Lenin would no doubt have agreed.

Graham, 65, had been pointing for this evangelical undertaking since 1959, when he made his first trip to the U.S.S.R. During a quick visit to Moscow's huge Lenin Stadium, he recalls, "I bowed my head and prayed that God would one day open the door and let me preach the Gospel in Russia." In more recent years he has preached in Hungary, Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, but always with a Soviet mission in mind. Then in 1982 he attended a Moscow peace conference and stirred one of the biggest flaps of his career. He made remarks to reporters that downplayed the severity of Soviet re-

ligious repression, causing him to be charged throughout the West with naiveté or, worse, appeasement. Graham rode out the storm unrepentantly while he and his aides worked on the painstaking negotiations for this month's mission.

It is hardly the sort of patented Graham "crusade" that so many nations of the world have witnessed. No billboards beckoned audiences, no hippodromes were booked. But in Leningrad, at least, he got permission to put up loudspeakers for overflow crowds, despite Soviet laws that forbid any evangelism outside church walls. Inside the Leningrad Baptist hall, every inch of pew and aisle space was packed by the 2,000 worshipers, including a healthy number of teen-agers. Two participants said they had traveled 2,000 miles from Central Asia for the event. Outside, dozens of people listened to Graham on the loudspeakers while a cold drizzle turned to heavy rain. In Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, a remarkable overflow of 3,000 people stood in the streets outside the Baptist church. There were no loudspeakers this time, and police dispersed two-thirds of the devout. This week Graham moves on to Novosibirsk, the major city in Siberia, and completes the tour in Moscow.

Translated phrase by phrase by interpreters supplied by the host churches, Graham's sermons were generally familiar, but the words had special power in the context of militant state atheism: "Jesus Christ is not dead on the Cross. He is a living Christ. He can come to your person. He can come to your family. He can come

to your great country." This time there was no propaganda harvest for Radio Moscow. Instead, Graham sought to assure the Soviets that Americans and President Reagan desire peace. But he consistently and deftly attached his hopes for world peace to the need for divine intervention—in his oft-used phrase, "peace with God."

The evangelist is meeting beleaguered Jewish leaders and speaking in Russian Orthodox cathedrals and churches that have rarely allowed Protestants in the pulpit. At Leningrad's Orthodox Academy, Graham offered advice to 1,000 seminarians and priests. Without directly citing Soviet restrictions, he said, "In some societies you cannot go out and preach the Gospel. What do you do?" His answer: "We must wear the fruit of the Spirit, so that people, when they see how we live, will be drawn to the Spirit within us." Christianity has survived atheist taunts, he said, "because the Gospel has its own power to change human lives." But when six youths bravely held aloft crude banners protesting the jailing of Soviet Christians, Graham made no public acknowledgment.

The evangelist's words are likely to be heard by more than those who came to see him; surreptitious cassette recorders will doubtless give his sermons wide distribution among Soviets. Graham also took note of how difficult it is for Soviets to display their faith. In his usual appeal for public commitments to Jesus Christ, he asked his Baptist listeners in Leningrad to raise their hands. Despite the presence of KGB plainclothesmen with cameras, two dozen people did so. A parishioner later explained poignantly why more did not respond: "You Americans live in freedom. Our arms are always pressed down to our sides. We are like prisoners. It is hard for us to lift our souls to God."

—By Richard N. Ostling.

Reported by Erik Amfitheatrof/Moscow

Faithful risking a commitment to Christ

Crowd fills Leningrad's Baptist church



Speaking to clergymen at Orthodox Academy

