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# CHURCH HISTORY MONTHLY

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## Timeline of Topics

---Extra: Another reason for the large number of churches/denominations

-European

---Quote from Karl Barth

-American Church History

---How did Billy Graham get to be so famous?

## ANOTHER REASON THERE ARE SO MANY CHURCHES, DENOMINATIONS, AND CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS

I have heard many people ask, "Why are there so many different churches/denominations/groups with just one Bible?" After studying this for a long time (I took my first church history class in 1987), my answer can be boiled down to one word.

Now, as soon as you see the word, remember the first thing that comes to your mind. Don't try to figure out what the right answer is, just remember the first idea that pops into your head.

The word is . . . "bat." That is it: bat.

What came to your mind? Perhaps a baseball bat or a flying animal. But which one is right? You will only know if I tell you since it is my question. And if I never tell you? You might think your answer is right and that the other way is wrong. The same thing happens within Christianity.

The Bible contains many clear instructions and definitions but also "bat" words and concepts that produce different interpretations. Consider Communion. Jesus said this about the bread: "This is my body." Some Christians say, "Ah, this means that the bread turns in to Jesus' body." Others say, "Ah, this means that the bread is holy in some way." Others say, "Ah, this means that the bread is a symbol of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross." And others say, "Ah, this means that we are not to focus on the bread but live in spiritual awareness of God." One verse, four interpretations. [The first way is Catholic, then Lutheran, then most Protestants, and last Quakers and the Salvation Army.] Jesus is not here, so Christians have different interpretations.

Most Christians and non-Christians see this as a problem, even a deep wound, within Christianity, yet I see it otherwise: it is necessary. On primary issues, Christians agree, in secondary matters (technically called "adiaphora"), we can "agree to disagree." After all, that is one reason why the church is referred to as the "family of God," for which family completely agrees? Therefore, I developed this word-concept to explain why there are so many interpretations and also why it is OK to have so many different interpretations.

Therefore, one reason there are so many different churches/denominations/groups is simply that there are many interpretations of some of the "bat" words and phrases in the Bible. Some ideas are foundational to all Christian groups, such as the Incarnation and Trinity, but many concepts (adiaphora)--such as whether to sing hymns or praise songs during worship--are open for interpretation. And to take this one step further, since the exact meaning of some of the secondary concepts is not made clear in the Bible, then it is OK to have different opinions, as long as the foundational ideas are the same.

To sum up, let me share a story about the Apostle John that is not in the Bible but might be true. In the late AD 90s, John was alive, very old, and living in Ephesus. People came from far away to ask him questions since he was the oldest living Apostle. But he gave the same answer to everyone: "Love one another." Then someone finally got the courage to ask him why he didn't answer any of the questions. He replied: "Because if you love one another, the questions don't matter." So as long as we all have the same foundational Christian beliefs, then the secondary issues should not matter. That is why they are known as "adiaphora," which means "those matters not essential to the faith."

**One of the greatest, if not the greatest, conservative theologians in the 1900s was Karl Barth. He wrote many articles and books. On a visit to the USA, someone asked him if he would summarize all his writings down into one sentence. He replied, "Jesus loves me, this I know, because the Bible tells me so."**

## What event made Billy Graham famous?

Billy Graham is widely respected as a televangelist, yet he began his traveling revivals years before the first one was televised. When Graham began traveling with his evangelistic message in the early 1940s, he was but one of a number of traveling evangelists. But that all changed in Los Angeles in 1949. What had started as a three-week revival ended eight weeks later; within two months Graham became the most prominent evangelist of his time.

In the 1940s, Graham preached in at least 17 states and 11 foreign countries. So by the late 1940s he was one among a number of popular evangelists. Then came 1949.

In that year Graham was invited to Los Angeles by a group of Christians known as "Christ for Greater Los Angeles" for a revival series. They raised financial support for Graham and his team along with renting a large tent with chairs, platform, etc. Some of this money also went to publicity, although for the first three weeks the media virtually ignored the revivals. As a matter of fact, just prior to the revivals Graham held the first press conference of his life, although almost no resultant articles came out in the papers. Three weeks later that would change.

The revival began on October 25. [A handbill is pictured on the left.] The attendance during those first three weeks averaged 3,000 per night, with 4,000 on Sundays. It was a size and success that Graham had anticipated. Yet something happened at the close of the three weeks which would forever change Graham's life and ministry. This "something" centered on two men: Stuart Hamblen—a popular radio personality who hosted a daily two-hour show along the West Coast—and William Randolph Hearst—who owned several newspapers.

Hamblen came to the first revival meeting and was so convicted that he returned time and time again. During the third week, Graham and those involved with the revival considered extending it. They prayed for a sign and it came in the form of a phone call to Graham at 4:30 in the morning: It was Hamblen. He begged to see Graham and, after coming to his room, became a Christian. With the conversion of this radio host came a tremendous amount of publicity as he promoted Graham's revival on his popular radio show.

As for Hearst, for reasons that Graham still does not know Hearst decided to prominently cover Graham in his newspapers. This led to other newspapers picking up the story of the revivals. Soon Life and Time magazines carried the stories as well as the Associated Press, which transmitted it throughout the world. As a result, Graham's revival became so popular that it was extended five more weeks. He preached 65 sermons, hundreds of thousands attended, and 1000s became Christians.

And Graham's life was changed. As he states in his autobiography, Just As I Am, "Overnight we had gone from being a little evangelistic team . . . to what appeared to many to be the hope for national and international revival. Everywhere we turned, someone wanted us to come and do for them what had been done in Los Angeles." And as we all know, Billy Graham has spent every year from 1949 to the end of his life in 2018 doing that.

**Greater L.A.'s Greatest Revival Continues!**

*Ad in all papers in L.A. Angles*

THIS CAN'T BE LOS ANGELES!

BILLY GRAHAM'S 5th SIN-SMASHING WEEK!

**BIG TENT**  
WASHINGTON & HILL

At the request of hundreds of churches BILLY GRAHAM'S sensational revival meetings have been continued for another week. From all southern California points thousands have flocked to hear America's outstanding young evangelist—BILLY GRAHAM—30-year-old college president who has become famous as the Billy Sunday of the mid-twentieth century!

**160,000 HAVE HEARD BILLY GRAHAM IN L. A.  
MORE THAN 5000 GREATER L. A. CONVERSIONS**

**BILLY GRAHAM SAYS:**

I have never witnessed such an outpouring of the spirit of God in the face of such tremendous odds as here in Los Angeles. We will continue our meetings subject to the leading of God's spirit. Other engagements have been canceled. It is our hope that thousands of enslaved men and women will gain spiritual liberation as the result of this crusade.

**6000 FREE SEATS**

**EVERY EVENING 7:30**  
SUNDAY 3 & 7:30

Last Sunday more than 20,000 people came to the big tent. Thousands were obliged to stand outside at both services. People are coming from places many miles from Los Angeles. Everyone should plan to attend this week.

**1000 GREATER L. A. CHURCHES INVITE YOU!**

**COME EARLY TO AVOID STANDING**

DAILY NEWS, LOS ANGELES—WEDNESDAY, OCT. 26, 1949 . . . 2

Free summer online classes:

May 31: 3 weeks: How we got the NT

June 28: 3 weeks: Books not in the NT

July 26: 4 weeks: How we got the OT,

plus the books not in the OT

---More info? go here

Questions, comments, or want to join a free class contact Mark at [marknickens@gmail.com](mailto:marknickens@gmail.com)

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