

# Billy Graham: On Calley

By BILLY GRAHAM

MONTREAT, N. C.—The first time I became suspicious that the United States might become involved in Indochina was in January, 1961. I had just played golf with President-elect John Kennedy, the then Senator George Smathers of Florida, and Billy Reynolds, president of Reynolds Aluminum.

Sitting in the clubhouse afterward Mr. Kennedy was making observations on a number of domestic and foreign problems that he would immediately face upon becoming President in a few days. The most immediate problem was Cuba and then he mentioned Indochina. He made what seemed to me to be almost a passing remark. He said, "We cannot allow Laos and South Vietnam to fall to the Communists."

When President Johnson took over the Presidency the United States already had 16,000 troops in Vietnam. The political climate in the United States at that hour demanded that the President take even stronger action. Many of the present doves in the Senate were not then so dovish—even Senator Fulbright who introduced the now famous Tonkin Gulf resolution.

Not since the Civil War has this country been so torn apart by any single issue.

The trial of Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. brought out all the emotion that had been building up for years. It became a catharsis for the raging passion that lay just beneath the surface.

While some cry out for vengeance against one individual, others beat their breasts in self-condemnation.

While some cite this tragedy as justification for renewed fighting, others regard the incident as an indication that the United States should disengage immediately.

While some condemn one individual,

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## *Perhaps From Mylai May Emerge Justice Love, Mercy, Peace*

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wishing to make him the scapegoat of a nation's conscience, others would glorify him as a hero.

While some turn their attention to a jury, which courageously faced up to assorted incidents, and blame them and the whole system which they represent, others seem willing to salve their conscience by ignoring all elements of humaneness as far as possible in warfare.

It is very difficult for the average American with his limited knowledge of what went on that dreadful day in Mylai to make a sound judgment. I find that knee-jerk reflexes in a response to sudden jabs are not always reliable for an individual or a nation. Later on when tempers are cool, when passions have subsided, when objectivity has returned it may be possible to conclude under the laws of equity that the rules of war under which Calley was convicted were too narrow and too rigid in scope. Then mercy will come into play and passion will have its day.

We are learning one thing—that Sherman was right, "War is hell." I have never heard of a war where innocent people were not killed. Tens of thousands of innocent people were killed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I have been to Vietnam several times and I have heard some of the most horrible stories from missionaries and Vietnamese people about sadistic murders by the Vietcong of innocent villagers. I talked to men who will never walk again, who were suffering from boobytrap or grenade wounds, planted or thrown by women and children working for the Vietcong.

Millions of Americans are asking themselves this holy week, "Is any war moral?" For those who are pacifists, all wars, including the one in Vietnam, are wrong. For those of us who believe that the Bible distinguishes between just and unjust wars, the situation becomes painful and difficult.

Perhaps it is a good time for each of us to re-evaluate our life. We have all had our Mylais in one way or another, perhaps not with guns, but we have hurt others with a thoughtless word, an arrogant act or a selfish deed. When the religious leaders were about to stone the adulteress who had been convicted and tried, Jesus said, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." If that were the law of the world today, never a stone would be thrown, for the Bible says, "We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Why do we call the day upon which Jesus died "Good Friday"? Was it possible for anything good to come out of such seeming tragedy? Before He died the anguishing death called "crucifixion" amidst the jeers and cries of the emotional throng, His audible prayer was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." A new meaning was given to the word "forgiveness." It was given amid suffering, injustice and death. In retrospect, it was a tragedy and a triumph! Christians throughout the world believe that if it had not been for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there could be no forgiveness of sin and no hope of heaven.

Perhaps out of the tragedy of Mylai may come some "good." There may be even a triumph emerging for future justice, love, mercy, forgiveness and peace!

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The Rev. Billy Graham has been a friend of Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon.



David Douglas Duncan