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NO THOUGHTFUL American can help but ponder the implications of the sordid Watergate affair for our nation's future. The matter is not only important because it demonstrates the apparent disregard for law and morality by some people who had been trusted. It is also important because if it is not dealt with firmly and fairly it could encourage continuing cynicism and disillusionment concerning the American political process. Anyone charged and found guilty should be punished.

However, I hope that our judicial system will not be jeopardized by newspaper and television headlines based on rumors. Some of those mentioned may not be guilty, yet their lives may be ruined. In America every citizen is presumed innocent until found guilty. We need to be reminded that even a grand jury indictment does not imply guilt; it only affirms that there is probable cause for a determinative trial. The Federal grand jury investigating Watergate should not be hindered or prejudiced in any way as it seeks all the facts.

The Watergate affair, however, is but a symptom of the deeper moral crisis that affects the nation. On every level of our society, public and private, deceit, dishonesty and moral looseless seem to be increasing. A taxi driver in one of our largest cities said to me recently, "This whole city is corrupt."

America has condoned amoral permissiveness that would make Sodom blush. The family which is the basic unit of our society is in danger of crumbling. Crime waves that no people in history professing to be a "nation under God" could tolerate now abound. Many people, especially our youth, have become disenchanting by our emphasis on materialism and have sought "relief" and "meaning" in drugs, alcohol and the occult. We live in a society that is too often dominated by selfish interests and expediency.

Moral Lesson Of Watergate

By Billy Graham

The time is overdue for Americans to engage in some deep soul-searching about the underpinnings of our society and our goals as a nation. For decades we have been brainwashed into thinking that there are no absolute moral standards. Many people have said that man is simply the product of his environment and therefore is not really responsible for his actions. We are now reaping the bitter fruits of these teachings. As a result, the very moral fiber of our society is in grave danger of being shredded. What can we do? Where can we turn? Is it too late? These are some of the questions that millions of Americans are now asking.

No, it is not too late, but time is rapidly running out if American democracy based on Judeo-Christian tradition is to survive. First, we need a national and pervasive awakening that includes repentance for our individual and corporate sins. Historically these "awakenings" in America have always come at our darkest hours.

Sir Winston Churchill once said, "Our problems are beyond us." Let's face it—we need supernatural help! American leaders were driven to God for help at crisis periods such as the Revolutionary War, the Constitutional Convention, and the Civil War!

Secondly, we must put the Watergate affair

in proper historical perspective. America has lived through many moral political crises. One has only to think of the muckraking years at the turn of the last century, all of the various dishonest political machines that have historically dominated some of our largest cities. No political party can claim the title of "Mr. Clean."

Thirdly, the media—including press, radio and television—that have opened up the Watergate issue can almost make us do, buy, sell or think any way they wish. They could render constructive service to the nation at this critical moment of history if they joined hands with the churches and synagogues and used their vast powers to fan the dying embers of the moral and spiritual life of the nation.

Lastly, perhaps Watergate can teach us that we need to take the law of Moses and the Sermon on the Mount seriously. We read that during a time of crisis in ancient Israel that Nehemiah and Ezra called the people together.

"And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding . . . and he read it . . . and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." (Nehemiah 8:1-3). (Jesus "... seeing the crowd, opened His mouth and taught them . . ." (Matthew 4:1-2).

The moral laws expressed in these two great documents could form the moral guidelines for every American.

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