

NYTimes MAY 29 1974
**Transcripts Vex Graham,
But He Stands by Nixon**

By JUDITH CUMMINGS

The Rev. Billy Graham has called his reading of the transcripts of President Nixon's Watergate conversations "a profoundly disturbing and disappointing experience" but added that, as Mr. Nixon's friend, he has "no intention of forsaking him now."

Mr. Graham, who in the past has offered only infrequent public comment on the Watergate affair, made his remarks in a statement issued yesterday from his home in Montreat, N.C.

Mr. Graham said "One cannot but deplore the moral tone implied in these papers." It was not clear, however, whether his comments referred solely to the use of what he termed "objectionable language" in the transcripts or to substantive matters in the conversations. A spokesman for the Baptist clergyman said yesterday that he was traveling and not available to add to the statement.

In a seeming allusion to a defense of Mr. Nixon's use of profanity by a Jesuit priest who is a salaried member of the President's staff, Mr. Graham said:

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" is a Commandment which has not been suspended, regardless of any need to release tensions."

The priest, the Rev. John J. McLaughlin, in an unusual news conference earlier this month defended the profanity as a "form of emotional drainage."

Since then, a number of other religious spokesmen have expressed varying degrees of dismay over the quality of "moral leadership" disclosed in the transcripts.

Mr. Graham has been a personal friend and occasional adviser to Mr. Nixon for many years and has led a number of church services in the White

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House at the President's invitation. The evangelist has also frequently pointed to his association with previous Presidents, particularly President Johnson.

Asked three years ago about his friendship with Mr. Nixon, Mr. Graham said, "I'm not as close to President Nixon as people think. I'm certainly not as close to him as Bebe Rebozo is."

Mr. Graham's statement yesterday was issued in response to requests by The New York Times, initially for its Op-Ed page, and by The Associated Press.

TEXT OF STATEMENT

During the last few days, I set myself to the difficult task of reading the Watergate transcripts, which I have not yet completed. While we have no other President's transcripts by which to compare these, I must confess this has been a profoundly disturbing and disappointing experience. One cannot but deplore the moral tone implied in these papers, and though we know that other Presidents have used equally objectionable language, it does not make it right.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" is a commandment which has not been suspended, regardless of any need to release tensions.

What comes though in these tapes is not the man I have known for many years. Other mutual friends have made the same observation.

Now all these matters are in the hands of the judicial process set up by our Constitution. The law will take its course.

We must pray for the House of Representatives and the Judiciary Committee, for the special prosecutor and the courts. We must pray for the President and his counselors. We must pray that the Congress, the courts, the President and the media will all be motivated by high purposes and will seek only what is morally right. And we should pray for ourselves that a sense of judicious patience will govern both our emotion and our speech.

Our reputation of wrongdoing and our condemnation of evil must, however, be tempered by compassion for the wrongdoers. Many a stone is being cast by persons whose own lives could not bear like scrutiny. Therefore, we dare not be self-righteous.



The New York Times
The Rev. Billy Graham

A nation confused for years by the teaching of situational ethics now finds itself dismayed by those in Government who apparently practiced it. We have lost our moral compass. We must get it back. Nowhere is it more clearly or concisely stated than in the Ten Commandments.

If this nation is destroyed, it will be the result of moral decadence within. Therefore, this should be a time to come to our senses, to return to God and His law. It would be nothing less than hypocrisy to call for a moral house-cleaning at the White House unless we are willing to do the same at your house and my house.

I believe that our nation will survive as a strong and united power. But if we do survive, it will be because we have maintained our moral compass, the law of God. It is by God's moral law that some day we will all be judged.

Therefore, God commands all men everywhere to repent while there is yet time. America needs to repent and turn to God for forgiveness, for correction, for direction and for healing.

While I have had little contact with the President during the past 18 months, yet the President is my friend, and I have no intention of forsaking him now—nor will I judge him as a man in totality on the basis of these relatively few hours of conversation under such severe pressure. But I would be neither his friend nor God's servant if I did not point out what the righteousness of God demands at such a time as this.