

August 14, 2009

Franklin Graham: Minister of Christ or Priest of Baal?

“And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.” 1 Kings 18:28

Less than a week ago, as I am writing this article, I, and members of our Pilgrims Covenant Church, spent over five hours “without the camp” preaching the gospel of Christ and bearing biblical witness against a carnal monstrosity called “Rock the River.” This event was one of four staged in Mississippi River cities by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. As of now, approximately 90,000 young people have been “ministered” to at the three Rock the River events that have already taken place. Rock the River is the proud brainchild of BGEA president/CEO Franklin Graham, who also briefly preached the Graham gospel several times during each of the six to seven hour “Christian” rock concerts. Mr. Graham was very open about his reason for making use of head-banging rock, hip-hop, and even a mosh pit set up by BGEA. “We’re just changing the lure. Kids today love rock music. We’re giving them the music they like and understand” (*Quad City Times*, Aug. 9, 2009). Now, much could, and should, be said about using sensual, in some cases even sexualized, rock bands to “lure” young people into hearing the gospel according to Franklin Graham. The same is true of Graham’s open collusion with Roman Catholics in the planning of Rock the River. But on the August 14th “Heart of the Matter” program I dealt with those issues in depth.



A “Christian” drummer plies his trade during Rock the River.

What I want to very briefly address here, or perhaps even just report on, is Franklin Graham’s notion of what is worship acceptable to the Lord. The Scriptures have much to say on that very issue, for instance: “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 29:2) and “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him” (Ps. 89:7). But apparently Mr. Graham holds the same philosophy as his rock-and-roll followers, including two young women I interviewed at the Rock the River event at which we ministered in Davenport on Saturday, August 8. After our time of preaching, passing out tracts, and holding signs, I assumed my Christian media identity and conducted an interview with two evangelical rockers who had apparently not come past my side of the large area where our three separate teams were witnessing. With pounding, ear-splitting music as the backdrop, I brought up that the Scriptures command that the Lord be worshiped with reverence and also “in the beauty of holiness.” I asked them if Rock the River music fits that description. The young women confidently explained to me that “it depends on who you are as a person. Like, some people love this. And you

have to worship as you do, and they have to worship as they do.” But I asked again, “Is this music reverent?” Again, the god “I” was put forward as the ultimate authority in such matters. “I think it’s awesome . . . I think it’s perfect . . . I think for them that’s reverent. For you it might be different . . . for them it’s how they get it all out.” Reverence, I was told, is different for everyone. And what of holiness? “I think it’s how you view it.”

Such is the ignorance and such are the resulting beliefs that allow, and seduce, young evangelicals into the “Christian” rock culture which is anything but Christian and into a worship of God which is really a frenzied, heathenish worship of another christ, with another gospel preached, and all of this by another spirit, not the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 11:4). But now consider Franklin Graham’s canned media comment, fed to reporters at Rock the River towns and posted on the BGEA website: “As we head up the Mississippi River . . . we will be going against the currents of secularism, postmodernism, and the godless culture in which we live.”

Sure. And evil is good and good is evil. And one bright day in the middle of the night, two dead boys got up to fight. Back to back they faced each other . . . etc.

But rather than risk reader fatigue, I will not attempt to describe in depth the ungodly looking characters and music Graham made use of to fight those evils he just mentioned. I will simply ask readers to go to the links provided at the bottom of this page and get a taste of it themselves. Suffice it to say, I am of the opinion that long-haired, ear-ringed men—in some cases wearing eye makeup—and sexualized, screaming, even growling women

pumping out ear-splitting, demonic-sounding music while gyrating, writhing, and slamming around in front of immodestly dressed, crowd surfing, moshing, screaming fans is hardly the antithesis of “the godless culture in which we live.”

By the way, for those of you who do not know what crowd surfing is, that is when a rock fan is passed overhead from fan to fan—actually from hand to intimate hand. In fact, those who have a strong stomach can see on one of the links provided a young lady being passed around at Rock the River while a wild woman “Christian” singer wails and a very long-haired “man” guitar player flings himself around like a whirling dervish. Another video clip shows the same woman singer make guttural sounds, driving the crowd into even more of a frenzy. This band appeared to be a real crowd pleaser, but they were certainly not out of the ordinary among Rock the River bands.

There was no attempt whatsoever to ban or stop the crowd surfing at Graham’s Rock the River events. But I suppose that too could be considered a lure to bring in young men for that “awesome” moment when Graham counts all the hands to signify a “decision for Christ”—like the young Catholic woman who wrote on her blog that she and her friend raised their hands for fun because they were so bored by Graham’s preaching!

And then there was the mosh pit which BGEA, at Graham’s direction, set up in front of the stage at each Rock the River concert. Young people who wanted to mosh to the frenzied music were invited into the pit to enjoy themselves. Simply put, people mosh by physically slamming themselves into each other and trying to throw each other to the ground. A dictionary definition puts it this way: “to engage in a form of frenzied, violent dancing; slam-dance.”

Now at this juncture I want to make very, very clear what Franklin Graham made abundantly clear in the media, what his performers made clear over and over from the stage in our hearing, and what Rock the River fans insisted to us repeatedly with absolutely no shame. What I have been describing—the music, the body surfing, and the moshing—was all said to be worshipping the Lord and praising Him!

Before I close with a conclusion, please allow me to add a little information on the subject of moshing at Rock the River. I will first repeat, the mosh pit was set up by the BGEA. It was set up to be used during the “worship” time, when the “Christian” bands were playing. In fact, consider this from the BGEA web site “real-time updates from Rock the River in Quad Cities”: “And now Fireflight’s out, bringing their female-fronted heavy alternative rock. . . the audience of thousands is loving it! Kids of all ages and stripes are out here, moshing as one.” Further, the official Rock the River Facebook page, run by BGEA personnel, was happy to have testimonies such as these posted:

Brook
i got kicked in the face by a crowd surfer when flyleaf was playing =D yes I’m proud of that
July 20 at 2:22pm

Haley
Omg it was amazing i just got home....my neck hurts so bad from headbanging....omg wish i could
c them all again!
August 2 at 10:50pm



This picture of “Superchick” was posted on the official Billy Graham web site to promote Rock the River.



Another Rock the River “Christian” band. “The shew of their countenance doth witness against them . . .”

Heather

I just got home from it i took amazing pics cause i was n the pit n the very front row i got smashed during flyleaf and kicked n the face also ill have a black eye 2morrow but it was all worth it i was a counselor and 1 of the people i talked 2 got saved and that was all GODS doing not mine so PRAY 4 ALL THE PEOPLE WHO MADE DECISON on august 2nd
August 3 at 12:39am

Jayde

omg! this girl was crowd surfing and she fell and broke her neck! me and shelby saw her. she looked pretty bad. praying for her.
Yesterday at 8:12pm · Report

Ah yes, and all for the glory of God, done with reverence and in the beauty of holiness. This is called “going against the currents of . . . the godless culture in which we live.” Such is the witness of “Christian” worship also set forth, compliments of Franklin Graham, to the world on the Internet and in the print media. Consider these quotes from “Christian” moshers in an excerpt from a Louisiana newspaper, the *Advocate*.

Will Dover, 19, of Lafayette, was celebrating his birthday, and danced so hard he could barely stand by the end of the set. “I like this stripped-down version of Christianity,” Dover said. “I like to just scream for Jesus.”

Andrew Reinhardt, 17, also of Lafayette, said he was there with his Asbury United Methodist Church youth group. “I like to throw down in the name of Jesus.”

John Ervin, 15, of Walker, was there with his church youth group, Walker Baptist. “I like to throw down with these guys I just met. I’m a mosher.”

Farther back in the crowd, Emmanuel Stewart, 14, and Chris Schultz, 21, were waiting for Mary Mary to take the stage at around 6:30 p.m. “This is a good time to get out and worship with all these people,” Schultz said.

Now, I need to get to that conclusion I mentioned. Franklin Graham considers himself a preacher of the gospel, a minister of God. But I ask the reader, in fact, I challenge the whole Christian church to judge righteous judgment by the Scriptures. True ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ do not facilitate, promote, and encourage crude, frenzied, sexualized, even violent worship as acceptable to the Lord. No, just the contrary. It is the heathens who have always worshipped their false gods in that very way. Certainly the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel come immediately to mind as one example. So my conclusion then is that Franklin Graham is no minister of Christ; rather he is a minister of Baal and ought to be exposed, rebuked, and resisted for the glory of God and the good of His church.

—*Pastor Ralph Ovadal, Pilgrims Covenant Church, Monroe, Wisconsin, www.pccmonroe.org*

Disclaimer: The video clips shown in the links below are on YouTube. The video segments themselves were provided to me for viewing. I am not a YouTube user but suspect those who visit it must keep in mind that no doubt there are things on it that no Christian should view.

Flyleaf, “Sorrow,” Rock the River, Quad Cities: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgbU5cqmKul&feature=channel>
Flyleaf, “I’m So Sick,” Rock the River, Quad Cities: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKAVAbYlkW0&feature=channel>

Franklin Graham’s Rock the River Abomination

Heart of the Matter Special, August 14, 2009

www.sermonaudio.com/hom