

On Nixon's enemies list: News of the Century's imminent demise

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [July 17, 2002](#) issue

As the whole country knows, evangelist Billy Graham said some things to President Richard M. Nixon—caught on the Oval Office taping system—about American Jews that he now regrets. The whole country does not know that on that same day in the Oval Office, February 1, 1972, the two went on to say some uncomplimentary things about this magazine. (Our source is a recording from the Nixon presidential materials at the Library of Congress.) We have no doubt that Billy Graham would now regret those comments too.

After discussing Jewish dominance of the media, Graham brought up the state of religious journals.

Graham: . . . A lot of these [religious] papers are going out of business and so forth.

Nixon: Because of the mail thing?

Graham: Yeah.

Nixon: We're helping them. We've supported legislation for a congressional subsidy where . . .

Graham: My own magazine [presumably *Christianity Today*], if that went through, was going to rise 700 percent, my postal rates. Pornography rise 25 percent. Somehow they had a discrepancy. And then I got our lawyers, they're drawing it up right now to submit to the proper people. But I've told you that we could absorb it. My organization can absorb that.

Nixon: Yeah, yeah.

Graham: It would be hard on us, but we could absorb it. Our income is very large.

Nixon: What's the situation there? That legislation as I understand it . . .

Graham: But the religious people are really howling over it.

Nixon: Hmmmm.

Graham: And a lot of them ought to close, you know.

Nixon: I know.

Graham: In fact, the Christian Century is just about out of business.

Nixon: It's horrible.

Graham: It's about out of business.

Nixon: It's antireligious. . . . I used to read it as a kid and in college, but no more.

Graham: No more. Well, it's the most left wing of all the religious press in the country.

It's kind of nice to think of Nixon reading the Century as a kid, and picking it up in his college library. The Century was almost pacifist in those days, when Nixon was at the Quakers' Whittier College.

It's sad to think of President Nixon finding the magazine "antireligious." But those were the dark days of 1972, when the notorious Committee to Re-Elect the President was more than a gleam in his eye.

Graham's comment about the Century being "left wing" led us to check the index for those years. We found the Century's coverage of Graham was lighthearted, never "left," and quite fair. For instance, the editors chastised a British Protestant minister for calling Graham a "moral simpleton." They also issued a correction from the Associated Press: Graham "did not dance the cha-cha during an inaugural ball" in Liberia. The AP blamed a garbled transmission.

Lots of facts were being garbled in 1972. One fact is clear: news of our imminent demise was greatly exaggerated.