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# The Reverend Billy Graham: The Preacher in American Politics

*Le Révérend Billy Graham: Le prêcheur de la politique américaine*

Stephen Whitfield

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## Le Révérend Billy Graham: Le prêcheur de la politique américaine

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### Résumé

*Au cours du dernier demi-siècle, aucune personnalité n'a été admirée avec autant de constance par ses concitoyens Américains que le Révérend Billy Graham. Démocrate, on l'associe pourtant plus volontiers à deux présidents républicains : Richard M. Nixon et George W. Bush. La présidence de Nixon fut sanctifiée par les conseils spirituels que Graham prodiguait ouvertement (mais aussi par ses conseils politiques plus confidentiels). Quant à George W. Bush, il incarne le fils prodigue : c'est l'ivrogne, le vaurien que Graham a réussi à rediriger vers le Christ, rendant ainsi possible son étonnante ascension politique. Le fort impact de cet évangéliste sur la politique des États-Unis et le fait que Graham soit si intimement associé aux deux présidents les plus controversés des cinquante dernières années seront au centre de notre réflexion.*



## The Reverend Billy Graham: The Preacher in American Politics

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**I**n 1948 and 1962, when American historians were polled to rate the performances of Presidents, two of them ranked as “failures.” Warren G. Harding and Ulysses S. Grant both earned a “verdict of total unfitness.”<sup>1</sup> Such polls have continued to be conducted, though they are no longer confined to the judgment of historians; and in the retrospective assessment of the twenty-first century so far, two subsequent Presidents are likely to rival Harding and Grant (among a handful of others) as the worst among the republic’s chief executives. One of them is Richard M. Nixon, the sole President to resign his office (to avoid impeachment and removal). He was an unindicted co-conspirator for crimes that sent nearly all the President’s men to jail for what his own Attorney General, John Mitchell, called “the White House horrors.” One recent poll has him at rock-bottom, where he earns “the worst negative rating of any modern President.” Although judgment on George W. Bush is bound to seem premature, the Princeton University historian Sean Wilentz felt compelled early in the twenty-first century to publish a lengthy answer to the question: “The Worst President in History?” Five years after 9/11, but before the disastrous economic decline, the political analyst William Pfaff was willing to omit the

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, “Rating the Presidents” (1962), in *Paths to the Present*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964, 104-106, 107-108, 277-280.

question mark, and to expect George W. Bush to “finish his term as the most disastrous president in American history.”<sup>2</sup>

Grant and Harding, and Nixon and Bush all happen to be Republicans. But the careers of the two most recent Presidents have in common something else. Both are entwined with the influence of the leading figure in American religious history of the last half-century. Billy Graham (1918- ) has known, counseled, and prayed with other Presidents; he has been, after all, a registered Democrat.<sup>3</sup> But his relationships with Nixon and Bush have been far more important than with any other occupant of the White House. How the evangelical vocation – with its urgent call for personal redemption from sin – got so intimately involved with Presidents Nixon and Bush can serve to illustrate how church and state have been connected in postwar America.

In affecting these two Presidents, Graham played very different roles. Nixon’s Presidency was partly sanctified by the spiritual guidance that Graham conspicuously offered – and was punctuated by the political counsel that he far more secretly offered. George W. Bush would never have become President had Billy Graham – in one weekend in 1985 – not managed to turn around a notoriously prodigal son, a drunkard and a wastrel, a good-for-nothin’ beneficiary of crony capitalism, toward an acceptance of the Savior. During that summer weekend at the family home in Kennebunkport, Maine, “Reverend Graham planted a mustard seed in my soul, a seed that grew over the next year,” Bush recalled. Graham “led me to the path [...]. It was the beginning of a new walk where I would recommit my heart to Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup> That spiritual and psychological transformation facilitated a rapid political ascent. Without that personal reversal, and without the ardent support of evangelical voters who saw in President Bush a “brother in Christ,” neither his two electoral victories nor his policies would have been imaginable.

Graham himself spoke at a prayer breakfast in Jacksonville, Florida on November 5, 2000, two days before the election, with the Republican nominee and his wife in attendance. Graham called the Bush-Gore match-

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<sup>2</sup> “Kennedy Bumps Roosevelt from Top of Presidential Greatness Scale”, Zogby International Poll, 18 January 2006, <<http://www.zogby.com/templates/printnews.cfm?id=105>>, accessed 22 October 2006; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “The Ultimate Approval Rating”, *New York Times Magazine*, 15 December 1996, 46-51; David Greenberg, *Nixon’s Shadow: The History of an Image*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2003, 344; Sean Wilentz, “The Worst President in History?”, *Rolling Stone*, <<http://www.rollingstone.com/news/profile/story/9961300>>, accessed 17 September 2006; William Pfaff, “A Disaster by Any Measure”, *New York Review of Books*, 19 October 2006, 10.

<sup>3</sup> David Aikman, “Preachers, Politics and Temptation: Interview”, *Time*, 28 May 1990, 12.

<sup>4</sup> George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, New York: William Morrow, 1999, 136; Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy, *The Preacher and the Presidents: Billy Graham in the White House*, New York: Hachette Book Group USA, 2007, 291, 326-327.

up “crucial,” “a critical election in the history of America.” Indeed the preacher had already voted by absentee ballot, and predicted: “There’s going to be a tremendous victory and change by Tuesday night in the direction of the country. Putting it in good hands.” Though Graham coyly insisted that he did not endorse candidates, he added, “I believe in the integrity of this man. I’ve known him as a boy, I’ve known him as a young man [... and] I’m very thankful for the privilege of calling him friend.” And Graham professed to be “praying for this crucial election.” Such praise was an index of the support that Bush sustained among the approximately fifty million born-again evangelicals, even though he left office early in 2009 with only about a fourth of the public approving of his performance in the White House. Perhaps the evangelical loyalty endured because he seemed to regard God as a “senior presidential adviser.”<sup>5</sup> Bush’s cousin John Ellis professed amusement “when people say George W. is saying this or that to appease the religious right. He is the religious right.”<sup>6</sup>

That Graham is so intimately associated with two most problematic Presidencies of the last half-century (and arguably among the most dubious of the entire span of American history) suggests the value of an examination of this evangelist’s impact on American politics.

He himself has had nothing to worry about when pollsters have asked Americans their opinion of Graham. He has probably been the most consistently admired citizen of the past half-century. In terms of continuous favorability ratings, the last five decades might well be called the Age of Graham. (More detached observers might therefore call it the Age of Innocence.) In 1958, a year after the most famous of his revivalist crusades, in New York City, Gallup pollsters learned that Americans admired Graham behind only President Eisenhower and two foreigners: Sir Winston Churchill and Albert Schweitzer. Graham “has been, over the years, the most admired man in America,” Garry Wills concluded in 1990. “He stays there as other leaders come and go. He has been in the top ten uninterruptedly for thirty-five years.” Even in the 1980s, despite the

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<sup>5</sup> [Billy Graham.] “Statement by the Rev. Billy Graham Supporting George W. Bush”, 6 November 2000, <<http://www.cnsnews.com/Politics/Archive/200011/POL20001106c.html>>, accessed 30 October 2006; Matthew I. Pinzur, “Bush Worships in Jacksonville”, *Florida Times-Union*, November 6, 2000, <[http://www.jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/110600/met\\_4532657.html](http://www.jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/110600/met_4532657.html)>, accessed 24 October 2006; Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 336-338; Timothy Egan, “In the Reddest of States, Many Keep Faith in Bush”, *New York Times*, 4 June 2006, 1, 21; Katrina Vanden Heuvel, *Dictionary of Republicanisms*, New York: Avalon, 2005, 50.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*, New York: Oxford UP, 2006, 185.

collateral damage that the Watergate scandals inflicted, he “averaged third on the list.”<sup>7</sup>

Another Baptist preacher from the South probably changed the region – if not the nation – more obviously. Martin Luther King, Jr., was alive for less than half the span of years that were granted to Graham, and during his lifetime appeared on the cover of *Time* Magazine as often (four times). But King never enjoyed the benefit of a mandate akin to what the very rich and reactionary media mogul William Randolph Hearst issued in 1949, when he ordered his editors to “Puff Graham.”<sup>8</sup> Henry R. Luce of Time, Inc. met the young evangelist as early as the following year; and both *Time* and *Life* puffed him as well. John Connally, the Texas Democrat who became Nixon’s Secretary of the Treasury and then a Republican, called Graham “the conscience of America.”<sup>9</sup> Historians have demurred, however. They have preferred to bestow that status on King, whose assassination in 1968 inspired Graham to issue a remarkably tepid statement: “Many people who have not agreed with Dr. King can admire him for his non-violent policies and in the eyes of the world he has become one of the greatest Americans.” By then King had become so disturbing a figure that no President or ex-President dared to attend the Atlanta funeral.<sup>10</sup>

In bearing witness to his beliefs, King paid the price of martyrdom. But even though Graham did not suffer the fate of self-sacrifice that Christianity exalts, his historical importance deserves to be measured in other ways. The books attributed to his authorship have sold very well, and continue to do so, even though his major revivals have receded into the past. Even in the spring of 2006, the *New York Times Book Review* announced that *The Journey* had climbed onto #22 on the “extended list” of best-sellers.<sup>11</sup> To be sure, literary popularity alone cannot be the marker of significance. Mao Tse-Tung’s *Little Red Book* was disseminated far more widely than any single volume by Graham. But there is another relevant measure of Graham’s impact. By the summer of 2005, Graham had preached to an estimated 210 million people, of whom 80 million

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963, 15; Garry Wills, *Under God: Religion and American Politics*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham*, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997, xx, 149-150.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Marshall Frady, *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1979, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story*, New York: William Morrow, 1991, 351; Harvard Sitkoff, *King: Pilgrimage to the Mountaintop*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2008, xii.

<sup>11</sup> “TBR: Inside the List”, *New York Times Book Review*, 2 April 2006, 22.

heard and saw him in person – more than anyone who ever lived,<sup>12</sup> with the possible exception of the peripatetic John-Paul II. But the stature of a pontiff stems mostly from the office he holds, a lineage that can be traced back to St. Peter. Graham by contrast made it to the pinnacle of fame through his own electrifying powers as a preacher and also as an organizer of the evangelical association that he created.

The voice of Protestantism tends to have a pronounced Southern accent (very much like the sound of American music), and Dixie has long been the burnt-over district of evangelicalism. Flannery O'Connor famously called her native region "Christ-haunted."<sup>13</sup> (She was careful not to call it "Christ-like.") Graham is an authentically regional figure who has asked interviewers to "call me Billy," and he has exuded an unpretentious folksiness akin to populists like "Jimmy" Carter and "Bill" Clinton. Graham rose to prominence at about the same time that the comedian Lenny Bruce was admitting to the difficulty of imagining a nuclear physicist with a Southern accent. But Graham helped make it impossible to conceive of an evangelist who was *without* a Southern accent. And though there is a Billy Graham Parkway in Charlotte, North Carolina, he didn't confine himself to tarrying down by the riverside. Unlike many other evangelists, the Illinois-educated Graham was not primarily a regional religious figure. Both the Reverend Jerry Falwell and the Reverend Pat Robertson were headquartered in Virginia. Until 2003, Graham's national office was in Minneapolis (before moving to Charlotte); and his most spectacular crusades – beginning in Los Angeles and in New York City – made him a national and then an international figure as well.

Graham retained the good will of the citizenry because he was not a slimeball. He was not a crook. He was not a Tarheel Tartuffe. Perhaps his personal conduct was no more decent or exemplary than the morality of millions of other Americans. (Of the 81% of Americans who believe that heaven exists, 61% predict that after their deaths they will go directly there,<sup>14</sup> which may be a reassuring confirmation of widespread virtuousness in the nation.) But because the history of the clergy has often been rocked by sexual and financial scandal, the bar is so low that Graham has been given much credit for sheer (or mere) rectitude. The notorious bank robber Willie (the Actor) Sutton famously remarked that

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<sup>12</sup> Laurie Goodstein, "For Evangelist, Spirit Willing, Another Trip Down Mountain", *New York Times*, 12 June 2005, 1; Nancy Gibbs and Richard N. Ostling, "God's Billy Pulpit", *Time*, 15 November 1993, 70; Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, vii.

<sup>13</sup> Flannery O'Connor, "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" (1960), in Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (eds.), *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1969, 44.

<sup>14</sup> David Van Biema, "Does Heaven Exist?", *Time*, 24 March 1997, 73.

he selected financial institutions because “that’s where the money is.”<sup>15</sup> Some Americans emulated Sutton by going into the ministry – but not Graham, who has lived very comfortably but has not perpetrated the financial improprieties that ruined, say, the Reverend Jim Bakker. Other preachers have been seduced by what Martin Luther called “the devil in the shape of a woman.” But not Graham. Here he has differed from Dr. King himself, as well as from the Reverend Jim Bakker (again), from the Reverend Jimmy Swaggart, and most startlingly from the Reverend Billy James Hargis, the Christian Crusade leader who liked to swing both ways – with girls at the Christian school he founded, and with boys at the All-American Kids choir.<sup>16</sup> Some errant Gospel-flingers have made Elmer Gantry look like Dietrich Bonhoeffer. But under the auspices of Billy Graham, however, the old-time religion has not been synonymous with scoundrel time. By not violating the commandments against stealing and against adultery, he has offered protective coloration for Presidents seeking to draw him into their orbit.

No wonder then that by 1979, when Marshall Frady published a major critical biography, well over two dozen books about Graham himself had already appeared, plus about 280 magazine profiles.<sup>17</sup> By 1990, however, when Garry Wills published a lengthy study subtitled *Religion and American Politics*, it contained only half a dozen passing references to Graham, probably because the axis of both evangelical religion and evangelical politics had shifted so dramatically to the right. That transformation made Graham a much less formidable presence in the polity. His own 1997 autobiography did not thrust him closer to the center, perhaps because *Just As I Am* is bereft of serious introspection. As a spiritual record, this hefty and officious volume brings to mind the answer that Saul Bellow once gave, when a member of the audience asked him: “What is *The Adventures of Augie March* about?” The novelist replied: “About two hundred pages too long.” Readers of Graham’s account might well be entitled to infer that he is proof that the unexamined life *is* worth living.

His stature confirms the persistent religiosity of one particular nation under God. The evidence is overwhelming. Under the guidelines of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), religious programs on television could be counted as having met the requirements of public

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<sup>15</sup>Quoted in “FBI History: Famous Cases, Willie Sutton”, <<http://www.fbi.gov/libref/historic/famcases/sutton/sutton.htm>>, accessed 20 September 2010.

<sup>16</sup>Frank Rich, “A High-Tech Lynching in Prime Time”, *New York Times*, 24 April 2005, IV, 13.

<sup>17</sup>Frady, *Billy Graham*, viii.



service. Slogans like “The family that prays together stays together” were classified as “public service announcements.”<sup>18</sup> The standard history of best-sellers in the United States lists the Bible as non-fiction. An earlier author from North Carolina, Thomas Wolfe, made at least the title of one of his novels famous: *Look Homeward, Angel*. But it was not formally classified as non-fiction, whereas Graham’s 1975 book about angels was so categorized on the best-seller list, though an empiricist or a secular humanist or an agnostic might describe Graham’s views on the topic as deluded. (Perhaps, like Tony Kushner’s play, *Angels in America*, Graham’s own *Angels* could be labeled a “fantasia.”) By 1954 Billy Graham’s newspaper column, *My Answer*, was reaching 15 million Americans in 73 newspapers.<sup>19</sup> Their editors were not presumably trying to balance Graham’s views against those of, say, a “free-thinker” (nor, for that matter, the syndicated opinions of a rabbi or an imam or even a priest). On the typical editorial pages and op-ed pages of daily newspapers, answers to weighty questions of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, this life and the next are rarely contested on a level playing field; and Graham himself has usually been cut considerable slack.

As an evangelical who believes that the Bible is inerrant and that salvation can come only through faith in Jesus Christ, Graham belongs to the self-identified religious group that constitutes a plurality in American society. The figure in 2006 is 34% of white evangelical Protestants, compared to 22% white mainline Protestants, and 21% Roman Catholics.<sup>20</sup> A decade earlier, in the 1996 study, 26% of Americans were evangelicals, followed by Roman Catholics (23%) and then by mainline Protestants (17%). In that year the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association had 525 employees, and took in \$88 million in revenues the previous year. *The Hour of Decision* radio program was eventually broadcast on 900 stations all over the planet. Graham has also published a monthly magazine (*Decision*), has run a publishing house (World Wide Publications), and even built a movie studio (World Wide Pictures). Though about 1,500 “different religious groups” can be located in the United States, Graham also benefits from his identification with the largest evangelical denomination in the country, the Southern Baptist Convention, which also happens to be the largest denomination of Protestants, with over 16.3 million members.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Alan Nadel, “Cold War Television and the Technology of Brainwashing”, in Douglas Field (ed.), *American Cold War Culture*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP 2005, 149.

<sup>19</sup> Frady, *Billy Graham*, 225.

<sup>20</sup> “America by the Numbers: What We Believe”, *Time*, 30 October 2006, 50-51.

<sup>21</sup> David Van Biema, “In the Name of the Father”, *Time*, 147 (13 May 1996), 74; Frady, *Billy Graham*, 272; Walter Russell Mead, “God’s Country?”, *Foreign Affairs*, 85 (September-October 2006), 32.

The United States also contains about 75 different sorts of Baptists,<sup>22</sup> and here the contrast with the founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference helps explain Graham's influence. King applied the social gospel, drawing upon faith to transform society in a dramatic and permanent way. Graham by contrast was not overtly inspired by the Sermon on the Mount, preferring to regard sin as individual. In the early 1960s, as prayer in public schools was being declared unconstitutional, and as the sexual revolution was becoming rampant, Graham thundered that "the United States is in the worst state of [...] immorality in its history."<sup>23</sup> He conveniently forgot that a century earlier slavery had long been integral to American society, even as such bondage was being denounced as a sin by serious Christians like Harriet Beecher Stowe, the daughter of a celebrated evangelical preacher. (In writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Mrs. Stowe claimed God to be its author,<sup>24</sup> though she did not agree to split the royalties.)

It is fair to speculate that Graham, whose politics have veered consistently to the right, would have been far less admired had he been more liberal. Emerging from the region that has historically been the least sympathetic to organized labor, Graham once listed the attributes of the Garden of Eden as including "no union dues, [and] no labor leaders."<sup>25</sup> He neglected to mention that the description of paradise in the Book of Genesis also omits Chambers of Commerce – or, for that matter, evangelists. But Graham's list was presumably not intended to be exhaustive. Though the Sermon on the Mount predicts that the meek are to inherit the earth, nothing is said about its mineral rights; and Graham has said nothing about the despoliation of the planet due to predatory business practices. The first prayer that he ever delivered in Congress, in 1950, offered thanks to God "for the highest standard of living in the world."<sup>26</sup> This invocation of material well-being might be contrasted with the blessed status of the poor proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount. Nor did the emergence of feminism in the 1960s seem consistent with Graham's understanding of the Gospel. The subordination of wives to husbands, he insisted, was biblically warranted, and should be

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<sup>22</sup> Gordon S. Wood, "American Religion: The Great Retreat", *New York Review of Books*, 8 June 2006, 60.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 399; Steven P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*, Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2009, 40, 48, 50, 56, 123.

<sup>24</sup> Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War*, New York: Oxford UP, 1966, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 236, and in Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 49.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 240.

considered timeless and unchanging.<sup>27</sup> Such conservative and even reactionary opinions seemed, however inadvertently, to fortify the Marxist view of religion as the opiate of the people, whose ardent belief in the Resurrection ran the risk of forestalling the prospect of insurrection.

Not that Graham was equivocal on the subject of Karl Marx, whom he condemned as a “degenerate materialist”, whose perverted ideology had resulted in the “filthy, corrupt, ungodly, unholy doctrine of world socialism.” It is no accident that Graham became famous when the Cold War dominated international politics. Nor could he refrain from supporting the vigilant excesses of domestic anti-Communism. In a 1953 radio broadcast, he endorsed the “internal security” investigations designed to expose “the pinks, the lavenders and the reds who have sought refuge beneath the wings of the American eagle”, and expressed gratitude to God for providing leaders engaged in exposing the subversives. When the U. S. Senate condemned one of its own, Joseph R. McCarthy, in December, 1954, Graham drew the analogy of Nero’s fiddling while Rome burned.<sup>28</sup> The advance of Communism was interpreted as revealing a national fall from grace. A onetime-God-fearing people might well be sinking into the “cesspool” of secularism. Graham warned, “America [...] is under the pending judgment of God; and without a spiritual revival now, we are done as a nation.”<sup>29</sup>

No politician struck Graham as more effective in combating such dangers than Richard M. Nixon. Until the Watergate scandal erupted, their relationship seemed to be closer than it probably was. But the evangelist did claim in 1972, “I know the President as well as anyone outside his immediate family. I have known him since 1950, and I have great confidence in his personal honesty.” How well Graham actually knew Nixon can be gauged from the kudos that the preacher lavished upon this “man with a deep religious commitment”, this “splendid churchman” who was endowed with “a great sense of moral integrity.” Before 1960 he did not conceal his enthusiasm for Nixon’s Presidential candidacy. In October, 1959 Graham had called the Vice President “probably the best-trained man for President in American history, and he is certainly every inch a Christian gentleman.” For religious reasons Graham opposed Senator John F. Kennedy, and even joined with other

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<sup>27</sup> Beth Bailey, “She ‘Can Bring Home the Bacon’: Negotiating Gender in Seventies America”, in Beth Bailey and David Farber (eds.), *America in the Seventies*, Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 2004, 121-122, 128.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 238-239; William G. McLoughlin, *Billy Graham: Revivalist in a Secular Age*, New York: Ronald Press, 1960, 111-112; K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, New York: Routledge, 2005, 37.

<sup>29</sup> Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995, 298.

Southern Baptists who declared that there could be “no Catholic for President.”<sup>30</sup> Curiously Graham denied that he was taking sides in the 1960 election, which was, he warned, “the most crucial our nation has ever confronted” (even more decisive, presumably, than exactly one century earlier, when the Civil War erupted). Because the United States was “wrestling with the forces of anti-Christ”, he urged voters “not [to] decide on the basis of which candidate is more handsome or charming.”<sup>31</sup> By that criterion it was obvious who would lose – which he did, despite Graham’s invocation at a Nixon rally in Columbia, South Carolina, by the end of the campaign.<sup>32</sup>

Two Presidential elections later, Nixon had achieved his ambitions; and on July 4, 1970, Graham participated in an Honor America Day, a partisan event engineered by his friend in the White House. Graham justified his own inclusion in the celebration by asserting that “there is just too much negativism. There are too many people knocking our institutions – the government, the church, [and] the flag.” Such a complaint was strange coming from a revivalist who aroused apocalyptic fears of an impending Judgment Day upon a sinful nation. Even under Nixon, America was still presumably east of Eden; and it is hard to imagine earlier prophets like Amos or Isaiah participating in an Honor Judea day, or Jonathan Edwards doing something equivalent to honor Massachusetts. Clergymen who were Graham’s contemporaries were getting jailed for their principled opposition to the military intervention in Indochina. But the “conscience of America” could not bring himself to criticize the war in Vietnam that Nixon was perpetuating and extending. Graham professed to regret the killing and suffering of the war, but he tried to put its human cost in perspective: “We also have to realize that there are hundreds of thousands of deaths attributed to smoking.” Moreover, he wondered, “where are the demonstrations against alcohol?”<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, there is scant evidence that Graham ever spoke truth to power, at least when Nixon wielded it. Perhaps the only instance occurred after MEN WALK ON MOON appeared on the front page of the New York Times (which was the largest headline type that the newspaper ever ran). The President was so elated that he told the astronauts on the deck of the U. S. S. *Hornet*: “This is the greatest week in

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 438, 454, 464; Tom Wicker, *One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream*, New York: Random House, 1991, 234-235; Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 54, 56, 86-89, 93-95; Miller, *Billy Graham*, 75, 125-126, 135, 154.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 444, and in Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 101-102.

<sup>32</sup> Frady, *Billy Graham*, 445; Martin, *Prophet with Honor*, 269-283.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 426, 428; Martin, *Prophet with Honor*, 370-371.

the history of the world since the Creation!" In a rare rebuke to Nixon, Graham felt compelled to object to the hyperbole, and in his correction mentioned three events of greater magnitude: the birth of Jesus, the death of Jesus and the Resurrection. Nixon was annoyed by Graham's list. Ever the lawyer looking for a loophole, he scrawled a message to his chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman: "Tell Billy RN referred to a week[,] not a day."<sup>34</sup>

Graham was fond of proclaiming his doubt that "Jesus or the Apostles took sides in the political arenas of their day." Yet he opened himself to charges of hypocrisy by claiming in 1972, "I have really stayed out of politics purposely."<sup>35</sup> The tapes of Oval Office conversations contradict such a claim, and reveal the extent of Graham's own political efforts on behalf of Nixon.

So frequent were these machinations that he might as well have belonged to the Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP). Indeed, on June 18, 1972, the very day after the burglars had been caught breaking into Democratic Party headquarters, the President phoned Graham to discuss the looming candidacy of Alabama's George C. Wallace, whom the revivalist claimed to be willing to try to dissuade from running as an independent candidate in the general election. Wallace posed much more of a threat to Nixon than to his Democratic challenger. So great was the fear of a third-party candidacy, according to journalist Richard Reeves, that Graham, as well as Secretary of the Treasury John Connally, met with Wallace "to assure him that he would have whatever he wanted or needed as long as Nixon was in office." Such conversations revealed Graham's concerns as something more than the status of the Presidential soul. Serving as an intermediary between Nixon and Wallace, Graham was used in the attempt to discourage a third-party candidacy in 1968. That effort failed, but Graham was under consideration for a similar task in 1972.<sup>36</sup> In public he insisted upon a desire to separate himself from politics, hoping at best to purify it. Such was the claim – but it would be wrong.

His obvious coziness with Nixon did not exempt Graham from the curiosity of one part of the executive branch: the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). "Billy Graham tells me an astonishing thing", Nixon informed Haldeman on September 13, 1971. "The IRS is battering the shit out of him. Some son-of-a-bitch came to him and gave him a three-hour grilling." Nixon was indignant, and came quickly to the point: "Bob,

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Reeves, *President Nixon: Alone in the White House*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001, 101-102; Wicker, *One of Us*, 534.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Harold Bloom, "The Preacher: Billy Graham", *Time*, 14 June 1999, 197, and in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 245.

<sup>36</sup> Reeves, *President Nixon*, 499, 517; Carter, *Politics of Rage*, 449; Miller, *Billy Graham*, 12, 195, 199; Martin, *Prophet with Honor*, 351-361, 387-399.

please get me the names of the Jews, you know, the big Jewish contributors of the Democrats [...]. Could we please investigate some of the cocksuckers?" The following day the President's outrage had not subsided: "The IRS is full of Jews, Bob [...]. That's the reason they're after Graham [...]." <sup>37</sup>

The victim of such harassment did not distance himself from the antisemitism that floated through the Oval Office. When Graham visited the President to discuss the possibility of conducting revivalist crusades in states that Nixon considered critical to his 1972 re-election campaign, Haldeman recorded in his diary the ensuing conversation: "There was considerable discussion of the terrible problem arising from the total Jewish domination of the media [...]. Graham has the strong feeling that the Bible says that there are satanic Jews and that's where our problem arises." On a February 1, 1972 White House tape released in 2002, Graham speaks in the Oval Office after a prayer breakfast, and is heard to blame liberal Jews as "the ones putting out the pornographic stuff." He added: "A lot of the Jews are great friends of mine, they swarm around me and are friendly to me because they know that I'm friendly with Israel. But they don't know how I really feel about what they are doing to this country." <sup>38</sup> Such remarks seem to be the only evidence of Graham's antisemitism – and were probably uttered to ingratiate himself with the bigot who occupied the Oval Office.

The Watergate scandal rubbed off a bit on Graham despite his denials that it did so; there was some collateral damage to his image of rectitude. "I did not have to distance myself from Watergate", he recalled. "I wasn't close to it in the first place." Graham claimed that in "the last six months of Nixon's presidency, we could not get to him. I went through every angle I knew [...] [But] he gave orders not to allow me near him because he did not want me tarred with Watergate." Graham considered Nixon "a true believer", who "held such noble standards of ethics and morality for the nation." <sup>39</sup> Neither in his autobiography nor in interviews long after Nixon's resignation could Graham bring himself to say anything especially critical of the disgraced former President or his associates, who were presumably rather in need of redemption.

Graham had served in effect as the chaplain on a pirate ship. He could not seem to grasp or acknowledge the moral status of the company he kept, even though he tried to convert sanctity into spin. Thus Matthew

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<sup>37</sup> "13 September 1971: The President and Haldeman", in Stanley I. Kutler (ed.), *Abuse of Power: The New Nixon Tapes*, New York: Free Press, 1997, 31, and Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 193, 201-202, 203.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Reeves, *President Nixon*, 370, and in Goodstein, "For Evangelist", *New York Times*, 25.

<sup>39</sup> Graham, *Just As I Am*, 456, 458; Aikman, "Preachers, Politics and Temptation", 12.

7:1 was quoted: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” The scandals were blamed on the failure of Christians to pray enough for the President (despite the ostentatious piety of the prayer breakfasts in the White House). In September 1973 – even as the Senate was holding hearings into criminal activities of the executive branch – Graham observed, “how morally *weak* we really are in this country. It seems almost that some sinister force has taken hold of our country.” Describing Nixon as “a close friend”, Graham simply could not “accept in my heart that his conduct and his conversation during that crisis sprang from the deep wells of his character.”<sup>40</sup>

Graham’s autobiography makes no mention of the actual evidence of the White House horrors, nor of the charges that were leading toward Nixon’s impeachment. “The thing that surprised and shook me the most”, Graham recalled of his friend, “was the vulgar language he used”, once the tapes were released. “I felt physically sick and went into the seclusion of my study at the back of the house. Inwardly, I felt torn apart.”<sup>41</sup> Graham was shocked by the profanity: “I just didn’t know that he used this type of language in talking to others.” What was most repugnant about Watergate was primarily the “objectionable language” with which the misdeeds and crimes were plotted and considered. When Graham was asked if Nixon had ever expressed remorse to him about Watergate, this was the reply: “Oh, he apologized to me about the language. He said, ‘There are many words that I used that I never knew before,’” even though the former naval officer had served in the Second World War.<sup>42</sup> (Graham’s squeamishness was shared by many of his fellow Christians. For example, when President George W. Bush praised the blundering chief of Federal Emergency Management Agency, Michael Brown, by announcing, “Brownie, you’re doing a heckuva job!”, the adjective was colloquial and hence a bit populist; but no one could be offended.)

In the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, Graham conceded: “I’ve had my turn getting mixed up in politics ... Oh, no, never again.” But the flame of power was too attractive to this particular moth; and when the first Iraq war began early in 1991, Graham was holding a Bible as he appeared at the side of President George H. W. Bush, as though to sanctify a crusade against the infidel. He had invited Graham, who privately told Bush that Saddam Hussein was “the anti-Christ himself”,

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 6; Graham, *Just As I Am*, 445, 456, 457, 462; Martin, *Prophet with Honor*, 425-430, 432-435; Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 220; Miller, *Billy Graham*, 184-194, 284.

<sup>41</sup> Graham, *Just As I Am*, 457.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 477; Aikman, “Preachers, Politics and Temptation”, 12; Martin, *Prophet with Honor*, 430-431.

to spend the night in the White House just before Operation Desert Storm was launched, an invitation that was accepted. Flattery did get Graham somewhere (even inside the Oval Office); a year earlier he had praised the Episcopalian who occupied the White House as "easy to talk to about spiritual things, easier than any other Presidents I have known [...]. He has the highest moral standards of almost anybody whom I have known." In turn, the President called Graham "America's pastor."<sup>43</sup>

When Nixon died in 1994, Graham could not resist the temptation to deliver a public prayer at the funeral, despite the betrayal of the trust and faith that Graham (and their overlapping constituencies) had invested in the deceased. Though Nixon had palpably violated the good will and friendship that Graham had proffered, national television was too difficult a habit to kick. To be sure no eulogy can be expected to share the same zip code as the unvarnished truth. But Graham's obtuse, sanctimonious praise of "a great citizen", "a great man", who "had a great respect for the office of the President", might be contrasted with reaction of the journalist Hunter S. Thompson, for whom the departed validated the historic Calvinist doctrine of total depravity: "Nixon was a navy man, and he should have been buried at sea [...]." Had the ceremony been done right, however, "his casket would have been launched into one of those open-sewage canals that empty into the ocean just south of Los Angeles." After all, "he was scum."<sup>44</sup> One need not choose between Graham's sentimentality and Thompson's rancor. But the historians' polls of Presidential performance is a sufficient measure of which extreme is closer to the ideal of accuracy.

Growing up in the one-party South, Graham professed to be a Democrat, though his closest ties have been with Republicans, beginning with Eisenhower.<sup>45</sup> Like other Southern white Protestants, Graham himself is the legatee of a tradition of deference to political authority. The alternative Quaker credo of speaking truth to power has been foreign to Graham, who has offered soothing speech instead. The preference of this preacher in politics was not to challenge officials but instead to play golf with them. He saw his role as supportive and pastoral, rather than prophetic or dissident. While anticipating the decisiveness of Judgment Day, Graham hoped for good news for his favorite candidates on Election

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 10, and in Holmes, *Faiths of the Founding Fathers*, 177; Bloom, "Preacher: Billy Graham", 194; Gibbs and Ostling, "God's Billy Pulpit", 78; Aikman, "Preachers, Politics and Temptation", 12; Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 288, 302-303.

<sup>44</sup> Billy Graham, "Closing Remarks", in <<http://www.nixon.library.org/index>>, accessed 22 October 2006; Hunter S. Thompson, "He was a crook", *Rolling Stone*, 16 June 1994, 42-44.

<sup>45</sup> William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham*, New York: Ronald Press, 1959, 505-507.



Day. Instead of generating tension with existing authority because of its moral shortcomings, the religion that Graham personified has asked little of our representatives on earth, perhaps out of his desire to be well-liked – especially by other famous persons. In ancient Palestine “many people came to Jesus”, Graham once opined, “because he was a celebrity.”<sup>46</sup>

The historical irony of course is that the denomination to which Graham has belonged was long wary of entanglement with the state. It is no accident that when Thomas Jefferson articulated the ideal of “a wall of separation between Church and State”, he mounted this vindication of the first part of the First Amendment in a letter to Baptists.<sup>47</sup> That ideal specified a legal separation, not necessarily personal ties. Nevertheless the political detachment that Baptists, beginning in the colonial era with Roger Williams, have promoted was not exactly honored by the close proximity that Graham enjoyed with political figures. His congenital reluctance to criticize Presidents has been reciprocated. The only President to criticize Graham openly appears to have been a fellow Baptist, Harry S. Truman, who considered him a “counterfeit”, a show-biz Savonarola whose sincerity was in fact open to doubt. Not that Graham’s praise of General Douglas MacArthur as “one of the greatest Americans of all time” was the sort of political endorsement that Truman would have found congenial.<sup>48</sup> But Graham’s compulsion to court Presidents might be contrasted with the forthrightness of Bill Moyers, an ordained Baptist minister in the employ of the imperious Lyndon B. Johnson. On one occasion the President asked Moyers to deliver a prayer, and then complained that its recitation needed to be louder. Moyers is supposed to have responded: “I wasn’t speaking to you, sir.”

Not even the intensity of Graham’s anti-Communism could trump his deference to authority, even when Leonid Brezhnev wielded it. In 1984 Graham brought his crusade to the Soviet Union, where he managed to endorse what fervent anti-Communists considered anathema: the idea of “moral equivalence.” Speaking in the Baltic Republics, Graham was asked by an interviewer about religious freedom under the Soviets. He expressed appreciation for his freedom to preach wherever he wanted to, and claimed that the U S S R had no monopoly on challenges to religion, since “the United States [also] has problems with religion.” Reading the interview in *Pravda* from his prison cell, the political prisoner Anatoly

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<sup>46</sup> Frady, *Billy Graham*, 373; Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 50, 134, 342; Miller, *Billy Graham*, 9.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “To Nehemiah Dodge and Others, a Committee of the Danbury Baptist Association, in the State of Connecticut”, 1 January 1802, in Merrill D. Peterson (ed.), *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, New York: Viking, 1975, 303.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Gibbs and Ostling, “God’s Billy Pulpit”, 72, in Bloom, “Preacher: Billy Graham”, 194, and in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 253; Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 20, 25.

Shcharansky was stunned. “Did Graham not understand that he was giving legitimacy to a system that sought to eradicate religion completely?” Shcharansky’s own cellmate had been given a seven-year sentence for promoting Christian “propaganda” to fewer than ten people. Anatoly Shcharansky (later Natan Sharansky) recorded his own “disappointment” in “seeing the free world abandon its own values”, the link between human rights and democracy. “Nowhere was this disappointment more bitterly experienced than from the confines of a prison cell”, because the effect of Graham’s enunciation of moral equivalence was “to crush the spirits of dissidents inside the USSR.” Graham later claimed that his remarks had been misinterpreted.<sup>49</sup>

If Graham’s career is an object lesson in the perils of political entanglement, perhaps a wider accusation can be advanced as well. Religion itself runs the risk of leading its adherents into foolishness. For example, two days after the terrorist atrocities of September 11, 2001, Reverend Pat Robertson agreed with Reverend Jerry Falwell that divine punishment of America had been inflicted, because the nation had allowed “the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians”, plus the civil libertarians, to flourish and to promote secularization. Of course stupidity can usually find warrant somewhere, though religion seems to be the most readily available recourse to justify beliefs and prejudices that are harbored independently. Perhaps the best antidote to arrogance is to read the Second Inaugural address of Abraham Lincoln, who described the paradox of both sides of the Civil War “read[ing] the same Bible and pray[ing] to the same God”, while “each invokes His aid against the other.” Yet “the Almighty has His own purposes”;<sup>50</sup> and mortals who profess to know that design, Lincoln suggested, do so at their peril.

Graham made so many fatuous and unverifiable claims about the purposes of the Deity, and invoked His designs with such assurance and such frequency, that the version of the “religion of the heart” that he has championed marks a repudiation of critical thinking. Despite the “Dr.” that is often attached to Graham’s name (the theology degrees are honorary rather than earned), he tended to disparage those forces that have sought to make human life less mysterious (and therefore more tolerable). The invocation of the centrality of the Bible licensed him to

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<sup>49</sup> Natan Sharansky, with Ron Dermer, *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror*, New York: Public Affairs, 2004, 198-200; Gibbs and Ostling, “God’s Billy Pulpit”, 77; Graham, *Just As I Am*, 509-510; Gibbs and Duffy, *Preacher and Presidents*, 273.

<sup>50</sup> “Falwell Apologizes to Gays, Feminists, Lesbians”, <<http://www.CNN.com> (14 September 2001), [archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/14/Falwell.apology](http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/14/Falwell.apology)>, accessed 30 October 2006; Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address”, 4 March 1865, in Richard Hofstadter (ed.), *Great Issues in American History: A Documentary Record*, New York: Vintage Books, 1960, 416.

deprecate other books. Yet even the formally uneducated Sportin' Life in *Porgy and Bess* could see the benefits of skepticism ("Oh, I takes dat gospel/Whenever it's pos'ble –/But wid a grain of salt!");<sup>51</sup> and even within the orbit of religion, Graham basically ignored the higher criticism, or Bible criticism, or the scholarly quest for the historical Jesus.

Graham lamented the proclivity of too many Americans to doubt the inerrant authority of the Holy Scriptures, and instead to opt for "reason, rationalism, mind culture, science worship, the working power of government, Freudianism, naturalism, humanism, behaviorism, positivism, [and] materialism [...]. Thousands of these 'intellectuals' have publicly stated that morality is relative – that there is no norm or absolute standard [...]." (Graham's later apologetics for Nixon hardly fortified an absolute standard of morality, however. But let it pass.) Graham's version of faith excluded the work of philologists or archeologists or historians of the ancient Near East, and was so impoverished in its anti-intellectualism that the dilemma that Walter Kaufmann once posed is more stark than it needs to be: "If we are made to choose between reason and religion, the choice is between criticism and idolatry."<sup>52</sup> The religion of the heart permits the sort of defense that the Reverend Norman Vincent Peale once gave, after backing away from the anti-Catholicism that animated his condemnation of John F. Kennedy's candidacy in 1960. The only Protestant minister to rival Graham's influence in the 1950s, Peale admitted that he had "never been too bright anyhow."<sup>53</sup>

The usual explanation for Graham's political involvement has been a lack of guile, which permitted him to be played for a sucker by the likes of Nixon. But gullibility – especially inside the circles of power – may be another name for what Graham himself has conceded: "I have severe intellectual limitations." The forfeiture of higher education he long claimed to lament.<sup>54</sup> Graham was capable of making so many goofy utterances that at some point one has to wonder how smart he is. For instance, though no likeness of Jesus has ever survived, though no one worshipping him as the Savior could have any idea what he looked like, Graham claimed that "Jesus Christ was the most perfectly developed physical specimen in the history of the world. He never had sin to deform his body. His nervous system was coordinated with the rest of his body.

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<sup>51</sup> Ira Gershwin, "It Ain't Necessarily So" (1935), in Robert Gottlieb and Robert Kimball (eds.), *Reading Lyrics*, New York: Pantheon, 2000, 296.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism*, 15; Walter Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1961, 430.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Garry Wills, *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970, 152.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 223; Peter J. Boyer, "The Big Tent", *New Yorker*, 22 August 2005, 47.

He would have been one of the great athletes of all times”, whose “strong jaw and strong shoulders” were especially impressive. No eyewitnesses, no portraitists, no physicians (much less neurologists) have left behind any documentation of these claims – nor did Graham take up the conjecture of Malcolm X that Jesus must have been black.<sup>55</sup>

If the search for coherence and consistency is the mark of intellectual seriousness, then the tension between politics and religion remains an unresolved feature of Graham’s legacy. He cannot be expected to share the view of Reinhold Niebuhr that purity is an inappropriate political test. But Graham has not evidently wrestled with a specifically American conflict: If the United States suffers from a fallen state, and is terribly vulnerable to sin, how is so ungodly a condition compatible with the imperatives of patriotism? If Americans weren’t sinners, they would have no need of Jesus. But if they are sinners, why exult in the nation’s achievements?

As far back as 1949, Graham was warning in Los Angeles that “Judgment Day is fast approaching”; and Americans might well be found wanting. “History has reached an impasse”, he warned in 1965. “We might be approaching the end of our history”, he conjectured in 1970. True to form, in 1990 he claimed that “things are now converging for the first time in history, fulfilling the prophecies that He Himself made about His coming.”<sup>56</sup> Even though Graham’s foresight has not been 20/20, in his eschatology something dire is always about to happen. But if so, why associate with conservative candidates and officials who uphold the status quo and “tradition” and who resent the nattering nabobs of negativism who knock America? How can the predictions of imminent apocalypse inspire dread when its prophet himself proclaims that American optimism, along with “cheerfulness”, turn out to be the rather undemanding “products of knowing Christ”?<sup>57</sup> Graham’s willingness to moderate the austerity of the doom that awaits sinners is akin to the 1983 *New Yorker* cartoon of two men conversing while burning in hell: “Oh, sure it’s hot, all right”, goes the caption, “but it’s a dry heat.”

The compulsion to temper the severity of historic Christianity took a grotesque turn three days after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, when Graham delivered the sermon at the National Cathedral in Washington. So firm was his knowledge of the afterlife that he claimed not only to know that many of the victims were already in heaven but also that “it’s so glorious and so wonderful there”, they would have no

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 14, 407; Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1965, 206-207.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 202, 397; Aikman, “Preachers, Politics and Temptation”, 14.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Frady, *Billy Graham*, 124; Bloom, “Preacher: Billy Graham”, 195.

desire to return to earth. So daft a thought the literary editor of the *New Republic* did not find “consoling, it is insulting. We are not a country of children. Nothing that transpired on September 11 was wonderful, nothing.” Leon Wieseltier refused to believe that Americans had to “choose between being imbeciles and being mourners. But mourners can be imbeciles too.”<sup>58</sup> This particular preacher could not separate the known and the unknown, nor could he bring himself to generate any friction with the relentlessly upbeat spirit of his fellow citizens. (Though 81% believe in the existence of heaven, only 63% of Americans believe in the existence of hell – and among them, only 1% fear that after their deaths they will go directly there.)<sup>59</sup> The Jesus of Billy Graham is more likely to love such believers than to judge them. In his reluctance to challenge – much less alienate – his constituency, Graham bore some resemblance to politicians who defined their vocation in terms of giving the electorate what it wanted rather than what it needed; and his enduring esteem in which the public held him might also raise troublesome questions about the character of a citizenry.

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<sup>58</sup> Billy Graham, “Sermon”, 14 September 2001, <<http://www.cathedral.org/cathedral/programs/wtc9.11/wtc.shtml>>, accessed 24 October 2006; Leon Wieseltier, “Clippings”, *New Republic*, 225 (8 October 2001), 50; Grant Wacker, “The Billy Pulpit”, *Christian Century*, 120 (15 November 2003), 21.

<sup>59</sup> Van Biema, “Does Heaven Exist?“, 73.

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