Andrew Finstuen, Anne Blue Wills, and Grant Wacker (eds.)


In *Billy Graham: American Pilgrim*, editors Andrew Finstuen, Anne Blue Wills, and Grant Wacker offer their readers yet another volume among the many on the life of a modern American religious icon. This volume, designed for post-secondary students and the general public, originated from a Lilly Endowment Inc. grant to Wheaton College for the study of Graham. The editors have chosen to arrange the essays around three sections: religion, politics, and culture, seeking not to advance a central thesis, but rather to emphasize themes of change and paradox (6).

The section on religion offers four essays. Andrew Finstuen looks at Graham's work at colleges and universities. This particular essay provides a strong summary of the content of Graham's campus events, but the reader would often have been better served with stronger contextualization along the way. For instance, the discussion of Graham's 1958 trip to California's Bay Area universities would be stronger had the author briefly considered that these visits took place during a rising student movement, one which was concerned with McCarthyism and the power of the House Un-American Activities Committee, and discussed how the content of Graham's addresses appealed to students living in that atmosphere (27–28). The second essay of this section, Michael S. Hamilton's piece on Graham's evangelistic preaching style, is the essay in this work that best demonstrates the theme of change in Graham's career, showing that while many of Graham's sermon patterns remained the same, he did alter his content to reflect shifts in American life and in international politics. The author's attempts to show parallels between Graham and Great Awakening preacher Jonathan Edwards seem somewhat forced and ahistorical, but otherwise, the reader does get a sense of true basis of Graham's concerns and the impact on his preaching style. In what is one of the most original pieces of the book, Edith Blumhofer writes about the roles of George Beverly Shea and Cliff Barrows in creating the musical approach of Graham's Crusades. Her brief discussion of the ever-increasing regional and ethnic diversity of music from the Crusades should inspire future scholars to develop more work on this topic. In the final essay of the section, William Martin summarizes Graham's international trips. Although he address Graham's 1982 Moscow trip, scholars of Pentecostal history and readers of *Pneuma* will be disappointed to note that Martin does not discuss the controversy that resulted from Graham's visit to the Siberian Seven, the Pentecostal dissidents then living as refugees in the American embassy in Moscow, a topic to which Graham himself devoted three pages

The essays of Part Two examine Graham and politics. David P. King provides perhaps the best example of Graham as a paradox in his essay on Graham and evangelical humanitarianism. Graham could, for instance, identify global poverty as a pressing issue, but was slow to see the impact of the same phenomena at home. He was a man with the ear of presidents from either party, yet worried that some in ministry were going beyond the realm of the spiritual. King argues that Graham’s evangelical humanitarianism provides us with a window into the debates over boundaries of post-war religion, the growing importance of a global outlook to evangelicals, and debates among evangelicals over the role of the federal government (137). Curtis J. Evans examines Graham’s political and social vision and concludes that Graham believed that change would come through converted Christians and godly intervention rather than the political process. This individualistic view was problematic when it came to racial issues and systemic injustice, but Graham maintained a belief in the power of the individual Christian to serve as an example of the possibility of a more Christ-centered society. In the third essay, Darren Dochuk considers the impact of this individualist viewpoint on Graham’s civil rights work in Houston where he engaged in a “bootstrap formula for racial uplift,” calling for both black and white elites of the rapidly growing Houston economy to solve the social problems of the day (172). In this work, Dochuk admits to some of the failings of Graham’s perspective but challenges those who would see Graham as a moderate or worse. The authors in this section readily admit to both the advantages and disadvantages of Graham’s worldview as they have discovered it.

The third part of this work begins with an essay by Elesha Coffman that considers Graham as a public figure who was media savvy enough to know how to appear both authentic and polished, and who had only a few missteps in the public eye, most of which he overcame, with perhaps the exception of the 2002 scandal revolving around surfacing of anti-Semitic comments recorded in one of his conversations with then-President Nixon. Despite this failing, Coffman argues that had Graham only been using the media he would likely have faded into obscurity much sooner. This section then moves to an essay by Seth Dowland which considers the evangelical form of masculinity that Graham constructed, one in which the attractive evangelist emphasized his loyalty to his wife by taking precautions to avoid being alone with other women, and in which he was seen as being able to stand firm in his convictions and belief in the completeness of the scriptures, in a way that foreshadowed the