

Billy Graham: 'A Prophet With Honor'

As beloved evangelist Billy Graham will celebrate his 100th birthday on Nov. 7 this year, Zondervan Publishing will release *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story*, by William Martin, in March, in anticipation of the historic occasion. Graham himself requested Martin for the project and granted him unprecedented access to the Billy Graham archives and team members, lending this work the authenticity and transparency of no other.

"As I have written in this book, I have constantly examined what I have said in an effort to make sure that I was neither shading the truth in Graham's or his associates' favor out of gratitude for their helpfulness, nor taking an inappropriately negative slant as a way of emphasizing that I had not been taken in by slick manipulation," Martin writes. "But since Billy Graham and his associates—like all humankind—have weaknesses, I determined not to gloss those over.

"I have tried to be scrupulously fair, not only because I do not wish the taint of unfairness to mar the most notable scholarly enterprise in which I have engaged to date, but also because I regard fairness as a cardinal virtue," Martin continues. "I do not imagine, of course, that my judgment is flawless. But the account and the assessments I have rendered have been given with great care."

Martin begins the work with a short introduction to evangelicalism and the revivalist movement starting with John Cotton's messages to the settlers of New England in the 1600s. Other names to follow include Solomon Stoddard, Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield through to Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday and Mordecai Ham, the evangelist under whom Graham came to faith in Christ as a teenage boy in 1934.

Fans of Graham's autobiography *Just As I Am*, will recognize many of the names, places and events chronicled here, but *A Prophet with Honor* goes further behind the scenes to explain the conditions that made it possible for Graham to achieve his spectacular success and to reveal how sometimes he succeeded in spite of himself.

As Graham explained when approaching Martin about writing the book, "There are no conditions. It's your book. I don't even have to read it. I want you to be critical. There are some things that need criticizing."

Despite Graham's humble expectations of a biography that would reveal his true self—warts and all—Martin came away from his research with the overwhelming sense that despite his flaws, Graham was a man of rare integrity. Martin concludes that there will likely never be another like him. "Unless and until that happens, William Franklin Graham Jr. can safely be regarded as the best who ever lived at what he did—a workman,' as Scripture says, 'who needed not to be ashamed.'"

Martin (B.D., Ph.D., Harvard) is the Harry and Hazel Chavanne Emeritus Professor of Religion and Public Policy in the Department of Sociology at Rice University in Houston, Texas. Since his retirement from teaching in 2005, he has served as the Chavanne Senior Fellow for Religion and Public Policy at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice. He has appeared on many national radio and television programs, including *60 Minutes*, *Nightline*, *20/20*, *Today*, *Frontline* and *All Things Considered*. He has been published in numerous national and regional periodicals, including *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Esquire* and *Texas Monthly*. While researching this book, he was given exclusive access to the Graham archives.