

Graham Finds It Difficult to

By John Dart
Los Angeles Times

Evangelist Billy Graham was a close friend of Richard M. Nixon for much of his presidency.

But in the final months of the Nixon administration, when Dr. Graham tried to reach the President, he was unsuccessful.

"I did call twice just to let him know I was praying for him, but I could not get through," (to the White House) Dr. Graham told the Los Angeles Times in a telephone interview Wednesday from his Montreat, N.C., home.

"I hope to remain a friend of President Nixon; I don't know what my relationship is now," Dr. Graham added.

The disconnected relationship with the evangelist is an example of why the Nixon presidency will hold a fascination for historians of American religion for years to come.

Mr. Nixon's successor, Gerald R. Ford, quickly established his spiritual credentials with the American people during his first week in office. He attended church Sunday and called for God's help in his address to Congress Monday.

But questions linger from the Nixon

years, perhaps the chief one being whether religion and religious figures were "used" by the White House as an image-building device.

Last May, the Rev. M. G. (Pat) Robertson a Southern Baptist minister who heads a religious broadcasting network, and is the son of the late Sen. A. Willis Robertson of Virginia, said the Watergate tapes showed Christians were the victims of a cruel hoax.

"We were led to believe that the man who appeared as a confidant of Billy Graham . . . was in truth a man of personal piety," Mr. Robertson said.

"We can surmise that Dr. Billy Graham has been used for political image building."

Dr. Graham, a friend to several Presidents, said it was difficult for him to say whether Mr. Nixon was "using" religion.

"There is a fine line between using religion and feeling that (one) must set an example to the country," Dr. Graham said.

The Baptist minister said he was impressed with Mr. Nixon in 1960 when, as a presidential candidate, he told Dr. Graham he had heard rumors the evangelist was thinking of endorsing him.

Nixon urged Dr. Graham not to.

"I never forgot that," said Dr. Graham.

On the other hand, Dr. Graham said, "Those tapes revealed a man that I never knew. I never saw that side of him."

"Perhaps that came out after Watergate, or the presidency did that to the man . . . Sometimes a man can become more proud in the White House or he can become more humble," he said.

The turning point in Mr. Nixon's relationship with Dr. Graham seemed to come last December.

At that time, Dr. Graham interrupted a European tour to preach at the Dec. 16 White House services in which he called for every citizen to "repent" at this time of spiritual crisis.

A few days later, in a lengthy interview, Dr. Graham was quoted as saying that many of Nixon's "judgments have been very poor" in the Watergate affair.

Meanwhile, Nixon was receiving en-

• The Rev. John McLaughlin, a Jesuit priest on the Nixon staff.

• Rabbi Baruch Korff, organizer of enthusiastic support and defense from three other men from the world of religion: the National Citizens Committee for Fairness to the Presidency.

• The Rev. Sun Myung Moon, whose full-page newspaper ads proclaimed that the office of President is sacred and only "God has the power and authority to dismiss him."

One of the three, Rabbi Korff, asked for comment Wednesday, said Mr. Nixon is "a deeply religious, deeply devout man—this is without equivocation."

Rabbi Korff pointed out that his efforts to support the presidency began last summer without prior consultation with the White House.

"I didn't meet with the President until Dec. 19, 1973," he said. He indicated that part of his relationship with the President was to "give hope, self-esteem and renewal of faith."

The rabbi said it would be unfair to characterize Mr. Nixon as turning to a trio of religious figures—a priest, a rabbi and a Korean sect leader—in his hour of need.

Mr. Nixon "only met Mr. Moon fleetingly once," said Rabbi Korff.

However, following Mr. Moon's revelations about the sacredness of the presidency in newspaper ads last November, his Unification Church of America organized airport cheering sections for Mr. Nixon and demonstrations such as the 72-hour prayer fast on the U.S. Capitol steps in late July.

Dr. Graham declined to comment on the relationship between Mr. Nixon and his three religious defenders, partly because of the lack of contact with Mr. Nixon this year.

Dr. Graham said he has not seen Mr. Nixon privately since December.

"I heard from a friend of the President that he (Mr. Nixon) didn't want to get Billy Graham involved," Dr. Graham said. "So I assumed that he just wanted to keep me out of it."

One historian of American religion, Dr. William Clebsch, said Wednesday that Nixon "used every dimension of his life — family, religion —" in order

Baptist Church To Install Pastor

The Rev. Daniel C. McFaden will be installed Sunday as the pastor of the Braddock Baptist Church, 6519 Braddock Rd., Fairfax.

Mr. McFaden comes to Braddock from the Falls Baptist Church, Wake Forest, N.C., where he served until receiving his master of divinity degree.

Born in Richmond, Mr. McFaden was graduated from the University of Richmond in 1964 and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1971.

Say Nixon Was 'Using' Religion

The Washington Post

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to identify himself with the presidency, rather than present himself as a fallible human being under the responsibility of the presidency.

"He didn't use religion; he abused it," Dr. Clebsch said.

Besides the controversial White House services, the scholar cited Mr. Nixon's "drawing on his friendship with Billy Graham, his summoning of his house Jesuit to rise in defense of his foul language and at the last, his most abusive (act), his enlisting of Rabbi Korff."

Dr. Graham indicated he believes it is admirable for an American president to set a religious example for the public, and that that was one of the reasons for Mr. Nixon's series of White House worship services.

"Mr. Eisenhower, I think, rarely went to church before he became President, but afterward he went often," said Dr. Graham.

"The man who went to church most often was President Johnson, sometimes two services in one morning," he said.

Dr. Graham said he thinks President Ford wants his behavior to be example-setting as well.

"I played golf with him the weekend before I went to Europe (in July). He's quite aware of the religious situation in the country and has come into contact with many evangelical groups," said Dr. Graham.

The evangelist said he thinks Mr. Ford will speak more openly about religious matters than did Mr. Nixon.

"He'll probably talk more about the Bible, God and the need for prayer than Nixon," Mr. Graham said.

"President Nixon didn't like to; I never knew why."



By Joe Heiberger—The Washington Post

The Nixons and the Grahams in December: friendship's end?