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**Biography Bil Bright [Review of: J.G. Turner (2008) JOHN G. TURNER, Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ. The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America.]**

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JOHN G. TURNER, *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ. The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2008, 304 pp., 20 ill. ISBN 9780807831854. US\$ 59.95.

Assistant professor of history at the University of South Alabama, John G. Turner, published a clear history, part biography, part institutional history of Bill Bright (1921–2003), the founder and director of Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC), from its founding in 1951 till 2001. Turner claims that CCC's activities help to explain the vitality of postwar evangelicalism. It did so by fully exploiting the flexibility of a parachurch organization. Its fundraising activities and entrepreneurial type of evangelism was an innovative source for cultural adaptation. The result of this approach realigned the conservative wing of American Christianity with conservative political forces, which polarized American politics.

Studying CCC is a logical choice for obvious reasons. As the largest parachurch organization it operated in the mainstream of evangelicalism. On a national level, it was involved in the major events in America at the time. Last but not least, it became a model for marketing the gospel. Initially Bright targeted students at their home bases, fraternities, and sports facilities, as the old YMCA had done. His remarkable success in making converts among high profile students propelled him into an ever growing circle of operations, both geographically and demographically: from the western US to a national, then international level, and from a student milieu to all citizens. Each decade his plans grew more ambitious and his need for financial support expanded accordingly. This resulted in an international organization with branches in numerous countries and an annual budget of half a billion dollars.

The strength of this book lies in its analysis of the context of these operations, such as Bright's failed business efforts, CCC's origin in California as part of the rejuvenated Billy Graham style of mass evangelism, Bright's gradual alienation from Bob Jones's separatist style of fundamentalism, the effect of maintaining a high profile headquarters, and his role in a countercultural variation of the New Left. CCC and the New Left shared an alarmist strategy fanned by a great concern for the future. This attitude encouraged anti-institutional allergies, while in fact both movements built their own institutions.

CCC's growth was not unique, for the number of evangelical institutions skyrocketed and created a huge constituency. Through a series of creative tensions the emerging evangelical subculture achieved a respectable position. This upward movement started with the departure from their former "family members" who had defended a separatist approach, and was followed by a

cautiously welcoming attitude towards the charismatics, the invention of a national evangelical profile (in 1976) thanks to a trio of high-profile born-again Christians (Carter, Colson, and Cleaver), and a liaison with conservative politicians leading to a strong stand in domestic issues. One of the most effective mobilizing instruments was to raise the level of anxiety, which called for immediate political action. First communism and secular humanism raised fear, later the attention turned to the future of the family. The result was that Bright and many colleagues blurred the line between evangelical religion and evangelical politics. Despite the criticism from liberal evangelicals this process did not stop.

Bright's inspirational legacy is found in his "gospel in a nutshell," the four spiritual laws, which have been adopted by scores of evangelistic organizations. Its message is that God had a plan for everyone, that humans rebelled against Him and lost track of this plan, that Jesus' atonement restored the knowledge of this plan and a personal acceptance of Jesus opened up the future. Secondly, Bright perfected the flow of money to parachurch organizations (though without enriching himself), which other groups mimicked. Thirdly, he welded new coalitions of Christians, including Roman Catholics, and conservatives.

Turner's use of a great variety of published and unpublished sources and more than a hundred interviews, create a sound basis for his enlightening explanation of the spectacular rise of evangelicalism. As an encouragement for further research, I would like to add three sets of questions, which could strengthen his argument.

My first remark concerns the link between business and the gospel industry. Why did so many evangelical captains of industry subsidize it? Was the emergence of conservative politics an inevitable result? Comparisons with similar groups, such as Abraham Vereide's International Christian Fellowship (or, "the Family"), might have revealed broader patterns. Were those efforts related? Did the international growth of CCC follow the spread of capitalist economy? If so, it would explain its remarkable growth in Korea, but it would also raise questions about the lack of expansion in Japan.

Secondly, the book deals primarily with the CCC leadership, but where did the recruits come from and how long did they stay? Were most of them converts and if so, converts of which type? Sometimes it seems that the reported decisions for Christ were reconfirmations from lapsed Christians, rather than completely new conversions. Here a missiological analysis of what conversion means could have helped. Now it seems that CCC could continue to grow only by first tapping those students who had been raised Christians, and then by widening the net of target groups, including teenagers. Did this strategy lead to

a saturation of CCC's recruitment potential, which prodded the organization to find ever more ambitious new expansion opportunities?

A third set of questions connects philosophical and religious pragmatism. Repeatedly Bright explained that results counted most, that the will was more important than the mind. His ideas were rather wide than deep. Did this attitude explain Bright's periodic failures and his uncritical use of financial and military means, despite his personal integrity? Why did he trust people like Nixon and J. Edgar Hoover, who showed so little evidence of personal piety?

Turner has enriched historiography with a highly readable and balanced book about a key figure in evangelical America, which offers new research questions about the captivating world of American evangelicalism.

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