

People

News in the [January 23, 2007](#) issue

Billy Graham has been named in the Gallup Poll's top 10 "most admired men" list for a record 50th time. In a poll taken in mid-December, the 88-year-old evangelist came in fifth. Ranked before him, in order, were President **George W. Bush**, former president Bill Clinton, former president Jimmy Carter and Senator **Barack Obama** (D., Ill.). The men ranking behind Graham, in order, were former secretary of state Colin Powell, Pope Benedict XVI, former South African president Nelson Mandela, former president George H. W. Bush and Microsoft founder Bill Gates. Graham has been ranked in the poll almost every year—starting in 1955—that the question was asked by the Gallup Organization. Senator **Hillary Clinton** (D., N.Y.) topped the Gallup list of most admired women for the 11th time. She has placed in one of the top two spots every year since 1993. Oprah Winfrey came in second for the fifth year in a row, followed by Condoleeza Rice and Laura Bush.

Former president **Jimmy Carter**, under fire from Jewish leaders for describing the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands as "apartheid" in a new book, has written an open letter to U.S. Jews to defend and clarify his use of the term. In the December 15 letter, Carter described a meeting he had with the Board of Rabbis of Greater Phoenix while on a tour to promote his book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*: "I emphasized, as I had throughout the tour, that the book was about conditions and events in the Palestinian territories and not in Israel, where a democracy exists with all the freedoms we enjoy in our country and Israeli Jews and Arabs are legally guaranteed the same rights as citizens." Carter said his use of the term *apartheid* was based on travels to the "Holy Land during the past 33 years." He said the Palestinian people are being "deprived of the necessities of life by economic restrictions imposed on them by Israel and the United States." The Anti-Defamation League demurred: "Apartheid, that abhorrent and racist system in South Africa, has no bearing on Israeli policies. Not only are Israel's policies not racist, but the situation in the territories does not arise from Israeli intentions to oppress or repress Palestinians, but is a product of Palestinian rejection of Israel and the use of terror and violence against the Jewish state."

Robert Bilheimer, a Presbyterian minister who helped organize the first meeting of the World Council of Churches and led opposition to the Vietnam War and apartheid in South Africa, died December 17 at age 89 in Canandaigua, New York. Bilheimer was among the organizers of the first meeting in 1948 of the WCC, the international ecumenical organization that emerged out of World War II. He became an associate general secretary of the council in 1960 and was a leader in the effort by the WCC to declare apartheid—South Africa’s system of racial separation—a sin. He was credited with helping turn South African theologian C. F. Beyers Naude into a staunch opponent of apartheid. “Bob Bilheimer, who called himself an ‘ecumenical engineer,’ was both an organizational genius and an inveterate provider and provoker of thought,” said a spokesperson for the Minnesota-based Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, of which Bilheimer had been executive director from 1974 to his retirement in 1984. Though Bilheimer was senior minister at a Presbyterian church in Rochester, New York, from 1963 to 1966, he soon returned to the ecumenical movement as international affairs director of the National Council of Churches.

Harald Bredesen, an ordained Lutheran minister who led many religious figures into a “Spirit-filled” charismatic experience, including broadcaster Pat Robertson and actor Pat Boone, died December 29 in an Escondido, California, hospital following complications from a fall at his home three days before. He was 88. Bredesen was credited with coining the term *charismatic renewal*, the neo-Pentecostal movement that spread in mainline churches in the 1950s and 1960s. Bredesen was involved in the founding of Robertson’s CBN and the California-based Trinity Broadcasting Network.