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## Conservative Constructionist: The Early Influence of Billy Graham in Britain

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At an early stage in his All Scotland Crusade of 1955, Billy Graham announced: 'I am neither a fundamentalist nor a modernist, but a constructionist'.<sup>1</sup> Graham's statement was, at the time, a way of avoiding theological controversy, but it also provides an insight into an important aspect of his contribution to the twentieth-century church. As a constructionist Billy Graham played a critical part in the shaping of British evangelicalism in the period after the Second World War. Confidence among British evangelicals was low. The inter-war years had seen the evangelical constituency weakened by division and suffering from consequent decline in influence. Max Warren, secretary of the Church Missionary Society, wrote in 1944 that 'all too commonly today, an Evangelical in the Church of England is a person labouring under a sense of frustration and discouragement so deep as to engender . . . an inferiority complex'.<sup>2</sup> As well as doctrinal tensions between liberal evangelicals, conserva-

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in F. P. Butler, 'Billy Graham and the end of Evangelical Unity', University of Florida PhD (1976), 86. I am indebted to the staff of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, Illinois, for their help in the provision of this and other source materials. I am also grateful to the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals for a grant to facilitate the research.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by D. W. Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism in Its Settings: The British and American Movements since 1940', in M. A. Noll, D. W. Bebbington and G. A. Rawlyk, eds, *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1900* (Oxford, 1994), 367.

tives and fundamentalists,<sup>3</sup> there was no common spirituality, with the conservative camp alone being sub-divided into those who adhered to either Keswick or Wesleyan holiness teaching, to a Reformed understanding of sanctification or to Pentecostalism. George Wilson, who was to manage the Graham organisation over the next four decades, accorded British Christianity this bleak assessment in a 'Report of Britain' in the *American Youth for Christ Magazine* in 1947: 'The moral pulse of Britain was low, her churches empty and her youth indifferent'.<sup>4</sup> It is understandable that American evangelical observers, living as they did in a country which saw church membership rise by nearly 40% in the 1940s, would have viewed Britain as an obvious mission field. In the spring of 1946 Billy Graham, then aged twenty-seven, became part of a small team of Youth for Christ missionaries charged with the task, as they saw it, of saving Britain out of 'the abyss'.<sup>5</sup> From this point the influence of Graham in the process of reconstructing conservative evangelicalism in Britain was to be felt in a number of crucial ways.

Evangelistic activity was by no means absent in Britain. Towards the end of the war a Forces Gospel Song Team was in action. The National Young Life Campaign, founded in 1911 by the brothers Frederick and Arthur Wood, had been a significant movement in inter-war evangelicalism and claimed 13,000 members in 1947.<sup>6</sup> A younger evangelist who had been inspired by the Wood brothers and had worked for the Children's Special Service Mission (CSSM) was Tom Rees. Immediately after the war Rees took advantage of the sense of psychological relief felt at the ending of the bombing and blackouts to begin large-scale meetings in the Westminster Central Hall and then in the Royal Albert Hall. He used well-known names like C. S. Lewis, leading preachers such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones of Westminster Chapel and W. E. Sangster of Westminster Central Hall, and titled individuals such as Viscount Hailsham to attract capacity crowds.<sup>7</sup> Despite the obvious enthusiasm which Rees generated among young people, he found that his initiatives were slow to

<sup>3</sup> D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), Chap. 6, 'Walking Apart'. Bebbington has the 'centrists' as a fourth group.

<sup>4</sup> *Youth for Christ Magazine*, April 1947, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Report by Wes Hartzell on the British trip, which took place from 18 March to 20 April 1946, in Collection (CN) 224, Box 1, Folder 17, Billy Graham Archives. Also W. Martin, *The Billy Graham Story: A Prophet with Honour* (London, 1991), 94-5, 106. Martin's is an outstanding biography of Graham.

<sup>6</sup> *The Christian* (after C), 24 April 1947, 1. For the Wood brothers, see F. P. and M. S. Wood, *Youth Advancing* (London, 1961).

<sup>7</sup> J. Rees, *Putting Ten Thousand to Flight* (London, 1952), 95, 102, 108; C, 14 February 1946, 9.

attract support from London ministers, most of whom apparently had little confidence in mass evangelism.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the 1950s attitudes had dramatically altered. A gathering of evangelists called together by Rees in 1958 revealed that those who a few years before had felt discouraged and isolated were revelling in the new atmosphere which was by then perceived to be prevailing in Britain.<sup>9</sup> It was recognised that the Graham Crusades of 1954 in Harringay Arena, London, and 1955 in the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, had made a major contribution to this change of outlook, and forty years on it is proper to analyse the wider impact of those historic meetings. An understanding of Graham's impact in the pre-Harringay period is, however, also vital in any study of the changing face of post-war British evangelical Christianity.

### Raising the level of confidence

Under the leadership of Torrey Johnson, the successful pastor of the fundamentalist Midwest Bible Church in the Chicago area, 'Chicago-land' Youth for Christ rallies commenced in spring 1944, attracting up to 30,000 young people from the metropolis. The following year saw over six hundred North American youth leaders gathering to form Youth for Christ International, an organisation which, with its vision, verve and contemporary approach formed a key element in the growing strength of American conservative Christianity.<sup>10</sup> The roots of this renewed evangelicalism were in fundamentalism, but a generation was emerging which had not experienced the humiliation of the damaging defeats which fundamentalism had suffered in the mid-1920s.<sup>11</sup> The new, younger leadership, epitomised in the arena of front-line evangelism by Johnson and subsequently Graham, was supremely confident that what was often termed the 'old-time religion', far from being outmoded, was utterly relevant and overwhelmingly convincing.<sup>12</sup> Graham was recruited to Youth for Christ by Johnson ('If I can swing it, will you come join us?') and from 1945 Graham was YFC's first field representative. Quickly

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<sup>8</sup> J. Rees, *Stranger than Fiction* (Frinton-on-Sea, 1957), 24-5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>10</sup> See J. A. Carpenter, ed, *The Youth for Christ Movement and its Pioneers* (New York, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> G. M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York, 1980), especially 176-195.

<sup>12</sup> M. Silk, 'The Rise of the "New Evangelicalism": Shock and Adjustment', in W. R. Hutchison, ed, *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment, 1900-1960* (Cambridge, 1989), 280.

exhibiting the enormous capacity for travel and work which was to characterise his ministry, Graham visited forty-seven American states in that year—in the process being designated by United Airlines as their top civilian passenger—determined, as he had done in Chicago, to use ‘every modern means to catch the ear of the unconverted’ who were then ‘punched . . . straight between the eyes with the gospel’.<sup>13</sup> The style of the youth rallies was fast-moving and image-laden, modelled on the latest media techniques. Success bred success and during 1946–7 Youth for Christ became a significant force, not only in North America but in a number of other countries. An enthusiastic YFC report in 1947 stated: ‘News of the great YOUTH meetings in America and elsewhere in the world reached the ears of English leaders who asked for the inspiration and blessing of God from their American friends’.<sup>14</sup> American evangelical confidence was being exported.

Three YFC preachers—Johnson, Graham and Charles (Chuck) Templeton, a former newspaper cartoonist—and a singer, Stratton Shufelt, together with Wes Hartzell, a reporter from William Randolph Hearst’s *Chicago Herald-American*, arrived in Britain in March 1946. Tom Rees was one of the American team’s few initial contacts and he gathered about sixty clergy and lay people to meet the American group at the Bonnington Hotel in London. Evangelistic events began to be scheduled. Hartzell, who was a Christian, highlighted in his reports what was seen as the poor state of affairs within British churches.<sup>15</sup> In Eastbourne, a town of 60,000 people, the local ministers reported a total of only 100 young people connected with any church. Later in the tour Graham preached in Cheetham Methodist Church, a building seating about 1,200, to an audience of sixty-two, of whom two were young. Such news bulletins were, of course, often a prelude to accounts of revival and there was no doubt a measure of exaggeration. It seems clear, however, that this forty-six day visit, followed by six months of mission which Graham conducted throughout Britain from October 1946, brought fresh vision in many places. Four reasons may be given. First, American enthusiasm and vibrancy were contagious. Templeton, who was later to move away from his evangelical faith, recalled: ‘I don’t really think we affronted people over there. . . They expected ebullience from Americans. I’m not so sure they didn’t welcome it. . .

<sup>13</sup> Billy Graham quoted by W. G. McLoughlin, *Billy Graham: Revivalist in a Secular Age* (New York, 1960), 38.

<sup>14</sup> *YFC Magazine*, April 1947, 4.

<sup>15</sup> CN 224, Box 1, Folder 17, BG Archives, for these reports.

We were so full of bloody energy, we were just irresistible'.<sup>16</sup> Second, Graham used his personal magnetism to inspire local leaders. Stanley Baker, the evangelistically-minded minister of Bordesley Green Baptist Church in Birmingham, was unconvinced that the way to reach the 95% of people in Birmingham who allegedly did not attend church was through 'surplus saints', as he labelled them, from America. Graham, in a telephone call, convinced him otherwise, and Baker was so motivated that he engaged in frantic telephoning of his acquaintances urging support for the Birmingham youth meetings. Numbers attending rose from 500 to 2,500.<sup>17</sup> Third, rallies of the YFC variety represented a new ingredient on the British evangelistic menu. Edwin Orr, a leading chronicler of revivals, suggested that the huge impact of Youth for Christ in America could be attributed to the utilisation of modern techniques and although he could pinpoint few differences between the methodology of YFC and Tom Rees, the YFC organisation seemed to him to convey an atmosphere of success.<sup>18</sup> Above all, however, the palpable power of Graham's preaching and leadership made British participants, in such diverse places as Eastbourne and Bradford, describe his meetings as the greatest they could remember, while in Pontypridd the experience evoked memories of the Welsh revival of 1904-5.<sup>19</sup> The YFC comment on the City Hall rallies in Birmingham in February 1947 was uncompromisingly triumphant: Birmingham was 'in the grip of a revival'.<sup>20</sup>

During his six months of continuous evangelism in Britain in 1946-7 Graham, accompanied by Cliff and Billie Barrows as his musical team, spoke in twenty-seven centres and on 360 occasions, an average of about two meetings a day. He had made four further transatlantic trips by 1949 and T. W. Wilson, one of his close friends and colleagues, also spent several months in Britain with a quartette named 'Couriers for Christ'. Support for Wilson was forthcoming from prominent business men as well as ministers.<sup>21</sup> The idea of a crusade in Britain on a larger scale was already germinating. Graham's comment to George Beverly Shea, who was emerging as the leading gospel singer in America, was: 'There is a feeling among some of us that we should go back again some day and hold a

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<sup>16</sup> M. Frady, *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness* (Boston/Toronto, 1979), 166.

<sup>17</sup> Report by Billy Graham, CN 318, Box 54, Folder 13, BG Archives.

<sup>18</sup> C, 10 April 1947, 9.

<sup>19</sup> *YFC Magazine*, April 1947, 5, 24, 25.

<sup>20</sup> *YFC Magazine*, February 1947, 51.

<sup>21</sup> C, 8 April 1948, 9.

campaign not directed primarily to youth'.<sup>22</sup> Such pronouncements as those by the Lord Mayor of York, who was quoted as claiming that the Graham meeting he attended was not only 'one of the finest exhibitions of religious programming' but was an approach which could 'lead Britain back to God',<sup>23</sup> must have raised expectations. The attraction eventually became too strong to resist and in 1951 Graham, through an intermediary, signalled to the British Evangelical Alliance his willingness to talk to church leaders about evangelism.<sup>24</sup> Negotiations, which took place during the period March–July 1952, were far from straightforward. The British Council of Churches wanted a pilot crusade to be held outside London, but Graham was not interested in such a proposal. His goal was to mount 'the greatest evangelistic effort, humanly speaking, that the Church had ever committed itself to', in order to make religion a national talking point, to encourage the church about mass evangelism and to stimulate church attendance.<sup>25</sup> The responsibility for arranging what became the Greater London Crusade at Harringay Arena from March–May 1954 therefore fell, perhaps inevitably, to the Evangelical Alliance. At a meeting of BCC and EA representatives the intriguing statement was made that a campaign of the kind proposed would best be sponsored by 'a body of responsible enthusiasts outside ecclesiastical organisation'.<sup>26</sup> The fact that such a group of enthusiasts could be drawn together was due in no small measure to Graham's influence in the 1940s.

It was Graham's Los Angeles Crusade of 1949, when such celebrities as Stuart Hamblen, a popular cowboy singer, Louis Zamperini, an Olympic track star, and Jim Vaus, a wiretapper with underworld connections, were converted, which guaranteed Graham's position as America's foremost evangelist. The scale of the Harringay Crusade, with an aggregate attendance of over two million at all associated meetings, including 120,000 at Wembley Stadium on the closing day—the largest religious meeting in British history—gave Graham the leading evangelistic place on the world stage. Evangelical religion was suddenly, and unexpectedly, big news in the British as well as the American press. Reflecting on Harringay in *Moody Monthly* in October 1954, Graham identified the key importance of American leadership in altering Britain's spiritual state, which he described as characterised by rationalism,

<sup>22</sup> G. B. Shea, *Then Sings my Soul* (Old Tappan, NJ, 1968), 95.

<sup>23</sup> *YFC Magazine*, April 1947, 4.

<sup>24</sup> F. Colquhoun, *Harringay Story* (London, 1955), 17–18.

<sup>25</sup> Billy Graham to Bryan Green, 5 July 1952, Collection SC 9, BG Archives.

<sup>26</sup> Colquhoun, *Harringay*, 27.

materialism, an irrelevant church (only 6–10% church attendance), extreme liberalism in the pulpit and lack of evangelism<sup>27</sup> To what extent, then, did Harringay make a difference in these areas? Three years on, when the predictable euphoria had been dissipated, F. P. Copland Simmons, who in 1955–6 was Moderator of the Free Church Council of England and Wales, considered that there had been a ‘turn in the tide’, with Christian meetings gathering strength<sup>28</sup> In the following year J. C. Pollock, editor of *The Churchman*, suggested that the most significant contribution of the Crusades of 1954–5 was the new emphasis on the part that lay people (actually ‘laymen’!) had to play in the evangelisation of Britain. Pollock was also convinced that in sharp contrast to twenty years previously, when evangelicals were regarded as relics of an era long gone, the initiative now lay with them<sup>29</sup> It seemed that the evangelistic thrust from America, which Graham embodied, had proved capable of being transferred to Britain and had produced new optimism about the future of British evangelical life.

### Establishing and strengthening networks

An important factor in the renewal of evangelical confidence was the creation of networks of people and organisations. Adrian Hastings, in his survey of post-war evangelical expansion, tends to overlook some of the early formative processes in favour of the high profile consequences<sup>30</sup> In America the leadership of the youth network included Chuck Templeton, Director of Youth for Christ in Toronto, Jack Wyrzten, a bandleader converted in the late 1930s who staged ambitious events in Carnegie Hall and Madison Square Gardens in New York, and above all Johnson and his associates in Chicago, a city with an evangelical tradition which owed much to Dwight L. Moody. Before joining Johnson, Graham spent a brief but effective period as pastor of a Baptist Church (renamed, to reflect his evangelistic concerns, Village Church) in Western Springs, a suburb of Chicago. Stratton Shufelt, the singer during the first YFC invasion of Britain, was director of music at the famous Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. Against a background of this kind of evangelistic teamwork, the YFC group which left Chicago airport in 1946—with a thousand young people there to see them off—was intent on

<sup>27</sup> *Moody Monthly*, October 1954, 32.

<sup>28</sup> *Christianity Today* (after CT), Vol 1, No 21 (1957), 5.

<sup>29</sup> CT, Vol 2, No 15 (1958), 11—an article entitled ‘England Four Years After Graham’.

<sup>30</sup> See A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920–1990* (London, 1991), 453–5.



establishing similar networks in Britain and elsewhere in Europe. The inauguration of British Youth for Christ in 1947 was a sign of the growing transatlantic dimension, and Johnson and Graham were back in Britain for the second YFC annual conference in 1948, by which time Eric Hutchings, the first British YFC Field Director, was able to stage a 'Welcome Back to Britain' rally for Graham in Manchester.<sup>31</sup> It was reported that 7,500 attended, some gaining entrance as a result of obtaining black market tickets, and 750 apparently professed faith, though whether any of these repented of dubious methods of entry is unknown. What is clear is that by 1948 British evangelicals involved in seeking to reach a new generation were aware of a growing sense of national identity.

This emerging British network was to prove invaluable when larger events were launched. The committee which planned Harringay included Lindsay Glegg, minister of Down Lodge Hall, Wandsworth, who had interests in many evangelical groups including Christian Endeavour and Crusaders and was described rather extravagantly in an American YFC report in 1946 as one who 'probably has more influence on British Christian life than any other man'.<sup>32</sup> Also on the committee were Tom Livermore, who had used Graham to run a much acclaimed parish mission in St John's, Deptford in 1947—at which 234 people professed conversion<sup>33</sup>—and Joe Blinco, who had invited Graham to his Methodist Church in Southampton and who would later join the Graham team. As a result of Graham's visits to Birmingham between 1946 and 1949 he forged a lasting friendship with Alfred Owen, the Chairman of the large engineering firm Rubery, Owen & Co, with Owen becoming a powerful evangelical force through his work for Birmingham YFC and as treasurer of the Harringay Crusade.<sup>34</sup> Maurice Rowlandson, whose personal history as Graham's representative in Britain was to be so closely intertwined with Billy's work that his autobiography was entitled *Life with Billy*, describes how it all started when he met Graham at a London YFC presentation in 1948.<sup>35</sup> In the English context Anglican connections were particularly important to Graham and in 1949, at a YFC conference which Cliff Barrows, Bev Shea and Graham attended, there was Anglican support from Bryan

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<sup>31</sup> *YFC Magazine*, March 1948, 47, 52.

<sup>32</sup> CN 224, Box 1, Folder 17, BG Archives.

<sup>33</sup> C, 20 March 1947, 11.

<sup>34</sup> D. J. Jeremy, 'Businessmen in Interdenominational Activity: Birmingham Youth for Christ, 1940s–1950s', *The Baptist Quarterly*, Vol 33, No 7 (1990), 336–43; D. J. Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians: Business Leaders and the Churches in Britain, 1900–1960* (Oxford, 1990), 397–410.

<sup>35</sup> M. Rowlandson, *Life with Billy* (London, 1992), 11.

Green, recently appointed Rector of Birmingham—a transatlantic figure in his own right, who had drawn large audiences at evangelistic efforts in New York's Cathedral of St John the Divine—and Colin Kerr, a Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral. Other backers were added, the most important Anglican figure being Hugh Gough, Bishop of Barking (later Archbishop of Sidney and central to Graham's 1959 Australian Crusade) while in Scotland Tom Allan, Field Organiser of 'Tell Scotland', the expression of a national evangelistic concern which took shape in Scotland in the early 1950s, was a strategic contact. It was Graham's vision for gathering key leaders which helped to produce more concerted evangelical action.

The success which Graham achieved in eliciting commitment to united evangelistic ventures came from two sources. The first was Graham's ability to adopt a flexible approach which allowed him to adapt to, and learn from, the differing contexts in which he found himself. Conducting a service for William Fitch, minister of Springburn Hill Parish Church in Glasgow—described by Hartzell as a very formal church which had not experienced revival for years—Graham obliged by wearing a formal gown. At a deeper level, Stephen Olford, a British evangelist who was to become pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in New York, helped Graham through a personal spiritual crisis in 1947 in which Graham's heart was 'flooded with the Holy Spirit'.<sup>36</sup> Without altering the essence of his message, Graham proved himself, in Britain as later elsewhere, to be a very teachable teacher.<sup>37</sup> His conservatism, coupled with his policy of avoiding confrontation, resonated with and strengthened traditional British evangelical values. As a consequence, divergent streams in evangelicalism were drawn together. Secondly, Graham recognised the need to encourage new leadership. On a visit to Aberdeen, as part of the early 1946 tour, he preached at Gilcomston South Church of Scotland (which was, it was remarked appreciatively, well heated) where he noted the potential of the energetic and innovative minister, William Still, and invited him to America. In turn, Still was impressed with Graham's direct and forceful style, a welcome contrast with what Still called the histrionics and lurid preaching of Templeton.<sup>38</sup> The American Youth for Christ team insisted that they would not leave Aberdeen until they knew that YFC rallies were going to continue and these did take off in a burst of enthusiasm, but within less than a year Still, feeling that the meetings

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<sup>36</sup> Martin, *Billy Graham Story*, 98–9.

<sup>37</sup> D. Lockard, *The Unheard Billy Graham* (London, 1971), 27–8.

<sup>38</sup> *History of Gilcomston South Church, Aberdeen, 1868–1968* (Aberdeen, 1968), 42.

were 'dragging' and had 'lost their grip on outsiders', severed his links with YFC.<sup>39</sup> He became convinced that the way to promote evangelical renewal in the Church of Scotland was by consistent preaching rather than by special evangelistic events, a task to which he committed himself with distinction. Although in some instances, therefore, Graham failed in his recruitment of others into the new network, his successes seem to have been considerable. Stanley Baker, the Bordesley Green minister, expressed his switch from coolness about Graham to wholehearted support: 'I wanted to hug this 27 year old big boy that I had failed, to clean his shoes, wash his feet. . .'<sup>40</sup> It was these many personal contacts, often carefully nurtured, which constituted a significant part of Graham's contribution to the strengthening of the evangelical sub-culture in Britain.

### Deepening unity

Greater confidence among, and closer links between evangelicals signalled a move away from the fragmentation of the inter-war era. Both in America, which had been the scene of intense fundamentalist-modernist warfare, and in Britain, where conflicts were more moderate, Graham sought to promote moves towards greater unity by leaping backwards in time to the Moody and Sankey ethos of the later nineteenth century. Silk, in his study of the rise of the 'new evangelicalism' (a movement which rejected the separatism, obscurantism and militancy of fundamentalism), suggests that in the 1950s an evangelical excitement took hold of mainstream Protestantism which harked back to the goal of 'the evangelisation of the world in this generation'.<sup>41</sup> This watchword, often associated with student and missionary concerns and especially with the leadership of J. R. Mott, became prominent at Moody's annual summer conferences at Northfield, Massachusetts in the 1880s.<sup>42</sup> Moody is best known as an evangelist and it was his evangelistic strategy, including the extensive use of advertising and the place of music, which Graham consciously employed as the pattern for his crusades.<sup>43</sup> There was, however, another important aspect of Moody which influenced Graham. Moody's Northfield conferences had Christian unity as their central idea and in order to facilitate this Moody, whose personal sympathies lay with fairly conservative

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 43, 46, 49.

<sup>40</sup> CN 318, Box 54, Folder 13, BG Archives.

<sup>41</sup> Silk, 'New Evangelicalism', in Hutchison, *Between the Times*, 285.

<sup>42</sup> C. H. Hopkins, *John R. Mott, 1865-1955* (Grand Rapids, 1979), 28, 70.

<sup>43</sup> McLoughlin, *Billy Graham, 17-18*; L. W. Gillenson, *Billy Graham: The Man and His Message* (Greenwich, Conn., 1954), 67.

evangelicalism, invited some speakers who represented a more liberal approach, most notably the Scottish Old Testament scholar George Adam Smith.<sup>44</sup> W. G. McLoughlin, writing in 1959 in the widely-read American monthly *The Christian Century*, argued that Moody operated within a broad evangelicalism and had a vision of the 'church universal', but that as evangelicalism hardened into twentieth-century fundamentalism this concept was abandoned and with the resultant narrowing came the decline of mass evangelism after the First World War.<sup>45</sup> It was, therefore, a natural step for Graham, as he reversed that process, to emulate Moody in his approach to both evangelism and broad evangelical unity.

In Britain Graham had little difficulty in achieving evangelical co-operation on the ground. From 1946 onwards support for Graham and his associates was drawn from all Britain's mainline denominations as well as from other groups such as the Brethren and Elim Pentecostals. Rees noted in 1948 a marked increase in co-operation between churches, ministers and Christian leaders.<sup>46</sup> The contribution of Rees himself to this process was important. Inspired by experiences in the United States, Rees purchased Hildenborough Hall, a large country house in Kent, and turned it into an influential Christian conference centre.<sup>47</sup> For a time it seemed that Rees might take on the mantle of Moody, with Glegg pronouncing in 1951 that Rees was both a Moody and a Sankey in one person.<sup>48</sup> Another central figure was John Stott, who became Rector of All Souls in 1950 at the age of twenty-nine, and who by 1954 was accepted by most Anglican evangelical clergy as the outstanding figure of the future.<sup>49</sup> But whereas Rees concentrated much of his post-war attention on the London area and Stott was a beacon for Anglicans, Graham was winning over key supporters throughout the British Isles and across the denominations. Even in traditionally conservative and revivalist Northern Ireland a businessman said in 1947 that in his fifty years of Christian experience he had never known such power as was mediated through Graham. The body which sponsored Graham's Belfast meetings decided to reorganise and affiliate to YFC.<sup>50</sup> Common evangelical action, as a doorway to evangelistic success,

<sup>44</sup> W. R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody* (New York, 1900), 426; J. C. Pollock, *Moody without Sankey* (London, 1963), 258.

<sup>45</sup> W. G. McLoughlin, *The Christian Century* (after CC), Vol 76, No 24 (1959), 744.

<sup>46</sup> C, 29 April 1948, 6.

<sup>47</sup> C, 24 January 1946, 9.

<sup>48</sup> C, 27 April 1951, 3.

<sup>49</sup> M. Seward, *The Anglican Church Today: Evangelicals on the Move* (Oxford, 1987), 31.

<sup>50</sup> C, 6 March 1947, 13.

was undoubtedly high on Graham's agenda and speaking in Raven Hill Presbyterian Church in Belfast he stated that he had come to bring elements of the city closer together.<sup>51</sup> Such evangelical reservations about Graham as there were tended to come from some in the Calvinistic camp. Martyn Lloyd-Jones made oblique references to Harringay.<sup>52</sup> Forthright opposition was the stance taken by others who followed his lead.<sup>53</sup> But looking back on Harringay from the vantage point of 1958, Pollock emphasised the unity in evangelism and prayer—not, of course, in doctrine—across the denominations, which had come out of Graham's crusade.<sup>54</sup> Although Scotland was less cheering, with united action lasting only during 1955 and with basic theological tensions remaining unresolved, Pollock was confident that if Graham had stayed longer in Britain, as Moody and Sankey did in 1874–5, more substantial unity could have been achieved.<sup>55</sup>

It was the theological tension involved in co-operation with non-evangelicals which was to cause Graham some of his most severe headaches. While attention is sometimes directed to Graham's 1957 New York Crusade as the time when he embraced the principle of allowing 'modernists' to be co-sponsors of his crusades his thinking was actually developing over a number of years. As early as 1946 Graham was happy to accept an invitation from Ernest Barnes, the Bishop of Birmingham, who was associated with Anglicanism's liberal evangelical movement but who was viewed by some as an 'extreme liberal', to talk to a diocesan gathering on evangelism in the twentieth century.<sup>56</sup> In 1948 American and British Youth for Christ leaders, including Graham, decided that young people should not be discouraged from going back to 'dead' or modernist churches, since the very presence of those recently converted could bring revival. It was during his London Crusade that Graham's base of support broadened beyond conservative evangelicalism. There seems little doubt that the approval of Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury,<sup>57</sup> and Leslie Weatherhead, minister of the City Temple,

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<sup>51</sup> *YFC Magazine*, April 1947, 25.

<sup>52</sup> I am indebted to Gilbert Kirby, former General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, for his recollections of this period.

<sup>53</sup> As illustrated by E. Hulse, *Billy Graham: The Pastor's Dilemma* (Hounslow, 1966).

<sup>54</sup> J. C. Pollock, *CT*, Vol 2, No 15 (1958), 11.

<sup>55</sup> J. C. Pollock, *Billy Graham* (London, 1966), 198–9.

<sup>56</sup> Pollock, *Billy Graham*, 64 (London edition). For Barnes see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 207–8.

<sup>57</sup> In the *Canterbury Diocesan Notes*, June 1954.

affected Graham's thinking.<sup>58</sup> Weatherhead was widely quoted for his statement: 'And what does fundamentalist theology matter compared with gathering in the people we have all missed and getting them to the point of decision'.<sup>59</sup> Graham's acceptance in 1955 of an invitation from the Protestant Council of the City of New York to conduct a Crusade under its auspices signalled a decisive distancing of himself from the fundamentalist camp. Jack Wyrzten was irate and leading American fundamentalists such as Carl McIntire, John R. Rice and Bob Jones Snr hurled vituperation.<sup>60</sup> In the American context the voice of the new evangelical coalition heard principally through Graham, Fuller Seminary in California and *Christianity Today*, a journal which Graham helped to launch as a vehicle for combining 'the best in liberalism and the best in fundamentalism'—had the effect of profoundly dividing the fundamentalist, separatist constituency.<sup>61</sup> In Britain, by contrast, Graham's policy of returning to the ethos of the Moody tradition brought evangelicals from various backgrounds closer together.

Concentration on Moody as an exemplar can mean that the role of Ira Sankey, Moody's soloist, is overlooked. Bev Shea sees Cliff Barrows, Graham's song leader, as continuing the Sankey tradition,<sup>62</sup> although it is also possible to argue that Shea's own singing is based on the Sankey model. Certainly the songs used in 1954 at Harringay drew heavily on an earlier era. In his late teens Shea confessed Christ in a revival meeting while 'Just as I am', the invitation hymn used so often at Graham crusades, was being sung. The combination of Graham and Shea, speaker and singer, copied the pattern established by Moody and Sankey and carried on by R. A. Torrey (Moody's lieutenant) and Charles Alexander, and by Billy Sunday and Homer Rodeheaver. The influence of Alexander and the trombone-playing Rodeheaver on Barrows has been particularly strong.<sup>63</sup> There was little change over the years in the core of the songs used in Graham crusades and David Winter, editor of *Crusade*, a magazine begun as part of the Graham follow-up, commented in 1966 that the preliminaries in the Crusade of that year

<sup>58</sup> W. De Sousa, 'Billy Graham: The Controversy over Cooperative Evangelism', Trinity Evangelical Divinity School MA, Deerfield (1979), 173.

<sup>59</sup> Martin, *Billy Graham Story*, 181.

<sup>60</sup> G. M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, 1987), 162–5.

<sup>61</sup> Butler, 'Billy Graham', argues this point. See also Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 158, 167.

<sup>62</sup> Shea, *Then Sings*, 115.

<sup>63</sup> G. W. Stansbury, 'The Music of the Billy Graham Crusades, 1947–1970: An Analysis and Evaluation', Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1971), 79.

seemed rather old fashioned and outdated.<sup>64</sup> In 1954, however, the effect of the Harringay music was to create a powerful sense of unity. Songs such as the Fanny Crosby favourite 'Blessed Assurance' had deep echoes in evangelical culture and their experientialism made them invaluable as inter-denominational cementing agencies. Barrows has argued that since he wants congregational material to be well known and able to be sung without embarrassment by outsiders he does not favour new songs, nor hymns that contain sentiments such as 'I worship'.<sup>65</sup> 'Blessed Assurance', however, which contains phrases such as 'Praising my Saviour all the day long', is hardly a song for outsiders. The fact is that Barrows and Shea have, in line with Graham's deliberate strategy, sought to re-create aspects of the 'old-time religion'. Speaking to British church leaders in 1952 Graham claimed that he had eliminated choruses from his meetings and was 'singing nothing but the old hymns'.<sup>66</sup> Although the British experience has been that this policy has not been so successful in the longer term, it had clear unifying effects in the 1950s.

### Promoting conservative Christianity

While Graham's policy became one of operating from a broad ecclesiastical base, his first visit to Britain illustrated the way in which he had been shaped by conservative American theology and spirituality. Significant American YFC funding came from businessmen who did not want the minds of young people cluttered up with 'the social gospel kind of preaching'.<sup>67</sup> It was the simple message of sin and individual salvation which was needed. At meetings in Newcastle in 1947 Graham 'preached sin night after night' and as a consequence 500 came to Christ. He was applauded in Birmingham later in that year for his fearlessness in speaking 'point blank' to the ministers of the city of their 'difficulties and sins'. Graham was appalled at the lack of leadership among conservative evangelicals and when he was told that there were only 400 young people in all the (presumably evangelical) theological schools, Bible Schools and Christian colleges in Britain he began to consider the setting up of a college along the lines of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.<sup>68</sup> On the ecumenical front, Graham attended the 1948 World Council of

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 103; D. Winter, *Decision* (after *D*), September 1966, 11.

<sup>65</sup> Martin, *Billy Graham Story*, 546.

<sup>66</sup> Billy Graham, *The Work of an Evangelist* (London, 1953), 22.

<sup>67</sup> H. E. Fey in *CC*, Vol 62, No 25 (1945), 730.

<sup>68</sup> CN 318, Box 54, Folder 13, BG Archives.

Churches Assembly and according to Pollock found it 'one of the most thrilling experiences of my life up to that point'<sup>69</sup> although when asked what he expected beforehand it seems that he believed the WCC was going to 'nominate the Anti-Christ'.<sup>70</sup> At best, it seems, Graham's attitude to liberal theologians was ambivalent. *The Christian Century* was incensed in 1951 when Graham supported a report by the Southern Baptist Convention which condemned the WCC. Graham stated his belief that 'the hope of Christianity is the Southern Baptist Convention' while *The Christian Century* saw the Southern Baptist attitude as 'perverse, unbrotherly and dangerous'.<sup>71</sup> The influence of Graham in Britain in the 1940s was calculated to strengthen a strongly conservative brand of evangelicalism.

So deeply embedded were Graham's fundamental beliefs that they underwent little change over time. From the 1940s he had many contacts with those outside the evangelical camp and not only remained thoroughly conservative but was responsible for the wider acceptance of such views. Reflecting on his own thinking, Graham suggested in 1960 that his mind had in fact changed and that his concept of the church was no longer 'narrow and provincial', but his most significant statement was that he had 'come to believe that within any visible church there is a group of regenerated, dedicated disciples of Christ'.<sup>72</sup> In other words, those with whom Graham identified and whom he saw as the real hope of the churches were the evangelicals. The sponsorship of Harringay by the EA could have substantially narrowed his support but in the event relatively few church leaders from the wider Christian constituency in Britain openly opposed the conservative complexion of the Crusade. Perhaps Graham's most famous theological opponent was the formidable Methodist open-air preacher Donald Soper, who was quoted as commenting: 'Anyone who says we enter the knowledge of God only by accepting the Bible literally is trying to take us back 300 years and I for one am not going'.<sup>73</sup> *The Bulletin* of the liberal evangelical Fellowship of the Kingdom movement in Methodism was worried that if Methodists became 'Harringay-minded' it could produce a resurgence of bigoted narrow-mindedness, but it took comfort from the fact that if new people were attracted to church they could be brought to 'sounder' (ie non-conservative) views of the Bible.<sup>74</sup> Graham announced that he was receiving the sympathy and support

<sup>69</sup> J. C. Pollock, *Billy Graham* (New York, 1966), 47.

<sup>70</sup> Butler, 'Billy Graham', 84.

<sup>71</sup> *CC*, Vol 68, No 28 (1951), 814.

<sup>72</sup> *CC*, Vol 77, No 7 (1960), 188.

<sup>73</sup> J. Erskine Tuck in *Moody Monthly*, October 1954, 88.

<sup>74</sup> *The Bulletin*, June 1955, 2.



of 80% of all ministers and churches for his London Crusade and that opposition came from only a few extreme modernists on the one hand and a small group of exclusive fundamentalists on the other.<sup>75</sup> The message seemed to be that far from Graham having changed, his assertion that what 'the Bible says' was authoritative, indicating a biblicism which is one of the hallmarks of conservative evangelicalism, was now acceptable as part of mainstream Christianity.

While Graham's assessment of the strength of his support in the mid-1950s was probably over-optimistic, Pollock considered that since 1945 theologians had been returning to the Bible and he saw 1954 as a turning point.<sup>76</sup> In 1960 the Methodist historian A. Skevington Wood, in an article entitled 'Evangelical Prospects in Britain', suggested that there was a firmer emphasis on the Bible in all denominational bodies, even outside the circles of those who traditionally accepted the inerrant authority of the Bible. He enthused about Bible weeks and Bible schools now being convened and about greater respect for conservative scholarship, instancing Clifford Rhodes of the Modern Churchmen's Union, who accepted that in the past twelve years the intellectual balance in the Church of England had been weighing down on the evangelical side.<sup>77</sup> There was talk of liberals re-grouping and there was great disappointment among evangelical Anglicans over the stance of the Archbishop of York, Michael Ramsay. Hugh Gough wrote to Graham in 1956 about his fears of a conspiracy behind the scenes by 'many prominent people' to frustrate the new evangelical initiatives.<sup>78</sup> This followed Ramsay's militant article in *The Bishoprick*, 'The Menace of Fundamentalism', in which he described the fundamentalism of Graham as 'heretical and sectarian'.<sup>79</sup> In fact Ramsay and others were already out of date. The rise of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, which David Bebbington sees as probably the single most important factor in the rise of post-war conservative evangelicalism,<sup>80</sup> was producing, in the 1950s, scholars like F. F. Bruce at Manchester, who could not legitimately be classed as fundamentalists. Conservative evangelical resurgence owed much to younger British clergy, especially John Stott,<sup>81</sup> and to scholarship, but Graham operated at a popular level in 'selling' the evangelical message in the public arena.

<sup>75</sup> C. T. Cook, *The Billy Graham Story* (London, 1954), 50.

<sup>76</sup> *CT*, Vol 1, No 5 (1956), 9.

<sup>77</sup> *CT*, Vol 4, No 14 (1960), 13.

<sup>78</sup> Letter dated 12 April 1956 from Gough to Graham, CN 318, Box 14, Folder 12, BG Archives.

<sup>79</sup> P. A. Welsby, *A History of the Church of England, 1945-1980* (Oxford, 1984), 60.

<sup>80</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 259.

<sup>81</sup> D. J. Tidball, *Who are the Evangelicals?* (London, 1994), 50.

His attempt at more intellectual preaching during his Cambridge mission of 1955 was not a great success, whereas Stott, as assistant missionary, was completely at home in that environment. The combined effect of the scholars and the salesman was to ensure that from the 1950s onwards it was the conservatives who were making ground within the churches in Britain.

### Stimulating a sense of urgency

'Ladies and gentlemen', said Graham in his opening remarks to about 250 British church leaders in Church House, Westminster, in March 1952, 'as I look around today, and particularly as I think of America, I am desperately afraid'.<sup>82</sup> Graham went on to argue, in an address which was published and circulated to all British clergy, that America and Britain faced perils from within, the threat of communism from outside and the possibility of God's judgment. He saw the period 1920–40 as one of spiritual drought in America, characterised by a church which was 'prayerless and powerless' and by 'super-sensational, hyper-emotional' evangelism.<sup>83</sup> The good news was that there had been a profound change in America, although Graham, who was always sensitive to his audience, did not claim any part in achieving the improvement. Nevertheless, for those who had been part of Graham's network since 1946 the message had been explicit. Graham's meetings in Deptford in 1947, for example, were advertised with complete candour: 'Something new in Youth Meetings'; 'America's Youth challenges YOU'; 'Revival for survival'.<sup>84</sup> The urgent need for revival was taken up by Stephen Olford and another British Baptist, Alan Redpath (who in 1953 was to become minister of Moody Memorial in Chicago) in addresses at YFC meetings two months later.<sup>85</sup> Over this period there were reports of 3,000 enquirers having responded at Graham's British rallies and, against a background in which youth meetings often attracted only the already Christian, of significant impact being made on the estimated 80–90% of young people outside the churches.<sup>86</sup> In Aberdeen, for example, 3,000 young people were reportedly unable to gain access to the cinema where Graham was speaking, but apparently the audience inside was composed mainly of those uncommitted to Christianity. 262 came forward.<sup>87</sup> Expectation of

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<sup>82</sup> Graham, *Work of an Evangelist*, 7.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–12.

<sup>84</sup> Colin and Shirley Brown kindly supplied me with this material.

<sup>85</sup> C, 30 April 1947, 9.

<sup>86</sup> C, 20 June 1946, 5; 23 January 1947, 5; 30 January 1947, 13.

<sup>87</sup> C, 27 March 1947, 15.

imminent revival was so widespread in the later 1940s and early 50s that Jean Rees, Tom's wife, questioned in 1952 whether it was deflecting people from ordinary Christian work, although she too wondered if something unusual was in store.<sup>88</sup> In the same year Graham told British clergy that his priority was to have meetings that were, as he put it: 'Heavy with the power of the Holy Spirit'.<sup>89</sup> Revival was at the top of the agenda.

Graham believed that the churches had to be revived since otherwise socialism and communism would throttle Christian faith. A YFC report in March 1949 lamented that 'with socialism operative' British clergy were often 'attacked in the public places'.<sup>90</sup> American readers in the Eisenhower era would have taken this questionable piece of news very seriously and would not have thought it unusual for Graham to charge the Labour Party, as he did in 1949, with 'killing all initiative and free enterprise'.<sup>91</sup> In 1952 Graham was warning about the danger of a tranquil attitude to socialism, communism and dictatorship and he told his radio listeners in June of that year that his team might go to Britain to try to halt the steady trend towards 'Marxian socialism'.<sup>92</sup> Peace talks with Moscow were, Graham alleged in 1953, 'most dangerous', since communism's basic philosophy remained unchanged.<sup>93</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that a 1954 calendar sent to Graham supporters should have said, with reference to the British situation where a socialist government had been in office, that '... what Hitler's bombs could not do, socialism with its accompanying evils shortly accomplished. England's historic faith faltered'.<sup>94</sup> The message caused uproar among Labour supporters in Britain and the explanations given by the Graham team, for example that the word socialism should have been secularism, did not carry much weight. Graham publicly insisted on his political neutrality and this was generally accepted. His true feelings at the time were probably indicated when he reported back to America on the telephone for the benefit of his YFC network that communists were threatening strong opposition to the Harringay meetings.<sup>95</sup> British evangelicals did not generally align themselves with strident anti-socialist rhetoric—Pollock in his biography is anxious to play it down—but Roy Cattell, Tom Rees'

<sup>88</sup> J. Rees, *Putting Ten Thousand*, 158.

<sup>89</sup> Graham, *Work of an Evangelist*, 22.

<sup>90</sup> *YFC Magazine*, April 1947, 4.

<sup>91</sup> Martin, *Billy Graham Story*, 177.

<sup>92</sup> McLoughlin, *Billy Graham*, 102.

<sup>93</sup> *CC*, Vol 70, No 18 (1953), 552.

<sup>94</sup> McLoughlin, *Billy Graham*, 103.

<sup>95</sup> *Youth for Christ*, March 1954, 13.

organiser, who was involved in IVF and who became General Secretary of the EA, was also for a time personal assistant to the extremely right-wing journalist Kenneth de Courcey.<sup>96</sup> Alfred Owen appealed to fellow industrialists for funds for the Harringay Crusade on the grounds that the only answer to communist infiltration was the militant Christianity which Billy Graham would bring.<sup>97</sup> It was increasingly evident to observers that Graham's belief in the urgency of evangelistic efforts to reach the nation had been communicated to British evangelicalism.<sup>98</sup>

Having burnt his fingers over socialism, Graham was thereafter careful to stress, in speaking to British audiences, the threat of moral decline. Graham returned to Britain in 1961 for a Crusade in Manchester and stated: 'After being in Britain for some weeks I am convinced that the nation is either on the brink of a catastrophic moral declension or on the verge of a spiritual revival'.<sup>99</sup> Some of the symptoms of decay which Graham noted were cynicism about the church and a greater anti-clericalism than he had experienced seven years before. At the same time he detected a 'yearning for vital faith'. Clearly seven years on from Harringay there was limited evidence of a change in national life, but Jerry Beavan, Graham's main crusade publicist and media man, was not the kind of person to let that discourage him. 'We have every reason', he claimed of the Manchester meetings, 'to believe that we are about to witness our greatest evangelistic endeavour in Great Britain' and in June 1961 the Crusade was being heralded as a 'mass evangelistic effort on a scale unknown in the history of the Christian church. . .' which would 'influence the spiritual life of all Britain'.<sup>100</sup> Graham later said, somewhat surprisingly, that the meetings had been 'beyond our expectations', but by November 1961, when a British edition of *Decision* magazine was launched, the familiar story was being told of British alienation from the churches (less than 10% attending) and rampant immorality.<sup>101</sup> The options for the future were regularly portrayed as national catastrophe, revival or the second coming of Christ and while each was often declared in some sense to be imminent none actually took place. Although Harringay was rightly perceived as having achieved a great deal, it was not seen as

<sup>96</sup> C, 8 May 1947, 7.

<sup>97</sup> Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians*, 403.

<sup>98</sup> T. Allan, *CT*, Vol 1 No 7 (1957), 14.

<sup>99</sup> *D*, August 1961, 10.

<sup>100</sup> *D*, February 1961, 8; June 1961, 16.

<sup>101</sup> *D*, August 1961, 10; November 1961, 2.

ushering in a revival<sup>102</sup> and by 1964, three years after Manchester, John Stott was commenting on the 'paganising tendencies' at work in Britain and lamenting the fact that the lessons Graham had taught in 1954 had been largely forgotten.<sup>103</sup> Stott's call for urgent action to relearn Graham's message was a tribute, from British evangelicalism's most widely respected leader, to Graham's continued influence.

### **Increasing organised activism**

The final aspect of the influence of Graham on British evangelicalism was a renewed activism which showed itself as a evangelical leaders devoted themselves to the task of organised evangelism. There was encouragement to believe in mass methods. For some this was a new discovery. Tom Allan, who had believed that such an approach was no longer relevant, became a wholehearted convert, and claimed, twelve months after the All Scotland Crusade, that perhaps nothing since the Reformation had made such a deep impression on the religious and secular life of the nation. One Scottish minister who had found it difficult to recruit people for evangelism took the unprecedented step of asking at the end of a service in his own church, on the last Sunday of the Crusade, if people would stand up and commit themselves to be agents of mission in the parish. In this select west-end congregation, Allan recounted, a hundred men and women stood up.<sup>104</sup> In other places results were more predictable. At All Souls, Langham Place, 150 cards were received after Harringay and one year later eleven classes were being held to nurture new Christians while enrolment in classes for lay leaders had doubled.<sup>105</sup> Some well known people made decisions in 1954, such as Ernest Shippam, managing director of a large meat and fish paste firm and Joan Windmill, an actress. Many individual stories from among the 36,000 who went forward were featured in the Christian press and Hugh Gough wrote to Graham in 1956 to say that he was 'constantly meeting men and women who were converted through your ministry and are now established members of the local church'.<sup>106</sup> In Scotland sales of Bibles soared following the Crusade and in 1954-5 the readership of Scripture Union notes, which had

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<sup>102</sup> For a fascinating argument that Graham's Australia Crusade in 1959 was a revival see S. Piggin, 'Billy Graham in Australia, 1959—Was it Revival?', *Lucas*, October 1989.

<sup>103</sup> *D*, June 1964, 8; Pollock, *Billy Graham*, 340.

<sup>104</sup> *CT*, Vol 1, No 7 (1957), 14-16.

<sup>105</sup> S. High, *Billy Graham* (New York, 1956), 229.

<sup>106</sup> Gough to Graham, CN 318, Box 14, Folder 12, BG Archives.

been heavily plugged, leaped by 120,000.<sup>107</sup> The message was that mass evangelism worked.

By the 1950s Graham's evangelistic methods and their consequences were subject to meticulous management. He explained that as soon as a decision for Christ was made by an individual 'a process, a machine, starts into motion'.<sup>108</sup> At Harringay the stewards, many of the choir members and most of the counsellors were people who had gained experience under Tom Rees, although the Harringay committee made little effort to draw Rees into their activities.<sup>109</sup> In areas such as advertising, packaging of meetings and follow-up, Rees anticipated the techniques which would become standard after Harringay. The younger Graham was, however, to prove to be the evangelistic model for the future. His apparent accessibility, as witnessed by the 1955 headline 'Glasgow belongs to Billy', was in tune with the culture. Rees was always welcomed by his Albert Hall audiences with the more formal, though enthusiastic greeting, 'Good evening, Mr Rees'. Graham also had highly effective team members—Barrows, T. W. Wilson, George Wilson, Shea and Grady Wilson—who had worked with him for a decade. As *The Christian Century* put it: 'The boys in the Graham team know their business. They're in evangelism'.<sup>110</sup> Graham's ongoing impact during the 1950s on the organised life of British evangelicalism was to be seen not only in the style of evangelism which he established, but in three specific developments. First, John Stott put to the 1955 London Crusade committee plans to launch *Crusade*—to be modelled on *Punch*—as a monthly which would continue the spirit of the Crusades.<sup>111</sup> Second, Lindsay Glegg, concerned that converts needed a variety of events to attend, began the Filey Christian holiday week, taking over Butlin's Holiday camp in 1955 and attracting from the beginning 5,000 people.<sup>112</sup> Third, local committees which had been set up to provide landline relays from the main crusades and which drew together evangelical leaders in many localities—even William Still, who distanced himself from the crusade approach, was overseer of the Aberdeen relay—continued to function through-

<sup>107</sup> *Eternity*, July 1955, 44; *CT*, Vol 2, No 15 (1958), 10.

<sup>108</sup> Graham, *Work of an Evangelist*, 19.

<sup>109</sup> I am indebted to Maurice Rowlandson for providing me with this and other insights in a letter of 12 May 1994.

<sup>110</sup> *CC*, 2 June 1954, 670.

<sup>111</sup> Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Billy Graham 1955 London Crusade, 22 February 1955.

<sup>112</sup> *The Sunday Companion*, 12 February 1955, 7.

out the 1950s.<sup>113</sup> Across the nation, evangelicals responded with relish to new opportunities for Christian activism.

Perhaps the most significant consequence of Harringay was the increase in the number of evangelicals entering Christian ministry. Twenty-two out of thirty-two men ordained in the Diocese of Southwark in September 1957 were evangelicals, signalling a major shift which would take place in Anglican evangelical strength.<sup>114</sup> F. P. Copland Simmons referred in 1959 to the 'embarrassing numbers' of people offering themselves for service.<sup>115</sup> Robert Ferm, a Graham apologist, noted that every year for twelve years after 1954, when students at Oak Hill Theological College were asked how they had become Christians, the largest single block of responses was 'from Harringay'.<sup>116</sup> Whereas in the early 1950s it was estimated that less than 10% of those being ordained into the Anglican ministry would have called themselves evangelicals, by 1969 31.2% of those training as Anglican clergy were evangelical and by 1986 this figure had risen to 51.6%.<sup>117</sup> It seems that the impact on Anglicanism was greater than on other denominations, possibly because Graham and his associates were keen to affirm their Anglican backers. But Baptists and Methodists also benefited. In 1960 Christopher Steer, a Baptist minister in Chislehurst, reported to Ferm that three of the students entering Spurgeon's College that year were converted under Graham while in the same year five out of fifty young men offering for Methodist ministry were Harringay converts.<sup>118</sup> When, in 1964, *The Christian* ran a series of testimonies from Harringay converts, the one person featured who had entered pastoral ministry was a Baptist, Peter Pearmain.<sup>119</sup> Evangelists followed in Graham's footsteps, notably Eric Hutchings who was steered towards evangelism by Graham.<sup>120</sup> Don Summers was subsidised by the Graham organisation in an effort to encourage evangelism in Britain.<sup>121</sup> Some already in the ministry found that Graham could affect their theological outlook. One Anglican clergyman described himself as having been a 'conventional parson' and related to Tom Livermore how he had been revolutionised by Harringay. 'Billy Graham', he

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 2 April 1955, 3; J. Rees, *Fire in his Bones* (Frinton-on-sea, 1959), 54.

<sup>114</sup> Pollock in *CT*, Vol 2, No 15 (1958), 10.

<sup>115</sup> Letter to Carl Henry, 18 October 1959, in CN 8, Box 17, Folder 91, BG Archives.

<sup>116</sup> R. O. Ferm, *Billy Graham: Do the Conversions Last?* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1988), 108.

<sup>117</sup> Seward, *Evangelicals on the Move*, 33-4.

<sup>118</sup> *D*, November 1960, 6.

<sup>119</sup> *C*, 29 May 1964, 4.

<sup>120</sup> J. E. Tuck, *Your Master Proclaim* (London, 1968), 29, 31.

<sup>121</sup> CN 19, Box 4, Folder 18, BG Archives.

asserted, 'has done more for me than my university and theological college'.<sup>122</sup> In 1947 Graham had bemoaned the lack of flair which he found in Britain. There was, he said, 'absolutely no talent' for youth programmes.<sup>123</sup> His own efforts over the subsequent decade did a great deal to inject new leadership into British evangelicalism.

Debates have continued about the lasting effects of Graham Crusades in Britain on those outside the churches. An analysis in 1955 suggested that as few as 4,000 unchurched converts were still attending church regularly although other surveys indicated this figure might be 11,000.<sup>124</sup> In 1959, however, Stanley High investigated the results of Haringgay on behalf of the *Reader's Digest* and concluded that at least 72% of those who responded at Haringgay were still involved in religion.<sup>125</sup> Denis Duncan, editor of *The British Weekly*, concluded that the main impact of the London and Glasgow Crusades had been on those already sympathetic.<sup>126</sup> J. D. Douglas, writing in *Christianity Today* in 1961, said that six years after the Crusade in the Kelvin Hall it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that the fruit from the unchurched branches did not amount to a large basketful.<sup>127</sup> Numbers of baptisms in Baptist churches increased from around 5,000 per annum in 1954 and 1955 to around 7,000 in 1956 and 1957, but then dropped back to the previous figures and overall membership was virtually unchanged over the period. Stanley Turl, Superintendent Minister of the West Ham Central Mission, as he reflected on a decade of Crusade evangelism, wrote: 'Like most of us in my generation, I have had some experience of following up these Crusades and have been extremely disappointed in many a case. . . .'<sup>128</sup> But concentration on direct converts tends to miss the point, which was that evangelical batteries had been recharged. When Maurice Rowlandson, on behalf of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, approached the leaders of the Evangelical Alliance in 1963 about a further invitation to Graham to come to Britain, they surprised him with 'a unanimous and categorical rejection'.<sup>129</sup> The growing strength of evangelicalism, which Graham had helped to produce, meant that independent thinking was going on. Graham was to be invited to return to Britain over the course of the next three decades and these visits have been influential in the

<sup>122</sup> D, November 1960, 6.

<sup>123</sup> CN 318, Box 54, Folder 13, BG Archives.

<sup>124</sup> *The British Weekly*, 10 February 1955, 1.

<sup>125</sup> Rowlandson, *Billy*, 66-7.

<sup>126</sup> McLoughlin, *Billy Graham*, 192-3.

<sup>127</sup> CT, Vol 5, No 22 (1961), 919.

<sup>128</sup> CN 19, Box 11, Folder 4, BG Archives.

<sup>129</sup> Martin, *Billy Graham Story*, 318.



lives of many individuals, but it was during Graham's earliest visits that he helped to shape not only individual stories but the history of post-war British evangelicalism.

### Conclusion

Evangelicalism, now commonly with a charismatic face, has become a pervasive force in the British church as a whole. Hastings writes of the 'social and sacramental' approach illustrated by Donald Soper's Methodism that it 'fits very much within the mainstream of modern English religion, just as the evangelicalism of Billy Graham does not'.<sup>130</sup> The contrast is over-drawn, since Soper is also an evangelical, albeit in an older, more liberal mould. Most indicators of Christianity in Britain would, however, suggest that it is the heirs of Billy Graham's evangelicalism, whether in its early revivalistic form or in its later more subdued approach, who now have more claim to be looked on as 'mainstream'. Graham's first visits to Britain can be regarded as explosive in character. One observer described a meeting as like an atomic bomb.<sup>131</sup> As Graham and his associates trekked across Britain they acted as a tonic, raising the spirits of weary evangelicals and drawing them together. In 1952 Graham looked back on ten years during which, he argued, evangelistic activity had moved from being a 'narrow track' for the few to being a 'super highway'.<sup>132</sup> Conservative Christianity was on the move. By 1954 Graham and his team had developed from their roots in youth evangelism into a sophisticated and impressive organisation. The evangelical message became hot news in Britain, with the national press moving from determined hostility to sympathy and even some appreciation, and from 1954 onwards evangelicalism gradually grew in authority and influence. Networks were consolidated and new leadership emerged. The change of mood in British evangelicalism since the 1950s owes a great deal to the conservative constructionism of Billy Graham.

### Abstract

A major influence on the development of evangelicalism in post-war Britain was the work of Billy Graham. It raised the level of

<sup>130</sup> Hastings, *English Christianity*, 464.

<sup>131</sup> *YFC Magazine*, April 1947, 25.

<sup>132</sup> *YFC Magazine*, July 1952, 20.

confidence among British evangelicals, creating fresh links among them and strengthening their unity. It created a greater sense of urgency for evangelism with a consequent increase in activism. The heirs of Billy Graham's evangelicalism constitute the mainstream of British evangelicalism.