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Outgrowing Combative Boundary-Setting: Billy Graham, Evangelism and Fundamentalism

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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.'[1] Graham's statement was, at the time, a way of avoiding theological controversy, but it also provides a helpful introduction to the topic of this study. Few people have thought of Billy Graham as a theological modernist or liberal. There is little doubt that he was a constructionist, in that he played a critical part in the shaping of transatlantic evangelicalism in the period after the Second World War. Adrian Hastings, looking at English Christianity in the period of the Second World War, states that, 'it was the impact of Billy Graham that was really formative for the Evangelicalism of the subsequent decades'.[2] However, was Graham correct in denying that he was a fundamentalist or was this simply a ploy to avoid an unwelcome label?[3] I want to look at Billy Graham's background and to explore what thinking he brought to Britain during his first vis-

1 Quoted in F.P. Butler, 'Billy Graham and the end of Evangelical Unity', University of Florida PhD (1976), 86.

2 A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-2000* (London: SCM, 2001), 454.

3 David Bebbington and George Marsden have looked at British-American contrasts. The best introductions are G. M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); G.M. Marsden, 'Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon: A Comparison with English Evangelicalism', *Church History*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (1977), 215-32; D.W. Bebbington, 'Martyrs for the Truth: Fundamentalists in Britain', in D. Wood, ed., *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 30 (Oxford, 1993).

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its to this country in the second half of the 1940s and the early to mid 1950s. I will seek to show the ways in which Billy Graham's outlook was in transition in this period and I will attempt to analyse the kind of evangelicalism that he helped to promote in the British context. Through this lens I want to explore aspects of the relationship between fundamentalism and evangelicalism. An understanding of Graham's impact in the 1940s and 50s is, I would argue, vital in any study of the changing face of post-war evangelical Christianity.[4]

I Graham and Fundamentalism

There is no doubt that Billy Graham's roots were in American Fundamentalism. After graduating from high school in 1936, the young Billy Graham enrolled in Bob Jones College, Cleveland, Tennessee. William Martin in his fine biography of Graham notes that at that time '(t)he unaccredited school had no standing in professional educational circles, but it was gaining a reputation as a place where Fundamentalist young people could insulate themselves from the chilling winds of doubt that blew across secular campuses'.[5] Bob Jones saw himself as American Fundamentalism's most influential leader, and his educational goal was for students to master his own views, with independent thinking being suppressed.[6] The term 'Fundamentalist' had been coined after the First World War and one of the movement's prominent leaders, William Bell Riley, spoke of how Baptists had entered the Fundamentalist controversy 'knowing that it was not a battle, but a war…and that they will never surrender'.[7] Following the 1925 'Scopes Trial' in Dayton, Tennessee, American Fundamentalists found themselves held up to public caricature and derision. However, far from Fundamentalism disappearing, it focused its attention instead on building up conservative local church life and Bible schools. In the period 1925-1930 church growth in Mississippi and Tennessee was twice as rapid as population growth.[8] This was the fundamentalist atmosphere that Billy Graham absorbed.

Billy Graham found Bob Jones College irksome, and within a year he had transferred to Florida Bible Institute (FBI), Tampa, but the Fundamentalist environment was similar at both institutions. FBI had been set up by W.T. Watson, a Bible school product, and Watson was well-connected enough to secure high profile Fundamentalist leaders as visiting teachers. Billy Gra-

4 Some of this material, but not the argument, is in 'Conservative Constructionist: The Early Influence of Billy Graham in Britain', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (1995).

5 William Martin, *The Billy Graham Story: A Prophet with Honour* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), 66.

6 Ibid, 69.

7 M. Marty, *Modern American Religion: The Noise of Conflict, 1919-1941* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 170.

8 J. Rogers, 'John Scopes and the Debate over Evolution', in R.C. White, *et al*, *American Christianity: A Case Approach* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Mich., 1986), pp. 143-8; Marty, *The Noise of Conflict*, 32.

ham was fascinated as he listened to legends in their time such as A.B. Winchester (who had a catch-phrase, 'My Bible says'), Homer Rodeheaver, who had been Billy Sunday's song-leader, and William Bell Riley. As Billy Graham drew from these speakers, he did so with the hope that, like them, he would (as Watson put it) 'do something big'.[9] At the end of his three years at FBI, Billy Graham moved up the academic ladder. He enrolled at Wheaton College, Illinois, which although it was a Fundamentalist institution was an academically respected liberal arts college. The Chicago area was to offer Billy Graham, now in his early twenties, many new opportunities. Under the leadership of Torrey Johnson, the successful pastor of the Fundamentalist Midwest Bible Church in the Chicago area, 'Chicagoland' Youth for Christ rallies commenced in spring 1944, attracting up to 30,000 young people from the metropolis. Johnson invited Graham, who by the early 1940s had begun to gain a reputation as a highly effective evangelist, to speak at the inaugural rally.[10] Billy Graham was a rising Fundamentalist star.

In the following year—in July—over six hundred North American youth leaders gathered at a conference venue at Winona Lake, Indiana (a centre well known in Fundamentalist circles), to form Youth for Christ (YFC) International, an organisation which, with its vision, verve and contemporary approach formed a key element in the growing strength of post-war American conservative Christianity. The roots of this renewed evangelicalism were in Fundamentalism, but a generation was emerging which had not experienced the battles of the 1920s.[11] 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.[12] From 1945 Graham was YFC's first field representative, with Torrey Johnson as YFC president. Quickly exhibiting the enormous capacity for travel and work which was to characterise his career, 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'.[13] The militant lan-

9 Marshall Frady, *Billy Graham: Parable of American Righteousness* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 130; Martin, *The Billy Graham Story*, 70-1.

10 See J.A. Carpenter, ed., *The Youth for Christ Movement and its Pioneers* (New York: Francis Taylor, 1988). Martin, *The Billy Graham Story*, 85-6, 90.

11 Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 176-195.

12 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: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 280.

13 Billy Graham, quoted by W.G. McLoughlin, *Billy Graham: Revivalist in a Secular Age* (New York: Ronald Press, 1960), 38.

guage had strong Fundamentalist overtones.

The style of the youth rallies was fast-moving and image-laden, modelled on the latest media techniques. William Martin has described them as 'a sort of Evangelical vaudeville', and highlights one act in which a horse named MacArthur would kneel at the cross, tap his foot twelve times when asked the number of the apostles, and tap three times when asked how many persons there were in the Trinity. Chairmen at the rallies, steeped as they were in Fundamentalist anti-modernist polemic, commented that 'MacArthur knows more than the Modernists'.[14] Success bred success and during 1946-7 Youth for Christ became an increasingly significant force, not only in North America but in a number of other countries. An enthusiastic YFC report in 1947 reported how '(n)ews 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.'[15] Three YFC preachers—Johnson, Graham and Charles (Chuck) Templeton, a former newspaper cartoonist—together with Wes Hartzell, a reporter from William Randolph Hearst's *Chicago Herald-American*, arrived in Britain in March 1946. Through Tom Rees, a British evangelist, a range of evangelistic events was scheduled, and these were widely reported in America.[16] George Wilson, who was later to manage the Graham organisation, accorded British Christianity this typically overdrawn Fundamentalist assessment in the American *Youth for Christ Magazine* in 1947: 'The moral pulse of Britain was low, her churches empty and her youth indifferent.'[17]

The year 1947 saw a development that could have given Billy Graham a life-long career firmly within the American fundamentalist setting. The YFC evangelists spoke at rallies organised by George Wilson at the First Baptist Church in Minneapolis and met William Bell Riley, who had been the pastor and who was now well past eighty years of age and was looking for successors. Riley became very keen on Graham becoming president of his Northwestern Schools, which were made up of a Bible school, a seminary and a liberal arts college. Graham was extremely reluctant, but eventually yielded to the pressure and became, at twenty-nine, the youngest college president in America. Bob Jones College soon awarded Graham an honorary doctorate and in turn Bob Jones was asked by Graham to speak at Northwestern. Graham continued in this presidential role until 1952, but it was never a position with which he felt comfortable. His associates observed that he 'was called to be an evangelist, not an educator', a view that Graham himself fully endorsed.[18] It was to be his commitment to evangelism that would, to a large extent, cause him to question the Fundamentalism in which he had been nurtured.

14 Martin, *The Billy Graham Story*, 93.

15 *YFC Magazine*, April 1947, 4.

16 See Billy Graham Center, CN 224, Box 1, Folder 17, BG Archives, for these reports.

17 *Youth for Christ Magazine*, April 1947, 4.

18 Martin, *The Billy Graham Story*, 101-3.

II Questioning Fundamentalism

Several developments in the later 1940s and early 1950s caused Billy Graham to question the Fundamentalism which initially he had taken to be, quite simply, true Christianity. The first was Graham's encounters with evangelicals who differed from him. His extended time in England in 1946-47—six action-packed months—made him realise that bridges needed to be built to those who were suspicious of the approach he brought. Whereas the reaction of most Fundamentalists to those who differed from them was angry denunciation, Graham was instinctively inclusive and irenic. An example of this was his interaction with Stanley Baker, the minister of Bordesley Green Baptist Church in Birmingham. In the 1930s Baker had been involved in an effective evangelistic team operating mainly among Baptist churches, named the 'Essex Five'.[19] But while he was fervently evangelistic, Baker was wary of the Fundamentalist spirit. In 1943, discussing the Baptist Revival Fellowship—which affirmed the Bible as 'a unified revelation of the mind of God through men, inerrant and infallible[20]—Baker warned about 'heresy-hunting', picturing this in ominous terms as 'sectarian goose-stepping'. Baker's call was for united evangelism.[21] By March 1946 Baker, then in Birmingham, was arguing for an Order of evangelists and community chaplains. He was dismissive of Graham—a 'hand-counting huckster whose perorations drip with emotion'.[22] Graham took the trouble to persuade him otherwise, and Baker subsequently urged support for Graham's Birmingham youth meetings. Numbers attending these meetings rose rapidly to 2,500.[23] YFC reports saw Birmingham as 'in the grip of a revival'.[24] Graham's inclusivism paid dividends.

Another phenomenon that Graham encountered in Britain to a greater extent than he had in the USA was the presence of evangelical leaders within denominations that were theologically mixed. One of these evangelicals was an Anglican clergyman, Tom Livermore, who asked Graham to run a parish mission in St John's, Deptford, London, in 1947. Graham duly donned a clerical robe, although with a bright red bow tie visible. Livermore recalled that Graham preached for fifty-seven minutes—'an All-England record at the time'.[25] Although there was some cultural mis-match, 234 people professed conversion.[26] In the English context, Anglican connections were par-

19 See REKEBAS [S.A. Baker], *An Adventure for God* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1934); Doris Wittard, *Bibles in Barrels: A History of Essex Baptists* (Southend-on-Sea: Essex Baptist Association, 1962), chapter 22.

20 *Opening of the Door to Mid-Century Revival* (London: Baptist Revival Fellowship, n.d.). The archive is held in Spurgeon's College, London.

21 *Baptist Times*, 18 November 1943, 4.

22 *Baptist Times*, 7 March 1946, 8.

23 Report by Billy Graham: Billy Graham Center Archives, CN 318, Box 54, Folder 13.

24 *YFC Magazine*, February 1947, 51.

25 Canon Thomas Livermore, oral history, 1971, Billy Graham Archives, CN 141, Box 10, Folder 9.

26 *The Christian*, 20 March 1947, 11.

ticularly important to Graham. He 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.[27] In 1949, at a conference which members of Billy Graham's team—including Cliff Barrows and George Beverly Shea—attended, there was Anglican support from Bryan Green, Rector of Birmingham. In Scotland, the Church of Scotland was crucial for any national evangelistic impact. On a visit to Aberdeen, in 1946, Graham preached at Gilcomston South Church of Scotland (which was, it was remarked appreciatively in one report, 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 by Graham's direct style, a contrast with what Still called the lurid preaching of another member of the team, Charles Templeton.[28] Graham was able to adapt to situations very different from his Bible Church background.

Graham was also increasingly aware in the later 1940s and early 1950s of the role that could be played by prominent public figures or well-known personalities. He knew that Tom Rees had been able to organise large-scale meetings in London after the war, in the Westminster Central Hall and then in the Royal Albert Hall, and had used nationally-known figures like C. S. Lewis and Viscount Hailsham. Graham employed similar methods. In 1947 the Lord Mayor of York was quoted as claiming that the Graham meeting he had attended was not only 'one of the finest exhibitions of religious programming' but was an approach which could 'lead Britain back to God'.[29] In America 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 wire-tapper with underworld connections, were converted, which guaranteed Graham's position as America's foremost evangelist. Vaus arranged a meeting between Graham and Mickey Cohen, the notorious mobster. Film stars began to seek Graham out.[30] Graham also became fascinated by political figures. After a 1952 crusade in Washington DC's National Guard Armory, Graham reported with glee, 'As near as I can tell, we averaged between twenty-five and forty Congressmen and about five senators a night.'[31] Graham was moving beyond the normal boundaries set by Fundamentalism.

At a deeper level, Graham was seeking for authentic experience, something that Fundamentalism, with its

27 J. Pollock, *Billy Graham* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1966), p. 64. For Barnes and Liberal Evangelicalism see I.M. Randall, *Evangelical Experiences: A Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism, 1918-1939* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), chapter 3.

28 *History of Gilcomston South Church, Aberdeen, 1868-1968* (Aberdeen, 1968), 42.

29 *YFC Magazine*, April 1947, 4.

30 Martin, *The Billy Graham Story*, 112-20.

31 M. Frady, *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979), 250-1.

stress on correct doctrine, did not necessarily emphasise. In October 1946, while at Hildenborough Hall in Kent, Graham heard Stephen Olford, a British evangelist who was to become pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in New York. Olford preach a powerful message: 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit'. Graham later recalled, 'I was seeking for more of God in my life, and I felt that here was a man who could help me. He had a dynamic, a thrill, an exhilaration about him I wanted to capture.'[32] They arranged to meet for two days in Wales, when Graham was preaching in Pontypridd, near the home of Olford's parents. Their first day was spent, according to Olford, 'on the Word…on what it really means to expose oneself to the Word in one's "quiet time"'. This was a new emphasis for Graham. The next day Olford concentrated on the Holy Spirit. He told Graham how 'God completely turned my life inside out—an experience of the Holy Spirit in his fullness and anointing'. Graham, deeply moved, said, 'Stephen, I see it. That's what I want.' He expressed 'a prayer of total dedication to the Lord' and finally exclaimed, 'My heart is so flooded with the Holy Spirit!' Graham talked about this as 'the turning point of my life'.[33] His Pontypridd meetings apparently evoked memories of the Welsh Revival of 1904-05.[34] This is not to say that Graham became self-satisfied about his spirituality. Later he could speak about how he fell short of living the Christian experience outlined in the New Testament.[35] What was significant was his spiritual openness, which was at odds with doctrinaire Fundamentalism.

Yet there was also within Graham a desire for intellectual credibility. This was stimulated by the questioning that his friend Chuck Templeton was undertaking. Templeton decided that he needed disciplined theological study and—despite his lack of entrance qualifications—he was accepted by Princeton Theological Seminary. He resigned from the church of which he had been pastor to begin studies in 1948. After graduating from Princeton, Templeton accepted a position with the National Council of Churches, conducting major preaching missions. Several conversations took place between Templeton and Billy Graham about the new approaches to the Bible which Templeton had come to appreciate at Princeton. This caused Graham to grapple with tough questions about the faith he preached—not least whether the Bible was 'completely true'.[36] Eventually Graham's response to his friend was, 'I have found that if I say, "The Bible says" and "God says", I get results.' Templeton, appalled, warned him against dying intellectually. Ultimately Graham resolved this dilemma by an experiential commitment 'by faith' to the Bible as the Word of God.[37] Graham

32 Pollock, *Billy Graham*, 62.

33 Martin, *The Billy Graham Story*, 98-9.

34 *YFC Magazine,* April 1947, 5, 24, 25.

35 Stanley High, *Billy Graham: The Personal Story of the Man, his Message and his Mission* (Kingswood: The World's Work Ltd., 1956), 42.

36 Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 138.

37 Martin, *The Billy Graham Story*, 110-12.

listened to others,[38] but he was not simply a follower of the views he heard propounded by others. It is significant that his deepest convictions came not from an attempt to find a watertight Fundamentalist doctrinal system, but from decisive spiritual experiences.

III Evangelical activism

Billy Graham was a typical evangelical activist and goal-setter. After his sustained work in Britain in the later 1940s, he commented to George Beverly Shea, who was emerging as the leading gospel singer in America, 'There is a feeling among some of us that we should go back again some day and hold a campaign not directed primarily to youth.'[39] The attraction eventually became too strong to resist.[40] At a British Evangelical Alliance meeting held in November 1951 and attended by a number of evangelical leaders—Hugh Gough (Anglican), Chalmers Lyon (Presbyterian), Ernest Kevan (Baptist), Gilbert Kirby (Congregational), and Roy Cattell, the entrepreneurial EA Secretary—it was reported that Graham had signalled his willingness to address British church leaders on evangelism.[41] Subsequent negotiations about a visit and possible campaign were far from straightforward. Evangelical Alliance leaders met with Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, who indicated that the Church of England would not officially support a campaign conducted by Graham alone, although it would not oppose such a venture. A meeting was subsequently held with Francis House and Bryan Green as representatives of the British Council of Churches (BCC), the British ecumenical body that had been set up in 1942.[42] Graham's aim was to seek partners who would ensure that the proposed campaign was viable. Their theological hue was not the main concern.

To facilitate the transatlantic discussions, Roy Cattell went to the USA and spoke to the Graham team. One idea being put forward as a result of the BCC discussions was for a pilot crusade, but Graham rejected such a scheme. 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 in Britain and to encourage the church about mass evangelism.[43] The Evangelical Alliance then decided to take responsibility for arranging what became Graham's Greater London Crusade—at the Harringay Arena, London—from March-May 1954. An intriguing statement was published: the crusade was best sponsored by 'a body of responsible enthusiasts outside ecclesiastical organisation'.[44] An

38 D. Lockard, *The Unheard Billy Graham* (London, 1971), 27-8.

39 G. B. Shea, *Then Sings my Soul* (Old Tappan, NJ, 1968), 95.

40 F. Colquhoun, *Harringay Story* (London, 1955), 17-18.

41 Minutes of the Executive Council of the Evangelical Alliance, 22 November 1951; F Colquhoun, *Harringay Story* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1955), 17-18.

42 Minutes of the Executive Council of the Evangelical Alliance, 22 May 1952; 24 July 1952.

43 Billy Graham to Bryan Green, 5 July 1952, Collection SC 9, BG Archives.

44 Colquhoun, *Harringay*, 27.

outstanding example of an activist who gave great energy to fostering cross-ecclesiastical links was Gilbert Kirby. He was then the pastor of a Congregational Church, and was involved in teaching at London Bible College (where he was later Principal), in the Evangelical Alliance, in Hildenborough Hall (with Tom Rees), and in the fellowship for ministers organised by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, minister of Westminster Chapel, London.[45] The fact that enthusiastic activists could be drawn together in Britain to support Graham was due in no small measure to the activities of inter-denominational evangelical bodies such as the Evangelical Alliance and to leaders such as Kirby.

The next step was to bring Graham to London for preparatory meetings. In March 1952 he spoke to about 700 British church leaders at a reception in Church House, Westminster. His speech was carefully calculated to play down any idea that America had the answers to the problems of Britain. A very different message would probably have been given to an American audience. Graham stated, in an address that was widely circulated in Britain, that as he looked around 'and particularly as I think of America', he was desperately afraid. He went on to argue that both America and Britain faced perils from within, the threat of communism from outside and the imminent 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. Mass evangelism, he stated, was only one form of outreach and was largely ineffective unless conducted in full conjunction with churches in any given district.[46] The references were designed to assure British church leaders. Graham adapted his tone to suit his audience. The strategy worked.

Most of those drawn together to organise the 1954 Graham campaign were typical evangelical activists. Working with a wider group from the Evangelical Alliance, the core committee which planned the meetings in the Harringay Arena, London, included Lindsay Glegg, a businessman who had interests in many evangelical groups (and had been described rather extravagantly in an American YFC report as one who 'probably has more influence on British Christian life than any other man'),[47] Joe Blinco, who utilised Graham within Methodism and who would later join the Graham team, and Alfred Owen, the Chairman of the large engineering firm Rubery, Owen & Co.[48]

45 For the role of London Bible College in this period see I. M. Randall, *Educating Evangelicalism: The Origins, Development and Impact of London Bible College* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), chapter 4.

46 Billy Graham, *The Work of an Evangelist* (London: World's Evangelical Alliance, 1953), pp. 7-12; *Evangelical Christendom*, May 1952, 40.

47 BG Center Archives, CN 224, Box 1, Folder 17.

48 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; Clarendon Press, 1990), 397-410.

Maurice Rowlandson, who met Graham at a London YFC presentation in 1948, became Graham's representative in Britain.[49] Along with these lay people were a number of clergy, such as Hugh Gough, then Bishop of Barking and later Archbishop of Sydney, and John Stott, who became Rector of All Souls, Langham Place, London, in 1950 at the age of twenty-nine, and who by 1954 was accepted by most Anglican evangelical clergy as the outstanding leader of the future.[50] Stott and other evangelical ministers would help to inject theological acumen into the evangelical bloodstream, but it is reasonable to say that to a large extent activism ruled.

IV Co-operation for a purpose

The scale of the London meetings, with an aggregate attendance of over two million, including 120,000 at Wembley Stadium on the closing day—the largest religious meeting in British history to that date—gave Graham the leading evangelistic place on the world stage. The sponsorship of Harringay by the Evangelical Alliance 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. Graham announced that he was receiving the sympathy and support of 80% of all ministers and churches and that opposition came from only a few extreme modernists on the one hand and a small group of exclusive fundamentalists on the other.[51] The message seemed to be that Graham's confidence in what 'the Bible says'—indicative of the biblicism which is one of the hallmarks of evangelicalism—was part of mainstream Christianity. The approval of Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury,[52] and Leslie Weatherhead, minister of the City Temple, neither associated with conservative evangelicalism, was highly significant.[53] 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.'[54] Fundamentalist controversies seemed irrelevant. The call was for co-operative evangelism.

However, there were reservations. Perhaps Graham's most famous theological critic was the formidable Methodist minister Donald Soper, who in 1955 as President of the Methodist Conference, spoke of Graham's 'totalitarian methods'.[55] *The Bulletin* of the

49 M. Rowlandson, *Life with Billy* (London: Hodder, 1992), 11.

50 M. Saward, *The Anglican Church Today: Evangelicals on the Move* (Oxford: Mowbrays, 1987), 31; D.J. Tidball, *Who are the Evangelicals?* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 50.

51 C.T. Cook, *The Billy Graham Story* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1954), 50.

52 *Canterbury Diocesan Notes*, June 1954.

53 W. De Sousa, 'Billy Graham: The Controversy over Cooperative Evangelism', Trinity Evangelical Divinity School MA thesis (1979), 173.

54 Martin, *Billy Graham Story*, 181.

55 *The Times*, 24 April 1955, p. 7; cf. S.J.D. Green, 'Was there an English Religious Revival in the 1950s?', *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society, Vol. 7, No. 9* (2006), 527-8.

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.[56] Evangelical reservations also come from some in the Calvinistic camp. Martyn Lloyd-Jones declined to take part in ministers' meetings held in conjunction with Harringay. He included within his prayer at the Westminster Chapel service on 1 March 1954 mention of the 'brethren' who were 'ministering in another part of the city', but spoke of reports from the campaign as 'most confusing'.[57] Forthright opposition was the stance taken by others who followed Lloyd-Jones' lead.[58] A variety of people, for a variety of theological reasons, opposed Graham. But Graham increasingly saw narrow attitudes as a hindrance to evangelism. As Mark Noll puts it, Graham was committed to the cross-centred and Christ-centred aspects of Fundamentalism, but 'he began to outgrow its combative boundary-setting'.[59]

Graham's political views also caused controversy. In American society in the 1950s a vehemently anti-communist line was standard fare, and Fundamentalists were among the most vehement. Peace talks with the USSR were, Graham alleged in 1953, 'most dangerous'.[60] It is not surprising, therefore, that a 1954 calendar sent to Graham supporters should have said, with reference to Britain Labour government, that 'what Hitler's bombs could not do, socialism with its accompanying evils shortly accomplished. England's historic faith faltered'.[61] The message caused uproar among Labour Party supporters in Britain and the explanations given by the Graham team, for example that the word socialism should have been secularism, were not wholly plausible. However, 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 his meetings.[62] 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 was for a time personal assistant to the extremely right-wing journalist Kenneth de Courcey.[63] Alfred Owen, appealing to fellow industrialists for funds for Harringay, suggested that the answer to communist infiltration was the militant Christianity which Billy Graham would bring.[64]

56 *The Bulletin*, June 1955, 2.

57 I. H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith, 1939-1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), 338.

58 As illustrated by E. Hulse, *Billy Graham: The Pastor's Dilemma* (Hounslow: Maurice Allan, 1966).

59 M.A. Noll, 'The Innocence of Billy Graham', *First Things*, No. 79 (January 1998), 37.

60 *Christian Century*, Vol. 70, No. 18 (1953), 552.

61 McLoughlin, *Billy Graham*, 103.

62 *Youth for Christ*, March 1954, 13.

63 *The Christian*, 8 May 1947, 7.

64 Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians*, 403.

Some aspects of the political rhetoric that characterised American Fundamentalism played well in mobilising evangelicals to concerted effort in Britain.

As the Harringay meetings ended, members of the Executive Council of the Evangelical Alliance expressed their belief that—as Sir Arthur Smith, the Chairman, put it—'all other aspects of the work of the Alliance was [sic] secondary to the follow up of the Greater London Crusade'. There were suggestions of another major campaign, although it was recognised that this would need 'a vast sum of money and enormous headquarters'. The Executive Council did not commit itself to this plan, but the thirteen members present agreed that 'the Evangelical Alliance should regard evangelism as its primary task'. Military figures within the Alliance, such as Lieutenant-General Sir William Dobbie and Major Batt, were attracted by the idea of an ongoing spiritual crusade. With thoughtful pastoral leaders such as John Stott and Gilbert Kirby on the Executive Council, however, the Alliance was always going to seek to be responsive to the wider work of the churches in Britain, and it was agreed that 'the Alliance had a vital responsibility of ministry to the clergy and the churches to foster and strengthen the spiritual life of the churches'.[65] Co-operation for a positive purpose, rather than negative conflict, seemed to attract wide support, although in the 1960s evangelical co-operation would be strained to breaking point.

V Evangelical theological renewal

The 1954 Harringay meetings were followed in 1955 by the All Scotland Crusade and also by meetings in Cambridge University. All of this aided the post-war evangelical resurgence in Britain. As an example of this resurgence, twenty-two out of thirty-two men ordained in the Diocese of Southwark in September 1957 were evangelicals, signalling a major advance which would take place in Anglican evangelical strength.[66] F. P. Copland Simmons referred in 1959 to the 'embarrassing numbers' of people offering themselves for Christian service.[67] Robert Ferm, a Graham apologist, noted that every year for twelve years after 1954, when students at the Anglican Oak Hill College in London were asked how they had become Christians, the largest single block of responses was 'from Harringay'.[68] One Anglican clergyman who described himself as having been a 'conventional parson', told Tom Livermore how he had been revolutionised by Harringay. 'Billy Graham', he asserted, 'has done more for me than my university and theological college.'[69] Writing in 1958, J. C. Pollock, then editor of *The Churchman*, was convinced that in sharp contrast to twenty years previously, when evangelicals were regarded as relics of an era long gone, the initiative now lay

65 EA Executive Council Minutes, 25 March 1954.

66 *Christianity Today*, Vol. 2, No. 15 (1958), 10.

67 Letter to Carl Henry, 18 October 1959, in BG Archives, CN 8, Box 17, Folder 91.

68 R. O. Ferm, *Billy Graham: Do the Conversions Last?* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1988), 108.

69 *Decision*, November 1960, 6.

with them.[70] This degree of optimism about the future has to be seen in the context of a continuing Christian culture, which Callum Brown has analysed.[71] This, as he argues, was to alter markedly in the 1960s.

Much has been written about the effect of the Graham campaigns on the general strength of evangelicalism. My purpose here is to note the ways in which Billy Graham made a contribution to the changing shape of evangelical theology. It is not that Graham portrayed himself as a theologian. Other individuals and movements made a much greater contribution in this area. Thus the rise of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF), which David Bebbington sees as probably the single most important factor in the advance of postwar conservative evangelicalism,[72] was helping to produce evangelical scholarship, and in 1960 the Methodist historian Skevington Wood, in an article entitled 'Evangelical Prospects in Britain', noted that Clifford Rhodes, director of the Modern Churchman's Union, accepted that the intellectual balance in the Church of England had been weighing down on the evangelical side.[73] Through his impact on students, Billy Graham played some role in this development. Harriet Harries has outlined the way in which Billy Graham's Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU) mission in 1955 sparked off a debate about Fundamentalism,[74] with Canon H.K. Luce from Durham complaining that Fundamentalism 'ignored the conclusions of modern scholarship' and should not gain a hearing in Cambridge.[75] Whether Fundamentalism gained a hearing or not, Graham did.

The Cambridge mission was important since CICCU, with its very large membership, was the epicentre of the IVF. CICCU obtained permission to use Great St Mary's, the University church. This was a period when University students were thinking about issues of belief. A survey of former students at Girton College, a Cambridge women's college, showed that 70% of those who entered the College between 1950- and 1954 said that religion had been 'important' to them during their university years. John Robinson, who was Dean of Clare College, Cambridge, confirmed the high level of religious interest.[76] Yet Graham was deeply anxious. He recalls in his autobiography that he wrote to John Stott, a Cambridge graduate who had been the missioner for CICCU in 1952, about his feeling that the messages he had prepared were 'weak and shallow'. Stott passed on

70 *Christianity Today*, Vol. 2, No. 15 (1958), 11.

71 Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001), 9-15.

72 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 259.

73 *Christianity Today*, Vol. 4, No 14 (1960), 13.

74 H.A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 54-5.

75 *The Times*, 15 August 1955, 7

76 Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 37-8; cf. D.W. Bebbington, 'The Secularisation of British Universities since the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in G.M. Marsden and B.J. Longfield, eds., *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 268.

the letter to Hugh Gough, another Cambridge graduate, who wrote to Graham telling him to keep to his 'clear simple message'. Great St Mary's and two other churches were packed with students and Graham attempted for three nights to use material which he had attempted to put into an 'intellectual framework', as he put it. He then preached 'a simple Gospel message on the meaning of the Cross', and 400 Cambridge students stayed behind to make a commitment to Christ.[77] When Graham was invited to visit Cambridge again in 1980 a significant number of evangelical leaders, such as Mark Ruston, Vicar of the Round Church in Cambridge, spoke of the long-term impact of the meetings held in 1955.[78]

Although Graham spoke of his message on the cross of Christ as 'simple', he also insisted that the cross was a profound mystery. The highlight of Graham's All Scotland Crusade was probably a Good Friday sermon broadcast from the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, on BBC TV and radio. In preparation for this, Graham spent time with Professor James Stewart, Professor of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at the University of Edinburgh. Graham was determined that his sermon should not be ill-digested. Yet beyond his theological probing was his sense of the wonder of the cross. Before preaching, Graham read and reread the story of the crucifixion, and wrote, 'When I read of His suffering and death by crucifixion it overwhelms me.'[79] Similarly, Graham's view of the Bible may be dismissed as naive, as certainly happened, but it is noteworthy that Graham's deepest concern was for how the Bible functioned in people's lives. Stanley High commented that unlike the 'extreme fundamentalists', some of whom seemed more concerned for their views about the Bible than the Bible itself, and 'who make it a book of controversy and division', for Graham it was 'an instrument….of faith'.[80] Stott, during the debate about Fundamentalism in 1955, wrote to *The Times*, insisting that Graham had denied the description Fundamentalist.[81] Certainly, by the mid-1950s, Graham's approach to theology had more in common with an older inclusive, evangelicalism than with narrower Fundamentalism.

This change was also evident on the ecumenical front. Here Graham's thinking diverged more and more from Fundamentalism's anti-ecumenical stance. He had attended the 1948 World Council of Churches Assembly and it seems that beforehand he had believed that the WCC was going (in some unspecified way) to 'nominate the Anti-Christ'.[82] According to Pollock, Graham actually found the Assembly 'one of the most thrilling experiences of my life up to that point'.[83] In 1951, however, *The Christian Century* was incensed when Gra-

77 Graham, *Just as I am*, chapter 14.

78 John Elworthy, *Billy Graham in Oxford and Cambridge* (n.p., 1980), 6.

79 Pollock, *Billy Graham*, 1966, 196.

80 High, *Billy Graham*, 39.

81 *Times*, 25 August 1955, 14.

82 Quoted in Butler, 'Billy Graham and the end of Evangelical Unity', 84.

83 Pollock, *Billy Graham*, 47.

ham supported the Southern Baptist Convention in condemning the WCC. Graham stated that 'the hope of Christianity is the Southern Baptist Convention', while *The Christian Century* saw Southern Baptist ecumenical attitudes as 'perverse, unbrotherly and dangerous'.[84] The same issues surfaced in Britain in the mid-1950s. Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of York, wrote a militant article on 'The Menace of Fundamentalism', describing Graham's views as 'heretical and sectarian'.[85] Hugh Gough wrote to Graham about his fear of a conspiracy by 'many prominent people' to frustrate new evangelical initiatives.[86] Ramsey was in fact wide of the mark in seeing Graham as sectarian. In 1960 Graham traced the way his mind had changed; his concept of the church was no longer 'narrow and provincial'.[87] Mark Noll argues that Graham was one of the first Protestants to exploit the common ground of the Apostles' Creed with Roman Catholics and with the Orthodox.[88] This was significant for the process of evangelical theological renewal. The kind of catholicity that Graham embraced was completely at odds with sectarian fundamentalism.

Conclusion

From his early Fundamentalist beginnings, Billy Graham embarked on his own theological journey. His passion for evangelism meant that he found himself rejecting the restrictions of Fundamentalism. His inclusive and irenic approach meant that he could not be 'an evangelical who is angry about something'.[89] Graham's visits to Britain in the later 1940s and early 1950s helped to broaden his own outlook. In turn he helped to shape the advancing post-war evangelical movement, not only in America but also in Britain. Adrian Hastings writes of the 'social and sacramental' approach of Donald Soper, that it 'fits very much within the mainstream of modern English religion, just as the evangelicalism of Billy Graham does not'.[90] The argument is not convincing: Graham fitted remarkably well within the varied Christian scene in London and across England, in the sterner world of Scottish Christianity, and even in the unlikely setting of Great St Mary's, Cambridge. Co-operation and catholicity became the order of the day in evangelism. Graham was concerned that his theology should reflect what we might term today a 'generous orthodoxy'. It was during his British campaigns of 1954 and 1955 that Graham's base of support broadened. As is well known, Graham's acceptance in 1955 of an invitation from the Protestant Council of the City of New York to

84 *Christian Century*, Vol. 68, No. 28 (1951), 814.

85 P. A. Welsby, *A History of the Church of England, 1945-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 60.

86 Hugh Gough to Billy Graham, 12 April 1956, BG Archives, CN 318, Box 14, Folder 12.

87 *Christian Century*, Vol. 77, No. 7 (1960), 188.

88 Noll, 'The Innocence of Billy Graham', 37.

89 G.M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1.

90 Hastings, *English Christianity*, 464.

conduct a Crusade under its auspices signalled a decisive distancing from the Fundamentalist camp. Bob Jones and others hurled vituperation.[91] Instead of being swayed by this, however, Graham maintained that it was possible to be a convinced evangelical while seeing that the church was bigger than the evangelical movement. In this way Graham produced, as Noll puts it, 'one of the most powerful forces for Christian ecumenicity ever seen—which is to say, himself'.[92]

91 G. M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 162-5.

92 Noll, 'The Innocence of Billy Graham', 37.