

**Billy Graham in Australia, 1959 - Was it Revival?**

**Moore Theological College Annual Library Lecture**

**26 May 1989**

Stuart Piggin,  
Department of History,  
University of Wollongong.

Introduction:<sup>1</sup>

Billy Graham himself said you cannot judge the real results of a crusade until thirty years later.<sup>2</sup> The time has come for judgement. A widely-held sentiment during or immediately after the Australian crusades was that only history could determine whether or not they amounted to revival.<sup>3</sup> It is time for history to make a determination. That is the fundamental question I want to address this evening: Did Australia experience revival in 1959?

Many who participated in those great events would consider this a disappointing and barely serious question. To them it was clearly not a revival. Even those who then most wondered at what God was doing seem to have decided that it was not a revival. Gordon Powell said six months after the Sydney Crusade, 'I haven't any doubt in my own mind that revival is coming'.<sup>4</sup> He was not prepared to say that it had come. Marcus Loane at the 25th anniversary of the Australian crusades said 'For a short while during those four weeks in 1959, Sydney seemed to stand on the edge of an authentic revival.'<sup>5</sup> He has nowhere said that it went over the edge.

The Crusades did not look like authentic revivals of the past. There does not appear to have been any generalised conviction of sin as evidenced by the mass weeping which characterised some earlier revivals. Somehow Billy does not appear to have had the emotional impact of Edwards, Whitefield, and Wesley. Harold Whitney, the Presbyterian evangelist, born near Kingaroy, Queensland, 41/2 years before Johannes Bjelke-

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<sup>1</sup> The chief published source on the '59 crusades in Australia is S.B. Babbage and I. Siggins, *Light Beneath the Cross: The Story of Billy Graham's Crusade in Australia*, The World's Work, Kingswood and Melbourne, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon Powell, *Six Months after Billy Graham, An Address delivered at the University of Sydney on October 8, 1959*, The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1960 (unpaginated).

<sup>3</sup> For example, Billy Graham in *Star-News*, 1959.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon Powell, *Six Months after Billy Graham, An Address delivered at the University of Sydney on October 8, 1959*, The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1960 (unpaginated).

<sup>5</sup> M. Loane, 'Billy Graham: God's Man for this Century!', *Decision*, May 1984, p.17f.

Petersen, spent six months touring Britain and America in 1956 'to assess Revival potential'<sup>1</sup>. He clearly doubted that Billy did have the potential when he first heard him preach:

I listened carefully and sympathetically. I watched everything he did. I noticed his appeal. I noticed the reluctance of the people on that opening night of his campaign to move. Frankly my reaction was unfavourable. . . . As the week wore on, and, night by night, I sat and listened, I could only say that there was nothing that I could see in this preaching which separated it from that of many another earnest, evangelistic preacher. I could not see why the people responded. . . . Night after night people came forward without undue pressure. True, I did not see many tears. In my own preaching I like to see the power of the Holy Spirit move in, with quiet tears of confession and contrition evident.<sup>2</sup>

Billy's crusades were too unemotional to be revivals.

There are others who did not participate in this or any Billy Graham Crusade who are adamant that crusades actually get in the way of revival. Organised campaigns are just not compatible with revival. Martin Lloyd-Jones declared:

I have always believed that nothing but a revival — a visitation of the Holy Spirit, as distinct from an evangelistic campaign — can deal with the situation of the church and of the world. . . . I have never been happy about organised campaigns. . . . I am convinced that nothing can avail but churches and ministers on their knees in total dependence on God. As long as you go on organising, people will not fall on their knees and implore God to come and heal them.<sup>3</sup>

Let us look at these two objections, namely that there was too little emotion and too much organisation in the '59 crusades for them to be revivals. It is perhaps worth recalling that when Billy himself was converted, he did not shed a tear and many doubted his conversion.

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<sup>1</sup> N.W. Wallis, *The Warhorse: The Life and Work of Rev. Dr. Harold J. Whitney*, Mission Publications of Australia, Lawson, 1986, p.82.

<sup>2</sup> H.J. Whitney, *Pilgrimage with a Purpose*, Mission Publications of Australia, Lawson, 1988, p.31f.

<sup>3</sup> *Christianity Today*, February 1980. For a more ferocious assertion of the same point, see J. Pollock, *Billy Graham, The Authorised Biography*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1966, p.211.

Observers at his meetings monotonously remark on the surprising atmosphere — not overt emotion, but a deep hush and remarkable concentration on the preacher's message from people of all ages. What were they thinking as they concentrated? Were they under conviction for their sins, an indication of the Holy Spirit's reviving presence? Were the terrors of God real to them even though Billy rarely dwelt on the matter as some earlier evangelists have done? So frequently are we told of the entire absence of fear-inducing techniques by Billy that it is surprising to learn that there was fear in those quiet, engrossed hearers. The testimonies of converts of the 1959 crusades do testify to the presence of such convictions:

When I first heard Billy Graham speak, he frightened me because I had hear nothing like it ever before. During the service I felt uncertain and afraid.<sup>1</sup>

Reluctantly I went to hear Joe Blinco and then Billy Graham. I shall never forget it. Mr. Graham had preached on Noah, and I shook as he said, 'And God shut the door!' . . . When the appeal was given for people to come forward I just stood there resolved that I could never do that . . . But as the crowds moved to the front, Billy kept repeating Ephesians 2.8,9 'For by grace. . .' Almost imperceptibly . . . it dawned on me. . . Salvation was something God gave me. It was as though I was let out of a box. I was free. I wanted to run, and I did.<sup>2</sup>

The entire absence of hysteria, of course, makes it more possible that such convictions may have come from God's Spirit and not from crowd suggestion. Billy's own understanding is that this is what was happening. Counsellors were advised, 'Each evening the evangelist will preach a simple, direct Gospel message which will last for approximately 35 or 40 minutes. Without any attempt to stir people emotionally, and without using human pressure to bring people to a decision, he will invite all of those in whose heart the Holy Spirit has been working to come to the front for further counsel and prayer.'<sup>3</sup> If the experiences of those cited above were multiplied throughout the great crowds, one can support the

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<sup>1</sup> June Cox, testimony, November 1961, Billy Graham Archives, CN 245, 2, 2

<sup>2</sup> Deane E. Meatheringham, statement, Billy Graham Archives, CN 245, 14, 23

<sup>3</sup> Crusade Procedure Book, Melbourne, 1959 (hereinafter CPB)

opinion of John Robinson of Melbourne five years after the Crusade: 'I believe that in a very real sense, and to quite a degree, this nation came to a place of repentance.'<sup>1</sup> The very absence of the emphases for which Harold Whitney looked in the preacher when he went to assess Billy's revival potential and the very absence of those emotional expressions which observers expected to see generally exhibited at the meetings, increases the possibility that the 130,000 who went forward in the Australian crusades were visited individually by Holy-Spirit revival. We should remember Jonathan Edwards' warning that a work of the Spirit 'is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength.'<sup>2</sup>

Was there too much organisation? It is certainly difficult to imagine how the crusades can have been better organised. Even by American standards the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association was organised. *Time* magazine reported:

The tools he has fashioned add up to an intricate technology of soul-saving that might astonish St Paul, bewilder John Wesley and give any Madison Avenue ad-man some ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Jerry Beavan, director of the Australian crusades, defends the organisation thus:

You can't get anywhere with any kind of business these days without organisation. I happen to believe that, for Christ's business, we need the best.<sup>4</sup>

A Billy Graham Crusade is a mammoth feat of organisation. It is run according to directions laid down in Crusade Procedure Books which are full of SOP, Standard Operational procedures, a military term. This manual has 12 chapters covering committees (of which there are 12),

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<sup>1</sup> *Crusades*, p.200.

<sup>2</sup> *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, in C.C. Goen (ed.), *Jonathan Edwards: The Great Awakening*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1972, p.230.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in 'Billy Graham in Australia,' *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 24.4, 22 June 1959, p.53.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in 'Billy Graham in Australia,' *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 24.4, 22 June 1959, p.53f.

Correspondence , Counselling , Financial, General office, Prayer, Press, Promotion, Relay, Reservations, Statistics and Ushers. Most of these are subdivided into pre-crusade, crusade, and post-crusade. The process was very masculine. Of all the 12 committees only the prayer committee was required to have a lady vice-chairman. The incomparable organisation perhaps results from the fact that the team have primarily business associates and only secondarily academic ones. The team knew how to enjoy themselves with men. For example on 30 May 1959 Grady Wilson, Associate to Billy Graham, wrote to an executive of the Chrysler Corporation, thanking him for taking them hunting:

The kangaroo hunt was tops . . . Every member of the team got a kangaroo. . .<sup>1</sup>

But is all this organisation incompatible with prayer and revival? Pollock claims that the basic facts of organisation were taught the team by Willis Haymaker, a veteran who had organised Crusades for many evangelists between the wars. He attached primacy to prayer, emphasising that the secret of revival was to get thousands to pray. At the final Melbourne meeting of the 1959 Crusade, Billy said of the enormous crowd of 143,000 'God did this'. But his saints worked mighty hard for it, urged on by Billy himself, who wrote to all counsellors, ushers and choir members, 'I am deeply concerned that on the last day March 15 that the cricket ground be filled to capacity. This is not going to be an easy task; yet this could be the largest religious service ever held in Australia. It could be one of the largest Protestant meetings in the history of the Christian church. What a tremendous witness for Christ it would be throughout the world.'<sup>2</sup> Surveying the enormous crowd, the largest in MCG history and the largest he had ever addressed, Billy said 'This is the Lord's doing, and it's marvellous in our eyes. . . This crowd is due to the work of the churches of Victoria. . . to hunger and to the sovereign move of God.'<sup>3</sup>

One of the first exhibits in the Billy Graham Museum of evangelism and revival at Wheaton College is of John Eliot, missionary to the American Indians, who spoke of prayer *and* *pains*. Efficient bureaucracy is not

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<sup>1</sup> Billy Graham Archives, CN 245, 18, 9.

<sup>2</sup> CPB, Melbourne, 4 March 1959.

<sup>3</sup> F 130, 15 March 1959.

incompatible with revival. One wonders if this lesson, taught by the Billy Graham crusades, explains the reorganisation of the Diocese of Sydney during Gough's episcopate. So Prayer and pains. The emphasis is not on the pains at the expense of *the prayer*. It was all the prayer that gave Graham all the confidence. His appeal at the first meeting in Melbourne included the words: 'You cannot come to Christ anytime you want to. You can only come when the Spirit draws you. Millions have been praying. You'd better come now.'<sup>1</sup>

We cannot rule out the possibility of revival on the *a priori* grounds that it was too organised. Before we proceed any further, we must define revival.

### Revival defined

Revival is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon large numbers of people at the same time. It is occasionally preceded by an expectation that God is about to send revival. It is usually preceded by two things: an extraordinary unity and prayerfulness among Christians. And it is always accompanied by three things: revitalisation of the Church, the conversion of large numbers of unbelievers, and the diminution of sinful practices in the community.

There will be some who object that this definition is too spiritual for an historian to use. The historian is not at liberty to confirm or deny whether a phenomenon is the work of the Holy Spirit. The task of the historian is to treat the mundane factors, of which there are plenty, to account for Billy's unprecedented success: the superb organisation which was getting better all the time; the fact that Sydney and Melbourne are more Protestant than New York, and have a higher percentage of church-goers than London; the fact that the population is concentrated in a few cities making the total population relatively easy to reach; the relative lack of deep-seated divisions between Protestants in Australia; the predisposition Australians then had for things American — certainly Australians were

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<sup>1</sup> Film 124, 18 February 1959.

receptive to Sabrina and evangelist Canon Bryan Green, but when Ava Gardner or Billy Graham came on the scene they were voracious.<sup>1</sup>

I do not accept that the historian has to confine his attention to these mundane factors. I concede that I cannot establish the presence of the supramundane, but the advantage of my definition is that it includes six historical characteristics which, when taken together, infer the supramundane. Revivals are spiritual phenomena which are longed for; they draw Christians together in unprecedented unity; they are born of ardent prayerfulness; they renew the Church; they convert many sinners; they restrain sinful social behaviour. I shall explore each of these with reference to the 1959 Billy Graham Crusades.

### The expectation of revival

A deep longing for, and expectation of, revival has sometimes preceded the great revivals of the past. The expectation developed strongly in Australia in the 1950s. True, there was still room for doubt about city-wide campaigns in the tradition of American revivalism. Stuart Barton-Babbage has since written of the feeling before the Melbourne Billy Graham Crusade of which he was the Executive Chairman:

It was impossible to anticipate what kind of response there would be: [in 1956] Oral Roberts had come to Melbourne with the largest tent in the world only to have it pulled down ignominiously around his ears. There were disgraceful scenes of violence and larrikinism fomented and inflamed by a hostile press.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of this setback, the 1950s was a decade of unusually successful university, parish, and denominational evangelistic missions, the details of which will be well known to most present. At the annual conventions, too, the spiritual temperature rose. The Katoomba Christian Convention beginning on Christmas Day 1955 was characterised by the spirit of prayer from the very beginning. At the 7.30 a.m. prayer meeting there was such a burden to pray, that when any person stopped praying to take a breath, someone else would start. The main speaker was Harold Whitney, who

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<sup>1</sup> This catalogue of the mundane factors is found in K.S. Inglis, 'Sydney, Meet Mr. Graham,' *Nation*, 11 April 1959, p.14.

<sup>2</sup> S.B. Babbage, Ms. Autobiography, p.127.

preached on such themes as sin and repentance. Tony Tress, invited to attend by Ron Beard, had never heard preaching like it - God spoke directly and personally to him. It was as if Whitney knew all about him. It is, says Tony, the closest he has ever come to witnessing revival. When the invitation came for people to put their lives right, crowds surged forward, and, when Whitney encouraged them to pray out loud for forgiveness, they all prayed together.<sup>1</sup>

With scenes like that, it is not surprising to learn that a desire for, if not expectation of, revival of sorts was nurtured in the 1950s by those, numerous at Moore College, who embraced an other-worldly, premillennial eschatology<sup>2</sup> and who sought holiness within the second blessing, entire sanctification, sinless perfection tradition.<sup>3</sup> I dare say Billy Graham did not do a lot to foster this understanding of revival. Whereas it called for a primary commitment to personal sanctification and a corollary that one should not climb into bed until one had witnessed for one's Lord, Billy reversed the order. Billy's was an altogether more robust, wholesome, happy, outgoing expression of the Christian faith. One could not fairly say of it as has been said of the holiness movement that it was 'essentially neurotic, well-meaning, but emotionally-damaging'.<sup>4</sup> Billy's expectation of revival was centred neither in premillennial eschatology nor in sinless perfection, but in human need and its remedy, the cross.

You object: he often preached on the second coming; he still writes on Armageddon and Apocalyptic horses. No, no! Anyone who organises like Graham and cultivates friendships like he does, expects to be around for a while. And as for perfectionism, Graham preaches for cleansing and challenge, but it is God who does the cleansing and God who does the challenging, the latter of which is understood as a call to a life of self-sacrifice, purpose, and destiny. A Billy Graham Crusade is not a convention for the deepening of the spiritual life. I dare say it is not

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Tony Tress, 15 June 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Lawton, *The Winter of our Days: The Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1950-1960*, unpublished MS., p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Lawton, "'That Woman Jezebel' — Moore College after 25 Years,' The Moore College Library Lecture — 1981, pp.14-17.

<sup>4</sup> Bill Lawton, "'That Woman Jezebel' — Moore College after 25 Years,' The Moore College Library Lecture — 1981, p.30.

revivalism. With its addressing of current issues, albeit in a non-political way, it is closer to the optimistic postmillennialism of Jonathan Edwards in the Eighteenth Century and Howard Mowll in the twentieth. It is addressed to the world, not some spiritual elite. Still, Moore College students of the 1950s talked revival, even if it was not exactly what Billy had in mind.<sup>1</sup>

The Billy Graham Team had in mind, at first, a rather modest campaign.<sup>2</sup> They did not anticipate that the Australian crusades would follow the trajectory of his previous crusades, especially Los Angeles, 1949, which made Billy a national figure, London, 1954, which made him an international figure, and New York, 1957, when, at the closing rally in Times Square, nothing could contain the excitement in Cliff Barrows' voice as he surveyed the crowd usually now assessed to have been about 125,000: 'We cannot see the end of the crowd. . .spiritual hunger draws people together like this. . . a symbol of spiritual revival. . . let us tell the world that we Americans believe in God'.<sup>3</sup>

The Team's preliminary research suggested that the Australia campaign would be small because the population was scattered and Australians had a reputation for being sportsloving, prosperous, and hitherto resistant to evangelists.<sup>4</sup> An undated typed preliminary projections report made for the Sydney Crusade in the archival records reads: 'The proposals presented do not have in mind a major Crusade. They are based on the assumption, somewhat arbitrary, of an upper limit of 7,500 decisions over a 9-day crusade.' The eventual outcome was that this number of decisions was almost reached in the first four days of the Sydney Crusade and the number of inquirers was eight times that early projection. The cost of the follow-up operation was put at £2,750. A budgetary estimate closer to the

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<sup>1</sup> In his vote of thanks on the occasion on which this paper was read, Dr. Bill Lawton made the interesting observation that BillyGraham killed Keswick piety in Sydney and replaced it with an altogether healthier spirituality.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Ogden, Chairman of the Arrangements Committee, informed the author that at the Sydney Showground Gerry Beavan requested him to build the platform facing only about one-third of the available seating. Thinking that the need would be greater than that Ogden had wheels built on the platform so that its direction could be changed if required!

<sup>3</sup> Film in the BG Archives, Times Square Story, CN54 F149.

<sup>4</sup> Pollock, *Crusades*, p.186.

Crusade put counselling and follow-up costs at £16,500. The actual expenditure was £21,818.

All the projections were surpassed. The finance committee who had to allow 10 shillings for every enquirer was advised that a two-week crusade would be expected to result in not less than 3000 commitments to Christ.<sup>1</sup> The response rate was double that. Jerry Beavan said at the first Federal Committee meeting (10 October 1958) that in Sydney and Melbourne, 2500-3000 counsellors would be needed. By the end of January Canon H.M. Arrowsmith reported that 8,000 had enrolled in Sydney. At the Federal Executive meeting on 17 December 1958 Colin Becroft advised that material for 20,000 decisions would be produced. This was to prove one-third of Sydney's requirements alone. So the expectations were high before the crusades began, but not high enough. That something special was afoot was, however, perceived by Jerry Beavan, Australian Crusades Team director, whom Billy later concluded had done his best work in Australia.<sup>2</sup> Pollock wrote:

It was Beavan who foresaw that by landline relays, tape recordings, and the extensive buying of time on radio and television, together with a full use of operation Andrew and special transport near the crusade centres, most of the people of Australia might be touched. As he travelled around the continent he began to sense a high degree of expectancy. 'Bill,' he wrote on August 8, 1958, 'I really believe that we are on the verge of a national spiritual awakening here in Australia. . . There are so many evidences that God is doing an unusual thing that we are constantly overwhelmed by his blessing. . . There is more prayer right now in Sydney than there was in New York City at the height of that crusade'.<sup>3</sup>

A further factor affecting expectation was that motivating Christians to pray and work for revival was built in to every Billy Graham Crusade. On 27 October 1958 a luncheon was held in the Melbourne Town Hall Banqueting Hall to announce the Billy Graham Crusade and to welcome his personal representatives, Walter H. Smyth and Charles Riggs. The Menu? Tomato juice followed by roast lamb, vegetables in season and

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1 CPB, Melbourne

2 Pollock, *Crusades*, p.187.

3 Pollock, *Crusades*, p.187.

mint sauce, then fruit sundae, roll and butter. Dean Babbage made the announcement. Lt. Gen. Sir Edmund Herring responded. The programme sported a special picture of Billy with a one page biography, ending with the words, 'The Goal. . . The Prayer: Revival in our Time!'

The *Crusade Bulletin* for November 1958 contained a personal word from Billy Graham:

The question, 'Will revival come in our time?' is on the lips and in the hearts of God's people everywhere. Wherever I go I am asked if this current religious resurgence which the world is experiencing is really a spiritual awakening. . . So many are writing in these days and saying, 'What can I do?' There is a great deal you can do. First, if you have not done so, make an open confession of Christ, and a definite decision for Christ. Join a church, and put your time, your talents and your money at God's disposal. Beign to live a positive, whole-hearted Christian life, witnessing to others of your faith in Christ. Pray earnestly for a revival in your church, your community and your nation.

Read and believe the promise of God in Isaiah 57.15.<sup>1</sup> Remember that God is the author of renewal.

A dodger entitled 'Hear Billy Graham in Melbourne' has a message from Billy Graham on the back:

'We need . . . we must have REVIVAL'  
says Billy Graham

Thinking men in every walk of life are agreed that our civilisation. . . our way of life . . . has little hope for survival on a local, national or international level unless we see, and soon, a return to God. . . to the faith of our fathers.

A spiritual awakening now could change the course of this nation's destiny — and make a profound impact upon the entire world as well.

Only rarely, perhaps once in a generation, do the Churches, religious and civic organisations join hands in a united endeavour to make a lasting impact for good — and for God —

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<sup>1</sup> 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'

upon the life of a great city. Such an opportunity may not come our way again.

Billy's concern for the regeneration of the nation did not go unnoticed or unappreciated by the national press, and the desire for revival was widespread in the Australian community in early 1959 if an editorial in the *Melbourne Age* is correct:

The most significant and arresting feature of the evangelistic crusade that is being launched upon the Australian people is the obvious fact that, in its preliminary and preparatory stages, it has demonstrated a passionate desire on the part of widely differing sections of the community for a revival of true religion comparable with the great revivals of history.<sup>1</sup>

In 1956 Canon Loane, then Principal of Moore College, predicted revival was coming to Australia: there were 'signs of tjhe chilly winter air beginning to yield to a warm and sunny springtime'.<sup>2</sup> Like the resurrection there were signs that it had to be, but the success of the 1959 crusades still took everybody by surprise.

### The unprecedented unity

The sociologists of religion tell us that it is normally sects, not churches, which are conversionist. Conversion work and revival are most frequently found among the sects. There have probably been hundreds of 'little revivings' in Australian history. They go unreported because most religious phenomena in Australia go unreported and they go largely unnoticed because they are sectarian, not mainstream.

By 1959 Billy had already turned his back on the sectarianism of fundamentalism. He was not concerned to dwell on what divides Christians, convinced that in Church History 'the great divisions have always resulted from somewhat minor differences'.<sup>3</sup> He was building his inclusive evangelism which was to result in the formation in the United

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<sup>1</sup> *Age*, 14 February 1959.

<sup>2</sup> *Diocesan Magazine*, 9.12, May-June 1956, p.176, quoted by Bill Lawton, *The Winter of our Days: The Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1950-1960*, unpublished MS., p.15.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in 'Billy Graham in Australia,' *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 24.4, 22 June 1959, p.55.

States of the new evangelicalism. In the interests of evangelistic success, his ecumenical pragmatism drove him towards the harnessing of the support of all the clergy, rather than offend any of them. He did not just clean up the reputation of revivalism, by insisting on calling his campaigns crusades instead of revivals, and by taking steps to ensure that he would not succumb to the three great temptations assaulting revivalists — sex, money, inflated statistics — but he adapted evangelism to the churches instead of making it the scourge of the Church as it had been in the hands of the old-time revivalists.

Billy's San Francisco Crusade of 1958 had enjoyed much wider support than had the campaign in New York. The Australian crusades marked the beginning of the near unanimous support for his crusades by the major Protestant organisations.<sup>1</sup> The Sydney churches themselves elected to exclude the Assemblies of God who applied to be included in the Crusade activities. The Melbourne executive decided to accept them in the choir, counselling, and ushering.<sup>2</sup> At the second meeting of the Federal Executive held in Adelaide on 28 November 1958 the SA and Qld representatives said that they had followed the NSW, rather than the Victorian example, in disallowing involvement to groups not represented in the invitation to Billy. The Sydney representatives explained that their attitude was not based as much on doctrinal as local considerations. In Sydney, groups not represented in the inviting committee had sponsored the visit of other more suspect evangelists, such as Oral Roberts. It was resolved that this matter be left to local executives. But the Pentecostals did well out of the 1959 Crusades. Among those then converted was Clark Taylor, Senior Pastor of the Brisbane Christian Outreach Centre.<sup>3</sup>

One evangelical group who elected not to support Billy Graham in 1959 was the Australian Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches Association. It had dropped the Independent out of its title to accommodate the small Australian Wesleyan Methodist churches which came to Australia after World War II. When Billy Graham came,

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<sup>1</sup> F. Butler, *Billy Graham and the end of evangelical unity*, Ph.D., Florida, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> CPB, Sydney, Exec meeting, 12 November 1958

<sup>3</sup> Clark Taylor interviewed by R.D. Linder, 29 May 1987.

however, the Wesleyan Methodists co-operated with the Crusades whereas the other churches stood by the fundamentalism of Carl McIntyre, rediscovered their independence, voted against co-operation with Billy and took their leave from the Wesleyan Methodists.<sup>1</sup> It was a tiny Antipodean flick from a large American tail.

The process by which the formal invitations to invite Billy to Australia were developed has been well documented by Loane.<sup>2</sup> What must be added to this picture is all the humbler invitations which Billy received by visitors to America such as evangelist, Harold Whitney, who in 1956 shared with Billy his vision for Australia of 'a national revival through a revived church',<sup>3</sup> and layman, Alan Kerr, who sat on the platform at the 1957 New York Crusade and invited Billy to Australia on behalf of Campaigners for Christ, only to be told that he would have to do better than that, so he returned to Melbourne and worked successfully on Archbishop Booth.<sup>4</sup>

Billy's evangelistic ecumenism went beyond evangelical ecumenism, frequently reclaiming for evangelicalism clergy who had hitherto avoided unequivocal identification with the evangelical cause. He welcomed the support of any clergy, particularly if they had a following. The Methodist, Alan Walker, had to be wooed a bit. He had once described a Billy Graham Crusade as 'nineteenth-century evangelism in a twentieth-century world'.<sup>5</sup> At the meeting of the Executive Committee on 24 October 1958 Walker attempted to stop the holding of Crusade meetings on Sunday afternoons as it would conflict with church activities - especially, I suppose, Methodist PSAs. This smacks of a certain robust confidence in one's own wisdom as the BG team had already advised the executive that Sunday afternoon rallies were always the best attended and yielded the best results. The Advisory Committee unanimously recommended the

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. James Ridgeway interviewed by R.D. Linder, 26 August 1987.

<sup>2</sup> How Anglican and Episcopal Churches co-operate and benefit through the Billy Graham Crusades, unpublished manuscript, Billy Graham Archives.

<sup>3</sup> Harold Whitney, *Tell Australia*, W.R. Smith & Paterson, Brisbane, 1957, pp.59-62.

<sup>4</sup> Interviewed by M. Lamb and S. Piggìn, 22 February 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in 'Billy Graham in Australia,' *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 24.4, 22 June 1959, p.56.

holding of meetings on Sunday afternoons, and Walker withdrew his motion under protest.<sup>1</sup>

The Presbyterian, Gordon Powell, is the archetypal minister whom Billy delights to get on side with the promise of mutual benefit. He was the sort of person to whom things happened. At 5.30 p.m. on 21 June 1936 he was sitting on the shores of Loch Ness when the monster deigned to reveal itself to him: 'It had a large, calf-like head on a long neck. Behind the head were three or four humps which gave the thing a sea-serpent appearance. It streaked away at between 30 and 60 mph with the humps undulating as if providing the propulsive energy.'<sup>2</sup> In 1954 when he dined with the Queen, he sat at Her Majesty's right hand. In 1956 he preached at the Olympic Games service in Melbourne.

Gordon Powell is Australia's answer to Norman Vincent Peale and a Man called Peter. Indeed he preached 18 times in Peale's Church, Marble Collegiate in New York, and once in Peter Marshall's Church in Washington when George Bush was in the congregation. When asked if he was an evangelical, he would always answer in the affirmative and then go to the Oxford Dictionary to check: 'of the Protestant school maintaining that the essence of the Gospel consists in the doctrine of salvation by faith'— ah, yes, he could subscribe to that. A soft Evangelical, Powell agreed with a colleague at St. Stephen's, Sydney, that 'you don't have to take the Bible literally, but you do have to take it seriously.' Yet Powell's preaching was always based on the Bible.

Convinced that religion and psychology were partners in the attack on much illness, he wrote popular books to make one feel good and positive. He advised women that the way to stay young and beautiful was to get a magnificent obsession. He encouraged his congregations to relax and rest in the Lord: many fell asleep. In 1959 Powell was vice-chairman of the Sydney Billy Graham Crusade Executive Committee. St. Stephen's received 646 referrals, at that time a world record. 404 new members were added to the Church roll.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Executive, 12 November 1958, CPB, Sydney.

<sup>2</sup> *People*, 18 November, 1953

<sup>3</sup> Personal letter from Gordon Powell, 28 January 1989.

Dorothy Turner, an historian's delight because she is totally frank about people, wrote to John Pollock:

'... I am practically certain that you will have assessed Gordon Powell! He has come a long way since Billy worked on him (more's the pity Alan Walker did not react similarly). Yet Gordon Powell plays to the gallery somewhat and overlooks too much. For instance, because Nola Dekyvere is a St. Stephen's communicant she does no wrong in his eyes.<sup>1</sup>

Billy liked people like Gordon Powell. He would not have been distressed to learn that Powell was a rank modalist in his understanding of the Trinity.

A critical aspect of Billy's sensitivity to ecclesiastical traditions is his remarkable appreciation of the importance of the Anglican Church. He did not win all Anglicans. Among Anglican Bishops who condemned the Crusades were Dr. E.H. Burgmann of Canberra and Goulburn who said that Billy's view of the Bible was 'idolatrous' and that 'decisions for life need a calmer atmosphere than that provided by a crowd'.<sup>2</sup> The Bishop of Rockhampton, T.B. McCall, wrote in his diocesan magazine that aspects of the Graham crusades were 'objectionable, dishonest, distressing, and disgusting'.<sup>3</sup> And Dr. T.T. Reed of Adelaide wrote to his flock:

I must . . . as chief Pastor in the Diocese, warn you that the form of Christianity preached by Dr. Graham and his associates falls short of the the fulness of the Catholic Faith. If those of you who hear him will. . . remember the great dangers of mass suggestion . . . you will be less likely to abandon, under emotional stress and at the twinkling of an eye, that faith and practice which you have known since your Baptism to be essential to the fulness of life in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

But Billy's growing friendship with a number of senior Anglican clergy — Kerle, Loane, Archie Morton, Leon Morris, S.B. Babbage, Archdeacon Arrowsmith— goes a long way to explaining the success of the Australian

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<sup>1</sup> 26 August 1964, CN 245, 2, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in 'Billy Graham in Australia,' *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 24.4, 22 June 1959, p.57.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH*, 2 May 1959.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in 'Billy Graham in Australia,' *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 24.4, 22 June 1959, p.57.

crusades.<sup>1</sup> In an address at the Myer Music Bowl on the text from John 3 'Have you been born again', Billy said Nicodemus was the sort of person who might be a bishop today - then he added 'Perhaps not here in Australia, but in America'.<sup>2</sup> It was an interesting aside showing how highly he rated Sydney Anglican Bishops.

At the last meeting of the Sydney Crusade he waxed lyrical on the Sydney clergy.

I have never been to a city before where one man was so loved by so many from all walks of life as the late Archbishop Mowll was. Dr. Archie Morton and others had come back from America and told him a little of our work to him and he became interested and began writing to us and he said that he wished to live to see this day. I believe . . . you Sir, your grace, you can see this day . . . your heart is rejoicing. A part of what you are seeing here is a result of your many years of faithful ministry in this city.

Then after commending Bishop Kerle as a soul winner and man of God, he added something which he claimed he had never said in a Crusade before:

I've been to many cities, but I've never been to a city where the calibre of the clergy has been so high, so devout, so spiritual, so evangelical as in the City of Sydney, and I seriously doubt if you quite realise what you have here.<sup>3</sup>

The unity between Sydney and Melbourne evangelical Anglicanism was also a very important, perhaps critical factor, in the success of the Crusades. One prominent Melbourne evangelical is of the opinion that Babbage, the Chairman of the Melbourne executive whose leadership did much to promote the unity among the Protestant clergy, was a very important factor in the success of Billy Graham in Australia.

He was so good as Dean that he overshadowed the Archbishop. All the papers would go to see what Babbage thought. Any comment from the Anglican Church would be sought from Babbage . . . He went to Ridley, but he was still a very prominent name with the rank and file, especially the other churches. The

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<sup>1</sup> May 1984, p13.

<sup>2</sup> Film 127, 28 February 1959?

<sup>3</sup> Film CN 113, F 153, 10 May 1959, Billy Graham Archives.

fact that he threw his weight behind the campaign . . . meant a lot to a lot of people out there as his name was so widely known.<sup>1</sup>

The success of the Melbourne Crusade was critical to the even greater success of Sydney. Melbourne evangelicalism is more lay-led than Sydney evangelicalism which is clergy-dominated. Melbourne had more lay experience in evangelistic enterprise and was thus well-placed to initiate the grand campaign; Sydney had more strength to carry the battle higher and further. Like an Aussie Rules football player, Sydney evangelicalism climbed up on the shoulders of Melbourne evangelicalism, reaching even higher than Melbourne, to take a glorious mark. In the religion of football one is permitted to gloat over the one on whose shoulders one has climbed; in the religion of the Spirit one must give humble and hearty thanks for those shoulders.

So the Crusades were preceded and accompanied by extraordinary unity among the Churches and, as Bishop Kerle observed, left behind 'a memory of what God can do when His people are fully involved in a city and nation-wide campaign of evangelism'.<sup>2</sup>

Billy's success in winning the almost unanimous support of the Churches was not the limit of his ecumenism. The cordial embrace of the Graham machine was to include the civil as well as the religious spheres. Perhaps because of the impenetration of American life and politics and the press by religion, Billy sought and succeeded in obtaining the assistance of the secular arm.<sup>3</sup> He was every bit as successful in obtaining this in Australia as in America. The Australian Crusades were not without the blessing of Eisenhower and Nixon:

April 3, 1958.

The Honourable William J Sebald,  
American Embassy,  
Canberra, Australia.

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Kerr interviewed by M. Lamb and S. Piggin, 22 February 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Kerle and Gilchrist, circular letter, 1 June 1967 in CN 12 b.14, f25, Billy Graham Archives.

<sup>3</sup> F. Butler, Billy Graham and the end of evangelical unity, Ph.D., Florida, 1976.

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

I am sure you know Dr. Billy Graham is planning to come to Australia later this year for a series of meetings.

When he was in my office recently, he informed me that Mr. Jerry Beavan, who heads his advance planning staff, will be coming to Australia this month to handle all the necessary arrangements for these meetings. I would greatly appreciate any assistance that the members of your staff may be able to provide Mr. Beavan in connection with his arrangements in Australia.

I hope that you and Mrs. Sebald are enjoying your stay in Canberra. Certainly it would be most difficult to find people who were more friendly in their attitude toward the United States than the Australians.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely,

Richard Nixon.<sup>1</sup>

At the last meeting in Melbourne, Billy read a letter from Ike. Just a month after the conclusion of the Sydney Crusade, Billy was in London, taking tea with the Queen. What is so special about Billy Graham, demanded the *Daily Herald* that he should be accorded such 'an unusual public honour'? To this the palace replied that the Queen wanted to a firsthand report from Billy on his successful campaign in Australia. From this the *Herald* concluded that 'the evangelist's barnstorming, fast-talking, massed-choir approach certainly has royal interest — and possibly royal approval.'<sup>2</sup>

The press, too, were united in their praise of the handsome young evangelist. At the opening meeting in Melbourne (18 February 1959) someone spoke of the 'unprecedented recognition with not one unfriendly voice' from the newspapers.<sup>3</sup> At the close of the Crusade, Billy

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<sup>1</sup> Richard M. Nixon Pre-presidential Papers, Federal Records Center, Laguna Niguel, California.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Herald*, 12 June 1959.

<sup>3</sup> Film F 124

gave a 'word of appreciation to the newspapers. I think it's a thrilling thing and a wonderful thing when the newspapers make religion front page copy almost every day'.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the Sydney Crusade, historian Ken Inglis, observed that as in Melbourne the first converts were the newspapers:

the 'Daily Telegraph', in particular, having decided that Mr. Graham will not froth at the mouth and run off with church funds, welcomes him as an ally in the struggle to turn Australia's thoughts 'to the less obvious but more lasting values of spiritual things.'<sup>2</sup>

The only really hostile attack came in *Newsday*, a Melbourne monthly. Its first issue screamed the headline 'Billy Graham go Home'. But few heard the scream. Many newsagents returned them to the publisher, and the journal suffered a quick and deserved death!

The press are always controlled by some group wielding political power - one cannot help wondering what they were up to in supporting Billy so uncritically? Was it that he was a known anti-Communist, a well-connected ally in the cold war? The Crusades in Australia and New Zealand, preceded by a diplomatic letter from Nixon and accompanied by an open letter from Eisenhower, did look like the religious equivalent of ANZUS.

Billy was not the offending type; he was not a protestor; he was not angry; he did not load others with projections of his own defective personality, which many a preacher has done, but he has a message which because it does not come from him, may come from God.

The results of this sanctified warmth and supportiveness were astounding. Eric Baume, the popular columnist, was lyrical:

He does not insult public intelligence. . . He insults no one; he exhorts all; his heart of wondrous sympathy beats in his face [surely, an unfortunate metaphor]. . . He is a Triton among a few tub-thumping minnows who have been affronting Australian

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<sup>1</sup> Film F 130

<sup>2</sup> K.S. Inglis, 'Sydney, Meet Mr. Graham,' *Nation*, 11 April 1959, p.14.

intelligence with their self-opinionated attacks on the sinfulness of a fundamentally decent Australian community.<sup>1</sup>

Not all Australians admired Billy's debt to Carnegie. Ken Inglis prophesied about the Sydney Crusade:

He will flatter Sydney, and make jokes about Melbourne. There will be other jokes, a few of them in the guise of autobiography, such as the one about the lady who, having been told that one in every three children born is Chinese, says: 'Dr. Graham, I have two children. Is it a fact that if I have another in a few years it will be Chinese?' Last year that other evangelist, Kingsley Martin, told the same story. Arthur Calwell likes to tell it, too. Wherever will the poor lady turn up next?<sup>2</sup>

To be faithful you do not have to be exclusive; to be prophetic you do not have to nag and be negative; to beget revival you do have to preach the reality of sin, but you do not have to be denunciatory. No great awakening, as distinct from localised revivals, will come to Australia while the churches are not all committed to the task of propagating the gospel - this is evangelical ecumenism.

### Prayerfulness

Frequently, great revivals have been preceded by a spirit of extraordinary prayer. In the *Crusade Bulletin* for October 1958, Billy wrote, 'If spiritual awakening comes to Australia, it will not be as a result of organisation, publicity, preaching or singing. It will come as a result of prayer on the part of Christians all over the world.' In the *Crusade Bulletin* for March 1959, Billy wrote, 'People all over the world are praying for Australia. I believe that more prayer has been made for the Melbourne and Sydney crusades than for any single event in the whole history of the Christian Church.'

The Billy Graham crusades of 1959 were great prayer offensives. There is little doubt that the BGEA was serious about prayer. There is more than lip service in the SOP directive 'The most vital of all is the Prayer Committee. Please give your prayerful thought to the selection of

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<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 21 April 1959.

<sup>2</sup> K.S. Inglis, 'Sydney, Meet Mr. Graham,' *Nation*, 11 April 1959, p.14.

personnel for this committee. They should be your most spiritual people.' Hence, Leonard Buck was chosen as the Chairman of the Melbourne Crusade Prayer Committee. In Sydney the Prayer Committee chairman was Dr. E.H. Watson, Director, Council for Evangelism, Baptist Union of NSW. Buck took as the key verse for the united prayer programme the great revival text 2 Chronicles 7.14: 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin, and will heal their land.' Among the stated objectives of the prayer programme was:

To have the people of the Melbourne Area become 'revival conscious'. Only as God's people become concerned and burdened for conditions around them; and only as people become aware of their spiritual need, can the Holy Spirit come in mighty convicting and converting power.

The prayer meetings were to pray 'for a heaven-sent revival'.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the dodger concerning the Prayer Partnership Scheme for the Sydney Crusade had on the front cover the words of Habakkuk 3.2 'O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years' and inside, readers were exhorted to pray:

- that Christians all over the world will be burdened to pray for Revival in Australia
- that every Church in NSW will have a burden for Revival
- that Sydney will experience the greatest moving of the Spirit of God it has ever known.

Join in this challenging effort . . . pray for Revival in Our Time!

There was a rising crescendo of prayer. On 1 July 1958 there were 48 prayer partners; by 1 August, 3,386; 1 September, 9,874; 1 October, 14,267; 26 November 25,000; April 1959, 40,000.

This 'vital National Prayer Offensive' was launched at an all-night of prayer in five centres in Melbourne on 21 September 1958. At least 16

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<sup>1</sup> CPB, Melbourne

churches in Sydney and 20 in the country joined in. The first hour focussed on the need for 'heart searching and revival among the people of God, beginning with we who pray'. The third hour focussed on country areas of Victoria, 'That revival may come there'. The fourth hour was devoted to praying for 'a mighty awakening among college and school children, High School and University students.' One leader commented, 'I have attended many prayer meetings before, but never have I seen such spontaneity in prayer. I noticed through the night that there was never any lagging in the praying. There was a very evident leading of the Spirit of God throughout.'

Under Buck's generalship, the churches went on to a war footing, alerted to the task and to the fact that this was the Lord's appointed time to bless Australia. Buoyed by the news that 1400 home prayer meetings were now praying for the Crusade and that 5,000 ladies' home prayer meetings had been held in 500 homes, Buck wrote to the leaders of the All Night of Prayer set for 6 February 1959:

It is impossible to express to you the importance which the Committee sets on this most Scriptural of all holy exercises, or the strength of its conviction that this further night of united intercession may well determine the character of the Melbourne Crusade, and the calibre of the spiritual impact made on the life of this city and the souls of its people.

In view of the stupendous promises given to us by our Lord regarding prayer, and the teaching of the Word of God on its vital relationship to the work of the Spirit of God, we enter this warfare . . . with solemnity and reverent trust. We must afresh lead the Lord's people to see that organisation, meticulous though it has been in preparation for the Crusade, does not and cannot endure Divine power and unction.' We are dependent on his Sovereign Spirit, and we humbly submit our plans and ourselves to Him, who alone can do wonders, and honour the work and witness of His servants. 'It is time, oh Lord, for Thee to work.'<sup>1</sup>

To encourage his prayer warriors to relish the battle, he encouraged them to repent at length for the years of timidity and unbelief, and for the 'bewildering prayerlessness in the light of God's promises and provisions

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<sup>1</sup> CPB, Melbourne, Prayer Committee, 29 January 1959.

for those who pray'. He urged them 'corporately and individually' to accept the blame for the powerlessness of Christ's Church. We should be 'terrible as an army with banners' (Sol.6.4), he wrote, 'the gates of hell (not prevailing) against us' (Matt.16.18). We have been 'at ease in Zion' (Amos 6.1), thus perpetuating our spiritual flabbiness. We have been content with our flabbiness 'while the world is on the edge of a nuclear and spiritual volcano'. Unlike our Lord who was eaten up by zeal for the Lord's house we have been complacent in our vain shew of formality.

Petitions were to be for revival: for a 'mighty awakening among all of us who know Christ'; for 'an awakening among the unconverted; awakened to their need of Christ, of the reality of sin; and of judgment'; 'Above all for a Heaven sent revival among the people of God in our Commonwealth.'<sup>1</sup>

An interesting indication of the Billy Graham team's ability to think of everything and everybody is found in this area of prayer. Pasted into the Melbourne Crusade Procedure Book in the section devoted to prayer are two pamphlets. One is a united prayer programme, which opens with 'A sure way to have a revival' by Dr. R.A. Torrey, which shows that Billy endorsed this aspect of his revivalist tradition. The second pamphlet is entitled *The Victory of the Veterans*. It was written by Dr. F.W. Boreham, O.B.E. It begins with the words: 'In the course of a very long life I have often heard God speak to the multitude through the lips of an outstanding evangelist'. Born in 1871 in England, he loved in his youth 'to mingle in the huge throngs that surged about the magnetic personality of Mr. Spurgeon'. Then while a student at Spurgeon's Pastors' College he served as an usher in the great evangelistic campaign conducted in London by D.L. Moody. Many graduates of Pastors' College came to Australia, and in 1911 Boreham began to deliver in the Baptist Tabernacle, Hobart, the first of a series of 125 sermons on 'texts that made history'. Published in five volumes between 1920 and 1928, it has been described as 'one of the most famous series of sermons in the history of preaching and certainly one of

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<sup>1</sup> CPB, Melbourne, Prayer Committee, 29 January 1959.

the most original'.<sup>1</sup> Having mentioned Spurgeon and Torrey, Boreham continues in his pamphlet:

And now Dr. Billy Graham is coming; but I shall not be there. The poignancy of my regret is shared by an immense number of old and frail folk and sick folk who must needs be content with watching the dynamic movement from a distance.

Having recounted the role played by men of similar condition in Joshua's fight with Amalek on the plains of Rephidim, Boreham concluded that 'Moses, Aaron and Hur had proved that, in the spiritual realm. . . there is such a thing as remote control'. Just eight days after the glorious climax to the Sydney Crusade, Boreham was called to his reward. We may wonder if the recording angel has accorded the honours for the 1959 Crusades to Boreham, just as it did to Moses at Rephidim. The point is that Billy was at pains to recruit the help of all such warriors.

If the prayers offered for the Melbourne Crusade were prodigious both in volume and in zeal, they were exceeded by those offered for the Sydney Crusade. Dr. Watson said that the opening of the Sydney Crusade would be something 'in the nature of a spiritual explosion'. No city, he claimed, had ever had such a concentration of prayer.<sup>2</sup> Prayer at the weekly noontime prayer meeting in the Chapter House was characterised as 'spontaneous and fervent'. From 16 March there were daily quarter-hour prayer time programmes on 2CH, to be followed by prayer meetings in 3,000 homes. The 10 April evening of prayer had to be held in 51 centres.

### The Church is revitalised

In genuine revivals the churches are revitalised and strengthened. Four measurable indicators of the Church's revitalisation may be offered:

#### a) Increased numbers of churchgoers

Evidence abounds of increased membership of individual churches after the crusades. Lance Shilton, for example, Rector of Holy Trinity Adelaide,

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<sup>1</sup> From the foreward by Warren W. Wiersbe, in *A Frank Boreham Treasury*, compiled by Peter F. Gunther, Moody Press, Chicago, 1984, p.vii.

<sup>2</sup> CPB, Sydney, Executive Minutes, 25 March 1959.

and, in the opinion of Dorothy Turner, 'our own John Stott'<sup>1</sup>, wrote to Billy Graham on 30 July 1962 attaching a copy of Trinity Sermon no.18 'Changed Lives':

Some people ask the question — 'Do those who make decisions at the meetings last?' In answer to this, after three years I am able to give the figures which indicate the fact that, where there is sympathetic and sincere follow-up by the Church to whom they are referred, the majority [75%] go on to spiritual maturity.<sup>2</sup>

Of Gordon Powell's world record 646 inquirers, 404 were added to Church membership. Two years later a survey revealed that 52% had not missed a communion, 24% had missed a few, and 24% appear to have dropped out.<sup>3</sup> The percentage of survivors (76%) is remarkably similar to Shilton's experience.

Rather than multiply such examples, the task of the historian is to be more quantitative. Did church membership rise in Australia after the crusades? Readily available Church membership statistics only give us figures for 1956 and 1961. (See Graph 1). They do show a higher than expected increase between those years. Anglican figures exclude NSW and Tasmania for which statistics are not available. Both Anglican and Presbyterian figures reveal a healthy increase between 1961 and 1966, suggesting perhaps that the Crusades had fostered a capacity for evangelism in those denominations. The Methodists, however, peaked in 1961.<sup>4</sup>

We might suspect that if any denomination would benefit from Billy Graham's visit it would be the Baptists. Billy Graham is a Baptist, and Baptists traditionally are enthusiastic about evangelistic campaigns to increase membership. It is also known that, whereas the proportion of decisions at the Crusade approximated to the denominational strength in the wider population in the case of Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians, the Baptist percentage of decisions was five times higher than

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<sup>1</sup> CN 245, 2,2

<sup>2</sup> 30 July 1962; BG Archives CN 19 Box 5, folder 47.

<sup>3</sup> 'Never before in Human History', *Decision*, May 1984, p.20.

<sup>4</sup> Based on W. Vamplew, *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Syme, and Weldon, Broadway, pp.428-31.

that of its percentage of the population.<sup>1</sup> With about 2% of the population the Baptists scored 11.6% of the decisions, exactly the same percentage as the Presbyterians who had 10.7% of the population.<sup>2</sup> The Baptists also supplied nearly 30% of counsellors for the Sydney Crusade.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, Dr. Edward Gibson, President-General of the Baptist Union, has done meticulous work on Australian Baptist membership statistics from which I have extracted the following graphs:

1. Graph 2 shows the percentage increase in Baptist membership in 6 states and the ACT over three year periods. This shows that up to 1953 Baptist membership a decrease was as likely as an increase, that percentage increase picked up in 1956, peaked in 1959 and 1962, then went into decline until the mid 70s.
2. The consolidated graph of all the states is Graph 3. This graph shows the percentage increase of membership for all Australian Baptists. It clearly peaks at '59 and '62.
3. Dr. Gibson advises that the vital index of evangelism and growth in the Baptist denomination is the percentage of membership to be baptised or restored. Again in Graph 4 we see the same peak at '59 and '62.

The clear conclusion we must draw from the excellent Baptist data is that the Billy Graham Crusades did not initiate the improvement in the denomination's membership; it appears, however, to have enabled it to grow even more rapidly in '59 and to reach its highest rate of growth in '62. The '59 Crusades, then, were a very effective form of harvesting and an effective, but short-term, means of Church growth.

#### b) Increased numbers of theological students

In 1969 Adelaide Bible Institute had a student body of 118, including 14 converts of '59 and another 14 who said they were in College as a result of

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<sup>1</sup> F. Alleyne and H. Fallding, 'Decisions at the Graham Crusade in Sydney: A Statistical Analysis,' *Journal of Religious Education*, III.1, July 1960, p.39.

<sup>2</sup> F. Alleyne and H. Fallding, 'Decisions at the Graham Crusade in Sydney: A Statistical Analysis,' *Journal of Religious Education*, III.1, July 1960, pp.37, 39 n.5.

<sup>3</sup> 'Billy Graham in Australia,' *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 24.4, 22 June 1959, p.56.

'59 - so 25% were there because of '59.<sup>1</sup> More than half of Melbourne Bible Institute's 160 students in 1969 were products of '59. The first year intake at Moore College in 1960 of 44 was the largest in Moore College's History and the 1961 total enrolment of 104 students was the peak enrolment before recent years.<sup>2</sup> The Principal, Broughton Knox wrote thus to Billy Graham at the end of 1962:

It is now over three years since you conducted the campaign in Sydney and I thought you would like to know how the campaign has affected this College. . . . We have a student body of 100.

All the then student members of the College attended the counselling classes and were counsellors at the Crusade. I know the counselling classes conducted by Charles Rigg were a wonderful help to them, but especially the practical experience of speaking for Christ personally to enquirers both at the Showground and later following them up in their parishes was a great contribution to their spiritual growth. All these students have now been ordained and have left the College, but I enquired a month or two ago of the present members of the College as to what the effect of the campaign had been on them, inviting them to drop a short note in my letter box if the campaign had a decisive influence in their coming to College. 14 replied. 8 attributed their conversion and spiritual awakenig directly to the campaign. 6 others who were converted before the campaign began regarded the campaign and their participation in it, whether by way of attendance or counselling, as directly contributing to their call to the ministry.

I am glad to be able to say that the 14 who repliled are among the finest members of our College at present. One of those converted at the Crusade is a Master of Science and a leading expert on electronic computers in Australia, another topped his class at the University of Sydney and has just won a first class B.D. at London. Another, a man over 40, writes, 'Prior to the Crusade life was a sinful, hellish question mark. Knowledge of Christ's love in dying for me and paying the penalty I owed simply gave me power over all previous difficulties.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G. Bingham to Berryman, 12 October 1972, CN 245, 14, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Lawton, "'That Woman Jezebel" — Moore College after 25 Years,' The Moore College Library Lecture - 1981, pp.22,32; Judd & Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, p.302.

<sup>3</sup> 28 December 1962, CN 245,2,2.

Deaconess House also enjoyed record enrolments just after the Crusade, peaking at 62 theological students. In 1961 Deaconess Mary Andrews surveyed the students about the impact of the Crusade. Every student said they had either been involved in at or converted at it. Mary Andrews was suspicious: there was an Indian student from Kerala; surely she had not been involved. Yes, she had participated in Billy's 1956 campaign in India!<sup>1</sup>

c) Increased numbers of missionaries. Irene Jeffreys of Adelaide, General Synodsperson and CMS (Australia) Vice-President, was a counsellor at the 1959 Crusade. She thought the follow-up was not good. 'They all faded away' she said. But, she added with her next breath, 'A great number of people who came forward for CMS service were converted at the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade'.<sup>2</sup> A.J. Dain, Federal Secretary of CMS, 1959-1965, concurs. He said that 'Over my years in CMS there was never a single course of candidates among whom there were not Graham converts.'<sup>3</sup>

d) The impact of the Crusades on Bible Reading was probably enormous. Scripture Union membership in Australia leaped from 58,000 in March 1958 to 104,400 in November 1959.<sup>4</sup> This was due, however, not only to the Crusades, but to two Scripture Union weeks which were designed to reinforce the Crusades.

#### **Large numbers are converted**

In genuine revivals of religion large numbers of the hitherto unconverted are brought to Christ. The 1959 Southern Cross Crusade took in Australia and New Zealand. During the 3 and 1/2 Months of the Southern Cross Crusade nearly 3 and 1/4 million people attended meetings - that is 1/4 of the entire population of Australia and New Zealand. Of these 150,000 decided for Christ. In Australia 130,000 or 1.24% of the Australian population responded to Billy's invitation.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Andrews to S . Piggin, 5 May 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Irene Jeffreys interviewed by R.D. Linder, 22 September 1987.

<sup>3</sup> A.J. Dain to Berryman, 28 September 1972, CN 245, 14, 23

<sup>4</sup> J. & M. Prince, *Tuned in to Change: A History of the Australian Scripture Union*, Sydney, 1979, p.166.

These were said to be the largest crowds which had ever heard the preaching of the gospel. To that point it was the largest, most successful evangelistic campaign in human history - and it happened in the land of amiable pagans. 'Never again will I doubt that the gospel is the power of God,' wrote Bishop Kerle overawed, 'nor that men's lives can be changed through the foolishness of preaching'.<sup>1</sup>

Melbourne attendances totalled 719,000 with 26,440 enquirers. i.e. 3.7%  
 Attendances at the Sydney Crusade totalled 980,000 with 56,780 enquirers.  
 i.e. 5.8%

Perth: 106,800 and 5396 i.e. 5.1%

Adelaide: 253000 and 11,965 4.7%

Brisbane: 291000 and 10661 i.e. 3.7%<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the second week of the Sydney Crusade a marked increase in church going was already evident. Billy had never known such a response. 'Spiritual hunger is the greatest I have ever known in my ministry,' he said, 'This is the work of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>3</sup> Ministers were reporting daily miracles of God's grace in changed lives. Homes were being restored, and whole families were dedicating themselves to Christ.

### The diminution of sinful practices in the wider community

The great revivals of the past have resulted in a decline in national illegality and immorality. At first sight it looks unlikely that the 1959 Crusades would have done that. Would not most of his converts have been good-living people — like the Countess of Huntingdon, converted from righteousness? Only 25% of decisions made at the Sydney Crusade, for example, were made by the unchurched. Only 5.5% were from so-called depressed residential areas and only 7.5% of those who were employed were in labouring or manual jobs.<sup>4</sup> That I should, nevertheless, look for evidence of the impact of the Crusades on the incidence of crime

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<sup>1</sup> CPB, Melbourne

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Billy Graham Crusades in Australia and New Zealand*, 1959 (unpaginated).

<sup>3</sup> S. Piggin, *Faith of Steel*, Wollongong, 1984, p.242.

<sup>4</sup> F. Alleyne and H. Fallding, 'Decisions at the Graham Crusade in Sydney: A Statistical Analysis,' *Journal of Religious Education*, III.1, July 1960, pp.34-39.

was suggested to me by my Rector, the Rev. Dr. Rod Irvine, on the basis of a definition of revival similar to the one used in this paper.<sup>1</sup> He further counselled that one would have to work hard to make the statistics yield the truth that genuine revival tends to lower crime rates in the wider community. By 'work hard' he meant one would have to look for annual, even monthly figures, since the custom of providing such statistics in 5-year intervals would obscure any such impact. He appears to have been right on both counts, a fact which alarms me because it suggests that he is sufficiently competent to be allowed to run the parish! The Crusades do appear to have modified social behaviour and yet this is only evident in the annual statistics. (Monthly statistics appear to be very difficult to procure).

At first glance the statistics show that all the crime indices except drunkenness<sup>2</sup> rose dramatically in the 1950s, suggesting that the frequently-voiced expressions of fear about juvenile delinquency and moral declension had some basis in fact. This fear was one of the reasons why Australians were encouraged to pray for revival when Billy came. Then, in the 1960s, the indices rose even more steeply, suggesting that the Crusades had no quantitative impact on the community's standards. So my first inclination was to doubt that the crusades had made any impact on the wider community's behaviour, which, if true, would be evidence that this was not a revival.

Then my eye was caught by an article in the *Sunday Mirror* for 17 May 1959, the Sunday after the final great meeting of the Sydney Crusade. The article was headed:

### THUG GIVES UP REVOLVER

#### Burglar hands over tool-kit

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Piggin, Preaching for Revival from Jonathan Edwards to Billy Graham, Paper delivered at the Clergy Conference, Gilbulla, 7 March 1989, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> S. K. Mukherjee, *Crime Trends in Twentieth Australia*, Australian Institute of Criminology & George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1981, pp.82-84. Drunkenness offences in Australia peaked in 1951 and then declined throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

### Graham sequel

The Billy Graham Crusade has cut crime in Sydney by an estimated 50 per cent.

It appears that a magistrate, A.E. Debenham, had made this claim, which was accompanied by stories of a safebreaker handing the instruments of his trade over to a flabbergasted counsellor, and a gunman surrendering his revolver to another, together with the information that businesses were reporting an epidemic of repayments of bad debts, and thrown in for good measure, was the fact that Church attendance in King's Cross had risen to record heights.

Debenham retired in 1962 and is now 92. A keen Anglican all his life, he went to every Crusade meeting and was thoroughly involved in every way possible. The nature of his work involved protracted interviews with people brought before the courts. He does not appear to have hesitated to probe their spiritual condition, and on the basis of such intimate discussions, he concluded that Billy Graham was having a deep impact on the human psyche in Sydney. His wife was a child welfare officer. She took a number of State wards to the Crusade and had the joy of seeing some decide for Christ and continue with Christ in the intervening decades. Debenham is quite adamant that the number of crimes was reduced by the Crusade and he suspects that liquor consumption must also have fallen as a result. He has no doubt that Australia enjoyed religious revival in 1959 as evidenced by increased church attendances in all denominations.<sup>1</sup>

So, I thought I should return to those crime statistics and this time obey my rector and work harder.

The number of convictions for all crimes committed in Australia doubled between 1920 and 1950 and then doubled again between 1950 and 1959

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<sup>1</sup> Telephone conversation with Mr. and Mrs. A.E. Debenham, 18 May 1989. He has written three books, *Without fear or favour; All Manner of People; The Innocent Victims*.

when the population increased by only one-quarter.<sup>1</sup> Then, in 1960, 1961, and 1962, the number of convictions remained fairly constant, resuming its dramatic upward trend in the middle and late 60s.<sup>2</sup> Something which happened at the same time as the Billy Graham Crusades slowed, even stopped, the further decline into criminality of community behaviour.

Then I investigated the illegitimate birth-rate to get some rough index to non-criminal community standards. Again one is at first struck by the gigantic change for the worst which overtook our society in the later 50s and 60s. Ex-nuptial births as a proportion of total births had fallen in the 1940s and early 50s to an historic low of about 3.9 per hundred. They then began to climb fiercely in the middle and late 50s, heralding the permissive 60s. In the period 1955 to 1965 this index rose every year to almost double the 1954 figure, but the year it rose slowest (.06%) was in 1960.<sup>3</sup> The illegitimate children not conceived in 1959 were not born in 1960! Again one can argue that something happened in Australia at the same time as the Billy Graham Crusade which almost stopped the rot, not from existing, but from becoming more rotten.

Turning to alcohol consumption, I asked the Rev. Bernard Judd, well-known temperance campaigner, if he was under the impression that alcohol consumption fell after the Crusades. He thought not, but procured from the Bureau of statistics the following figures.

Annual Per Capita Consumption of Beer in Australia in Litres

|         |        |
|---------|--------|
| 1958-59 | 111.01 |
| 1968-69 | 113.5  |
| 1978-79 | 133.2  |

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<sup>1</sup> The population increased by a steady rate of about 200,000 per year throughout the 1950s. See *Demography*, 1965, Bulletin No.83. Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra, 1966, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> See S. Mukherjee et. al., *Source Book of Australian Criminal and Social Statistics, 1900-1980*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> *Demography*, 1965, Bulletin No.83. Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra, 1966, p.80.

This also reveals the same regrettable trends as we have seen in all the other social indicators. It is therefore striking to learn that the figure for 1960-61 is 100.1, that is 10% lower than the 1958-59 figure. I asked the Rev. Bernard Judd how he explained that unexpected and dramatic fall. 'It is interesting,' he said. Something happened in Australia at about the same time as the Billy Graham Crusades to cause a 10% reduction in the consumption of beer.

### Conclusions

How do we explain the success of the 1959 Crusades? Successes in history are rarely monocausal. A combination of factors explains the great impact of the crusades: anxieties about a world threatened by the Cold War and a society beginning to totter into moral decline after a decade of equipoise — this made even softly secular forces approve of revival, thus opening many hearts to the challenge and hope in Billy's message; the gifts, stance, and superb organisation of Billy Graham and his team; the all-important initial success in Melbourne, fostered by superb laymen who had been used to decades of parachurch activity because they were excluded from satisfaction in their own churches; the growth of Methodism in the 1950s ably led by Alan Walker.

But one could make out a strong case that the critical mass in all of this was evangelical Anglicanism. Billy Graham was the icing on Mowll's cake. It was a rich cake, full of the right ingredients. The leadership of S.B. Babbage and Leon Morris in Melbourne and Kerle, Loane and others in Sydney was consistent and constructive. The clergy were frequently passionate in their zeal for souls, experienced in evangelism, and they had tasted some success in the many effective parish missions of the 1950s. The laity, both men and women, were capable and loyal.

The point can be seen the more clearly if a contrast is made with English rural Anglicanism which has been described as 'occasionally infuriating, often lovable and almost always confused'. The Anglican Church in Sydney is frequently infuriating, rarely lovable, and never confused even if it is often divided. The real division is between those who are primarily evangelistic and those who are primarily scholastic. The latter is ultimately a Catholic concern, and the Catholic identification of the gospel

with ecclesiology soon results in a dilution in the seriousness with which we pursue our commitments. It is Protestant principle, as Tillich called it, which challenges us to take the contemporary situation seriously and to raise issues more fundamental and spiritual than the survival of the Church. The Anglican church, like the Catholic church, has rarely enjoyed revival. But when significant numbers of Anglicans start hungering for it, as they did in England in 1954 and in Australia in 1959, that is when things have happened. Billy came to see all that while he was in Australia. That is why he hoped the next great awakening would commence in Australia.

Did revival come to Australia in 1959? By all the indicators accessible to the historian, it did. It was a revival, all right, and a great one. That it grew out of an evangelistic outreach to the unchurched and reflected the style and positive personality of the preacher and therefore looked different from past revivals should not obscure the fact. Was it also the beginning of the next great awakening? Well, only history can tell us that, and it will take another 30 years to tell us!

Stuart Piggin.

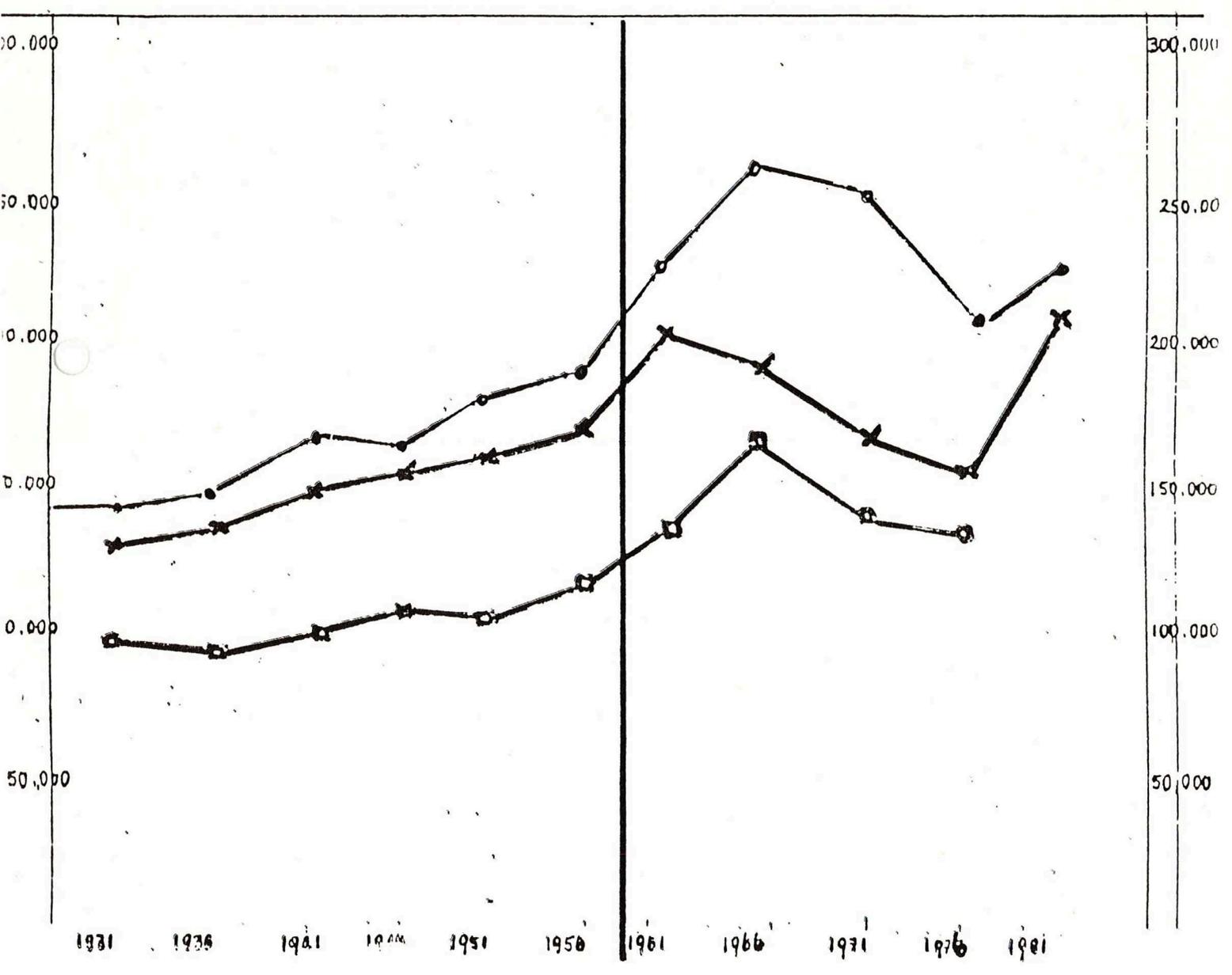
GRAPH I  
 CHURCH MEMBERS  
 AUSTRALIA (ALL STATES)  
 1931 - 1981

Legend:

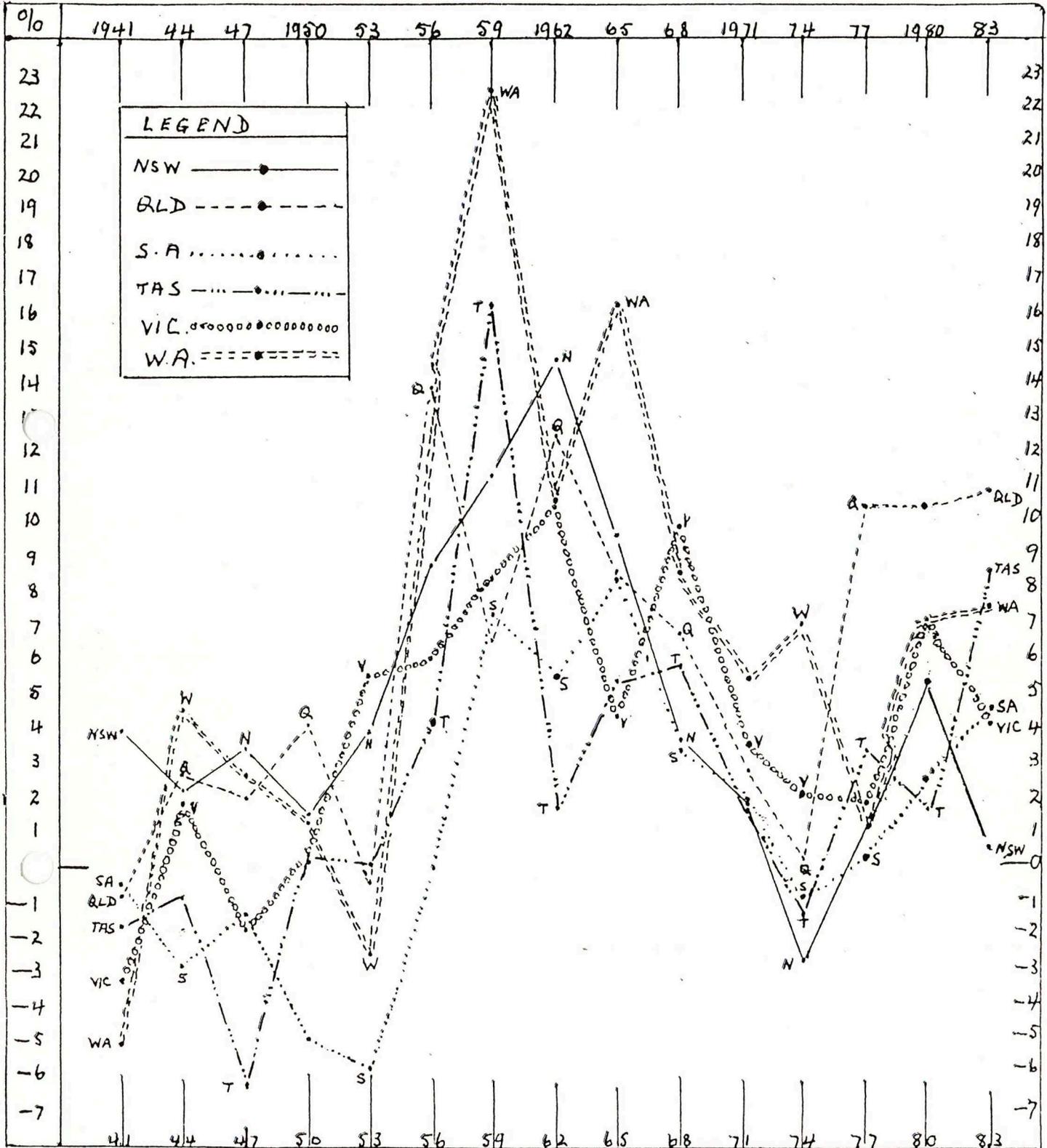
Anglican  

 Methodist  

 Presbyterian  
 Excludes (Sydney + Tasmania)



**GRAPH 2**  
**% INCREASE IN BAPTIST MEMBERSHIP**  
**3 year periods, 1941/83**



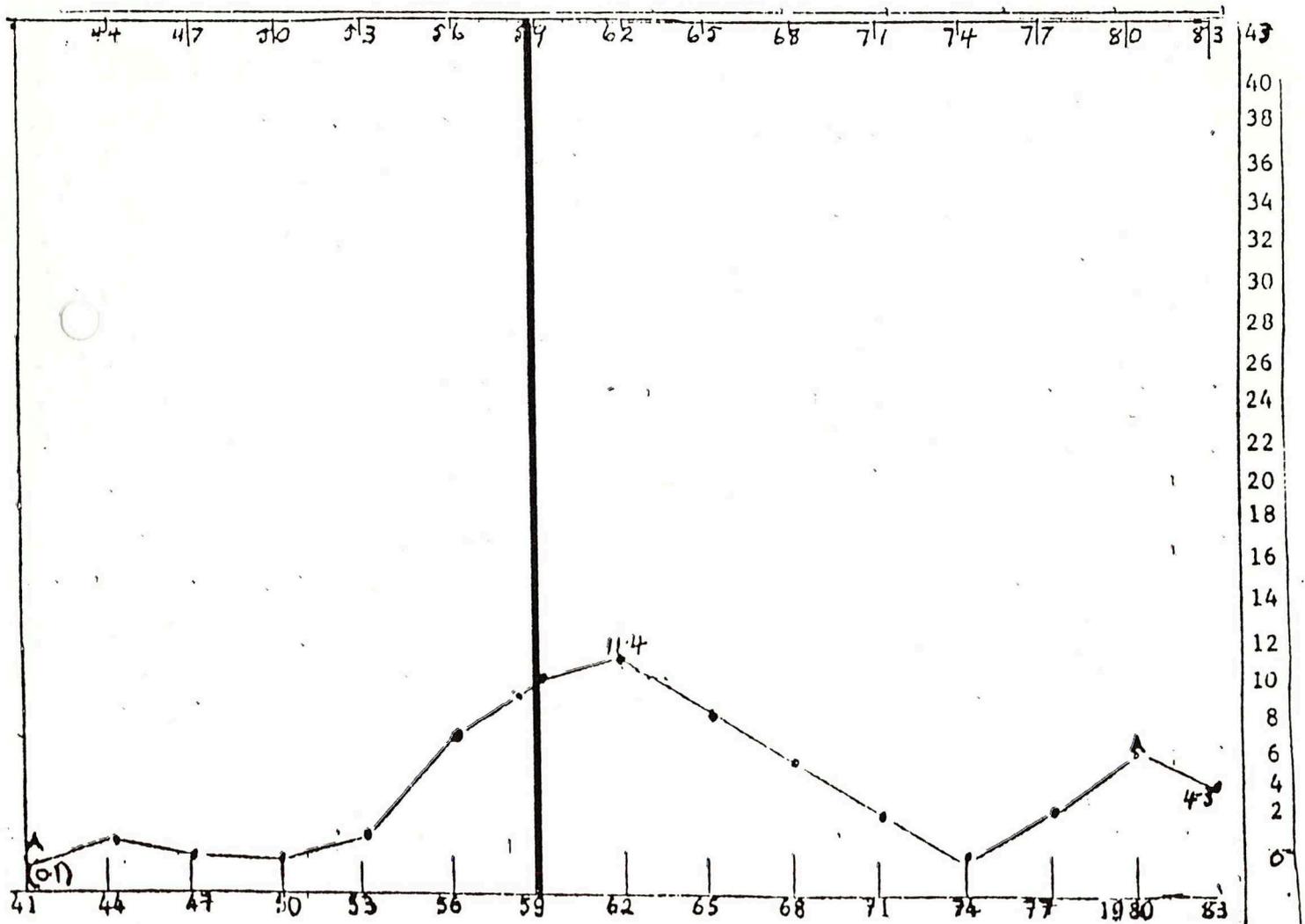
Note that there has been an upturn since mid-70s. This upturn has been consistent in Qld, SA, WA, strong uptrend in TAS, while NSW, VIC have shown lower rates in the last triennium, 1980/83. These two larger states do show a high intake from net migration in spite of heavy movement from them to other states. The steady growth of ACT has evened out due no doubt in part to Federal Government pause in the Capital. In the N.T. quite a good recovery after cyclone Tracy is evident.

### GRAPH 3

1941 - 1983

AUSTRALIAN BAPTISTS - Three year period

A = % increase of membership over three years.



# GRAPH 4

1941 - 1983

## AUSTRALIAN BAPTISTS Three year period

C = % of the sum of Baptisms + Visitation  
(restorations) to membership. This is the  
vital index of evangelism and growth.

