

CRUSADE COMMENTARY

(OBSERVATIONS AND OPINIONS ON THE
GREATER LONDON CRUSADE FROM VARIOUS SOURCES)

IT will doubtless be of interest to our readers to learn some of the opinions expressed in the British press regarding Dr. Billy Graham and the Greater London Crusade. The extracts printed below are purposely gathered from a variety of sources in order to indicate how men of different types reacted to the Crusade.

"The Times"

The following quotation is taken from the report of the opening meeting of the Crusade which appeared in 'The Times' for March 2nd.

"The evangelist gives the impression not only of a very sincere but of a very modest man. His message is always Bible-based; one text after another is hurled at his audience. His voice is a baritone, usually mild, that comes over in a practised way from a lapel microphone that glitters like a cravat pin on his discreet tie. His gestures are not particularly enlarged. In view of the scale of the hall he is using, and he seems constantly to have to remind himself of some orator's precept about not plunging his left hand into his pocket and spoiling a stance. He gave the impression of a likeable man with whom it would be eminently easy to talk without too much English reserve.

"The whole message led up to the invitation with which he ended—the invitation which brought that unexpected and somehow not wholly convincing band of penitents, singly and in twos, young, middle-aged, and old, shyly down the gangways, through the audience with their heads bowed in

prayer, until they stood at the evangelist's feet.

"'If this evangelism,' Mr. Graham had said, 'does not contribute to the building of the church it will have very little effect in the City of London. I am calling on you to pray as you have not prayed before, because I am convinced the only way our generation can have peace, can be spared the paralysis of materialism and secularism, is for us Christians to fall on our faces before God and beseech Him. Would it not be great to see everybody in the City of London discussing Christ? To see hundreds of people praying across London? Would it not be wonderful to see secularism and materialism hurled back? Would it not be grand to see our trains and coaches filled with people singing Christian hymns as they did in the days of Wesley?'"

"The Spectator"

'The Spectator' of March 12th carried an article on Billy Graham written by John Betjeman, who described himself as an Anglo-Catholic. The following two paragraphs are taken from his article.

"Every night the Haringay Arena is packed; every night throngs of converts—mostly young people—crowd up at the end of the service to the bare space below the rostrum, thence to be conducted by 'counsellors' to a room where they are interviewed and given tracts. This is the Greater London Crusade of Billy Graham and I think he must be cynical indeed who affects to despise the crusade or doubt the

sincerity of its promoters. If only a tithe of the 'conversions' are lasting, by the end of the campaign the effect on nonconformity throughout London and the home counties, is bound to be enormous. And Evangelicals in the Church of England who are now enjoying a revival, will also benefit.

"Billy Graham himself, who is a Baptist . . . is not an emotional speaker, despite his wonderful eloquence. It is obviously within his power to make people weep and scream 'Alleluiah.' But he restrains himself. He has the great Evangelical love of Our Lord as Man. Jesus as a person is vivid to him. Billy Graham knows his Bible so well and he brings the scenes of our Lord's life on earth so vividly before us, that neither Catholic nor Evangelical could quarrel with him. He is genuinely above religious differences and if any intolerance or quarrelling comes into the campaign, it will not be Billy Graham's work but the devil's, the product of the Protestant underworld of mad sects, or the arrogant uncharity of ultramontanes. The whole burden of his message is that people should return to their particular churches, whether Plymouth Brethren or Church of England. For this reason he holds no services on Sunday in order that people should go back to their own churches. Meanwhile I think all churches should be grateful for the work which is being done for them."

"Northern Daily Mail"

The following extract from the 'Northern Daily Mail' dated 7th April, will be read with particular interest in view of the remark made by Dr. Graham as reported above in 'The Times.'

"Billy Graham's hymn-singing concerts are surprising late travellers in London's tube trains. They come in in flocks, with the after-glow of Haringay excitement still in their eyes, and start up their rollicking hymn

tunes. Often tired night workers put away their evening papers and join in.

"I followed a group of youths up the escalator one night. They sang 'This is my story,' all the way. As they passed the ticket collector several paused to say 'God bless you.'"

Beverley Nichols

The comments that follow are taken from the Beverley Nichols column in 'The Sunday Chronicle' for March 7th.

"I am not going to describe Billy Graham. It has been done too often in the past fortnight. The lean, taut figure—the clenched fists upraised—the staring eyes—everybody who reads newspapers has it all by heart.

"Nor do I propose to rehash the familiar arguments about the finances of American evangelism. Some of the things which have been written about Graham's salary, and the expenses of his campaign, make one ashamed of British journalism.

"The plain fact of the matter is that he is giving himself body and soul to a job which he considers to be of vital importance—and so do I—for a tenth of the salary which his genius might command in other directions.

"He is blazingly sincere. He sweats sincerity. At the risk of raising a guffaw from the gallery, the word 'sweat' is to be taken literally. At the end of a 40-minute sermon he has to change from top to toe, as he is soaking wet. If that strikes you as terribly funny, I can't help it.

". . . Well, what do we think of the set-up? Speaking for myself, I have the highest admiration for it. My Christianity is not an antiquarian luxury, it is a 20th-century necessity. If the Gospels can't be translated into the slang of the street-corner, then we might as well leave them to gather dust on the shelves of the library. That is why it seems to me so petty and purile to purse our lips when a man



Billy Graham speaking to 12,000 people in Trafalgar Square on Saturday, April 3rd

like Billy Graham dares to use all the apparatus of the atom era to spread the Gospel of the eternal era."

Dr. Leslie Weatherhead.

The Rev. Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead, minister of the City Temple, offered the following comments on the Crusade in the April issue of the 'City Temple Tidings.'

"I have been asked by one or two friends to comment on the amazing thing that is happening in our own town through the advent of Billy Graham. Now I want you to go and hear Billy Graham. Don't accept the criticisms that have been made in certain newspapers about him. I met him before I left for America and I was present at one of the meetings at Harringay. Billy Graham is a sincere, humble, genuine person. He has a great gift. It is a gift for which we should thank God. I could not find anything in the whole service that was psychologically unsound. I was in-

vited to go from that point of view, and I listened and entered into the whole service and found myself thanking God for what that man is doing in our midst.

"I think it is magnificent. What are we critical about? Why do we concentrate so much on the balance sheet and worry about figures? Why are we worried about Billy Graham's theology because it is the theology of what is called a Fundamentalist? Let us talk about theology later. Let us get these people within the sound of the Gospel and making up their minds.

"I can only give my witness that I believe this man is of God. I am going to pray for him and his converts, and I invite you to do the same."

Canon Bryan Green

The Rev. Canon Bryan S. W. Green, Rector of Birmingham, had this to say about Billy Graham in an article which appeared in one of the Birmingham dailies.

"Billy Graham is front page news in

London, and to be known by name to the vast majority of Londoners is no mean publicity achievement on the part of the organising committee, and of Billy Graham himself. In these days of modern mass thinking and propaganda it is a great thing when a Christian preacher is a household name.

"He is absolutely sincere, and genuinely humble when a lesser man might easily have become conceited with the limelight and the admiration.

"He speaks for about 40 minutes—and he is an excellent orator. He uses his voice well, but without striving after oratorical effects. His gestures and movements are lively and effective. This is clearly shown by the evident interest of the huge audience.

"It was the end that struck me most—and remember that I, too, have tried to preach the Christian message to audiences of 10,000 to 15,000 people. I know some of the difficulties, and that is why I admire the way that Billy Graham does it.

"But the end mystifies me. With-

out any emotional pressure or unpleasant tricks he asks those who wish to give themselves over to Christ to come forward. People came forward after a moment of silent prayer—a moment which I felt was genuinely real and sincere with reverence and purpose.

"Frankly, there did not seem to me to be any explanation on a purely human level of oratorical tricks or demagogic suggestion that would account for British people coming forward openly and so earnestly. I believe it is the work of God's Spirit in answer to the prayer of Christians throughout the world, and that there is a genuine religious movement happening in Haringay.

"Billy Graham preaches Christ simply and plainly as the Saviour and Master for all men and for each man. Here I stand shoulder to shoulder with him, and thank God that Billy is preaching his message with power, and with a success that is a result of the faith and power of many members of the Christian Church."