

THE VOICE OF GOD AT HARRINGAY

By The Rev. J. D. BLINCO

(Archway Methodist Central Hall)

*"Great things He hath taught us,
Great things He hath done."*

HE would be a very obdurate man who still refused to believe that at Harringay we witnessed a miracle of saving grace such as few generations are privileged to see. Here and there such a man is even still to be found and one wonders whether an angel from heaven would convince him. The vast majority recognize that during the Greater London Crusade the Lord God visited us in mighty power; but not even they are in a position to assess the greatness of the visitation.

The results are not fully known to the Executive Committee, privileged as they were to be at the very centre of the campaign. Things moved so quickly and the whole effort grew to such astonishing magnitude that it was quite impossible for any one man or group of men to keep abreast of every development. At this very moment there is pouring in from every part of the British Isles an undiminishing stream of witness to the power and blessing of the campaign's influence. I believe it will go on for months. There is every indication that the interest will grow, especially as the time approaches for the return of Billy Graham. In the meantime it would be a good thing to set down some of the things the Lord did for us, and taught us, during those hallowed and memorable days. We all felt like singing, "To God be the Glory," and it is fitting that two sentences from the hymn should serve as a text for this article.

**Great Things He hath done . . .
for me**

Testimony, like charity, should always begin at home, and it's there I begin. The campaign was a tremendous challenge and blessing to me. Its Bible emphasis searched my soul and poured a judging light upon my own preaching ministry. The sight of every kind and condition of person coming into transforming fellowship with Jesus Christ quickened and confirmed my passion for evangelism, and my love for the sheep for whom the Shepherd died.

I would have to go back on many holy moments of personal challenge and resolve, on countless glimpses into the heart of the eternal realities, if I were to go back to where the Greater London Crusade found me. It has been worth living every single year of my life to be alive and ready for those three tremendous months.

I have loved evangelism since the day back in 1928 when an evangelistic mission, held in a little Methodist Church in a Cumberland village, brought the Gospel to my very needy and darkened heart. Throughout the years I have believed that the Lord Jesus could and would "save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him"; through the years I have been privileged to see thousands own His Name and receive His grace; but Harringay kindled even brighter fires in my heart and I am more wholeheartedly committed to the evangelistic calling than ever before.

Great Things He hath Done . . . for my Church

There is no use pretending that hundreds of people have joined my church as a result of the campaign. We had a fair number, situated as we are quite near the Arena and being committed, though not unanimously, to the meetings. Round about thirty people have come into the fellowship, either for the first time or from standing on the perimeter of the fellowship. Almost without exception they are coming into membership with us and are quietly and effectively finding their place among us.

But the addition of new members or worshippers is not the only benefit, and it may not be the most important at this point. We have been stirred in our spirit, made uncomfortable if you like. Our eyes have been focussed on the essential things of our own personal devotion and our communal task. We have been called to holiness (though most of my people may not use that word to describe the experience) and evangelism. The sight of people being converted, to a generation that had hardly ever seen *anyone* converted, was a marvellous stimulant to faith and a clarion call to dedicated service.

The touch of God that came to us at Harringay will have its effects not only upon us but upon a generation still to come, for we have taken to ourselves a precious treasure that will increase as the years pass and become an invaluable legacy to our young.

Great Things He hath Done . . . for the Minister

"Which is the ministers' block, please?" How many times one heard that in the course of the campaign! For every one minister who found his way to the reserved section there seemed to be two others scattered round the vast arena.

What other religious event in this

century has commanded the attention and *attendance* of so large and so representative a group of ministers and pastors? Those who were privileged to attend will never forget the gathering at Westminster Central Hall just before the end of the campaign. Nearly two thousand four hundred preachers were there, of almost every shade of doctrine, from extreme fundamentalism to extreme liberalism, though many fewer of the latter than the former. It was a convincing testimony to the force with which the Crusade had hit the ministry, especially when one remembered that that great gathering represented only a fraction of those desiring to attend but prevented by distance or duty.

More than one minister has told me that the campaign strengthened his own hand for evangelism in his church. It is not easy for the keenest evangelist to do his best work when his own people need convincing of the reality and power of the saving grace of God; and, as I have already remarked, thousands of church-going people of this generation had never seen conversions taking place, certainly never on anything like the scale of Harringay. These men tell me that their people are awakening to the duty, and fruitfulness, of being an evangelising community.

Ministers have told me that the meetings brought a breath of heaven to their hearts, set a new light in their mind, put a fire in the tongue and a Bible back into their hand and mouth. We are bound to see the long-term effects of this. Nothing can happen to the minister, good or bad, progressive or retrogressive, without its showing in the general life and usefulness of his people.

Great Things He hath Done . . . for Thousands of Penitents

The whole story will never be told

or known until we meet in the bliss of His presence and tell the story of His saving love; but enough is known to say without fear of exaggeration, that thousands of men and women have been very wonderfully born again of His Spirit. Of that there cannot be any serious doubt.

Not only in Britain, but all over the world, there are men and women who were led to Harringay and from there to Calvary. I have met some hundreds of them myself and can readily testify to the reality of their experience and its continuing power.

The sole object of the campaign was to call men and women to repentance and faith, that they might know the salvation of our God and of His Christ. That this objective was achieved is now history, far beyond cavil or qualification. Some of those who were reached and won will emerge as leaders in the Church in the years that are ahead. They will find their service in His Kingdom's work to the uttermost parts of the earth and in every walk of life. Well may our hearts sing in gratitude and wonder, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Great Things He hath Taught Us ... about being Wise in our Time

There are those who were not at all happy about the vast organisation that went on behind the scenes to perfect every possible means by which to reach the hitherto unreached 80% of Britain's population; but we all felt at an early stage that we must speak to people where they are and in an idiom they understand. Hence the publicity. It offended some, but arrested thousands, so that the campaign was a talking point weeks before it opened, and Billy Graham's name was becoming a household word before he reached these shores.

The Crusade was after people, and it seemed basic to the situation that the largest possible number knew in the shortest possible time what was about to happen. There is a great deal to learn on this issue. We have hidden our lamp beneath a bushel as though apology and decorum were virtues like modest self-effacement.

The snag about going ahead on publicity, if you have survived the test of taste and reticence, is finance. Publicity is big business and there is not an over-plus of the milk of human kindness in that realm. Bills posted means bills presented. Which brings me to another point.

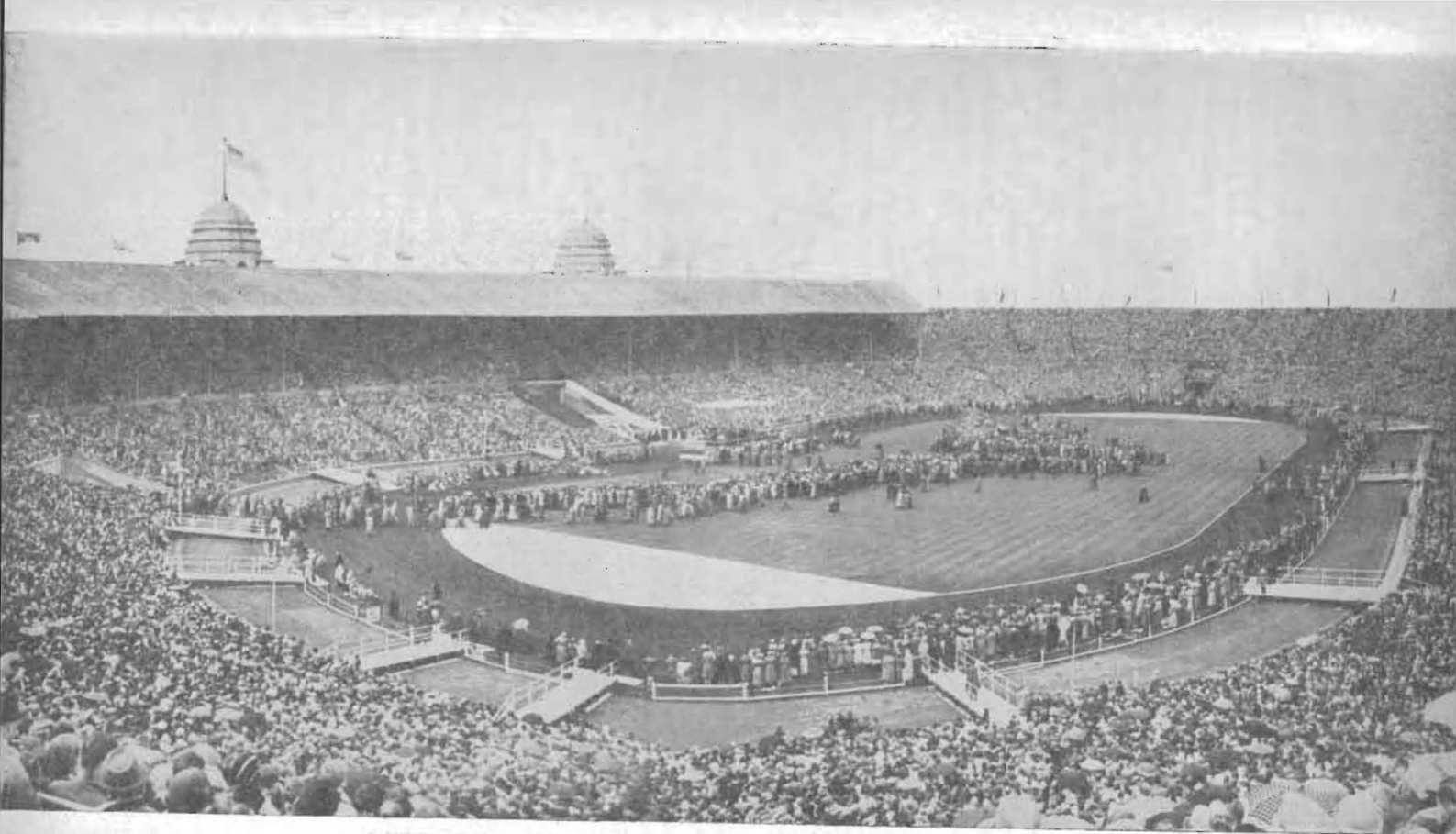
Great Things He has Taught Us ... about the Ability and Willingness to Give

A staggering amount of money was raised during the campaign, not a penny too much, as it has turned out, but a staggering amount nevertheless. The final figure will be far above the initial target of £100,000.

I remember the day the Committee became certain that the Lord was directing them to lease Harringay. About sixteen men sat around a table and contracted for £30,000 worth of leasing at a time when the money to pay for it was almost entirely still in the pockets of the people to whom we were to appeal for funds; all kinds of people, by no means the wealthy, though some of them gave handsomely.

It was a great venture of faith, but we were to discover that the Lord and His people were equal to the emergency. (And if you think we ought to have known that anyway, try sitting round a table with a handful of people and look £100,000 square in the face).

Every post brought in shoals of letters bearing the money. The ravens of God are not a scraggy, dispirited, moulting lot; they came with meat in



A VIEW OF THE GREAT FINAL RALLY AT THE EMPIRE STADIUM, WEMBLEY

their mouth. The same was true of the offerings at the Arena; the giving was good, at times very good.

The result ran contrary to many speculations in regard to church finance. There were not a few who would have told you that our people were so heavily laden that they just could not support such an effort, but they did.

It points, maybe, to the fact that some people have buttoned up their pockets because they felt that they were not paying for the right kind of goods.

Great Things He hath Taught Us . . . that God does not only Use People with Great Names

A minister excused himself from committal to the Crusade in its early stages on the grounds that no outstanding church leader was involved in the intimate preparation (though I find it difficult to understand how he had missed the very substantial Council of Reference). It was an excuse that many had. The campaign lacked 'standing' they said. How soon we forget the Scriptures, how soon the fishermen recede from our memory. The Galilean lacked standing, but His words and works were with power.

No man or men, 'big' or 'little', can monopolise a work of God, and the Lord would soon lift His hand from any group that tried. It seems that it does please Him to demonstrate the reality of His power by using those who might not be the most likely.

It is to the people who are *ready*, and willing now, to respond to the call of God that comes to men at great moments in the Church's history—it is to these people that He comes, and comes in power.

It befits all of us to refrain from trying to find God's man for this hour, as some are doing. That man is never found, he just bursts on the scene.

He has not to be looked for, because as the months and years pass he stands out so clearly that he cannot be missed, or hardly. The Lord has not appointed any particular group as a Nomination Committee for this special work. He comes by whom He will and no man will gainsay His word.

The committee responsible for the campaign arrangements can take to itself no special credit and it would be foolish and almost blasphemous to try. It rejoices in that the good Lord used it to His glory.

Great Things He hath Taught Us . . . about the Unity that is Deeper than Church Union

I worked with all kinds of people during the Campaign and I can honestly say that there are dozens of them whose church affiliation is unknown to me to this day. What you were by denomination was not nearly so important as Whose you were and how ready you were to do just anything to further His purpose in the campaign.

Among other things it seems to indicate that the people of God must be busy fighting the devil and his works or they will fall to criticising each other. The true church unity is in obedience of life and service and not necessarily in any re-arrangement of church organization. If union is in His mind for us let us look for it, but in the meantime let us cherish the unity of the Spirit that enables men of different church groups to give themselves in unreserved service, each in the company of the other. The true unity is found there. The fellowship of believers was a reality at Harringay. Men who loved the Book worked without frustration so that the Lord Who gave it, and Who is the Living Word, might be exalted and received.

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**Great Things He hath Taught Us
... about the Hunger in the Heart
of our Generation**

The Lord Jesus told His disciples something they evidently had not noticed . . . that people were ready for harvest. I believe He has spoken again to us, and to the same end.

Men who cannot accept the Harringay way and who are not deeply impressed with what happened there, are quite unanimous on this point. Harringay, by the grace of God, took the lid of the human heart and showed the unutterable need and hunger that is there.

Without knowing why, men are hungry for what only God can give. They do not speak to us in this strain, but the facts are plain, and the Church would neglect the signs to the peril of tens of thousands of precious souls.

We must pray God for a sensitive ear that we might catch the heart-cry of our age, and that He might give us radiant assurance that He is able to answer it.

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Others will write, again and again, about the lessons we learned about direct, simple, Bible-based preaching; of the place and power of humbly requested prayer; of the decisive factor of personalities completely dedicated to the high task of winning men and women to acceptance of the Lord Jesus, of being a "this one thing I do" man; of the power of Gospel singing by dedicated singers and well trained choirs. But when all is written that men can write, the half will not have been told of the great things He hath taught us, and the great things He hath done.