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The Transatlanticism of Billy Graham's Visit to Poland in October 1978

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The evangelical form of American Protestantism is based on the foundation of charismatic pastors, well-organised communities, thousands of committed believers, and, especially since the 1970s, their clearly visible political influences.¹ There was also a strong trend of international evangelistic visits, led by one of the most recognisable preachers, Billy Graham. The pastor,² born in 1918, became a tireless propagator of missionary evangelical Christianity, setting himself the goal of spreading the Good News not only in the United States, but also to the world. His world-wide campaign began in 1946 and 1947 with short visits to Europe, in the 1950s he targeted Japan and Korea,

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- 1 Kirsteen Kim, "Globalization of Protestant Movements since the 1960s," *The Ecumenical Review* 63 (2011), 1: 136–139; Mark. A. Shibley, "Contemporary Evangelicals: Born-Again and World Affirming," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Americans and Religions in the Twenty-First Century 558 (1998), 1: 169–72; Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 28–45; Timothy George, "Evangelical Theology in American Contexts," in: *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, eds. Timothy Larsen, Daniel J. Treier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 279 – 283; William. G. McLaughlin, "Is There a Third Force in Christendom?," *Daedalus* 96 (1967), 1: 43, 58–60; Hans Krabbendam, "Opening a Market for Missions. American Evangelicals and the Re-Christianization of Europe, 1945 – 1985," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 59 (2014), 2: 153–175.
 - 2 Standard biographies of Graham include William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor. The Billy Graham Story* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2018); Marshall Frady, *Billy Graham. A Parable of American Righteousness* (New York–London–Toronto–Sydney: Simon and Schuster, 1979); David Aikman, *Billy Graham. His Life and Influence* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007); Gary Wacker, *America's Pastor. Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 2014); Roger Burns, *Billy Graham. A Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004); Michael G. Long, ed., *The Legacy of Billy Graham. Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist* (Louisville – London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). The complexity of his mission is discussed in: Andrew Finstuen, Grant Wacker, and Anne Blue Wills, eds., *Billy Graham. American Pilgrim* (New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

but also England, Western Europe and the United States. In the mid-1950s Graham, apart from his home country, preached in India, Hong Kong, Korea, The Caribbean, Mexico, Australia, and New Zealand. In the 1960s he toured Africa and again Western Europe, and later South America.³

Billy Graham's foreign missions served several purposes – to expand and strengthen Christianity, to support smaller evangelical Protestant churches, and constituted a form of export of American religious culture. In this regard, Billy Graham was not only a preacher spreading conservative Christianity around the world, but he appeared to be a personification of the United States and everything that was associated with it – its size, power, international mission or influence in the world.

Until the late 1960s, Graham's evangelistic travels were restricted by the political realities of the Cold War to take place in the areas of missionary importance to Graham and his Evangelistic Association, which was the formal party preparing and organizing the visits. The direction of the crusades was also determined by the religious and political situation in the world. Shortly after World War II, due to the social crisis in the United States and the desire to establish himself in the local "preaching market," Billy Graham organised his crusades primarily in his own country. However, he soon realised that, especially in European countries devastated by World War II, due to the subsequent crisis of values and the postwar spiritual void, foreign missions had even bigger potential. It was greatly feared that communism, which was gaining ground, and interest in Europe, Asia and Central America could fill this void. Graham's sermons delivered on both sides of the Atlantic were full of conviction that Christianity should constitute a barrier against the growing popularity of the atheistic extreme left.

In the 1970s, the new political developments known as the detente, created for Graham an opportunity to visit those parts of the world where, for political reasons, he had not been able to go. These included Eastern Europe, which, as one may suspect, was to play a role in the preacher's evangelistic endeavours. The agreements concluded in Helsinki in 1975 guaranteed, under the so-called third basket of arrangements,⁴ greater freedom in the field of human rights, which also included travel, scientific and religious exchange, etc. They created an opportunity to implement the plan set out by the Lausanne Conference to conduct missions in parts of the world previously inaccessible to Graham, including Eastern Europe. They were aimed at strengthening the existing Protestant churches, stimulating the spiritual transformation of the faithful and strengthening their belief that the West had not forgotten about them. Thus, Graham's missions took on a political nature, because one of the axis of the disputes between the USA and the USSR was the issue of religious freedoms.

3 Thomas P. Johnson, *Examining Billy Graham's Theology of Evangelism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers: 2003), 19–24, 438–444.

4 Michael C. Morgan, *The Final Act. The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 169–206.

This article claims that one of the purposes of visiting Poland in October 1978 was not a mission to build or make stronger the already existing Polish-American relations but to create opportunities for a more active independent social engagement of individual Christians in the countries where, for political considerations, it was extremely difficult or almost impossible to do. It was religion, especially its evangelical branch, not politics, that was to be the platform for this activeness. For this reason, Graham's visit was to create a field for a closer cooperation for all those who would be willing to be involved in these kinds of activities. Billy Graham's mission to Poland, therefore, aimed at mobilising the churchgoers to religious fervour and spreading the Good News in their communities and neighbourhoods. The preacher did not come to reconcile Protestants and Catholics or various Protestant denominations but to make Polish Protestantism stronger and fresher, especially the Baptists, since this church represented the evangelical segment of Polish Protestantism. Broadly speaking, Graham's objective seemed to be to mobilise all evangelically oriented Christians, regardless of their denomination, to bear witness to their faith and evangelise the nation through everyday actions or attitudes; thus building a kind of alternative system of values to the communist one in the countries behind the Iron Curtain. Graham hoped to build up a worldwide interfaith cooperation of Christians from all the countries, including those which had not been included in his missionary action. In the case of Poland, the dimension of his visit seems to add to the already existing ties an element of spirituality and Christian brotherhood across the political borders. For the Poles, apart from an opportunity to meet with a renowned preacher, it also was a chance to observe a different religious culture, and a less known aspect of America.

The missionary activities of Protestant Churches were coordinated by the World Council of Churches (WCC), founded in 1948. The WCC attempted also to limit the ideological influence of communism, especially in African and Asian countries, where it was growing in popularity. It concentrated missionary activity in the hands of the structures of the Council rather than in the hands of the missionary movements. Missions thus became local rather than transnational.⁵ This gave rise to fears among smaller, primarily American and evangelical Protestant churches that a kind of super-church would emerge, centralised and tightly controlling the denominations belonging to it.⁶ Their growth and importance were so great that in 1958 William McLaughlin, a well-known historian of American religion, wrote that they were building "a third force

5 Kim, "Globalization," 136–147; Harold van der Linde, "The Nature and Significance of the World Council of Churches," *The Ecumenical Review* 3 (1951), 3: 238–247; Philip Eastman, "The Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches and International Legal Order," *The International Law Quarterly* 2 (1948–1949), 4: 675–677.

6 Henry P. Van Dusen, "What Does the Formation of the World Council of Churches Mean for the Relations of the Churches to Reach Each Other?," *The Ecumenical Review* 1 (1949), 3: 252–259; Hendrik Kraemer, "The Formation of the World Council of Churches and Its Significance for the Relations of the Churches to One Another," *The Ecumenical Review* 1 (1949), 3: 260–266.

in Christianity.”⁷ The evangelical community insisted that perfectionism, religious awakening, true godliness, the redemption of sins, and the preaching of the Word would lead to the spiritual rebirth of humanity, thus preventing the imminent end of the world. Disciples of Christ, bringing this news to all people, will build justice, peace, and true love. Americans, understanding faith primarily in terms of emotion, commitment, sacrifice, and activity, considered the phenomenon of the “third force” to be enduring and to have great potential for further development.

During the World Congress on Evangelism in 1966, Billy Graham and his Evangelistic Association recognised the religious revival in the world, the growing importance of charismatic movements, but contested the Council by devising their own methods of promoting the faith. They were manifested at the WCC Congress in Uppsala in 1968, held under the characteristic theme “Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation, 21:5). The American evangelical churches accused the WCC of excessive politicisation, missionary passivity and ineffectiveness, and an unspecified attitude towards communism.⁸ The evangelical author, scholar and former editor of “Christianity Today” magazine, Harold Lindsell, wrote that the WCC was extending its reach into politics, economics, and social issues, commanding its members to engage in programs and activities from every walk of life, “charged with anti-Americanism and abandonment of world evangelism.”⁹ American Evangelicals were also concerned about the possibility of communism satisfying spiritual needs. Hence, the conviction arose that not only political or economic life but also European Christianity should be rebuilt by believers from across the Atlantic, inspiring continental religious initiatives with their American variant as a purer, better, more attractive and more effective form of Christianity.¹⁰ “Christianity Today,” the magazine founded in 1956 by Billy Graham to spread evangelical Christianity¹¹ argued that because of their doctrinal purity, a secure biblical foundation, and not engaging in “campaigns for social and economic equality, housing improvements,

7 McLaughlin, “Is There a Third Force,” 53–68.

8 Gerald H. Anderson, “Uppsala 1968. The World Council’s Fourth Assembly,” *Philippine Studies* 16 (1968), 2: 393; Thomas FitzGerald, *The Ecumenical Movement. An Introductory History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 104–113; Peter Lodberg, “World Council of Churches,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 12 (1999), 2: 530–532; Katarina Kunter, “Revolutionary Hopes and Global Transformations. The World Council of Churches in the 1960s,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 30 (2017), 2: 353–345.

9 “Uppsala 1968: A Report on the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches,” *Christianity Today* 12 (16 August 1968), 22: 3–4, 6–7.

10 Antti Laine, Juha Merilainen and Matti Peiponen, “Ecumenical Reconstruction, Advocacy and Action. The World Council of Churches in Times of Change, from the 1940s to the Early 1970s,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 30 (2017), 2: 328–331; Richard Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2004), 731; “Wheaton Declaration,” *The International Review of Mission* 55 (1966), 220: 458–478. Paul Abrecht, “The Social Thinking of the World Council of Churches,” *The Ecumenical Review* 17 (1965), 3: 241–250.

11 “Why «Christianity Today?»”, *Christianity Today* 1 (1956), 1, accessed: 4 October 2023, <https://www.christianitytoday.org/who-we-are/our-history/whychristianitytoday.html>.

welfare, or the advancement of people of color," experience in evangelism and their clear anti-communism, evangelical movements are almost ideal for missionary activity.¹² Thus, it was suggested that independent evangelical denominations would produce much better results and from the bottom up would create authentic fellowship, brotherly love and world-spreading peace. "The tide is in for an evangelical witness around the world and the consensus was that we move on that tide toward the goal of world evangelization in this century," wrote "Christianity Today" in November 1973.¹³

The right strategy, methods and tools were supposed to "make total world evangelization physically possible for the first time in this generation." An effective system of cooperation and unity in achieving the goal, finding and motivating local leaders, spontaneous religious initiatives and the search for new areas of evangelisation were additional guarantees of success. Modern means of communication, well-targeted financial resources and, above all, new leaders were also important: "this is the fissionable material making up a critical mass, a potential for a total thrust in world evangelization of this century," claimed "Christianity Today."¹⁴ The anticipated success of future evangelism was based on the person of the charismatic Billy Graham and his evangelistic and rhetorical skills, the growth of local evangelical churches, conversion, and various forms of activeness of believers – religious, social, philanthropic – although non-political in form, but with political references.¹⁵

The plans and intentions of evangelical Christians and their areas of activity were shown by Billy Graham in his 16 July speech at the First International Congress for World Evangelization (16–25 July 1974) in Lausanne. He raised the theme of Eastern Europe, with its "thousands of dedicated believers" and argued that, thanks to the Holy Spirit in the Eastern socialist world there was evidence of a quiet but real work of the Spirit. In one country the Baptists, for example, have doubled in numbers in the last decade. Belief in God is indestructible – even in the Soviet Union; among workers and intellectuals alike, there is a growing awareness of God. Therefore, "we have one task – to proclaim the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. In rich countries and in poor,

12 "Is Ecumenism Running Out of Fuel?", *Christianity Today* 12 (1 March 1968), 11: 26–27; David E. Kucharsky, "Will the WCC Endorse Violence?", *Christianity Today* 12 (7 June 1968), 18; Harold O. J. Brown, "Climax in Confusion," *Christianity Today* 12 (7 June 1968): 39; Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Harper One – Zondervan, 2007), 568.

13 Paul E. Little, "Looking Ahead to Lausanne," *Christianity Today* 18 (23 Nov. 1973), 4: 4–6; Rene De Visme Williamson, "Negative Thoughts about Ecumenism," *Christianity Today* 12 (30 August 1968), 23: 13–14.

14 Donald E. Hoke, "Lausanne May Be a Bomb," *Christianity Today* 18 (15 March 1974), 12: 12–18; cf. W. Maxey Jarman, "Do We Really Need Lausanne?," *Christianity Today* 18 (15 March 1974), 12: 36–39.

15 Bernhard Ott, *Beyond Fragmentation. Integrating Mission and Theological Education. A Critical Assessment of Some Recent Developments in Evangelical Theological Education* (Regnum Books, Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2001), 74–84; David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 2–3.

among the educated and uneducated, in freedom or oppression.”¹⁶ Graham thus appealed to the classical understanding of the mission of the church sending out its representatives to all the peoples of the globe, relying on Scripture as the supreme source of faith, seeking salvation only in Jesus Christ and his death on the cross.¹⁷ The final document of the conference expressed hope for a new era of evangelisation and recommended the faithful to reject all forms of enslavement, seek new areas of spiritual activity, and to make a covenant with God and among themselves in prayer, planning and working together for the evangelisation of the whole world.¹⁸

According to Hans Krabbendam, the Congress in Lausanne resulted from the conviction about the need to re-evangelise Europe that was going through spiritual crisis. It was understood by the Americans as the duty of their evangelical churches in the face of the ineffective actions taken by the traditional churches.¹⁹ It opened the door to cooperation with smaller Protestant denominations and offered organisational assistance from Americans creating outposts for possible use in future religious activities. They referred to religious legacy, common history, the Bible, missionary engagement, sought deepening religious brotherhood and cooperation, but did not base on national denominators. In this way, the evangelical churches were able to build international prominence and show themselves to be the third major Christian force in the world, alongside the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, to build a community of all believing in God.²⁰

Therefore, the visit of the American pastor to Poland²¹ between 6 and 16 October 1978 should be seen in the context of the above-mentioned three elements: the growing

16 Billy Graham, *Why Lausanne*, 1, 4–5, 11–12, 17–18, 20, accessed 4 October 2023, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/why-lausanne-print>.

17 Tormod Engelsen, “The Role of the Lausanne Movement in Modern Christian Mission,” in: *The Lausanne Movement. A Range of Perspectives*, eds. Margunn S. Dahle, Lars Dahle and Knud Jorgensen (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2014), 34–37.

18 *The Lausanne Covenant*, 2, 3–6, accessed: 16 October 2023, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant#cov>; Robert A. Hunt, “The History of the Lausanne Movement,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25 (April 2011), 2: 83; Martin, *A Prophet*, 455–456; Jong Sung Rhee, *Significance of the Lausanne Covenant*, accessed: 4 October, 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274658940_Significance_of_the_Lausanne_Covenant.

19 The conviction that evangelical denominations would not be a third force was strongly expressed in: McLaughlin, *Is There a Third Force*, 64, writing that it could only be the pietistic spirit of American culture (...) and the sense of religious commitment and ideals that Americans embed in democracy and their way of life.

20 Krabbendam, “Opening a Market,” 166–170; Uta A. Balbier, “The World Congress on Evangelism 1966 in Berlin: US Evangelicalism, Cultural Dominance, and Global Challenges,” *Journal of American Studies* 51 (2017), 4: 1171–1196.

21 The idea of Billy Graham’s visit to Poland appeared for the first time in late 1965, but despite intensive efforts to make it happen in 1966 and the actual consent of the authorities, it did not take place. Only a visit to Hungary in October 1977 opened the door to Poland for Graham. Billy Graham Center Archives (BGCA), Wheaton College (WC), Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) 1950,

strength of evangelical Churches and tensions between them and the mainline WCC denominations, the détente process and the goals set by the Lausanne Conference. During his 10-day stay, the preacher visited Warsaw, Białystok, Poznań, Wrocław, Katowice, Kraków and the former German concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, the site of the death camp in Treblinka, Tykocin and Jasna Góra. He preached in Baptist, Catholic, Polish-Catholic, Evangelical and Calvinist churches and met with representatives of the Catholic and Protestant clergy and the authorities of the Polish People's Republic. The visit occurred after the conclusion of the Helsinki Accords (1975), which created an opportunity for evangelisation in Eastern Europe and the achievement of several purposes: the realisation of the Lausanne Conference's plan to carry out missions in these neglected regions of the world, the strengthening of the evangelical churches operating there, the stimulation of the spiritual transformation of Christians in the communist part of Europe and a visible sign that the Western world remembers them.

It seems that it was in Eastern Europe where Graham saw the spiritual potential contrasting it with the crisis of culture and morals in the West. He made a comment about Poland: "you have in my judgment a deep spiritual heritage. You are a people of courage." He asserted that "I will learn much from you, I want to look at your society and socialist system, to see the possibilities and problems your churches have in existing and witnessing in a socialist society." He was looking for a way to a more efficient evangelisation behind the Iron Curtain, to sustain and stimulate the religiosity there, which at some point could become an element of the spiritual transformation he hoped for.²² Graham's encouragement to practice religion on the basis of constant spiritual growth, choice making, active participation in the surrounding reality, and building community became an indirect carrier of American culture, way of thinking, and commitment. Thus, the visit to Poland took on yet another aspect, concealed from the outside world, and perceptible only after a closer analysis of the cultural and religious context of his arrival and teaching, as well as its transatlantic dimension.

The themes of Billy Graham's evangelism in Poland reflected the central thesis of evangelical teaching on conversion to a new life. On 8 October in Białystok the preacher spoke about "returning to the Father," the next day in Poznań about the Cross of Christ, in Wrocław on 11 October about spiritual awakening, the same day in Katowice about the importance of the Cross as a signpost of salvation, and in Kraków on 12 October

Montreal Office Records 1944–2010, Call Number (CN) 580, Box 78, folder 16, Invitation from the Polish Church of Christian Baptists, 15 February 1966; *ibidem*, Graham's response of 16 February 1966; *ibidem*, Graham Will Visit Poland for Millennium Celebration, 2 May 1966, press release; *ibidem*, Proposed Billy Graham Visit to Poland, 29 September–2 October 1966, Reported by Robert P. Evans, 1–5; *ibidem*, Poland 29 Sept.–2 October 1966; Schedule for Mr Graham, 19 August 1966; *ibidem*, Statement on Visit to Poland, 9 September 1966 announcing the cancellation of the visit.

22 "Główna odpowiedzialność wszystkich chrześcijan" [Main Responsibility of All Christians]. An interview with Billy Graham, *Znaki Czasu* 56 (1978), 9 (309): 3–4.

about “the rich young man” from the Gospel according to Mark 10, 17–27. The evangelist returned to the theme of the Cross in Warsaw on 14 October. He delivered two speeches in the capital: on 7 October, just after his arrival, during a meeting with Protestant clergy on the preaching of the Gospel, and on 15 October on the human soul. In all sermons there was a recurring theme of conversion, rebirth, living in accordance with the dictates of the Gospel, returning to the Father, spiritual awakening carried out individually and the role of the preacher as a spiritual guide encouraging inner transformation. The address to the pastors on 7 October is the essence of the “spirit of Lausanne,” the intentions formulated there and the ways in which evangelical Christians should proclaim the Scripture to the world in order to succeed in religious activities.²³

In Graham’s teaching, the spiritual awakening was “a sovereign decision of God that cannot be explained from a purely human point of view,” to embrace all Christians, to be “acted upon in a spirit of unity,” of discipline and sanctified living, of concern for neighbour and for the world. In other words, the spiritual transformation of a person cannot be only for private use but for the human one. Faith bonds Christians and prayer mobilises them. During a speech in Katowice, Graham asked: “do you pray every day, do you read the Scriptures every day? Does the Holy Spirit help you in your daily work?”²⁴ These activities, appropriate for every Christian, were supposed to teach a life of purity, justice, and give the power necessary to overcome the sin inherent in man and the world around him. In the reality of the atheistic communist state, this attitude gave the Christian power and showed the way to a thorough spiritual transformation and liberation.

Graham taught that an earnest search for Jesus will lead to spiritual awakening. The teaching in Cracow was devoted to this theme. Graham believed that the youth and their energy constitute the strength of evangelical movements; he gave the example of spiritual revivals in the US, Japan and Africa. “Today you can still make a decision about this. If you are not born again you cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” According to Graham, Christ must come first for the believer: “I must make a choice and submit every area of my life to Christ. He must come first in my life.”²⁵

The teaching delivered on 14 October in Warsaw emphasised the central role of the Cross “without which there is no gospel or Christianity, which condemns evil in this world” and called for “giving your life to Christ now, with every beat of your heart.

23 Billy Graham’s speeches were recorded by the organiser of the visit, the Polish Baptist Church, and later published in the book: Michał Stankiewicz, ed., *Billy Graham w Polsce* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “Słowo Prawdy,” 1979). All quotations and references are taken from this work. Main themes of Graham’s sermons Poland are discussed in: Włodzimierz Batóg, *Mosty wzajemnego zrozumienia. Wizyta Billy’ego Grahama w Polsce w październiku 1978 r.* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2022), 127–137.

24 Stankiewicz, ed., *Billy Graham w Polsce*, “Spiritual Awakening,” sermon, 130–134, 147.

25 Ibidem, “The Rich Young Man,” sermon at St. Anne’s Church, 178–183.

He should come first, "He should be not only Saviour but Lord." In a speech at a Calvinist church in Warsaw, he urged once again to follow Christ, "do so publicly, that we may pray for you."²⁶

The social and religious aspect of the teaching in Poland can be summarised as follows – one should seek God and proclaim the Gospel in all places and circumstances. Governments should respect the religious convictions of citizens who remain good, humble Christians, faithful to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. They should develop spiritually, take an interest in the secular, social and political spheres and, when necessary, actively participate in them. Individual action is more important than collective action, since the sum of the actions of individuals will in time transform into a community. Their activity, like their faith, is universal and global, and therefore has a causative power all over the world. It is people through their attitudes that make countries better, not the other way round. This is why Graham's teaching poses less emphasis on the state (the collective) and more on the individuals and their re-birth. Evangelism and missions must, therefore, first lead to the creation of good people, and good people will create a good state, the Kingdom of God.²⁷ The state and believers have a common goal: faith creates people who are honest, hardworking, committed, ethical, community builders, and therefore needed by secular structures. The separation of the state from the Church in communist countries creates a situation in which believers can work for the building of the Kingdom of God without being exposed to repressions, from which Graham concluded that there was a certain space for mission in communist Eastern Europe. Therefore, Graham's missions to these countries bordered on the limits of acceptance of their

26 Ibidem, "At the Foot of the Cross of Golgotha," sermon, 198–200, 202, 204–205; ibidem, "The Price of the Human Soul," sermon, 215. On structure of Graham's sermons see: Thomas G. Long, "Preaching the Good News," in: *The Legacy of Billy Graham. Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist*, ed. Michael G. Long, (Louisville-London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 3–15.

27 At this point, the question arises whether, due to the specific situation of believers in Communist countries, Graham did not shift the emphasis in his teaching to a more postmillennial interpretation of the Second Coming of Christ. Conservative evangelical churches were characterised by the so-called premillennialism, i.e., the belief that the coming of Christ will usher in the New Millennium. Meanwhile, Graham's teaching in Poland shows that this must be accompanied by a prior deep transformation of man and the strengthening of his faith, which was rather close to the postmillennialists, who believed that the Ongoing Millennium would end with the return of Christ and the Last Judgment, for which man should prepare spiritually. On differences between post and premillennialism see "Premillennialism," in: *Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, ed., J. Gordon Melton (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 438–441; "Millenarians and Millennialism," in: *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, vol. 3, ed. Hans J. Hillebrand (New York-London: Routledge, 2004), 1355–1358; Daniel G. Hummel, "American Evangelicals and the Apocalypse," in: *The Cambridge Companion to Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. Colin McAlister, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 288–315; Richard J. Neuhaus, "What the Fundamentalists Want," in: *Piety and Politics. Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Confront the World*, eds. John Neuhaus and Martin Cromartie (Lanham, MD: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 2004), 3–19; John D. Hunter, "The Evangelical Worldview Since 1890," in: *Piety and Politics*, 20–54; George Marsden, "The Evangelical Denomination," in: *Piety and Politics*, 55, 67; A. James Reichley, "The Evangelical and Fundamentalist Revolt," in: *Piety and Politics*, 69–97.

system of power, as long as they did not limit religious freedoms and their actions curbed sin in the moral, social or cultural scope. At the same time, he did not agree to state interference in individual decisions and the ability to choose one's own path. A born-again person will independently distinguish good from evil and make decisions on his own, drawing strength from God. In this way, a community built on the American model will become a force even where the political police control the views of residents.²⁸

Re-birth is also seen in the teaching in Poland. It was to serve the purpose of pursuing the path of goodness, giving dignity and pride to the individuals, making them resistant to evil and the sin coming from the outside world. Thus, freedom became a necessary ingredient of life, and it was the Christian's duty to care for it. Freedom also made people face rational and responsible choices. Culturally, this was a typically American understanding of the role of freedom in creating human development. Billy Graham wanted to immunise believers against sin so that they could safely seek freedom in other aspects of existence.

Kazimierz Waloszek, mentioned in an article in "Christianity Today," exemplified such an approach. This 33-year-old engineer, thanks to Billy Graham, discovered a personal relationship with Christ. After the preacher's visit to Poland, the magazine reported that "Bible study groups are springing up like mushrooms after the rain. In Białystok about 300 people came to a mid-week service just three days after the evangelist's visit, pastors of other churches report interest in the religion, the evangelical influence in the Roman Church has strengthened." The author wrote of crowds listening to the evangelist, thousands of copies of the Scriptures distributed, and even Catholic Bishop Herbert Bednorz asked Graham to sign the book "How to Be Born Again," saying:

28 Michael G. Long, *Billy Graham and the Beloved Community. America's Evangelist and the Dream of Martin Luther King* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 31–48. During a press conference on 20 October 1978, the preacher stated that despite the initial "state of confrontation between the Church and the state, many negotiations were carried out to reach an agreement, and many compromises were made on both sides. Of course, there are difficulties and some skirmishes," but the situation has improved to the point that "Christians have absolute freedom of worship." The preacher admitted that before coming to Poland he believed that "the restrictions were much greater," meanwhile "there was not the slightest suggestion as to what I should say, what I should preach, and I basically preached the same sermons that I preach in the United States." Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warszawa [Modern Record Archives, Warsaw], 131/434, Urząd do spraw Wyznań, Wizyta Billy Grahama w Polsce, Konferencja prasowa Billy Grahama, Nowy Jork, Hilton Madison Suite, New York, 20 października 1978, 1–8, k. 356–363. He repeated the same opinions in an interview on 2 November for the German media, also expressing his willingness and readiness to visit other communist countries "including the Soviet Union." When asked in this context about his former strong anti-communist attitude, the evangelist replied that sometimes it seemed to him that the American way of life was a Christian way of life, and this was, of course, a mistake. "Although as a Christian I do not agree with any atheistic philosophy, my task is to preach the Gospel in a positive way. Christians are tolerated in Eastern Europe and they are really strong there. The communists began to realize that Christians in their countries are also among the best citizens, honest and hard-working." BGEA, WC, International Ministries and North American Ministries Records 1949–1993, CN 17, Box 143, folder 64, Poland–Media, Question from "Idea" in Germany, Manuela Eitzman, 2 November 1978.

"I will give it to my friends." The article thus suggested that the evangelist's visit was enhancing the understanding between previously disliked denominations, and not just between the East and the West in the political sense.²⁹

For Piotr Dajludzionek, a Baptist pastor from Białystok, the visit was important and necessary: "I think people enjoyed listening to Billy Graham. He spoke well, in a simple and evangelical language, I think it brought us more knowledge about Baptists, because Billy Graham is America after all... And because so many people came, something got across to them."³⁰ Ingeborga Niewieczyńska, a Calvinist, perceived it differently: "As far as our church is concerned, it did not have a major impact. Neither for the Protestant community. It was a substantively important event, but more visual, so it was special. It was over, and what is left is the usual preaching work."³¹ A broader perspective was presented by a Calvinist clergyman, Rev. Lipiński: "We evaluated this visit well. It was positive that we were able to invite Billy Graham, maybe [his message – WB] will reach tens, hundreds of people in the country." The simple sermons, otherwise frequently criticised, were helpful in this regard: "to a person who comes and listens to an address different from those he heard in Roman Catholic churches at the time, no deep theology is necessary. Graham was showing that there was no need for lukewarm Christianity, only either God or Satan."³²

Rev. Lipiński noted that Americans cared about evangelism behind the Iron Curtain for some reason: "The visit was inspired, programmed, planned. Perhaps such a thought struck Graham's co-workers: What if we ventured into evangelization in a socialist country? But in order to go there, you need to have someone there. So we'll give the money, the people, the machinery, but there has to be a response from below." According to him, "Graham was coming to communist countries to support the awakening churches in confronting atheistic indoctrination. First he wanted to take his teaching to the capitalist countries of Europe, and at some point he started coming to socialist countries. I think that at a certain stage of his life, his collaborators, at a certain stage of the development of his crusades, decided that it was necessary to take up arms also against atheistic indoctrination, not in the materialistic version as it was in capitalism, but in the ideological version as it was in communist countries. He didn't say such things, but many of us could read it that way, because he brought the sermon to the point where a listening and thinking person asked himself: Will Jesus Christ help me in this?"³³

29 Edward Plowman, "Billy Graham in Poland. Crossing Church Frontiers," *Christianity Today* 23 (3 November 1978): 54–57; cf. draft article in BGCA, WC, Harold Lindsell Papers 1964–1981, CN 192, Box 6, folder 9, Billy Graham in Poland: *An Autumn Harvest*.

30 Interview with Rev. P. Dajludzionek, 4 July 2020. Recording in author's possession. The phrase about "sick and lame" referred to the negative stereotypes of Baptists as poor, uneducated, and living far from cities.

31 Interview with I. Niewieczyńska, 22 July 2020. Recording in author's possession.

32 Interview with Rev. R. Lipiński, 30 July 2020. Recording in author's possession.

33 Interview with Rev. R. Lipiński, 30 July 2020. Recording in author's possession.

It is very difficult, however, to state whether the listeners to Graham's sermons interpreted his words in the same way as Lipinski. Even taking into consideration the skill of people living in the communist countries to read between the lines to find meanings that are intended but that are not directly expressed in something said or written, even in official media, and to conclude from what is covered or not, one cannot assess this dimension of Graham's teaching in Poland. The available sources suggest a rather short-lasting effect of his visit, also in the questions of religious engagement, missionary activities or participation in services. It is worth remembering, however, that Graham did not call for an open rebellion, martyrdom or heroism. He appealed for Christian humbleness, dignity, trust in God and pride of being Christian even in the circumstances. He tried to create the impression that the Christian community remembers about all its members, supports them and remains in spiritual unity with them. Therefore, he referred to the transnational community of Christian values.

Two interesting visual sources have remained from Graham's visit to Poland. The first one is the book *Billy Graham in Poland* published by the Polish Baptist Church in Warsaw in 1979 collecting all the sermons and official statements delivered by the preacher in Poland. There are two photographs that show Graham's grandeur as a spiritual guide. In the first one the evangelist is preaching a sermon standing at the pulpit with his right hand raised, holding the Bible in his left hand. In the other picture Graham is standing at the lectern, on the top of which there is a decorative, large-format edition of the Bible, another open book, and a bundle of notes. In the background, in the upper left corner, there is a globe, making the whole composition suggest the world-spanning evangelistic power of the pastor looking into the distance. The selected photographs suggest evidently that he is more than a preacher, he is a leader emanating strength, self-confidence and determination, qualities often exhibited by evangelists.³⁴ The biographical entry in the book presents him in the same way. The date and place of his birth, his pastoral career, and his missionary work are preceded by a much more detailed account of his impact on the world around him: "he visited 56 countries on every continent," preached to 50 million people, eased racial and denominational tensions, and even had an impact on decreasing crime, reuniting families, and "saving from disaster individuals restored to society." His status is marked by numerous books and radio programs broadcast by 900 stations "continuously since 1950" and by the fact that "presidents of the United States have sought his advice." Billy Graham "appeals to his listeners: you can walk out of here changed, today Christ can change your life," he is constantly on the road, exposed to fatigue and inconvenience but he crosses continents on a mission of salvation. He sets an example: "conversion was my experience, it can become yours too, and you can live it."³⁵

34 K. E. Lofton, "The Preacher Paradigm: Promotional Biographies and the Modern-Made Evangelist," *Religion and American Culture* 16 (2006), 1: 108–110.

35 Stankiewicz, ed., *Billy Graham w Polsce*, 12–14.

The visit to Poland was also shown in a film prepared by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Its consultants for the Association, John Akers and Alexander Haraszti, made sure that the motion picture was made in accordance with the needs of the “Eastern European strategy” and the “political conditions of the narrative.”³⁶ From a cultural point of view, the photographing or filming of the mission expressed the American fascination with modernity, advanced technology and the belief in their effectiveness, as well as demonstrating to the world the capabilities Americans possessed. It suggested that the combination of technology, youth, enthusiasm, and dedication of missionaries and believers could not fail to bring success. It meant to show encounters with crowds of believers, individuals, and the state and church leaders, and thus the popularity and trust placed in the preacher by large numbers of participants, international respect and status among the most important people in the churches and countries he visited. In this way was created an impression of a personal connection between the preacher and the believers – Graham showed his effectiveness to his followers, and they accompanied him in his work of saving the world from evil.

The material depicting preaching in Poland lasted 59 minutes. It demonstrated Graham as a speaker and evangelist, but also contained interesting cultural references. One of them were sequences showing a Polish suburb where Marian Królak, 38, lived with his wife and two children. He worked for the construction company “Mostostal” for 14 years and had been a homeowner for eight years, having previously lived in a cooperative block of flats.

The Królaks, who belonged to a Baptist church, are probably meant to exemplify a typical Polish family, but in a way that their image will capture the imagination of viewers from across the Atlantic. The family consists of four people. Marian, returning from work, is greeted joyfully by his four-year-old son Adam and his wife Lidia, a nurse who has been a stay-at-home mum for four years. We see her in the kitchen preparing dinner for her husband who, upon entering the house, embraces her tenderly and greets her with a kiss. The other son, 14-year-old Piotr, is shown wearing a pressed white shirt as he reads. The next scene shows the couple having dinner together, preceded by a moment of prayer. A voice [Królak's?– WB] speaks in English off the frame, saying that he is worried about the future, but “as long as we can educate our children, bring them up as good Christians, and be close to Jesus, we don't worry so much. The state doesn't help us in our Christian upbringing, but we also don't see the difficulties they make” as they were able to attend services and Sunday school. Królak adds

36 Wheaton College Special Collections (WCSC), Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), Collection 622, Cliff Barrows Papers, Box 9, folder 1, Poland, *Billy Graham in Poland*. A Report in Summary prepared by Walter F. Bennet and Co. for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota, March 1979, 1–9.

that he is very excited about Billy Graham's visit, which was made possible after 12 years of praying and waiting, and he is glad it came to fruition.³⁷

The film sums up the visit as follows: the books by Billy Graham in Polish translation were published, the British and Foreign Bible Society prepared 100 thousand copies of the Gospel of St John, the preacher spoke about 47 times in six cities to thousands of believers, he was received by the mayors of Białystok and Poznań, the US Ambassador in Warsaw, the leaders of the Baptist Church and the Polish Ecumenical Council. He was also kindly welcomed by Orthodox Archbishop Bazyli and Catholic Bishop Miziołek, who conveyed greetings from Cardinal Wyszyński. The evangelist was invited to attend a performance at the Jewish Theatre in Warsaw and to visit the monastery at Jasna Góra. The film suggests that the visit was a success and will certainly leave a mark on Polish Christians, strengthen Polish Protestant churches, especially Baptists, and sow the seeds of Good News stimulating the faithful to spiritual transformation. The presence of such an outstanding preacher will encourage the faithful to independently search for faith, deepen it and give them strength to openly profess it, shaping new, more mature attitudes towards the grim reality of an atheistic state. The film ends with a call to reunite with Christ, confess and repent of sins, and an advertisement for a new edition of the Bible, distributed by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.³⁸

The production is meant to show that Billy Graham was a worldwide evangelist and his preaching was recognised in every corner of the world, expected and listened to by large numbers of people. He is an open-minded evangelist who comforts the afflicted, takes an interest in all people, and tries to reach with his preaching to the hearts of all believers in Christ. He demonstrates it through his meetings with all the churches in Poland and the openly atheistic communist authorities. The film convinces that the visit was fully successful and achieved its goals - the preacher was listened to by crowds, which confirmed the rightness of the trip to the countries behind the Iron Curtain.

The sequence showing the Królaks is particularly interesting: a God-fearing family, living in a single-family house in the suburbs rather than in a block of flats, forming a common home, with two aspiring children, a well-paid husband and a non-working wife, leading a life, including a religious one, without major problems. The Królaks' house is well-kept and meticulously maintained. The Królaks themselves also looked good and wear clean, though modest clothes. One gets the impression that the purpose of presenting the family and their household is to convey the connection of Christianity

37 WCSC, BGEA, Collection 622, Cliff Barrows Papers, Box 9, folder 1, Poland, *Billy Graham in Poland*, video, 01:17:30:28–01:20:00:00. Królak alluded to the planned and almost materialised 1966 visit to Poland which was cancelled by the Communist authorities at the very last moment (see note 21).

38 WCSC, BGEA, Collection 622, Cliff Barrows Papers, Box 9, folder 1, Poland, *Billy Graham in Poland*, video, 01:33:20:28–01:57:22:25.

with order and relative prosperity, and thus the idea of its expansion to other parts of the world as a vehicle of progress. In this way a kind of personal relationship is built with the faithful in other countries, with the missionaries whose efforts bring visible results. One can also assume that an "average Polish family" is based on the model of an average American family which enjoys exactly the same liberties. Even the shot of Marian coming home resembles the shot of the doctor from W. Eugene Smith's famous and widely recognised photo essay "Country Doctor." This short excerpt of the film showed "a day in the life" in the unknown parts of the world, so beloved by Americans, and strengthened their faith in the sense of missionary activity.

In the film, Billy Graham himself is presented as a great orator, delivering the Good News to the crowds, calling for a renewal of the world and its inhabitants. He is cable of adapting to various conditions, he teaches in a calm manner, using Scripture quotations, parables, and examples. The speeches are general, constructed so as not to offend the listener, but to make him reflect on his own life, behaviour, attitude. Several large excerpts from Graham's evangelism attempted to show him to the American viewer from a familiar perspective, while episodes of conversation with the state or political leaders suggested his important international position. There was an attempt to create the impression that it was the representatives of the state, churches and believers who wanted to meet an American guest, but also a nice, open and polite man. This builds up not only the position of the preacher but also that of the United States, suggesting that Americans – and thus the United States – are just like that: helpful, eager to help, sensitive, concerned about the fate of an individual and of humanity as a whole.

His mission in Poland was also to build up the Church and its real spiritual strength. The pastor's call to entrust one's life to Christ³⁹ and the expectation of an open declaration was an appeal, modelled on the apostles, to make and fulfil the commitment resulting from listening to the evangelisation. The people making such a commitment were trusted to be taking it seriously by becoming the leaven and leaders of change, building God's order. The evangelist, though speaking to the masses, was actually addressing individuals, mobilising them, expecting an unambiguous response and a future attitude resulting from the confession of faith. That is why the teaching had to be, above all, simple, understandable so as to affect the emotions, inspiring the individual listeners. The preacher seemed to be someone extraordinary and the encounter with him something unusual and unforgettable.

In Poland, unlike in the United States, in order to facilitate the believers the opportunity to meet the preacher, Graham visited several venues. His Polish listeners were not very wealthy, resembling average, busy Americans. Their age was also similar and so were the hardships of everyday life visible on the faces of the participants in the footage.

39 Graham called for this particularly strongly during his sermon "Jesus at the Bottom of Human Misery" in Warsaw on 7 October 1978; Stankiewicz, ed., *Billy Graham w Polsce*, 73–77.

The teaching also emphasised the positively welcome voluntariness of conversion.⁴⁰ The uniqueness of coming to Poland was also enhanced by the choice of an appropriate place for the teaching. In Poland it took place in churches, partly because of the lack of suitable space, partly because of the stubbornness and hostility of the authorities, and partly because of the reluctance of fellow Protestants who were unfriendly to Graham's stay. Even though they housed a large number of the faithful, they could not give the impression desired by the Americans of a huge crowd awaiting his arrival. The only time such an effect was achieved was in Katowice, where the crowds gathered in an enormous cathedral delighted the organisers, the preacher, and especially the television cameramen.

The organisation of the teaching space in place where Billy Graham preached in Poland is also interesting. This was of no small importance to the Americans, and special care was, therefore, taken to arrange the designated spaces accordingly. Placing the pulpit and the speaker in their central area, due to the fact that the services were held in churches, was not possible. Graham was accompanied only by an interpreter, invited guests were seated on the sides or in the first rows, while the back of the altar or platform was occupied by the choir. It corresponded to the Protestant tradition of placing the music near the speaker, behind and to either side of him. This simple visual trick strengthened the reception of the teaching, because in the Protestant tradition the spatially separated choir was closely connected with the pulpit, which together with the speaker became the central point of the service. The photographs from the Warsaw Calvinist church clearly show that the pulpit was placed in front, increasing the importance of Graham speaking from behind it and marginalising the much smaller altar, which was partially visible.⁴¹

It is extremely difficult to estimate the attendance for the sermons. The Baptists estimated that, in Warsaw, 2000 people came for the evening teaching and between 800 and 900 pastors took part in the special meeting with them in the morning of this day. In Białystok, 5000 people attended the service, in Poznań, 4000 and 300 decisions were made. We have no estimations from Wrocław. In Katowice, 14 thousand attended and 2 thousand took the decision. In Cracow, 3000 came to the service, but the number of decisions was unspecified. In another service in Warsaw's Roman Catholic Church "attendance was impressive" and 300 decisions were taken. During the service in the Calvinist church 200 decisions were made and the church "was full up to its capacity." During the service in the Warsaw Lutheran church 200 decisions were made and the US ambassador to Poland, William E. Schaefe, participated in this meeting with Graham.

40 Wayne E. Oates, "The Billy Graham Evangelistic Crusade: An Evaluation," *Pastoral Psychology* 7 (1956): 20–23.

41 Stankiewicz, ed., *Billy Graham w Polsce*, 33, 191.

In the light of this source the number of decision takers⁴² could reach 3000.⁴³ “There were decisions, people raised their hands, but there were too many of them to count. Well, people lifted their hands, but whether they were really convinced nobody knows,” noticed Rev. Dajludzionek from Białystok.⁴⁴ According to the American Embassy, the number of decisions varied from 10 to 25 percent of participants. But the Embassy’s report indicated that “most of the services were attended by a representative mixture of young and older people” and “despite the lack of advance notice and the minimal media coverage during his swing through Poland, the Graham crusade seemed to draw a comparatively high level of popular interest. Some people came out of curiosity to view an event unique in Poland’s post-war history; others came out of conviction.”⁴⁵

Undoubtedly, the visit caused interest in religious literature and church going, especially in Warsaw, where, according to reports “80 people came to the Wednesday service and special duty hours had to be organised for those interested in discussing religious matters.” Similar observations came from Białystok and Wrocław where “more people attended services and a stir was visible. Eight people were baptised, others, converts, are now close [to baptism – WB]. No other new developments were observed. Also in Katowice prayer groups consisting of Catholics, Baptists and Lutherans were formed.”⁴⁶ But the US Embassy noticed that “the visit clearly gave the least a temporary boost to ecumenism in Poland, the degree of Roman Catholic involvement being especially noteworthy. However, the very fact that Poland is so overwhelmingly Catholic makes it likely that the impact of Graham’s crusade will be rather transitory for most who witnessed it, but perhaps deeper for young people in search of answers to the big questions of life. The election of the Polish Pope on the very day Graham concluded his stay will

42 Evangelical denominations of Christianity assume that the faithful must independently make a conscious decision to accept and follow Christ, therefore be born again. This understanding of conversion derives from the third chapter of St. John in the New Testament, where Jesus tells Nicodemus that in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven he must be born again. See: “Conversion,” in: Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, 187; “Conversion,” in: *Encyclopedia of American Religious History*, eds. Edward L. Queen II, Stephen R. Prothero and Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr. (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 306–307. During Billy Graham’s crusades, it often took the form of altar calls and raising hands to make the decision public.

43 Archiwum Naczelnej Rady Kościoła Baptistów w Polsce (ANRKBP) [Supreme Council of the Church of Baptists in Poland Archive, Warsaw – Radość], 1/37, Posiedzenia Rady PKChB. Protokoły z załącznikami 1975–1980, Protokół nr 17 z posiedzenia Naczelnej Rady Polskiego Kościoła Chrześcijan Baptistów w Warszawie z dnia 27 XI 1978, 188–198.

44 Interview with Rev. Piotr Dajludzionek, 4 July 2020. Recording in author’s possession.

45 Wikileaks, Billy Graham Crusade to Poland, cable, US Embassy Warsaw to Embassies and Consulates in Sofia, Bulgaria, Prague, Czechoslovakia, Munich Germany, Budapest Hungary, Bucharest, Romania, Cracow, Poland, Poznan, Poland, Belgrade, Serbia, Moscow, Russia, Secretary of State, 20 October 1978, 3–6, accessed: 26 March 2022, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1978WARSAW09544_d.html.

46 ANRKBP, [Supreme Council of the Church of Baptists in Poland Archive, Warsaw – Radość], 1/37, Posiedzenia Rady PKChB. Protokoły z załącznikami 1975 – 1980, Protokół nr 17 z posiedzenia Naczelnej Rady Polskiego Kościoła Chrześcijan Baptistów w Warszawie z dnia 27 XI 1978, 188–198.

certainly have overshadowed the short-term impression the evangelist may otherwise have left with his audiences in Poland.⁴⁷

The mission in Poland, like other missions Graham undertook in the 1960s and 1970s, combined two components: inspiring democratic attitudes and expanding the space for religion in countries where it was scarce, and strengthening evangelical churches and religious movements close to him in search of believers among the young and lower middle class. Graham's departure from anti-communist and staunchly pro-American rhetoric did not indicate a failure of his mission but an attempt to find a form appropriate for the times of detente. Graham intended to help his Polish sympathisers create a separate identity, draw them into the worldwide evangelical movement, while building his position as its leader. But the softer rhetoric did not mean a change in Graham's thinking: he believed that the world was still divided into good and evil, it was threatened by consumerism and secularism, and the remedy for which was to be an ever-deepening spirituality. There is no doubt, however, that emphasising individual conversion, the right to choose one's own life path or salvation was a strong reference to such American characteristics as freedom of choice, independent decision-making, commitment to the community and striving for its perfection. However, to Christians raised in the tradition of a hierarchical church with a well-established theology and sacraments, Graham's theology could seem poorly grounded,⁴⁸ and attractive as a form religious culture rather than deepened Christianity. Therefore, the preacher, seeking to build international recognition and identity for evangelical Christianity, sought support in all parts of the world.

But Billy Graham's visit to Poland did not make the Polish–American relations newer, stronger or better. These relations were based on purely political considerations and heroes of the common past, like Thaddeus Kościuszko, Casimir Pulaski, presidents Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Hoover or the masses of immigrants from

47 Wikileaks, Billy Graham Crusade to Poland, cable, US Embassy Warsaw to Embassies and Consulates in Sofia, Bulgaria, Prague, Czechoslovakia, Munich Germany, Budapest Hungary, Bucharest, Romania, Cracow, Poland, Poznan, Poland, Belgrade, Serbia, Moscow, Russia, Secretary of State, 20 October 1978, 3–6, accessed: 26 March 2022, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1978WARSAW09544_d.html.

48 These charges were formulated mainly by West European Lutherans; in Germany, he was accused of showbiz commercialisation of religion, manipulation of the emotions of the faithful, Hollywood entertainment disguised as Christianity, the carnival atmosphere of the crusades, and its inadequacy to German religious conditions, also by expecting an immediate conversion decision from the attendees; James C. Enns, *Saving Germany. North American Protestants and Christian Mission to West Germany 1945–1974* (Montreal–London–Chicago: McGill–Queens University Press, 2017), 146–151; Belgian pastors had very similar impressions, pointing to the low effectiveness of the crusades, shallow theology, “a caricature of evangelism that is at odds with the Belgian way of thinking,” ignoring the Catholic Church, and even the “cult of personality.” William Thomas, *An Assessment of Mass Meetings as a Method of Evangelism: Case Study of Eurofest '75 and the Billy Graham Crusade in Brussels* (Amsterdam: Rodopi N.V., 1977), 250–254; Thomas P. Johnson, *Examining Billy Graham's Theology of Evangelism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 189–192.

the late 19th and early 20th century. Graham was not a politician and, even though his religious agenda included certain political aspects or allusions in his visit to Poland, he distanced himself from them. The relations he wanted to build were solely based on evangelical spirituality and born-again religiosity, but in Poland it appealed mostly to a tiny group of evangelical Christians or those involved in interfaith dialogue, not to average Catholics or mainstream Protestants. The only transnational or transatlantic religious dimension of the visit can, therefore, be an attempt to build stronger connections between Polish and American brothers in faith. However, I would hypothesise that he hoped that the sermons preached in the free countries repeated unchanged in a Communist country might have been interpreted differently because of the authorities were hostile to religion. Therefore, although literally the same, they could have a different meaning because of a different context. Additionally, the visit was essentially forgotten and did not function in Polish Protestantism except for the small circle of Polish Baptists. This was the result of two factors: the marginalisation of the visit by Polish communist-controlled newspapers and the American ones (only those connected with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association mentioned the visit to their readers) and the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła to be Pope. This happened on the same day when Graham was leaving Poland and totally overshadowed his visit behind the Iron Curtain. The transatlantic dimension of Graham's visit can, therefore, be traced in its religious aspects, but even these were difficult to note in a heavily Catholic country with a different religious culture. Evangelical forms of spiritual manifestations – emotions, sudden conversions, born-again spirituality, studying the Bible were very difficult to adopt by Polish non-evangelical Christians. Consequently, the visit did not become a part of the Polish–American world of common history and remembrance and did not take its place as a component of politically motivated Polish–American relations.

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English version: Mark Atkinson

SUMMARY

Billy Graham, one of the most recognisable American preachers, was known primarily for his large-scale evangelisation projects, organised initially in the United States and Western Europe, and then on other continents. In a favourable situation of political détente between the USA and the Soviet Union, Graham, in October 1978, visited Poland, delivering a number of sermons to the faithful of the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations. From a religious point of view, Graham's teachings bore clear features of evangelical Protestantism, weakly rooted in Poland. Teaching also had a cultural dimension, trying to instil in the faithful such character traits as the courage to make decisions, being guided by Christian values, the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and openness to other people. Graham's charisma and unquestionable missionary zeal thus became an opportunity to present the values of American evangelicals and, for Poles, an extremely rare opportunity to encounter a different religious culture that carries values so important to Americans as freedom, liberty, searching for one's identity and deepening spirituality. In the reality of the Polish communist state, this religious message also had a deeper dimension, being a breath of freedom flowing from the USA.

Transatlantycki wymiar podróży Billy'ego Grahama do Polski w październiku 1978 r.

Słowa kluczowe: Billy Graham, wizyta w Polsce, ekumenizm, Baptyści w Polsce, religia, ewangelikalizm, misje Billy'ego Grahama

STRESZCZENIE

Billy Graham, jeden z najbardziej rozpoznawalnych amerykańskich kaznodziejów, znany był przede wszystkim z zakrojonych na ogromną skalę przedsięwzięć ewangelizacyjnych, organizowanych początkowo w Stanach Zjednoczonych i Europie Zachodniej, a następnie na innych kontynentach. W sprzyjającej sytuacji odprężenia politycznego między USA a Związkiem Radzieckim Graham odwiedził Polskę, wygłaszając szereg kazań do wiernych Kościołów protestanckich i katolików. Z religijnego punktu widzenia nauczanie Grahama nosło wyraźne cechy ewangelikalnego protestantyzmu, słabo zakorzenionego w Polsce. Nauczanie miało również wymiar kulturowy, starając zaszczerpić się w wiernych takie cechy charakteru jak odwaga podejmowania decyzji, kierowanie się wartościami chrześcijańskimi, naukami Pisma świętego czy otwartość na drugiego człowieka. Charyzma Grahama i jego niekwestionowana gorliwość misyjna stały się tym samym okazją do zaprezentowania wartości amerykańskich ewangelikanów i niezmiernie rzadką sposobnością spotkania odmiennej kultury religijnej niosącej w sobie tak cenne dla Amerykanów wartości jak swoboda, wolność, poszukiwanie własnej tożsamości i pogłębianie duchowości. W autorytarnej rzeczywistości komunistycznego państwa to religijne przesłanie miało również głębszy wymiar, będąc powiewem płynącej z USA wolności.

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