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IAMS Abstract

*Conversions and Transformations at Billy Graham's Largest Crusade:  
South Korea, 1973*

On June 3, 1973, Billy Graham preached to the largest audience in the history of his career as an evangelist. Approximately 1.1 million people gathered in Seoul's *Yoido* Plaza to hear the gospel message, which Graham preached in English and his translator Billy Kim preached in Korean. With a total of over 3 million attendees and 73,000 "decisions for Christ," the five-day crusade in Seoul surpassed Graham's record-setting crusades in New York City in 1957. In the early days of the global Cold War with the triumph of Chinese communism and the division of North and South Korea, Christian revival had not been predicted in East Asia. Two decades later, why did Graham's largest crusade occur, of all places, in South Korea? What did it mean for 1.1 million people to gather to hear Graham's sermon and for 73,000 people to make "decisions for Christ"? That Graham, "America's Pastor" as religious historian Grant Wacker calls him, reached his numerical apex in a foreign nation should not be digested as interesting trivia, but interpreted as pivotal data for understanding evangelicalism's *transnational* ascent in the late twentieth century. Through bilingual archival research in English and Korean, I seek to historically understand the transnational U.S.-South Korean dimensions of Graham's largest crusade. By doing so, I aim to set U.S. evangelicalism in its global context by showing how the tradition's revitalization in the second half of the twentieth century depended on conversions and transformations witnessed in South Korean Christianity.

*My paper would best fit the study group for "DABOH: Documentation, Archives, Bibliography and Oral History"*

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