

capitals as member states formulate their policies for the special session. The Stanley Foundation and the Working Group on Disarmament—a new Washington-based coalition—have been two of many points of NGO pressure on U.S. policy. During the special session itself, NGOs will publish a daily newspaper, conduct a daily prayer service, and operate a coffeehouse. Mass demonstrations, some involving civil disobedience, are being planned. Thousands of citizens from all over the world are expected to converge on New York beginning May 23.

Will the special session be a success? What constitutes success? Already the superpowers have admitted to feeling pressures to produce “some treaty” before the special session begins. Most likely is a comprehensive test-ban agreement or at least a moratorium on underground nuclear weapons tests. A SALT II agreement may be hastened. Even a treaty abolishing the production and stockpiling of chemical weapons may be completed. During the special session, if a far-reaching declaration can be adopted, and also if a program of action can be agreed upon that will be more than the lowest common denominator—this could spell success. Not a single weapon would be demolished, but a new impetus would be engendered.

The special session will be the largest disarmament gathering in the twentieth century, no doubt in all times. Unless the arms race is halted, then reversed, it is hard to expect humankind to survive the rest of the century.

Homer A. Jack is Secretary-General of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. He is Chairman of the NGO Committee on Disarmament (at U.N. headquarters).

EXCURSUS VI

“Renatus Denovo” on Aflame Again, or An Evening With Billy Graham Revisited

Fortunes in religion are not usually made by clever innovations but by clever refusals to innovate. The old-time religion was good enough for granddad and will be good enough for me, so the typical religious consumer seems to reason. And so one of our most successful religious merchants seems also to reason. Billy Graham is not quite old enough to have been preacher to three generations, but a sinner who caught fire with Billy’s *World Aflame* (1965) could conceivably have a son ripening for an early adolescent conversion as Billy’s *How To Be Born Again* came off the presses this year. In that case father and son could both be edified at the consistency of Billy’s message over the years.

Take the basic matter of establishing contact with God. In *World Aflame* Billy told a touching and instructive anecdote from his own boyhood. In *Born Again* he uses the same anecdote.

World Aflame (p. 94)

When I was a boy,
radio was just coming of age.
We would gather
around a crude homemade set
and twist the three tuning dials
in an effort to establish
contact with the transmitter.
Often all the sound
that came out of the amplifier
was the squeak and squawk
of static,
but we knew
that somewhere out there
was the unseen transmitter
and if contact was established
and the dials were in adjustment,
we could hear a voice
loud and clear.
After a long time
of laborious tuning,
the far distant voice
would suddenly break through
and a smile of triumph
would illuminate
the faces of all in the room.
At last we were tuned in!

Born Again (pp. 33-34)

Radio was just coming of age
when I was a boy
We would gather
around a crude homemade set
and twist the three tuning dials
in an effort to establish
contact with the transmitter.
Often all the sound
that came out of the amplifier
was the squeak and squawk
of static. It wasn't very exciting
to listen to all those senseless sounds,
but we knew that somewhere out there
was the unseen transmitter,
so if contact was established
and the dials were in adjustment
we could hear a voice
loud and clear.
After a long time
of laborious tuning
the far distant sound of music or
a voice would suddenly break through
and a smile of triumph
would brighten
the faces of everyone in the room.
At last we were tuned in!

Critical biblical scholarship, when confronted with a “doublet” of this sort in Holy Writ itself, typically says that the shorter, simpler version is the original and the “conflate” longer version is derived. But Billy has never put much stock in critical biblical scholarship. The real reason for any such similarities is that all of the Bible comes from the same God. What may be a scandal to the simple and a puzzle to the learned is, to the right kind of conservative Christian, a miracle. Let us then not be too quickly scandalized or puzzled at what may in fact be a biblical miracle recurring in our own day.

The consistency of Billy’s message is nowhere plainer than in those peak moments when he stands at the cross of Christ and calls sinners to repentance. *World Aflame* and *Born Again* are reassuringly close when this point is reached.

World Aflame (p. 118)

But in the suffering of Jesus
we have the participation of God
in the act of atonement.
Sin pierced the very heart of God.
God felt
every piercing nail and spear thrust.
God felt the burning sun.
God felt
the mocking derision and
the body blows.
Here in the cross
is the suffering love of God
bearing the guilt of man's sin,
which alone is able
to melt the sinner's heart
and bring him

Born Again (pp. 114-15)

In the suffering of Jesus
we have the participation of God
in the act of atonement.
Sin pierced God's heart.
God felt
every searing nail and spear.
God felt the burning sun.
God felt
the scorn of His tormenters and
the body blows.
In the cross
is the suffering love of God
bearing the guilt of man's sin.
This love alone is able
to melt the sinner's heart
and bring him

to repentance for salvation
"For he hath made him
to be sin for us"
(II Cor. 5:21).

to repentance for salvation.
"He [God the Father] made Him
who knew no sin [Jesus] to be
sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Skeptics may doubt that consistency of such a high order can be maintained at book length, and the truth is that there are many lapses. Not all of *How To Be Born Again* is to be found verbatim in *World Aflame*. Still, the number of passages like the two cited is large enough that a father taking his son to a Billy Graham crusade could have no doubt that the boy would be making the same decision for the same Christ. Meanwhile, though it remains to be seen whether Billy will make a fortune by his refusal to innovate, Word Books of Waco, Texas, the publisher of *Born Again*, has ordered a first printing of 800,000, quite possibly the largest hardcover first printing in history. To date Doubleday, publisher of *World Aflame*, has had nothing to say either about losing its best-selling religious author or about *How To Be Born Again*. But the most striking parallel between the two books has doubtless not escaped the attention of either publisher. It is, of course:

World Aflame
All rights reserved.

Born Again
All rights reserved.

Renatus Denovo is the pseudonym of a New York-based editor.

QUOTE/UNQUOTE

The Law und Order Boys

David Hamlin, executive director of the Chicago American Civil Liberties Union, said today he doubted that the Nazis would again petition the United States Supreme Court to force an earlier hearing. He also said he did not believe the Nazis would violate the injunction since it remains legally in effect.

"It has been the past history of the Nazis not to violate court orders," he said.

—*New York Times*, June 29, 1977

What They Don't Know...

The standard objection to using general funds for Social Security—that it would remove a psychological barrier between social insurance and public welfare—doesn't apply here. Since almost no one would understand this indirect raid [on general funds], Social Security's insurance image would survive unimpaired.

—*New York Times* editorial, November 4, 1977

Political Satire

South African officials, in their grim, awful way, continue to produce some of the best political satire around.

The South African police minister admitted that black leader Steve Biko died of brain damage in police custody but said there was no evidence of police involvement.

"I don't know if they were self-inflicted," he said of the injuries, "but I often think of banging my own head against a wall. A man can damage his brain many ways."

And one of them, apparently, is by becoming police minister of South Africa.

—Donald Kaul in his "Over the Coffee" column.
Des Moines Register, November 14, 1977

Probably Not for Jews Only

The Almighty, Himself, called it an abomination and prohibited it and there is nothing that any world-reforming legislator, or even "enlightened libertarian" at the ballot box can do to alter the fact that it is halachically off-limits to Jews and shouldn't really be practiced by the Gentiles either.

—Rabbi Chaim U. Lipschitz, "The Jewish Point of View of Homosexuality" (unpublished ms.)

!??

"Shark attack is unique among human experiences. What could possibly equal being eaten alive by a monster fish?"

—H. David Baldrige
"Shark Attack"

Dear Reader:

Can you imagine the terror of a shark attack?...

—Letter from Time-Life Television

Enforcing Human Rights

Minister, I am sure that the Virgin of Caacupé and Christ the Lord will cause their displeasure to be felt by those responsible for this unnecessary cruelty which has brought misfortune to the Bernal family and to so many other families who are suffering the same anguish at the detention and death of parents, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. She who is revered as the mother of all Paraguayans will not allow the persecution and death of her children to continue and therefore will not be slow in manifesting her maternal authority with salutary and exemplary punishments.

I offer you, Minister, my humble prayers.

Demetrio Aquino
Bishop of Caacupé

—From a letter to Paraguay's Minister of the Interior protesting the death of Arturo Bernal while in police custody