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Thirty years after the assassination of Martin Luther King and thirty-five years after that of John F. Kennedy, it may be time to ask again, "*Why?*"—in the context of a document that regards an execution with the utmost seriousness, namely, the Gospel according to John. What can the Fourth Gospel's reflections on the cross tell us about America's crucifixions? Why were a prophet and a president murdered in the same decade that promised—but did not deliver— the greatest social changes in American history?

In the light of the Fourth Gospel, the question why Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy were killed points in two directions. First, why were the prophet and the president slain by the system they tried to change? Second, given their recognition of that system's threats to them, why did they live in such a way as to give up their lives?

The Death of Martin Luther King

"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God." For Martin Luther King, in the beginning was the word *agape,* a word that was, he said, at the center of nonviolence. In September 1958 he wrote in the Roman Catholic periodical *Jubilee:* "When we speak of loving those who oppose us, we refer to neither *eros* nor *philia*; we speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word *agape. Agape* means understanding, redeeming good will for all…. It is the love of God operating in the human heart." [1]

I am grateful to Prof. Gary Chamberlain and the Seattle University Theology Department and Campus Ministry for their invitation to give this talk at Seattle University on January 20, 1998. I also wish to thank Professors Christopher Bryan, Sandra M. Schneiders, Frank Thielman, and Walter Wink for their helpful critiques in my revision of the text.

[1] Martin Luther King Jr., "An Experiment in Love," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King Jr.,* James M. Washington, ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 19.

Because *agape* is God's love, King said it was a love directed especially at those neighbors who are our enemies: "A*gape* is disinterested love.. .. The best way to assure oneself that love is disinterested is to have love for the enemy-neighbor from whom you can expect no good in return, but only hostility and persecution."[2] *Agape* was also the divine power within King's vision of community: "*Agape* is love seeking to preserve and create community.... *Agape* is a willingness to go to any length to restore community." That is why *agape* became flesh in a world hostile to it and suffered the consequences. "The cross," King said, "is the eternal expression of the length to which God will go in order to restore broken community."[3] *Agape* became flesh in compassion.

On the night before his death, King spoke about the light coming into our world.

> I see God working in this period of the twentieth century in a way that [people], in some strange way, are responding—something is happening in our world. The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee—the cry is always the same—"We want to be free."[4]

He also spoke about not getting to that promised land himself.

> Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And [God has] allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.[5]

Evidently, King had his eyes wide open to the cross standing before him. In the beginning was the word: *agape*. That word was why King went to Memphis, even though he sensed he was walking into his grave. In the full meaning of *agape*, he loved the Memphis sanitation workers, who were on strike and struggling, and who represented profoundly the Poor People's Campaign that he hoped to lead to Washington. The word King heard spoken to him through

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[2] King, "An Experiment in Love," 19.

[3] King, "An Experiment in Love," 20.

[4] King, "I See the Promised Land," in *A Testament of Hope*, 280.

[5] King, "I See the Promised Land," 286.

the lives of the sanitation workers was simple: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

The Fourth Gospel makes a disturbing connection between *agape* and systemic hatred that can help us understand the King assassination. At the Last Supper, Jesus gives his disciples the command to love one another, and he immediately follows it by a warning: "I am giving you these commands, so that you may love one another. If the world [*ho kosmos*] hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:17-18).

What does the Fourth Gospel mean by the continually repeated term, *ho kosmos*? *Ho kosmos* is usually translated (e.g., NRSV) as "the world," but as Walter Wink has shown, in John's gospel *ho kosmos* has become a central theological concept that often has a structural sense. Its most characteristic meaning in John is not "world" but "system."[6]

The bad news before the good news in John is that *agape* provokes systemic hatred. *Agape* and the system are at odds. The system hates *agape* because *agape* transcends the system. As Jesus prays to his *Abba* for the disciples, "I have given them your word, and the [system] has hated them because they do not belong to the [system], just as I do not belong to the [system]" (John 17:14). Accepting the word of the love commandment means not belonging to the system. As Jesus says to Pilate, "My kingdom is not from this [system]" (John 18:36). Living out the word, as King did in his escalating demands for justice, will provoke the system's hatred. One can then expect to be killed, as King was, true to the gospel's insight.

"The Domination System," as Walter Wink (following Riane Eisler) calls it, has a structural dimension that is specified only in the Fourth Gospel. Only in John is Jesus arrested in the garden by a *speira* (18:3, "detachment" in the NRSV, the Greek word for a Roman cohort made up of 600 soldiers) and its *chiliarchos* (18:12, "officer" in the NRSV, the word for a tribune commanding that number

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[6] Walter Wink identifies three meanings for *kosmos* in the Fourth Gospel. Their frequency suggests that "system" is the most characteristic meaning for *kosmos* in the Fourth Gospel. In seven texts John uses *kosmos* for the created universe. In nine texts he uses it for humanity. "The other sixty uses of *kosmos* in the Fourth Gospel refer to the alienated social order," what Wink calls "the Domination System." See Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1992), footnote 21, 344. These three meanings correspond to John's theology: "As the Domination System is transformed into the New Reality of God, it loses its malevolent character and becomes a neutral concept, virtually synonymous with 'humanity' or 'human society.' This ambiguity in the use *of kosmos* is not caused by confusion on the Fourth Evangelist's part, but is a consequence of the complexity of the perception of the world as being simultaneously God's good creation, fallen, and capable of redemption." See Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 57-58.

of men), together with "police from the chief priests of the Pharisees" (18:3). Why would the powers-that-be send 600 soldiers *and* the temple police to arrest one man, Jesus? Raymond Brown suggests, "If the mention of Roman troops is historical, then we must assume that they were placed at the disposal of the priests or the Sanhedrin by Pilate, perhaps because he feared the danger of another insurrection."[7]

It is also only in John's gospel that there is no formal trial of Jesus by the full Sanhedrin. First, Jesus is questioned and ill-treated before Annas, father-in-law to the high priest (18:13-23); then he is sent "bound" to the high priest himself, Caiophas (18:24); then, at daybreak "they took Jesus from Caiophas" and handed him over to Pilate (18:28).[8] Therefore, David Rensberger says in *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community*, the Fourth Gospel "rests the *formal* responsibility for the humiliation and condemnation of Jesus squarely on the Roman prefect Pilate."[9] Be that as it may, John presents *agape* as condemned and executed by a collusion of the system's two highest powers in Palestine— established religion and the state. Jesus tells those who obey the love commandment, as King did, not to be surprised at the system's response because "it hated me before it hated you" (15:18).

The revolutionary compassion of Martin Luther King likewise seems to have provoked such systemic hatred. According to William F. Pepper's powerful book, *Orders to Kill*,[10] the system's agents stalked King for some time, seeking the covert opportunity they needed to kill the prophet of nonviolence. Pepper tells of Clifton Baird, a Louisville, Kentucky, police officer in 1965, when he was asked to help kill Martin Luther King. On September 18,1965, Baird gave a ride home in his car to fellow Louisville officer Arlie Blair after their evening shift. Baird parked his car in Blair's driveway, and the two men talked. Alarmed at what Blair was saying, Clifton Baird secretly turned on a microphone hidden under his seat that was connected to a recorder in a rear speaker. What Baird taped was an offer to engage in a conspiracy to kill Martin Luther King. He later

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[7] Raymond E. Brown**,** *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 808.

[8] It should be noted that some scholars see in the "they" of 18:28 a reference to the Sanhedrin (see Brown, *John XIII-XXI***,** 844). Note also that John's references to Jesus' accusers during the Roman trial suggest that he envisages that the pressure on Pilate to have Jesus executed comes from something a good deal more than just a couple of highly placed individuals in the Temple establishment (see 18:35, 19:7, 12, 15b).

[9] David Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 91.

[10] William F. Pepper, *Orders to Kill: The Truth Behind the Murder of Martin Luther King* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1995), 140-44.

shared the information with Pepper who included it in his book. Blair told Baird that an organization he belonged to was willing to pay $500,000 for the death of King. Would Baird be willing to participate? Baird said he definitely would not. He urged Blair to stay away from it, too.

The next day at a Louisville police station, Clifton Baird saw Arlie Blair conferring with a group of police officers and FBI agents. The FBI agents had, over a period of sixteen years or more, developed a close relationship with members of the Louisville police force. When the group went into a room and closed the door, Baird overheard them discussing the offer in heated terms and referring to him as "a nigger lover."

On September 20, 1965, Baird taped a second car conversation with Blair. Blair again brought up the $500,000 bounty for King, which Baird now connected with the FBI. Baird also began to realize then the real reason behind a puzzling FBI investigation into his alleged involvement in a "dynamite ring" in western Kentucky. The investigation was being held over his head to force him to join the conspiracy. Baird suspected he was being groomed to become its patsy—"like James Earl Ray," he told Pepper.

Pepper recounts that after Baird refused to cooperate with the FBI plot and was exonerated from any bombing involvement, four local FBI agents he knew followed and harassed him for the next couple of years. He thought he "was being watched and warned to keep quiet. Then in 1968 after Dr. King was killed, the harassment stopped; the pressure was off." Baird also told Pepper, "There was an unprecedented wholesale transfer of all the Louisville FBI agents to other field offices just before the assassination."[11] Baird believed that when the assassination plans had been formulated, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover "found it desirable to move the agents who had been involved in the previous attempt out of Louisville."[12]

The system that hated Martin Luther King knew well that he made frequent trips to and from Louisville to visit his brother, the Reverend A. D. King. Louisville thus offered a stable assassination site for the planners. King could be counted on to return there. Louisville also had the advantage of close FBI-police relationships to help carry out King's murder and cover it up. But the refusal of police officer Baird to cooperate with the system's plot was a counterforce. By blocking the Louisville assassination plans at considerable risk to himself, Clifton Baird may have added as much as two years to the life of Martin Luther King. Thanks also to Baird, however, we know also that the system was stalking King from at least September 1965.

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[11] Pepper, *Orders to Kill,* 143.

[12] Pepper, *Orders to Kill,* 143.

Clifton Baird was a witness to the truth. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus says, "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (8:32); however, there is a condition to be met: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (8:31). The truth will set us free if we continue in Christ's word, the word *agape,* the word made flesh in compassion. No disembodied truth will ever make us free. It is the truth of love made flesh in compassion that will deliver us.

According to Pepper, Myron Billett was another witness to the truth. Having experienced repentance (*metanoia,* "a change of mind") in his own life, Myron Billett revealed that in January 1968 FBI and CIA agents offered a New York Mafia leader a one-million-dollar contract to kill Martin Luther King.[13]

Billett told the following story to Maurice McCrackin, William Pepper, and members of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), and he repeated it on a 1989 BBC documentary produced shortly before his death.[14] He was a messenger and go-between for Chicago Mafia don Sam Giancana. In January 1968 Giancana asked him to make the arrangements for "a very important meeting" between New York Mafia leader Carlo Gambino and some government representatives. Billett set up the meeting at a motel in Apalachin, New York, the site of an early 1960s mob summit. Billett said that at the meeting (which he attended) the three representatives of the CIA and FBI asked Carlo Gambino if he would accept a one-million-dollar contract to assassinate Martin Luther King. Billett recalled the exact words of Gambino's reply: "In no way would I or the family get involved with you people again. You messed up the

[13] My personal basis for knowledge of Myron Billett is the testimony of the Reverend Maurice McCrackin, a much-loved Cincinnati minister and prophet of peace, who died on January 30, 1997. McCrackin told me that he met Myron Billett in the late 1970s while visiting prisoners at Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio. Billett, a former Mafia member, was serving a sentence for manslaughter. McCrackin became his close friend. When Billett was released from prison for health reasons, "Mac" baptized him. He then ministered to him through the 1980s. As a repentant Christian, Billett renounced his mob past and broke silence concerning his criminal involvements. Myron Billett's dedication to telling the truth in his final years came from love, *agape* made flesh regardless of the consequences. 1 have read Myron Billett's letters to Maurice McCrackin (given to me by McCrackin ten months before his death). The letters are filled with statements of love and gratitude to the friend who helped turn his life around. Each is signed: "Yours in Christ's Love, Myron." Maurice McCrackin described Myron Billett to me: "There's no finer person and more caring spirit I've known than Myron. He was very gentle and always the same. It was just remarkable looking at him and realizing what he'd been a part of" (Maurice McCrackin to Jim Douglass, March 11, 1997, in a phone interview).

[14] Pepper, *Orders to Kill,* 146-48; and John Edginton, producer, *Who Killed Martin Luther King?* (BBC Television, 1989).

Cuba deal. You messed up the Kennedy deal."[15] The CIA and FBI men said they would make "other arrangements" and departed.

After King was assassinated on April 4, Sam Giancana gave Myron Billett $30,000 and told him to start running: they both knew too much and were going to be killed. Giancana was in fact murdered in his Chicago home in June 1975, just before he was scheduled to testify before the Church Committee concerning assassination plots. His killing took the form of a symbolic warning to other possible assassination witnesses. Giancana was shot seven times in a circle around his mouth. Like Clifton Baird, Myron Billett was shadowed in obvious ways, apparently designed to intimidate him.

On April 4, 1967, one year before his assassination, Martin Luther King said in his historic Riverside Church address on the Vietnam War: "I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government."[16]

When King testified to the works of his government in Vietnam, J. Edgar Hoover sent a memorandum to President Lyndon Johnson saying, "Based on King's recent activities and public utterances, it is clear that he is an instrument in the hands of subversive forces seeking to undermine our nation."[17] Hoover then stepped up his already extensive monitoring of everything King said and did. "The [system] hates me," Jesus said, "because I testify against it that its works are evil" (John 7:7).

For King, what followed must have been like playing chess with an opponent who always knows what your next move will be. Memphis police sources have described the extent of federal electronic surveillance of King on his March 18, 1968, visit to Memphis when he stayed at the Holiday Inn Rivermont Hotel. Every room in his suite was bugged, even the bathroom. Microphones, monitored by federal agents, had been placed, one officer said, "in the elevators, under the table where he ate his breakfast, in the conference room next to his suite, and in all the rooms of his entourage. Even the balcony was covered by a parabolic mike."[18]

When King returned to Memphis on March 28, the march he was about to lead had been targeted. Memphis minister Samuel "Billy" Kyles, who was close

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[15] Myron Billett, "Deathly Enemies," an unpublished 4-page typed article by Myron Billett dated December 29, 1977, 1 (punctuation corrected). The article was included with Billett's letters (see above, footnote 13).

[16] King, "A Time to Break Silence," in *A* Testament *of Hope,* 233.

[17] David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross:* Martin *Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1986), 555.

[18] Pepper, *Orders to Kill,* 218.

to police sources, said in 1993 that he "had learned later that the FBI had hired *provocateurs* to disrupt the march."[19] The Reverend James Lawson, who had invited King to Memphis, witnessed the provocateurs' actions and a curious police response to them. He noticed a group of youths on the sidewalk between the marchers and the police. Although Lawson knew the young black activists of Memphis, he recognized no one in this group. He saw them begin to break windows, and "yet the police remained impassively in place, just watching."[20] Lawson believed he was witnessing a violent scenario being played out to justify police violence against the marchers.

The violence during a march on March 28 was what forced Martin Luther King to return to Memphis on April 3. King had to prove he could lead a peaceful march in Memphis before he could lead the Poor People's Campaign to Washington, D.C. On the day after the disrupted march, the FBI's Domestic Intelligence Division issued a memorandum. It recommended that an FBI-authored article be given to a "cooperative news source." The FBI article read in part:

> The fine Hotel Lorraine in Memphis is owned and patronized exclusively by Negroes but King didn't go there for his hasty exit [from the march). Instead King decided the plush Holiday Inn Motel, white owned, operated and almost exclusively patronized, was the place to "cool it." There will be no boycott of white merchants for King, only for his followers.[21]

Six days before King's assassination, the FBI was applying pressure ro move him from the Holiday Inn Rivermont, where he had stayed on his last two Memphis visits, to "the fine Hotel Lorraine" where he would be killed. King coworker Hosea Williams testified in the 1993 HBO television trial of James Earl Ray that when he arrived with King on April 3, they were looking forward to staying at the Rivermont Holiday Inn, and that he was surprised that they were taken to the Lorraine Hotel. He said that neither he nor anyone else in the entourage was familiar with the Lorraine Hotel, and no one understood why the change was made. Williams also said that King was "initially" given a room on the ground floor but "for some strange reason, his room was changed."[22]

Martin Luther King was not the only person whom the system killed on April 4- Its other victim was Lorraine. The owners of the Lorraine Hotel were Walter and Lorraine Bailey.[23] They had invested their life's savings in it. The motel was

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[19] Pepper, *Orders to Kill,* 282.

[20] Pepper, *Orders to Kill,* 220.

[21] Pepper, *Orders to Kill,* 118.

[22] Pepper, Orders to *Kill,* 297.

[23] The following story is drawn from Wayne Chastain Jr., "The Assassination of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Possible Links With the Kennedy Murders—Part One," *Computers and People* 23 (February 1974): 31-32.

named after Lorraine. Lorraine Bailey was a deeply religious woman and a great admirer of Martin Luther King. When she learned from her husband that King would be staying with them, she happily prepared her best suite for him. It was Room 202 on the ground floor, facing an inner courtyard, making it possible for King to come and go with more privacy and security.

On April 2, the day before King was due to arrive, Lorraine Bailey received a visitor who identified himself as an advance security man for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.[24] The SCLC said later, however, that they knew nothing of such a man. When the man saw King's room, he insisted that Bailey change it because "Dr. King always likes to stay on the second floor overlooking a swimming pool." Lorraine Bailey then canceled the reservation she already had for room 306 and assigned it to Martin Luther King. Room 306 was, as the man had specified, on the balcony overlooking the swimming pool.

When Lorraine Bailey learned on April 4 that King had just been shot on the balcony, she groaned, "My God, what have I done?" and suffered a stroke, dying soon thereafter. While Lorraine Bailey was innocent of intent, she accepted total responsibility for the way she was used.

In their study of Christian origins, *The Message and the Kingdom*, Richard Horsley and Neil Silberman have described the Roman Empire's purpose in carrying out a political execution:

> Crucifixion was as much communal punishment and state-sponsored terrorism as it was judicial vengeance against a particular crime. The crosses planted outside the cities warned potential rebels, runaway slaves, and rebellious prophets of what could happen to them.[25]

Whether in first-century Palestine or twentieth-century America, the purpose of a political execution is to destroy the people's hope. "Here is the man *[ho anthropos*]!" proclaimed Pilate mockingly (19:5) of a prophet beaten and about to be executed. In other words, humanity's hope is dead. But as is often the case in the Fourth Gospel, the words bear a prophetic irony beyond the speaker's

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[24] William F. Pepper writes that Walter Bailey, the source of Chastain's story, apparently told an earlier version of it to private investigator Leon Cohen. In that version Bailey himself switches King's room, in response not to a visitor but to a telephone request from Atlanta. But in an interview with Pepper, the Baileys' daughter and her husband "were adamant that Mrs. Bailey had been declared in excellent health by their family doctor around the time of the stroke. They were convinced that for some reason she had taken a measure of personal responsibility for the assassination. They didn't know why." See Pepper, *Orders to Kill*, 204.

[25] Richard A. Horsley and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World* (New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1997), 86.

intent. Which meaning do we believe? Pilate's cynicism or agape's hope through suffering, both expressed by the same words? Is love dead or alive in one who dies out of compassion? Who has really died?

While looking terrorism in the face, the Fourth Gospel reverses the official meaning of the cross in the most radical way. Each gospel by its nature overturned the humanly perceived order by proclaiming a public execution as the Good News: the one executed by the religious establishment in collusion with the empire has been raised from the dead. But in John, Jesus speaks of the *execution itself* as his resurrection. The victim says, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (12:32). An execution whose purpose is to terrify has been transformed into an exaltation of the victim, thereby liberating the oppressed from their fear of the cross.

But no such resurrection from systemic hatred and terror is possible without our first looking into its face. Clifton Baird, Myron Billett, and Lorraine Bailey looked into the cosmic night, just as Martin Luther King did. Each experienced the truth of love made flesh. *Agape* lifted up will draw all of us into life.

The Death of John Fitzgerald Kennedy

One summer weekend in 1962, while out sailing, President Kennedy was asked by a friend what he thought of the book *Seven Days in May,* which explored the possibility of a military takeover in the United States. Kennedy said he had not read the book but would do so that night.

The next day, having read *Seven Days in May,* Kennedy discussed the possibility of a military takeover. Consider that these words were spoken by him after the Bay of Pigs and before the Cuban Missile Crisis:

> "It's possible. It could happen in this country, but the conditions would have to be just right. If, for example, the country had a young President, and he had a Bay of Pigs, there would be a certain uneasiness. Maybe the military would do a little criticizing behind his back, but this would be written off as the usual military dissatisfaction with civilian control. Then if there were another Bay of Pigs, the reaction of the country would be, 'Is he too young and inexperienced?' The military would almost feel that it was their patriotic obligation to stand ready to preserve the integrity of the nation, and only God knows just what segment of democracy they would be defending if they overthrew the elected establishment."
>
> As if steeling himself for the final challenge, he continued, "Then, if there were a third Bay of Pigs, it could happen." Pausing long enough for all of us to assess the significance of his comment, he concluded with an old Navy phrase: "But it won't happen on my watch."[26]

26 Paul B. Fay Jr., *The Pleasure of His Company* (New York: Dell, 1966), 163.

The young President John Kennedy did, of course, have a Bay of Pigs. He bitterly disappointed the military by accepting defeat at the Bay of Pigs rather than escalating the battle. Kennedy realized after the fact that he had been drawn into a CIA scenario whose authors assumed he would be forced by circumstances to drop his restrictions against the use of U.S. forces.

"How else," he asked his friends Dave Powers and Ken O'Donnell, "could the Joint Chiefs approve such a plan?"[27]

> "They were sure I'd give in to them and send the go-ahead order to the [Navy's aircraft carrier] *Essex,"* he said one day to Dave Powers. "They couldn't believe that a new President like me wouldn't panic and try to save his own face. Well, they had me figured all wrong." [28]

The Bay of Pigs awakened Kennedy to internal forces he feared he might never control. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas recalled Kennedy saying what the Bay of Pigs taught him about the CIA and the Pentagon:

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[27] Kenneth P. O'Donnell and David F. Powers, *"Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye*": *Memories of John Fitzgerald Kennedy* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1972), 274.

[28] O'Donnell and Powers, "*Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye*", 274. The major players in deceiving Kennedy about the Bay of Pigs were his CIA advisors, especially Director Allen Dulles. As Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. writes, "the Joint Chiefs of Staff had only approved the Bay of Pigs. The CIA had invented it." See Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (New York: Ballantine, 1978), 486. At his death Allen Dulles left the unpublished drafts of an article that scholar Lucien S. Vandenbroucke has titled "The 'Confessions' of Allen Dulles." In these handwritten, coffee-stained notes, Dulles explains how CIA advisors who knew better drew John Kennedy into a plan whose prerequisites for success contradicted the President's own rules for engagement: "[We] never raised objections to repeated emphasis [by the President] that the operation: a) must be carried through without any 'combat' action by U.S.A. military forces; b) must remain quiet [and] disavowable by [the] U.S. gov[ernment]; c) must be a quiet operation yet must rouse internal revolt vs. Castro and create a center to which anticastroites will defect." See Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, "The 'Confessions' of Allen Dulles: New Evidence on the Bay of Pigs," *Diplomatic History* 8:4 (Fall 1984): 369, citing Allen W. Dulles Papers, handwritten notes, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, New Jersey. Although Dulles and his associates knew these conditions conflicted with the plan they were foisting on Kennedy, they discreetly kept silent in the belief that "the realities of the situation" would force the President to carry through to the end they wished: "[We] did not want to raise these issues—in an [indecipherable word] discussion—which might only harden the decision against the type of action we required. We felt that when the chips were down—when the crisis arose in reality, any action required for success would be authorized rather than permit the enterprise to fail" (369). But again, as Kennedy said to Dave Powers, "They had me figured all wrong."

> This episode seared him. He had experienced the extreme power that these groups had, these various insidious influences of the CIA and the Pentagon on civilian policy, and I think it raised in his own mind the specter: Can Jack Kennedy, President of the United States, ever be strong enough to really rule these two powerful agencies? I think it had a profound effect. . . [and] it shook him up![29]

John Kennedy had come into the White House as a typical "cold warrior." The Bay of Pigs shook his faith in the military and the military's faith in him. He was beginning to turn.

Kennedy's second "Bay of Pigs," from the military's standpoint, was the Cuban Missile Crisis. The transcripts of Kennedy's secretly taped White House meetings during the missile crisis reveal how isolated the President was in choosing the more restrained policy of blockading Soviet missile shipments rather than bombing and invading Cuba. Nowhere does he stand more alone against the pressures for a sudden, massive air strike than in his October 19, 1962, meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In this encounter the chiefs' disdain for their Commander-in-chief is summed up by Air Force Chief of Staff General Curtis LeMay:

> *LeMay*:… [You] made pretty strong statements... that we would take action against offensive weapons. I think that a blockade, and political talk, would be considered by a lot of our friends and neutrals as being a pretty weak response to this. And I'm sure a lot of our own citizens would feel that way, too. You're in a pretty bad fix, Mr. President.
>
> *President Kennedy:* What did you say?
>
> *LeMay:* You're in a pretty bad fix.
>
> [Kennedy makes an unclear, joking reply.] ...
>
> *President Kennedy:* I appreciate your views. These are unsatisfactory alternatives. The obvious argument for the blockade was [that] what we want to do is to avoid, if we can, nuclear war by escalation or imbalance.

A few minutes after this statement, Kennedy departs from the room. The recorded discussion continues with Marine Commandant General David Shoup:

> *Shoup:* You pulled the rug right out from under him. Goddamn.
>
> *LeMay:* [With a chuckle.] Jesus Christ. What the hell do you mean?
>
> *Shoup:* I agree with that answer a hundred percent, a hundred percent. He [President Kennedy] finally got around to the word "escalation." That's the only goddamn thing that's in the whole trick. Go in and get every goddamn one. Escalation, that's it.

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29 Cited by L. Fletcher Prouty, *The Secret Team* (New York: Ballantine, 1974), 472.

> Somebody should keep him from doing the goddamn thing piecemeal. That's our problem. We've been friggin' around with the missiles.[30]

The White House tapes show Kennedy questioning and resisting the mounting military pressure to bomb Cuba. The generals who opposed the President's policy were probably not pleased by his final concessions to Khrushchev: a pledge of no invasion of Cuba (and a private promise to withdraw U.S. missiles from Turkey) in exchange for Khrushchev's removal of the Soviet missiles. The cold warrior was beginning to turn toward peace.

John Kennedy's third Bay of Pigs was his American University address. Norman Cousins stated succinctly the significance of this remarkable speech: "At American University on June 10,1963, President Kennedy proposed an end to the Cold War."[31]

"What kind of peace do we seek?" Kennedy asked. "Not a *Pax Americana* enforced on the world by American weapons of war," he said,[32] and he delivered an impassioned call for a reexamination of American attitudes toward the Soviet Union. In terms of a dogmatic cold war theology, the military considered the speech heretical. The President's specific pledge not to be the first country to resume nuclear tests in the atmosphere further alarmed the military.

Kennedy's fourth Bay of Pigs was the partial nuclear test-ban treaty that he and Nikita Khrushchev signed. Admiral Lewis Strauss responded to the treaty by saying, "I am not sure that the reduction of tensions is necessarily a good thing."[33] The treaty was opposed by Admiral Arthur Radford, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and by General Thomas Power, the chief of the Strategic Air Command, who attacked it in secret hearings before the Armed Services Committee.[34] Kennedy's Defense Secretary Robert McNamara claims

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[30] Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 182, 186-88. By checking the audio and subtitles for parts of the same tapes played on "The Secret White House Tapes," *Investigative Reports* (aired on the History Channel), I have corrected a few transcribing errors found in the May-Zelikow book. I have followed, for the most part, the editing of this section of the October 16 tape done by Theodore C. Sorensen in his article, "From the Eye of the Storm," *Washington Monthly* (November 1997), 27-28.

[31] Norman Cousins, *The Improbable Triumvirate: John F. Kennedy, Pope John, Nikita Khrushchev* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 9.

[32] John F. Kennedy, "The Strategy of Peace," in "*Let the Word Go Forth*"*: The Speeches, Statements, and Writings of John F. Kennedy 1947 to 1963,* Theodore C. Sorensen, ed. (New York: Delacorte, 1988), 282.

[33] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 911.

[34] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 911.

he locked the five unanimously opposed Chiefs of Staff in his Pentagon office with him and pressured them until they agreed to support the treaty.[35]

Kennedy thought the test-ban treaty was the most serious congressional issue he had faced as President. He was, he told his staff, "determined to win if it cost him the 1964 election." [36] He did win—but did it cost him his life?

John Kennedy's fifth Bay of Pigs was his behind-the-scenes exploration of a new relationship with Fidel Castro's Cuba. U.S. diplomat William Attwood has described in his book *The Twilight Struggle* how he had a series of meetings in October and November 1963 with Cuban U.N. Representative Carlos Lechuga, with guidance from Robert Kennedy. Fidel Castro then offered to fly Attwood to Cuba for secret talks concerning Cuban-American relations. Kennedy wanted to discuss the agenda for such a meeting.[37]

Attwood has wondered in retrospect what part these diplomatic initiatives may have played in the President's assassination. He feels "the CIA must have had an inkling of what was happening from phone taps and surveillance of Lechuga."[38] For the CIA and the military, Kennedy's back-door overtures to Castro may already have been the last straw.

But there was another.

Kennedy's sixth Bay of Pigs was his decision to withdraw from Vietnam. Robert McNamara in his memoir *In Retrospect* has described the contentious October 2, 1963, National Security Council meeting at which Kennedy decided, against the arguments of most of his advisors: first, to withdraw all U.S. forces from Vietnam by the end of 1965; second, to withdraw 1000 U.S. troops by the end of 1963; and third, to announce this policy publicly "to set it in concrete," which McNamara then proceeded to do at a press conference when the meeting was over.[39] Ken O'Donnell supplements McNamara's account, adding: "When McNamara was leaving the meeting to talk to the White House reporters, the President called to him, 'And tell them that means all of the helicopter pilots, too'."[40]

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[35] Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1993), 245.

[36] Schlesinger, *A* Thousand Days, 910.

[37] William Attwood, *The Twilight Struggle: Tales of the Cold War* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 257-64. Attwood's story is confirmed by his dialogue partner Carlos Lechuga in Lechuga's *Eye of the Storm: Castro, Khrushchev, Kennedy, and the Missile Crisis* (Melbourne: Ocean, 1995), 197-211.

[38] Attwood, *The Twilight Struggle*, 264.

[39] Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Time Books, 1995), 80.

[40] O'Donnell and Powers, *"Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye"*, 17.

On October 11, 1963, Kennedy put the policy into effect by issuing National Security Act Memorandum 263, which authorized the initial withdrawal of 1000 American troops that year. After Kennedy's assassination, his withdrawal policy was voided. The Pentagon Papers state:

> In the last weeks of 1963, the U.S. government reassessed the progress of the counterinsurgency effort and the policy options. Plans for phased withdrawal of 1000 U.S. advisers by end-1963 went through the motions by concentrating rotations home in December and letting strength rebound in the subsequent two months.[41]

The reversal of Kennedy's decision to withdraw from Vietnam certainly links his death to the subsequent deaths of 58,000 Americans and over three million Vietnamese.

In the summer of 1962, when John Kennedy said optimistically of a military coup, "It won't happen on my watch," he had postulated just three major "Bay of Pigs" conflicts with the military. Assuming three strikes against him among military planners at the height of the Cold War, he saw himself as possibly out. What about six strikes?

On the morning of November 22, 1963, a few minutes before his flight to Dallas, Kennedy spoke to his wife Jacqueline about a possible assassination attempt: "If someone really wanted to kill a President, it was not too difficult; put a man on a high building with a telescopic rifle, and there was nothing anybody could do to defend a President's life."[42] In full awareness that he had already exhausted the tolerance of much of the military-industrial complex, Kennedy pushed ahead with increasing urgency for an end to the cold war. The one-time cold warrior had turned toward peace with a conscious disregard of his own life.

Kennedy, like King, lived the word *agape:* "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). The Fourth Gospel tells the story of a man who has become for me a symbolic way of understanding Kennedy's life: Lazarus. Who was Lazarus? According to John, Lazarus belonged to a wealthy and prominent family living in Bethany. He had two sisters, Mary and Martha. That the family was rich is suggested by the fact that Mary is identified in the story as "the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair" (12:3)—ointment, we are told, worth 300 denarii (12:5), the equivalent of a worker's annual wages in Judea. That the family was prominent might be suggested by the response of the *Ioudaioi* (NRSV,

41 *Senator Gravel Edition of the Pentagon Papers* (Boston: Beacon, 1971), 303.
42 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 1024.

"Jews") to the death of Lazarus (11:18-19, 31, 36-37, 45-46).[43] But who, precisely, are the *Ioudaioi*?

In the Fourth Gospel, the root meaning of the Greek word *Ioudaioi* is probably not simply "Jews" but "the Jews who lived in Judea" (as opposed in the gospel to *Galilaioi,* "the Jews who lived in Galilee"). Judea was the economic center of Palestine. In John's gospel, therefore, "Judeans" are perhaps especially Jerusalem's priestly aristocracy, who collaborated with Rome and controlled the religious-economic center of Judea, the Jerusalem temple. In other words, in John, the "Judeans" embody *ho kosmos,* the system.[44]

The gospel tells us that when Lazarus died, many of the Judeans came out from their center of power, Jerusalem, to console Mary and Martha. But is John also suggesting they were shedding crocodile tears? The text tells us that Jesus became deeply angry *(enebrimesato,* "deeply moved" in NRSV),[45] which seems a strange response to sorrow. What is going on here?

Lazarus had commanded the respect of these Judeans. He had been one of them. But Lazarus, with his sisters Mary and Martha, had then accepted the call of *agape.* In their mourning with Mary and Martha, the Judeans were responding dutifully to the death of one of their own. But was it the case that, from their hearts' perspective, Lazarus was really better off dead—as his sisters would be, too, given the downhill path they were following with a Galilean prophet? Does John mean us to see Jesus angry at *hypocritical* tears over Lazarus's death?

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[43] On the other hand, it should be conceded that in a Mediterranean village society the death of any member of the community is likely to met by support from neighbors.

[44] "*Ioudaios* ideology signifies for John the particular systematic form of sociopolitical domination that was embodied in the practices of the Jerusalem sacerdotal aristocracy as those practices were perceived and experienced by those who were subject to them. . . . John's use of *Ioudaios* belongs to the discursive practice of the Jewish Palestinian underclass, to the dominated and the marginalized." See Obery M. Hendricks Jr., *A Discourse of Domination: A Socio-Rhetorical Study of the Use of Ioudaios in the Fourth Gospel* (Princeton University dissertation, June 1995), 254.

[45] "It is beyond question that *embrimasthai* [in John 11:33] implies anger." See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 399, and it was so understood by the Greek fathers. The word comes from the snorting of horses, "so (as in English) of persons snorting with suppressed rage or indignation." See also Max Zerwick, S.J., and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament,* 4th rev. ed. (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993), 321. Why then is Jesus snorting with rage? Is it because he is looking at phony tears? Or is it anger at the fact of the death itself? The same verb is used elsewhere in the gospels to speak of Jesus' reaction to affliction: see Matt. 9:30 and Mark 1:43 (with which latter compare the minority reading *orgistheis,* "moved with anger" at 1:41: see NEB ["in warm indignation"], NRSV margin). Perhaps then the word refers to anger "at their illness and handicaps which were looked on as manifestations of Satan's kingdom of evil." See Brown, *John I-XII,* 426.

Lazarus, by turning away from power in his life, had been raised from the dead by Jesus even before he died (cf. John 5:25-26). Now, by being raised from the final death of his tomb, he becomes a still more profound symbol of resurrection—and of the system's impotence before faith. The system controls its subjects ultimately by the threat of death. Therefore, belief in resurrection signifies the end of the system's power. The client rulers of Israel overseen by Rome now recognize that Jesus and the resurrected Lazarus both have to be killed (John 11:53, 12:10-11) to prove that death, not life, is still in power.

John F. Kennedy was raised from the death of wealth, power, and privilege. The son of a millionaire ambassador, he was born, raised, and educated to rule the system. When he was elected President, Kennedy's heritage of power corresponded to his position as head of the greatest national security state in history. But Kennedy, like Lazarus, was raised from the death of that system. In spite of all odds, he became a peacemaker and, thus, a traitor to the system.

It was especially in the confrontations with the military during the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis that Kennedy was raised from death to life. He resisted, at great risk to himself, the deadly pressures of the military to escalate those Cold War battles. He was then inspired to go on to further peacemaking initiatives: the American University address, the test-ban treaty, the back-door opening to Cuba, and his decision to withdraw from Vietnam.

Why? What raised Kennedy from the dead? Why did John Kennedy choose life in the midst of death and by continuing to choose life thus condemn himself to death? I have puzzled over that question while studying the various biographies of Kennedy. May I suggest one source of grace for his resurrection as a peacemaker? In reading his story, one is struck by his devotion to his children. There is no mistaking the depth of love he had for Caroline and John, and the overwhelming pain he and Jacqueline experienced at the death of their son Patrick. Robert Kennedy in his book *Thirteen Days* has described how his brother saw the Cuban Missile Crisis in terms of the future of his children and *all* children.[46] I believe John Kennedy was at least partially raised from the dead of the national security state by the life of his children. The heroic peacemaking of his final months, with his acceptance of its likely cost in his own death, was, I suspect, partly a result of the universal life he saw in and through them. I think he believed profoundly the words that he gave in his American University

[46] "The thought that disturbed him the most, and that made the prospect of war much more fearful than it would otherwise have been, was the specter of the death of the children of this country and all the world—the young people who had no role, who had no say, who knew nothing even of the confrontation, but whose lives would be snuffed out like everyone else's. They would never have a chance to make a decision, to vote in an election, to run for office, to lead a revolution, to determine their own destinies." See Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Signet, 1969), 106.

address as his foundation for rejecting the Cold War: "Our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."[47]

An interesting news item appeared on November 27, 1997, in relation to the Kennedy assassination. It said that a long-secret government document had been released to *Newsday* that "lends credence to the contention that Lee Harvey Oswald was seen in Dallas with a U.S. intelligence agent about two months before the murder." [48] The news article identified the intelligence agent who reportedly met with Oswald by his pseudonym, "Maurice Bishop." It explained:

> Antonio Veciana, founder of the Alpha 66 Cuban exile group that launched repeated guerrilla raids against Fidel Castro's regime, testified before the House [Select] Committee [on Assassinations] that he considered Bishop his U.S. intelligence contact; that he met with Bishop more than 100 times over a 13-year period; that Bishop had directed him to organize Alpha 66 and had paid him $253,000.
>
> Moreover, Veciana said, he had met briefly in Dallas with Bishop and Oswald sometime around September 1963, two months before Kennedy's Nov. 22 assassination. G. Robert Blakey, chief counsel to the House Committee, said Veciana's claim could not be given weight because, among other things, there was no proof that Bishop existed.
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> But the document released Wednesday by the U.S. Assassination Records Review Board supports the contention that Bishop existed and otherwise backs Veciana's story. Government sources said the document—an Army intelligence report dated Oct. 17, 1962—describes a man like Bishop.[49]

For those who were familiar with Gaeton Fonzi's classic book on the Kennedy assassination, *The Last Investigation*,[50] the released document confirmed an already well-proven link between Lee Harvey Oswald and the Central Intelligence Agency. Fonzi was an investigator for the House Select Committee. In his brilliant description of the HSCA probe, he established beyond reasonable doubt who "Maurice Bishop" was: the "Maurice Bishop" who for years managed a CIA theater of war against Castro, and who then met with Lee Harvey Oswald, was David Atlee Phillips.

David Atlee Phillips, born in Fort Worth, Texas, always loved the theater. The CIA gave him the world of the Cold War for his stage. Phillips became a master

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[47] John Kennedy, "The Strategy of Peace, " 286.

[48] Michael Dorman, "File Sheds Light on Shadowy Figure in JFK Killing, " *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (November 27, 1997), A14.

[49] Dorman, "File Sheds Light, " A14.

[50] Gaeton Fonzi, *The Last Investigation* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1994).

propagandist in the war against every suspected Communist front. He helped mastermind the CIA overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz's Guatemala government in 1954 by a propaganda technique which he called "the big lie."[51] He worked closely with E. Howard Hunt in planning both the Guatemala coup and the Bay of Pigs invasion. After the assassination of President Kennedy, he rose to one of the highest ranks in the CIA—Chief of the Western Hemisphere Division.[52]

What Gaeton Fonzi and fellow HSCA researcher Dan Hardway discovered was that David Phillips ran "the red-herring, disinformation aspects" of the assassination plot, [53] creating Oswald's image as a Communist sympathizer. The master of the CIA's "big lie" in Guatemala created an even bigger lie in Dallas. It seems that, even more than the assassination of Martin Luther King, John Kennedy's assassination illustrates the connection made in the Fourth Gospel between murder and lying. In John 8:44 Jesus indicts the devil as "a murderer from the beginning" and "the father of lies." In the Fourth Gospel, murder and lying are a single profound evil in our cosmic night.

The second assassination of John Kennedy has been as evil as the first. Exposés of Kennedy assault his character with the same hatred as lay behind the crossfire in Dealey Plaza. The propaganda purpose of this hate campaign is crystal clear: Why should we even care about the killing of so notorious a man? Forget the whole thing. Camelot is dead. But "Camelot" was nothing more than a play Kennedy once saw. It had nothing to do with his life. Camelot is the big lie's straw man for its constant propaganda barrage.[54]

We can readily concede that John Kennedy was no idyllic figure of goodness presiding over Camelot. He was a man of deep contradictions both personally

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[51] Fonzi, *The Last Investigation,* 264.

[52] Fonzi, *The Last Investigation,* 157.

[53] Fonzi, *The Last Investigation,* 293. Phillips continued to lie under oath in his testimony to the House Select Committee on Assassinations. The perjury was obvious. It was relegated to a footnote in the final report. Fonzi comments: "That it disregarded Phillips's perjury confirms the Committees tacit decision not to pursue the truth *wherever* it might lead—especially if it headed toward the CIA. Chief Counsel Blakey had, after all, a very delicate 'working agreement' with the Agency. David Phillips represented the most crucial investigative link ever developed between the Central Intelligence Agency and the assassination of President Kennedy" (336).

[54] "Camelot" was originally Jacqueline Kennedy's elegiac image of her husband one week after the assassination. She shared it with writer Theodore White who featured it in a *Life* magazine article on December 6, 1963 (158-59). Writers who use the grieving widow's image as a straw man for their attacks on her husband's humanity might want to recall her motive: "As she said over and over again, don't leave him to the bitter old men to write about." See Theodore H. White in his later description of the incident, *In Search of History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 524.

and politically who turned toward peace in the end. In terms of kings, the proper analogy to Kennedy is not King Arthur but King David. David was a sinner in the depths of his soul. Yet God kept calling David to repentance, and David served God by uniting Israel. John Kennedy, like David, was a sinner. Yet the God of Peace kept calling John Kennedy, and he learned in his short presidency to seek peace. For that reason John Kennedy was executed by those behind his throne. They recognized that Kennedy was beginning to act as boldly for peace as his American University vision.

Postscripts

The stories by which we can understand Martin Luther King and John Kennedy are biblical. Martin Luther King, like John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel, came as a witness to testify to the light of *agape* coming into our world—the light of truth and nonviolence which enlightens everyone. He testified to *agape* made flesh in justice for the oppressed and love for the enemy. He testified to the possibility of *agape* made flesh in a new America.

In his final, most radical presidential address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King dealt with the question of restructuring the whole of American society. He asked, "Why are there forty million poor people in America?" "When you ask that question," he said, "you begin to question the capitalistic economy." In order to "help the discouraged beggars in life's marketplace," King said, "one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."[55]

King saw this vast problem of restructuring the United States in terms of the response of Jesus to Nicodemus in the Fourth Gospel:

> One night, a juror came to Jesus and he wanted to know what he could do to be saved. Jesus didn't get bogged down in the kind of isolated approach of what he shouldn't do. Jesus didn't say, "Now Nicodemus, you must stop lying." He didn't say, "Nicodemus, you must stop cheating if you are doing that." ... He said something altogether different, because Jesus realized something basic—that if a man will lie, he will steal. And if a man will steal, he will kill. So instead of just getting bogged down in one thing, Jesus looked at him and said, "Nicodemus, you must be born again."
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> He said, in other words, "Your whole structure must be changed." A nation that will keep people in slavery for 244 years will "thingify" them—make them things. Therefore they will exploit them, and poor people generally, economically. And a nation that will exploit economically will have to have foreign investments and everything

[55] King, "Where Do We Go from Here?" in *A Testament of Hope,* 250.

> else, and will have to use its military might to protect them. All of these problems are tied together. What I am saying today is that we must go from this convention and say, "America, you must be born again!"[56]

For Martin Luther King, the end and means were one nonviolent vision. King's goal of an America born again through total restructuring was joined to the means of massive civil disobedience, as he envisioned it happening in the Poor People's Campaign. Martin Luther King knew what lay ahead of him, and he knew what he had to do: "Like anybody I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will."

It was a miracle that a man of John F. Kennedy's background should be born again as a peacemaker. The Fourth Gospel's final words on Lazarus are: "So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Judeans were deserting and were believing in Jesus" (John 12:10-11, my emendations). The great danger John Kennedy posed to the system was that many Americans, even people of power, would on account of him desert a cold war vision and believe in peace.

In his address before the 18th General Assembly of the United Nations, September 20, 1963, John Kennedy said:

> Two years ago I told this body that the United States had proposed, and was willing to sign, a limited test-ban treaty. Today that treaty has been signed. It will not put an end to war. It will not remove basic conflicts. It will not secure freedom for all. But it can be a lever; and Archimedes, in explaining the principles of the lever, was said to have declared to his friends: "Give me a place where I can stand—and I shall move the world."
>
> My fellow inhabitants of this planet: Let us take our stand here in this assembly of nations. And let us see if we, in our own time, can move the world to a just and lasting peace.[57]

The place where John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King stood so as to move the world was in the presence of all nations, before their God, ready to lay down their lives for a just and lasting peace.

No one *has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

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[56] King, "Where Do We Go from Here?" in A *Testament of Hope,* 250-51.
[57] John Kennedy, "The Quest for Peace," in "*Let the Word Go Forth*", 305.