The 3 Greatest Challenges Facing Us in Next Decade
This is It!
Boston University School of Theology
Distinguished Alumnus Panel Presentation
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Introduction

This is it:
The Fire Next Time is set,
slowly burning, quickly spreading.
From a distance, he saw it;
He, the James of Baldwin, prophesized
Like the queer man of God he was:
“No more water, but the fire the next time.”
My Sisters! My Brothers!
Thus says James Baldwin:
No more water as in the days of Noah!
But fire, the fire of cosmic judgement and wrath!

Climate Change

Look! With your own eyes
at the slowly burning fire,
Fed by our use of fossil fuels,
Now burning Planet Earth
As our days are hotter and hotter
And droughts dry out the good earth
Of edible meats of the field
Yes, our planet is slowly burning,
In the rising temperatures of climate change, stifling
while ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica melt
while “glaciers everywhere are melting
and disappearing fast, threatening
The primary source of clean water for millions of” our kind.
With rising sea levels putting at risk
coastal communities around the world
and island nations too.
What shall we do now about rising temperatures,
now burning the earth hotter and hotter
and still hotter than before?
What shall we do now about climate change?
What shall we do now to save,
not our souls, but future generations, even human civilization?
When shall we begin?

Now, is the acceptable time for the doing!
“At an acceptable time I have listened to you;
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.
“See, now is the acceptable time,
See, now is the day of salvation. “
(2 Cor.6:2)

Terror Drones of Assassination

Look! With your own eyes!
See! The targeted weapon of fire soaring in the sky
For someone
said to be very high
Up on the Top Secret Kill-List
Requiring a can’t miss
Drone of assassination!
(See e.g, J. Scahill, The Assassination Complex: Inside
The Government’s Secret Drone Warfare Program)
This is it! A special delivery
From the USA’s President
Now guided by its pilot
From somewhere in Nebraska - in general, at the least
To chosen and spotted targets in the Middle East.
Then from a desk with a video screen,
Some thousands of miles away,
The shooter lets out a celebratory scream:
Score this a clean hit for the American team!
A clean hit for the American team!

Who here mourns for the innocent ones there,
Now dead or maimed by our Drone strike?
How many international laws are mangled by such strikes?
On what basis does the President have the authority
to prosecute and judge, convict and sentence someone,
even a citizen of the United States,
to death by assigning him to the Secret Kill List?
Anwar al Awlaki, assassinated in a Drove strike, was a citizen of the United States of America.

**With drones**

_Can we terrorize the world_

_Hoping to kill the enemy,

_His children, her husband, and the innocents standing by?_

_Can we do this_

_Hoping to avoid the boomer-rang blow of ugliness_

_Riding hard and relentless as evil in vengeful array?_

*(Ted Lockhart, “With Drones We Terrorize,” from *In Our Good Name*, 2016, p 12)*

Is that vengeance visible in dynamite vests?
Ready to self-explode in the soft spots of our living?
Is that vengeance concealing assault rifles behind coats of deception?
Gathering bomb making stuff from the local garden shop
And hardware store?
Are those a few of the asymmetrical weapons of Ugliness
Riding hard and relentless as evil in vengeful array?
Or is it mere hate, or blind hate without a just cause?

No more water, but the fire the next time.
You better run sinner, run!
Run to a hiding place.
In – a that morning of my Lord.
Run to the Devil,
But the devil don’t want you in that day.
Thus says that queer prophet of the Lord of Justice

**Black Lives and The Militarized Police**

From another state of awareness
The Queer Prophet said:
_Nobody Knows My Name._
But others soon said:
Somebody knows the name
Because Black Lives Matter!
In and beyond the line of fire,
the line of police firing and killing
Blacks in “the land of the free”
“And the home of the brave.”

Call out the names of Black lives
Lives that mattered in circles of family and friend
but mattered not in the eyes of police
protecting the status quo of White power and privilege
exploiting the poor and disinherited.

Call out the names of Black Lives that mattered:
Michael Brown, a young man in Ferguson, MO, shot
by police who left his fatally wounded body on the street for hours.
Tamir Rice, a boy playing with a toy gun,
shot by police;
Walter Scott, a middle aged man, chased and
shot in the back by police;
LaQuan McDonald, executed in cold blood on a
street by Chicago police;
Alton Sterling, shot at close range by Baton Rouge police;
Philando Castiles, killed at point blank range in Falcon Heights, MN,
“as he reached for his wallet,
next to his girlfriend,
before the eyes of her child;”

(“The Radicalism of Black Lives Matter,” In These Times, September 2016, p.14)

We must not forget Trayvon Martin, killed by a wanna-be Cracker Jack cop.

Take the Chicago police department:
From 2010 through 2015
a total of 435 people were shot by officers and 92 were killed.
(Vishakha Sonawave, International Business Times, 8/20/16)

Take the Baltimore police department
Now tasering, and shooting and killing
and fondling the genitalia of black males in public
(http://nyt.ms/2b5EuDo)
Then weigh all that on the scales of justice
To see their crime,
The crime of police innocence.
From within *The Fire Next Time*
come these burning, flaming words on
the crime of innocence:
“and this is the crime of which I accuse
my country and countrymen
and for which neither I nor time nor history
will ever forgive them.
that they have destroyed and are destroying
hundreds of thousands of lives
and do not know it
and do not want to know it...
But it is not permissible that the authors of devastation
should also be innocent.
It is the innocence which constitutes the crime.”

Because of such arrogant innocence,
Comes *The Fire Next Time,*
The fire of cosmic judgment!
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