

## ARE YOU AN EARTHFOLK?

by Francis X. Kroncke

To understand why this question is being asked and what it asks, some personal and historical background about the 1970s anti-war trials<sup>1</sup> of the “Minnesota 8” draft board raiders and subsequent imprisonment is required.

### Trial evidence—the Documents of Vatican Council II

One judge decreed, “You gentlemen are worse than the average criminal who attacks the taxpayer’s pocketbook, you strike at the foundation of government itself!” The other judge ruled—after eight days of testimony by historians, theologians, ecologists, Vietnam veterans, anti-war activists (and a stillborn effort by Daniel Ellsberg to release the then yet to be published “Pentagon Papers” when cross-examined)—“Everything you have heard here for the last eight days is irrelevant and immaterial.”

As attorney *pro se* I had argued a Defense of Necessity<sup>2</sup> and had the “Documents of Vatican Council Two” accepted as evidence. Despite the judge’s ruling, the jury returned two hours later (split six-six as they stated to the local press) and asked, “Can we read the Documents of Vatican Council Two?” The patrician and normally pastorally tempered magistrate exploded in prophetic thunder, “You *cannot* read the Documents of Vatican Council Two!”

Within a week, the local archbishop affirmed the rightness of his judicial colleague’s condemnation through a letter to all pastors questioning why they would let me, “a criminal,” ascend their pulpits. “You have no right to preach in a Catholic Church, nor do you have my permission to do such. With cordial best wishes, sincerely yours . . . .”<sup>3</sup> Dangerous stuff, this Vatican Two theology and spirituality. I heard clearly, *Don’t read it, don’t preach it*. These

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<sup>1</sup> United States District Court, District of Minnesota, Fifth Division. United States of America, Plaintiff, vs. Francis Xavier Kroncke and Michael Duane Therriault, Defendants 5-70 Criminal 19. Popularly called the “Minnesota 8.” [www.minnesota8.net/transcripts.htm](http://www.minnesota8.net/transcripts.htm) All trial related quotes are sourced in these transcripts. Three trials under two judges occurred. Only my and Mike’s presented a defense and witnesses.

<sup>2</sup> Francis X. Kroncke, “Resistance as Sacrament,” *Cross Currents*, XXI, no.4 (Fall 1971), 369. *The Documents of Vatican II*, (ed.) Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: America Press, 1966) were Defendant Exhibit 6. See trial transcripts and a 2007 memoir MS, “Outlaw or American Patriot?” <http://www.minnesota8.net/FXKroncke.html> The Defense of Necessity is in the model penal code. It allows that one law may be violated by the obligations of a higher law. For example, stealing a car to take a pregnant woman to a hospital; blowing up a dam and killing a thousand to save a million people, and like arguments. <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Necessity+defense>

<sup>3</sup> Francis X. Kroncke, *Patriotism Means Resistance*, 1972 trial memoir. MS. Minnesota Historical Society archives. At arraignment the prosecutor alleged that I was part of “the international Catholic Conspiracy led by the Berrigans” (Catholic priest brothers) and “financed by (Fidel) Castro.” This justified the initial charge of “sabotage of the national defense” and a \$50,000 bail.

ceremonially robed men were the authorities ordained by Heaven and Earth, who was I not to accept myself as felon and heretic?

A five year sentence, fourteen months served. Sitting inside the barred cage, playing with the handcuffs and leg chains, watching the armed guards—“irrelevant and immaterial” me decamped from and forsook Church and State. For the next ten years I meandered throughout a dark night of the soul domain<sup>4</sup>.

### **Trial witness—“Semper fi!”**

The Documents were dead-weight in my hands until their central message was brazenly thrown back at me by a post-traumatically stressed battle-scarred veteran.

It was January 1970 and, as a young pacifistic Roman Catholic lay theologian, I was fulfilling my military obligation by completing two years of Alternative Service<sup>5</sup>. Curiously, my draft board had approved a position as a staff member at the University of Minnesota’s Newman Center where I continued to teach and preach. One day, a Vietnam veteran (and later trial witness) brought the battlefield into my office. As a Marine he had obediently “searched and destroyed” villages, property and people. Once home, he realized that what he had really done was search and destroy his own home, killed his own family.

It socked it to my head.  
It wasn’t a hootch, it was a home.  
It wasn’t a gook, it was a person.

I listened to his heartfelt words and all at once the messages that Vatican Two offered “to all men and nations” found their clearest expression in the simplicity of: “hootch, home...gook, person.” Up to this moment, I had heard Vatican II claim<sup>6</sup> that, “The holy People of God shares also in Christ’s prophetic office.” Read its concerns about “Building up the international community.” Took to heart its warnings about the apocalyptic perils of “Total War” and the need to work towards “The avoidance of war” and “Curbing the savagery of war.” I accepted that “the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity.” Quite honestly, I was cowed intellectually and theologically by its challenging call for “The total banning of war, and international action for avoiding war.” But most of all, I read and re-read, parsed and pondered,

It is our clear duty, then, to strain every muscle as we work  
for the time when all war can be completely outlawed  
by international consent.

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<sup>4</sup> Francis X. Kroncke, “Prison, Bottoming Out, Mother,” *Cross Currents*, XXVIII, no. 1 (Spring 1988), 53. Here, the prison discipline is described as a *process of patriarchal feminization*. Also, <http://www.minnesota8.net/Writings-Kroncke.htm>

<sup>5</sup> “Alternative Service” consists of two years at an approved job in lieu of a regular military assignment.

“Conscientious Objector” is a legal deferment. A “CO” is *not* a draft resister. <http://www.sss.gov/FSconsobj.htm>

<sup>6</sup> All quotes from *The Documents of Vatican II*, (ed.) Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: America Press, 1966).

I heard, I read, I contemplated... but I did *not* put myself at risk, strained neither my political, moral or spiritual muscle. It took a battle-scarred Marine to wake me up and clarify my obligation to act. He said—observing I am sure my totally stunned, somewhat paralyzed reaction to his gut-wrenching, hyper-violent saga—“What are you going to do?” *Do?* I thought that I was doing it—completing my Alternative Service and eagerly awaiting a return to graduate theological studies. “I’ve heard you preach.” *Another indictment!* “We’ve got to stop the story from being told. We have to shut the system down.”

### **The 8<sup>th</sup> holy sacrament**

Now what's Mr. Kroncke's argument? He says, I... did as you charge but I committed no crime. I administered a sacrament. ... Seven sacraments are not enough! To Baptism and Confirmation and the Eucharist and Penance and Holy Orders and Matrimony and Extreme Unction we add the EIGHTH SACRAMENT of the Roman Catholic Church—*ripping off draft boards!* (Thorwald Anderson, District Attorney, prosecutor)

The Sixties was a paper-based world; no personal computers. As I—and others in the “Beaver 55” and the “Minnesota 8” actions<sup>7</sup>—destroyed a draft card, a young man disappeared from the Selective Service System (SSS). It gifted him with a decisive moment to reconsider whether he wanted to kill. If so, he would have to consciously commit to re-registering. At trial, as a hostile witness, the State director of Selective service testified that the raids had crippled his ability to fulfill his quota in Minnesota for a full year. Even today, men approach and thank me for keeping them out of Vietnam.

“Strain every muscle”... My heart was not just troubled by the immorality of the SSS and the Vietnam war, more to the point, it was the spiritual vision and imagination that Vatican Two was professing that I struggled to witness to and make manifest. Suffice it to say, for me, raiding draft boards and destroying draft cards—as symbols and signs—was a spiritual experience, a holy moment. Truly, it was the 8<sup>th</sup> sacrament.

### **Fast forward, 2008, “Peace Crimes”**

If you live long enough you can tell your sons, “They spray-painted signs with “Kill the Minnesota 8!” on the street corners and on the walls surrounding campus.” Then you might also invite them to a play about “Peace Crimes: the *Minnesota 8* vs. the war.”<sup>8</sup> I did so in 2008.

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<sup>7</sup> I was part of the February 1970 “Beaver 55” raids on the post offices in Hennepin County (Minneapolis) and Ramsey County (St. Paul). Tens of thousands of files in over fifty centralized draft boards were destroyed. No one was ever arrested. “Minnesota 8” raids occurred July 1970. FBI agents were waiting in ambush at three boards. Two other boards were hit and no one ever arrested.

<sup>8</sup> “Peace Crimes: the *Minnesota 8* vs. the war,” written by Doris Baizley, was commissioned by the History Theatre (St. Paul, MN) and the Playwright Center and co-produced with the University of Minnesota’s Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. <http://www.minnesota8.net/peacecrimes.htm>

Unfortunately, “Peace Crimes” was highly relevant because young campus activists were facing most of same issues about war and violence as had we Sixties radicals. Starting in 2005, to promote the play, an educational project, “Peace and War in the Heartland,” <http://www.pwh-mn.org/> toured regional campuses to connect the dots from the Sixties to today’s wars. Not surprisingly, the social justice movement on campus had dramatically changed.

Simply, in the Sixties there were mainly two social justice issues: civil rights and war resistance. In stark contrast, 2005’s activist students were involved in more social justice causes than one could count. War and racism were still there but now a myriad of "movements" vied for the activist's attention and time. I was—and remain—profoundly moved by the passionate commitments of today's youth for social justice and for the healing of the planet.

As I listened to their concerns, I realized that a thematic pattern of ideas and images was emerging. They valued and honored the Earth in every way. They cared for people, of course, but saw that humans and the Earth were a single living organism. I realized that they were the heartfelt conscience and consciousness of the Living Earth. When I shared with them that, “It wasn’t a hootch, it was a home. It wasn’t a gook, it was a person,” *they got it*. I didn’t have to argue the vision. I didn’t have to invoke sacred scripture or any philosophy to morally sway them. They simply got the connection...they were “Earthfolk.”

Now, I am an old guy. I was not only their grandfather but my white-hair and aging body truly made some of them consider me an Ancient One—an ambulatory, peripatetic historical footnote. Enthralled—*Challenged!*—by their passionate commitments, I wanted to contribute, to play a part in support of their efforts. Being a white-hair, I have a robust story. On one hand, it might make for an interesting obituary column, but I thought I’d tried to wring some juice out of all my ripeness. The word "Earthfolk" had come to me decades before, but only now did it begin to reveal its vision and imagination. So, I began writing <http://www.earthfolk.net>

There are three pathways. Pathway A—*Seeker* simply presents how Earthfolk feel, think and act. Explanatory notes are included when necessary. On Pathway B—*Seer*, the more detailed explanations of why, when and how, including the historical roots and cultural and theological analyses, of Earthfolk are presented. A few practices and rituals are described. On Pathway C—*Belover*, the rituals of Earthfolk’s “sensual preciousness” are presented.

## II

Earthfolk invite you to explore the pathways that lead towards living peacefully and comfortably at-home on the Living Earth. The Earthfolk vision sees you as a precious other, as one who is beloved. <http://www.earthfolk.net> introduces you to the Earthfolk vision, and invites you to develop ways of making yourself present to others and engage them as precious beloveds.

The Earthfolk vision and practice is a way of healing, becoming whole and making precious one's self, others and the Living Earth. Earthfolk imagine the everlasting Living Earth as forever

hearth and home. The Living Earth is us. We are lively manifestations, presences of the Living Earth. We are its consciousness, its imagining: the Living Earth's passion. The Living Earth is hearth and we the flaming breath of fire.

Why and how can Earthfolk invite you to live peacefully and comfortably at-home on the Living Earth if we live in the Nuclear Age?

Earthfolk ponder the meaning of the awesome changes that have been occurring since the Nuclear Age opened. Facts: United States has 7,200 nuclear warheads. Russia over 6,000 nuclear warheads. Twenty-five countries have ballistic missiles. There are seven self-declared nuclear weapon states: the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, India, and Pakistan.

On the first day of the Nuclear Age—August 6, 1945—the Atomic Bomb was dropped and for the first time ever human beings were vaporized. *Poof!* After the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, investigators saw the blackened "nuked" images of people on walls. "...in Hiroshima {people} were vaporized and literally turned into shadows."<sup>9</sup>

Disturbing questions must be asked and explored:

- Is the whole human race suffering from Atomic Bomb post-traumatic stress disorder?
- Why have we been globally engaged in endless warring?
- Why has every major global economy become militarized?
- Why is someone somewhere always being called "enemy"?

Did our collective human psyche terrorize and traumatize itself on August 6, 1945? Are we doomed to nuclear self-annihilation? Is there no hope for world peace? Is all lost?

Equally key to the emergence of the Earthfolk vision of living peacefully and comfortably at-home on the Living Earth is what occurred on December 24, 1968 when "Earthrise"<sup>10</sup>—the first picture of Earth from outer space—was snapped by the Apollo 8 astronauts. The image startled many as if from a deep sleep, an ancient slumber. It stirred the core depth of our imaginations and set our hearts beating. Instinctively we uttered a primal, "Mother!" Never before had any human ever seen this picture of our home—Spaceship Earth, The Blue Marble, and Starship Earth.)

Imaginatively we were happily present at home. We knew ourselves as one Family. We felt ourselves embraced as beloveds within an Earth-wide parental presence intimately precious. We delighted in being Earthfolk.

Yet Earthfolk were not then a "we" in the sense of being a conscious and organized group. Rather in the twenty-three years between August 6th and December 24th, the movement to

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<sup>9</sup> "Shadows of Hiroshima," CBS digital archives.

[http://archives.cbc.ca/war\\_conflict/second\\_world\\_war/topics/1794-12165/](http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/second_world_war/topics/1794-12165/)

<sup>10</sup> Earthrise photo at [http://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image\\_feature\\_102.html](http://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image_feature_102.html)

militarize outer space dominated global consciousness and exerted a paralyzing grip on the political agendas of the major powers. The endless war continued to be waged as a "Cold War."

Deep down, our collective global human psyche and communal heart were steeped in and paralyzed by a dreadful fear—of the other we called enemy, and of ourselves—we who had unleashed a power we could not control, that made everyone on Earth and the Earth itself an enemy and victim of nuclear warfare.

In truth, the Apollo astronauts were on a military expedition and their photographing the Earth was part of a celestial mapping task. They sought to determine how a ring of armed nuclear satellites could be put in orbit around the Earth. This was in response to President John F. Kennedy's belief that, "Control of space will be decided in the next decade. If the Soviets control space, they can control Earth, as in the past centuries the nations that controlled the seas dominated the continents."<sup>11</sup>

August 6, 1945 and December 24, 1968 are bookends to the start of the "movement to militarized outer space." Within the span of those twenty-three years, the Nuclear Age opened and the militarization of the core institutions of the dominant global societies took root and developed. During this same timeframe, the Earthfolk movement began to form as a counter-movement. The seeds of the Earthfolk vision were planted by a range of anti-militarization and social justice movements.

Throughout history “movements” have arisen that have had social, cultural and spiritual impact but little hard and clear organizational definition. In this light, Earthfolk’s “we” is a movement pronoun. It is a we whose identity is continually forming. It is a catalytic we, not an authoritative one.

Dissenting views were publicly aired by various “movements,” the:

- nonviolent movement,
- civil rights movement,
- anti-war movement,
- women’s movement,
- gay rights movement,
- Native American movement,
- Green movement, among others.

The Earthfolk vision of living peacefully and comfortably at-home on the Living Earth is an initial expression of a “movement” that *arose from within* these several movements.

The main change that seeded the Earthfolk vision was that overtime the various counter-movements each developed a core theme or themes that wove through the other counter-

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<sup>11</sup> Antill, P. (12 January 2001), *The Space Race*, [http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/concepts\\_spacerace.html](http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/concepts_spacerace.html)

movements. Earthfolk identify, describe, analyze and interpret four common themes that these counter-movements opposed and worked to change.

- 1) Confronting the Nuclear Age's deep cultural emotion of dreadful fear by living in a nonviolent way that affirmed the preciousness of all human beings and life forms.
- 2) Refusing to identify and name the Other as enemy, instead embracing the Other as family.
- 3) Affirming and celebrating Earth as the Living presence of the Mother Goddess and/or the feminine, and bringing forth a life-affirming and loving presence of the Father God and/or a new masculine. Living at-home on Earth within the embrace of our loving Parents.
- 4) Rejecting the claimed "inevitability" of the self-fulfilling apocalyptic story of self-annihilation, and a commitment to simple living and building the Earth as one home for the one family of all people.

The Earthfolk website explores these four common themes—both negatives and positives—and describes the why and how of the Earthfolk vision that seeks to give a robust expression to the inspiring desire by so many to “live as if I am no one’s enemy” and so live peacefully and comfortably at-home here on the Living Earth.

### III

Two iconic images remain always before us: the Mushroom Cloud and the militarized Starship Earth. They bracket the foreboding vision of the Dark Age that began on August 6, 1945. Ominously, the blazing, super-brilliant brightness of the Mushroom Cloud actually cloaked the Earth in a shroud of spiritual darkness.

"Spiritual darkness?" Most in my generation were raised terrified but inspired by the atomic bomb. It evidenced ultimate human power—nuclear scientists molded with the atomic building blocks of life, itself! We then accepted that the atom bomb indicated that humankind was "progressing," shedding ever more light on the mysteries of life. For many the discovery and use of nuclear energy marked an evolutionary milestone.

Few of us ever heard anyone talk about the bomb issuing in an age of darkness. But now we realize how deeply and profoundly nuclear war altered the human and spiritual landscape. Whereas pre-bomb modern war weaponry blew people to bits, a nuclear bomb actually vaporized a person—*Poof!* It destroyed every semblance, whiff, scent, breath, sound, etc., of a person—effecting *intimate* destruction.

What dark vision enabled a cadre of the brightest minds on the planet to create a bomb that so disrespects and demeans you that you are to be obliterated, with every molecule and atom blasted apart?

Earthfolk now see the Mushroom Cloud and the militarized Starship Earth as icons of intimate destruction. Each anchors a horrifying vision which redefined what "intimacy" means. The

question raised is—"What is it that they find so powerful in your intimate presence that they assembled their brightest minds and spent untold millions of dollars so that your intimacy could be atomized? That you are now their *Intimate Enemy*?"

In one fell swoop of the nuclear *Poof!* all humans began to eye one another as an Intimate Enemy, and our collective and communal heart started forever beating to the cadence of dreadful fear—as we all now remain forever threatened with instant death through nuclear annihilation.

“Intimate Enemy” is a central Earthfolk insight. It expresses not only the objective of the nuclear war visionaries, but also the core values of the dominant spiritual vision that rules the world.

This spiritual vision is the “Warrior's Quest.” Its dark vision frames and by stark contrast casts light upon our Earthfolk vision. Each is a vision of intimacy. The Warrior's Quest envisions other people—you—as Intimate Enemy. Earthfolk's living peacefully at-home on Earth vision sees others—you—as precious and beloved.

Warrior's Quest describes a vision and a set of spiritual practices. Earthfolk awoke at a moment of transformation—which typically involves a break-down and a breakthrough. All of a sudden, we clearly saw how we had been raised, educated and spiritually advised to live according to this Warrior's Quest vision and spiritual practices.

We were forced to confront how each of us had pledged allegiance and bowed our heads and bent our knees in adoration of its god and faith. It was a moment of life-changing challenge where we had to acknowledge and take responsibility for how we had lived out in our lives this Warrior's Quest.

The Warrior's Quest imagination is deeply embedded in the individual and communal psyche of most people. Its vision has come to be the way through which almost every religious, theological or spiritual tradition (East and West) has interpreted and molded itself.

The Warrior's Quest vision:

- honors the male deity(ies) over the female(s)
- presents male energy as the creating life force or the superior force
  - that uses subordinated and submissive feminine energy to achieve its objectives

The Warrior Quester:

- seeks to achieve dominion and dominance over the Earth and all natural forces
- sees himself and his people as chosen and
  - other people as an Intimate Enemy to be feared and conquered
- lives in dread-filled fear of his god, other people, or the meaninglessness of life itself
- strives to escape his wretched earthly existence often
  - seeking to obtain fulfillment with his deity in an afterlife paradise
  - through being saved or achieving enlightenment or evolving into a higher state of ultra-human supra-being or super-being

The Warrior Quest practices include:

- using violence as the first resort to resolve relational and relationship issues
- proclaiming himself as Good and his enemy as Evil
- never acknowledging his dark side or inner shadow
- use of imagery and language to make his enemy a sub-human
- subordinating and suppressing—even annihilating—feminine ways: visions, powers, truth, values and practices
- rituals that seek to redeem his fallen or lesser self or
  - release him from the bondage of his earthly existence
  - through mastery over and often suppression of all his bodily and human senses
  - shedding blood as sacrificial offering or proof of faithfulness

The Warrior's Quest story:

- is an ongoing saga of Endless Warring
- driven by a passionate sexual violence
- that anticipates and seeks an End-of-Time cataclysm wherein
- the Earth is destroyed and all life annihilated or
  - his male deity returns to fashion a New Earth or
  - all human life evolves into a higher state of ultra-human supra-being or super-being

In the Earthfolk vision of living peacefully and comfortably at-home on the Living Earth

- the Earth is honored as an eternal living presence—the Living Earth
- the Living Earth's life-force is made manifest through female and male coupling in intimacy
- the Living Earth is Mother and once Her nurturing presence is felt so is the presence of Him, Father—our nurturing Living Earth parents
- within the nurturing embrace of our Living Earth parents is how human preciousness is discerned and deeply heartfelt
- every person is someone's child born into family
  - able to parent other children and so make manifest
  - the one and precious family that has always been and is eternal—the Forever-Family
- male and female embracing or coupling in respectful intimacy is an act of sensual preciousness that
  - makes present the fullness of the individual as precious and beloved
  - makes manifest the eternal character of life as the Forever-Family is made present
- through living as Forever-Family makes present the fuller communal whole and preciousness that expresses itself through society and culture

Humans are

- living manifestations of the Living Earth's passionate fire
  - the Living Earth's consciousness and conscience
  - the Living Earth's imagining presences and so co-creators of the everyday world

Earthfolk

- seek to live in ecstatic harmony with the beauty and truth of all living presences making no distinction between “plant,” “animal” and “human” beings
- behold every person as a precious beloved
- strive to live peacefully and comfortably at home with all the Living Earth’s manifestations—organic and inorganic
- understand spiritual, theological and religious imagery and language to be
  - a way of imagining how to honor and make present
  - male and female wholing, healing and precious powers
- experience the fullness of being beloved in moments of
  - respectful intimacy shared equally by a coupled female and male

#### Earthfolk practices include

- “living as if I am no one’s enemy”
- using nonviolence as the first and last resort to resolve relational and relationship issues
  - understanding nonviolence as a way of creatively channeling and
  - making whole and precious the violent imagination and actions
- accepting that others will name her/him as enemy but
  - always stating to the other that he/she does not honor or accept that name
- imagining everyone as beloved and seeking to respectfully embrace them to make present and share in the beauty and bountifulness of his/her preciousness
- recognizing evil imaginings and actions and immediately and actively resisting both
  - while always proclaiming all involved as precious beloveds
- actively and consciously exploring their own dark side or inner shadow
- using imagery and language that expresses another’s preciousness and honors her/him as a beloved
- rituals that enable preciousness to arise within the embrace of coupled beloveds where every human sense is honored as a way of enabling a couple to make present their preciousness and live a sensually precious life

#### The Earthfolk story

- is an ongoing saga of humans manifesting a life of living peacefully and comfortably at-home on the Living Earth
  - that is driven by a robust passion for respectful intimacy
  - that seeks and delights in embracing the Other
  - that practices “living as if I am no one’s enemy”
    - so that the Living Earth manifests its wholeness and preciousness.

#### Within the nurturing embrace of our Living Earth Mother and Father

- we become fully human as we are beheld and as
- we behold others as beloveds
  - delighting in sharing our mutual preciousness and
  - so making manifest the healing that makes us eternally whole as the Forever-Family
  - so living peacefully and comfortably at-home on the Living Earth

“Are you an Earthfolk?” Explore <http://www.earthfolk.net> and determine your answer.

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