

StraitWay



January 2002

Volume 4 Issue 1

Noah Taught His Family

Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5), who did much of his teaching at home. Consequently, "In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Jepheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark" (Gen. 7:13). Indeed, this was a great day, for Noah saved his family. Others have not been so successful. Judges 2:10 says, "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel."

It is disturbing when children of faithful brethren never obey the gospel or, as soon as they are away from home they forsake the Lord and His church. I, too, am a parent who desires that my children love and serve God all their lives. If they forsake the Lord, I want it to be in spite of me, not because of me (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; Matthew 16:26).

Timothy was a young man who was a second or third generation Christian. He was one of "unfeigned faith...which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice..." (2 Timothy 1:5). His mother and grandmother taught him the Scriptures from the time that he was a "babe", that he might become "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). Indeed, one's salvation is an individual choice. A person will be converted to Christ when he is personally convicted of his sins and obeys the gospel from the heart. However, I am persuaded that one reason why we may lose our young people to the world is because parents are failing in their responsibility to consistently train unto godliness "FROM A BABE."

The apostle Paul, who considered himself Timothy's spiritual father, gave him specific instructions and warnings to prevent him from casting aside his faith: 1) **Be godly** (1 Tim. 4:7-8), devout and sincere in his faith rather than just going through the motions. 2) **Trust in God** (1 Tim. 4:10). 3) Be a **faithful** example to others in all areas of his life (1 Tim. 4:12). 4) Be **completely dedicated** in his faith, as opposed to half-hearted service (1 Tim. 4:13-15). 5) **Take heed** to himself and his doctrine, i.e. practice what you believe and preach (1 Tim. 4:16). 6) **Flee sin** and follow after righteousness (1 Tim. 6:11). 7) **Keep the commandments** until the day of the Lord (1 Tim. 6:14). 8) **Be not ashamed** of his faith, nor the gospel; be bold (2 Tim. 1:8,11-14). 9) **Be diligent** (2 Tim. 2:15).

Our children today need to hear and give heed to these things. There is real danger of one's faith not being genuine. It is possible for our children to believe certain things just because Mom and Dad believes them, instead of having individual conviction that must be "learned" of God (John 6:44-45) by knowledge of the Scriptures. Conviction is not inherited! True faith comes by the individual hearing and believing (Rom. 10:17). Faithfulness is individual. "...The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20). The Bible clearly teaches that one can fall from grace, no matter how good an environment he was reared in (Gal. 5:4; 1 Cor. 10:12). Many fail to personally study God's Word for themselves. Christians, from the beginning, must "long for the spiritual milk..." (1 Peter 2:2), so they may grow in faith. First generation Christians hunger and thirst to obtain Bible knowledge; but, some who are "raised in the church" may think they already "know" all they need to without personal study. Parents, let us never become lax in providing the proper spiritual training (Eph. 6:1-4). Taking my children to worship, as important as that is, is no substitute for providing a godly atmosphere in the home with regular Bible study coupled with a good example. The "do as I say, not as I do" approach does not work!

Let us examine ourselves by the standard of God's word, both parents and children (2 Cor. 13:5), and serve God out of personal conviction, continuing in spiritual growth (2 Peter 1:5-10).

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Ultra-Liberalism In Churches of Christ

I would like to thank Glenn Melton for asking me to write a series of articles for StraitWay in 2002. I have chosen as my topic "Ultra-Liberalism In Churches of Christ" In this series I intend to look at the ultra-liberalism that is tearing apart liberal/institutional churches.

Several years ago I was given an article by Robert R. Taylor, Jr. of Ripley, TN. The article was reprinted in a church bulletin, *East Hill News*, August 16, 1992 (I do not know brother Taylor, neither do I know which church publishes the *East Hill News*). The title of the article asks, "Is There A New Liberalism?" Taylor lists fifteen items that he considers proof that there is a new liberalism in the church:

1. "Rewriting God's laws of marriage, divorce and remarriage..."
2. "Turning God's church away from its spiritual mission into recreational outlets and entertainment activities."
3. Filling sermons (???) with anything and everything except the Bible..."
4. "Advocating a direct leading of the Holy Spirit"
5. "Insisting that Holy Spirit baptism and charismatic gifts are still available..."
6. "Calling sectarian the sound veterans of the faith fought sectarianism all their valiant days."
7. "Insisting that there are...sincere Christians scattered among the denominations."
8. Tampering with God's avowed purpose of baptism..."
9. "Moving us closer and closer to the mainstream of popular Protestantism."
10. "Making amazing apologies to Christian Church preachers for our being wrong in treating the mechanical instrument issue as basically a matter of their lacking respect for Bible authority..."
11. "Relative to the music issue some of our brethren are telling Christian Church preachers that we are the weak brethren and they...are in reality the stronger brethren."
12. "A refusal to preach anything negative or that breaths the spirit of controversy."
13. "A refusal to see and heed the dangers of Crossroads and its mini cultic characteristics."
14. "That there is grace and grace only and no law at all in Christianity."
15. "A growing tolerance for anything that calls itself a Bible." (Taylor points out they prefer the NIV and the RSV).

From his article, I believe it would be safe to assume that Taylor is what some are now calling a "conservative/liberal." He does not go along with what I consider ultra-liberalism, but he would still be in favor of the church support of some human institutions.

To Taylor's list I would add:

16. The rejection of the Bible as the complete and final revelation of God's will.
17. The idea that man is not bound by any law, especially written laws.
18. Leadership roles in the worship service should be extended to include women.
19. The worship service is changed to include songs during the Lord's Supper and the responsive reading of Scripture, involving women speaking in the worship assembly.

Why do conservative/non-institutional brethren need to be concerned about the trouble in liberal churches? Because, brethren, it is coming our way. At least thirteen of the above nineteen items were involved in the recent split of a conservative East Texas church. Fortunately, the sound brethren were in the majority and were able to hold onto the building. That is not always the case. Next month: **How Ultra-Liberalism Comes Into A Congregation**

Identity of A Church of Christ

Introduction

I look forward to spending the next year with you discussing things that I consider important to the saints of God. I am deeply humbled by the request to write on this subject, and have confidence that many others have the ability to present these thoughts with more clarity and do a better job. But I will do my best to speak things clearly and concisely so that I may impart my understanding of the mysteries of Christ (paraphrasing Paul in Eph 3:4).

I also want to challenge your thinking by asking you to put away previous prejudice and examine these things as if you came across them for the very first time. Perhaps you will view these things in a different light and have cause to examine yourself as instructed in 2 Corinthians 13:5. Do not be afraid to view something in a different light, for perhaps you might find your current reasons and motives to be wrong. It is possible because, none of us are perfect, even though we try to be. Please approach this subject with honest hearts.

There are trends among the brotherhood of Christ that are a matter of concern for a few while many of the trends are of little consequence to most of the church today. Our relationship and fellowship with God is based upon the truth (John 17:17). We find more and more worldliness and ignorance on the part of the membership than in times past. We appear to be moving in the wrong direction.

In Hosea 4:6 God said "**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...**"

It appears that more and more church leaders are tolerating such lack of knowledge. Many elders no longer rule as they should (1 Peter 5:3), and many preachers have failed to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Even the saints in the pews do not show a care and concern for others as they are instructed so often in the scriptures.

Our age of political correctness and democracy have infiltrated the church along with the worldliness so evident in the lives of many members. In the church, we have the reputation of being right and pure, and being the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim 3:15).

Sometimes we separate ourselves from those who do not hold the same standards and we form our own sort of denomination. Now many of you are extremely upset that I would use such a word to describe the brotherhood because we have denied it as long as I can remember. As we look, we see that we are unique and different from those other groups who claim to be a church of the Lord, yet we know better. We know that they are wrong and we are right, and we don't want to be viewed as just another denomination.

Strangely though, we are the only ones who feel that way. For the rest of the world views us as another denomination. Where we are to be separate and different is in our faith, doctrine, and practice. We know, without reservation, that the Lord's church is one and only one (Ephesians 4:4). It is pure and holy and acceptable to God. As far as we know, none of the others are.

Whenever we try to explain to others in the world the difference between us, our knowledge shows forth. We know our knowledge is based on our faith, the rest of the world perceives arrogance on our part (1 Corinthians 8:1). Wishing to avoid the stigma of being arrogant, we take extraordinary measures to hide our arrogance, and by doing so, we create our own kind of unique denomination. Watch next month for the explanation. Until then, May the Lord richly bless you and keep you.

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Preparing Sermons

This series will be an effort to assist preachers (especially younger men) to make preparation to speak before an audience. I am not a scholar or a professor, but in 49 years of preaching I have learned a few things about sermon preparation, and am glad to suggest them to others who stand in the pulpit.

It is understood that prior to sermon preparation there must be self preparation. Paul told Timothy to take heed to himself and to the doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16). Note that only the one whose life is in order has the right to teach others, so we first look closely at self. Next we make certain the doctrine we teach is pure truth. Then we begin with a sense of obligation to God, to the Gospel, and to our hearers. The preacher will be seen and heard, but we try to "hide ourselves behind the cross" so that people will go away talking more about the wonderful Savior than about the wonderful preacher. In the matter of preparing self numerous passages stay close to our minds. A few are 1 Cor. 6:18; 10:31; Rom. 12:1-3, 9-10; 13:8; 1 Tim. 5:1-2,22; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Tit. 2:11-15. Many such verses will be memorized and lived.

The word "evangelist" is used primarily in the New Testament in reference to those inspired men who originally announced the Gospel. The Gospel is now confirmed and written. So a modern teacher ("evangelist" if you wish) is to teach that truth and nothing else - Gal. 1:8-9; Rev. 22:18-19. The truth is powerful (Heb. 4:12) and it does not require any propping up by human power. There is no place in the pulpit for comedians or actors, and no need for long-winded intellectuals. Let's just "preach the Word!"

Since we are not inspired we have to study, and study can be hard work. It takes hours of prayerful concentration. At the center of the study is to be the Word of God. We must know the Truth, believe it without question, love it without reservation, live it without deceitfulness, and teach it without apology. Someone said "read it through, write it down, pray it in, work it out, and pass it on." Perhaps Paul summed that up in 2 Cor. 4:13 when he quoted Psa 116:10 ("I believed, therefore have I spoken").

We are dying men who are speaking to dying people, and our work is deadly serious. We cannot be satisfied with less than the best we can do on sermon preparation and presentation. For each man there is the involvement of his individual personality and style. The best improvement of each one's capabilities is found by developing his own strength, not by imitating someone else. Listen to good men and follow good advice, but be natural and be your own man.

As we proceed we will look at different types of sermons and how to develop them. Some mention will be made of available tools and the way to use them effectively. Keep in mind that we are not trying to make a name for self or develop a big reputation. If you have great inherent ability, you will attract attention and become widely known, but that is secondary -- the first order of importance is to work for the glory of the Father and the honor of the Savior. The result will be the salvation of souls. Keep those objectives in mind and try to reach them without being overly long-winded. As a young preacher I was told "stand up to be seen, speak out to be heard, and sit down to be appreciated." Or, "stand up, speak up, and shut up." One older preacher said "take a long text and don't say much about it." There may be occasions when a sermon needs to be longer than usual, but just be sure to quit when you get through.

Topical sermons can be scriptural and interesting. Some topics are big and complex, and more than one sermon may be needed to cover the field. Some brethren tend to weary if it is "stretched out too long" (in their view), so it is good to avoid wandering from the subject and thereby making the lessons or the series drag out. Expository sermons may be the most difficult to prepare, but plain teaching right out of the Book, following the inspired author step by step is valuable to the hearer. You will find great satisfaction in this kind of study. When you have engaged the audience in serious exegesis of a paragraph or a chapter you will be encouraged by their obvious interest, and you will be glad you made your best effort to heed Paul's instruction to a young preacher: "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2).

Humanism, Satanism, And The New Age Movement

An Introduction

Though on the surface, these three subjects may seem as though they are not at all related, upon further investigation we find great similarity among them. In fact, they are as it were, different sides of the same coin. Whereas the *Humanist* says, “Man has replaced God,” the *Satanist* (for our purposes, we will include the wiccans in this category as well, though they do not believe in a literal devil) believes man can control god, while the *New Ager* (ala Shirley McClain, John Denver, Human Potential Movement, etc), proclaims that man can become god or is already a god. All of this stems from the old lie with which Satan deceived grandmother Eve in the Garden of Eden saying “ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and *ye shall be as gods*, knowing good and evil.” (Gen 3:5) Herein is the temptation of the “vain pride of life” of 1Jhn 2:16. They are all religions of self-worship, with “self actualization” as the new mantra. A religion where the “self” has become the replacement of the soul, and the therapist couch as the pew.

Satanism and the New Age Movement are simply Humanism gone to seed, with a slightly religious flair to it. Try as they might, man is still essentially a worshipping being and has this innate desire and need to worship that must be fulfilled, for, “He hath set eternity in their hearts” (Eccl 3:11, ASV). Man realizes he cannot live in a spiritual vacuum, so Satanism and New Age are feeble attempts to have one’s cake and eat it too. In this way, man can both be the Supreme Being and still worship a god (self) at the same time. These three philosophies then form a sort of “occultic pie”, served straight from the ovens of humanism when half-baked and served up regularly in your community and fresh to your children. Ingredients include a hint of wealth and power with *self* in the center of it all.

In this series, we want to show just how entrenched these values and philosophies have become in our society. In our public schools and colleges, self help books, sales and personal improvement seminars, etc. it has become commonplace. These views are no longer confined to the fringe of society, but rather have become the posh and accepted trends from Hollywood to Main Street. The “preachers” of these faiths have moved from beads and tie-dye to three-piece suits.

It is as though we went to sleep and woke up in a strange and foreign world. None of this is new, however. Most every society, shortly before their downfall, has promoted these “values”, from France to Russia. By their very nature, these are self-destructive, as sin is always. Paul affirmed such by saying, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (Gal 6:7).

The poet, Walt Whitman, in his “Song of Myself” said in the very first line “I celebrate myself.” This is the pervasive thought of today even as Whitney Houston sang, “Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all.” Contrast this mentality with Jesus statement, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). These views all promote *selfishness*, whereas the Bible teaches *selflessness*. Do we see this kind of lifestyle for what it really is? Mindless hedonism? The only real life one can live is when we learn to die first to self and then to live for something greater than self. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will [my] Father honour” (John 12:24-26).

When we see ourselves as souls created in the image of God, then we see our self in relation to God. When we see ourselves as simply self, then we see ourselves *only* in relation to self... and we collapse under our own weight. We implode under our own burdens. To say, as “ol’ Blue Eyes” did, “I did it my way” is truly to commit spiritual suicide.

Premillennialism

The Land Promise

One of the most popular and widespread doctrines in the religious world today is the one that is referred to as Premillennialism or as it is referred to sometimes as Dispensationalism. Its popularity may be seen in a recent book which deals with one phase of the doctrine. On the dust jacket of this book it is said that 40,000,000 copies have been sold. Although there are many sides to the doctrine, basically it claims that between the second coming of Christ and the end of the world there will be a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth in Jerusalem. Since that period has not occurred yet we are living in the time before it does, thus premillennial. The word millennial comes from Latin and means one thousand, thus the idea of premillennialism. Involved in this is the idea that God promised to Abraham, and especially his descendants (the Jews) the land of Canaan (Palestine). It is further claimed that this promise has never been completely fulfilled and that it will be sometime in the future.

Let us consider the promises to Abraham. Basically there are three: (1) Land, (2) A nation of numerous descendants, (3) Spiritual or the seed promise. The promise of land is seen in Genesis 12. This chapter tells of God's call for Abraham to leave his country and kinsmen and go to the land that God would show him. In obedience to this, Abraham came into the land of Canaan (12:5). Here God said to Abraham, "unto thy seed will I give this land." (12:7). Later the promise was extended in Genesis 15:18ff where God said to Abram, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the River of Egypt unto the great river, the River Euphrates." The second part of the promise, numerous descendants, is found in 13:16 where God said to Abraham, "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" and "as the stars of heaven" (15:5). The "spiritual" seed promise is found in 11:18, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou has obeyed my voice." These are very important. In fact, the rest of the Bible grows out of these promises; the Old Testament from the first two and the New Testament from the third one.

It is claimed that these promises have never been fulfilled, but this is a false claim. A fulfillment of the promise of the land can be seen in the Israelites entering into the land of Canaan following the exodus from Egypt and the forty years in the wilderness. In Joshua 1:4-6 God assured the Israelites that He would give them "the land which I swore to their fathers to give them." Following their entrance into the land, the Bible says, "So Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And Jehovah gave them rest round about, according to all that He swore unto their fathers; and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not aught of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel, all came to pass." (Joshua 21:43-45)

Furthermore, it can be seen that later the "extended land promise" of Genesis 15:18ff was fulfilled during the days of Solomon. Here in 1 Kings 4:21, "Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River unto the land of the Philistines and unto the border of Egypt: they brought tribute, and served Solomon all the days of his life." Also see Verse 24.

Then in Nehemiah 9:7ff there is a brief, concise history of God's dealing with Israel. In Verses 7-8 the following statement is found, "Thou art Jehovah, the God who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham, and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite, and the Girgashite, to give it unto his seed, AND HAS PERFORMED THY WORDS FOR THOU ART RIGHTEOUS."

To people who believe the Bible, there can be no doubt about it, God has fulfilled His land promise that He made to Abraham and his descendants.

Reasons For Being A Member of The Church of Christ “It Is The Church That Jesus Built”

The first and foremost reason why one should be a member of the church of Christ is because Jesus is its founder. This profound statement of fact was made by Jesus in Matthew 16:13-19. Within a few short statements Jesus revealed several truths about His church that mankind needs to learn and understand. Jesus asked His disciples, *“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”* Some thought He was John the Baptist while others thought he was Elijah; but still others believed Him to be Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

Jesus then asked His disciples, *“But who do you say that I am?”* Peter responded by saying, *“Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.”* The term ‘Christ’ refers to the Messiah, the anointed of God for whom the Jews had long awaited. Of more importance, Peter recognized Jesus’ deity by calling Him the Son of God.

Jesus responded to Peter and said, *“Blessed are you Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”* Peter, being mere flesh and blood, could not have received this information through any human source. Lenski, in his commentary on Matt 16:17 says, *“Actually to realize in the man Jesus the presence of the Christ and Son of God requires more than sinful flesh and blood is able to muster.....The Father revealed Jesus to Peter through Jesus Himself, and He endeavors to do this in the case of all men by bringing Jesus into contact with them.”*

After Peter’s good confession, Jesus was now going to reveal something of extreme importance to him saying, *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.”* The rock upon which Jesus was going to build His church was not Peter (‘Petros’), but upon the solid foundation rock (‘Petra’), which was the confession of Peter that, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

There is only **“one true church”**. Jesus said, *“I will build My church (singular, my emphasis) and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.”* The church of Christ is not a building constructed of materials such as wood, stone or brick. It is composed of all who were being saved, Acts 2:47. That the church is composed of people and not material things is seen in Acts 5:11 where it is said that, *“And great fear came upon the whole church”*; and in Acts 11:22 which says, *“And news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem.”* These scriptures clearly show that the church of Christ is not a building but is composed of people. Also, the church of Christ is not one of the several hundred Protestant denominations; all of which can trace their beginnings to a point in time after Pentecost when, in Acts 2:14-47, the Lord’s church was established.

As we have seen, the church of Christ is a spiritual institution composed of those being saved, Acts 2:47. It is the one true church which was purchased by Christ with His own blood, Acts 20:28. He is the only founder and builder, Matt 16:18. He is the head of the church, Eph 5:23. Jesus is our lawgiver, both Lord and Christ, Acts 2:36. And finally Jesus is the Savior of the body which is His church, Eph 5:23; Eph 1:22,23.

Can you not see that the first and foremost reason for being a member of the church of Christ is that it is the one and only church that Jesus built.

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Welcome

Welcome to a new year of StraitWay. Many of you have been reading and learning with us for three years now. We appreciate your support and words of encouragement. Glenn has done an excellent job choosing the direction for this paper. There have been useful, timely articles in each issue. I look forward to good articles again this year. Before leaving this life on December 19, 2001, Glenn Melton ask me to take over the job of guiding StraitWay beginning this month. Our new writers and topics were selected by Glenn before he gave the reins to me. Our purpose remains the same as in the beginning: 1) We have a desire to help others, to do good and no harm. 2) To encourage as many young men as we can in the noble work of preaching is our prime purpose. In striving to meet these goals we hope to help everyone gain a greater understanding of God's Word and the issues and problems facing His people today. I intend to continue the work started by Glenn. If you know of someone that would benefit from receiving StraitWay send us their address using the information at the bottom of this page.

With the new year we have new writers for StraitWay. Mickey Galloway will be writing our front page articles this year from Lancaster, CA. These articles will not necessarily follow a particular topic. Richard Sims of Mineola, TX will be writing for us about Ultra-Liberalism In The Church of Christ. Carey Scott of Houston, TX will help us understand the Identity Of A Church of Christ. Darrell Shaw is also from Houston, TX and will be giving guidance for Preparing Sermons. Humanism, Satanism and the New Age Movement are becoming more prominent today and Wayne Goforth of Abilene, TX will give us help in understanding them and how to deal with them. A topic heard discussed often during recent months is Premillennialism. Hiram Hutto of Athens, AL will give us articles to help combat this destructive teaching. In tune with Peter's admonition to "...be ready always to give an answer..." Ray Wilson will give us Reasons For Being A Member Of The Church Of Christ. That covers all the writers for StraitWay in 2002 except me. I will be bringing you the Back Page this year. Who am I? Dan Henderson of Jasper, TX. If you stay with us in our studies you will be better informed. If you study diligently the Word of God you will be able to overcome Satan.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot our his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Revelation 3:5-6

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Bible Daily!***

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Worship in spirit and in truth!

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