



THE BEACON BEAM

June 2015

PROGRESSING IN TRUTH

The Majesty of God

By Brant H. Seacrist, Jr.

The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved (Psalms 93:1).

What a wonderful declaration we have here of the sovereignty of God. So much attention is now being drawn to methodologies and attempts to measure God's blessings quantitatively that little attention is directed to the being and existence of God. The purveyors of popular religion are intent on equating the blessing of God with the success of programs and "cunningly devised fables." The true worship of God such as that reflected in such scripture as this is wanting. Here we have the Lord described as reigning by which we see absolute power. We behold the majesty of His being, His countenance and His position. He is not only declared to be clothed with strength, but girded therewith indicating that His strength is being used. Somehow this conception of God has no place in either contemporary religion or the American society; God is held in contempt either in word or in deed.

We have recently read of the birth of a child into the royal family in England. It is interesting to note that while the monarchy there is figurative the language in reference to it remains unchanged. So, "Her Majesty the Queen" is still treated with the respect befitting one who reigns in great pomp and splen-

dor and the citizens of Great Britain seem to love it to be so. But, what do we understand of the term "majesty?" We would leave off thoughts of men and majesty, and wonder at the fact that such language is sadly lacking in the words of the many with respect to God. The 1828 Webster's Dictionary defines majesty as, "Greatness of appearance; dignity; grandeur; dignity of aspect or manner; the quality or state of a person or thing which inspires awe or reverence in the beholder; applied with peculiar propriety to God and his works." This definition was followed by a reference to Psalm 93. The presence of majesty is verified in the witness of the beholder of it. All those qualities in the Lord that make Him majestic have been there from all eternity and so will ever remain. He is majestic whether we see Him or not. But, both the Psalmist in our text and Webster in the definition indicate that He "appears" in that manner to eyes of faith.

This writer finds great difficulty in trying to describe majesty. It is like some other terms - such as dignity - that are difficult to describe but you know it when you see it. Such is that which we see in beholding the Lord. He is regal in His being, mighty in strength, accomplished in all His doings, and He is clothed with majesty in it all. The Puritan Stephen Charnock wrote concerning Job: "A little experimental sense of the majesty of God brought Job more upon his knees

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Schedule of Services:

Sunday
Morning Worship...9:30 AM
Sunday School.....11:10 AM
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday
Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

Beacon Highlights for June

Special Events for June

01	Tri-State Particular Baptist Fellowship	18	Silver Saints Year-End Banquet
03	Teen/Parent Focus	19-27	Mission Team to Montana
07	Sunday School Promotion	21	Members Meeting
13	Teen Homeplace Ministry	27	Mission Team Returns
14	Father's Day Baby Day	28	Lord's Table
16	Elders/Deacons Meeting		



*We enjoyed a wonderful Spring Bible Conference with Pastor Mark Webb, preaching a five part series on **The Testing of Job.***

You can hear these messages and hundreds of others from the Beacon pulpit at

www.SermonAudio.com/beacon.

The Beacon Broadcast is available at

www.SermonAudio.com/bb.

Sympathy ~ We express our heartfelt sympathy to the family of:

Carson Huffman
Wyatt Morrison
Carol Norton

Pastor Steve Shebs
Marcel Claude Thibault

The Beacon Broadcast

Monday thru Friday

WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN)	9:30 a.m.
WKBA 1550 AM (Roanoke, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WKPA 1390 AM (Lynchburg, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	2:00 p.m.

Sunday

WPCM 920 AM (Burlington, NC)	9:00 a.m.
WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WSML 1200 AM (Graham, NC)	8:30 p.m.
WLES 560 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:30 a.m.
KUTR 820 AM (Salt Lake City, UT)	11:00 a.m.
Harbour Light of the Windwards 1400 AM/94.5 FM (Caribbean)	9:30 p.m.

June Member Birthdays

03	Mary Lee Harper Ron Massey Melanie Moody
05	Cheryl Ingold
14	Sam Florence
15	Linda Spencer
17	Suzann Lynch Christen Verroi
20	Nellie Hunter
21	Shirley Watkins
22	Robin Allred
23	Christie Carpenter
24	Dorothy Campbell Gail Ellis Matthew Haizlip
25	Gary Allred Louise Day
29	Kevin Kooy

Happy Birthday!

June Missionary Birthdays

01	Isaiah Jensen*
05	Micaiah Bixby* Alethea Johnson*
21	Tammy Honeycutt
30	Larrie Bunyan

Happy Birthday!

Beacon Pastors

Gregory N. Barkman	<i>Senior Pastor</i>
Michael R. Karns	<i>Minister of Christian Education</i>
Robert F. La Tour	<i>Minister of Families</i>
Gerald J. Counts	<i>Minister of Visitation</i>
Gregory L. Phillips	<i>Minister of Music</i>

I was unable to write my column last month because of ministry in Africa. I am happy to be back home and ready to continue my doctrinal history series. I would now like to discuss some of the obstacles which kept me from embracing Calvinism for several years. I am thankful the Lord would not allow me to take permanent refuge in any of these issues, but patiently and persistently held my feet to the fire until I yielded to these precious truths.

UNBIBLICAL. Initially, I was convinced that Calvinism is simply not Scriptural. It didn't correspond with the way I understood the Bible, and I was convinced for a long while that the Doctrines of Grace could not be reconciled with Truth. As I examined the five points of the Calvinistic Tulip, I found two points, perhaps three at the most with which I could agree. The others seemed contrary to sound doctrine. But I had to admit that there were verses that I could not adequately explain. For example, the doctrine of Election was clearly taught in the Bible. The only question was whether it was Unconditional or Conditional (a watershed issue between Calvinism and Arminianism). I was certain that Election had to be Conditional. That is, it must be based upon what God knew in advance about each person. Those whom He knew would believe, He chose. Those whom God knew would not believe, He passed over. What's so difficult about that? And yet, the more I studied the Bible, the less sure I was about this interpretation. There seemed to be a number of problems with a Conditional understanding of Election, not the least of which is the fact that this is not really Divine Election at all. It is more like Divine Ratification. According to this view,

man chooses first, and God then ratifies man's choice. That was more pleasing to my man-centered theology, but clearly that is not an honest use of language. Either God chose, or man chose and God simply ratified man's choice. And if that's the way it is, then why call it Election? Why use words like "chose" and "elect" in reference to God and salvation, if it really doesn't mean that God chose? By this reasoning, "election" doesn't really mean much of anything at all. It's a nonsense term that Christians should gloss over without giving it serious consideration. The more I meditated upon the doctrine of Unconditional Election, the more Biblical it became to my thinking. Eventually, the unthinkable became the inev-

"Nobody likes to lose friends, and that puts a lot of pressure on Christians to steer away from Calvinism."

itable, and I slowly and humbly bowed to the truth that God sovereignly elects people to salvation.

FRIENDSHIPS. Then there was the problem of my friends. Almost all my Christian friends denied the Doctrines of Grace, and what was more troubling, almost all the preachers and Bible teachers I knew rejected Calvinism. At least that's what I thought. Nobody wants to lose

friends, and nobody wants his friends thinking he has gone off the deep end. Adults would like to believe that peer pressure is only a teen problem, but truthfully, it is an adult problem as well. If I embraced the Doctrines of Grace, all my friends would think I'm crazy and want nothing more to do with me, or so I thought. The truth is, some of my friends were confessing Calvinists, but they were a very small minority, perhaps no more than three or four. After I embraced Calvinism, I found out that some whom I thought were not Calvinists actually were. They were Closet Calvinists who only revealed their true position to those whom they considered safe. Like I said, nobody likes to lose friends, and that fact puts a lot of pressure on Christians to steer away from Calvinism, or at the very least, to keep it a secret from your non-Calvinistic friends. Eventually, I came to the place where the approval of God was more important to me than the approval of man, and I thank God for patiently dealing with me until I reached that point. But fear of man can be a strong obstacle to pursuing an honest study of Calvinism. Many would rather avoid the subject. Why risk making life uncomfortable for yourself? Why not just leave well enough alone? But if God is leading you to search for answers to these perplexing questions, please don't let peer pressure keep you from the treasures of God's Word.

BAPTIST THEOLOGY. Another aspect of peer pressure came in the form of misrepresented Baptist Theology. Several pastors and teachers told me that Calvinism is antithetical to Baptist doctrine. "You can't be a Calvinist and a Baptist at the same time," I was told. "If you become a Calvinist, you will have to become Presbyter-

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The Troubled Poet

Greg Phillips

Perhaps you know of John Newton, eighteenth-century slave trader, transformed by God's grace to be a minister of the gospel and the author of "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me." You might know of his opposition to slavery or know of other hymns he penned. Fewer will know of the book of hymns he published, *Olney Hymns*, named for the village where he served as pastor. Newton wrote in the preface to *Olney Hymns* in 1779, "The public may be assured that the whole number were composed by two persons only . . . [and are] intended as a monument to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship." He spoke of his friendship and ministry to poet William Cowper.

William Cowper was born in 1731, about the time that God was beginning His work of revival which we now call the First Great Awakening. Cowper's father was rector of his town and a chaplain of King George II, so young William's upbringing was well-to-do. After his mother died when he was six, he was sent away to boarding schools where he learned well but suffered many difficulties. His disposition was averse to the public life to which his studies led, and he struggled with depression and mental illness. His first major battle with despair was at age 21. God showed mercy to him and gave him relief, but he was not yet a Christian, and credited the poetry of George Herbert and the beauty of nature for his improved condition.

After serving again in government life for a few years, at age 32 Cowper was paralyzed by fear of a public examination for a promotion. He broke down completely, attempted suicide three different times, and was put into an asylum. He was cared for by Dr. Nathaniel Cotton, an evangelical believer. Dr. Cotton held out the hope of the gospel to Cowper, and directed him to the Bible. Cowper testifies of his gradual enlightenment, reading of the benevolence and mercy of Christ toward "miserable men." He reported that he found hope in the mercy of Christ as "the propitiation through faith in His blood" (Rom.3:25). Although Christ had saved his soul, Cowper would struggle the rest of his life with debilitating mental issues.

After staying with Dr. Cotton for a year after conversion, Cowper went to stay with the Unwin family in Huntington. Two years later, Mr. Unwin died tragically and unexpectedly, and the pastor of a nearby parish came to minister to the family. John Newton's ministry was helpful to them, and they moved to Olney to sit under Newton's ministry. For the next thirteen years John Newton, who also lost his mother when he was six, was Cowper's minister, counselor and friend. Newton, six years elder to Cowper, influenced him with robust theology, and the poetry that they wrote reflected the greatness of God's work in showing mercy to lost and hopeless men. During this span, Cowper wrote the poem *Light Shining out of Darkness*, which we know by its first line:

*God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs and works His sovereign will.*

Just as Newton related his testimony of conversion in the hymn *Amazing Grace*, Cowper speaks of himself in the lines:

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.*

Although shown grace by a merciful Savior, Cowper's life did not end happily; he struggled with despair until the end of his earthly days. God granted seasons of relief, but the whole of Cowper's life was one of difficulty, darkness and suffering. We can see some of the outward causes in Cowper's family and upbringing, but only God knows the secrets of his life. We are grateful for the gifts of poetry and hymnody that God gave to Cowper which encourage us today. May God grant us wisdom and patience as we seek to minister His mercy to those who struggle.

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than all the pressing discourses of his friends, or his own knowledge before his affliction. *'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see thee; wherefore I abhor myself'* (Job 42:5-6). A glimpse of God will bring forth more saving fruits than all the reports of him to the ear, or speculations in the mind.¹ Could it be that the great lack in our worship is a conception of the "Majesty of God?" In beholding majesty there can be no thought of anything greater and truly we "stand in awe and sin not."

So often our thoughts of God are tied to the mercies received at His hand and well it should be. David wrote thusly of loving the Lord: *I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications* (Psalms 116:1). The calls to praise are found throughout and the redeemed of the Lord delight to "say so." But, we would be aware that the acknowledgements of His majesty are forthcoming without regard to any benefit other than being able to behold Him as such. To quote Voddie Baucham, "Get over yourself, it is not about you." His majesty will forever be the cause of both wonder and worship. In beholding Him in that way there can be no thoughts of personal significance – only the joy of being drawn out in pure adoration and love. Of course, it is the redeemed of the Lord who experience such rapture and redemption. It is the

"We are bidden to boldly come to that throne of Grace, but we must do so knowing that it is a throne to which we go and our sovereign and Majestic Lord is seated there."

means whereby we are enabled to see, to hear, to love and to bow before Him. He is indeed clothed with majesty.

Eternal life is clearly defined by our Lord. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* (John 17:3). We may be certain that He intended more than a casual acquaintance with the Lord. The thought of knowledge implies a knowing and an identifying relationship to the Lord. It would certainly mean that such who know Him see Him as described here by the Psalmist. Peter could speak graphically of his experience: *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto*

you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty (2 Peter 1:16). One can read in the Apostle's words that the majesty of the Lord was a vivid image etched indelibly in his heart and mind and so should it be with us all. We are bidden to boldly come to that throne of Grace, but we must do so knowing that it is a throne to which we go and our sovereign and Majestic Lord is seated there. We rejoice at the consideration of all His attributes. And, His majesty attends His every revelation of Himself to us.

A. W. Tozer wrote: *"The modern Christian has lost a sense of worship along with the concept of majesty [of God]...It is this that makes Christianity, and we have all but lost it. Added numbers, yes, but lost fear. Tons of literature being poured out, of course, but no consciousness of the divine Presence. Better communication, certainly, but nothing to communicate."*

¹Stephen Charnock, *The Knowledge of God*.

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Escape or Endure?

We're big on escaping but not much on enduring. Well, of course we're not. Who wants to endure when you can escape? Propelled by that very natural feeling we have tried to turn Christianity into a religion of escape. But as a follower of Jesus I must remember that He chose to endure rather than escape. He could have escaped but didn't; we can't, but we die trying. And the more we anticipate escaping, the less strength we have to endure.

And so I say that faith is not necessarily the power to make things the way we want them to be; it is the courage to face things as they are.

—Ronald Dunn, *When Heaven Is Silent*

Searching through the memory bank I found this, written a few years ago. These tiny babies are now busy four-year-olds...

The entire package weighed only eight and a half pounds and measured less than two feet in length. Smaller than a decorative pillow, lighter than a bag of groceries, but oh how important that package was! Entire families rearranged their lives for the arrival, traveling hundreds of miles and taking days off work. Evelyn Hope Newton - 'Evie' - joined the family in January and the arrival of this third little grandchild reminded us of just how big a stir a tiny bundle can make! And another little package is due to arrive in April in Massachusetts. That baby boy will be our second grandson and the first child of our third daughter. I'll pack my car and drive 750 miles just to make sure his room is ready. Not much more than a speck on a blanket, these little ones, but how they impact the lives all around them. Important things do come in small packages.

The Bible speaks in most descriptive language about something much smaller than a new baby, weighing mere ounces, but something that can cause such a stir we find it in the company of words like 'deadly' and 'poison'. That little tongue of ours is a world of trouble. "Oh me! If only I had kept my mouth shut. If only I'd thought before I spoke! How I wish I hadn't said that!" Familiar words, these. Haven't we all uttered those phrases? We often confess to speaking before thinking, but I'm afraid most of our unwise words are the result of our thinking. Suddenly we hear ourselves saying what we've thought but never intended to verbalize. We say something that 'just needed to be said' only to realize it not only didn't need to be said, but in fact should never have been spoken.

Scripture is clear, almost shocking, on the seriousness of this matter of our speech, telling us the worth of our religion is in doubt if we don't control our tongues! "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless (James 1:26). Could it be that my tongue says this much about my heart...that though I may be talking about others, I'm really revealing myself?

"Our speech is a picture into our hearts and if our faith is genuine, our tongues should be the brush that paints a picture of that faith."

We fail so often in this battle that it seems an almost un-winnable war. *What is to be done about the tongue?* What if, instead of working only to avoid what we shouldn't say, we actively pursue speech that blesses and encourages other? Our speech is a picture into our hearts and if our faith is genuine, our tongues should be the brush that paints a picture of that faith. In other words, it is *better* to say nothing than to speak sinfully, but it's best to say something edifying!

I know you've spoken and regretted doing so, but have you ever heard someone say something and thought, 'I wish I'd said that'? It's been years since I read the book *Disciplines of a Godly Woman* by Barbara Hughes, but I've thought often of her personal account of a night when her husband was struggling with discouragement and the feeling, in his words, 'that God has called me to do something He hasn't given me the gifts to accomplish.' His conclusion was that

God is not good. Read what she says about the night:

"When we think back on that long-ago night Kent tells me that if I had answered him in any other way than the way I did, it would have been all he needed to 'hang it up'. If I had joined him in bitter recriminations and complaints about our situation, he might have quit the ministry and spent the rest of his life attempting to prove his worth and God's injustice. But, thanks to God, my answer was full of hope in God. 'I don't know what you're going to do, but for right now, for tonight, hang on to my faith, because I believe. I believe that God is good. I believe that He loves us and is going to work through this experience. So hang on to my faith. I have enough for both of us.'"

What a beautiful example of encouraging words spoken by a wife who was no doubt equally as discouraged and possibly even more fearful than her husband. Where did her encouraging words come from? From a heart that was filled with true thoughts about God. She had words that were filled with hope and courage because she had learned how God treats his children.

What is to be done about the tongue? We know that bitter and evil words come from our hearts, for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks'. We continue to fail in word because we start in the wrong place. We're not going to get our tongues operating rightly until our hearts are filled with truth and consequently, our minds are thinking right thoughts. We've been starting in the wrong place...the heart, not the mouth, is the source of our words.

"Make your words sweet...you may have to eat them someday!"

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ian.” At first, I believed them. I really didn’t know many Baptists who were Calvinists, and my personal experience reinforced the claim that Baptists were not Calvinists. This was a troubling matter. I had been in Baptist churches nearly all my life, and I enthusiastically embraced Baptist doctrine. For a while after I became a Calvinist, I wrestled with the idea of also becoming a Presbyterian, but the issue of infant baptism seemed an insurmountable barrier. As much as I had come to appreciate orthodox Presbyterian books and fellowship, I was still a committed Baptist and saw no possibility of changing. What was I to do? Slowly, I began to search for Baptists who were Calvinists, and to my surprise, discovered there were many. In addition, I began to read Baptist history, and learned that Calvinists were actually the majority among Baptists in England and America until the twentieth century. Baptists from continental Europe tended to be Arminian, but English-speaking Baptists were predominantly Calvinists. The more I studied the history of Baptists in America, the more enthusiastic I became for Baptist doctrine. Historically speaking, my present day, non-Calvinist, Baptist friends were the anomaly. As a Calvinist and a Baptist, I represented the majority Baptist position. I experienced new enthusiasm for historic Baptist Theology and reveled in my new found Baptist heritage. What was originally a barrier to embracing the Doctrines of Grace, now became a catalyst to discover my roots in historic Baptist Calvinism. Strange what a little bit of education can accomplish.

PUSHY CALVINISTS. I hate to mention this one, but one obstacle to my embracing the Doctrines of Grace

“Strange that those who most believe in Sovereign Grace can be the very ones who act like they can convince others by sheer force of pugnacious argument.”

was pushy Calvinists who are some of the most enthusiastic ambassadors for this position. Once it became noised abroad that I was re-thinking my previous position, I began to attract a cadre of aggressive Calvinist salesmen. I recall telling one individual, “If you would spend one tenth the effort trying to win your neighbor to Christ that you spend trying to convert me to Calvinism, you would probably become a great soul-winner.” I realize now that this was a bit unfair, but I’m still convinced there is a grain of truth in that statement. Some of the worst enemies of Calvinism are Calvinists who lack grace and good manners. I’ve heard it said that when a young man first becomes a Calvinist, you should put him in a cage and throw away the key for three or four years. From my personal experience, I’d say there is wisdom in that bit of exaggeration. The Doctrines of Grace, once understood, are so amazing, that some people can’t seem to refrain from pushing them upon people who are not yet prepared to receive them. Strange that those who most believe in the necessity of Sovereign Grace to un-

derstand spiritual truth, can be the very ones who act like they can convince others by sheer force of pugnacious argument. Pushy Calvinists have scared many Christians away from the Doctrines of Grace. I know, because they almost turned me away. I thank God He didn’t allow that to keep me from coming to the truth. I also thank God for using Pushy Calvinists to show me how important it is NOT to be pushy about these doctrines. I have tried to conduct my ministry in a patient manner, and, except for two or three stumbles along the way, I believe I have succeeded. If you, dear reader, have had experiences similar to mine, please don’t let bad representatives of truth drive you away. The Truth is too precious to be forfeited because of a few who propagate it offensively.

I have a few more obstacles to share, but I must leave them for another day. I trust that you will “buy the truth, and sell it not.” Yes, the Doctrines of Grace definitely go against the grain of contemporary Christianity and man-centered theology. But they accurately convey truth, and failing to embrace them will leave you with an incomplete understanding of God, man, and the Biblical way of salvation. “O people, selected by sovereign love, Through free grace elected to glory above; What cause for uniting your voices to sing; What cause for delighting in Jesus your King.”

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Joy and Peace in Believing

*Sometimes a light surprises the Christian while he sings;
It is the Lord, who rises with healing in His wings:
When comforts are declining, He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining, to cheer it after rain.*

*In holy contemplation we sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation, and find it ever new.
Set free from present sorrow, we cheerfully can say,
Let the unknown tomorrow bring with it what it may.*

*It can bring with it nothing but He will bear us through;
Who gives the lilies clothing will clothe His people, too;
Beneath the spreading heavens, no creature but is fed;
And He Who feeds the ravens will give His children bread.*

*Though vine nor fig tree neither their wonted fruit should bear,
Though all the field should wither, nor flocks nor herds be there;
Yet God the same abiding, His praise shall tune my voice,
For while in Him confiding, I cannot but rejoice.*



I've often wondered how people cope with the trials of life without the strength found in Him. His presence and comfort are so vital that I'm not surprised when unbelievers accuse Christians of using religion as a crutch. We remember Karl Marx's charge that "religion is the opiate of the people." He was referring to opium, a narcotic used for dulling the effects of pain.

It is no shame to call on Him for help in times of trouble. It is His delight to minister to us in our time of pain. There is no scandal in the mercy of God to the afflicted. He is like a Father who pities His children and moves to comfort them when they are hurting. To suffer without the comfort of God is no virtue. To lean upon His comfort is no vice, contrary to Marx.

—Dr. R. C. Sproul, *Surprised by Suffering*

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