

Banner of Truth

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False Religion — A Terrible Enemy Of True New Testament Christianity

As false religion increases, interest in true Christianity wanes, and its influence for good weakens. While there is no lack of news about false religion, the news about true Christianity is scarce, and in many instances virtually nonexistent. The effect upon society is frighteningly evident.

Due to the very broad meaning of the word **Religion** and the misunderstanding and confusion relative to the meaning of **New Testament Christianity**, we shall begin our discussion with some definitions. Since there are a variety of definitions relative to the two terms, we shall delineate the definitions we will be using in order that our remarks will be more clearly understood.

What Does Religion Mean? The word **religion** is used a number of times in the New Testament. We shall note two Greek words. First is the word *THRESKEIA*. *Vine's* says the word "signifies religion in its external aspect..., religious worship, especially the ceremonial service of religion." This is the word used by Paul in Acts 26:5, where he said, "...after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." James uses this word in 1:26-27, where he speaks of "man's religion" that is "vain," and describes "pure religion" as follows: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." That James speaks of "pure religion" implies that there is false or impure religion. The visiting of the fatherless and widows and keeping one's self unspotted from the world are demonstrations of pure religion.

The second word is *DEISIDAIMONIA*. *Vine's* says of this word: "Primarily denotes fear of the gods (from *deido*, to fear, *daimon*, a pagan deity, Eng. , demon) regarded whether as a religious attitude, or, in its usual meaning, with a condemnatory or contemptuous significance, superstition." In Acts 25:19, it is said of Paul that Festus, "...had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." In the ASV the word "superstition" is translated "religion."

From the above definitions we can see that **religion** can be used to refer to the religion which is true, but it can also be used to refer to religion which is false. When speaking of religion there is usually a need to qualify what we mean by the term.

In our time the word **religion** is used in such a broad sense that it can mean a great many things, some of which are as ungodly as can be. In order to give a better idea of the wide use of religion, we shall note some definitions from Webster.

1. a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, esp. when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usu. involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code for the conduct

of human affairs. **2.** a specific set of fundamental beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects: *the Christian religion*. **3.** the body of persons adhering to a particular set of beliefs and practices: *a world council of religions*. ... **6.** something a person believes in and follows devotedly.

From the above definitions it is clear that the term “religion” can apply to all sorts of things. Even communism can be called a religion, as well as all sorts of pagan beliefs. “Religion” can be used to refer to that which is opposed to God’s will, as well as that which is in harmony with God’s will. Therefore, there is a **True Religion** and there are uncounted numbers of **False Religions**.

In our discussion we will generally be using the term, “False Religion” to refer to that which claims to believe in a higher power. This would include the hundreds of religions which claim to believe in Christianity, and a number of pagan religions. We will also use the term to refer to those who claim to be a part of true religion, Christianity, a member of the one true church which Christ purchased with His blood, but who reject the clear teaching of God’s word on vital subjects.

TRUE RELIGION DEFINED

The only **True Religion** is that which was established by God. That religion in the New Testament dispensation is made up of Christians and is called Christianity. This is the religion which is set forth in the New Testament, as predicted by the Old Testament prophets. The many so-called Christian religions, which have originated this side the New Testament time of the first century, are **not** true religions; they are **false religions**.

True Religion was in the mind of God before the human race came to be. This is pointed out by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11). From this we know that God’s plan of salvation looked forward to the coming of Christ, through whose everlasting sacrifice salvation would be made possible, for both those who lived before Him and those who would live afterward. The unfolding of God’s plan is first noted in Genesis 3:15, and then through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Christ came forth, born of the virgin Mary. The New Covenant was established, as God intended, and men must live under that law in our time to be justified, or have salvation.

In Matthew 16:18, Christ said, of the confession made by the apostle Peter that Christ was God’s son, “upon this rock will I build my church.” From Acts 2, and onward, we see His church in existence. Paul said, “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23). This is the **true church**, and it constitutes **True Religion**. Christ is the “head” of no other religion in our day, and it is only through Christ and His church that salvation is available to man. This we also see from Acts 4:12, where Peter said of Christ: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Since salvation is conditioned on being “in Christ,” who is the “head” and “savior” of the body, it is essential that one come to know **How** one gets into Christ. That salvation is “in Christ” is made crystal clear by Paul when he speaks of obtain[ing] “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10).

Now, “How does one get into Christ?” Let God be thanked that this all important question is clearly answered in the New Testament. In Romans 6:3, Paul asks: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” To the Galatians Paul wrote, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

Baptism “into Christ” can occur only when certain conditions are met. Let us note here that the baptism which is involved in getting “into Christ” is a “burial,” as described by Paul in Romans 6:4. To merely pour or sprinkle water on someone does not constitute the baptism of which Paul and even our Savior speaks in Mark 16:16. There is now only “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). All other so-called baptisms are not that which is necessary to get “in Christ.”

There are certain steps (conditions) which one must take before becoming a proper subject for the baptism which has God’s approval. For example, a person might be “buried” in water by baptism and not receive any benefit whatsoever. The one baptism which is necessary to get “into Christ,” and have one’s sins forgiven (Acts 2:38) must result from **Faith** in God. The writer of *Hebrews* says of God, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). The true, living and active faith in God leads one to submit to His will.

Submission to God’s will requires **Repentance**. Repentance involves the change of one’s mind. That change acknowledges one’s sins and a decision to quit those sins, and to serve God rather than man or one’s own will. On the birthday of the church which Christ said he would build (Matt. 16:18), those who asked “what shall we do?” [to have forgiveness] were told by Peter, “**Repent**, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). Paul told the Athenians, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now he commandeth all men every where to **repent**” (Acts 17:30). Our Lord said, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye **repent**, ye shall all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3). Only penitent people have a right to be baptized as God’s word commands.

The next step to be taken after repentance is the **Confession** of one’s faith in Christ, as God’s Son and the Savior of mankind. Those who might claim to “believe” in Christ, but who will not confess faith in Him, show their lack of faith and true repentance. Such were the “chief rulers” in John 12:42-43. Paul shows the importance of **Confession** when he said, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). The Ethiopian made the following **confession** before he was baptized by Philip: “...I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37).

It is only when one has come to have **faith** in God, which comes from the hearing of God’s word (Rom. 10:17), and the evidence shown by the creation (Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:1), **repented** of sins and made the good **confession** that Jesus is the Christ, God’s Son, that one is a proper subject to be **baptized** for “remission of sins,” at which point one is added to the “house [family] of God, which is “the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (Acts 2:47; I Tim. 3:15).

We have set forth above, from God’s word, the conditions of becoming one of God’s family, the church. It is only through Christ and His church that salvation is possible. What we have described is “**True New Testament Christianity**.” We have given considerable space to this aspect of God’s plan of salvation due to the fact that untold millions, even billions, do not know and/or accept God’s will. Millions, though “religious,” are a part of some **False Religion**, and are without true hope.

Now that we have given attention to what is meant by “False Religion,” and what constitutes “True New Testament Christianity,” we shall turn our attention to the main point in our discussion, that is, that False Religion is a Terrible Enemy of True New Testament Christianity.

FALSE RELIGION — A TERRIBLE ENEMY OF TRUE NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

It is understandable that the above statement will indeed raise the hackles of some religious people; to others it will be confusing. The various responses to the idea of a distinctive religion, that of true New Testament Christianity, can be attributed to a variety of reasons. We shall discuss some of those reasons and show how they constitute an enemy to the one true, God ordained, religion.

Source Of Religious Authority. While the greater majority of those in our country who claim to be Christians would say that the Bible is their source of authority, there are some exceptions. The Mormons consider the Bible as inferior to the *Book of Mormon*, alleging that the Bible has mistakes but that the *Book of Mormon* by the false prophet, Joseph Smith has none. The Christian Scientist follow the writings of Mary Baker Eddy. The Catholic Church accepts “tradition” as equally authoritative as the Bible. There are others.

When people claim to accept God’s word as their authority in religion and then teach and practice things which are in opposition to the teaching of God’s word, this is confusing. Truth does not contradict itself, but in all these so-called inspired writings other than the Bible, there are contradictions and opposition to God’s word. Those who are led to believe in these sources of uninspired authority, must reject at least some of the Truth. This means that they have become a part of a **False Religion**. The chances of converting such people is slim. There’s no doubt but that some people are turned off by these inconsistencies.

The greater part of the denominations say that the Bible is their source of authority. But when this is examined it doesn’t hold up. Though they do not claim to have other “inspired” sources of authority, they usually have some sort of a guide other than the Bible. It may be called a “creed,” “confession of faith,” “catechism,” etc. We can be sure that it is something more or less than the Bible. Otherwise, there would not be hundreds of so-called “Christian beliefs.” It is quite irresponsible to make the claim that men cannot understand the Bible to the extent that there would be only “one church” as was the case when our Lord built His church. To make the charge that God’s inspired word is not “all sufficient” is to take issue with God Himself.

Just a few days ago a brother talked with me, and explained how he had been in a man-made church in his earlier years, and how that he determined with himself that he would show the true church to be wrong. As he began to study God’s word, he realized that he must accept the truth he had learned or reject God. He accepted the truth and is now a member of God’s family, with a true and living hope. I’ve known others who did as the brother above. On the other hand, some people have inherited a false religion, and their loyalty to it will not allow them to be intellectually honest with self and with God. Therefore, only the Lord knows how many people have passed through this life, rejecting the church for which Christ shed His blood. They in reality became “enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction...” (Phil. 3:18-19)

By failure to accept God’s inspired word as the only true source of authority in religion, some have been turned off completely, due to the inconsistencies with reference to the things which are taught and practiced, when compared with what God’s word teaches.

Pleasing Men Rather Than God. Contrary to what God teaches, there is great emphasis now upon that which pleases men, rather than what God desires. Many religions are now offering a **Religious Smorgasbord**. People can pick and choose what they like and reject anything they do not like. Consequently, the customers really go for **entertainment**. Another item in demand is **food**, like hot dogs and hamburgers. In some places “**singing and twisting, with handclapping**” go over big, as if it pleased our Lord. Portions of **emotions** are the favorite with some. **Positive Preaching** is an often selected item. Generous portions of **palaver** are quite high on the list.

Some things which are slow movers, if they are even offered are: A serving of **responsibility**. **Negatives** are almost always rejected. **Worship**, “In spirit and in truth is by no means a favorite.” “**Thus saith the Lord**” is seldom selected. **Church discipline**, is perhaps the lowest on the list of things selected. God’s law on **fellowship** is a virtual no-go.

At these religious smorgasbords, that which the Lord wants people to select is generally rejected. It is not what the Lord wants that rules the day, but rather what people want, what pleases them. The individual who has any knowledge of God’s word and a desire to please the Lord cannot be a customer at these places. Some honest souls learn enough of the truth that they come out from such people. They can see the inconsistency of this kind of religion. But who knows just how many people see the hypocrisy of such religion, and become discouraged and never look for the true religion of our Lord Jesus Christ? There may be multitudes.

The Influence Of Subjectivism. God’s word is set forth in an objective form. People can read it and know what it says, and what man must do to have salvation. But a great portion of today’s religion is based on **subjectivism**, that is, what people “feel,” “think,” and “like.” A good knowledge of God’s word is increasingly hard to find. Yet, we will be judged by Christ’s word (Jno. 12:48), rather than by how we feel or what pleases us.

The emphasis upon God’s objective word which used to be seen by many in “The Bible belt” is no longer the case. The things practiced today which are without any Bible authority are simply too numerous to mention. People are “destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6), yet they give little attention to what God’s word teaches.

The Influence Of Cults. When we think of: Jim Jones, Waco, the J.W.’s, Heaven’s Gate, we think of religious cults. Some of these cults do outrageous and stupid things in the name of religion. The members of these cults are usually brainwashed to the point that they will accept just about anything which their leader suggests, even to the point of suicide. Yet these people are “religious,” and claim to believe the Bible. Some of the early Christians died for their faith, but they didn’t die on the cue from some man. To the church at Smyrna Christ said, “be thou faithful unto death [to the point of death], and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). The individual who will kill himself just because some cult leader tells him to do so, has a terrible misunderstanding of God’s will.

What kind of picture do these cults present to people who are not religious? It is a far cry from what would influence people to want to be a part of a religion like that. Sadly, many people never learn enough about the true religion of Jesus Christ to know what it really is, and that it does not teach some of the crazy things done in religion. Any religion which does not give a true picture of what God approves [only one does] is an enemy of the true religion of Christianity.

Sinful Religious Practices. The number of these is far too numerous to enumerate. We now have religions, claiming to believe the Bible, which do all manner of things which are condemned in God’s sight. Some uphold sexual perversion. Some uphold murder by abortion. A wide variety of sins are condoned by many religions. More than a few mislead people into thinking they can have salvation without conforming to God’s plan of salvation.

Think of all the people who are hoodwinked into believing that a man can work miracles in healing people. The thinking person can easily see the deceit being employed by these people to line their own pockets.

Snake Handling Religion. I’ve known personally of people who died because they were bitten by a poisonous snake. These religious people are very much like those who believe in “fake healing.” They should see by the results that this kind of thing is not upheld by God. Such things

as this can serve as an enemy of true Christianity, because some may be led to believe that such is upheld by the true Christian religion. Those who fall for such deceit are seldom converted to the Truth.

A major **False Religion** is that of the Catholic Church. The history of this religion is readily available to those who have a desire to know. Their history is replete with many ungodly things to their account. Most people have heard of the Crusades carried out by the Catholics in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. Multitudes of people were murdered. Those considered “heretics” were put to the sword. The false doctrines taught by the Catholic Church are many. The “Pope” claims to be the “vicar” of Christ on earth. The priests claim the power to forgive sins. Tradition is claimed to be as authoritative as God’s word. Mary, the mother of Christ, is often given more prominence than Christ himself. Purgatory is an invention of men. The claim of miracles done by the Catholics is almost endless. History reveals much corruption within the leadership.

A recent note concerning the corruption of the Catholic Church has become public knowledge. It has to do with the priests using boys for sexual purposes. It is reported that as many as 80 priests are involved. Not only has this happened, but there were attempts to cover up these ungodly doings, rather than dealing with the sinful matter.

Catholicism holds sway over more people than any other religion which claims to be Christian. For centuries the members have been kept in the dark, but that is beginning to change somewhat. Younger people are more reluctant to bow to the false teachings and practices. The Catholic Church is not growing as it once did.

A sad thing about the Catholic Church is that of those who see the corruption of it are reluctant to search for the truth. Once they have become disillusioned, they turn away from all religion. Indeed, the Catholic Church has been one of the greatest enemies of True New Testament Christianity, and continues to be so today. Many children are brought up in this false religion and untold adults accept it.

The False Religion Of Islam. We have dealt mostly with false religions which claim to be Christian, and profess to believe in the Bible. Islam claims to believe in God [Allah], but their source of authority is the *Koran*, with some accepting the sayings which were supposedly said by Mohammed, but were never written down.

Islam, the second largest religion in the world, is the enemy of true Christianity in the greatest way by keeping the people in the dark and not allowing them to have access to God’s word and the true religion. There is no doubt but that if the people under Islamic control were free to think and act for themselves, many of them would seek true Christianity. While a little mission work has been done in Muslim countries, for the most part more than a billion people are virtually out of bounds for mission work.

It is rather ironic that a people who claim to believe in God would be so evil as are the Muslims. The idea that those who aren’t Muslims [infidels and unbelievers] are to be killed with God’s blessing is a weird concept of God. The only Muslim who is not an enemy of every true Christian is one who does not follow the teaching of the *Koran*. This is a case where being liberal is better than being conservative. But even so, we never know when the Muslim may decide to do evil to us. A good friend of mine, who has spent several years in a Muslim country said to me words to the following effect: “I have some close friends in Indonesia, but if it came down to making a choice between me and their religion, they would choose their religion.”

We have tried to point out some of the reasons why the false, so-called Christian religion, constitutes an enemy of true Christianity. We shall give more attention to that in our discussion. But

we shall now turn our attention to a somewhat different kind of false religion, and that is false religion within the Lord's church. There are several examples of warnings in the New Testament, where we are warned of false prophets and teachers. We are told that people will turn away from the truth. When people turn away from the truth, their religion becomes false. It is not based on the truth. The apostle Paul, writing to the elders at Ephesus, tells them to "Take heed." Paul continues as he says:

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Ac. 20:29-31).

There has never been a time in my life when the above warning was ignored within the church to the extent that it is ignored NOW. In my estimation, one of the greatest enemies of the Lord's church today is composed of people within the church.

The liberalism which has swept over the Lord's church in the past three or four decades, rejects the clear and plain teaching of God's word. The time when brethren looked for a "Thus saith the Lord" before engaging in an activity has passed on. It is not an uncommon thing now for brethren to engage in things for which there is not an iota of scriptural authority. It is hard to realize why preachers, elders, and uncaring brethren will promote such. Our brethren simply seem not to care anymore.

The Matter Of Fellowship. God's word makes plain that God does not approve of fellowship with those who are not Christians, or those who are guilty of teaching rank error. A growing number of brethren are simply ignoring God's law in this area. It is a common thing nowadays to hear of brethren fellowshiping various denominational religions. Some preachers go and preach to these people and do not condemn that which is wrong. They simply fellowship them. When a preacher, members, and elders from two congregations fellowship the Catholic Church, that just about takes the cake! But it happened right here in the "Bible belt."

When people see such things taking place by those who claim to believe the Bible, they must see the hypocrisy involved. You can't tell me that such practices as this does not pour cold water on the interest some sincere people have in serving God in an acceptable way.

Belittling The Church. When brethren fellowship false religions they are sending a message, and that message is a real enemy of the Lord's church. It says, in effect, the man-made religions are also acceptable in God's sight. What a **Terrible** thing it is to equate the religions of men with that one true church for which our Savior died! How can preachers do this? How can elders participate in or allow such? How can individuals, if they have any respect for God's word, be a participant in this evil? I do not profess to know the answer to these questions, but one who loves the Lord as he should, as taught by the New Testament, could not harm the church in such a way as this. But, brethren, it is happening at an increasing rate, and many seem not to care.

Those who claim to believe God's word and then willingly ignore it or go against it, deserve to be called "Hypocrites." To use as an excuse, "the hypocrites in the church," reveals one's lack of understanding with regard to personal responsibility, but hypocrites within the church are "enemies" of our Lord's true religion.

Our Schools And Their Influence. The time was that many of our schools rendered a great service by teaching people how to live and preparing men to preach the gospel. That which was once an asset has become a liability. A great many students are now coming out of our schools,

having imbibed a mindset which has less than proper respect for God's will. These people are now and will in the future exercise a great influence within the church. The history of our schools is not a pretty picture. Though they may have started out on a sound basis, error crept in and they became detriments. We are now seeing the same thing happen that has happened in the past, yet many aren't concerned.

Many of our schools have now become "devices of Satan." Why so, you may ask?" This becomes very evident when brethren become so loyal to their favorite school that they will go along with virtually anything the school decides to do, even though the same is not upheld by God's word. When loyalty for anything becomes stronger than loyalty to the Lord and His will, that loyalty is evil and an enemy of the one distinctive church of our Lord. In the beginning we defined "false religion" and "True New Testament Christianity." Our objective in this discussion has been that of showing how that false religion is a terrible enemy of true religion, or true Christianity. We want, in the conclusion of our discussion, to point out some things about false religions, and to note some of the same characteristics which are becoming more common within the Lord's church, especially in the past few decades.

SOME IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS

We shall review some things which are common within the false religions of our day, especially those which claim to be Christian and to believe in the Bible as God's word.

Not Based On Truth. Though claims of belief in the Bible are made, actions with regard to teaching and practice prove otherwise. The only religion based on truth in our day is the Lord's church. He built only one church and purchased only one church with His blood. Therefore, every other religion is built upon something other than truth. Such religions are false religions.

The Influence Of Emotions. Emotions play a great part in many false religions. There appears to be a desire to reach an emotional high, which is self-pleasing rather than God-pleasing. Sin is the transgression of God's law (I Jno. 3:4). When one's actions are based on emotions, God's law may be completely overlooked. Subjectiveness often rules the day and God's objective truth is ignored.

Pleasing People, Not God. True Christianity demands of people that they submit to God's will and go about to please Him rather than self. False religions, for the most part, are continually changing. This is not because God's will has changed, but rather that what people want changes. The changes which have come about within denominational religion within the past thirty or forty years have been no less than monumental. This can be traced to changing of the desires of men in religion. Most religion of today, unlike true Christianity, frowns upon that which would have much impact upon lifestyles. Rules and regulations, which are characteristic of the Lord's will, are no longer in, but out. To honest, God-fearing people, the hypocrisy is clearly seen. But a sad thing about it is that when people see the inconsistency in their religion, they often turn away from religion, putting forth no effort to look to God's book to see what is right.

Entertainment Religion. Whereas religion used to be viewed with seriousness for the most part, it has now come to the point of being an activity which is largely designed to entertain. Some religions are now putting on "shows" of various kinds, that have little connection with true religion. Preachers who are known as excellent joke-tellers are in great demand.

Broken Moral Standards. One can find a religion today which will just about suit their likes, regardless of what that person's moral standard is. As mentioned earlier, sexual perverts make a pretense of being religious. Just about any kind of lifestyle is accepted. On and on we could go.

WHAT WE ARE SEEING WITHIN THE LORD'S CHURCH TODAY

The things we have mentioned above can be seen in some measure within the Lord's church. Many will no longer accept the Truth. Emotions have gone wild with some. The better the entertainment the more some of our brethren like it. There are great efforts to give people what they want, rather than submitting to God's will and what He wants. Those who want to walk in "the old paths" (Jer. 6:16) are ridiculed and charged with disrupting the "peace." Subjectivism holds greater sway with many than does a "thus saith the Lord."

Only the Lord knows just how much hurt is being brought to bear upon Christ and His church. It is a matter of fact that people can speak truthfully of the hypocrisy which is now seen within the church. How, I often ask, can our brethren be serving as enemies of the church, due to their practice of false religion? How can brethren equate the false religions of men with the Lord and His church, the only true religion in our day? As to how they can do such, I don't know, but I do know that we have a great many warnings in the New Testament about such times as we are now seeing. May the Lord bless His faithful servants!

- - *Walter W. Pigg*

GLORY TO THE GOOD SINGERS!

(And everyone else be quiet).

Rusty Stark

SPECIAL GROUP SINGING IN THE WORSHIP ASSEMBLY

In our corporate worship services (those done corporately, as a body), faithful brethren know and agree that singing is to be congregational. Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19, command all to sing.

Furthermore, in our corporate assembly we do not seek to showcase the talents of our best singers. "Miking," giving microphones to certain ones in the audience, so that their voices stand out is wrong. It has no scriptural authority, and it places emphasis on what is pleasing to our ears instead of what is pleasing to God. While we must be concerned that our worship edify, teach, and admonish others (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), we are not the primary audience, God is (Jno. 4:24). So we do not seek to please ourselves, we seek to please God.

Selecting the best singers and enhancing the volume of their voices is only a half-step from asking those with poor voices or no musical training to sing softly or not to sing at all. It would be sin to try to quiet or silence those with less talent just because we want something that sounds better to us.

SPECIAL GROUP SINGING OUTSIDE THE WORSHIP ASSEMBLY

There is a difference between singing that is done as an assembled body and that which is done

outside the assembly. However, some of the very things that make special group singing wrong in the worship assembly make it just as wrong outside the worship assembly.

If we do not use spiritual things in our assemblies to showcase talents of men, why would it suddenly become fitting to do so outside our assemblies? Concert performances invariably select the better singers and showcase their musical talents. So these types of performances are glory to men. To deny this is to bury our heads in the sand. Not only do these performances show off the talents of certain ones, they also set up a situation in which other Christians with less talent are expected to be quiet and just listen. In essence we are saying to some, “Don’t join in the singing of these spiritual songs, the good singers are singing now.” If it is wrong to try to quiet or silence the worship of some in the assembly, why is it right outside the assembly? Where is the biblical authorization (Col. 3:17)?

Some claim these concerts are authorized by the biblical idea of edifying one another. However, all of us singing together is God’s plan for edifying one another in song (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Are we to think that concert performances, that God never mentioned, can edify others better than what God’s word does set forth — everyone singing to one another? There is just no justification for substituting something that better pleases our ears for what God has set forth in his word.

Concert singers may sincerely think they are singing to edify the listeners, and I do not question their motives. The question is this: Why set it up as a concert and expect some not to sing, when all of us singing together teaches and admonishes just as well? Concerts let the good singers sing, and everyone else must be quiet.

QUESTIONS:

What about Paul and Silas singing praises to God in prison (Acts 16:25)? “ The prisoners heard them,” and possibly the jailer. This is not a parallel to a concert performance where people are there for the purpose of listening to the good singers. The Jailer and the prisoners did not go there to be entertained or even edified by hearing Christians sing songs of praise. Paul and Silas did not go to the jail that night to perform for those inmates. (By the way, if this passage teaches us anything, it teaches that the singing of spiritual songs outside the worship assembly should still be done as praise to God, in other words, as worship).

Are you saying that every time a spiritual song is sung outside the corporate worship all who hear it must join in? No. But there is a great difference between a group singing at a nursing home, glad if the listeners join in, and a concert performance where listeners are supposed to be quiet.

If it is proper for someone to choose not to sing along with a spiritual song outside of worship, why cannot a whole audience choose to just listen while a choir performs? Here is a false front set up by the advocates of choir performances. They give the impression that if I teach against choir performances I am taking away people’s right to choose to listen. This is not so. Advocates of these types of performances are the ones taking away the choice of people. They want to set up a situation in which Christian people cannot choose to join in with the singing of spiritual songs. With a choir performance, one cannot choose whether to join in or just listen. In a choir performance the only choice is either just listen or stay at home.

Here is what concert advocates are really saying: *Tonight our senses will be pleased and excited by listening to spiritual songs being sung by good, well-trained, well-rehearsed singers. Those who like to sing to God and join in when spiritual songs are sung should make up their minds ahead of time, either choose not to sing or don’t come.* I choose to believe that brethren

have not thought this through, and do not intend to say such highhanded things, but is high time we see this activity for what it is.

CONCLUSION

Concerts are for the showcasing of men's talents. They use spiritual things, not in a way that brings greater glory to God or greater edification to men, but simply to satisfy our aesthetic desires, please our senses, and bring glory to men. So – **GLORY TO THE GOOD SINGERS! (And everyone else be quiet).**

1495 E. Empire, Benton Harbor, MI 49822

Has your address changed? If so, let us know. - *Editor*

Olympics, A Sexual Orgy?

From information made available by Jeff Johnson, CNSNews.com Congressional Bureau Chief, February 04, 2002, one might conclude that the Olympics which took place in Salt Lake City were designed to be **A Sexual Orgy**.

A decision, attributed to the Salt Lake Organizing Committee (SLOC), was made to supply 12,000 birth control devices (I still do not prefer to the use the “c” word which is so commonly used now) to “Olympic athletes attending the winter games.” The above article states, “The official Olympic medical supplier, Cardinal Health, donated 12,000 [c word] to be made available to athletes through first aide stations.” Due to the number of the devices made available, it would seem that a great deal more than what one referred to as “casual sex” was expected of the athletes.

It is not in the least far-fetched to think that the SLOC was expecting promiscuous sexual behavior and that they were taking steps to encourage such. The cost of providing security for the Olympics was many millions of dollars. If sexual activity took place to the extent that seems to be implied by the SLOC, it would amount to the taxpayers footing a huge bill to provide safety for the people while the athletes engaged in a sexual orgy.

Within the past several years there has been much said about “safe sex,” and people have been encouraged to engage in such. Yet, the so-called safe sex has not prevented sexually transmitted disease, and the number of out of wedlock births has continued to increase. As my Dad used to say, “society has gone to the dogs.”

The proponents of abstinence are often looked upon very critically, by those whose moral standards have largely disappeared. When God is put out of the picture, immorality rules the day. We have indeed “come a long way” from the moral standards which the greater portion of our society used to respect. God's word has much to say about sexual activity, pointing out that such is permissible only between a husband and a wife. But as we forget God, the image of Sodom and Gomorrah is becoming more distinct on the horizon. - - *Editor*

“How Long Halt Ye Between Two Opinions?”

Bob Spurlin

Ahab, king of Israel, saw Elijah, the prophet, coming to him and he said to the prophet, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” Elijah replied, “I have not troubled Israel, but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou has followed Baalim” (I Kings 18:18).

Ahab’s house, coupled with his wicked wife, Jezebel, had corrupted the nation of Israel with idolatry and in particular the worship of Baal. Elijah challenges King Ahab to gather the children of Israel together at Mount Carmel. Elijah further challenges Ahab to assemble the four hundred-fifty prophets of Baal, which was hand picked by the king, to meet in a contest with the prophet of God. Elijah went to question the children of Israel and said, **“How long halt ye between two opinions?** If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word” [emphasis added]” (I Kings 18:21).

Elijah could see that idolatry had poisoned the children of Israel. The false prophets perpetuated this act, and ultimately Ahab. Elijah challenges God’s people to decide, or take a stand for God, or Baal. They were unwilling to decide. How tragic. Elijah and the four hundred-fifty false prophets engaged in a contest where the prophet Elijah, through the one God, was victorious. The false prophets saw who was the true God (I Kings 18:25-30).

The likeness of the people of Israel and God’s people today have many parallels, not the least of which is fickleness and wavering when it comes to making candid choices for truth, right and certainty.

CONCERNING CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

The church must not waver when Christian schools seek to manipulate the local church, by being included in the church budget. We should be equally concerned about our sons/daughters when we place them in their care. Like ancient Israel that refused to stand against the false prophets. So, today too many schools in our brotherhood are subjecting our young people to error as they are placed under the care of “so-called” teachers and professors at our brotherhood schools. I will not make a blanket condemnation of all our Christian schools. Jesus said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Mt. 7:16).

While attending Christian schools in the late sixties it was my opinion that I received an excellent education and never suspected error being taught. Accordingly, they have called upon me to raise money, and also schools of preaching, over an extend period. We gladly did so and urged others as well. During the process of time news came to our attention that some of these schools were not worthy of our financial support. I had numerous conversations with Christian parents, who wept about their son/daughter who lost faith at a particular Christian College. God, the author of all righteousness, will hold those accountable that seduced the souls of our children (Acts 17:31). When one speaks out about these matters, he is usually looked upon as negative. Yet, if we want to save the souls of our children and grandchildren, we must exercise great urgency in view of the error they will face. Elders should be equally aware of the cunning and subtle

approach allowing the college to become a part of the church budget.

Where is the scripture that authorizes the church to place the college in its budget? One approach has been to sell the church on the idea that the support will go to the Bible department. Even if such were scripturally permissible, which I fail to find, “To what part of the Bible department would it go?” Several students, from different Christian colleges have informed me that students have literally protested the error being crafted on their college campus. It is my humble opinion that we should monitor any Christian school today. Our young men have some excellent schools of preaching available, if the church wishes to prepare them to preach the gospel. Conversely, some schools of preaching should be avoided due to the error being taught. It is no secret that the schools of preaching are producing far more preachers than the Christian Colleges. We must guard our sons and daughters against thinking that attending a brotherhood school means that they should blindly accept all that is taught. We should not accept everything *carte blanche* just because the preacher stands in our pulpit. The ancient Bereans were wise because they searched the scriptures to see if the spoken words were accurate (Acts 17:11). Conversely, brethren operating a school does not mean that we can trust the accuracy of their words when taught in the classroom.

RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

How long will be we indecisive when it comes to the **recreation and entertainment** mania plaguing the church? Too often we are seeing the church reach further into the field of recreation and cross lines we have no business crossing. Many churches in our fellowship have built recreational structures under the name of “Family Life Centers.” The first time I saw a “Family Life Center” was at the First Baptist Church in 1981. Shortly thereafter many churches of Christ began to copy their denominational neighbors. [It was Nov. 19, 1978, that “Madison takes a Giant Step Forward” in introducing their “Family Life - Educational Center!” This was a real beginning among brethren. *Editor*].

Millions of dollars are spent from the church treasury that provide basketball courts, volleyball, a place for “Christian aerobics,” which is beyond my understanding, a tract for walking, etc. Some brethren feel the church of the Lord must compete with sectarians by providing entertainment and recreation for its membership. The New Testament offers no authority for such foolhardy things. I do not believe in a “Church of Christ softball team,” anymore than a “Church of Christ bass fishing team.” Fishing is not wrong for members of the church, hunting, and playing softball is not wrong within itself. Dear reader, it is not the responsibility of the church to provide such recreation. There is a threefold duty or responsibility well defined by scripture: (1) Preach the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). (2) Edify the church (Acts 20:32; Eph. 4:16). (3) Care for the needy, widows, orphans, etc. (James 1:27; Gal. 6:10). Only in these comprehensive areas is the church authorized to work and use its financial resources.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

How much longer will we remain mute about the role of women in the church? During the last two decades or so we have seen serious inroads of women playing a more prominent role in churches of Christ. Many have asserted that her role has been seriously limited while others suggest that there should be an open mind to what she may do including her participation in the public worship. The initiation of the Nashville Jubilee had many goals initially. Among them was the use of women in the public assembly. An invitation given to sister Jane McWhorter to the Nash-

ville Jubilee to speak, she assumed, was to a group of women. When men began to wander in, this knowledgeable sister refused to teach the class due to men being present. Sister McWhorter, a noted author of Christian books, and married to a faithful gospel preacher, was to be commended for her action.

We have seen this kind of thing and other digressive practices “wax worse and worse,” as Paul declared (2 Tim. 3:13). Paul said further, “But I suffer (permit) not a woman to teach, or to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” The phrase “over the man,” modifies “to teach” and “to usurp.” She cannot teach over the man, nor can she usurp over the man. She may in a class situation ask a question, provided she is not exercising authority over the male teacher.

Scripture mandates that women teach children and other women, but deity places a prohibition upon the woman when it comes to women teaching men in mixed audiences. God forbids women preachers, elders, deacons, etc. May we hasten to point out that Philip “had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy” (Acts 21:9). The daughters were teachers of the word of God, but there is no indication that they exercised authority over men, which is not allowed. We are hearing more and more about women: As ushers, waiting on the Lord’s table, making announcements and leading singing. One can easily understand where all this is heading. Those who would change the order of things which God has approved would take us even farther into the mire and morass of apostasy.

Jeremiah’s refrain is clear, “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein” (Jer. 6:16). Elijah urged the children of Israel to take a stand when he said, “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, then follow him, and if Baal, follow him...” (I Kings 18:21). The response of Israel was no response at all. Again, the similarity between Israel and the church of today is uncanny in their indifference. We urge those who are engaged in unauthorized activities to repent and return to the “old paths.” Conversely, the faithful must always be “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).

122 Brooks Ln. Somerville, AL 35670

Editor’s Note:

Brother Bob Spurlin, the author of the above article, is a great example of a servant of the Lord who is not willing to give up his serving, even under the most adverse circumstances. After preaching the gospel some 30 years, brother Spurlin came down with the debilitating disease of multiple sclerosis six years ago.

Bob wrote a book, *Tackling Life’s Troubles*, which dealt with his circumstances. He has now written another book, *DIAL 911: Essentials To Living Life In The 21st Century*. The proceeds from this book, as was true of the other book, are to help him with his severe medical expenses. The book sells for \$11.50, postpaid. A case of 30 is \$300.00.

Bro. Spurlin is bedfast but is able to write by the use of a device which converts his voice into print. I just now talked with Bob and he said their out-of-pocket expenses this past year were the greatest ever. By purchasing a book one can do a good deed and also receive some worthwhile reading material. Our brother Spurlin is a sound gospel preacher and is still doing a good work in spreading the truth, even though he is working under very adverse circumstances. Many would have given up under similar circumstances, but not Bob! The address to order a book: 2101 Glenwood Dr., Hartselle, AL 35640. E-mail: < PrechTeach@Aol.Com >

**Second Annual
Banner of Truth Lectures
Murray, KY - June 24-27
Theme: Church Growth
As God Would Have it**

Listed below are some of the general subjects to be discussed during the lectures. Subjects may be discussed from a positive or negative standpoint or from both.

1. The Potential of Youth. 2. God Approved Fellowship. 3. *“The Sincere Milk of The Word.”*
4. A Praying Church. 5. Cheerful Giving. 6. Effective Leadership. 7. Growth Among Muslims. 8. Local Evangelism. 9. Benevolence. 10. Scriptural Worship. 11. Training Men to Preach. 12. God-Approved Homes. 13. God Intended His Church to Grow. 14. False Fellowship. 15. Contending for The Faith. 16. Material Motivation. 17. Entertaining Them In. 18. Foreign Mission Work. 19. The Printed Page. 20. *“Our Schools.”* 21. Disease of Indifference. 22. A Good Influence. 23. Scriptural Marriages. 23. Scriptural Work of The Church. 24. The Heavenly Reward. 25. Personal Work. 26. Church Growth Seminars. 27. Choruses. 28. Subject yet to be chosen.

Confirmed Speakers

Alan Adams — Dean Buchanan — Ken Burlison --- Roger Campbell — Freddie Clayton — Lindon Ferguson — Gilbert Gough — Richard Guill — Virgil Hale — Tim Hester — David Lemmons — Walter Pigg — Garland Robinson — Joe Spangler — Don Waggoner — Bill Willard.— Lenard Hogan

We trust that we will have specific subjects and speakers assigned by the time we get the March issue of *Banner of Truth* in the mail.

We encourage our readers in traveling distance of Murray, Kentucky to make plans to attend the lectures and encourage others to do so. We look forward to an even better lectureship this year, and we plan four additional lessons, and perhaps other speakers. - - *Editor*

Brother Ben Vick and His Position on Choruses

Let me say in the beginning that unless brother Ben comes up with something different from what he has in the past, we will not be devoting more space to the discussion in *Banner of Truth*. We believe the space and time could be used more profitably.

However, since we haven't responded to the latest writings of Ben, and know not what he may yet still write, we are letting it be known that we are **not at all fearful** of what Ben describes, referring to himself, as *“the pungent style of my writing,”*

Those who do not receive Ben's bulletin may be at some loss to understand what has transpired thus far in the discussion. But we are using this means for the benefit of those who do receive his bulletin.

The discussion began when brother Michael Willey wrote an article, "The Danger Of Choruses," which was carried in the [Aug. 2001, issue of Banner of Truth](#). The article sets forth in the beginning the practice under consideration. That practice: The hosting of choral groups from "Christian schools," by many congregations. Also, "These performances generally take place prior to or immediately after worship services, and generally involves the singing of spiritual songs." Purpose of discussion? "To examine some of the dangers involved with these activities."

Bro. Willey points out that Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 authorize congregational singing, but not choruses or choirs.

Bro. Vick came out with an article, "The Danger of Choruses' Reviewed," in the Oct. 21, 2001, issue of *The Informer*, his bulletin. Ben informed me that they were not passing out the Aug. 2001, issue of *Banner of Truth*, because of the Willey article. Ben also told me that because I carried the article in BOT, that I had "stepped over the line on this one." More than once Ben has referred to "Pigg and Willey" as opposing his position. And, we do.

In the above article brother Willey (and I) were criticized rather severely. He makes the accusation of judging and lists "(Matt. 7:1-2)." Yet, he gives not one bit of scriptural authority to show us wrong.

In the [Dec. 2001, issue of BOT](#) we carried an article of detailed response to Ben's "Review" article. This article by brother Willey has received several responses, and not a one clearly disagrees.

With one exception, which we shall note later, Ben has not produced one verse of scripture to uphold his position that choruses, choirs, quartets, solos, etc. are approved of God when performing by the singing of spiritual songs. Ben has twisted more than one thing said in bro. Willey's article. He implies that we do not believe worship can be enjoyed. We **have not** said that. He implies that we believe all singing except in the congregational sense is wrong. We **have not** said that. He implies that we believe it is sin to call God's name at any time other than in worship. We **have not** said that. Ben knows the facts on these matters.

Instead of turning to the New Testament to show that we are wrong in opposing the use of choruses or choirs, Ben has made several statements or used terms with reference to us that appear to be used to strengthen his position. Otherwise, we cannot understand why they were used. Note some of them: (1) "Running past Jerusalem." (2) "Crankified." (3) "Crankiness gone to seed." (4) "Willey and Pigg" object to long quote from N.B. Hardeman. (5) Willey's article "is not true." (6) "The extreme view these brethren teach on this matter."

Ben offers what would appear to be proof that his position is right. (1) A lengthy quote from brother N.B. Hardeman. (2) Ben's experience at the Georgia Christian School. (3) "brother Joe Warlick said:... *Stark-Warlick Debate*, p. 60." (4) Ben's own proclamation that he is right. (5). The "pungent style" of Ben's writing. (6) If I will keep my "view to yourself [myself]," Ben will fellowship me.

We turn to another matter, the verse of Scripture produced by Ben, referred to earlier as "the exception." After using seven pages of *The Informer* to try to uphold his position, without the use of scripture, Ben comes forth with what he may think is a clincher. I don't profess to know why he has waited so long. If you were asked to guess what that verse is, just what would you guess?

Well, here it is. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25). Believe me, I'm not being facetious in the least, but dead serious — To attempt to equate Paul and Silas singing praises to God in that prison, with the "performance" of a chorus or choir, as is often done today, says that a person has a real problem. If one could believe that in the case of Paul and Silas, word was spread far and wide that two excellent

singers were going to “perform” at the jail, and people from all around were encouraged to come and join in with the prisoners as listeners to the entertainment and worship of these men, there might seem to be some semblance of a parallel. But who could believe such? I frankly believe that this is an example sheer desperation, grabbing at even less than a straw.

In a letter to me, dated Feb. 1, 2002, Ben says, “...but no Scripture has been give to show that participation in a special singing group outside the worship assembly is sin. Every verse used has been to uphold congregational singing...” Our main point has been that there are verses which uphold congregational singing, but we don’t find such for the choruses. Ben, a debater, should know that it is his responsibility to come up with verses which uphold his position. It is God’s word that authorizes, not silence or absence of verses.

Ben has mentioned debating a couple of times. I wrote Ben, the following, asking him if he would be interested in debating: “When the Scriptures are silent on a religious activity, people have a right to engage in that activity.” I stated further, “Let me know what you are willing to do. We might work up some kind of debate. The proposition could be shortened to say: Silence of the Scriptures authorize religious practices. We could also discuss instrumental music under that proposition.” Needless to say, Ben is not interested.

Ben could have saved a great deal of time and effort if in response to brother Willey’s article, he had simply pointed out from the New Testament that brother Willey’s position (and mine) was error. I have never professed to be a debater, and I would not want to be one if it involved twisting what an opponent said in order to make a point for myself. I believe Bible questions should be settled by God’s word, not by what a man thinks, feels, pronounces, or holds as an opinion.

As I have written Ben, I wish he would give this matter some serious thought. If he can show that his position is upheld by God’s word, then I will be obligated to heed His word, and would want to do so. It is my belief that there are many dangers involved in the use of choruses and that we should be aware of the same. Thus far I’ve not seen Scripture to justify their use either in or outside the regular worship services. But as stated earlier, it is not my intention to continue using my time and the space in BOT in a continued discussion of this matter.

- - Walter W. Pigg

READERS’ RESPONSE

“I would make three observations about Ben’s 10 Feb. 02 article: 1. He has neither a logical nor a scriptural leg to stand on in his defense of the choir issue. 2. In his heart of hearts, he knows that he has been caught with his hand in the cookie jar but is too stubborn to admit it. His Informer arguments are nothing more than grasping at straws. 3. I doubt that any other special music loving brother can offer a better defense than Ben. It may be that this is a golden opportunity for the truth to be presented to others who have never considered the issue in light of scriptural authorization - **Richard Crutchfield.**” - **KY.** (*We, too, believe this is a question which needs to be seriously studied. This, like a lot of other questions should be studied from the standpoint of what the Book teaches and not what is popular or in practice.* - Editor).

“Would you please send your wonderful publication to me and two of my brethren. Banner of Truth is just as the name suggests, it tells the truth of God’s Holy and divine word, something that is lacking today!! Please continue to print the things that need to be read and heard, not the things

that people want to hear! So many are having their ears tickled and what's so awful is that it is being done in the one true church of our Lord - **Jennie Barnett.**" - **AL.** (*You certainly hit the nail on the head when you suggest that people need to hear God's word, not that they want to hear. We need many who are willing to stand by their convictions in upholding the truth and opposing evil of every sort. The opportunity before is great! - Editor.*)

"Dear bro. Walter, Can you e-mail the Banner of Truth to me? Thanks -**Michael Leong.**" - **Malaysia.** (*Michael, I don't try to send the BOT by e-mail. I just don't have the time to do it. I do try to send a bundle of back issues, to cover a year or more. - Editor.*) **P**

"I have been receiving your paper, Banner of Truth, and enjoying it very much. I appreciate an article in the August 2001 issue, entitled, 'THE DANGER OF CHORUSES,' by brother Michael Willey. I was visiting with another gospel preacher here in Ohio, and he mentioned an article in another publication that troubled him. The article was written by Ben F. Vick, Jr.. The article was in 'The Informer,' October 21, 2001...The article is entitled, 'THE DANGER OF CHORUSES' REVIEWED, and of course it is a review of brother Willey's article....The best explanation I could give you of brother Vick's review is that it is both unreasonable and illogical....I, too, am troubled by brother Vick's review!....- **Dennis J. Sargent.**" - **OH.** (*Thanks for relaying the information. I have received brother Ben's review and have discussed the matter with him. - Editor.*)

"Your paper reach us 'Banner of Truth' Vol. 8, No. 8. Your are doing a good work and I appreciate it. I understand that your paper is sent free to interested persons. Please include my name on your mailing list. ...Your article, 'An Urgent Need for Courage in these Most Perilous Times' is an encouraging message. It encourages to earnestly contend for the faith, to live the Christian life, to boldly preach and teach 'all the counsel of God,' to respect God's law on fellowship, upholding God's moral standard in our ungodly and morally corrupt society. If there was a time when the followers of Christ need courage, it is now.'.....- **Simeon A. Balbag.**" - **Philippines.**

Lectures on Islam

I have been asked by the church in Gatlingburg, TN, to present a series of four lessons on Islam. Date: April 21-22. Three lessons on Sunday and one lesson Monday evening. This a subject about which we need to be well informed. We encourage people in driving distance to be with us.
- **Editor.**

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<http://www.hcis.net/users/dlemmons/BOTlist.htm>

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