

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO HUMANISM

by

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INTRODUCTION

“Absolute truth belongs only to one class of humans...the class of absolute fools”(Montagu, 1981, p. 4-C). These are the piercing words of Ashley Montagu, famous evolutionist/humanist from Princeton University. Dr. Montagu wanted to make it clearly understood that truth is at best relative and that anyone who states differently is categorized as a fool! Others have, of course, joined Dr. Montagu in this kind of thinking. Consider, for example, Sir Julian Huxley's comments: “We must now be prepared to abandon the god hypothesis and its corollaries like divine revelation or unchanging truths, and to change over from a supernatural to a naturalistic view of human destiny” (1965 p. 101).

Why? What could cause men to make such statements? The answer, it seems, lies in an ever-increasing attitude of “supreme self-sufficiency”—a burning desire to “cut ourselves from the apron strings of God” as it were. It's the old “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” attitude. The late paleontologist from Harvard, George Gaylord Simpson, adequately expressed it in these words:

Man stands alone in the universe, a unique product of a long, unconscious, impersonal material process with unique understanding and potentialities. These he owes to no one but himself, and it is to himself that he is responsible. He is not the creature of uncontrollable and undeterminable forces, but is his own master. He can and must decide and manage his own destiny (1953, p. 155).

Richard Leakey, another famous paleontologist of our day, echoed those exact sentiments in his now-famous book, *Origins*, when he said:

Unquestionably mankind **is** special, and in many ways, too.... There is now a critical need for a deep awareness that, no matter how special we are as an animal, we are still part of the greater balance of nature.... During that relatively brief span evolutionary pressures forged a brain capable of profound understanding of matters animate and inanimate: the fruits of intellectual and technological endeavour in this latter quarter of the 20th century give us just an inkling of what the human mind can achieve. The potential is enormous, almost infinite. **We can, if we so choose, do virtually anything**: arid lands will become **fertile**; terrible diseases will be cured by genetic engineering; touring other planets will become routine; we may even come to understand how the human mind works (1977, p. 256, first emp. in orig., latter emp. added).

But is that the only, or even the major, reason for this “debunking of God” in favor of a purely human vantagepoint? No indeed. There is more—much more. It is not just that man is convinced he can

make it on his own, though that in itself would be bad enough. It is the attitude of which Paul spoke in Romans 1:28, where people “refused to have God in their knowledge.” It has much to do with those who “exchange the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). It is a **willful** determination on the part of man **not** to have God in his mind or in his life, and instead to replace Him with something—anything—non-divine, non-supernatural. It is a concerted effort to escape any ultimate responsibility, and instead to find a way to allow each person to “do his own thing.” Listen to the words of Aldous Huxley from his article, “Confessions of a Professed Atheist”:

I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently, assumed it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.... The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics; he is also concerned to prove there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do.... For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom (1966, 3:19).

Statements like these not only leave little to the imagination, but also show the absolute determination of some to live without God, no matter what the cost. It is difficult not to be reminded of the people of whom Paul spoke in Ephesians 2:11-13 who found themselves in the position of “having no hope, and without God in the world.” Such hopelessness is evident in statements like this one from Richard Leakey: “There is no law that declares the human animal to be different as seen in this broad biological perspective, from any other animal. There is no law that declares the human species to be immortal” (1977, p. 256). Such thinking is the warped product of what has been called “the void of humanism” (Stearsman, 1981, pp. 490-491). It is the goal of this treatise to document the tenets of humanism, and then to explain what Christians can do to actively oppose this false system.

THE TENETS OF HUMANISM

There is nothing left to the imagination when it comes to humanism. This system of thought has been so well defined and so oft’ discussed that it is an easy matter to identity its goals, aims, objectives and teachings. In 1933, and then forty years later in 1973, humanists set forth their credo in *Humanist Manifesto I* and *Humanist Manifesto II* (Prometheus Press, 1973). In 1980, humanists once again elucidated their beliefs in the now-famous document, *A Secular Humanist Declaration* (1980).

Humanism is not just a system of thought that places a high importance on humans (mankind). Far more than that, humanism is a very subtle, disarming, and sophisticated way of saying “atheism.” The *Humanist Manifesto II* makes that perfectly clear: “As non-theists, we begin with humans, not God, nature not deity. ...humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves” (1973, p. 16). The *Humanist Manifesto I* is composed of fifteen theses covering such areas as ethics, religion, man’s origin and destiny, etc. It was signed by such men as R. Lester Mondale, relative of former United States Vice-President Walter Mondale, and John Dewey, the celebrated American educator, among others. *Humanist Manifesto II* contains seventeen principles or theses grouped under five major headings: Religion, Ethics, Individual, Democratic Society, and World Community. It was signed by a number of influential people from almost every walk of life, including, among others, Linus Pauling, Isaac Asimov, Francis Crick, Julian Huxley, Antony Flew, Corliss Lamont, and Kai Nielsen. In the preface the proponents stated clearly: “As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons...is an unproved and outmoded faith” (1973, p. 13).

Humanists have “taken aim” at God, religion, the supernatural, and especially the Gospel message, and intend to “shoot to kill.” Consider, for example, statements like this one from humanist philosopher Kai Nielson:

In cultures such as ours, religion is very often an alien form of life to intellectuals. Living as we do in a post-Enlightenment era, it is difficult for us to take religion seriously. The very concept seems fantastic to us.... That people in our age can believe that they have had a personal encounter with God, that they could believe that they have experienced conversion through a “mystical experience of God,” so that they are born again in the Holy Spirit, is something that attests to human irrationality and a lack of sense of reality (1977, 37[3]:46).

Or, consider this statement from Hampton L. Carson as he made his presidential address to the Society for the Study of Evolution:

Since the very beginning of organized society, the purveyors of religious belief have traditionally reserved this area [the origin of life on earth, including man—BT] for themselves. Answers have been sought through revelation, not reason (1971, 22[6]:350).

Julian Huxley, the famous UNESCO biologist, both defended the humanistic system and showed its atheistic content when he said:

I use the word “Humanist” to mean someone who believes that man is just as much a natural phenomenon as an animal or plant; that his body, mind, and soul were not supernaturally created but are products of evolution, and that he is not under the control or guidance of any supernatural being or beings, but has to rely on himself and his own powers (n.d.).

The message is crystal clear. Those people who accept God, His Son, His word, and His salvation are “out of touch with reality, irrational, and unreasonable.” And, as if to add insult to injury, they are the progeny of animals and plants as well!

The *Humanist Manifesto II* is quite clear on a number of important points. There is no misunderstanding humanism, what it teaches and stands for, or what it hopes to accomplish. Consider, for example, these comments on religion:

We believe, however, that traditional or dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence; in our judgment, the dogmas and myths of traditional religions do not do so.... We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race.... Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices. Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the “ghost in the machine” and the “separable soul.” Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces. As far as we know, the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context. There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body. We continue to exist in our progeny and in the way that our lives have influenced others in our culture (1973, pp. 15-17).

Consider also these comments on ethics:

...We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is **autonomous and situational**, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest. To deny this distorts the whole basis of life. Human life has meaning because we create and develop our futures. Happiness and the creative realization of human needs and desires, individually and in shared enjoyment, are continuous themes of humanism. We strive for the good life, here and now. The goal is to pursue life’s enrichment despite debasing forces of vulgarization, commercialization, bureaucratization, and de-humanization.... **Reason and intelligence** are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses. There is no substitute: neither faith nor passion suffices in itself. The controlled use of scientific methods, which have transformed the natural and social sciences since the Renaissance, must be extended further in the solution of human problems (pp. 15-17, emp. in orig.).

Consider lastly these comments on “sexual freedom”:

...In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered “evil.” Without countenancing endless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a **tolerant** one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-styles as they desire. We wish to cultivate the development of a responsible attitude toward sexuality, in which humans are not exploited as sexual objects, and in which

intimacy, sensitivity, respect, and honesty in interpersonal relations are encouraged. Moral education for children and adults is an important way of developing awareness and sexual maturity (pp. 15-17, emp. in orig.).

There you have it. Promises of salvation are “illusory and harmful,” ethics becomes “situational,” and sexual activity between “consenting adults” is acceptable no matter who or what is involved. Sounds like “vice is nice” propaganda, doesn’t it? Abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, and now, even what humanists call the “last taboo” (see Jones, 1981, p. 309)—incest—are perfectly acceptable according to humanism. My, what this system has to recommend itself! As one author put it: “While humanity did not arise from the beasts, Humanism certainly stoops to their level...” (Jones, 1981, p. 309).

Many people simply are not aware that humanism teaches such atrocious concepts. Furthermore, many are not aware that humanism has its own systems of cosmology, soteriology, ethics, and even eschatology (see Morris, n.d.)—all of which stand in direct opposition to the Bible. What, then, should be the Christian’s response to such teachings as set forth by humanists and those sympathetic to their cause? And what may concerned Christians do to actively oppose humanism?

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS HUMANISM

Let me make one thing crystal clear at the outset. **A Christian cannot be a humanist!** It is true that there are those who say they are “Christian humanists” or “religious humanists” (with the term “religious” referring to a God-based religion). But humanism and Christianity are **not** compatible. Paul Kurtz, former editor of the *Humanist* magazine, wrote:

Humanism cannot in any fair sense of the word apply to one who still believes in God as the source and Creator of the universe. Christian Humanism would be possible only for those who are willing to admit that they are atheistic Humanists. It surely does not apply to God-intoxicated believers (1973, p. 177).

Corliss Lamont has gone as far as to state: “Passing to the New Testament, we see plainly that its theology, taken literally, is totally alien to the Humanist viewpoint” (1977, p. 50). Odd that the humanists can see what some Christians cannot. Christianity and humanism are 180° opposed to each other. They are mutually exclusive, diametrically opposed systems. Humanism states that matter is eternal, that there is no God, that man and his environment are the result of chance, evolutionary forces, that ethics is situational, that no one group has absolute truth, that there is no life after death, that views of salvation are

illusory and harmful, that man is the most important thing in the Universe, that man has no soul, that there is no heaven or hell, and so on.

Christ, on the other hand, teaches through His Word the exact opposite of these things. The Bible speaks often of an eternal God, man's immortal soul, heaven, hell, a promised and planned salvation, the absoluteness of Truth, morals based on that Truth, etc. The Lord Himself recognized, during His tenure on this Earth, the leanings of people toward humanism with its heavy dependence on only those things that can be examined empirically. Pity the people of Jesus' day. They were like the humanists of today—scientifically precocious, but spiritually retarded. Jesus said:

...When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say, "There cometh a shower;" and so it cometh to pass. And when ye see a south wind blowing, ye say, "There will be a scorching heat:" and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven, but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time? (Luke 12:54-56).

These people could read the scientific signs, but refused to read the spiritual signs. While they saw themselves as intellectual giants, they were in reality spiritual dwarfs. Paul wrote of such men. He said:

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He that taketh the wise in their craftiness: and again, the Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain. Wherefore let no one glory in men (1 Corinthians 3:19-21).

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (Romans 1:22).

Pity the people of our day who fall into the same trap. While the humanist is busy measuring, weighing, numbering, calculating, and classifying, he has "left undone the weightier things of the law" (Matthew 23:23).

Humanists have failed to comprehend one of the greatest of all truths, that the "fear of the Lord" is both "the beginning of knowledge" and "the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). True wisdom is in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30). He alone is the way, the Truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). It is His Truth that will make us free (John 8:32) and protect us from the "philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men" that is able to spoil us (Colossians 2:8). Furthermore, the Christian system places man in his proper place in the Universe as a specially created being (Genesis 1:26,27) made a little lower than God (Psalm 8:4-5). He is not "up from the slime" as humanism teaches through its false concept of evolution. In addition, Christianity plainly teaches that ethics cannot be situ-

ational, but instead always must be based on God's Word, since in that Word we find "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). Far from being situational, the ethics system of the Bible is governed by the revelation given to us by the Creator. Prohibitions against such things as humanism advocates (divorce, homosexuality, extra-marital and pre-marital sexual activity, etc.) are frequent in the divinely inspired text (1 Corinthians 6:9-19; Romans 1:26-32; Matthew 5:27; 19:9; Genesis 2:24; etc.). The wisdom man values so highly God often sets at naught (1 Corinthians 3:19-21; 2:6; 1:19-21). The Bible urges us to pray often (1 Thessalonians 5:17), with the assurance that we will be heard by our God (Matthew 7:7-8). Humanism denies these things. The Bible warns us against "friendship with the world which is enmity with God" (James 4:4), and then promises us instead the "abundant life" (John 10:10) through Christ. Jesus Himself promised eternal life to those who were faithful to God (John 17:3; Matthew 10:32-33; John 14:1-3,23-24).

Why do we find the world in the state it is in today? Tim LaHaye, in his book, *The Battle for the Mind*, says: "Our present society is in a state of moral decay, not because the majority of Americans love degeneracy, but because the influence of humanism has been greater on our culture than the influence of the church" (1980, p. 189). Christ said:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on a stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:13-16).

We, as God's people, are to uphold that which is right and oppose that which is wrong, and in so doing set an example for all around us to see. We must rise up and oppose humanism because its teachings are contrary to the teachings of the Bible. We must come to understand, and help others to understand, the folly of human "wisdom" such as is found in humanism.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to naught. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:19-21).

Human wisdom always leads away from God if not founded on, guarded by, and subject to biblical revelation. Human wisdom is at war with God (Romans 8:7), and is foolishness as far as God is concerned (1 Corinthians 3:19-20). In the long run, it will come to nought (1 Corinthians 2:6). We must help people to see that through the false and deceptive philosophy of humanism, the god of this world has blinded the minds of many (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), so that they cannot see God's truth. We must help people to see the saving grace of God found only in Christ (Galatians 5:1).

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO HUMANISM

What, then, should be the Christian's response to humanism, and its attendant evils? It is obvious that some response on the part of the Christian is demanded. But, practically speaking, what is that response? I would like to suggest the following:

First, Christians should know both what humanism is and what it teaches. Common sense tells us that we cannot teach what we do not know. Likewise, we cannot knowledgeably oppose that which we do not understand. Our ignorance may well be one of the best tools the humanist possesses. If we do not understand the evils of humanism, we are likely to sit by quietly as they continue. It behooves each and every Christian to learn about this insidious dogma, and then to oppose it both publicly and privately. But how shall we learn humanism's tenets? One way, of course, is to purchase and study the writings of today's popular humanistic writers. Men and women like Isaac Asimov, Garrett Hardin, Paul Kurtz, Ayn Rand, and others have written frequently on humanism. Since they are (or have been) among the dogma's leading advocates, we should study their materials to learn what they are advocating. Another way of educating ourselves is to attend programs designed specifically for that purpose. It now is possible to attend lectures, seminars, and other such programs whose sole purpose is to acquaint us with the goals, aims, and objectives of humanism. Good books on humanism also are available, and are written from a perspective that compares the false teachings of humanism with the correct teachings of God's Word. We should avail ourselves of each of these avenues of instruction, which will better equip us to oppose humanism.

Second, Christians should understand that humanism is undermining the basic values on which America was built. Francis Schaeffer stated in his book, *A Christian Manifesto*: “The whole structure of our society is being attacked and destroyed. It is being given an entirely opposite base which gives exactly opposite results.” Humanism is not innocuous, and thus something that may co-exist quietly with basic Christian values. These two world views are diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive. Schaeffer was correct when he observed:

We must realize that this view will with inevitable certainty always bring forth results which are not only relativistic, and not only wrong, but which will be inhuman, not only for other people, but for our children and grandchildren, and for our spiritual children. It will always bring forth what is inhuman, for with its false views of total reality it not only does not have a basis for the uniqueness and dignity of the individual person, but it is totally ignorant as to what, and who, Man is (1981, p. 132).

Christians must speak out, and must act when the need arises, to oppose humanism. And there are times when, to use Dr. Schaeffer’s words, “We must not be satisfied with mere words” (1981, p. 132). There are times when we must involve ourselves in the political/sociological arena. If we are the salt of the Earth, then we can do no less. We must present ourselves before school principals, school teachers, school board members, or anyone else who threatens the well-being of our families and our country as a result of the teaching of humanism. We must actively participate in government, if need be. We can vote. We can, in a non-violent manner, protest. In short, we can do anything within the boundaries of law to oppose humanism. In fact, we **must** do exactly that.

Third, Christians should oppose humanism by taking a firm stand against this false system, even if adverse consequences follow. Peter made it clear that Christians ought always to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29) in such cases when the laws of men conflict with the law of God. This certainly is the case in regard to humanism. Humanism reigns supreme in many areas of government today. Numerous examples could be offered. The Supreme Court’s decision of January 22, 1973 to allow infant murder (abortion) is just one such example. Christians must oppose such atrocities, even when those atrocities are permitted by the law of the land. Early Christians died because they would not obey the state in civil matters. They gave their lives freely because they understood Peter’s meaning in Acts 5:29. There is never a

time when man's law supercedes God's law! As Schaeffer noted, "The bottom line is that at a certain point there is not only the right, but the duty, to disobey the state" (1981, p. 93).

There may well be times when Christians have to take a stand on the Word of God that ultimately will place them squarely at odds with civil law, and possibly cause them persecution of one kind or another (imprisonment, fines, etc.). In such instances, Christians have no option but to do that which is right in God's sight, knowing that He will not abandon us in such times. It never is right to do wrong. Peter spoke of such things in 1 Peter 2:15-16 when he said, "For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God." Regardless of what the world may do, or what civil law may say, Christians live and die under God's law. When that law conflicts with man's law, God's law always must take precedence. Let us never be a people who will count the consequences **first**, and **then** go stand for the Truth. Let us instead be a people who will stand for the Truth, regardless of the consequences.

Fourth, Christians must oppose humanism by proposing and implementing alternatives to humanism. While those at Planned Parenthood encourage willful slaughter of innocent, unborn children through abortion, let us work to see that women around the world have an alternative. If Planned Parenthood offers abortion on demand, let us then offer, on demand, assistance that would allow a woman the option of having her baby in an atmosphere of peace, gentleness, and love. If advocates of euthanasia offer "death with dignity" to those whom society has determined are "unfit to live," let us offer services that show the compassion and kindness only Christ can offer. And let us not merely say "be ye warmed and filled." Instead, let the world see that we are willing to put our money and our energy where our mouth is. Yes, it may be expensive. And yes, it may consume us in both time and energy. But what price may we place on a single human life, when the Lord Himself stated that one human soul is worth more than all the world? We, as Christians, must show the world that we do not just "talk a good game." We must **live** so as to inspire others to see Christ in us. As we do so, even in the face of adverse situations and/or consequences, those around us will see that we are indeed "different," but in a good way. In a world filled with greed, avarice, selfishness, and unethical behavior, what a difference a Christian life could make!

Fifth, we must, at all costs, train our children in the ways of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6). Let us do everything in our power to see to it that our children are protected from the onslaught of humanism. Let us do everything in our power to see to it that the children of others likewise are protected. Nothing, aside from our own souls, should be more precious to us than the souls of our children. If the public schools are overrun with humanism, and if every effort on our part to rectify such a situation has failed, then let us put our children in private schools operated by Christians who will teach them “the way of the Lord more perfectly.” Some will aver, “But we cannot afford it.” To that I reply, “Can we afford **not** to?” We sacrifice daily for things far less important, do we not? Of course, there may well be times when a Christian education is not available. In such cases, let us double our efforts to ensure that the child’s education comes **first** from the home, and then from other sources. Let us **in no case** turn our child’s total education over to the schools, Christian or public. It is clear from the Scriptures that God fully intends for the family unit also to be the unit from which education stems (Deuteronomy 6 and 11).

Let us, as Christians, make every effort to guard our children from the slings and arrows of the Evil One. Our vigilance may save their souls. We must ever be watchful in regard to the music they hear, the movies they view, or the friends they choose. We must never, through indifference or apathy, grow tired of maintaining the vigilance that is so needful when our children are at the times of their lives where they are easily molded and shaped. Humanism, left to its own devices, will go unchecked and will turn our children from their Creator. Eternal vigilance on our part can prevent that. Negligence on our part can encourage it. Let us never be negligent regarding the souls of our children. And, for that matter, let us never be negligent regarding the souls of others as well.

CONCLUSION

“Humanism,” wrote Tim LaHaye, “is a tragic philosophy to live by and a disastrous philosophy to die by” (1980, p. 79). How true. No one lives wrong and dies right (2 Corinthians 5:10). If there ever existed a formula guaranteed to provide a sin-sick life on this Earth, and a home in hell in the life to come, humanism is it. Under the title, “Contemporary Humanism” in the *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Eugene Leggitt made the following observation:

Man is utterly alone. He is condemned to be free and no help can come to him from the outside. He aspires always striving for the impossible which cannot be. Free and alone, he is doomed to frustration and eternal incompleteness (n.d., p. 538).

A better description of the emptiness of humanism it would be hard to imagine. Paul put it this way:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life (Galatians 6:7-8).

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