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THE LOVE VS. LEGALISM ERROR

There is a new theory which is gradually gaining some supporters among our people. I want to warn you to beware of it, for it undercuts several of the most basic principles of our beliefs.

I will call it the “*Love vs. Legalism Theory*.” That is one of the phrases used by its adherents.

The most subtle and deceptive of any error—and therefore the most dangerous—is the one which combines some truth with some error.

Here is a brief summary of what this error teaches: The basic issue is that **being saved is not the putting away of sin, but learning more about the love of God.** To say it another way, the problem is not sin, but ignorance. **When we learn that God is love, we are ready to go to heaven.**

We learn this by viewing the loving life of Christ, who loved us so much that He was willing to die if it might help reveal that love. **Receiving salvation is keyed not to forgiveness of sin and enabled obedience, but only to perceiving the love of God. We need not be concerned about Satan, temptation, sin, or obedience to God’s law. Indeed, any effort to obey God’s law, with Christ’s help or apart from it, is “legalism.”** Christ did not die “to save us,”—for according to this theory, we do not need to be saved from anything other than our ignorance of His loving character.

This insidious theory devastates many cardinal principles of our faith, of which the following are a few:

- 1 - The **law** of God is not important.
- 2 - We do not need to do away with **sin** in order to be saved.
- 3 - Sin is not the transgression of the law.
- 4 - We do not need **enabling grace** to help us

Frequently, **the individual who tried to convert me to his belief said that the concept of one man dying for another was “pagan.” Here are several quotations from the 27-page paper which he handed me.** It is entitled, *Penal Substitution vs. Christus Victor: Understanding the Cross from the Perspective of Grace rather than Legalism.*

The title can be reworded in this way: “*Christ as our punishment-substitute vs. salvation by grace alone: From the perspective of grace alone, rather than [empowered] obedience to the law of God.*”

The entire paper consists almost entirely of speculations and quotations from other men.

The following statements will demonstrate the objective and evil nature of this paper, and the certainty of its author that basic Christianity is of the devil:

“For them [Christians], **the cross** is something terrible. It shows them **a cruel God who accuses and condemns us for something we cannot help and then murders his own son to appease this bloodlust.** They do not see love in the cross; they see something cruel, they see a God who frightens them.”—*Penal Substitution vs. Christus Victor: Understanding the Cross from the perspective of grace rather than legalism, p. 1.*

Shortly afterward, the author states his view of the hated Biblical concept of Christ as our sin-bearer, in these

vicious words:

“You have broken the law because it is impossible to keep it, and so you must have broken it. And because you cannot keep this impossible to keep law you will be charged with death because ‘the penalty for sin is death’ and those are just the rules. God must have blood because the law requires it; there must be a penalty paid. The only payment that would have been enough is sacrificing someone who was the ‘perfect law-keeper’, someone who could live a perfect life without sin. Now that Jesus has been sacrificed God is no longer mad at us for not doing what we can’t do anyway, so we can now come and live with him forever - as long as we are grateful to him for his “mercy” to us.”—*Ibid, pp. 2-3.*

John 3:16 is quoted but not verses 18 to 21. What are the sources for his concept? The references at the end of the paper cite them: Gustaf Aulen (*Christus Victor*), Walter Wink (*Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*), Gilbert Bilezikian (*Beyond Sex Roles*), Eugene Peterson (*The Message*), Nachum Braverman (*Animal Offerings; Slaughter of the Beast*), Richard Rohr (*Der Nackte Gott*), Peter J. Gomes (*from introduction to Pal Tillich’s The Courage to Be*), E. Stanley Jones (*Mahatma Gandhi*), and Jurgen Moltmann (*The Crucified God: the Criticism of Christian Theology*).

I prefer the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. —vf

overcome sin.

5 - The **Old Testament sacrifices** were only meant to show God's love for mankind, and to help them look forward to Christ's later expression of deep love on Calvary.

6 - Christ is not our **sin-bearer**.

7 - Christ is not the **Lamb of God**.

8 - The **atonement** consists only of teaching us the love of God, and nothing more.

9 - There is no **mediation** by a high priest, either in type or antitype, because sin is no longer a problem to be dealt with.

Other essential beliefs are also denied, but the above should give you an idea of where acceptance of this evil theory will carry you, if you accept it.

A fundamental teaching of this error is this: The death of one person cannot save (that is, atone for) another person.

That summarizes the concepts in this error.

*In broad contrast, the Bible/Spirit of Prophecy truth is this: **We agree that Christ died because of His deep love for us. And yes, that death reveals His deep love for us.** —But there is more to the plan of redemption than merely a demonstration of love on the part of God.*

Now, according to the Bible, here is a closer look at what is involved here:

The alienation problem—It is correct that we do not understand what God is like, so the atonement helps us understand and love Him in return. But the atonement includes more than just learning to love God.

“Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But **your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.**”—*Isaiah 59:1-2.*

Our sins have separated between us and God—because the law has been broken!

“Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. **Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.** And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.”—*1 John 3:3-5.*

The only solution is either that I must pay the penalty for my own sins, or I must surrender my life to God and let Christ become my sin-bearer, so that by His forgiveness and enabling grace I may resist temptation.

The sin problem—The error teaches that only our ignorance has separated us from God. But the Bible teaches that it is our sins which have sepa-

rated between us and God! Christ gave Himself for our sins.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, **who gave Himself for our sins**, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.”—*Galatians 1:3-4.*

The sin problem is directly connected with the broken law of God. In order to remove our sins, God must enable us to once again obey His law. It is the law which identifies sin.

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for **by the law is the knowledge of sin.**”—*Romans 3:20.*

“What shall we say then? **is the law sin? God forbid.** Nay, **I had not known sin, but by the law:** for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”—*Romans 7:7.*

The empowerment problem—We need enabling strength to resist temptation and obey the law of God! Only Christ can give it. And He can do it because He is our sin-bearer. —If we deny that truth, then we are lost! Christ gives us empowering grace to overcome, so we can become like Him.

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? **He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,** how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”—*Romans 8:31-33.*

The sacrifice principle—The entire Old Testament sacrificial system was keyed to the fact that Christ would be our sin-bearer! The price had to be paid, and only Christ could do this.

How could God get rid of the transgression of His people? It could only be done by Christ coming to earth and dying in our place as our sin-bearing substitute. He had to become the afflicted, slain lamb in order to remove that transgression in those willing to accept it.

“But **He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and **the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.** He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: **He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,** and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.”—*Isaiah 53:5-7.*

And here is the glorious result of that fearful sacrifice by the Son of God!

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; **He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin,** He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. **He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied:** by His knowledge

shall My righteous servant justify many; **for He shall bear their iniquities.**”—*Isaiah 53:10-11.*

Christ knew ahead of time all that He would have to undergo in order to save us.

“Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, **and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death:** and the third day He shall rise again.”—*Luke 18:31-33.*

The law principle—By our sins, we have broken the law of God. The demands of the law have to be met.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: **And He is the propitiation for our sins:** and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him.”—*1 John 2:1-5.*

The word “propitiate” means to do something, to fulfill a requirement, in order to win someone’s favor. On Calvary, Christ bore our sins to meet the demands of the Law, so God could accept us. According to the above text, Christ is the “propitiation for our sins.”

The love of God is not perfected by accepting the hideous error that all Christ did on Calvary was to reveal God’s love. Notice, in the above passage, that only those who accept the truth of Christ’s propitiation and obey God’s law—are able to receive and have the love of God perfected in them!

While we are defining words, here is another big one: “Expiation.” This means “make amends for something, as a means of making atonement.” Here is a quotation using this word:

“It is the privilege of all to comprehend, far more than we do, the expiatory sufferings of Christ. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” even so has the Son of man been lifted up, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:14, 15. **To the cross of Calvary, bearing a dying Saviour, we must look.** Our eternal interests demand that we show faith in Christ.”—*Desire of Ages, 660.*

The vicarious death principle—The Bible says:

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”—*John 15:13.*

That is a Bible principle! Jesus Himself said it! By the command of God, it was demonstrated by a detailed system of sacrifices for over two thousand years: the concept that one can die to atone for the sins of another. In the type, it was done symbolically; on Calvary—the antitype—it was done in fact. We could not pay the debt ourselves, so another had to pay it for us. That is an integral part of the great plan of salvation. (Interestingly enough, George Bernard Shaw was one of those who denied that principle. Referring to Christ’s sin-bearing on the cross, which he hated, Shaw said, “Every man should bear his own sin!” In the final Judgment, Shaw will have that opportunity.

The sin-bearing principle—This is the vicarious principle, stated in another way. The Bible teaches that Christ bore our sins on the cross. It is a major part of the “gospel”:

“Moreover, brethren, **I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you,** which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”—*1 Corinthians 15:1-4.*

The elimination of sin principle—Christ came to our world specifically to remove our sins. Only then could we understand and value the love of God.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.**”—*1 Timothy 1:15.*

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for **He shall save His people from their sins.**”—*Matthew 1:21.*

In bearing sin, Christ became sin for us, so that, if willing to submit to the conditions of surrender to obedience, we might have our sins removed.

“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”—*2 Corinthians 5:21.*

The Lamb of God principle—The story of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah, and the ram sacrificed instead of Isaac—would be meaningless according to this terrible error. Under the inspiration of God, John the Baptist called Christ “the Lamb of God.” Christ takes the place of the sinner and dies for him.

“And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but **where is the lamb for a burnt offering?** And Abraham said, my son, **God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering:** so they went both of them together.”—*Genesis 22:7-8.*

“And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith,

Behold the Lamb of God!—*John 1:36.*

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**”—*John 1:29.*

Notice in the above passage, that God’s Lamb had come, first and foremost, for a special purpose: to take away our sins. That could only be done by our acceptance of His sin-bearing, and only that could result in our loving Him.

Think not that this “Lamb of God” principle of the atonement is something that is inconsequential.

The book of Revelation emphasizes this truth repeatedly. *Jesus Christ is called the “lamb” 27 times in the book of Revelation alone!* Every such passage in Scripture which speaks of Christ as the Lamb of God—is connecting Him directly as the antitype fulfillment of the Old Testament principle of one suffering death in place of another.

“The place of the scripture which he read was this, **He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth** . . . Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”—*Acts 8:32, 34-35.*

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; **but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:** who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”—*1 Peter 1:18-20.*

The atonement and mediation principles—Both truths are gutted of their most basic meanings by the error that Christ only died to show us God’s love. The existence of sin as the breaking of God’s law, and a way to put sin out of our lives is omitted. The mediation of Christ in heaven to enable us to put away of sins is removed.

Notice in the following passage which says that Christ could only become our Mediator because on Calvary He gave Himself as “a ransom.”

“For there is one God, and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all,** to be testified in due time.”—*1 Timothy 2:5-6.*

The next passage also clearly shows that Christ became our mediating High Priest only because He “offered up Himself.” On Calvary, He offered up Himself as the “lamb sacrifice.”

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, **seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them** . . . Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people’s: **for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.**”—*Hebrews 7:25, 27.*

In giving Christ as a sin-offering, God gave us the greatest gift of all! Eternal life with all those wonderful people in heaven!

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”—*2 Corinthians 9:15.*

The judgment principle—God can justly justify the faithful, and judge and condemn to death the wicked,—because of the correct view of what Christ’s death on Calvary accomplished. Christ bore our sins, so we could be enabled to stop sinning and live like Him.

“He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.”—*Acts 17:31.*

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”—*2 Corinthians 5:10.*

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”—*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.*

In concluding this section of the study, I wish to state that I was startled with how frequently the sin-bearer principle was so closely associated with each of the points that I referred to. *The principle that Christ died in our place, as our substitute, is clearly a central aspect of the atonement process by which men and women are saved.*

— SECTION TWO —

WHY CHRIST HAD TO DIE

Introduction

“Man has not been made a sin-bearer, and he will never know the horror of the curse of sin which the Saviour bore. No sorrow can bear any comparison with the sorrow of Him upon whom the wrath of God fell with overwhelming force. Human nature can endure but a limited amount of test and trial. The finite can only endure the finite measure, and human nature succumbs; but the nature of Christ had a greater capacity for suffering; for the human existed in the divine nature,

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and created a capacity for suffering to endure that which resulted from the sins of a lost world. The agony which Christ endured, broadens, deepens, and **gives a more extended conception of the character of sin, and the character of the retribution which God will bring upon those who continue in sin.** The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ to the repenting, believing sinner.”—*5 Bible Commentary, 1103.*

“As subjects of the love of God we ever should be grateful that we have a mediator, an advocate, an intercessor in the heavenly courts, who pleads in our behalf before the Father.

“We have everything we could ask to inspire us with faith and trust in God. In earthly courts, when a king would make his greatest pledge to assure men of his truth, he gives his child as a hostage, to be redeemed on the fulfillment of his promise; and behold what a pledge of the Father’s faithfulness; for when He would assure men of the immutability of His council, He gave His only-begotten Son to come to earth, to take the nature of man, not only for the brief years of life, but to retain His nature in the heavenly courts, an everlasting pledge of the faithfulness of God. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and love of God! ‘Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God’ (1 John 3:1).

“Through faith in Christ we become members of the royal family, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. In Christ we are one. As we come in sight of Calvary, and view the royal Sufferer who in man’s nature bore the curse of the law in his behalf, all national distinctions, all sectarian differences are obliterated; all honor of rank, all pride of caste is lost.

“The light shining from the throne of God upon the cross of Calvary forever puts an end to man-made separations between class and race. Men of every class become members of one family, children of the heavenly King, not through earthly power, but through the love of God **who gave Jesus to a life of poverty, affliction, and humiliation, to a death of shame and agony,** that He might bring many sons and daughters unto glory.”—*1 Selected Messages, 258.*

“What language could so forcibly express God’s love for the human family as it is expressed by the gift of His only-begotten Son for our redemption? **The Innocent bore the chastisement of the guilty.** ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.’ John 3:16-18.

“**Christ gave Himself, an atoning sacrifice, for the saving of a lost world. He was treated as we deserve, in order that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His.** ‘With His stripes we are healed.’ Isaiah 53:5.”—*8 Testimonies, 208.*

“**As man’s substitute and surety, the iniquity of men was laid upon Christ; He was counted a transgressor** that He might redeem them from the curse of the law. **The guilt of every descendant of Adam of every age was pressing upon His heart; and the wrath of God and the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation.** The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. Every pang endured by the Son of God upon the cross, the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands and feet, the convulsions of agony which racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father’s face from Him, speak to man, saying, **It is for love of thee that the Son of God consents to have these heinous crimes laid upon Him;** for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise and immortal life. He who stilled the angry waves by His word and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee from His touch, who raised the dead to life and opened the eyes of the blind, **offers Himself upon the cross as the last sacrifice**

for man. He, the sin-bearer, endures judicial punishment for iniquity and becomes sin itself for man.

“Satan, with his fierce temptations, wrung the heart of Jesus. **Sin, so hateful to His sight, was heaped upon Him till He groaned beneath its weight.** No wonder that His humanity trembled in that fearful hour. Angels witnessed with amazement the despairing agony of the Son of God, so much greater than His physical pain that the latter was hardly felt by Him. The hosts of heaven veiled their faces from the fearful sight.”—*Story of Redemption*, 225.

1 - Christ had to die in order to solve the sin problem.

“**The glorious Redeemer of a lost world was suffering the penalty of man’s transgression of the Father’s law. He was about to ransom His people with His own blood. He was paying the just claims of God’s holy law. This was the means through which an end was to be finally made of sin and Satan, and his host to be vanquished.**

“Oh, was there ever suffering and sorrow like that endured by the dying Saviour! **It was the sense of His Father’s displeasure which made His cup so bitter.** It was not bodily suffering which so quickly ended the life of Christ upon the cross. **It was the crushing weight of the sins of the world, and a sense of His Father’s wrath.** The Father’s glory and sustaining presence had left Him, and despair pressed its crushing weight of darkness upon Him and forced from His pale and quivering lips the anguished cry: ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ ”—*2 Testimonies*, 209.

“**The sin of the world, with all its terribleness, was felt to the utmost by the Son of God.** The displeasure of the Father for sin, and its penalty, which is death, were all that He could realize through this amazing darkness. He was tempted to fear that sin was so offensive in the sight of His Father that He could not be reconciled to His Son. The fierce temptation that His own Father had forever left Him caused that piercing cry from the cross: ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ ”—*2 Testimonies*, 210.

2 - Christ had to die because He was the only one who could be a sacrifice for sin.

“**It was necessary for the Son of God to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin. He who knew no sin became sin for us. He died for us on Calvary. His death shows the wonderful love of God for man, and the immutability of His law.**”—*1 Selected Messages*, 240.

“All who did service in connection with the sanctuary were being educated constantly in regard to the intervention of Christ in behalf of the human race. This service was designed to create in every heart a love for the law of God, which is the law of His kingdom. **The sacrificial offering was to be**

an object lesson of the love of God revealed in Christ—in the suffering, dying victim, who took upon Himself the sin of which man was guilty, the innocent being made sin for us.”—*1 Selected Messages*, 233.

3 - Christ had to die because He could only save us by becoming our sacrificial victim.

“Before offering Himself as **the sacrificial victim**, Christ sought for the most essential and complete gift to bestow upon His followers, a gift that would bring within their reach the boundless resources of grace. ‘I will pray the Father,’ He said, ‘and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.’ ”—*Desire of Ages*, 668-669.

“As in the typical service the high priest laid aside his pontifical robes and officiated in the white linen dress of an ordinary priest; so **Christ laid aside His royal robes and garbed Himself with humanity and offered sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim.**”—*Acts of the Apostles*, 33.

“**The infinite sufficiency of Christ is demonstrated by His bearing the sins of the whole world. He occupies the double position of offerer and of offering, of priest and of victim.**”—*7 Bible Commentary*, 933.

4 - Christ had to die because He was the only one who could be our ransom.

“He [Zwingli] declared that there was a truth more ancient, and of infinitely greater worth, than the theories taught by schoolmen and philosophers. **This ancient truth was that the death of Christ is the sinner’s only ransom.**”—*Great Controversy*, 173.

“**We are the property of God; for mind, soul, and body have been purchased by the ransom of the life of the Son of God . . .** For our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. The Lord Jesus laid aside His royal crown, He left His high command, He clothed His divinity with humanity, in order that through humanity He might uplift the human race. He so appreciated the possibility of the human race that **He became man’s substitute and surety.**”—*Youth’s Instructor*, September 5, 1895.

“Through Christ, restoration as well as reconciliation is provided for man. **The gulf that was made by sin has been spanned by the cross of Calvary. A full, complete ransom has been paid by Jesus, by virtue of which the sinner is pardoned, and the justice of the law is maintained.** All who believe that Christ is the atoning sacrifice may come and receive pardon for their sins; for through the merit of Christ, communication has been opened between God and man. God can accept me as His child, and I can claim Him and rejoice in Him as my loving Father. We must center our hopes of heaven upon Christ alone, because He is our substitute and surety.”—*Amazing Grace*,

177.

“Every discourse given should be of that practical character which will **show sinners the sinfulness of sin in the light of the law of God. It should lift up before them the sin-pardoning Redeemer, who gave His life that He might draw them unto Himself and ransom them from the power of Satan, by the price of His own sacrifice** of ease, of pleasure, of honor, of glory in coming to a world all scarred and marred with the curse. **Thus He became man’s surety and substitute, and stands in the place of the transgressor of God’s law. He suffered—the Guiltless for the guilty—that He might make it possible for all to believe on Him and accept Him as their personal Saviour, and for God to accept them in one Beloved.**”—1888 *Materials*, Vol. 2, 782.

“According to the law Christ Himself gave, the forfeited inheritance was ransomed by the nearest of kin. Jesus Christ laid off His royal robe, His kingly crown, and clothed His divinity with humanity, in order to become a substitute and surety for humanity, that dying in humanity He might by His death destroy him who had the power of death. He could not have done this as God, but by coming as man Christ could die. By death He overcame death. The death of Christ bore to the death him who had the power of death, and opened the gates of the tomb for all who receive Him as their personal Saviour.”—7 *Bible Commentary*, 925-926.

5 - Christ had to die because He was the Lamb of God.

“The law of the ten commandments lives and will live through the eternal ages. **The need for the service of sacrifices and offerings ceased when type met antitype in the death of Christ. In Him the shadow reached the substance. The Lamb of God was the complete and perfect offering.**”—6 *Bible Commentary*, 1116.

“It had been difficult even for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption—to comprehend that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. **When the command was given to Abraham to offer up his son**, the interest of all heavenly beings was enlisted. With intense earnestness they watched each step in the fulfillment of this command. **When to Isaac’s question, ‘Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Abraham made answer, ‘God will provide Himself a lamb;’ and when the father’s hand was stayed as he was about to slay his son, and the ram which God had provided was offered in the place of Isaac—then light was shed upon the mystery of redemption, and even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man’s salvation.**”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 155.

“The rude soldiers had been softened by what

they had heard and seen of Christ, and they were restrained from breaking His limbs. **Thus in the offering of the Lamb of God was fulfilled the law of the Passover**, ‘They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.’ Numbers 9:12.”—*Desire of Ages*, 771.

6 - Christ had to die because He was the rock smitten on our behalf.

“The smitten rock was a figure of Christ, and through this symbol the most precious spiritual truths are taught. **As the life-giving waters flowed from the smitten rock, so from Christ, ‘smitten of God,’ ‘wounded for our transgressions,’ ‘bruised for our iniquities’** (Isaiah 53:4, 5), the stream of salvation flows for a lost race. **As the rock had been once smitten, so Christ was to be ‘once offered to bear the sins of many.’** Hebrews 9:28.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 411.

7 - Christ had to die to meet the demands of the broken law.

“Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met both these requirements. **By dying in man’s stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon.**”—6 *Bible Commentary*, 1099.

“Christ became our sin-bearer. The fact that the only-begotten Son of God gave His life because of man’s transgression, to satisfy justice and to vindicate the honor of God’s law, should be constantly kept before the minds of children and youth. The object of this great sacrifice should also be kept before them; for it was to uplift fallen man degraded by sin that this great sacrifice was made. **Christ suffered in order that through faith in Him our sins might be pardoned. He became man’s substitute and surety, Himself taking the punishment, though all undeserving, that we who deserved it might be free, and return to our allegiance to God** through the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. He is our only hope of salvation.”—*Fundamentals of Education*, 370.

“**Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring them again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son.**”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 63.

8 - Christ had to die because only one equal with God could do this.

“Said the angel, ‘Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no. It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give His be-

loved Son to die for him.' Angels were so interested for man's salvation that there could be found among them those who would yield their glory and give their life for perishing man, 'But,' said my accompanying angel, 'that would avail nothing. **The transgression was so great that an angel's life would not pay the debt. Nothing but the death and intercessions of His son would pay the debt and save lost man from hopeless sorrow and misery.**'—*Early Writings, 151-152.*

9 - Christ had to die because God's law could not be changed.

"**Christ consented to die in the sinner's stead, that man, by a life of obedience, might escape the penalty of the law of God.** His death did not make the law of none effect; it did not slay the law, lessen its holy claims, nor detract from its sacred dignity. **The death of Christ proclaimed the justice of His Father's law in punishing the transgressor, in that He consented to suffer the penalty of the law Himself in order to save fallen man from its curse. The death of God's beloved Son on the cross shows the immutability of the law of God.** His death magnifies the law and makes it honorable, and gives evidence to man of its changeless character. From His own divine lips are heard the words: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.' The death of Christ justified the claims of the law."—*2 Testimonies, 200-201.*

10 - Christ had to die because God's law could not be abolished.

"**Had it been possible for the law to be changed or set aside, then Christ need not have died to save man from the penalty of sin. The death of Christ, so far from abolishing the law, proves that it is immutable.** The Son of God came to 'magnify the law, and make it honorable.' Isaiah 42:21."—*Great Controversy, 466.*

"There are many who claim that by the death of Christ the law was abrogated; but in this they contradict Christ's own words, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. . . Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.' Matthew 5:17, 18. **It was to atone for man's transgression of the law that Christ laid down His life. Could the law have been changed or set aside, then Christ need not have died.** By His life on earth He honored the law of God. By His death He established it. **He gave His life as a sacrifice, not to destroy God's law, not to create a lower standard, but that justice might be maintained, that the law might be shown to be immutable, that it might stand fast forever.**"—*Christ's Object Lessons, 314.*

"**The Lord does not save sinners by abolishing His law,** the foundation of His government in heaven and in earth. **The punishment has been endured by the sinner's substitute.** Not that God is cruel and merciless, and Christ so merciful that He died on Calvary's cross to abolish a law so arbitrary that it needed to be extinguished, crucified between two thieves. **The throne of God must not bear one stain of crime, one taint of sin.** In the councils of heaven, before the world was created, **the Father and the Son covenanted together that if man proved disloyal to God, Christ, one with the Father, would take the place of the transgressor, and suffer the penalty of justice that must fall upon him.**"—*6 Bible Commentary, 1070.*

"Our most illustrious preachers gave a wonderful majesty to their discourses by following the example of the Master, and giving prominence to the law, its precepts, and its threatenings. They repeated the two great maxims, that the law is a transcript of the divine perfections, and that a man who does not love the law does not love the gospel; for the law, as well as the gospel, is a mirror reflecting the true character of God. This peril leads to another, that of **underrating the evil of sin,** the extent of it, the demerit of it. In proportion to the rightfulness of the commandment is the wrongfulness of disobeying it . . .

"Affiliated to the dangers already named is the danger of underestimating the justice of God. The tendency of the modern pulpit is to strain out the divine justice from the divine benevolence, to sink benevolence into a sentiment rather than exalt it into a principle. **The new theological prism puts asunder what God has joined together. Is the divine law a good or an evil? It is a good. Then justice is good; for it is a disposition to execute the law.** From the habit of underrating the divine law and justice, the extent and demerit of human disobedience, **men easily slide into the habit of underestimating the grace which has provided an atonement for sin.**' Thus the gospel loses its value and importance in the minds of men, and soon they are ready practically to cast aside the Bible itself.

"Many religious teachers assert that Christ by His death abolished the law, and men are henceforth free from its requirements. There are some who represent it as a grievous yoke, and in contrast to the bondage of the law they present the liberty to be enjoyed under the gospel."—*Great Controversy, 465-466.*

11 - Christ had to die to enable us to obey that law.

"He bore the sins of the world, and endured the

— SECTION ONE —

The Love vs. Legalism Error

— SECTION TWO —

Why Christ Had to Die

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penalty, which rolled like a mountain upon His divine soul. **He yielded up His life a sacrifice, that man should not eternally die.** He died, not through being compelled to die, but by His own free will. This was humility. **The whole treasure of heaven was poured out in one gift to save fallen man.** He brought into His human nature all the life-giving energies that human beings will need and must receive.”—*5 Bible Commentary*, 1127.

12 - Christ had to die because it was the only way He could save us.

“It will be seen that He who is infinite in wisdom could devise no plan for our salvation except the sacrifice of His Son. The compensation for this sacrifice is the joy of peopling the earth with ransomed beings, holy, happy, and immortal. The result of the Saviour’s conflict with the powers of darkness is joy to the redeemed, redounding to the glory of God throughout eternity. And such is the value of the soul that the Father is satisfied with the price paid; and Christ Himself, beholding the fruits of His great sacrifice, is satisfied.”—*Great Controversy*, 652.

“But let none deceive themselves with the thought that God, in His great love and mercy, will yet save even the rejecters of His grace. The exceeding sinfulness of sin can be estimated only in the light of the cross. When men urge that God is too good to cast off the sinner, let them look to Calvary. **It was because there was no other way in which man could be saved,** because without this sacrifice it was impossible for the human race to escape from the defiling power of sin, and be restored to communion with holy beings,—impossible for them again to become partakers of spiritual life,—it was because of this **that Christ took upon Himself the guilt of the disobedient and suffered in the sinner’s stead.** The love and suffering and death of the Son of God all testify to the terrible enormity of sin and declare that there is no escape from its power, no hope of the higher life, but through the submission of the soul to Christ.”—*Steps to Christ*, 31-32.

13 - Christ had to die because He was our Sin Bearer.

“When Adam, according to God’s special directions, made an offering for sin, it was to him a

most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which God alone could give, and make an offering for sin. It was the first time he had witnessed death. **As he looked upon the bleeding victim, writhing in the agonies of death, he was to look forward by faith to the Son of God, whom the victim prefigured, who was to die man’s sacrifice.**

“This ceremonial offering, ordained of God, was to be a perpetual reminder to Adam of his guilt, and also a penitential acknowledgment of his sin. This act of taking life gave Adam a deeper and more perfect sense of **his transgression, which nothing less than the death of God’s dear Son could expiate. He marveled at the infinite goodness and matchless love which would give such a ransom to save the guilty.** As Adam was slaying the innocent victim, it seemed to him that he was shedding the blood of the Son of God by his own hand. He knew that if he had remained steadfast to God, and true to His holy law, there would have been no death of beast nor of man. **Yet in the sacrificial offerings, pointing to the great and perfect offering of God’s dear Son, there appeared a star of hope to illuminate the dark and terrible future,** and relieve it of its utter hopelessness and ruin.”—*Story of Redemption*, 50.

“Hating sin with a perfect hatred, **He [Christ] yet gathered to His soul the sins of the whole world, as He trod the path to Calvary, suffering the penalty of the transgressor. Guiltless, He bore the punishment of the guilty; innocent, yet offering Himself to bear the penalty of the transgression of the law of God. The punishment of the sins of every soul was borne by the Son of the infinite God. The guilt of every sin pressed its weight upon the divine soul of the world’s Redeemer. He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.** In assuming the nature of man, **He placed Himself where He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, that by His stripes we might be healed.**”—*Review*, December 20, 1892.

“Oh, was there ever suffering and sorrow like that endured by the dying Saviour! It was the sense of His Father’s displeasure which made His cup so bitter. It was not bodily suffering which so quickly ended the life of Christ upon the cross. It

was the crushing weight of the sins of the world, and a sense of His Father's wrath. The Father's glory and sustaining presence had left Him, and despair pressed its crushing weight of darkness upon Him and forced from His pale and quivering lips the anguished cry: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

"Jesus had united with the Father in making the world. Amid the agonizing sufferings of the Son of God, blind and deluded men alone remain unfeeling . . . **Christ is dying! He is in despair! His Father's approving smile is removed,** and angels are not permitted to lighten the gloom of the terrible hour. They can only behold in amazement their loved Commander, the Majesty of heaven, **suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law.**"—*2 Testimonies*, 209.

14 - Christ had to die because He was the great sin offering.

"Adam and Eve, at their creation, had a knowledge of the law of God; they were acquainted with its claims upon them; its precepts were written upon their hearts. **When man fell by transgression the law was not changed, but a remedial system was established to bring him back to obedience. The promise of a Saviour was given, and sacrificial offerings pointing forward to the death of Christ as the great sin offering were established.** But had the law of God never been transgressed, there would have been no death, and no need of a Saviour; consequently there would have been no need of sacrifices.

"Adam taught his descendants the law of God, and it was handed down from father to son through successive generations. But notwithstanding the gracious provision for man's redemption, there were few who accepted it and rendered obedience."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 363.

"**Jesus Christ has given Himself as a complete offering in behalf of every fallen son and daughter of Adam. O what humiliation He bore! How He descended, step after step, lower and lower in the path of humiliation,** yet He never degraded His soul with one foul blot of sin! **All this He suffered, that He might lift you up, cleanse, refine, and ennoble you, and place you as a joint heir with Himself upon His throne.**"—*Fundamentals of Education*, 251.

15 - Christ had to die because He alone could suffer the penalty of sin.

"**Christ endured an agonizing death under the most humiliating circumstances that we might have life.** He gave up His precious life that He might vanquish death . . . **By bearing the penalty of sin, by going down into the grave, Christ has brightened the tomb for all who die in faith.**"—*6 Testimonies*, 230.

"When Christ came to this world, He found that Satan had everything as he wanted it. The adver-

sary of God and man thought that he was indeed the prince of the earth, but Jesus laid hold of the world to take it out of the power of Satan. **He came to redeem it from the curse of sin and the penalty of transgression,** that the transgressor might be forgiven. He planted the cross between earth and heaven, and between divinity and humanity; and as the Father beheld the cross, He was satisfied. He said, 'It is enough, the offering is complete.' God and man may be reconciled. Those who have lived in rebellion against God, may become reconciled **if, as they see the cross, they become repentant and accept the great propitiation that Christ has made for their sins.** In the cross they see that 'mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.'—*5 Bible Commentary* 1137-1138.

"**It was not alone by dying on the cross that Christ accomplished His work of saving men. The ignominy and suffering and humiliation was a part of His mission.** 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.' **This penalty Christ bore for the sins of the transgressor; He has borne the punishment for every man and for this reason He can ransom every soul, however fallen his condition, if he will accept the law of God as his standard of righteousness.**"—*4 Bible Commentary*, 1147-1148.

16 - Christ had to die because only then could He atone for our sins.

"The words spoken in indignation, 'To what purpose is this waste?' brought vividly before Christ **the greatest sacrifice ever made,—the gift of Himself as the propitiation for a lost world.** The Lord would be so bountiful to His human family that **it could not be said of Him that He could do more. In the gift of Jesus, God gave all heaven.** From a human point of view, such a sacrifice was a wanton waste. To human reasoning the whole plan of salvation is a waste of mercies and resources. Self-denial and wholehearted sacrifice meet us everywhere. Well may the heavenly host look with amazement upon the human family who refuse to be uplifted and enriched with the boundless love expressed in Christ. Well may they exclaim, Why this great waste?

"**But the atonement for a lost world was to be full, abundant, and complete. Christ's offering was exceedingly abundant to reach every soul that God had created.** It could not be restricted so as not to exceed the number who would accept the great Gift. All men are not saved; yet the plan of redemption is not a waste because it does not accomplish all that its liberality has provided for. There must be enough and to spare."—*Desire of Ages*, 565-566.

"**Hating sin with a perfect hatred, He yet gathered to His soul the sins of the whole world.**

Guiltless, He bore the punishment of the guilty. Innocent, yet offering Himself as a substitute for the transgressor. The guilt of every sin pressed its weight upon the divine soul of the world's Redeemer. The evil thoughts, the evil words, the evil deeds of every son and daughter of Adam, called for retribution upon Himself; for He had become man's substitute. Though the guilt of sin was not His, His spirit was torn and bruised by the transgressions of men, and He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

"What a price has been paid for us! Behold the cross, and the Victim uplifted upon it. Look at those hands, pierced with the cruel nails. Look at His feet, fastened with spikes to the tree. **Christ bore our sins in His own body. That suffering, that agony, is the price of your redemption.**"—*Amazing Grace*, 172.

17 - Christ had to die as our substitute.

"Christ was to die as man's substitute. Man was a criminal under the sentence of death for transgression of the law of God, as a traitor, a rebel; hence a substitute for man must die as a malefactor, because He stood in the place of the traitors, with all their treasured sins upon His divine soul. It was not enough that Jesus should die in order to fully meet the demands of the broken law, but He died a shameful death."—*5 Bible Commentary*, 1127.

18 - Christ had to die because only then could we stop sinning.

"But Christ gave His life that man should have another trial. He did not die on the cross to abolish the law of God, but to secure for man a second probation. He did not die to make sin an immortal attribute; He died to secure the right to destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. He suffered the full penalty of a broken law for the whole world. This He did, not that men might continue in transgression, but that they might return to their loyalty and keep God's commandments and His law as the apple of their eye."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 134.

"There is Jesus, who gave His life, not that men might continue in sin, not that they may have license to break the law of God, but that through this infinite sacrifice they may be saved from all sin."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 161-162.

19 - Christ had to die so He could be our mediator and intercessor with God.

"The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the forerunner is for us entered.' Hebrews 6:20. There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There

we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption. **The salvation of man is accomplished at an infinite expense to heaven; the sacrifice made is equal to the broadest demands of the broken law of God.** Jesus has opened the way to the Father's throne, and through His mediation the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God."—*Great Controversy*, 489.

"But after Christ's ascension **His enthronement in His mediatorial kingdom** was signalized by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit . . . **By faith these believers saw Him as the One who had borne humiliation, suffering, and death that they might not perish but have everlasting life.**"—*Christ's Object Lessons*, 120.

20 - Christ had to die because He was the antitypical Lamb of God.

"The ceremonial system was made up of symbols pointing to Christ, to His sacrifice and His priesthood. This ritual law, with its sacrifices and ordinances, was to be performed by the Hebrews until type met antitype in the death of Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Then all the sacrificial offerings were to cease."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 365.

"He [Paul] makes plain **the work of the Redeemer as the great high priest of mankind—the One who through the sacrifice of His own life was to make atonement for sin once for all, and was then to take up His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.** Paul's hearers were made to understand that the Messiah for whose advent they had been longing, had already come; that **His death was the antitype of all the sacrificial offerings, and that His ministry in the sanctuary in heaven was the great object that cast its shadow backward and made clear the ministry of the Jewish priesthood.**"—*Acts of the Apostles*, 246.

"The rude soldiers had been softened by what they had heard and seen of Christ, and they were restrained from breaking His limbs. **Thus in the offering of the Lamb of God was fulfilled the law of the Passover,** 'They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.' Numbers 9:12."—*Desire of Ages*, 771.

21 - Christ had to die to destroy both Satan's arguments and life.

"Satan's lying charges against the divine character and government appeared in their true light. He had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, and had declared that, while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice. **Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make;** for

'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.' 2 Corinthians 5:19. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled Himself and become obedient unto death.

"God had manifested His abhorrence of the principles of rebellion. All heaven saw His justice revealed, both in the condemnation of Satan and in the redemption of man. Lucifer had declared that if the law of God was changeless, and its penalty could not be remitted, every transgressor must be forever debarred from the Creator's favor. He had claimed that the sinful race were placed beyond redemption and were therefore his rightful prey. But the death of Christ was an argument in man's behalf that could not be overthrown. **The penalty of the law fell upon Him who was equal with God,** and man was free to accept the righteousness of Christ and by a life of penitence and humiliation to triumph, as the Son of God had triumphed, over the power of Satan. **Thus God is just and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.**

"But it was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to the earth to suffer and to die. He came to 'magnify the law' and to 'make it honorable.' Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but **it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God's law is unchangeable.** Could its claims have been set aside, then the Son of God need not have yielded up His life to atone for its transgression. **The death of Christ proves it immutable. And the sacrifice to which infinite love impelled the Father and the Son, that sinners might be redeemed,** demonstrates to all the universe—**what nothing less than this plan of atonement could have sufficed to do—that justice and mercy are the foundation of the law and government of God.**

"In the final execution of the judgment it will be seen that no cause for sin exists. When the Judge of all the earth shall demand of Satan, "Why hast thou rebelled against Me, and robbed Me of the subjects of My kingdom?" the originator of evil can render no excuse. Every mouth will be stopped, and all the hosts of rebellion will be speechless.

"The cross of Calvary, while it declares the law immutable, proclaims to the universe that the wages of sin is death. In the Saviour's expiring cry, 'It is finished,' the death knell of Satan was rung."

Great Controversy, 502-503.

22 - Christ had to die because His death would protect the universe against sin ever arising again.

"The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and **there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven.** The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. **Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ?** The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, **for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan.** Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God.

"The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Our only hope is perfect trust in the blood of Him who can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is our only hope in this world, and it will be our theme in the world to come. Oh, we do not comprehend the value of the atonement! If we did, we would talk more about it. The gift of God in His beloved Son was the expression of an incomprehensible love. **It was the utmost that God could do to preserve the honor of His law, and still save the transgressor.** Why should man not study the theme of redemption? **It is the greatest subject that can engage the human mind.** If men would contemplate the love of Christ, displayed in the cross, their faith would be strengthened to appropriate the merits of His shed blood, and they would be cleansed and saved from sin."—*5 Bible Commentary, 1132-1133.*

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