

Defender

"I am set for the defense of the gospel"

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Dancing and Dogs: New Testament Worship?

Gary W. Summers

You know, it just does not pay to give ridiculous illustrations. In debates of old, on the subject of instrumental music, for example, brethren often showed the bankruptcy of the pro-instrumental position by saying, "We have just as much authority to have steak and cake on the Lord's table as to use instrumental music in addition to singing. Where does the Bible say not to do it?" Usually, this argument was classified as absurd, since no one would ever do that.

Yet, according to Kent Bailey, Milligan College had "the Lord's Supper" on a weeknight in 1983 and used pepperoni pizza and coke. As absurd as it sounds, it fits their view of authority, which is, "If the Bible does not condemn it, it's all right to do it" (rather than the principle set forth in Colossians 3:17 that requires authority for what we teach and practice). We have often written words to the effect: "The Bible does not say, 'Don't dance down the aisles in worship, either, but such a practice is not authorized.'"

A word of advice: "Don't give absurd illustrations; someone will take you up on it." A brother from

Lubbock emailed me on May 20, 2005, his message began: "Out of curiosity, I went to www.google.com and typed in 'church of Christ dancers.' I never expected to see what came up next! The 2nd link that came up was for the South Central Church of Christ" in Tyler, Texas. He was astonished to find: "They have a VIDEO clip of their Praise Dancers!"

"No!" I vainly thought. A few days later, I clicked on the Website in his email, and, sure enough, he was not exaggerating. I watched the clip. Just as he had said, a mixture of younger and older women were "dancing" to a "Christian" gospel music performer (apparently, they used a tape or CD, which included instruments of music), "they are applauded by the audience (who you don't see on the clip) and it is accompanied by outbursts of shouting from the audience," he wrote.

This group is undoubtedly on the cutting edge of what is to come. How long will it be before Broadway shows are scheduled during "worship"? Brethren could start with something tame like *My Fair Lady* or *Oklahoma!* and work up to

Chicago or even *Oh, Calcutta!* Well, there I go, being absurd again. I should not have suggested it; someone will think it is a great idea.

The brother who emailed me mentioned some other things on this Website that merited attention. This church has a minister and deacons, but no elders are listed. Nevertheless, the minister's column in their bulletin, *The Skylight*, is titled "Pastoral Perceptions," which makes one wonder if he considers himself "the pastor." Anyway, he writes:

Last weekend took us to "INSPIRATION-STATION!" What a time we had during the entire Spring-Thing-Praise-A-Thon! So many things combined to create the atmosphere and we will reap mileage from it for months, perhaps even years to come....

What a shame that Jesus did not take His apostles to "INSPIRATION-STATION." What could the Lord have been thinking by not giving the apostles lessons in creating the correct atmosphere! After all, if you are going to get people to be religious, you have got to get their blood pumping. Forget such things as teaching and learning; work people up into an emotional lather so

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Notes From The Editor

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Is There Not a Cause?

Yahweh brought the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage but because of Israel's unbelief (Heb. 3:16-19) they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Thus, God caused them to wander in the wilderness till that generation died out. Upon the death of that generation, God brought them back to the edge of the Promised Land by the Jordan River. It is at this location where the great Lawgiver, Moses, while not allowed to take the Israelites into the land, is allowed by God to see the land prior to his death. Joshua becomes the leader in place of Moses to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. In taking the land, God specifically lists seven nations Israel was to destroy (Deu. 7:1). It appears the Philistines, while not specifically one of the seven nations, were to be destroyed along with the seven. However, Israel failed in destroying those nations, so God left certain nations in the land to "prove Israel by them" (Jud. 3). One of the nations left to prove Israel was the Philistines (3:3). The Philistines became a mortal enemy and a constant thorn in Israel's side till Yahweh destroyed them (Jer. 47:4).

During one of the confrontations between the Philistines and Israel, the Philistines challenged Israel to provide a *champion* to meet their *champion* in a single combat. The Philistines' *champion* was the giant, Goliath. Goliath comes out twice a day for forty days and defies Israel (1 Sam. 17:8-10). He demands they send out someone to fight him and if he wins, then Israel would be the Philistines' servants, but if Israel's *champion* won, then the Philistines would be Israel's servants.

David's father, Jesse, sent David (his youngest son) with a *care package* to his three brothers at the battle front along with some food for the captain with the instruction to "look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge" (17:18). (Taking their pledge, while not clear, might be bringing back what they have to say or something, such as a token, from them showing their health, or pay any debts they might owe.) David arrives just in time to hear Goliath's challenge. When the army of Israel "saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (17:24). Even though King Saul was at least a tall man, "from his shoulders and upward *he was* higher than any of the people" (9:2), he was not willing to go up against this giant. However, it was reported among the Israel's men that the king was offering a nice reward to anyone who successfully fought him. He offered the man great riches, he would give his daughter in marriage to the man (possibly paving the way for him to become king but providing unnamed privileges reserved for the royal family), and make his father's house exempt from taxes.

David did not hear or understand the king's offer to the man who would defeat Goliath. "And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (17:26). After the people tell him what the king offered, David receives a severe rebuke from his oldest brother, "And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle" (17:28). Perhaps these caustic false accusations against David were because of Eliab's own cowardice. Eliab certainly heard the same defiance of Goliath's as David heard. Eliab no doubt was among those who "fled from him, and were sore afraid" (17:24). Eliab was there at the battle and one of the men of war. Why did he not go out and meet the challenge presented by Goliath? Instead of going out and meeting Goliath in battle, he made these false allegations against his brother.

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

Eliab's heart was not right with God, and he lacked the ability to make proper judgments about others. He accused David of leaving the sheep, but he did that at his father's request—something Eliab did not even consider and did not ask about. He made that accusation based upon his thinking that David had a wicked heart and David's pride motivating David to come watch the battle (possibly watching others die in the battle or at least the thrill of battle). The truth is that Eliab had a failure to trust God, had a cowardice in the face of the enemy. These factors along with his inability to make proper judgments (even of his own family members) might be why he was rejected by God to be Israel's next king (16:7).

David did not allow these false accusations to stand without giving a proper response with two rhetorical questions. "And David said, What have I now done? *Is there* not a cause?" (17:29). The first question is saying that he (David) had done nothing wrong. He was actually doing what their father told him to do. The second question points out there is a matter of great importance and one that is of great urgency. This situation demands the attention of everyone regardless of age or social position. Goliath's slanderous attack against God and

God's people justified his involvement.

Everyone knows the outcome of this historical event, and even little children learn about David defeating the giant, Goliath. David's attitude and response to his brother, Eliab, is of great importance and application. David should not have been condemned by his brother because the circumstances present an urgent need that should capture everyone's attention and participation. This giant had defied Yahweh and His army. To David's chagrin, none of these soldiers (including their leader—Saul) was doing anything about it. David's attitude seems to be that every person in the camp should be jumping to defend God and His army. There is a cause to take care of and it is serious enough to cause anyone to participate, even when some might question their actions and motives. This is serious enough that even those who might not have *standing* or the *responsibility* to act should still act.

Satan walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). A roaring lion seems strong, courageous, and not defeatable: much like Goliath did to Saul and his army. Satan wishes to destroy the Lord's church and every person associated with it. He would

love, even as Goliath, to make us his slaves. There is the call to each and every Christian to "resist steadfast in the faith" (5:9). Satan makes his attacks through various methods both from without and within, both doctrinal and moral. Thus, there is a cause! It demands the attention of every single Christian. There is no Christian who is not worthy of being in this vital fight and taking the fight to the enemy. Every Christian can "Resist the devil" and it will cause he to "flee from you" (Jam. 4:7). Every Christian needs to make sure that everything said and done is in harmony with God and His Word. We must make sure that we do everything authorized by the Scriptures and only what is authorized by Scripture. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). There are so many activities churches of Christ have been engaging in the past few years that simply have no Bible authority for the actions. It is past time for Christians to become David's and realize there is a cause and not allow anyone to prevent our entering the battle because with God on our side, we will not be defeated.

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they can go home and say, "Whew! What a high time we had."

Does not John 8:31-32 teach just this point: "If you continue in my dance steps, you shall know how to boogie, and the boogie shall make you free"? Yes, sir, let the Spirit move you. Feel the electricity surge

through your body. Where does this kind of behavior end? Is this the way Jesus taught the people? What is the connection between "creating the correct atmosphere" and offering God the kind of worship that Jesus and His apostles did? The *pastor* writes even more:

Our worship has taken on a new di-

mension and I can already witness the difference. I thank you for your patience and your trust in me as your spiritual leader, I promise you that I do nothing where South Central is concerned without first praying "fervently" and asking for the Lord's guidance...Our objective is to minister and worship without the restraints of tradition—to literally

let go and let God. We are pacesetters and a church that strives to think and serve—outside the box.

We doubt not that worship has taken on a new dimension—an **unscriptural** one. Does no one at this *church* see that the Bible does not authorize dancing as praise to the Lord? Hebrews 13:15 mentions “the sacrifice of praise to God” as “the fruit of our lips”—not the movement in our feet and hips. Why is it that brethren cannot just be satisfied, as we used to say, to do “Bible things in Bible ways”?

The fact that this *pastor* prays fervently before making decisions is scarcely comforting—especially in light of the decisions he has already made. Too often people ask what the Lord’s will is with all confidence that it will coincide with what they already have decided to do. How did the Lord answer his prayer, we would like to know, in such a way as to cause him to decide to have Praise Dancers?

It is safe to say this congregation has been successful in departing from the “restraints of tradition.” They are definitely *pacesetters*—in departing from what the Bible teaches regarding worship. They not only think outside the box—but outside the Scriptures as well. Jesus said that true worshipers worship the Father in spirit and in truth. To worship according to truth is to worship according to the revealed Word. Since dancing is not “revealed” in the Scriptures as part of worship, they are indeed outside. Dancing is certainly not commanded; there is no example of New Testament Christians doing so; nor is it implied. Furthermore, it does not qualify as an expedient—even for someone with a vivid imagination.

Literally, “letting go and letting God” is perhaps the most dangerous philosophy of all. Upon what Scripture is this thought based? The Bible teaches us to walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7) and not to depend entirely upon ourselves (Pro. 3:5-6). It teaches the doctrine of Providence (Rom. 8:28), but nowhere does it tell us to give up our mental faculties so God can take over. This is the definition of hypnotism—not spirituality.

When people “let go,” someone will take over, but it is unlikely that it will be God since He does not operate that way (Acts 20:32). One’s own ideas and impulses may, then, call the shots, and we erroneously attribute our ideas to Him. False ideas, such as those found in denominationalism or cults, may suggest themselves to us; thus, ideas born of Satan may be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. How careful we need to be not to “let go.”

The irony of this Website is that they do a commendable job in setting forth the truth regarding the church and salvation. In the section titled “FAQs,” the first section is: “What is the Church of Christ?” Several Scriptures are presented, including Isaiah 2, Joel 2, Matthew 16:18, and Acts 20:28. It closes with this statement: “For all of God’s people wanting to be His church, we must submit to His authority for how to please Him in all things.” Amen.

The next question is: “What must one do to be a member of the Church?” and the answer again is appropriate, including hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized into Christ. A third question is: “Why don’t we use instrumental music in worship?” Their reply is given below.

In the New Testament, there is not a command, example, or inference of it being used in worship to God. Furthermore, early church history bears out the use of vocal singing in praise to God. Modern churches, even with the name “Church of Christ” on them, who use instrumental music do so without scriptural warrant. It needs to be noted that there are other religious groups who refuse instrumental music either on the grounds that there is no authority for it, or on some other grounds.

Amen! This paragraph contains truths to which all faithful brethren subscribe, but the website goes beyond this explanation. It analyzes and refutes six arguments that people often make to justify its use. This part of the Website is very well done. In the “About Us” section, the beginning paragraph is also Scriptural.

Our aim is to practice and teach non-denominational New Testament Christianity. We believe in the authority of the Word of God as a standard and guide in religious practice and doctrine. We believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and that baptism (immersion in water) is the only way, as taught by the scriptures, to enter into Christ. Such an act, preceded by repentance and confession of faith in Christ makes one a Christian, and a Christian only. We reject man-made rules, names, traditions and practices and call others to do the same and just be “Christians,” nothing more, nothing less and nothing else!

Amen, again. Why then, brethren, do you not apply what you said about the church, God’s plan of salvation, and instrumental music, to Praise Dancing? To whose authority are you submitting for that practice? Where is the command, example, or inference for it? [Or

more technically: direct statement, example, or implication—editor.] What happened to needing “the authority of the Word of God”? In fact, how does needing that authority “as a standard and guide in religious practice and doctrine” square with worshipping “without the restraints of tradition” and “letting go and letting God”?

Our fervent desire is that these brethren would apply the proper Biblical principles they use with respect to the church, salvation, and singing to the dancing they have unscripturally initiated.

What a Howl!

If they were owls, we would have said, “What a hoot!” But the article in the weekly offshoot of *The Orlando Sentinel*, called *Sentinel Express*, is titled “Church Invites Dogs.” The article is wrapped around a picture of an Italian greyhound staring rather perplexingly at a sheet of orange paper being held up in front of its face. Its heading is “Hymns & Hounds.” He is probably thinking, “Isn’t it enough that I chase rabbits and fetch balls? Now they want me to read, too?”

Canines are invited to accompany their owners once a month to a service in Apopka. The founder, Dee Renda, claimed that God was showing her “how we can understand our relationship with our pets.” What is to understand? “Me—master; you—pet.”

About ten humans and five dogs attended the first *service* on April 9th. One wonders how soon they will invite cats to attend so they can teach on brotherly love between animals. Believe it or not, this *church* has been in the planning stages for two years (All of this information is in Volume 15, Number 17, which is April 27-28, 2005.)

During the service, a blessing and a prayer was said for each dog, and donations were collected for a Web site to advertise Hymns and Hounds and events the group may sponsor.

Water was provided for the dogs, along with an occasional treat Renda slipped them from the stash she hid in her pocket....

The first sermon was titled “Do All Dogs Go to Heaven?”

Renda read various passages from the Bible to illustrate the roles of animals in creation and the way they worship their creator.

Are tapes available? How would anyone determine which dogs go to heaven and which ones are denied? Fortunately, for those of us in the dark, Renda gives her rendition of how this all works out.

If a dog is the pet of a righteous person, I think they will [go to heaven]. I’ve got a few who’ve already gone ahead of me, so I’ve got a little menagerie up there.

It is probably fair to say that this lady takes the spiritual well-being of her animals far more seriously than her hounds do. Dogs do not pray. We have tried to get ours to wait until the prayer is done before he digs into his supper, but he is nearly finished sometimes before the prayer is. In fact, as cute and lovable as dogs are, they do not have any spiritual inclinations. We had one that would bark every time we started to sing hymns, and she was not trying to join in. She did baptize herself, inadvertently. We took her over to the church building while we did some work. Suddenly, we heard a splash, followed by furious dog paddling.

She had found the stairs leading to the baptistery, climbed them, and found herself in water before she knew what had happened. We dried her off and took her home. Would it

surprise anyone to know that her name was Nuisance? Anyway, the baptism did not take. Her behavior did not improve one iota.

When she died, nobody ever wanted a dog to go to heaven more than we did. According to Renda, she might be there, waiting on us since she was fortunate enough to be owned by a righteous family. However, what about dogs who are not so lucky? Can a dog’s eternal destiny really be determined by what kind of owner he has? That does not sound fair. It is not how obedient or loyal a dog might be to his master: his fate is tied to the owner’s goodness—or badness.

This is about the same answer denominationalists have concerning babies or young children who die. Technically, a Calvinist believes that all children are born depraved, with the sin of Adam upon them, which means they should all be lost, but no one can bring themselves to believe this horrible doctrine. So, they hit upon this solution: “The children of righteous parents are saved.” Probably, they figure that sinners will not care one way or another, although they could be wrong. “Sorry, Jack, your six-month-old child is in hell because you are an evil man.”

Such a doctrine makes no sense for people or dogs. The difference is that babies, as they grow, can be taught about God and respond spiritually to Him; dogs cannot. God created animals, but only man is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28). Animals are, well, animals. Will someone start a group for nocturnal birds, called Odes and Owls? Can we expect to see a church for cats, parakeets, goldfish, monkeys, snakes, crocodiles, hippopotami next?

The next service was scheduled to occur at the Apopka Assembly of God. At least the dogs can howl in tongues if words escape them.

Where is God in All Man's Ideas?

Whether dancing or dogs are incorporated into worship, the question must be, "Doesn't anyone care about what the Scriptures authorize any more?" Evidently, many people think that God decided to put man

in charge of worship to devise and do whatever he likes. Such a notion does not arise from the Scriptures, in which Jesus says that "the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:23).

Men and women, who may have the best of intentions, must get back to what the Bible teaches about wor-

ship. Bringing animals to worship has no Biblical authority, any more than dancing does. Can anyone imagine Jesus calling for the Jerusalem Praise Dancers to perform while preaching the Sermon on the Mount? Can anyone imagine Paul telling the Corinthians to have a dog service? How much is Bible study needed!

Winter Park, FL

The Cost of Saving Others

Roy H. Lanier

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10).

Who Are the Elect?

Elect is usually used with reference to people who are already children of God, as in Romans 8:33 and Colossians 3:12; but in this verse it is not so used. Some take it to refer to the Jews, for whose salvation Paul was willing to be anathema from Christ (Rom. 9:1-5). However, there is nothing in the context to demand such application. Since no particular group or race of people are under consideration in the context, neither is the word generally used in the New Testament to refer to the Jews, I think it not wise to restrict its meaning here to the Jews.

If it be insisted that the word here refers to those who are already children of God, we have but to suggest that Paul says he endures all things that these elect may "obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus." Since they have not yet obtained that salvation in Christ, we know they are not in

Christ, therefore not children of God. Hence, the "elect" of this verse must be people who are not yet Christians. Other expressions are used in this same way. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and they shall become one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16). Here Jesus spoke of having other sheep when as yet, He did not actually have them. The phrase "other sheep" undoubtedly refers to the Gentiles, and Jesus speaks of them as being His sheep even while He was yet alive. But in reality, Gentiles did not become His sheep until the conversion of Cornelius. And, again, God spoke of the Corinthians as being His people before they obeyed the Gospel. "For I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10). This was said to Paul to give him courage to preach the Gospel that people might become children of God, yet God spoke of them as being His already.

So, in the verse under consideration *elect* refers to people who are not yet in Christ, but who, if the

Gospel is preached to them, will obey the Gospel and enjoy the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. No distinction is to be made between Jews and Gentiles as Paul was as much interested in the salvation of Gentiles as he was in the salvation of Jews, and he would suffer as much for one as for the other.

What Is the Salvation?

If Paul was willing to endure all things that these people might obtain the salvation which is in Christ, it must be a wonderful salvation. It is spoken of as "so great a salvation" (Heb. 2:3). Why is this salvation so great?

1. It is salvation from the **power** of sin (Rom. 6:14, 17-18; Col. 1:12-14).
2. It is salvation from the **pollution** of sin (Heb. 9:13-15; 1 John 1:6-9).
3. It is salvation from the **practice** of sin (Rom. 6:12-13; 1 John 3:5-10).
4. It is salvation from the **penalty** of sin (Rom. 5:8-11; 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:14, 21).
5. And, finally, it is salvation from the **presence** of sin (Heb.

9:28). When we have proved faithful to our Lord amidst the temptations and trials of this life, He will come for us to take us to mansions prepared for those who love and serve Him, where there will be no sin, neither temptation to sin. Hence, He will save us from the presence of sin.

This salvation in Christ is also represented to be redemption from sin through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). It is reconciliation to God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-20). It is the obtaining of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). It is all of this, and more, in this world, together with eternal glory in the world to come. Why should anyone despise it? Why should anyone neglect it? Surely all Christians sincerely wish that all others may enjoy it.

The Price Paul Paid

Paul said he “endured all things” that others might have and enjoy that salvation he enjoyed. Notice the words, “that they also may obtain.” The emphasis here is on the word *also*. This implies that Paul had obtained this salvation and that he wished others also to enjoy it. He said he had “great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren’s sake” (Rom. 9:3). This was his feeling for the Jews who had rejected Christ, and this feeling caused him to suffer the loss of all things and to suffer persecution to an extent that few, if any, others of his time suffered. In 2 Corinthians 11:21-33, Paul wrote at length of his sufferings, not to

boast of how much he had suffered for the sake of others, but to prove his sincerity in his work. But from this we learn something of what he endured that the elect might obtain the salvation which is in Christ. Paul realized there were many people who would believe and obey the Gospel if only they had the opportunity to hear it; so he was determined to preach it in regions where Christ had not been named, so “they shall see, to whom no tidings of him came, And they who have not heard shall understand” (Rom. 15:20-21). He also said: “I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22b).

What Price Are You Paying?

Paul finally paid the price of his life for the privilege of preaching the Gospel to the lost. What are you paying? Are you and I willing to pay such a price for that privilege? We will be if only we will cultivate the love for the lost which Paul had. Yet, some of us are not willing to attend services of a Gospel meeting held for the purpose of saving souls. Every preacher who holds meetings knows the difference between the size of the Sunday-morning audience and the week-night audiences. The house will be full on Sunday morning but only a third to a tenth of them can be depended on to attend the services through the week. Why? Too tired, not enough gas, live too far, not able physically to be up too much at night, and a hundred and one other excuses which are nothing more nor less than lies on the part of the majority. They go other places and do other things, even on the very nights when they

should be attending the meeting. Can these say they are willing to “endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus”?

It takes money to carry the Gospel into new territory. Radio programs, tracts and papers, preachers and teachers are all necessary to evangelizing a community. Such work requires money, and this cannot be obtained by public solicitations, it must be contributed by the children of God. So, we brethren spend more for picture shows than they give for Gospel work. Are they willing to give up the shows and turn that money to Gospel work? Others spend more money for tobacco than they do for Gospel work. Some even say they are not able to give to the Lord, when they are actually spending enough for tobacco to hold a meeting. A man who smokes two packages of cigarettes a day will spend about \$125 per year one who smokes three packages will spend close to \$200 [these figures are from years ago and be much more now]; yet, if one of these men should be asked to spend that much for a meeting to save lost souls, he likely would say he is not able. Would he be willing to quit smoking so he would be able? If he is willing to “endure all things for the elect’s sake,” he would. But how many are willing to pay that price to save the lost? I know elders and some preachers who have not shown that willingness yet. May we all cultivate a willingness to endure more, that others also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

Deceased

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