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LITERARY DEPENDENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES

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The article attempts to determine the differences between a literary dependence which involves the copying from another text of unusual ideas, terminology, textual units or syntactical rhythms, and the similarities which may be the result of discussion or of sharing common preaching material. The detection of prime patterns in the Paulines and in the group comprising Hebrews and 1st and 2nd Peter simplifies the problem.

Many scholars have attempted to show the dependence of one or other of the New Testament epistles upon another epistle. For example, certain points of contact between 1 Peter and Ephesians may be identified, or between 2 Peter and Jude, and the attempt is made to show which epistle is dependent upon the other. The word 'dependence' has often been used in a loose sense and it has not been made clear whether the commentator had in mind the copying of literary material or simply that one author was familiar with the content of another author's work.

Occasionally scholars have attempted to determine priority by examining the structure of the text but more often recourse has been made to dating ideas and concepts, thus placing the texts in chronological order. Dating according to the presence of supposed references to Gnostic movements and locating by the presence of Hellenisms in the texts can be problematical.

In this study, 'dependence' is taken to mean that one author had before him the text of another author's work and that some direct copying took place. Unusual ideas may have been copied; to constitute 'dependence' it is necessary that the ideas should be unusual. If the ideas were in common circulation at the time then it may not be concluded that one text is dependent upon the other. Unusual terminology may have been copied and to this the same argument applies. Whole phrases or sentences may have been lifted from the text. More difficult to identify are instances in which the syntactical rhythm has been copied, but has been

disguised by the use of synonyms. It is now a much simpler task to identify such cases, as the computer may be used to locate syntactical strings using the initial tags of the tagged machine readable texts. The use of the first two tags attached to each word allows a closer examination to be made which can identify, for example, the use of imperative participles.

Beyond the area of literary dependence which is involved in direct copying, there lies a large grey area in which an author may use many synonyms of words found in another author's work, and may employ parallel syntactical constructions. In such cases it is difficult to distinguish between material which shows familiarity with the written work of another author and material which has been produced after shared discussion, each author writing up the discussion in his own way.

This present study investigates these possibilities, but it also has a different starting point from that of other studies. It begins with the results of the application of literary scalometry which were found in two previous articles - *Scale and the Pauline Epistles* (*IBS* 17,1, pp.22-41) and *The Structure of Hebrews and of 1st and 2nd Peter* (*IBS* 19,1, pp. 17-31). These articles reveal the scale-related prime patterns which link all thirteen of the Pauline epistles and also show that Hebrews and 1st and 2nd Peter share a quite different prime pattern. The search for similar patterns which coincide with identifiable discourse units and which might be mistaken for these prime patterns has covered over half a million words by a dozen authors in three languages ancient and modern. So far no similar patterns have been found. For the purposes of this paper, therefore, it is accepted that the Pauline prime patterns indicate that the mind of Paul lies behind each of the thirteen Pauline epistles and that Hebrews, 1st and 2nd Peter come from the hand of Silvanus. The arguments leading to these conclusions are given in the two articles mentioned above.

Acceptance of this position greatly simplifies the matter of 'dependence'. There is no need, for example, to devote time and effort to the supposed 'literary dependence' of 1 Peter on Hebrews if it is accepted that they were written by the same person. But before considering the possible dependence of one epistle upon

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another, further consideration must be given to the meaning of 'literary dependence', and this is done by means of the following example.

A divinity student at Trinity College, Glasgow was asked at short notice to give a five minute talk on Rudolph Otto with whose work he was at that time unfamiliar. He took Otto's book, *The Idea of the Holy* and skimmed through it. It soon became clear that there were certain key words which in Otto's thinking carried special connotations - these he underlined. On reading through the book a second time it became clear that the essence of Otto's thinking was contained in a few short sections. Much of the remainder of the book which put flesh on the bare bones could be ignored for the time being as the student prepared an outline of the main themes.

The talk which he prepared relied on a framework which was established by selecting these key words, a few important phrases and one or two longer sentences which seemed to encapsulate the essence of the book. These were strung together with his own text to provide the talk.

On looking back to identify the points at which the text of the talk was dependent on Otto's book, it was not difficult to pick out the portions of text which had been lifted from the original and incorporated within the student's own text. These points of contact were clustered in those sections which he found rewarding, while other portions of the book were unrepresented. The order in which these points of contact occurred in the talk corresponded generally to the order in which they were found as the argument developed in the original text. These are important features concerning this type of literary dependence.

A similar result is obtained by turning to *Comparative Religion* by E.O. James (London:Methuen, 1961). James devotes three pages to the work of Rudolph Otto and the main points of contact between his summary and Otto's book, *The Idea of the Holy*, are shown below. The page numbers refer to the 1959 Pelican paperback edition of Otto's book, and the text indicates the main points of contact which have been identified in pages 40-42 of James's summary, in the order in which they occur.

Page	
21	<i>sui generis</i>
20	Quotation - "unique original feeling-response.....in its own right."
21	the numinous
22f	creature-feeling
24	Quotation - "self-abasement (Otto - "submergence").....of some kind."
26	mysterium tremendum
45	fascination
45	Quotation - "the daemonic divine object.....his own."
143	numen loci, el, baal and the like
143	"How dreadful is this place."
111	Plato - "ideologies of myth...by enthusiasm or inspiration....eros or love....mania or the divine frenzy"
130	Quotation - "peculiar interpretations.....transcending it."
130	Kant

There are other references of a general nature which cannot easily be tied to a particular locus in the original text, but these points of contact outlined above follow the order of the original text except in the case of references on page 143 which are out of order and have been combined with other material by James for the sake of brevity.

Important characteristics of this kind of literary dependence are that points of contact occur in clusters and occur more or less in the order in which the relevant matter occurred in the original. The clustering is not a random phenomenon, but is related to the layout of important points in the argument. The order is not rigidly observed, but may be rearranged to suit the later author's purpose. Nevertheless, something of the original order may be preserved.

It is quite in order for students to approach such a task in the manner outlined above. They are dealing with material in which theologians are creating language, either by inventing new words (like 'numinous') or giving new connotations to familiar terms. A student at that stage has no other language with which he can describe the thinking of the theologian and must be heavily dependent on the original text. In his précis there will be a marked

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absence of synonyms as the student is as yet unsure of the precise shades of meaning attached to these technical terms. If, however, a group of such students were to discuss or write about the work of the same theologian a year later, they might do so without showing any literary dependence of this kind. They might indeed use some of the specialist terms, but these terms would have become widely known and used generally as part of everyday theological language. In the interval, the students might well have read widely and become able to place the work of the theologian against a wide spectrum of theological thinking. They would certainly use Otto's terms but would also use synonyms with greater freedom. There would be no clustering of references, and their essays would be much less likely to reflect the order of the layout of the original book.

A correspondence of language may be found in the works of two colleagues engaged in research, such as Crick and Watson who discovered the helical nature of the structure of the DNA molecule in the 1950's. The writings of these two men during the weeks leading up to the discovery might employ similar highly esoteric terminology. If so, any attempt to show that one was dependent upon the other would be misguided. They were at the forefront of research, developing technical language, giving old words new connotations.

The writers of the New Testament epistles were also in this position. They were original researchers breaking in new ground, developing new vocabulary in discussion and giving old words (such as ἀγάπη) new meanings. They had to tackle rival philosophies and heretical tendencies. Leaders like Paul and Silvanus, travelling companions in mission, were preachers and apologists who heard each other's sermons and arguments repeatedly. They were familiar with their colleague's vocabulary and phraseology, yet each was an experienced scholar in his own right and well able to express himself. Much discussion must have taken place in the group of apostolic writers as the expression of the Christian faith developed, and each writer reflected the discussion in his own way. If dependence of one upon another is to be established, then it must be shown that there is a difference between

the kind of literary dependence in which one writer has before him the text of another author and copies key terms, ideas or syntactical rhythms from it, and the kind of similarities which arise from the sharing of thought and terminology among partners engaged in research and discussion.

Literary dependence, in the sense of the **copying** of vocabulary, phrases, sentences and ideas, will not be rich in synonyms as the copyist is in a position of dependence and may be unsure of precise shades of meaning. The points of contact may well cluster in the original, as some particular passages are likely to appeal to the copyist as containing the essence of the work. The borrowed portions of text may also preserve something of the order of the original. Material in which authors have reflected **shared discussion** may show points of contact without there being any question of literary dependence; synonyms may be more commonly used as both authors are fluent in the subject. It is more difficult to distinguish between the latter case and one in which an author is familiar with the written work of another, rather than having engaged in discussion with him.

Moffatt was aware of this problem and in connection with the relationships between 1 Peter and Ephesians, and between 1 Peter and James, wrote briefly of 'a certain community of style and conception prevailing among early Christian writers of this class'¹. However, he says of 1 Peter and Ephesians that 'the affinities between the two, not only in phraseology but in structure and conception, involve a literary relationship which implies that one drew upon the other....' He cannot, however, decide which was first to be written, saying that 'either Peter knew Ephesians, or if the latter is post-Pauline, the author of Ephesians...was acquainted with the Petrine pastoral'².

In this present study, it is accepted that scalometric analysis indicates that the prime patterns of all thirteen Pauline epistles have their origin in the mind of Paul, that Silvanus wrote Hebrews, and also (possibly at Peter's instigation) 1 and 2 Peter. The question of

¹ James Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, (3rd ed. ;Edinburgh:T.& T. Clark, 1920), p. 338.

² *Ibid*, p. 338.

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dependence is therefore considerably restricted and concerns mainly the relationships between the Paulines and the group which came from the hand of Silvanus, the relationships between the epistle of James and the other epistles, and the relationships between the epistle of Jude and the other epistles. The epistles under the name of John are scarcely relevant to the matter of dependence among the epistles.

No fewer than sixteen epistles came through Paul and Silvanus and as these were colleagues in mission and travelling companions they must each have been familiar with the thought and expression of the other. There is no question of there being one dominant scholar and personality, the other borrowing from him; both were articulate, able thinkers and writers. Yet it is worth while considering the points of contact between the two corpora. These are:

1P1:14 = Ro.12:2, 1P1:22 = Ro.12:9f., 1P2:5 = Ro.12:1, 1P2:6-8 = Ro.9:32-33, 1P2:10 = Ro.9:25, 1P2:11 = Ro.7:23, 1P2:13-14 = Ro.13:1-4, 1P3:9 = Ro.12:17, 1P4:7-11 = Ro.12:3,6, 1P2:1f. = 1Cor.3:1f.,10f.= Col.3:8, 1P1:5 = Gal.3:23, 1P2:16 = Gal.5:13, 1P1:3 = Eph.1:3, 1P1:3-5 = Eph.1:5-15, 1P1:10-12 = Eph.3:5,10, 1P1:13 = Eph.6:14, 1P1:13-15 = Eph.2:3, 1P1:18 = Eph.4:17, 1P1:20 = Eph.1:4,9, 1P1:23 = Eph.1:13, 1P2:1-2 = Eph.4:22-25, 1P2:6 = Eph.2:20, 1P2:4-6 = Eph.2:18-20,21-22, 1P2:13 = Eph.5:21, 1P2:18 = Eph.6:5, 1P3:1,5 = Eph.5:22, 1P3:4 = Eph.3:16, 1P3:7 = Eph.5:25, 1P3:19 = Eph.4:8-9, 1P3:22 = Eph.1:20-22, 1P4:2-3 = Eph.2:3f., 1P4:10 = Eph.3:2, 1P1:18 = Tit.2:14, 1P2:1 = Tit.3:3, 1P2:9 = Tit.2:14, 1P2:11 = Tit.2:12, 1P2:13 = Tit.3:1, 1P1:3,3:21 = Tit.3:5,

Heb.10:30 = Ro.12:19, Heb.10:38 = Ro.1:17, Heb.11:11,12,19 = Ro.4:17-21, Heb.12:14 = Ro.14:19, Heb.13:9 = Ro.14:2f., Heb.13:20 = Ro.15:33, Heb.2:4 = 1Cor.12:11, Heb.2:8 = 1Cor.15:27, Heb.2:14 = 1Cor.15:26, Heb.5:11-14 = 1Cor.2:6,3:2, Heb.6:10 = 2Cor.8:4, Heb.10:28 = 2Cor.13:1, Heb.13:18-19 = 2Cor.1:11-12, Heb.2:2 = Gal.3:19, Heb.6:6 = Gal.3:1, Heb.12:22,13:15 = Gal.4:25f., Heb.1:4 = Phil.2:9f., Heb.13:16 = Phil.4:15,18, Heb.13:24 = Phil.4:21-22.

Examination of the points of contact between 1 Peter and Romans shows that a common term is used in seven instances; synonyms are used in another three instances. Of the three longer phrases which the texts have in common, two are quotations and

one is a commonplace ('evil for evil'). In every case the thought in each epistle is expressed differently. While several points of contact involve Romans 12, the parallels in 1 Peter are widely scattered and there is no significant clustering. The occurrences do not follow a significant order. These points of contact do not point to literary dependence but show two articulate writers expressing shared thought each in his own way.

The three points of contact between 1 Peter and 1 Corinthians and Galatians are scattered and involve a single common term in each case plus one synonym. The thought in each case has similarities but is expressed in different ways. They are of no significance regarding dependence.

There are numerous points of contact between 1 Peter and Ephesians, but in every case the thought is expressed differently. For the most part the point of contact rests on a single term and synonyms are frequently used. Advice to slaves, husbands and wives is found in both but treated differently. There is no significant clustering or common order in the occurrences. These are random correspondences in the works of two men dealing with a common fund of preaching material. The affinities are so strong that some scholars have thought that both were written by Silvanus. That, however, is not the case, as the prime pattern of Ephesians is a classical Pauline pattern and the prime pattern of 1 Peter is that which is found also in Hebrews and 2 Peter. Such is the weight of these points of contact, however, that it suggests a closer relationship than is the case in other epistles. It suggests that these two epistles were written at about the same point in the missionary travels of Paul and Silvanus, reflecting their discussion and preaching at a particular stage in the development of their thought. This is of significance regarding the dating of 1 Peter and Ephesians.

The points of contact between 1 Peter and Titus rest on isolated terms and the occasional synonym. The two epistles have some traits in common, but in every case the thought is expressed differently.

There are also some points of contact between Hebrews and the Pauline epistles. Between Hebrews and Romans the points

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of contact involve two quotations used differently; a term, a synonym, an illustration and a blessing, all used differently. There are no clusters or orders of occurrence of any significance.

Between Hebrews and the group comprising 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians there are few points of contact. All involve a common term or illustration. Occasionally a synonym is used and in every case the material is handled differently. The contacts are too few to show any clustering or order.

It is clear that in these points of contact between the Pauline corpus and the group which comes from the hand of Silvanus there is no substantial evidence of literary dependence in the form of the copying of vocabulary, phrases or sentences. Many of the ideas which appear to be in common are found to be handled quite differently. Neither author can be said to be dominant. Both authors are thoroughly articulate and at these points of contact either author may provide the richer expression. The strong affinities found at some points do not reflect literary dependence on the part of one of the authors, but do reflect the close relationship which Paul and Silvanus may have enjoyed on their preaching tours during which they may have shared deep discussion and frequently heard each other preach.

The epistle of James finds echoes in the Paulines and in 1 Peter. There are no significant points of contact between James and Hebrews, and those between James and Jude are limited to a few common words. The points of contact with the Paulines are as follows:

Jas.1:2-4 = Ro.5:3-5, Jas.1:6 = Ro.4:20, Jas.1:22 = Ro.2:13, Jas.2:11 = Ro.2:22-25, Jas.2:21 = Ro.4:1f., Jas.2:24 = Ro.3:28, Jas.4:1 = Ro.7:23, Jas.4:4,7 - Ro.8:7, Jas.4:11 = Ro.2:1, Jas.1:26 = 1Cor.3:18 = Gal6:3, Jas.2:5 = 1Cor.1:27, Jas.3:15 = 1Cor.2:14, Jas.2:8-12 = Gal.5:14 = Ro.13:8f., Jas.2:10 = Gal.5:3, Jas.4:4-5 = Gal.5:17, Jas.1:4-6 = Eph.4:13f., Jas.5:13f. = Eph.5:19,6:18.

The most numerous contacts are with Romans and it is noticeable that in every case James's way of expressing himself is quite different from that of Paul and at several points he uses synonyms. Even in James 1:2-4 and Ro.5:3-5 where there is the

greatest concentration of common terms and synonyms, the contexts are quite different. James 2:21 (=Ro.4:1f.) and 2:24 (=Ro. 3:28) reflect the argument over faith and works but there is no evidence of literary dependence; two articulate writers are independently expressing their sides of the argument.

The points of contact in the other Paulines consist of a few scattered references. In every case the two authors express themselves differently and synonyms are used frequently. There is no clustering or significant order. The dependence which Moffatt finds to be plain is not a literary dependence of James upon Paul; James is a pungent and articulate writer and thinker in his own right. The scattered references might well, however, reflect discussion and argument rather than familiarity with the written word.

In considering the points of contact between James and 1 Peter, the use in both epistles of *διασπορά* (two out of three occurrences in the N.T., the other being in John) and *παρακύπτω* (the only two occurrences with *εἰς*) and *δοκίμιον* (only two occurrences in N.T.) is noted. The points of contact are as follows:

1P1:1 = Jas.1:1, 1P1:3 = Jas.1:18, 1P1:6 = Jas.1:2, 1P1:7 = Jas.1:3, 1P1:23 = Jas.1:18, 1P2:1f. = Jas.1:20f., 1P2:11 = Jas.4:1, 1P2:25 = Jas.5:19, 1P3:15-16 = Jas.3:13, 1P4:8 = Jas.5:20, 1P5:4 = Jas.1:12, 1P5:5ff. = Jas.4:6f., 1P5:6 = Jas.4:10.

It is notable that except for the instances noted above there is little in the way of common vocabulary; many synonyms are used, and the two authors always express themselves in different ways. The points of contact are scattered and there is no order to suggest that one author had the text of the other before him. It is more plausible that the epistles reflect discussion, and the use of rare terms suggests that the two authors had personal contact with each other.

The points of contact in James and Jude have little significance, but 2 Peter and Jude provide correspondences of a different kind. Most of these occur in the second chapter of 2 Peter and between v.4 and the end of Jude, but several occur outside these boundaries. Found only in Jude and 2 Peter are *παρεισδύω* (in 2 Peter *παρεισάγω*), *συνευωχέω*, *ὑπέρογκος* and *ἐμπαίκτης*. The word *ἄλογος* has one other occurrence in Acts. These terms

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are all chosen to awaken the church to the vile nature of the teaching that is being so cunningly introduced. They are used only in response to the nature and the methods of the libertine movement which the church leaders are opposing. The false teachers “sneak in” (παρεισδύνω) or in the other transitive form (παρεισάγω) they “sneak in” their teachings. They turn the Christian love feast into shameless carousing (συνευωχέω)). In classical Greek εὐωχεῖω has an emphasis on sumptuous provision and making merry. Their words are those of “swollen headed” people (ὑπέρογκος). In classical Greek ὄγκος meant a top-knot giving height and carrying overtones of conceit and arrogance. They were mockers - ἐμπαίκτης - (Lat. illudere - with the suggestion of trickery and deceit). They were literally without reason - ἄλογος (from ἄ and λόγος). These unusual terms are all adopted to meet the specific situation.

The points of contact between Jude and 2 Peter are as follows:

Jd.3 = 2P1:5,2:21, Jd.4 = 2:1-3, Jd.5 = 1:12, Jd.6 = 2:4, Jd.6-7 = 3:7, Jd.7 = 2:6, Jd.8 = 2:10, Jd.9 = 2:11, Jd.10 = 2:12, Jd.11 = 2:15, Jd.12 = 2:13, Jd.12-13 = 2:17, Jd.16 = 2:18, Jd.17 = 3:2, Jd.18 = 3:3, Jd.21-23 = 3:14, Jd.24 = 3:14,17, Jd.25 = 3:18.

The points of contact for the most part follow a systematic order and are much more dense than in the other comparisons which have been made above. In every case, however, each author has expressed himself in his own way and there is a substantial proportion of synonyms and alternative terms. Where there is a dense cluster of common words as in Jude 4 and 2 Peter 2:1-3 or Jude 10 and 2 Peter 2:12, each author uses the words in a different order. The density of the points of correspondence suggested that it might be worth while checking the syntactical strings in case the use of synonyms was disguising the copying of syntactical constructions, but no strings of significant length were found.

Kümmel³, in his attempt to summarise the current position of mainstream scholarship, places Jude at about the turn of the second century and 2 Peter anywhere thereafter up to about A.D.

³ Kümmel, W.G. *Introduction to the New Testament*. London:SCM Press, 1975.

150. He claims that there is a literary dependence on the part of 2 Peter. One must therefore imagine the author of 2 Peter sitting down to write his epistle with the text of Jude before him, copying the terminology and illustrations more or less in the order in which they are found in Jude, but recasting each verse in a completely different syntactical form and reflecting quite different perceptions. It is difficult indeed to understand how the text of 2 Peter could be arrived at by such selective cribbing, but the theory is rendered impossible by the scalometric analysis which shows that the prime pattern of 2 Peter matches those of 1 Peter and Hebrews, indicating common authorship. If it is accepted that Silvanus is the author of these three works then both Jude and 2 Peter must be early and reference to second century Gnosticism is out of the question; the false teaching referred to must be related to an incipient phase of an early and local libertine movement with Gnostic tendencies.

It is difficult to imagine the motive of a writer of the calibre of the author of Hebrews responding to false teaching by taking an epistle like that of Jude's and cribbing the terminology in the order in which it occurs and recasting each sentence in a different syntactical form reflecting his own perceptions. Yet a reason must be found for such a writer using those terms in that order and displaying linguistic and stylistic features which Moffatt noted as having a "cumbrous obscurity". It is highly unlikely that these points of contact represent the copying of terms from a written text. Nor would familiarity with another author's text be likely to produce patterns of this kind.

The most plausible solution is that a group of leaders in the early Church were faced with pressure from a group whose teaching was displaying first signs of a developing libertinism, possibly on Gnostic lines. After discussing the problem, sermon material was prepared and possibly taken by members of the group to a number of congregations. Members of the group may indeed have heard each other preach this material repeatedly. The tone and the terminology may have been contributed by several members of the group. In time, Jude wrote the sermon material up in his own way, reflecting his own perceptions. Silvanus too wrote the material up, and in his version are heard echoes of the voices of

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members of the preaching group. In the Greek may be heard the echo of Peter's voice, and perhaps with good reason Silvanus has incorporated the material in his epistle under Peter's name. The frequent preaching of the common material would account for the order. The freedom which each preacher had would account for the many synonyms and alternative terms, and the reflection of different perceptions.

To sum up, the striking features about all these comparisons, with the exception of the last between 2 Peter and Jude, are that the points of contact are very scattered and follow no significant order; that many synonyms and alternative terms are used; that there is no significant clustering of terms such as might be expected in dependent work and very importantly, that the **contexts** of these points of contact are usually quite different. They are random points of contact resulting from the sharing of ideas and vocabulary and do not produce the kind of patterns which result from a direct literary dependence. Indeed, any attempt to show literary dependence among these epistles is entirely misconceived. However, the existence of a vague "community of atmosphere" is not enough to account for these relationships; they result from much discussion and argument among the apostolic leaders and from hearing each other in their apologetic and preaching work.

The relationship between 2 Peter and Jude is special in that the weight of points of contact, the order in which they occur and the use of unusual terminology points to a more structured origin. It is inconceivable, however, that either of the authors might sit down to write an epistle, with the text of the other before him, and produce the script which he did. The answer must lie in the texts used by the group in a campaign combating the insidious tendency which had arisen - a campaign in which they heard each other preach the material frequently so that in the hands of each it adopted a similar form, with common illustrations and terminology. Silvanus and Jude then wrote it up each in his own way, maintaining the general order, preserving the illustrations and vocabulary, but showing great individuality in their perceptions and in their expression.

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