



The Truth about the Lie of Universalism

When Adam and Eve were created by the hand of God and placed in the Garden of Eden, they were given explicit instruction concerning their freedom to eat of any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This instruction was given to prevent them from coming under the influence of Satan.

"Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.... In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.... And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" Gen. 1:8, 9, 16, 17.

But as we all know, Adam and Eve did eat of the forbidden tree—first Eve and then Adam, who went against his conscience and followed his feelings of love for Eve to cause him to disobey God. Since by their disobedience sin and death has come upon all of humanity, let's go back and trace the steps and reasoning which caused them to fall, for by their acts and reasoning, we all become inheritors of the sins of our first parents.

"The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it." PP 54.

Now notice what happened when she went to the tree:

"Unmindful of the angels' caution, she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration, upon the forbidden tree. The fruit was very beautiful, and she questioned with herself why God had withheld it from them. Now was the tempter's opportunity. As if he were able to discern the workings of her mind, he addressed her: 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts. But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness; and his words were not displeasing. Instead of fleeing from the spot, she lingered wondering to hear a serpent speak. Had she been addressed by a being like the angels, her fears would have been excited; but she had no thought that the fascinating serpent could become the medium of the fallen foe.

"To the tempter's ensnaring question she replied: 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.'" PP 54.

Satan now had Eve's full attention. With subtle flattery of her beauty and insinuations against God for selfishly withholding the fruit of the magical tree, the wily foe captured the mind of Eve and she eagerly took the fruit and ate it.

"Eve ate and imagined that she felt the sensations of a new and more exalted life. She bore the fruit to her husband, and that which had an overpowering influence upon him was her experience.... Her experience stood arrayed against the positive command of Jehovah, and Adam submitted himself to be seduced by the positive experience of his wife." 3T 72.

What can we learn from this experience of Adam and Eve? Men and women today are just as much in danger of accepting the pleasing deceptions of Satan as were our first parents. We should not trust our feelings or venture to speculate upon forbidden ground, but lean wholly upon the revealed word of God. We should study the scriptures diligently to learn what is truth, and never deviate from that which God has given us to guide us unto eternal life.

"Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the Judgment, men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. All the lessons which God has caused to be placed on record in His word are for our warning and instruction. They are given to save us from deception. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan." PP 55.

The original lie of Satan, "Thou shalt not surely die," is still with us today. All false religions believe in some form of eternal life after the death of the body. Our minds cannot conceive of the complete extinction of the soul. Many people believe that their dead loved ones are hovering about them and watching everything they do. Others believe that the souls of the dead go to a holding place somewhere in the universe, or to a Nirvana of heavenly bliss. Christians generally believe that after the death of the body, the soul goes either to heaven or hell; or, as Catholics believe, to purgatory, "the condition, process, or place of purification or temporary punishment in which ...the souls of those who die in a state of grace are made ready for heaven." Britannica.

But none of these concepts come from the Bible. God plainly states in His word that the soul who sins will die:

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Eze. 18:4. KJV.

Many people seem to feel that God is unfair, unjust, and unloving if He destroys sin and sinners in His judgment at the end of the world. But it is not God's desire that any should be lost. It is up to the choice of each individual which course and which destiny they will choose.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? Saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?..."

"Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Eze. 18:20-23, 31, 32. KJV.

"God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires that men be converted and live. He has furthermore provided an opportunity for all. It is with the strongest appeal that He pleads with every sinner to disconnect himself from sin, lest he be destroyed with it when evil is finally eradicated.

"In the event the righteous man falls away, the book of remembrance, in which all his good deeds were recorded, is not taken into account in the judgment. He is rewarded according to his long category of sins. Not only are sins he has not repented of charged against him, but all those also for which he had earlier obtained pardon. [See Eze. 18:24.] When a man separates himself from God he rejects His pardoning love, and is consequently 'in the same condition as before he was forgiven. He has denied his repentance, and his sins are upon him as if he had not repented' (COL 251). It is sometimes erroneously held that when a sin is forgiven it is immediately blotted out. This belief is refuted both here and in the teaching of the sanctuary. Sins are forgiven, but retained on the record books until the Day of Judgment (see PP 357, 358)..."

"Sin has its seat in the mind. The soul must purpose the sinful act before passion can dominate over reason. The root of sin, then, is a bent of mind that causes man to choose the evil course. The solution to the problem is to correct this basic disposition. This is what repentance is intended to accomplish. A change must take place in the thinking of the individual. Since God never coerces the will, this act must be voluntary, but the Holy Spirit is given to aid the soul. It is quite impossible for the individual of himself to accomplish the transformation. But when he chooses to make the change and in his great need cries out to God, the powers of the soul are imbued with power from above and the propensity of the mind is corrected.

"The reason many Christians also repeatedly fall into the same error is that they have never truly permitted the Holy Spirit to change their basic thinking with regard to that sin; they have never taken their sins to heart, to discover how, by the enabling grace of God, they might have complete victory over those sins.

"Israel charged that God was unjust and caused their ruin. God declared that sin itself, which the sinner voluntarily chose, was their ruin (see 5T 120). He may not acknowledge the justice of God's ways now; but in that awful moment, when he confronts the Judge of all the earth, there will be heard from his lips the acknowledgement that God's ways are just (see GC 668, 669)."

From the fall of Adam and Eve, mankind has rebelled against God's restrictions upon their behavior, and wished to be free to follow their own impulses and decisions without suffering the consequences which God has predicted will follow rebellion and disobedience. This was also the problem in heaven with Lucifer and the angels who rebelled in heaven. This kind of thinking is strange and unreasonable, considering the fact that God is our Creator and knows what is best for His created beings, His universe and His government. No one wants to die eternally, but God has clearly pointed out the road to life and the road to death. The choice is up to each individual.

Since the purpose for this article is to reveal the errors of universalism, I will address the meaning of universalism as it appears in Christianity:

"In Christian theology, universal reconciliation, or universalism, is the doctrine that all sinful and alienated human souls--because of divine love and mercy--will ultimately be reconciled to God..... Believers in universal reconciliation may support the view that while there may be a real 'hell' of some kind, it is neither a place of endless suffering nor a place where the spirits of human beings are ultimately annihilated after enduring the just amount of divine retribution.... Universalists espouse various theological beliefs concerning the process or state of salvation, but all adhere to the view that salvation history concludes with a reconciliation of the entire human race to God. Many adherents assert that the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ constitute the mechanism that provides redemption for all humanity and atonement for all sins." Wikipedia.

"The more robust arguments for universalism hold that God's purposes in creating the world will fail if even one intelligent creature should be finally be separated from God. This line of reasoning implies that not only human sinners but also fallen angels will finally be saved." Christianity Today.

Now it becomes clear that the author of universalism is Satan himself, the same being who told Eve at the forbidden tree, "You shall not surely die." All the suffering and sorrow that sin has brought upon our world since Eve listened to the devil and disobeyed God's command, should help us to see that those who continue to tolerate sin in their lives, will ultimately be destroyed. But many people want to believe that God is too kind and loving to put anyone to death, and therefore He has devised a plan by which He can save everyone that has sinned. This plan, they

believe, is that since the death of Jesus has paid the price for every sin, the salvation of every sinner has been secured. This reasoning sounds appealing, but it is a clever devising of the evil one to lure people into carnal security, believing that they can choose to live as they please and still have eternal life in heaven. But this belief is in opposition to scripture. While it is true that God loves every person with unutterable love and devotion, He has given freedom to each one to decide whether they will love and obey Him in return. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross of Calvary provides eternal security for those who choose to love and obey God, but those who use the cross and the sacrifice of Jesus as an excuse to continue in their sins and yet claim the promise of salvation will meet with terrible disappointment on the day when Christ returns to claim His own.

The wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and insight that God has used to meet the challenge of the highest angel in heaven against the government of God is beyond finite comprehension. But in order to cooperate intelligently, we need to understand what God has revealed to us in order to appreciate what He has done to free the universe forever from disaffection and rebellion.

"It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin, to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil.... Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it, is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause to be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is the transgression of the law; it is the outworking of a principal at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government....

"God desires from all His creatures a service of love,—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced of allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.

"But there was one that chose to pervert this freedom. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God, and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven....

"Lucifer might have remained in favor with God, beloved and honored by all the angelic host, exercising his noble powers to bless others and to glorify his Maker. But, says the prophet, 'Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.' Little by little, Lucifer came to indulge a desire for self-exaltation.... Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of His creatures, it was Lucifer's endeavor to win their service and homage to himself. And coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield....

"God, in His great mercy, bore along with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent.... Long was he retained in heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon, on condition of repentance and submission.

Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise, were made to convince him of his error.... As his dissatisfaction was proved to be without cause, Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong, that the divine claims were just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels.... But pride forbade him to submit. He persistently defended his own course, maintained that he had no need of repentance, and fully committed himself, in the great controversy, against his Maker." GC 492-496.

Only after Satan and his followers were cast out of heaven, did he begin to see the enormity of the decision he had made to rebel against God.

"Satan trembled as he viewed his work. He was alone in meditation upon the past, the present, and his future plans. His mighty frame shook as with a tempest. An angel from heaven was passing. He called him and entreated an interview with Christ. This was granted him. He then related to the Son of God that he repented of his rebellion and wished to gain the favor of God. He was willing to take the place God had previously assigned him, and be under His wise command. Christ wept at Satan's woe but told him, as the mind of God, that he could never be received into heaven.... The seeds of rebellion were still within him. He had, in his rebellion, no occasion for his course, and he had hopelessly ruined not only himself but the host of angels also, who would then have been happy in heaven had he remained steadfast....

"He repented not of his rebellion because he saw the goodness of God which he had abused. It was not possible that his love for God had so increased since his fall that it would lead to cheerful submission and happy obedience to his law which had been despised. The wretchedness he realized in losing the sweet light of heaven, and the sense of guilt which forced itself upon him, and the disappointment he experienced himself in not finding his expectation realized, were the cause of his grief. To be commander out of heaven was vastly different from being thus honored in heaven. The loss he had sustained of all the privileges of heaven seemed too much to be borne. He wished to regain these.

"This great change of position had not increased his love for God, nor for His wise and just law. When Satan became fully convinced that there was no possibility of his being reinstated in the favor of God, he manifested his malice with increased hatred and fiery vehemence." SR 26, 27.

The stark reality concerning the problem of sin is that once it is fully assimilated into the heart and mind,—once the seeds of rebellion have completely obliterated love for God and respect for His principles—there is no power in heaven or earth that can change the heart again into a person who loves God and His law. The unpardonable sin is unpardonable because the person has hardened his heart beyond recovery.

Yes, Jesus has paid the price for all our sins on the cross of Calvary. And He has made provision through His Holy Spirit to write obedience to His law upon our hearts and minds. But in order for this to happen, we must do our part to turn from sin and open our hearts to the righteous life that Jesus has made possible for us:

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. And God has said: 'I will live with them and walk with them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'

"Therefore come out from them and be separate,' says the Lord. 'Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,' says the Lord Almighty.

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1.

And as God's word plainly tells us, "Without holiness no one will see the Lord." Heb. 12:14.

"Do not think that God will work a miracle to save those weak souls who cherish evil, who practice sin; or that some supernatural element will be brought into their lives, lifting them out of self into a higher sphere, where it will be comparatively easy work, without any special effort, any special fighting, without any crucifixion of self; because all who dally on Satan's ground for this to be done will perish with the evildoers. They will be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." TM 453.

Dealing with the eradication of sin from the universe has been a long and arduous process, even for God and all of heaven. In every way possible, God has tried to make the plan of salvation so clear that even a child can understand. The sanctuary service in the Old Testament still has lessons to teach us about God's plan to eradicate sin and sinners. Here are some quotations taken from 1 BC 776, 778 [not EGW], concerning the Old Testament sanctuary service, which can help us understand more clearly the entire plan of salvation:

"At any time during the year when a sinner presented his offering and confessed over it his sins, an 'atonement' was made for him. He was 'forgiven.' His sin was symbolically transferred to the sanctuary by the ministration of the blood of the offering.... Nevertheless, full atonement for his sin had not been made. Though his sin was forgiven he must continue in the way of obedience. Should he fail to do so and neglect to afflict his soul on the Day of Atonement, all of his erstwhile forgiven sins would return upon him and he must die. His only safety lay in enduring to the end. Then, and only then, could he expect to be 'saved' (Matt. 24:13.)"

The most important symbolism for the eradication of sin took place on the Day of Atonement at the end of the year:

"The people had previously obtained forgiveness for these same sins, when in the daily service they brought their personal sacrifices for sin.... However, though the sin was forgiven, the record of the sin remained until the Day of Atonement, when it was blotted out. And when this had taken place there was an end of reconciling....

"The high priest, having cleansed the sanctuary of sin, now went forth with these sins to the door of the tabernacle where the scapegoat waited (PP 356; GC 422). He laid his hands upon its head and confessed over it these sins, thus transferring them from the sanctuary to this goat, who bore them away into the wilderness (PP 356, 358).

"In the antitype Christ will finally cleanse the heavenly sanctuary, removing the confessed and forgiven sins of His people thence, and placing them upon Satan. He will be declared guilty of all the evil he has caused them to commit, and must bear the final penalty (GC 422, 485, 658). 'The sins of those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ will at last be rolled back upon the originator of sin, and he must bear their punishment' (EW 178)."

"The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law; was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement.... Then by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be blotted from the books of heaven....no more to be remembered or come into mind." PP 357, 358.

One would think that after six thousand years of the display of the sin problem, including the necessity of destroying the world by a flood, and finally the terrible crime of the crucifixion of the Son of God, that the world and the universe would be convinced forever that Satan and his angels deserve extinction and eternal death. But the roots of sin are deeply embedded in the human heart, and most of the world will finally choose to follow Satan and his evil ways. Therefore, the final display of Satan's intentions will be clarified before the universe until even the wicked will acknowledge that God's dealings with sin and sinners are righteous and holy.

"Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, 'In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.' All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame." Isa. 45:23, 24.

When Jesus comes and takes His faithful children home to heaven, Satan and his angels will be left to roam over the dark and broken earth for a thousand years with nothing to do but contemplate what they have done in their war against God and His people. At the same time, the righteous will have access to the books of record in heaven so that they can see for themselves every detail of the lives of the lost who are recorded there. At the end of the thousand years, the New Jerusalem descends upon the earth with all the redeemed host; then the wicked will be raised for their final judgment.

"As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart,—all appear as if written in letters of fire....

"Satan seems paralyzed as he beholds the glory and majesty of Christ. He who was once a covering cherub remembers whence he has fallen. A shining seraph, 'son of the morning,' how changed, how degraded!...

"He reviews His work among men and its results,--the enmity of man toward his fellow man the terrible destruction of life, the rise and fall of kingdoms, the overturning of thrones, the long succession of tumults, conflicts, and revolutions. He recalls his constant efforts to oppose the work of Christ and to sink man lower and lower. He sees that his hellish plots have been powerless to destroy those who have put their trust in Jesus. As Satan looks upon his kingdom, the fruit of his toil, he sees only failure and ruin....

"Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture. His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down, and confesses the justice of his sentence.

"'Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.' Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain.... The history of sin will stand to all eternity as a witness that with the existence of God's law is bound up the happiness of all the beings He has created. With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare, 'Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.'...

"Notwithstanding that Satan has been constrained to acknowledge God's justice, and to bow to the supremacy of Christ, his character remains unchanged. The spirit of rebellion, like a mighty torrent, again bursts forth. Filled with frenzy, he determines not to yield the great controversy. The time has come for a last desperate struggle against the King of heaven. He rushes into the midst of his subjects and endeavors to inspire them with his own fury, and arouse them to instant battle.... The wicked are filled with the same hatred of God that inspires Satan; but they see that their case is hopeless, that they cannot prevail against Jehovah. Their rage is kindled against Satan and those who have been his agents in deception, and with the fury of demons they turn upon them.

"Saith the Lord: 'Because thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God; behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit. I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.... I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.... Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.'" GC 666-672.

The Bible also records the end of the great controversy between good and evil, Christ and Satan, and the triumph of righteousness over Satan's rebellion against God's character of love. The entire universe will see that God has given every possible chance for Satan to reveal his true character, and that in the end, his determination to overthrow the government of God will remain unchanged.

"When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur....

"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.... If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire....

"He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new!.... He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.'" Rev. 20:7-21:8.

As we can see, the Bible nor the Spirit of Prophecy support the concept that Satan, his angels, and the wicked will have a change of heart at some point and learn to love God and His principles of righteousness. This is a terrible deception from the mind of the devil to keep people comfortable in their sins until it is too late. Even though Satan knows what is predicted in the Bible concerning his future, he lies to himself and to those who are willing to believe him, in order to keep them asleep in their sins until the door of probation closes. But listen to what Jesus says to His chosen and faithful people:

"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.... And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be....

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter into the gates into the city.

"For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie....

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely....

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."
Rev.22:7-20.

Article by Carol Zarska, MAR, author
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