



R O S A R Y
M E D I T A T I O N S

ROSARY
MEDITATIONS

A Lawyer Examines the Evidence

(For Catholics and for Protestants, Too)

ROBERT M. RANDOLPH, KM

PALUXY PRESS

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and Jonathan G. Kerr, J. D.

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P R E F A C E



These meditations are the fruit of a lawyer's efforts to understand the evidence regarding the events from which the Mysteries of the Rosary arise. I have sought to know what happened insofar as it is now possible to do so. As primary evidence, I have considered the Scriptures, assuming that they do not contradict themselves in any way and may, and must, be reconciled where necessary. I have considered some patristic writings and the "Tradition" of the Catholic Church as part of the Church's definitive teachings. I have referred to pertinent archeology, astronomy, art, history, and modern science as applied to the Shroud of Turin, the Sudarium of Oviedo, the *titulus*, and the Eucharistic miracles of Lanciano and Bolsena. I have read a number of modern writers; I agree or disagree with some of their conclusions. It has been my effort and intent not to stray from the teachings of the Magisterium.

The Scriptures are so brief as frequently to be almost cryptic. From the evidence I have sought to infer the most probable facts, as any lawyer may do. An inference is not as strong as direct evidence of the fact inferred, so there is always the possibility of error; one is dealing with probabilities. I have also done what the

rules of evidence prohibit. Namely, I have drawn inferences from inferences (or “piled inference on inference”). From a probability, one infers another probability. Obviously, this is not as reliable as the original inference, but it is what we all do every day because we can then construct a factual picture that is normally reliable, though not perfect.

Nevertheless, I recognize the risks of doing so and have sought to take them into account in these meditations. As Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman wrote, where inferences, or probabilities, converge or support each other, the risk of error is diminished. Indeed, a number of mutually supporting probabilities may rise to the level of a virtual certainty. None of what follows is dogmatic, at least insofar as it originates with me.

A friend asked me, why would one want to know such details of the events. A good question. Knowing the details will not get you into Heaven. My reasons are twofold: (1) Scripture frequently is open to interpretation. It is ambiguous, as witness the existence of a multitude of Christian ecclesial entities in the United States, most of them with some particular difference of interpretation that called that denomination into existence. I am reminded of a Texas Supreme Court decision that held by a vote of five to four that a will was unambiguous. In law, when a text is ambiguous, evidence of the extrinsic circumstances is admissible to assist in the interpretation. These meditations largely deal with the extrinsic circumstances. (2) The witness of each Gospel varies from the witness of the others. That is a good sign. Every lawyer who has spent much time in the courthouse knows that, when the witnesses all agree on every detail, the testimony has been “cooked.” Different witnesses to the same event or transaction see different things, remember different things, and consider different things to be important. The testimony of each witness may be truthful, but their testimonies need to be correlated. These meditations involve

a lot of correlation, particularly regarding the events of Holy Week and the post-Resurrection appearances.

I am a lawyer, not a theologian or philosopher, though I have read a little from both fields of study. Nor am I a student of ancient languages. I have read different translations of some passages and have imposed upon a friend who was a scholar to give me his translation in some instances. The scripture quotations are usually from the Revised Standard Version, 2nd Catholic Edition. Due to my own esthetic preferences, I occasionally use Coverdale's "Great Bible," used in the Book of Common Prayer, especially for the canticles, or the Authorized (King James) Version. With rare exception, I have made no attempt at exegesis between the New and Old Testaments. That is a different kind of work, appropriate to biblical scholars and theologians, for which I claim no qualification.

I accept the tradition of the Catholic Church for 1,800 years that the books of the New Testament were written by the named authors, all within the forty years following the death of Jesus and prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the Gospels being written in the order listed. I rely particularly on John A. T. Robinson's *Redating the New Testament* (1976), which basically supports the traditional authorship and dating. If the Gospels, particularly, and other books of the New Testament were written during the lifetime of many, or even most, of the participants and witnesses, the likelihood of their accuracy is greatly enhanced. (See Paul's use of this argument: **"Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep"** (1 Cor 15:6).

This position is contrary to current doctrine in many seminaries today. I have no desire to wade into the voluminous controversies regarding the authorship and dating of the New Testament, but a word of explanation seems required because my

acceptance of tradition is so out of step. Beginning about 1840 among Protestant theologians at Tuebingen University in Germany, the new biblical criticism dated most of the New Testament up to and beyond AD 150, including the *Gospel of John* at AD 160–170, and denied the authorship by the named authors for almost all of it. By 1897, Adolf von Harnack dated the synoptic Gospels (*Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*) from AD 65–93, with *John* at AD 80–110 and *the Epistles of Jude, James* and *2 Peter* at AD 100–175. By 1950, a middle course steered by W. G. Kuemmel between his more radical German brethren and the more conservative English writers, dated *Mark* at AD 70, *Luke* at AD 70–90, *Matthew* at AD 80–100, and *John* at AD 90–100. Many writers went far beyond these dates, and most of them contended that most books of the New Testament were pseudonymous. A recent book by Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (2006), assumes the Markan priority (that is, *Mark* was written first) and posits the writing of the Gospels to be in the 80s or thereabouts. His work is considered a great triumph by the “conservatives” because he purports to tie all the Gospels to writers who had personally met someone who saw Jesus or had talked to someone who had, thereby lending greater weight to the authenticity of their work. He denies that John, son of Zebedee, was the author of *John*. As of today, the books written on the subject are in academic jargon almost unintelligible to an educated reader, and they largely consist of quoting other academicians, either in support or in argument. Robinson’s book (1976) is refreshingly straightforward and clear.

“Indeed what one looks for in vain in much recent scholarship is any serious wrestling with the external or internal evidence for the dating of individual books, . . . rather than an *a priori* pattern of the theological development into which they are then made to fit. . . . (T)he chronology of the New Testament documents has

scarcely been subjected to fresh examination. No one since Harnack (1897) has really gone back to look at it for its own sake or to examine the presuppositions on which the current consensus rests. It is only when one pauses to do this that one realizes how thin is the foundation for some of the textbook answers and how circular the arguments for many of the relative datings” (Robinson, pages 8–9). He then lays out his evidence for 350 pages and concludes that all the books of the New Testament were written between AD 40 and AD 68 and the Gospels between AD 40 and AD 65. He points out in his conclusion: “If one is dealing with a gap, say, of thirty years . . . , there is a good deal of built-in control in the form of living memory—whereas if the distance is doubled, the controls are much less than half as strong. Without access to public records, when parents or grandparents die, folklore takes over. And what applies to the Gospel stories applies also to the history researched by the author of *Acts*” (Ibid, page 355). Which is exactly the point St. Paul had made. Acceptance of the traditional datings before AD 70 also makes the reading of the texts much clearer.

What follows are meditations, not a history. Consequently, it does not flow in a straight line but rather sometimes meanders. Please bear with me; I do usually arrive at a point.

These are meditations, not a narrative, so the author will speak in the first person singular.

Those who know me know that I am a lamb of the Lord’s own flock, but one for whom he went in search, leaving the ninety-nine behind. It is only through His grace that I have come this far.

What follows is structured as a Rosary meditation. It presupposes making the sign of the cross and the recitation, at the commencement, of the Apostles’ Creed on the crucifix, an “Our Father,” three “Hail Marys,” and a “Glory Be to the Father” on the chain before the fifth bead. Then the Fatima Prayer, still on the chain, the announcement of the Mystery (the Roman numerals

and the capital letters in the contents), and an “Our Father” on the succeeding single bead. Then the reading of the meditation (the Arabic numerals in the text), followed by a “Hail Mary” on each bead of the following decade of ten beads, followed by a “Glory Be to the Father” and the Fatima Prayer on the chain after the last bead of the decade. Repeat for the next four single beads and four decades. After the last decade, say a “Glory Be to the Father” and the Fatima Prayer. At the end, recite “Hail, Holy Queen” on the medal. For those not accustomed to the Rosary (virtually all Protestants and many Catholics), forms of each prayer follow. If you don’t “do” the Rosary, try it for a while, preferably while reading these meditations. It’s an acquired taste, so don’t be put off if it doesn’t appeal to you right away.



The sign of the cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Apostles’ Creed: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father: Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our

trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary: Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be to the Father: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Fatima Prayer: O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell and lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy. Amen.

Hail, Holy Queen: Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

THE JOYFUL
MYSTERIES





Ecce Ancilla Domini! (The Annunciation), Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1849-1850,
Tate Gallery, London

THE ANNUNCIATION



(If you skipped the Preface, please go back and read it now.
Do not read further until you have done so.)

1. “In the sixth month (of Elizabeth’s pregnancy) the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary” (Lk 1:26–27).

Mary was a young Jewish woman who lived in Nazareth. Upon reaching puberty, she was betrothed. In all probability, she was thirteen years old. St. John Paul II named 1987 as a Marian Year, in preparation for a Jubilee Year at the second millennium, in the belief that Mary was thirteen years old at the time of the Annunciation.

Mary’s mother was Anne, who was approximately fifty years old. Anne’s “kinswoman” was Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah. Elizabeth was “a daughter of Aaron”—that is, her father was descended in the male line from Aaron. He was therefore a Levite of the legitimate priestly tribe, though many priests in his day were political appointees, not of the Levitical line. Neither Mary nor Anne is described as a daughter of Aaron, because only

women whose fathers were Levites were so called. Therefore, Anne was related to Elizabeth through her mother, since her father was not a Levite. Anne's mother and Elizabeth were probably sisters. Elizabeth was approximately sixty years old, years past menopause and notoriously "barren."

Mary's father was Joachim. Scripture and Tradition say that Jesus was descended from King David, in fact, and not only through Mary's husband, juridically the "father" of Jesus (Rom 1:3; Ignatius, *Epistle to Ephesians*). According to the *Proto-evangelium of James*, Joachim was not a Levite. Since Anne was of the Levitical line, through her mother, probably, Joachim was the "son of David." Mary was the long-desired child of the "old age" of Anne and Joachim; her birth was late but not miraculous. There is no indication that Mary had any siblings.

Mary was literate at least in Hebrew, the language of Scripture and liturgy, and probably in Aramaic, the spoken language of the Jewish people. Since the reign of Queen Alexandra Salome (76–67 BC) basic education was compulsory for all Jewish children, girls as well as boys.



2. Where did the Annunciation take place? It could not have been in a public place, since the conversation between Mary and an angel was confidential, intimate, and potentially dangerous. It therefore took place in privacy at Anne's and Mary's home in Nazareth. Joachim apparently had died previously.

There have been at least five churches in Nazareth over a grotto that tradition points out as the place of the Annunciation. The house itself had been converted into a house church, probably as early as the first century, by relatives of Jesus, traditionally descendants of Jesus' "brother," Jude. In the third century, the

house was demolished and a church, having the architectural attributes of a synagogue, was built. Though built like a synagogue, it was a church. The village's Jewish synagogue was a different building altogether. Graffiti show devotion to Jesus and Mary. Archeological work prior to building the current basilica disclosed stones in a cistern covered over by the later Byzantine church, bearing inscriptions "Hail Mary" and "This is the holy place of Mary." They necessarily were from either the third-century or first-century structure. Some experts have identified them as second century, necessarily inscribed on a portion of the original house, connecting the site to the Annunciation at a very early date indeed.

The grotto was behind and at a lower level than the house. Steps led from the grotto to the courtyard, since the stored goods and materials would not have been carried through the house. The third-century synagogue-style church incorporated the steps and the grotto, as did the Byzantine church, which replaced it about AD 427, and as have subsequent churches on the site.

The community which used the site for almost four hundred years was Jewish Christian. The only first-century structures remaining on the site are the steps, the grotto in which the Annunciation is said to have taken place, and a smaller grotto connected to it.

Did the Annunciation take place in the grotto itself? Probably not. Not much is identifiable of the first-century grotto under the church, but it is typical of numerous other grottos in Nazareth. The grottos were used for storage and for agricultural use, such as a wine press. Silos and cisterns were dug into them, and many were connected with corridors. None of them show signs of being used as habitations. The grotto under the church itself had three large silos dug into its floor. The grotto was about 18' by 19' but, filled with the tools, materials, grain, and oil stored in it, it would have

been a dark, dirty, and uninviting place for such an encounter. The history of the site is such that, in all reasonable probability, the Annunciation occurred on these premises. Following destruction of the original house, it was reasonable to identify the grotto as the place of the Annunciation, since it and the steps were the only surviving portions of the house of Anne and Mary. The standard small house of the period had two rooms, one semi-public for cooking and eating and the other private for sleeping. Very poor houses had no courtyard or shared a courtyard with other houses; Joachim's and Anne's probably had its own courtyard, since there is no indication that they were at the bottom of the scale financially. The courtyard was walled off from the street, with entrances to the street, to the grotto, and into the house, and served as an outdoor kitchen, living room, and workshop.

What size was the house? The excavations in Nazareth do not tell us. However, Mary appeared in a dream to a Saxon lady, Richeldis, in 1061 at Walsingham, County Norfolk, in East Anglia, England, and told her to build a chapel the size of the house of the Incarnation and to dedicate it to the Incarnation. The dimensions were about 23' by 12'. The size and shape are replicated in the Lady Chapel of Our Lady of Walsingham Church in Houston. The dimensions would conform well to a small house in a Galilean village.

Mary was particularly devout. We can well picture her withdrawing to the private room of the house to pray.



3. “And he (the angel) came to her, and said, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be” (Lk 1:28–29).

What did the angel look like? Contrary to many artistic renderings, he did not have wings. He had the form of a man. The prophet Daniel described him as “the man Gabriel” (Dn 9:21). The angels of the Ascension were “two men in white robes” (Acts 1:10). At the tomb after Jesus’ resurrection, Mary Magdalene saw “two angels in white” (Jn 20:12). These angels were more precisely described: “His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow” (Mt 28:3). The “appearance like lightning” was similar to Jesus’ appearance at his transfiguration, when “his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light” (Mt 17:2). The angel had a supernatural ability to appear and disappear, similar to Jesus’ sudden appearances to his apostles after his resurrection (e.g., Jn 20:19). Mary saw a figure in the form of a man who took form from thin air in the privacy of her home. His features were supernaturally radiant, and his white robes were supernaturally white. She instantly recognized that it was an angel, rather than a man, who had invaded her bedroom.

The angel’s greeting was unique. “Hail, full of grace.” Mary knew of no person in the Scriptures who had been so addressed. She had reason to be troubled by the angel’s appearance and the form of his greeting and to wonder what it meant for her.

The Greek word translated as “full of grace” has a connotation of holiness, of something connected with God. Protestant translations usually mistranslate it, such as “Hail, O favored one,” in an effort to downplay Mary. Some recent Catholic translations have similarly mistranslated it, thoughtlessly in keeping with the general cultural, and Arian-like, attack on Jesus’ divinity.



4. “And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will

conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end”” (Lk 1:30–33).

Mary knew that much was demanded of persons in Scripture who had “found favor with God.” What was demanded of her was to bear a child described as destined to become the Messiah. Having recognized the figure before her as an angel sent by God, Mary believed the angel’s message.



5. “And Mary said to the angel, ‘How shall this be, since I know not a man?’” (Lk 1:34). Mary’s question was not an expression of disbelief. It was a reasonable question. It was faith seeking understanding. Mary was a virgin who was perfectly aware of how babies were made. Mary understood the angel’s message as calling upon her to conceive the child at this very time, rather than a conception which would take place naturally at some time in the future after she and Joseph had their formal wedding and began living together.



6. “And the angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible’” (Lk 1:35–37). Mary understood that the conception was

to be miraculous, brought about by the action of God upon her body. As a devout Jew, she understood that the child would be the long-awaited Messiah. It would be years before Mary understood the child's description as "holy, the Son of God."



7. "And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word'" (Lk 1:38).

Mary well understood the danger in the angel's message. She was called by God to conceive a son before she had sexual relations with Joseph. There was no way of knowing what Joseph's reaction would be to finding his wife pregnant with a child not his own. Death by stoning was a possibility. Even if Joseph just walked away, the child would be illegitimate. Mary's risk of being a single mother was underscored by being told that "*You* shall call his name Jesus." The naming of a child was done by the father, and the angel's statement implied the absence of a father. Jewish society was not forgiving of such behavior. Both she and her son could be thrust to the margins of society, to the status of day labor, or even worse.



8. "And the angel departed from her" (Lk 1:38).

Mary was alone in the privacy of her bedroom. After the angel disappeared, the Holy Spirit "came upon" Mary, and she was "overshadowed" by the power of God.

Marriage is a "good" approved by the Church. Likewise, conjugal relations within marriage are a "good," approved by the Church. When the Holy Spirit "came upon" Mary, and she conceived Jesus in her womb, she experienced the perfect union.

Overcome by the experience, she was confirmed in her belief in the angel and his message. She knew that her encounter was not an illusion, teenage feminine hysteria, or any of the other grounds for explaining away what had happened to her. She knew that she was suddenly pregnant with Israel's Messiah.

The conclusions of the above paragraph, while not unique, are also not common; they result from a convergence of inferences that support each other. The first fact is Mary's absolute assurance of her pregnancy in a situation in which one normally could not be sure of the result, particularly in the case of a woman so young; from that one must infer that something unusual had taken place so to convince her. The second fact is the impregnation of Mary by the Holy Spirit; from that one may infer that God acted upon Mary's body in a material way, rather than waving a wand and saying, "Now you are pregnant." The third fact is the goodness of conjugal relations within the marriage bond, from which we may infer that the consummation of marriage of the world's only perfect woman with God, however it was done, must have given rise to the perfect union. The convergence of these three facts and their inferences gives rise to the conclusion that Mary's conviction arose from an extraordinary ecstasy, which left her absolutely certain of her encounter with the angel and the resultant pregnancy.



9. Mary also knew, or came to know, that the author of her pregnancy, the father of her child, was God, acting as the Holy Spirit. She had become, in some fashion, the wife of God. While the angel had spoken to Mary of the Holy Spirit, a devout Jew, strongly monotheistic, would have had no idea at that time of the Trinity and would have simply considered that a unitary God had acted upon her, perhaps through an agent called the Holy Spirit; the actor, in Mary's

mind, was simply God. Furthermore, because God does not commit fornication or adultery, their union necessarily occurred within a marriage bond of some sort between God and Mary. She knew that she could not become the wife of Joseph in the ordinary sense.

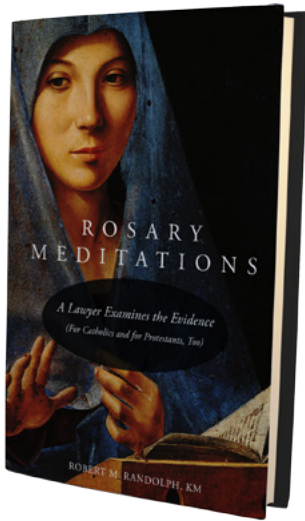
The foregoing, again, is not a unique thought, nor is it widely accepted. This is another example of convergence of probabilities. The Magisterium from a very early date has taught that Mary is “ever-virgin.” When was the decision made that Mary and Joseph would not enjoy normal conjugal relations after their marriage? Some writers think that Mary had resolved on a life of virginity before her betrothal to Joseph. I find no evidence of such a decision, and virginity would have been contrary to the belief of a devout Jew, whose duty was to propagate and replenish the earth. There is no indication that Joseph voluntarily came up with the idea after he believed that the child that Mary was carrying was conceived by God. Indeed, for Joseph to have suggested that there be no conjugal relations would have been an improper denial of such relations to his lawful wife. If the idea did not originate with Joseph, in fairness to him, it had to be part of the package of information given to him with news of his wife’s pregnancy. When Joseph consented to bring Mary into his home, he had to have known that he was agreeing to a platonic marriage. Since the idea had to originate with Mary, the only remaining question is that of timing. It is possible that Mary realized immediately after her conception that she was the bride of God and therefore could not be Joseph’s wife in the normal sense, or she may have worked this out in her mind during the period before she returned to Nazareth from Ain Karem. The precise timing is not important; the important thing is that she had reached this conclusion, and it was presented to Joseph as part of the package. I will not lengthen these meditations by tracking the inferences in subsequent passages, but I hope these examples will allow the reader to do so.



10. When Anne returned home, Mary told her in detail what had happened. Anne was taken aback. She knew Mary as a devout, virtuous, obedient daughter; for Mary to have had an affair would have been out of character. Furthermore, in a small village like Nazareth, it would have been difficult for Mary to have done so without Anne at least having become suspicious. Nevertheless, Mary was obviously convinced that she was pregnant even though the normal results of such a pregnancy would be catastrophic for Mary and the baby. Further, Mary's confession of pregnancy, if illicit, was contrary to the normal course of quietly hoping that pregnancy had not resulted.

Mary slept in the same room, and probably in the same bed, as Anne. Anne clearly was aware of the timing of Mary's periods. While the timing was right for conception to have occurred, both Anne and Mary were well aware that, even if Mary had had a sexual encounter that day, pregnancy frequently did not result. Yet, Mary was convinced that she was pregnant. Anne, a practical country woman, knew that she would not be the first mother to be fooled by her daughter, if Mary had become pregnant by a man other than Joseph. Anne was full of doubt. Why was Mary so convinced of her pregnancy when she had had a normal period two weeks earlier and there had not been time for any indication of pregnancy to appear? If Mary were pregnant, who was the father?

Anne decided that there were two tests of Mary's story. If Mary was not pregnant, Anne would know in two weeks when Mary's next period began. If Mary missed her next period, the angel had told Mary that Anne's barren Aunt Elizabeth was five to six months pregnant with a son. They could go to Elizabeth and learn if it was true. Anne, full of doubt, decided to wait.



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